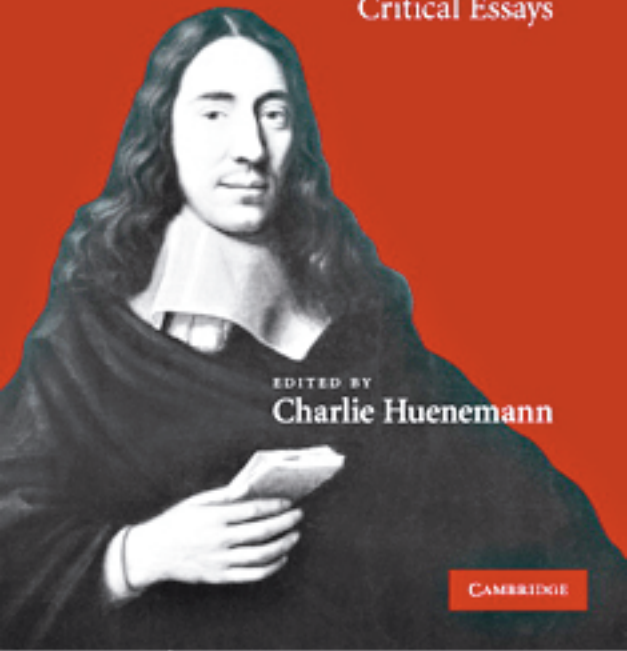
Interpreting Spinoza

Critical Essays



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INTERPRETING SPINOZA

The philosophy of Spinoza is increasingly recognized as holding a position of crucial importance and influence in early modern thought, and in recent years it has been the focus of a rich and growing body of scholarship. In this volume of essays, leading experts in the field offer penetrating analyses of his views about God, necessity, imagination, the mind, knowledge, history, society, and politics. The essays treat questions of perennial importance in Spinoza scholarship but also constitute new and critical examinations of his worldview. Scholars of modern philosophy will welcome this volume as a collection of some of the very best recent work done on Spinoza's philosophy.

CHARLIE HUENEMANN is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Utah State University.

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Method of citation

Where references are by author and year of publication, full reference information may be found in the Bibliography.

The following abbreviations have been used in referring to Spinoza's writings:

DPP	*Descartes's "Principles of Philosophy"* (*Renati Des Cartes Principiorum Philosophiae, Pars I et II, More Geometrico demonstratae*)
E	*Ethics* (*Ethica Ordine Geometrico demonstrata*)
Ep	*Correspondence* (*Epistulae*)
G	*Spinoza Opera*. 4 vols. (vol. 5, 1987), ed. Carl Gebhardt. Hildesheim: Carl Winter
ST	*Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being* (*Korte Verhandeling van God, de Mensch en des zelfs Welstand*)
TdIE	*Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (*Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*)
TP	*Political Treatise* (*Tractatus Politicus*)
TTP	*Theological-Political Treatise* (*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*)

References to the *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being*, the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, the *Political Treatise*, and the *Theological-Political Treatise* are by chapter and, within chapters, sometimes also by the section numbers introduced in the Bruder edition of Spinoza's works and reproduced in many subsequent editions.

Some of the essays in this volume also employ further abbreviations for citations; they are explained within the notes of those essays.

References to the *Correspondence* are by letter number.

References to *Descartes's Ethics* begin with an Arabic number denoting the Part, and use the following common abbreviations:

a	Axiom
c	Corollary

d	Definition (when not following a Proposition number)
d	Demonstration (when following a Proposition number)
da	Definitions of the Affects (located towards the end of *Ethics*, Part 3)
p	Proposition
s	Scholium (Note)

For example, "E 1p14d,c1" refers to *Ethics*, Part 1, Proposition 14, Demonstration and Corollary 1.

Introduction

Charlie Huenemann

Spinoza selected a seal for his correspondence that was both clever and fitting. It was a design with his initials, a stemmed rose, and the word "*Caute*," or: *with caution*. We might suppose that he took this as a motto for himself, to act always with caution; but since his own name connoted the rose (*espina* is Spanish for "thorn"), it is more likely that he was advising his correspondents to handle him with caution. He had fascinating visions to offer – but beware the thorns! And his readers soon were pricked by them, as they discovered that Spinoza denied many things thought to be necessary for a civil life: free will, the traditional distinction between good and evil, heaven and hell, and the existence of a benevolent creator. Spinoza became known as an impious atheist, and philosophers over the next two centuries were both attracted and stung by what he wrote.

Philosophers in more recent times have found Spinoza to be thorny as well, perhaps not so much because of his heretical views, but because of the sheer difficulty of his great work, the *Ethics*. It seems that, in his attempt to lay out his thought as clearly as possible, with sharp definitions, axioms, and demonstrations, Spinoza made his philosophy well-nigh ungraspable. It is not at all unusual to hear a well-intentioned reader despair, "I know there is something powerful in there, but I can't quite get hold of it." Still, more and more philosophers have found their way into this deductive fortress, and have written about what they have found there in increasingly clear and precise ways. This volume of essays, we hope, adds to this broad, communal effort of excavation and interpretation, not only of the *Ethics*, but of his treatises on theology and politics as well. There are indeed many powerful things in Spinoza's philosophy, and we can make sense of a great many of them.

One great virtue of this collection of essays is that they provide penetrating discussion of three important domains of Spinoza's philosophy: metaphysics, psychology, and politics. Furthermore, while these essays were written independently for this volume, several interesting connections can

be found among them. So, for example, the essays by Nadler, Della Rocca, and Garrett all end up exploring various dimensions of the "in" relation in Spinoza's philosophy; Rosenthal and Huenemann offer different estimations of how successful Spinoza was in making room for autonomous thought; James, Sorell, and Garber all discuss the power of the imagination and its role in Spinoza's political thought. The collection thus offers broad coverage, plus the virtue of presenting several ideas in different perspectives, both of which are crucial for grasping the wholeness of Spinoza's philosophical vision.

This volume of essays also pays tribute to a scholar who has devoted his career to helping others make better sense of Spinoza's thought. Edwin Curley has been a translator, an interpreter, and a facilitator of fundamental importance. The first volume of his translation, *The Collected Works of Spinoza* (Princeton, 1985), made available, for the first time in English, a critical edition of the *Ethics* along with several other works. It is fair to say that readers who want a more accurate sense of what Spinoza wrote than what Curley offers will need to go and learn Latin and Dutch for themselves (and even so, they will still need to make use of the valuable textual commentary in Curley's edition). Moreover, in *Spinoza's Metaphysics* (Harvard, 1969), *Behind the Geometrical Method* (Princeton, 1988), and in many essays, Curley has developed new and compelling ways to think about Spinoza's metaphysical, ethical, and political projects, ways that have shaped the terrain of contemporary Spinoza scholarship. Finally, Curley has helped build a scholarly bridge across the Atlantic, bringing American and French students of Spinoza into fruitful dialogue with one another.

This overly brief account gestures only toward what Curley has done for Spinoza studies. But his contributions to the history of modern philosophy as a whole are equally impressive. His book, *Descartes Against the Skeptics* (Harvard, 1978), helped situate Descartes's *Meditations* with respect to various kinds of skepticism, and offered (again) a new and compelling interpretation of that work. His edition of Hobbes's *Leviathan* was the first edition in English to incorporate the variations found in the Latin versions of that work. Other essays published by Curley – far too many to mention individually – examine thinkers as diverse as Montaigne, Castellio, Locke, Maimonides, Leibniz, Calvin, and Pufendorf, and topics as diverse as religious toleration, Christian theism, the book of Job, the state of nature, certainty, rationalism, teleology, the soul, personal identity, dreaming, and logic. And that is not yet all; we are assured that there are more works to come.

Each contributor to this volume was eager to do something to honor Curley's long and productive career. This is not only because of his

scholarly contributions, but also because of his scholarly attributes: in both print and in person, Ed Curley is patient, serious, honest, and encouraging. He has helped many scholars, of all ranks, to develop their careers and to enter into productive discussions. He has shown many of us how to approach texts – with serious philosophical intent, abetted by sound historical knowledge and a degree of literary sensitivity. It is with gratitude that we dedicate this volume to him.

CHAPTER 1

Representation and consciousness in Spinoza's naturalistic theory of the imagination

Don Garrett

1 INTRODUCTION

Spinoza identifies the minds or souls of finite things with God's ideas of those things. Margaret Wilson famously suggests that this identification prevents Spinoza from giving an adequate account of the human mind:

> Descartes's position on the mind–body issue is notoriously beset with difficulties. Still, [his] theory of *res cogitantes* does recognize and take account of certain propositions about the mental that seem either self-evidently true or fundamental to the whole concept. These include . . . that the mind (in a straightforward and common sense of the term) *represents* or *has knowledge of* external bodies; that it *is ignorant of* much that happens in "its" body; that having a mind is associated with thinking and being conscious; that mentality is recognizable from behavior of a certain sort, and the absence of mentality from "behavior" of other sorts. Will not Spinoza's theory of "minds" simply *fail to be a theory of the mental* if it carries the denial of all or most of these propositions? More specifically, will it not fail to make sense of the specific phenomena of human mentality by attempting to construe the human mind as just a circumscribed piece of God's omniscience? (Wilson 1980: 111)

This is the primary question that I will try to address: Can Spinoza "recognize and take account of" such "specific phenomena of human mentality" as (i) ignorance of many internal bodily states, (ii) representation of the external world, (iii) consciousness, and (iv) expression in behavior? In order to answer this question, we must solve four puzzles about his theory of the imagination, each corresponding to one of the four phenomena of our primary question. In order to solve these puzzles, in turn, we must first understand some of Spinoza's central doctrines concerning a number of closely related topics – and we must understand an aspect of Spinoza's approach to philosophy that I will call his *incremental naturalism*. Doing so will allow us to see a good deal of his philosophy in a clearer and potentially more attractive light – or at least, so I imagine.

II FOUR PUZZLES ABOUT THE IMAGINATION

Imagination defined

Spinoza defines "imagination" (*imaginatio*) in *Ethics* 2p17s:

> The affections of the human Body whose ideas represent external bodies as present to us, we shall call images of things, even if they do not reproduce the figures of things. And when the Mind regards bodies in this way, we shall say that it imagines.[1]

As this indicates, his use of the term "imagination" is broad enough to include sensation as well as mental imagery and to include modalities of bodily representation that do not represent shape. He goes on to identify *imagination* as the first and lowest of the three kinds of knowledge or cognition (*cognitio*), with the intellect (constituted by distinct and adequate ideas) providing the higher (second and third) kinds of knowledge.[2]

A puzzle about the scope of the imagination

One puzzle about the imagination concerns its seemingly unlimited *scope*. Prior to his initial definition of "imagination," Spinoza asserts in 2p12 that

[1] Translations are those of Curley, in Spinoza 1985.

[2] Thus, at 2p40s, he writes:

> It is clear that we perceive many things and form universal notions:
> I. from singular things which have been represented to us through the senses in a way that is mutilated, confused, and without order for the intellect (see 2p29c); for that reason I have been accustomed to call such perceptions knowledge from random experience;
> II. from signs, e.g., from the fact that, having heard or read certain words, we recollect things, and form certain ideas of them, which are like them, and through which we imagine the things (2p18s). These two ways of regarding things I shall henceforth call knowledge of the first kind, opinion or imagination.
> III. Finally, [we have cognition] from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things (see 2p38c, p39, p39c, and p40). This I shall call reason and the second kind of knowledge.
> IV. In addition to these two kinds of knowledge, there is (as I shall show in what follows) another, third kind, which we shall call intuitive knowledge (*scientia intuitiva*). And this kind of knowing proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things.

Ethics 2p17s treats imagination as the having of a certain kind of idea, while 2p40s2 characterizes it as a way of perceiving or having knowledge; but this does not mark any distinction between senses of *imagination*, since all ideation is perception or knowledge, and vice versa, for Spinoza. See, for example, his use of 1a4 (which concerns "knowledge") in 1p25d. See also his comment about "perception" and "conception" in 2d3, and his very similar account of "four kinds of perception" in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* §§ 18–29.

whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human Mind must be perceived by the human Mind, or there will necessarily be an idea of that thing in the Mind; i.e., if the object of the idea constituting a human Mind is a body, [then] nothing can happen in that body which is not perceived by the Mind.

In the next proposition, he goes on to specify that "the object of the idea constituting the human mind" indeed *is* the human body – with the obvious consequence that nothing can happen in the human body that is not perceived by the human mind.[3] Furthermore, it is clear that this "perception of whatever happens in the human body" must be imagination, rather than intellection.[4] Hence, it seems that, for Spinoza, a human being's mind perceives by way of imagination *everything* that happens in his or her body – including, to borrow Michael Della Rocca's example (1996: 9), each specific chemical reaction in the pancreas.

This result is surprising enough. But it seems that we have not yet reached the limits of imagination. For in the immediately following scholium, Spinoza remarks:

> The things we have shown so far are completely general and do not pertain more to man than to other Individuals, all of which, though in different degrees, are animate. 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. And so, whatever we have said of the idea of the human Body must also be said of the idea of any thing. (2p13s)

Thus, *every* "individual" or "thing" has an idea that is related to that individual in just the way that the human mind is related to the human body; and, at least once (3p1d), he uses the term "minds" to designate these ideas of non-human things.[5] It appears, then, that even individual things whose behavior may seem to express no sentience at all will nevertheless have "minds" and perceive by imagination whatever happens in their

[3] 2p13: "The object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body, or a certain mode of Extension that actually exists, and nothing else."

[4] Spinoza regularly treats his distinction of three kinds of knowledge or cognition as jointly exhaustive of all perception. Yet he holds that the human mind's perception of what occurs in the human body is both inadequate and confused. (According to 2p19, "the human Mind does not know the human Body itself, nor does it know that it exists, except through ideas of affections by which the Body is affected"; and according to 3p27, "the idea of any affection of the human Body does not involve adequate knowledge of the human body itself." Furthermore, according to 3p28, "the ideas of the affections of the human Body, insofar as they are related only to the human Mind, are not clear and distinct, but confused.") And of the three kinds of knowledge, only the first kind, *imagination*, can be either inadequate or confused (2p28s, 2p41d, 5p28d).

[5] In 3p57d, he uses the term "soul" (*anima*), which is also suggested, of course, by his use of "animate" (*animata*) in 2p13s.

"bodies": it seems, for example, that toasters must perceive the flow of electricity to their heating elements. Hence, the first puzzle: How can Spinoza seriously maintain that the phenomenon of imagination is so pervasive as to include perception, by every individual thing, of "whatever happens in" its body?

A puzzle about the representational content of the imagination

A second puzzle concerns the *external representational content* of imagination. According to Spinoza's own definition, *all* imagination involves not merely perception of an *internal* state or "affection," but also representation of an *external body*. Yet the seemingly universal scope of the Spinozistic imagination seems to render this utterly incredible. How can each individual's perception of *each* occurrence within it – seemingly including such occurrences as pancreatic chemical reactions or flows of electricity to heating elements – also serve to represent one or more external bodies? Yet that is just what Spinoza seems to think they do. He asserts in 2p16: "The idea of *any mode* in which the human Body is *affected by external bodies* must *involve* the nature of the human Body and *at the same time the nature of the external body*" (emphasis added). And in 2p17, he adds: "If the human Body is affected with a mode that *involves the nature of an external body*, the human Mind will *regard the same external body as present*" (emphasis added) – which is the very condition that he immediately goes on to define in 2p17s as "imagination." It seems to follow that a perception of any internal bodily state that has been even partly *influenced by* an external body will qualify as an imaginative *representation of* that body on Spinoza's account. But while this may help to explain why so many internal states are supposed to qualify as representations of the external for Spinoza, so minimal a requirement on representation seems (as Wilson urges) not so much to account for external representation as to change the subject to a relation much weaker than genuine representation of the external. Hence, the second puzzle: How can Spinoza suppose that imagination as he conceives it always represents something external?

A puzzle about the consciousness of the imagination

A third puzzle concerns the *consciousness* of imagination. It seems that Spinoza could render the seemingly incredible scope of the imagination less incredible if he could maintain that much of this imagination is unconscious, or at least of a very low degree of consciousness. And he

does make a number of claims about consciousness in the *Ethics*[6] that appear to be restricted to human beings. One might suppose, then, that only human beings – and perhaps some higher animals[7] – have conscious imagination on Spinoza's view.

As Wilson rightly argues, however, this interpretive supposition cannot be maintained. Whenever Spinoza offers a demonstration for a claim that human beings are *conscious of* something, the argument always takes the form of showing simply that *an idea of* that thing is *in* the human mind; and *that* argument, in turn, always appeals ultimately only to features of the human mind that are, according to 2p13s, "completely general and do not pertain more to man than to other Individuals."[8] It seems, then, that if human minds are conscious, so too must be the minds of all other individual things.

Still, when he reaches Part 5 of the *Ethics*, Spinoza does clearly imply that there are at least degrees of consciousness. In 5p31s, he writes, "The more each of us is able to achieve in this [third] kind of knowledge, the more he is conscious of himself and of God, i.e., the more perfect and blessed he is" (see also 5p42s). In 5p39s, he explains further:

He who, like an infant or a child, has a Body capable of very few things, and very heavily dependent on external causes, has a Mind which considered solely in itself is conscious of almost nothing of itself, or of God, or of things. On the other hand, he who has a Body capable of a great many things, has a Mind which considered only in itself is very much conscious of itself, and of God, and of things.

[6] These claims include the following: that "men believe themselves free because they are conscious of their own actions, and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined" (3p2s; see also Appendix to Part 1 and 2p35s); that "the Mind . . . strives, for an indefinite duration, to persevere in its being and it is conscious of this striving it has" (3p9); that "desire is generally related to men insofar as they are conscious of their appetites [so that] *desire* can be defined as *appetite together with consciousness of the appetite*" (3p9s); that "man is conscious of himself through the affections by which he is determined to act" (3p30d); and that "knowledge of good and evil is nothing but an affect of Joy or Sadness, insofar as we are conscious of it" (4p8; see also 4p19d and 4p64d).

[7] In Part 3, Spinoza writes of animals such as horses as having "lusts" (3p57s); and a "lust" is defined as a kind of "love and desire" (3p56s, Definition of the Affects 48). From this it seems to follow (by 3p9s) that a lust consists partly in an "appetite together with consciousness of the appetite," and hence that horses, at least, are also conscious to some extent.

[8] Wilson devotes particular attention to the argument of 3p9d that human beings are conscious of the Mind's striving to persevere in its being. The core of this demonstration is the citation of 2p23 to show that human beings are conscious of the ideas of the affections of their bodies. But 2p23 does not use the term "conscious" at all; rather, it claims that human beings have ideas of the ideas of the affections of the body, and the argument for this claim, in turn, depends on noting that God must have an idea of *each* of his affections *including* the human mind, and an *idea of* any mind must be united to that *mind* in the same way – i.e., by identity – that a *mind* is united to the *body* that is its object. Her special attention to this argument is the result, in part, of the identification of consciousness with having *ideas of ideas* in Curley 1969 (see also Curley 1988: 71–72).

In this life, therefore, we strive especially that the infant's Body may change (as much as its nature allows and assists) into another, capable of a great many things and related to a Mind very much conscious of itself, of God, and of things. We strive, that is, that whatever is related to its memory or imagination is of hardly any moment in relation to the intellect. These passages suggest that differences in degrees of consciousness are grounded in differences of bodily capacity and/or intellectual knowledge.

Yet upon examination, this suggestion does not seem to offer a promising approach to distinguishing degrees of consciousness in the imagination. The appeal to mere bodily capacities or skills of the sort that infants lack seems of doubtful relevance to degrees of consciousness of any kind. And the appeal to differences of intellect – such as greater achievements of "the third kind of knowledge" – seems no more helpful, for two reasons. First, it is not obvious why differences of *intellect* should have any bearing on differences in the consciousness of *imagination*. Second, as Wilson argues, it seems doubtful whether Spinoza's own account of the intellect provides any basis for distinguishing different minds with respect to the contents of their intellects. For according to that account (2pp37–46), the foundation for knowledge of the higher, intellectual kinds lies in certain "common notions" that must be perceived adequately in any act of perception performed by any mind.[9] For example, Spinoza holds that every idea – and hence every idea of imagination, regardless of what mind perceives it – necessarily involves an "adequate and perfect" knowledge of God's essence. So far, then, it seems that the minds of even seemingly inanimate individuals, such as toasters, may well have as many adequate ideas of intellect as do human minds; and, if that is so, then the mere possession of ideas of intellect cannot provide any useful basis for distinguishing degrees of consciousness among things. Thus, the third puzzle: How can Spinoza regard some instances of imagination as more conscious than others?

A puzzle about expression in behavior

A fourth puzzle concerns the *expression in behavior* of imagination. Spinoza appears to hold that all individuals perceive, by way of imagination, whatever happens in them. Perception is a mental state. Yet it seems that many individuals, such as rocks and toasters, never express this or any other

[9] These common notions must be adequately perceived in any act of perception, according to Spinoza, because they are ideas of things that are common to all and are "equally in the part and in the whole," so that they cannot be perceived only incompletely.

mental state in behavior. Hence, the fourth puzzle: How can Spinoza explain why many individuals' mental states, such as imaginative perception, are seemingly never expressed in behavior?

III SOME CENTRAL DOCTRINES AND THE APPROACH OF INCREMENTAL NATURALISM

To resolve these puzzles, it is essential to understand some of Spinoza's central doctrines concerning such topics as inherence, individuality, *conatus*, power of thinking, minds, confusion, and intellection. I will take up these topics in that order.

Inherence

Perhaps the most fundamental relation in Spinoza's metaphysics is the relation of *being in*. Spinoza introduces the relation at the very outset of the *Ethics*, in 1d3 and 1d5, when he defines "substance" as "what is in itself and is conceived through itself" and "modes" as "the affections of a substance, or that which is in another through which it is also conceived.[10] I will use the term "inherence" to designate this relation of being *in* and to distinguish it from the *in* of spatial containment and from the *in* of the relation of parts to wholes.[11]

Although the definition of "mode" indicates that the affections or modes of a substance are in that substance, it is not only substances that can have modes or affections in them.[12] In 2d7, Spinoza defines "singular things" (*res singulares*) as

> things that are finite and have a determinate existence. And if a number of Individuals so concur in one action that together they are all the cause of one effect, I consider them all, to that extent, as one singular thing.

[10] The very first axiom of the *Ethics* (1a1) also concerns this relation: "Whatever is, is either in itself or in another."

