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introduction: spinoza's provocation

dimitris vardoulakis and daniela voss

Friedrich Jacobi could not have foreseen that the reception history of Spinoza would vindicate his position that all philosophy ultimately results in Spinozism. Jacobi may not be right in the sense in which he made this point, namely, as a polemic against the Enlightenment and transcendental idealism. But he has been vindicated in the sense that Spinoza's philosophy has been appropriated by any conceivable philosophical standpoint. Spinoza has been presented both as a communist or as a liberal, as a democrat or as a republican, as a materialist or as an idealist, as an atheist or as "God intoxicated," as a proponent of "might is right" and as a fierce critic of power.

The list above can be expanded but that is not necessary here. Its key insight is clear: if something is all encompassing so as to include every difference within it, then it runs the risk of itself becoming indifferent, lacking conceptual rigour and ultimately without impact. We can formulate the peril of the elasticity that characterizes Spinoza's reception in the form of a rhetorical question: If Spinoza can stand for everything, then can he really stand for anything at all?

To avoid this conundrum, a double approach is required: First, we need to contextualize Spinoza's position. This will include an examination of the historical context of his argument. What are some of the specific influences that shape his thought? Jon Rubin explores what Spinoza gets from scholastic philosophy;

Jean-Marie Guyau examines how Stoicism and Epicureanism converge in Spinoza's thought; and, Dimitris Vardoulakis argues for the primary influence of Epicureanism.

The contextualization of Spinoza's position also needs to be forward looking so as to include the reception of his thought. This will inform us how certain interpretations have been arrived at as well as show us how far specific readings of Spinoza can go. Thus, Eva Schürmann underscores the importance of Herder's interpretation of Spinoza at the time in the late eighteenth century when Spinoza re-enters philosophical debate; Daniela Voss interrogates Balibar's reading of Spinoza, one of the most important interpretations of Spinoza's political thought in the twentieth century; and Janice Richardson evaluates Hampton's feminism that relies on Kant by turning to Spinoza.

Second, we need to closely analyse critical concepts of Spinoza's thought. This is all the more necessary today, given that Spinoza's philosophy is often appropriated piecemeal and second-hand in order to serve as justification for the motives of authors who, precisely, eschew any close reading of Spinoza's text.

Such an analytical procedure needs to be very mindful of Spinoza's language, especially his Hebrew, as Inja Stracenski demonstrates. It also needs go through some key concepts and problems in Spinoza, such the key problem of teleology that, as Filippo del Lucchese demonstrates, is the hinge that links his politics and metaphysics; his conception of thinking that, Thomas Kisser, departs from the rationalism that was prevalent in seventeenth century; the third kind of knowledge that may not be as elusive, as Katrin Wille argues, but is certain critical for understanding Spinoza. It also needs to turn back to the individual to make sense of Spinoza's conception of agency, a task carried out by François Zourabichvili; or by identifying seemingly secondary concepts such as the slave that in fact are pivots in Spinoza's conception of the individual from his political perspective, as Michael Polios argues.

These two approaches are distinct but not separate. They present the provocation of Spinoza's thought for us today: how to retain the uniqueness of his thought and make it speak to our contemporary concerns, while being mindful of the danger of making it too malleable for the purposes of all sorts of positions that may in fact not be amenable to it.

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"something of it remains": thought, individuation and the eternity of the mind

jon rubin

INTRODUCTION

This paper weaves together three different theses that are necessary conditions for us to understand and believe Spinoza's notorious claim that: "the human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal" which is made in *Ethics* V, P23.[1] I can't claim to be the originator of any of these theses that I'm going to discuss, but to my knowledge nobody has tried to combine all three of them in order to make sense of *E* V, P23.

This paper will try to help us understand the otherwise "incomprehensible," "dangerous rubbish" of *E* V, P23. "Incomprehensible" and "dangerous rubbish" (familiar terms to all readers of the secondary literature on Spinoza) are the two summary judgements of Edwin Curley and Jonathan Bennett respectively. I think it's useful to treat these as two quite separate objections to the claim made in *E* V, P23 (and to the second half of book five more generally, inasmuch as it follows from *E* V, P23). The Curley objection is that, "in spite of many years of study, I still do not feel that I understand this part of the *Ethics* at all adequately. I feel the freedom to confess that, of course, because I also believe that no one else understands it adequately either."[2] Or more simply: nobody has a clue what is going on because the second half of Part V from *E* V, P23 onwards is *incomprehensible*. The

Bennett objection is that some people *do* think that they know what is going on, that it is comprehensible, and their attempts to explain how both *E* V, P23 and the identity of mind and body are simultaneously true, makes people write *rubbish* because you can't explain away this kind of fundamental contradiction. In his own words, "it is dangerous: it is rubbish which causes others to write rubbish."[3] The reason for Bennett's belief that *E* V, P23 introduces a fundamental contradiction into the *Ethics* is simple enough. Part II of the *Ethics* examines some of the consequences of Spinoza's substance monism. In particular it considers the relationship between our minds and our bodies and insists that: "a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are *one and the same thing*, but expressed in two ways" (*E* II, P7S, emphasis added). This quote is from a scholium (the scholium that immediately follows the 'parallelism doctrine' given by *E* II, P7) because it is the clearest statement of a consequence of the substance monism that underlies the infinity of the attributes. The quote is from the scholium, not because I think this identity claim is in any way peripheral to the *Ethics*, but because both the demonstration and corollary to *E* II, P7 are significantly less clear than the scholium. We can put it this way: my mind and body are the same modification or affection of substance but different modes of Thought and Extension. Bennett argues that the claim in *E* V, P23 that "the human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal" contradicts Spinoza's whole monistic enterprise. He concludes that this claim simply cannot be true, given this modal identity of mind and body.

Anyone, therefore, trying to tackle *E* V, P23, needs to respond to two quite separate charges that require two quite different arguments, in both aim and scope. Sufficient historical context is needed, so that Curley-style bafflement is removed. We also have to deal with Bennett's objection: that even if we can understand what Spinoza is trying to do from *E* V, P23 onwards (and why he is trying to do it), he shouldn't have, because it introduces a glaring contradiction into the *Ethics*. So whereas I think we can remove Curley-style bafflement with historical context alone, Bennett's charge of flagrant contradiction will require both broad historical context and close textual argumentation. The first part of this paper will deal with the Curley-style problem by sketching out some of the historical detail to at least make sense of what is being attempted in the second half of Part V of the *Ethics*. I am confident that what I'm going to argue for in the second half of this paper answers Bennett's charge of contradiction, but this is the beginning of a larger project, and trying to circumvent the law of identity is always a delicate, dialectical, dance.

The first part of the paper follows the path laid down first by Steven Nadler in his *Spinoza's Heresy* and "Eternity and Immortality in Spinoza's *Ethics*."[4] It supplement's Nadler's work with extra detail from Adler's more recent "Mortality of the soul from Alexander of Aphrodisias to Spinoza."[5] This section will sketch out, in a massively condensed manner, the various twists and turns in a lineage sometimes refereed to as Alexandrian, sometimes, perhaps more familiarly, as Averroist, but if we wish a more conceptual, less personal label, we can call it *monopsychist*. But in following the work of Nadler and Adler, it is important to recognise the (explicit and self-imposed) limits of their work. Nadler in his book, *Spinoza's Heresy*, is specifically addressing the mystery of why Spinoza was thrown out of the Jewish community in Amsterdam and why the *cherem* was so severe and never revoked. His answer, which I find compelling, is that Spinoza was (even at that early part of his life) denying the truth of personal immortality. This denial, as Nadler makes clear, was not an aberration or innovation of Spinoza's. It follows in the (Rabbinically) acceptable footsteps of Maimonides and the less acceptable ones of Gersonides. Why then was Spinoza treated so harshly? Nadler's answer is twofold. The group of rabbis in Amsterdam had all argued strongly for a concept of personal immortality. Arguing against it was therefore a direct challenge to their authority. This, on its own though, is not sufficient to explain the severity of the *cherem*. As Nadler points out, questions about the soul and its survival after death are "a matter not of *halachah*, of law and prescribed ritual, but of *aggadah* (storytelling)."[6] The second part of the answer has to lie in the theological-political situation of the Netherlands and of the Jewish community within it. Spinoza's denial of personal immortality was not merely a challenge to the authority of the rabbis in Amsterdam, it was also a potential threat to the status of the Jewish community in Amsterdam itself. This may seem like an over-the-top possibility but it was one that was felt to be very real.

The use of the ban, then, in addition to its internal social function in regulating conduct among the congregation's members, was a public—indeed, political—act that was meant to communicate to the Dutch authorities the message that the Jews ran a well-ordered community; that they—in accordance with the conditions laid down by the city when it granted them the right to practice openly—tolerated no breaches in proper Jewish behavior or doctrine.[7]

Complicating the theological-political situation still further was the question of those *conversos* who remained still on the Iberian peninsula. The question of their salvation or not was a live and bitter debate amongst the Marranos in Amsterdam.

Spinoza's denial of personal immortality was not simply an abstract philosophical point. It managed to intersect with every point of personal, political and theological tension within the Jewish community in Amsterdam.

But if the two objections to the second part of Part V of the *Ethics* are that it is on the one hand incomprehensible, and on the other hand dangerous rubbish, then Nadler and Adler's works only really address the former worry. They provide much desperately needed historical context for what Spinoza was trying to do. Nevertheless, Spinoza, unlike *any* of the monopsychists before him argues for the *identity* of mind and body. In other words, Nadler and Adler may now help us to reach a position where we understand what Spinoza was trying to do, whilst still agreeing with Bennett that the very attempt is "dangerous nonsense." We may have to choose: we can be a monopsychist, or a substance monist, but not both. There is, after all, historical precedent for Bennett's intemperance in an important figure in Spinoza's thought, that is mostly absent from both Nadler and Adler's accounts: Hesdai Crescas, and he was both *not* an Aristotelian *and* thought monopsychism was dangerous rubbish.

The second part of the paper therefore needs to address the problem that the claim, "The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal" (*E* V, P23) seems to contradict the identity of mind and body. If my mind and my body are the same thing, then surely destroying one, destroys the other. The first part of the paper gives an historical context to see why Spinoza might have wanted to make this claim. The second part needs to show why it is not nonsense. In order to do so, it will first discuss the knotty issue of the diversity of the attributes. How can they constitute the essence of the same substance without simply being the same? The real puzzle of the attributes is not: how can there be an infinity of them when we perceive only two? The real puzzle is: how can there be more than one of them and not more than one substance? Once that has been addressed, then I will turn to focus on the attribute of Extension. I will do so in order to argue that what Extension does is provide us with a *ground of individuation*. It is by understanding how bodies are *numerically* individuated by the attribute of Extension, as they previously had been by the accidental form of Quantity in scholastic Aristotelianism, and what this means for the ideas that they are, that we can start to address the second worry, that *E* V, P23 is comprehensible, yes, but still dangerous, contradictory, rubbish.

PART ONE: MONOPSYCHISM

In his article, "Gersonides on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Agent Intellect" Feldman gives the best introduction that I could hope for, to the first story that I need to tell:

> In *De anima* book three, chapter five Aristotle distinguished two aspects in the activity of intellection or knowing: one active, the other passive. His remarks are notoriously obscure, and they have occasioned an enormous exegetical literature from antiquity to our own day. Besides laying the foundations of an epistemological edifice that remained intact for many centuries, Aristotle also suggested that the active factor in knowing is eternal and immortal. Thus, he retained in some form Plato's belief that there is a link between knowledge and immortality. Several of the leading ancient and medieval interpreters of Aristotle developed this suggestion into a complex doctrine of immortality, the main thesis of which was the idea that human perfection consists in union or conjunction with the active power in knowledge.[8]

Four things are worth highlighting here. Firstly, Feldman goes on to argue that Gersonides does *not* have a doctrine of union, or conjunction with the Agent Intellect. According to Feldman, Gersonides held that such a union was impossible. What we could strive for is a strictly intellectual *imitation* of the truths known by the Agent Intellect. Nothing of us lives on. Our true ideas as contemplated by the Agent Intellect do. Secondly, I'm still not exactly sure what is meant by this denial of conjunction with the Agent Intellect. Conjunction is an incredibly obscure term—not helped by it being one of those terms that traces its lineage back to both an Aristotelian *and* a neo-Platonic heritage. For a term that becomes so important to rationalist Aristotelians, it has some seriously mystical Plotinian roots. I find this fascinating but have only just begun to scratch the surface of this particular problem of what we are supposed to think conjunction is. I'm going to return to this point very shortly, but first I need to finish my remarks on the Feldman quote. So, to return to that: thirdly, describing the passage from *De anima* as "obscure" is supremely kind. If it had been written by anybody other than Aristotle, nobody would have tried to decode it. Fourthly: to say that the medieval commentators used this passage from Aristotle to develop a 'complex' theory of immortality is a masterpiece of understatement. And on top of this, it's not like there's any contemporary fixed scholarly consensus on any of the "complex doc-

trines" of Averroës, Maimonides, or Gersonides to name just three of the relevant main players. Disagreement built on complexity founded on obscurity is a not unkind way to see the debates around the Agent Intellect.

The Agent Intellect

In the title of his article, Feldman writes of 'the Agent Intellect.' What does this refer to? Recall that Aristotle had introduced a distinction between "two aspects in the activity of intellection or knowing: one active, the other passive." We need to jump forwards 500 years to Alexander of Aphrodisias, a major commentator on Aristotle (in fact, until Averroës, it was Alexander who was known as 'The Commentator'). It was Alexander who

> introduced terminology that set the terms for later discussions of the soul and its fate. The soul in its initial form [that is, its passive aspect is] is called the *material* (or *hylic*) intellect, which is no more than a disposition or potentiality to understand. Being merely a disposition, the material intellect perishes when the body perishes. This potentiality can only be actualised by something that is itself [always-already] in act, namely, the *agent* (or *active*) intellect. If this intellectual potentiality becomes sufficiently developed, the person attains an *acquired intellect*, which is not subject to decay, and is thus immortal. For Alexander, it does this by achieving what is called conjunction with the *agent intellect*. Alexander himself identifies this agent intellect with God, though others describe it otherwise: for Thomas Aquinas, it is part of the human soul; for Gersonides it is the separate intellect governing the sublunary realm. This theory of the soul in its various manifestations came to be known as the theory of the acquired intellect.[9]

What the inclusion of Aquinas on this list shows, is that a belief in the Agent Intellect does not *necessarily* lead to a denial of personal immortality. In 1270, Aquinas publishes a text, *On the Unity of the Intellect: Against the Averroists* precisely attacking this denial.[10] But this belief *can* lead to a denial of personal immortality, and, unless you're being very careful, the history of philosophy shows that it often does. Averroës and Averroism do seem to remain an ever-present problem for Christian Aristotelians. The Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517) was merely the latest attempt to stamp it out following the three prior Paris Condemnations (of 1210, 1270 and 1277); though its requirement for philosophers to defend the

theory of personal immortality was new. We can see the long shadow Averroism and the Fifth Lateran Council cast even in Descartes' *Meditations*, its subtitle being, "in which are demonstrated the existence of God and the immortality of the soul." You don't need to demonstrate the immortality of the soul, unless there is some debate and doubt that it might not be immortal. Jumping back two hundred and some years, the 1270 Paris condemnation gives us a usefully condensed list of the problematic claims that Averroists were committed to:

> 1. The claim of the unicity of the intellect in all human beings;
> 2. the related denial that an individual human being understands;
> 3. the rejection of human freedom;
> 4. whether based on determinism by heavenly bodies;
> 8. or by the object desired;
> 5. the affirmation of the eternity of the world (denial of creationism);
> 6. and of human beings;
> 7. the mortality of the human soul;
> 8. a denial that it suffers from fire after death;
> 10. the rejection of God's knowledge of individuals;
> 11. or of things other than himself;
> 12. or of his providence;
> 13. or of his power to endow a mortal body with the gift of immortality.[11]

I think it isn't much of a stretch to see all of these theses to a greater or lesser extent recapitulated, or explicitly rejected in Spinoza's own thought. The interesting ones of course, are the first two. One immediate difference between this condemned Averroism and Spinoza is that in the *Ethics*, despite being finite in power and duration, individual humans do manage to understand. Consequently, the relationship of the infinite intellect, the immediate infinite mode of Thought to finite thoughts, is not the Aristotelian one of actuality to potentiality or form to matter. Nor (and this is one area where I remain in absolute agreement with Deleuze's reading of Spinoza) is an immanent cause the same as an emanative one. To put it utterly schematically: finite modes are *modifications* of the infinite, not *creatures of* the infinite. *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata* is a purely conceptual distinction, not a real one. As Hallett puts it, substance is "not a 'thing' but self-realizing and self-manifesting agency," and "agency involves both a power of act*ing* and the expression of that power in something enact*ed*, a doing and a deed, and in action *par excellence* that which is enacted is the exhaustive expression of the potency."[12] Substance as infinite acting-action, not merely infinite being. It is

the task of the final section to show how Spinoza can use his own metaphysics of substance, attributes, infinite and finite modes to achieve the results that were striven for by Alexander, Averroës and their heirs.

Conclusion to the first part

This first part has sketched out an historical narrative whereby an Aristotelian distinction between an aspect of the intellect that is both mortal and passive and an aspect that is eternal and active gets taken up and developed by a series of Greek, Arabic, and Christian thinkers. The most important consequence of this Aristotelian heritage was the continuing denial, in various forms, of personal immortality. This denial of personal immortality, from Alexander of Aphrodisias, through Averroës, simultaneously though esoterically in Maimonides, openly discussed and transformed by Gersonides and Narboni, and firmly rejected by Crescas, was still a live issue in the Dutch Republic such that it had to be denied in 1619 as part of the political settlement of Jews in Amsterdam. Spinoza's denial of personal immortality may not have strictly been unorthodox for a Jew but his *cherem* was an explicable reaction from a precarious minority community that was always nervous about heterodoxy and that was being led by a group of rabbis who had personally argued against denials of personal immortality.

PART TWO: THE IDENTITY CATASTROPHE

Although I often think of *E* V, P23, "The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal," as breaking the *parallelism* of *E* II, P7,[13] which affirms that the, "order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things," it actually violates a more fundamental idea, the law of identity:

> a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same *thing*, but expressed in two ways.
> (*E* II, P7S, emphasis added)

I don't want to get entangled in the question of whether ideas are primarily representational or not. That would be a whole different paper. When Spinoza writes that "the idea that constitutes the formal being of the human mind is the idea of a body" in the demonstration to *E* II, P15, this means that whatever it is that we think that ideas do (e.g., represent, plan, think, contemplate), putting that prob-

lem to one side, we know that whatever the mind *is*, it is the same *thing* as some particular, singular, body. This means that if a body is destroyed, the idea that that body *is*, is destroyed too. That's just how identity is supposed to work. Except that *E* V, P23 says, no: that "something of it remains, that is eternal." We need to strictly separate these two claims, that something remains and that it is eternal. When Spinoza says that eternity has nothing to do with time or duration, he is not trying to smuggle in concepts like sempiternity. "By eternity I understand existence itself, insofar as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the definition alone of the eternal thing" (*E* I, D8). In logic, what are referred to as 'modal properties' are the concepts of necessity and possibility. Eternity then is a modal property in *that* sense; it means a kind of necessity that follows from a definition of an eternal thing.[14] "Feeling and experiencing that we are eternal" as Spinoza claims we do in the scholium to *E* V, P23,[15] does not license claims about either immortality or sempiternity. To move from eternity in Spinoza's sense, to claims around immortality or sempiternity, such claims involve a logical error. This claim about knowing that we are eternal is the best, if still thin, evidence that Spinoza had read Moses of Narbonne's *Treatise on the Perfection of the Soul*.[16] This matters as it is a commentary of Averroës' claim that we can achieve conjunction with the Agent Intellect whilst alive. I don't believe either Maimonides or Gersonides make this kind of claim, and so, assuming that this is not simply an original deduction of Spinoza's, this would be evidence that he was familiar with Narbonne's work and by extension, at least via this intermediary, with Averroës too.

Back to trying not to violate the law of identity: we know that when it comes to intentional systems and descriptions, the law of identity *is* routinely violated. I can know that Venus is hot, but not know that Phosphorus (the Ancient Greek name for the planet Venus) is hot too.[17] But the latter is an epistemic problem, not an ontological one. When it comes to the laws of logic, we have developed intuitionist logics that do not use the law of the excluded middle; we can employ dialethic logics that cautiously abandons the rule of non-contradiction.[18] The three fundamental laws of logic after Aristotle of identity, non-contradiction and the excluded middle are now taken to be, with appropriate care and technical caveats, not quite as binding as Aristotle thought. So it's not like there isn't some available conceptual wriggle room *vis à vis* Spinoza's mind-body identity. However, as much as I dislike readings of Spinoza that prioritise the principle of sufficient reason, I'm not going to argue that Spinoza is a dialethic, dialectical intuitionist thinker of vague predicates; these simply are not options conceptually available to the seventeenth century.

But if we turn to the history of philosophy *before* the seventeenth century, is there anything there we could deploy, or argue that Spinoza could deploy, to loosen the iron bonds of identity? Well, with some caution, yes. That something is Scotus' concept of formal distinction. Before explaining what this concept is, I need to describe the problem that the concept was invented to resolve. This problem follows from the Scholastic belief that God is *simple*. What does it mean to say that God is simple? It means that a number of distinctions, e.g. between form and matter, act and potency, essence and existence, do not apply. It also means that God does not have parts. Most problematically (for this discussion), it means that there is no difference between a property and the subject of that property. I may be essentially human, essentially both an animal and rational but even in the case of essential properties there is a difference between the subject and the properties. The subject is that which has those properties. In the case of God, this is no longer true. When we say that God is good, we are not predicating a property of God because to do so would be to make God complex. He would be a Subject that *has* properties. There would be an ontological difference between God and one of his properties. Apart from the general oddity of this position on God's simplicity (we are so used to having a subject-property distinction that not having one is hard to imagine), it raises the question of the distinction of God's attributes. If God *is* good and God *is* wise then because of the transitivity of identity (if A=B and A=C, then B=C) then goodness and wisdom must be the same. But they're not. An almost equivalent problem arises with regard to the Trinity. How is it "possible to have a trinity of Persons with a unity of essence"?[19] As I remarked at the start of this paper, readers of Spinoza have wondered about why we know only two attributes when there are meant to be an infinity of them. Does this mean that there are only two attributes because infinite really means 'all' not 'uncountably many'? An equally pressing problem though, is: how can there be more than one attribute when they constitute the essence of the same substance?

I'm not the first person to suggest that Scotus' concept of formal distinction might be helpful in understanding the diversity of attributes and the unity of substance. Although I think he gets some of the details wrong, I think Deleuze is the first one to argue for this idea in his book *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*.[20] More recently, there's a convincing article by Andreas Schmidt in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza's Ethics* that also argues for the attributes being formally distinct from one another.[21] I also have to mention Thomas Carson Mark's scandalously under-utilised "The Spinozistic Attributes" which, although it mentions neither Scotus nor formal distinction, does give the best non-theological account of how

we should understand the diversity of the attributes and their relationship to substance and to each other.[22] The importance of the concept of formal distinction is, as Schmidt notes, twofold:

> The formal difference of divine attributes is, however, not to be mistaken for a conceptual difference, viz., with differences that exist only *in mente*; rather, the different predications have different 'truth makers' in the thing itself. ... Duns Scotus's radical thesis seems to commit him to suspending the converse of the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles—the *Principle of the Indiscernibility of Identicals*—so that it is possible that, although x and y are identical, x has different properties from y.[23]

I think we need to pause for a moment and repeat that final sentence in order to recognise how far from a commonsensical solution Scotus' concept of formal distinction is: "it is possible that, although x and y are identical, x has different properties from y." I really like how Schmidt puts this with this suspension of the 'principle of the indiscernibility of identicals.' X and Y can be *identical* and yet X may have different properties from Y. Recall that earlier I pointed out a problem that follows from the transitivity of identity: if A=B and A=C, then B=C. The simplest way of understanding what suspending the 'principle of the indiscernibility of identicals' (the converse of Leibniz's 'identity of indiscernibles') means, is that this transitivity of identity no longer holds; although God is good and God is wise, His goodness and wisdom are not identical and are discernible. If the principle of the identity of indiscernibles is refereed to as Leibniz's Law, I'm going to name the suspension of the transitivity of identity, Duns' Law.

Just how far does Duns' Law stretch? If we think that the difference between the attributes is a formal one, then it stretches as far as everything but that is not quite what I meant. Broadie suggests that even a thing, and that thing's existence could be formally distinct.[24] Does this mean that we could say: yes, a body and its mind are the same modification of substance; however: because the attributes through which these modifications of substance are perceived are only formally distinct, we can say that one exists and one does not? And this is the problem with formal distinction: it can appear to be 'magic juice' that solves all the problems one may have without making anything clearer. To put it another way, there remains an important and difficult open question: just how *far* can formal distinction violate Leibniz's Law before it becomes "dangerous rubbish"? We may want to immediately insist that Duns' Law is "dangerous rubbish." Ockham did so. We may accept

that the Father is not the same Person as the Son whilst insisting that they share the same essence. But we may also insist that formal distinction only applies in this very specific and restricted claim. Spinoza, though, needs parts of a mind to exist once its body has been destroyed, despite them being the same thing. I'll return to this later. Turning back to Schmidt, I'll note that he makes no mention of Mark's paper on the Spinozistic attributes. This is unfortunate because Mark offers us a model, a non-theological example, of how on earth Duns' Law can actually apply to things other than God and thereby showing that formal distinction is a viable concept. It is Mark's account of the attributes that I will discuss next.

Mark points to a number of examples where we can sensibly talk of 'the same thing' being expressed in different ways which do not commit us to saying that there is an extra hidden term, the thing that is being expressed. Different performances of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony express the same thing: Beethoven's Fifth, without there needing to be this thing, Beethoven's Fifth, that exists in any way separate from its performances. We can also have texts stored in different mediums: physically as human readable text, pits in a CD-Rom, electron potentials in RAM, in the cloud, etc. Most interesting is Mark's suggestion that the attributes function analogously to languages. We can think of English as Extension and Latin as Thought. If we take something complicated like a philosophical treatise written in Latin and translate it into English, although the order and connection of the concepts are the same, individual words and phrases will differ. Or more simply: *nix alba est* if and only if "snow is white." These two sentences mean the same thing. They have the same meaning. We can say that they are essentially the same thing, expressed in different ways (modes). Mark's point is that there is an analogy between the way substance is fully expressed in each attribute and meaning is fully expressed in each language so that a mode of one attribute is the same thing as a mode of another attribute in an analogous way to how a sentence in one language is the same sentence in another language.

These non-theological examples matter precisely because Scotus thought his formal distinction only applied to the divine persons. But we can also provide a more seventeenth century example. Descartes' realisation of the identity of geometry and algebra offers us both a clear and historically relevant example of regimes that are formally distinct yet essentially identical. However, formal distinction and Duns' Law is still not yet enough to give us an adequate response to Bennett's objection, though I do think it's another vital piece of the argument.

Intermediate conclusion

So where have we got to so far? There are two kinds of objections to the eternity of parts of the mind after the death of the body. Curley's "incomprehensible" and Bennett's "dangerous rubbish." The historical work done so far has, I hope, moved us out of Curley's fog. It has also, I hope at least, weakened Bennett's worries. *E* V, P23 may still *fail*, but hopefully it is not rubbish; this kind of historical work can only ever be a necessary step, it can't be sufficient in the sense of replacing a careful reading of the text. However, I don't think this is the complete story—we need one more piece of the puzzle to help mitigate Bennett's criticism.

Extension and Individuality

Taking on board the work of Nadler and Adler moves the problem of the eternity of the mind away from being both incomprehensible and nonsense. It moves it into a complicated historical lineage of monopsychism that goes back to Aristotle. Recognising this gives rise to a new problem. The monopsychist lineage is conceptually beholden to an Aristotelian framework. But Spinoza is not an Aristotelian. Actually that's probably putting it too strongly. I think we can safely describe Hume, for example, as not an Aristotelian, but Spinoza, like Descartes and Leibniz are *post*-Aristotelian. Their philosophies are still defined in many ways by their reactions *to* Aristotelian scholasticism as well as their borrowings *from* it and rejections *of* it. As Wolfson so memorably puts it:

> In the case of the *Ethics* of Spinoza, there is, on the one hand, an explicit Spinoza, whom we shall call Benedictus. It is he who speaks in definitions, axioms, and propositions; it is he, too, who reasons according to the rigid method of the geometer. Then there is, on the other hand, the implicit Spinoza, who lurks behind these definitions, axioms, and propositions, only occasionally revealing himself in the scholia; his mind is crammed with traditional philosophic lore and his thought turns along the beaten logical paths of mediaeval reasoning. Him we shall call Baruch. Benedictus is the first of the moderns; Baruch is the last of the mediaevals.[25]

We need to balance, or combine, our reading of the *Ethics* so that Baruch and Benedictus produce one, consistent doctrine. We need then to move from the first stage of historical reconstruction in which we can now recognise in broad brush terms what it is that Spinoza might be trying to theorise in the second half

of Part V of the *Ethics*, to slightly more detailed questions about *how* he might think that, "something of the mind remains that is eternal." To do that we need to talk still more about the attributes. Although the concept of formal distinction and the more contemporary analogy with geometry and algebra gives us vital conceptual tools to understand how Thought and Extension relate to one another, above all, we need to understand what it is that Extension *does*. We need to do this extra work because although placing Spinoza's discussion of the eternity of the mind in this monopsychist lineage helps to make sense of what it is that Spinoza is trying to do in the second half of Part V of the *Ethics*, it does not show us that he succeeds; where succeeding would mean that the eternity of the mind after the destruction of the body contradicts neither the identity of the mind and its body, nor that the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of causes.

Quantity

There are a number of clues as to how we should understand what it is that the attribute of Extension *does*, especially if we don't just think of it as a passive container on the model of Newton's Absolute Space. If Thought thinks, can we say that Extension extends? Yes, but only in a highly specific way. So what are these clues? Well the biggest clue is Spinoza's account of the common notions, specifically in his use of the phrase "equally in the part as in the whole." This is not a uniquely Spinozist turn of phrase. In fact, the use of this phrase strongly indicates that Spinoza was both aware of, and making use of, a particular set of ideas from scholastic philosophy. The doctrine that encapsulates these ideas can be traced back to (at least) Plotinus and Augustine. The label by which this doctrine is now known, 'holenmerism,' originates with Henry More, the Cambridge, seventeenth-century, Platonist. He coined it in chapter 28 of his *Enchiridion metaphysicum*.[26] *This is published in 1671, so it's extremely doubtful that Spinoza would have read it, but as I just said, although the term for the doctrine is modern, the doctrine itself is not. What are these ideas that make up the doctrine of holenmerism?* They are summarised in the following eight points:[27]

> 1. Scholastic Aristotelianism happily includes both material and immaterial entities.
> 2. What makes an entity material is that it depends on prime matter, immaterial ones do not.
> 3. Immaterial entities include God, human souls and angels.

> 4. *We* now may think of immaterial entities as transcendent to the world lacking any place in it; this is not the scholastic view. On the contrary, for a scholastic Aristotelian, immaterial entities absolutely have a *place* and *location* and are *extended* in the world, just not in the way material bodies are.
> 5. Material bodies, formed from prime matter, are extended in the world such that they are composed of 'parts *outside* of parts' (think Lego).
> 6. What makes prime matter extended, what gives things 'parts outside of parts', is the accidental form of QUANTITY.
> 7. Holenmerism is a doctrine about how immaterial entities are also extended but in a different way to material bodies. To take the example of a human soul: it is located in the human body, but it is located *wholly in each part of the body and wholly in the whole of the body*; or, as Spinoza will put it: "equally in the part and in the whole."
> 8. Some scholastics try to extend the idea of holenmerism to material entities. Descartes runs with this usage and suggests that the "form of heaviness" is present equally in any part of a body as it is in the whole of it.[28]

Given Spinoza's use of the phrase "equally in the part and in the whole" in Part II, Propositions 37-39 of the *Ethics*, I think Spinoza's account of the common notions is derived from the doctrine of holenmerism (via Descartes but also Heereboord). That the framework that Spinoza employs to create the common notions borrows from the scholastic tradition of 'holenmerism' is something I have argued for elsewhere.[29] For the purposes of this paper, I will take it as a given. The central thesis of the argument is that a particularly obscure phrase—"equally in the part and in the whole"—as the constitutive feature of the common notions is made intelligible by understanding it as Spinoza's version of the doctrine of holenmerism. What this implies is that the attribute of Extension has taken the place of the Aristotelian category of quantity. The attribute of Extension is what makes substance corporeal in the sense of being composed of 'parts outside of parts.' This is, I recognise, a bold claim. Do I have any additional textual evidence? I think there is, in the scholium to *E* I, P15 (emphasis added):

> by body we understand any *quantity*, with length, breadth, and depth, limited by some certain figure [*quod per corpus intelligimus quamcunque* quantitatem*, longam, latam et profundam, certa aliqua figura terminatam*]

This is I suggest, a very odd formulation. What is the word 'quantity' doing here? Why isn't it just *res*, thing, as he says in *E* II, D1:

> By body I understand a mode that in a certain and determinate way expresses God's essence insofar as he is considered as an extended thing (*res extensa*)

Note also, that it's not: "by body I understand any quantity *of things*." To speak of quantity in this manner, as a noun, rather than an adjective, would have had an obvious meaning to Spinoza's seventeenth-century readers. We may now think that to write 'extended body' is otiose. An unextended body is a *contradictio in adjecto*. This was not the case (or not necessarily the case, it was a matter of debate) for scholastic philosophy. A body became an extended body only when it involved the form of quantity. Spinoza is alluding to—and in the context of the people he is discussing, I think that this would have been obvious to his contemporaries—the form of quantity, that which gives things their extension.

Let us assume that the attribute of Extension replaces the category of quantity and does the same job (at least with regard to the finite modes). How does this help with *E* V, P23? If modifications of substance *qua* bodies are extended by the attribute of extension, this means that ideas are *not*. Does this mean that ideas are unlocated, unplaced, dimensionless and even transcendent? No. To repeat the fourth point of my list: immaterial entities absolutely have a *place* and *location* and are *extended* in the world, just not in the way material bodies are. Bodies are extended *partes extra partes*. Ideas are extended "*tota in toto corpore et tota in qualibet parte*" which translates as "wholly in the whole body and wholly in each part."[30] This has some weird consequences.[31] The soul, as form of the body, is understood to exist equally in any part of the body as in the whole of the body. This has the slightly odd, or counter-intuitive (at least to our modern intuitions) result that if I lose, for example, a finger, I don't lose any part of my soul, because my soul isn't made up of parts such that it can be divided in that way. Whereas extended things can have bits snapped off them, immaterial entities cannot. I'd say this is true for Spinoza's mind too. But doesn't Spinoza's mind have parts—presumably as many parts as the body that it is the idea of does? Yes. But these will be intensively, not extensively, individuated in terms of function. There's one final weird consequence of ideas not being extended. Yes, ideas still have location, they are co-extensive with the body that they are, but they are not thereby limited to just the one body. I think that when two people have the same adequate idea, they really do have the *same* (i.e. numerically identical) adequate idea. I need to correct something I just said. It would be more accurate to say that yes, an adequate idea has a location but I should have said: they are co-extensive with the *bodies* that

they are. Ideas, both adequate and inadequate constitute our essence. We therefore cannot say that an idea belongs to any person, they make up part of the mind of a person. An adequate idea constitutes a part of any mind that has attained it; an adequate idea constitutes a part of any *minds* that attain it. Adequate ideas are not *mine*, they are always-already *us*.

This is the final piece of the puzzle. The destruction of my body no more destroys an adequate idea, than the loss of a finger destroys part of a soul.

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that there are two quite separate categories of problem with *E* V, P23 which are respectively formulated by Curley and Bennett. Curley's incomprehension can be addressed by a recognition that what Spinoza is attempting to do fits within a long lineage of monopsychism that originates with Alexander of Aphrodisias and was still a live, or at least a recognisable option in the seventeenth century. Leibniz saw this clearly and put Spinoza in this tradition.[32] But recognising that Spinoza is part of a monopsychist or Averroist tradition is not the same as saying that he should have been, or that he was a successful part of this tradition. Bennett's objection is that the identity of mind and body means that we simply cannot make sense of the claim that when one is destroyed, something of the other remains. I have focused primarily on this part of the claim, rather than the eternity part of the claim. In order to make sense of this, we do always run the risk of writing rubbish. But what I have argued for in the second half of the paper is that the identity of mind and body has considerably more wriggle room than that simple assertion of identity might make one think. In particular, the non-corporeal nature of ideas, their holenmeric nature means that adequate ideas never simply belong to, or make up, me alone. Whereas inadequate ideas, or passions, individuated as they are by the body that I am, are uniquely and strictly dependent on the continued existence of my body, my adequate ideas are not.
In conclusion then: what makes me, *me* cannot be my adequate ideas. Spinoza is at great pains to stress that the more adequate ideas two people have, the more they agree in nature. In a very real sense although adequate ideas may be part of me (and the ethical project is for as much as our mind as possible to be adequate), they aren't *mine*.

This is what it means to truly reject an account of personal immortality: It is only our inadequacies that define us.

JON RUBIN taught the graduate program, 'The Philosophy and Ethics of Mental Health,' for eight years in the Medical School at the University of Warwick, before moving to Australia. He now lectures for the MSCP most recently on 'Spinoza and Politics.' His research is currently split between Spinoza and Deleuze. One of his most recent publications is 'The Pride and Joy of Spinoza,' in Thomas Kisser and Katrin Wille (eds), *Spinozismus als Modell: Deleuze und Spinoza*, Paderborn 2019.

NOTES

1. Mens humana non potest cum corpore absolute destrui; sed ejus aliquid remanet, quod aeternum est.
2. Edwin M. Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method: A Reading of Spinoza's Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, 84.
3. Jonathan Francis Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 374.
4. Steven Nadler, *Spinoza's Heresy: Immortality and the Jewish Mind*. Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 2001, and idem, "Eternity and Immortality in Spinoza's *Ethics*." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 26:1 (2002, 40-52).
5. Jacob Adler, "Mortality of the Soul from Alexander of Aphrodisias to Spinoza." *Spinoza and Medieval Jewish Studies*. Ed. Steven Nadler. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014, 13-35.
6. Nadler, *Spinoza's Heresy*, 42.
7. Nadler, *Spinoza's Heresy*, 21.
8. Seymour Feldman, "Gersonides on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Agent Intellect." *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 3 (April 1978, 99). Seymour is referring to the following passage: "Thought, as we have described it, is what it is by virtue of becoming all things, while there is another which is what it is by virtue of making all things: this is a sort of positive state like light; for in a sense light makes potential colours into actual colours. Thought in this sense of it is separable, impassible, unmixed, since it is in its essential nature activity (for always the active is superior to the passive factor, the originating force to the matter). Actual knowledge is identical with its object: in the individual, potential knowledge is in time prior to actual knowledge, but absolutely it is not prior even in time. It does not sometimes think and sometimes not think. When separated it is alone just what it is, and this alone is immortal and eternal (we do not remember because, while this is impassible, passive thought is perishable); and without this nothing thinks." Aristotle, "On the Soul [De Anima]." *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Ed. by Jonathan Barnes. Trans. J. A. Smith. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984, bk. 3.5.
9. Adler, "Mortality of the Soul," 17; emphasis in italics is original, I've highlighted the phrase "agent intellect."
10. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Unity of the Intellect Against the Averroists*. Trans. Beatrice H. Zedler. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1968.
11. John Wippel, "The Parisian Condemnations of 1270 and 1277." *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. Eds Jorge J. E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2003, 65; the non-sequential ordering is due to Wippel.
12. Harold Foster Hallett, *Benedict de Spinoza: The Elements of His Philosophy*. Bristol: Thoemmes, 1957, 13 and 9 (emphasis in original).
13.The term 'parallelism' as a description of Spinoza's system always puts me in mind of Churchill's comment about democracy. We can say that parallelism is the worst possible description of Spinoza's system, apart from all the others. As a term it clearly has a better resonance with Leibniz's pre-established harmony and it should be no surprise that it seems to have been first coined by a nineteenth century Leibnizian, Alexandre Louis Foucher de Careil, who was attempting to show how mistaken all of Spinoza's ideas were. Alexandre Louis Foucher de Careil, *Réfutation Inédite de Spinoza, Précédée d'Un Mémoire Par A. Foucher de Careil*, 1854. https://philpapers.org/rec/LEIRID-3. First translated as *A Refutation Recently Discovered of Spinoza by Leibnitz*. Trans. Octavius Freire Owen. Edinburgh: T. Constable and co, 1855.
14. For an excellent discussion of this idea in its historical context see Yitzhak Y. Melamed, "Eternity in Early Modern Philosophy." *Eternity*. Ed. Yitzhak Y. Melamed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 129-67.
15.For a truly thorough discussion of the linkage between experience and eternity, see Pierre-François Moreau, *Spinoza: l'expérience et l'éternité*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994.
16. See Alfred L. Ivry, "Moses of Narbonne's Treatise, 'The Perfection of the Soul.' A Partial Edition from the Paris Ms., with Translation and Notes." Dissertations submitted at Brandeis University, Philosophy Department,1963. See

also Alfred L. Ivry, "Moses of Narbonne's 'Treatise on the Perfection of the Soul': A Methodological and Conceptual Analysis." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 57:4 (1967, 271–97).
17. Sometimes Spinoza does seem to treat the attributes as if they were names.
18. There are some readings of dialectics that suggest it's what a logic without the law of identity would look like.
19. R. G. Wengert, "The Development of the Doctrine of the Formal Distinction in the 'Lectura Prima' of John Duns Scotus." *The Monist* 49 :4 (1965, 573).
20. Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*. Paris: Ed. de Minuit, 1968. Translated as *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Zone Books, 1990, chap. 3.
21. Andreas Schmidt, "Substance Monism and Identity Theory in Spinoza." *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza's Ethics*. Ed. Olli Koistinen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. My preceding discussion of God's simplicity is indebted to Schmidt's account.
22. Thomas Carson Mark, "The Spinozistic Attributes." *Philosophia* 7:1 (1977, 55–82).
23. Schmidt, "Substance Monism and Identity Theory in Spinoza," 92. This is not something I will discuss any further, but it is worth noting that having Spinoza employ formal distinction and therefore deny the complete applicability of the Identity of Indiscernibles, is a serious and so far previously unrecognised problem for those interpreters who stress Spinoza's use of the Principle of Sufficient Reason.
24. Alexander Broadie, "Scotus on God's Relation to the World." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 7:1 (1999, 10).
25. Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the Latent Processes of His Reasoning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934, Vol. I, vii.
26. More, Henry More, *Enchiridion metaphysicum, sive, De rebus incorporeis succincta & luculenta dissertatio. Pars prima de exsistentia & natura rerum incorporearum in genere: in qua quamplurima mundi phaenomena ad leges Cartesii mechanicas obiter expenduntur illusque philosophiae & aliorum omnino omnium qui mundana phaenomena in causas purè mechanicas solvi posse supponunt vanitas falsitasque detegitur*. Londini: Typis E. Flesher : Prostat apud Guilielmum Morden, 1671.
27. This summary is entirely indebted to the following works: Robert Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes, 1274-1671*. Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 2011, and Pasnau, "On Existing All at Once." *God, Eternity, and Time*. Ed. Christian Tapp. Burlington: Ashgate, 11-28,.2011. Marleen Rozemond, "Descartes, Mind-Body Union, and Holenmerism." *Philosophical Topics* 31:1/2 (2003, 343-67), and Rozemond, "Pasnau on the Material–Immaterial Divide in Early Modern Philosophy." *Philosophical Studies* 171:1 (2014, 3-16). The extension of the idea of holenmerism to Spinoza's common notions is my own.
28. "I conceived of heaviness [*gravitas*] as if it were some sort of real quality, which inhered in solid bodies [...] And although I imagined heaviness to be scattered throughout the whole body that is heavy, I still did not attribute to it the extension which constitutes the nature of a body. For the true extension of a body is such as to exclude any interpenetration of the parts, whereas I thought that there was the same amount of heaviness in a ten foot piece of wood as in one foot lump of gold or other metal – indeed I thought that the whole of the heaviness could be contracted to a mathematical point. Moreover, I saw that the heaviness, while remaining coextensive with the heavy body, could exercise all its force in any one part of the body; for if the body were hung from a rope attached to any part of it, it would still pull the rope down with all its force, just as if all the heaviness existed in the part actually touching the rope instead of being scattered through the remaining parts. This is exactly the way in which I now understand the mind to be coextensive with the body—*the whole mind in the whole body and the whole mind in any one of its parts*." René

Descartes, "Author's Replies to the Sixth Set of Objections." *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Trans. John Cottingham. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 2:297–98; emphasis added and translation slightly modified.

29. .Jon Rubin, "Spinoza, holenmerism and the common notions 2p37-2p39." (https://www.academia.edu/35270798/Spinoza_holenmerism_and_the_common_notions_2p37-2p39_1)

30. William Ockham, "Tract. de Corp. Christi." *Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1967, chap. 12, and idem, *Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1967, Vol. X, 114. Cited in Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes*, 56.

31. Calling it weird is not anachronistic. Plenty of scholastic *and* early modern thinkers thought the doctrine of holenmerism made no sense.

32. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy. Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*. Ed. Austin Farrer. Trans. Eveleen M. Huggard. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951, 81. My thanks to Joe Hughes for pointing this reference out to me.

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guyau's spinoza: between epicureanism and stoicism

federico testa

Jean-Marie Guyau died in 1888, at 33 years old. His premature death interrupted an already prolific and promising philosophical trajectory. As Gabriel Tarde writes, he was "prematurely taken from us in the full bloom of a train of thought".[1] Guyau, who was once called "the Spinoza of France,"[2] is today an unknown figure in the history of philosophy, still occupying only a marginal place in its narratives. During his lifetime, however, Guyau was far from being a marginal figure in the debates of his time. He was read by scholars across different fields, and his work was translated into several languages.[3] He was known especially for two of his main published books: the *Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction* and the *Irréligion de l'avenir*, as well as for his book on Epicurus, *La morale d'Épicure et ses rapports avec les doctrines contemporaines*.[4]

Guyau was part of a transnational intellectual debate, having for example engaged in a fruitful philosophical exchange with English thought. This is clear in a series of analyses of Hobbes, Bentham, Mill and Spencer, but also the lively debate with his English contemporaries and a series of mentions, texts and book reviews. In 1879, Sidgwick reviewed *La morale d'Épicure* for *Mind*.[5] G.E. Moore reviewed Guyau's work in 1899 and commented the *Esquisse* in his 1903 *Principia Ethica*.[6] Spencer himself claimed that Guyau was the first to describe his ethics with precision.[7] Guyau's thought also left its mark in the arts, for his works on aesthetics were important for artists and writers such as Proust and Tolstoy.[8] Moreover, Guyau was

himself a poet (having published the *Vers d'un philosophe,* in 1881). Guyau's ideas also reverberated in nineteenth (and early twentieth) century political thought, especially anarchism. Indeed, Piotr Kropotkin, who admired Guyau's critique of sanction as well as his ideas of fecundity and evolution through cooperation, saw in Guyau the founder of an "anarchist ethics."[9]

Guyau's impact was not any less remarkable in the debates taking place around the formation of sociology in France. Authors from opposite ends of the spectrum of rising sociological thought—such as Émile Durkheim[10] and Gabriel Tarde[11]—have read his work and critically engaged with his ideas.

Finally, Henri Bergson and Friedrich Nietzsche were also attentive readers of Guyau's work: praising him, while at the same time critically assessing some of his positions. Bergson edited and published—together with French philosopher and Guyau's stepfather Alfred Fouillée—one of Guyau's important posthumous books, *La génèse de l'idée de temps*, an important book for the formation of Bergson's own thinking. Nietzsche, in his turn, referred to the young philosopher as "the brave Guyau," and covered his copies of the *Esquisse* and of *L'Irréligion* with enthusiastic notes, both praising and criticising Guyau. As Mazzino Montinari has shown, Guyau was part of a constellation of authors that Nietzsche read during his stay in Southern France.[12] Furthermore, scholars such as Ilse Walther-Dulk believe that there is a strong historical link between Guyau's work and the French reception of Nietzsche. According to Walther-Dulk, Guyau prepared the ground for the successful reception of Nietzsche's work in France (and ended up by being absorbed by this reception).

In what follows, my attempt is to present the key parameters of Guyau's reading of Spinoza, in the context of one of his first major books, *La morale d'Épicure*. To do this, I situate Guyau's interpretation of Spinoza in relation to the general philosophical project and the main concerns of the book.

The analogies and convergences existing between Guyau and Spinoza have often been stressed in scholarship. However, no systematic study exploring this relation is currently available in English.[13] My intention in presenting the first English translation of Guyau's text on Spinoza is to contribute to deepening research on this topic by providing the tools and textual evidence for further understanding this relationship.

Guyau's text is a chapter of his *Morale d'Épicure* and, in this context, it shows a contact with Spinoza's philosophy mediated by the two Hellenistic schools which were, for Guyau, also the guiding principles of the history of moral thought: Epicureanism and Stoicism. More specifically, Guyau's reading of Spinoza appears in the part of the book dedicated to the "modern successors of Epicurus" (*Livre IV—Les successeurs modernes d'Épicure*) and after the analysis of Gassendi and Hobbes (chapter 1) and La Rochefoucauld (chapter 2). In order to understand why and how Guyau reads Spinoza as a "modern successor of Epicurus"—and a very special one, who operates a synthesis or reconciliation between Epicurus and the Stoics—we must situate this reading within the context of the general philosophical and historical project of *La morale d'Épicure*.

LA MORALE D'ÉPICURE AND GUYAU'S SPINOZA

La Morale d'Épicure is better understood when situated in the context of Guyau's formative engagement with the history of philosophy. Fouillée, played an important role in this itinerary, initiating his relative in the history of philosophy and the study of the classics.[14] In 1869, Fouillée was still a young scholar working on his books on Plato and Socrates. These books were developments from what was originally two *mémoires* that he wrote and submitted to the *Académie de sciences morales et politiques* in 1867 and 1868.[15] However, due to the excess of work, Fouillée was temporarily blind and therefore unable to read and write. It is then that a 15-year-old Guyau "lent" him his eyes (to quote Fouillée's expression). Not only has Guyau worked on the research of material and sources, but he would also write under Fouillée's dictate, adding his sentences to those of his mentor. According to Walther-Dulk, at the age of 17, Guyau was already a "*licencié ès lettres,*" having translated Epictetus' *Handbook*, accompanied by a "brilliant essay on the Stoics."[16]

Contini claims Guyau began his scholarly activity with "a series of translation of classical works, usually accompanied by introductory essays and critical apparatus."[17] It is as the pinnacle of this development that, in 1873, Guyau decides to take part in a competition proposed by the *Académie de Sciences Morales et Politiques*, like Fouillée had previously done. The topic of the competition of the *Section Morale,* announced in 1871, was utilitarianism. In 1874, two authors won the *prix de budget*. In Elme-Marie Caro's report, the first name that appears is that of Ludovic Carrau, a professor at the Besançon Faculty of Letters (who submitted his study *La morale utilitaire. Exposition des doctrines qui fondent la morale sur l'idée*

de bonheur). The second awardee is the 19-year-old Jean-Marie Guyau. It is from the 1300-page *mémoire* on *L'histoire et la critique de la morale utilitaire* submitted to the *Académie* that he will extract two books. These will be the last books he dedicated to the history of philosophy: *La morale d'Épicure* and *La morale anglaise contemporaine,* published in 1878 and in 1879 (re-edited in 1885), respectively.

In *La Morale d'Épicure,* Guyau proposes an original reading of the Hellenistic philosopher by looking at his work from the perspective of modern utilitarianism. As Caro writes in the report: "the Epicurus presented in this *mémoire* is an Epicurus seen through [John] Stuart Mill."[18] In effect, Guyau traces the origins of utilitarianism back to the ancient Epicurean school, which allows him to say that modern utilitarianism is a form or an embodiment of Epicureanism. On the other hand, Guyau sees in Epicurus an accomplished expression of utilitarian ethics. In this sense, Guyau's approach reveals the surreptitious continuity of an Epicurean tradition in the history of thought, ultimately concerned with human emancipation and happiness: a tradition which finds its modern expression in Gassendi, Hobbes, La Rochefoucauld, Spinoza, Helvétius, Bentham and the French thinkers of the Enlightenment, as well as in the "contemporary English school," especially with Mill and Spencer.

Visualising this continuity in the development of Epicurean ideas throughout time corresponds to one of the main tasks established in the *Avant-Propos.* In this text, Guyau argues that his method considers philosophies as living systems. This means that a merely structural or architectonic reconstruction of the system is insufficient to understand its history. Guyau proposes to look at the formation of the philosophical system in the same way one sees the formation of an organism, for "the laws of life and the laws of thought are the same."[19] The organism, beginning from a cell or a small number of cells, develops into an increasingly complex entity. The same would be valid for a philosophical system: the historian must identify the key idea or ideas and look at their development in time. To an "anatomy of thought," Guyau claims, an "embryogenesis of thought" should be added.[20] However, one cannot understand the evolution of a living system simply by analysing its internal development.

In addition to the fundamental ideas that engender the system, one must look at the evolution and development of its structure throughout time. It is in the interaction with the environment and the challenges it imposes (33) that the system evolves. In the case of a system of thought, these challenges are the objections and

the opposition it encounters. In this sense, the Epicureanism that Guyau identifies in antiquity, and in modernity with utilitarianism, should be understood as a living system developing and evolving throughout time. This vitalist and evolutionist insight is what allows Guyau to say that modern utilitarianism is Epicurean, and that ancient Epicureanism is already utilitarian.[21]

Another important claim that *La morale d'Épicure* puts forward—and which will be essential for Guyau's reading of Spinoza—concerns the grounds of what we could call the history of moral thought and ethical attitudes. Indeed, in the history of Western ethical thought, Guyau argues, Epicureanism plays a key role, occupying what could be considered a "quasi-metahistorical place."[22] However, Guyau proposes an agonistic model in which Epicureanism shares its fundamental role with Stoicism. It is the conflict between these two "doctrines" that fuels the development of thought. Guyau claims:

> Everywhere, in theory and in practice, we find two moralities [*morales*] ... split philosophical thought and divide human beings. We could say that today the fierce half-a-millennium struggle between the Epicureans and Stoics has rekindled and is burning anew (43).

The history of ethical thought and practice is described by Guyau, then, as the staging of the conflict between Epicureanism and Stoicism (43), understood not merely as ancient philosophical schools, but as two fundamental forces in human ethical experience. The claim regarding this agonistic structure underlying the history of thought could be more clearly translated in ethics by the reference to two different principles: *duty*, on the one hand, represented by the Stoics; *pleasure* or *interest,* on the other, represented by the Epicureans.

As the title of the chapter dedicated to Spinoza expresses—"a synthesis of Epicureanism and Stoicism"—Guyau understands the thought of the Dutch philosopher as an expression of this *agon*. However, Spinoza's philosophy is also its suspension or, at least, an attempt to reconcile the two forces in conflict.

Guyau's reading of Spinoza situates the philosopher within the framework of the history of Epicureanism (understood as utilitarianism). In this sense, Guyau sees Spinoza's system as already containing the fundamental theories of French and English utilitarian schools (317). This is evident in Guyau's discussion of Spinoza's redefinition of the *good* as relative to us: the good is that which we know to be

useful to us. Now, that which is useful is what produces *joy*. The latter is defined as is the "satisfaction of desire". To this "Epicurean definition" Spinoza adds a "metaphysical complement" (319), which is his definition of desire as "the tendency of our being to persevere in being" (i.e. *conatus*). This metaphysical addendum allows Spinoza to redefine the good: "The good is, for a being, to succeed in this effort to conserve and satisfy its nature. The good, therefore, is nothing other than this *success* and it amounts to *power* [*puissance*]; and it is this power [*puissance*] that we call virtue" (319).

For human beings, however, virtue and power are directly linked to reason and to the *knowledge* of the best means to satisfy one's desires.[23] In this sense Guyau recasts the dynamics of interest in terms of the use of reason and the "laws of intelligence," and thus he finds the bridge linking Epicureanism and Stoicism in Spinoza. Because reason is the essence of man (320), satisfying one's true nature—and therefore seeking one's own advantage and utility—means understanding (by *E* IV, P26). As he explains, "The conciliation of interests finds its place in the common interest of reason. 'A man acts entirely from the laws of his own nature when he lives according to the guidance of reason; and only to that extent must he always agree with the nature of other men.'"[24]

In this sense, the more one affirms and satisfies one's own nature (that is, the more one knows and understands through reason), the more one is also useful to others. As Guyau says: "Here one finds Epicurus and Zeno finally reconciled: to live according to nature [...] or reason is to live according to one's particular interest and to the interest of all."[25]

Working through Spinoza, Guyau finds moral relativity: in the same manner that perfection is a way to relate reality to our thought (318), so the notions of good and evil are ways in which we relate reality to our desires, which is to say that good is that which we desire and that which is useful for us. Moreover, achieving what is useful to us depends on a certain power [*puissance*], and this power increases the more we actively *know* the means to obtain what is useful. In this sense, for human beings, to the extent that they are rational, power is this knowledge and understanding. Therefore, within this fundamentally Epicurean movement of the research of happiness and utility, Guyau finds the place of reason, of common notions and of intelligence, by means of which man understands that happiness (and what is useful to him) presupposes others and is equally useful to others. It is in pleasure and utility—and understanding the necessity of seeking them—that

one finds sociability.

If Guyau's broader ethical project can be described as an attempt to surpass both utilitarian ethics (going beyond pleasure understood as egoistic self-satisfaction) and the ethics of duty (going beyond duty understood as obligation and sanction), reconciling them, it is possible to say that he found a first formulation of this synthesis in Spinoza. Guyau discovers in Spinoza an agonistic equilibrium between *hedonē* and *kathekonta,* which would be, perhaps, his own way to surpass utilitarianism, equalising *pleasure* and *duty* beyond sanction and obligation.

What follows is an extract of *La morale d'Épicure,* in its first English translation, where Guyau discusses the philosophy of Spinoza.

FEDERICO TESTA is a Philosophy PhD candidate at Monash University and at the University of Warwick. He has previously been a Postgraduate Fellow at the European University Institute and a Research Assistant at Macquarie University. He is finalising the translation of Jean-Marie Guyau's *La Morale d'Épicure* and is the co-translator of Pierre Hadot's *Selected Writings*. Testa has taught in universities in Australia and Brazil and he is currently a sessional teacher in Philosophy and Sociology at the University of Warwick. His current research explores the notions of life and normativity in Foucault and Canguilhem. F.Testa@Warwick.ac.uk

NOTES

1. Gabriel Tarde, *Penal Philosophy*. Trans. P. Berne. New Brunswick/London: Transaction Publishers, 2001, 29.
2. Jean-Marie Guyau, *A Sketch of Morality Independent of Obligation or Sanction*. Trans. Gertrude Kapteyn. London: Watts & Co., 1898, xii
3. In Fouillée's 1913 short biography of Guyau, he mentions English, German, Spanish, Polish and Russian translations.
4. During his lifetime, Guyau published at least six philosophy books: *La morale d'Épicure* in 1878, *La morale anglaise contemporaine* in 1879, *Les problems d'esthétique contemporaine* in 1884, the *Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction* in 1885 and, finally, *L'irreligion de l'avenir* in 1887. In 1889, Fouillée edits and publishes two of Guyau's unpublished manuscripts: *L'art au point de vue sociologique* and *Education et hérédité*. In 1900, he edits and publishes, with Henri Bergson, Guyau's *La genèse de l'idée de temps*. As a teacher and educator, Guyau also wrote a series of school books, namely: *Première Année de lecture courante* in 1875, *L'Année préparatoire* in 1884, *L'Année enfantine* in 1883. Guyau's method for teaching to read and write was widely used in French schools, and it was later named "*méthode Guyau*."
5. Henry Sidgwick, "M. Guyau, La Morale d'Épicure et ses Rapports avec les Doctrines contemporaines." *Mind* 4:582, 1879. According to Jordi Riba, Sidgwick and Guyau later became acquainted: the two philosophers met in 1882, when Guyau hosted Sidgwick in Menton. See Riba, *La morale anomique de Jean-Marie Guyau*. Trans. Mariló Fedz Estrada. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999, 30.
6. G.E. Moore, "Book Review: A Sketch of Morality Independent of Obligation or Sanction. M. Guyau, Gertrude Kapteyn." *International Journal for Ethics* 9 (2), 1899.
7. Riba, *La morale anomique,* 8.
8. Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?* Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. London: Penguin, 1995, §II.
9. Riba, *La morale anomique,* 31. See Jean-Marie Guyau. *Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction*. Biography, Preface and Postface by Jordi Riba. Paris: Payot, 2012. See especially the extracts of Kropotkin's *Ethics*.
10. See, especially, Michael Behrent, "Le débat Guyau-Durkheim sur la théorie sociologique de la religion. Une nouvelle querelle des universaux?" *Archives de sciences sociales des religions, 53e année, no.* 142, April-June, 2008. See also Durkheim's review of Guyau's *Irréligion:* "De *L'irréligion de l'avenir.*" *Revue philosophique,* 1887, *23,* 299-311.
11. See Tarde, *Penal Philosophy.*
12. Mazzino Montinari, ″Nietzsche e la décadence″, Studia Nieztscheana, 7 June 2014, 18
13. This is valid both for a comparative study or a study on Guyau's reception of Spinoza. This is not the case in French. See André Comte-Sponville, "Jean-Marie Guyau et Spinoza," In Tosel, A., Moreau, P., & Salem, J. (Eds.), *Spinoza au XIXe siècle : Actes des journées d'études organisées à la Sorbonne (9 et 16 mars, 23 et 30 novembre 1997*). Éditions de la Sorbonne. Philippe Saltel (*La puissance de la vie: Essai sur l'*Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction *de Jean-Marie Guyau,* Paris : Belles Lettres, 2008) shows how Guyau implicitly engages with Spinoza's work (see, for example, p.50 and p.93).
14. According to Gourinat, Fouillée is involved in Guyau's education long before 1884, when he marries the young student's mother, Augustine Tuillerie, who was also his cousin. Guyau's mother, who wrote under the pseudonym "G. Bruno," published popular books on education, among which the most known is the *Tour de la France par deux enfants*, which is a "reading book

for children, which proposes the values of the secular and jacobine morality of the Third Republic. His mother's influence is at the origin of Guyau's interest for pedagogy and of the pedagogical reading books for children which he himself wrote and were broadly used in the elementary schools of the time" (*La morale d'Épicure.* Paris: 2002, 24). Guyau develops a method for reading which will later be known as the "*méthode Guyau*" and which consists, according to Contini in a visual approach to the written text, stimulating memorisation through the use of lively images (1995, 60).

15. Contini, *Jean-Marie Guyau*, 61. These dissertations were awarded in the competitions promoted by the Académie in the respective years.

16. Walther-Dulk, *De Guyau à Proust*, 14.

17. Contini, *Jean-Marie Guyau*, 59. According to Contini, the main works of this period are: 1) translation of Epictetus' *Handbook,* preceded by a *Study on the Philosophy of Epictetus*, and followed by extracts from Epictetus' *Discourses* and extracts form Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* (Paris, 1875); 2) a critical edition of the Greek text of Epictetus' *Handbook* (Paris, 1876); 3) a critical edition of Cicero's *On the Ends of Good and Evil* (or *On Moral Ends*), translated by Desmarais and edited by Guyau, followed by a study on the history of Epicureanism (Paris, 1875); 4) a critical edition of the Latin text of Cicero's *On Moral Ends* (Paris, 1876); 5) a critical edition of Pascal's *Entretiens avec de Saci sur Epictète et Montaigne*, preceded by a study by Guyau and followed by extracts from Montaigne (Paris, 1875); 6) a critical edition of Pascal's *De l'autorité et du progress en philosophie*, followed by a study, by Guyau, on the history of the idea of progress (Paris, 1875); Finally, 7) a volume on the *Christian Literature from the 2nd to the 6th Centuries. Extracts from the Fathers of the Latin Church*, followed by extracts of Christian poets (Paris, 1876).

18. Guyau, *La morale d'Épicure,* 30.

19. Guyau, *La morale d'Épicure,* 35.

20. Guyau, *La morale d'Épicure,* 35..

21. "Epicurus and Lucretius already have the scientific and positivist spirit of the modern utilitarians" (41).

22. Testa & Dennis, "Pleasure and Self-Cultivation," 105.

23. Guyau quotes Spinoza (*E* IV, P24): "acting, living and preserving our being … by the guidance of reason, and all this according to the rule of interest [*intérêt*] that is particular to each one."

24. *T.N. E* IV, P35C.

25. The other way that Guyau finds the coincidence between self-interest and collective interest is the love of God. He explains that the activity of reason par excellence is understanding (*E* IV, P26), and the supreme object of understanding is God (*E* IV, P28). As Guyau claims: "The activity which is proper to reason is that of understanding, and understanding is to perceive the necessity of things. This necessity is Nature or, if you wish, God." Knowing God means knowing eternal necessity, which, according to Guyau leads us to the "intellectual freedom of the Stoics." Moreover, it is through the love of God generated by this understanding that we love everything *in God*, that is to say, all other modes.

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spinoza: a synthesis of epicureanism and stoicism[1]

jean-marie guyau, translated by federico testa

Spinoza's vast system, which assimilates the systems of Epicurus and Hobbes, contains the fundamental theories of the French and English schools. At the same time, however, it seeks to surpass them by recasting the ethics of happiness [*la morale du bonheur*] in terms of the ethics of intelligence [*morale de l'intélligence*] and placing the highest pleasure in supreme knowledge [*savoir*]. Spinoza exercised direct influence on d'Holbach, and a more or less indirect influence on all the other thinkers that we will discuss later on, such as Helvetius.

I. SPINOZA: METAPHYSICIAN OF UTILITARIANISM[2]

An absolute negation of all that we understand by morality [*moralité*] and a reduction of everything, including the will, to the necessary laws of nature, which are also the necessary laws of intelligence: this is, in concise terms, what Spinozism is. There is no other absolute than eternal necessity, which is the cause of the existence of everything that exists. Everything else is relative. The absolute is that which is; and when we speak of what *could* or *should* be, we are simply uttering judgements on perfection and imperfection, on good and evil. Through a strange illusion we take these judgements for what is most absolute, when in fact there is nothing more relative than them. For what are, in effect, perfection and imperfection, which the Platonists wished to posit as the absolute archetypes of our intellect? Perfection and imperfection are simply relations between things and our

thought. “If someone has decided to make something, and has finished it, then he will call it perfect – and so will anyone who rightly knows, or thinks he knows the mind and the intention[3] of the author of the work.” (*E* IV, Pref.). You see an unfinished house; if the builder wanted to finish it but did not succeed, the house is imperfect; if, on the other hand, he wanted to take it only to the point in which we find it, then it is perfect. All perfection is relative to the thought of the agent. Accordingly, would we have the right to say that the works of nature are perfect or imperfect, as if nature had ideas and intentions, as if it were guided by ideal types imagined by Plato? “As the vulgar[4] commonly say – that Nature sometimes fails or sins and produces imperfect things – I count among the chimeras [I treated in the Appendix of Part I]. Perfection and imperfection, therefore, are only modes of thinking, that is, notions we are accustomed to feign because we compare individuals of the same species or genus to one another.” (*E* IV, Pref). [5]

In the same way in which perfection and imperfection are relative to our thought, so good and evil are relative to our desires, as Epicurus and Hobbes have shown. “For one and the same thing can, at the same time, be good or bad, and even indifferent. For example, music is good for one who is melancholic, [bad for one who is mourning,] and neither good nor bad to one who is deaf. … Good and evil do not indicate anything positive in things considered in themselves.”

Thus, when we say that something is imperfect, it is because we compare it to what it *could be* according to us; but this possibility indicates only a way of thinking, since in fact everything is necessary. Similarly, when we say that something is evil, we are actually comparing it to how we think it *should* be, that is to say, we compare it to that which we desire it to be. We make our desires – and our thoughts – the measure of things, and thus we create the chimera of an absolute moral order which would surpass the relative orders of physics and logic. On the contrary, it is morality that is relative, while nature is absolute. This is the implied principle of every Epicurean and utilitarian system, expressed in all its rigour: Spinoza brings it to light with his unshakable logic.

Since there is no absolute good, what is, then, the relative good? – Spinoza answers the same as Hobbes and Epicurus: “By *good* I shall understand what we certainly know to be useful [*utile*] for us.” (*E* IV, D1). The useful, in turn, is that which produces joy, and joy is caused by the satisfaction of desire: it is still the Epicurean definition, except that Spinoza adds a metaphysical complement to it: desire is the tendency of our being to persevere in being. This desire is the basis

of self-love, just as Hobbes and La Rochefoucauld described it. "No one strives to preserve his being for the sake of anything other than himself." (*E* IV, P25).

The good is, for a being, to succeed in this effort to conserve and satisfy its nature. The good, therefore, is nothing other than this *success* and it amounts to *power* [*puissance*]; and it is this power [*puissance*] that we call virtue: "By virtue and power I understand the same thing." (*E* IV, D8).[6]

But he who is *able to* satisfy the fundamental desire of conservation is he who *knows* what the best means for achieving it. *Power*,[7] for a rational being such as man,[8] is *knowledge*. Therefore, true power [*puissance*] resides in reason, without which we would not be able to calculate utility with certainty. From this follows the theorem: "Acting absolutely from virtue is nothing else for us but acting, living and preserving our being (these three signify the same thing) by the guidance of reason, and all this according to the rule of interest that is particular to each one." (*E* IV, P24). This is the fundamental theorem of the utilitarian system. "The essence of virtue is the very effort to preserve one's own being, and happiness consists in [one] being able to effectively preserve it." This power [*pouvoir*] merges with virtue itself. Striving [*effort*] would be but its ground and success its achievement. In this way, there is an identity between happiness and virtue. "Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself." [*E* IV, P42].[9] To really be able to preserve oneself is the same as being successful in doing so; additionally, to act in this way is to enjoy [*jouir*], and to enjoy is to be happy. On the other hand, to act in this way is also to be virtuous. Virtue, then, is not different from happiness itself, as all Epicureans and utilitarians maintain.[10]

II. INDIVIDUAL ETHICS

The human being can be considered both as an individual and as a member of society. From this fact, it follows that there are two relative points of view in this equally relative science that one calls ethics [*morale*], or the science of virtue and happiness.