[11] It is important to distinguish among these relations because, for Spinoza, the relation of inherence characterizes (non-spatial) thought just as much as it does (spatial) extension, and while everything inheres *in* God (1p15), which is the only substance, God has no real parts at all (1pp12d–15d). I choose the term "inherence" simply because it is commonly used for the relation between modes and substances; I do not mean to suggest that Spinoza's conception of this relation (and its relata) is not highly distinctive; and I especially do not mean to suggest that it involves an unknowable substratum.

[12] In addition, it is not *only* affections or modes that can be *in* something, since, as Spinoza has already indicated in 1d3, a substance is also *in* itself. Furthermore, I have argued (Garrett 2001) that 3p6 should be read literally, as claiming that singular things (which are finite approximations to substance) are *to some extent in* themselves.

Singular things are, of course, affections or modes of God, on Spinoza's view. He nevertheless regularly refers to singular things as being "subjects" (e.g., 3p5, 5a1, Ep 23) and as having affections that are *"in"* them (e.g., 2p13d, 2p22d, 2p38d, 2p39s, 3p52s). Thus, it is evident that he accepts the

Inherence in Singular Things Doctrine: Singular things have modes or affections that inhere in them.

Individuality

Spinoza defines "individual" (*individuum*) (in a definition after 2p13s) as follows:

> When a number of bodies, whether of the same or of different size, are so constrained by other bodies that they lie upon one another, or if they so move, whether with the same degree or different degrees of speed, that they communicate their motions to each other in a certain fixed manner, we shall say that those bodies are united with one another and that they all together compose one body or Individual, which is distinguished from the others by this union of bodies.[13]

It follows from the definitions of "singular thing" and "individual" that every *finite* individual is *also* a singular thing.[14] Hence, these definitions and the *Inherence in Singular Things Doctrine* together entail the

Inherence in Finite Individuals Doctrine: Finite individuals have modes or affections that inhere in them.

Spinoza's definition of the term "individual" suggests that he regards the persistence of an individual complex body through time as consisting not in the sameness of underlying substance but in the persistence of a distinctive pattern of communication of motion among parts. This is confirmed when he concludes (in lemmas 4–7, plus the scholium following 2p13s) from the definition that individuals can undergo replacements of parts, growth and shrinkage, change of direction, change of overall speed, and changes within their parts, so long as the distinctive pattern of

[13] Although this definition specifies that individuals are complex bodies, elsewhere in the *Ethics*, Spinoza uses the term *individual* to characterize not only complex bodies but also their minds (2a3, 2p11d, 2p21d, 2p57d,s).

[14] This is in contrast to the "infinite Individual" having all bodies as its parts, described in the scholium to Lemma 7 following 2p13s; this infinite individual is *not* a singular thing, for singular things are by definition finite. Likewise, some singular things may not be individuals. For a number of individuals "concurring together in one action" may count to that extent as a singular thing but perhaps not as a further individual; and, in addition, singular things, unlike individuals, are not required by definition to be complex.

communication of motion that constitutes their "nature" or "form" is preserved. Thus, he is committed to the

Extended Pattern Preservation Doctrine: The persistence of an individual through time consists not in the sameness of underlying substance but, insofar as it is conceived through extension, in the persistence of a distinctive pattern of communication of motion among parts.

In *Ethics* 2p7, Spinoza affirms the

Parallelism Doctrine: The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.

In the scholium to the proposition, he also affirms the

Mode Identity Doctrine: A mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways (i.e., under the two attributes of extension and thought, respectively).

Thus, Spinoza also holds the

Thinking Pattern Preservation Doctrine: The persistence of an individual through time consists not in the sameness of underlying substance but, insofar as it is expressed and conceived through thought, in the persistence of an idea of a distinctive pattern of communication of motion among parts.

Conatus

Ethics 3p6 states: "Each thing, insofar as it is in itself, strives to persevere in its being." In what follows, I will use Spinoza's term *"conatus"* to designate this striving to persevere in being. His demonstration of this proposition makes it clear that the scope of the proposition includes all singular things. In the demonstration of the immediately following proposition,[15] Spinoza asserts that each thing's *conatus*, or specific striving to persevere in its being, is the thing's *actual essence* and is "the *power of each thing*, *or* the striving by which it (either alone or with others) *does anything, or strives to do anything*" (emphasis added). Thus, Spinoza holds the

Conatus as Power Doctrine: The power of each singular thing is (i.e., consists entirely in) its *conatus*, which is its striving to persevere in its being.

[15] 3p7: "This striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing."

The doctrine that *every* singular thing has some power to persevere in its being may seem surprising; but consider the central case of finite individuals. It is the nature of an individual to communicate motion among its parts in a fixed manner or pattern. But a communication of motion among elements that does not tend to persist cannot be a fixed manner or pattern; and whatever does tend to persist or repeat itself as such a pattern has a nature that serves to explain, at least in part, its persistence under particular circumstances. Take, for example, a rock or a toaster. If force is successfully exerted to move one part of a rock or a toaster, the rest of the rock or toaster will tend to move as well, maintaining contact with the part on which force was originally exerted in such a way that the rock or toaster remains able to continue communicating motion among its parts in its distinctive fashion. Some individual bodies, however, have far more resources than a rock or toaster for maintaining the distinctive patterns of communication of motion that constitute their continued existence. Specifically, some individual bodies have systems that *register* small differences in their environments and *utilize* the registration of those differences in pursuing bodies and circumstances that will be beneficial to their own preservation while avoiding bodies and circumstances that will be detrimental to it. In other words, they have relatively well-developed sensory systems that are well integrated into their self-preservatory activities. Rudimentary self-preservers such as rocks and toasters undergo very little if any increase or decrease in their power to preserve themselves. But bodies with well-developed sensory systems can undergo far more variation in their degree of fitness to preserve themselves – depending on the operational fitness of those sensory systems and of the information-processing and motor systems with which those systems interact.

Spinoza also identifies a thing's *power* with its *perfection*. For example, he defines "joy" (*laetitia*) as "a passion by which the Mind passes to a greater perfection" (3p11s), but he characterizes it equally as one by which "the power of the Mind ... is increased" (3p15c, citing the previous definition as support); and in the same passages he defines "sadness" (*tristitia*) in terms of passage to lesser perfection, while characterizing it equally in terms of decrease in power.[16] And in 2d6, he writes, "By reality and perfection I understand the same thing." Hence he is committed to the following:

Power as Perfection Doctrine: The degree of a singular thing's power is the degree of its perfection, which is also the degree of its reality.

[16] See also 3p53d; Part 3 Appendix, Definition of the Affects 3; and, for confirmation of the general relation between power and perfection, the Preface to Part 4.

It is clear that, for Spinoza, different singular things can have different degrees of perfection-or-reality, of power, and hence of *conatus*. For example, when he affirms in 2p13s (a passage already quoted in part) that all individuals are *animate* "though in different degrees," he goes on to explain these differences precisely in terms of differences of reality and power:

> However, we also cannot deny that ideas differ among themselves, as the objects themselves do, and that one is more excellent than the other, and contains more reality, just as the object of the one is more excellent than the object of the other, and contains more reality. And so to determine what is the difference between the human Mind and the others, and how it surpasses them, it is necessary for us, as we have said, to know the nature of its object, i.e., of the human Body . . . I say this in general, that in proportion as a Body is more capable than others of doing many things at once, and being acted on in many ways at once, its Mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once. And in proportion as the actions of a body depend more on itself alone, and as other bodies concur with it less in acting, so its mind is more capable of understanding distinctly. And from these [truths] we can know the excellence of one mind over the others . . ..

But differences of power, perfection, and *conatus* are not limited to comparisons among different things. From the very existence of joy and sadness, as Spinoza has defined them, it follows that at least some singular things will *themselves* vary through time in the degree of their perfection, their power, and hence their *conatus*. Thus, it is clear that Spinoza is committed to the

Variability of Power Doctrine: Different singular things have different degrees of power, perfection, and *conatus*; and the same singular thing may undergo increase or decrease in its power, perfection, and *conatus*.

Power of thinking

Despite the *Mode Identity Doctrine*, God's attributes, such as thought and extension, are causally independent of one another according to Spinoza – that is, any effect produced in a given attribute must be produced through a cause belonging to that attribute (2p6). It is a mistake, on Spinoza's view, to suppose that an act of thought causes a bodily motion as such, or vice versa; as a mode of extension, a given mode can only cause another mode of extension, while the idea of the first mode, as a mode of thought, causes the idea of the second mode. Just as God exists through multiple attributes constituting his essence, which is also his power (1p34), so too a singular thing is a mode of multiple attributes through which is conceived that singular thing's actual essence – i.e., its *conatus* (3p7) – which is also *its*

power. Since all power is God's power, the power of a singular thing is an expression or share of God's power. Spinoza calls God's power as expressed and conceived under the attribute of thought "power of thinking" (*cogitandi potentia*) (2p1s, 2p7c, 2p21s); and, not surprisingly, he also uses this term very frequently to describe the power of each singular thing as that power is expressed and conceived in the attribute of thought (2p49s, 3p2s, 3p11, 3p12d, 3p15d, and 3p28d). This power of thinking is the power by which ideas produce other ideas – ideas that follow from them. Thus, Spinoza holds the

Power of Thinking Doctrine: The power of a singular thing, as it is expressed under the attribute of thought, is its power of thinking.

From this plus the *Conatus as Power Doctrine* and the *Power as Perfection Doctrine*, it follows that a singular thing's power of thinking is simply its *conatus* and perfection (and reality) insofar as these are conceived under the attribute of thought. By the *Variability of Power Doctrine*, it follows that different minds can have different degrees of power of thinking, and the same mind can have different degrees of power of thinking at different times. This is so even though all of these minds of singular things are themselves ideas in God. Thus, some of *God's* ideas have more power of thinking than do others, and they can increase or decrease in their power of thinking. The same is true of particular ideas in *human* and other finite minds.[17] The more power an idea has to determine how the singular thing whose idea it is does or does not exercise its power or *conatus* at a given time, the greater will be the power of thinking of that idea in that particular mind at that particular time – for it is only or chiefly through contributing to the determination of the strength and direction of an individual's *conatus* that an idea can exert power *in* that individual. Thus, Spinoza is committed to the

Variable Power of Ideas Doctrine: Particular ideas in the mind of a singular thing may have more or less power of thinking than other ideas in the same mind, and they may increase or decrease in power of thinking at different times, depending at least in part on the idea's power for determining *how* the singular thing strives for self-preservation.

As Spinoza indicates in 4p5, the power of thinking possessed by an externally caused idea in a particular mind is partly a result of the mind's own power and partly a result of the power of that idea's external cause.

[17] For example, most of the early propositions of *Ethics* Part 4 (up through 4p18) largely concern the circumstances under which particular ideas – namely, the affects or emotions – have greater or lesser power; and 4p44s explains how it is that *especially powerful* affects can lead the mind to think more of one thing than of other things.

Minds

Human and non-human minds have ideas that are "in" them; and yet everything is "in" God. Hence, it follows that some ideas are in human minds *and* in God; and Spinoza confirms this by writing of the same ideas "as they are in the human mind" and "as they are in God." As Della Rocca (1996) has argued convincingly, the truth, adequacy, and representational content of an idea can be partly determined for Spinoza by what other ideas are in the same mind with it, so that the same idea can be true and adequate in God while being at the same time false and inadequate in a human mind, distinctly representing its object in God while confusedly representing many things in a human mind. Furthermore, because the common notions are ideas of things present everywhere and equally in the part and in the whole, these ideas must, on Spinoza's account, literally exist *in* many different minds at the same time. In addition, because the human body is composed of bodies that are its parts, the human mind is, by the *Parallelism Doctrine* (2p7) and the *Mode Identity Doctrine* (2p7s), composed of the ideas of those parts, as Spinoza affirms in 2p15;[18] and since individuals can have parts within parts, it follows that the same idea can be a *part of* more than one mind. There is no reason why an idea need have exactly the same degree of power in relation to each of the minds or thinkers that it is in, or of which it is a part. On the contrary, since the minds that have the common notions evidently include the minds of philosophers and the minds of their toasters, it seems impossible to deny that the common notions themselves will occur with different power of thinking relative to different minds. Thus, it seems that Spinoza must accept the

Differential Power of Thinking Doctrine: The same idea may have greater or less power of thinking as it exists in, or as part of, different thinkers or minds.

Confusion

In Cartesian psychology, the *confusion* or *confusedness* of ideas is to be contrasted with their *distinctness*, and Spinoza follows this usage (2p28, 2p28s, 2p29, 2p36, 3p9, 3p58d, 4p1s, 4p59, 5p3d). Confusion, he holds, is a "privation of knowledge" (2p35) that prevents the mind from distinguishing things that are different (1p8d, 2p41s1). He regards all ideas of imagination

[18] Note that 2p15 is derived not from 2p12 – which concerns affections rather than parts – but from 2p7 and 2p13.

as at least somewhat confused (2p40s2), but he does recognize *degrees* of confusion and distinctness in the imagination (2p40s1, 3p53d, 3p55d, 4d6, 5p6d), and he characterizes *relative distinctness* of imagination as allowing what is imagined to be distinguished from other things (see especially 2p40s1, 3p55d, and 4d6).

As we have seen, Spinoza asserts (in 2p16d) that "the idea of any mode in which the human Body is affected by external bodies must involve the nature of the human Body and at the same time the nature of the external body." His grounds are that the conception of an effect always (by 1a4) involves the nature of the cause. Della Rocca (1996: 57–64) has inferred that every idea of imagination is confused, for Spinoza, at least in part because it represents both an internal state of the body *and* the external cause of that state in such a way that the mind cannot distinguish between them. Even if this is correct, however, inability to distinguish between the internal state and an external cause is not the *only* aspect of confusion present in imagination. For one thing, Spinoza holds that an idea of imagination owes part of its nature to the *nature of the human body itself* and part of its nature to *the nature of the parts of the human body* (2p28d), as well as owing part of its nature to external causes, even though the idea often does not allow the mind to distinguish these contributions. Furthermore, an idea of imagination does not represent *any* of the finite causes of its corresponding bodily state adequately, but rather in a way that *only* reflects that cause's ability to produce the particular state of the body in question. Yet a given state of the body can ordinarily be produced by things that otherwise differ in many respects; for example, the same bruise could be produced by a rock or a toaster, and the same state of the auditory processing areas of the brain could be produced by a live voice or a recording. Thus, an idea of imagination can also be confused because it does not itself allow the mind to distinguish among any of the various alternatives that could equally have produced the same effect. Since greater degrees of distinctness involve greater ability to distinguish that which is actually perceived from other things, degrees of confusion will be correlated with the *variety* of alternative causes among which the mind cannot distinguish. Hence, Spinoza accepts the

Causal Confusion Doctrine: An idea is *confused* in a mind to the extent that it represents its object's causes in a way that does not allow them to be distinguished from one another or from other possible causes.

This helps to explain why an idea's distinctness or confusion can vary depending on the mind or thinker that it is in – for example, being

confused in a human mind and yet distinct in God – for the presence of other ideas in the same mind may allow the making of distinctions that could not otherwise be made.

Intellection

Although persistence through time or duration is one kind of *persevering in being*, it is not the only kind, nor even the most important kind. Spinoza argues in Part 4 of the *Ethics* (4pp26d–28d) that the mind strives to understand and that understanding God is the mind's highest good. Yet "good" is defined as "what is useful to . . . preserving our being" (4p8d), and many individual things with little understanding seem to endure far longer than the individuals whose understanding is greatest. This seeming paradox is resolved in Part 5, where Spinoza argues that the intellect consists of ideas that are *eternal*, ideas that can nonetheless come to constitute a greater part of one's own mind the more one understands by the second and third kinds of knowledge. Thus, Spinoza also holds the

Perseverance through Intellection Doctrine: Development of the intellect constitutes a kind of persevering in being that consists in making a greater part of one's mind eternal.

Incremental naturalism

An especially important aspect of Spinoza's approach to philosophy is what I will call his incremental naturalism. By "naturalism," I mean the project of fully integrating the study and understanding of human beings, including the human mind, into the study and understanding of nature, so that human beings are not contrasted with nature but are instead understood as entities ultimately governed by the same general principles that govern all other things.[19] By "incrementalism," I mean the methodology of treating important explanatory properties and relations not as simply present-or-absent but rather as properties and relations that are pervasively present to

[19] Spinoza's most memorable endorsement of naturalism, in this sense, occurs in the beginning of the Preface to Part 3 of the *Ethics*, where he describes those whose approach he opposes:

> Most of those who have written about the Affects, and men's way of living, seem to treat, not of natural things, which follow the common laws of nature, but of things which are outside of nature. Indeed, they seem to conceive man in nature as a dominion within a dominion. For they believe that man disturbs, rather than follows, the order of nature . . .

greater or lesser degrees.[20] His incremental naturalism is simply the result of applying this incremental approach to the project of naturalism: it consists in his seeking to explain such crucial elements of human life as intentionality, desire, belief, understanding, and consciousness as already present in their most rudimentary (and perhaps even initially unrecognizable) forms throughout all of nature, so that humanity can be seen as a complex and sophisticated expression of nature rather than as something arising from the introduction of non-natural elements. With an understanding of this aspect of Spinoza's approach to philosophy in place, we are now in a position to resolve the four puzzles concerning the imagination's scope, representative content, consciousness, and expression in behavior.

IV THE FOUR PUZZLES RESOLVED

The scope of the imagination

The first puzzle was this: How can Spinoza seriously maintain that the phenomenon of imagination is so pervasive as to include perception, by every individual thing, of "whatever happens in" its body? There can be no question that Spinoza does commit himself to this doctrine in 2pp12–17s. It is a consequence of his monism and his conception of God as infinitely thinking, which together lead him to identify God's ideas of things with the minds of those things. But it would be a mistake to suppose that the doctrine is in any way an unwanted or unintended consequence for Spinoza, for it constitutes a key element in his program of incremental naturalism.

Of course, if the doctrine is to have plausibility as well as programmatic value, Spinoza must be able to explain why it is not simply *belied* by the facts of everyday experience. However, he has three resources available for doing so: the distinction among different senses of "in," the distinction among degrees of imaginative confusion, and the distinction among degrees of power of thinking. The first of these allows him to *limit the scope* of "everything that happens in." The second and third allow him to *minimize the force* of "perceives."

In claiming that each thing perceives everything that happens *in* it, Spinoza is not committed to the view that each thing perceives everything that occurs within its outer spatial boundaries. To take an obvious example, one need not perceive what occurs in an object that has been swallowed or

[20] Spinoza's incrementalism is evident in, among other things, the prevalence of the locution "insofar as" (*quatenus*) in his writing.

implanted under one's skin, if what occurs in that object has not been incorporated into the functioning of the structure of parts communicating motion in a distinctive manner that constitutes one's own body. Spinoza's argument in 2p12d that the mind perceives everything that happens in the body concerns the "in" of inherence, not the "in" of spatial containment. This is confirmed by Spinoza's later applications of 2p12, all of which concern perception of *affections* of the body – i.e., qualities that inhere *in* a body, not things that are *within the boundaries of* a body. A thing must perceive any change of its *affections*, on Spinoza's account, for that is a change *in* the thing, in the relevant sense. But many changes may occur within the external boundaries of an individual that are not such changes *in* the individual.

Of course, as previously noted, Spinoza also holds that, just as an individual body is composed of bodies that are its parts, the mind of that body is composed of the ideas of those parts (2p15). Hence, ideas of bodily parts are "in" the mind in the non-inherence sense that they are parts of the whole; and thus any change to an idea of a part of a human body is also a change to an idea that is a part of the human mind. Nevertheless, Spinoza asserts in 2p24 that

> the parts composing the human Body pertain to the essence of the Body only insofar as they communicate their motions to one another in a certain fixed manner . . . and not insofar as they can be considered as Individuals, without relation to the human Body. For the parts of the human Body are highly complex Individuals, whose parts can be separated from the human body and communicate their motions to other bodies in another manner, while the human Body completely preserves its nature and form.

Thus, Spinoza need not maintain that every change involving a part of the body – or even a complete replacement of one part by another – would make any difference to the qualitative character of a mind's perceptions, so long as the parts themselves were playing the same role, in the same way, in the functioning of that body. A watch may, considered as a watch, undergo little or no qualitative change as the result of incidental changes to or complete replacement of one of its parts. In a similar way, although one's mind includes as a part some idea of one's pancreas, and the ideas of each part of the pancreas make some contribution, as parts, to the idea of the pancreas that is a part of one's mind, the *qualitative character* of the ideas of one's mind may change very little or perhaps not at all in response to some changes – or even replacements – that occur to parts of the pancreas. A change to a part of a body is something that happens "in" the body, in the sense relevant to Spinoza's claim in 2p12, only to the extent that it also constitutes a change in affections of the body itself.

Second, a mind's perception of what happens in its body may be very highly *confused*.[21] To the extent that a given state or affection of the body is something that any number of very different causes would have the power to produce, the mind will perceive the cause of that affection only very confusedly, without an ability to distinguish among these alternative causes. Consider, for example, the change in internal state that occurs when an apple is dropped and becomes slightly bruised. This state is, according to Spinoza, due partly to the nature of the apple, as an individual self-preserving mechanism; partly to the nature of its parts; and partly to the external causes that operated on it. But there are *many* combinations of internal and external causes that could produce this same state or affection; merely from the bruise, one could discern very little about its causes, either internal or external. Thus, the idea consisting in the perception of this state in the "mind" of the apple will be *extremely* confused – as contrasted with, for example, the complex and intricately structured state produced in the visual cortex of a mammal by exposure to a greengrocer dropping an apple in plain daylight. Yet, compared to most of the slow internal changes in an apple, the apple's perception of its bruise, poor as it is, must no doubt constitute one of its *least* confused (i.e., most distinct) imaginative perceptions.

Third, a mind's perception of what happens in its body may have very little *power of thinking*. Rudimentary individuals such as rocks and toasters have very few ways of utilizing their internal states to persevere in their being, and hence they have very little *conatus* and very little power of thinking for *any* of their perceptions. Humans and animals with very sophisticated sensory and information processing systems, in contrast, have much greater *conatus* and hence power of thinking; but many of the internal states or affections of even a very powerful individual (for example, the pancreatic states of a human being) will be capable of only very minimal roles in shaping or determining the direction of that individual's exertion of power; hence, the perceptions of *those* states or affections will occur, in those minds, with very little power of thinking. It should be emphasized that *degree of power of thinking* is not the same thing as *degree of distinctness*. For an idea that is very confused with respect to representation of its causes – for example, a state of intense but nameless dread – may still have very considerable power of thinking, while an idea that is very distinct with respect to representation of its cause – such as the pictorial internal state of a high-resolution digital camera – may still have very little power of

[21] Curley 1988: 72 also mentions the inadequacy or confusion of many ideas as a factor ameliorating the incredibility of 2p12.

thinking, because it is capable of little in determining the individual's striving to persevere in being.

Representational content

The second puzzle was this: How can Spinoza suppose that imagination as he conceives it always represents something external? While this supposition might appear to involve a merely naïve or simplistic view of representation, it should instead be viewed as an application of incremental naturalism to the relation of representation. Spinoza is not trying to replace a relation of genuine representation with the simpler relation of "being an effect of." Rather, he is maintaining that a given internal state of a thing *represents* its external cause insofar as its production by that cause is able to play a role in determining the self-preserving behavior of a self-preserving individual. The pervasiveness of representation then follows from three further claims: (i) that every finite individual must tend, to some extent, to preserve itself; (ii) that even at the level of very rudimentary individuals, every affection of an individual has the capacity to play *some* role in determining the individual's self-preserving behavior; and (iii) that every affection of an individual involves *to some extent* the nature of the external causes of that state. At higher levels of "perfection," some affections of some individuals – such as human beings – owe a great deal of their very specific natures to very specific features of their external causes in a way that allows them to represent their causes quite *distinctly*; and some of these affections have a great deal of *power* to determine the sophisticated and highly discriminating self-preservatory behavior of the individuals in ways that are very sensitive to specific features of their causes. Since plants and animals occupy various points on the scale between rudimentary individuals and human beings, representation is not, on Spinoza's account, a sudden addition to nature at a certain level of complexity. Rather, it is a development and articulation of a phenomenon that is already present even in the least complex of individuals, all of which are self-preserving mechanisms to at least some extent. How distinctly or confusedly representation will occur depends, of course, on how specifically or narrowly an idea serves to distinguish its real cause from other things.[22] How *powerfully*

[22] *Error* occurs when an idea is confused between several possible causes *and* the idea causes the mind to act in a way that would tend to be self-preserving if one of the other possible causes had been the actual cause. Although there is not sufficient space to develop this idea here, I believe it is the key to explaining how mere confusion and inadequacy can give rise to actual *error*.

representation will occur depends on the power of the idea in determining self-preserving activity.

Consciousness

The third puzzle was this: How can Spinoza regard some instances of imagination as more conscious than others? Given the scope of the Spinozistic imagination, his willingness to infer propositions of the form "M is conscious of O" from propositions of the form "M has an idea of O" certainly commits him to the view that all finite individuals are conscious to at least some degree. Once again, however, this is not an embarrassment to Spinoza. Rather, it is a result that is entirely in accordance with his incremental naturalism: he intends to place human consciousness high on a scale that has its beginnings at the most rudimentary level of nature. Furthermore, he can do so, in his system, simply by identifying degrees of *consciousness* with degrees of *power of thinking*. This identification is almost irresistibly implied by the conjunction of 2p13s with 5p39s, both of which have been cited previously. In the former passage, he claims that a mind's degree of "reality" or perfection – which is its *power of thinking* – increases "in proportion as a Body is more capable than others of doing many things at once" and is "more capable of understanding distinctly." Similarly, in the latter passage, he claims that an individual's mind is *more conscious* to the extent that it has "a Body capable of a great many things" and has an imagination that is "of little moment in relation to the intellect." *Ethics* 5p31 strengthens the identification of consciousness with perfection and power: "The more each of us is able to achieve in this [third] kind of knowledge, the more he is conscious of himself and of God, i.e., the more *perfect* and blessed he is" (emphasis added).[23]

This identification of degrees of consciousness with degrees of power of thinking allows Spinoza to meet many of the explanatory demands on his theory of consciousness. First, it can explain why some minds enjoy a higher degree of consciousness than others, and why a given mind can increase or decrease in consciousness – for, as we have seen, power of thinking varies in just this way. This is because some individuals are more powerful self-preservers than others (i.e., are more capable of producing

[23] It is worth emphasizing also that Spinoza's explanation, in the Definition of the Affects, for his inclusion of the phrase "from any given affection of it" in the definition of "desire" seems to indicate that this phrase allows the inference that desire is *conscious* precisely because it explains how desire derives its *power*.

greater effects through efforts at self-preservation); and an individual's *conatus*, or power for self-preservation, can increase or decrease through time – especially if the individual is a highly complex one with highly complex self-preservatory systems. Second, it can explain why some ideas are more conscious than others in a given mind, and why the degree of consciousness of an idea in a given mind can increase or decrease; for, as we have seen, power of thinking varies in this way as well. This is because some ideas can exert more power on the determination of an individual's self-preservatory activity than others, and an idea's degree of power to do so may change with other changes in the individual. For example, an idea of an object may suddenly become more powerful, and so more conscious, when it is recognized as the idea of a dangerous object. Third, it can explain why both confused and distinct ideas can be conscious; for either kind of idea *may* play a powerful role in determining self-preservatory activity. Fourth, it can explain why relatively distinct ideas are more *likely* to have higher degrees of consciousness than relatively confused ideas; for the more distinct an idea is, the better fitted it is likely to be for guiding the sophisticated self-preservatory activity of individuals that have a high level of power of thinking. Fifth, it can explain why high degrees of consciousness should be correlated, as Spinoza says they are, with "having a body that is capable of many things at once"; for only individuals that have such bodies will have high degrees of *conatus*, which are expressed, under the attribute of thought, as high degrees of power of thinking. Finally, it can explain why higher degrees of consciousness are correlated with the development of the intellect; for although Spinoza's theory requires (as Wilson argues) that all individuals *have* the intellectual ideas that constitute the common notions, those individuals who succeed in having these ideas with greater power of thinking thereby achieve the highest kind of power for perseverance in being, because they maximize the parts of their minds that are eternal.

Expression in behavior

The fourth and final puzzle was this: How can Spinoza explain why many individuals' mental states such as imaginative perception are seemingly never expressed in their behavior? Of course, the causal independence of the attributes in Spinoza's metaphysics guarantees that no individual's ideas strictly *cause* that individual's bodily behavior; for Spinoza, ideas cause only other ideas (which may or may not be in the same mind as their causes). But bodily behavior can certainly be caused by bodily states that

parallel (and by the *Mode Identity Doctrine* are identical to) an individual's mental states, and in that sense bodily behavior might be said to "express" mental states such as imaginative perception. Once we understand Spinoza's theory of the universality of *conatus*, however, we see that all individuals engage in at least *some* self-preservatory bodily activity that is a result of their *conatus* or perfection, and hence in activity that expresses some power of thinking. We fail to recognize the tendencies of rudimentary individuals to resist destruction and to persist in their distinct patterns of communicating motion as tendencies to self-preservatory activity only because the behavior is so minimal and undiscriminating. If Spinoza is right, however, it is nonetheless the rudimentary behavior of which more recognizably intentional activity is a sophisticated development.

V CONCLUSION

I conclude that Spinoza has surprisingly rich resources for answering Wilson's original question: namely, the question of whether he can identify the mind of a thing with God's idea of that thing while still "recognizing and taking account of" the occurrence of such "specific phenomena of human mentality" as ignorance of many bodily states, representation of the external world, consciousness, and expression in behavior. The identification itself results, in part, from his joint commitment to substance monism and a requirement that God be infinitely thinking. While some of his readers may well share his commitment to one or the other of these two doctrines, perhaps very few will share his commitment to both. If the interpretation I have offered is correct, however, Spinoza was encouraged by his identification of minds with God's ideas to develop the outlines of a striking incremental naturalism concerning perception, representation, consciousness, and intentional behavior that may prove of considerable independent interest to philosophical naturalists as they seek to understand the human mind and imagination.[24]

[24] I gratefully acknowledge the comments of Edwin Curley on the earliest version of this paper, presented in a symposium at the Eastern Division Meetings of the American Philosophical Association in December 2001. I also wish to thank Béatrice Longuenesse, Martin Lin, Michael LeBuffe, Aaron Garrett, and audiences at the University of Toronto, Georgetown University, Boston University, and Texas A&M University.

CHAPTER 2

Rationalism run amok: representation and the reality of emotions in Spinoza

Michael Della Rocca

Everytime we say goodbye,
I die a little. Cole Porter

Consider two different dimensions along which a rationalist account of the emotions might develop.

According to the first dimension, emotions are themselves expressions of reason; they are, or at least can be, a rational, reasoned response to a state of affairs. I will (vaguely) describe this (vague) rationalist view as the view that emotions are inherently rational.

According to the second dimension of a rationalist account of the emotions, emotions – though they may be in some measure rational, even inherently rational – are somehow inferior to the unfettered operation of reason. Perhaps, on this view, emotions cloud our judgment and lead us to misapprehend the truth and to act in ways that are – in one way or another – contrary to reason. I will (vaguely) describe this (vague) rationalist view as the view that emotions are inferior to reason.

These two rationalist dimensions are, of course, not exhaustive: there are, perhaps, many other ways to articulate a rationalist approach to the emotions. Further, these two dimensions are compatible: one can hold that the emotions are inherently rational, but not perfectly so *and* that other, more purely rational, responses to a given situation are somehow superior. Finally, these views are independent in that one can hold one view without holding the other.[1]

I won't attempt to pin either of these rationalist views (or their denials) on particular philosophers, other than Spinoza. That can only get me into

[1] Thus one may see emotions as inherently rational and as not inferior to purely rational responses and even as superior to purely rational responses. This combination of views would be, on our spectrum, the most positive take on the emotions. Conversely, one may hold that emotions are inferior to purely rational responses and that they are not themselves rational at all. This combination of views would be the most negative about the emotions.

trouble. However, I believe that these views do provide a helpful framework for understanding the way Spinoza's rationalism drives his treatment of the emotions. My contention will be that Spinoza holds extremely rationalist versions of the view that emotions are inherently rational and of the view that they are somehow inferior to reason. Thus Spinoza offers an account of the emotions that is, at once, very positive in one respect *and* very negative in another. At each stage, Spinoza's positions are dictated by his commitment to the Principle of Sufficient Reason (hereafter: "the PSR"), the view that each thing that exists has an explanation, is intelligible.

Besides tying Spinoza's account of the emotions to the PSR, one of my goals in this paper is to lay the groundwork for a new interpretation of the connection between causation and inherence or the relation whereby a thing is *in* another thing or is *in* itself. As we will see, Spinoza's views on the rationality of the emotions turn on his deeply rationalist views on causation and inherence. An important advantage of this reading is that it leads to a surprising, new defense of a central aspect of Ed Curley's enormously influential and controversial understanding of the relation between substance and mode in Spinoza.

Before I begin my analysis of Spinoza's views, two points about terminology. First, so far I have spoken of the emotions, but this is not Spinoza's preferred term. The term he most frequently uses is "affect" (*affectus*).[2] For reasons that will emerge, this is a particularly apt term and so I will from now on speak of affects.

Second, when I say in my title that rationalism has run amok, I am gesturing not at my own assessment, but at what I take to be prevailing opinion. I realize that the extremely rationalist views I find in Spinoza will seem, to many readers, to be, at best, crazy. But I don't find them crazy. In fact, I find them, in many ways, rather congenial. How far I'm willing to go with Spinoza here, I'm not quite prepared to say, but I do think that if we are interested in the emotions – the affects – it behooves us to explore the often quite powerful reasons for Spinoza's "crazy," rationalist views about them.

I THREE GRADES OF RATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

In this first part of the paper, I will show how Spinoza's commitment to the PSR dictates three ways in which affects are the operations of reason.

[2] He does on occasion use the term "*commotio*" which can be translated as emotion. See the explanation of 3da27 and 5p2.

Affects as representational

Let's have a crash course in Spinoza's metaphysics. For Spinoza, there is only one thing in the full-blown sense, only one substance, and that is God or nature. Spinoza has an absolutely wonderful argument for this view which I think is largely right and deeply rationalist, but unfortunately we must pass over that in silence.[3] The finite objects that we know and love are what Spinoza calls *modes* of the one substance. These modes depend on or are conceived through, and in some sense are *in*, the substance. I'll return to the dependence of modes on substance later. Modes are grouped into different kinds or fall under what Spinoza calls different attributes of the one substance. Among infinitely many others, there are the attributes of thought and of extension. Individual minds and the mental states that minds have are modes of thought, and individual bodies and bodily states are modes of extension. It is a fundamental tenet of Spinoza's metaphysics that, whereas all modes depend on the one substance, no mode of one attribute depends on or interacts with modes of another attribute. Thus there are no mental–physical causal or dependence relations for Spinoza. This explanatory separation is central to Spinoza's critique of Cartesian interactionism, and it, like Spinoza's substance monism itself, is deeply grounded in Spinoza's rationalism. There's another beautiful story to tell here, though not quite as beautiful, in my opinion, as the story of substance monism. But, again, I must refrain.[4]

Despite the lack of interaction between the mental and the extended, Spinoza argues that there is a thoroughgoing parallelism between modes of thought and modes of extension: as Spinoza puts it in E 2p7, the order and connection of ideas (or modes of thought) is the same as the order and connection of things (which include modes of extension). This controversial doctrine too has a fine rationalist pedigree which I cannot go into here. Instead let's look into the way parallelism manifests itself in the case of my mind and my body.

For Spinoza, my mind is a mode of thought, and, in fact, is simply an idea, an idea in God's intellect.[5] My mind is, if you will, an idea in God's mind. This idea is a complex idea, made up of many "smaller" ideas in God's intellect. There is, for Spinoza, nothing more to the mind than these ideas (see, especially, 2p11, 2p15).

[3] I analyze this argument in Della Rocca 2002.
[4] I explore Spinoza's explanatory barrier between the attributes in Della Rocca 1996.
[5] Later, I'll see Spinoza as offering a crucial modification of this claim.

For Spinoza, ideas as such represent things, they are of things: Spinoza specifies in 2d3 that an idea is "a concept of the mind." What do the ideas that constitute my mind represent? Spinoza holds that each idea or mode of thought represents the mode of extension that is parallel to it. The mode of extension parallel to my mind is simply my body. And the modes of extension parallel to each of the constituent ideas in my mind are just the states of my body.[6] So all my mind represents are my body and its states. Spinoza does hold that I am able to represent things outside my body, but I do so by representing a state of my body that is caused by other, outside bodies. Because, for Spinoza, effects are represented in terms of their causes – a crucial point to which I will return – in representing certain bodily states of mine, i.e. in having as part of my mind an idea that represents this bodily state, I am thereby also representing some external body that causally interacts with my body.

Take an idea in my mind that enables me to represent a bodily state and some external cause of that bodily state. Because this idea is at once in my mind and in God's broader, all-encompassing mind, we may ask not only what this idea is a representation of insofar as it is in my mind, but also what it is a representation of insofar as it is in God's mind. As we will see, the representational content of this idea insofar as it is in my mind differs from its content insofar as it is in God's mind. This is what I call the mind-relativity of content, and it has intriguing and, indeed, drastic implications for the metaphysical status of the affects, as we'll see later in the paper.

With this metaphysical background, let's approach the affects. Each body and mind, each mode, has what Spinoza calls a certain power of acting. This is the power to do things of a certain kind. I or my body now has the ability to lift, say, a 20-pound weight, but I don't have the ability to lift a 200-pound weight. This is power of acting (or the lack of it) on the extended level. On the mental level, my mind has the power to have whatever idea is parallel to (and is of) my lifting 20 pounds, but does not have the ability to have whatever idea is parallel to my lifting 200 pounds. I can do exercises which may give me the power to lift 200 pounds after all. If I do so, then my bodily power of acting would increase in this respect and there would be a corresponding increase in mental power of acting.

[6] The parallel modes also include parts of my body and events that take place in my body. But I will focus primarily on bodily states. In fact, it's not clear that Spinoza would recognize any sharp distinction between states, parts, and events. See the explanation of 3da1: "by an affection of the human essence we understand *any constitution* of that essence" (my emphasis).

Here is where the affects come in. Spinoza offers this definition:

> By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time the ideas of these affections.[7] (3d3)

We can see, right away, why Spinoza prefers the term "affect" to the term "emotion." The phenomenon Spinoza is considering is fundamentally one in which a mind has certain *affections*, is *affected* either from without or from within, and so the term "affect" is more suggestive of the notion Spinoza wants to convey.

In this vein, Spinoza speaks of joy as "a man's passage from a lesser to a greater perfection" (3da2). By perfection it is clear that Spinoza means power of acting.[8] Similarly, sadness is the passage to a lesser power of acting (3da3). These definitions are in terms of a *man's* power of acting, and so, given that, for Spinoza, a man "consists of a mind and a body" (2p13c), the transition involved in joy (and sadness) is here regarded as a mental transition and a parallel physical transition.

However, Spinoza often speaks of joy and sadness in specifically mental terms as the *mind's* transition to a greater or lesser power of acting (3p11s), and he is thus often willing to see joy as specifically a mental phenomenon despite the fact that there is a parallel extended phenomenon. Because we are here interested in the connection between affects, emotions, and *reason*, and because reason is, for Spinoza, a mental phenomenon, I will follow Spinoza in emphasizing the mental aspect of joy, sadness and affects in general.

So, considered mentally, joy involves a transition from one idea in my mind to another idea in my mind, from one representation of a bodily state to another. In this way, joy is fundamentally representational. Similarly for sadness.

Joy and sadness are two of the three primary affects for Spinoza. The other is desire which, on the mental level, is simply the mind's tendency or striving to go from one idea or representation to another. Thus the crucial aspect of desire is also representational.[9]

For Spinoza, desire, joy, and sadness are the primary affects in that all other affects – fear, hope, lust, anger, envy, pity, etc. – are constituted out of these three. Thus love is a joy accompanied by the idea of an external

[7] Translations are those in Spinoza 1985.

[8] See the way Spinoza moves from talking about power of acting in 3p11 to talking about perfection when he defines "joy" in 3p11s.

[9] For more details regarding desire in particular, see 3p9s and 3da1.

cause. Pity is "a sadness, accompanied by the idea of an evil which has happened to another whom we imagine to be like us" (3da18). At bottom all affects are representational, as Spinoza stresses by offering his general definition of the affects in terms of ideas:

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

I want to take this occasion in which we have the general definition before us to flag an important complication. Spinoza here offers a general definition of affects as *passive* states, as passions. But this is not, by Spinoza's lights, a fully general characterization of the affects, because he does elsewhere allow and even insist that there can be affects that are not passions, but actions of the mind. If the transition that is joy or sadness is caused from outside the human mind, or if the tendency that is desire has its origin in some external object, then the affect is a passion (3d3). However, Spinoza indicates that there can be affects that are not externally caused in this way. These affects would be actions of the mind. The possibility of active affects is explicitly opened up in the second part of 3d3: "If we can be the adequate cause of any of these affections [which are affects], I understand by the affect an action; otherwise a passion." Spinoza later asserts that we do in fact have affects that are active (3p58). As he stresses here, sadness can never be an action because nothing can, on its own, bring about a decrease in its power of acting. This is an implication of Spinoza's *conatus* doctrine according to which each thing strives to persevere. But, as he explains here, joy and desire can each be actions of the mind. Whether Spinoza is justified in claiming that we can be actively affected is a difficulty to which I shall briefly return.

But the crucial point here is that the affects are representational for Spinoza. Further, as Curley has elegantly explained, Spinoza tends to regard these representations as propositional.[10] As propositional ideas, affects can thus be true or false, justified or unjustified. In other words, affects as representational are susceptible to rational assessment. For example, my love for Henrietta is constituted in part by the thought that she has benefited me, and if I am in fact unjustified in thinking that she has, then

[10] See, e.g., the way in which in his general definition of the affects at the end of Part 3, Spinoza defines an affect as an idea by which the mind *affirms* something of the body. See also Curley 1975.

one can say that the love I feel toward her is unjustified.[11] The representationality of affects is the first grade of rational involvement.

Why does Spinoza think that affects are representational (and thus rational)? I'll take up this question after presenting the second grade of rational involvement.

Affects as only representational

The second grade of rational involvement stems from the first. Not only are affects representational, but, for Spinoza, they are *only* representational. There is nothing more to an affect than a representation of some state of affairs together with the relevant transitions between such representations. In particular, for Spinoza, there is no qualitative character of affects that is not entirely a matter of representational content. Thus take joy: this is simply a passage from one representation to another. The latter representation is simply a representation of the body's greater power of acting. There is no additional quale of joy or, if there is a quale, the quale is to be understood fully in representational terms. One might say that to appeal, as Spinoza does, only to representations is to miss the essence of joy, the *feeling* of joy; mere representation is just too cold-blooded to be feeling. One might say this, but this is precisely what Spinoza denies, and we'll see that and why he does so in a moment.

This nothing-but-representations view of the affects is the second grade of rational involvement. If affects are not only representational, but also *purely* representational, then there is nothing in affects that cannot be evaluated for truth or falsity, nothing that is not subject to justification or lack of justification. If there is, contra Spinoza, an irreducibly qualitative aspect of fear, for example, this aspect would be neither true nor false, and perhaps it would not, by itself, be justified or unjustified. Representations can enter into the space of reasons in a way that irreducible qualia cannot. To say, as Spinoza does, that representations lack such irreducible qualitative character is to regard the affects as even more thoroughgoingly rational than does one who holds merely that the affects are representational, but not necessarily exclusively representational.

That Spinoza takes such a position is evident from the way he discusses affects early in Part 2 of the *Ethics*. Spinoza first describes affects in Axiom 3 of Part 2:

[11] Spinoza calls attention to unjustified affects on several occasions, especially in connection with overestimation, scorn, pride and despondency (3da21, 22, 28, 29).

There are no modes of thinking, such as love, desire, or whatever is designated by the word affects of the mind, unless there is in the same individual the idea of the thing loved, desired, and the like. But there can be an idea, even though there is no other mode of thinking.

At first glance, this axiom seems to suggest only the first grade of rational involvement, the relatively tame claim that when there is an affect there is also a representation of a certain kind. However, the way Spinoza employs this axiom a little later on suggests the second grade of rational involvement. In 2p11d, he glosses 2a3 in the following way:

The essence of man (by 2p10c) is constituted by certain modes of God's attributes, namely (by 2a2), by modes of thinking, of all of which (by 2a3) the idea is prior in nature, and when it is given, the other modes (to which the idea is prior in nature) must be in the same individual (by 2a3).