If we [first] consider the individual, leaving aside society, then virtue for him consists in obtaining the greatest possible happiness. In order to do this, he must satisfy his true nature in the best possible way. Now, this true nature is reason, since reason is the essence of man. The activity which is proper to reason is that of understanding, and understanding is to perceive the necessity of things. This

necessity is Nature or, if you wish, God. Thus, Spinoza refers the ethics of happiness [*morale du bonheur*] to the ethics of intelligence [*morale de l'intélligence*], that is to say, Epicureanism to Stoicism. "What we strive for from reason is nothing but understanding; nor does the soul, *insofar as it uses reason*, judge anything else useful to itself except what leads to understanding." (*E* IV, P26), We know nothing that is *certainly good* or *bad* except that which leads us to really understanding things, or that which can prevent us from understanding them. (*E* IV, P27). The soul [âme] only acts when it understands; and it is only in this case that we can say that the soul acts virtuously in an absolute sense. Understanding is, then, the absolute virtue of the soul. Now, the supreme object of our intellect is God. Therefore, the supreme virtue of the soul is understanding or knowing God. (*E* IV, P28).

To understand the absolute necessity of eternal nature amounts to understanding that which, while being subject only to its own law, is free. Therefore, understanding this necessity means understanding eternal freedom. It is through understanding that one participates in this freedom and identifies with it. The science of necessity and the science of freedom are one and the same thing. Again, Spinoza adds a Stoic principle to Epicureanism. The point where these two doctrines come together is the intellectual intuition which crowned Aristotelian ethics, namely the identity of human and divine thought, or the consciousness of eternity. "We feel and know by experience that we are eternal."[11] This awareness, which produces supreme joy, is the real love of oneself, and it is simultaneously the love of God. The mystical ideal of the Hebrews and the Christians seems here to merge with the moral theories of antiquity and in the broad synthesis proposed by Spinoza. His conception of nature is all-encompassing: the utility of the greatest possible happiness is nature enjoying itself; and the intellectual freedom of the Stoics, which is the very knowledge of necessity, is nature possessing itself. Finally, the mystical ecstasy, through which individuality is absorbed in universal being, is nature penetrating itself and finding its eternal existence underneath its ephemeral modes.

III. SOCIAL ETHICS

Spinoza has shown the nature of the good for the individual: the individual's relative good is that which satisfies his desires. His absolute good is that which is no longer individual, it is not merely in relation to him but is universal and necessary: it is nature or God. For, again, there is no other absolute than being itself in its

eternal necessity.

Now, the human being cannot exist alone. In fact, man is but a mode of existence which is inseparable from all other modes. Thus, in order to understand [and, therefore, to satisfy his nature], it is not enough for man to know himself [taken individually]: he must know other beings and, especially those that most resemble him. Finally, if he is to be happy, man needs to know that he is not self-sufficient: he needs the help of fellow men and other beings. His existence, his thought and his desire are equally linked to the existence, thought and desire of humankind and, indeed, of the world as a whole. Hence the recognition of the movement from egoism that will engender society. Social passions and the love of others are, ultimately, transformations of self-love. This physics of custom [*moeurs*] that the French Epicureans would later erect, and that psychology of custom under the law of association that the English utilitarians would later establish, Spinoza conceived them first – and he did something even more remarkable: he constituted a geometry of custom. "I shall consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a question of lines, planes, and bodies." (*E* III, Pref.). Spinoza proceeds *a priori*, by deduction, and he contemptuously opposed his method to that "*historiette* of the soul," *haec historiola animae*, which was still satisfying to Bacon and his school.[12] The effort to persevere in being, insofar as it is conscious of itself, is [called] desire.[13] From desire both joy and sadness arise, and here we find the principle of all passions. "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." (*E* III, P13S). The mechanism of the ideas, or of the "images of things," (*E* III, P19, P20, and the following) which links one representation to other, explains the mechanism of the passions.[14] Spinoza does not limit himself, as the English utilitarians do, to positing the law of association of ideas empirically. Rather, he deduces this law and draws its consequences. It is this law that explains, for instance, the sentiment of sympathy, which will play a major role in the English school. "I know, of course, that the authors who first introduced the words sympathy and antipathy intended to signify by them certain occult qualities of things. Nevertheless, I believe we may be permitted to understand by them also qualities that are known or manifest." [*E* III, P15]. Sympathy is thus reduced to a theorem: "If we perceive or represent an object that is similar to us (for instance another man), and towards which we previously had no affect, to be affected with some passion, we are thereby affected with a similar passion." (*E* III, P15).[15] From this fact derive both *pity* and *emulation*. "This communication of the affects,[16] when it is related to sadness is called *pity*; but related to desire it is called

emulation, which, therefore, is nothing but the *desire for a thing which is generated in us from the fact that we imagine others like us to have the same desire*. [Guyau adds the following:] If the thing desired cannot belong to the two at the same time, then emulation turns into envy." [*E* III, P27S]. This proves that the same mechanism, according to the different outcome, is at the basis of virtue or vice.

Among these theorems, there is one of capital importance, namely the one regarding the love of others [*amour d'autrui*]. "When I say the lover's will to join himself to the thing loved is a property of love, I do not understand by *will* a consent, a deliberation of the mind [âme], or a *free decision*; for we have demonstrated that this is a fiction." (*E* III, Definitions of the Affects, 6). This is the fundamental issue, not only for psychology, but also for ethics itself. If we are not morally free, then there is nothing else within us than desires and interests; therefore, both the exclusive love for others and full disinterestedness are but appearances. Self-love is what is real, and the Epicureans win the quarrel. Spinoza, while rejecting freedom, acknowledges that it is for us the condition that sets the value of love. He writes the following theorem, which Fouillée highlighted in his *Histoire de la philosophie*: "Given an equal cause of love, love towards a thing will be greater if we imagine the [loved] thing to be free than if we imagine it to be necessary. [And similarly for hate.] If we imagine as necessary the thing that is the cause of this affect, then we shall imagine it to be the cause of the affect, not alone, but with many others. Consequently, our love or hate towards it is less.[17] From this it follows that because men consider themselves to be free, they have greater love or hate towards one another than towards other things." (*E* III, P49). Ultimately, love is reduced to an illusion, and this is also the last word of the Epicurean system.

Nevertheless, it must be possible to establish, among men, if not love, at least the appearance and the equivalent of love. The social problem consists precisely in this. And there is only one way to solve it: making the interests of one [man or agent] coincide with the interests of another. This is what[18] all Epicureans have sought, from Epicurus himself to Helvetius.

Now, from where does the opposition between men come from? From the opposition that exists between their passions. "Men, insofar as they are torn by the conflict of passive affects, are contrary to one another." The interest of the passions is what divides men, and that which is also often used as an objection to the ethics of interest. However, according to Spinoza, there are two remedies for this state of division among men. One can subject men's passions, bringing them

to unity [and making them converge] either by means of the power [*puissance*] of a stronger passion, namely fear, or through the power of reason [*puissance de la raison*]. These are the two main sources of the social order: the law of fear and the law of reason. "And surely, we do derive, from the society of our fellow men, many more advantages than disadvantages. … Men still find from experience that through mutual help [*secours mutuels*] they can provide themselves much more easily with the things they require and that, by joining forces, they can avoid the dangers which threaten on all sides" (*E* IV, P35S). From this interest derive society and the social pact, as well as the sovereign power instated to protect this pact by force. For "no pact has any value except because of its utility; if utility disappears, the pact fades with it and loses its authority. It is folly to pretend to chain anyone to their word forever, except that one would do so in such a way that breaking the pact brings more damage than profit to the violator of his oaths" (*TTP*, XVI). These are Epicurus' and Hobbes' principles.

The first means to maintain society is, then, physical power [*puissance physique*], along with the fear it inspires. Insofar as men are slaves to their passions, force is the only means to govern them. Reason, however, joins its logic to the physical power [*puissance*] of force in order to maintain the social contract, and to condemn all perfidy. "Suppose someone now asks: What if a man could save himself from the present danger of death by treachery? Would not the principle of preserving his own being recommend, without qualification, that he be treacherous? To this I reply that if reason should recommend that, it would recommend it to all men" – it is Kant's criterion – "from which follows that reason would recommend, without qualification, that men should make agreements to join forces and to have common laws only by deception – that is, that they really should have no common laws, which is absurd." (*E* IV, P72S).[19] In other words, if [on the one hand] treachery can be the effect of passion, and a fatal and necessary effect, [on the other] it is not logical from the point of view of reason, which has brought men together by the need of forming a society.

If passion divides men, reason unites them. Indeed, the object of reason is the understanding of truth. Now, truth is the same for all, and everyone can know it at the same time. As we have seen, reason is the true good of each man. It transpires that the real good of each one is also the true good of all the others. Thus, we possess the principle which will be able to produce peace and concord among men. The conciliation of interests finds its place in the common interest of reason. "A man acts entirely from the laws of his own nature when he lives according to the

guidance of reason; and only to that extent must he always agree with the nature of other men." [*E* IV, P35C]. In this way, the more each man seeks that which is useful to him, the more he is useful, precisely because of that, to other men. "For the more one seeks what is useful to him, and strives to preserve himself, the more he is endowed with virtue, or what is the same, the greater is his power of acting according to the laws of his own nature, that is, of living according to the guidance of reason. But men most agree in nature, when they live according to the guidance of reason. Therefore, men will be most useful to one another, when each one most seeks what is useful to him." Here one finds Epicurus and Zeno finally reconciled: to live according to nature, or to live according to reason, is to live according to one's particular interest, and to the interest of all; which amounts to being happy and virtuous. Therefrom we can turn to this other theorem, which Socrates as well as Aristotle would have admitted: "The greatest good of those who seek virtue is common to all and can be enjoyed by all equally." (*E* IV, P36). This good is, in effect, the knowledge [*connaissance*] of the eternal truth, or of God. Here we return to the final absorption of all in God, which is the sovereign good of the mystics: "The good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men; and this desire is greater as his knowledge of God is greater." [*E* IV, P37]. "This love towards God cannot be tainted by an affect of envy or jealousy: instead, the more men we imagine to be joined to God by the same bond of love, the more it is encouraged." [*E* V, P20]. This love, however, is by no means free; it is rather a necessity of reason, [for] it is still an interest. But insofar as it is rational, this interest is also universal. There is, therefore, a coincidence between interest and disinterestedness, between self-love and love towards others. For Spinoza's God is ultimately ourselves, in our eternal substance. Hence, to love God is to love oneself and all others, it is one and the same love. The ethics of particular utility strives to identify itself to a universal ethics.

IV. POLITICS

In what concerns politics, we find the same [theoretical] movement in Spinoza and Hobbes. The latter wanted a full abdication of the individual in favour of the sovereign; but, as a matter of fact, this abdication is [ultimately] impossible.[20] Indeed, there is a power and a right which we can never abdicate: the power of thinking. Why? Because this power expresses the very necessity of our nature, that is to say, our reason. We cannot be deprived of our reason, which will be the refuge of freedom in Spinoza's politics. It dwells within man as an inalienable power [*puissance*] and as an inalienable right: it is the necessity of thinking which

is identical to the freedom of thought. The true goal of politics is to organise[21] the strongest possible physical power to prevent passion from tearing men apart; and, at the same time, it is to make this physical power increasingly useless, replacing it with the power [*puissance*] of reason. Now, the strongest physical power is not that of the absolute monarch, as Hobbes believed, but it is rather the general force of the whole people,[22] or the force of democracy. On the other hand, the greatest rational power [*puissance*] is that of general reason [*raison générale*];[23] the more this reason develops in the individuals, the more these individuals are united among themselves. Therefore, in Spinoza, we find a relatively liberal politics which aims to place the greatest interest within the greatest freedom of thought; that is to say, within the greatest necessity of reason, or in the greatest possible unity of all [particular] interests by the universal interest of reason. This liberal[24] revolution in utilitarian doctrine will be henceforth an accomplished fact: Hobbes will remain as the sole partisan of despotism.

In this way, the great system of the rationalist Spinoza effected the synthesis between Epicurean or utilitarian ethics and Stoic ethics. The only element that seems to be absent from Spinozism is the ideal of a real progress of nature, or the idea of "*evolution*,"[25] an idea which the German metaphysicians (especially Hegel) and the English ethicists [*moralistes*][26] (especially Spencer) will stress. To this metaphysics of universal evolution they will add an ethics of universal evolution. But in the end the principles remain the same: a relative good takes the place of the absolute good; this relative good is ultimately reduced to a progressive knowledge [*connaissance*] of a progressive utility, by means of which the interest of each individual is more and more identified with a universal interest.

NOTES

1. Extract from *La morale d'Épicure et ses rapports avec les doctrines contemporaines*, Book 4, Chapter 3. This chapter is part of *The Ethics of Epicurus,* translated by Federico Testa, co-edited with Keith Ansell-Pearson (Bloomsbury, forthcoming, 2019). I am grateful to Prof Keith Ansell-Pearson as well as to my colleagues Andre Okawara and Dr Thom Ryan for their attentive feedback on this translation. I would also like to thank Bloomsbury, in particular Liza Thompson, for making the publication of this extract possible.

2. *T.N.* I have added the section headings to Guyau's original section numbers. I have extracted the titles from Guyau's chapter summary, provided in the beginning of each chapter in *La Morale d'Épicure*.

3. *T.N.* Curley's choice was to translate this word as *purpose.* My choice was to include and prioritise Guyau's variations, translating the French quotations used by Guyau or translated by him into French. Guyau occasionally changes and adapts or emphasises certain aspects of the translations for the sake of his argument, highlighting certain aspects that are present in the original, which could have an effect in his argument. For this reason, although consulting Curley's and Shirley's translations, my choices throughout this extract was to follow the general rule of preserving Guyau's own French translations of Spinoza. Moreover, when Guyau provides an incomplete quote or omits relevant parts of the original text, I will occasionally add the missing parts in square brackets.

4. *T.N.* The French original here says "*le vulgaire*," which would be closer to the common man, the man in the street; this is a figure that reappears in Spinoza's work, with a slight negative connotation (the coarse or uncultivated people) or in contrast to the sage. It could also have the pejorative sense of "populace."

5. *T.N.* Guyau does not provide the reference for this quote. When this occurs, I will add the reference in square brackets.

6. *T.N.* Guyau's original reference is D7 instead.

7. *T.N.* Guyau uses the French *pouvoir* which also means "being able to." The noun "power" [*le pouvoir*] preserves that meaning, while at the same time indicates the particular power of the human being, which in this case is *reason.* In Guyau's explanation reason is an expression of our conatus and of our desire, and it is the condition for being successful in our effort for conservation and "satisfaction" of our nature. Additionally, in the original Guyau's use of *pouvoir* and *savoir* can be seen as two infinitives: to be able to [*pouvoir*] is to *know*.

8. *T.N.* I have preserved Guyau's literal phrasing, common in French, *l'homme.* A less gendered option would be 'human being,' which is the idea here. For this reason, in some of the occurrences of the term *homme*, I have decided to use 'human being.' In quotes from Spinoza's text, I have usually followed Guyau, Curley and Shirley.

9. *T.N.* Guyau does not provide the reference. When this occurs, I will consistently provide the reference in square brackets.

10. Way before Bentham, Spinoza protests the principles of asceticism; he laments the fact that the virtuous life is usually presented to men as a sad and grim life, a life of privation, in which all pain is grace and all enjoyment [*jouissance*] a crime: "To use things, therefore, and take pleasure in them as far as possible – not, of course, to the point where we are disgusted with them, for there is no pleasure in that – this is the part of a wise man. It is the part of a wise man, I say, to refresh and restore himself in moderation with pleasant food and drink, with scents, with the beauty of green plants, with decoration, music, sports, the theatre, and other things of this kind, which anyone

can use without injury to another." *E* IV, P45S. [*T.N.* The reference in the is "*Ibid*., Part II," which is mistaken].
11. *T.N.* Guyau does not provide the reference. *E* V, P23S. In the French, Guyau's phrasing would be closer to the following sentence: "We experience our eternity," or "that we are eternal."
12. *T.N.* This reference comes from Fouillée's *Histoire de la philosophie*, 1920, 293.
13. *T.N.* See *E* III, P9S.
14. *T.N. Ep.* II, 393.
15. *T.N.* This is the reference provided by Guyau. The passage actually seems to be *E* III, P27, in which Spinoza formulates the important notion of "affective imitation".
16. *T.N.* Curley's translation is slightly different: "This imitation of the affects." Although an unusual choice in scholarship, I have kept Guyau's French "*communication.*"
17. *T.N.* These two sentences are originally part of the demonstration of *E* III, P49. The following clauses are part of the scholium of the same proposition.
18. *T.N.* A more literal translation would be: "This means [to solve the social problem] is that which all Epicureans have looked for."
19. *T.N.* In this case, I have corrected Guyau's reference (he quotes the *TTP* as well as *E* IV, P62).
20. *T.N.* See Spinoza's *Ep.* L, to Jarig Jelles, where he explains to his friend and correspondent the difference between his political philosophy and that of Hobbes, especially in what concerns natural right and transfer.
21. *T.N.* In his 1902 text comparing Nietzsche and Guyau ("The Ethics of Nietzsche and Guyau." *International Journal of Ethics* 13:1), Fouillée claims that whereas Nietzsche was the philosopher of *power*, Guyau was the philosopher of the *organisation of power*. As Fouillée explains: "Quantity [Fouillée refers to the idea of 'intensity of life,' central both for Nietzsche and Guyau] in the rough meant to him only 'power' to which 'order' should be added, that is an *organisation of power* in view of some end to be attained" (p. 23). Fouillée argues that if, for Nietzsche, the end to be achieved was power and intensity as such, for Guyau, "The end always remains to be determined" (23). Additionally, this idea of *organisation* points to the fundamentally social – or societal – and political aspect of Guyau's philosophy: as he highlights in the *Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction,* the expansion of life in its fecundity is always social, extensive to others and ultimately collective. As Fouillée explains, "Guyau sees the genuinely intense life in the generous and fruitful life, which 'lives for many others'" (24).
22. *T.N.* A literal translation of *people* after Guyau's text would be "the whole nation." This argument is close to Spinoza's description of the *multitudo* in the *TP*, although Guyau makes no reference to it and seems to prioritise the *TTP* (and *E* IV) in his reconstruction of Spinozist politics.
23. *T.N.* We could read this notion of *raison générale* as a sort of collective reason.
24. *T.N.* "Liberal," here, refers to freedom and liberty. One should avoid reading the phrase in terms of its contemporary (and contextual) meaning in English. Guyau's idea is that of a revolution of freedom: it is the freedom of thought, on the one hand, and the freedom of the people organised in a democracy, on the other, which is the opposite of Hobbes' "despotism." Freedom, here, refers to both collectively organised power and collective reason.
25. *T.N.* Guyau finds in Epicureanism the foundations of a scientific idea of progress. See *La morale d'Épicure,* book 3, chapter 3. On other occasions, I have emphasised the importance of the idea of *time* and *temporality* in *La morale d'Épicure*: See Testa and Dennis, "Pleasure and Self-Cultivation in Guyau and Nietzsche;" Testa, "Guyau and Nietzsche, lecteurs d'Épicure," paper presented at the *Journée d'études Jean-Marie Guyau: Guyau et ses contemporains*, international conference at the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, 22 – 23 March 2018. Forthcoming.

26. *T.N.* Although Guyau often refers to the tradition of the French *moralistes,* my choice for ethicists aims at highlighting the difference between this tradition and that of positivistic and scientific attempts to found morality and a science of ethics, which is here represented by Spencer. In Guyau's perspective, positivism, utilitarianism and evolutionism are linked in what he calls *morale anglaise*. This term loosely designates what Guyau sees as the 'school' of thought which represents modern Epicureanism in England.

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freedom as overcoming the fear of death: epicureanism in the subtitle of spinoza's *theological political treatise*

dimitris vardoulakis

1. THE PROBLEM: FREEDOM TO PHILOSOPHIZE

The first part of the subtitle of the *Theological Political Treatise* may have been easily acceptable to Spinoza's contemporaries: the book shows that "Freedom of Philosophizing can be allowed in Preserving Piety and the Peace of the Republic."[1] In the aftermath of the Reformation, this sentiment would not have been unfamiliar. The secular ideal of the separation of Ecclesiastical from temporal authority requires that there is a division between the inner self that is subject to faith and receives the message of Scripture, and the external self, who is subject to the authority of the sovereign and to the laws of the state.[2] Mirroring this logic, philosophers and deists of various hues claim a private right to the freedom to philosophize—a right that is distinct from their obligations to the state and which the first part of the subtitle ably presents.

The second part of the subtitle would have come, however, as a surprise to the general educated reader in the seventeenth century. The book, indicates Spinoza, also wants to argue that "it is not possible for such Freedom to be upheld except when accompanied by the Peace of the Republic and Piety Themselves." Here, the freedom to philosophize acquires a public dimension. It is as if Spinoza is suggesting that the freedom to philosophize is a necessary precondition for a well-functioning state and for a pious Church.[3] The absence of such a freedom, then,

would threaten the existence of a state and would make the Church impious. It is as if—to put it bluntly—the freedom to philosophize not only bridges the divide between private and public, but it also becomes the condition of the possibility of public liberty. Such a collapse of the distinction between the inside and the outside challenges authority, *both* the ecclesiastical authority that relies on internal faith, and the temporal authority that relies on the obedience of the law.[4]

I want to show that Spinoza's conception of freedom that does not rely on a division of an inside and an outside is intricately linked with the dialectic of authority and utility that characterizes his Epicureanism. Let me sketch what I mean by this dialectic, as I presented it elsewhere.[5] Authority or *auctoritas* has a specific range of signification in Latin that is much narrower than in modern English. It asserts the entity that is beyond dispute, or that is impervious to argumentation.[6] As Spinoza puts it, "the authority of the prophets does not permit of argumentation [*prophetae auctoritas ratiocinari non patitur*]" (139/152). The calculation of utility refers to the human propensity to make practical judgments in the course of acting. On the one hand, there is a conflict between authority that calls for obedience, and the calculation of utility that one fulfils by judging for oneself. To do what you are told and to calculate what is the most advantageous action are two contradictory ways of acting. On the other hand, this does not establish an exclusion between authority and utility because it may be advantageous to obey. Differently put, one may calculate that one's utility is better served by suspending their calculation and following someone else's lead.

Explaining the crosscurrents between Spinoza's thought and Epicureanism around freedom and the dialectic of authority and utility will help us make sense of the enigmatic use of the "freedom to philosophize" in the subtitle of the *Theological Political Treatise*. I am only concerned to present these crosscurrents here, not to outline the entire theory of freedom in Spinoza. To achieve my aim, I will first look at the connection between fear and practical judgment in Epicurus; I will then turn to Lucretius's contribution in both developing the concepts of authority and history; and finally I will show how freedom and the dialectic of authority and utility inform the most famous passage from the Preface of the *Treatise* discussing voluntary servitude.

I underscore that the discussion here is not meant to be an exhaustive analysis of freedom in the *Theological Political Treatise* or in Spinoza as a whole. The scope of the present article is more modest: it highlights how elements of ancient epicureanism inform the presentation of freedom in the Preface of the *Treatise*.[7]

2. "A FREE MAN THINKS OF NOTHING LESS THAN OF DEATH…": FEAR AND FREEDOM IN EPICURUS

The difficulty in adumbrating the connection between freedom and the dialectic of authority and utility is that it is hard to identify a definition of freedom in Spinoza's works. Nowhere in the *Theological Political Treatise* can we find an explicit definition of freedom. If we turn to his other major work, the *Ethics*, the difficulties compound. Part V of the *Ethics* may be about human freedom, but freedom as such is not defined there.

The closest that Spinoza comes to a definition of freedom is Proposition 67 of Part IV: "A free man thinks of nothing less than of death, and his wisdom is a meditation on life, not on death." This is an unusual definition of freedom, one that does not provide us with a *prima facie* description of what we would have expected freedom to be. More damagingly, as soon as we start interpreting Proposition 67, we are quickly led to contradictions and paradoxes: If we interpret it in terms of one's personal overcoming of the fear of death, freedom's *political* aspect recedes in the background reinstating the division between the inside and the outside—which is precisely what we thought that the freedom to philosophize overcomes. And as soon as the protection from death is delegated to a sovereign, Spinoza would require a strong sense of authority aligning his position with that of Thomas Hobbes.[8] How is it possible to understand Spinoza's conception of freedom without presupposing either individualism or authoritarianism?

It is notable that the opening of the *Theological Political Treatise* is concerned with fear, specifically with how people become "prey to superstition [*superstitione*]" through fear (1/5). Spinoza observes that humans are under the sway of "fortune's fickle favours," which makes them "wretched victims of alternating hopes and fears [*spem metumque*]" (1/5). It is for this reason that fear "engenders, preserves and fosters superstition" (2). Everybody is subject to fear and hence to superstition. If that is true for the common people—Spinoza quotes Curtius saying that "the multitude has no ruler more potent then superstition"—it is also true for exceptional and powerful individuals such as Alexander the Great, who, in hard times, turns to oracles—"that mockery of human wisdom," according to Curtius, whom Spinoza quotes again (2). This is a significant example—the first one in the *Treatise*. It suggests the futility of a task to "enlighten" ourselves as foolproof protection against superstition. If such a great individual as Alexander is prey to fear and superstition, we may be better served recognizing that we will always be subject to passions and that reason on its own will not liberate us. Is there maybe,

then, a link between the enslaving function of fear and the conception of freedom as overcoming the fear of death?

The above question allows us to turn to Epicureanism. Let me start by sketching the position. The importance of the overcoming of the fear of death is something of a commonplace in Epicureanism. The famous "*tetrapharmakon*" or the "fourfold remedy" that summarizes the first four of Epicurus's principal doctrines devotes the first two to the overcoming of fear: "Fear not the gods/ Fear not death."[9] This entire discourse about overcoming fear culminates in the fear of dying, since death provokes the strongest emotional reaction. Fear overwhelms us with emotions and thereby curtails our capacity to make practical judgments that lead to freedom. It works in the opposite direction too: as Epicurus puts is, when we are "altogether free from the fear of death," our actions can be free and not dependent on any authority (ἀδέσποτον, X.133).[10]

The key to helps us make sense of the definition of freedom in Proposition 67 of Part IV of the *Ethics* in conjunction with the discourse on fear in the *Theological Political Treatise* is the calculation of utility—the third epicurean theme. According to Epicurus, phronesis is the precondition of any virtue and any good (X.132). We will see here that freedom is understood as the operation of phronesis, where this operation also mobilizes the other two themes of Spinoza's epicureanism. Epicurus contributes on how to conceive the co-articulation of monism and phronesis, whereas Lucretius contribution—as we will see in the next section—is to delineate the first epicurean theme—the construction of authority through fear—in relation to instrumental rationality.

Phronesis in Epicurus is best grasped by noting first how he radicalizes Aristotle's position. In Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes between scientific knowledge or episteme and practical knowledge or phronesis.[11] The main characteristic of scientific knowledge is that its causes are necessary because it refers to unchanging things (1139a-b). To put this point differently, scientific knowledge is universal. By contrast, practical knowledge is concerned with contingent things. As such, it relies on rational calculation (τὸ λογιστικόν, 1139a). Phronesis in particular is concerned with calculating or judging how one can achieve a good life (τὸ εὖ ζῆν, 1139b). This is why Aristotle describes phronesis as concerned with calculating means and ends relations and as the kind of knowledge that pertains to the political.[12]

Aristotle summarizes his distinction between scientific knowledge and instrumental rationality as follows: "Phronesis is concerned with the affairs of men, and with things that can be the object of deliberation. ... But no one deliberates about things that cannot vary, nor yet about things that are not a means to some end" (1141b). The lack of deliberation and instrumentality characterizes the one who practices scientific knowledge, the one who will be described later in the history of thought as a removed, objective observer. The one who has phronesis or the one who exercises practical knowledge is never conceived as removed. The reason is simple: "Thought by itself moves nothing" (1139a). Thought does not lead to action—it is not practical—unless it accompanied by emotion or desire. Significantly, for Aristotle this relation between thought and action in the operation of phronesis is not a hierarchical one. It can be either a thought coupled with desire or desire accompanied by thought (1139b). The starting point can be either, but for phronesis to be possible there must be a balance between the two—neither emotion can overwhelm thought, nor vice versa. This is an important point never questioned by Epicurus who otherwise significantly departs from Aristotle.

When Epicurus writes that phronesis is the precondition of the ends of human life and it is "the beginning and rule of everything [πάντων ἀρχὴ] and the greatest good [τὸ μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν]" as well as "the cause of all virtues [ἐξ ἧς αἱ λοιπαὶ πᾶσαι πεφύκασιν ἀρεταί]" and hence "more significant [τιμιώτερον] even than philosophy" (X.132), he effectively rejects the separation of theory and praxis and thereby turns Aristotle's hierarchy of knowledge on its head. Suddenly phronesis emerges as the primary form of knowledge. Let us turn to Epicurus's letter to Herodotus, his most detailed account of a theory of knowledge, to see why Epicurus places so much emphasis on phronesis.

Epicurus begins by stressing what knowledge of nature is *for*, specifically, for peaceful and calm life (X.37). He explains at this point that there are two sources of knowledge, either directly through perceptions, or indirectly through words that communicate experiences. But for this empirical conception of knowledge to be possible, Epicurus asserts that it is required to assume regularity in nature. He summarizes this position by saying that "nothing is created out of nothing" (X.38). The rejection of the possibility of creation *ex nihilo* was prevalent amongst the "physiologists" who tried to explain nature in material terms.[13] For instance, the same view was held by Democritus, the atomist who greatly influenced Epicurus.[14] Significantly, Epicurus recognizes that the rejection of creation *ex nihilo* can be expressed in terms of totality: "There is nothing outside the totality [τὸ πᾶν]—nothing that can enter the totality in order to change it" (X.39).[15] The recognition

that the rejection of creation *ex nihilo* entails a totality outside of which nothing exists essentially asserts that knowledge is possible on condition that there are no divine interventions that change the laws of nature.[16] Or, knowledge presupposes a complete or unchanging totality.

The affinities with Spinoza's monism are clear. The opening of the *Ethics* consists in a repetition and defense of this Epicurean insight about totality. Substance, Spinoza's word for this totality, "cannot be produced by anything else" is how Proposition 6 of Part I of the *Ethics* puts it. The totality of substance or God is also a key position of the *Theological Political Treatise*—for instance, the rejection of miracles in Chapter 6 is indebted to this Epicurean idea: if nothing comes out of nothing, no event can be precipitated by a deity intervening into the natural course of things. Or, more broadly, ontologically speaking, there is no transcendence. We can readily see how this monist principle—that the totality can admit of nothing outside it—is incompatible with the Judeo-Christian metaphysics that requires both creation and transcendence.[17]

The presupposition of a totality for knowledge to be possible leads to the primacy of practical judgment.[18] As soon as we impute a totality of being, a complete theoretical knowledge of that totality appears impossible. Thus, knowledge always begins with a practical purpose. Epicurus designates this end as tranquility. The word that he uses at the beginning of the letter to Herodotus is γαληνισμός, which is more commonly expressed in his writings as ἀταραξία (*ataraxia*) and its cognates signifying the serenity and blessedness characteristic of the wise person who has phronesis (see e.g. X.83, 85, and 124-125). The letter to Menoeceus says that such a disposition makes the wise person live "like a god amongst humans" (X.135). *Ataraxia* means literally the absence or negation of "anxiety" (τάραχος)—and fear of death is singled out as the most detrimental anxiety in our pursuit of blessedness (X.81-82).

The mutual support between phronesis and *ataraxia* is clear. If phronesis signifies the balanced relation between thought and emotion in the process of making judgments about how to act, then *ataraxia* is the state of mind and body that results from the balanced exercise of thought and emotion characteristic of phronesis (X.132 and X.140). Differently put, *ataraxia* is the state in which we are *free from* the dominance of emotions such as fear of death that curtail our calculative capacity, *as well as* free from the illusion that the mind or the spirit can predominate over the body.

The Epicurean refusal of the separation of mind and body combines the materialism of monism—no transcendence and no creation—with the inseparability of thought and emotion characteristic of phronesis. The interconnection of thought and emotion entails that no body is created out of nothing and that no mind contains a transcendent quality. When the body dies, the mind dies with it—there is no immortal soul or spirit that outlives the body. This means that—as Epicurus puts in a phrase that was perhaps his best known in antiquity—"death … is nothing to us" (X.126). The reason is that, while we are alive, we should concern ourselves with living—as Spinoza puts it in Proposition 67, we are free when our activity "is a meditation on life"—and when we are dead, we feel nothing and hence death can no longer bother us. The fear of death, then, is a state in which our knowledge starts from false premises and as such derails our judgment by overwhelming our emotions. In other words, it derails the balance in phronesis of thought and emotion that *ataraxia* requires.

This balance between thought and emotion provides a basic conception of free action. Phronesis cannot accommodate the hierarchical division between spirit and body—the division that is the metaphysical foundation of the conception of the free will. Another way of expressing this idea is to say that instrumental rationality conceives of *freedom as being free from the free will*.[19] This is a fundamental idea in Spinoza that Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens express by saying that in Spinoza "freedom fundamentally is the emergence from the illusion of freedom—that is, from the illusion of free will."[20] It is also noteworthy at this point that the Latin translation of *ataraxia* is "beatitudo," usually rendered in English as "blessedness," a word that plays a significant role in Part V of the *Ethics*, which is concerned, as its title discloses, with "human freedom."

Following Epicurus, we could say that beatitudo as understood by Spinoza is the state that arises when one acts without being overwhelmed with the fear of death, but rather by exercising judgments that pertain to his living—that is, when one acts freely, according to Proposition 67 of Part IV of the *Ethics*. That Spinoza adopts the Epicurean position of linking phronesis and ataraxia in terms of overcoming the fear of death is also supported by the fact that Proposition 67 is preceded by two propositions that essentially summarize the calculation of utility: Proposition 65 holds that "from the guidance of reason, we shall follow the greater of two goods or the lesser of two evils." And Proposition 66 explains that this calculating applies not only to the present but also to the future.[21]

A difficulty arises at this point. If monism designates a totality outside of which nothing exists does not this entail determinism?

Even if Epicurus does not tackle this problem explicitly, his letter to Pythocles may be used to respond to the charge of determinism. This letter discusses celestial or "meteorological" phenomena (X.83), for instance, thunder, lightning, and eclipses. These are natural phenomena that may generate fear in us, which is why people have attributed them to the interference of gods. Epicurus approaches the discussion of these phenomena by saying that they may admit of a multiplicity of causes, none of which contradicts the senses (X.86). From a modern scientific perspective, it is inadmissible to impute multiple causes for the same natural occurrence. And if for Epicurus the senses were indeed the only way in which existence is experienced, as Hegel accuses him in his lectures on the history of philosophy, then such an admission of multiple causes would have constituted an empiricism on a weak foundation.[22]

Hegel's accusation presupposes a separation of theory and practice, which is precisely what Epicurus seeks to deny through the primacy of practical knowledge. In fact, the reason why Epicurus admits of multiple causes is to defend the idea of a substance outside of which nothing exists and to reject creation *ex nihilo* as a way of arguing for the primacy of phronesis. There may or may not be multiple causes for thunderbolts, writes Epicurus almost nonchalantly, but—and that's the point—"the only thing that really matters is not to lapse into myth" while providing an explanation (X.104). In other words, if we cannot find the single cause of a phenomenon, we can experiment with different causes based on sense-experience, but we must avoid at all cost concocting divine interventions in the totality of nature, which only ever precipitates fear. The multiplicity of causes is not a theoretical point about epistemology but a point about how to avoid emotional surges that overwhelm us and lead to fanciful ideas about gods. In other words, the discourse on multiple causes points to the primacy of practical knowledge.

This is not to reject theoretical knowledge or to devalue it in any way. It is, rather, to recognize that theory is founded in practice and inseparable from it. Epicurus is describing a hermeneutical situation as overcoming the separation of theory and praxis similar to what Heidegger calls the primacy of interpretation over understanding—and I call the primacy of practical knowledge.

We can put the same point starting with monism: The totality that includes everything is, by virtue of the fact that it includes everything, impossible to know completely. On certain occasions we may even be allowed to impute multiple causes to a natural phenomenon so as to avoid being trapped in the fear of this phenomenon. Instrumental rationality in this construal is the form of knowledge that does not simply have an epistemic function but that is the necessary outcome of the substance and that organizes all the various ways of being in the world. Ontology necessarily entails that actions take place within contingency, requiring the human to make practical judgments—to exercise phronesis—so as to act in the world. Differently put, the operation of phronesis breaks the hold of determinism.[23]

The priority of phronesis indicates that the Epicurean question is not "what is truth?" Rather, the question is about how we arrive at falsities. How is it that we err? This is an epistemological question—it asks how we can avoid errors. It is simultaneously an ethical question—it asks about the effects of our capacity to know, especially as they pertain to our wellbeing. And, finally, it is a political question that addresses the motivation for action—either because we are influenced by certain desires that drive us to error, or because falsities motivate us to act so as to rectify them. Note how congenial this line of thought is to Spinoza's understanding of the imagination in the *Theological Political Treatise*. The imagination does *not* lead to truth—which is why it is about action and therefore, as we learn in Chapter 2 of the *Treatise*, the imagination "is beyond the limits of intellect [*multa extra intellectus limites percipere*]" (20/28). And that's why it is also related to freedom: A universal truth does not demand any action, whereas the possibility of error requires action, it calls for it as a way of presenting or amending the error. Thus error contains within it the possibility of political freedom.

The discussion of the multiple causes of celestial phenomena indicates also that Epicureanism is not naturalism if by naturalism we understand that any natural explanation is referred to science. Phronesis precedes scientific explanation. But this is not humanism either, because phronesis is an effect of materiality. There is an hylocentricism operating here—as opposed to anthropocentrism. The imputation of multiple causes is, in fact, not uncommon in the materialist tradition. For instance, Machiavelli often draws attention to how the same actions do not necessarily lead to the same outcome.[24]

Overcoming the fear of death, then, suggests a theory of freedom that is irreducible to the free will, because it understands the mind and the body, emotions and thought, as inseparable. The calculation of utility or phronesis is the kind of practical comportment to the world that makes such a materialist sense of freedom possible because phronesis relies on the parallel operation of desire and rationality. Thus, the overcoming of the fear of death emerges as a way of expressing *freedom as the exercise of phronesis*.

3. ANTE-SECULARISM: THE CONSTRUCTION OF AUTHORITY AND HUMAN NATURE IN LUCRETIUS

Freedom as overcoming the fear of death in Epicurus shows how monism and the calculation of utility work together, for the good life of the human. For this to be possible, practical knowledge or phronesis needs to take priority. Knowledge is never disinterested or, as we might express it today, "knowledge is power."

It is here that the shortcoming of Epicurus arises. Despite certain incidental intimations, Epicurus never develops a theory of power, stopping instead at the designation of *ataraxia* as the end of action. This is a significant deficiency for two reasons. First, authority—the first epicurean themes—is an underdeveloped concept in Epicurus; and, second, the historical dimension of the dialectic of authority and utility is lacking. Lucretius may claim that his *On the Nature of Things* adds nothing new to his philosophical master and it is merely an attempt to popularize his view in Rome (5.336–37).[25] But in fact it is more than that, as it addresses the two shortcomings we identify in Epicurus. Let me take these two innovations by Lucretius in turn.

At the beginning of his poem, immediately after the opening hymn to Aphrodite, Lucretius turns to "religio." This is a condition that we find in Epicurus, namely, when we assume gods or mysterious entities to be the efficient causes of natural phenomena that cause us fear or anxiety. Consequently, we are "oppressed beneath the weight of religion [*oppressa gravi sub religione*]" (1.63). But this oppression is no longer *solely* an effect of the phenomena themselves. Rather, it is produced by those who interpret the phenomena in such a way as to gather power for themselves by making others obey them. Let me put this differently: According to Epicurus, ontologically there is nothing transcendent, since there is nothing outside the totality. Fear of nature creates transcendent ideas—what Epicurus calls "myths." With Lucretius, transcendence is not produced solely, or even primarily, by natural phenomena as such. Rather, it is produced through the

interpretation of natural phenomena by the proponents of religion. Essentially this means that the practitioners of *religio* actively counter the operation of phronesis through fear. *Religio* appropriates instrumental rationality for itself and for its own ends, that is, to perpetuate its own power. Or, more succinctly, *religio* stifles freedom. This is a significant shift because it allows for a thinking of authority.

That Lucretius has *auctoritas* in mind when he writes *religio*—or that, at least, we can substitute one term for the other—is also shown by the fact that Lucretius indicates both a theological and a political source to *religion*, just as authority's origins are theologico-political. The example that Lucretius puts forward for the "evil" of *religio* (1.101) is the sacrifice of Iphigeneia (1.80 ff.). Her father, Agamemnon, does not sacrifice her only because he is ill-advised about the reasons why the winds won't carry his Greek army to Troy. In addition, he draws his justification for the sacrifice from the matrix of beliefs and practices instituted as religion. Thus, in *religio*, as the example of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia demonstrates, collude those who derive their authority through theological and through political means.[26]

Note that authority signifies a kind of power that is constructed and that is not shared—a power that is confined to priests and kings. Such an artificial power that is not common to all is what Spinoza calls "potestas" or constituted power. As Negri has demonstrated, Spinoza stages a conflict between potestas and the kind of power that is shared by everyone and which is creative—as opposed to created.[27] This is the kind of power that Spinoza calls "potentia." Let us see how Lucretius stages the conflict between potestas and potentia as a way of presenting the dialectic of authority and utility.

Lucretius writes that Epicurus took a stand against (*obsistere contra*, 1.67) religion and the misery it brought to the world.[28] This consists in questioning the myths (*fama*, 1.68) about Gods as well as searching for the causes of the natural phenomena that provoke fear.

> Therefore the lively power of his mind [*vivida vis animi*] prevailed, and forth he marched far beyond the flaming walls of the world, as he traversed the immeasurable universe in thought and imagination; whence victorious he returns bearing his prize, the knowledge what can come into being, what cannot, in a word, how each thing has its powers limited [*finita potestas*] and its deep-set boundary mark. (1.72-77)

This is a complex passage. The main metaphor presents Epicurus as a powerful adversary that conquers *religio*. In parallel, there are two further metaphors presenting monism. First are the fiery walls that signify the end of the world, and the second is about the boundary mark that indicates the laws of nature that we as human cannot overcome—for instance, the fact that we will all die.

It is important to note the two parallel metaphorics—about the overcoming of *religio* and about monism—are possible on condition that a conception of power other than constituted power is presupposed. Specifically, the power (*vis*) that Epicurus has to take a stand against the oppressions of *religio* is not premised on any instituted form of power. Rather, the source of his power is that he has "marched" to the end of the world, or, to put the same point in the vocabulary of the letter to Herodotus, he has grasped the totality (τὸ πᾶν). This power that Epicurus employs is finite (*finita potestas*). It is a power that comes from his thought that as finite it pertains to the particular circumstances that allow for the emergence of that power. We can understand this power as phronesis, that is, as the power exercised through practical judgment and which is opposed to the power of authority that operates by employing fear. Thus, here the potestas of authority is pitted against the potentia of Epicurus's phronesis.

From this vantage point, we may be able to explain why the expression "freedom to philosophize" from the subtitle is absent from the Preface—and in fact it is not used again until Chapter 14 of the *Treatise*. It is substituted by the idea of the freedom to judge, repeated three times in the Preface. The first use suggests that preventing people from making judgements freely erodes their political freedom: "To invest with prejudice or in any way coerce each person's free judgment [*liberum uniuscuiusque judicium*] is altogether incompatible with public freedom [*communi libertati*]" (3/7). The freedom to judge is opposed to constituted power that derives its authority from "prejudices." The second takes the same point further, accusing priests who "distort the true function of the Church" from "inhibiting everyone from judging freely [*unusquisque libero suo judicio*]" (4/8). This point could have come from Lucretius. The final use asserts that "everyone should be allowed freedom of judgment [*unicuique sui judicii libertatem*]" (6/11)—because this freedom to judge is distinctive of human nature and of potentia, the kind of power that everyone has access to. We see here how Lucretius's first innovation helps organize the dialectic of authority and utility in terms of power in the Preface.

The second innovation that we find in Lucretius consists in highlighting the historical import of phronesis. If phronesis is constitutive of human nature, its operation cannot be confined to the here and now. It also operated in the past. Not only does this allow for the employment of history in the pursuit of "free philosophizing." In addition, it solves a problem about the connection between instrumentality and teleology. Let us, now, turn to Book 5 of *On the Nature of Things* where Lucretius introduces this second innovation.

Lucretius's theory of the stages of social formation requires an initial step, namely, the denial of any anthropomorphic conception of the divine as well as the denial of creationism: "the world was certainly not made for us by divine power" (5.198-99). This leads to a conclusion that is familiar to readers of the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics*. As Spinoza puts it there, "Nature has no end set before it, and … all final causes are nothing but human fictions." Consequently, the "sanctuary of ignorance" is the belief that God has a will. The Epicureans express this also by saying that the gods do not care about us—their tranquility and blessedness is unconcerned with human affairs.

Following upon the denial of the divine creation of the world "for us," in Book 5 Lucretius spends close to two hundred lines on the interconnection between creation and destruction. Nothing created is exempt from destruction, "even stones [of the gods' temples] are conquered by time" (5.306). This mutual dependence of birth and death ought to be placed within the argument about the mutual dependence of forces of power that Lucretius developed in Book 3: "one thing never ceases to arise from another, and no man possesses life in freehold—all as tenants" (3.970-71). One exists by virtue of the fact that one is inserted in a network of power relations. No one is absolutely free. Everybody depends upon the relations of power—both of potestas and of potentia—that unfold within the specific context one finds oneself in. Differently put, the totality consists of power relations that are responsible for the continuous, incessant unfolding of genesis and destruction, birth and death—and there is no end or meaning to this process. The rejection of creation *ex nihilo* or monism and the rejection of teleology go hand in hand.

The discussion of the formation of society is premised on the realization that, even though there is no ultimate end in this matrix of power relations, still we can identify particular ends that regulate behavior. Instrumental rationality or phronesis has no need for final causes at a metaphysical level, which is what allows for the operation of particular ends in history. Or, in another formulation

employing vocabulary from Book 1 of *On the Nature of Things*, we strive for particular ends as opposed to an ultimate end because our power is finite. We can find the same move in Spinoza, who rejects ultimate ends in the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics* but admits of instrumental reasoning—the kind of reasoning that relies on means and ends as a way of calculating utility—in Part IV of the *Ethics*.[29]

Lucretius employs the principle that human action is premised on the finite ends pursued by phronesis to delineate three stages of social and political formation. Every epoch in the three stages of society is adumbrated by stipulating how humans use their instrumental rationality to respond to specific material conditions.[30] An historical analysis has recourse to phronesis to describe power relations that articulate the finite or particular ends—as opposed to final ends—of action. Thus Lucretius uses phronesis to distinguish between the three stages of society.

In the first stage of social formation life is nomadic, based on hunting, but humans lack a conception of the common good and do not have laws (5.925-69). Being close to nature, they do not fear natural phenomena and hence have no use of religion, but they fear the wild beasts. In the second stage, humans start living in settlements. At this point, Lucretius provides his account of the creation of language in terms of the utility (*utilitas*, 5.1029 and 1047) of communication. Here Lucretius also stipulates that property and wealth start developing, but with that also comes ambition (5.1132), leading to the slaying of kings and general warfare—resembling what Hobbes calls a war of all against all. The feature that inaugurates the third stage is the creation of laws (5.1143-44), whose purpose is to arrest the violence characterizing the previous stage. The humans in this stage overcome the fear of violence but now they fear punishment from the law instead (5.1151).

Two features of this schema are notable. First, Lucretius extrapolates how instrumental rationality is based on material conditions (see, e.g., the account of the development of metallurgy, 5.1241 ff.). Any articulation of phronesis thus is historical—which is to say, finite. Second, the drive toward the preservation of life or *conatus* accounts for the transition from one stage to the next—and fear is the dominant emotion. Thus in the first stage humans fear for their life from wild animals, in the second they fear for their life through the ambitions leading to generalized violence, and in the third stage they fear punishment from the law. Consequently, the main features of each stage are thoroughly determined by the exercise of instrumental rationality that responds to material circumstances with the aim to preserve life. What characterizes the humans by virtue of being humans, all the way from a state of barbarism to the development of complex

political structures, is the fear for their lives and the drive for self-preservation.[31] This constant feature affords Lucretius a method to think about the evolution of society. To put this differently, history shows us that human nature consists in how we exercise our phronesis to overcome fear. Or, that human nature consists in the unfolding of the dialectic of authority and utility—where authority is understood as the power produced through fear.

When Spinoza links conatus to the calculation of utility (for instance in *E* IV, P20S), he makes available to himself the historical methodology that we find in Book 5 of *On the Nature of Things*. Thus, he can employ the example of the founding of the Hebrew state through the contribution of Moses's authority not simply as an historical analogy, as is common in the newly founded Dutch Republic.[32] Moreover, as soon as history is founded on phronesis as a distinctive feature of human nature, the lessons about the dialectic of authority and utility derived from the analysis of the Hebrew state become relevant to the present. Spinoza can reconstruct an instrumental logic that leads to the foundation of the Hebrew state by identifying the means and ends relations that were at play in conjunction with the various forms of power—but, crucially, *without* recourse to ultimate ends, or to transcendent entities that miraculously intervene to support a supposedly "elect" people (as Spinoza argues in Chapter 3 of the *Theological Political Treatise*).

A significant implication arises from Lucretius's analysis of authority in conjunction with its historical articulation, one pertaining to the inseparability of the two sources of authority, the theological and the political. In a move that today would seem counter-intuitive, Lucretius locates the emergence of *religio* in the third stage of human progress (5.1161 ff.). As soon as society is politically organized by providing laws to protect the state and to lead to order, peace and stability, humans realize that they are still subject to sudden death: "when cities are shaken and fall or threaten to fall, what wonder if the sons of men feel contempt for themselves, and acknowledge the great potency and wondrous might of gods in the world, to govern all things?" (5.1237-40). The fear of punishment distinctive of the third stage is transfigured into a fear of gods as the punishers *par excellence*.[33] This creates the theological support for the structure of command and obedience that political authority relies on. Differently put, it is not religious practice as such that is produced in the third stage; rather, what is produced in the *theologico-political* authority.

This entails that the political and the religious are inextricable in any organized polity. But this is not the kind of postsecularism that has become prevalent the past few years, for instance through the work of Charles Taylor or Jürgen Habermas. The main characteristic of the recent "return to religion" presupposes that a separation was forged between Church and state and that contemporary sensibilities transverse this secular moment.[34] Their aim is for postsecularism to point toward a pluralism sustained through reason. As opposed to this, Lucretius locates the genesis of *religio* in the creation of the political community through obedience to laws. The demand to *obey the laws* is psychologically distorted to create the illusion that we also need to *obey the divine*. This recognition of the theologico-political roots of authority cannot be used to defend pluralism as it is simply a fact of historical development. Differently put, it indicates a historical or finite dimension of phronesis that explains the creation of law and that lacks any normative traction dictating what the law ought to legislate. Since it describes how a distinction between religious and state law is possible, we can talk of Lucretius's *ante*-secularism.

Instead of a normative dimension, ante-secularism fuels the dialectic of authority and utility. On the one hand, the production of authority as the theologico-political conjunction is positive. This is the reason why Lucretius locates *religio* at the advanced stage of society. In the move characteristic of Epicureanism, the calculation of utility leads to commonality and the political structures that result from this can contribute to the utility of the community. The calculation of utility is thus necessary for the political.[35] Further, the fact that the citizens obey the law is necessary for the law to function and reach the third stage of development in Lucretius's schema. The structure of command and obedience is here positive.

On the other hand, the theologico-political authority can lead to negative consequences for the community when the calculation of utility is co-opted by those in authority to further their own purposes. Such a theologico-political authority can be concentrated in one person—Spinoza's example in the Preface is Alexander. Or it can be split between Church and state. But this "secular" separation of powers is immaterial compared to the fact that the production of authority reunites within itself politics and religion. Obedience in a community relies on both political and religious motivations that may promote the ends of those who hold authority against the utility of the community. The negative articulation of authority contains within it a strong anti-authoritarian impulse.

This double movement of authority—both required under certain conditions to protect the utility of the people and under other detrimental to them—is characteristic of the dialectic of authority and utility. And such a dialectic operates *irrespective* of a constitutional separation of Church and state, which is why Spinoza is ante-secular. Such an ante-secularism arises in Lucretius through the mobilization of the first epicurean theme—the production of authority through fear—in conjunction with the third epicurean theme—the operation of phronesis. This ante-secularism, then, complements Epicurus's analysis of the interactions and interconnections between the second and the third epicurean themes.

This point is also important so as to avoid confusing Spinoza's Epicurean position with the typical republican position of freedom as freedom from domination. Both conceptions of freedom are indeed anti-authoritarian. But there are at least two important differences. First, freedom from domination implies a sense of negative freedom that is still reliant on the free will, that is, on a separation of mind and body. Second, in the republican tradition the emphasis is on the construction of forms of legality within the framework of the legitimacy of political authority. Conversely, in Spinoza anti-authoritarianism unfolds at the level of phronesis, whereby the conflict cannot be confined at the level of legitimation; rather, the conflict arises from the junctures and disjunctures of authority and utility. Thus, even though republicanism and Epicureanism share an anti-authoritarian drive, it is constructed differently because of the Epicurean dialectic of authority and utility.

4. "FIGHTING FOR THEIR SERVITUDE AS IF FOR SALVATION": MONARCHY VERSUS DEMOCRACY

The most forceful and paradoxical co-articulation of freedom and the dialectic of authority and utility in the Preface occurs soon after the discussion about fear and superstition:

> Granted, then, that the supreme mystery [*arcanum*] of monarchism [*monarchici*], its prop and stay, is to keep men in a state of deception, and with the specious title of religion to cloak the fear by which they must be held in check, so that they will fight for their servitude as if for salvation [*pro servitio, tanquam pro salute pungent*], and count it no shame, but the highest honour, to spend their blood and their lives for the glorification of one man. Yet no more disastrous policy can be devised or attempted in a free state [*in libera republica*]. To invest with prejudice or in any way coerce

> each person's free judgment [*liberum uniuscuiusque judicium*] is altogether incompatible with public freedom [*communi libertati*]. (3/7)

The most "mysterious" feature of the dialectic of authority and utility is that in certain political settings, the dialectic seems to suspend itself. The people stop calculating their utility and thereby lose their freedom. The regime of power that results is monarchy. Monarchy should be taken literary—as the authority that incorporates both political and religious obedience. Monarch is despotism—not just authority but authoritarianism.[36] At the same time Spinoza entertains the possibility of an opposed regime of power, namely, the free republic or democracy. Spinoza notes only one characteristic of a democratic regime—as if a regime is democratic if and only if it has that characteristic: namely, the capacity to judge freely. In other words, the exercise of phronesis that we have already seen as synonymous with freedom in the Epicurean tradition here becomes the necessary condition for democracy. With this move, the dialectic of authority and utility is transformed into the conflict between two regimes of power, monarchy and democracy. Let us explore some of the context of this move, before examining Spinoza's answer to the threat of freedom posed by voluntary servitude—what the *Treatise* designates as "people fighting for their servitude as if for salvation."

Spinoza's insight is that even in the most abject and total state of obedience, the possibility persists of a re-inscription of utility. He shares this insight with Étienne de La Boétie, who, a century and a half before the *Theological Political Treatise*, frames the issue of voluntary servitude as follows: "how it happens that so many men, so many towns, so many cities, so many nations at times tolerate a single tyrant who has no other power than what they grant him, who has no other ability to harm them than inasmuch as they are willing to tolerate it, who could do ill to them only insofar as they would rather suffer it than oppose him. It is certainly quite something." In other words, "it is the people who enslave themselves."[37] Voluntary servitude presupposes democracy in the sense that the people have more power than any other entity within the polity. This power consists in the capacity to calculate their interest—that is, it consists in the exercise of instrumental rationality. The suspension of this power produces tyrannical authority but its re-energizing—always a possibility—describes a robust anti-authoritarian impulse that shook a lot of La Boétie's contemporaries, including his good friend Montagne, who thought it prudent to leave the *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude* unpublished.

Let me express this another way: La Boétie realizes that authority does not rely on command but on obedience. Command on its own is useless—as anyone who has encountered the "no" of a young child easily realizes. Command is effective only so long as it is obeyed. Thus, the power of the sovereign relies on the continuous submission to obedience. But—and that's La Boétie's significant insight—the people actually have the capacity to calculate their utility, which may lead them to the conclusion that they need not obey. To put it differently, disobedience is the precondition of obedience.[38] This means that they have more power than the one who relies on their obedience. The critical insight is about the calculation of utility: power can only be mobilized against authority through the actualization of instrumental rationality, that is, through phronesis.

The articulation of voluntary servitude in the *Theological Political Treatise* relies on instrumental rationality to grasp the function of obedience. This often remains unrecognized. At a strategic moment in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari refer to Spinoza's phrase that people "fight for their servitude as if it is their salvation" to support the pivotal claim of their work, namely, that the forms of production and reproduction leading to a capitalist society rely on desire. They invoke Spinoza to show the paradoxical nature of desire, which consists in willingly striving for something that is against one's interests.[39] And yet, *pace* Deleuze and Guattari, Spinoza's insight is not just that every rational calculation is determined by desire. It also moves in the opposite direction: every desire is also equally determined by rational calculation. There is a reciprocal movement between desire and practical judgment. I won't indulge here in all the medieval debates as to what comes first, emotions or intellect. Aristotle was fully aware that this was the wrong question, when he asserts that either is possible because phronesis "may be called either thought related to desire or desire related to thought; and man as an originator of action is a union of desire and intellect."[40] This co-operation of thought and emotion characterizes phronesis specifically, according to Aristotle. We have already seen how epicureanism radicalizes the Aristotelian notion of phronesis and how Spinoza appropriates this radicalization. In their extrapolation of Spinoza's conception of voluntary servitude, Deleuze and Guattari pay scant attention to the operation of phronesis in how obedience is constructed in the *Treatise*, and thereby miss the dialectic of authority and utility.

Deleuze and Guattari's blindness to the dialectic of authority and utility is in fact the norm in the secondary literature. Even Frédéric Lordon, who in *Willing Slaves of Capital* makes Spinoza's voluntary servitude resonate with the twenty-first century, only points to the dialectic to envisage its suspension.[41] In an analysis

full of insightful observations, Lordon shows how obedience can be mobilized in all sorts of seemingly irrational ways so as to precipitate submission to capitalist and neoliberal forms of production and reproduction. Toward the end of the book, Lordon asks how it is possible to evade voluntary servitude. He points to Spinoza's argument from the *Political Treatise*, according to which the indignation of the multitude is the motivating factor in resisting power when it acts against their interests. Indignation implies recognition of one's predicament and a drive to change. There is, then, here, an intimation of the dialectic of authority and utility. But what does this change amount to? To the multitude regaining control of government in what would amount to "a second coming of sovereignty," writes Lordon at the very end of the book. This solution erases the dialectic of authority and utility. Utility will triumph over superstition but then democracy will be completely absorbed within sovereignty. Besides the danger that the dialectic here may contain a telos, I primarily fear that the abandonment of the agonistic framework—the conflict of authority and utility—at this critical juncture of the argument contains the danger of resurrecting a revamped sense of voluntary servitude, one in which we are slaves by exercising our power (potestas). We are slaves by being rulers—not as a master and slave dialectic but as a coincidence of master and slave. At this point utopia becomes indistinguishable from dystopia. The exercise of pure utility supposedly freed from obedience is just as, if not more, disturbing than the surrendering of utility in the act of blind obedience—because voluntary servitude at least retains the prospect of resistance.

Both Deleuze and Guattari's and Lordon's positions stumble when the question arises about how to overcome voluntary servitude. The problem is that neither desire on its own, nor the elimination of obedience seem adequate. So what is Spinoza's position? His solution is unexpected. He grants that—quoting Curtius—"'the multitude has no ruler more potent than superstition'" (2). But avoids the usual move, whereby democracy is defined by arguing that the people or the multitude should rise from servitude by perfecting themselves through education, a better political system, and so on. Instead, he accentuates the conflict between the two regimes of power, monarchy and democracy.[42] This accentuation of the conflict in the dialectic of authority and utility is at the heart of what I take to be Spinoza's conception of agonistic democracy.[43]

Let us see how Spinoza signals such a move. I am citing here the passage that immediately follows the one in which Spinoza determined voluntary servitude while distinguishing between monarchy and the free state:

> Alleged seditions [*Et quod ad seditiones attinet*] that are pursued under the cloak of religion, they surely have their only source in this, that law intrudes into the realm of speculative thought [*leges de rebus speculativis conduntur*], and that opinions are put on trial and condemned as crimes. The adherents and followers of these opinions are sacrificed, not to the public health/ salvation [*publicae saluti*], but to the hatred and savagery of their opponents. If under state law [*ex jure imperii*] "only deeds were arraigned, and words were not punished," seditions of this kind would be divested of any appearance of legality [*nulla juris specie similes seditiones ornari possent*], and controversies would not turn into seditions [*controversiae in seditiones verterentur*]. (3/7)

This is a complex passage, not least because of Spinoza's propensity to present something as self-evident, whereas in fact it may deviate from our preconceptions. So let us read the passage attentively.

This first point to note is that the word "seditio" is repeated three times. Seditio enters forcefully the vocabulary of political philosophy through Hobbes's translation of Thucydides's *Histories of the Peloponnesian War*. Hobbes translates as "seditio" the word "stasis."[44] It is well-known that stasis as civil war, or internal arrest, or conflict within the city denotes a negative political experience. For instance, Plato contrasts the glory and virtue that arises through *polemos*, the war against external enemies, with the *stasis*, the internal war that he describes as the greatest ill of the polity.[45] From ancient times onward, stasis is described as the greatest disease of the polis.[46] This assessment is still pivotal in Carl Schmitt's distinction between the enemy and the foe—who is the internal enemy. Schmitt defines the political as the identification of the enemy, whereas the foe is explicitly excluded from this definition.[47] Significantly, the identification of the internal enemy, *pace* Schmitt, is also a way of strengthening sovereign power, as the flourishing of sedition laws in the aftermath of 9/11 demonstrates.

Sedition or stasis is never accomplished by a single individual or a group of people. There may be an orchestrator of an internal unrest, but for that to be a threat to the state, the participation of the people is also required. For instance, Locke strongly advocates for the toleration of any opposing view, but with one exception, namely, when opinions that can be detrimental to the state start appealing to a large number of people.[48] The "fickle multitude" that is swayed this way and that by the enemies of the state, is indispensable for sedition to be actualized. Thus, "seditio" signifies the worst that a state or polity can encounter and which consists

in the people inciting conflict with established authority. So, the word "seditio" is loaded with over two millennia of unanimity as to its pernicious influence on the state, a unanimity that is accompanied by the fear of the multitude.[49]

Within the historical and conceptual context that I describe above, Spinoza's discussion of "seditio" is extraordinary. He completely reverses the entire structure of the concept. Instead of the people precipitating sedition against authority, Spinoza presents authority as being seditious when it is using the law to suppress the free exercise of judgment. Spinoza starts by introducing not real but false seditions. These alleged seditions are perpetrated "under the cloak of religion" to the extent that religion is a vehicle of superstition advancing authority. Religion, as we will learn soon and as Spinoza will tirelessly repeat throughout the *Theological Political Treatise*, has a positive function that consists in instilling obedience as a precondition of legality (6). Authority—to repeat—is not bad per se. But obedience, when promulgated through superstition, is counterpoised to the freedom to judge (4). Alleged seditions are the intrusion of law (and hence obedience whose negative side is superstition) into our freedom to judge and to calculate our utility. The effect of this is that alleged seditions will lead to prosecution. Differently put, authority seeks to substitute instrumental rationality, which is against the *salus* of the people—against the multitude's utility.

The tension between authority and utility comes to a climax around the word *salus*. The word *salus*, meaning both health and salvation, repeats the word used in the expression about the people fighting for their servitude as if for their salvation (*pro salute*). So there is certainly an echo of this phrase here. At the same time, the medical metaphorics of the term stasis are unmistakable. As I mentioned above, since Plato stasis has been consistently designated as the greatest disease of the political. Spinoza is certainly aware of this tradition to which he responds to by totally subverting it. Here, the loss of health is attributed to those who seek to exercise authority despotically.

The reversal of the traditional understanding of stasis allows Spinoza to dramatize the dialectic of authority and utility leading to an understanding of democracy as agonistic practice. The idea of stasis, from Plato and Aristotle all the way to the seventeenth century, was uniformly attributed to the "fickle multitude," whereas here it is attributed to those who hold political authority and evoke the law against those who want to exercise phronesis.[50] *Seditio* is, according to Spinoza, an effect of seeking to consolidate authority by eliminating instrumental rationality in the name of the law. The accusation is directed primarily against authority—

both religious and political—as is stated unambiguously a bit later: "Church and Court are breeding bitter factions [*dissidia*] which readily turn people to sedition [*seditiones*]" (5/9). This claim is repeated in Chapter 7 and further amplified in Chapter 14 of the *Treatise*. The seditious role of what Lucretius calls "religio" is presented in political terms that mirror the distinction between monarchy and democracy: sedition is the prosecuting—exercised in the service of monarchy—of the freedom to judge. In this sense, sedition here stages the conflict between monarchy and democracy.

The argument concludes that if we recognize this seditious activity of monarchical authority, then controversies will no longer be thought of as seditions. In other words, democracy here is not defined through the people achieving rule. Such a rule is always liable to voluntary servitude when the people miscalculate their utility. Instead, the starting point of Spinoza's democratic thinking is the controversies and conflicts (another word in Greek for this could actually be stasis) allowed to unfold within the polity.[51] Thus, democracy is only possible if the dialectic of authority and utility is operative.[52]

The subversion of stasis performed by Spinoza is not unprecedented. The word "seditio" has another equally, if not more, important side. As I argue in my book *Democracy and Violence*, an alternative tradition about the function of stasis does exist.[53] For instance, Nicole Loraux discovers the foundation of the political in ancient Athens precisely in stasis.[54] And centuries later Machiavelli—one of the major if never named conversants in the *Theological Political Treatise*—rehabilitates stasis by arguing in the *Discourses* that the greatness of the Roman Republic was due to the instituted conflict between the senate and the people.[55] The position I defend in *Democracy and Violence* is that such an alternative tradition is crucial for an understanding of democracy. Within such a genealogy of stasis, the passage we are dealing with here is of singular significance.

Differently put, Spinoza engages in this paragraph with a long tradition that sees stasis or sedition as the bane of the political—as the greatest fear of any state. As opposed to this tradition, Spinoza inscribes free judgment or phronesis at the center of the regime of power that is democratic. This means that internal controversies are indispensable for democracy to be possible. And yet, that possibility is not envisaged as an ultimate outcome that would put an end to the conflict with authority—that is Lordon's deficient move. Instead, free judgment is counterpoised to sedition as the attempt by authority to repress judgment so as to institute voluntary servitude.

Nothing in Spinoza's passage indicates that this conflict characteristic of the dialectic of authority and utility can end. It does suggest, however—and this is fundamental in Spinoza's conception of democracy—that monarchy cannot exclude that conflict and therefore that the democratic is always presupposed, even when it is seditiously repressed. If freedom as the overcoming of death consists in nothing else than the exercise of phronesis, then the political regime embodying this freedom is democracy, even though—or, perhaps, because—the threat of authority and voluntary servitude can never be eliminated.

DIMITRIS VARDOULAKIS was the inaugural chair of Philosophy at Western Sydney University. He is the author of *The Doppelgänger: Literature's Philosophy* (2010), *Sovereignty and its Other: Toward the Dejustification of Violence* (2013), *Freedom from the Free Will: On Kafka's Laughter* (2016), and *Stasis Before the State: Nine Theses on Agonistic Democracy* (2018). His monograph *Spinoza, the Epicurean: Authority and Utility in Materialism* is forthcoming in 2020. He has also edited or co-edited numerous books, including *Spinoza Now* (2011) and the two-volume *Spinoza's Authority* (2018). He is the director of 'Thinking Out Loud: The Sydney Lectures in Philosophy and Society,' and the co-editor of the book series 'Incitements' (Edinburgh University Press).