In saying that the relevant idea is *prior* to the affect, what Spinoza has in mind is that the idea accounts fully for the presence of the affect.[12] And indeed he gives voice to the same view in his general definition of the affects in which, as we have already seen, Spinoza stresses that an affect simply is a certain (confused) idea.[13]

Why does Spinoza take this extremely representational view of the affects? In answer to this question, I will also be answering the question I postponed earlier as to why Spinoza accepts the weaker, first grade of rational involvement.

Spinoza doesn't fully articulate his reasons here, but the point – roughly and briefly – is this:[14] suppose that it is not true that affects are exclusively representational. Suppose that affects have both representational *and* non-representational features, in particular that they have non-representational qualitative features. What would be wrong with this scenario from Spinoza's point of view? Well, if there are these two radically different kinds of features, then in virtue of what are these features both specifically *mental* features? This is, in effect, a demand for an explanation: here the demand is for an account of what makes these otherwise different features (representational features and non-representational qualia) both classified as mental. Why, for example, aren't qualitative features extended features,

[12] Cf. Spinoza's claim in 1p1 that substance is prior to its modes. According to the definitions of substance and of mode which he cites here, this means, in part, that modes are conceived through, i.e. explained by, substance; and, as Spinoza goes on to show later in Part 1, modes are indeed exhaustively explained in terms of the substance of which they are modes.

[13] See *Short Treatise*, part 2, Appendix 2, sections 5 and 6. See also Gueroult 1968, vol. II: 33.

[14] I have developed this line of thought in more detail in Della Rocca 2003a.

i.e. features of bodily things instead of features of mental items? This demand for an explanation is, I believe, in keeping with Spinoza's commitment to the PSR. Because of this commitment, Spinoza would not be content to say that representational and qualitative features are both mental features and that's that, that there is nothing in virtue of which they are both mental.

If we grant, because of the PSR, that there must be such an explanation, what would it be? It's hard to see what kind of answer would be legitimate on Spinozistic terms. One might say that these features are both mental because each is such that one can be *conscious* of it. (This is, perhaps, an answer that Cartesians would give.) But this doesn't get us very far because we can now ask in virtue of what are representational features and qualitative features both accessible to consciousness? So this explanation really amounts, in Spinoza's eyes, to no explanation at all.

Various other potential explanations would be rejected by Spinoza for similar reasons, but I'm not able to go into the details here. The general lesson I would like to draw is that, for Spinoza, there can be no irreducible qualitative aspect to affects because such a distinction among features would amount to an inexplicable disparity. We can thus see how Spinoza's rationalist commitment to the PSR generates the first two grades of rational involvement of the affects.

Representation as grasp of reasons

Affects are, I have argued, nothing but representations. But what are representations? Spinoza's answer to this question constitutes the third grade of rational involvement enjoyed by the affects. For Spinoza, to represent something is simply to appreciate the reasons for its existence; it is simply to be able to explain the thing, to understand it in terms of its causes. So, for Spinoza, not only are affects thoroughly representational and, as such, thoroughly susceptible to rational assessment, but affects are also themselves the appreciation of the reasons for that which they represent. For Spinoza, to have an affect is simply to represent, and to represent is to explain, to give reasons for the thing represented.

That Spinoza holds that to represent a thing is to explain it is evident from an important passage in his early, unfinished work, *Treatise On the Emendation of the Intellect*:

> If by chance we should say that men are changed in a moment into beasts, that is said very generally, so that there is in the mind no concept, i.e., idea, or connection

of subject and predicate. For if there were any concept, the mind would see together the means and causes, how and why such a thing was done. (section 62)

That Spinoza holds that to represent a thing is to explain it also emerges explicitly from the crucial fourth axiom of Part 1 of the *Ethics*: "the knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of its cause."[15] It is important to note that although Spinoza speaks here of knowledge – literally cognition – he also often phrases this claim in terms of ideas.[16] This suggests strongly that he sees himself as placing a requirement on representation itself, on what it is to have an idea of a thing. Spinoza makes a similar claim in Ep 60 where he says, "the idea or definition (*idea sive definitio*) of a thing should express its efficient cause" (G IV: 270). Spinoza says here that to represent a thing, to have the idea of it, is to explain it.[17] We represent things by seeing them in an explanatory network. This is, of course, a highly unusual claim: we seem to be perfectly able to have ideas of things that we cannot explain, indeed of things of whose causes we are completely ignorant. But Spinoza is, in some way, denying this commonsense view.

Why does Spinoza deny this view? Here too the PSR is at work. To see how, it will be helpful to take another quick and bracing plunge into Spinoza's metaphysics and, in particular, to investigate what, for Spinoza, the nature of existence itself is. Then we will return to the nature of representation. So what is it for a thing to exist? This question is, in effect, a demand for an explanation, an account, of the nature of existence, and I think it is a perfectly natural demand to make. We want to be able to say what it is, in general, that distinguishes states of affairs or things in general that don't exist from states of affairs or things that do. What is it that George Bush has that Harry Potter lacks? Or what is it that New Haven's being in Connecticut has that, say, New Haven's being in California lacks? Without such an account, there would be an inexplicable, primitive bifurcation between true propositions and false ones: in virtue of what are just these propositions true and these false? There would be no good answer to this question if we lacked an account of what it is for a proposition to be true, to be such that a given state of affairs which the proposition is about *exists*.

[15] "*Effectūs cognitio à cognitione causae dependet, et eandem involvit.*"

[16] See Ep 72: "*effectus cognitio sive idea, a cognitione sive idea causae pendeat.*"

[17] Spinoza indicates that to see things through their causes is to explain them in 2p7s: "so long as things are considered as modes of thinking, we must explain (*explicare*) the order of the whole of nature, or the connection of causes, through the attribute of thought alone. And insofar as they are considered as modes of extension, the order of the whole of nature must be explained (*explicari*) through the attribute of extension alone."

I believe that this demand for an explanation of the nature of existence is a fairly natural and plausible one to make and that it can be defended. But whether or not you accept the legitimacy of this demand for an explanation of the nature of existence, certainly a thoroughgoing rationalist – someone like Spinoza committed to the PSR – would accept it. What account, then, does Spinoza offer? For Spinoza, for a thing to exist is simply for that thing to be intelligible or conceivable, i.e. for the thing to be capable of being explained. If you want a slogan, then take this: "existence is intelligibility." I have made the case in detail elsewhere for attributing this view to Spinoza. Let me give a few highlights here. For Spinoza, God's essence is identical to God's existence, as he explicitly says in 1p20: "God's existence and his essence are one and the same" (*Dei existentia, ejusque essentia unum et idem sunt*). Further, God's essence is just the fact that God is self-conceived or intelligible through himself.[18] Spinoza's view is that what holds for God also holds for other things, i.e., for God's modes. Of course, modes are not self-conceived as God is. Rather, their essence is to be conceived through something else, viz. God (see 1d5, the definition of mode). Nonetheless, just as God's existence is God's intelligibility, the fact that God is intelligible, so too the existence of anything else just is the fact that that thing is intelligible. Thus Spinoza says in 1p25s: "God must be called the cause of all things in the same sense in which he is called the cause of himself." Now God is cause of himself in the sense that God's essence makes God conceivable or intelligible and this intelligibility is God's existence. If, as Spinoza says in 1p25s, God is the cause of a mode in the same sense in which he is the cause of himself, then Spinoza must mean that God's essence makes the mode intelligible and that this intelligibility is the existence of the mode. So, given that God's existence is his intelligibility, I do not see how God could be the cause of modes in the same sense as he is cause of himself unless the existence of modes is their intelligibility. Thus, for Spinoza, the mere intelligibility of a thing is the existence of that thing. Other things differ from God only in that God is intelligible through himself and modes are not, but are rather intelligible only through God. Still, in all cases, the existence of a thing is its intelligibility.[19]

[18] See the definition of substance, 1d3, and keep in mind both that God is defined as a substance, and that, as Spinoza states in 3p4d for example, the definition of a thing states its essence. Spinoza actually defines a substance as that which is not only self-conceived, but also as that which is in itself. So God's essence is for God to be self-conceived *and* in itself. Perhaps, then, God's essence is not simply God's being intelligible through himself, it also consists in part in God's being in himself. However, I believe that ultimately the in-itself relation is not different from the conceived-through-itself relation. I will develop some of the reasons for this position in the second half of this paper.

[19] Portions of this paragraph were adapted from Della Rocca 2003b.

This identification entails that if ever a thing is only partly, not fully intelligible, then it only partly exists. As yet, we have no reason to believe that Spinoza accepts, for this reason, the exotic view that there are, in some sense, things that only partly exist, but later I will argue that Spinoza does, indeed, accept this view.

For now, let's stick with the tamer but still quite exotic view that existence is intelligibility. Here too we can see that Spinoza is guided by the PSR. If the PSR is true, then existence and intelligibility are coextensive. If everything has an explanation, then each thing that exists is intelligible. Equally, if the PSR is true then if a thing is intelligible then it exists. We can see why this is so as follows: if something is intelligible and yet does not exist, why doesn't it exist? If a state of affairs, p, is intelligible and if the state of affairs, not-p, is not intelligible, then, of course, p must exist. So the only case in which an intelligible state of affairs, p, does not exist must be one in which its opposite not-p also is intelligible. But in such a case, one or the other of p and not-p must exist, of course, given that each one is intelligible. Why should one exist rather than the other? The PSR demands an answer here, and whatever answer one gives would reveal that the state of affairs which does not exist is, after all, unintelligible. Let's say that not-p does not exist simply because of its very nature or, in other words, p exists because of its very nature. In this case, not-p is unintelligible after all. Alternatively, let's say that not-p does not exist because of some other state of affairs q. Why, though, does q exist, we might ask in our rationalist humor? Either q is self-explanatory or it is not. If q is self-explanatory, then not-q and hence not-p are unintelligible after all. If, alternatively, q is explained by something else, say r, then we can ask the same question about r, and the rationalist regress continues. Now let's take the collection of all such existing states of affairs that are not self-explanatory, i.e. p, q, r etc., and let's ask what makes this collection obtain. Again the PSR demands an explanation. This explaining thing must not be a member of the series of things that do not explain themselves. (If the thing that explained the series were itself part of the series, then that thing would be a self-explaining thing and so not eligible to be a member of the series after all.) So the explaining thing must not be a member of the series of non-self-explaining things. But, of course, it must have an explanation. Therefore the explaining thing must be self-explanatory.[20] Thus p, q, r etc. – the non-self-explanatory things – are explained by something self-explanatory. Thus p *et al.* are such that their non-existence would go against the

[20] Cf. the transition from 1p6 to 1p7.

nature of something that is self-explanatory and so the non-existence of p would be unintelligible after all. Thus the PSR quickly leads to the conclusion that any state of affairs like not-p or not-q that does not exist must in the end be unintelligible. And so we can see that, for a fan of the PSR, something exists if and only if it is intelligible. This rationalist line of thought is behind, I believe, Spinoza's equation of existence and intelligibility.[21]

With this equation in hand, let's return to representation, for we can now identify the sources of Spinoza's view that to represent a thing is to explain it. Start with the plausible assumption that to represent something is to represent its existence.[22] Then consider that, given the identity, for Spinoza, between the existence of a thing and its intelligibility, it follows that when we represent a thing, we represent its existence, i.e. we represent its intelligibility, i.e. we represent the way it is explained. Thus Spinoza's rationalist identification of existence and intelligibility leads to his view that to represent a thing is to explain it.[23]

One challenge to this argument might be the following: even if existence is identical to intelligibility, it need not follow that representing a thing's existence is representing its intelligibility. Perhaps one is not aware of the identity between existence and intelligibility, and so the inference does not go through. I think that this objection can be obviated by pointing out that there is good reason to think not only that existence and intelligibility are identical for Spinoza, but that the concept of the existence of a thing just is the concept of its intelligibility. If this is so, then existence and intelligibility are not just metaphysically identical, but, as we might say, conceptually identical. This even more intimate connection between existence and intelligibility allows the inference to go forward. But where does Spinoza say that the concept of existence just is the concept of intelligibility? Perhaps the clearest indication comes from the definitions of substance and mode (substance and mode exhaust all the things that exist). Spinoza

[21] This line of argumentation is very much in the spirit of the cosmological argument for the existence of God, a version of which Spinoza powerfully articulates in 1p11d3.

[22] Perhaps Kant is making this point in his criticism of the ontological argument when he says, "when I think a thing, through whichever and however many predicates I like, . . . not the least bit gets added to the thing when I posit in addition that this thing is" (Kant 1997: A600/B628). Perhaps Hume makes the same point: "the idea of existence is nothing different from the idea of any object, and when after the simple conception of any thing we wou'd conceive it as existent, we in reality make no addition to or alteration of our first idea" (Hume 1978: 94).

[23] There is, perhaps, still a gap between representing the explanation of a thing and explaining that thing. Perhaps. But in any event, this line of thought helps us at least to begin to see why Spinoza holds that to represent a thing is to explain it.

defines these notions – at least in part – in terms of the way in which these things are conceived or explained. Thus, it seems that for Spinoza the concept of a thing is the concept of something that is explained in some way. From here it is but a short step to say that the concept of the existence of a thing is the concept of its intelligibility.[24]

So we can see why, for Spinoza, to have an affect is simply to have a certain kind of representation which, in turn, is simply to engage in a certain kind of explanatory activity. This claim embodies the three grades of rational involvement, and at each stage we can see Spinoza as guided by the PSR. As we have seen, the PSR leads to the view that mental states, including affects, are nothing but representations (if they were something else beyond representations, then there would, as we have seen, be a brute fact). The PSR can be seen as generating the demand that there be an explanation of the nature of existence itself, and thus the claim that existence is intelligibility. This claim, in turn, leads to the claim that representations and thus affects are nothing but explaining things in thought. In this way, as I said at the outset, affects are, for Spinoza, inherently rational.

II THE DARK SIDE OF AFFECTS

Despite Spinoza's extremely positive take on the affects as fundamentally rational, all is not sweetness and light when it comes to the affects. Here we reach the negative part of the story in which affects come to be seen as inferior – indeed almost breathtakingly inferior – to the operations of reason. To begin to see why, we must for now restrict our attention to *passive* affects.

The first thing to note about passive affects is that they are *confused* and *inadequate* ideas. This is not the place to launch into a full-blown account of Spinoza's notion of confusion and inadequacy, but here's a broad sketch: take an idea that is caused from outside my mind. This idea, insofar as I have it, is confused and inadequate because it represents or is of two different things, and my mind is unable to have separate ideas of the two items individually. In particular, this idea, insofar as I have it, is of the parallel state of my body and also of the external cause, call it c, of that state of my body. For Spinoza, in representing a bodily state we also and thereby represent its cause or causes (II4), but because of the limited capacity of our

[24] Portions of this and the preceding three paragraphs were adapted from Della Rocca, "Spinoza and the Metaphysics of Skepticism" (forthcoming).

mind, we are unable to have separate ideas of the bodily state and of its causes, and so, in representing these two things, we are confusing them. Thus when I love Henrietta, my love is an idea of Henrietta as benefiting me. This idea, however, is a confused idea not just of Henrietta, but also of my body and certain of its states. My affective response in this case is as much, or more, about myself than about the external objects acting on me (see 2p16c2, 3p14d, 4p9d, 5p34d).

The reason that the idea insofar as I have it is confused is precisely that the idea is caused from outside my mind. Spinoza makes this clear when he stresses that ideas that are actions, that are caused wholly from within the mind, are adequate and not confused (see, in particular, 2p11c, 2p24d, 2p29s). We can see why this is so in the following way. For Spinoza, a thing is represented in terms of its causes (as we have seen). Consider an idea of a bodily state b. This idea must also represent its external cause c. But precisely because c is external to me, I do not have an idea that is just of c. Each idea in my mind is at least partly of a state of my body, and so I have no idea that is, as it were, free to be just of the external cause, c. And precisely because I have no idea that is just of c and, for the same reason, no idea that is just of b, it follows, for Spinoza, that my idea of b and of c confuses these two objects.[25]

To see what is so bad, in Spinoza's eyes, about the confusion that passivity engenders in our affects, all we need to do is to focus on two prepositions: "of" and "in." First, I will consider how what ideas are *of* or represent insofar as they are in one mind may differ from what they are of insofar as they are in another mind. Then I will investigate what it is, for Spinoza, for an idea to be *in* a mind.

Of

Let's begin with "of." As we saw earlier, each idea in my mind is also an idea in God's mind and so we may ask: what does the idea that is my affect represent insofar as it is in God's mind? Very significantly, for Spinoza, the content of the idea varies insofar as it is in the two different minds. This is what I called earlier the mind-relativity of content: the idea, insofar as it is in my mind, is confusedly of bodily state b and of the external cause c, while that same idea, insofar as it is in God's mind, is unconfusedly of b

[25] Spinoza makes clear in 2p40s1 that lack of confusion in the idea of two objects requires the ability to have separate ideas of each one. For more in this vein on Spinoza's account of confusion, see Della Rocca 1996: chapter 3.

alone. This idea – insofar as God has it – is focused on b precisely because God's mind is more capacious than ours, and so God has a separate idea that is just of c, the cause of b. This other idea is simply the idea parallel to c, an idea that is, of course, in God's mind too. This difference between God's mind and mine results simply from the fact that some ideas in my mind are caused from outside my mind, but, given that God's mind is all-encompassing, no idea is caused from outside God's mind. The passivity of my mind is what generates the confusion of some of my ideas, and this lack of passivity of God's mind is what renders all of God's ideas adequate and unconfused.[26]

This mind-relativity of content is an expression of Spinoza's holism about the mental. If, as a holist about content would have it, the content of an idea is determined in part by the content of other ideas in the mind that has the idea, and if, as Spinoza holds, a single (token) idea can be in two or more minds, minds of greatly different sizes with very many different other ideas to determine the content of the idea in question, it follows and seems natural that the content of this idea varies insofar as it is in the different minds.

It would be nice to show how Spinoza's holism is a result of his commitment to the PSR, but that would take us too far afield here. Instead, let's turn to the other crucial factor needed to see what is so bad about the confusion and passivity characteristic of at least some affects, i.e. let's turn to what it is, for Spinoza, for one idea to be *in* a given mind or, more generally, what it is for one thing to be in another.

In

Spinoza's notion of "in" can best be illuminated by considering the relation between modes and substance.

The first thing to note is that the *in*-relation that modes bear to substance is not one of spatial containment. This is evident from the fact that things such as ideas are said to be in other things although ideas as such, for Spinoza, have no spatial properties.

Traditionally, modes of a substance are simply states of the substance. For example, the roundness of the table is a state of the table; it is a mode, a way in which the table exists. The notion of in-ness as manifested in the mode–substance relation is, I believe, a version of the traditional notion of *inherence*: modes are in substance in the sense that they inhere in that

[26] See again Della Rocca 1996: ch. 3.

substance. And, I believe, Spinoza understands the notion of in-ness in this sense. This is precisely what his selection of the term "mode" indicates.[27]

The mode–substance relation is thus a kind of dependence relation: states of a substance depend for their existence on the substance itself. This state of roundness depends on the round table itself, though, of course, the table does not depend on this state of roundness. The general point is that modes are intelligible through that which they are in. A mode – a dependent being – is not intelligible without that on which it depends.[28]

The connection between the notion of "in" and the notion of intelligibility becomes even more vivid when we see the way Spinoza links the notions of one thing being in another and one thing being conceived through another. Spinoza defines a mode as a thing that is in another and is conceived through that other (1d5). And he defines substance as that which is in itself and is conceived through itself.[29] As Spinoza stresses, there is nothing in the world beside the one substance and modes, so it follows that a thing is in another if and only if it is conceived through that other, if and only if it is understood through that other.

Spinoza also makes quite clear that another crucial notion is coextensive with these two coextensive notions: viz. the notion of causation. For Spinoza, given that effects are conceived or explained through their causes, it follows that if something is caused by another thing, it is conceived through that other. Spinoza also makes clear that he accepts the converse: if something is conceived through another, then it is caused by that other (see 1p25d). Given the coextensiveness of being in and being conceived through, it follows that something is in another if and only if it is caused by that other. The connection between *in* and causation is manifested in Spinoza's view that modes – i.e. things that are in God – are caused by God (see, e.g., 1p16c1).

Intriguing complications relevant to the status of affects arise when we consider the causal and conceptual relations not between mode and

[27] He uses "*affectio*" as an equivalent term (1d5, 1p4d) which also suggests a notion of inherence. Carriero 1995 develops nicely the theme that the mode–substance relation in Spinoza is one of inherence, and he carefully spells out how Spinoza's notion of mode has sources in the Aristotelian tradition's notion of accident.

[28] In treating the mode–substance relation as one of inherence, I am siding with Carriero in his dispute with Curley on this matter. See Carriero 1995 and see Curley 1988, Curley 1991, and Curley 1969. However, as will become clear, I think Curley is nonetheless right on a major point where he disagrees with Carriero, viz. that the in-relation between substance and modes is the relation of causation.

[29] 1d3. What is it for a thing to be in itself? Does this mean that a thing inheres in itself? If so, what could *this* mean? I will try to shed light on this matter later (in note 34).

substance directly, but between one mode and another mode. As Spinoza emphasizes, there is an infinitely long causal chain of finite modes. The table, for example, is caused by the carpenter or by the actions of the carpenter.[30] Of course, the carpenter is not the complete cause of the table. The complete cause includes, e.g., other finite modes that cause the carpenter's actions and, ultimately, the complete cause is God, the one substance which, as we saw, is the cause of all modes, including the cause of the modes that cause the table.

Since the table is caused by the carpenter, it must be conceived through the carpenter, but since it is only *partly* caused by the carpenter, it is only partly conceived through the carpenter (see the second "Axiom 1" following 2p13). All this is well and good, but matters get even more interesting when we bring the notion of *in* back into the picture. As we saw, in-ness is coextensive with causation and with being conceived through. It seems to follow that, because the table is partly caused by and partly conceived through the carpenter, the table is also partly in the carpenter, the table *inheres* in or is a state of the carpenter at least to some degree. And this does seem quite odd. To paraphrase a famous claim of Curley's in a related context: the table seems to be of the wrong logical type to inhere in or be a state of the carpenter – even to some degree (Curley 1969: 18).

Because of this oddness, commentators have been quite averse to drawing this conclusion. Don Garrett, who has done a wonderful job of bringing out the power of Spinoza's in-relation, conceived as inherence, and of emphasizing that this relation comes in degrees, stops short at precisely this point. Garrett allows that the in-relation is coextensive with the relation of being conceived through, and he accepts, in particular, that if y is conceived through x, then y is in x. Garrett also allows that although finite things are in themselves only to a certain extent, God is in itself unrestrictedly. This is how Garrett makes sense of Spinoza's talk of finite things *insofar as* they are in themselves (most famously in Spinoza's statement of his *conatus* doctrine in 3p6). I am in complete agreement with Garrett on these points. Nonetheless, Garrett denies that being in another is a matter of degree. In discussing the view that "if y is conceived through x, then y is in x" Garrett says:

[30] Like many other philosophers of the period, Spinoza makes no sharp distinction between events and actions as causes, on the one hand, and objects as causes, on the other. In Spinoza's case, the lack of a sharp distinction is principled and not due to mere sloppiness. I would argue that for Spinoza ordinary objects are more event-like than we would normally think.

This applies, however, only in cases where y is *completely* conceived through x. For although a finite mode may be partly conceived through the other finite modes that are partial causes of it, it does not follow that it is *in* those finite modes. Rather, it is *in* the substance through which it – as well as the finite modes that help to cause it – may be *completely* conceived. (Garrett 2001: 156n21)

So on Garrett's view, although conception and causation may be only partial, and although a thing can be only partly in itself, being in another is all or nothing. This seems to be a reasonable move because it avoids having to bite the apparent bullet of saying that the table is in any way *in* or inheres in the carpenter. But *Spinoza* is not one to avoid biting bullets or, more accurately, what one might see as bullets the biting of which is to be avoided, Spinoza often sees as logical or rational conclusions to be embraced because of their rationality, because of their logical unavoidability. And, indeed, I think that there are good reasons to see Spinoza as embracing this conclusion.

First let me note a bit of suggestive textual evidence. Spinoza says in the TTP:

> The more we know natural things, the greater and more perfect is the knowledge of God we acquire, or (since knowledge of an effect through its cause is nothing but knowing some property of the cause) the more we know natural things, the more perfectly do we know God's essence, which is the cause of all things. (TTP, chap. 4, section 11; G III: 60.)[31]

Spinoza's parenthetical claim is quite general: he speaks here of effects and properties of causes in general. He doesn't say explicitly that the property of the cause is the effect itself. But the full context of the passage in which the effects are natural things and the cause is God suggests precisely this, for natural things, for Spinoza, are modes, are properties or property-like things, and they are indeed modes of God. So it is natural to see Spinoza as saying in this passage that the property of the cause we come to know is indeed the effect of the cause, which effect is, in this case, a mode of God. This in turn suggests that when Spinoza makes the parenthetical general claim that the knowledge of an effect is knowledge of a property of the cause, he is making the general claim that effects are properties of the causes of those effects. And this general claim suggests that Spinoza would be

[31] See also ST, part 2, chapter 26 (G I: 111): "All the effects which we produce outside ourselves are the more perfect the more they are capable of being united with us to make one and the same nature, for in this way they are nearest to internal effects." This passage suggests that there are degrees of internality of effects. I am indebted to Yitzhak Melamed for calling my attention to the relevance of these passages.

willing to accept that, e.g., the table is, at least to some extent, in the carpenter.

However, I don't want to put very much weight on this parenthetical passage and its context. Instead, I want to show that to deny that the table is partly in the carpenter – as Garrett seems to – would threaten the very foundation of Spinoza's metaphysics, i.e. it would threaten his naturalism and the PSR.

Let's assume that, although the table is in and completely caused by and completely conceived through God, and that although the table is partly caused by and partly conceived through the carpenter, nonetheless the table is not at all in and does not at all inhere in the carpenter. As I said, for Garrett, in-ness is an all-or-nothing affair, or at least being in another is an all-or-nothing affair. On this view, although the inherence relation – the relation between a thing and a state of that thing – is a kind of causal relation, it is not at all to be found between the table and the carpenter. Thus, on this view, there are two fundamentally different kinds of causal relation for Spinoza: what may be called non-inherent causation of the kind between the table and the carpenter, and also another kind of causal relation, viz. inherence.

At least two untoward consequences follow. First, given that, on this view, there are these two quite different kinds of causal relations, we now naturally ask: in virtue of what does dependence that is inherence differ from causal dependence generally? What makes it the case that the relation of inherence that holds between the table and God does not hold – to any degree – between the table and the carpenter? Given that both relations are relations of causation, and given that both relations are matched by relations of conceptual dependence, it seems very puzzling that this one relation, in-ness or inherence, doesn't at all show up between the table and the carpenter as it shows up between the table and God. In light of the continuity in the case of causation in general and in the case of being conceived through, it seems puzzling and, indeed, arbitrary for in-ness not to be at all manifested in the relation between the table and the carpenter. So, as far as I can see, there is no good answer to the question in virtue of what does what might be called inherence-dependence differ from other forms of causal dependence. And, thus, this difference would seem to be a brute fact, in violation of the PSR. Given Spinoza's deep aversion to brute facts, it behooves us to see Spinoza as not drawing this ultimately arbitrary distinction.

One can see such a distinction as a violation of Spinoza's naturalism, which is, roughly, the thesis that everything in nature plays by the same

rules; there is nothing that operates according to principles that are not, in some sense, at work everywhere. (For Spinoza's classic statement, see the preface to Part 3.) If inherence is found only in some causal relations but not others, then that is to see a special kind of causal principle at work in some cases and not in others, and this – in addition to being arbitrary – would violate the spirit of Spinoza's naturalism. One can put this by paraphrasing Spinoza himself: causal relations are everywhere the same.[32]

Let me try to show from another angle what would be wrong with failing to assimilate inherence to causation generally. On the view I am opposing, there are two kinds of what might be called ontological dependence relations: inherence and causation that is not inherence. But now on the conceptual level, what kind of dependence relations are there? It seems that there is just one: the table is conceived through God and the table is conceived through the carpenter. In the former case, the conceptual dependence is complete; in the latter case, the conceptual dependence is not complete. But in both cases, on the conceptual level, the kind of dependence seems to be the same. There is no radical shift in kinds of dependence relations on the conceptual level as there is on the ontological level between dependence relations that are relations of inherence and those that are not. Thus, on the view I am opposing, the homogeneity of the conceptual dependence relations is not matched – not, if you will, paralleled – by any homogeneity of the ontological dependence relations. And this would threaten Spinoza's parallelism of things and ideas, according to which "the order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas" (2p7). On the view I oppose, the connection among things – sometimes involving inherence, sometimes not – is not the same as the more homogeneous connection among ideas, i.e. among the concepts of things for ideas are, for Spinoza, concepts of the mind.[33] Spinoza's parallelism is – on anyone's view – one of his most fundamental positions. This is another reason to deny the view that the table does not in any way inhere in the carpenter.

Of course, one can preserve the homogeneity at the ontological level simply by denying that the in-relation is one of inherence, a relation between a thing and its states. This is, in effect, what Curley does in his ground-breaking work. For Curley, Spinoza's in-relation is simply a causal relation and is not a relation of inherence. Although Curley does not

[32] Cf. Spinoza in 1p15s: "matter is everywhere the same" (*materia ubique eadem est*) (G II: 59).
[33] 2d3.

present matters this way, his view has the advantage of preserving Spinoza's parallelism, naturalism, and the PSR.

However, Curley's view does not do justice to the traditional meaning of the term "mode" as something like a state of substance, a meaning which, I would argue, Spinoza, following Descartes and others, accords to this term. Further, and more importantly, Curley's view leaves Spinoza without an account of the relation between a thing and its states, without an account of the nature of inherence. Spinoza – rationalist that he is – would certainly seek an explanation of the nature of inherence. And, on my view, such an explanation is precisely what he offers. I see Spinoza as assimilating inherence to causation or dependence generally: inherence just is the relation whereby one thing depends on another.[34] On the view I have argued for, there is homogeneity of dependence relations on both the ontological and conceptual levels, as Curley would have it, the in-relation is a causal relation, as Curley would also have it, *and* there is a genuine inherence relation between cause and effect, as Curley would not have it. This entails that the table is to some degree in the carpenter, and my point here is that Spinoza welcomes this conclusion as dictated by his parallelism, his naturalism and ultimately the PSR.

Whose affect is it anyway?

Let's return from the depths of Spinoza's metaphysics, from this talk of "of" and "in," to the affects. I want to address the question: whose affect is it anyway? More technically, my question is: what is an affect in? This is an important question because what something is in is what makes that thing intelligible. So what we are really asking is: what makes affects intelligible? Again, I will focus for the time being on passive affects and take up active affects later.

Starting from the narrowest perspective, we can see that a passive affect is certainly not completely in itself because the affect is not self-caused. It's not, after all, a substance. So the affect must be at least partly in other things, viz. in its causes.

So let's consider some *finite* cause of the affect. One of these finite causes is simply my mind itself. As Spinoza stresses, each change in a thing is at

[34] Because Spinoza assimilates the in-relation to ontological dependence generally, we can gain some insight into what he means by saying that a substance is in itself: a substance is in itself because it depends only on itself in order to exist; modes are in another because they depend on other things in order to exist.

least partly the result of the nature of the thing in question (see again the second "Axiom 1" following 2p13). So, since effects are in their causes, the affect will be in my mind. But not wholly in my mind, and that's because the affect – qua passive affect – is caused by things external to my mind. Let's focus on one particular external cause of my affect – let's focus on Henrietta, the object of my love who has caused my transition to a greater power of acting.

Given that affects are in their causes, as we have seen, the affect must be in Henrietta. But Henrietta is only a partial cause of the affect; as we have seen, I am a partial cause too. So the affect is in Henrietta to some degree as well as in me to some degree. This is fine, but we still have not found what the affect is fully in. After all, the affect is caused from outside both Henrietta and me. Indeed, no matter how far back we go in the chain of *finite* causes of the affect, we will not arrive at an individual or collection of individuals that the affect is fully in. So we have not succeeded yet in finding what the affect is fully in, and thus we have not succeeded yet in showing how the affect is fully intelligible.

But it seems that success here is not hard to come by. The reason that the affect is not fully in any series of finite causes is that the affect seems to be caused by something infinite – in particular, it seems to be caused by God.[35] Thus the affect seems to be in God and since the affect is certainly not caused from outside God – after all, nothing is outside God – it seems that the affect is fully in God. Here, at last, we have found it: we have found what makes the affect fully intelligible, what the affect is fully in.

But just when we seem to have achieved this success, we can also see that none of this can be right, that the affects cannot really be in God at all. Why not? Recall that we are dealing with a *passive* affect, and thus the affect is, as such, a confused and inadequate idea. However, as we have seen, no idea insofar as it is in God can be confused or inadequate. Rather, ideas – insofar as they are in God – are all adequate and unconfused.[36] As we saw, inadequacy and confusion cannot be in God and cannot characterize ideas insofar as God has them because inadequacy and confusion are, for Spinoza, the result of passivity, and God is, of course, in no way passive. The fundamental point then is that precisely because a passive affect is passive, it cannot be in God, i.e. it cannot be made intelligible through

[35] The affect also seems to be caused by certain infinite modes which follow – directly or indirectly – from God's absolute nature. But this intermediate step between God and the affects can be passed over here because the problem that I want to raise emerges more clearly from considering the apparent infinite cause, God.

[36] Joachim 1940: 114–15.

God. But, as we saw, a passive affect cannot be fully in or fully intelligible in terms of anything that is not God. And so it seems that passive affects are not fully in anything. For Spinoza, nobody and nothing is such that a passive affect is fully in it. And because, as we have seen, for something to be intelligible it must be in something, it follows that passive affects are not fully intelligible.

But how can this be? Spinoza's PSR commits him to the intelligibility of all things that exist. So how can there be affects that are not fully intelligible? We'll see how by making Spinoza's conclusion here even more extreme.

As if the conclusion that passive affects aren't fully intelligible weren't striking enough, it leads to another, perhaps even more shocking claim: passive affects don't fully exist. To see why, recall the equivalence, for Spinoza, of existence and intelligibility. What it is for a thing to exist is just for it to be intelligible. It follows, as I noted briefly, that if something is not intelligible, then it does not exist *and* it follows that if something is not *fully* intelligible, then it does not *fully* exist. Just as Spinoza's rationalism opens up the possibility that being-in or inherence is not an all-or-nothing affair, so too it opens up the possibility that existence itself is not an all-or-nothing affair; it is not a switch that is either on or off. Instead, for Spinoza, there are degrees of existence, and affects insofar as they are passive do not fully exist.

Here we can see how Spinoza's claim that affects are not fully intelligible is compatible with his commitment to the intelligibility of all things: the commitment to the intelligibility of all things is a commitment to the intelligibility of all things that exist; as Spinoza says in 1a1, "whatever is is either in itself or in another."[37] This indicates that a thing with only a certain degree of intelligibility or in-ness must also have a correspondingly limited degree of existence. In fact, in a rationalist system one would expect there to be in some sense things with all degrees of intelligibility and hence of existence. This simply follows from Spinoza's commitment to a principle of plenitude which can be seen as following from his PSR.[38]

But wait! The situation gets even worse. Not only do our passive affects not fully exist, but – insofar as we have such affects – we ourselves do not fully exist. Recall that, for Spinoza, my mind is just a collection of ideas. This collection consists in part of certain passive affects, affects that are not

[37] *Omnia, quae sunt, vel in se, vel in alio sunt.*

[38] The connection between the PSR and a principle of plenitude in Spinoza has been elegantly demonstrated by Samuel Newlands, "The Harmony of Spinoza and Leibniz" (unpublished).

fully intelligible and do not fully exist. Thus, insofar as I have affects that are not fully intelligible and do not fully exist, I myself am not fully intelligible and do not fully exist. To see this, just ask: what am I in? Insofar as I am passive, have passive affects, I am not in myself or in any other finite object, nor am I in God who, of course, has no passivity in him. Thus, insofar as I am passive, I am not fully in anything and I am thus not fully intelligible and I do not fully exist. Someone who gets this point exactly right is the British Idealist and great Spinoza commentator, H. H. Joachim who says: "Our actual mind, with its emotions, volitions, desires is qua passional unreal. In its reality, it is a part of the 'infinita idea Dei', but in the completeness of that 'idea' all passion vanishes" (Joachim 1940: 96). Someone else who captures this insight extremely well is the philosopher and songwriter Cole Porter who gives expression to a kind of sadness or passive affect by writing, famously, "Every time we say goodbye, I die a little."

In saying that my affects do not exist insofar as they are passive and that I do not exist insofar as I have passive affects, I am not saying that there is no respect in which the state that is my affect and I myself are fully intelligible and fully exist. For the state that, insofar as it is in my mind, is a passive affect and a confused and inadequate idea, is also, insofar as it is in God, an action (of God) and an unconfused and adequate idea. This is a manifestation of the mind-relativity of content. Insofar as this state is unconfused, adequate and active, it is *fully* in God and thus is fully intelligible and fully exists. But insofar as this state is passive, confused and inadequate, it is not fully in God or anything else, and thus it is not fully intelligible and does not fully exist. Similar points apply to my mind itself which, insofar as it consists of passive ideas is not fully in God or anything else and does not fully exist, but which, insofar as it consists of active ideas, i.e. *God's* active ideas, is fully in God and does fully exist.

Not only does the logic of Spinoza's system commit him to this position, but we also find him saying something along these lines in 5p40s1:

> Our mind, insofar as it understands, is an eternal mode of thinking, which is determined by another eternal mode of thinking, and this again by another, and so on, to infinity; so that together, they all constitute God's eternal and infinite intellect.

In speaking of my mind insofar as it understands, Spinoza means my mind insofar as it is active (3p1). So he is saying that that my mind insofar as it is active is an eternal mode of thought and thus helps to constitute *God's* intellect. And this indicates that he holds that insofar as my mind is active it

is *in* God's intellect. The suggestion is that, by contrast, the mind – insofar as it is passive – does not help to constitute God's intellect and so is not *in* God.[39] And this is to say that my mind qua passive is not fully intelligible and does not fully exist.

I have focused so far on ideas that are passive insofar as they are in my mind. These ideas are actions insofar as they are in God's mind, but are passive insofar as they are in my mind. Are there any ideas that are actions insofar as they are in my mind? Such an idea would not be caused from outside my mind and would thus be adequate and unconfused insofar as it is in my mind. Spinoza clearly thinks that there are such fully active and adequate ideas (2p38, 2p45, etc.). But it's not completely clear to me that Spinoza is entitled to the view that I have ideas that are not, at some remove, caused from outside my mind. The main point here, however, is that even among passive ideas in my mind, some owe less to external causes than other ideas do. These ideas – insofar as they are in my mind – would be more active, even if not fully active, and thus these ideas would be, insofar as they are in my mind, more intelligible and more fully existent.

These points about degrees of intelligibility and existence apply not merely to passive affects and to me insofar as I have such affects. Affects are simply ideas considered insofar as they are passive, considered insofar as they are caused from outside a given mind. The moral to be derived from this is that things or states in general considered insofar as they are passive, considered insofar as they are caused from outside a finite thing, are not fully intelligible. The argument is the same as before. Take a given state, s. It is not fully in a finite object or collection of finite objects because ultimately it is caused from outside any such finite object. But nor can it be fully in God, that is, s cannot be fully in God insofar as s is passive. That's because nothing in God is caused from outside God. God has no passive states. But equally, as we have just seen, no passive state is fully in any finite object. So passive states as such are not fully in anything and so are not fully intelligible and do not fully exist. What does fully exist is s qua active, s insofar as it is a state of God. But, qua passion or passive state, i.e. qua state of a finite object that is caused from outside that object, s does not fully exist. And, for the same reason, the finite object itself does not fully exist insofar as it has that passive state.

Let's sum up. Spinoza's primary complaint about the affects – passive affects in particular – is not that they cloud our judgment and have bad

[39] Here, then, is the modification, alluded to in note 5, of the view that my mind is an idea in God's intellect: my mind, *insofar as it is active*, is an idea in God's intellect.

consequences. They do do such things, but they do such things precisely because they have the deeper flaw of being – to some extent – unintelligible and of not fully existing. What's worse, insofar as we have affects we ourselves are unintelligible and do not exist. Affects, for Spinoza, literally strip us of our existence, or at least strip us of our existence to some degree. This is Spinoza's fundamental charge against the affects. And this is simply an instance of the more general insight that passivity is not fully real, that passivity strips things of their existence to some degree.

This charge is propelled by Spinoza's PSR. The claim that we do not fully exist insofar as we have passive affects stems, in part, from Spinoza's equation of existence and intelligibility which – as we have seen – he holds because of the PSR. This claim about our non-existence also follows in part from Spinoza's view that passive affects are not fully in – or intelligible in terms of – anything. And this view in turn follows from Spinoza's equation of being-in or inherence and being caused by – an equation that is also dictated, as I have argued, by Spinoza's PSR.

As we saw in the first half of the paper, Spinoza also has extremely good things to say about the affects – that they are exclusively representational and thus subject to rational assessment and that they are appreciations of reasons. These positions are also the result of Spinoza's thoroughgoing application of the PSR. Thus in Spinoza's eyes, when it comes to the affects – as in so many other things – all positive and negative metaphysical judgments are dictated by the PSR. For Spinoza, the PSR giveth and the PSR taketh away.[40]

[40] Like all other Spinoza scholars, I owe a tremendous debt to Ed Curley both for the monumental importance of his research and for the generous ways in which he encourages the research of others. This paper was presented at the second annual NYU conference on early modern philosophy in November 2005. Lilli Alanen's comments on that occasion were extremely helpful, as were conversations and exchanges with George Bealer, Shelly Kagan, Sam Newlands, Yitzhak Melamed, Sean Greenberg, Sukjae Lee, Tad Schmaltz, Andrew Janiak, Karen Detlefsen, and Alison Simmons.

CHAPTER 3

"Whatever is, is in God": substance and things in Spinoza's metaphysics

Steven Nadler

Edwin Curley has accomplished something that most scholars in the history of philosophy can only dream of: to come up with an interpretation of a philosopher's thought that is remarkably bold and original and yet, at the same time, so effective and natural that it sometimes simply gets taken for granted.[1] Indeed, it can be said that Curley's insightful and persuasive interpretation of Spinoza's metaphysics, and especially his nomological account of the nature of and relationship between substance and modes, has, in effect, achieved the status of a standard reading.[2]

And yet, although I am proud to call myself a admirer of Curley's reading, I still have some misgivings, and I feel that it may not in fact do sufficient justice to what Spinoza was trying to say. In this essay, I consider what I think are some serious problems facing Curley's account. As Curley himself was the first to admit, there are important questions his interpretation leaves unanswered and objections with which it must deal. Some of these he explicitly raises and addresses.[3] I shall leave these aside, however, and discuss other problems that he seems not to have considered. I will focus on the issue of the relationship between substance and mode in Spinoza's metaphysics and the way in which all things are supposed to be related to (or "in") God. I will also look at some broader issues – about Spinoza's understanding of God or Nature (*Deus sive Natura*) and his alleged pantheism – that are intimately connected to the way in which one interprets Spinoza's claims about the substance/mode (or God/thing) relationship.

[1] First in Curley 1969, and then in Curley 1988.
[2] It is adopted by a number of recent commentators, including Allison 1987. It is also rejected by others, including Jonathan Bennett, in Bennett 1984.
[3] See, for example, Curley 1969: 78–81.

I THE TWO INTERPRETATIONS

By Proposition 14 of the *Ethics*, Spinoza has established that there is but one necessarily existing, active, eternal, infinite substance of Nature, and this is God. But if God alone is substance, and if everything must be either substance (which is identified with its attributes) or a mode or "affection" of substance ("except for substances and modes there is nothing"), then it follows (as Spinoza says in 1p15[4]) that all things are "in" God: "Whatever is, is in God and nothing can be conceived without God."

This proposition is, of course, exasperatingly unclear. What can it mean to say that something is *in* God? There are many ways in which something can be *in* something else: it can be the way in which parts are in the whole that they compose, or the way in which an object is in a container that holds it (which is akin to the way in which Newton, for example, conceived things to be in absolute space), or the way in which properties or qualities belong to a subject (such as wisdom is in Socrates or hardness is in the rock).

It is important to keep in mind the "things" about which we are speaking. The things[5] that are supposed to be *in* God or Nature precisely as modes or affections are *in* substance include all of those familiar items that populate our world and that we, in our pre-Spinozistic way of thinking, took to be substantial in their own right: physical objects (trees, chairs, human bodies) and minds or souls. Like Aristotle (and, to a degree, Descartes), we believed that these were things that were "in themselves," things in which other items (such as properties) existed but which themselves did not exist in anything else. Now Spinoza seems to be telling us that, in all metaphysical rigor, we were wrong. But then what is the correct way to conceive of the ontological status of these items?