NOTES

1. All references to Spinoza's *Theological Political Treatise* are to the translation by Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001) cited parenthetically by page number. I have often altered the translation. For the Latin, I have used the *Opera*. Ed. Carl Gebhardt. Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1924. The Tractatus Theologico-Politicus is contained in Volume 3. All page references to this edition follow after the English edition.
2. For the concept of authority in relation to the Reformation paying particular attention to the division between the inside and the outside of the subject as well as to the contrast between faith and reason, see Herbert Marcuse, *A Study on Authority, in Studies in Critical Philosophy*. Trans. Joris de Bres. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973, 49-155. For the historical context in relation to Biblical hermeneutics, see Susan James, *Spinoza on Philosophy, Religion, and Politics: The Theologico-Political Treatise*. Oxford: Oxford U. P., 2012; and, Samuel Preus, *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 2001.
3. Pierre-François Moreau notes this tension in the subtitle in *Spinoza et le Spinozisme*. Paris: PUF, 2014, but he does not link it to Epicureanism, nor to a discussion of freedom in Spinoza.
4. There is a significant body of work on Spinoza's "alternative" modernity that is characterized, amongst other things, by the overcoming of the mind-body dualism. See, indicatively, Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*. Oxford: Oxford U. P., 2001; and, Michael Mack, *Spinoza and the Specters of Modernity: The Hidden Enlightenment of Diversity from Spinoza to Freud*. London: Bloomsbury, 2010.
5. See Dimitris Vardoulakis, "Why is Spinoza an Epicurean?" *Epoche*, forthcoming in 2019. This is developed even further in my forthcoming book *Authority and Utility: On Spinoza's Epicureanism*.
6. As Arendt puts it, authority "is incompatible with persuasion, which presupposes equality and works through a process of argumentation. Where arguments are used, authority is left in abeyance." Hannah Arendt, "Authority", *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought*. New York: Viking, 1961, 93. Or, in Alexandre Kojève's formulation, authority resides with someone whose "action does not provoke a reaction." *Kojève, The Notion of Authority (A Brief Presentation)*. Ed. François Terré, trans. Hager Weslati. London: Verso, 2014, 13.
7. I further elaborate on the concept of freedom in Spinoza in *Authority and Utility*.
8. Some of the most penetrating observations about the importance of the individual's fear of death in Hobbes's adumbration of the social contract can be found in Carl Schmitt's *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*. Trans. George Schwab and Erna Hilfstein. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, [1938] 1996.
9. The so-called *tetrapharmakon* (meaning, literally, a fourfold pharmakon or medicine) is a summary of what Epicurus's students regarded as the four most important ideas of his teaching. The tetrapharmakon has been preserved in a Herculaneum papyrus by Philodemus.
10. Diogenes Laertius, "Epicurus", *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. R.D. Hicks (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1931). All references to Book X of the Lives are made parenthetically in the text. I have regularly modified the translations of this edition.
11. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. H. Rackham. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. P., 2003. All references to this edition are made parenthetically in the text. I have often amended the translations. Also, I note that the distinction is more complicated. Aristotle is also concerned with technical or artistic knowledge—the knowledge about how to create things. I am presenting here the Aristotelian theory only insofar as it has a bearing on the Epicurean discussion of phronesis.
12. I am using phronesis, calculation of utility and instrumental rationality interchangeably: see

Vardoulakis, "Why is Spinoza an Epicurean?" I note here the influence of Heidegger's course on the Sophist in repressing the importance of instrumentality in Aristotle's extrapolation of phronesis. The course on the Sophist was particular significant for Heidegger's development as it was delivered just before the writing of Being and Time and it was attended by a number of students—such as Gadamer and Arendt—who, in their own ways, followed Heidegger's lead to have an aversion to instrumentality when it comes to practical knowledge. I examine Book VI of the Nicomachean Ethics and I take up its interpretation by Heidegger and others in Neoepicureanism, a book on materialism that I am writing. For a synoptic view of my position, see Dimitris Vardoulakis, "Neoepicureanism." *Philosophy Today* (2019), forthcoming.
13. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. Trans. Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. P., 1933, 986b.
14. Diogenes Laertius, "Democritus", IX.44.
15. I could have translated τὸ πᾶν as substance using the Spinozan expression from Part I of the Ethics.
16. This is the reason, as Frederick Lange explains in his monumental history of materialism, that the idea of the rejection of the creation ex nihilo played such a decisive role in the development of modern empiricism. See Friedrich Albert Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart*. Iserlohn: Baedeker, [1866], 2nd rev. ed. 1887. This is also why Epicureanism is important for the scientific revolution. See Elizabeth Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008.
17. Leo Strauss makes this point very clearly in *Spinoza's Critique of Religion.* New York: Schocken, 1965.
18. See Vardoulakis, "Why is Spinoza an Epicurean?"
19. See Dimitris Vardoulakis, *Freedom from the Free Will: On Kafka's Laughter.* Albany, NY: SUNY, 2016.
20. Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present.* London: Routledge, 1999, 51.
21. Propositions 65 and 66 are summarized at a pivotal moment of the argumentation about natural right in Chapter 16 (175) of the *Theological Political Treatise*.
22. G.W.F. Hegel, "The Philosophy of the Epicureans." *Lectures on the History of Philosophy.* Trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson. London: Kegan Paul, 1895, vol. 2, 276-311.
23. Thus, phronesis does in the political realm what the clinamen or swerve does in the physical realm. I cannot develop here the connection between the Epicurean physics and ethics, and I only want to note the operation of instrumental rationality as a way of making sense why Spinoza has no use of the clinamen in his metaphysics, as his correspondence with Boxel makes clear (see esp. Ep. 54).
24. For an excellent discussion of multiple causes in Machiavelli, see Vittorio Morfino, "The Five Theses of Machiavelli's 'Philosophy'." *The Radical Machiavelli: Politics, Philosophy and Language.* Eds Filippo Del Lucchese, Fabio Frosini, Vittorio Morfino. Leiden: Brill, 2015,145-73.
25. Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, trans. W.H.D. Rouse, rev. Martin F. Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924). Hereafter cited parenthetically by book and verse number. On occasion, I have modified the translation. On the discover of Lucretius's manuscript, see Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: Norton, 2011). For an overview of different approaches to Lucretius's reception and impact in modernity, see the collection edited by Jacques Lezra and Liza Blake, *Lucretius and Modernity: Epicurean Encounters* (London: Palgrave, 2016).
26. For the theologico-political origin of authority see Paul Ricoeur, "The Paradox of Author-

ity." *Reflections on the Just.* Trans. David Pellauer. Chicago: Chicago U. P., 2007, 91-105. Because of this double origin, as I argue in Spinoza's Promise, the title of the Treatise can be understood to mean Treatise on Authority.
27. Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics.* Trans. Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota P., 1991.
28. For the distinction between taking a stand and taking sides, see Dimitris Vardoulakis, "Stasis: Notes Toward Agonist Democracy." *Theory & Event*, 20:3 (2017, 699-725).
29. As Julia Annas argues, ancient moral theories take for granted that their starting point is the investigation of the ends of action that lead to happiness and virtue. See *The Morality of Happiness.* Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1993, 9 and passim. Such a moral end is very different from the teleology relying on the presence of a divine law-giver, which Spinoza attacks in the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics* and elsewhere. It is prevalent amongst Spinoza's commentators to infer from the rejection of an ultimate end (in the Appendix to Part I) that Spinoza rejects that action is directed toward ends. I have found no textual evidence that supports this inference, nor does it make sense within Spinoza's framework.
30. Lucretius is here a long distance from Hesiod's mixing of myth, of the stories about gods, in order to describe the various stages of humankind in *Works and Days*. See Hesiod, *Theogony; Works and Days; Testimonia*. Trans. Glenn W. Most. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. P., 2006, lines 109–201.
31. The similarities with Hobbes's state of nature are stark and the Englishman's debt to Lucretius still remains to be fully explored.
32. See Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: And interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age.* New York: Vintage, 1987, Chapter 2.
33. It may be worth comparing Lucretius's argument to that of the second essay of Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*. For both, religion is intricately linked to how punishment is conceived.
34. For a critique of this conception of secularism as well as an adumbration of secularism from a radical democratic perspective, see Stathis Gourgouris, *Lessons in Secular Criticism.* New York: Fordham U. P., 2103.
35. The correlation of utility and commonality is a feature of phronesis at least since Aristotle, but it is most clearly presented in Spinoza. As I argue in Neoepicureanism, the rupture between utility and commonality mirrors the rupture between thought and emotion in the adumbration of instrumental rationality, for instance, in the way that Adam Smith describes self-interest in the *Wealth of Nations.* This rupture is fully effected in neoliberalism, such as in Kenneth Arrow's *Social Choice and Individual Value*. As such, Spinoza can be seen to respond to neoliberalism.
36. This is an important distinction as Spinoza develops a positive conception of authority in chapters 7 of the *Theological Political Treatise*. Again, see my *Authority and Utility*.
37. Étienne de La Boétie, *The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude* (*Or, Against One*). Trans. James B. Atkinson and David Sices. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2012, 2 and 6.
38. See Dimitris Vardoulakis, "Authority and the Law: The Primacy of Justification over Legitimacy in Spinoza." *Spinoza's Authority Volume II: The Political Treatises*. Eds Kiarina Kordela and Dimitris Vardoulakis. London: Bloomsbury, 2018, 45-66.
39. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism & Schizophrenia.* Trans. R. Hurley et al. London: Athlone Press, 2000, 29.
40. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139b.
41. Frédéric Lordon, *Willing Slaves of Capital: Spinoza and Marx on Desire.* Trans. Gabriel Ash. London: Verso, 2014.

42. I have described this move in my own work by saying that democracy does not need to be defined by starting with the definition of the demos and then inquiring how the demos can rule. Instead, we can start with the second noun of the compound democracy, namely, the word kratos that means both constituted power as well as conflict, disagreement, and overpowering. See Vardoulakis, "Stasis: Notes Toward Agonist Democracy."
43. I provide here only the general framework of Spinoza's agonistic democracy, a concept that I develop in detail in *Spinoza's Promise*.
44. See Dimitris Vardoulakis, "Stasis: Beyond Political Theology?" *Cultural Critique* 73 (2009,125-47).
45. Plato, *Republic*. Trans. Paul Shorey. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. P., 2003, 470a-471c.
46. Cf. Kostas Kalimtzis, *Aristotle on Political Enmity and Disease: An Inquiry into Stasis.* New York: State University of New York Press, 2000.
47. Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political.* Trans. George D. Schwab. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 28-30 and passim.
48. John Locke, "An Essay on Toleration." *Political Essays.* Ed. Mark Goldie. Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1997, 134-59.
49. See Warren Montag, "Who's Afraid of the Multitude? Between the Individual and the State." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 104:4 (2005, 655-73).
50. La Boétie also makes this point in *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*, 7.
51. See on this point again Vardoulakis, "Stasis."
52. And, can the dialectic of authority and utility ever be thoroughly suspended? If, following Spinoza, we assert that that's not possible, then we can grasp why Spinoza calls democracy the absolute form of government in the final chapter of the *Political Treatise*. I return to this point at various points in *Spinoza's Promise.*
53. The book *Democracy and Violence* is still in draft form. A lot of the ideas from that book have informed the present study. Also, *Democracy and Violence* contains an analysis of Spinoza's *Political Treatise* that I could not undertake in the present book for reason of space.
54. See Nicole Loraux, *The Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens.* Trans. Corinne Pache and Jeff Fort. New York: Zone, 2006.
55. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius*. Trans. Allan Gilbert. In Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others, volume 1. Durham: Duke U. P., 1989, 200-01.

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a system of freedom and joy—herder on the traces of spinoza: the two editions of *god, some conversations* and their relation to the *ethics*

eva schürmann, translated by kirk turner

In each of the two—clearly different—editions of his work *God, Some Conversations* (On Spinoza's System), from 1787 and 1800 respectively, Johann Gottfried Herder develops a discussion of Spinozan philosophy which has not only been of considerable influence in the dispute over Jacobi's letters on Spinoza but also beyond. Hegel himself compared both editions shortly after 1800 in a review (which has unfortunately been lost) in an attempt to summarize them but also to position himself within the debate.[1] In this paper, I will try to answer the following questions: What motives characterize Herder's reception of Spinoza? What points are raised? And, to what degree *must* Herder's thought be called Spinozan? The investigation is divided into two parts. The first part shows, on the basis of the Herderian interpretation of the Spinozan concepts of existence, love of God and nature, where and how the influence from Spinoza makes itself clear as well as where Herder's God and Spinoza's substance are strictly incompatible. The second part is concerned with Herder's understanding of the *modifications* and the concept of *potentia* (power).

Herder conceives of Spinoza's philosophy as a "system in which all is directed towards the freedom and joy of the soul."[2] The shift of accent here is already obvious: referring to the biography, the *Letters* and the *Ethics*, Herder seeks to highlight what in Spinoza's system can be understood as a practical philosophy of life. According to a conception of being [*Daseyn*] connected to Spinoza's *existentia*

sive perfectio (existence or perfection), Herder understands the conatus for self-preservation (*conatus in suo esse perseverare*) as a "love for existence [*Daseyn*]"[3] and interprets the conception of the intellectual love of God (I will discuss this later) as a "love of the all to all that is in us."[4] Spinoza's foundation of serenity and joy as always-to-be-fostered feelings with exclusively positive significance ("all those things that bring pleasure are good," *E* IV, Ap. 30) is conceived by Herder under the heading of the concept of "enjoyment" (which will later become important for Hegel in the *Encyclopaedia*).[5] Leibniz's reproach that the God of Spinoza is a blind necessity is clearly rejected by Herder as well as Goethe. However, neither is concerned with an exact reconstruction of the substance metaphysics of the rationalist but instead attempt to find—besides a defence of the supposed "atheist"—a legitimation of their own natural philosophical, as well as religiously and metaphysically critical, thought. More precisely stated, what is important for them is the establishment of a concept of being, a comprehension of God and a conception of Nature, the pivotal impulses toward which they received from Spinoza.

Of course, Herder also proves to be a beneficiary of Spinoza's in terms of a type of thinking whose lively movement and sometimes just contradictory nature prevent a *definite* attribution to Spinozism. His efforts to understand Spinoza coalesce with his search for new answers to the questions of God and the world; with his alternative conception of the empirical natural sciences; as well as a concern to explain his theory of organic powers. Thereby, Herder's text *God* can be seen as a conglomerate with many facets. The text, planned as a synthesis of Leibniz, Spinoza and Shaftesbury, equally displays features of his dispute with Kant.[6] Further, besides explicit statements on Lessing's *On the Reality of Things Outside God* and Jacobi's *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza*, there are numerous literary references to Haller, Gleim, Vanini and others as well as a discussion of Lambert's *Neues Organon*.[7] The diversity of all these subjects gives an idea of Herder's worldview and background and explains the differences in research interests. B.M. Dreike has provided a convincing argument on the influence of Leibniz.[8] As for Spinoza, the opinions diverge greatly. The contradictoriness of the research results alone makes clear how equivocal the phenomenon of new Spinozism is in the case of Herder. As unanimously as the differences of the two editions have been overlooked since Suphan[9] and Haym, so variously has the book been described as Spinozist (Vollrath),[10] non-Spinozist (Dietterle),[11] theistic (Haym)[12] and as a "purely personal document" (Kühnemann).[13] And more recently, despite the knowledge-rich and comprehensive studies of Hermann Timms[14] and David Bells,[15] which provide large-scale analyses of factors both historical and immanent

to the work, and have elucidated the context, they are no substitute for a finely detailed analysis and comparison of Spinoza's *Ethics* and Herder's *God*.

If one understands Herder's text however as a *process* of convergence and divergence, then the fluctuations in misunderstanding, as well as the simultaneity of agreed proximity and critical distance, become plausible. The methodical reproduction[16] of the Herderian process-related development of thought proves to be the appropriate way to follow the traces of the contradictory facets and temporal development of his reception of Spinoza and to specify his protean oscillation between agreement and rejection

1. A CONTRADICTION-FULL AGREEMENT

Herder's understanding of Spinoza's philosophy in the book *God* is loose and to a certain extent poetic. In includes, for example, the blunt rejection of the theory of attributes due to the—what can certainly only be understood as fallacious—assumption that the attributes are negligible or at least refinable component aspects of Spinoza's philosophy. Yet it also includes the development of a concept of being, which for Herder provides a direct link to Spinoza's concept of existence: if, according to Spinoza, a) reality is perfection and b) being able to exist is a capability, then, so Herder concludes, being is to be considered godly. With a concept of being animated by forces, he ventures to combine Spinoza's formulas *realitas sive perfectio* (existence or perfection), *natura sive deus* (Nature or God) and *existentia sive potentia* (existence or power) with the thought *existentia sive Deus*: "God or being."[17] Thereby he is able to bind inseparably God, being and power. Reality and existence consequently become reciprocal determinations. Furthermore, *realitas*—completely in the Spinozan sense—is understood as the whole of that, which is what it is, and in its being thus represents a foundational structure that cannot be any other way.[18] "From Spinoza himself," Herder explains, one can, using the concept of being in the sense of "actuality, reality," encompass the reason for everything; it is "the chief conception in Spinoza."[19] Although this may remain undecided, it is certain that such conceptions of Herder's (as well as Goethe's) can be read as traces of Spinoza, whose philosophical ideas have been incorporated integrally.[20]

Irreconcilable Differences

However, the Spinoza resurrected in Weimar is of course a different one. And this also means that essential aspects of his philosophy had their radicality defused through theo-ideological harmonization efforts. The God of philosophical

reason is also for Herder decidedly too little worthy of worship. The differences between him and Spinoza can most clearly be seen in respect to the concept of God. It is, for Herder, a difficult, indeed irresolvable, task, on the one hand, to support a God without personality,[21] to differentiate himself from Jacobi and other contemporaries, and at the same time, on the other hand, to not accept the God of the *Ethics*, the equivalence "substance or God or Nature," due to "abstractness" and, as a theologian, to save theism. The contradictions contained in his statements are insurmountable at this point. Even in the fifth conversation there is talk of a "Father,"[22] which he seemed to have long ago discarded in his confrontation with Jacobi ("you want God … as a friend who thinks of you").[23] With his attempt to integrate theistic and even pietistic aspects into a modified Spinozism, Herder not only had to fail: from today's perspective he could also be accused of undercutting Spinoza's radicalism, of failing to capture the logical consequence of his ethical doctrine and of underestimating the scope of the *Ethics* in terms of the diversity of its aspects.

Those differences cannot be assimilated: Herder represents the belief of a God who came into the world; Spinoza's substance, in contrast, is eternal. Herder's deep roots in bourgeois Protestantism as well as the historicity of his thinking distinguish him here so irreconcilably from Spinoza that the intended gain of a religious reorientation cannot hide the fact of the painful loss of the liberal achievements of the philosopher. Spinoza's ethical doctrine involves a pragmatic belief in reason tied in with a deep and fundamental affirmation of life: what is useful for the individual is also good so long as it does not harm others—that is why one needs reason as a personal corrective and a reasonable politics as a general one. Virtue is for Spinoza a reward in itself (e.g. *E* IV, P18S): only an unemancipated person needs gratification from an otherworldly father. Shame and remorse, as the theory of affections teaches us, are in themselves bad feelings, for they are sadness, and sadness is the transition to lesser perfection.[24] Above all pedagogically, as Spinoza concludes in the Scholium to Proposition 54 in the fourth part, these feelings have a certain meaning: to protect barbarians from complete brutalization. One can see how resistant to integration these concepts must have been for the Christian theologian. While Spinoza's bold innovation consisted in describing feelings and passions as if they were "bodies and lines in space," in order to penetrate beyond all normative and moralizing set goals to a description of the actual state, Herder negates this de-anthropomorphization via the geometrical method almost violently. He had declared this since the very beginning to be a regrettably misguided attempt and had never seen its human centred and emancipatory potential. If Spinoza ultimately naturalizes the deity,

to the extent that each psychic trait is denied in order to displace it within a law-ordered universal connectivity, with Herder Nature itself is deified, God is humanized after all and man is made the image of God.

A Poetic Approach

Nevertheless, the representation of God is for Herder wavering and complex.[25] In the process of his search, his God even abandons theistic traits in order to become the *summa realitas* (supreme reality) and Nature (which carries all "Being") in order to recall, at least in regard to his origin, the "God or Nature." In addition, as the "highest Being" that we as mankind "enjoy" the more "knowledge, and love of the all to all" is within us, he comes closer to the God of the *Ethics* V.[26] The free and rationally-gifted human—whose "mind, insofar as it is eternal" (*E* V, P31Pr.) can be understood as a part of the infinite intellect of God—can here enter into a relationship: qua intuition he approaches, in the love of God, the godly perspective of the cosmos and "intuits" this *sub specie aeternitatis* as universal and eternal identity. It is interesting that Herder speaks of knowledge in this context as in Spinoza we also find the intellectual love for God connected, in a memorable conclusion, to the self-knowledge of man: ("He who clearly and distinctly understands himself and his emotions loves God" (*E* V, P15). The legitimate power of Being of existence is understood by Spinoza as well as Herder as a direct expression of a (differently conceptualized) God.[27] Thereby, however, the knowledge of the whole and one's self as a part of the whole becomes the knowledge of God: "The more we understand particular things, the more we understand God" (*E* V, P24). And, "So the more each man is advanced in this kind of knowledge, the more clearly conscious he is of himself and of God, that is, the more perfect and blessed he is" (*E* V, P31S). This Scholium however stands in the closest relation to that which Herder sets as the motto of his preface: Αν γνῶς τί ἐστι Θεὸς, ἠδίων ἔση. This proves that Herder's interpretation (and Goethe's with him) of the love of God is indeed consistent and quite appropriately Spinozist.

The evident contradictions of such an idea of God and the theistic one can only be explained by the fact that Herder was so entwined in the development of the examination that its historical explosiveness led him to lose track of the overall view, and in addition to this that he found himself conflicted between philosophy and theology.

The strengths of Herder's thought however do not lie in their conceptual systematicity. He had already, in 1785, dismissed Kant's advice to give 'his genius

a few shoves' and make the effort toward creating more precise concepts. Instead there is the constant relation to life in his arguments, the concern to think κατ› ἄνθρωπον, as well as the constructive handling of history for the purpose of future-oriented pioneering, which makes his world of thought fruitful.

As great as the differences in terms of the concept of God are, so great is the proximity to the conception of the love of God, of existence and—as we will now see—Nature. Choosing one or the other aspect for the purpose of clearly classifying Herder as Spinozist or non-Spinozist would always mean absolutizing partial aspects and curtailing the complexity of Herder's reading of Spinoza.

Science and Religion

Proposition 18 of the first part of the *Ethics*—"God is the immanent cause of all things"—is not only fundamentally accepted by Herder but also thoroughly further thought through in terms of the consequences for the empirical sciences that must be present in such a way that the object of their analyses testifies to the presence of God. Herder sees in the results of the Enlightenment the threat of a split between religion and science and thereby two ways of navigating the world: between the objectifying mastery of Nature on the one hand and a religious dogma that has become empty on the other, a split that offers mankind only inadequate alternatives. Hence he tries to provide a mediation between a religion subject to decay and the ever-strengthening natural sciences, whose alienating and destructive potential he recognizes at an early stage, because of which he evokes Spinoza: not only because his position on the immanent causality of God results in the divinity of the world but also because the manner of dealing with Nature described in the appendix to *Ethics* I could serve as a basis for this vocation. Herder perhaps does not quote the particular part directly, however when he states later that "our admiration" of this "cosmic system" is "rational," and preferred against that of "a devout but empty wonder," then one feels indeed close to Spinoza's concern and is reminded of his understanding of Nature as a scholar—*ut doctus*—instead of staring at it idiotically—*ut stultus*.[28]

In Spinoza's plea for a judicious study of Nature as well as his denial of teleological thinking, Herder sees, together with the thought of immanence, a constructive suggestion for a new orientation of the natural sciences of his time. If one takes the entwined congruence of God and Nature seriously, then the scientific treatment of Nature must be a respectful one. One sees thereby how Herder's reception of Spinoza is equally equivocal and fruitful. In fact, in accordance with his

concept of aestheticization, the immanence of God for Herder implies goodness and the beauty of the world, terms that Spinoza would have certainly rejected as anthropomorphic categories that testify more about the nature of our brains ("*pro dispositione cerebri*") than natural conditions. Nonetheless, this concerns a difference in their temperament between the two.

More central, however, for the question of Herder's Spinozism is the constructive use of Spinozan philosophical ideas for the purpose of the solution of contemporary problems. "If men had forever stood still in admiration [of the cosmos]," then "many purposes ... could have been thought out." However that "natural philosopher who first looked away from these purposes and sought the 'hidden law' ... assuredly did more than the greatest inventor of purposes among men could do."[29] The path of the "sober natural scientist who ... examines the conditions of things themselves" is seen as "the road which Spinoza opened up."[30] While a frequently presented reproach to this day holds that the Cartesian form of rationalism leads to the exploitative objectification of Nature, Herder points out that Spinoza's enlightened concern with the exploration of Nature, and his equalization of God and Nature, present a new opportunity for understanding it. In order to establish an ethical relationship with Nature, which neither analytically removes God nor mystically enchants nature, Herder draws on aspects of Spinozism that testify to his intensive reading.

All this will have shown that a quasi-archaeological reading of "traces" is full of consequences in a field where a more limited conceptualization may leave one perplexed or duped by the numerous incompatibilities and a conglomeration of facets of varying durability. Two further particularities of Herder's reading of Spinoza nonetheless should not be overlooked in this regard.

2. THE CONCEPT OF *POTENTIA* AND ORGANIC FORCES

The influence of Leibniz on the thought of Herder is generally judged to be very strong, specifically in respect to his conception of forces as well as in regard to the strong focus on the aspect of individuality. This cannot be denied. In the second edition of *God*, however, both aspects—forces and individuality—are related, by Herder, to Spinoza. In extensive expansions, the older Herder explains a deepened understanding of Spinoza which highlights two central features in an original reading. On the basis of his conception of the attributes as supposedly unreconciled Cartesian oppositions, Herder called in the first edition for a "mediating concept" that would bring thought and extension into an organic unity. In the second

edition, however, and independent of the critique of the theory of attributes, the following is emphasized: for Spinoza "power is an essential reality … I can think of no other substantive, which could include both ['thought' and 'motion'] with so little constraint as the conception of force, power" and this is described as going to "the very heart of the Spinozistic system."[31] Later it would be said that "power … necessarily, and as a consequence of his own system" leads to "the conception of forces."[32] Hence, Herder found in Spinoza's concept of *potentia* a basis for his own concept of power which he proposes by adding the idea of the organism from the natural philosophy of his time. On the other hand, he complains about Leibniz that "with … little sacrifice"[33] he could have made the move to the theory of power in Herder's sense. As undeniable as Leibniz's influence on Herder's intellectual development may be, Herder himself only refers to the *Ethics* and not the *Theodicy* in his book *God*. With that justification he refers to Spinoza, and how close he reads exactly to come to results that to this day can still be called fresh and original, is shown in the text of the *Ethics* itself, as *potentia* is one of the most dazzling and central concepts of Spinozan philosophy.

The centrality of the concept of *potentia* (power) in the *Ethics* is initially guaranteed through its connection to the entity of God: "God's power is his very essence" (*E* I, P34). In this context nonetheless, *potentia* is not clearly and consistently differentiated from *potestas*. Further on, *potestas* is largely reserved for the active power of God, while *potentia* reappears at the most diverse levels of the *Ethics*. For example, in connection with the *conatus* in the Proof to *E* III, P7: "Therefore, the power of anything, or the conatus with which it acts or endeavors to act … that is, the power or conatus by which it endeavors to persist in its own being, is nothing but the … essence of the thing." Here, *potentia* no longer has anything to do with its metaphysical meaning of the power of God but instead is identified with the pursuit of self-preservation as the active drive and essence of man.

Additionally, Spinoza needs the *potentia* of external causes to explain movement and change. The concept obtains an ontic meaning—which, as we saw, was interesting for the interpretation of Herder's "being"—through *E* I, P11: "To be able to not exist is weakness; on the other hand, to be able to exist is power." Furthermore, the terms *potentia cogitandi* and *potentia agendi* are present in life and in the world in connection with the theory of affections to the extent that the "*vir fortis*" needs one of the capacities in order to steer the other reasonably.

The equivocity in the signification of the concept is also reflected in the various, sometimes self-contradictory, translations. Lorenz Schmidt, whose translation

Herder would have certainly known, translated *potentia* as "power" [*Macht*] as well as "force" [*Kraft*].[34] Gebhardt, however, from *E* II, P3S, provides the word power for both "*Dei potentiam*" and "*potestatem*."[35] Baensch differentiates, here, between "power" and "violence."[36] In the other aforementioned contexts however, he also translates *potentia*—much in the manner of Herder—as "power." That fact that Gebhardt's translation, "capacity" [*Vermögen*], cannot be described as wrong can be seen as further proof of how enigmatically Spinoza's *potentia* is caught up in the meanings of empowerment, strength, power and capacity as well as with what right Herder saw it as a key concept.

Apart from one exception, *vis* is differentiated continuously from *potentia* in the preface to *E* V, as *vis* is mostly used in connection with the affects.[37] The whole fourth part indeed concerns *de affectuum viribus*, which Gebhardt falsely renders in the singular as "power of the affects" [*Macht der Affekte*]. In the plural, *vires*, denotes the manifold wealth of passions that are put into opposition with both *potentia rationis* and *potentia intellectus*.

The equivocal multi-layering and occasionally wavering use of the term may be traced back to the various editorial stages of the text, however what remains clear is that *potentia* is the only form of a modality of possibility, in Spinoza's theory, capable of virtually overcoming necessary, caused being.

The *potentia* receives a final signification in the fourth part. There it is identified with *virtus*, virtue: "By virtue and power [*Per virtutem, et potentiam*] I mean the same thing" (*E* IV, D8). This equivalence functions as both have a common reference point in the essence or nature of the human being: "Virtue is human power, which is defined solely by man's essence [*Virtus est ipsa humana potentia, quae sola hominis essentia definitur*]" (*E* IV, P20Pr).

Potentia is therefore something different each time insofar as it has its *cosmological* connection to God, its *ontic* link with existence and an *ethical* relation to the human being: in the latter case it can be distinguished depending on its relationship to the body, the mind, the *conatus* or essence. Common to all of these meanings, however, is its essential place in Spinoza's system: in every case, *potentia* is a virulent driving force that has to be taken into account at any moment without being calculable itself, and that renders being dynamic. Certainly one must admit that this dynamic is thought of mechanically, and that the organic viewpoint was originally added by Herder. However, the appeal to "power as essence" can only be understood as a deep-seated agreement of the older Herder with Spinoza that

emphasizes a key concept that even to this day has not always been seen as such.

MODIFICATION AND INDIVIDUALITY

The second aspect Herder introduces against all tradition in the historical reception of Spinoza, is found at the end of the book *God*, in a final original extension in the second edition. There, Herder highlights the modifications of Spinoza explicitly as *individualities*. He clearly denies the accusation that Spinoza's philosophy negates the idea of individuality insofar as he explains, quite categorically, that talk of certain, finite, ways of existence of the substance must be read as speaking of particular individualities and that anything else must be "self-contradictory nonsense."[38] Herder clarifies this reading as follows: identity and selfhood are understood as those things applying to a person who, within the midst of all change, is still possible to regard as a self-enduring "I." Despite a "change of circumstances," the stages of one's life, mental and emotional states and the like, there is nevertheless something that allows the "I" and others to speak of a self-identical person.[39] This "center of selfhood" lies in "myself" that, neither as concept nor as sensation, allows "of further dissection."[40] This is true to the extent that "in spite of all changes, my body and spirit do not remain the same, but I remain the same," namely because "a self does not depend on my reasoning."[41] The principle of individuation "lies in the word 'self' itself."[42] In this manner one determines the distinctiveness of the "I" against others; the self is a specific mode of existence with "different kinds and grades of self-consciousness."[43] Herder understands modification in Spinoza's sense as exactly these "modes of existence." That's why he sees "the one and eternal principle of individuation developed in the system of our philosopher, along a line that leads into our innermost self."[44] In the literature this point is commonly overlooked, whether it has to do with the fact that the extensions of the second edition remain virtually unnoticed, or because such an idiosyncratic and daring reading is incomprehensible for many Herder researchers who do not know the *Ethics* well. And, to be sure, the reading is also in need of explanation. Opening the *Ethics* to find the points to which Herder may have been referring, one could make discoveries in various areas.

For example, the *intelligo* always brought up by Spinoza, if not regarded in the sense of the Cartesian *cogito*, can be assessed as an indication of an apprehending "I"—that of Spinoza in contrast to that of Descartes and others, but also that of a free human whose cognitive capacity is emancipating.[45] This is not to be overrated in a subjective-theoretical sense, yet nonetheless the "I" emerges as the reflexive

reference point of a statement.[46] Therefore, as *E* III, P17S makes clear—"For the human body is composed of very many individual bodies of different nature, and so it can be affected by one and the same body in many different ways"—a body is composed of manifold "individuals" that can each be differently affected. In addition, the diversity is thereby multiplied to the extent that the degree of affectedness is dependent on the nature of the affecting body:

> All the ways in which a body is affected by another body follow from the nature of the affected body together with the nature of the body affecting it, so that one and the same body may move in various ways in accordance with the various natures of the bodies causing its motion. (*E* II, L3A1)

The particular and respective form of composition can explain individual and distinct reactions. Only in this manner can it be possible that one loves what another hates and that the same person can now love that which he will later hate:

> Different men can be affected in different ways by one and the same object, and one and the same man can be affected by one and the same object in different ways at different times. (*E* III, P51)

The Scholium to this Proposition states:

> We therefore see that it is possible that what one man loves, another hates, what one man fears, another fears not, and that one and the same man may now love what he previously hated. … Again, since everyone according to his emotions judges what is good, what is bad … it follows that men vary as much in judgment as in emotion.

Both in terms of their affects and in their *judgements*—herein lies one of the reasons for the tolerant and liberal character of Spinoza's ethical doctrine—people can differ from one another in multifarious manners. This explicit emphasis on the individual diversity of people as well as the subjective and affective affinity of their judgements is remarkable to begin with. Later, this is followed by an explanation, namely that everyone, according to what their personal ideas of courage, timidity and other affects are, makes assignations toward others (or fails to do so) with corresponding provisions. Hence I would consider someone courageous, who does not fear "what I usually fear" (*E* III, P51S).

There is even a certain consideration of social and pedagogic influences on the development of the individual, insofar as it is pointed out that the praise and

blame, negative and positive sanctions, and agreement or rejection of others have a decisive effect on the actions of the individual as they are motivations of extreme importance for the affects (cf. *E* III, P55S).

The pluralistic multiplicity of the world of feelings is not yet a principle of individuation. The mere recognition of this diversity should also not be confused with an obvious theoretical concept of the subject. The point is rather that Spinoza's monochrome identity-thinking includes a clearly articulated awareness of individual differences with regard to essence. "Any emotion of one individual differs from the emotion of another to the extent that the essence of the one individual differs from the essence of the other" (*E* III, P57).

We can find more examples, however, this may be enough to show that Herder is completely right in comprehending the modifications as wholly specific expressions of individual particularity. He proves thereby once again his understanding of Spinoza and shows that he has deeply incorporated the impetus of the *Ethics* and by no means—as often claimed—only read into it what he wanted to get out of it.

Identity and Difference

Monistic, infinite identity proves to be the horizon of the given, finite, differences—this does not however mean that the latter have disappeared within the former. Spinoza's method of observing things uniquely from various viewpoints—quasi perspectively, e.g. "insofar [*quatenus*] as the mind understands all things as governed by necessity, to that extent [*eatenus*] it has a greater power over emotions" (*E* V, P6), that is to say "*in se consideratus*" or with their relation to something else in sight—is proven here too. He always points out that "things can be conceived as real in two different ways" namely in respect to their particularities or in regard to their participation in the whole.[47] In order to restore unity to the split Cartesian world, Spinoza chose the one substance to be the ground of identity for all being. This means only that things are *identical* in terms of their sufficient cause and in their general relation to the substance. If they are regarded alternatively as particular modifications of the two attributes of thought and extension, then they are clearly separated from one another. If body and mind then appear as one and the same individual or as distinct things depends on the angle of perception: "Mind and body—are one and the same individual thing, conceived now under the attribute of Thought and now under the attribute of Extension" (*E* II, P21S). And: "Two or more distinct things are distinguished from one another … by the difference of the attributes of the substances" (*E* I, P4).

Certainly, God is considered in the sense of Nicholas of Cusa as *coincidentia oppositorum*, which means that he is a veritable unity of identity and difference, which cannot be stated better than in the expression "God or Nature."[48] This peculiar figure of thought is the result of that methodical process by means of which Spinoza views things firstly differentially and then in terms of identification. He shows them to be unique and distinct in some respects but identical in their universal relation. Thereby, not only do God and Nature coincide but also nature or essence and—due to the parallelism of the world of ideas and the world of things— reality or perfection. The "or" (*sive*) guarantees the difference while at the same time founding the unity. It is a formula for the identity of parts that, as parts, still differ from one another. Proceeding from the basic assumption of the parallelisms of body and mind, the world of ideas and the world of things, the general and the particular, part and whole, Spinoza always shows that it is dependent on the angle of reception of the perceiving "I" whether one appreciates something in respect to its differences to others or to its universal identity of the whole.[49]

The Capacity for Freedom and Truth

Added to this, the following aspect must be considered: through knowledge—rational as well as, above all, intuitive—man has the possibility to convert their passions into actions, and therefore to become an appropriate cause of their affects. This means mastery over suffering and thus freedom. This capacity for freedom, however, makes the individual modification a subject.

Incidentally, the use of reason in Spinoza is not an end in itself. The goal of his philosophy is the *homo liber* (free man) or rather *vir sapiens* (honourable sage), in its moderate hedonistic way as he knows how to enjoy his life and be happy (*E* IV, P45S), with a sanguine peace of mind (*aquiescentia mentis*) that loves being. He can't reach this goal however when he is the mere object of his passions but only then when he can make use of his reason and therefore his freedom. The *homo liber* is the one "who lives solely according to the dictates of reason" (*E* IV, P67Pr). What is denied the will is granted to the capacity for knowledge. The cognizing mind thus has a very strong position in Spinoza's system. Therefore, the question of what is true falls to the subject who can see clearly and distinctly what is true and false. That which is true is that of which the cognizing "I" has a clear and distinct representation. This means, therefore, that the specific position of referentiality, from which one speaks and cognizes, is never denied but is always taken into consideration. This does not mean at all that Spinoza

understands this point of view as relativity. Rather, in the manner so typical of him, there results a coincidence of the process of knowing and of that which is known: a true idea agrees with its content completely, i.e. the truth ascertained by the I has a positive-objective equivalence (*E* I, D6). Herder mentions this toward the end of the conversation.[50]

Thus, although it will not be possible to assert that the idea of subjectivity exists in Spinoza in a theoretically formulated sense, one can certainly say that there is an emphasis on individuality, personal development and pluralistic diversity in a distinct proportion:

> Indeed, from what has been said I think everyone is quite convinced that emotions can be combined with one another in so many ways and give rise to so many variations that they cannot be numbered. (*E* III, P59S)

Herder's reception of Spinoza thus proves to be an idiosyncratic amalgamation of philosophical agreement as well as systematic and historical differences. A critical evaluation of Herder's relation to Spinoza's thought can therefore not come to a definitive outcome without also voicing the conditions within which his agreement or disagreement with Spinoza is stated. With this complexity, however, it becomes apparent how essentially Herder is influenced by Spinoza, the master of the thought of the identity of unity and plurality, or, using Herder's terms, of the particular and the general.

EVA SCHÜRMANN holds the Chair of Philosophical Anthropology and Cultural Philosophy at the University of Magdeburg (Germany) since 2011. For her book *Seeing as Practice* she was awarded the Science Prize of the Aby-Warburg-Foundation in 2014. Since 2015 she is co-editor of the German *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, a peer-review philosophical journal.

NOTES

1. See Karl Rosenkranz, G. *W. F. Hegels Leben*. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1844. Reprinted Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963.
2. Johann Gottfried Herder, *God, Some Conversations*. Trans. Frederick H. Burkhardt. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1940, 70. Original: J. G. Herder, *Sämtliche Werke*. Volume XVI. Ed. Bernhard Suphan. Berlin: Weidmann, 1877. Reprinted Hildesheim: Olms-Weimann, 1967, 404-580. Burkhardt's English translation from 1940 is based on the first edition of Herder's text. It adds parts of the second edition in notes or in the appendix but it is not a full translation of both editions. Whenever necessary, I translated directly from the original German second edition. TN
3. Herder, *God*, 177.
4. Herder, *God*, 213.
5. All references to Spinoza's *Ethics* are to the translation by Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002). TN
6. See Heinrich Clairmont, „'Die Leute wollen keinen Gott, als in ihrer Uniform, ein menschliches Fabeltier'—Herders anthropologisch fundierte Gnoseologie und seine Spinozadeutung in Gott." *Spinoza im Deutschland*
des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts. Eds Eva Schürmann, Norbert Waszek and Frank Weinreich. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: rommann-holzboog, 2002, 329-355.
7. The pantheism controversy was a major intellectual and religious event in the 1780s that involved Jacobi, Lessing and Mendelssohn among others. It was sparked off by the question of whether Spinoza's philosophical system was to be understood as materialist and atheist, or theist or rather pantheist. Although the controversy was ignited in Germany, it had an effect throughout Europe. See Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism. The Struggle against Subjectivism, 1781–1801*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002. TN
8. Beate Monika Dreike, *Herders Naturauffassung in ihrer Beeinflussung durch Leibniz' Philosophie*. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1973.
9. Ever since Suphan had merely highlighted the "literary meaning" of the second edition in his concluding editorial statement to the collected works (to the detriment, astonishingly, of the philosophical import) one cannot find any argument to the contrary in the related research. See Herder, *Sämtliche Werke*, volume XVI, 625.
10. Wilhelm Vollrath, *Die Auseinandersetzung Herders mit Spinoza*. Gießen: PhD diss., 1911.
11. Joh. A. Dietterle, „Die Grundgedanken in Herders Schrift ‚Gott' und ihr Verhältnis zu Spinozas Philosophie." *Theologische Studien und Kritiken 87* (1914, 505-555). The title promises considerably more than the author maintains.
12. Rudolf Haym, *Herder. Nach seinem Leben und seinem Werk. 2 Bde*. Reprinted Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1958.
13. Eugen Kühnemann, *Herder*. Leipzig: Verlag der Dürrschen Buchhandlung, 1904.
14. Hermann Timm, *Gott und die Freiheit. Studien zur Spinozarenaissance im Deutschland der Goethezeit*. Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1974.
15. David Bell, *Spinoza in Germany from 1670 to the Age of Goethe*. University of London: PhD diss., 1984.
16. Of course, this cannot be done here in the necessary length and detail. However, such an analysis is available in the present author's MA thesis from Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 1993.
17. Herder, *Sämtliche Werke XVI*, 541: „Gott oder das Daseyn." Although in Burkhardt's translation

of Herder's text, 'Being' is always written in upper case, I have resolved to render it consistently throughout the text with a lower case. TN
18. Kant's objection to the ontological proof of God, which states that being cannot be perfection, because being is not a real predicate, does not interest Herder in this context. Here he continues to hold to what he wrote at the age of 20 in *Versuch* über *das Seyn*, highlighted in a confrontation with Kant's *Einzig möglichem Beweisgrund*: "*Quidquid est, illud est*" is sufficient as the basis for all certainty of being. Decades later even, in a letter to Jacobi dated February 6, 1784, he still held to this view, as Spinozan knowledge.
19. Herder, *God*, 202.
20. Incidentally, it is also this view of existence which substantiates the thesis of the non-demonstrability of God. When he writes, in his *Versuch* über *das Seyn*, that God's existence is not demonstrable ("*kein Dasein Gottes ist erweislich*") the point is that it is nevertheless certain ("*dennoch Gewiß*") (KAA [Kant Akademieausgabe—TN], XXVIII, ii, 959). The self-evidence of all being is related to its perfection.
21. Compare this with the lengthy digression added by Herder to the fourth conversation in the second edition that, amazingly, does not prevent him from clinging to an acting, active 'He' ("*thätigen Er*").
22. Herder, *God*, 165.
23. "Letter to Jacobi from December 20, 1784." *Herders Briefe*. Ed. Regine Otto. Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1983, 234.
24. On these affirmative basic features of Spinoza's philosophy of life, see also Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Robert Hurley. San Francisco: City Lights, 1988.
25. On this, see also R. Haym, „Herder bringt das Kunststück [fertig], den Gott des Spinoza und den der Christen einstimmig zu finden." Haym, *Herder II*, 309. The multiplicity of ideas of God was also described by Elisabeth Hoffart in *Herders ‚Gott'*. Halle a. d. S.: Niemeyer, 1918.
26. Herder, *God*, 213.
27. See also Herder, *God*, 169-170 and Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Zone Books, 1992.
28. Herder, *God*, 132.
29. Herder, *God*, 131.
30. Herder, *God*, 132-33.
31. Herder, *God*, 195.
32. Herder, *God*, 123.
33. Herder, *God*, 109.
34. See Christian Wolff, *B. v. Spinozas Sittenlehre*. Trans. Johann Lorenz Schmidt. #WoGW II.Abt. Bd15#Frankfurt and Leipzig: 1944, e.g. 93, 215.
35. See B. de Spinoza, *Opera. Bd. II. Lateinisch und deutsch*. Ed. Konrad Blumenstock. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967, 165.
36. B. de Spinoza, *Sämtliche Werke in sieben Bänden. Bd. 2*. Trans. Otto Baensch. Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1989, 52.
37. Exceptions are also possible here when *vis* and *conatus* are equated. See, e.g. *E* IV, P3.
38. Herder, *God*, 210.
39. Herder, *God*, 211.
40. Herder, *God*, 211.
41. Herder, *God*, 211.
42. Herder, *God*, 211.

43. Herder, *God*, 212.
44. Herder, *God*, 212-13.
45. In this connection one must also think of *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* that Spinoza began in a quite individual manner with reference to his experience.
46. For example, in his study on the history of the concept of the "I," Riedel points out that "the individual [of Spinoza] is granted." Christoph Riedel, *Subjekt und Individuum*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989, 83.
47. Cf. *E* V, P29S: "We conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them as related to a fixed time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature. Now the things that are conceived as true or real in this second way, we conceive under a form of eternity, and their ideas involve the eternal and infinite essence of God."
48. Incidentally, Hegel refers to the antinomical character of the first definition in his *Differenzschrift*. See on this Hans-Christian Lucas, *Spinoza in Hegels Logik*. Leiden: Brill, 1982, 10.
49. In the end, Spinoza's perspectival view is proven on all levels of the *Ethics*. Also in regard to the affects and actions, he states: *Nullo actio, in se solo considerata, bona aut mala est* (*E* IV, P59Pr2; "no action, considered solely in itself, is good or evil"). Essentially, the unity of identity and difference is already thereby set, as God, the *ultima ratio*, is the single substance, beside or beyond which there can be no other, which must nevertheless be considered as both *res cogitans* and *res extensa*.
50. Herder, *God*, 212-18.

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rational and affective genesis of sociability: balibar's reading of spinoza

daniela voss

In his writings on Spinoza, Balibar has repeatedly returned to Proposition 37 of Part IV of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza lays out, in two demonstrations, "the foundations of the state (*civitas*)" (*E* IV, P37S1).[1] Balibar famously interpreted these two demonstrations as providing a rational and an affective genesis of sociability. In his view, this analysis of sociability is crucial because it shows, in a very condensed way, how the social and political problematic can be derived from a philosophical anthropology or, indeed, a relational ontology of transindividuality.[2] According to this reading, sociability is constructed by a dialectic of reason and passion "just like" the construction of individualities, which occurs through the passionate and rational exchanges with others. The cause of sociability is ultimately the individual striving for self-preservation (*conatus*), which is best realised in the rational determination of one's actions and reciprocal usefulness to one another. The common good is thus to be found in mutual utility, that is, the exchange of goods and the communication of ideas and knowledge. In the final analysis, what we find in Spinoza is a "a highly original philosophy of communication."[3]

This paper aims to highlight some difficulties with this reading of Spinoza, in addition to those that Balibar himself mentions in a recent essay.[4] While Balibar tries to establish what could be called a 'politics of the second kind,' which proposes mutual utility, virtue and friendship as a common "communicable good," this reading seems to disregard what Spinoza himself defined as the greatest good

which alone secures "satisfaction of mind" (*E* IV, Ap.IV) and the only "principle which will be able to produce peace and concord among men"[5]: the knowledge and intellectual love of God (*E* IV, P28). For Balibar, the emergence of this third kind of knowledge "represents a *leap* outside the social and political problematic that had found its fulfilment in the propositions of Part IV of the *Ethics* on *convenientia* and the mutual utility of men."[6] However, the idea of God is already at the heart of the very proposition that contains Spinoza's analysis of sociability. A close reading of Proposition 37 will show that Spinoza's socio-political analysis is firmly anchored in his ontology of the One-All, or rather One-Infinity, of substance.

Furthermore, Balibar's reconstruction of the two demonstrations of Proposition 37 as two "antithetical narratives"[7] of the genesis of sociability opposes the faculties of rationality on the one hand, and passions and imagination on the other, as two antithetical political tendencies for the association of human beings. However, Spinoza does not consider affectivity as the opposite of rationality: there are affects that arise from reason and wherein the mind is not passive (*E* IV, P63). In other words, there are joys and desires that are active because they are not determined by external encounters (*E* III, P58). These active affects and desires not only play an indispensable role in the so-called "rational genesis" of sociability: the greatest and most constant of all affects, the intellectual love of God, is a key element of the "affective genesis." Ultimately, what will be shown is that the two demonstrations are *alternative* proofs for the genesis of sociability, drawing their resources from a (rational) morality and (universal) religion rather than from genuine political considerations.

BALIBAR'S 'POLITICS OF THE SECOND KIND'

In Part IV, Proposition 37, we find the most substantial account of Spinoza's political ideas in the *Ethics*. It is there, in the demonstrations and scholia, that he brings together the findings of his ontological and anthropological reflections with the question of the foundations of sociability (*civitas*). The proposition and the two demonstrations read as follows:

> P37: *The good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men; and this Desire is greater as his knowledge of God is greater*.
>
> Dem.: Insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, they are most useful to man (by P35C1); hence (by P19), according to the guidance of reason, we necessarily strive to bring it about that men live according to the guidance of reason. Now, the good which everyone who lives according

> to the dictate of reason (i.e., by P24, who seeks virtue) wants for himself is understanding (by P26). Therefore, the good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men. Next, Desire, insofar as it is related to the Mind, is the very essence of the mind (by Def. Aff. I). Now the essence of the Mind consists in knowledge (by *E* II, P11), which involves knowledge of God (by *E* II, P47). Without this [knowledge the mind] can neither be nor be conceived (by *E* I, P15). Hence, as the Mind's essence involves a greater knowledge of God, so will the Desire also be greater by which one who seeks virtue desires for another the good he wants for himself, q.e.d.
>
> Alternative dem.: The good which man wants for himself and loves, he will love more constantly if he sees that others love it (by *E* III, P31). So (by *E* III, P31C), he will strive to have the others love the same thing. And because this good is common to all (by P36), and all can enjoy it, he will therefore (by the same reason) strive that all may enjoy it. And this striving will be the greater, the more he enjoys this good (by *E* III, P37), q.e.d.

Some preliminary remarks are necessary to prepare the ground for understanding the two demonstrations. First of all, we need to recall Spinoza's ontological and anthropological assumption that the essence of the human being is desire, which is to say, a striving (*conatus*) to persevere in one's being. Because of this *conatus*, human beings will necessarily strive for what is useful to them. In Proposition 35, Part IV, Spinoza demonstrated that nothing is more useful for a human being than another human being who lives according to the guidance of reason. This is so because when we are driven by passions, we can easily be at variance with one another. Affects are inconstant and changeable, insofar as they arise within a play of external forces. Spinoza has shown at some length how affects of joy and sadness, love and hatred can be moderated or restrained by their opposite affect. Furthermore, they can be undermined (for instance through the influence of a third person) in such a way that we find ourselves in a state of ambivalence. For instance, if we imagine that someone is "averse to what we love, or the opposite [NS: that he loves what we hate], then we shall undergo vacillation of mind" (*E* III, P31).

Imaginary agreement is of an equally inconstant nature, which has to do with the temporal structure of the faculty of imagination and its dependence on perceptual signs. It first asserts the presence of its object, but then it might be affected in such a way that the presence of the object is excluded. The object appears as

contingent, as an uncertain event. Thus the faculty of imagination enters into a state of "vacillation," fluctuating between the image of the object and the causes that precisely exclude its existence. The object of imagination carries with it the risk of its own dissipation over time.

It seems that neither common passions nor imaginary agreements have a stabilizing social function. However, when we are guided by reason, our action can be understood through our nature alone. We are no longer tossed to and fro in our affects, driven about by external causes, but act according to our own nature, that is, freely. Freedom for Spinoza refers to a power of action that arises out of adequate ideas, i.e. an adequate knowledge of causes. If human beings always acted in accordance with what is confirmed by reason as their true interest, society would need no laws: peace and tranquillity would prevail in a community of rational beings that would be bound together in mutual friendship and love. In such a utopian society, the common good would also be plain for everyone, since whatever we strive for under the guidance of reason is good. Spinoza explains that we call something 'good' not because it has some intrinsic value but because it is useful to us with regard to preserving our being and increasing our power of acting. Now, "the mind, insofar as it reasons, cannot conceive anything to be good for itself except what leads to understanding" (*E* IV, P26D). This striving for understanding is the very essence, or nature, of the human mind. Moreover, understanding is a good that can be shared by all without rivalry or loss. It involves an adequate knowledge of God, or infinite substance.

The first demonstration of Proposition 37 is precisely based on this claim: The good that everyone seeks for himself, namely understanding, is a common good that can be shared equally without causing rivalries, resentment or hatred. Spinoza imagines someone objecting to him: "what if the greatest good of those who seek virtue were not common to all? Would it not follow from that, as above (see P34), that men who live according to the guidance of reason, that is (by P35), men, insofar as they agree in nature, would be contrary to one another?" (*E* IV, P36S). To this Spinoza responds that it is by definition that true knowledge, that is, adequate knowledge of the common good, is universal, because "man could neither be nor be conceived if he did not have the power to enjoy this greatest good. For it pertains to the essence of the human Mind (by *E* II, P47) to have an adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence" (*E* IV, P36S).

The knowledge that Spinoza refers to in his reply does not seem to be a progressive knowledge that we accumulate in the course of our lives and that has proven

its utility. Rather, it is a kind of knowledge that we necessarily possess (or, if I may say so, that we *are*) inasmuch as "our mind, with respect both to essence and existence, follows from the divine nature, and continually depends on God" (*E* V, P36S). The human mind is nothing but a mode, an immanent modification of the infinite substance, an internal effect in the attribute of thought; as such its essence cannot involve existence. Only the essence of substance contains the cause of its existence within its definition (*E* I, P7). As a mode, the human mind depends on the absolutely infinite substance as immanent cause, on account of which it exists. It does so inasmuch as it pertains to the attribute of thought, which envelops an infinite causal chain of eternal modes of thinking. An individual human mind is just one effect, determined by another eternal mode of thinking, which is again determined by another: "so that together, they all constitute God's eternal and infinite intellect" (see *E* V, P40S), which is an infinite mode of the thought-attribute. In this way, by anchoring the formal being (*esse formale*) of the human mind in God, Spinoza not only attempts to prove its eternity but also to ground an intuitive knowledge of God: "So (by P30) insofar as it is eternal, it has knowledge of God, knowledge which is necessarily adequate (by *E* II, P46)" (*E* V, P31Pr). Indeed, Spinoza argues that everyone must have knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence (*E* II, P47S), and if this knowledge is not clear to everyone to the same degree, then this is so because we tend to conceive of God abstractly or superficially, as we imagine bodies. Spinoza's *Ethics* can be read as an attempt to restrict the imagination to its proper place (the encounter of bodies), to modify the play of affects such that joyous passions that agree with reason (*E* IV, P59Pr) and desires that arise from reason (*E* IV, P63Pr2) prevail, and finally to assist true understanding by means of demonstrations of mathematical rigour: "For the eyes of the mind, by which it sees and observes things, are the demonstrations themselves" (*E* V, P23S).

In short, Spinoza's reasons for why the greatest good, the knowledge of God, can only be desired unanimously are the following: firstly it pertains to the essence of the human mind to strive for adequate knowledge. Secondly, "the human mind has an adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence" (*E* II, P47). This is so because all things are in God and nothing can be nor be conceived without God (*E* I, P15). Thirdly, this knowledge of God forms the third kind of knowledge, which exceeds the other kinds of knowledge in excellence and utility, because it enables the human mind to know of all those things which can follow from this given knowledge of God (*E* II, P40). If this argument seems somehow circular, this is indeed the case, and necessarily so: Spinoza has guaranteed through the ontological metastructure (the immanence of each singular mode in God) that

the idea of God is indeed universal. The difficulty in fully grasping the idea of God in its objective being (*esse objective*) seems to lie in the fact that we need to follow a bottom-up approach, if we are not lucky enough to have an intuitive grasp of it: "The more we understand singular things, the more we understand God" (*E* V, P24). The mind has to have ideas of itself, the body and external things as actually existing and as following necessarily from God as cause "insofar as he is considered under the attribute of which the things are modes" (*E* II, P45). In other words, the mind has to conceive things under a species of eternity (*E* II, P44C2), for which it requires common notions as the foundations of reasoning (see *E* II, P40S1).

This discussion of the idea of God and knowledge of the third kind was necessary in order to better mark the distinction between the concept of the common good, as presented above, and Balibar's concept of the common "communicable good". As Balibar rightly remarks, the third kind of knowledge considers singular things, or "singularities [that] *as such* are known as necessary."[8] This necessity, I would argue, is the eternal existence of each mode, whereby existence here is not to be understood in spatio-temporal terms but as immanence in God.[9] What we thus understand in the third kind of knowledge is the equality of modes in their eternal being; their immanence to an infinite One without will, interests, or affects, from whose essence everything follows by necessity; an eternal truth that can be understood with mathematical clarity (*more geometrico*).

Balibar's interpretation of the third kind of knowledge, instead of emphasising the equality and eternity of modes, focuses on the contingent differences of singular individuals:

> Rational communication requires that individuals know each other as different individuals who have much in common. "Under the guidance of Reason," humans know that their fellow humans are irreducible to one another, each having what Spinoza calls a specific *ingenium* [character or temperament], while being mutually *convenientes* more than any other beings.[10]

Thus, in Balibar's view, rational knowledge of the third kind is precisely a valuing of difference on the common ground that we share with one another (*convenientia*). Through our differences, i.e. differences in powers and capacities, we can be mutually beneficial and increase security and prosperity for all. We benefit from the exchange of knowledge, services and goods. According to Balibar's reading,

sociability results from this rational insight into reciprocal utility, which is based on "difference in similarity."[11] What leads human beings to this insight is not a sort of "transcendent reason"[12] but rather a cumulative *economic* reason that comprehends the reciprocal usefulness of human beings to one another. It depends on imagination (to imagine others as similar to oneself), experience (to recognise others in their empirical differences as actually existing, spatio-temporal beings), and common notions. Consequently, the idea of the common good, in Balibar's reading, relies on the first and second kind of knowledge. It is not a universal and true idea (idea of God), but a communicable, economically rational idea (mutual utility). As Balibar says, "in the final analysis, there is no other cause of sociability than the striving of individuals to achieve self-preservation and, therefore, mutual utility."[13] It is in this sense that he interprets the first demonstration of proposition 37 as a *rational genesis* of sociability.[14]

The idea of politics that underlies this reconstruction of the rational genesis of sociability can be called a 'politics of the second kind' for the reason that Balibar establishes a correspondence between the three orders of knowledge and different regimes of communication that represent distinct ways of life.

> And that "way of life" is nothing other than a given *regime of communication* (affective, economic or intellectual) with other individuals. The different regimes of communication form a sequence through which a collective effort is being worked out – the effort to transform the mode of communication, to move from relationships of identification (that is, from the mode of *communion*) to relationships based on *exchange* of goods and of knowledge. The political state itself is essentially one such regime.[15]

Balibar seems to understand the second order of knowledge as basically an economic regime of communication, on account of the exchange of goods and of knowledge.[16] In other words, the relationships are based on reciprocal utility and difference in similarity. But clearly, in the *Ethics*, this is not the highest form of knowledge. In Part V of the *Ethics* Spinoza elaborates on the intuitive knowledge and intellectual love of God, "which we really fully possess" (*E* V, P20S). Spinoza emphasises that "the essence of our mind consists only in knowledge, of which God is the beginning and foundation (by *E* I, P15 and II, P47S)" and he takes pains to prove "how much the knowledge of singular things I have called intuitive, *or* knowledge of the third kind (see *E* II, P40S2), can accomplish, and how much more powerful it is than the universal knowledge I have called knowledge of the second kind" (*E* V, P36S).

From the beginning of the *Ethics*, Spinoza prepares the reader, through constructing his ontological metastructure of immanence, for accepting our relation to God – if not immediate then at least mediate – as immanent cause, and for the kind of knowledge founded in God.[17] The idea of God has no beginning and no other foundation than God himself; it is universal and not general (as in the sense of continuously being improved through communication). In the first demonstration of Proposition 37 of Part IV, Spinoza carefully guides the reader through the insights of economic reason to the intellectual truths, which can only be seen through the mind's eye. He shows that seeking one's own advantage is not in conflict with sociability, on the contrary, one's personal interest is best realised in relationships of mutual utility, virtue and friendship. Next, self-preservation is nothing but striving for understanding under the guidance of reason, and understanding is a good, which can be shared by all equally. In fact, understanding involves knowledge of God and as such it is the greatest good that the mind can strive for (*E* IV, P28). Depending on the degree with which it occupies the human mind, it necessarily fills the mind with intellectual love as well as with the desire that everyone else may participate in this knowledge and intellectual love of God. Hence the principle that is able to unite everyone in mutual love (not mutual utility) is the properly universal idea and love of God. As Guyau puts it:

> There is, therefore, a coincidence between interest and disinterestedness, between self-love and love towards others. For Spinoza's God is ultimately ourselves, in our eternal substance. Hence, to love God is to love oneself and all others, it is one and the same love. The ethics of particular utility strives to identify itself to a universal ethics.[18]

With his conception of the common good as the recognition of mutual utility, Balibar remains on the level of a 'politics of the second kind.' It is striking that he does not include Part V of the *Ethics* in the discussion, but prefers to consider the analysis of sociability as "the very core" of the *Ethics*, i.e. Proposition 37 of Part IV.[19] He briefly mentions the idea of God, only to dismiss it as soon as possible.[20] While Balibar's reading is ingenious enough in the way it renders Spinoza's philosophy relevant for readers today, for whom considerations of utility will be paramount, it certainly conflicts with Spinoza's own understanding of the primacy and pre-eminence of the intuitive or third kind of knowledge. It is true that for Balibar (as well as for Spinoza), calculating utility does not mean the pure reign of self-interest in the sense that Adam Smith depicts it. Balibar particularly emphasises the free circulation of ideas, access to knowledge, education for all, and transparency in political affairs.[21] However, the concept of utility seems not well suited today for

an emancipatory politics. By the way, neither does a 'politics of the third kind', guided by the idea of God or knowledge of the third kind. Spinoza himself seemed to be rather pessimistic with regard to the practical political consequences of the third kind of knowledge: thus in the absence of any free and equal community of wise human individuals, "the true goal of politics" can only be, as Guyau explains, "to organise the strongest possible physical power to prevent passion from tearing man apart; and, at the same time, … to make this physical power increasingly useless, replacing it with the power [*puissance*] of reason."[22]

TWO "ANTITHETICAL NARRATIVES" OF THE GENESIS OF SOCIABILITY

The second demonstration of Proposition 37, Part IV of the *Ethics*, provides, as Balibar argues, an account of the *affective genesis* of sociability. Key to understanding this genesis, rooted in passions, is an affective mechanism that Spinoza coined "imitation of the affects" (*imitatio affectuum*): "*If we imagine a thing like us, toward which we have had no affect, to be affected with some affect, we are thereby affected with a like affect*" (*E* III, P27S). For instance, we are affected with a joyful affect simply because someone "like us" is filled with joy, or conversely, we are affected with a sad affect because the other is filled with sadness. Spinoza holds this to be true not only with regard to people to whom we have personal relationships, i.e. people we love (friends or family), but also with regard to people "toward which we have had no affect," provided they have something in common with us. This relation of similarity (i.e. partial identification) is produced by the imagination, on account of the likenesses that we perceive among people that embrace the same habits and affective structures by sharing a common form of life. We can assume that the 'imitation of the affects' works the better, the more the other person, by whose image we are affected, is "like us."

From the imitation of the affects further affective mechanisms can be deduced. For instance, we might feel encouraged and confirmed in our love for some thing, if others love the same thing, and thereupon our love for it can even be increased (*E* III, P31D). Or we might have the "ambition" (*ambitio*) to make others love the same thing that we hold in esteem, or the reverse, make others hate what we hate (*E* III, P29S). However, "ambition is a fundamentally ambivalent affect; it is both intensified and destroyed by the fundamental imitation of the affects."[23] This is so because when all love the same thing and "all alike want this, they are alike an obstacle to one another" (*E* III, P31C). The common desire for some material goods that are a scarce resource, or for those "finite and unstable objects, such as wealth, honour, and love"[24] can cause division and rivalry between people.

Thus while they "rejoice to sing the praises of the thing they love, they fear to be believed" (*E* IV, P37S1). They will try to appropriate and monopolise the good, as well as secure exclusive access only for themselves. Even if the desired good is of an ideal nature and thus partable or communicable, the passionate accord that it engenders remains tenuous and at risk of collapsing into its opposite, given that the definition of the common ideal or the measures of its implementation may be contested.

From the analysis of the affective mechanisms such as identification, imitation and ambition, Balibar concludes that human beings are drawn into ambiguous and unstable relationships. Contrary to what one might assume, neither the imitation of the affects nor ambition lead to friendship or greater social harmony. Rather, these fluctuating passions and imaginations generate a *conflictual sociability* but a sociability nonetheless. Balibar argues that the affective mechanisms of identification and imitation can, for instance, found a religious community, a class or a nation, yet only under the condition of "fear and misappreciation of the difference between individuals."[25] These mechanisms ultimately lead to the exclusion of those we imagine not to be "like us," thus generating religious fundamentalism, class animosities or nationalism.[26] Spinoza admits that passions, such as fear and hope of the masses, can be the driving force for the foundation of a state. But the kind of harmony that results is unstable and risks being undermined by the dynamic antagonism of passions. "Harmony is also commonly born of Fear, but then it is without trust. Add to this that Fear arises from weakness of mind, and therefore does not pertain to the exercise of reason" (*E* IV, Ap.16). The *affective genesis* of the state cannot ensure social cohesion and stability. Balibar points out that what is required are institutional processes, the instantiation of a juridical apparatus of laws and civil rights. In order for the juridical apparatus to be effective, the state has to be invested with sufficient power to make and maintain common law, and to *force* citizens to agree and be compatible – "not by reason, which cannot restrain affects (by P17S), but by threats," as Spinoza outlines in the second Scholium of Proposition 37.

Such is Balibar's interpretation of the second demonstration referring to the affective genesis of sociability, which is necessarily a conflictual sociability. In the final analysis, Balibar presents the two demonstrations of Proposition 37 as two *antithetical accounts of sociability* that have to be taken together as the dialectic foundation of the City: both rational agreement and imaginary ambivalence generate "the real-imaginary complexity of social relationships."[27] He thus concludes:

> We must therefore understand that these two antithetical narratives of the genesis of the City do not correspond to two types of City, and even less to some opposition between an ideal city (which is, in some sense, "celestial") and real cities (which are irremediably "earthly"). They represent two aspects of a single dialectic. Every real city is always founded simultaneously on both an active genesis and a passive genesis: on a "free" (or rather, a liberating) rational agreement, on the one hand, and an imaginary agreement whose intrinsic ambivalence supposes the existence of a constraint, on the other.[28]

Therefore, sociability has to be constructed by a dialectic of reason and passions, of utility and conflict. While in this early text, Balibar rather thinks of the dialectical relation between reason and passions as an opposition and the two narratives of the genesis of sociability as "antithetical," in his recent revision he claims instead a "circle of reciprocal presupposition" between the two. There is a "chiasm" between rational and passionate sociability:

> The idea of a city entirely constituted by logics of passionate imitation is absurd: a rational utility must not only be "immanent" but recognized by the citizens, which is the function of institutions. But the idea of a rational city, without an affective and imaginary "base", is just as devoid of signification. I believe that this thesis is implicit in the very way in which Spinoza uses the strategic category of the "similar" [*semblable*] to define the "common good" as a model of life "according to the guidance of reason".[29]

This recent interpretation of the two demonstrations is preferable to the earlier one of "antithetical narratives," which built on the traditional dichotomies between reason/passions or reason/imagination as two antithetical political tendencies. The problem with this latter reading is that it neglects the role of active affects or desires that spring from reason. In particular, it disregards the intellectual love of God, which is free from any ambivalence or uncertainty that define the affective relations to finite and unstable objects of desire. Lastly, it cannot explain why Spinoza labels the second demonstration as an "alternative demonstration" (*aliter*): Spinoza claims to explain the same thing or action only in a different way. He does not mark these two demonstrations as an antithesis. In what follows I will address these difficulties in turn.

In general, Spinoza considers the play of passions as an obstacle to understanding and seeks for remedies to restrain their power. He asserts that humans beings are in many ways driven by external causes "like waves on the sea driven by contrary winds" (*E* III, P59S). Insofar as they are assailed by affects, which are passions, they can be contrary to one another (*E* IV, P34). By contrast, human beings become alike, insofar as they live under the guidance of reason. However, unlike those philosophers who subject human affectivity to moral judgment and condemnation, and who seek methods how to gain absolute power over the affects, Spinoza claims that it is impossible to subdue or control them absolutely, as we are beings that depend on a permanent exchange with other things and are subject to external forces (*E* IV, P18S). What is more, he acknowledges a positive power of the affects: joyful affects increase our power of thinking and acting.[30] In Spinoza's words: "By *Joy*, therefore, I shall understand in what follows that *passion by which the Mind passes to a greater perfection*. And by *Sadness*, that *passion by which it passes to a lesser perfection*" (*E* III, P11S). Indeed, a joy can even be called 'good,' insofar as "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" (*E* IV, P59Pr).