One available interpretation of Spinoza's conception of the relationship between substance and its attributes (God or Nature), on the one hand, and its modes (everything else that exists), on the other hand, is perhaps also the most natural way to think of it. According to this interpretation, for Spinoza things are in God or substance in the sense of being properties or states or qualities of God. They inhere in God as in a subject or substratum. As Curley describes the position, it consists in "the identification of [the] distinction [between substance and mode] with the distinction between things and properties."[6]

[4] Translations of Spinoza in this paper are from Spinoza 1985.
[5] I am using the word 'thing' here loosely, since, in the strict sense (for Spinoza), only God is a true thing (i.e., substantial entity).
[6] Curley 1969: 13.

This interpretation makes Spinoza's account of the substance–mode relationship similar to that of Descartes, for whom the modes of a substance are properties that inhere in it – or, more precisely, that inhere in its principal attribute or nature – and for that reason are predicable of it.[7] For Spinoza, then, just as motion is a state of the moving body, so the moving body itself would be a property or state of God (in one of God's infinite attributes, Extension). And just as my particular thought at this moment is a property or state of my mind, so my mind is a property or state of God (in another of God's infinite attributes, Thought). The moving body and my mind just *are* God's nature (or, more precisely, God's nature*s*) existing or expressing itself in one way (mode) or another. As Spinoza says in 1p25c, "Particular things are nothing but affections of God's attributes, or modes by which God's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way."

This is how the seventeenth-century intellectual impresario Pierre Bayle read Spinoza.[8] Bayle admired Spinoza's character, but abhorred his philosophy. He called it "the most monstrous that could be imagined, the most absurd, and the most diametrically opposed to the most evident notions of our mind." Bayle was offended in particular by what he took to be Spinoza's conception of God and of God's relationship to things. According to Spinoza, Bayle says,

> There is only one being, and only one nature; and this nature produces in itself by an immanent action all that we call creatures . . . It produces nothing that is not its own modifications. There is a hypothesis that surpasses all the heap of all the extravagances that can be said. The most infamous things the pagan poets have dared to sing against Venus and Jupiter do not approach the horrible idea that Spinoza gives us of God.[9]

Bayle objected that if things and their properties are themselves nothing but properties of God and therefore predicable of God, then a number of unacceptable conclusions follow. First, there is the logical problem that God would have incompatible properties. The happy person and the sad

[7] See the geometrical presentation in the Second Replies, Descartes 1974, vol. VII: 161.

[8] It is also, as Curley notes, the interpretation offered by Joachim 1940. A more recent (but idiosyncratic) version of this way of reading Spinoza can be found in Bennett 1984. Charles Huenemann offers a defense of a Bayle-like reading, by way of a quasi-Aristotelian understanding of the nature of Extension as an attribute; see Huenemann 2004. John Carriero also appeals to the Aristotelian tradition to show that "Spinoza's conception of modal dependence is fundamentally the same as the traditional conception of inherence"; see Carriero 1995. Finally, Martial Gueroult notes that for Spinoza, the relationship between cause (God) and effect (modes) is that of substance and inherent property; see Gueroult 1968: vol. I, 297.

[9] Bayle 1965: 301.

person would equally be states of God, and thus God would itself be both happy and sad, or a happy person and a sad person, at the same time; this, Bayle insists, is absurd. Second, there is the theological problem that God itself would be subject to change, division and motion, since the things that are modes of God are divisible and are constantly changing and moving. Spinoza's God, according to Bayle, is thus "a nature actually changing, and which continually passes through different states that differ from one another internally and actually. It is therefore not at all the supremely perfect being, 'with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning' (James 1:17)."[10] This is not just a theological problem, but (according to Bayle) also a question of philosophical consistency in Spinoza's system, since Spinoza himself seems to say that God is immutable and not subject to change (1p20c2). Finally, and (in Bayle's eyes) most problematic of all, God would be the ultimate subject of all the thoughts and intentions and actions of human beings, all of our loves, hates, and desires, including the most evil thoughts and deeds conceivable. "Here is a philosopher who finds it good that God be both the agent and the victim of all the crimes and miseries of man."[11] When one person kills another, God is, on Spinoza's account, the true author of the crime, or so Bayle would have it.

Bayle, seeing these as the necessary implications of Spinoza's view of God, basically concluded "so much the worse for Spinoza." Curley, in response, basically says "so much the worse for that reading of Spinoza." Surely, one would think, Spinoza could not have held a theory that had such clear and obviously problematic philosophical and theological implications. Curley thereby implies that the consequences that Bayle finds so horrific would be unacceptable to Spinoza as well, and therefore could not have been a position that he would defend.[12]

Moreover, Curley adds his own objection to such an account of the relationship between God and things.[13] It is, he says, simply odd to regard the items that we think of as "things" and as real individuals (houses, chairs, human souls) as actually being properties or states of something else. That seems to be quite a serious category mistake, one of which Spinoza should not be accused. "Spinoza's modes are, prima facie, of the wrong logical type to be related to substance in the same way Descartes' modes are related to substance, for they are particular things, not qualities. And it is difficult to know what it would mean to say that particular things inhere in

[10] Bayle 1965: 308. [11] Bayle 1965: 311. [12] Curley 1969: 13.
[13] He also argues against Wolfson's interpretation of the substance/mode relationship in terms of genus/species (Curley 1969: 28–36).

substance . . . What it would mean to say that one thing is predicated of another is a mystery that needs solving."[14]

For those who would reject Bayle's inherence interpretation, a second interpretation of what Spinoza means by saying that "whatever is, is in God" is made possible by a subtle but important change in Spinoza's language as of 1p16, and it is this that Curley picks up on in defending his alternative reading of the substance/mode relationship. In that transitional proposition ("From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes"), as well as in subsequent propositions, language so suggestive of properties inhering in a substratum gives way to a new kind of model. The relationship between God and things, or substance and modes, is now described in causal terms. The shift is not total, since Spinoza will continue to refer to particular things as "affections of God's attributes" (for example, in 1p25c), but it is something that cannot be ignored. In the demonstration of 1p18, God is described as "the cause of all things"; in 1p24, we are told that things are "produced" by God; and 1p28 describes the ways in which things have been "determined" by God or by God's attributes. On this model, God or substance and its attributes is not the subject in which things inhere as properties, but rather the infinite, eternal, necessarily existing (or self-caused) cause of all things. More particularly, God's attributes can be seen as the universal causal principles of everything that falls under them – which is absolutely everything. In short, on Curley's reading, inherence gives way to causal dependence.

Let us look more closely at the details of this interpretation. According to Curley, the attributes of substance are to be identified with the most general laws of nature governing the phenomena that fall under them. More precisely, any attribute is nothing but the most basic necessary and universal facts or features of an aspect of reality. Curley calls these facts "nomological" because they are described by laws. Thus, the attribute Extension is constituted by the necessary and universal facts characterizing all extended bodies, and thereby involves (or has "inscribed" in it, to use Curley's term) the laws governing all material things (including, presumably, the truths of geometry, since geometrical objects just are extended objects). Similarly, the attribute Thought is constituted by the necessary and universal facts characterizing all thoughts or ideas, and thereby involves the laws governing all thinking.

[14] Curley 1969: 18. In Curley 1988, he moderates his position somewhat and says that this reading "is not hopelessly unintelligible" (p. 31), although he continues to find it unacceptable.

The infinite modes under each attribute, in turn – those "things which follow from the absolute nature of any of God's attributes" (1p21, which refers to what have come to be called the immediate infinite modes) and "whatever follows from some attribute of God insofar as it is modified by a modification" (1p22, the so-called mediate infinite modes) – are to be identified with what Curley calls "derivative nomological facts," that is, universal and necessary features that are not the most basic within an attribute but derive (either directly or indirectly) from the most basic universal and necessary features; these include, for example, motion and rest under the attribute Extension and infinite intellect under the attribute Thought, as well as the subsidiary laws of nature that are "inscribed in" these derivative facts:

> On this interpretation, Spinoza's thesis that every infinite and eternal mode of the attribute of extension follows either directly from the absolute nature of the attribute of extension or indirectly from some other infinite mode which follows from the nature of extension (1p23) – put in logical terms – amounts to the thesis that every scientific law relating to extended objects can be derived either directly from the fundamental laws governing extended objects or from a finite series of nomological propositions which terminates ultimately in the fundamental laws.[15]

This gives us a kind of nesting of subordinate laws of nature within higher-order laws from which they derive, culminating in the most universal laws of nature, that is, those laws that are inscribed in the attributes – all of which correspond to certain general facts in nature that are caused by higher-order facts, culminating in the most universal facts of nature. "We identify the basic nomological facts with the attribute of extension, [and] the derivative nomological facts with the infinite and eternal modes of that attribute."[16] Curley concludes that "Spinoza . . . is identifying the power or essence of God with the scientific laws that govern phenomena . . . [or] rather with the general facts that the most fundamental of those laws describe."[17]

What does all this mean for the relationship between God or substance and things? In what way are things or finite modes supposed to be "in" God? On Curley's reading, God is only substance and attributes, that is, the most basic nomological facts and the laws describing them. "[Spinoza] identified God with (the attributes in which are inscribed) the fundamental laws of nature."[18] Finite modes, on the other hand, are not identical with God, and they do not inhere in God. Rather, they are, Curley insists,

[15] Curley 1969: 59. [16] Curley 1969: 55. [17] Curley 1969: 49, 55. [18] Curley 1988: 42.

singular facts, and are "in God" only in the sense that they are causally brought about by the highest-level nomological facts (or the laws describing them) that constitute the attributes, in conjunction with both (a) the lower-level nomological facts (or laws) that constitute the infinite modes of substance and that follow from those highest-level facts (laws), and (b) other singular facts. Nature is governed by a necessary order as the active ground of all things, and to speak of God or substance just is, on Curley's interpretation, to refer to that most universal causal framework. For Curley, things are "in" and "follow" from the divine nature in the sense of being facts that are "causally determined and made intelligible by" scientific laws.

> The singular facts which exist at any given moment are determined by the previously existing singular facts and by certain general facts but . . . neither the previously existing singular facts nor the general facts alone suffice to determine what facts now exist. The previously existing singular facts give us the infinite series of finite causes. The general facts give us the finite series of infinite causes, terminating in God.[19]

Thus, when Spinoza says that "whatever is, is in God," what this means, on Curley's causal interpretation, is simply that "(1) God is the proximate cause of the infinite modes, (2) God is the remote cause of the finite modes, in the sense that he is their cause through the mediation of the infinite modes."[20]

In addition to the passages noted above, in which Spinoza seems to reduce the ontological relationship between God and the world to a causal claim, there is also textual support for Curley's specifically nomological reading, such 1p15s, where Spinoza seems to identify being *in* God with being causally generated by certain laws: "All things, I say, are in God, and all things that happen, happen only through the laws of God's infinite nature and follow (as I shall show) from the necessity of his essence."

II GOD'S IMMANENT CAUSATION

There is something to be said for both of these readings – Bayle's inherence model and Curley's causal model – of the relationship between substance and mode (or God and things) in Spinoza's metaphysics. Each of them must also face some difficult although not necessarily insuperable problems. There are, of course, the puzzles that Bayle raises for the "subject/

[19] Curley 1969: 66. [20] Curley 1969: 71.

property inherence" model. But Spinoza could obviously reply to Bayle's first objection by saying that it is certainly not the case that God has the incompatible properties in absolutely the same respects, which is what would be required in order to generate the alleged contradiction. Just because God is happy in so far as God is one person and God is sad in so far as God is another person, it does not follow that God itself is both happy and sad in the same respect – for it is explicitly specified that God is happy and sad in *different* respects.[21] And, turning to Bayle's second objection, while Spinoza does indeed say that "God, or all of God's attributes, are immutable" (1p20c), this does not mean that there is and can be no change in God; rather, it is a claim about the permanence of the existence and the nature of each attribute. Spinoza is saying that despite the variability at the level of (finite) modes, the attributes themselves do not change.[22] As for Bayle's third objection, based on the apparent impiety of making God the cause of evils, Spinoza, as is well known, both argues that the adjectives "evil" and "sinful" do not refer to anything real in nature – they are only projections of our subjective judgments onto things – and refuses to concede that God has any moral characteristics that need to be respected and preserved in the first place; therefore, he would not be very troubled by this objection. Nor would Spinoza have been bothered by the ontological oddity of thinking of ordinary things as properties of something else; indeed, it is precisely a part of his project to get us to rethink our ontological outlook. After all, as Jonathan Bennett (who favors a version of the inherence reading[23]) has claimed, in his own critique of Curley's position, Spinoza is "original and bold and deep," and was given to "a kind of recklessness."[24] The presumed oddity or category mistake of regarding things as inhering in a substantial subject can therefore, by itself, be an objection to this way of reading Spinoza only by begging the question.

Curley's interpretation certainly avoids the allegedly unpalatable implications of the inherence model. Moreover, Curley's reading reminds us that any interpretation must take care to do justice to Spinoza's understanding of the full and precise nature of God's *causal* relationship to things. God (or substance or Nature) is, above all, the ultimate and general

[21] See Bennett 1984: 96; and Carriero 1995: 263.

[22] Carriero offers a slightly different defense of Spinoza on this point; see Carriero 1995: 264–66.

[23] For Bennett's interpretation, see Bennett 1984 and Bennett 2001, vol. I: ch. 7, as well as Bennett 1991.

[24] Bennett 2001, vol. I: 145. Similarly, John Carriero believes that Curley's interpretation de-radicalizes or "disappointingly flattens" Spinoza's position, making it a "comparatively uninteresting commonplace"; see Carriero 1995: 254, 273.

efficient cause of all things, the active agent whose power explains their coming into being. This much is absolutely true, certain and non-negotiable about Spinoza's account. No matter which interpretation of the substance/mode relationship one adopts, one must preserve the special *causal* relationship that exists between God and things. The question that divides the two interpretations is, is it also a relationship of *inherence*?

Curley says *no* to this question. But – and here is what I see as a fundamental problem with his interpretation – Spinoza insists that God or substance is also the *immanent* cause of its modes. While Bennett and other scholars have directed their criticisms at a number of other aspects of Curley's reading,[25] I would like to focus here on this particular issue, since it seems not to have received any attention in the literature.

Spinoza says that "God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things" (1p18). An immanent cause is ordinarily understood to be a cause whose effects belong to or are a part of itself (much as the Cartesian mind can be said to be the cause of its own ideas): it is a cause that brings about some state in or within itself.[26] A transitive cause, on the other hand, brings about effects that are ontologically distinct from itself (as the baseball is the cause of the broken window and the heat of the sun is the cause of the melted ice). It might seem that unless we think of the things causally brought about by God as properties or states of God – that is, unless we adopt the inherence interpretation – we will be unable to explain God's causation of things as an immanent causation, as Spinoza demands.

Now the demonstration for God's immanent causation in 1p18 relies exactly on the claim that our competing interpretations are fighting over:

[25] Among other points, Bennett insists that in the seventeenth century, the substance/mode distinction was equivalent to the thing/property distinction, and that Spinoza's own words (e.g., in 1d5) testify that he regarded modes as "affections" of substance, where "affection" means state or quality. Thus, he concludes, Curley's Spinoza would be "misusing" terms (Bennett 2001, vol. I: 141). Carriero shows that the alleged problems with the inherence reading raised by Bayle and Curley stem from wrongly assimilating inherence to predication, and also argues that (contrary to what seems to be Curley's concern) Spinoza was indeed willing to recognize particulars that are also accidents (and thus inhering in a substance); see Carriero 1995: 256–59.

[26] An immanent cause should not be confused with a cause that is immanent in things. Harry Wolfson has a good discussion of this in Wolfson 1934, where he shows that immanent causation (especially in the case of Spinoza, but also in the medieval tradition) is not a matter of the cause inhering in the effect, but the effect inhering in the cause (vol. I: 319–28). Curley himself seems skeptical that any sense can be made of such immanent causation: "How can a subject cause itself to have the properties it has? how can the relation of inherence which a property has to its subject be anything like the relation an effect has to its cause?" (Curley 1988: 36). But Carriero addresses these worries in Carriero 1995: 259–61. Moreover, the claim that God is an immanent cause (the subject of 1p18) should not be confused with the related but distinct claim that things are immanent in God (1p14–15); Gueroult makes this point well in Gueroult 1968: vol. I: 295–96.

"Whatever is, is in God." Because everything God causes is "in" God, God's causality is an immanent causality. Thus, it would seem, we cannot use the immanent causality of 1p18 itself to argue for one interpretation of the problematic phrase, "Whatever is, is in God," over another without begging the question. But can Curley's causal interpretation, which rejects the inherence model, still consistently make sense of immanent causation? Perhaps it can, but only if it can interpret immanence in such a way that it does not imply that the effect belongs to or inheres in the cause as its state or property.

One important and distinguishing feature of immanent causation is the inseparability of cause and effect.[27] Without the continued existence and operation of the cause, the effect would cease to exist. Medieval philosophers called this *causalitas secundum esse*, or causality with respect to being, and contrasted it with *causalitas secundum fieri*, or causality with respect to becoming (or coming into being).[28] The sun is a *causa secundum esse* of its light and heat; when the fusion reactions in the sun stop, so will their effects. By contrast, a builder is a *causa secundum fieri* of a house. Once the house is built, the builder does not need to continuously work to keep the house in being; rather, the completed house (the effect) has an ontological independence from the activity of the builder (the cause). Now Spinoza certainly does think that God stands to all things in a relationship of *causalitas secundum esse*. In the corollary to 1p24, he insists that "God is not only the cause of things' beginning to exist, but also their persevering in existing, or (to use a Scholastic term) God is the cause of the being (*causa essendi*) of things." In the scholium to the corollary to 2p10, he reminds us that "God is not only the cause of the coming to be of things (*causa rerum secundum fieri*), as they say, but also of their being (*secundum esse*)." It may be, then, that all that Spinoza means by calling God the immanent cause of all things is to stress that it is a relationship of *causalitas secundum esse*, and that God's causal activity is ongoing and necessary with respect to the continued existence and operation of everything else, without also implying that everything else is *in* God in the way in which properties inhere in a subject.

This seems, though, a rather weak and insufficient conception of God as an *immanent* cause. There has to be more to God's immanent causality than *causalitas secundum esse* alone. (This should be clear from the fact that Descartes also regards God as a *causa secundum esse* – of my soul, for

[27] See Wolfson 1934: vol. I: 321–22.
[28] See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 104, a1.

example, as he argues in the Third Meditation – but does not believe that God is therefore an immanent cause; Descartes's God is a transitive, and transcendent, cause of creatures.) Rather than exhausting God's immanent causation of all things, *causalitas secundum esse* would appear to be simply one of its essential features, such that *because* God is an immanent cause and all things caused by God are *in* God, it follows that God's activity is that of a *causa secundum esse*.

The result, I want to suggest, is that Curley's reading involves an interpretation of 1p15, "Whatever is, is in God" – whereby "in" is reducible to "caused by" – that provides too thin an understanding of the way in which things are "in" God to support a meaningful sense of immanent causation.

I suppose Curley could try to strengthen his account of the "in" of 1p15 without giving up his main thesis in the following way. Given what Spinoza sees as the logical nature of causal relations, whereby causal necessity is tantamount to logical necessity,[29] it follows that the concept of the effect is logically contained in and follows from the concept of the cause. But since God is the ultimate cause of all things, this means that everything is *in* God in just the way in which a consequent is *in* its antecedent(s) or logical ground. *B* is in *A*, in this sense, just in case *B* is logically implied by *A*.[30] If everything ultimately has its causal foundation in God, then everything is causally – that is, logically – in God.

Of course, the only things that are logically implied by God alone (that is, by "the absolute nature of any of God's attributes") are the immediate infinite modes, and (by way of these) the mediate infinite modes. As Curley himself shows so well, any particular finite mode is caused by/logically implied by God (attributes) and the infinite modes only in conjunction with other finite modes. However, the infinite series of finite modes ("the face of the whole universe") is itself one of the mediate infinite modes; thus, the totality of finite things – "all [finite] things" – are "in" God in the sense that this totality falls logically out of the attributes and whatever is immediately implied by the attributes.

I believe, however, that even this *logical* reading is still much too externalistic an understanding of the way in which things might be *in* God, and does not do justice to the intended *ontological* boldness of

[29] See, for example, 1p17s2: "I have shown clearly enough (see 1p16) that from God's supreme power, 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 it follows, from eternity and to eternity, that its three angles are equal to two right angles."

[30] Curley seems to want to read it this way; see Curley 1969: chapter 2.

Spinoza's claim. In the end, it may simply be too difficult to sustain immanent causation without inherence. Take, for example, Spinoza's discussion of immanence in the *Short Treatise*, where he says that "[God] is an immanent and not a transitive cause, since he does everything in himself, and not outside himself" (G I: 35; Spinoza 1985: 80). He gives as an example of immanent causation (whereby the cause "does not in any way produce anything outside itself") "the intellect [as] the cause of its concepts" (G I: 30; Spinoza 1985: 76). Indeed, it seems that even Curley recognizes that, without inherence, immanence – and a stronger sense of the way in which things are "in" God – is practically lost; at one point he concedes that, on his view, we should think of God as producing and acting "on things other than God."[31] To end up with Spinoza talking of God acting "on things other than God" seems to me too high a price for an interpretation to pay to avoid inherence.

III "WHATEVER IS, IS IN GOD"

Something important for the understanding of Spinoza's philosophy hinges on this question of how to interpret the *in* of 1p15, "Whatever is, is *in* God." One of the most difficult and persistent questions raised by the *Ethics* is just how to understand Spinoza's identification of God with Nature, particularly as this is expressed by the infamous phrase *Deus sive Natura*, "God or Nature" (4p4d). There can be no question that the identity he has in mind is a strict and literal one. He is denying that God is anything distinct from Nature, whether one understands this to mean "distinct from and outside Nature" (as a transcendent God is ordinarily conceived) or even "distinct from but within Nature," as a kind of supernatural element within nature. As Spinoza says in a letter to Henry Oldenburg of April, 1662, "I do not separate God from nature as everyone known to me has done" (Ep 6; G IV: 36; Spinoza 1985: 188). The "*sive*" of "*Deus sive Natura*"[32] is clearly the "or" of identification: "God, that is, Nature," or "God, or – which is the same thing – Nature."