It is true that affects, insofar as they indicate affections of our body that result from external encounters, remain passions and can only lead to inadequate ideas. Inadequate ideas amount to partial knowledge, that is, knowledge of the effects suffered from external bodies, and cannot give us knowledge of the causes, for instance, the nature of those external bodies. However, Spinoza explicitly specifies joys and desires that are *active*: they are not determined by external encounters but related to us insofar as we act. This is to say, whenever the mind conceives a true or adequate idea, this action is accompanied by an active affection (or self-affection) of joy. In this case, we are ourselves the adequate cause of the affection and Spinoza defines the corresponding affect as an action (*E* III, D3). He names a few of these active affects; all of them are derived from joy. One example is self-esteem (*acquiescentia in se ipso*), which "is a Joy born of the fact that a man considers himself and his own power of acting" (*E* III, Def. Aff. XXV; see also *E* IV, P52). In fact, Spinoza claims that self-esteem, which arises from reason, "is really the highest thing we can hope for. For (as we have shown in P25) no one strives to preserve his being for the sake of any end." He concludes that "we are guided most by love of esteem and can hardly bear a life in disgrace" (*E* IV, P52S). Spinoza enumerates as further examples moderation, sobriety, chastity, which "are not affects *or* passions, but indicate the power of the mind, a power which moderates

[excessive] affects" (*E* III, P56S). Spinoza counts those three also as active affects, which becomes clear in the Scholium of Proposition 59, Part III of the *Ethics*:

> *All actions that follow from affects related to the Mind insofar as it understands* I relate to *Strength of character*, which I divide into Tenacity and Nobility. For by *Tenacity* I understand *the Desire by which each one strives, solely from the dictate of reason, to preserve his being*. By *Nobility* I understand *the Desire by which each one strives, solely from the dictate of reason, to aid other men and join them to him in friendship*. Those actions, therefore, which aim only at the agent's advantage, I relate to Tenacity, and those which aim at another's advantage, I relate to Nobility. So Moderation, Sobriety, presence of mind in danger, and so forth, are species of Tenacity, whereas Courtesy, Mercy, and so forth, are species of Nobility. (E III, P59S)

Those active affects, which Spinoza enumerates, all agree with the rules of reason or are *born* of reason. Apart from affects, there are also desires that are related to us, insofar as we act or understand something, and which are called *active*. In fact, our knowledge would be weak and ineffective, if there were no desire or striving related to it. Spinoza explicitly acknowledges affects or desires that arise from reason (*E* IV, P63Pr2).

If we now go back to the first demonstration of Proposition 37, Part IV, we are able to see that the supposedly 'rational genesis' of sociability indeed involves active affects and desires. As Spinoza explicates in Scholium 1: "he who strives from reason to guide others acts not by impulse, but kindly, generously, and with the greatest steadfastness of mind" (*E* IV, P37S1), that is, by tenacity and nobility. And in the following passage he declares that the knowledge from reason generates in us the "Desire to do good" as well as the desire "to the formation of friendship" (*E* IV, P37S1).

The psychic economy that Balibar identifies in the second demonstration, dedicated to the affective genesis, can only lead to a highly unstable and conflictual sociability, because it is rooted in imaginary ambivalence and the fluctuation of passions. Balibar seems to agree with Pierre Macherey who maintains that "all passions without exception … [tend] towards a *fluctuatio animi* [a vacillation or fluctuation of the mind]."[31] Affects of joys are not exempt to this general principle: passionate joys, "which are in fact imaginary joys linked to encounters with external bodies, cannot be assembled into a coherent stable aggregate, but rather tend inevitably to conflict, tending not towards composition but towards

decomposition."[32] However, if we look at the second demonstration more closely, there is no mention of any fluctuation between love and hatred.

> Alternative dem.: The good which man wants for himself and loves, he will love more constantly if he sees that others love it (by *E* III, P31). So (by *E* III, P31C), he will strive to have the others love the same thing. And because this good is common to all (by P36), and all can enjoy it, he will therefore (by the same reason) strive that all may enjoy it. And this striving will be the greater, the more he enjoys this good (by *E* III, P37), q.e.d. (*E* IV, P37Pr2)

It is true that the psychic mechanisms involved here are the imitation of the affects and ambition, and in Proposition 31, Part III, Spinoza has indeed emphasised the risk that one's feeling of love might collapse, when it is connected with an image of someone who is averse to one's object of love. But the desired good that Spinoza refers to in Proposition 37, Part IV, is not just any imaginary object, but a good common to all, the greatest good, which is according to the previous proposition (P36) the knowledge of God. "From this kind of knowledge there arises the greatest satisfaction of Mind there can be" (*E* V, P32), and this joy is necessarily an active joy, because it is "accompanied by the idea of oneself". Since self-knowledge (by *E* V, P30) implies knowledge of God, Spinoza concludes that "it is also accompanied by the idea of God, as its cause" (*E* V, P32Pr). The joy related to the idea of God as its cause is what Spinoza calls the "intellectual love of God" (*E* V, P32C).[33] As regards this intellectual love, it cannot be undermined by any other affect. As Spinoza states in Proposition 37, Part V, "[t]here is nothing in Nature which is contrary to this intellectual love, or which can take it away". It is the most constant affect of all and cannot be destroyed. "This Love toward God cannot be tainted by an affect of Envy or Jealousy: instead, the more men we imagine to be joined to God by the same bond of Love, the more it is encouraged" (*E* V, P20). This is precisely the affective mechanism, which is referred to in the second demonstration of Proposition 37, Part IV, and which is necessary to bring people together in mutual love. For therein consists "our greatest happiness, *or* blessedness," as Spinoza reminds us: "namely in the knowledge of God alone, by which we are led to do only those things which love and morality advise" (*E* II, P49S). He tells us how advantageous this doctrine is in individual as well as social or political life:

> This doctrine contributes to social life, insofar as it teaches us to hate no one, to disesteem no one, to mock no one, to be angry at no one, to envy no

> one; and also insofar as it teaches that each of us should be content with his own things, and should be helpful to his neighbor, not from unmanly compassion, partiality, or superstition, but from the guidance of reason, as the time and occasion demand. I shall show this in the Fourth Part. (*E* II, P49S)

Spinoza's conclusions for socio-political life, at least in the *Ethics*, draw primarily from his conceptions of the knowledge and intellectual love of God. As he emphasises, "especially necessary to bring people together in love, are the things which concern Religion and Morality. On this, see P37S1 and S2, P46S, and P73S" (E IV, Ap.XV). Of course, religion and morality in the sense that Spinoza embraces them have to be understood in terms of a universal and rational ethics. In the *Theological-Political Treatise* he was highly critical of superstition, the reign of dogmatic opinion and the authority of the Church. However, Spinoza's ontology is still "theological," if only in the sense that he upholds an ontology of the One (absolutely infinite substance). As several philosophers of our time have argued, the crucial problem of contemporary thought is how to think the multiple. Instead of embarking on this broader discussion, however, I will simply recall some of the well-known problems that follow from deducing, by way of a philosophy of nature that explains nature as One, governed by causal necessity, the foundations of social and political life. These difficulties revolve around the naturalisation of the political, the analogical transfer of natural causality into the human realm, and the gesture of grounding politics in a naturalised figure of the human.

CONCLUSION

Balibar contends that in Spinoza, politics and philosophy are closely intertwined.[34] On the basis of Spinoza's philosophical anthropology, which explains the constitution of human individuals through rational and passionate exchanges, he proposes an account of the rational and the affective genesis of sociability. Political life thus emerges from the dialectical relation between two opposing political tendencies: ideological, imaginary and passionate mechanisms on the one hand, and a liberating rational agreement on the other. In combination, following a certain logic of proportion [*ratio*], these tendencies account for the constitution of any sociability.

Spinoza seems to suggest that the foundation of sociability can be achieved either way: through reason *or* through affects. Elsewhere, he states that "to every action to which we are determined from an affect which is a passion, we can be determined

by reason, without that affect" (*E* IV, P59). Nevertheless, Spinoza seems to have a preference for the guidance by reason, because "every desire, which arises from an affect which is a passion" is "blind" (*E* IV, P59S). While Balibar dissolves this tension by claiming that both passions and reason are constitutive of sociability, according to a certain ratio, I have shown in this paper that there is no rigid distinction between rationality and affects, since Spinoza also considers active affects and desires that spring from reason. Specifically, what Spinoza calls the intellectual love of God (*E* V, P32C) is a universal and rational affect, free from any ambivalence or threat by contrary affects. It is this affect that is attached to the 'common good,' i.e. the knowledge of God, and on account of which people can be united in mutual friendship and love, as demonstrated in the second proof of Proposition 37. The first proof equally refers to the idea of God, without which a human mind cannot be nor be conceived. There are ideas that actively exclude certain other ideas (see *E* III, P10) and certainly, the idea of God excludes any rejection, just as the love of God excludes any counter-affect. In the knowledge and intellectual love of God Spinoza seeks the principle for the foundation of sociability.

In a less idealist but rather materialist reading, Balibar interprets the 'common good' as resulting from a utilitarian reason that takes the differences between human individuals (their skills and knowledges) into account and seeks to harmonise each individual's striving through "the necessary establishment of a *commercium* with other man."[35] This is what I have called a 'politics of the second kind.' One might raise the question whether one can reasonably talk about a 'politics of the third kind,' or whether the alternative is simply, as Guyau suggests, a universal ethics. A 'politics of the third kind' would have to be one that upholds a universal idea of the common good, that does not consist in a generalisation of the particular interests of those who govern, nor a consensus between conflicting interests. It would have to be the idea of an equality that goes beyond the contingent anthropological "differences in similarity." Here it would be useful to look at Balibar's elaboration of the idea of equaliberty in his later work. The main problem, however, in reconciling a politics of the idea (for instance, of equaliberty) with Spinoza's philosophy is that, due to the ontological metastructure of the *Ethics*, the universality of the idea is already, and necessarily, given. By contrast, within a social and political context a truly political idea should be conceived as the historical and political result of a struggle. The question whether one could extract a 'politics of the third kind,' a politics of the idea, from Spinoza must be, it would seem, answered in the negative.

DANIELA VOSS is Associate Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Hildesheim. Her fields of research include the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, post-Kantian philosophy, early modern philosophy and, more recently, philosophy of technology. She is the author of *Conditions of Thought: Deleuze and Transcendental Ideas* (Edinburgh UP, 2013) and co-editor with Craig Lundy of *At the Edges of Thought: Deleuze and Post-Kantian Philosophy* (Edinburgh UP, 2015).

NOTES

1. I use Curley's translation of the *Ethics*, which appears in the *Collected Works of Spinoza*. Ed. and trans. Edwin Curley. Vol. 1, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985.
2. Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*. Trans. Peter Snowdon. London, New York: Verso, 1998, 76. See also Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality*. Delft: Eburon, 1997, 7.
3. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 99.
4. Etienne Balibar, "Philosophies of the Transindividual: Spinoza, Marx, Freud." *Australasian Philosophical Review* 2:1. Eds Mark Kelly and Dimitris Vardoulakis (2018), pp. 5-25. One of the problems Balibar notes is the *anthropomorphic* analogy between the construction of singular human individuals and of the political body as "quasi-individual". He acknowledges that the qualifier "quasi-" indicates a different logic, which he spells out in a number of points.
5. See Jean-Marie Guyau, "Spinoza: A Synthesis of Epicureanism and Stoicism," in this volume.
6. Balibar, "Philosophies of the Transindividual."
7. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 112.
8. Balibar, *From Individuality to Transindividuality*, 30.
9. See Spinoza's distinction of two types of existence in *E* V, P29S.
10. Balibar, *From Individuality to Transindividuality*, 30, translation modified, D.V. See also Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 110.
11. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 111.
12. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 83.
13. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 112-13.
14. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 110.
15. Baliblar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 124.
16. Elsewhere he characterises the three successive orders of knowledge as corresponding to "imagination, scientific reason and 'intellectual love of God'" respectively. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 97.
17. On the immediate causation of infinite things, where God is the absolutely proximate cause, and causation of finite things that depend on the mediation of these first things, see *E* I, P28S. On the problematic of the infinite and the finite in Spinoza, see Alain Badiou, "Spinoza's Closed Ontology." *Theoretical Writings*. Eds. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano. London, New York: Continuum, 2004, 81-93.
18. See Guyau, "Spinoza: A Synthesis," in this volume.
19. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 103.
20. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 81: "Let us begin by looking at the first demonstration. On the surface, the reasoning seems to follow a predictable course. Sociability is defined as reciprocity of participation in the greatest good, which is determined by reason. It is through the knowledge of truth (and thus of God, and thus of things) that men are disposed to desire this common Good, and thus their reciprocal usefulness – or in other words, to love one another. So it is not surprising that scholium 1 refers to this 'rational' mode of Desire as Religion and Morality. But this demonstration depends upon two prior propositions ..."
21. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 121.
22. Guyau, "Spinoza: A Synthesis," in this volume.
23. Jason Read, *The Politics of Transindividuality*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2016, 150.
24. Read, *The Politics of Transindividuality*, 150.
25. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 111.

26. “If someone has been affected with joy or sadness by someone of a class, or nation, different from his own, and this joy or sadness is accompanied by the idea of that person as its cause, under the universal name of the class or nation, he will love or hate, not only that person, but everyone of the same class or nation” (*E* III, P46).
27. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 96.
28. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 112.
29. Balibar, “Philosophies of the Transindividual.”
30. Deleuze first pointed to the positive role of joyful passions and showed “that from every passive joy there may arise an active joy distinguished from it only by its cause.” Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. New York: Zone Books, 1992, 275.
31. Pierre Macherey, *Introduction à l’Ethique de Spinoza*. Paris: PUF, 1995, 155. My translation, D.V.
32. Macherey, *Introduction à l’Éthique*, 154.
33. Spinoza shows some hesitation to call the intellectual love of God actually ‘joy’: “insofar as it [this satisfaction of mind] is related to God (by P35), it is joy (if I may still be permitted to use this term), accompanied by the idea of himself [as its cause]” (*E* V, P36S).
34. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 76.
35. Balibar, *From Individuality to Transindividuality*, 28.

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humility, *acquiescentia* and subordination: a spinozist response to jean hampton's feminist kantianism

janice richardson

INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND FEMINIST ANALYSES

> Humility is a sadness born of the fact a man considers his own lack of power, or weakness.
> (*E* III, DA26)

> We call him humble who quite often blushes, who confesses his own vices, and tells the virtues of others, who yields to all and finally who walks with his head bowed, and neglects to adorn himself.
> (*E* III, DA29Exp)

> For as pride is born of self-esteem so despondency is born of humility.
> (*E* III, DA28Exp)

> [Despondency is] a sadness born of a man's false opinion that he is below others.
> (*E* IV, P57S)

In this paper, I explore a feminist understanding of humility, drawing upon the work of Benedict Spinoza in order to explain some of the ways in which subordi-

nation is perpetuated. My aim is to demonstrate that Spinoza's conceptual framework provides a better understanding of (and solution to) the problem of humility than that of the Kantianism employed by feminist philosopher Jean Hampton. Hampton's work provides an important background to this paper.[1] She sets up the problem to be examined by recognising that there *is* a problem with humility; that there are women (and men) who are raised to view themselves as "a different type of person," one for whom morality involves *always* putting others first at the expense of their own interests. This course of behaviour, of someone who "yields to all" (*E* III, DA29Exp) as Spinoza puts it, is problematic for Kant and Hampton if it arises from a lack of self-worth or diminished sense of entitlement rather than from generosity. Hampton's Kantianism provides her with a straightforward analysis. She characterises such humility as based upon a moral failure to view *oneself* as of equal moral worth to others. For her, as for Kant, such a failure is morally wrong for the same reason that a failure to respect others is wrong: the humble fail to recognise that all persons (including themselves) should be treated with respect as equal.[2]

As I will explain, Hampton's reliance upon Kant's idea of equal moral worth has *no equivalent* in Spinoza's immanent ethics. Instead, Spinoza describes how we move from a state in which we compare ourselves to others to one in which there is no comparison made, as we gain adequate knowledge about ourselves. I will compare Jean Hampton's feminist analysis of humility and self-worth with that of Spinoza on humility and his complex view of self-esteem /self-contentment (*acquiescentia*). What happens when Hampton's feminist inquiry is reworked within a Spinozist rather than Kantian framework? Hampton's analysis of humility informs her understanding of practical situations. As I will explain below, it provides her with a way of understanding unfairness in long-term relationships, paradigmatically heterosexual marriage, and has implications for gender bias regarding the credibility of witnesses in the criminal (and civil) justice system. Ultimately, what is at stake in my examination of humility is our understanding of subordination and its perpetuation. As a result, I argue that Hampton's feminist insights about humility are both provocative and useful when reframed within a Spinozist analysis.

I start with Hampton as a comparator to Spinoza because of her insight that "the problem of selflessness" is a feminist problem. This does not mean that men cannot be humble or that there is anything *necessarily* humble about women, who have often been stereotyped as vain regarding their appearance in societies that

objectify them. Hampton is concerned about particular cultures in which women are trained to always "yield to others" and to be less confident of their abilities, with lower expectations of being respected. In Hampton's "Two Faces of Contractarian Thought" she compares Hobbes' view of our worth unfavourably with the Kantian position that we should all be treated as having equal moral worth.[3] Spinoza's view of human value does not fit within the Kantian position of equal moral worth, on which Hampton relies, but neither does Spinoza merely fall back on Hobbes' view that our worth is to be understood as our price. Instead, he holds a unique position in which a comparison with others only takes place when we have inadequate knowledge about ourselves. I explain this in the context of his understanding of humility and its opposite: *acquiescentia*, which is translated as self-esteem[4] but also self-contentment.[5]

THE PROBLEM OF HUMILITY: SETTING THE SCENE

Before turning to Spinoza, it is worth setting the scene by answering in more detail the question: what is at stake in Hampton's analysis? She uses the same arguments to address the criminal law as she does fairness in relationships—albeit that the criminal law provides an extreme example of unfairness. If someone is treated as a means to an end—paradigmatically in sexual offences—then, Hampton argues, the victim is right to feel she has been "put down" because she has not been treated with respect as a person. The criminal has treated her as if she were only an object, someone whose own goals do not matter. However, there is a worse reaction suffered by the victim of such a crime. This arises more often in a society in which the justice system does not discharge its duty to ensure that it makes a public statement that the criminal was wrong to hold himself above the victim; to continue to belittle her. It is possible, Hampton argues, for the victim (of heterosexual rape) to feel *diminished*. She started by feeling that she was of equal worth but then—as a result of the crime and courts' unjust response—she *feels* and mistakenly starts to believe that she is an inferior sort of being compared to the criminal who has licence to treat her as an object.

Sometimes women (and men) are socialised from childhood to have a lower sense of self-worth and to expect little respect from others, just as some are taught to have a greater sense of entitlement. This lack of self-belief is not randomly distributed in the population—a point that I examine in my Spinozist analysis below. The spread of humility in a population correlates with groups for whom respect has been historically denied, based on race, class, disability and sexuality as well

gender. Even in a supposedly egalitarian society, which is no longer based upon differences in legal status, it is possible to compare some students—who expect that if their work is not viewed as that of a genius then they have grounds to appeal—with others whose experience of the education system leaves them diminished. Today in the West, this may well be associated more with class than gender in some universities. However, irrespective of the identity or identities that are belittled, such mechanisms undermine equality and the possibility of participative democracy. Focusing upon gender, Hampton cites an extreme example of a woman who viewed rape as something that women just had to suffer because that experience is "natural," viewed as inevitably how society works.[6] Hampton argues that this woman's assumption is morally (and epistemologically) incorrect. To make this claim, Hampton relies upon the Kantian premise that the victim is objectively equal to others.

Hampton applies the same framework to consider long-term heterosexual relationships.[7] She considers the fate of Jake and Amy, two children in Carol Gilligan's famous study of children's reaction to moral problems. When asked: "When responsibility to oneself and others conflict, how should one choose?" Jake replies: "You go about one fourth to others and three-fourths to yourself."

In response, Amy is much less clear about her own claim even when she considers something that could hurt her,

> Well it really depends upon the situation. If you have responsibility with someone else (sic) then you should keep it to a certain extent, but to the extent that it really is going to hurt you or stop you from doing something you really, really want then I think *maybe* you should put yourself first. But if it is your responsibility to someone really close to you, you've just got to decide in that situation which is more important yourself or that person, and like I said, it really depends upon what kind of person you are and how you feel about the other person or persons involved.[8]

Amy's use of the term "maybe" could be viewed as leaving open the possibility that she would put herself first, for example if there were a risk of harming herself if she failed to do so. However, as Hampton points out, Amy is not even clear that she actually would act in her own interests, even in this extreme example and it is clear whose goals would dominate if Jake and Amy married.[9]

While this lack of assertiveness on Amy's part may well disempower her, and certainly reflects a lack of any sense of entitlement, it may be that she is proud of being selfless. She talks of taking responsibility for others and her position makes sense if she is thinking of those who cannot easily reciprocate because they are children or sick. However, she does not limit herself to these situations. Such an attitude could be based on a view that those with bodies similar to hers (women) are subject to a different sort of morality to Jake—a view popular with many male philosophers, including Kant.[10] Drawing upon Spinoza for a moment, it may be that she may not compare herself to Jake any more than with "trees or lions" (*E* III, P55SCS) because she does not see herself as sufficiently similar to warrant comparison. It is necessary to be careful about what humility entails. It may be possible to attribute a willingness to help others to what Spinoza refers to as "nobility" (*generositas*) *E* III, 59S. I am concerned only with situations in which someone always "yields to others" because of a sense that she is below them. This is Hampton's characterisation of Amy.[11]

To summarise, for Hampton—arguing against proponents of the ethics of care who view Amy's sense of responsibility as commendable—her selflessness reflects an objectively faulty morality because it is based upon a low expectation of how others should treat her. Hampton views Amy's answer to the question of what to do if your interests conflict with that of others as the counter-part of Jake's selfishness. She argues that it reflects the socialisation of one who is being trained to be subordinate, just as Jake is being raised to dominate. Hampton therefore has a straightforward answer to the problem she highlights regarding humility: the humble should use reason to view themselves as equal persons. This answer is based upon her Kantian position that persons have equal moral worth (despite Kant's actual views on women expressed in the *Anthropology* that they only mimic morality by behaving beautifully rather than employing reason).[12]

Part of my interest in reframing Hampton's work on humility is to think about the perpetuation of subordination. Spinoza's argument that both my mind and my body are expressions of the same mode of substance is useful in thinking of both: (i) encounters with other minds (ideas) that reinforce subordination; and (ii) encounters with other bodies, including bodily habits that perpetuate subordination. Neither mind nor body has priority, each being an expression of the same thing:

> [T]he mind and the body are one and the same thing, which is conceived

> now under the attribute of thought, now under the attribute of extension. (*E* III, P2S)

Thomas Carson Mark provides a useful analogy to illustrate the relationship between mind and body in Spinoza's thought.[13] He compares this relationship with the way in which the content of a noun or statement can be expressed in two different languages. For example, and leaving aside difficult problems of translation, "my aunt's pen" and "la plume de ma tante" both express the same thing but in different ways. By analogy, both my mind and my body express *me* but through different attributes. I will discuss encounters with others, which are always encounters between minds or between bodies, to explain how we come to a greater understanding of our interactions when I turn to Spinoza below.

Before turning to Spinoza's own analysis of humility, I want to illustrate Hampton's concern further by turning briefly to another feminist theorist to draw out one particular aspect of Hampton's work. Miranda Fricker discusses the result of "epistemological injustice," which occurs when what someone says, whether truth statements or opinions, is consistently disregarded by her listeners.[14] It may be that someone's comments are not accorded respect in a one-off case, for example if her expertise is simply not realised by her audience. However, Fricker highlights the problems that arise when some sections of the population are consistently undermined when they communicate (or try to communicate, given that others may fail to listen at all). Women have been stereotyped as both ignorant and sometimes deliberatively deceptive, with clichés employed such as "old wives tales" and "women's intuition." Fricker gives examples regarding attacks on women's credibility in both the formal role of witnesses in court, dismissive attitudes to their suggestions at work meetings and in social situations. In her empirical work, some women have described the problem of having their suggestions for workplace improvement adopted only when a man, who is then credited for the insight, later expresses these proposals.

Spinoza's ontology is particularly useful for considering the harm that arises in these situations, both to the individual women whose credibility is systematically attacked and to others who are denied the knowledge that she could otherwise provide. Both of these effects undermine the ability of a society to communicate adequate knowledge. While this seems to serve them right, the lost contribution of the subordinate to those who dominate them matters because everyone in a society is undermined if communication that leads to adequate knowledge

is blocked. The pride of those who dominate is based upon ignorance and anything that perpetuates ignorance is a problem for society as a whole. This is because, from a Spinozist perspective, human communication is central to the way in which we increase our understanding of the world and ultimately to "who we are" (ontologically) and the richness of the lives open to us:

> To man, then, there is nothing more useful than man. Man, I say, can wish for nothing more helpful to the preservation of his being than that all should so agree in all things that the minds and bodies of all would compose, as it were, one mind and one body; that all should strive together, as far as they can, to preserve their being; and that all, together, should seek for themselves the common advantage of all.
> (*E* IV, P18S)

In support of the view that "man" also includes women in this quotation, Spinoza (*E* IV, P68S) describes Eve as completely agreeing with Adam's nature.[15] Human bodies are similar enough that one person's insights may well be valid for others, in many though not all situations. My cure for cancer is likely to be your cure for cancer. Spinoza's argument does not rest upon a claim that we are identical. We are particularly useful to each other as a source of adequate knowledge (or information that can lead to adequate knowledge). Adequate knowledge—an ability to understand the reasons why an encounter (with something or someone) has affected us in a particular way—allows us to increase our powers to act and to think, which increases the quality of our lives. Adequate knowledge changes *us* such that we can thrive and live more virtuous and free lives, given that for Spinoza thriving, freedom and virtue are synonymous. When we gain such knowledge, we can "boot strap" ourselves into a richer life by opening up richer experiences and new ways of living. As Balibar puts it:

> [T]he whole of Spinoza's philosophy, insofar as it makes metaphysics inseparable from politics (this unity or reciprocal presupposition being precisely what is meant here by an "ethic"), can be understood as a highly original philosophy of communication.[16]

In contrast to such a virtuous circle of improving our understanding of the world that comes from associating with "the wise," I am interested in Fricker's argument that failure to be treated as a credible source of knowledge may create a vicious circle, thereby producing one of many mechanisms through which subor-

dination is perpetuated. Someone whose statements and opinions are not taken seriously may start to doubt herself. A woman's (or man's) lack of self-confidence regarding her opinions will be reflected in bodily social cues, such as hesitation, thereby undermining her credibility further.

Although Fricker and Hampton have not engaged with each other's work (and neither discusses Spinoza), both produce theories that trace particular operations of power that are potentially self-reinforcing in ways that contribute to the perpetuation of subordination. Fricker's analysis of the way in which someone's credibility can be undermined such that she starts to doubt herself is akin to Hampton's analysis of women who are "diminished" as a result of an experience of a crime or treatment as a subordinate in an on-going sexual relationship. Unlike Spinoza, who does not recognise that humility is encouraged *systematically* in certain parts of the population, Hampton and Fricker both recognise this as a feminist problem (as well as one that concerns racism, and subordination through class, disability etc.). As a result, they trace a mechanism or techniques of power whereby such humility is maintained.

Having made this point, Spinoza's *Ethics* is useful for thinking in detail about the ways in which some passions are reinforced or undermined. In Spinoza's terms, both Hampton and Fricker describe sad encounters between women's minds and other minds, which diminish women's powers of thinking. (Bodily encounters with other bodies, in this context, diminish their powers of acting. As discussed above, this is an expression of the same thing, given that, for example, my mind and my body are simply the same thing: me, expressed in different ways.) While both Fricker and Hampton identify themselves as "analytic philosophers" their descriptions of specific mechanisms that reinforce subordination can inform the feminist/left work of continental philosophers who rework Spinoza's thought. Feminist engagement with Spinoza has thrived over recent years, as illustrated, for example, by the collection of *Feminist Interpretations of Benedict Spinoza*.[17] The "transplant" of Hampton's work (that I aim to conduct) opens up a way of thinking of these mechanisms that is anti-humanist, i.e. that conceptualises the self as emerging because of such mechanisms, rather than (for example) envisaging a fully formed self that is then corrupted. This is a better image because it conveys the idea that our powers of acting and thinking may fluctuate; that even though there are mechanisms that perpetuate subordination, we can still improve our situation, not through an act of volition but by increasing our powers of acting.

Spinoza's analysis makes communication and understanding key to such improvement. The problem is that only affects can overcome other affects (*E* II, P7Pr). We are more likely to react to expressions of contempt by others with hate (defined as "sadness with an accompanying idea of an external cause," *E* III, P13S), seeking to destroy the object of hate, as discussed further below. Nevertheless, the point of analysing the passions in the *Ethics* is to understand them as part of nature so as to increase our powers through such understanding.[18] This use of understanding rather than emotion allows us to become more active rather than passive. Spinoza is not asking us to "turn the other cheek" if belittled but provides resources so that we can try to understand how such lack of respect emerged in a society. For Hampton, we should only forgive if it is clear that the "guilty party" has changed and now recognises our equal personhood. For Spinoza, as I will illustrate, the relevant question only concerns our ability to be active and to increase our powers of acting.

Although she does not focus upon humility as such, I have referred to Fricker's work to illustrate a potential area of interactions in which someone's self-belief in her own opinions and judgement is undermined. Hampton's own problem of humility could include such diffidence regarding one's speech and so this aspect of Fricker's analysis can be used to illustrate one aspect of Hampton's concern. Having set up her feminist analysis of concern about humility, I will now turn to Spinoza on humility more generally to re-situate Hampton's response from a Kantian to a Spinozist framework. In common with Hampton, Spinoza—from a very different perspective—criticises the way humility has been characterised as a virtue.[19]

SPINOZA ON HUMILITY AND DESPONDENCY

In a definition, which I will apply to women as well as men, Spinoza defines humility as:

> [A] sadness born of the fact that a man considers his own lack of power or weakness.
> (*E* III, DA24)

His definition of despondency indicates that it is born of humility, just as pride arises from self-esteem *E* III, DA28Exp and involves:

> [T]hinking less highly of oneself than is just.
> (*E* III, DA29)

And:

> [A] sadness born of a man's false opinion that he is below others.
> (*E* IV, P57S)

In the next section, I will discuss the ways in which humility only ever arises because of our having inadequate knowledge about ourselves. I will then trace the way that Spinoza explains how, with adequate knowledge of ourselves, humility will turn into self-esteem, which is stable and does not involve a comparison with others. This self-knowledge differs at different "levels" of understanding, associated with the first, second and third type of knowledge, and is central to our ability to thrive. First, in this section, I will examine the description of humility and despondency in Spinoza's *Ethics*.

Turning to the definition of despondency, the idea of viewing oneself as "below others" provides a precise description of the problem that worries Hampton. She argues that philosophers have rarely recognised the problem of selflessness. This problem, described above, only becomes obvious when women and their traditional socialisation come into view as an area that requires philosophical analysis. From this perspective, Spinoza's claim appears traditional when he characterises humility and despondency as "very rare" (*E* III, DA29Exp). He claims that, while there may be many supposed displays of humility—of going out of one's way to always try to please others, for example—these are usually really motivated by ambition and not true humility. Spinoza gives a supporting argument as to why this should be the case:

> These affects—humility and despondency—are very rare. For human nature, considered in itself, strains against them, as far as it can (see P13 and P54). So those who are believed to be most despondent and humble are usually most ambitious and envious.
> (*E* III, DA29Exp)

> Human nature strains against humility and despondency because both are sad passions.
> (*E* IV, P56S)

Despondency is therefore more easily corrected than pride. Spinoza's explanation of why this is the case draws upon his analysis of the passions more generally and is envisaged in terms of forces. The "force" of the desires that arise from joy—as is the case with pride—is greater than the force of desires that arise from sadness, as is the case with humility (*E* IV, P18). In more detail, the force of a desire that arises from joy is:

> [D]efined by both human power and the power of the external cause whereas the force of a desire which arises from sadness must be defined by human power alone.
> (*E* IV, P18Pr)

This is a complex idea and an alternative translation of its demonstration by Shirley is useful to explain it:

> Desire arising from pleasure is, by the fact of pleasure being felt, increased or helped; on the contrary desire arising from pain is, by the fact of pain being felt, diminished or hindered; hence the force of desire arising from pleasure must be defined by human power together with the power of the external cause, whereas desire arising from pain must be defined by human power alone.[20]

First, it is important to recognise that the reference to "human power alone" in this quotation should not be confused with the situation in which someone is the adequate cause of her own actions and therefore is active rather than passive, acting in accordance "with her nature alone." The situation, envisaged in the above quotations from *E* IV, P18, is different because here Spinoza is discussing someone who has *inadequate* knowledge of the cause of her desire to act out of joy or sadness. This is clear because someone suffering from humility and despondency can only have inadequate knowledge of the situation. By attaining adequate knowledge of oneself, one overcomes these mistaken views. The reference to a desire arising from sadness (Curley's translation) or pain (Shirley's translation) is a reference to an interaction with another body or mind (ideas) that disagrees with our nature (such as a situation in which one's opinions are not respected and one is belittled). The external body/mind (ideas) then reduces our power to act/understand, i.e. it undermines our abilities (i.e. our powers of acting/understanding). Spinoza does not envisage us experiencing a *lack* of any ability when he describes a reduction in our powers. The reduction in our powers is described in

terms of our being blocked from our own powers of acting/understanding. When this impediment—such as the idea that our opinions are worthless—no longer exists then we are able to use these abilities as before.

To employ Hampton's examples, if a woman is raped then she could have different responses: anger or—worse—a sense that this is the sort of treatment that, as a woman, she has to put up with, thereby taking on the perspective of a misogynist society as inevitable. In the case of the second reaction, she is being "*diminished*" in Hampton's terms. In Spinoza's framework, this situation in which a woman becomes "diminished" accords with humility and despondency because it involves an assessment of oneself as ultimately "lower than others." This situation involves a diminution of one's powers of acting and thinking but these powers are never fixed while we are alive. As described in the above quotations, we strain against being positioned in this way because it gives us sadness and pain. This can be compared with joy/pleasure that derives from pride (i.e. assessing oneself as *above* others). Pride is accompanied by joy and therefore reinforced by external factors and so it is not as easily overcome as humility.

The humble are undermined in their striving to increase their powers of acting by a set of bodily practices that are also simultaneously expressions of ideas of this subordination expressed through a different attribute. The way in which Hampton and Fricker discuss such mechanisms, outlined above, provide examples. Spinoza captures one aspect of their analysis when he refers to passions that "cling to us":

> The force of any passion, or affect, can surpass the other actions, or power of a man so that the affect stubbornly clings to the man.
> (*E* IV, P6)

Seemingly selfless acts could be motivated by ambition, of course—as Spinoza also discusses—yet, as explained above, I am interested in "genuine" humility; thinking of your lack of power, associated with judging yourself as "below others." This investigation of humility involves clarifying the ways in which self-worth and self-esteem fit within these two very different frameworks: that of Kant/Hampton and of Spinoza. While Spinoza argues that humility and despondency are rare, he also recognises that parents bring up their children to have different views of what is moral, depending upon what is subject to praise or blame, such that "as each one had been educated, so he either repents of a deed or exults at being es-

teemed for it." (*E* III, DA27). This opens a way to think about the fact that some people are raised to have (what Hampton, but not Spinoza, views as) "a false morality" that is based upon acting as subordinates to others. By acting in this way and because of their treatment by others, they view themselves as subordinate. I will argue that Spinoza provides a better framework than Kant through which to understand humility and its relationship to subordination. However, as recognised above, Spinoza does not consider the extent to which such socialisation does not occur randomly within the population. In many cultures it is women (along with some other groups, such as those based on race, class and disability) who are brought up to judge themselves as both weak and "below others," with an accompanying lesser sense of entitlement.

To understand humility further, consider its opposite, self-esteem, along with the opposite of despondency, pride. Spinoza describes "self-esteem" or—in Shirley's translation, "self-contentment" (*acquiescentia in se ipso*) as "the highest thing we can hope for" (*E* IV, P52S). It is clearly not peripheral to his thought nor does it simply refer to the "empty" aim of the ambitious who want to be highly regarded by others (*E* IV, App). I will look at how self-esteem is conceptualised differently in each stage of knowledge, starting with inadequate knowledge.

SPINOZA'S ANALYSIS OF HUMILITY AND SELF-ESTEEM: INADEQUATE KNOWLEDGE

Spinoza describes different stages of knowledge, the first stage being "inadequate knowledge." This pertains to what we experience when we first encounter another body or idea. This encounter may increase or decrease our powers of acting / understanding or may be neutral. As a result, it is associated with either joy or sadness (or no passion) and we form an image of the other thing in our imagination. If it has harmed us, we tend to label it as "evil" rather than working out the ways that it failed to agree with our nature. This partial understanding makes us passive.

At this first stage of knowledge, we only have "mutilated and confused" (*E* II, 29C) ideas. Contra Descartes, Spinoza argues that we cannot introspect to gain a truthful or adequate understanding of our minds (*E* II, 28S). The only way we can know our own mind is through the ideas of our body's interaction with other bodies (*E* II, P23). Additionally, we do not know what our bodies are capable of doing (*E* III, P2S). When it comes to self-esteem, our confused assessment of ourselves

is based upon a general impression of a number of experiences, including our own abilities as we perceive them; and our, often inaccurate, perceptions of how others rate us. If we are constantly belittled by others then we are more likely to be humble and despondent; and, as Spinoza (*E* IV, P49) stresses, if flattered we can easily become proud. As discussed above, Spinoza does not consider the impact of some parts of the population being treated systematically as subordinate. He comes closest to recognising this point in the *Ethics* when he notes that we may stereotype others based upon a particular sad encounter (i.e. one that diminishes our powers) with a representative of a particular class or nation, different from our own (*E* III, P46).

In Part III, definitions (*E* III, DA26Exp) Spinoza opposes self-esteem ("the joy born of the fact that a man considers himself and his power of acting," *E* III, DA25) with humility ("sadness born of the fact that a man considers his own lack of power or weakness," *E* III, DA26). Self-esteem and humility are opposites when we are considering our power of acting/thinking in general. (When we reflect upon a specific deed—when we feel good about having done something—then self-esteem is opposed to repentance of that deed.)

So, just as despondency arises as a result of humility, pride can result from self-esteem (*E* III, DA28Exp). As Spinoza points out, it is more usual to think of humility and pride as opposites. However, he argues that this is incorrect for an important reason. There is no opposite to pride ("thinking more highly of oneself than is just, *out of love of oneself*," *E* III, DA27Exp, emphasis added), i.e. we cannot feel less highly of ourselves than is just, *out of hatred of ourselves*. This follows from a central point about Spinoza's framework in the *Ethics*. No singular thing that exists can hate itself. "One who hates strives to remove and destroy the thing he hates" (*E* III, P13S) and nothing strives to destroy itself. On the contrary, the very *essence* of each singular thing is its *conatus*; its striving to preserve itself and to thrive. This is clearly illustrated by Spinoza's treatment of suicide, which, he argues, only arises when someone is "defeated by causes external" (*E* IV, P20S).

A comparison between humility (and the despondency that can arise from humility) and suicide, illustrates how problematic such misunderstandings of oneself are for Spinoza. All things that exist have an essence that Spinoza defines in terms of their striving to persist and thrive. As humans we do this by increasing our understanding of what helps us (and undermines us) and *why*. By associating with the wise—people who try to increase their own understanding and hence

powers—we are able to make a collective effort to become more active in the world, seeking out things that are good for us and avoiding the bad. Spinoza envisages a society in which our greater understanding opens up culture, the arts and many different ways of life. We cannot do this alone but by working with others to achieve greater understanding of both ourselves and things that affect us, including the society in which we find ourselves. This striving to understand is undermined to the extent that fear and the passions can diminish us (and the society of which we are a part). If someone is humble or despondent, she is systematically diminished, i.e. at that point in time, she is unable to move beyond the passions to gain adequate knowledge of the world.

Given that Spinoza argues that humility is likely to be rare because "nature strains against it," as discussed above, we need to find a reason for its existence at all in Spinoza's *Ethics*. I think this can be understood by considering what Spinoza says about the socialisation of humility. He recognises that parents differ in the actions that they praise and blame (*E* III, P55S). He also argues that, if people cannot be reasonable, the prophets (i.e. those who tried to hold together early societies) were right to encourage humility and shame rather than pride in order to restrain the multitude:

> The mob is terrifying, if unafraid. So it is no wonder that the prophets, who considered the common advantage, not that of the few, commended humility, repentance and reverence so greatly. Really, those who are subject to these affects can be guided far more easily than others, so that in the end they may live from the guidance of reason, that is, may be free, and enjoy the life of the blessed.
> (*E* IV, P54S)

However, in this scholium, Spinoza does not fully recognise the problems with humility because he fails to see that both pride and humility are *systematically* encouraged by the socialisation of some groups as the "complementary opposites" of each other. For example, Jake feels good about being male in comparison to Amy and Amy sees herself as the sort of person who should put others' needs before her own. This is reflected in their language and demeanour as well as the credibility with which their arguments are received, as discussed above. I suggest that humility is particularly problematic because it is not spread randomly in a population but, as I will now detail, this analysis is easily derived from (and analysed using) Spinoza's conceptual framework.

In the quotation above, Spinoza argues that, ideally we would all be wise, but in the absence of wisdom, humility is better than pride because the humble are more easily lead to wisdom. I have two responses: a) pride and humility, when they are gendered, are counter-parts and so reinforce each other. Hence, they are not as easily divided as he envisages; and further b) in a society in which there is systematic socialisation of some of the population to be humble and some proud, there are mechanisms, detailed by Hampton and Fricker discussed above, that reinforce both humility and pride.

To draw out the implications of these points involves recognising that those who are encouraged to dominate (men, for example) are likely to become proud in comparison to the humble (women) in ways that not only creates the "weakness of mind" associated with pride (*E* IV, P56 and *E* IV, P56C), it also undermines social harmony (Spinoza's concern). This is perpetuated when the problem concerns stereotypes of men and women in traditional roles for the following reasons: first, children learn subordination and domination in the home through the ways that their parents behave towards each other. Second, as Spinoza argues, socialised dominance behaviour produces fear and anger—sad passions—that are socially disruptive (*E* III, P30S).

In this regard, Spinoza shares with Hobbes his political concern about pride.[21] In a Hobbesian state of nature, vainglory contributes to the war of all against all.[22] For Hobbes, it is particularly strong in young men who have read classical tales of heroism.[23] When Spinoza describes self-esteem, which arises from inadequate knowledge of ourselves, his account bears another similarity with Hobbes' position (for whom our worth is simply our price, based upon others' estimation of us). In Hobbes' view, our "worth" is something that can fluctuate. Similarly, for Spinoza, when we have inadequate knowledge of ourselves, our muddled self-assessment is unstable and depends upon our estimate of others' fickle views of us. Like Hobbes, Spinoza (*E* IV, P58S) recognises that this causes conflict when individuals compete for glory.

Turning to Spinoza's explanation of humility in Part IV, gives us insight into the way self-esteem (*acquiescentia*) is understood when we have adequate knowledge and why it is "the highest thing we can hope for" (*E* IV, P52S) rather than merely an "empty" (vain) concern with others' opinions. It therefore leads into my next section on self-esteem that arises from reason. Spinoza explains why "humility is not a virtue, nor does it arise from reason" (*E* IV, P53). When we know ourselves

by "true reason" (as he puts it) we understand our own essence, which is our power to understand. His analysis depends upon the fact that he is describing a process that involves reflecting upon our own abilities, i.e. at a "meta level" understanding our ability to understand. As humans, our power to thrive actually *is* our ability to reason itself. It is through our ability to understand why some interactions aid or diminish our powers that we are able to increase our powers. If we know *ourselves* through reason then we also *understand that we understand* particular interactions and why they effect us. This adequate knowledge of our own power (to understand our encounters with others) gives us joy when we reflect upon it.

By contrast, in the case of humility, when "man is considering himself" he thinks about some lack of power. Importantly, this muddled thought about our lack of power does not mean that we understand ourselves. The opposite is true. The humble think of their lack of power because their power (i.e. their ability to reason; to understand an interaction) is, at that moment, *restrained* in some way by an external force. Importantly, as discussed above, there is nothing lacking as such, our power is merely blocked. When we understand ourselves, we clearly understand what we adequately know about the world.

Additionally, when someone appears humble, she may in fact be thinking of something more powerful than herself that really does act as a genuine constraint on her powers. We are finite and there are always things that are more powerful than we are. If this is what is happening, then she has a clear understanding of the situation in which case such insight actually *increases* her powers of acting. She knows when to run or fight (preferably helped by others similarly situated) and what to avoid or fight in future for a better life. In this example, she is not humble, as such, but demonstrates reasonable judgement and an understanding of the situation. This allows her to be active rather than passive. In contrast, to be humble involves sad passions and passivity. However, to be humble does not involve being permanently diminished or corrupted. Ideas and practices may diminish us (in Hampton's sense such as a woman who, as a result of being treated as second class wrongly judges this as an inevitable reflection of society). However, there is nothing *corrupting* about inadequate knowledge in Spinoza's thought. Inadequate knowledge is partial and tells us something—albeit in a muddled way—about the world. With greater knowledge, such as the details about the ways that mechanisms of power work and the best ways to oppose it in concert with others, it is possible to increase our powers.

Spinoza therefore concludes that,

> humility or sadness which arises from the fact that a man reflects on his own lack of power, does not arise from true reflection, or reason, and is a passion not a virtue
> (*E* IV, P53Pr)

The idea that to know ourselves involves reflecting on our essence, which is not fixed but is what we do to persist and thrive, i.e. our ability to understand, is considered in more detail in the next section.

SPINOZA'S ANALYSIS OF HUMILITY AND SELF-ESTEEM: ADEQUATE KNOWLEDGE

In *E* IV, P52 Spinoza states,

> Self-esteem (*acquiescentia*) can arise from reason, and only that self-esteem which does arise from reason is the greatest there can be.
> (*E* IV, P52)

Within the demonstration, he refers back to the Definitions of the Affects 25 to say that:

> [S]elf-esteem is a joy born of the fact that man considers himself and his power of acting.

This section follows from the previous discussion of humility, which is a passion and is only experienced when we have inadequate knowledge of ourselves. As discussed above, when we have adequate knowledge of ourselves, we are able to reflect upon (and understand) our ability to understand. To recap and explain further, when we have adequate knowledge, we have understood the reason why an interaction with something or someone has increased or decreased our powers of acting. Once we have understood an encounter, further reflecting upon our ability to understand in itself gives us joy. This is not simply because the initial understanding of an interaction allows us to be active in seeking out things that agree with our nature and to avoid those things that diminish us. It is because we experience joy when we reflect upon our power of understanding itself. This fits as the corollary to Spinoza's definition of the love of others, which is "joy with the

accompanying idea of an external cause." Here, we have self-esteem as self-love, joy with the accompanying idea of ourselves as a cause.

When we have such adequate understanding, by definition, we do not experience either pride, humility or the empty self-esteem that is associated with confused ideas, imagination and passions. We are not drawing on our confused sense of others' evaluations of us; instead, we clearly understand what we are capable of doing/thinking by reflecting upon what we genuinely understand.

In summary, in *E* IV, P53S Spinoza makes it clear that self-esteem, when derived from reason, arises as a result of our understanding of our essence, which is our striving to thrive. This in turn involves reflecting upon our power of understanding because it is by employing this ability to understand that human beings thrive. So, it is our ability to understand the role of understanding for us that gives us insight into "who we are." Such insight does not involve comparing oneself with others. We benefit and are not competitive over the spread of such self-knowledge. Spinoza therefore describes this self-esteem as "the most we can hope for" (*E* IV, P52S). He then sounds a jarring note in this scholium:

> And because self-esteem is more and more encouraged and strengthened by praise ... and on the other hand, more and more upset by blame ..., we are guided most by love of esteem and can hardly bear a life in disgrace. (*E* IV, P53S)

As I am interested in those, who are not accorded respect, this switch is disturbing. Self-esteem holds an important position in Spinoza's thought, being "the best we can hope for" (*E* IV, P52S). However, towards the end of *E* IV, P53S there is this shift in register when he refers to others' evaluation of ourselves. Without explanation, Spinoza suddenly reverts to the more Hobbesian position of the volatile self-esteem that can fluctuate, being based upon inadequate knowledge and imagination rather than reason. I think that Spinoza mentions praise and blame at this point in the *Ethics* because he is about to address the difference between self-esteem associated with both adequate and inadequate knowledge in more detail, turning to humility in *E* IV, P53 and going on to discuss pride. This jarring note is then clarified later in *E* IV, P58 in which he deals with the difference between self-esteem based upon imagination (and hence inadequate knowledge) compared to that based upon reason (and adequate knowledge) directly when he states that, "Love of esteem is not contrary to reason, but can arise from it" (*E* IV,

P58). In *E* IV, P58S, Spinoza makes clear that he was switching between two types of self-esteem in *E* IV, P53S. He distinguishes between: (1) the love of esteem linked to inadequate knowledge (the first kind of knowledge), that depends upon the view of the multitude, which is fickle, and the results of which are destructive to society; and (2) that self-esteem associated with adequate knowledge attained through understanding (the second type of knowledge), both of which have now been discussed.

I will briefly touch on Spinoza's third type of knowledge before returning to think about Amy. Clare Carlisle has argued that self-esteem (*acquiescentia*) can be understood—through not only imagination and reason—but also through the third kind of knowledge, that of intuitive knowledge of God, discussed in Part V of the *Ethics*: "[A]cquiescentia signifies the feeling-quality of participation in God's eternity, giving content to the apparently abstract idea of intellectual love of God."[24] In support, she quotes *E* V, P32 and its demonstration, noting that what Curley translates as "satisfaction of the mind" in Latin is "*mentis acquiescentia*." Carlisle thereby highlights a link with the earlier use of *acquiescentia*, discussed above, that is lost when it is translated as "self-esteem" in the Curley translation of the *Ethics*. Spinoza states:

> Whatever we understand by the third kind of knowledge we take pleasure in [*eo delectamur*], and our pleasure is accompanied by the idea of God as cause. From this kind of knowledge there arises the greatest satisfaction of Mind [*Mentis acquiescentia*] there can be (by P27), i.e. (by DA25), Joy; this Joy is accompanied by the idea of oneself, and consequently (by P30) it is also accompanied by the idea of God, as its cause, q.e.d.
> (*E* V, P32)

Here Spinoza is discussing the joy that arises as a result of, not only our understanding of our abilities (the second type of knowledge), but also the idea of ourselves and our abilities as part of God/Nature/all that exists (the third type of knowledge). In other words, intuitive knowledge of our abilities goes beyond our joyful reflection upon our power to understand adequately. We recognise that we are part of God/Nature/all that exists. A different way of stating this is to say that we become aware through intuitive knowledge that our adequate ideas are also adequate ideas in God/Nature/existence. Given that it is necessary to move beyond humility to attain adequate knowledge of oneself through reason (the second stage) before attaining this third type of knowledge, things are not looking

great for humble Amy.

CONCLUSION: RETURNING TO AMY

For Spinoza, like Hampton, genuine displays of humility are not demonstrations of virtue. On the contrary, they indicate that something is seriously wrong. For both, the use of reason is necessarily part of the solution to the humble person's problem. Both have different views of reason, however. Spinoza pre-dates Kant's distinction between understanding and reason. Spinoza stresses the human ability to understand our interactions with the world, that is, to employ reason in order to produce adequate knowledge as to why something is good or harmful to us. Importantly, for Spinoza, we are able to improve our understanding, to live richer lives, the more we are able to work together. A society that systematically produces pride and humility greatly undermines its members' ability to thrive. When we have only a confused passionate view of ourselves then our ability to understand the encounters we have of the world is blocked. In addition, the communication of adequate knowledge is undermined because of epistemological injustice.

For Hampton, as a Kantian, the way out of the problem of humility is to replace such false morality with true morality, i.e. the humble should recognise that they should treat *themselves* as well as others as having equal moral worth. For Spinoza, the answer is to move from such a confused imaginative state (which involves a comparison with others and which fluctuates) to one of genuine self-understanding and contentment, i.e. to have self-esteem (*acquiescentia*) that is derived from reason. For Spinoza, this necessarily involves working with others to understand and change anything that undermines us. This, I argue, includes increasing our understanding of economic and social subordination, along with an analysis of mechanisms by which subordination is perpetuated.

For Hampton, persons can demand respect as persons and not because of any other quality that involves a comparison with others. From a very different perspective, Spinoza also rejects such comparisons. He rejects the form of self-esteem that is derived by comparing ourselves with others, which we do experience but only when we have inadequate knowledge about ourselves. With the transition from inadequate to adequate knowledge, our self-esteem stops being imagined in relation to others' abilities and opinions. Instead, we feel joy as a result of a reflective understanding of our own ability to increase our powers through the use of reason. This is not the same position as Kant's (and Hampton's) claim

that we have equal worth because we simply do not compare ourselves with others at all, at this stage of knowledge. Instead, this self-esteem (better translated as self-contentment) arises from our reflection upon our powers; that we can be the cause of our own joy through understanding; gaining adequate knowledge that allows us to join with things that help us thrive. Drawing on this knowledge of the second kind, we may then be able to gain knowledge of the third kind, an understanding of our position within the whole of nature, with accompanying joy.

Rather than being a person—a special type of thing with free will and an ability to choose rationally to obey one's own law—we come to see ourselves as modifications of part of the whole of existence. Spinoza's recognition that there is no "free will" opens up the possibility of greater freedom. It allows us to gain a better understanding of why we act as we do. This attempt to understand would be unobtainable if we simply attributed our actions to free will without further analysis. Therefore, within Spinoza's framework, Amy's humility is not to be characterised as an individual failing of her will nor is the solution for her to struggle alone to understand and hence increase her powers of acting on her own. His answer is certainly not that Amy should treat herself as a neo-liberal enterprise who needs to work harder on her assertiveness training in case her submissive attitude affects her earning potential.

In Spinoza's thought, the term for self-esteem, "*acquiescentia*," carries with it a sense of stillness but also acquiescence. At first sight, this is not a term that feminists are likely to find useful in the context of Amy as it sounds as if she is being called upon to acquiesce in her subordination. However, in the case of Spinoza's thought, the obedience that arises as a result of our understanding is "obedience to our nature," which is to "seek [our] own advantage," *E* IV, P18S. To advise that Amy seek her own advantage sounds initially as if she is being advised to behave more like selfish Jake. To avoid this conclusion, it is important to recognise that Spinoza's view of the individual is not that of separate competing individuals. The fact that we thrive in communication with each other means that we all have an interest in others' attainment of adequate knowledge. For all of us, self-esteem therefore involves recognising our powers of acting in ways that make us more active rather than passive, which also means being more virtuous and free. This radically alters what it means to be a virtuous woman.

JANICE RICHARDSON is Associate Professor in Law at Monash University. She is author of *Selves, Persons, Individuals: Philosophical Perspectives on Women and Legal Obligations* (Ashgate, 2004), *The Classic Social Contractarians: Critical Perspectives from Contemporary Feminist Philosophy and Law* (Ashgate, 2009), *Law and the Philosophy of Privacy* (Routledge, 2016). Her journal publications include those in *Angelaki*, *Feminist Legal Studies, Law and Critique, Minds and Machines: Journal for Artificial Intelligence, Philosophy and Cognitive Science.*

NOTES

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9. Hampton, "Feminist Contractarianism."
10. Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Ed. and trans. Robert Louden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, [306] 207.
11. My thanks to Justin Clements and other members of my audience at the Australian Continental Philosophy Conference who argued that Amy was a decent human being and not humble. If so, then she is a bad example of humility that leads to despondency, i.e. of acting and experiencing oneself as "below others," which is the focus of this paper. I use her to follow Hampton's analysis of Amy. My Spinozist analysis does not rely upon Hampton's interpretation of Amy's position per se, although I use her name as a signifier for it for ease of reference.
12. Kant, Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View, [306] 207.
13. Mark, Thomas Carson, "The Spinozistic Attributes." *Philosophia* 7:1 (1977, 55-82).
14. Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
15. See also Beth Lord , "Spinoza, Equality, and Hierarchy." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 31:1 (2014, 59-77).
16. Étienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*. Trans. Peter Snowdon. London: Verso, 1998, 99.
17. Moira Gatens (ed.), *Feminist Interpretations of Benedict Spinoza: Re-Reading the Canon*. Univer-

sity Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009.
18. Genevieve Lloyd, *Part of Nature: Self-Knowledge in Spinoza's* Ethics. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994.
19. Julie Cooper, "Humility: Spinoza on the Joy of Finitude." *Secular Powers: Humility in Modern Political Thought*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.
20. Spinoza, *Ethics*. Trans. Shirley. (2002, 330).
21. Thomas Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan: With Selected Variants from the Latin Edition of 1668*. Ed. Edwin Curley. Cambridge: Hackett, 1994, XV [19].
22. "Besides, revenge without respect to the example, and profit to come, is a triumph, or glorying in the hurt of another, tending to no end; (for the end is always somewhat to come); and glorying to no end, is vain-glory, and contrary to reason; and to hurt without reason, tendeth to the introduction of war; which is against the law of nature; and is commonly styled by the name of cruelty." *Ibid*.
23. "The vain-glory which consisteth in the feigning or supposing of abilities in ourselves, which we know are not, is most incident to young men, and nourished by the histories, or fictions of gallant persons; and is corrected oftentimes by age, and employment." Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. VI [41].
24. Clare Louise Carlisle, "Spinoza's Acquiescentia." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (2016, 230).

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spinoza's *compendium of the grammar of the hebrew language*

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> [W]*e are to consider one Jewish tradition as uncorrupt, namely the meaning of the words in the Hebrew Language.*
> Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise* VII

Spinoza's *Compendium of the Grammar of the Hebrew Language*[1] is a work that, despite the innovative spirit of its content and the ingenuity of its author, never came to shape modernity. It contains the impulse that could have changed our understanding of the Scriptures, based on no other sources than the meaning and the use of the Hebrew language. A project notably different from the Christian Hebraism of the Lutheran Reformation, as I will try to show here, it could have had ground-breaking consequences, had it ever found a scholarly audience to take it on.

To be sure, the European Enlightenment shed light on the superstitions, naïve beliefs, theological dogmatism and institutional clericalism, but less on what the Scriptures teach. What followed from a religion cleared of superstitions and dog-

matism after the Enlightenment, was not a new, more *enlightened* understanding of Scriptures, but the separation of religion from the biblical text. A religion of internality, which can tell us what a person feels, believes or reasonably thinks, but not what Scriptures teach. And a theology of historical-critical exegesis, which demonstrates great difficulty in providing historical truths with a necessity of meaning. What remained for our understanding of religion and Scriptures after the Enlightenment, were Reason and History. That is, the assumption that the universality of reason does not require a reference to a particular text. And the assumption that historical contingency reveals the complexity of a cultural history, rather than truths with a meaning of their own. Both critiques, the one of reason and the one of history, remain negatively determined in their relationship to the biblical text, without establishing a positive ground from where to discern the *thoughts* conveyed by the language in which the Scriptures were originally written.

In what follows, I give an account of the purpose of the *Compendium*, and a brief answer to Steven Nadler's question of "Aliquid remanet: What Are We to Do with Spinoza's *Compendium of Hebrew Grammar*."[2]

SCRIPTURES VERSUS ESTABLISHED RELIGION

The idea to turn Scriptures against religion, i.e. the meaning of words in the biblical text against established religious doctrines, can occur only to those aware of the chasm between them. Such occurred to Luther, after having learned some Hebrew, as he famously puts it: "The Hebrew language is the best and richest language of all. ... If I were younger I would want to learn this language, because no one can really understand the Scriptures without it. For although the New Testament is written in Greek, it is full of Hebraisms and Hebrew expressions. It has therefore been aptly said that the Hebrews drink from the spring, the Greeks from the stream that flows from it, and the Latins from a puddle" (Luther, *Table Talk*[3]). What made this linguistic turn in biblical scholarship possible, was the Hebrew revival in Christian Europe, i.e. the progressive recovery of Hebraica, first by the proto-reformation in Italy (with Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino), and then by the subsequent introduction of biblical Hebrew at all main universities across the Protestant United Provinces, Northern Germany and England by the mid-sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century, the 'Christian Hebraist' was to become the new academic, a scholar that not only teaches biblical Hebrew at a university, but translates biblical texts, interprets them, and compiles grammars of biblical Hebrew. By the end of the seventeenth century, the entire corpus of

rabbinic biblical commentaries had been translated into Latin, and the new Christian, mainly Protestant scholarship of biblical studies experienced a publishing boost of multilingual editions of the so called 'polyglot Bibles' (where Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Syriac versions of the same biblical passage were printed on one page, as in the Plantin Polyglot Bible from 1568), and of a considerable number of important grammars of biblical Hebrew: Reuchlin's *De rudimentis hebraicis* (1509), which Luther used for his translation of the Bible; Franciscus Junius's *Grammatica Linguae Hebraeae* (1590), written at Leiden, and used by Hugo Grotius and Peter Cunaeus; and Buxtdorf's *Thesaurus Grammaticus linguae sanctae Hebraeae* (1609, 1620), which Spinoza had in his library, together with Vossius's *Aristarchus: sive de arte grammatica* (1635), and numerous other publications of grammars of biblical Hebrew. In the Jewish community of Holland, grammars of Hebrew were printed in Portuguese, and often circulated as manuscripts within the community: Menasseh ben Israel, who entertained close relationships with Vossius, Grotius, L'Empereur, and Salmasius wrote his 'lucid language' *Sapha berura, hoc est Labia clara da grammatica hebrea* (written in 1621, published 1647); Isaac Morteira his 'the craft of grammar' *Melekhet Hadikduk* (1642); and many "other contemporaries of Spinoza were also engaged in the art of grammar," including Mosse Rephael d'Aguilar (1659/60) and Selomoh de Oliveyra (1688/89)[4].

Around the time when Spinoza, either wrote, or would have thought of writing, his *Compendium of the Grammar of the Hebrew Language* (1674/75), it seems that everything relevant had already been done in terms of Hebrew scholarship and grammar, by Christian and Jewish scholars alike. From the late fifteenth century, Hebrew texts and grammars were progressively available to Christian scholars, and Luther's *sola scriptura*, that is, the principle to interpret the Bible only with the biblical text itself and no longer with philosophy (scholastic Aristotelianism or Neoplatonism), had long since put the study of Hebrew at the core of Christian ministry.

The question here is: if there was no need for a new grammar of biblical Hebrew in the scholarly world of mid-seventeenth century Europe, what is, if anything new about Spinoza's *Compendium*? Spinoza himself tells us that "there are many who wrote (a grammar) of the Scriptures, but none who wrote a grammar of the Hebrew language."[5] But, if "Spinoza apparently saw it as being the first true grammar of the Hebrew language, and not merely another grammar of Scripture,"[6] what exactly is the difference then between a grammar of biblical Hebrew, and a grammar of the Hebrew language derived from the Bible? And more importantly, to what

purpose should such a 'grammar of Hebrew language,' be used? Put differently, let us imagine we follow Spinoza's advice that "Without a thorough knowledge of Hebrew, we cannot properly understand the Bible" (*TTP* VII, 100-101), and learn Hebrew from his *Compendium*. What is it that we now understand differently and could not have seen in the text, had we learned biblical Hebrew from another grammar and followed another method of biblical hermeneutics than Spinoza's?

HISTORY AND REASON

The answer provided by the existing scholarship to this question about the purpose of Spinoza's *Compendium* is twofold. And, indebted as we are to our intellectual history, it is, not surprisingly, based on the patterns of the Enlightenment. The existing literature unwittingly shares these preconceptions, which inform the development of our understanding and interpretations of matters related to Scriptures, divided along the concepts of History and Reason. This description is, of course, a rough abbreviation of existing scholarly contributions on this topic. Nevertheless, the divide between historical and philosophical approaches to Spinoza's *Compendium* in contemporary scholarship holds, as I think, regarding the expectations we have for a work to be understood in its purposiveness, and from where we draw a certain meaning, which gives us the reason for continuous reading and research.

The historical approach

The work of A.J. Klijnsmit draws on the grammarian traditions, and its early modern "reframing of Judaeo-Arabic grammar into the scheme of grammatical description of Latin and Greek." [7] Klijnsmit focuses on the analysis of various features of the Hebrew grammar in the *Compendium,* and understands Spinoza in the continuity of the Jewish Hebraists outside the mainstream Christian academia: "In the literature on Spinoza's grammar the originality of his linguistic thought has been stressed, but I would like to show what his position is within Jewish grammatical tradition." Klijnsmit's account is a piece of linguistic erudition, showing that Spinoza "certainly was no ignoramus of grammatical matters" within the Jewish grammarian tradition. Or, as Shirley puts it, "Spinoza deserves to be called a philologist and grammatical scholar as well as a philosopher and a scientist."[8]

The purpose, or novelty, of the *Compendium* would, from this perspective, be to provide us with an improved grammar of the Hebrew language, one that better reframes the specific structures of Hebrew into the pattern of the more classical scheme of grammatical descriptions. And no other scholar better than Klijnsmit provides such a detailed genealogy of the most important development in the Jewish grammarian tradition, tracing from medieval grammars of Hebrew to Spinoza's *Compendium*. Klijnsmit also notes a very important fact that I will return to later, namely, that Spinoza, in contrast to other Jewish grammarians, "doesn't include in his corpus postbiblical Hebrew to derive his (grammatical) rules from," and that "The *usus*, by which since Dionysius Thrax (c. 100 B.C.E.) the usage of language of generally accepted authors is meant, from which grammatical rules must be derived is for Spinoza, even more than for other Jewish grammarians, the Bible."[9] I have no reservations about any of Klijnsmit's claims related to the grammar of Hebrew and the reframing of grammatical forms Spinoza introduces in the *Compendium*. I found it difficult, however, to see in such grammatical reframing the purpose and motivation for which Spinoza would have written the *Compendium*. I disagree on this one specific point: that Spinoza is reframing grammatical forms, making the grammar of the Hebrew language "normative and prescriptive," as Klijnsmit holds, "because Spinoza's aim was to teach active knowledge of Hebrew." It is centred upon a remark Spinoza makes in the *Compendium* while dealing with cantillation accents (the vowel notation system introduced by the Masoretes between 6th-10th centuries CE) and says that he won't consider them here, because they are not relevant for those "who desire to speak Hebrew, not cantillate it" (CGHL, IV, 25)[10]. I cannot agree with the understanding Klijnsmit, but also Harvey, have on what 'to speak Hebrew' means for Spinoza. It seems that both Klijnsmit and Harvey think of an 'active' use of the Hebrew language, in the sense we think of the use of modern living languages. But Spinoza's main effort in the *Compendium* consists in his attempts to retrieve, from the biblical text, the spoken Hebrew of biblical times, that is, Hebrew *without* the vowel notation system of the Masoretes that allows for cantillation, and as it was spoken by those who wrote the Scriptures, and understood by those who listened to the public Torah readings in Antiquity. And as Harvey rightly says, "He did not imagine he could retrieve lost Hebrew vocabulary (e.g., words for fruits, birds, fish), but was convinced that he could reconstruct lost grammatical forms by way of analogy"[11] This means that anything which is later than this ancient version of Hebrew, Spinoza saw as "irrelevant" for his project of retrieving spoken Hebrew from biblical times. Thus, when Spinoza refers to "those who desire to speak Hebrew," I take this to mean nothing else than when we say that someone 'speaks' Latin or An-

cient Greek: understanding the language of the original version of a text, as it was spoken at that time, however complex its linguistic history might have been, as in the case of the Bible, or of Homer and Cicero for that matter.

Similar difficulties regarding the purpose of the *Compendium* arise, in my view, with the work of Philippe Cassuto, another master of the Hebrew language, who clarifies for us the important place that not only the Hebrew language occupies in Spinoza's oeuvre, but also of the rabbinic commentaries to which Spinoza refers to throughout the *Ethics* and the *TTP*, without mentioning his sources. Cassuto also reminds us that we have lost the sense that the *TTP* originally quotes all biblical passages in Hebrew, and which contemporary editions have, contrary to Spinoza's intentions, replaced with translations into modern languages. Early English editions of the *TTP* were in fact printed with Hebrew quotes.

Cassuto's analysis of the purpose of the *Compendium* is not explicitly stated, but framed within his uncovering of the important place biblical Hebrew occupies in Spinoza's thought and the use of the Rabbinica for his work, as a reconciliation of the two worlds, the Latin and the Hebrew world: "Il s'agit là, à notre avis, d'une tentative unique de réunir ces deux mondes que, souvent, on considère comme séparés par un fossé infranchissable." (It is, in my view, the unique attempt to reunite these two worlds, which are usually considered as separated by an insurmountable abyss)[12]

The crossing of this dividing line that Cassuto uncovers in Spinoza between the world of philosophical conceptual language and the world of Hebrew wisdom literature certainly transforms our naïve understanding of those elements we consider universal in our interpretations of Spinoza's work, by assuming a fundamental difference between Spinoza and the rabbinic tradition. And one can only wish to have a commentary to Spinoza's *TTP* published in the form Cassuto proposes, with all the parallels of similar passages from rabbinic literature, from Ibn Ezra, Rashi or Maimonides, framed around Spinoza's text, as on a page from the Talmud. It is nevertheless a commentary that makes what has grown historically an object of further reflections and comments, but still doesn't answer our question about the purpose of Spinoza's *Compendium*. Reconstructing the historical structure of a work by uncovering its influences, is still different from re-thinking this same work and philosophically acting on it.

The philosophical approach

It was Warren Zev Harvey who, in his article "Spinoza's Metaphysical Hebraism" (2002) pointed out the connections, and "striking parallels" between Spinoza's metaphysics in the *Ethics* and his treatment of the noun in the *Compendium*, which according to Harvey "plays a role similar to that of God in the *Ethics*," where "the substantive noun (i.e. the proper noun or the common noun) and the infinitive ('a pure unadulterated noun') correspond to *substantia*, adjectives and verbs to *attributa*, participles and adverbs to *modi*."[13] This is a valid observation that found some resonance among prominent Spinoza scholars. It is often taken up as a proof of relevance of the *Compendium* for philosophy, as by Curley, Nadler or Melamed, but without them going into any further analysis than already provided by Harvey. And indeed, one cannot go much further here if we take philosophy to be the criterion for our understanding of the purpose of the *Compendium*, since there are no other visible intersections between philosophy and Spinoza's grammar of Hebrew.

We could, however, try to follow Harvey's broader question that arises from such parallel, namely if there is not in Spinoza's view "some potent metaphysical presuppositions about the Hebrew language."[14] One could see a reference to the rabbinic tradition here as expressed by Rashi, whom Spinoza calls *R. Selomo* (Rabbi Salomon) in the *TTP*, and *R. Shelomo Jarhi* in the *Compendium*: Rashi's statement that "the world was created in Hebrew" (from Rashi's *Commentaries on the book of Genesis*). But as for any other 'topos' from the Jewish tradition in relation to Spinoza, this one too tells us only that there is perhaps a connection, but not how exactly Spinoza understands these topoi, or how he eventually transforms them into novel claims. In this case of the parallel between metaphysics and language in the *Compendium*, we would also have to reconcile such assumption with Spinoza's views on the universals in the *Ethics* (E IV, Pref), which would prove highly problematic. Put differently, and in relation to the history of philosophy, we would have then to place Spinoza's *Compendium* and understand its purpose within the early modern project of a "universal language" from Bacon to Leibniz., that is, within the framework of the three questions that framed the seventeenth century philosophy of language: universal language, universal grammar, and the origins of language. And it would matter little, whether this universal language is Latin or Hebrew, composed of logical terms (*characteristica universalis*) or based on vernacular languages, as Esperanto was. It would in any case be based on logic, truth and universality as the language used by the Utopians in Thomas More's *Utopia*.

Words would truly reflect reality and could serve as a common tie to the whole of humanity. A linguistic paradise. This is not, I argue, Spinoza's view. Neither on the concept of universality of words, nor on human or Jewish history. In fact, there is no support in the texts of Spinoza that would allow us to see in the *Compendium* another early modern search for the "lingua adamica," a kind of introduction to the universal language, as the key to mutual understanding once lost at Babel.

The philosophic-historical approach

The work of Giovanni Licata argues differently, but in a similar speculative vein. In his "Spinoza and the Universal Cognition of Hebrew. Grammatical Speculations and Demystification in the *Compendium,*" (2009), Licata argues that:
the *Compendium* is a decisively speculative work, which shows the coherence of Spinoza's thoughts: it shows that a perfect and thorough knowledge of biblical Hebrew, which is in fact the essential instrument for the historical-critical exegesis of the Bible, that is, for the critique of all superstitions of Christian and Jewish religious traditions in the *TTP,* actually represents Spinoza's theoretical attempt to isolate the structures and potentialities of the Hebrew language, and now *grammatically* express the concepts and thoughts of Spinoza's philosophy.[15]
Licata combines the historical-rationalist elements of grammar and philosophy into a speculative philosophy of language for his understanding of the *Compendium*.

Another possibility of such combination between history of language and reason was formulated earlier by Ze'ev Levy, in his "The Problem of Normativity in Spinoza's 'Hebrew Grammar,'" (1989) where, according to Levy, "Spinoza's proclaimed aim (for the *Compendium*) was to show that the determinism which reigns in nature and philosophy applies to the Hebrew language as well."[16] Spinoza, in Levy's view, is trying to discover prescriptive (normative) grammatical rules, "which did not exist in the biblical text itself, in order to corroborate the allegedly inherent norms of Hebrew grammar."[17]

Both, Licata and Levy suggest a highly speculative reading of the *Compendium,* where a grammar of a language is understood as fully determined by ontology and metaphysics. And according to which the purpose of the *Compendium of the Grammar of the Hebrew Language* would have been for Spinoza to express his metaphysical thoughts now in form of a language grammar. Here the idea of a philosophical reading is transformed into the assumption of its own ultimate foundation in

metaphysics. It is the assumption that the *Compendium* is lacking its own purposiveness, and needs to be determined through Spinoza's metaphysics.

Finally, to my knowledge the most recent book published on Spinoza's *Compendium, Hébreu – du sacré au maternel* (Hebrew – From sacred to Mother tongue) by Keren Mock (2016), represents another account of a philosophy of language, prefaced by Julia Kristeva, it is written in the tradition of psychoanalysis and semiotics.[18]

In sum, the existing scholarship derives the purpose of Spinoza's *Compendium* either from a given historical context: of linguistics or grammarian traditions, that is, from History. Or from its connections with philosophy: either philosophy of language or metaphysics, that is, from Reason. It proceeds along the same pattern with which the Enlightenment determined the scope of the interpretations of Scriptures. And this model seems to be a greater obstacle to overcome for the reader of the *Compendium* than the Hebrew language.

THE PURPOSE OF THE COMPENDIUM

The *Compendium of the Grammar of the Hebrew Language* is the only work, besides the *Ethics*, which Spinoza supposedly intended to demonstrate 'more geometrico.'[19] But the *Compendium* is unfinished[20], and the text we have is not demonstrated in geometric manner. We do not know how such a grammar of the Hebrew language would have looked like, but we do know that the choice of the geometric method, just like in the *Ethics,* would have claimed the apodeictic certainty of an 'exact science'; here of a science of the Grammar of the Hebrew language. Its first lines could have begun with Spinoza's definition of the noun: "By a noun I understand a word by which we signify or indicate something that falls under the intellect (*sub intellectum cadit*)," [21] since all words in Hebrew have for Spinoza "a force of a noun," [22] i.e. a force of a signifier that falls under the intellect. It is uncertain even so, whether an accomplished project of the *Compendium*, written in geometric manner, would have had a different reception history, since the geometric method, as we know from the *Ethics*, does not explain to its readers the purpose of its undertaking.

From the text we have, it is nonetheless clear that the purpose of Spinoza's *Compendium* is, in the first place, for the reader to learn Hebrew from it. It would be a mistake to think that we could bypass this simple purpose of Spinoza's *Compen-*

dium, and let our judgement find its way around it, without acknowledging the fact that understanding occurs in the medium of language. Hence, to think out the consequences of learning Hebrew in the way Spinoza suggests is the next, and more compelling, question about the purpose of his *Compendium*. Such learning of the Hebrew language concerns, I argue, our better understanding of the Scriptures, that is, of the second of the two 'separate,' but *not* conflicting 'footings' upon which philosophy and Scriptures stand. [23] We know that Spinoza "found nothing in what *Scripture* expressly teaches that does not concur with our understanding and nothing that is in conflict with it." (*TTP,* Pref. 9)[24]

What is at stake then with Spinoza's *Compendium* is the comprehension of *how* biblical texts do *not* conflict with our understanding. In other words, it is about the overturn of "our most powerful prejudices about religion," this time not with the help of philosophy, where for Spinoza "teaching is nothing more than the speculations of the Aristotelian and the Platonists ... with the Greeks, to render the prophets equally nonsensical" (*TTP* Pref., 8), nor with traditional theology "to reduce religion to ridiculous mysteries and revile understanding as corrupt by nature" (*TTP* Pref., 8), but "to derive it from Scripture itself," i.e., to turn Scriptures against established religious doctrines, now with the help of the meaning conveyed by nothing else than the Hebrew language.

Spoken Hebrew

Luther's *sola scriptura*, which made the study of Hebrew a Christian duty, and for whom salvation was no longer to be sought through any other authority than the biblical texts themselves, has much in common, or so it seems, with Spinoza's method of interpreting the Scriptures, according to which "we must derive all our knowledge of it and of spiritual matters from Scripture alone" (*TTP* Pref., 10). Both, Luther and Spinoza are convinced that without Hebrew, "no one can really understand the Scriptures ... For although the New Testament is written in Greek, it is full of Hebraisms and Hebrew expressions" (Luther, *Table Talks*)[25]; or, in the words of Spinoza, "without a thorough knowledge of Hebrew, we cannot properly understand the Bible," "because all the writers of both the Old and the New Testament were Hebrews undeniably the history of the Hebrew language is more essential than anything else not only for understanding the books of the Old Testament which were first written in this language, but also those of the New Testament. For while the latter were propagated in other languages, they are full of Hebrew idioms" (*TTP* VII, 100).

And yet, these two statements, from Luther and from Spinoza, which share a view on the necessity of knowing Hebrew for understanding what the Scriptures teach, reflect two very different positions: Luther is concerned with the knowledge of biblical Hebrew, that is, with the knowledge of Hebrew as we find it in the biblical text. For Luther, knowledge of biblical Hebrew is the final aim, and its result a translation of the Bible into modern languages, getting as close as possible to the original texts of Scriptures, as all modern translations of the Bible proceed[26]. By contrast, Spinoza is concerned with the knowledge of *spoken* Hebrew from biblical times. For Spinoza, the biblical text represents a linguistic platform from where to 'recover,' as far as this can be done, ancient Hebrew as it was spoken by the authors of the Bible, and its meaning and connotations understood by its audience. And this is, Spinoza tells us, what his intention with the *Compendium* is, namely, that "There are many who wrote (of the grammar) of the Scriptures but none who wrote a grammar of the Hebrew language" (CGLH VII, 36), and the reason why "the history of the Hebrew language is more essential than anything else" (*TTP* VII, 100). For Spinoza, the result is knowledge of ancient spoken Hebrew, with no translation, getting as close as possible to the understanding of meanings conveyed by the Ancients.

Spinoza's *Compendium* undertakes the transformation of the text back into language, where a written tradition is no longer a fragment of the past, but our immediate concern, insofar as this past has raised itself far beyond the meaning handed down to us by the Ancients, into an established ideality of words that constitutes the sphere we call 'religion.' Or to say it with Gadamer, "It is not at all a matter of securing ourselves against the tradition that speaks out of the text then, but, on the contrary, of excluding everything that could hinder us from understanding it in terms of the subject matter."[27]

The written word

The fact that the tradition is essentially verbal, or 'spoken,' had consequences for the interpretation of its written form for all three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. And, in a sense, this was already the case for the written compilation of the tradition, i.e. the biblical canon, since the book of Deuteronomy, the fifth book of Moses (or of the Torah), represents a commentary to the previous four books. This biblical tradition itself allows for comments from within its own matrix, enabling further comments, for which the prophets were in fact the first interpreters. Judaism preserves this verbal character through its oral

tradition of rabbinic commentaries and succession of teachers, allowing different interpretations and discussions throughout generations. Christianity preserves it through its view about the connection between understanding and interpretation, in the form of 'true' teachings, or doxa, that allows for a continuity, and which tries to translate the verbal character of tradition into a conceptual one. And Islam preserves the verbal character of tradition through the introduction of an interpreter who is contemporary with the text, the last prophet, trying to secure the immediacy of the spoken word in the succession of his followers.

From this point of view, of the verbal character of tradition based on the Hebrew Bible, as source of all monotheism, the question of language and meaning does not present itself in the way philosophy of language or historical exegesis raises it. Because the transformation of a written tradition back into its spoken language cannot mean here merely acknowledging what has been established, either historically or linguistically. Rather, the fact that the tradition is essentially verbal in character, means that *understanding* of the spoken word has always determined the very existence of that which is transmitted.

Spinoza's Method

If Spinoza's method, as I argue here, is different from the method of rabbinic commentaries in Judaism, and from the method of doctrinal teachings in Christianity, then his method offers an alternative to both. In Judaism, an alternative to the method based on the experience of the exile, trying to recover the meaning of the Written Law through the Oral Law. But also, an alternative to Jewish philosophy, where the meaning of tradition is recovered through the convergence of meanings with philosophy, whereby language represents an extreme challenge to their Jewish authors, i.e. an obstacle that is not actually possible to overcome. And in Christianity, an alternative to the method based on the experience of being separated from the older Hebrew tradition which Scripture originated from, and recovering its meaning through various attempts of transforming it into the universality of conceptual language, and where the variety of meanings and the apparent contradictions in the text, represent a major obstacle to Christian theologians that cannot really be overcome. When such contradictions are forced into the universality of conceptual language, the result is an uncompromising world of dogmas. In this sense, Judaism and Christianity figure both as two different forms of 'exile' literature preserving the meaning of the text from outside of it, and not from within.

The only way out, from such 'exile' literature, seems almost obvious: to regain the coherence of the verbal tradition through the language of Scripture itself. Without any external reference to unfold its meaning, be it an additional narrative of wisdom literature; the legal deductions of the praxis; or the wrapping into a concept of abstraction. The meaning of biblical texts resides in the vast field of its own language according to Spinoza. But this meaning becomes intelligible only in and through the language itself, that is, in Hebrew. "In fact, it is very difficult to alter the meaning of a word" and Spinoza is "thus wholly convinced, for these and other reasons, that it could never have entered anyone's mind to corrupt a language" (*TTP* VII, 105), so that "we must investigate a passage's sense only from its use of the language or from reasoning which accepts no other foundation than Scripture itself" (*TTP* VII, 100).

Spinoza's method of interpreting biblical texts – "The universal rule … for interpreting Scripture is to claim nothing as a biblical doctrine that we have not derived, by the closest possible scrutiny, from its own history" – includes first, "the nature and properties of the language," and second, the history of each of the biblical books: the history of their transmission and canonization, and the history of their authors and their audiences.

On that account, Spinoza's *Compendium* concerns the first of these two tasks, namely the knowledge of spoken Hebrew:

> Firstly, such a history must include the nature and properties of the language in which the biblical books were composed and which their authors were accustomed to speak. We can then investigate all the possible meanings that every single phrase in common usage can admit; and because all the writers of both the Old and the New Testament were Hebrews undeniably the history of the Hebrew language is more essential than anything else not only for understanding the books of the Old Testament which were first written in this language, but also those of the New Testament. For while the latter were propagated in other languages, they are full of Hebrew idioms.
> (*TTP* VII, 100)

The first sentence of this quote describes the content of the *Compendium*, where we find "the nature and properties of the language in which the biblical books were composed and which their authors were accustomed to speak," that is, Spi-

noza's 'retrieved' spoken Hebrew in the *Compendium,* with its grammar and its properties. And the second sentence of this quote essentially summarises the task of the reader who is to learn Hebrew from the *Compendium*, namely, "to investigate all the possible meanings that every single phrase in common usage can admit" and, "organize them by subject so that we may have available by this means all the statements that are found on each topic." Thus, if we are to understand what 'religion' truly teaches, i.e. the biblical canon, "undeniably the history of the Hebrew language is more essential than anything else" (*TTP* VII, 100).

From all this, it follows that the actual question about the purpose of Spinoza's *Compendium* is: *How* are we "to stick to the literal sense" of words and "investigate all the possible meanings common usage can admit"? For instance, the common usage and literal meaning of the words: 'world,' 'whole,' 'inhabit,' 'beginning,' 'God,' or any other Hebrew word from the text. As Spinoza writes, "we are concerned here only with their meaning, not with their truth" (*TTP* VII, 100) and, "Moreover, in seeking the sense of Scripture we must take care especially not to be blinded by our own reasoning, in so far as it is founded on the principles of natural knowledge (not to mention our preconceptions)," which means that we are "not permitted to adjust the meaning of Scripture to the dictates of our reason or our preconceived opinions; all explanation of the Bible must be sought from the Bible alone" (*TTP* VII, 100). Spinoza's method of reading, which, at first sounds naively 'literal,' perhaps suffices, in fact, to overturn our "most powerful prejudices about religion."

Meaning of words

Every language embodies a coherent system of meanings, expressed through its grammar and linguistic features. The connotations, allusions or disruptions of meaning are all part of the convention that makes those who speak the language understand each other well. And although words signify concepts and things, they are not for Spinoza identical with the things they signify, but rather gain their meaning from the language that is alive in speech. This is demonstrated in Spinoza's example regarding the word 'fire,' where "we must first ask whether this unique expression, 'God is fire', admits any but a literal sense, i.e., whether the word 'fire' has any other meaning apart from natural fire". Further, "the word 'fire' also stands for anger and jealousy (see Job 31.12), and therefore Moses' statements are readily reconciled, and we are justified in concluding that they are one and the same," "since Moses also plainly teaches, in many passages, that God has

no similarity with visible things" (*TTP* VII, 101).

Remember that "the purpose of the Scriptures" is not to teach us "language" (the Scripture does not provide us with a grammar of Hebrew, and, therefore, the necessity of writing one), but things, or "teachings" (CGHL XV, 90)[28]. So that those who wish "to speak Hebrew" today (CGHL IV, 25), need to attain a "universal knowledge" of Hebrew (CGHL VIII, 40). And "While our method requires a knowledge of Hebrew and the common people likewise have no time to study that, no such objection weakens our position. For the Jewish and gentile common people for whom in their day the prophets and Apostles preached and wrote, understood their language so that they also grasped the prophet's meaning," so "that I can point to the common people who understood very well the language of the prophets and Apostles" (*TTP* VII, 114).

For his method of "universal knowledge," Spinoza presents us in the *Compendium* with the 'fundamentals' that characterise the Hebrew language and from where he derives the grammatical rules, demonstrates its laws, explains its morphology, and comprehends its syntax. He speaks of 'letters' and 'vowels,' which are in Hebrew essentially different: the letters are the transcription of consonants, and vowels are signs, which help us read the consonants. Vowels, Spinoza tells us, are consequently "not letters" in Hebrew (CGHL I, 7). The biblical text is indeed originally written without vowels, that is, without the additional punctuation introduced later, around the seventh century by the Masoretes. Today, without the vowels, the text would be illegible to us. However, the words are intelligible to us because of the use of roots, composed of three, and sometimes two, consonants through which other words are created. It is the meaning of consonant roots in the Hebrew language, which, for Spinoza "we are to consider as incorrupt, namely the meaning of words in the Hebrew Language" (*TTP* VII, 105). From this perspective, the vocalisation system, introduced with the intention to preserve the oral tradition in its written form, necessarily confines the meaning of words in the text.

Because all words in Hebrew (nouns, adjectives, infinitives, prepositions) are subject to the same modifications introduced with the vocalisation system, as Spinoza convincingly argues, there are in biblical Hebrew no different parts of speech (as in Latin). Thus, all words in Hebrew are originally 'nouns' according to Spinoza. What we usually understand as a verb for instance, does not apply here, since infinitives are modified, through the vocalisation rules, in the same way as

nouns.

Hence, what matters most for our understanding of the purpose of the *Compendium* is Spinoza's definition of the noun: "By a noun I understand a word by which we signify or indicate something that falls under the intellect (*sub intellectum cadit*). However, among things that fall under the intellect, there can be either things and attributes of things, modes and relationships, or actions, and modes and relationships of actions. Hence, we sum up easily the various kinds of nouns. ... There are then six kinds of nouns: I the substantive noun, which is divided into the proper and the common. II the adjective. III the relative or preposition. IV the participle. V the infinitive. VI the adverb" (CGHL V, 28). It is by means of reconstructing the vocalisation rules that Spinoza seeks to recover the spoken Hebrew that lies, as it were, concealed behind the vowels of the written text. In a finished version of the *Compendium,* we would presumably have the vocalisation rules demonstrated in 'geometric order,' derived from Spinoza's definition of a noun. Thus, contrary to the assumptions made in the literature about normativity and Spinoza's metaphysics, nothing else than this ordering and retracing of vocalisation rules make his grammar 'prescriptive' or 'normative': "For all Hebrew words, except for a few interjections and conjunctions and one or two particles, have the force and properties of nouns. Because the grammarians did not understand this they considered many words to be irregular, which according to the usage of the language are most regular, and they were ignorant of many things, which are necessary to know for a proper understanding of the language" (CGHL V, 28).

We can say therefore, that what 'falls under the intellect' in the Hebrew language is the consonant root, whose meaning is shared by all words derived from the same root. This meaning, together with its connotations and disruptions, which fall under the intellect, were well understood by the authors of the Scriptures and by "the common people who understood very well the language of the prophets and Apostles."

Examples

In the following, I bring first, two examples given by Shmuel Trigano in his book *L'Hébreu, une philosophie*, and for whom Spinoza allegedly plays an important role.[29] And second, the example of the word we translate as 'God.'

Root: *Alam* – to disappear, to be hidden
Neelam: non-visible, hidden; *Ilem, heelim:* to hide, to recover; *Hitalem:* to disappear, to ignore, to neglect; *Alum:* unknown; *Olam:* world, extension; *Elem:* young, adolescent; *Alma:* young girl, non-married; *Almut:* youth.

When the word 'world' is used in biblical Hebrew, its author and its audience will hear a connotation of something that is in disappearance, something that is hidden: that the world manifests itself in disappearance, in the impossibility of taking hold of it, in the absence of its materiality, as it were. The identity of an adolescent is hidden within the person she is to become as an adult. An adolescent is a hidden person, unknown or absent to herself. A transitory state, which is bringing birth to what is hidden, as in *Isaiah* 7:14, where a young girl, the *Alma*, will give birth to a child. The Septuagint, the Latin version of the biblical text, translates *Alma* as gr. *parthenos*/virgin, because it was not thought that something of this world/*Olam* can give birth to something pure. The biblical audience understood it differently. The expression 'olam haba,' usually translated as 'the world to come,' and which some understood as a world separate from this one (afterlife), is in Hebrew simply a 'world in coming,' that is, the world as it will eventually be in future due to our ethical and intellectual efforts to better it. The 'rewards' of such efforts, are nothing else than the real possibility of changing the present.

If we just 'stick' to the literal sense of the root *Alam*, as Spinoza proposes, we have, among other meanings: a world, which does not manifest itself in its materiality; a simple young girl, who gives birth to a real child; and a conception of a future, which is dependent solely upon our actions in the present. The Scriptures teaches nothing mysterious: "For the teachings of true piety are expressed in the most everyday language, since they are very common and extremely simple and easy to understand" (*TTP* VII, 111).

Root: *Kol* – the whole
Kalah: a finite being, accomplished; *kilah:* to finish, to destroy; *kalah:* extinction, extermination, wholly; *kaleh:* transitory, temporary, ephemeral; *kalah:* the bride, the daughter-in-law.

When something is said to be 'whole' in the text, the audience would have heard 'something that is about to destroy itself.' A warning that, eventually, totality always contains its own end. Any totality is finite, its character ephemeral: the apogee, the entelechy, the apotheosis is prone to auto-destruction, if we succumb to

the temptation of totality/the 'whole.' To the 'whole' of Israel, there is always a 'rest' in the tradition, a rupture of totality that keeps the whole alive.
The 'bride' is perhaps the destruction of the totality of an ego, which makes place for the other. And the 'daughter-in-law,' the destruction of the bond between mother and son. Whatever the Ancients might have heard in it, the connection between totality/the whole and destruction/finitude is essential to all words derived from this root.

According to Spinoza, to clearly understand what the Scriptures teach, we do not need to investigate the truth of this relationship (of finitude and totality, or of any other), only the meaning of words, for "we are concerned here only with their meaning, not with their truth" (*TTP* VII, 100). The advantage of such method of meanings, conveyed only through the Hebrew language, is that it precisely implies a particular content, which we can understand clearly (since we can understand the relationship between totality and finitude without asserting its truth) and which has a force of a signifier that falls under the intellect. Namely, "those topics that are accessible to the intellect and of which we can readily form a clear conception. For matters that by their nature are easily grasped can never be so obscurely phrased that they cannot be readily understood, according to the saying, a word is enough for a wise man" (*TTP* VII, 110).

Almost needless to say, if we follow Spinoza's method of 'literal reading,' every single meaning we usually attribute to 'religion' (creation, salvation, blessing, messiah, love, knowledge, revelation, miracles, soul, and all others) would appear in a wholly new light, transformed into a meaning of ordinary language, intelligible to everyone as it must have been in biblical times, since "this method requires no other light than that of natural reason" (*TTP* VII, 111). This includes the meaning of the word we translate as 'God,' and which represents the name of names in the Scriptures, or as Harvey rightly notes, the noun of nouns for Spinoza, that is, the *Tetragrammaton*.[30]

Root: *hyh – to be, to become, to exist, to accompany, be with*

The verb 'to be' is understood here as the naming of "a being that has always existed, exists, and will always exist, and for this reason Moses calls him by name, which in Hebrew expresses these three tenses of existence" (*TTP* II, 36), namely as expressing the past, present and future tense of the verb 'to be.' The name of names, the *Tetragrammaton,* refers to pure being. This distinguished name in the

Scripture, which refers to the infinity of existence, gives the name to all other names, that is, to all other instances, which are put in relationship to finite beings. In other words, in the biblical text, there is no such noun as 'God,' but one distinguished name (a noun in the form of a verb) for pure being, and other names (nouns in the form of adjectives, or of a definite noun, which is always defined grammatically through its relations to a particular thing), which designate a reference to pure being in relation to finite beings. References to pure being include: El (true divinity), Elohim (creative power, principle of justice), Adonai (Lord, i.e. the name for the privileged name), Hashem (Name), El Shaddai (the One that suffices), El Elyon (the Highest), Shekhinah (the presence of the distinguished name, or of infinite being in the world) or Hamakom (the Place where the infinite being dwells), which are all expressing multiple perspectives of the one and the same distinguished name *as* we know it according to the description of the prophets in the text, and to which Spinoza refers to in his discussion on prophecy in the *TTP* as 'attributes.' In brief, for what we usually translate as 'God we have in the text of the Scriptures nothing more than one word with the meaning of pure being in the form of a verb, and other words in relation to it in the form of adjectives or definite nouns, with the meaning of different modes of this same (verb) being. Nothing else does the Scripture teach. And however surprising this might sound to us, there is no 'God' in the text, i.e. no noun that corresponds to the Greek 'Theos' or the Latin 'Deus,' if we keep the literal meaning of words, only pure being and modalities (ways) of being.

What the prophets knew, Spinoza tells us, is the "moral certainty" that follows from this, from the fact that what is truly divine is not a pharaoh, the sun, or anything other than pure being. The Scripture is not a philosophical treatise, but is nevertheless based on the most abstract concept of being, and for which Tacitus could say that they, the ancient Hebrews, "have ideas quite the opposite (of Egyptians). The Egyptians worship many animals and monstrous images; the Jews conceive of one god only, and that with the mind alone: Iudaei mente sola unumque numen intellegunt" (Tacitus, Historiae, Book V, 5)[31].

CONCLUSION

These examples of Hebrew words and remarks suffice to give us a sense of some connotations of meanings the biblical authors and audience would have been familiar with, and which no translation of the Hebrew language, however close to the text, as the remarkable translation by Buber and Rosenzweig into German for

example, will ever be able to convey to us. For Spinoza, only the Hebrew language in its spoken form can provide us with an understanding of 'what falls under the intellect,' that is, of anything that can ever become an object of thought. Without such 'universal knowledge' of Hebrew, we have little to say about the content of teachings handed down to us by the Ancients.

What would have happened if our intellectual history had taken up Spinoza's *Compendium,* is no 'reformation' of religion, but indeed "the overturn of our most powerful prejudices about religion," a revolution that "Admittedly ... because the path it shows to be the true and right one was never cultivated, or even ventured on, by men, so that owing to the passage of time, it became arduous and almost impassable, as is eminently clear, I think, from the difficulties that I have pointed out" (*TTP* VII, 111). The purpose of Spinoza's *Compendium of the Grammar of the Hebrew Language* is precisely this, a shift that could provide a common ground to all three monotheistic religions, and finally shed light on what the Scriptures truly teach. For "I make this chief distinction between religion and superstition, that the latter is founded on ignorance, the former on knowledge" (Ep. 21).

Before I close this paper, just a brief comment to Nadler's question of "Aliquid remanet: What Are We to Do with Spinoza's *Compendium of Hebrew Grammar*?"[32] Nadler's article is a reaction to the fact that the most recent English edition of *Spinoza's Collected Works* (Curley 2016) did not include the *Compendium*. It was to this fact that I commented on in the introduction to this paper presented at a workshop held at Western Sydney University in 2016, but decided to leave out here. Because it should not be a question of *whether* to publish a work written by Spinoza, *whether* to acknowledge the existing scholarship, however small, on the *Compendium,* and *whether* to withdraw the text from any future research by upcoming scholars, as Curley decided to do. It is the most alarming sign, in my view, of us having entered into the kind of oblivion which philosophical thinking faces each time when we forget, as Gadamer puts it: "that in understanding the texts of great thinkers, a truth is known that could not be attained in any other way, even if this contradicts the yardstick of research."[33]

INJA STRACENSKI is a PhD candidate in Philosophy at the University of Sydney, with a thesis on Spinoza's metaphysics. She holds an M.A. in Philosophy, Theology, Logic and Theory of Sciences from Ludwig-Max-

imilians-University (LMU) of Munich. Her publications include a book chapter, 'The Will and the Reason', a comparative study on the foundations of ethics in Kant and Spinoza, in *Motivationen für das Selbst: Kant und Spinoza im Vergleich*, Wolfenbütteler Research Series, Vol. 130., Herzog August Library, 2012.

NOTES

Endnotes

1. *Compendium Grammatices Linguae Hebraeae* (*CGLH*), Carl Gebhardt, Spinoza Opera I, (Heidelberg, Carl Winter Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1925), 283-403.
2. Steven Nadler, "Aliquid remanet: What Are We to Do with Spinoza's *Compendium of Hebrew Grammar*?" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 56:1 (Johns Hopkins University Press 2018), 155-167.
3. Martin Luther: *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe, WA TR 1* from the first half of the 1530's, (Weimar, 1883–2009), p. 525: Wenn ich jünger wäre, so wollte ich diese Sprache lernen, denn ohne sie kann man die h. Schrift nimmermehr recht verstehen .... Darum haben sie recht gesagt: Die Ebräer trinken aus der Vornquelle; die Griechen aber aus den Wässerlin, die aus der Quell fliessen; die Lateinischen aber aus der Pfutzen.»
4. Anthony J. Klijnsmit, *Spinoza and Grammatical Tradition*, (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 3.
5. I am using here the only translation available in English of Spinoza's *Compendium* from Maurice J. Bloom: *Baruch Spinoza, Hebrew Grammar* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962) p. 36. The *Compendium* in Shirley's *Complete Works of Spinoza* (Hackett Publishing 2002) is a reprint of Bloom's translation.
6. Warren Zev Harvey, "Spinoza's Metaphysical Hebraism." *Jewish Themes in Spinoza's Philosophy*. Eds Lenn E. Goodman and Heidi M. Ravven. (Albany: State of New York University Press, 2002) 108.
7. Anthony J. Klijnsmit, "Some Seventeenth Century Grammatical Descriptions of Hebrew." *Histoire,* Épistémologie, *Langage* 12:1 (1990) 77-101.
8. Samuel Shirley, *Spinoza – Complete Works.* Foreword to the Hebrew Grammar. (Hackett, Indianapolis, 2002) 584.
9. Klijnsmit, *Spinoza and Grammatical Tradition*, 5.
10. Reference to the *Compendium* with chapter and page number here as CGLH for Bloom, M. transl., *Baruch Spinoza, Hebrew Grammar* (Philosophical Library, New York, 1962), p. 25
11. Harvey, (2002) 108.
12. Philippe Cassuto, *Spinoza hébraïsant*. (Leuven: Peeters, 1999) 125.
13. Harvey, (2002) 110.
14. Harvey, (2002) 111.
15. Giovanni Licata, "Spinoza e la *Cognitio Universalis* Dell'Ebraico. Demistificazione e Speculazione Grammaticale nel *Compendio di Grammatica Ebraica*." *Giornale di Metafisica,* Nuova Serie – XXXI (2009), 626 (my emphasis and translation).
16. Ze'ev Levy, *Baruch or Benedict: On Some Jewish Aspects of Spinoza's Philosophy*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1989) chap. 6, 59.
17. Ibid.
18. Keren Mock, *Hébreu – du sacré au maternel*, (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2016)
19. Jarig Jellesz in the Preface to Spinoza's *Opera Posthuma* (1677).
20. Spinoza wrote thirty-three chapters of the first part of the *Compendium* (on phonetics, alphabet, morphology), and of which the last chapter is unfinished; the second part (on syntax) remained unwritten.
21. CGHL, V, 28 (Bloom transl.): "I shall now explain what I understand by a noun. By a noun I understand a word by which we signify or indicate something that is understood. However, among things that are understood there can be either things and attributes of things, modes and relationships, or actions, and modes and relationships of actions".
22. Ibid. :"For all Hebrew words, except for a few interjections and conjunctions and one or two particles, have the force and properties of nouns. Because the grammarians did not understand

this they considered many words to be irregular which according to the usage of language are most regular, and they were ignorant of many things which are necessary to know for a proper understanding of the (Hebrew) language".
23. The edition for all references to the *TTP* is: Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*. Ed. and trans. Jonathan Israel and Michael Silverthorne, (Cambridge University Press, 2007).
24. A century later, Moses Mendelssohn is making a similar claim, namely that there is nothing in the Hebrew Scriptures that "argues against reason", in: Moses Mendelssohn, *Correspondenz mit dem Erbprinzen von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel* [Correspondence with the hereditary prince of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel], 1776.
25. Martin Luther: *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe, WA TR 1* from the first half of the 1530's, (Weimar, 1883–2009), p. 525
26. For the history of Hebrew in Christianity see Pinchas E. Lapide, *Hebrew in the Church: The Foundations of Jewish-Christian Dialogue,* (Eerdmans Publishing, 1984).
27. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* (New York, London: Continuum, 1975) 272.
28. Spinoza formulates it as follow: "I do not know whether they (the grammarians) believed the purpose of the Scriptures to be the language rather than the teachings", CGLH, XV, 90
29. Shmuel Trigano, *L'Hébreu, une philosophie*, (Paris: Éditions Hermann, 2014)
30. Harvey, (2002) 110.
31. Tacitus, *Histories: Books IV-V,* transl. Clifford H. Moore (Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1931) 183:"They bury the body rather than burn it, thus following the Egyptians' custom; they likewise bestow the same care on the dead, and hold the same belief about the world below; but their ideas of heavenly things are quite the opposite. The Egyptians worship many animals and monstrous images; the Jews conceive of one god only, and that with the mind alone: they regard as impious those who make from perishable materials representations of gods in man's image; that supreme and eternal being is to them incapable of representation and without end".
32. Steven Nadler, "Aliquid remanet: What Are We to Do with Spinoza's *Compendium of Hebrew Grammar*?" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 56:1 (Johns Hopkins University Press 2018), 155-167.
33. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* (New York, London: Continuum, 1975) Introduction, xxi: "The naïve self-esteem of the present moment may rebel against the idea that philosophical consciousness admits the possibility that one's own philosophical insight may be inferior to that of Plato or Aristotle, Leibniz, Kant or Hegel. One might think it a weakness that contemporary philosophy tries to interpret and assimilate its classical heritage with this acknowledgment of its own weakness. But it is undoubtedly a far greater weakness for philosophical thinking not to face such self-examination but to play at being Faust. It is clear that in understanding the texts of these great thinkers, a truth is known that could not be attained in any other way, even if this contradicts the yardstick of research and progress by which science measure itself".

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the mother of all prejudices: teleology and normativity in spinoza

filippo del lucchese

Teleology is a major problem in Spinoza's thought for at least three reasons, two internal and one external to Spinozism as a historico-philosophical field. The first internal reason is that Spinoza himself considers the path toward truth to be seeded with obstacles and difficulties formed by theological and philosophical prejudices. He sees teleology as the first and most serious of these obstacles, so widespread that everyone aspiring to the acquisition of true knowledge encounters it. Teleology is, in a word, the mother of all prejudices. The second internal reason is that the question of Spinoza's teleology, and the normativism that derives from it, is one of the most divisive issues within Spinozist scholarship. Although Spinoza plainly and openly dismisses every and any form of teleology, this claim is unambiguously understood and fully accepted only in the continental tradition. In analytic scholarship, on the contrary, it has sparked a huge debate that has dismissed Spinoza's own words and neutralised the originality and strength of his thought vis-à-vis the main normative ethical and metaethical thinkers of the canon, Aristotle and Kant in particular.[1] The third reason goes beyond a mere enquiry in the history of philosophy and is thus external to Spinozism itself: I strongly believe that Spinoza's critique of teleology and normativity remains relevant, as teleology permeates our culture in forms and ways that are far more sophisticated than they were in Spinoza's time. We are in dire need of language that critiques it as the theological/philosophical superstition it is, and the internal and external reasons thus converge: we can ill-afford a strand of philosophy that so misreads this key

element in Spinoza's potentially liberatory work.

Although space constraints make it impossible to discuss the external reason, I will explore the question of teleology related to the internal reasons to show that Spinoza's philosophy is—in all its aspects, metaphysical and ethical, political and aesthetic—profoundly and consistently anti-teleological. I will start by showing that the historiographical debate has failed to understand the issue of teleology in Spinoza because it has used a definition of finalism that is more consistent with the language and meaning of 20th century metaethical and analytical debates than with the 17th century debates Spinoza refers to. Next, in section two, I will show how he rejects teleology, along with normativism, and grounds his philosophy on four theoretical pillars that I will analyse in the third and last section. These pillars are the redefinition of the notion of essence, the destruction of the concept of divine providence, the critique of functionalism, and, finally, the development of ontological nominalism.

SPINOZA AND THE ORDER OF NATURE

According to Spinoza, everything happens necessarily and in agreement with the universal and eternal disposition of nature that reveals itself in its constant and regular *ratio*. Spinoza consistently states this, perhaps most clearly in chapter VI of his *TTP* in which he says that Nature observes a fixed and immutable order (*ordo fixus et immutabilis*) and that if anything were to happen contrary to Nature's universal laws (*leges universales*), it would necessarily also be contrary to God's intellect (*TTP* VI, 7-9; *CSW* II, 154). Nature's *ratio* does not make exceptions and does not depend on any divine and arbitrary will.

The term *ratio* refers to hermeneutic rules (*TTP* VI, 34), Hebrew grammar rules (*TTP* IX, 29), legal rules and laws (*TTP* VII, *passim*) and, most interestingly for the issue at stake here, the *regula naturae,* which Spinoza used in his striking definition of the *jus sive potentia* in *TTP* XVI, 2: "Per jus et institutum naturae nihili aliud intelligo quam regulas naturae uniuscujusque individui, secundum quas unumquodque naturaliter determinatum concipimus ad certo modo existendum et operandum." The following are the most important English translations:

> Wernham: "By the right and law of nature I simply mean the rules of each individual thing's nature, the rules whereby we conceive it as naturally determined to exist and act in a definite way."

> Shirley: "By the right and etablished order of Nature I mean simply the rules governing the nature of every individual thing, according to which we conceive it as naturally determined to exist and to act in a definite way."
>
> Silverthorne/Israel: "By the right and order of nature I merely mean the rules determining the nature of each individual thing by which we conceive it as determined naturally to exist and to behave in a certain way."
>
> Curley: "By the right and established practice of nature I mean nothing but the rules of the nature of each individual, according to which we conceive each thing to be naturally determined to existing and having effects in a certain way."

Shirley and Israel both introduce the idea of rules that, from above, actively "govern" and "determine" natural things, which are somehow passive. Wernham, followed by Curley, is more respectful of the text, implicitly suggesting the immanence of these rules to natural things. Nature's *ratio* is immanent and Spinoza suggests, I believe, precisely the contrary of an "order" (Israel) or an "established order" (Shirley) that governs or determines nature. Wernham is closer, with the idea of law, which is also suggested by Giancotti's *Lexicon*, which unequivocally points to the meaning of *lex naturalis*.[2]

The laws of nature do not express God's will, but God's intellect, and thus unfold according to its *integrally absolute* necessity, beyond and against every end. The concept is strategically explained in *E* I, Ap.: "the laws of [God's] nature [are] so ample that they sufficed for producing all things which can be conceived by an infinite intellect," (*E* I, Ap.; *CSW* II, 446) which repeats *E* I, P16: "omnia quae sub intellectum infinitum cadere possunt." It is in this astonishing text, the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics*, that Spinoza powerfully presents his fight against teleology: "Nature has no end set before it [*naturam finem nullum sibi praefixum habere*] and ... all final causes are nothing but human fictions [*omnes causas finales nihil, nisi humana esse figmenta*]" (E I, Ap.; *CSW* II, 442).

TELEOLOGY: THE PROBLEM OF A DEFINITION

Now, if the statement is as unambiguous as I claim, how is it that so many scholars are able to reintroduce teleology into Spinoza's thought? Again, this happens

mainly in the anglophone debate, largely but not exclusively influenced by the analytical approach and completely ignoring, consciously I assume, the continental scholars who take Spinoza's anti-teleological statement seriously. The dispute in anglophone scholarship is polarised around two main positions that recognise either a partial or a full teleological dimension in Spinoza's thought. Both are attempts to respond to a number of recurring questions: does Spinoza accept any form of teleology and, if so, in which domain of his system, i.e. moral psychology, the natural world, or even the substance/God itself ? How does his metaphysics, apparently grounded on a strict necessitarianism, reconcile itself with an ethics? In other words and more broadly, is a non-normative and non-teleological ethics possible at all?

Edwin Curley has argued that the ethical aim of Spinozism cannot be disconnected from teleology. Spinoza's ethics is concerned with the future, with previsions and prescription, with recommendations and injunctions, and thus, Curley contends, with something that somehow commands, from the end that lies in the future, the beginning and present of human actions. Moral imperatives for Spinoza are general and universal; as "hypothetical imperatives with necessary antecedents, and so, in effect, categorical," they remind us of Kant.[3] Curley's intention is to transform Spinoza's natural laws, at least at the human level, into imperatives.[4] Surprisingly, however, Curley ignores the clear distinction that Kant himself establishes between categorical and hypothetical. A hypothetical imperative, even with a necessary antecedent, does not become categorical. It is an assertorial and non-problematic imperative, but not a categorical one.[5]

Curley has refined his position in response to Jonathan Bennett's influential thesis. Spinoza claims to reject ends in both his metaphysics and his psychology (i.e. neither nature nor man functions teleologically). However, Bennett argues, because Spinoza's ethics is grounded on the idea of the individual effort in the *conatus* (which Bennett uncritically but superficially equates with "self-preservation"), his argumentation is fallacious, inconsistent, and masks its teleology, which, according to Bennett, is the necessary condition for every principle of self-interest.[6] What is thus at stake for Curley and Bennett (and their respective followers) is the consistency of Spinoza's philosophy. Although they disagree on the formal consistency of Spinoza's argumentation, they agree on the substantive question, namely, that Spinoza, more or less explicitly and consciously, does not and cannot renounce teleology in the human realm, even if he is able to imagine nature at its highest level as free from it.

These readings have opened the door to even more radical conclusions like those of David Garrett. Less interested in the question of consistency, Garrett reintroduces Spinoza's philosophy into the early modern debate, comparing him with Descartes, Leibniz, and Aristotle. In an unorthodox position, Garrett claims that Spinoza accepts teleology, although differently, at every level of reality: human, subhuman, and divine. At the human level, Spinoza "fully and consistently accepts the legitimacy of many teleological explanations," in particular through his theory of *conatus*, which is intrinsically teleological. More strikingly, because of Spinoza's monism, "whatever teleological selection process exists must exist 'in God'." If there is not a teleology *of* God, there is certainly a teleology *in* God. Finally, at the subhuman level, since the *conatus* is in no way restricted to human beings, the mechanistic laws of motion and rest ultimately depend on and point to an intrinsic teleological activity. Spinoza's originality is thus annihilated, and he is reinserted into the diverse and yet consistently teleological nature of the philosophical canon.[7]

A third set of interpretations stands between the first two, serving as a kind of mediation between Spinoza's unambiguous condemnation of every form of teleology and the idea that a certain kind of normativity must exist, at least as a regulatory framework, in every ethically oriented system. Michael A. Rosenthal argues, for example, that Spinoza is committed to a full relativism of moral positions and values, and that these values never work as higher principles that transcend the actual relationship between modes.[8] However, by metaphorically extending the process of value creation from the political to the individual domain, Rosenthal claims that the Good has a *constitutive* function for humans in the same way a political *constitution* does for the body politics. Developing Miller's reflection on the real presence of an axiology in Spinoza,[9] Rosenthal argues that objective standards exist, notwithstanding and beyond relativistic anthropology, in Spinoza's thought, and that they have a normative function in the same way that political values are normative at the collective level. The question of Spinoza's consistency reappears also within this third kind of mediating interpretations, for example, Yakira's.[10] Yakira argues that the "final moment" of the *Ethics* is normatively grounded on a positive and objective concept of values that is developed beyond and against the earlier natural necessitarianism and ethical eudemonism of Stoic inspiration. In Yakira's view, Spinoza's strictly deterministic approach fails to respond to Blyenbergh's objections on the nature of evil, until, that is, part V of the *Ethics*, when Spinoza responds by abandoning his determinism for a normatively oriented ethics. The problem is that Yakira seems to proceed here as if part V were

the ultimate and real expression of Spinozism, superseding the rest of Spinoza's production.

In the anglophone literature, only Lee Rice has taken Spinoza's rejection of any teleology seriously. Spinoza is not inconsistent, Rice claims, because his *conatus* is not a conscious effort *even* for humans; rather it must be connected to a physical idea of a "law of psychodynamic inertia," of internal and essential force.[11] Rice's only non-English source is Sylvain Zac's book on *L'idée de vie dans la philosophie de Spinoza*, but he develops a reading of both the *conatus* as an inherent and efficient cause of motion and of teleology as a merely human fiction that was already *not* problematic in the continental literature since at least the works of Gueroult (1969), Deleuze (1968), Matheron (1969), and Macherey (1979). However, before the analytic turn—and one can hardly underestimate Bennett's influential reading here, regardless of whether it has been accepted or criticised—the vast majority of interpretations of Spinozism have seen him—the enemy of teleology—as guilty of the mortal sin of ruling out every and any form of normativism in early modernity.[12]

The analytic approach, however, is not the main problem here. Garrett, for example, goes far beyond a purely analytical perspective, making a real effort to take the historical dimension of Spinoza's philosophy seriously. The problem, I believe, is in what all these authors intend by teleology and how they define it. No scholar has the monopoly on a definition, but if one does not work with the same concept Spinoza does, then 'Spinoza' becomes an empty word, much like, following Spinoza's metaphor in *E* I, P17S, the word 'dog' means both the barking animal and the heavenly constellation.

People form opinions about the future using their imagination, evaluate the possible consequences of their actions using their reason, *desire* what they do not possess yet, *fear* what they perceive as a threat, etc. In a word, humans think about and are thus affected by the idea of the future: for many scholars, this is already teleology. It is by no means a technical or specific definition of teleology, drawn from a philosophical tradition, but it is enough to say that because Spinoza conceived human minds as engaging in all these activities, he admits teleology and normativity in his thought, notwithstanding his open condemnation.[13]

Thinking the future, or even thinking *about* the future, is an idea that extends beyond any workable definition of normative teleology. Because this idea is so

broad, encompassing any viable definition of a human mind having any kind of idea beyond the immediate and punctual perception of itself, these scholars are not saying that Spinoza more or less consciously or consistently opts for teleology. Instead, they are saying that no human mind *qua* human can be conceived outside a teleological framework. If teleology is any psychological consideration of the future, then nothing but teleological psychology can possibly be conceived. But this would mean no alternative interpretation of Spinoza—or, indeed, debates about teleology at all—would be possible.

A similar outcome follows from Garrett's definition:

> Roughly speaking, a *teleological explanation* explains why something is so by indicating what its being so is *for*. Somewhat more precisely, a teleological explanation is one that explains a state of affairs by indicating a likely or presumptive consequence (causal, logical, or conventional) of it that is implicated in the state's origin of etiology. Such consequences often, if not always, take the form of ends, goals, or goods. … *Teleology* is the phenomenon of states of affairs having etiologies that implicate, in an explanatory way, likely or presumptive consequences of those states of affairs.[14]

It is not clear where Garrett takes this definition from. Nor is it clear why he decides to "make no attempt to define the concept of 'an explanatory way',"[15] since the teleological *explanation* of phenomena is precisely what is at stake in this debate and what is denounced by Spinoza as a human fiction.

In the Appendix, Spinoza states clearly that part I of the *Ethics* is first and foremost an *explanation* of the concatenation of things. He also says that "misconception" developed into superstition precisely when "every man strove most earnestly to understand and to *explain* [*explicare*] the final causes of all things," and that the abstract notions such as Good, Bad, Order, Confusion and the like are precisely formed "to explain" what happens in nature. Finally, Spinoza states, "we see … that all notions whereby the common people are wont to explain Nature are merely modes of imagining" or *entia imaginationis*.[16]

It is thus a pity that Garrett's hypothesis avoids precisely what Spinoza considers the ground of the main prejudice, namely the supposedly explanatory function of teleology,[17] the widespread belief among humans that all things in Nature are like themselves in acting with an end in view.[18] Turning upside down Spinoza's un-

ambiguous statement, Garrett first establishes the truth of the teleological prejudices and then builds on it the ground for every other prejudice.

SPINOZA'S CONCEPT OF TELEOLOGY

Spinoza clarifies that the chronological anticipation of the future is only part of the problem, which has to do with the nature and characteristics of human imagination. Imagination is a power and feature that has the inconvenience of drifting toward the finalist illusion.[19] There is nothing wrong in imagining the future in itself. The more or less adequate knowledge of it does not differ, in this sense, from the knowledge of the present or the past. The future is involved in our knowledge and action as much as the memory of the past is. When I cry or laugh because I remember a sad or cheerful event that happened in the past, it is not the past event itself that causes my sadness or joy, but rather my current mind-body state, which is determined by my memory, knowledge and representation of the past. They are at work in the representation, but never as a final cause. One could think of the image of a mechanical watermill. It is not the water that has already passed nor that is yet to come that actually moves the wheel. But there is a continuity in the movement, and although the wheel is only in contact with the water that is presently pushing it, the whole flow includes the water that was here in the past and will be here in the future.

The problem, Spinoza argues, is thus not imagination itself, but rather the belief in the actual existence of a final cause, a *causa finalis* that explains the antecedent by the subsequent, not so much in chronological terms, but by claiming ontological priority and superiority over the efficient cause.[20]

Bennett claims that the representation of the future is incompatible with the materialist physics of the *Ethics*,[21] and Spinoza "simply failed to notice that he had no decent case against this kind of teleological explanation."[22] To this, one can respond with Curley that human action is not caused by the future itself, but by the anticipation of its consequences, which produces desire and informs the action.[23] One can also respond to Curley, however, by saying that this is not "making talk of final causes acceptable."[24] In fact it is simply *not* finalism at all.

Bennett makes his point by saying that "Spinoza [rejects] 'final causes,' teleological explanations, anything in the nature of a pull rather than a push,"[25] and concludes that Spinoza is wrong. I think this is a poor metaphor, however, and that

the language is imprecise. For a mechanicist like Spinoza, *push* and *pull* belong to the same kind of phenomena, material and mechanical. The cause that pushes and the one that pulls are both efficient causes and thus not different with respect to their mechanical (and non-teleological) nature. What Bennett's language misses is that Spinoza's denunciation is not pointed at the direction to or from which a cause pushes or pulls, but rather the ontological priority of the effect over the cause. It is this, for Spinoza, that turns Nature upside down.

Once the final cause has been restored to its central position, the question becomes what its relationship with the efficient cause is and if there are domains in which its existence can be granted. It is here that Spinoza's radical originality can be seen. Mechanicism, and the 17th century more generally, is traditionally seen as the adversary of finalism. Yet the truth is not so simple. Neither Bacon nor Descartes deny the existence of final causes. They only exclude them in physics and biology. Throughout the 17th century, Descartes' followers take a much softer position, and sometimes work precisely to restore final causes to scientific discourse.[26] In order to counter anti-Cartesian arguments, they must reconcile efficient and final causes in nature. The mechanical structure of animal bodies, so unambiguously maintained by Descartes, becomes the proof of the machine-maker's higher intelligence, its operation above and beyond nature itself.[27] The outcome of this process will be Leibniz's idea that finalism contains mechanicism,[28] followed by Boyle's and Newton's teleological science.[29]

It is at this moment that Spinoza's originality becomes evident. The demolition of the ontological consistency of final causes had already started in the middle ages with Scotus[30] and Ockham,[31] who declare that the end can be a cause only in a metaphorical sense. Stoics had already criticised the multiplication of causes in Aristotle and Plato and reduced all of them to the efficient cause, as seen in Seneca, *Ep.* 65, in which, however, the efficient cause is the providential reason of a god that, like a sovereign and the soul, gives shape and order to the world. I think Spinoza goes much further. Like Lucretius and the Epicureans,[32] Spinoza does not just reduce final causes to efficient ones or merely think that ends are causes in a metaphorical sense.[33] Instead, he utterly denies any consistency to final cause. He does this by flattening the ontology of causality onto a single plan of immanence and denouncing the fictions of beauty, order, and providence in nature.[34] The Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics* is thus a refutation not only of Aristotelian and Scholastic teleology, but also of Cartesian conciliation.[35]

THE FOUR PILLARS OF SPINOZA'S ANTI-TELEOLOGY

Following a Lucretian pattern, Spinoza summarises his critique in the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics,* the manifesto of his anti-teleological philosophy. This critique aims to show that, because of the nature of the final cause, i.e. its ontological priority over the efficient cause, teleology is always accompanied by normativism. Spinoza is perfectly aware that the ontological priority of the final cause implied by teleology has always been conceptualised by building four types of hierarchies: 1) priority of the essence over the existence; 2) priority of the providence of the ends over the necessity of the means; 3) priority of the function over the organ; 4) priority of the universal over the individual. I will now show how Spinoza rejects these four claims of priority first in the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics* and then throughout his works, in order to build his anti-teleological and anti-normative philosophy.

i) Essence and Existence

Aristotle defined the priority of the essence over both the accident and the existence by opposing the true and stable nature of being to both its superficial modifications and the mere fact of being.[36] Everything in nature makes itself, or is made, through the actualisation of a certain power, namely in and through the passage from power (δύναμις) to act (ἐντελέχεια). Although the potential comes chronologically before the act, from the point of view of perfection, the act has priority, because it is the reason that what is less perfect tends toward something else, becoming in the process, if everything goes well, more perfect.[37] *If* everything goes well: nature is full of obstacles, and perfection is never fully realised. This is what gives nature its diverse appearance and beautiful harmony: if perfection were always accomplished, everything would resemble itself and nothing could be distinguished from anything else.[38]

This is where Spinoza strikes first. The priority of the essence over the existence is at the heart of the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics*, in which he claims that "all things proceed by a certain eternal necessity of nature, and with the greatest perfection" (*E* I, Ap.; *CSW* I, 442). Nature as a whole, as well as each individual thing in it, is already thoroughly perfect. It is as perfect as it can possibly be, both in its being and in its becoming. Having stated this in part I, in part II of the *Ethics*, Spinoza makes the natural perfection of all things even clearer by redefining the concept of essence and its relationship with existence. *E* II, D2 reads as follows:

> I say that to the essence of any thing belongs that which, being given, the thing is [NS: also] necessarily posited and which, being taken away, the thing is necessarily [NS: also] taken away; or that without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and which can neither be nor be conceived without the thing [*vice versa quod sine re nec esse, nec concipo potest*].

In the last line, Spinoza offers a definition of the essence that, as scholars have suggested, is stricter than Aristotle's or even Descartes'.[39] More than that, he reverses the core idea of the essence's ontological priority.[40] If it is true that the essence of God does not constitute the essence of individual things, it is also true that without individual things, essence cannot be or be conceived.

Spinoza explains that the correct order of philosophising is from God to individual things, descending and not ascending, moving from the cause to the effects (*E* II, P10CS; *CSW* I, 454). Humans, however, tend to invert the order of reasoning and start with the effects, which creates endless contradictions, as he explains in the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics*. The teleological illusion thus arises from an incorrect definition of the essence, an error Spinoza condemns in both the Scholastics and the Cartesians.[41] Spinoza's essence does not have ontological priority over existence, it is not above and before the actual existing thing. As Macherey puts it, the essence is something of the thing, and in it.[42] This is the ground for the radical immanence Spinoza suggests for the relationship between God and individual things.[43]

This immanence is not just abstract, nor does it statically describe the relationship between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. Immanence characterises the mechanism of production of things themselves or, as Aristotle would put it, their passage from power to act. In Spinoza's idea of *potentia*, however, the δύναμις of Aristotle loses all its ontological subordination to the ἐντελέχεια. The reversibility of essence and existence implies that the production of things cannot be conceived as the actualisation of a possibility, according to a model of essential perfection.[44] This is especially clear in God: Spinoza's striking, bold and counter-intuitive suggestion is that God's power is always-already in act.[45]

It follows that individual things' power is always-already in act, since that power is part of God's power and no different from it in nature.[46] These things, together and in themselves, necessarily cause all their effects, that is to say all the effects that result from their nature. The nature of things is the efficient cause, always-

already in act, of their effects (*E* I, P36), in the same way God is the efficient cause, always-already in act, of nature as a whole (*E* I, P16C1).

For Descartes and Aristotle, the cause has more perfection than the effect. God, as a cause, is eminently perfect vis-à-vis the creation. Spinoza, on the contrary, claims that the same perfection passes from cause to effect, immanently and equally.[47] He explains this by developing the famous theory of the equivalence between *realitas* and *perfectione* in *E* IV, pref. According to Spinoza, the concept of perfection has been perverted by comparing it to a model and giving it the meaning of an "ought," of how things ought to be.[48] The preface of *E* IV explicitly refers to the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics.* in condemning the teleological illusion. Whereas teleology implies that perfection is intended as a model, nature expresses on the contrary an absolute necessity that manifests itself in the strict equivalence between reality and perfection. Reality is always perfect as it is, because it is always everything it can be.

The Preface of Part IV has sometimes been read against the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics* because Spinoza speaks there of the *exemplar naturae humanae* (usually translated as 'model'), an example of human nature that men can approach to.[49] My suggestion, which is perhaps counter-intuitive, is to contrast the example and the model and play the former against the latter. It is not by chance that Spinoza speaks about the *exemplar* on the same page on which he condemns the fiction of perfection as a model and establishes the equivalence between reality and perfection. The example means nothing more (and nothing less) than what we can learn from both the correct and the wrong order of reasoning, i.e. the teleological illusion and its normative corollaries. The example is nothing more (and nothing less) than the essence conceived in and through its actual—and thus concrete and individual—existence.[50] Examples can be set, and behaviours adapted to them, without thus creating any normative content with objective values or standards.[51]

Spinoza expands on this concept in the Ep. XXI and the famous discussion with Blyenbergh on good and evil. A man is, or becomes, blind, and we say that he is deprived of sight because we compare him with a model, or a standard, or an essence. Yet privation "is, not the act of depriving, but only the pure and simple lack, which in itself is nothing. Indeed, it is only a Being of reason (*ens rationis*) or mode of thinking, which we form when we compare things with one another."[52] The constructs of the mind recall, of course, the *entia imaginationis* and the *humana figmenta* about which men rave when they fall prey to the teleological prejudice.

ii) Providence and Necessity

The second pillar upon which a teleological conception of nature rests is the belief in divine providence. The Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics* makes the connection between finalism and providentialism explicit anchoring it again in the human tendency to reason from effects backward to causes, that is to say, to rely on final causes. When people find outside of themselves means and things that help them reach their goals, they come to believe that someone else, above them, has made these means and things for them.[53]

This is the second step of the teleological illusion: establishing a relationship of exchange with God, who has supposedly created the world and what is convenient in it freely for the sake of humans. Anthropocentrism and finalism thus go hand in hand.

It is interesting to note the political origin of the idea of an "exchange" with God, that is, the way the Jews use it as a trump card in their ongoing dispute with the gentile neighbors about whose God is stronger. The idea of miracles, Spinoza says, originated with the ancient Jews who wanted to convince themselves and others that "the whole of nature was directed only for their advantage, by the command of the God they worshipped," and thus they made themselves "the final cause [*causa finalis*] on account of which God has created, and continually directs, all things" (*TTP* VI, 4; *CSW* II, 153). Anthropocentrism and teleology are here perfectly merged within the *figmentum* of the chosen people.

Spinoza contrasts the *ars divina vel supernaturalis* that supposedly creates things *for* men with the *ars mechanica* that produces things necessarily. Wolfson interestingly remarks that Spinoza's choice corresponds to, and diverges from, Maimonides' opposition between teleology and chance.[54] Maimonides' opposition is traditional, and dates back to the very origin of teleology in Greek thought, in particular in Anaxagoras and Xeno's Socrates.[55] Spinoza carefully chooses his terminology to overturn the traditional sense: whereas Maimonides and the earlier Greek philosophers defend teleology and providence to say that nothing happens by chance, Spinoza defends the mechanical art's necessity to say that nothing happens teleologically and providentially.

What kind of necessity, however, is Spinoza talking about? A steady stream of scholarship has recognised Stoic elements in Spinoza's philosophy.[56] Kristeller ar-

gues that Spinoza's radical determinism is clearly Stoic, while De Brabander sees the *natura naturans* and the *natura naturata* as corresponding to the active and passive Stoic principles. What this scholarship overlooks, however, is Spinoza's opposition to divine providence, a foundational feature of Stoic necessitarianism.[57] As Matheron has shown, even Spinoza's *Ethics* IV app. 32, his most Stoic text, goes against the providential character of the πνεῦμα's action and intervention of the divine fire in the world.[58] For the Stoics, God's causality in the world is necessary and nonetheless providential, while Spinoza precisely rules out every notion of providential teleology.[59]

Spinoza's necessity is thus of a different kind. Following Spinoza's own suggestion (*Ep*. LVI to Boxel) and his explicit polemical statement against the authority of Plato, Aristotle and Socrates in favour of Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius, the necessity here is nothing else than the ἀνάγκη/*necessitas* of the Atomists, namely the causal explanatory principle traditionally opposed to teleology that establishes the mechanical and efficient explanation as the only causal principle.

iii) The function and the organ

The third pillar of teleological thinking is giving ontological priority to the function over the organ. This functionalist argument has been employed since finalism was first developed and was still vigorously used in Spinoza's time (and beyond) by partisans of the world's beauty and order. Nature's finalism, this time, takes the form of the perfect adaptation of individual beings to its complexity, reflected by the perfect disposition of the organs in a living organism. Spinoza is aware of this argument when he quotes in the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics* the classic examples of "eyes for seeing, teeth for chewing" and, more generally, the structure of the human body that men consider with astonishment, being ignorant of the causes of such work.[60] This is part of what Spinoza calls the *asylum ignorantiae,* and he is conscious that to escape from it, a changed paradigm is necessary, one with a different norm of truth. He finds this different norm in mathematics.

Truth, he writes in the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics*, could have remained hidden to eternity, "if Mathematics, which is concerned not with ends, but only with the essences and properties of figure, had not shown men another standard of truth [*alia norma veritatis*]." To the idea of mechanical and efficient logic as the only permissible principle of explanation in nature, Spinoza now adds that mathematical reasoning is alien to every teleological notion and thus the way toward

truth.[61]

Spinoza is aware of the difference between mathematical objects and physical realities. For example, it is the definition of the triangle (i.e. the polygon whose interior angles add up to 180 degrees) that establishes the science of the triangle itself. No definition of a living being can ground its science in the same way. The science of triangles is based on their common notions, strictly derived from their definition. Spinoza's striking suggestion is to extend the mathematical norm of truth to physics itself. This is only possible with the revolutionary definition of essence that we have seen above, a definition that obliterates every transcendency between essence and existence. Mathematical knowledge of physics means, first and foremost, understanding Nature without resorting to any teleology.

For this to happen, Spinoza argues, knowledge of essence and existence must go hand in hand. In other words, the knowledge of individual existing things must be held alongside the knowledge of their definition. This principle explains Spinoza's theory of the three kinds of knowledge. The first kind is imagination or opinion, which are the only causes of possible falsity (*E* II, P41; *CSW* I, 478). Reason is the second kind, the domain of common notions and adequate ideas. Lastly, Spinoza adds the third and highest kind, intuitive science, which he defines as the knowledge that "proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things" (*E* II, P40S2; *CSW* I, 477-78).

The highest kind of knowledge is the knowledge of singularity and individuality. For Spinoza, mathematics is not an end in itself. Rather, it is mainly concerned with asbtract notions related to common properties of shapes. It thus relates to the second kind of knowledge. The whole theory of intuitive science is developed to offer an additional way to knowledge that Spinoza eventually exploits in the last and final part of the *Ethics*, in which he shows to the reader the pattern toward freedom and beatitude.[62] It is not abstract notions, but the knowledge of concrete individuals that helps humans progress and move away from ignorance. This points to the fourth pillar of Spinoza's anti-teleology, namely his nominalism.

iv) Spinoza's nominalism

The universal and abstract categories that people use to describe nature—as if they existed outside the human mind—are only "entities of imagination (*entia*

imaginationis)." Good, Bad, Order, Confusion, etc., speak only about the relativity of human judgements, not the supposed objectivity of Nature itself.[63] The question of judgement resurfaces in Spinoza's epistolary exchange of 1665 with one of the most learned men in Europe, Henry Oldenburg, offering yet another opportunity for Spinoza to attack finalism and teleology.

War is threatening Europe, and Oldenburg seeks common ground with his erudite correspondent Spinoza by declaring the behaviour of the vulgar as of a "bestial kind, not human."[64] Spinoza responds in philosophical terms to this moral consideration, repeating his famous motto: *nec ridere, nec lugere, sed intelligere*. He makes the argument on his favoured ground, saying that man is only a portion of nature, whose parts agree and cohere with each other (*convenire* and *cohærere*) in ways that we ignore.[65]

Oldenburg is clearly interested in this statement, which is more a refusal to use moral categories than a declaration of ignorance. Spinoza could have remained on a general and abstract level, since Oldenburg's question is general and simply asks for further explanations (ironically, the discussion happens with the blessing of Robert Boyle, one of the strongest partisans of the teleological revival of the late 17th and 18th centuries).[66] But instead, Spinoza pushes the argument much further, directly attacking teleology and normativism by saying that not only does he not know how each part agrees and convenes with the others, but he does know full well that abstract and normative categories are nothing more than *entia imaginationis*.[67]

This passage is followed by the famous example of the tiny worm living in the blood, ignorant of what happens beyond its limited world and incapable of seeing the difference between the whole and the part, of understanding the laws of agreement and convenience, etc. The worm's knowledge is limited by the environment and the context within which its nature confines it. This is not an extreme case, Spinoza suggests. It is rather a metaphor for the common dimension within which all men live until and unless they have the intuition that another norm of truth is available. Spinoza has achieved his objective: Oldenburg becomes nervous and plainly declares (we can almost hear Boyle in the background) that he does not see "how we can ruin[68] [*profligare*] the order and simmetry from nature, as you seem to do."[69]

Although Spinoza's answer is lost, I think we have everything we need to see the

gap between the two authors: Oldenburg on the one hand, scientifically inspired by the belief in the regularity of nature's order, yet teleologically oriented, and Spinoza on the other, recognising the bias of order and harmony that still haunts the most enlightened mind of his century, because of the teleological prejudice that he intends to destroy.

In the *TTP*, Spinoza exploits the theologico-political dimension of this kind of ignorance, which he calls superstition. Superstition is the ground of men's belief in miracles and the "term 'miracle' cannot be understood except in relation to men's opinions and means nothing but a work whose natural cause we cannot explain by the example of another familiar thing [*cujus causam naturalem exemplo alterius rei solitae explicare non possumus*]" (*TTP* VI, 13; *CSW* II, 155).[70]

Just like the worm's, our pool of available knowledge is not wide enough to be used as a source of comparison with unknown things or events. People thus consider miracles "whatever they could not explain in the way in which the common people are accustomed to explain natural phenomena, that is, by resorting to memory so as to call to mind a similar happening which is ordinarily regarded without wonder."[71] The ignorance rising from the incapacity to connect the unknown to the familiar is part of the Skeptic rhetorical arsenal.[72] I believe, however, that Spinoza is pushing the argument further, by opposing the concept of *res solita* to the *res singularis*, and pointing to the possibility of changing perspective in order to move away from ignorance. *E* II, P40S1 explains that:

when the images in the body are completely confused, the Mind also will imagine all the bodies confusedly, without any distinction, and comprehend them as if under one attribute, viz. under the attribute of Being, Thing, etc. … Those notions they call *Universal*, like Man, Horse, Dog, etc. … the Mind can imagine neither slight differences [*singulorum parvae differentiae*] of the singular [individuals] such as the color and size of each one, etc.) nor their determinate number, and imagines distinctly only what they all agree in, insofar as they affect the body (E II, P40S1; *CSW* I, 477).[73]

The following S2 introduces the third and highest kind of knowledge as knowledge of individual essences. Spinoza is suggesting the need to move away from the illusion of universal categories and toward the knowledge of individuality. *E* III, P52 and P52S bring forth once again the deceptive nature of a knowledge isolated from context. Wonder (*admiratio*) arises from the singular, which appears to us

uncommon or special. Spinoza uses the same term, *res singularis*, for both individual and uncommon things: "This affection of the Mind, *or* this *imagination of a singular thing* [*rei singularis imaginatio*], *insofar as it is alone in the Mind*, is called *Wonder*" (*E* III, P52S; *CSW* I, 523). The thing's solitude, which derives from its singularity, drags the mind into the solitude of ignorance.[74] It is because the mind is stuck in loneliness that it falls prey to ignorance. The task, as Spinoza sees it, is thus to recognise this seeming singularity and bring it back to the whole of nature to which it belongs.[75]

What is crucial is to know and understand the singular, both in terms of the individual and what seems to be special. Spinoza's strategy is to reduce the power of singularity in the sense of that which evokes wonder by increasing the knowledge of singularity in the sense of that which is individual. "The more this knowledge that things are necessary is concerned with singular things [*res singulares*], which we imagine more distinctly and vividly, the greater is this power of the Mind over the affects" (*E* V, P6S; *CSW* I, 599). Also: "The more we understand singular things [*res singulares*], the more we understand God" (*E* V, P24; *CSW* I, 608).[76]

Spinoza's nominalism is already sketched in his *Short Treatise*, the aim of which is to reject both Plato's idealism and Aristotle's finalism by his critique of the archetype and the model.[77] It is only through intuitive science, however, and the whole theory of the three kinds of knowledge that Spinoza accomplishes the task and makes nominalism not only the ground of his ontology, but a powerful philosophical tool with a strong impact on the political dimension and people's concrete lives.