But what exactly is the extent of the identification of the two? Is God the *whole* of Nature, the entire universe and everything in it? Or is God just some fundamental, unchanging, eternal and universal aspects of Nature? On the inherence interpretation of the phrase "Whatever is, is in God," that is, on Bayle's interpretation of the relationship between God/substance

[31] Curley 1988: 38.
[32] At *Ethics*, Part 4, Preface (G II: 206; Spinoza 1985: 544), Spinoza says *Deus, seu Natura*.

and modes, whereby all things are in God as properties are in a subject, God must be identical with the whole of Nature, including all of its contents. This is because the properties or states of a thing *are* the thing, existing in particular manner. Thus, God is both the universal elements of Nature – substance, its attributes and whatever they involve – as well as all of the things that are (immanently) caused by and belong to those natures, right down to the lowest level of particularity. God is material nature (Extension) and its most general features, as well as every particular material thing and state of a material thing that expresses that nature; and God is thinking nature (Thought) and its most general features, as well as every individual "idea" or mind that expresses that nature, and all of the particular ideas had by these; and so on for every attribute.

On Curley's causal interpretation, whereby the relationship between God and particular things is a more external one, God is identified only with substance and its attributes, the universal natures and causal principles that govern all things.[33] God is not literally identical with particular things, since they are not *in* God in the way in which properties are in a subject. Rather, these things are simply necessarily and eternally causally generated by (and thus perpetually dependent upon) God. God is the infinite, invisible but active dimension of Nature, its most universal and basic essences and laws. All of the rest, including the visible furniture of the world, is but an effect of God's powers.

Now Spinoza certainly does recognize active and passive aspects of Nature. There is, in fact, an important distinction that he draws in 1p29s, one that shows that the term 'Nature' is, when left unqualified, ambiguous.

> I wish to explain here . . . what must be understood by *Natura naturans* (literally: naturing Nature) and *Natura naturata* (natured Nature) . . . By *Natura naturans* we must understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, or such attributes of substance as express an eternal and infinite essence, i.e., God, insofar as he is considered as a free cause.
>
> But by *Natura naturata* I understand whatever follows from the necessity of God's nature, or from any of God's attributes, i.e., all the modes of God's attributes insofar as they are considered as things which are in God, and can neither be nor be conceived without God.

According to Curley's purely causal interpretation of God's relationship to things, God is to be identified not with all of Nature, but solely with *Natura naturans*. God is only substance and its attributes. Everything that

[33] See Curley 1969: 42.

follows from or is caused by – or, to use the passive participle employed by Spinoza, *natured* by – substance (that is, absolutely everything else) belongs to *Natura naturata*, and is thus distinct from (albeit causally dependent upon) God. According to the substance/property inherence interpretation favored by Bayle, God is both *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*.

Despite the neatness and sophistication of Curley's causal interpretation, it must be granted that, in the light of this distinction between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*, there is certain advantage to the reading according to which God is identical to the whole universe, in both its active invisible and passive visible aspects. Spinoza identifies *Deus* with *Natura*. Thus, when he tells us that *Natura* includes both a *naturans* aspect and a *naturata* aspect, the natural conclusion would seem to be that *Deus* is to be identified with both of these. God is both the active and the passive dimensions of Nature, what causes (or "natures") and what is caused (or "natured"). If, as the scholium to 1p29 claims, *Natura naturans* just is God, "insofar as he is considered as a free cause," it would seem to follow that *Natura naturata* is also God, in so far as he is considered in some other way. I take this to be the upshot of claims made by Spinoza such as the following:

> When we say that the human mind perceives this or that, we are saying nothing but that God, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he is explained through the nature of the human mind, or insofar as he constitutes the essence of the human mind, has this or that idea. (2p11c)

In the end, then, the causal reading offered by Curley (and adopted by Allison and others) seems to fail to do justice to important elements of Spinoza's metaphysics of God and of God's or substance's relationship to finite things.

IV SPINOZA'S ALLEGED PANTHEISM

I would like to conclude with some remarks on an interesting and important issue that bears some relation to my discussion so far: does Spinoza's identification of God with Nature mean that he is, as so many have insisted for so long, from the early eighteenth century up through the most recent edition of the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, a pantheist?

In general, pantheism is the view that rejects the transcendence of God. According to the pantheist, God is, in some way, identical with the world. There may be aspects of God that are ontologically or epistemologically distinct from the world, but for pantheism this must not imply that God is

itself essentially separate from the world. The pantheist is also likely to reject any kind of anthropomorphizing of God, or attributing to the deity psychological and moral characteristics modeled on human nature. The pantheist's God is (usually) not a personal God.[34]

Within this general framework, it is possible to distinguish two varieties of pantheism. First, pantheism can be understood as the denial of any distinction whatsoever between God and the natural world and the assertion that God is in fact identical with everything that exists. "God is everything and everything is God."[35] On this view, God is the world and all its natural contents, and nothing distinct from them. I will call this reductive pantheism. Second, pantheism can be understood as asserting that God is distinct from the world and its *natural* contents but nonetheless "contained" or "immanent" within them, perhaps in the way in which water is contained in a saturated sponge. God is everything and everywhere, on this version, by virtue of being within everything. I will call this immanentist pantheism; it involves the claim that nature contains within itself, in addition to its natural elements, an immanent supernatural and divine element.[36]

Is Spinoza, then, a pantheist? Any adequate analysis of Spinoza's identification of God and Nature will show clearly that Spinoza cannot be a pantheist in the second, immanentist sense. For Spinoza, there is nothing but Nature and its attributes and modes. And within Nature there can certainly be nothing that is supernatural. If Spinoza is seeking to eliminate anything, it is that which is above or beyond nature, which escapes the laws and processes of nature. But is he a pantheist in the first, reductive sense?

The issue of whether God is to be identified with the *whole* of Nature or only a *part* of Nature (i.e., *Natura naturans*) might be seen as crucial to the question of Spinoza's alleged pantheism. After all, if pantheism is the view that God is everything, then Spinoza is a pantheist only if he identifies God with *all* of Nature – that is, only if we adopt the inherence interpretation of the relationship between substance and modes in his metaphysics. Indeed, this is exactly how the issue is framed in the recent literature. Both those who believe that Spinoza *is* a pantheist and those who believe that he is *not* a pantheist focus on the question of whether God is to be identified with the

[34] For an analysis of pantheism, especially with regard to these two features, see Levine 1994: 1–22.

[35] Owen 1971: 74.

[36] It is often suggested that Spinoza's philosophy is, in fact, a *panentheism*, just because he claims that everything is "in God". But this cannot be correct, in so far as panentheism, as it is traditionally understood (by Charles Hartshorne, for example), recognizes that while the world is in God, there is more to God than the world, and thus that God transcends nature.

whole of Nature, including the finite modes, or only with substance and attributes but not modes. Thus, Curley insists that Spinoza is not a pantheist, because (on his interpretation) God is to be identified only with substance and its attributes, the most universal causal principles of Nature, and not with any modes of substance. " 'Substance' denotes, not the whole of nature, but only its active part, its primary elements."[37] On the other hand, Jonathan Bennett argues that Spinoza *is* a pantheist, just because he does identify God with the whole of nature.[38]

I would like to suggest, however, that this debate about the *extent* of Spinoza's identification of God with Nature is not really to the point when the question is about Spinoza's alleged pantheism. To be sure, if by "pantheism" is meant the idea that God is everything, and if, like Curley, one reads Spinoza as saying that God is only *Natura naturans*, then Spinoza's God is not everything and consequently he is not a pantheist, at least in the ordinary sense. Finite things, on this reading, while caused by the eternal, necessary and active aspects of Nature, are not identical with God or substance, but rather are its effects. But this is not the *interesting* sense in which Spinoza is not a pantheist. For even if Spinoza does indeed identify God with the whole of Nature, it does not follow that Spinoza *is* a pantheist. The real issue is not what is the proper reading of the metaphysics of Spinoza's conception of God and its relationship to finite modes. On either interpretation, Spinoza's move is a naturalistic and reductive one. God is identical either with all of Nature or with only a part of Nature; for this reason, Spinoza shares something with the reductive pantheist. But – and this is the important point – even the atheist can, without too much difficulty, admit that God is nothing but Nature. Reductive pantheism and atheism maintain extensionally equivalent ontologies.

Rather, the question of Spinoza's pantheism is really going to be answered on the psychological side of things, with regard to the proper attitude to take toward *Deus sive Natura*. I would insist that, whichever of the two readings of the substance/mode relationship one adopts, Bayle's or Curley's, it is a mistake to call Spinoza a "pantheist" in so far as pantheism is still a kind of religious theism. What really distinguishes the pantheist

[37] Curley 1969: 42. See also Curley 1991: 35–60.

[38] See Bennett 1984: 58. Yovel takes a similar line (Yovel 1989: 76). Gueroult, while not explicitly saying that Spinoza identifies God with the whole of nature, nonetheless regards Spinoza as holding a *panthéisme* just because (given his reading of Spinoza on God's immanent causal activity) the modes/effects are *intérieur* or inhering in God; see Gueroult 1968, vol. I: 295–99. On the other side, and essentially agreeing with Curley, are Alan Donagan, who argues that "Spinoza is not a pantheist" since he denies that "the totality of finite things is God" (Donagan 1988: 90); and Zac 1991: 238.

from the atheist is that the pantheist does not reject as inappropriate the religious psychological attitudes demanded by theism. Rather, the pantheist simply asserts that God – conceived as a being before which one is to adopt an attitude of worshipful awe – is or is in Nature. And nothing could be further from the spirit of Spinoza's philosophy. Spinoza does not believe that worshipful awe or reverence is an appropriate attitude to take before God or Nature.[39] There is nothing holy or sacred about Nature, and it is certainly not the object of a religious experience. Instead, one should strive to understand God or Nature, with the kind of adequate or clear and distinct intellectual knowledge that reveals Nature's most important truths and shows how everything depends essentially and existentially on higher natural causes. The key to discovering and experiencing God, for Spinoza, is philosophy and science, not religious awe and worshipful submission. The latter give rise only to superstitious behavior and subservience to ecclesiastical authorities; the former leads to enlightenment, freedom and true blessedness (i.e., peace of mind).

To be sure, Spinoza is at times capable of language that seems deeply religious. He says that "we feel and know by experience that we are eternal" (5p23s), and that virtue and perfection are accompanied by a "love of God (*amor Dei*)" (5p15, 5p32s, 5p33). But such phrases are not to be given their traditional religious meaning. Spinoza's naturalist and rationalist project demands that we provide these notions with a proper intellectualist interpretation. Thus, the love of God is simply an awareness of the ultimate natural cause of the joy that accompanies the improvement in one's condition that the third kind of knowledge (*intuitus*) brings; to love God is nothing but to understand Nature. And the eternity in which one participates is represented solely by the knowledge of eternal truths that makes up a part of a rational person's mind.[40]

There is no place in Spinoza's system for a reverential sense of mystery in the face of Nature. Such an attitude is to be dispelled by the intelligibility of

[39] Bennett dissents from this reading. He rightly sees that a major part of the question of Spinoza's pantheism is about the appropriate attitude to take toward God or Nature. However, he insists that Spinoza is indeed a theist (pantheist) for just this reason: "Spinoza had another reason for using the name 'God' for Nature as a whole – namely his view of Nature as a fit object for reverence, awe, and humble love ... He could thus regard Nature not only as the best subject for the metaphysical *descriptions* applied to God in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, but also as the best object of the *attitudes* which in that tradition are adopted towards God alone." "Spinoza", he concludes, "did accept pantheism as a kind of religion" (Bennett 1984: 34–35).

[40] The intellectual love of God and the eternity of the mind are two of Spinoza's more difficult doctrines, and a proper analysis of them goes beyond the scope of this paper. For an examination of the eternity of the mind, see Nadler 2002.

things. Religious wonder is bred by ignorance, he believes. In the all-important appendix to part one of the *Ethics*, Spinoza contrasts the person who "is eager, like an educated man, to understand natural things" with the person who "wonders (*admirari studet*) at them, like a fool."[41] It seems obvious that, for Spinoza, anyone who would approach Nature with the kind of worshipful awe usually demanded by the religious attitude represents the latter.

By definition, pantheism is not atheism. And it is absolutely clear, to me at least, that Spinoza is an atheist. Novalis got it wrong when he called Spinoza a "God-intoxicated man." Spinoza did not elevate nature into the divine. On the contrary, he reduced the divine to nature – he naturalized God – in the hopes of diminishing the power of the passions and superstitious beliefs to which the traditional conceptions of God give rise. If there is a theism in Spinoza, it is only a nominal one. He uses the word "God" to refer to "Nature," but only because the basic characteristics of Nature or Substance – eternity, necessity, infinity – are those traditionally attributed to God. It was a way of illuminating his view of Nature and Substance, not of introducing a divine dimension to the world.[42]

[41] G II: 81; Spinoza 1985: 443. See also TPP, ch. 6, where wonder (*admiratio*) is linked with an absence of understanding (G III: 83–84).

[42] I am grateful to Charlie Huenemann and John Carriero for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

CHAPTER 4

Necessitarianism in Spinoza and Leibniz

Michael V. Griffin

Necessitarianism is the position that everything actual is necessary, or, that the actual world is the only possible world. Necessity and possibility are understood here as absolute or metaphysical. Bennett calls this a "tremendously implausible" view.[1] And Curley and Walski say, "views that are tremendously implausible should not be attributed to great, dead philosophers without pretty strong textual evidence" (Curley and Walski 1999: 242). However, the textual evidence for attributing necessitarianism to Spinoza appears pretty strong. Moreover, I don't believe Spinoza's necessitarianism is tremendously implausible. I will develop the position I attribute to Spinoza by first looking at Leibniz's arguments concerning necessitarianism. Leibniz spent much more time than Spinoza trying to make his thoughts on the issue clear. However, I believe that the position of these two philosophers, on the question of the necessity of all things, is substantially the same. In brief, both philosophers distinguish between a thing's being intrinsically necessary, or necessary by virtue of its essence or concept alone, and its being extrinsically necessary, or necessary only by virtue of being entailed by something necessary. Both philosophers maintain that God's existence, and only God's existence, is intrinsically necessary. And, I believe, both philosophers are committed to the claim that everything else is extrinsically necessary, because its existence is entailed by the existence of God. Nevertheless, both philosophers allow that there are non-actual things which are possible, in the sense that their concept or essence is internally consistent, even though their non-existence is entailed by the existence of God. I think that the most fundamental and important difference between Leibniz and Spinoza on the question of necessitarianism is their conception of the God from whose nature the necessity of all things derives.

[1] Bennett 1996: 75.

I LEIBNIZ'S NECESSITARIANISM

Leibniz holds logical doctrines which appear to have necessitarian consequences. For example, he maintains that all truths are analytic and that all of an individual's properties are contained in its individual concept. However, these doctrines do not lead straightaway to necessitarianism, unless it is maintained that existence is a property or predicate. This is a matter of disagreement among Leibniz's readers and I will have nothing to say about it here.[2] My concern is with a set of Leibnizian doctrines which do seem to lead straightaway to necessitarianism. These are his theological doctrines that God necessarily exists, is necessarily perfect, and is necessitated by his perfection to act in the best possible way.

The theological-necessitarian argument can be constructed from the following two passages:

A Since God is the most perfect mind, however, it is impossible for him not to be affected by the most perfect harmony, and thus to be necessitated to do the best by the very ideality of things ... Hence it follows that whatever has happened, is happening, or will happen is best and therefore necessary.[3]

B The existence of God is necessary; the sins included in the series of things follow from this; whatever follows from something necessary is itself necessary. Therefore, sins are necessary.[4]

The basic argument is this. (1) The existence and perfection of God are necessary. This is of course a traditional idea. (2) It is necessary that a perfect being choose the best, i.e., chooses to actualize the best of all possible worlds. This is a more peculiarly Leibnizian idea. We will examine

[2] See, for instance, Curley 1972 and Adams 1994, ch. 1, sect. 2.6; ch. 2, sect. 3; and ch. 6.

[3] A II, i, 117–18/L 146–47. I am employing the following standard abbreviations for references to Leibniz's works (full references can be found in the bibliography):

A	*Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*. Akademie der Wissenschaften. Cited by series, volume, and page number.
AG	*Philosophical Essays*. Trans. and ed. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber.
GP	*Die philosophischen Schriften von G. W. Leibniz*. Ed. C. I. Gerhardt. Cited by volume and page number.
Grua	*Textes inédits d' après les manuscrits de la Bibliothèque provinciale de Hanovre*.
L	*Philosophical Papers and Letters*. Trans. and ed. Leroy E. Loemker.
LA	*The Leibniz–Arnauld Correspondence*. Trans. H. T. Mason. Cited by page number in GP II (included in the margins of Mason).
T	*Essais de Théodicée*. GP VI, 1–436. English Translation: *Theodicy*. Trans. E. M. Huggard. Cited by section number.
VE	*Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Vorausedition zur Reihe VI – Philosophischen Schriften*.

[4] A VI, iii, 127.

a passage below which supports it. So, (3) the actuality of the best of all possible worlds is entailed by God's existence and perfection. Thus, (4) it is necessary that the best of all possible worlds is actual. (4) follows from (3) by the principle that necessity is closed under entailment, i.e., whatever is entailed by something necessary is necessary.

Passage A is from the letter to Wedderkopf, written in May 1671. The words are Leibniz's own. Passage B is from the dialogue entitled *A Philosopher's Confession*, first drafted in 1672 or 1673 and revised in 1678 or 1679. The words belong to Leibniz's opponent and present an objection to Leibniz's metaphysical and theological doctrines. My thesis is that Leibniz's view did not substantially change from the Wedderkopf letter through the re-drafting of the *Confession*. What changed is the way Leibniz came to express the doctrine that everything actual is necessary.

In the first draft of the *Confession*, Leibniz answers the necessitarian objection as follows:

> I reply that it is false that whatever follows from what is necessary is necessary. From truths, to be sure, nothing follows that is not true. Yet ... why may something contingent not follow from something necessary?[5]

It is remarkable that in order to avoid the necessitarian consequences of his theological doctrines Leibniz finds it necessary to deny what Bennett calls "the most fundamental theorem of any modal logic" (Bennett 1984: section 27.1). I think this shows how firmly Leibniz is committed to the doctrine that God's perfect nature necessitates his choice of the best. The most obvious and plausible response to the objection is to deny that God's perfection entails the actuality of the best possible world. Shortly after drafting the *Confession*, however, Leibniz rejected its unqualified denial of the closure principle. In a paper from 1675, he writes, "Whatever is incompatible with what is necessary is impossible."[6] For Leibniz, "X is incompatible with Y" means that the conjunction (or coexistence) of X and Y is impossible. So understood, what Leibniz says here is logically equivalent to the principle "whatever follows from something necessary is itself necessary." And, in revising the *Confession*, Leibniz amends the denial of the closure principle as follows:

> I reply that it is false that whatever follows from what is necessary *through itself* is necessary *through itself*. From truths, to be sure, nothing follows that is not true. Yet ... why may something contingent, *or necessary on the hypothesis of something else*, not follow from something necessary *through itself?*[7]

[5] A VI, iii, 127. [6] A VI, iii, 464/Pk 7. [7] A VI, iii, 127–8, emphasis added.

He also added this passage to the text:

In this place we call necessary only that which is necessary through itself – namely, that which has the reason for its existence and truth within itself. The truths of geometry are of this sort. But among existing things, only God is of this sort; all the rest, which follow from the suppositions of the series of things – i.e., from the harmony of things or from the existence of God – are contingent through themselves and only hypothetically necessary.[8]

A thing, X, is necessary *through itself* just in case X's existence follows from its concept or essence. I will call something that is necessary through itself *intrinsically necessary*. God is an example – the only example, for Leibniz – of something which is intrinsically necessary. Y is *necessary on the hypothesis of X* just in case (the actual existence of) X entails (the actual existence of) Y. The case that is most interesting to us is when Y is not intrinsically necessary, hence contingent through itself or intrinsically contingent. In such cases I will say that Y is *extrinsically necessary*. Leibniz's argument, in the revised *Confession*, is as follows. God is intrinsically necessary. Let's concede that the best of all possible worlds is necessary on the hypothesis of God's existence, that is, God's existence entails the best of all possible world's actuality. This is an assumption of the objection raised in B and Leibniz doesn't deny it here. Nevertheless, *it does not follow* that the actual world is *intrinsically* necessary. The actuality of the best possible world follows from God's perfection, not from its own essence or concept.[9]

This is not a satisfactory response to the necessitarian objection. It does not even seem to be a plausible attempt at a satisfactory response, unless Leibniz intends to define necessity in terms of what I have called intrinsic necessity. In many places Leibniz appears to do just this. For instance, in the revised *Confession*, he says, "we call necessary only that which is necessary through itself." And in the same place he writes:

Now I have defined the necessary as that the contrary of which cannot be conceived; therefore, *the necessity and impossibility of things are to be sought in the ideas of the things themselves, and not outside those things*.[10]

[8] A VI, iii, 128.

[9] It is not clear to me whether Leibniz thinks that the actual world has an essence, but he does think that it has a concept, see, e.g., LA 41.

[10] Emphasis added. One thing worth noting is that this passage is present in the first draft of the *Confession*. This suggests that Leibniz was already thinking of necessity in terms of intrinsic necessity when he wrote the original. Therefore, Leibniz's denial of the closure principle in 1672/73 may not have been as radical as it appears at first. I think his claim that it is false that whatever follows from what is necessary *through itself* is necessary *through itself* simply expresses more sharply what he meant when he wrote, "it is false that whatever follows from what is necessary is necessary."