■

I believe that the rejection of teleology and the normativism that derives from it is one of the major tasks Spinoza wishes to accomplish in his philosophy. Indeed, he may see it as the most important, for at least two reasons. The first is his conviction that finalism is the origin of every other form of superstition and ignorance. Demolishing the source is the surest and most effective way of destroying everything that derives from it. The second reason is that, contrary to Descartes and his followers, Spinoza knows all too well that not only has the battle for mechanicism not yet been won, but in fact, the most advanced intellectuals and scientists of his time, including Oldenburg, Boyle, and Leibniz, have been winning the battle only by compromising on teleology. Their Christian mechanicism is indeed provi-

dentialist, while Spinoza's revolutionary modernity, with its roots in the ancient Atomism of Epicurus and Lucretius, cannot compromise on this principle.

A final word on analytical interpretations that insist on a teleological reading of Spinoza: the connection between the ontological and the political is explicit in Spinoza's thought especially in the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics*: astonishment [*stupor*] is the one and only support for safeguarding the authority [*auctoritas*] of ignorance. If we needed another reason to assess Spinoza's anti-teleological statements, we would find it in his political thought and its history. The negation of teleology is the condition for overcoming ignorance, which is the aim of a free life in a free Republic. But of course, for analytical philosophers, the history of political thought is not philosophy, and thus for them the connection does not have any demonstrative value. And with this, we see that the dialogue lacks a common ground, much like that earlier one between Oldenburg and Spinoza.

FILIPPO DEL LUCCHESE is Senior Lecturer in History of Political Thought at Brunel University London, and Senior Research Associate, Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg. His research interests are in the early modern period (from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment), history of philosophy and Marxism. He is the author of *Conflict, Power and Multitude in Machiavelli and Spinoza* (Continuum Press, 2009) and *The Political Philosophy of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

NOTES

1. On the specific relation of Spinoza to these authors see, recently, F. Manzini, *Spinoza: Une lecture d'Aristote*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2009 and O. Boehm, *Kant's Critique of Spinoza*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. More generally, and with a different perspective, V. Morfino, *Genealogia di un pregiudizio. L'immagine di Spinoza in Germania da Leibniz a Marx*. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2016.
2. See E. Giancotti Boscherini, *Lexicon Spinozanum*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970.
3. E. M. Curley, "Spinoza's Moral Philosophy." *Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. M. Grene. Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1973, 371.
4. See also M. Lin, "Teleology and Human Action in Spinoza." *The Philosophical Review* 115 (2006, 318): "There is nothing in [Spinoza's] metaphysics or philosophy of mind that forbids teleological explanations of human actions. In fact, there is good reason to think that his account of mental content commits him to them."
5. See I. Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten. Kant's gesammelte Schriften*. Ed. Königlich-Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Berlin: G. Reimer (later Berlin-New York: W. de Gruyter, 1910-83) IV, 414-5: "Der hypothetische Imperativ sagt also nur, daß die Handlung zu irgend einer möglichen oder wirklichen Absicht gut sei. Im erstern Falle ist er ein problematisch-, im zweiten ein assertorisch-praktisches Prinzip. Der kategorische Imperativ, der die Handlung ohne Beziehung auf irgend eine Absicht, d. h. auch ohne irgend einen andern Zweck, für sich als objektiv nothwendig erklärt, gilt als ein apodiktisch-praktisches Prinzip." See also S. Landucci, "L'etica e la metaetica di Spinoza." *Rivista di Filosofia* 92 (2001, 400 n. 55).
6. J. Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's* Ethics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, ch. 9, "Goals" and ch. 10, "Self-Preservation."
7. D. Garrett, "Teleology in Spinoza and Early Modern Rationalism." *New Essays on the Rationalists*. Eds R. J. Gennaro and C. Huenemann. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 332-3: "... close examination shows that it is not Leibniz but Spinoza ... who holds the position on teleology and teleological explanation nearest to that of Aristotle ... Unlike Leibniz, Spinoza accepts unthoughtful teleology. Unlike Leibniz, he denies teleology through divine will. Spinoza allows teleological selection even more pervasively within the subhuman realm than does Leibniz, recognizing even inorganic teleological selection. Finally, far more thoroughly than Leibniz, Spinoza makes teleological explanation of particular events and features of nature part of the methodology of natural philosophy." See also A. Dominguez, "Die Ethik Spinozas—zwischen Aristoteles und Kant." *Zur Aktualität der Ethik Spinozas. Medizin/Psychiatrie—Ökonomie—Recht—Religion—Spinoza in der Geschichte der philosophischen Ethik*. Eds K. Hammacher, I. Reimers-Tovote, M. Walther. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000, 453-478 and, on Leibniz and Spinoza, the excellent work of M. Laerke, *Leibniz lecteur de Spinoza: La genèse d'une opposition complexe*. Paris: H. Champion, 2008. On the teleological interpretion of the conatus, see also M. Lenz, "Ideas as Thick Beliefs: Spinoza on the Normativity of Idea." *Contemporary Perspectives on Early Modern Philosophy: Nature and Norms in Thought*. Eds M. Lenz and A. Waldow. Dordrecht : Springer, 2013, 40: "On my reading, it is the conatus-doctrine, we've just referred to in passing, that lies at the heart of Spinoza's philosophy and of his account of normativity in particular. The term 'conatus' denotes the essence of every individual thing; and this essence lies in the thing's striving for self-preservation and for the increase of its power. Thus, I take it that, for Spinoza, everything's essence has basically a teleological structure." *Contra*, see L. Bove, *La stratégie du conatus. Affirmation et résistance chez Spinoza*. Paris:

Libraire philosophique J. Vrin, 1996, 21 and *passim*.
8. M. Rosenthal, "Politics and Ethics in Spinoza: The Problem of Normativity." *Essays on Spinoza's Ethical Theory*. Eds. M. Kisner and A. Youpa. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 85-101.
9. J. Miller, "Spinoza's Axiology." *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy* 2 (2005, 149-72).
10. E. Yakira, *Spinoza and the Case for Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
11. L. Rice, "Spinoza, Bennett, and Teleology." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23 (1985, 249).
12. This includes the classic works of P. Janet, *Les causes finales*. Paris: G. Baillière, 1876 and H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934. The accusation is, however, much older and accompanies the whole history of Spinozism. See P. Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
13. Some example of this kind of conclusion: Curley, *Spinoza's Moral Philosophy*, 370: "... Is it legitimate to interpret [Spinoza's] talk about what reason demands in terms of talk about obligation? Now it cannot be denied that Spinoza uses a great deal of language which sounds prescriptive. In the Scholium to E., IV, xviii alone, he speaks of the precepts of reason, of what reason prescribes, of the dictates of reason, of what reason demands and so on." J. Bennett, "Teleology and Spinoza's *Conatus*." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 8 (1983, 150): "Spinoza says that teleological explanations are always improper; yet he attributes to organisms a drive—he calls it conatus—that in his hands becomes a principle of self-interest. But to be self-interested is to have a certain kind of goal or purpose, which is the whole essence of teleology or 'final causes' [sic!]. What on earth is going on here?" E. M. Curley, "On Bennett's Spinoza: The Issue of Teleology." *Spinoza: Issues and Directions: The Proceedings of the Chicago Spinoza Conference*. Eds E. M. Curley and P.-F. Moreau. Leiden: Brill, 1990, 40-1): "I am not persuaded that it is Spinoza's intention to offer a non-teleological theory of human motivation. ... I would have thought that the passage just quoted [viz. *E* I, App] makes it quite clear that Spinoza does not deny purposive action to man: the prejudice Spinoza is exploring in this preface is precisely the attribution to natural things of *a form of activity charaacteristic of men*, viz. action for the sake of an end."
14. Garrett, "Teleology," 310.
15. Garrett, "Teleology," 310.
16. Partisans of teleology also stress that finalism has a philosophical value only insofar as it has a proper *explanatory* function. See, for example, G. W. Leibniz, *Tentamen Anagogicum*. In *Die philosophische Schriften*. Ed. C. J. Gerhardt. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1875-99 VII, 273, 6: "il y a, pour parler ainsi, deux Règnes dans la nature corporelle même qui se penètrent sans se confondre et sans s'empêcher: le règne de la puissance, suivant lequel tout se peut *expliquer* mécaniquement par les causes efficientes, lorsque nous en pénétrons assez l'intérieur; et aussi le Règne de la sagesse suivant lequel tout se peut *expliquer* architectoniquement, pour ainsi dire, par les causes finales, lorsque nous en connaissons assez les usages."
17. *E* I, Ap.: "omnia ... praejudicia pendent ab hoc uno."
18. *E* I, Ap.: "omnes res naturales, ut ipsos, propter finem agere." See also M. Gueroult, *Spinoza. I—Dieu*. Paris: Aubier, 1968, 393: "Ce préjugé est la source de tous les autres. En conséquence, à l'exemple de Descartes, qui estimait inutile d'examiner en particulier toutes les opinions fausses pourvu qu'on en ruinât le principe, il suffira de le détruire pour détruire du même coup tous les autres."
19. See A. Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1969 and P. Macherey, *Introduction à l'*Ethique *de Spinoza. La première partie, la nature des choses*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998.
20. *E* I, Ap.: *CSW* I, 442: "this doctrine concerning the end turns nature completely upside down

[*evertere*]. For what is really a cause, it considers as an effect, and conversely [NS: what is an effect it considers as a cause]. What is by nature prior [*prius*], it makes posterior [*posterum*]. And finally, what is supreme and most perfect [*perfectissimum*], it makes imperfect."
21. Bennett, "Teleology," 146: "the causal powers of a physical item depend wholly upon intrinsic properties, such as the shapes, sizes, positions, and velocities of particles, and never on any representative or 'of'-ish feature it might have."
22. Bennett, *A Study*, 217-8.
23. Curley, "On Bennett's Spinoza," 48.
24. Curley, "On Bennett's Spinoza," 48.
25. Bennett, *A Study*, 213.
26. B. Tocanne, *L'idée de nature en France dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle: Contribution à l'histoire de la pensée classique*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1978, 70: "A l'antifinalisme métaphysique et scientifique rigoureux de Descartes, ses successeurs, ses disciples ou ses critiques opposent une attitude souvent beaucoup plus souple et nuancée, quand ils ne redonnent pas à la finalité une place essentielle."
27. Tocanne, *L'idée de nature en France*, 72-3: "Les partisans des animaux-machines dépouillaient les bêtes de tout comportement intelligent pour mieux montrer l'intelligence de l'artisan infiniment sage qui a construit des automates aussi parfaits."
28. See "Leibniz an Ramond," 10/1/1714. *Philosophische Schriften*, III, 605-8 and "Leibniz an Philippi," January 1680. *Philosophische Schriften*, IV, 283-87. See also Janet, *Les causes finales*, 167: "les savants sont trop portés en général à confondre la doctrine de la cause finale avec l'hypothèse d'une force occulte agissant sans moyens physiques, comme un *Deus ex machina*. Ces deux hypothèses, loin de se réduire l'une à l'autre, se contredisent formellement: car qui dit *but* dit en même temps *moyens*, c'est-à-dire cause apte à produire tel effet. Découvrir cette cause, ce n'est nullement détruire l'idée du but: c'est au contraire mettre au jour la condition *sine qua non* de la production du but."
29. G. W. F. Hegel, "Teleologie." *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse. (1827), Gesammelte Werke*. Ed. Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, XIX, 161 ff. esp. par. 209. See also Janet, *Les causes finales*, ch. VI.
30. M. Fernandez-Garcia, *Lexicon scholasticum philosophico-theologicum* (Ad Clara Aquas: Ex. Typ. Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1910), 786: "Causa finalis cuiuscumque est, eius est causa efficiens.—Oxon. I. d. 8. q. 5. n. 6.—Nullius est causa finalis aliqua, nisi respectu cuius est causa efficiens, quia causalitas causae finalis est movere efficiens ad agendum.—Ib. d. 1. q. 5. n. 6.—Quia causa finalis non causat, nisi quia metaphorice movet ipsum efficiens ad efficiendum [a final cause is no more than a metaphorical cause, moving the efficient to act].—Ib. d. 2. q. 2. n. 16. —Vid. Finis est causa causarum = Finis movet efficientem." See D. Demange, *Jean Duns Scot, la théorie du savoir*. Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 2007, 159: "ce n'est que de façon metaphorique que l'on peut dire que la fin est motrice, en tant que la cause efficiente tend vers cette fin. Thomas d'Aquin expliquait le hasard dans la nature par l'absence de cause finale: un accident se produit lorsque se rencontrent des causes non ordonnées à la même finalité; Duns Scot explique les accidents de la nature par l'addition et la soustraction des causes efficientes concourantes, selon un modèle qui deviendra tout puissant dans la physique classique."
31. See Ockham, W. of, "Utrum ex hoc aliquid moveat ut finis sequatur ipsum habere aliquod esse reale extra animam (Q. disp.)." *Opera philosophica et theologica. Ad fidem codico manuscriptorum edita*. Cura Instituti Franciscani, Universitatis S. Bonaventurae. Ediderunt P. Boehner et alii. St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1967-, VIII, *Quaestiones variae*, q. 4, and *Quodl*., IV, q.

1, in *Opera philosophica et theologica*, IX, 293-300 (= *Quodlibetal Questions*. Translated by A. J. Freddoso and F. A. Kelley. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 245-50).
32. See, for example, Lucretius *De rerum natura: libri sex*. Ed. with prolegomena, critical apparatus, translation and commentary by C. Bailey. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947, IV, 832. See also Macherey, *Introduction à l'*Ethique *de Spinoza. La première partie*, 238. Significantly, the Lucretian and Epicurean philosophy that is Spinoza's source completely disappears from the scholarship supporting a teleological reading of Spinoza.
33. This is Wolfson's reading of *E* I, 36, see p. 423: "The method by which he now tries in Proposition XXXVI to reject final causes altogether is by reducing every final cause to an efficient cause."
34. See Janet, *Les causes finales,* 249 who reacts to this reading of immanence: "La finalité de plan que nous remarquons dans toute la nature, nous conduit à la *finalité esthétique*, qui en est une forme. [Le beau] implique un certain accord entre les parties et le tout: *unitas in varietate*. Ne faut-il donc pas, pour que la nature soit belle, quelque principe qui ramène la diversité à l'unité? Il ne suffirait pas, pour répondre à la difficulté, de faire tout dériver, comme Spinosa [sic], d'une seule substance: car il ne s'agit point d'une unité d'origine, mais d'une unité d'accord, de proportion, d'harmonie. Il ne s'agit point d'une identité abstraite et vide, mais de l'unité morale et intelligible qui résulte de la diversité même."
35. See Gueroult, *Spinoza. I,* 399: "... malgré [les] affinités, les deux conceptions restent très opposées, et la réfutation spinoziste vise Descartes autant que l'Ecole. ... l'*Appendice* final du Livre I de l'*Ethique* apparaît bien comme une réfutation directe du cartésianisme." See *E* I, Ap.; *CSW* I, 444 and *Ep.* LIV to Boxel; *CSW* II, 414-5.
36. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. Trans. H. Tredennick. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935, Z, chap. 3.
37. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* V, 7, 1017 a 35 ff. and IX, 1-9. Only God is the pure act as form fully accomplished and thus deprived of every potentiality. See *Metaphysics* XII, 6-10.
38. See P. Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962, 388-90: "Un monde sans échecs serait un monde où l'être serait tout ce qu'il peut être, où il n'y aurait ni matière, ni puissance, ni mouvement, ni multiplicité; un tel monde se confondrait avec son principe: acte pur, immatériel, immobile et unique comme lui, il serait, finalement, indiscernable de lui."
39. See M. Gueroult *Spinoza. II—L'Ame*. Paris: Aubier, 20, Curley in Spinoza, *Works* I (1985), 447 n. 1 and Giancotti in B. Spinoza, *Etica dimostrata col metodo geometrico*. Ed. E. Giancotti. Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1988, 364, n. 1.
40. Curiously, A. Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956[7], 302, does not see any originality in Spinoza's definition, correlating it with Aristotle's (*Metaphysics* VII, 4, 1030 a and 7, 1032 b) and Kant's *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*. *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, IV, "Vorrede." Wolfson in *The Philosophy of Spinoza,* II, 40 also fails to remark on the importance of Spinoza's addendum.
41. See Gueroult, *Spinoza. II*, 114-15 and P. Macherey, *Introduction à l'*Ethique *de Spinoza. La seconde partie, la realité mentale*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997, 100 ff.
42. Macherey, *Introduction à l'*Ethique *de Spinoza. La seconde partie*, 22 ff.
43. See G. Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1968, 38-9.
44. See Deleuze, *Spinoza*, 194.
45. *E* I, P17S; *CSW* I, 426: "from God's supreme power [*summa Dei potentia*], *or* infinite nature, infinitely many things in infinitely many modes, i.e., all things, have necessarily flowed, or always follow, by the same necessity and in the same way as from the nature of a triangle follows, from

eternity and to eternity, that its three angles are equal to two right angles. So God's omnipotence has been actual from eternity and will remain in the same actuality to eternity. And in this way, at least in my opinion, God's omnipotence is maintained far more perfectly."
46. Spinoza builds his original and unconventional theory of power across the *Ethics*, but it is in the *TTP* that he states it in its most compelling form. See e.g. *TTP* XVI, 4; *CSW* II, 282: "the universal power of the whole of nature is nothing but the power of all individuals together [*universalis potentia totius naturae nihil est praeter potentiam omnium individuorum simul*]."
47. Deleuze, *Spinoza*, 152.
48. *ST* I, 6-7. See Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, 438, Gueroult, *Spinoza*, I, 398, Matheron, *Individu et communauté*, 122-23.
49. Curley, *Spinoza's Moral Philosophy*, 364, for example, speaks about the *exemplum* as an objective standard that we can follow. But with this standard, Spinoza would reconstruct the Platonic-Aristotelian categories he has just destroyed, giving them an objective foundation. Moreover, this model would only be available to the philosopher, while the ordinary man would be condemned to ignorance. Against the elitist idea of the pattern of truth open to the wise but precluded for the ordinary man, see F. Del Lucchese, *Conflict, Power, and Multitude in Machiavelli and Spinoza. Tumult and Indignation*. London: Continuum, 2009.
50. See J.-M. Beyssade, "Norme et essence chez Spinoza." *Spinoza et la norme*. Ed. J. Lagrée. Besançon: Presses Universitaires Franc-Comtoises, 2002, 13-21.
51. Rosenthal, "Politics and Ethics," 98 speaks about the the *exemplar* as a *juridical* constitution. The analogy is suitable, however, only insofar as it is indended according to Spinoza's equation between *jus* and *potentia*. Rosenthal, on the contrary, thinks about the more traditional natural law theory according to which "... laws of nature [guide, through a model constitution] the foundational deliberation of a state" and, with J. Miller, "Spinoza's Axiology," he suggests the existance of an "objective standard" (98-100).
52. *Ep.* XXI; *CSW*, I, 377.
53. E I, Ap.; *CSW* I, 440-41: "knowing that they had found these means, not provided them for themselves, they had reason to believe [but had they? Shirley, 239: "they come to believe"] that there was someone else who had prepared those means for their use. For after they considered things as means, they could not believe that the things had made themselves [*credere non potueront, easdem se ipsas fecisse*]; but from the means they were accustomed to prepare for themselves, they had to infer that there was a ruler, or a number of rulers of nature, endowed with human freedom, who had taken care of all things for them, and made all things for their use."
54. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, 435: "In Maimonides the oppositional term is 'chance,' i.e., without a cause; in Spinoza it is 'mechanical art,' i.e. necessary efficient causation."
55. W. Theiler, *Zur Geschichte der teleologischen Naturbetrachtung bis auf Aristoteles*. Zürich: K. Hoenn, 1924.
56. See, for example, P. O. Kristeller, "Stoïc and Neoplatonic Sources of Spinoza's 'Ethics'." *History of European Ideas* 5 (1984, 1-16), S. James, "Spinoza the Stoïc." *The Rise of Modern Philosophy: The Tension between the New and Traditional Philosophies from Machiavelli to Leibniz*. Ed. T. Sorell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 289-316), F. De Brabander, *Spinoza and the Stoics*. London: Continuum, 2007, and Miller, *Spinoza and the Stoics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
57. James, "Spinoza the Stoïc," 306 and De Brabander, *Spinoza and the Stoics*, 11-2. See *contra* A. A. Long, "Stoicism in the Philosophical Tradition: Spinoza, Lipsius, Butler." *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*. Ed. B. Inwood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 377 and 396.
58. See A. Matheron, "Le moment stoïcien de l'Éthique de Spinoza." *Le stoïcisme au XVIe et au*

XVIIe siècle. Eds P.-F. Moreau and A. Michel. Paris: A. Michel, 1994, 302-16 and *supra*.
59. See, *contra*, Yakira, *Spinoza*, who reads Spinoza's Stoicism as a form of necessitarianism, withouth addressing the question of teleology.
60. The endurance of this idea is astonishing, and the teleological scholarship has clearly identified Spinoza and his Atomist source as the main targets. See Janet, *Les causes finales*, 69-73: "the embryo develops as if it had a model in front of it. It is indeed the λλλλλ λωλλμλλλλλλ of the Stoics, this secret and active reason of the universe which, conscious or unconscious, is the spring of life in the universe. [The] marvelous reciprocal adaptation [of sexual organs] cannot be considered as the simple result of the use and encounter; as if one said, for example, that the form of the bones' articulation, which is so appropriate, came from the reciprocal actions of organs: the use and the encounter do not explain, but rather require, the organs' formation; for the encounter, adaptation and convenience are required in advance; and one cannot say that the adaptation has been made with time, because the species would have been extinguished without it, before it to be even formed. ... Thus, at every phenomenal level, we see the determination of the present by the future. ... The order of causes is manifestly reversed, and no matter what Lucretius and Spinosa [sic] say, the effects are the causes" [translation mine]. Darwin's *The Origin of the Species* was published 17 years before this text, which is a late attempt to preserve 'evidence' of the ontological priority of the function to the organ, to support teleology in nature.
61. See Gueroult, *Spinoza*. I, 394 ff., Macherey, *Introduction à l'*Ethique *de Spinoza. La première partie*, 234, and Beyssade, "Norme et essence."
62. See Macherey, *Introduction à l'*Ethique *de Spinoza. La première partie*, 234. It is thus wrong, I believe, to see the "final moment" of the *Ethics* as detached from its early foundation in the critique of teleology, as suggested by Yakira, *Spinoza*.
63. *E* I, Ap.: "So many heads, so many opinions."
64. *Ep.* XXIX; *CSW* II, 35-6.
65. *Ep.* XXX; *CSW* II, 14. Shirley, 844 translates 'harmonises' and 'coheres.' Once again, the concept of harmony is alien to Spinoza's attitude. Curley's 'agree' and 'cohere' is preferable. Because of this lack of understanding, Spinoza adds, things appeared to him, in the past, vain, disordered and absurd (*vana, inordinata, absurda*), language that is repeated in *E* III pref. (*vana, absurda, horrenda*) and *TTP* XVI [G 191] (*absurdum, ridiculum, malum*).
66. *Ep.* XXXI; *CSW* II, 15-7.
67. *Ep.* XXXII; *CSW* II, 18: "I attribute to Nature neither beauty, nor ugliness, neither order nor confusion. For only in relation to our imagination can things be called beautiful or ugly, orderly or confused. ... Concerning whole and parts, I consider things as parts of some whole to the extent that they agree with one another as far as possible. But insofar as they disagree with one another, to that extent each forms in our Mind an idea distinct from the others, and therefore it is considered as a whole and not as a part."
68. Curley, *CSW* II, 22 translates with 'eliminate,' and Shirley, 851 opts for 'banish,' but Oldenburg's *profligare* is much stronger—closer to the idea of ruin, destruction and annihilation.
69. *CSW* II, 22: "This seems to be the formal ground itself of a true order" (Shirley: "good grounds of order"). Curley is thus closer to the *ratio formalis* that has a technical and Scholastic sense of formal reason. Barbaras in Lagrée (2002) argues that, with the example of the tiny worm, Spinoza targets first and foremost Aristotle's normativism.
70. Shirley, 446, reads it as "by comparison with any other normal event." It is however essential to keep the reference to the *res solita*.
71. Ivi.

72. See, for example, M. de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*. Trans. and ed. with an Introduction and Notes by M. A. Screech. London: Penguin, 1993. See also R. Popkin, *History of Skepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza*. Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979.
73. The *singulorum parvae differentiae*: the differences are slight (Curley) or small, but certainly not unimportant, as Shirley, 267, reads them.
74. *E* III, P52D; *CSW* I, 523: "when we suppose that we imagine in an object something singular, which we have never seen before, we are only saying that when the Mind considers that object, it has nothing in itself which it is led to consider from considering that. And so it is determined to consider only that."
75. See also S. Laveran, *Le concours des parties: Critique de l'atomisme et redéfinition du singulier chez Spinoza*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014.
76. Shirley is once again misleading with "particular things."
77. *ST* I, 6; *CSW* I, 86-7: "it cannot rightly be said that there is confusion in Nature, since no one knows all the causes of things, and so no one can judge them. But this objection arises from ignorance, from the fact that men have formed universal Ideas, with which they think the particulars must agree in order to be perfect. They maintain, then, that these Ideas are in God's intellect, as many of Plato's followers have said, viz. *that these universal ideas* (such as *rational animal*, etc.) *have been created by God*. And though Aristotle's followers say, of course, that these things are not actual, but only beings of reason, nevertheless they very often regard them as things. For they have said clearly that [God's] providence does not extend to particulars, but only to kinds. … They say also that God has no knowledge of particular and corruptible things, but only of universals, which in their opinion are incorruptible. But we have rightly regarded this as indicating their ignorance; for all and only the particulars have a cause, not the universals, because they are nothing." See Matheron, *Individu et communauté*, 123.

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spinoza's theory of thought

thomas kisser, translated by kirk turner

> I have always lived, *in parallel*, two lives. One is that of a character which a combination of hereditary elements has made me adopt, in a certain place and at a certain time. The other is that of a being without face, without name, without place and without a particular historical time: this is the life of substance itself and the breath of all life. Yet of these two consciousnesses, which are so different and nevertheless connected—one superficial and fleeting, the other durable and profound—the first, as if it were totally natural, concealed the second, during most of my childhood, my youth and even during my active and passionate life. It is only through a few sudden explosions that the other, subterranean, consciousness, succeeds in piercing the shell of everyday life and then it gushes like the hot spurt of an artesian well; only for a few seconds and then it is gone again, absorbed by the lips of the Earth.[1]

With these words, Romain Rolland begins his text *The Flash of Spinoza* [*L´Éclair de Spinoza*] describing the lightning bolt that suddenly brings enlightenment. Rolland is among other things famous for his exchange of letters with Sigmund Freud, with whom he formed a strong friendship. Freud, in his text *The Future of an Illusion*, conducted a psychoanalytic critique of religion and Rolland contested this account—which in his view was an indeed unappreciative view of religious phenomena—with the concept of "oceanic feeling." This feeling is known to all

people, according to Rolland, and leads toward a unity of mankind with reality as whole as a feeling of total accordance and tranquility. The understanding of this "oceanic feeling" most certainly goes back to the intensive reading of Spinoza conducted by the young Rolland, the immersion in the *soleil blanc de la substance* [white sun of substance], as he calls it. Even though he describes this second consciousness as deep and lasting, the white sun of substance reveals itself to him in lightning-like momentary manifestations, as our pure being beneath everyday existence, which only occasionally, and then explosively, emerges, a spontaneous, unpredictable and both destructive and creative causality that traverses and renews the ordered paths of everyday causality—without face, without place, without name, without time—that is to say, the pure breath of life.

Is this the fundamental tension with which the Spinozist lives and that represents the actual source of his life? This second life is, according to Rolland, so completely formless that one has to ask whether it can be described at all, as Rolland does, as consciousness, *conscience*. Is it not, rather, an unconscious, so to speak purely energetic dimension of thought? Undoubtedly, Rolland unleashes a provocative dimension in Spinoza's thinking here. Can we understand this provocation in Spinoza's theory of thought more exactly and in a textually oriented manner? In fact, within this investigation, we will not only see that Spinoza rejects our everyday image of human thought and action, but also examine the conception of being which sustains this critique and understands thinking in a quite different manner from that of tradition.

Spinoza himself explicitly spoke of the unconscious. In our everyday reality, Spinoza argues, we set goals as the very core of our actions, which are in turn based on norms, and understand our effective activity in such a way that we realize the means for these ends. Through this image of an antecedence and dominance of consciousness over being, through goal-setting and volitional acts, however, says Spinoza, the true causes of our actions are hidden, *rerum causarum ignari* (*E* I, Ap.): we don't know ourselves therefore. And yet how is this real being, which supposedly presents the actual truth and reality of mankind, to be understood and even found? This raises the problem of removing oneself from the everyday view. In fact, for Spinoza, the unconscious truth would have remained "hidden … to eternity, if Mathematics, which is concerned not with ends, but only with the essences and properties of figures, had not shown men another standard of truth" (*E* I, Ap.).[2]

Thus, according to Spinoza, our everyday thinking, insofar as it is bound to conscious or supposedly consciously set goals and fulfillments thereof, prevents us from properly understanding reality, including our own mental processes. The illusion of final causes inhibits proper thinking—carried out by mathematics among other things—which consists in the consideration of essences and their properties. The dynamics of essences and properties are thereby to be understood exactly the other way round when compared to the fulfillment of aims. Essences that also include human individuals are explicative and express themselves through their properties.[3] This can be illustrated through the example of the circle. A circle has the essence or genetic definition of a line drawn around a point at a constant distance. This results in the periphery of the circle. Only both taken together, center and periphery, result in the circle. From this essence, nonetheless, many other properties arise, such as triangles, which can be drawn by means of the radii. Even more properties are explicated when other figures, such as tangents or other circles, are allowed to "interact" with the first circle. This creates new figures or surfaces like the two circles that—the one drawn and moving within the other—allow an infinity to develop within a limited area.[4] This gives rise to common properties [*notiones communes*] right up to the most general features common to all figures. The specific properties "lie in" the definition of the circle [*inesse*] or follow from it [*sequi*]. These relationships of *inesse* or *sequi* form the true relationships of being that we follow even if we don't recognize them or even mistake them. While aims are always to a certain extent set against the prevailing reality, properties ensue automatically or spontaneously [*automaton* or *sponte*] from the unfolding [*explicatio*] of the essences. Hence Spinoza has a very accurate concept of what we call—often without giving it much thought—the free development, *explicatio* or *expressio*, of the personality.

One sees Spinoza's image of life and mankind: actions, experiences and knowledge flow from us, from the stream of life, that we are and which carries us, such that we become "a spontaneously rolling wheel," as Nietzsche put it.[5] According to this view we are always already connected with the whole of reality, instead of having to prevail against an unfriendly world.[6] In a society in which mechanisms of reflection are increasingly composed of grades, rankings, evaluations and optimization strategies, this is an alternative and in a sense even unrealistic position. Most of the time we hurry to meet appointments, agreements and requirements; seldom do we come to an autonomous rhythm of our own and admit we are free to wait and see what comes about.

It is also the original and unifying reality of the free stream of life instead of strained and isolating aim-fulfillments that produces the truth of the so-called common notions [*notiones communes*], the interactive formation of which we have already elucidated using the example of geometric figures. In human as well as social life, such common concepts arise from the social as such, and form the social as such—an orchestra, a working group, an army create common notions. Ultimately, certain concepts apply to all people—for example that of thought or affect, the common notions from which Spinoza's *Ethics* proceeds and which we can relate to our own lives. However, Spinoza is surely not only concerned with the lightning flashes of true being in everyday life, as Rolland holds, but also with a continuous practice, in which body and mind manifest themselves as forms of expression of a self-identical essence. Being manifests itself, to be sure, as body on the one hand and mind on the other, but does not divide these into a commander, the mind, and the commanded, the body, as Descartes understood it, nor—in a reversed manner—as a spontaneity, the body, and a minute taker, the mind, as Jacobi understood Spinoza maintaining.[7] But this must also be positively and coherently formulated on the theoretical level.

Spinoza's *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, dedicated to the goal of a rational way of life, already shows how the explicated relation in thought, or rather in the true idea, is to be understood.[8]

> A true idea [*idea vera*] (for we have a true idea [*habemus enim ideam veram*]) is something different from its object [*est diversum a suo ideato*]. For a circle is one thing and an idea of the circle another—the idea of the circle is not something which has a circumference and a center, as a circle does. Nor is an idea of the body the body itself. And since it is something different from its object [*diversum a suo ideato*], it will also be something intelligible through itself; that is, the idea, as far as its formal essence [*essentia formalis*] is concerned, can be the object of another objective essence [*objectum alterius essentiæ objectivæ*], and this other objective essence in turn will also be, considered in itself, something real and intelligible [*reale, et intelligibile*], and so on, indefinitely.
> (*TIE* §33)

The idea is different from its object; the idea of the body is not the body. This seemingly self-evident distinction makes another issue clear: as the idea of the body is not the body itself, it must have—as the body itself also has—an indepen-

dent status; it must be something real and, in addition, intelligible [*aliquid reale et intelligibile*]. As such an intelligible "something," it is the object of another idea, through which obviously this first idea is recognized (however which, in turn, is itself something independent).

This relation can evidently be repeated and continued into the infinite, indefinitely, as Spinoza says. But one must understand the nature of this *progressus in infinitum* correctly. For if the essence of Peter is something different to the idea of Peter, as well as the idea of the idea of Peter, then it is clear that "to understand the essence of Peter, it is not necessary to understand an idea of Peter, much less an idea of an idea of Peter" (*TIE* §34). What is therefore necessary in order to understand the essence of Peter? Spinoza's lapidary answer: one must merely understand the essence of Peter, "for to know that I know, I must first know" (*TIE* §34). This sounds like a very direct form of realism, which would remain unclear if one considered the interaction of thought and extension to be impossible. One can then hardly believe that Spinoza refers here to the direct physical and sensory experiences of Peter. In fact, the matter is more complex here than it may at first seem, as Spinoza continues: "From this it is clear that certainty is nothing but the objective essence itself, i.e., the mode by which we are aware of the formal essence is certainty itself [*quod certitudo nihil sit præter ipsam essentiam objectivam; id est, modus, quo sentimus essentiam formalem, est ipsa certitudo*]" (*TIE* §35). Obviously, here we are in the field of thought or ideas. Here, certainty—that is, the effect of evidence or truth—is understood as the relation of the objective essence to the formal essence. This relationship with the formal essence manifests itself in a sensation [*sentire*]; so we feel the formal essence or the being of the idea and this feeling is certainty. If we are in the field of thought here, then it can only concern the formal essence *of* an idea or *in* an idea and not the corresponding body. According to the Cartesian terminology that Spinoza follows here, the formal essence determines the idea as reality, as an event of the real world, and the objective essence determines the idea as an image or representation of reality. Spinoza, like Descartes, places the formal essence itself in the field of thought. If certainty, then, is the feeling of unity of the formal essence and the objective essence, then is truth merely the accordance of the formal and objective qualities of the ideas?

Let us see what role the differentiation of the formal and objective essence of the idea plays in Descartes' work! Descartes grounded his doubt on the truth of the ideas in the sense of representations of external objects by stating that

> these ideas must proceed from objects outside me, since they do not depend on my will, I do not find … convincing … [because] perhaps there is in me some faculty fitted to produce these ideas without the assistance of any external things, even though it is not yet known by me; just as, apparently, they have hitherto always been found in me during sleep without the aid of any external objects.[9]

The general substantiation of the doubt therefore comes from the status of ideas as products of my own—understood as causally efficient or productive—activity. We are concerned here, then, with the formal essence of the ideas, their ontological status as products of the human mind. The problematic involved in this activity or production is exemplified in the difference between dreaming and waking states. Obviously, we produce the dream images ourselves while regarding "real" images as externally influenced ones. But since this difference cannot be determined in terms of content, any representation of an external object can actually have the nature of a dream image. The ideas of external objects, therefore, can be deceiving if their reality [*realitas*] can be understood as emanating from the human subject itself in the sense of a productive power. The *realitas* refers, therefore, not only to the objective essence, the content of the represented, but also determines the degree of being or the formal essence of the idea. The more *realitas* there is, the more essence.[10] Thus, as products of the human mind, ideas can always be explicative projections of subjectively implicit structures of only apparently external objects and nothing else.

As we know, this argument will fail solely and exclusively because of the idea of God, which as an idea of a truly infinite substance cannot be within me, "if it had not proceeded from some substance which was veritably infinite."[11] Infinity, however, exceeds the reality [*realitas*] of mankind, and its concept must be accepted as an external influence. Epistemology is therefore discussed within the paradigm of causality or production. It is only there, where the subject can no longer understand his idea as an effect or product of himself, that an external reality can and must be accepted as the cause. Hence the conclusion about the existence of God.

One must also consider an additional complication to properly assess the relationship between Descartes and Spinoza. In Descartes' *Meditations* we find two proofs of God. Only the second proof in the fifth meditation is set out as an ontological proof of God, as Spinoza does at the beginning of his *Ethics*. There, the existence of God follows analytically from the concept of God as the most perfect

being, just as the idea of the valley follows from the idea of the mountain, whereby it is clear that the existence of the mountain does not follow from the idea of the mountain. The conclusion on existence is only possible in the case of God, the absolute being.[12] In the third meditation, by contrast, Descartes had taken the already described inference from the causality of ideas by means of the *lumen naturale*, as he says. There it is stated that the idea of the highest and absolutely perfect being cannot occur within us as an effect without this effect really coming from the outside. The objective reality in the idea of infinity cannot be traced back to our formal reality as human beings.[13] Only through this reasoning from effect to cause can doubt be overcome. This proof of God therefore remains thoroughly problematic in terms of validity. As such, there arises a light suspension in the whole train of thought. The conclusion, to a certain degree, assumes the character of an investment and an act of trust which we make explicit. This corresponds to the fact that the *nervus probandi* of this conclusion lies in the goodness of God. An almighty being, says Descartes, does not find it necessary to deceive and therefore it would not do this. This moral coloring of the proof imagines God to some extent as a moral being. Only the associated truthfulness of God, *veracitas*, guarantees the truth. One sees how Descartes, in his basic intuitions, differs from Spinoza, whose God manifests itself as a substance that explicates itself with internal necessity in the conceptual demonstrations of the *Ethics*, which begins directly with the ontological proof of God as its point of departure. Therefore, a further word is necessary on the relationship between both proofs of God in this reading of Descartes', which opens onto his fundamental problem.[14]

While the first proof of God in the third meditation builds upon the *lumen naturale* and asks for a certain moral investment, one can see in the second proof of God in the fifth meditation the classical ontological proof of God, which proceeds from concepts. Obviously, in the understanding of Descartes, the concepts or, as one would say in the seventeenth century, the innate tools of thought, are only now available—on the basis of the *veracitas* of God—for argumentative purposes. According to Descartes, concepts can be deceptive—even where they seem to be right to us—and this possibility must first be fended off in order to be able to use conceptual processes in a legitimate and reliable manner. As Descartes realizes at the start of the third meditation: "accordingly it seems to me that already I can establish as a general rule [*videor pro regula gernerali posse statuere*] that all things which I perceive very clearly and very distinctly are true."[15] It only seems [*video*] that one can apply this rule generally; this is turned around into its opposite however by the fiction of the deceiving God: namely, that one cannot even trust the

knowledge which we intuit—or believe to—with the utmost certainty.[16] Against the massiveness of the problem of deception, only the goodness of God can be mobilized. One can see in the analytic train of thought of the first three meditations of Descartes a form of transcendental philosophical thought—both *avant la lettre* and decidedly pointed—the fundamental motto of which is to always include the observer's point of view.

Spinoza will not be able to accept—as we have already seen—that one can deny the validity of notions that are self-evident. This can also be seen in the continuation of the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, where he clarifies the benefits he sees in his conception of truth: "And from this, again, it is clear that, for the certainty of the truth, no other sign is needed than having a true idea. For as we have shown, in order for me to know, it is not necessary to know that I know" (*TIE* §35). The primary relation to a reality which Spinoza obviously sees in this relation of objective and formal essences is supposed to release us from the nightmare of a reflection on truth and knowledge which triggers a *progressus in infinitum* and makes truth as such impossible.

Plainly, Spinoza is here taking aim at the Cartesian reflection on truth in the movements of doubt in the meditations. When, according to Descartes, we fundamentally question the relation of our ideas to reality, as occurs in the universal equation of dreams and reality, and consequently look for a sign of truth in reflection, we can always repeat this movement and thus never arrive at the truth. Spinoza confirms this controversial view further on when he states: "if, by some fate [*fato*], someone had proceeded in this way in investigating Nature, i.e., by acquiring other ideas in the proper order, according to the standard of the given true idea, he would never have doubted the truth he possessed (for as we have shown, the truth makes itself manifest)" (*TIE* §44).

If Descartes, therefore, if only by chance, had always thought correctly, he would never have fallen into doubt—a characterization he directly rejects in the third meditation. Looking back on the movement of doubt in the second meditation, which had called into doubt something seemingly certain, namely the perception of external objects, Descartes writes: "And it was in this that I erred, or, if perchance my judgment was correct, this was not due to any knowledge arising from my perception."[17] Descartes thus excludes the use of accidentally found truths in his method. So fundamental is doubt to his thinking.

For Spinoza, however, doubt is only a problem of—supposedly—a lack of truth, to the degree that we always already have true ideas to a certain extent. If we really had no true ideas, as Descartes at least assumes at times in the meditations, then the idea of truth, according to Spinoza, would be entirely illusory. Therefore, the whole problem for Spinoza is to find a true idea or proper concept of a particular object. But if we have found this, then we can use this as a guide to seek out other true ideas. The fact that we have a true idea, however, becomes known to us from the immediate relation to the formal, that is to say actually existing, essence of this idea. Therefore, a particular idea is clearly discernible:

> Next, from what we have just said, that an idea must agree completely with its formal essence [*cum sua essentia formali*], it is evident that for our mind to reproduce completely the likeness of Nature [*quod ut mens nostra omnino referat Naturæ exemplar*], it must bring all of its ideas forth [*debeat omnes suas ideas producere*] from that idea which represents the source and origin of the whole of Nature, so that that idea is also the source of the other ideas.
> (*TIE* §42)

The idea of God is supposed to form the source of all ideas, so that we have to first develop it in order for it to form the basis of all other ones. But in the idea of God, the existence of its formal essence is immediately revealed. Not only does God exist necessarily, his idea does as well. To put it another way: because we perceive the formal essence in the idea of God itself, such that this idea is evident, we can conclude that God necessarily exists. In the execution of this derivation, this *producere ideas*, the mind shows itself as *Exemplar Naturae*, which originally meant "copy," i.e., a transcription of nature, therefore, which depicts the reality entirely and in general, *omnino referat*. One sees how the train of thought of the *Ethics* is indicated in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. But what does the connection between formal essence and objective essence look like in the structure of parallelism? Even if he proceeds from an absolute trust in concepts, Spinoza will grant them a further dimension—different from that of our uses—in order to legitimate their truth. This, namely, is their formal essence. We will now examine further how this is to be understood on the basis of a reading of the *Ethics*.

The topic of the second part of the *Ethics* is the nature and origin of the mind, *De Natura, et Origine Mentis*. Evidently, the human mind must itself now be construed. There is no conceptual or principle change when compared to the *Treatise*

on the Emendation of the Intellect as the mind, *mens humana*, or human consciousness are—to the astonishment of some readers—themselves set as ideas.[18] "For of each thing there is necessarily an idea in God, of which God is the cause in the same way as he is of the idea of the human Body" (*E* II, P13S). The human mind is the idea God has of a particular body. Thus, the human mind is a part of the divine, infinite intellect, that is, the idea God forms from himself as a comprehensive reality in the attribute of thought. Yet in terms of method, there is a new orientation compared with the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, because the idea, which is the human mind, can obviously not be found in the method of the *Treatise*. In the *Ethics*, the train of thought, which was at least sketched out in the *Treatise*, proceeds from the source and cause of the whole of nature in order to derive effects and properties. Thereby, one proceeds always from the cause to the effects, and from the essence to the properties. The stream of life thus translates into the concatenation of demonstrations and constructions and gives the *mos geometricus* its sense and its meaning as a continuous and self-increasing formation and formulation of this flow of life. The theory of the mind, therefore, starts from the attribute structure of thought and from this develops the operation of thinking as such: the formation of ideas. This operation now leads to the infinite intellect, i.e., the idea that substance or God forms of itself in the attribute of thought as *idea Dei*. Individual consciousnesses have, therefore, not only ideas, but also, for Spinoza, these are primarily ideas in the infinite intellect and exist then in the original and continuous context of an intelligible nature. Thereby, the idea, the *mens* or *anima* itself "is," is the origin and cause of the ideas that the *mens* or *anima* "has" and through which it represents the external world. Here too, the properties follow from the essence. The *automaton spirituale* is named after this circumstance. From the individuality of the body and its consciousness as the idea of the body, *idea corporis*, grasped in the "field" of the attributes, follows the complete mental structure of the human. In this conception of an absolute connectivity of consciousnesses with each other, as well as with the attribute, the *Ethics* realizes Spinoza's anti-Cartesian and anti-subjectivist tendencies, which—as we saw—already shaped the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. The thesis that the finite intellect is part of an infinite and unified intellect leads the whole train of thought.

One can then see straight away how and why Spinoza avoids Descartes' analytical approach to the theory of the ideas. For if our consciousnesses are ideas in the mind of God, i.e., the effects of God, or of the attribute of thought respectively, then it is absolutely unnecessary to fundamentally doubt the effects, that is to

say, our representations. Instead, the capacity for truth of our ideas, in a principal sense, is thereby ensured. And yet what does this construction look like in detail? How does the truth of our ideas come about?

The operation of the formation of ideas is initially an operation of the substance itself that modifies and represents itself in the attribute of thought: "In God there is necessarily an idea, both of his essence and of everything that necessarily follows from his essence" (*E* II, P3). This idea that God forms himself arises only because "God acts with the same necessity by which he understands himself, i.e., just as it follows from the necessity of the divine nature … that God understands himself [*ut Deus seipsum intelligat*], with the same necessity it also follows that God does [*agat*] infinitely many things in infinitely many modes" (*E* II, P3S). God acts, *agat*, therefore with the very necessity with which he recognizes himself, *seipsum intelligit*, and he recognizes himself with the same necessity with which he acts. How is the relationship between action and knowledge with respect to God to be understood? Firstly, as in the Appendix to the first part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza is concerned here with differentiating his conception from the traditional image of a God who realizes certain possibilities and not others through his free will. But what takes its place? The inner necessity with which God both acts and knows at the same time. One might be tempted to divide both forms of expression, acting and knowing, between the attributes of extension and thought. But the situation is more complex. Spinoza himself gives an interpretation of the facts, as well as his theorem, a few lines later. After this it follows "that God can form the idea of his essence, and of all the things that follow necessarily from it, solely from the fact that God is a thinking thing, and not from the fact that he is the object of his own idea"(*E* II, P5Pr).

The fact that God acts with the same necessity with which he knows, and vice versa, hence implies that God does not have himself in advance as an object that he can subsequently know. Rather, it is self-knowledge as such, independent of any previously given object. Knowledge as an act is based solely on the fact that God is a thinking being and that he realizes his power of thought. In the process, the formal essence, *essentia formalis*, that we are here still trying to understand, plays a decisive role. This is so as the

> formal being of ideas [*esse formale idearum*] 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. I.e., ideas, both of God's attributes and of

> singular things, admit not the objects themselves [*non ipsa ideata*], or the things perceived, as their efficient cause, but God himself, insofar as he is a thinking thing.
> (*E* II, P5)

Ideas, then, are not formed according to models that depict them, but from the absolute spontaneity of the substance that manifests itself in the attribute of thought completely autonomously and independent of all other attributes. We find this spontaneity in every attribute independent of all others. The ideas in the attribute of thought are therefore also formed as spontaneously, simultaneously with the bodies in the attribute of extension, without this involving an interaction. And the ideas in the attribute of thought explicate exactly the same reality, *realitas*, as the bodies in the attribute of extension. Hence the idea of so-called parallelism, as Leibniz called it, of ideas and things, which Spinoza formulated as the central proposition of his epistemology.[19] "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (*E* II, P7). Every body or thing, *res*, is as such designated an idea in the divine mind that has this body as its object; that is to say, this body, and everything which happens to it, takes place mentally. This object relation therefore represents a factual identity: what happens in the body and in the idea of that body is the same. Thus, as Spinoza says, body and mind are but two views or forms of expression of one and the same thing that is expressed in two ways [*duobis modis expressa*] (*E* II, P7S).

However, these two views are not reducible to one another: a circumstance giving Spinoza, in the age of post-physicalism, a certain relevance. One is very often content with the presentation of this parallelism of ideas and bodies in order to show the solution to the body/soul problem in Spinoza as well as evoke its superiority over Descartes' dualism of the mental and bodily.[20] In actuality, one realizes the complete theoretical scope of the parallelism of ideas and things first when one recognizes the ideas as things, as the things or the *esse formale* in the attribute of thought. This second, but *de jure* primary, dimension of parallelism is to be found in the corollary to Proposition 7:

> From this it follows that God's power of thinking [*cogitandi potentia*] is equal to his actual power of acting [*agendi potentiæ*]. I.e., whatever follows formally [*sequitur formaliter*] from God's infinite nature follows objectively in God [*sequitur in Deo objective*] from his idea in the same order and with the same connection.

(*E* II, P7Cor)

In this manner we can answer our question on how the relation between the formal and objective essence of the ideas is shaped, in the context of the parallelism of the *Ethics*. Let us remember the terminological specifications of the Cartesians. The formal nature of something is its being as such; the objective nature of a thing is its (re)presentational content, the ideate. Even the ideas have a formal being, *esse formale*, which, although possessing a certain degree of *realitas*, of reality, must not be equated with the ideate, i.e., is not to be understood in the sense of an objectification. Thus, the idea of a circle has the reality of a circle formally, not as a representation: it is, in a sense, the circle as thought-thing or thing-of-thinking in the attribute of thought.

Thus, the idea of God as *esse formale* has an absolutely infinite reality that as such differs from the reality in its ideationality. Every idea has as its formal being to some extent the character of a pure thing in the attribute of thought. The ideas repeat therefore, as effect of the active or productive power of God, the bodies as things of thinking in the attribute of thought. This quality of the ideas as things, as Spinoza writes, comes from God's active power, *Dei potentia agendi*.[21] The corollary to *E* II, P7 concludes that the order that formally follows from the active power of God, *Dei potentia agendi*, is the same as the order that follows objectively from the thinking power of God, *Dei potentia cogitandi*. The latter refers to the objective being of the ideas, the ideate or representation contents. In this parallel sense, God thinks what he does and does what he thinks.

Wherein does the idea's character, as thing, or the formal being, *esse formale*, lie? This thingly character is generally determined, through the attribute, to be dynamic. The attributes are as a whole, as well as in their parts, explications or expressions of the essence of God. The formal being of ideas plays a role within this expressive or dynamic nature as an active power, as *causa efficiens* or *explicatio*. In fact, this is also the core of the Spinozist concept of ethics. This connects with the causal aspect of the theory of consciousness, as freedom means to liberate one's own essence or essentiality. This is the essence of explication, which is to be understood as a causally efficient process and which constitutes self-determination at both the level of substance and the level of the modes.

The dynamics of this release are grounded, thereby, in the formal essence of the idea that we are. Deleuze described this by saying that Spinoza thinks conscious-

ness according to the model of the body.[22] In this expressive logic, self-consciousness and self-determination are formed simultaneously and to the extent that the human being expresses or explicates his essence. The individual essence is indeed itself an expression of God and thus cannot be wrong. Spontaneity becomes the measure of theoretical truth and practical correctness. One sees that thinking is an entirely independent form and experience of activity, which is not an image of the body.[23]

An idea, A, thus generates the idea B, which in turn generates idea C, and so forth, thus creating the order and connection of ideas, *ordo et connexio idearum*, as things, *rerum*. This causal link first takes place independently of the ideate or representation. It is only in an—explicatively logical—second step that the ideas of the ideas as objective essences come about, which objectifies the formal essences and transcribe their content. One must now accurately distinguish these two levels of explication, or else it will lose its value for the whole conception. Let us follow Gueroult, one of the most important interpreters who explains the matter to us in the following way:

> In itself, the connection of ideas does not depend on the reflection of the ideas, that is to say the ideas of ideas, for the ideas are in themselves produced according to the order of causes within thought, without the ideas of ideas intervening at all, i.e., reflection. But the knowledge of this connection, according to the causes, is conditioned through the reflection of the ideas, through knowledge of them as reasons or causes. One sees, thereby, that the intra-cogitative parallelism within its second form is for the mind the condition of the concatenation of its ideas according to the order of the causes in thought, i.e., it is the condition of the intra-cogitative parallelism in its first form.[24]

One sees, as such, that the causal linkage of the ideas constitutes the actual dynamic of the attribute of thought as a whole as well as of individuals. This causal chain itself now experiences an objectification in the ideas of ideas, or reflection. The objective aspect of the idea thus has the character of an idea of the formal aspect of the idea, or an idea of the idea. In fact, we can only speak of explicit or conscious consciousness by means of this objectification. The formal aspect of the idea, the being of the idea as such, is unconscious, i.e., thinking in the form of the in-itself. The objective aspect of the idea is the only conscious part, i.e., thinking in the form of the for-itself. This configuration basically supports the line of

argument and construction of the second part of the *Ethics*. One sees this clearly in P23: "The mind does not know itself, except insofar as it perceives the ideas of the affections of the Body [*nisi quatenus Corporis affectionum ideas percipit*]." So it is not that we perceive through ideas or in ideas. The instrumental character is not addressed here. Ideas that are the object of ideas themselves become objects of perception. The ideas of the affects must therefore be initially noticed so that they become conscious. This concerns that type of reflection—the formation of the objective essence of the primary formal essence of the ideas—that first generates representation. This is a process that takes place solely within the attribute of thought.[25] In fact, it cannot be any different in Spinoza's parallelist conception as we cannot actually perceive bodies at all.

The reflexive figure of the idea of the idea as a precondition for awareness applies naturally for both inadequate and adequate ideas equally. "The idea of the idea of any affection of the human Body [*Idea ideæ cujuscunque affectionis Corporis*] does not involve adequate knowledge of the human Mind," as stated in Proposition 29. Certainty is produced in the true ideas by the idea of the idea, as we already saw in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* and is treated in the *Ethics*, Part II, Proposition 43: "He who has a true idea [*Qui veram ideam habet*] at the same time knows that he has a true idea [*simul scit se veram ideam habere*], and cannot doubt the truth of the thing [*nec de rei veritate potest dubitare*]." It can be seen that the reflexive conditions prevail equally for true and false ideas. The ideas that we are consciously aware of can only be true because they relate—so to speak completely and bindingly—to their formal being and we can recognize this relationship ourselves.[26]

Why is the reference to the being of the idea so important in this conception of spontaneity? Precisely as it gains a connection to being or secures it. Even if this being only lies within thinking, it is indeed, *qua* the nature of the attribute of thought, authentic being, so to speak. Only through this relation to the being of the idea as an immediate explication of God in the attribute of thought—Spinoza speaks of the infinite intellect as the first immediate mode in the attribute of thought—only by virtue of this relation can one reject the necessity of Cartesian doubt. Descartes had indeed determined the formal status of the idea, its *esse formale*, as the mere product of a subject. Precisely because of this the Cartesian movement of doubt is set in motion: if our representations are solely our own productions, the immediate question arises as to why they can be true as such. Spinoza "secures" the truth of the content of our conceptions not through the

relation to bodily correlates but by reference to the formal essence of the ideas themselves, their purely causal and pre-subjective linkage. And yet this raises a crucial question that, among other things, appears, according to Gueroult, as a question of seeing. Who sees what here, or who can see something here? As a matter of fact, the observer position formulated here should recognize the correspondence of the order of causes, i.e., a prereflexive and non-representational sequence of things and a reflexive, conscious and representational order of ideas. That both series, which should be in agreement here, are found within the attribute of thought does not mean that insights are compared but instead it means that the thing-aspect, in which an "abstraction" is made "from every sequence of the ideate," is considered "only according to the linkage of causes in thought which leads to the setting of the causal series of ideas themselves."[27]

But is there a position that can see both series and relate them to each other? This question is made specific and complicated by the fact that to a certain extent what is concerned here is the origin of knowledge and consciousness in general, i.e., observation itself. The attribute of thought does not produce actual consciousness in the formal essences of the ideas but only through their reflexive doubling—precisely as an idea of itself. The idea of the first degree—the pure being of the idea or, as we can also say, the pure operation of thinking—is unconscious or preconscious but at the same time constitutes the primary activity of thinking. In principle, the crucial point is thinking about the participation of the human mind in the general intellect or mind of God. Therefore, this mind must participate, in a general sense, in being, in a binding manner. God, in the *Idea Dei*, *genitivus subjectivus* and *objectivus*—that is, in his idea of himself, which he himself forms—objectifies the attribute of thought and is as such conscious of all being. Insofar as this idea of the idea agrees with the being of the attribute of thought, as idea of the first order, then it is true. Within this idea of everything, we individuals participate as parts of the infinite intellect, which is precisely this idea of the idea. Only in this manner does it become understandable that Spinoza himself follows his highest commandment: do not allow any interaction of thought and extension.

Truth, and true knowledge, are alone formed through a relation within thought. That is why there are two forms of ideas: the first as a form of being in the attribute of thought as simple ideas or idea-things, so to speak, and the second as reflected consciousness of these primary ideas—as ideas of the ideas. In order to preserve the existential or in-itself character of the idea of the first order, and thereby its legitimating function for truth, one must subtract its reflexive and rep-

resentational character to a certain degree. The first-order idea does not know, it simply "is": a thinking, without anything being thought of, i.e., the pure dynamic concatenation of ideas as dynamic entities. Consciousness arises only in the idea of the idea: reflexivity generates the representation, the ideate. So here it is not a matter of objectifying and observing something but of the genesis of both observation and objectification as such. The fundamental correctness of observation itself is traced back to a pure order of being from which it ought to now emerge. We cannot, however, proceed in any other way as we begin with our consciousness and the contents found within. Yet this means that we can only start with the effect of conscious consciousness. Thereby we always begin with the reflection in the idea of the idea as the effect of the first-order idea. We hence reason from a position in which there is an observer, on a state in which there is as yet no observer and which now also is supposed to be the condition of the position from which one observes. Obviously, one cannot conclude on the origin of the consciousness. For either the—conscious—consciousness is not yet there, and then there is no speaker or observer who could see anything, or the consciousness is there and then the transition from unconscious to conscious, from thought in-itself to thought for-itself, has already happened and will no longer allow itself to be observed as such. One sees the circle of reasoning here. A pure abstraction from the observer or consciousness would not at all allow, on the other hand, one to make the assumptions about attributes, explications, etc., which are made here. Abstraction is, indeed, not Spinoza's method.

In fact, Spinoza comes here to a situation in which the cause must be deduced from the effect: a status that he himself rejects. For he proves the parallelism of Proposition 7 with the axiom according to which the knowledge of the cause includes the knowledge of the effect, the latter depending on the former, "*Effectus cognitio a cognitione causæ dependet, et eandem involvit*" (*E* I, A4). Spinoza assumes then that we recognize the effect on the basis of the cause here. According to the train of thought of the *Ethics*, we infer the nature of the idea from the nature of the attribute of thought, and the attribute of thought, in turn, from the concept of God. Thereby, Spinoza believes that he can theoretically develop the formal essence such that he can proceed from it to find the objective essence and fundamentally come to the effect from the cause. In fact, however, we have knowledge of the idea only from the idea of the idea, i.e., from the self-doubling effect of the first-order idea. It is also not possible to annul this principal situation of the knower through or within the concept of God. There also we depart from the content of the idea. Now that the existence of God should have been proven, we

see—with Spinoza—how this God explicates in the—for us unconscious—formal essences of the attribute of thinking, on which, in turn, the truth of our conceptions as representations of this formal essences should be based. Because of this, a larger circle is also relevant. For Spinoza proves the actuality of God in the first part of the *Ethics* from our idea of God and in the second part deduces the truthfulness of our ideas from their status as divine products. This circle could only be suspended through the determination of the ideas as godly products.

Yet even if the formal essences of the ideas were, directly or indirectly, the product of God, we could not verify them on the basis of the objective essences, the ideate. Instead, in and for the proof of God, one already stakes a claim for the specific explicatory structure of God and proves this subsequently through the concept of God and the logic of essence and properties. One therefore believes in always being able to deduce the formal essence from the objective. The formal essence, then, offers the justification for passing from the concept, via the being of the concept, to being. In closing the circle, one then proves from the concept of God exactly this explicatory structure, which first makes it possible: the objective essence of the idea is grasped as the explication of the formal essence. Thereby, one assumes in advance the evidential mechanism for the proof of God that one first has to deduce from the concept of God, in order to derive from it in turn the proof mechanism. The proof of God and the dynamics of essence and properties as such do not close the gap between the being of the idea and the idea of being but are themselves put into question. However, this does not necessarily mean that the Spinozan vision of life and his conception of ethics are thereby overturned.

THOMAS KISSER is the author of *Spinoza. Selbstbewusstsein und Interaktion. Spinozas Theorie der Individualität* (*Spinoza. Self-consiousness and Interaction: Spinoza's Theory of Individuality*), Würzburg 1998, as well as many essays on Spinoza and the philosophy of German Idealism. He is the editor of a critical edition of Schelling's letters 1800–1803: F. W. J. Schelling, *Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe* vol. III.2, Stuttgart, Bad Cannstatt 2010. He has also co-edited (with Thomas Leinkauf): *Intensität und Realität* (*Intensity and Reality*), Berlin 2016; (with Katrin Wille): *Spinozismus als Modell. Deleuze und Spinoza* (*Spinozism as Model: Deleuze and Spinoza*), Paderborn 2019.

NOTES

1.This essay is dedicated to Manfred Walther for his 80th birthday
Romain Rolland, *L´Éclair de Spinoza.* Paris: Editions du Sablier, 1931, 107-08
2. All references to Spinoza's *Ethics* are to the translation by Edwin Curley, *Collected Works of Spinoza*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985, 408–617.
3. This concept is known to have influenced Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza. As I discuss this elsewhere, I will not explicitly deal with Deleuze here. See Thomas Kisser, "Wie kann man ein Bild des Denkens geben? Immanenzebene, Begriffe und Begriffspersonen bei Deleuze, Spinoza und Descartes." *Spinozismus als Modell. Deleuze und Spinoza*. Eds. Thomas Kisser and Katrin Wille. Paderborn: Fink, 2019. However, I will not deny his influence on my interpretation.
4. See, on Ep. 12 (Baruch de Spinoza, *Opera*. Ed. Carl Gebhard. Heidelberg: C. Winters, 1925, 52–62; 59), Simon Duffy, "The Differential Point of View of the Infinitesimal Calculus in Spinoza, Leibniz and Deleuze." *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 37:3 (2006, 286–307).
5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra.* Trans. Thomas Common. Part 1, Section 20. https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/n/nietzsche/friedrich/n67a/chapter20.html
6. The relevance of this position is shown in the following quote by Freya Mathews: "Our own immediate experience cannot reveal to us who the real subject of our subjectivity is, whether this is a global or a finite individual subject. … For suppose an alternative metaphysical presupposition is adopted—suppose that we do regard ostensibly individual minds as points of reflexivity in a wider field of 'mind,' a field which is manifest to us, externally, so to speak, as the manifold of physical reality; physical reality is thus seen as a continuum that is possessed of a mental as well as a physical dimension. In this case there would be no discrete individuals in the world, and no categorically or metaphysically distinct substances, so mind-body-dualism would dissolve, and with it the 'problem of knowledge,' in the sense of the problem, how mind, once severed from world, can reestablish contact with that world." (Freya Mathews, *For Love of Matter: A Contemporary Panpsychism.* Albany: SUNY Press, 2003, 37).
7. See the first few paragraphs of "The Passions of the Soul" in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, Vol. 1. Trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T Ross. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, 329–427.
8. Spinoza, *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* in *Collected Works of Spinoza*. Ed. and trans. Edwin Curley. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985, 7–45.
9. René Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy." *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, Vol. 1. Trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T Ross. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, 161.
10. A general principle of Cartesian philosophers. On this term taken in the broadest sense see *E* I, P9. See also the collected edition *Intensität und Realität.* Eds Thomas Kisser and Thomas Leinkauf. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016.
11. Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," 166.
12. Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," 180–185.
13. Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," 162–171.
14. On this, see Thomas Kisser, "Zweifel am Cogito? Die Begründung des Wissens bei Descartes und das Problem der Subjektivität" *Metaphysik und Methode. Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz im Vergleich*. *Studia Leibnitiana* Sonderheft Nr. 39. Ed. Thomas Kisser. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010, 13–44.
15. Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," 158.
16. Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," 158.

17. Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," 158.
18. Kant wonders that "Spinozism speaks of thoughts which themselves think, and thus of an accident that simultaneously exists for itself as a subject." See "What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?" *Religion and Rational Theology* (*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*). Eds Allen Wood, George Di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 15.
19. See for instance Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Considérations sur la doctrine d'un Esprit Universel Unique" *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Vol. VI*. Ed. Carl Gerhardt. Berlin: Weidmann, 1885, 529–538; 533. On the topic generally, see Mogens Lærke, *Leibniz lecteur de Spinoza. La genèse d'une opposition complexe.* Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008.
20. See for example Carol Collier, *Recovering the Body. A Philosophical Study*. Ottawa: Ottawa UP, 2013, 170 ff.
21. On this, see Chapter 7 (The Two Powers and the Idea of God) of Deleuze's *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza.* Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Zone Books, 1990, 113. This text must be understood—insofar as the current author has an overview of the literature—as the first clear interpretation of *E* II, P7C.
22. Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Robert Hurley. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988, 17 f.
23. This major topic of French research, the *devenir-actif* in thought, is most recently discussed by Marcos Gleizer in *Verité et Certitude chez Spinoza.* Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2017, 27 ff.
24. Martial Gueroult, *Spinoza II. L'Âme* (*Ethique, II*). Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1974, 72. Following Deleuze, who was the first to set out the complexity of parallelism in his minor thesis *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression dans la philosophie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1968), Gueroult, in 1972 (the first appearance of the cited text), developed in detail, in this commentary on the second part of the *Ethics*, the *parallelisme extra-cogitatif* as well as *parallelisme intra-cogitatif*. See also, ibid. 66 ff. We tendentially combine and unify the two interpretations here, which obviously have found no further extension—as Mogens Lærke, ibid., 401 ff. makes clear—and do not concern ourselves with the relationship between the two interpretations, which would require more extensive reading and reflection.
25. See, among other places, also *E* II, P29 and *E* II, P43.
26. Manfred Walther made clear, in his interpretation of Spinoza (*Metaphysik als Anti-Theologie.* Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1981), how essential the conception of the idea of the idea is for the whole structure of Spinozan philosophy.
27. Gueroult, *Spinoza II. L' Âme* (*Ethique, II*), 67.

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becoming concrete: spinoza's third kind of knowledge

katrin wille, translated by kirk turner

The philosophy of Spinoza, although long established as an object of academic research, still has the potential to be heretical or heterodox. Where does this potential lie, today, when the critique of a personal God of creation, i.e. heresy in the classical sense, leaves us rather cold and disinterested? The persistent provocativeness of Spinoza's philosophy is to be found within his radical critique of prejudices; and not only of such prejudices that one can dispense with through so-called higher cultivation. These prejudices which Spinoza has in sight are, for example, the special position accorded to mankind within nature; or the separation of rationality and affect or cognition and action: these are (in his view) misguided efforts to describe reality without the use of a unified vocabulary. Instead, Spinoza provides a philosophical project in which the central concept of nature *and* an ethical pathway to self-refinement are willfully combined in thought (something which, in Spinoza's own time, as well as the time of the Spinoza feuds of the 18th century in Europe, caused—and, in contemporary times, still causes—disquietude).

My focus in this article is a type of philosophical provocation that refers to the *scientia intuitiva* [i.e. 'intuitive knowledge'], classified by Spinoza as the third kind of knowledge. The core of the provocation lies within Spinoza's radical critique of abstraction, the point of which is the following insight: philosophical knowledge requires affective work otherwise it remains in abstraction. This abstraction has

two different faces and therefore it is also assigned various kinds of knowing. The first type of abstraction is described in terms of truncation and distortion. This means mistaking the human perspective as such, or the perspectives of individual people, for reality itself and therefore truncating and distorting the cognition of reality through the projection of simple patterns. This method of distorted abstraction, which marks our everyday form of life, is termed *imaginatio* by Spinoza (*E* II, P35S).[1]

The second form of abstraction is a conscious method of abandoning concrete differences and focusing on commonalities. Therewith, a knowledge of law and rule is developed (Spinoza calls this *ratio*), through which a part of reality, namely that of individual particularity, remains misunderstood (*E* II, P37). The abstraction of rule-based knowledge shows itself in questions of ways of life or, more specifically, in the lack of power to initiate concrete changes.

According to Spinoza, there is also a specific kind of knowledge which makes general rules effective *within* one's specific concrete praxis. This is no mere tacked-on application of rule-based insight. Thereby, a transition will be carried out: that of general rules to the extent that they are expressed in a certain and specific way.[2] Hence, the third kind of knowledge is self-knowledge of the modes (in which the substance expresses itself in certain and particular ways). This self-knowledge is however no free-floating cognitive state; it is something which is first reached in the concrete affective work of a mode. The tendencies inherent in affective human nature—those of distorting and isolating abstraction—must be concretely altered. Thereby, a mode of affectivity peculiar to the third kind of knowledge emerges—deprived of the logic of effectuation and counter-effectuation, of strengthening and weakening—which can be established as the affectivity of self-purposiveness (i.e. autotely).

In the following, I would like to unfold and explain this analysis of the third type of knowledge. To this end, I will go through the following stages. Spinoza's philosophical framework makes it possible to understand knowledge and cognition as forms of praxis. Theoretical insight and individual as well as collective ways of life form, properly speaking, an interrelation. The form of praxis in which we conventionally live is, however, in itself very problematic and leads to individual as well as collective difficulties. Due to this, a kind of knowledge (and a related form of praxis) is necessary through which one can illuminate these difficulties and construct other possibilities. Illumination and construction, however, are not so-

lutions for these difficulties and not realizations of a form of praxis in absence of these difficulties. Only the concrete execution of techniques of change can bring about a new form of praxis and it is exactly this which the third kind of knowledge, the *scientia intuitiva*, achieves.

1. SPINOZA'S FRAMEWORK: A PHILOSOPHY OF IMMANENCE

Spinoza's philosophy has for some time been increasingly distinguished as a voice which can provide an important contribution to the theoretical and practical concerns of the present day. The Spinozan delimitation of the concept of power as a unified central concept of reality *in toto* makes it possible to analyze the multiplicity of self-organizing cycles of power, which increase their effectiveness through coordination but can also block and dissolve. Order is achieved through coordination of this multiplicity which must withstand constant threats. The fecundity of this perspective has been discussed in political philosophy under the heading of *multitudo* and Spinoza is profiled as an author who can show to what extent political order can arise at all democratically through the self-organized coordination of multiplicity. Therefore, no shared values or leading culture are necessary, which is highly relevant for our current political climate. Identities also develop out of the cooperation of (or even because of) highly diverse actors and fall apart when the interaction dissolves.

Spinoza offers an ontology which on the one hand allows for a maximal general perspective on all areas of reality but on the other resists the temptations of transcendence, namely ultimate justifications, categorical distinctions or even seeking after supernatural authorities. Spinoza develops an ontology of immanence which can describe, explain and analyze, with the most general terms, a small number of constitutional processes and regularities of beings. Such a starting point now has considerable consequences for all topics and areas of philosophy. One important consequence is to even-handedly criticize and transform, in terms of the theory of power, a widespread theoretical figure as well as our own conventional understanding. Humans are not actors who recognize and operate and stand in interactive relationships and enforce their wills; instead, they are the expression of general effective relations which apply equally to the human and non-human. Accomplishing this is exactly a fundamental concern of the *Ethics*.

The framework is formed by an indeterminate and dynamic concept of field: nature. Spinoza himself uses various expressions for this which create their own

semantic realm: in addition to the term nature, namely, also substance, God and power, i.e. effectivity (*potentia*). Within this field, various constellations of efficacy are built through connections, which Spinoza calls modes, in each of which nature, or substance, expresses itself in specific ways. For each mode, the following applies: on the one hand each mode is determined by other modes and on the other each mode is itself effective, i.e. itself a kind of power center. Each of these indescribably many and varied power centers also stands, on the one hand, in a complex causal relation and is constantly being changed by other modes and, on the other hand, each power center has its own structure which is a manifestation of the form of the reactions to external influences, as well as its own influence on others, i.e. its activities. Reactions and actions exist in the effort to maintain its own structure and increase the radius or capacity for action (*potentia agendi*) and prevent weakening. Increases or decreases create affects, i.e. types of pleasure and pain, which display the significance of the changes for each of the modes. What or who an individual is, is shown therefore in what they do and what their affects are—there is no core of existence behind it.

Human cognition and action have access to two forms of expression of this field within which their individual modes can take shape—thought and extension. Every mode appears in the one form of expression as an idea and in the other as a body. Each mode has therefore to some extent a double articulation with its own logic. Cognition as such and also human cognition take place in the form of expression of thought and the object of our ideas is our body (including the experience of other bodies conveyed by it). These ideas now have bodily equivalents in the form of expression of extension. Cognition is a form of increase of the activities of a mode and hence also always affective. To consider cognition free of affect is impossible within Spinoza's philosophical framework. Insights, reactions, actions and affects form as such an indissoluble connection and therefore it makes sense to understand forms of cognition as forms of praxis.

2. COGNITION AS A FORM OF PRAXIS

A form of praxis is a combination of shared openings onto reality in which modes (and in the following I consider only one particular type of mode, namely humans) live, recognize, act and feel. Through their own implementations of their lives, as well as the cognitive acts and actions, the modes sustain these connections which enable their own self-understanding. Forms of praxis therefore are both collective and individual. Individuals are developed within and through shared forms of

praxis and can also maintain and change them respectively.

How is the human form of praxis properly determined (or does it make more sense to speak of praxis forms in the plural)? To some degree, the singular is appropriate if praxis is understood as boundary, i.e. the horizon, of human being and action. However, within this lies an inner moment of differentiation, which Spinoza does not derive social-theoretically through cultural influence, lifestyle or levels, but instead via various ways of knowing, hence to interpret and form oneself and reality and to behave accordingly. Human knowledge, dealt with in the second book of the *Ethics*, can now, while belonging to this field of acting forces, take three courses.

The first possibility is to access reality solely from the perspective of the respective effects of increase or decrease. The second possibility marks the opening of reality through the commonalities between the various power constellations. And the third possibility creates a type of synthesis between both of the overly abstract views and puts into question the ways and methods of emergence (*procedere*) of specific power constellations as the concretization of general effective relations.

These cognitive perspectives, which Spinoza presents as the three kinds of knowledge, are not only the cognitive appropriation of reality, but are themselves ways of living and acting and of having a strengthening or weakening effect on oneself and others. This is shown in the consequences for the affective nature of humankind, treated in the third and fourth books of the *Ethics*, as well as the special spaces which the third kind of knowledge, as way of life or form of praxis, opens up. This is the subject of the comparatively short fifth and final book of the *Ethics*.

For each of these forms of praxis, various activities of cognition are especially important: shared forms of praxis are formed from their coordinated execution and affective dynamics which are sustained by individuals, groups and institutions. As I interpret Spinoza, for each form of praxis there is the corresponding generation of a form of theory surrounding oneself, on the meaning of the self and world, which should have a stabilizing, generalizing and legitimating effect.

The most unclear of Spinoza's statements definitely concerns the third kind of knowledge; it has therefore experienced the most varied, extremely distinct interpretations. At first glance, the presentation of the three kinds of knowledge as cognitive acts follows a hierarchical order. The first kind appears as the lowest

and the third as the highest. If one observes, however, in the complete framework of the *Ethics*, that the first kind, the *imaginatio*, provides a type of natural constitution of man, and that the complete *Ethics* lays out to a certain degree a path of critical self-transformation, then the classification of the kinds into first, second and third instead describes a way of change of forms of praxis.

3. WHAT DO WE DO WHEN WE IMAGINE? *IMAGINATIO* AS A FORM OF PRAXIS

The first kind of knowledge is determined like an unquestionable starting point which arises through the ideas of interactions of bodies. Through the encounter of one's own body and those of others, one's body is affected and can affect others. To be affected means incorporating, integrating and changing oneself. The traces of these influences of other bodies belong to one's own body. And to affect means influencing other bodies and initiating changes. A constant exchange is thereby enacted. In the attribute of thought, these acts of affecting and being affected are ideas of affections which present a mixture of one's own and foreign bodies. We perceive something and do this by means of our bodies as well as our processing mechanisms. What thereby comes about, and how it does so, i.e. what belongs on the side of the object and what belongs on the side of our processing, is not differentiable and there is no reason for the *imaginatio* to distinguish this.

Perceptions do not take place in an isolated form, one following the other; instead, they always exist within associative connections. Our perceptual history shapes our perceptual present as well as future and forms perceptual habits: stable patterns which can stand for complex relations and grant us orientation. The two most important tasks of the *imaginatio* are hence to perceive and associate.

These activities then constitute praxis when they are not viewed in isolation as modes of knowing, but instead considered in terms of their interaction with and consequences for our affective nature. For Spinoza, this is expressed by *conatus*: i.e. the striving of each mode, whether human, institutional or a cluster of cells, to maintain itself in its being and increase everything that is experienced as conducive to this as well as to prevent all that is detrimental to the process. If such increase succeeds, the positive affects of joy or pleasure are produced. If they fail, what occurs is sadness or pain. The *conatus*, the quest for self-preservation, is not a new theoretical element which is introduced as a new and quasi-external factor in the third book of the *Ethics*. Rather, each mode's self-preserving effort

expresses the power of God in a certain and determined way.[3]

The activities of the *imaginatio*—to perceive as well as feel and associate—are carried out to increase our power to sustain ourselves. In this way, we cultivate our habits to repeat, and thereby stabilize, what has already been perceived as such an increase. This concerns not only individual habitual behaviors but also (and perhaps preferentially) interactions with others. For Spinoza, as such, there is no alternative to the increase of our capacity for action through cooperation with others. We learn, on the one hand, how certain interactions and the development of and participation in collective structures strengthen us: we try to repeat them; on the other, we learn how other interactions such as the participation in different collective structures weaken us: we attempt to avoid these and keep ourselves far from them (and perhaps even to work on their destruction and dissolution). Assessing which interactions and forms of participation have which effects is based on past experience and present sensations and can always fail. The *imaginatio* acts as the center and assesses everything according to the standards that arise from this perspective.

The ambivalence and inner instability of the form of praxis of the *imaginatio* becomes especially clear through the dynamics of our affective lives, namely through the imitation of affects. Spinoza is a ruthless analyst of the ambivalence of our conventional forms of praxis which is attested to in the following diagnosis: "And so we see that each of us, by his nature, wants the others to live according to his temperament; when all alike want this, they are alike an obstacle to one another, and when all wish to be praised, *or* loved, by all, they hate one another" (*E* III, P31S).[4]

This form of praxis suggests certain interpretive patterns of reality and therefore part of the *imaginatio*, in a certain sense, is the development of a theory about itself, through which the radius of application is widened, a claim to universality gains justification and the interpretive frame is stabilized. The theoretical activity which can achieve this is the formation of patterns and types (*notiones universales*) through *abstraction*.

The following notions follow from the application of the activity of such abstractions:

1. We humans strive to maintain and strengthen ourselves. We experience

ourselves thereby as active, free beings. *Thus*, we have a free will.
2. We evaluate our environment so as to determine if it meets our purpose—to persevere and enhance ourselves—or not. *Thus*, everything in reality has a function as well as the purpose of being useful to us.
3. Whatever is useful for the achievement of our purpose is also good in reality and whatever is detrimental to the fulfillment of this aim is also bad in reality.

This interpretation of reality, which occurs through the bracketing of perspective, is that which, according to Spinoza, requires the *most intensive critique*. Spinoza calls the prejudices of free will, the purposiveness of nature and objective values an *asylum ignorantiae*.[5] This does not mean, however, that the activities of the *imaginatio*, perception and association, must (or even can) be subjected to the same critique. We perceive and associate constantly. As these activities have the tendency to produce a form of problematical excess of theory however, which exacerbates and cements the instability of this form of praxis, it is necessary to observe this exactly in order to better understand and change it. And for this reason, the *imaginatio* points beyond itself to another form of cognition which Spinoza calls *ratio*.

4. WHAT DO WE DO WHEN WE REASON? *RATIO* AS A FORM OF PRAXIS OF COMMUNALITY

Ratio can be understood as a direct criticism and revision of *imaginatio*. While the *imaginatio* reveals the world according to one's own habits and interpretive patterns and neither investigates nor is interested in the conditions of formation, the *ratio* is characterized by the decentering of one's own perspective. The specific activities are comparison and concluding. Through the comparison of one's own experience with the experience of others and through the comparison of various events and circumstances, similarities can be deduced. The tasks of comparison and concluding lead to the activity of establishing commonalities in the form of common notions (*notiones communes*), conceived not as singular concepts but more as shared structures and regularities. These describe such comprehensive regularities as those of the laws of nature for the attribute of extension as well as elementary inferential principles for the attribute of thought. These activities can however also be applied to more limited contexts insofar as the commonalities between humans or between animals (or even sectors of society or of institutions) are made the object of rational consideration.

Rational forms of praxis also encompass the scientific exploration of nature including human behaviors, as well as the design of one's own environment and life. Exploration and design are connected as only the investigation of structures and regularities allows one to understand the natural environment and human nature as well as their interrelation. The principles of perception and association also belong to human nature as well as the affective dynamics of self-preservation, i.e. rational elucidation of the mechanisms of the *imaginatio*. These critical insights allow the formulation of expedient rules for the rational organization of political communities as well as individual conduct of life. Rational design consists of the orientation toward commonalities, whether between human nature and surrounding (and conditioning) nature; between one's own body and others' bodies; between all humans; or between humans of one region or institution. Put bluntly, one could perhaps say that one such rational person is also a political individual, who stands for participation and cooperation. This type of human is guided by the experience that strong affects are created through this orientation, i.e. toward communal participation, which can have an influence on other affects. The insight that one's own capacity for action can be increased through cooperation with many actors makes it possible to counteract the tendencies of the *imaginatio*: to absolutize one's own perspective and overlook common interests due to fixation on personal ones. Making the *ratio*, and therewith the orientation toward the collective, effective in terms of action, is a long and difficult route which Spinoza calls the path to perfection (*perfectio*). A rational person, in this sense, is one who has understood that the real striving toward self-preservation converges with the striving of all others. The *ratio* constructs the idea of the good and derives therefrom the claims of reason to which the recommendation of a certain affective life belongs. Affects such as gratitude, nobility, moderation and sobriety should make up the recommended affective life of the rational person.

In this rational form of praxis, there exists, according to Spinoza, a serious structural problem, which makes it insufficient and in need of broadening. And this problem lies precisely in the characteristics of rational construction and claims of the *ratio*. Constructions transcend reality and claims are negative toward lived reality. The claims and constructions of the good or better are weak and cause a structural rift in human nature. They suggest the reduction of human nature to a deficiency. Added to this, concentrating on general claims and rules ignores the differences between people, events and circumstances. Therein one finds the problematic abstractness of *ratio*.[6]

In connection with the question of the powerlessness of the *ratio* in contrast to the powerful force of the *imaginatio*, Spinoza quotes Ovid: "I see and approve the better, but follow the worse" (*E* IV, P17S). These words of Medea, with which she attempts to resist her sudden passion for Jason, are the *locus classicus* for the phenomenon which is then discussed in relation to Aristotle's notion of *akrasia* or weakness of will. *Akrasia* is mainly reserved for an action carried out *in spite of* the conviction that another act is the best. The akratic considers action A to be the best, however does something different, which she in fact considers to be worse. Aristotle explains this in terms of the emergence of strong passions through which the agent is to a certain extent forced toward action B, which is judged as worse. Spinoza considers this discussion completely misguided. The 'Medea' phenomenon is not a question of strength or weakness of the will. The concept of the will emanates from a truncated and distorted abstraction of the *imaginatio*. The 'Medea' phenomenon must therefore be placed in the proper conceptual frame, as the concept of will is empty and to be rejected from a philosophical standpoint. The question is rather that of the structural irritability and weakness of general claims, which the *ratio* formulates. The 'Medea' phenomenon is a problem of the specific abstractness of the *ratio*. It does not require any strengthening or training of will power, which should exert the mysterious effect that thinking is supposed to have on the body (in this manner, Spinoza is able to satirize Descartes in the preface to the fifth book). This is excluded in Spinoza's theory of parallelism and as such the concept of will is deprived of its ontological basis.

Against this, Spinoza develops the third kind of knowledge, which involves exploring the concrete active force in a mode and creating concrete conditions in order to bring the insights of the *ratio* into effect. This is a distinct form of cognition which Spinoza terms 'intuitive.'[7]

5. WHAT DO WE DO WHEN WE INTUIT INTELLECTUALLY? THEORY AS PRAXIS

5.1 The third kind of knowledge as critique of abstraction

The third kind of knowledge is critical of the tendencies toward abstraction found in the other two kinds. With the help of *ratio* and its structure-generating abstractions, it becomes possible to criticize the distortions and reductions of the *imaginatio*. The affective logic and tendencies toward distortion and reduction are made transparent within *ratio* in their fundamental functioning. This allows,

on the one hand, critical insight, insofar as the general regularities can be applied to isolated cases. The knowledge surrounding the regularities goes hand-in-hand with the knowledge of applicability: i.e. the ability to subsume single cases under these regularities. This enables both critique of jealous, angry or otherwise affect-driven actions of others or one's own affective action. However, the process of subsumption is abstract as the specifics of content of the concrete circumstances are disregarded in the subordination of a concrete state of affairs under given, general rules. Distinctiveness is reduced to a logical relation of the subordination of particular judgments under general ones, subject to rules of inference. If one such subordination is conducted, there is no gain in knowledge of the particularities of the case. Abstractness here means, therefore, that the distinctive features of objects are not taken into consideration—particularities are intentionally disregarded—and the objects and circumstances are taken as given and are therefore isolated from the generating acts of reflection.

The insights that can be gained by way of the *ratio* are nonetheless not only of an explanatory and diagnostic type. General guidelines for improvement can also be attained via this comprehension (*dictamina*, *E* IV, P62; *praecepta*, *E* IV, P18S), for example general life rules (*E* IV, P46), which are treated in the fifth book: hate is "to be conquered by love, *or* nobility; not by repaying it with hate in return" (*E* V, P10S).[8] Such guidelines are abstract as they are not intrinsically effective: they are followed sometimes and at other times not. In concrete situations, counteractive forces are often present which prove to be stronger. As long as the conditions are not subjected to thinking, under which conditions power and strength can develop in the field of counteraction, such *praecepta* remain abstract in a problematic way.

5.2 Transitional knowledge

Understanding the third kind of knowledge as transitional is based on its formulaic determination which Spinoza provides in the second book of the *Ethics* (*E* II, P40S) and concretizes in the fifth: "And this kind of knowing proceeds (*procedit*) from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the [NS: formal] essence of things."[9] This "proceeding" (*procedere*) proves in the fifth book to be the concretization of the insights of *ratio*, which were established in the third and fourth books of the *Ethics*. A process of concretization does not allow itself to be described abstractly; this lies in the nature of things. As such, it is by starting with something concrete: the con-

crete affective nature of humans as well as the experiences which we undertake in the *imaginatio*. The critical insights on the functioning of the *imaginatio* and the generation of suffering that is linked to it, which can be obtained in the *ratio*, are what are to be concretized therein. Through this concretization, the general guidelines—the *praecepta* or *dictamina,* obtained in the *ratio*—change into *remedia* (*E* V, Preface), i.e. remedies that receive a transformative power which is lacking in the *praecepta*.

The term *remedia* is proximal to medicinal usage semantically, which Spinoza draws on but also relativizes.[10] In the preface to the fifth part of the *Ethics*, two distinctions are made which make clear how one is *not* to understand the process of concretization described in propositions 1–20. The path (*via*) to freedom is differentiated from a path of somatic cultivation (i.e. medicine) and one of the mind (i.e. logic). The path with which the fifth book is concerned does not consist of the further development of bodily or mental potentialities, but the critical work on one's own prejudices and the realization of the general insights of the *ratio*: concrete affective work is necessary.

Spinoza distinguishes this from the affective work of the Stoics as well as Cartesian work on willpower. The affective work which Spinoza demonstrates in the fifth book does not at all concern freeing oneself of one's own nature through effort and discipline and acquiring a different one. This model of affective work is visualized through the Stoic image of making a hound out of a domesticated dog and vice versa. The dominion (*imperium*) over the affects which Spinoza is concerned with however is not that of the stoical victory over one's own nature and its determinations, a victory of the disciplinarian power of the mind against the limitations of nature. The ontological principles set out in book one of the *Ethics* make clear that such a model and such a conception of dominion are without foundation.

The borderline to the Cartesian model is equally sharp as the dominance of the affects proceeds from the authority of the will, which for Spinoza is nothing other than a mysterious point of influence which emanates between mind and body. This demarcation also follows the ontological framework from the *Ethics*.

Spinoza shows in the fifth book of the *Ethics* how the power over the affects is now to be thought, which follows the ontological framework and concretizes it. In propositions 1–20, the step-by-step procedure is shown whereby the critical

insights and guidelines obtained by the *ratio* can become concretized.

There is a large gap between merely informing oneself about the path and actually taking it. The latter takes place within the third kind of knowledge and the effects which thereby successively occur are specified in the propositions. The following evidences Spinoza's retrospection on the path: "From what we have said, we easily conceive what clear and distinct knowledge—and especially that third kind of knowledge (see *E* II, P47S), whose foundation is the knowledge of God itself—can accomplish against the affects" (*E* V, P20S).[11] While in the first part of the fifth book (propositions 1–20) the type of functioning of the third kind of knowledge is said to be made clear in "this present life" (*praesentam hanc vitam*), the thematic of the second half of the fifth book (propositions 21–42) concerns describing the affective consequences which arise when the path of concretization is carried out completely. The consequences are to be found in the realization of the transindividuality[12] of the mode which is accompanied by a wholly specific affective dynamic.

5.3 Ontology of change

The two axioms at the start of the fifth book have the function of qualifying the following path both as consequences of the ontological, epistemological and affective-theoretic principles and as their concretization. It remains to be shown how change is possible and necessary, as this is the sole condition under which remedies (*remedia*) can work. Changes are possible through an investigation into the natural power dynamics, as this shows how impulses can be strengthened and others weakened. Exactly this is achieved with both axioms; one could call them the "Law of contradiction concerning action" and "Law of immanence." The former formulates the following: changes occur when two contrary actions (*actio*) are generated in one subject; and the latter the following: that the power of an effect (or its essence, with respect to the determination of the essence of a mode as its *conatus*; see *E* III, P7) is dictated by the power of its cause (or its essence).

Therefore, in order to achieve change, it is not necessary to develop goals with specific contents that should be realized or achieved and nor is it necessary to control affects through reason, in order to conquer them. Instead, the conditions of the affective dynamics must be analyzed and modified. The direction of the modification is the concretization of the insights of the *ratio* in the individual mode. This is shown exactly in the determination of the third kind of knowledge

in the second book insofar as the epistemological foundations for the path of change are set in place (*E* II, P40S2).

5.4 Pragmatics of change

On the basis of these axioms, the concretization process, the pragmatics of change, can be implemented. There is much to be said on the choreography of propositions 1–20; in the following, only a few steps of the sequence have been selected. To understand the status of these propositions, and their difference to those in books 1–4, it's crucial to remember their designation as remedy (*remedia*) and to follow the consequent metaphorical implications. Therapeutically effective remedies are those which are given to provide relief to a harmful, limiting condition. The suffering which arises through the *imaginatio* and its affective dynamics can be seen as one such condition. Remedies which should be helpful against suffering can be administered by healers who understand sicknesses as well as health in their functions and mechanisms in the following ways: a) in the form of substances or dietetic measures; b) in the form of interventions; or c) in the form of instructions to do some things differently than one would usually.

The question then arises: what kind of remedies are presented in propositions 1–20 and who decrees them to whom? It is obvious that these cannot be substances or dietetic measures, as Spinoza points out, since it is "*the power of the mind* (*mentis potentia*) ... *defined only by understanding*" that is in need of determination and not the power of the body. Therefore, the two possibilities of b and c remain.

Who, however, can intervene here (and in regard to whom) and give instruction? Spinoza does not advocate finding a sage who gives advice or tells stories; this would be a means of externalizing the *ratio* and receiving the *praecepta* of others, instead of through the power of one's own thought processes. This does not change the problematic of the *praecepta* and cannot be considered as concretization. Therefore, nothing other can be meant than the self-relation between an instance which determines the interventions or gives the assignation and an instance in which the interventions are undertaken and show effects, i.e. which follows the procedure laid out.

However, if it concerns a self-relation, then option b is eliminated, as the interventions of a healer upon a sufferer are mostly incomprehensible for the latter, who rather surrenders completely to the expertise of the former. The most plau-

sible option is therefore the third, according to which propositions 1–20 form instructions for a concrete praxis that refer specifically to the situation of the sufferer and can be applied to it.

How then are propositions 1–20 to be understood, within a self-relation that provides the directive of an instance, in which distance from one's own suffering (and therefore general knowledge on affective dynamics) is achieved, in relation to an instance which is exposed to the enlacing and sufferance-generating power of affect?

If we take the second proposition[13] and read it as a coherent set of instructions, the following may be deduced: separate the affects from the thought of an external cause. How can such a directive be followed and what should be done? First of all, a starting point is necessary, for example the above-mentioned affective dynamic which shows the suffering of the *imaginatio* particularly clearly:

And so we see that each of us, by his nature, wants the others to live according to his temperament; when all alike want this, they are alike an obstacle to one another, and when all wish to be praised, *or* loved, by all, they hate one another. (*E* III, P31S)

This is a critical insight into the functioning of the *imaginatio*, which in turn was gained by way of the *ratio*. The concretization to be brought to fruition through the third kind of knowledge obliges us to describe a concrete situation in which this dynamic is manifested.[14] An example: *we live in a relationship and want our preferences to be realized (for instance, to sleep longer on the weekend). This is in conflict with the preferences of our partner, who wants to fill the weekend spending time together engaging in joint activities. We prevail in our wish by simply sleeping, however we feel that this makes our partner unhappy and causes an atmosphere of silent reproach to cloud over the weekend. This repeats itself each weekend with variations which creates increasing anger for each of us.* This may seem like a banal situation from everyday living however it is one of an endless series of concrete examples on the desires of our nature: everyone, and in this case our partner, should live according to our plan. The affect which arises here is a gradation of what Spinoza describes as hate, which is caused when we expect everyone to live according to our ideas and preferences. He determines hate as follows: "Hate is a sadness, accompanied by the idea of an external cause" (*E* III, D7).[15]

To offer advice in such a situation, through the wise counsel and authority within us, to understand the partner and find a compromise, to arrange the weekends alternately according to the preferences of one person and then the other, would probably remain abstract and ineffective. In the best case scenario, there would be the attempt to displace the achievement of one's own agenda onto another topic: e.g. food, clothing, a holiday, political orientation.

Therefore, the crucial step in the complex instructions that Spinoza provides in proposition 2, is precisely to separate (*amovere*) the affect of anger from the object toward which it is directed—here, the behavior of the partner—and to connect it with other thoughts. What should be done here? Through this separation from the external object we free up, by way of the action of thought applied to the concrete situation (such as the one described), the affect of anger toward our partner, i.e. the external cause of the disturbance. What then remains is namely the affect of anger arising from the disapproving reaction toward the enacting of our own wishes. This separation must be carried out concretely and its success can be seen in the described effect: the anger toward the partner dissipates. Spinoza, who here merely outlines the basic facets of concrete affective work, leaves open the question of which concrete variations have to be completed to bring the separation into effect. It is possible, and in fact highly likely, that a single intellectual act is by no means enough to resolve the affect of anger toward the partner or to prevent the problem becoming displaced onto other topics. Therefore it is indeed necessary to enact and repeat this separation in variations and to remember situations which had a similar structure, in order to thematize one's own affective habits. Only then can the insights become concrete (i.e. it is not our partner who has set into motion the affect of anger, and thereby is responsible for this, but the fact that we repeat our own affective habits).

If this becomes concretely clear and explicit, we experience the way in which the anger toward the partner dissolves and then our activities, and the affects associated with them, become liberated. This occurs however only when the effects can be brought about and the anger toward the partner is destroyed (*destruere*).

The other propositions (3–20) could also be broken down in this way into concretized procedures, i.e. always questioning with regard to examples of concrete situations what exactly should be done, what the effects are and how they can be presented. When we can follow this—the best case being by means of a situation to which we can apply our own experiences—and understand the effects which

Spinoza successively describes with each step, then we can see that the second part of the fifth book represents nothing else than, again and especially, observing effects on the mind—separated from the concrete steps which had to be carried out in the concretization procedure and through which the thoughts and ideas of the mind received a new order as was the case with the "images of things" (*imagines*) in the body (*E* V, P1).[16]

5.5 Affectivity of change

When an individual has repeatedly undergone this procedure of concretization, has gathered experience with dissipating passions, what arise as the affective effects? In the second part of the fifth book, Spinoza describes a fundamental change in the logic of affect. The affective experiences of one who is able to intuitively cognize show that these affects are spread out, inclusive and self-reinforcing. The familiar, emphatically charged terms for transindividual affects from the second part of the fifth book—such as *amor Dei intellectualis* or *sub specie aeternitatis*—describe the transition from concrete, individual affective work to the experience of transindividuality.

To make this plausible as a concrete experiential quality, I would like to again tie in the example situation. Let us assume that the effect presented in proposition 2 occurs and the anger toward our partner dissipates. Perhaps this is accompanied by regret concerning our previous suffering and also the suffering that has arisen in our partner. At the same time, we bring into effect our partner's potential to change her affective habits as well as the power to learn about and develop her own affect. We learn, from this power over our own affects, about our interrelations with others, whereas through the assertion of our partialities we learn about separation from others.

By means of the concrete and individually fulfilled resolution of our urge to push our individual prejudices through, we learn to consider ourselves as the expression of activity (*potentia agendi*), which we share with others and through which we experience, as part of nature as a whole, the confusing field of modes and their processes of change. And this is exactly a dimension of that which Balibar attempts to grasp through the concept of transindividuality, which is founded on the conceptual reciprocity of individuality and substance:

> In Spinoza's philosophy, not only is individuality a central notion, but it is the very form of *actual existence*. In the strong sense of the term … only individuals really exist. As a consequence, 'substance' and 'individuality' are reciprocal concepts. … [S]ubstance (or God, or Nature) is an infinite process or production of multiple individuals, whereas 'individuals', being all different and all causally dependent, are the necessary existence of the substance.[17]

In the fifth book of the *Ethics*, Spinoza makes the attempt to sketch a concrete path in which this relationship of individuality to substance is synthesized within a lived experience. Whether those who do indeed go down this path achieve eternal bliss is however unlikely. Instead, the third kind of knowledge shows us a course of practice, which requires great, and constantly repeated, effort: how, namely, in the midst of our imprisonment within the blind assertive fury of our partialities, we can undergo the experience of transindividuality.

What is then provocative about the third kind of knowledge? The provocation lies in the necessary transgressive shift of philosophy into non-philosophy, into concrete affective work. Spinozan philosophy demands exactly this of us.

KATRIN WILLE is Senior Lecturer in philosophy at the University of Hildesheim, Germany. Her research interests are in concepts of distinction and difference, pragmatism, feminism, and history of philosophy. She is the author of *Die Praxis des Unterscheidens. Historische und systematische Perspektiven* (*The Praxis of Making Distinctions. Historical and Systematic Perspectives*), Freiburg: Karl Alber 2018; and co-editor with Thomas Kisser of *Spinozismus als Modell. Deleuze und Spinoza*, Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink 2019.

NOTES

1. For the explicit characterization of the *imaginatio* as abstract see also *E* I, P15S.
2. I am referring here to the designation of modes in *E* I, P25C: "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." (*Res particulares nihil sunt nisi Dei attributorum affectiones sive modi, quibus Dei attributa certo et determinato modo exprimuntur.*) All English quotations are drawn from Spinoza, *Ethics*. *The Collected Works of Spinoza*. Ed. and trans. Edwin M. Curley. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, vol. 1, 408-617.
3. Compare the established and widely used determination of modes in *E* I, P25C: "[M]odes by which God's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way." (*[M]odi, quibus Dei attributa certo et determinato modo exprimuntur.*)
4. (*[A]tque adeo videmus unumquemque ex natura appetere, ut reliqui ex ipsius ingenio vivant, quod dum omnes pariter appetunt, pariter sibi impedimento, et dum omnes ab omnibus laudari seu amari volunt, odio invicem sunt.*) This passage is adopted again in *E* V, P4S.
5. *E* I, A.
6. This critique of the abstractness of *ratio* can already be found in the early work *TIE*, in which Spinoza differentiates a further four kinds of knowledge. For a more detailed analysis, see Katrin Wille, "Transformatives Erkennen im *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*. Funktion, Legitimation und Evaluation der vier *modi percipiendi*", in: *Metaphysik und Methode: Descartes, Spinoza und Leibniz im Vergleich*. Ed. Thomas Kisser. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010, 69–100, especially 87–90.
7. Spinoza critically ties in the concept of intuition from Descartes' *Regulae*. Thereby, the criteria of "clare et distincte," and, contained within this, above all, the aspect of the overview of the whole at once (*tota simul*), are taken into account. By way of the metaphoricity of sight and the use of Descartes' newly coined term 'intuitive,' Spinoza critically appraises Descartes' claim, from the *Regulae*, to have offered the highest and most reliable mode of knowledge, i.e. *intuitus* (*Regulae* 3, 6; AT X, 369). In complete contradistinction to Descartes, a simple thing, produced through methodical separation, cannot be intuitively recognized according to Spinoza; instead, a concrete relation is *seen* as an *expression* of its constitutive relationality. These relations are however condensed—'contracted'—and thereby, in a certain way, simultaneously captured in a single glance.
8. (*[O]dium amore seu generositate vincendum, non autem reciproco odio compensandum.*)
9. (*Atque hoc cognoscendi genus procedit ab adaequata idea essentiae formalis quorundam Dei attributorum ad adaequatam cognitionem essentiae rerum.*)
10. In his article "Individual Identity in Spinoza" (in the current issue of *Parrhesia*), François Zourabichvili shows the importance of medicine as dietetics and the experimental investigation of individual cases for a Spinozan concept of individuality based on this section of the preface to the fifth book. Medicine appears here as akin to the science of individuals as the body has somewhat of a privilege in the realization of individuality. With the third kind of knowledge, which should supposedly be the cognition of singular essences, the mind oddly turns away from the body. This widespread reading, which emphasizes the mysteriousness of the third kind of knowledge, does not recognize the interrelation of both sections of the fifth book. I would like in connection with this—but also to demarcate Zourabichvili's thoughts, which adhere to an asymmetry of body and mind—to venture the hypothesis that there is a gap in the theoretical arrangement of the *Ethics*. This consists in a liberation of the body which is similar—systematically—to the liberation of the mind conducted in the fifth book.

11. (*Ex his itaque facile concipimus, quid clara et distincta cognitio et praecipue tertium illud cognitionis genus* (*de quo vide schol. prop. 47. p. 2*), *cujus fundamentum est ipsa Dei cognitio, in affectus potest.*) The passage that he refers back to proceeds as follows:

> From this we see that God's infinite essence and his eternity are known to all. And since all things are in God and are conceived through God, it follows that we can deduce from this knowledge a great many things which we know adequately, and so can form that third kind of knowledge of which we spoke in P40S2 and of whose excellence and utility we shall speak in Part V.

12. Etienne Balibar takes this expression from Gilbert Simondon and therewith conceptualizes the various dynamics of the transgression in individuation processes through their consistent pursuit which always consists of an integration of others. See Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality*. Delft: Eburon, 1997.

13. "If we separate emotions, or affects, from the thought of an external cause, and join them to other thoughts, then the love, or hate, toward the external cause is destroyed, as are the vacillations of mind arising from these affects" (*E* V, P2). (*Si animi commotiones seu affectus a causae externae cogitatione amoveamus et aliis jungamus cogitationibus, tum amor seu odium erga causam externam ut et animi fluctuationes, quae ex his affectibus oriuntur, destruentur.*) In order to make the executable perspective of the concretization procedure linguistically clear, I have switched to the grammatical form of the first person plural (we).

14. For this first step, I would like to include this apt formulation from Zourabichvili with reference to *E* V, P22: "[K]nowledge of the third kind does not consist in grasping the essence of a human body in general, but the essence of this body—mine".

15. (*Odium est tristitia concomitante idea causae externae.*)

16. Spinoza's comment on the transition is as follows: "So it is time now to pass to those things which pertain to the mind's duration without relation to the body" (*E* V, P20S). (*Tempus igitur jam est, ut ad illa transeam, quae ad mentem sine relatione ad durationem corporis pertinent.*)

17. See Balibar, *From Individuality to Transindividuali*ty, 8.

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individual identity in spinoza

françois zourabichvili, translated by gil morejón

Spinoza does not himself talk about individual identity, but the expression would not seem out of place in his thought, given that he conceives the individual and its becoming in relation to an *essence*, which is defined as singular.[1] Besides: the understanding (or misunderstanding) of the self, individual difference, the recognition of another individual—these are all Spinozist themes that refer back to identity. The question is of knowing what kind of identity is at stake.

The following is just a sketch of an answer to that question. It aims only to indicate the two conditions of the problem: temperament and species.

1. TEMPERAMENT AND THE QUESTION OF HEALTH

Even if Spinoza never treated it for itself, the question of individual singularity haunts the whole of his work, situated at the crossroads of the two most general problems that it poses: illusion and discord. One might initially be tempted to say that Spinoza is suspicious of individual singularity: he denounces its cult, and endeavors to understand the passion that leads nearly everyone to judge everything in terms of criteria that are worthless because they are tied to one's own singularity—to universalize their own judgment and seek to impose it upon others. Moreover, this would hardly be surprising for a thought that makes salvation depend on a conquest of the universal. Nevertheless this is a simplification, since invok-

ing this kind of suspicion neglects two things: an essence, for Spinoza, is always singular (there is no essence of Man in general, but rather each individual has an essence that differs from that of others); and salvation is an affair that is not only singular, in the sense that each individual must live it for themselves, but also in that it places the individual in a relation with their own singularity.

Spinoza designates individual singularity with the word *ingenium*, and almost always in the same context: that of the ignorant mob (*vulgus*), which is 'varied and inconstant.' At first glance, the word thus seems tied to passivity. Spinoza repeats over and over that human beings diverge insofar as they are victims of the passions, and would converge if reason were to gain the upper hand. He opposes two ways in which life is determined: *ex suo ingenio* (conforming to one's own character or temperament), and *ex ductu rationis* (under the guidance of reason). It seems that Spinoza invites each person to overcome their singularity. This is true, but only partially; or rather, it is only one aspect of the problem. For Spinoza, singularity and universality do not map onto the couplet passive–active.

Ingenium refers to two distinct levels: physical constitution on the one hand, and character or dominant affective tonality on the other. Now, if character always refers back to physical constitution, the reverse is not necessarily true: a character, at least in principle, is for Spinoza neither essential nor definitive. The singularity of the *ingenium* is based on that of the body: *temperamentum, fabrica, constitutio*.[2] The contemporary French term *tempérament* does not preserve the initial sense of the word *temperamentum*: it is a properly individual mixture, combination, or chemism ('idiosyncrasy'). But also a proportion: recall that Spinoza defines the individuality of a body in terms of a certain proportion (*ratio*) of motion and rest, of the speed and slowness of its parts. 'Temperament' is a physiological notion, or, more precisely, the notion that highlights the physiological anchorage of affectivity. Consider two texts as evidence. On the *constitutio corporis*: "We find by experience that fevers and other corporeal changes are causes of madness, and that those whose blood is thick imagine nothing but quarrels, troubles, killings, and things like these" (*Ep*. 17, to Balling). On the *temperamentum corporis*: "revelation varied according to temperament in this way: if the Prophet was cheerful, what was revealed to him were victories, peace, and the things which move men to joy; for such men usually imagine these things more frequently. On the other hand, if the Prophet was sad, wars, punishments, and all kinds of evil were revealed to him. And as the Prophet was compassionate, calm, prone to anger, severe, etc., he was more ready for one kind of revelation than another" (*TTP* II, 13). The always-

singular constitution of the body implies a certain dominant affective tonality or temperament.

It so happens that *temperamentum* has an even more strictly physiological sense: "Beauty, Sir, is not so much a quality of the object one sees as an effect of the object on him who sees it. If our eye was longer or shorter, or our constitution was different [*nostrum aliter se haberet temperamentum*], the things we now consider beautiful would seem ugly, and those which are now ugly would seem beautiful to us. The most beautiful hand, seen through a microscope, will look terrible. Some things, seen from a distance, are beautiful; when we see them close up, they are ugly. Moreover, things considered in themselves, or in relation to God, are neither beautiful nor ugly" (*Ep*. 54, to Boxel). Here, temperament is the capacity relative to an organ, which aesthetic sensation depends on. No doubt the organ is not itself the subject of satisfaction: the latter is rather the individual as a whole; but the satisfaction is tied to a capacity, to the relation that the organ maintains with certain objects by virtue of its capacity. The text does not explain this satisfaction, but is content to mark the correlation; it renders affective difference immanent to perception, but it still leaves them indifferent to one another.

Another text goes farther. "For example, if the motion the nerves receive from objects presented through the eyes is conducive to health, the objects by which it is caused are called beautiful; those which cause a contrary motion are called ugly. Those which move the sense through the nose, they call pleasant-smelling or stinking; through the tongue, sweet or bitter, tasty or tasteless; through touch, hard or soft, rough or smooth, etc.; and finally, those which move the ears are said to produce noise, sound or harmony. Men have been so mad as to believe that God is pleased by harmony" (*E* I, Ap.). Here, Spinoza explicitly connects aesthetic sensation and judgment to a satisfaction of a physiological order, to such an extent that the sensation produced in the body is not merely of the order of pleasure—which is not even mentioned here—but of the order of health. Aesthetic sensation has no epistemological value: it teaches us nothing of the object, and even fosters illusions by inclining us to treat beauty as a quality of the object; it does however have a medical value, and it might be the case that Spinoza's medical inspiration has for too long been ignored. What is art? A medication, an excitation of salutary motions in the body: striking the eye or the optic nerve such that it increases its power to act, or that of the body overall.

What then is health? Since strictly speaking individuality is defined by a relation of motion and rest or of speed and slowness between its parts, health is the state in which this relation is not under threat: there is illness when this relation is threatened, or when the latter tends to change under the influence of an external cause. (*E* IV, P39Pr and P39S) But Spinoza demands of the body more than a simple preservation, or at least what he means by preservation is something other than simply maintaining existence. True health is *hilaritas*, enthusiasm, gaiety, "a Joy which, insofar as it is related to the Body, consists in this, that all parts of the Body are equally affected. I.e., the Body's power of acting is increased or aided, so that all of its parts maintain the same proportion of motion and rest to one another" (*E* IV, P42Pr). The preservation of this relation is tied to the *activity* of the body, in the conceptual sense that Spinoza gives this term: a maximal development of affects and capacities; a body is active when "the whole Body may be equally capable of all the things which can follow from its nature" (*E* IV, P45S).[3] Affect here is nothing other than an effect: to be capable to do or to act is a joy, and a body all of whose parts can do what they are capable of, or in other words can function in conformity with their structure, can be said to be in good health. (Inversely, pain is the affect that a part of the body experiences when, blocked, dominated by an external cause, it cannot carry out its function or 'do its job'; pain is the way in which a body experiences the passion suffered by one of its parts.) Spinoza connects two things: the preservation of the relation, and maximal capacity. The body as a whole attains its maximal capacity when its parts communicate a favorable motion, according to the relation that suits them. A given part of the body, taken as a whole, is healthy, or attains its maximal capacity, when it is animated by a motion that affects its parts without changing their relation: some agitations of the optic nerve suit the structure of the eye, others do not (and the same goes for the ear). Aesthetic difference has no other origin. However, it is established between emotions, between affections: there must be something more, the link between capacity and affect.

In fact, it is impossible to separate capacity and affect. Health is defined in relation to this notion in a double sense: it is the full capacity of the body; and its full capacity is not just the source of joy, it *is* joy as such. One must imagine the cheerful eye while it is seeing, the cheerful ear while it is hearing; that is, hearing is a joy, for it is an affect that follows from the nature of our body. Even the arm, when it strikes a blow in anger, is cheerful: for "the act of beating, insofar as it is considered physically, and insofar as we attend only to the fact that the man raises his arm, closes his fist, and moves his whole arm forcefully up and down, is

a virtue, which is conceived from the structure of the human Body" (*E* IV, P59S). No body produces an effect without itself being affected: sensibility is a property of power, not a faculty peculiar to organisms. And our 'senses' are just sensitive faculties among others: walking and striking are also senses in just the same way, even if they perceive nothing. The genesis of affect, in Spinoza, lies in being able and not being able to do in relation to a given nature, or capacity. We only enjoy capacities; and the capacity itself—action—is joy (melancholy being the state of impotence or the maximal incapacity of the body). To modern readers, the Spinozist concept of health, along with the medicine that follows from it, might seem strangely psychosomatic. Spinoza writes this incredible sentence in defense of pleasure: "For why is it more proper to relieve our hunger and thirst than to rid ourselves of melancholy?" (*E* IV, P45S). But it is clear that such a rapprochement poses the question poorly, and amounts to a misunderstanding: it does not take into consideration the primarily physiological status of affect; the latter is not related to a particular attribute (thought rather than extension) but to power, and therefore bears on any attribute whatsoever. That there is then a correspondence between the affects of the body and those of the mind is another matter, and suffices to ruin any rapprochement with the psychosomatic idea.

The word *temperamentum*, despite its variable usage, finds its coherence in the fact that Spinoza does not envision the body separately from its affects. Anatomy doesn't interest him much: what he considers in a corporeal 'part' (arm, eye, etc.) is its *capacity*, or in other words the effects—or affects—that it can produce. Spinoza is resolutely a physiologist: studying the structure (*fabrica*) of the human body means nothing other than 'explaining all its functions,' that is, writing up an exhaustive list of *what it can do*. (*E* III, P2S) It is likely that the static and contemplative study of the form or configuration of the parts of the body, and so of their organization, would seem to him to foster teleology, recourse to ideas of order and harmony, and the kind of explanation in which the human body "is constituted in such a way that one part does not injure another" (*E* I, Ap.). Anatomy sings the glory of God, the glory of a supernatural God. Instead, what counts is the temperament of a body: what it can do by virtue of its structure, and the particular affectivity that follows from this. It is clear how this physiological, that is, operational or experimental, conception of the body makes it possible to consider it in its singularity: whereas anatomy, concerned with form or structural disposition, naturally privileges analogy and leads to specific conclusions, functional study necessarily bears on a single body, must be undertaken again for a different one, and again for a different one, and so on to infinity. Anatomy thinks the identity of

an ideal schema and pronounces on individual deviations; physiology in Spinoza's sense experiments on singular bodies, and pronounces on the species in relation to them (resemblances and agreements). Later we will see how species poses a problem for a philosophy of the concrete or singular body; the same difference in approach is found on the moral plane, when Spinoza denounces the mania for comparing and of constructing models (for example in the Preface to *Ethics* IV and in Letter 19 to Blijenbergh; in this regard, ethics is inseparable from medicine, which is practical *par excellence*).

The problematic of health singles out a crucial point: nutrition, the condition for preservation. (*E* II, Post. 4 after P13) But Spinoza proposes here a very singular conception. The nutrient is above all a source of pleasure, and 'contributes to the health' of the body by procuring a pleasure for it. Nutrition is not limited to drinking and eating: it is also the use of "scents, with the beauty of green plants, with decoration, music, sports, the theater, and other things of this kind" (*E* IV, P45S), that is, whatever stimulates *all* the parts of the body, without any disequilibrium favoring or disfavoring any part in particular. The benefit—medically speaking—is not separate from the pleasure; conversely, there is no pleasure that, as such, is not tied to health. Pleasure in itself is not misleading; it is only dangerous, according to Spinoza, when it is too closely tied to one part of the body, thereby provoking a disequilibrium to the detriment of the other parts, threatening the individuating relation; such is the case for sexuality, which is inevitably excessive, exclusive, and obsessional. The virtue of a medication is measured, in the last analysis, by the joy it brings to a part of the body, to the capacity it recovers: it too is a nutrient, which is more favorable than others under certain circumstances. Finally, art is a way for the body to be nourished, and so amounts to a dietetics. Music, for example, is a type of nutrient whose value depends on the constitution of a given body: "Music is good for one who is Melancholy, bad for one who is mourning, and neither good nor bad to one who is deaf" (*E* IV, Pref). Ultimately, what is being nourished, if not being filled with joyous affections that increase the body's power to act? Spinoza says this literally with regard to edible nutrients: *frui, nempe comedere*, "to enjoy it—i.e., to consume it" (*E* III, P59S).[4] The body's need for nutrition, its need to 'regenerate itself,' remains an empirical postulate, external to the Spinozist logic, so long as one thinks of it as mere consumption, an extra-affective process; however, nutrition must be understood as the necessity of being favorably affected: the body needs joyous affections that maintain or increase its power to act.

Now the attribute of extension has the following particularity: any affect, even if it is active, implies an external body. Unlike the mind, the body is always exerted over *another* body. Even the least capacity mobilizes external bodies: walking, striking, but also seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting. So that the body in action is endlessly nutritive, the problem being only to find the best possible nutrients. The problem of the activity of the body is thus posed differently from that of the mind (this point is essential for the question concerning us here): there is no spiritual nourishment, the mind does not have encounters. Even a medication is only efficacious by its *taste*, because it favorably affects a given part of the body, and the doctor must have no goal, nor any methodological principle, other than the *hilaritas* of their patient: providing the body its joys, the set of partial and microscopic joys that constitute *hilaritas* (Spinoza emphasizes the loss of taste that accompanies sickness). (*E* IV, P63C, P63Pr, and P63S)

Nutrition raises yet another difficulty. Since a body is a part of nature, and thus in perpetual interaction with a number of other bodies, its degree of activity—its relative independence in its encounters—is paradoxically conditioned by its encounters: nutrition is a *need*. There is no question in Spinoza of protecting oneself from encounters, even unexpected ones, but of being active in the encounter, of producing in other bodies effects that are explained by our own nature, and of being correlatively affected with joy, rather than of suffering in our bodies effects that are not explained by our nature. From this point of view, nutrition is tricky. Nutritive enjoyment—in the broad sense that we have defined it—depends on other bodies, and yet the body needs it. In the last analysis, curiously, the activity of the body depends on its passivity, as if action did not contribute to health, but was only its expression. The body needs to enjoy passively, not just a little bit but "as far as possible" (*E* IV, P45S),[5] provided that the enjoyment is distributed equally across all the parts of the body. Passive enjoyment maintains or develops the body's capacity, that is, its power to act. (*Ibid*.) Better yet, certain parts of the body seem passive by vocation, if it is true that perceiving through the senses is nothing other than a form of nutrition. But, to follow Spinoza's examples, the stomach also involves a special sensibility, just like the genital organs: the more parts of the body, the more erogenous zones, it would seem (genital organs having no special privilege in this regard). But doesn't the question of passivity go the other way around, to the extent that seeing is the very capacity of an organ, and not the nutrition that maintains it? The ear is active when it hears, since hearing is its capacity, its function, its essence; consequently, music is properly auditory physiology, at the same time as it is its dietetic, since it is music that explores what

the ear can do. It is regrettable that Spinoza did not pursue this line of thought, especially since it provides the only way to resolve the apparent anomaly according to which the activity of the body depends on its passivity, a simply *postulated* anomaly (*E* II, Post. 4 after P13): sensing, as a first capacity, as a first form of activity, in a common genesis of action and passion …

What matters is the difference that emerges between the body and the mind, a decisive difference for the question of individual singularity. In fact: 1. Becoming active, for the mind, means being liberated from the imagination, becoming capable of judgments that no longer depend on the singularity of the corresponding body (judging *ex ductu rationis* instead of *ex suo ingenio*); 2. The mind does not become active without the body, for its part, becoming active as well; 3. For the body, increasing its power means finding appropriate nutrition given its singularity. Spinoza defines the two practices that work toward the *activation* of the individual: Logic and Medicine. (*E* V, Pref) But Logic has for its object the universal, whereas Medicine—which Spinoza could have called Dietetics—is the experimental study of a singular case. In one sense, wisdom is impersonal, since the mind is liberated from the singular determinations of the body of which it is the idea; but on the other hand and simultaneously, it implies that it *learns about* its object—the body—instead of perceiving it confusedly, that it manages to grasp it in its singularity, whereas before it had only poorly distinguished it from other bodies in the idea that it had—that it *was*. Is it by chance that such a duality also plays a role in the theory of knowledge, in the second and third kinds? The mind must accede to reason: second kind, knowledge of common notions. The body must be distinguished: third kind, knowledge of singular essences (it even seems that the body—and medicine—plays a special role in this regard). Oddly enough, then, though not on the same plane, the mind that is liberated is turned away from the body, and at the same time is turned toward the body.

The same body becomes active without changing its tastes nor its affective predisposition. What changes is its general humor, its dominant affective tonality: reasonable instead of coarse, joyous rather than sad (even though some temperaments are already happy, as evidenced by the 'cheerful,' healthy prophet.) (*TTP* II, 13) This is what Spinoza, in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, calls 'temperament.' At least one thing is clear: becoming-active modifies one's temperament. Thus one's system of tastes, which is invariable since it is based on one's corporeal structure, is disarticulated from one's dominant affective tonality: the word 'temperament' turns out to be equivocal. On the other hand, life no longer unfolds *ex suo ingenio*

but rather *ex ducto rationis*. One must not think that the system of tastes is pushed aside, or that it changes, or that the individual can become indifferent toward it, as though they were freed somehow from their singularity. Activity is always that of a singular body. What changes is that the individual now better understands their system of tastes, and more easily guards against disagreeable encounters that provoke excessive affective reactions and reduce reasoned judgment to impotence ('to see the better and do the worse'): *Caute*! Prudence! Knowing better, then, their own 'temperament,' in the sense of the Letter to Boxel and the Appendix to the First Part of the *Ethics* combined (i.e., knowing better their system of tastes, deriving from the structure of the body), the individual procures for its body a favorable milieu, so that their power to act increases. The *ingenium*, in the sense of one's own proper genius, does not change but on the contrary is expressed; and yet the *ingenium*, in the sense of one's comportment, changes and becomes that of a free human being. (*E* IV, P66S and IV Ap. IX) What seems strange is that the individual no longer lives *ex suo ingenio*, to the extent that their *ingenium*, having become universal, no longer tends to differ from that of other free human beings: nothing personal remains in this conquered *ingenium*, in which, paradoxically, singularity is better expressed.

How can this paradox be resolved? Its logical articulation is given in the judgment: *by virtue of the singularity of its body, the individual comes to determine itself rationally*. Singularity is the problematic horizon of the judgment; reason is its mode of determination. 'Rationally' primarily means: understanding true utility, which is to enter into community with other human beings, and consequently to pursue shareable, rather than exclusive, goals. Singularity only blossoms in community. This is no dialectic: singularity lacks nothing, does not bear any negativity in itself; but it is, in its existence and insofar as it is a part of Nature, inseparable from an environing milieu, which is more or less favorable, and the most favorable milieu is the community of similars (which are not, for all that, identical). We have to understand *why* the individual's becoming-active takes place through common goals, a point that will become clearer when we take up the relation of the individual and the species; for now, it is sufficient to know that the individual, when they conduct themselves *ex ductu rationis*, do not thereby give up their singular interests (whence, on the political plane, Spinoza's difference from Hobbes: Spinoza *always* maintains natural right [*Ep*. 50 to Jelles][6]). Individualism, for Spinoza, is only a very confused manner of expressing one's singularity.

The expression *ex suo ingenio*,[7] even when it is a matter of life, is thus exclusively related to judgment: it designates the usurpation of the universal, the false pretension to objectivity of judgments that only reflect the state of a body, the relation of a body to its existential milieu (in a way, it would be better to say: *ex occursibus*). To live according to reason does not eliminate one's *ingenium*, which remains the very stakes of life, the set of the conditions—which vary from one individual to another—of the problem that constitutes life. To live in a reasonable way amounts to nothing more nor less than to know one's *ingenium*. The problem of health thereby plays a pivotal role in the question of individual identity, at once because it localizes singularity (at the level of the capacities of a body) and because it lets us know that it is not intrinsically tied to passivity.

The problematic of the individual thus puts before us:

> 1. An opposition between two modes of singularization: one passive, one active; but more profoundly, one illusory, the other essential;
> 2. The paradox of activity, a process simultaneously of universalization and of singularization.

How can we bring these different aspects together? The first point has been sketched out above; the second will lead us to reexamine the relation of the individual to the species in Spinoza, that is, the very curious status of essence.

2. ESSENCE AND THE QUESTION OF SPECIES

The status of essence in Spinoza is not immediately clear.[8] On the one hand, essences are singular and not specific; on the other hand, there is the question of a human nature, of a nature of the human body, of the human mind, etc. To say that it is a matter of common notions is insufficient: we still need to see what they are based on.

What about species?[9] Species is, if not defined, at least treated in terms of agreement [*convenance*] and capacity to be affected. The difficulty is as follows: there are no specific essences, but species nevertheless has a reality and has something to do with essence. There cannot be specific essences because God produces modes and not species; if the human being in general were produced as a mode, what would be the necessity for this mode to be repeated an infinity of times? The species–individual relation runs aground on the principle of sufficient reason.

And yet, modes are grouped into species, by virtue of an agreement that follows from their essence. Spinoza says 'agree *by nature*': the concept of agreement thus unfolds in the register of essence.[10] Grouping modes into species is in no way accidental, it is ontologically grounded—and yet species is not an essence. It is a relational, *a posteriori* concept; species concerns the relations between essences, since the specific grouping presupposes the preliminary recognition of an agreement. Whence the criteria of capacity to be affected: the horse is distinguished from the human being from the point of view of the *libido procreandi*; certain of their libidos agree and are satisfied in similar ways (*gaudium, gaudere*), and others do not and are not. (*E* III, P57S)

But how are these agreements possible, if essences are singular, that is, if they only relate to one another through their difference? Their sole relation is indeed this non-relation, but only insofar as they are included within the attribute (as pure intensive quantities or degrees). For insofar as they are actual,[11] their proximity in degree translates into a resemblance in extended figure; inversely, it is logical that bodies that are similar in a certain number of respects enjoy a nearly identical force for maintaining themselves in their state. And if bodies are 'similar'—that is to say, resembling—then agreement is thinkable: agreement presupposes extension. Proximity in degree is really just a minimal difference, but in no way yet a resemblance: in the intensive order of power, there are only differences that, no matter how small or large, are absolute (it is not possible to conceive of resembling, let alone identical, degrees). In the extensive order of finite existence, by contrast, proximity becomes resemblances, that is to say a combination of similarities and differences, so that difference is relative: a small difference is a difference in some respects, although there are similarities in other respects. This distribution of agreements and disagreements presupposes divisibility, or composition: it remains unthinkable in the domain of the simple (simplicity of degree). Finally, agreements and disagreements imply encounters; for there must be a minimum of agreement in order for there to be encounters (*omnibus communia*).

On the scale of degrees of power, how can we account for agreements and disagreements? An essence is only a degree, it is singular, simple: it is not very clear how it could imply a variety of relations. Sticking to power, the only thinkable affinity is proximity on the scale of degrees. Similars would therefore be *neighbors*, and the limit of the neighborhood would mark the threshold of disagreement. But what would serve as the limit of a neighborhood? There are no discontinuities. One must accept that, rigorously speaking, to infinitely proximate degrees on

the scale, there can and even must correspond resembling bodies; but between two bodies, sometimes disagreement prevails, and sometimes agreement does. If we are able to understand that to two very proximate degrees there correspond bodies of which one, which is superior, is indifferent to the other, which is inferior, and which is truly *disagreeable* to it—on the other hand, however, this play of agreement and disagreement presupposes discontinuities or thresholds to which we cannot imagine anything corresponding on the scale of degrees. In fact, given a body, which corresponds to a degree of power, if one ascends or descends the scale of bodies beginning with it, at a certain point disagreement will prevail over agreement (that is, following Spinoza's criteria: the body no longer extracts any *gaudium* from its commerce with other bodies). Empirically, the passage from overall agreement to overall disagreement is brutal (for example, from a human being to a horse), whereas the agreement–disagreement relation can, without thereby reversing its polarity, continuously vary (so that, between human beings: the affinities or repugnances between human beings do not mean that disagreement will prevail over agreement, except in the limit-case of civil war; besides, Spinoza distinguishes between an essential plane, where agreement prevails, and an accidental plane, where disagreement can gain the upper hand). The scale of degrees of power, by contrast, is continuous. Even the vulgar think (*E* II, A2), whereas the most powerful of horses still belongs to the *irrationalia* (*E* III, P57S). Thus one cannot even say that the threshold where the polarity tips over could be found between two successive degrees: however close they are to one another, it is always possible to assign a third degree between them. One must therefore imagine gaps in the scale of degrees of power, not that certain degrees would not exist there and that no essence would correspond to them, which makes no sense (God suffers no lacuna in its power nor in its thought), but in the sense that the scale is not continuous. An infinite series of infinite series. The only hypothesis that remains is to assume there are singularities or thresholds where power bifurcates, passes from one order to another. This hypothesis is necessarily uncertain, but a number of elements appears to justify it.

Let us recapitulate. First, an infinite series of degrees of power; second, this infinite series of degrees of power includes discontinuities: the curve of power passes through thresholds. Each threshold gives rises to a multiplicity of infinitely proximate degrees. We therefore distinguish between two progressions: that of degrees of power, which is continuous; and that of thresholds or levels, which is discontinuous.

In order to put forward this second dimension, we have a clue at our disposal: in his theory of individuation, Spinoza invokes individuals of various levels (composed of simples, composed of composites, composed of composites of composites, etc. all the way up to the *facies totius universi*), which in fact designate levels of individuals: for example, all individuals designated by the name 'human being' are on the same level (and yet, all these individuals differ essentially...). Thus it is clear that Spinoza thinks essence according to two dimensions: degree and order. And order is also a series of powers or exponents: if we call a composite *C*, there will be individuals of type C (composed of simples), C^2 (composites of composites, that is, C x C), then C^3 (composites of composites of composites, C x C x C), up to C^n—Nature as a whole.

Second clue: the problematic character of the assimilation of mode to a property of an attribute, given that the existence of the mode is individual whereas a property amounts to a kind. The texts by Spinoza that deal with the relation between definition and the number of individuals (which, as it happens, is a non-relation—as we will see) fit poorly with those that affirm the singularity of the essence of an individual (*hujus et illius Corporis humani essentia* [*E* V, P22]) and those that denounce the abstractions of genus and species. Finally, Spinoza tells us that properties are the object of common notions, which tell us nothing about essences (*E* II, P37 and P40S2): this is the problem of agreement and disagreement, whose correlate on the plane of power we are looking for.

This correlate is nothing other than the threshold or order, the series of powers or exponents. Reread Proposition 16 from the First Part of the *Ethics*: "From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes" (*E* I, P16). Even more than the difficulties concerning the number of properties (why many rather than one?) it is the repetition of the word 'infinite' here that gives us pause: is this purely redundant, signifying the modal status of the thing? Is there not an echo of this repetition in the definition of striving: *quantum in se est* / *in suo esse*? And what if it were not a redundancy? And what if there were no way, at the end of the day, to assimilate things and modes, properties and modes?

An infinity of things in an infinity of modes, Proposition 16 tells us—the Latin says, more concisely: *infinita infinitis modis*. *Infinita* is the series of discontinuities of thresholds or levels; *infinitis modis*, the continuous series of degrees. For each thing an infinity of modes, that is, for each order of power (C,C^2, ... C^n) an infinity

of degrees. Spinoza's very expression affirms that a property does not exist outside its modes: a property only follows from the necessity of the divine nature in a certain mode, and not in itself. For Spinoza, then, a property is a theme that does not exist outside its variations. A curious torsion: what follows from the necessity of the divine nature are things rather then modes, and yet God produces modes rather than things (an analogous torsion, though one with a very different meaning, is found in Leibniz: God creates the world rather than the monads, but the world does not exist outside the monads that express it). What is a property? It is—to borrow a concept from Gilles Deleuze, though he does not employ it in this precise context—a *multiplicity* of singular essences, or in other words a plurality without any subsuming unity (a property is not itself an essence, it is only common to an infinity of essences). Properties are not unities, they come in packs: they are multiplicities.

Is Spinoza's assimilation of modes and properties a sure thing? What is it, in the text, that assures us of it? Does not the coherence of Spinozism on the contrary require that we distinguish them? Is there another means of exiting from the dilemma of the individual and the species? A long argument would here be necessary, but we will limit ourselves to a few remarks.

Spinoza never says that modes are properties. He says: 1. That "from the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many [properties, based on the demonstration] in infinitely many modes" (*E* I, 16); 2. That by mode one must understand an affection, that is, "that which is in another through which it is also conceived" (*E* I, D5), modes or affections being nothing other than "particular things" (*E* I, P25C), that is, "whatever exists" (*E* I, P36Pr); 3. Each existing thing "expresses in a certain and determinate way the power of God" (*Ibid.*), or in other words particular things are affections or "modes by which God's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way" (*E* I, P25C).

Modes are therefore expressions of the attributes. But what is expressed? Is it modifications of substance, each giving rise to a mode (or individual)?[12] Or is it rather properties? Proposition 25 of Part I, to which the cited corollary refers, concerns the essence of "things produced by God": the essence of things is necessarily inferred from the divine nature. Here one will recognize Proposition 16, which Spinoza mentions. Essences are thus the *infinita*—which would imply, from the point of view of our hypothesis, that all individuals would have the same essence. But we cannot remain there, since the corollary to I, P24 already added another

element concerning essence: it is that through which the individual perseveres in existing, which is an anticipation of III, P7, where striving (*conatus*) to persevere will be defined as the actual essence of the individual. The question is whether it is conceivable that this effort is the same in a plurality of individuals. Here we run up against the principle of sufficient reason: what would be the necessity of a plural production of individuals for a single essence, or of a production of identical essences?

Finally, "from the given essence of each things some things necessarily follow" (*E* III, P7, recalling I, P36): here it is a question of a production of effects, not of properties. Nevertheless these effects do depend on properties of the particular thing, which may be easily assimilated to its faculties. And it is clear, for example in the case of the human being, precisely how the assimilation of property and effect is not self-evident (the reference to *E* I, P16 in the demonstration of I, P36 proves nothing, since modes, or effects, just as much as properties, follow from the nature of God, according to I, P16). A human being has certain properties, which it expresses by producing effects, and not by producing these properties: one does not 'do' a given property; rather, one 'does' something by virtue of a given property of essence. For example, seeing is a property that follows from the essence of the human body; but seeing as a faculty differs from actual visual perceptions as particular affections. One might object that Spinoza thinks that there is only a distinction of reason between a faculty and the acts that one attributes to it (as for example the intellect and its ideas, the will and its volitions, etc.). But this is precisely what we are trying to say with regard to properties: they are packs, multiplicities, multiplicities of effects of the same species. A property or faculty is a species of effects, which each effect expresses (a given visual perception expresses the property of seeing, which does not exist outside actual visual perceptions). Moreover, Spinoza himself employs infinitives (speaking, walking, reasoning) to speak of properties that the very young infant does not yet possess. And he often speaks of a *virtue* that follows from the structure of the human body.[13] Finally, the term *proprietas* does not, in the *Ethics*, mean 'mode.'[14]

This reading, which is of course conjectural, must be put into dialogue with two series of texts. First of all, there are those texts concerning the property–number relation (*E* I, P8S2; *Ep*. 34 to Hudde; *Ep*. 50 to Jelles): there, it is a question of the relation of the general to the particular, whereas Proposition 16 concerns the relation between two levels of singularity. Let me explain. In the second scholium to I P8 and in Letter 34, Spinoza says that the definition of a thing—a thing, recall, is

a property, a common notion; when he wants to talk about an individual, Spinoza says '*existing* thing'—he says that the definition of a thing is indifferent to number, insofar as their existence is not included in their essence. In this way, to define the concept of the soul is not to define the soul in general (as if all particular souls were identical, essentially speaking, and therefore differed from one another *solo numero*), nor some particular soul (for this would no longer be a concept), but *a* soul, employing the indefinite article (Latin in any case doesn't have any articles, which doesn't make the translator's or the interpreter's job any easier); or even *souls* [les âmes], on condition that we understand this as a singular collective.[15] *A* soul, neither particular nor general, is a singularity: it is in this sense that property is indifferent to number. It is in this way that we must distinguish a concrete, essential, ontological plane, where a singular property traverses an infinity of always singular modes; and an abstract plane, that of predication, where singular modes become particulars subsumed under a property that has become general or specific. Sometimes property refers to modes (singulars), sometimes it refers to individuals understood in the numeric sense (individuals); or again, sometimes individuals are the modes of a property, sometimes they are its *exemplars* (a word used in Letter 50).[16] The common notions are not arbitrary like universal notions, but they are no less notions; in other words, they designate not an individual but something common to many individuals: we will see that these common notions, which transform singulars into particulars, are ontologically grounded, even if, concretely, only singulars exist, and not particulars (universal notions, for their part, are by no means grounded, since they depend on affections). (Cf. *E* II, P40S1)

Now let us proceed to the theory of agreement and difference, such as it is expounded in Part IV of the *Ethics*, beginning with Proposition 29. The problem of relations of agreement and difference between individuals can only be posed if they do not differ entirely, that is, if there is a minimum of agreement between them. We are thus in the domain of partial agreements and differences, where everything is a matter of more and less, as evidenced by the thesis according to which the human is the being that best agrees with the human, the being that is most useful for it (formulated in this way, this is a tautology or a *petitio principii*, since the immanent criteria of specific distinction just is maximal agreement). (*E* IV, P35C1) A horse is also useful to the human, it is in agreement with the human on many things, and the forces of the horse and that of the human being can, to a certain extent, be conjugated (in agricultural labor and in war, following the two examples given in the scholium on memory): there is sufficient agreement between the two that one can become the auxiliary of the other. By contrast, a fly

has very little agreement with the human being (even though everything extended agrees at least minimally with the human being). Thus it is a matter of partial agreements and differences. Given this text, what about inter-human relations? For this is above all what is at stake, as the text opens onto the necessity of social life. (*E* IV, P37S2) The criteria for the distribution of agreements and differences between human beings is very clear: *quatenus passionibus sunt obnoxii* (*E* IV, P32 and P34) / *quatenus ex ductu rationis vivunt* (*E* IV, P35). Reason being the essence of the human mind, one is tempted to think that the differences are accidental or extrinsic, whereas the agreements are essential or intrinsic. But this would inevitably be a mistake, since Spinoza says *natura convenire*, but also *natura discrepare*. Differences and agreements are thus equally explained by essence; individual differences refer back to the *ingenium*, as the product of their essence (corporeal constitution) and their encounters.

The concepts of essence and agreement, posed in this way, account for the singularity of the individual *within* the species, by escaping from the brutal alternative of the singular and the specific according to which either only singularity is essential (but then agreement—and the species—become incomprehensible), or else only the species is essential (individuals all participate somehow in the same essence, and singularity becomes unthinkable). So now we can return to the question of individual identity.

As we know, the power to act can gain the upper hand over external causes, in such a way that the individual becomes active. The problems that this passage to activity poses cannot be taken up here; we would in particular have to insist on the asymmetry of the body and mind, which we noted above, since a body never ultimately prevails over external causes. When one asks after the status of individual identity in Spinoza, one finds that, beneath the *ingenium* of any given individual, which only inadequately singularizes it, there is a more profound identity that alone deserves to be called *essence*. Beneath the passive *ingenium*, there is the degree of power on which it depends, and this power can be liberated in existence. The individual's desire is not hopelessly determined to have a natural, congenital, essential character; rather, it can come to testify to a more profound individual identity—to *express* the individual, instead of merely indicating it confusedly.

A question nevertheless arises: are these desires still individual, or individuated? Do they singularize the individual? Do they still affirm a singular identity? Does this not risk dragging Spinoza into an individualism that is foreign to him? Once

again, this would be to confuse individualism of the first kind (passivity) with the double process of singularization and universalization that characterizes the second and third kinds (activity).

Properties necessarily follow from the essence of God, but God produces modes rather than properties: the human is a property effectuated in an infinity of ways, which does not exist outside of this infinity of modes. These modes differ amongst themselves quantitatively, and not qualitatively, according to the degree of power that *is* their essence: individual essence is a *quantum*.[17] The individual expresses a specific property in a certain mode. This modality can only consist in the quantity of striving (actual essence, *quantum in se est*) with which it affirms the specific property that is its own (*in suo esse*). A given human expresses the human property, like all other humans, but only as far as it can. To have such an essence means: I have this amount of force to manifest the property 'human' by my existence. The individual does not have two natures, one singular and the other specific; rather its singular essence is to be able, to a certain extent—*quantum in se est, quantum potest*—to express a specific property, a property of the essence of God, a property of each of the attributes in which it is expressed. In other terms, a threshold of physical and mental complexity. The active individual expresses something absolutely anonymous or impersonal, a transindividual singularity, which is 'specific,' indifferent to the particular and to the general, that it cannot claim as its *own*: *a* human. All human beings, in this sense, express the same transindividual singularity: identity appears as a point of anonymity, the effects that follow from my singular nature expressing a property that has the name 'human'—whence the communal affect tied to activity. Better still, the greatest striving brings us back to individual singularity, since knowledge of the third kind does not consist in grasping the essence of human bodies in general, but the essence of a given body—my own. (*E* V, P22) It consists in grasping the part of power which is that of my body within Nature, as constituting a part of Nature, with the finitude that follows from it. Is this a kind of schematism, a schematic of the striving that would bridge the gap between essence and its concrete manifestations? Whatever the case may be, individual identity here is no longer the quantity of expression possible for someone anonymous, but the very thing that must be expressed: the degree of power becomes the object, just as much as it becomes subject. Now we are speaking of an identity without singularity (since it is a force expressing the same property as an infinity of other degrees): in knowledge of the third kind, this identity, grasped for itself, appears purely singular, unique in its kind, irreplaceable, unsubstitutable. Not only because it is my own, but also and above all because it is a certain

degree, which can never be repeated anywhere: quantitative singularity. The two aspects of essence are included in the simplicity of the degree, since the latter involves both the property of the human being—it is found in the neighborhood of a certain threshold within the series of power—and a certain capacity to express it. The essence of a human being is not the essence of a given body without being at the same time the essence of a human body. Only then is the property grasped as a multiplicity, as a concept absolutely inseparable from the modes that express it: neither prototype, nor pure nothingness.

Of what order is the identity of an individual for Spinoza?

A first, insufficient, answer, is: *ingenium*, character or 'temperament'—the consequence of the passive life of a singular body submitted to encounters, the confused expression of a body whose singularity is diluted in an anonymous type. In fact, the majority of individuals never transcend this semi-anonymity, and belong to a mob—the *vulgus*—from which only some types emerge; they have only a confused access to their own singularity (even and especially when they lay claim to it) and to that of others: passive-affective knowledge of oneself and others, the temporality of recognition. True singularity corresponds to the other sense of 'temperament'—the singular constitution or *structure* of a body, that is, the set of its *capacities*, which is necessarily the object of an apprenticeship, supposing this takes place (becoming active): singular knowledge of oneself and of others, the temporality of experience. In this regard, activity presents itself under a manifest paradox: singularity of health, universality of salvation. The compatibility of these two aspects, to which knowledge of the third kind testifies, seems to us to be based on the immanence of species to individuals, of property to modes: the individual as a singular incarnation of the species.

Individual singularity is thus not character. One's character has nothing essential, even if, in its passivity, it confusedly reflects something of identity. The notion of character does not reach the individual in its singularity: the character is typical (passivity) or tends toward the universal (wisdom). This is why it is not a matter of combatting one's *ingenium* but of inflecting it, of transforming it. This change does not take place abstractly, since we are not angels: its condition is a certain body, which is that of which there is an essence. Individual singularity is thus indeed an *identity*, but identity thought in this way loses its traditional attributes: it becomes a pure *quantum*, a degree of power, never given or representable but implied in acts, speech and postures—an object of intuition alone.

When we ask after the relation of the individual and its identity in Spinoza, we must not confuse the *individualism* of the first kind of knowledge with the eminently sociable *becoming-singular* that characterizes the passage from the second to the third kind. The individual's quest—for ambition, for glory—fails in principle, since the individual never escapes *types*, typical designations (they're an ambitious one... that's just a kind of ambition...): however refined one gets about it, one will never reach the singular by means of progressive specifications; singularity is not obtained, it is not a mixture. And so there is a rage of the ambitious, a rage for distinction, that is all the more vivacious and all-consuming the more it obscurely recognizes that it can only lay claim to, at best, a particular conformism. If singularity is not obtained, it is rejoined, by means of an effort exerted on oneself—not, of course, against oneself—which is all the more foreign to narcissistic indulgence as its object is not the individual itself but the specific property that it expresses in a singular mode—human nature. I express not myself but *human being*, which is given nowhere, a pure question to which an infinity of modes constitute answers; but at some point, in Nature, it is *me* that expresses it.

FRANÇOIS ZOURABICHVILI (1965–2006) was a French philosopher specialized in the works of Gilles Deleuze and Baruch Spinoza. He was director of *Collège international de philosophie* (1998-2004).

GIL MOREJÓN is an instructor in the Department of Philosophy at DePaul University in Chicago, where he recently defended his dissertation, *Obscurity and Involvement: On the Unconscious of Thought in Leibniz, Spinoza, and Hume*. He also recently edited and translated (with Filippo Del Lucchese and David Maruzzella) a collection of essays by Alexandre Matheron, *Politics, Ontology and Knowledge in Spinoza*, forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press.

NOTES

1. Zourabichvili delivered this essay as a talk at a conference at the Sorbonne entitled 'Spinoza: Puissance et ontologie', organized by the Collège Internationale de Philosophie in May 1993. It was subsequently published as "Identité individuelle chez Spinoza" in *Spinoza: puissance et ontologie*, eds. Myriam Revault D'Allonnes and Hadi Rizk, Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1994.

All English quotations are drawn from Benedict de Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza* (2 vols.), trans. and ed. Edwin Curley, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985-2016 [CWS]. —*trans*.]

2. *Constitutio* designates a state that is sometimes structural (*Ep*. 17 to Balling: having thick blood) and sometimes occasional (*E* III, P59S: having a full stomach).

3. Cf. *E* IV, Ap. XXVII. The definition of activity is found at the beginning of Part III.

4. This passage cites another example of nutrition, making love, in the same terms.

5. One will recognize here the formula of *conatus*.

6. Balibar has shed considerable light on the political stakes of the term *ingenium* in Spinoza. (Cf. Balibar, Étienne, *Spinoza and Politics*, trans. Peter Snowdon, New York: Verso, 2008, 28-31)

7. This expression appears very frequently, especially in the *Political Treatise*. For the *Ethics*, let us refer to just a few appearances: *E* I, Ap.; III, P31S; IV, P37S2.

8. Here one will recall the two most remarkable studies on Spinoza, in this regard as in many others: Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin, New York: Zone Books, 2005, esp. chapters 5 and 12; and Martial Gueroult, *Spinoza II: L'Âme*, Paris: Aubier, 1974, pgs. 459-466 and 547-551.

9. This is rarely discussed in the *Ethics*, but we can still refer to a few appearances: III, P56; IV, Pref; IV, Ap. IX, etc.

10. The notion of agreement has three principal senses in Spinozism. 1. Nominal agreement, for example between the dog as an animal that barks and the dog as a celestial constellation (*E* I, P17S); 2. Agreement of the idea with its object or ideatum (which Alain Badiou has defined as the norm of a *coupling*); 3. Agreement between individuals. In this essay we are concerned with the concept as elaborated in this third sense. [cf. Badiou, Alain, *Briefings on Existence: A Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology*, trans. and ed. Norman Madarasz, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006, chapter 5. —*trans*.]

11. In the sense that Spinoza speaks of *essentia actualis* (*E* III, P7 and V, P29 testify to a terminological hesitation).

12. Cf. Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, Ch. 6

13. Cf. *E* IV, P59S, on beating as a virtue.

14. Cf., for example, the beginning of the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics*, regarding the properties of God. Besides, Spinoza says that even though a human body is affected *multis modis* (*E* III, Post. 1), indeed *plurimis modis* (*E* II, Post. 3 after P13), and even though every affect—at least all the passive ones—can assume "infinite degrees and modes" (*E* IV, P43Pr), nevertheless these modes are not to be confused with the properties of affects, whose study is announced at the end of the Preface to Part III...

15. As in the Greek neuter plural.

16. [It is a bit misleading for Zourabichvili to point out that the word *exemplaires* appears in Letter 50. Spinoza writes: "remsolummodò existentiae, non verò essentia respectu unam, vel unicam dici: res enim sub numeris, nisi postquam ad commune genus redactae fuerunt, non

concipimus." (Spinoza, *Opera*, ed. Carl Gebhardt, Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1925; IV, 239) Appuhn's French translation of the latter part of that sentence reads: "Nous ne concevons en effet les choses comme existant en un certain nombre d'exemplaires qu'après les avoir ramenées à un genre commun." (Benedict de Spinoza, *Oeuvres de Spinoza* [3 vols.]. Trans. Charles Appuhn. Paris: Garnier, 1929) Curley's translation is more faithful: "For we don't conceive things under numbers unless they have first been brought under a common genus." (*Ep.* 50; *CWS* I, 406) But in this rendering, obviously, there are no 'exemplars.' —*trans*.]
17. It is Deleuze who has best illuminated the quantitative character of essence in Spinoza.

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natural right and the failure to calculate: the paradox of the slave in spinoza's *tractatus-theologico politicus*[1]

michael-francis polios

In Chapter 16 of the *Tractatus-Theologico Politicus*, Spinoza provides his definition of natural right: "each individual thing has the sovereign right to do everything that it can do, or the right of each thing extends so far as its determined power extends" (*TTP*, 195). One's right (*jus*) is co-extensive with one's power (*potentia*). This power is continually mediated within the immanent power of Nature as a whole. The radicality of this correlation between *jus* and *potentia* lies in the tripartite imbrication it implies between Spinoza's metaphysics, ethics, and politics. This has become a key point of departure for writers such as Gilles Deleuze and Antonio Negri. The insistence on this interpretation renders the absolute transfer of natural right inconceivable. Hence it follows that the fiction of an imaginary power is substituted for the actuality of a delimited power. Spinoza's metaphysics dictates that what one can effectively do, their capacity to act, is either enhanced or diminished within a network of affectual relations.

The right of each individual thing is no more than an expression of its power. But this principle is unthinkable in the abstract. This is because it is inseparable from an anthropological account of how the human effectively engages with its environment. To this, Spinoza grounds human action in a naturalistic understanding of how each individual seeks their own good (*utilitas*). More precisely, this modality of being is firmly inscribed in the effort (*conatus*) of each individual thing to preserve itself; hence it stands or falls on the claim to be common to all, and to

always be in operation. Yet, Spinoza defines a slave (*servus*) in the Chapter 16 of the *TTP* as an individual who 'cannot see or do what is good.' The existence of the slave would seem to provide an exception to the rule that everyone pursues his/her interests, therefore undermining the underlying metaphysical claim of Spinoza's natural right.

The capacity to persist and increase one's power is inseparable from the seeking out of means conducive to this end. This takes us to the heart of Spinoza's formulation of subjectivity, as well as disclosing the paradox of the slave. In Proposition 65, Part 4 of the *Ethics*, Spinoza explicates the principle through which reason compels each individual to seek their utility: "by the guidance of reason we pursue the greater of two goods and the lesser of two evils" (*E* IV, 65). This principle is prefigured in Chapter 16 of the *TTP*: "of two good things every single person will choose the one he himself judges to be the greater good, and of two bad things he will choose that which he deems to be less bad." And that this is a "universal law of human nature that no one neglects" (*TTP*, 198).

This principle of active striving, of seeking out one's utility, forms the bedrock of Spinoza's political thought, positioning his metaphysics and politics in relation to an anthropological account of how the human constantly relates to its environment by making judgements as to what can increase its capacity to act. The logic of calculating one's utility can be traced back to Aristotle's account of 'phronesis' in Book 6 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: the form of practical reasoning related to contingent situations.[2] Yet it is precisely here that Spinoza's definition of the slave proves disquieting. Let us turn to the passage as it appears in Chapter 16:

> Anyone who is guided by their own pleasure … and *cannot see or do what is good for them* [*nihil quod sibi utile est videre neque agere potest*], is him or herself very much a slave [*servus*]. The only genuinely free person is one who lives with his entire mind guided solely by reason. Acting on command, that is, from obedience, does take away liberty in some sense, but it is not acting on command in itself that makes someone a slave, but rather the reason so for acting. If the purpose of the action is not his own advantage but that of the ruler, then the agent is indeed a slave and useless to himself. (*TTP*, 201, emphasis added)

Before explicating this passage more closely, it might be helpful to provide a brief overview of how the slave figures in Spinoza's philosophy. The slave occupies

three locations in each of Spinoza's major texts: (1) Chapter 16 of the *TTP*, (2) the Scholium to Proposition 66, Part 4 of the *Ethics*, and (3) Chapter 2 of the *Tractatus Politicus*.

The invocation of the slave in the Scholium to *E* IV, P66, which immediately follows from the preceding cluster of propositions that identify the calculation of utility, is highly suggestive. It reads:

> With reference to the strength of the emotions, we shall readily see the difference between the man who is guided only by emotion [*affectus*] or belief and the man who is guided by reason. The former, whether he will or not, performs actions of which he is completely ignorant. (*E* IV, P66S)

The reference to slavery in this passage is framed around the condition whereby one lacks understanding of the causes that determine him to act, thus being at the mercy of the affects. This is prefigured in the subtitle of Part 4 of the *Ethics*: "On Human Servitude, or the Strength of the Emotions." From the outset, Spinoza's appeal to the slave functions as a figurative model upon which to understand individuals who are in principle 'free,' insofar as they are invested with the capacities to act and think that are common to all, and yet in some sense 'enslaved' because they lack adequate knowledge of their encounters, resulting in sad affects. As a result, they are often compelled to "see the better but do the worse" (Preface, Part 4). This theme is adumbrated in the *TP* where "human freedom is the greater as a man is more able to be guided by reason and control his appetites" (*TP*:), In this way, the figure of the slave is characterised by the inability to organise one's engagement with one's environment.

However, the definition of the slave in Chapter 16 is provocative. To begin with, it amplifies the account of bondage at work in the Preface to Part 4 of the *Ethics* which, as mentioned, Spinoza elucidates by borrowing a phrase from Ovid (which he cites several times in the *Ethics*); namely, that enslavement to the passions compels one to 'see the better but do the worse.' Yet, the passage in question defines slavery as not only the failure to commit to one's better interest, but the *inability to seek one's interest at all*. This is paradoxical, which is best conveyed through the tension between the principle of natural right, which is connected to the seeking out of means conducive to one's preservation, and the existence of the slave as precluded from seeking its good (*utile*). If the slave reveals an exception to the rule that individuals seek their utility, then it would seem to deeply problematise

Spinoza's claim to *always* preserve natural right. A people will always preserve an ineliminable part of their right: this much is made clear in Letter 50 to Jarig Jelles. More pertinently, to preserve natural right implies that individuals do not cease to look for the means to secure life. Spinoza emphasises this: insofar as the mind contains clear and distinct or confused ideas it "endeavours to persist in its being for an indefinite period of time, *and of this endeavour it is conscious*" (*E* III, P9, emphasis added). Insofar as Spinoza's coupling of right and power endeavours to speak the language of the universal, it must stand or fall on its claim to be common to all. And yet, how can we understand the *fact* of the slave, which seems to prove an exception to this very rule?

To begin, it is helpful to acknowledge the strategic intervention of the *Theological-Political Treatise* (1670) which, as Spinoza communicates in a letter to Oldenburg, seeks to dispel the prejudices of the theologians and secure the freedom to philosophise. The central political claim that characterises the *TTP*, as Spinoza lays out in the subtitle of the book, will be to convince his readers that the freedom to philosophise is not only compatible with civil authority, but its suppression constitutes a threat to the very stability of the state. Yet, from the outset this project is complicated by the animating question of the entire treatise, laid out in the Preface: how is it possible that a people fight for their servitude as if it were their salvation? This question in mind will allow us to think the paradox between the *principle* of natural right and the *fact* of the slave, that is, between the anthropological principle of active striving and the definition of the slave in Chapter 16 as the failure to 'see or do what is good.' At this point, I believe it is necessary to introduce a term that seems implicit to the question Spinoza poses in the Preface, despite never showing up in his vocabulary; namely, *voluntary servitude*.

To what extent are we justified in using this term? Spinoza's question in the Preface of the *TTP* is rhetorically prefigured in Etienne de la Boétie's *Discours de la servitude volontaire*, published in 1576. The text brings to light a perplexing phenomenon: that tyrannical regimes persist only as long as the many willingly acquiesce their power. As La Boétie writes: "it is unbelievable how people, once they are subjected, fall so quickly into such a deep forgetfulness of freedom that it is impossible for them to reawaken and regain it."[3] As a result, it would seem as though "they had not lost their liberty but won their servitude."[4] What is striking in his analysis is that the very conditions that underpin servitude are indistinguishable from obedience instilled through custom: hence, "men born under the yoke … are content to live as they were born, without looking any further."[5]

La Boétie's invocation of voluntary servitude is striking. Expressed in a more Spinozist vocabulary: this is because it seems to resist any clear distinction between the immanent powers of desire, which tend towards an expansion of the individual's activity, and the transcendent powers of coercion and control. Such a formulation renders it exceedingly difficult to separate voluntaristic and determinative accounts of subordination. In other words, the paradox between natural right (*jus naturale*) and the existence of the slave (*servus*) would seem to violate the 'active' nature of all striving. Again, individuals never cease to look for means in order to conserve life. What is at stake is that there is another way to think the slave in Spinoza; namely, one that resists any easy clear distinction between reason and the passions.

Conventionally, Spinoza's appeal to slavery is interpreted as coeval with the production of inadequate ideas, and hence concomitant with the passionate life. Susan James, in her article "Freedom, Slavery, and the Passions," defends such an interpretation. Here, she links Spinoza's appeal to slavery in the *Ethics* to Plato's allegory of the charioteer in the *Phaedrus*.[6] This conception of servitude consists in one's inability to regulate the passions. According to this analogy, an individual dominated by the passions is akin to a charioteer who, being pulled by two horses, fails to control the unruly one which represents the passionate sphere of life.

Her analysis raises this issue of servitude to the political by focusing on the distinction between the 'subject' and 'slave.' Her understanding of the slave is articulated in contrast to a people's capacity to institute a collective or common good that expresses their interest. In this context, obedience to the law does not itself constitute slavery. Spinoza is very clear on this point. Rather, slavery is the condition of being subject to the arbitrary will of an external power, where one's interest is never guaranteed. In contrast, the subject's obedience follows when one "internalises the reasons for obeying the law," and in doing so recognises its inherent utility.[7] Such an individual will thus act in accordance with their own will. Essentially, James' reading emphasises the distinction between the modality of action specific to the slave and that of the subject.

Frederic Lordon deals extensively with the issue of slavery in his *Capitalisme, Désir, et Servitude*.[8] The title of its English translation (*Willing Slaves of Capital*) would seem to belie its argumentative structure. Indeed, Chapter 1 cites La Boétie's thesis only in order to refuse the very possibility of a 'voluntary' servitude. The trouble would seem to begin from a subjectivity that posits an autonomous will as a

spontaneous locus of action. Hence Lordon concludes that voluntary servitude is bound to remain an "insoluble enigma."[9] Instead, Lordon frames the problem of slavery by focusing on the intransitive nature of desire. Accordingly, individuals are defined as constantly seeking out their 'good,' and yet precisely what they seek out is given through determinate social relations. Lordon identifies this as "passionate automata."[10]

Both James' and Lordon's interpretation consign the slave to the passionate sphere of life; that is, as a mode of being characterised by the inability to grasp the 'real' chain of connections that determine one's actions, which is the cause of enslavement. Yet, the decisive issue is that Spinoza's invocation of the slave in chapter 16 seems to infringe upon the *principle* of natural right, in which individuals constantly look for the means to preserve life. With this in mind, a reformulation is required. How can we reconcile enslavement as the *failure to calculate* with the fundamentally active nature of human striving?

To make sense of this paradox I will draw upon the ideas of Etienne Balibar. In his *Spinoza and Politics*, Balibar interprets Proposition 37, Part 4 of the *Ethics* as offering an account of human relations within political life as doubly constituted: one according to the affects and one according to reason.[11] The affective dimension of life, on the one hand, corresponds to what Spinoza refers to as 'knowledge of the first kind,' and expresses itself through an imaginary relationship to the world (*E* II, P40S). Reason, on the other hand, is connected with adequate ideas of the laws of one's nature. It is Balibar's formulation of 'reason' that will allow us to see what is at stake with the paradox of the slave.

The key idea for Balibar is that reason is imbued with a double sense of utility. As he expresses it: "reason is useful, but not instrumental. It cannot be rational without also being *reasonable*."[12] We can grasp this as follows: the fundamental impulse of reason prescribes the seeking of a common good around which life can be organised by virtue of preserving this very effort within political structures. Otherwise put, reason not only prescribes that individuals seek their advantage, but it "produces this result." This formula can be grasped in the first sense as an 'anthropological truth,' in which a people struggles to conserve their being. In the second sense, it hinges on the imbrication of knowledge with reason. One need only turn to Proposition 26, Part 4 of the *Ethics*: "whatever we endeavour according to reason is nothing else but to understand." The transition to the rationally ordered community does not expel the passions, rather they become understood

(or, are restructured), such that society is organised on the recognition of the laws of their own nature; that is, on grasping the 'real' chain of causal connections (*E* IV, P59).

Spinoza's ethical and political writings turn on this idea. As such, it presupposes a level of activity that is proper to the notion of *citizenship* which, as Moira Gatens aptly summarises, implies that states "enforce obedience to fundamental rules of law … *without removing the possibility of the development of reason*, which includes rational reflection on the utility of these institutions."[13] In this manner, what is intrinsic to the notion of 'reasonableness' is the extent to which natural right is retained as a constitutive principle within political structures, such that all agree to "act—but not to judge or think—according to a common decision," and all whilst "reserving always the right to recall their decision whence they should find a better course" (*TTP*, 257). This idea underpins Spinoza's characterisation of the 'free state' in Chapter 20 of the *TTP*, where the purpose of the rationally ordered state is not to "turn people from rational beings into beasts or automata, but rather to *allow their minds and bodies to develop*" (*TTP*, 252).

Balibar's formula suggests that the 'rational' depends on the mobilisation of 'reasonable' praxis, which implies human striving after self-preservation. This is where the paradox between the *principle* of natural right and the existence of the slave can be brought to light. Inasmuch as individuals constantly seek the means to secure life (and are continually conscious of this effort) the failure to 'see or do what is good' cannot follow from being separated from one's power to act. Rather, what is required is an inversion of Balibar's formula: that the 'rational' can *appear* to be satisfied, hence precluding the development of reason. In other words, the means through which the body politic is secured would appear satisfied. From this point of view, active striving would do no more than actuate the determinative commands of the community.

This difficulty accentuates the need to think more carefully about how to mediate between the affective and rational constitution of society. This is why—though it never enters Spinoza's vocabulary—the term 'voluntary servitude' retains the locus of an irreducible enigma: why does a people not realise that their very active striving thwarts their better interest? Obversely, what is it that compels a people to recognise (and thus pursue) what is most rightfully their own, namely, their power? Let us establish this as a provisional question, and look more closely at how this idea is developed in the text.

The development of this idea implies a servitude that cannot be reduced to a wilful striving or the result of external constraint. Rather, it is their point of convergence that concerns us; where heteronomy *appears* like autonomy. It seems to me that the paradoxical definition of slavery is projected directly onto the proceeding discussion of Hebrew theocracy in chapter 17, where it anticipates Spinoza's analysis of how, and under what conditions, the body politic is effectually realised.

Firstly, Spinoza's discussion of the 'foundations of the state' in chapter 16 is grounded by the consideration that "any agreement can have force only if it is in our interest" (*TTP*, 199). Again, this is how democracy comes to be 'properly' defined, as "a united gathering of people (*coetus universus hominum*) which collectively has the right to do all that it has the power to do" (*TTP*, 200). In other words, every civil body contains within it the reality that the order of nature "prohibits nothing but what no one desires, or no one can do" (*TTP*, 197). Spinoza is certainly no utopian. On the one hand, there would be no need for laws if "human beings were so constituted by nature that they desired nothing but ... true reason" (*TTP*, 72). On the other hand, "Each person's natural right is ... determined not by sound reason but by desire and power." And human desire is determined by "numberless other things that concern the eternal order of the whole of nature" (*TTP*, 197). Hence, "no society can subsist without government and compulsion, which moderate and restrain desires" (*TTP*, 73).

Yet, this leads to a profound consideration: "No one will ever be able to transfer his power and (consequently) his right to another person in such a way that he ceases to be a human being; and there will never be a sovereign power that can dispose of everything just as it pleases" (*TTP*, 208). This is why fear alone is not enough to *effectively* secure the body politic. Obedience secured through compulsion produces subjects that have "no reason of interest or necessity for doing what they do" (*TTP*, 73). An additional mechanism is required to ensure the actualisation of the state. Hence, "those exert the greatest power who reign in the hearts and minds of their subjects (*eum maximum tenere imperium, qui in subditorum animos regnat*)" (*TTP*, 209). What emerges is a notion of state power that wields an enormous influence over individuals. In a word, it is the efficacy of institutions in moulding subjects to desire the determinative commands of the community: subjects must be made to subordinate themselves. To put it differently, it is by virtue of the fact that natural right cannot be forfeited that, in order that the state can effectively guarantee the durability of its form, it must ascertain the "loyalty of its subjects, their virtue and their constancy in executing

commands" (*TTP*, 210). The argumentation here implies a crucial corollary: it is the masses that constitute the most potent threat to the preservation of any body politic, yet it is only from within the masses that a guarantee for the preservation of the state can be sought.

This problem is the key to grasping Balibar's article "*Jus-Pactum-Lex*: On the Constitution of the Subject in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*."[14] For Balibar, the articulation of the pact corresponds to the necessity of this 'additional mechanism' imposed on every singular state. According to Balibar's reading of Spinoza, the pact does not signify a 'metajuridical' theory that governs from above the particular instantiation of civil bodies: hence it differs radically from traditional social contract theories. Rather, it stipulates the "complex of causes that permits a given state to preserve its form." That is why "there are as many real states as there are forms of pacts."[15]

In this manner, the 'pact' signals no more than the formal 'working out' of the fact that every mass must constitute itself as both subject and object of politics. Or, as Balibar would have it, every political order is the convergence of human natural right that is simultaneously represented in a collective imaginary. As a result, theocracy is then not merely a particular constitutional form, but the very expression of the kind of political authorship specific to human natural power. Hence, as Balibar writes: "Theocracy is the *imaginary* institution of society as democracy, that is, as the collective transfer of power of individuals to an *imperium* that is itself only their collective projection."[16] Differently put, the rational impulse to stabilise the body politic coincides with an imaginary guarantee. This works to justify political institutions, such that they appear as what is necessary for the security and preservation of the polity.

Spinoza illustrates this idea in an extraordinary passage. Indeed, even though a people will retain their natural right, "which therefore depends upon no one's will but their own," their actions nonetheless conform to the commands of the sovereign power. As Spinoza writes:

> There are numerous reasons why someone decides to carry out the commands of a sovereign power: fear of punishment, hope of reward, love of country or the impulse of some other passion. Whatever their reason, they are still deciding of their own volition, and simultaneously acting at the bidding of the sovereign power. Just because someone does something by

> their own design, we should not immediately infer that they do it of their own right and not that of the state. Whether moved by love, or compelled by fear to avoid some bad consequence, they are always acting under their own counsel and decision. (*TTP*, 209)

These statements are paradoxically ordered for a reason. To recapitulate, it manifests the imperative by which any mass must constitute itself as both subject and object of politics. Hence, it is possible to act from one's volition and exercise one's own judgement, yet "simultaneously" (without logical contradiction) act perfectly in accordance with what the sovereign power decrees. The institution of the Mosaic Law associated constant observance of the Law with the means necessary to preserve the body politic, and hence its correlate: disobedience was identified with the necessary destruction of the state. As Spinoza writes: "nothing else is promised in the Bible in return for their obedience but the continued prosperity of their state" (*TTP*, 47). Moreover, the mobilisation of obedience was reinforced through material practices. Hence, in a striking passage one sees the repetition of *servitus* in the context of the discussion of the Hebrew state:

> But the most potent factor was the *strong discipline of obedience* in which they were brought up. Every single thing they had to do according to a specific precept of the Law. They could not plough as and when they pleased, but could only do so at certain times and in particular years, and with only one kind of beast at a time; they could sow and reap only in a certain way and at a particular time; their lives without exception were a continual practice of obedience. To a people wholly accustomed to this, it must have appeared [*videri*] to be freedom [*libertas*] rather than slavery [*servitus*]; surely no one could have desired what was forbidden, only what was prescribed.
> (*TTP*, 224, emphasis added)

It is here that the echo of La Boétie's thesis of voluntary servitude reaches its highest pitch. To reiterate, such a formulation of enslavement resists any easy distinction between the rational and affective modes of being. The difficulty is not that a people 'willingly' strive towards their own enslavement, but that the channelling of desire into static modes of existence immobilises the praxis of natural right while simultaneously *appearing as an immanent demand*. Which is to say, the investment of human active striving into an imaginary agreement beyond the here and now, along with its reinforcement through material practices, fosters the appearance

of satisfying the means necessary to secure life and the body politic. While it is to be admitted that the Hebrew masses were profoundly ignorant of the causes that determined and shaped their desires, this will always in some sense remain within the purview of theory. Indeed, the purpose of the theocratic injunction (the Law revealed by God), as well as the institution of collective practices, was solely to inculcate obedience. And although, as Spinoza writes, "all these things were more of opinion than reality" (*TTP*, 214), from the point of view of the Jewish masses, these instruments of transcendence that guaranteed obedience were unthinkable beyond their active striving toward the common good.[17] Indeed, desire did not know itself beyond what the Law prescribed. In other words, there was no world beyond the permitted.

With this in mind, let us now return to the question that was provisionally laid out early; namely, how do a people recognise what is most rightfully their own (that is, their power)? We can now determine more precisely what is at stake. To the extent that the effectual realisation of the body politic coincides with a channelling of desires, ensuring that individuals are not simply coerced but subordinate themselves, how can we think the political as something other than a static being? The invocation of the slave in Chapter 16 provides a locus for thinking this problem, insofar, as we saw, that active striving can be pacified and yet simultaneously appear to satisfy the conditions of a 'rationally' ordered state. This is the point where institutions and desire converge, where active striving does no more than reproduce the determinative commands of the community. Hence one cannot 'see' beyond what is permitted. Out of this, how can a space for political action be thought?

Balibar hints at this: that the enunciation of the 'pact' reinforces obedience to the law at the same time that it "permanently opens up the possibility of a contestation: a questioning of the legitimacy of power."[18] Or, as he puts in *Spinoza and Politics*, in the context of theocracy: "fiction itself determines praxis and acts as an immanent cause within reality."[19] Yet, it is not enough to explain this process by way of the natural variations of human power, since the intrinsic utility of the 'pact' is always to avoid the inherently unstable affects of the masses. What must be thought is an *immanent mechanism* that can account for this process. My contention is that the definition of the slave in Chapter 16, as the *failure to calculate*, not only discloses a limit point to think Spinozist politics, but simultaneously provides a condition in which this possibility of praxis can be thought.

Unravelling this position will require acknowledging the core of Spinoza's version of freedom. A clue is provided in the *Tractatus Politicus*: "freedom does not remove the necessity of action but imposes it" (*TP*, 2.1). One could reduce this to mean the difference between a positive and negative freedom, anticipating Isaiah Berlin's well-known distinction. But this would belie a much stronger claim; namely, that freedom is inseparable from an ineliminable precarity, through which the human is invested with the capacity to respond and increase its power to act. Only by way of inserting the political with a latent instability can the possibility of freedom arise. In other words, precariousness *imposes the necessity of action*. As Spinoza puts it: "if human nature were so constituted that men desired most of all what was to their advantage, no special skill would be needed to secure harmony and trust" (*TP*, 6.3).

This is where the phenomenon of voluntary servitude must be thought of as intensifying this intrinsic demand of ethical and political life. If the instrumentality of knowledge appears to be guaranteed, this must be thought of as producing *real* effects that *as such* impose the necessity of action. Otherwise put, the inability to 'see or do what is good' precludes effective engagement with the contingencies of political life. And yet, this very failure to mobilise praxis produces real effects, which are none other than the very need to secure the means to preserve the body politic. This double function can be stated otherwise: the definition of the slave in Chapter 16, as the failure to calculate, implies an existential threat that *itself* augments the necessity to commit to one's surroundings, that is, to seek means conducive to one's preservation. This dynamic allows us to posit an *immanent mechanism* that can account for processes of construction and destruction, for it is always the same causes that explain the rigidity of a state (and for that matter the astonishing stability of the Hebraic constitution) and its necessary dissolution. In order to develop this hypothesis, we need to understand how the aleatory (or, fortune) functions as a concealed centre of freedom.

To begin with, it is worth noting that the relationship between freedom and necessity, in Spinoza's terms, closely resembles Machiavelli's dialectic between *virtu* and *fortuna*, which appears in Chapter 25 of *The Prince*. Here, Machiavelli raises a concern; namely, that his appeal to *fortuna* deprives the possibility of human autonomy. But, as Machiavelli points out: "so as not to eliminate human freedom, I am disposed to hold that fortune is the arbiter of half our actions, but that it lets us control roughly the other half."[20] What is at stake here is a concept of the aleatory. In Chapter 3 of the *TTP*, Spinoza defines fortune as the "direction of God

inasmuch as he governs human affairs through external and unforeseen causes" (*TTP*, 45). Moreover, the conservation of any singular thing (which includes the particular 'form' of any state) relies on "external things and are consequently called gifts of fortune because they depend mostly upon the direction of external causes of which we are ignorant" (*TTP*, 46).

But fortune cannot be attributed to a subjective failure of knowledge, which is what Spinoza seems to suggest. Nor can it amount to mere arbitrariness. According to Machiavelli, fortune is that which is "beyond all human conjecture," *and yet* "it lets us control roughly the other half."[21] In other words, fortune imposes itself on us, motivating us to act, hence enabling *virtu*. The exegetical difficulty arises from Spinoza's rejection of contingency in the *Ethics*: "nothing in the universe is contingent, but all things are conditioned to exist and operate in a particular manner by the necessity of the divine nature" (*E* I, P29). What relation does Spinoza's philosophy have to chance, where all things are determined absolutely from God? Making sense of this is the key to grasping the double function of the failure to calculate: as an existential threat that simultaneously amplifies the exigencies of political life, and hence imposing the necessity of action.

To unpack this disguised centre of freedom it is necessary to understand how Spinoza employs the figure of chance, and furthermore, how it functions as an ethical imperative. This requires venturing into Louis Althusser's "Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter."[22] The posthumously published text introduces the novel conceptual language of aleatory materialism. The critical idea underlying Althusser's late philosophical writing consists in uncovering a subterranean tradition of materialism that privileges the modality of chance against the logic of necessity and finality.

Within this hidden tradition, Althusser places Spinoza in a lineage that stretches from Epicurus, Lucretius, and to Machiavelli (which also includes Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx, Heidegger, and Derrida). Central to Althusser's thesis is his appeal to the *clinamen* in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, the "infinitesimal swerve" that interrupts the vertical fall of the atoms in the void.[23] According to Althusser, the intervention of the swerve gives rise to the aleatory in every encounter, both in its origins (for no encounter is guaranteed) and its effect (for no *telos* prefigures the effectuality of an encounter). But what place does this understanding of the *clinamen* have in Spinoza's philosophy, which consistently alludes to the fixed and unalterable laws of nature? In a well-known correspondence with Hugo Boxel,

Spinoza suggests his affinity with the Ancient theorists of the atoms, and thus of the *clinamen*. The admission appears in Letter 56:

> The authority of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates, does not carry much weight with me. I should have been astonished if you had brought forward Epicurus, Democritus, Lucretius, or any of the atomists, or upholders of the atomic theory.
> (*Ep* 56)

This sole reference to Lucretius is cited against those who have "invented occult qualities, intentional species, substantial forms, and a thousand other trifles." This is certainly not a cursory remark. It can be read co-extensively with Althusser's thesis, which grants primacy of the aleatory over the form. Indeed, the letters exchanged between Spinoza and Boxel, upon closer examination, reveal an unacknowledged centre, where chance is concomitant with the very production of freedom.

At first glance the topic of the correspondence seems frivolous: Boxel asks for Spinoza's opinion on "apparitions," "ghosts," and "spectres." In Letter 52, Spinoza retorts that belief in ghosts are more likely to resemble the "pastimes of children or of fools" and are indicative of the desire to "narrate things, not as they really happened, but as they wished them to happen" (*Ep* 52). However, Boxel's reply in the proceeding letter reveals what is properly at stake. While Boxel claims that the belief in ghosts is proof of the "beauty and perfection of the universe," he proclaims that such reasoning will not "convince those who rashly believe that the world has been created by chance" (*Ep* 53). But Spinoza makes it clear that necessity and chance are in fact contraries: for the "world is a necessary effect of the divine nature" (*Ep* 54).

What in fact becomes clear is the notion of chance that Boxel employs is surreptitiously directed against the *absence of providence*, the lack of any free divine will. This production of chance is implicitly alluded to in Spinoza's critique of finalism in the Appendix to Part 1 of the *Ethics*: "a stone falls from a roof on someone's head and kills him." Those who attempt to impute purpose (i.e. the superstitious) to things will attempt to show that the stone was predestined to fall on the man, for they will incessantly pursue the series of causes until they "take refuge in the will of God—in other words, the sanctuary of ignorance." This ignorance is quite unlike the one which appears in the context of fortune.

Pierre Macherey refers to the production of chance in this context as a "necessary accident."[24] Otherwise put, there is no "immanent necessity," no internal unity, to a casual series that predetermines its effectuation. More pertinently, there exists no preordained necessity that can anticipate an encounter or guarantee the durability of its form: "Hence it follows that all particular things are contingent and perishable" (*E* II, P31S). The intervention of the *clinamen* is thus contingent, not because the encounter produced is arbitrary, but because there is no pre-ordained direction that guarantees the coming into being of an encounter. In other words, to affirm the primacy of the contingent is to acknowledge the void that looms over every prospect of a lasting encounter.

What is at stake here? The establishment and preservation of every 'form,' be it the individual or the body politic, requires continual engagement with one's environment. Indeed, it is by virtue of the fact that no collective arrangement of human powers corresponds to a natural finality or preestablished harmony that the correlation between human freedom and greater power to act can be thought. This is to say, no masses are 'elected' above and beyond nature, but must secure the means to preserve life in the here and now. This amounts to the suggestion that every 'form' is constantly traversed by *reasonable* conditions of praxis.

Fundamentally, this also implies that every 'form' is from the outset liable to rupture and transformation. This underlies Althusser's thesis that philosophy has as its object the void, that it begins from nothing and ends in nothing. As Althusser writes, "there is no eternity in the 'laws' of any world or any state. History is nothing but a permanent revocation of the accomplished fact by another undecipherable fact to be accomplished."[25] Rather than privileging the primacy of the 'form' that takes hold, Althusser shifts the plane of investigation to its "underground current." It is here that chance reigns, namely, where one "reasons ... not in terms of the Necessity of the accomplished fact, but in terms of the contingency of the fact to be accomplished."[26]

This shifting of the plane of investigation cannot be understated. By subordinating the necessity of every 'form' to contingency, Althusser furnishes us with the tools to think how the modality of the contingent creates the conditions for a space where 'reasonable' praxis can unfold. From this vantage point, the value of the *failure to calculate* is indispensable. On the one hand, it discloses a 'permanent revocation' that threatens to undermine the perceived necessity of an accomplished 'form.' On the other hand, it is by virtue of this existential threat that

it produces a *real* demand, which itself 'imposes the necessity of action.'

With this in mind, it is worth turning back to Balibar's text 'From Individuality to Transindividuality'. Taking from Gilbert Simondon's work on individuation, which rejects the notion of the individual as a pre-given matter, Balibar reads Spinoza's philosophy as a forerunner in acknowledging the transindividual conditions of existence. The concept of transindividuality allows Balibar to understand human relations in such a way that avoids reducing the individual as a self-sufficient entity or merely the effect of a greater totality.

There are three key points Balibar draws on. Firstly, that individuality is the "very form of actual existence," which is to say that every individual is defined by its particular striving. Secondly, that the 'form' of an individual is always composed of some parts. And thirdly, that the 'form' and its 'constituent parts' are in constant communication. The relation between individuals and broader social forces is thus fluid inasmuch as it is maintained by a continual exchange of parts. Differently put, the political is underscored by intractable processes of composition and decomposition. Turning to the text itself:

> Conservation is nothing but this regulated process of "continuous regeneration." To say that an individual keeps existing is tantamount to saying that it is continuously regenerated or reproduced. An isolated individual, having no "exchanges" with the environment, would not be regenerated, therefore it would not exist. Right from the beginning, what Spinoza implies is that any individual has a need of other individuals in order to preserve its form and its existence.[27]

However, this conservation remains precarious insofar as it demands the effort of individuals to maintain this "continuous regeneration." This is the implication that follows from Proposition 39, Part 4 of the *Ethics*, which must be read in the context of utility: "whatever is conducive to the preservation of the proportion of motion-and-rest, which the parts of the human body maintain towards one another … is therefore good" (*E* IV, P39). That this statement is eminently political is confirmed by the proceeding proposition: "whatever is conducive to man's social organisation … is advantageous" (*E* IV, P40). These pronouncements are all ordered around the fundamental provision that individuals seek their utility, and by doing so—as Balibar frames it in a footnote—"look for the conditions in which the cohesion of the parts is secured or even reinforced."[28]

This is where the invocation of the slave as the failure to calculate is critical. Though its place in Chapter 16 seems at first glance a cursory remark, on closer inspection it reveals a permanent condition and limit of the political. That is, insofar as the continuous exchange of parts necessary to maintain the body politic is precarious because it forms an "equilibrium which is not fixed, but a dynamic—a metastable equilibrium which must be destroyed if it is not continuously recreated."[29] In this manner, what must be thought is the immanent mechanism that accounts for this process of construction and destruction. How it is that the same causes that allow the body politic to endure contain the seeds of its fracture? What is presupposed within this structure is the slave's *failure to calculate*: the forestalling of 'reasonable' praxis introduces an existential threat, insofar as every 'form' requires "continuous regeneration." And yet, this threat imposes itself as a constitutive element within the economy of human relations, hence 'imposing the necessity of action.' Fundamentally, this implies nothing more than the seeking out of means conducive to the preservation of life.

Drawing our threads together, our focus on Balibar provides a reading of the constitutive mechanisms at play in Spinoza's politics. The central political problem, as we saw in Chapter 17, is the need to effectually realise the state from within the immanent nexus of human powers. Spinoza is keenly aware of the complexities involved, for no civil body can persist through constraining its people. Hence, not compulsion but the *elimination of chance* is required. Spinoza appeals to the role of institutions in channelling desires toward the moulding of compliant subjects. I argued, firstly, that the paradoxical definition of the slave anticipates this development. Indeed, the failure to calculate cannot proceed from being separated from one's power. Rather, it is the point where political structures and active striving intersect, where transcendental instruments of coercion and control are experienced as an immanent demand. Here, active striving does no more than reproduce determinative commands: hence, one cannot 'see' beyond the permitted. This difficulty intensifies the need to mobilise a theoretical strategy that allows us to understand how the power of a mass—*from within this immanent fold*—can come to recognise (and hence pursue) their right.

This leads us to Althusser's late 'philosophy of the encounter,' where the slave's failure to calculate functions not only as a limit, but as a permanent condition of the political. This failure coincides with the inability to tame the aleatory by organising one's encounters (the effort required to maintain the "continuous regeneration" of parts), introducing an existential threat that itself 'imposes the ne-

cessity of action.' Lastly, what remains to be said of the 'rational'? Nothing more than the set of determinative relations (the 'form') that *appears* necessary only insofar as it lasts. As Althusser frames it:

Once the encounter *has* 'taken hold'—that is, once the stable figure of the world, of the *only* existing world (for the advent of a given world obviously excludes all other possible combinations), has been constituted—we have to do with a stable world in which events, in their succession, obey 'laws.'[30]

In other words, the successful cohesion of the parts, its 'taking hold,' banishes from sight the possibility that these determinative conditions not only could have been otherwise, but are liable to rupture. This is why one cannot do without the *failure to calculate*. It prompts us to think, not in terms of a 'proper' adequation between 'form' and 'content,' but in terms of the fissures where a space for action can be pursued.

MICHAEL-FRANCIS POLIOS completed an MA in continental philosophy at Western Sydney University. His interests include early-modern and contemporary political philosophy, Spinoza, materialism, and nineteenth-century German thought.

NOTES

1. The following editions have been used for Spinoza's texts. For the Latin, see Benedict de Spinoza, *Opera*. Ed. Carl Gebhardt. Heidelberg: Winter, 1925. For the English translations see, Benedictus de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*. Trans. Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007; Benedictus de Spinoza, *Ethics*. *Complete Works: Spinoza*. Ed. Michael L. Morgan. Trans. Samuel Shirley. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002; Benedictus de Spinoza, *Political Treatise*. Trans. Samuel Shirley. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000; Benedictus de Spinoza, *The Letters*. *Complete Works: Spinoza*. Ed. Michael L. Morgan. Trans. Samuel Shirley. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002.
2. For an analysis of Spinoza's principle of the calculation of utility and its connection to the Epicurean *phronesis* see Dimitris Vardoulakis, *Authority and Utility: On Spinoza's Epicureanism* (forthcoming).
3. Étienne de la Boétie, *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude* (*or Against One*). Trans. James B. Atkinson and David Sices. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2012, 13.
4. La Boétie, *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*, 13.
5. La Boétie, *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*, 13.
6. See Susan James, "Freedom, Slavery, and the Passions." *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza's Ethics*. Ed. Olli Koistinen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 223-42.
7. James, "Freedom, Slavery, and the Passions," 231.
8. Frederic Lordon, *Willing Slaves of Capital: Spinoza and Marx on Desire*. Trans. Gabriel Ash. London: Verso, 2014.
9. Lordon, *Willing Slaves of Capital*, 18.
10. Lordon, *Willing Slaves of Capital*, 20.
11. Étienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*. Trans. Peter Snowdon. London: Verso, 2008, 76-95.
12. Étienne Balibar, "*Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality.*" Delft: Eburon 1997, 28.
13. Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present*. New York: Routledge, 1999, 120.
14. Étienne Balibar, "*Jus-Pactum-Lex*: On the Constitution of the Subject in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*." *The New Spinoza*. Eds Warren Montag and Ted Stolze. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, 171-201.
15. Balibar, "*Jus-Pactum-Lex*," 177.
16. Balibar, "*Jus-Pactum-Lex*," 183.
17. See Catherine Malabou, "Before and Above: Spinoza and Symbolic Necessity." *Critical Inquiry* 53 (2016, 84-109). Here, Malabou investigates to what extent Spinoza misses the immanent dimension within transcendence.
18. Balibar, "*Jus-Pactum-Lex*," 193.
19. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 47.
20. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*. Trans. Russel Price. Ed. Quentin Skinner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 85.
21. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 85.
22. Louis Althusser, "Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter." *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-87*. Trans. G.M. Goshgarian. London: Verso, 2006, 163-208.
23. Althusser, "Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter," 169.
24. Pierre Macherey, *Hegel or Spinoza*. Trans. Susan M. Ruddick. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, 174.

25. Althusser, "Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter," 174.
26. Althusser, "Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter," 174.
27. Balibar, *From Individuality to Transindividuality*, 18.
28. Balibar, *From Individuality to Transindividuality*, 20.
29. Balibar, *From Individuality to Transindividuality*, 22.
30. Althusser, "Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter," 195.

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authoritarian and minoritarian thought. françois laruelle, *a biography of ordinary man*

thomas sutherland

It would not be entirely unfair to observe with respect to François Laruelle—whose (non-)philosophy has experienced, in the past decade, a rather dramatic upsurge in attention outside of France—that the order in which his books have gradually been translated into English has not done any great favours to his reception. Laruelle published his first monograph in 1971, and by the time that the first English-language translations of his major works began to appear (viz. 2010's *Philosophies of Difference* [1986] and *Future Christ* [2002]), he had already published 22 such books, on top of sundry other articles and chapters, in French. Although the 2013 release of *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy* [1989] and *Principles of Non-Philosophy* [1996] arguably furnished Anglophone readers with the most central, programmatic works authored by Laruelle, this did little to address the overall deprivation of his oeuvre's proper continuity, the haphazardness of translation—in spite of all good intentions—liable to give the impression that his books could effectively be read at random.

After all, Laruelle's body of work evinces a patently linear progression and development of ideas: he is very much a systematic thinker, with said system expanded upon in each of his books, almost all of which presume knowledge of his previous works and the concepts that he has deployed within them. It is genuinely a *corpus*, a body of work that is progressively constructed, rather than a series of interrelated but largely independent texts (as is perhaps the predominant model within

continental philosophy). And it is for this reason that I would contend that the sequence of his English-language translation has been inimical to his reception: readers have been forced to dive right into the depths of his corpus, rather than being able to start in the shallows and gingerly wade in further. This has led to quite understandable confusions: for example, there is little indication supplied in the immensely difficult (albeit rewarding) *Philosophies of Difference* that the central concept of *the One*, which remains frustratingly indistinct in that particular text, was actually explicated quite clearly only one book prior: in *A Biography of Ordinary Man: On Authorities and Minorities* [1985].[1]

Indeed, although *A Biography of Ordinary Man* is still quite an embryonic piece of writing, missing many of the characteristic elements of what he would later come to label "non-philosophy," I would nonetheless regard it (contentiously, maybe) as the single most important text for grasping both the provenance and development of Laruelle's broader project. For it is here that the fundamental problematic which traverses said project is first clearly elucidated, in an unusually straightforward and lucid manner: namely, the question of whether there is "*a proper and primitive essence of man, one that would not be an attribute of something else*" (8), striving to locate the real within a thought both of and from man *qua* individual.[2] Although Laruelle's work is often presented, not wholly without justification, as a more radical or all-encompassing mutation of deconstruction, critiquing the self-legitimizing circularity of philosophical reason, this is only one, negative, aspect of a much larger positive project. As we are frequently reminded in this particular text, Laruelle has no interest in the negation or overcoming of philosophical reason, advocating instead "a strong but tolerant indifference to philosophy" (1), which is in turn founded upon the identification of a transcendental modality of thought—namely that of the "individual", the "minority", or, as he comes to refer to them in this book, the "ordinary man"—that is utterly incompatible with, and prior to, all such reason.

The overarching purpose of this book, which is presented as a sequence of theorems and explications, is to elaborate "the fundamental concepts of a rigorous—if not empirical, at least 'scientific'—discipline of man, and, therefore, of minorities" (31), a discipline which is in no way philosophical, and which cannot be rendered convertible with the aporias of philosophical reason. Its premise is deceptively straightforward: man is not a façade or illusion, he is not a mere epiphenomenal product of difference, becoming, power relations, and so on; rather, man is absolutely real, he exists as such, but he exists in this fashion *outside* of the World, re-

lated to the latter only in a *uni-lateral* manner. This is the *minoritarian* experience of man. At the same time though, man is inevitably condemned to find himself within the World, to be forced into action, practice, and ultimately philosophy, all of which divides him from himself. This is, correspondingly, the *authoritarian* experience of man, whereby he is placed under the yoke of various universal attributes and predicates—e.g. language, power, history, etc.—that come to define his worldly destiny. In opposition to the latter, Laruelle hopes to bring to light a thought of man in himself, a thought that is too "ordinary" (i.e. non-philosophical) for these Authorities, and for philosophy. Such a thought forms the basis of what he claims to be a rigorous science of man, which no longer takes the latter as its object (it is not simply an extension of the human sciences), and does not "borrow its means of investigation, demonstration, and validation from existing sciences" (4), but instead proceeds directly *from* man, and is in fact identical *with* man in his essence.

This new science, and the minority experience more generally that Laruelle wishes to highlight, is "based in a thought of the One rather than a thought of Being" (8): it does not look "beyond" man, toward a purported essence, hiding behind him, that would be defined in terms of Being, or the Other, or Difference, or any other mode of transcendence; it does not announce the death of man, or the overcoming of man; it is not post-human, or anti-human, or trans-human, or even all too human; it instead looks to that which comes *before* all these philosophical and anthropological projections which objectify man, positing him as something other than himself. What this science seeks, in other words, is the immediate givenness of the One, a pre-philosophical immanent experience, without any possible transcendence, that does not follow from the One, but is *identical with* the One. This experience, Laruelle boldly proclaims, is the *veritas transcendentalis* that so many philosophers have vainly sought: an "unreflective immanence, without alienation or nothingness, and thus without a self-position: non-thetic or non-position (of) itself" (60) that is the basis of all truly minoritarian knowledge.

Western philosophy—what Laruelle frequently refers to as the "unitary" paradigm of thought—has only been able to ever recognize the One as "as a mere Unity, transcendental, to be sure, but in the mixed, logico-real, manner of a unity that is *added* to the empirical or ideal manifold" (55), a representation, rather than a lived reality. It can only conceive of unity as formed by division (e.g. Being and Nothingness, Identity and Difference, etc.), entirely failing to grasp the One *in its essence*. Part of the novelty of Laruelle's project, then, is to not treat the real

as an object of thought, not even as an impossible or aporetic object, but as the identity of thought as such, proceeding from the real immanence of this inalienably finite experience of the One. This is a solitude of man, who is not enfolded within a totality or a unity, who is nothing other than finitude, irreducible to all external attributes or predicates. And it is the recognition of this radically finite, determinate reality of man, Laruelle argues, that allows us to "lay claim to a *transcendental naiveté*, real but precisely not philosophical, at the foundations of the absolute science of man" (12), a naiveté that does not ignore philosophy as such, but remains wholly indifferent to it, rendering all philosophies ultimately contingent. The biography of ordinary man, then, claims to be in effect a biography of us, of each individual: anterior to the philosophical universal of Man (and his various permutations and deconstructions), we find the ordinary man, the ordinary woman, the ordinary *individual* or *human*.[3]

A Biography of Ordinary Man follows quite directly, in both its ends and means, from Laruelle's previous (as yet untranslated) book *The Minority Principle* [*Le principe de minorité*], published four years prior, which marks the inauguration of his self-described "Philosophy II" period, seeing Laruelle veer sharply away from the largely Nietzschean and Deleuzoguattarian equation of multiplicity with difference and minoritarian thought with libidinal productivity that characterized his early works, wherein he sought to identify a latent machinic strain of philosophical syntax that would remain resistant to all interpretive mastery. He instead turns toward a thought of multiplicity (or more precisely, *multiplicities*), that is utterly incompatible with the *continuous multiplicities* typical of the contemporary philosophies of difference, which he comes to view as mere distensions of the Western philosophical tradition, incapable of ever really altering its fundamental structure. In this preceding book, a rather curious and enigmatic text even by Laruelle's own standards (whose writing style, although not as impenetrable as many would like to assert, is certainly idiosyncratic), he posits the titular *minority principle* as that which "compels us to seek out the possibility of multiplicities *beyond* Being, the Idea, the State, History, etc.", identifying a concept of *unary multiplicities*, to which he grants the name *minorities*, that have been "forgotten" by philosophical discourse, and which can be thought prior to and independent of any and all universals, and thus in their very *essence*.[4] His thesis, in short, is that "individuals are the ultimate constituents of reality, before Being, before the World, History, and the State."[5] It is in the figure of *the One* that we ultimately find the unreflective essence of such individuals.

The Minority Principle is, to a much greater extent than Laruelle's later works, grounded in familiar philosophical principles (viz. the transcendental methods of Kant and Husserl). Wishing to finally rescue the transcendental method from the empirico-transcendental doublet[6] that always ends up tracing the outlines of transcendental from empirical content, Laruelle seeks "the unknown real = X, which gives an absolute (and no longer relative or ideal) character to the transcendental, and likewise the unknown transcendental = X which snatches the real from the play of being and Being, from the objectified real—each multiplying the power of the other beyond the powers of Being."[7] It is precisely here that *A Biography of Ordinary Man* takes a different path, in two particular aspects: firstly, rather than departing from these philosophical materials toward a theory of the One or the minorities, it proceeds directly from the latter, making scant reference to either historical or contemporary philosophy (even whilst borrowing terminology from both), distancing itself from all norms of philosophical disputation, including any pretension to have surpassed or overcome preceding thinkers; secondly, in place of the prior book's intimidatingly abstract and schematic conceptualization of the minorities, Laruelle here gives these finite individuals a quite specific character—the real and the transcendental are no longer unknown, for they find their essence in the figure of the "ordinary man."

Following a lengthy introduction, wherein Laruelle outlines both the need for a rigorous science of man, and the notion of the "ordinary" man from whom such a science proceeds, the book is composed of four chapters, which simultaneously correspond to the three principal definitions of the ordinary man, and proceed in line with the irreversible order of immediate givens that is at the basis of this science: the first two chapters introduce us to the finite individual, the "minority", in their real *essence*, and the Authorities who seek to define such an individual using their own universal concepts and categories, therefore never actually speaking of the essence of man, but only interpreting it in their own terms; the third chapter discusses the mystical *existent*, by which the finite individual determines the World and the Authorities in the last instance; and the fourth chapter finally describes the pragmatic *existence*, whereby the finite individual acts upon the World and the Authorities not only mystically, but pragmatically, legitimating them as objects of the real science of man. It is in these latter two chapters that we find "the two means man has for escaping from unitary—philosophical and linguistic—enchantment" (185), furnishing a non-philosophical thought of ordinary man from and in his essence.

The first two chapters—entitled "Who are Minorities?" and "Who are Authorities?," respectively—establish the distinction between stato-minoritarian individuals, who are thought in terms of difference, and minorities in themselves, who cannot be reduced to any differential determination, and are thus real as such, thought before any and all universal attributes. A science of ordinary man, Laruelle suggests, is as much as anything a political task, for it is through such a science that we might learn "how not to inscribe minorities on the body of the State" (33), refusing to conceive of individuals in terms of those attributes projected upon them by the Authorities, and instead thinking them as real minorities who determine these Authorities in the last instance—a uni-lateral determination, absent of all reciprocal determination. "Ontology and politics, which serve us as thought," he submits, "have never been able to conceive of individuals as anything other than modes of the State or of the great universals" (34). And yet, in the last instance it is not the State which defines individuals; rather, the State is defined by those finite individuals who are absolutely autonomous in relation to it. We are all minorities, individuals without individuality, singulars without singularity, multiples without multiplicity, unthinkable within the horizon of philosophical reason. The minoritarian experience is that of the ordinary man as an immediate given, as an unreflective transcendental experience of the One as immediately real in and from itself, without division or alterity.

In addition to this experience of the ordinary man as immediate given, in the radical finitude of his essence, however, "he also produces a second type of experience, that of universals: the World, History, Sexuality, Language, Power, Philosophy, etc." (76), those Authorities which come after the One, and which represent a philosophical and political resistance to the One. This secondary experience of man is one in which he is thrown *into* the World, but at the same time one in which he also *unilateralizes* this relation between himself and the World, yielding "an absolute, irreversible contingency prior to any decision—philosophical or otherwise—that affects the insertion of minorities into Authorities, of individuals into the World" (80). Whereas the minorities find their essence in the real-as-One, a unity-without-scission, an immanence-without-transcendence, the essence of the Authorities lies instead in what Laruelle calls "effectivity", a mixture of the One with its Other (viz. a particular part or mode of the World). Through the process of unilateralization, otherwise known as *determination in the last instance*, ordinary individuals are able to effectuate the science proper to them, breaking any presumed continuity or relation between the One and its object, manifesting an impermeable distinction between the proper essence of the Authorities (effectiv-

ity), and their transcendental or real essence (the immediate finite experience of the One), inasmuch as they are determined by the latter in the last instance.

Having thus defined the parameters of the minorities and Authorities, Laruelle then moves on in the latter two chapters—"Ordinary Mysticism" and "Ordinary Pragmatics"—to lay down the foundation for a *real critique* of the World, first in a theoretical, and then practical mode. Such a critique seeks neither to dissolve nor negate the World, but merely to shatter the latter's ignorance of itself, its hallucination of its own reality *qua* totality. The mystical is, for Laruelle, not at all a movement of transcendence, and is located neither above, nor beyond everyday existence; rather, the mystical is simply the real as such, the ordinary individual, who *precedes* all worldly existence. Ordinary mysticism, then, is the critical component of the aforementioned absolute science, striving to put the World "back in its place" (137-138), positing it not as an illusion or deception, but as a positive, *contingent* reality that has no legitimate claim to the real as such. This mysticism is complemented by a practical critique consisting in a finite *use* of philosophy, starting from the finite acting subject, which extends "the concept of performativity beyond its linguistic and metaphysical limits" (181). This pragmatics is an extension of the mystical form of determination in the last instance, manifesting as a specifically and solely human mode of causality acting upon the World, really autonomous in relation to the various authoritarian rules and procedures by which philosophy produces meaning. At the same time, however, it takes the World, and the universals furnished by the Authorities, entirely seriously: "pragmatics is the generosity of the One or of ordinary mysticism recognizing the right of the World, recognizing in it a certain reality" (188), but a reality wholly distinct from that of the One, and the minorities.

This theme of the "ordinary" individual, who finds their real essence in an absolute finitude or radical immanence, and who is able to act upon the World without having to define themselves along philosophical lines is maintained throughout Laruelle's oeuvre, right through to his most recent texts. Although it comes to accumulate greater complexity, what remains stable is the notion that there is an experience of the One, an experience of *ourselves*, that is not programmed in advance by philosophical or authoritarian (i.e. worldly) teleologies, that is never subject to transcendence or division, that is not in becoming or traversed by multiplicity, but simply *is*, not as an object of knowledge, but as an experience of itself, in its own immanence. An ordinary pragmatics is a practice that "remains as passive as the real itself" (192). It does not attempt to intervene in the World, but

simply maintains a steady indifference to it, safe in the knowledge and experience of its own inalienability.

Of course, a project so heavily centred upon an irreducible individuality, especially one that labels all social, political, and even worldly attributes as "authoritarian," may be unpalatable to many readers. In an age of increasing social atomization, one might ask, what need do we have for "a biography of the solitary man" (8)? Likewise, one might quite reasonably baulk at the use of the gendered term "man," which is not only likely to seem painfully outdated to Anglophone readers, but would seem to project upon this figure certain historically and socially contingent attributes, contrary to Laruelle's own claims.[8] In this respect, it would seem crucial that we take seriously the priority which Laruelle purports to give to the "immediate actuality of use" over "all the linguistic or other projections in which unitary thinkers, that is, intellectuals, engage" (177): the term "man," as used in this context, is certainly inadequate as a description of the real identity that underpins all experience, whether worldly or otherwise, but so is any other term—minority, individual, the One, etc.

Ultimately, it would seem, whatever name we bestow upon this identity is of no real import, for such descriptions have no effect upon its unreflective essence. It is philosophy that identifies the human individual with such generalities—"a knowledge, an activity, a race, a desire, an existence, a writing, a society, a language, a sex" (5)—and in doing so effaces their essence, dividing them from themselves. The specific term "man" is a signifier drawn from philosophical materials, but it is here mutated, rendered inert or sterile, stripped of all propositional content, such that it does not in any way describe this individual, who is after all "without a face and without qualities" (10), but merely acts as the support for a minoritarian thought that proceeds irreversibly from them. There is no archetype or example, whether empirical or ideal, of what an ordinary "man" is, for "he" is nothing other than a lived experience, a finite and intrinsic immanence.

Likewise, the term "authoritarian," in spite of its negative overtones, must surely be understood not as a value judgement (which would reinscribe it within a philosophical hierarchy), but as a neutral descriptor of the way in which the Authorities, and the World in which they operate, function through a pretension to universality that robs individuals of their finitude, situating them within a totality (they are "totalitarian," in a very literal sense), denying them their status as minorities, rendering them in some way equivalent (even if this is an equivalence

grounded in difference). "When minorities meet historical, cultural, and political criteria," Laruelle writes, "they are thereby responsible and disputable groups, countable and speakable in institutional spaces and according to supposedly given codes—groups that are more or less identifiable and that agree, whether they like it or not, to enter into the authoritarian parousia of the World" (70). The minorities are, in their essence, invisible to the domain of politics, philosophy, and any other unitary mode of thought. In fact, Laruelle brazenly suggests, a rigorous science of these minorities, and thus of ordinary man, might actually become a "means of eradicating the resentment and hatred of the World innate to unitary or philosophical critique" (142-143), attesting to the real and absolute autonomy of the One in relation to the World of which it is the essence.

Laruelle's goal is not to diminish, resist, or revolt against the World, society, culture, or whatever else in the name of the solitary man, but to display a positive indifference, rendering these formations (and their numerous predications) contingent in relation to the only truly unalienated and inalienable knowledge. Such knowledge, which is an irreducibly *human* knowledge, is not something that we can find either outside of ourselves or even within ourselves; it is, rather, that which we find *before* ourselves—that is, before our worldly existence—not in a temporal, or even logical, but purely transcendental sense. The minorities "form the in-audible background noise of culture and history, a noise completely in the background, uncreated and thus inexhaustible" (67), the noise that philosophy has forgotten, and will always forget, but which nevertheless remains its real essence in the last instance. Laruelle's work does not strive to be "useful," at least in the sense that we have come to expect from philosophers. He does not spruik concepts that might be "applied" to empirical objects, seeking to explain, judge, or even negate the latter. He does not entreat another philosophical intervention into the World, which would end up just another "an instrument of vengeance" wielded against the latter (142). It is, rather, the decidedly naive experience of one's own minority, one's own unbreakable finitude, one's real and absolute autonomy, in the face of any and all authoritarian and totalitarian gestures—a real reversal of the oft-derided Copernican Revolution, presuming "that the finite subject is located at the center (of) itself, and no longer of the World, and that the World ceases to revolve around the subject so that it can be determined in the last instance by it" (74)—which constitutes the implacable premise of Laruelle's non-philosophical project.

THOMAS SUTHERLAND is Senior Lecturer in Media Studies at the University of Lincoln.

NOTES

1. The introduction to this book was previously published under the name "A Rigorous Science of Man," in *From Decision to Heresy: Experiments in Non-Standard Thought*. Ed. and trans. Robin Mackay. Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012, pp. 33-73.

2. This and all subsequent parenthetical references are taken from François Laruelle, *A Biography of Man: On Authorities and Minorities*. Trans. Jessie Hock and Alex Dubilet. Cambridge and Medford, MA: Polity, 2018.

3. The relationship between Laruelle's project and humanism is complex, considering the primacy he gives to the figure of man. A decade later, he would argue that humanism comprises a "set of philosophical images of man, rather than the rigorous knowledge of the latter [...] a form of speculative imagery, the product of an imagination, probably transcendental, understood in a very general sense as an operation of synthesis of contraries," which he counterposes against his own postulation of "a transcendental science as simple, uni-lateral, or non-specular reflection (of) the real." More specifically, he suggests that "these new perspectives on man constitute, rather than an anti-humanism, a sort of 'non-humanism,' a science of man that is more universal than any philosophy" (*Théorie des Étrangers: Science des hommes, démocratie, non-psychanalyse*. Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1995, pp. 105, 110, my translation).

4. François Laruelle, *Le principe de minorité*. Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1981, 6, my translation.

5. Ibid.

6. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. London and New York: Routledge, 1970.

7. Laruelle, *Le principe de minorité*, 13.

8. Laruelle would later argue, as part of his proposal for a *non-psychoanalysis*, that a "unified theory of woman and man," i.e. a non-unitary theory, "is possible on the condition that it is capable of declaring the theoretical and pragmatic invalidation of sexual difference, and its usage as a simple material in a science of humans" (*Théorie des Étrangers*, 317). Cf. François Laruelle and Anne-Françoise Schmid, "Sexed Identity." *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 19:2 (2014): 35-39.