Further, in his 1678 commentary on Spinoza's *Ethics*, Leibniz writes, "For if the essence of a thing does not involve existence, it is not necessary,"[11] and "I use the term 'contingent', as do others, for that whose essence does not involve existence."[12] And, in the *Theodicy* of 1710, we find:

> In a word, when one speaks of the *possibility* of a thing it is not a question of the causes that can bring it about or prevent its actual existence; otherwise one would change the nature of the terms and render useless the distinction between the possible and the actual.[13]

The claim that a thing's necessity or possibility is to be sought in its essence or concept is repeated several times in Leibniz's work. Nevertheless, I don't think Leibniz ever fully submitted to the temptation to identify the absolute necessity with intrinsic necessity. There are passages discussing the correlative notions of possibility and impossibility in which Leibniz explicitly distinguishes between something's being intrinsically and extrinsically (im)possible. For example:

> Impossibility is a twofold concept: that which does not have an *essence*, and that which does not have *existence*, i.e., that which neither was nor is nor will be, *because it is incompatible with God* . . . Whatever is incompatible with what is necessary is impossible.[14]

And, in the *Confession*, Leibniz says,

> Therefore if the essence of a thing can be conceived, provided that it is conceived clearly and distinctly . . . then surely it must be held to be possible, and its contrary will not be necessary, even if perhaps *its existence is contrary to the harmony of things and the existence of God*.[15]

Finally, in a passage added in the margin of the *Confession*, but subsequently struck, he wrote:

> The impossible is that whose essence is incompatible with itself. The incongruous or rejected (such as what was not, is not, nor will be) is that *whose essence is incompatible with existence, that is, with the Existent thing, i.e., the first of existent things, i.e., that which exists through itself, i.e., God*.[16]

In these passages Leibniz argues that something that is otherwise intrinsically possible may be impossible by virtue of being incompatible with something necessary (e.g., God). Impossibility and necessity, as well as incompatibility, here must be understood as absolute or metaphysical.

[11] A VI, iv, 1773/L 205 n.9. [12] A VI, iv, 1775/L 203.
[13] T 235. [14] A VI, iii, 463–64/Pk 7, emphasis added.
[15] A VI, iii, 127–8, final emphasis added. [16] A VI, iii, 128, emphasis added.

There is further philosophical evidence for rejecting the identification of metaphysical and intrinsic necessity. Leibniz maintains that metaphysical necessity obeys the closure principle. He also maintains that intrinsic necessity does not. So intrinsic necessity is not metaphysical necessity. In fact, this is a reason for thinking that intrinsic necessity is not a *kind* of necessity at all, since the closure principle is "the most fundamental theorem of any modal logic." Intrinsic necessity is rather *a reason for* a thing's being absolutely or metaphysically necessary.[17] That is to say, the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic necessity is meant to distinguish between two different explanations for a thing's being metaphysically necessary, and not to identify two different kinds or degrees of necessity. Though Leibniz is sometimes given to defining necessity in terms of intrinsic necessity, his more common way of defining necessity is as that whose denial involves a contradiction, without the qualification that the contradiction must be somehow internal to the denial. This broader notion of necessity takes in both intrinsic and extrinsic necessity. The intrinsic necessities are those whose denial is self-contradictory. The extrinsic necessities are those whose denial, only in conjunction with some other necessities, implies a contradiction.

To understand Leibniz's position we need to emphasize that his main interests concerning necessitarianism are theological. It is important to him that the actual world be intrinsically contingent, since otherwise God's wisdom and goodness play no role in explaining why this world is actual. But even if everything actual is metaphysically necessary, so long as its necessity is extrinsic, there is a place for God's wisdom and goodness in the explanation of its actuality. In fact, God's wisdom and goodness explain not only its actuality, but its also necessity. It is only because God is wise and good that this world is actual. And it is only because God's wisdom and goodness are essential that this world's actual existence is metaphysically necessary. If my interpretation is correct to this point, Leibniz did not substantially alter his position from the time of the Wedderkopf letter. He came to a clearer formulation of his position once he had in hand the distinction between "necessary through itself" and "necessary on the hypothesis of something else." He was thus also able to reject the early *Confession's* denial of the closure principle, where I think he had in mind, but did not explicitly formulate, this distinction. We come presently to

[17] A similar point is made by Garrett when he discusses Spinoza's distinction between things that are necessary by reason of their essence and things that are necessary by reason of their cause (Garrett 1991: 199).

further evidence that the basic doctrine of the Wedderkopf letter still stands, even after Leibniz developed more nuanced ways of talking about necessity and possibility.

Leibniz writes, in the late 1680s, "I was very close to the view of those who think everything is absolutely necessary . . . But the consideration of possibles, which are not, were not, and will not be, brought me back from the precipice."[18] However, the consideration of non-actual possibles is already in the explicitly necessitarian Wedderkopf letter: "For God wills the things which he understands to be the best and most harmonious and selects them, as it were, from an infinite number of all possibilities."[19] But, then, the Wedderkopf letter contains both the claim that whatever is actual is necessary and the claim that there are non-actual possibilities. Is Leibniz contradicting himself in a short space in this brief letter? I don't believe he is. I think he finds a way to make the consistency of his position clear once he adopts the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic necessity. The ideas are best expressed in an imaginary dialogue contained in a work from the early 1680s. I have labeled Leibniz's character "L" and his opponent "M."

L: We must say that *God wills the best through his nature* . . .

M: But it surely follows from this that things exist of necessity.

L: How so? Does the non-existence of what God wills to exist imply a contradiction? I deny that this proposition is absolutely true, for otherwise that which God does not will would not be possible. *For things remain possible, even if God does not choose them. Indeed, even if God does not will something to exist, it is possible for it to exist, since, by its nature, it could exist if God were to will it to exist.*

M: But God cannot will it to exist.

L: I concede this, yet, *such a thing remains possible in its nature, even if it is not possible with respect to the divine will, since we have defined as possible in its nature anything that, in itself, implies no contradiction, even though its coexistence with God can in some way be said to imply a contradiction*. But it will be necessary to use unequivocal meanings for words in order to avoid every kind of absurd locution.[20]

Leibniz concedes here that God wills the best through his nature. Whatever God does through his nature he does necessarily. So God's willing the best is absolutely necessary. He argues, however, that this does not imply the necessity of what is actual, because non-actual possibilities remain possible "in their own nature." We can say that such things are *intrinsically possible*.

[18] A VI, iv, 1653/AG 94. [19] A II, i, 117/L 146. [20] A VI, iv, 1447/AG 20–1, emphasis added.

This is an even less promising anti-necessitarian argument than the one we encountered in the *Confession*. Intrinsic necessity and intrinsic possibility are matters internal to the concept or essence of the things that have them. Suppose the actual world is intrinsically necessary, so that its existence follows from its concept alone. The existence of any intrinsically possible non-actual world would not alter this fact, because the intrinsic possibility of such a world is external to the actual world's concept. What is required to make Leibniz's argument work is that there be *metaphysically* possible non-actual worlds, where X is metaphysically possible just in case X is consistent with what is metaphysically necessary. Then the actual world would be intrinsically and metaphysically contingent. However, the metaphysical possibility of a non-actual possible seems to be precisely what Leibniz is denying in the passage above, when he says that "such a thing remains possible in its nature, even if it is not possible with respect to the divine will . . ., even though its coexistence with God can in some way be said to imply a contradiction."

Leibniz nevertheless believes that there is a plurality of possible worlds and that this is relevant to the issue of necessitarianism. In particular, he believes that the claim that there is a plurality of intrinsically possible worlds is sufficient for his concerns. To see how, let's first look at his conception of a possible world in more detail. For Leibniz, a possible world is a maximal, compossible collection of intrinsically possible substances. A collection of possible substances is compossible just in case the coexistence of the substances in the collection would imply no contradiction, that is, just in case the collection is *intrinsically* possible.[21] A collection is maximal just in case it contains everything that is compossible with what it contains. In other words, no proper subset of a collection constituting a possible world is a possible world.[22] For Leibniz there is one crucial restriction: God is not a member of any possible world so conceived. In Leibniz's record of a conversation with Gabriel Wagner, he says: "taking the word 'world' so that it includes God too . . . is not appropriate. By the term 'world' is normally understood the aggregate of things that are changeable or liable to imperfection."[23] The

[21] "There are as many possible worlds as there are series of things that can be posited without implying a contradiction. This is an identical thesis [i.e., a logical truth] for me, for I call possible that which does not imply a contradiction" (Grua 390).

[22] "There are, in fact, an infinite number of series of possible things. Moreover, one series certainly cannot be contained within another, since each and every one of them is complete" (A VI, iv, 1651/AG 29 (1689)).

[23] Grua 396. Cf. GP VI, 440: "one [world] embraces for us the entire universe of created things at any time and any place, and it is in this sense that we use the word 'world.'" Leibniz also calls the world "the composite of all created things" (A VI, vi, 567), "the aggregate of limited existents" (VE 1339), and "the collection of finite things" (GP VII, 302/AG 149).

reason for this may be to preserve the intrinsic possibility of non-actual worlds. If the concept of a possible world includes the concept of God, it will turn out that every non-actual world is intrinsically impossible, since any non-actual thing's "coexistence with God can in some way be said to imply a contradiction." Moreover, the actual world turns out to be not just metaphysically necessary, but intrinsically necessary, because it contains the reason for its existence within itself. Equivalently, the actual world will be the only intrinsically possible world, since it will be the only world whose concept is consistent.[24]

But I think that there is reason for this restriction which is more central to Leibniz's thinking. In Leibniz's philosophy, possible worlds are primarily a device for discussing theological issues, in particular the doctrine of creation. Leibniz's well-known picture of creation is of God surveying the realm of entirely determinate possible worlds and choosing to make one of them, the best one, actual. It is natural, on this picture, to think of God as standing apart from possible worlds. For this picture to work, though, there has to be a plurality of possible worlds; otherwise, saying that God chose the best one is vacuous. And what matters about these worlds is that they are intrinsically possible. That is, there is nothing in *their* nature that stands in the way of God choosing them. But it is consistent with Leibniz's theory of creation that *God's* nature be such that it is impossible for him to choose any world other than the best. Writing in December 1676, shortly after his meeting with Spinoza, Leibniz expresses the theological motivation for the plurality thesis:

> If all possibles were to exist, no reason for existing would be needed, and possibility alone would suffice. Therefore there would be no God except insofar as he is possible. But a God of the kind in whom the pious believe would not be possible, if the opinion of those who believe that all possibles exist were true.[25]

As I read this passage, Leibniz is attacking the thesis that a thing's intrinsic possibility alone is sufficient to explain its actual existence. Necessitarianism so understood is inconsistent with the existence of a God in whom the pious believe. The God of the pious is a personal God whose creative decisions are guided by his wisdom and goodness. Leibniz's philosophical piety implies that these essential features entail that God chooses the best. And the actual world's necessity derives from this, rather than from its nature or essence alone.

[24] Considerations like this may have led Leibniz to adopt the infinite analysis theory of contingency in 1686. A consequence of this theory is that the actual world, even if its concept includes the concept of God, will be contingent because there is no finite demonstration that this is the best of all possible worlds. Even after adopting the infinite analysis theory, however, Leibniz continues to maintain that God's choice of the best is necessitated by his nature.

[25] A VI, iii, 582/Pk 105.

II SPINOZA'S NECESSITARIANISM

I turn now to the question of Spinoza's necessitarianism. Let me begin with a brief sample of the well-known texts which support a necessitarian interpretation of Spinoza:

1. I want to explain briefly in what way I maintain the fatal necessity of all things and actions. For I do not subject God to fate in any way, but I do conceive that all things follow with inevitable necessity from God's nature, in the same way that it follows from God's nature that he understands himself. (Ep 75)[26]
2. . . . if things could have been of another nature, or could have been determined to produce an effect in another way, so that the order of Nature was different, then God's nature could also have been other than it is now . . . which is absurd. (E 1p33d)[27]
3. But I think I have shown clearly enough (E 1p16) that from God's supreme power, 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 it follows, from eternity and to eternity, that its three angles are equal to two right angles. (E 1p17s)

God's self-understanding is, I presume, something absolutely necessary. Therefore, if *all things* followed from the divine nature "in the same way that it follows from his nature that he understands himself," it seems that *all things* are absolutely necessary. Next, if we think Spinoza holds the closure of necessity under entailment, then whatever implies something absolutely impossible is absolutely impossible. Therefore, passage 2 says it is absolutely impossible that "things could have been of a different nature, or could have been determined to produce an effect in another way." In the third passage, Spinoza assimilates the way in which things follow from the divine nature to the way in which it follows from the nature of a triangle that its interior angles are equal to two right angles. This fact about triangles is absolutely necessary, following as it does with absolute necessity from a triangle's nature, together with the absolutely necessary principles of geometry. Finally, in 1p33s1, Spinoza boasts, "I have shown more clearly than the noon light that there is absolutely nothing in

[26] Letter 75, G IV, 311–12.

[27] The translations of Spinoza given in this essay are by Edwin Curley, either in Spinoza 1985 or in Curley's various articles.

things on account of which they can be called contingent," adding that "a thing is called contingent only because of a defect of our knowledge."[28]

On the other hand, there is textual evidence pointing to the idea that Spinoza took some of the things which follow from the divine nature to be objectively contingent, rather than necessary. For instance:

4. The essence of man does not involve necessary existence. (E 2a1)
5. The essence of the things produced by God does not involve existence. (E 1p24)
6. I call singular things contingent insofar as we find nothing, while we attend only to their essence, which necessarily posits their existence or which necessarily excludes it. (E 4d3)

When we put these together, we conclude that for Spinoza the singular (i.e., finite, by 2d7) things produced by God are contingent. However, a distinction Spinoza draws between what is necessary by reason of its essence and what is necessary by reason of its cause shows how passages 4–6 might be rendered consistent with the thesis that everything actual is absolutely necessary, as passages 1–3 appear to say. Spinoza writes:

> A thing is called necessary either by reason of its essence or by reason of its cause. for a thing's existence follows necessarily either from its essence and definition or from a given efficient cause. (E 1p33s1)

A thing's being "necessary by reason of its essence" is what I have called *intrinsic necessity*. For Spinoza, God and God's attributes are intrinsically necessary. How are we to understand a thing's being "necessary by reason of its cause"? It is not clearly equivalent to the extrinsic (though absolute) necessity developed in the discussion of Leibniz. However, given the other passages that we have seen so far, it would not be entirely unreasonable to expect it to turn out this way. Passages like 1–3 suggest that the necessity of all things produced by God is absolute or metaphysical, in the same way that the necessity of God's self-understanding or theorems about triangles is absolute or metaphysical. Passages like 4–6 suggest that their necessity is extrinsic.

[28] In a footnote to the translation of the latter passage Curley calls this claim "provisional" and refers us to 4d3,4, where Spinoza gives more objective definitions that distinguish the contingent and the possible. It is interesting, then, to note that in the *Metaphysical Thoughts*, the subjective and objective conceptions are presented side by side. After giving virtually the same definitions of "possible" and "contingent" as are found in 4d3,4, Spinoza writes: "And if anyone wishes to call *contingent* what I call *possible*, or *possible* what I call *contingent*, I shall not contend with him. For I am not accustomed to dispute about words. It will suffice if he grants that us that these two are nothing but a defect in our perception, and not anything real" (*Metaphysical Thoughts*, part II, chapter III; G I: 242).

Curley has developed and defended an anti-necessitarian reading of Spinoza, most thoroughly in Curley and Walski 1999.[29] According to Curley and Walski, all the texts require us to say is that a thing's being necessary by reason of its causes is simply its being causally necessitated. They therefore think that when Spinoza asserts the necessity of all things produced by God he is stating the plausible thesis that in the world of finite things, causal determinism, not absolute necessity, reign. We will come to the argument for denying the absolute necessity of finite things in a moment. Right now I would like to raise a point about a general feature of Curley and Walski's interpretation.

It appears that one reason Curley and Walski resist identifying "necessary by reason of its cause" with "absolutely (though extrinsically) necessary" is that they seem tempted to take the following terms as synonymous: "necessary in the strongest sense available," "absolutely necessary," and "necessary by reason of its essence." For instance, in commenting on one of the central arguments in Garrett's defense of the necessitarian interpretation, Curley and Walski write:

> [" 'The necessity of the divine nature' is something necessary"] evidently means that the presence of the word "necessity" in ["Everything which falls under an infinite intellect follows from the necessity of the divine nature"] indicates that Spinoza thinks God's nature or essence is necessarily what it is. If anything is certain in Spinoza, it is that he holds [" 'The necessity of the divine nature' is something necessary"], so interpreted. We add only that the necessity here attributed to God's nature should be understood in the strongest sense available. God's nature is necessary, not by reason of any external cause, but because of its intrinsic character (cf. 1p33s1). We can call this strong notion of necessity "absolute (or unconditional) necessity," and use the phrase "relative (or conditional) necessity" for that species of necessity which holds when an object is only necessary given its cause.[30]

Here necessity "in the strongest sense available" is being identified with the necessity that God's essence has "because of its intrinsic character." In another passage, Curley and Walski say:

[29] Curley and Walski do not call the position they attribute to Spinoza "anti-necessitarianism," but rather "moderate necessitarianism." However, the necessity of, for example, the finite modes is not absolute. Therefore, moderate necessitarianism is not necessitarianism as I have chosen to use the term.

[30] Curley and Walski 1999: 244–45. The texts in brackets are the propositions from Garrett's reconstruction of 1p16, on which Curley and Walski are commenting. Garrett reconstructs Spinoza's argument as follows: (1) Everything which falls under an infinite intellect follows from the necessity of the divine nature. (2) "The necessity of the divine nature" is something necessary. (3) Whatever follows from something that is necessary, is itself necessary. (4) Everything which is actual falls under an infinite intellect. (5) Everything which is actual is necessary.

> Suppose we grant that God's nature is what it is necessarily, in the strongest sense of necessity available in Spinoza's system (however, precisely, we understand that notion of necessity). Why should it follow *from that* that when Spinoza says *everything else* in nature is necessary, he must be claiming that those things, too, are necessary in the strongest possible sense and not merely inevitable in the light of their antecedent conditions (i.e., conditionally necessary)? . . . More especially, why should we expect this when 2a1 explicitly tells us that the essences of particular finite things do not involve existence? (Curley and Walski 1999: 252)

2a1 is cited as evidence against the proposition that finite modes are necessary "in the strongest sense of necessity available in Spinoza's system." But this is not what Spinoza says. Spinoza says that the existence of particular men is not involved in their concept.[31]

Curley and Walski notice, however, that the identification of absolute necessity and intrinsic necessity raises systematic problems concerning the status of the infinite modes. Notice first that infinite modes, like all modes, fall under "the things produced by God." Hence, according to passage 5 above, their "essence" does not involve existence.[32] Hence they are not intrinsically necessary. Rather, the infinite modes follow from the absolute nature of God's attributes. But then, Curley and Walski write, "the infinite modes should be necessary in precisely the same sense that the attributes are necessary. If we equate 'absolute necessity' with the logical necessity of modern modal logics, and if we equate 'follows from' with the entailment relation in those logics, this is inescapable" (Curley and Walski 1999: 248). That is, if necessity is closed under entailment, then God's attributes transmit their necessity to their infinite modes. But God's attributes are intrinsically necessary – it pertains to their nature to exist. Therefore, it should follow that the infinite modes are intrinsically necessary. This, however, is in contradiction to their status as modes. "Perhaps what this shows," Curley and Walski say, "is that Spinoza's 'necessity by reason of the essence of the thing' should not be equated with the logical necessity of modern modal logics, since a proposition which possesses this kind of necessity does not transmit the same kind of necessity (even) to its (unconditional) logical consequences" (Curley and Walski: 249).

[31] As Garrett points out, "the axiom does not claim that the *existence* particular men is not necessary; it claims, rather, that necessary existence is not "involved" *in the essence* of men. It is thus a particular instance of the distinction drawn at E Ip33s1" (Garrett 1991: 199). Here and throughout Garrett's paper "necessary" means "absolutely or metaphysically necessary."

[32] It's not clear whether infinite modes have essences. But I think the same point could be made by talking about their concepts, or by saying that the proposition that denies their existence is not self-contradictory.

I am not sure exactly what Curley and Walski have in mind here. They could be saying that Spinoza's conception of absolute necessity – i.e., the strongest sense of necessity available in Spinoza's system – should not be equated with the logical necessity of modern modal logics, because the strongest sense of necessity available in Spinoza's system is intrinsic necessity, and intrinsic necessity, unlike the logical necessity in modern modal logics, is not closed under entailment. I disagree with this, of course, because I think that for Spinoza intrinsic necessity is not a species of necessity. Rather, as in Leibniz, to say something is intrinsically necessary is to give the reason for its absolute or metaphysical necessity. "X is intrinsically necessary" is shorthand for "X is absolutely necessary because X's existence follows from its essence." So X does transmit its necessity – its absolute necessity – to its logical consequences. And "X is extrinsically necessary" is shorthand for "X is absolutely necessary because X's existence is entailed by something absolutely necessary." So, X's necessity – its absolute necessity – is transmitted by its cause via entailment. That Spinoza thinks of the relationship between cause and effect as involving entailment seems evident from 1a3: "From a given determinate cause the effect follows necessarily; and conversely, if there is no determinate cause it is impossible for an effect to follow." It is true, then, that intrinsic necessity is not to be equated with the logical necessity of modern modal logics. But I think it is also true that intrinsic necessity is not to be equated with "necessity in the strongest sense available," because the infinite modes are necessary in the strongest sense available, though they are not intrinsically necessary. Curley recognizes this in *Behind the Geometrical Method*:

> [The principles involved in infinite modes] are eternal in the sense that their existence is necessary. But the nature of the necessity here is not quite the same as that possessed by the attributes. The attributes involve principles which, for purely logical reasons, could not have a cause and could not have been otherwise. The infinite modes involve principles which do have a cause and could have been otherwise, *if* that cause could have been otherwise. But that cause could not have been otherwise. So they are necessary, but their necessity is derivative from that of the attributes. (Curley 1988: 46)

Because the infinite modes are modes, their existence does not follow from their essence or concept. So, there can be no internal contradiction in denying their existence. They are therefore intrinsically contingent. This is the sense in which they could have been otherwise. Nevertheless, the cause that entails them could not have been otherwise, in the strongest sense available in Spinoza's system. So they are absolutely necessary, or necessary in the strongest sense available in Spinoza's system.

On the basis of these considerations, modifications are required to Curley and Walski's critique of Garrett's reconstruction of the argument of 1p16. Garrett's reconstruction includes the closure principle, "Whatever follows from something which is necessary, is itself necessary." Curley and Walski recommend that the closure principle be stated as follows:

> (3′) [i] Whatever follows unconditionally from something which is absolutely necessary (i.e., necessary by reason of its essence) is itself absolutely necessary; [ii] but if something follows only conditionally from something which is absolutely necessary, then it is not itself absolutely necessary but only conditionally necessary (i.e., necessary by reason of its cause). (Curley and Walski 1999: 246; bracketed roman numerals added)

If "absolutely necessary" in [i] means necessary by reason of its essence, as "i.e.," suggests, then it is false that whatever follows from something absolutely necessary is itself absolutely necessary. [ii] also needs to be made clearer. Saying that Y follows conditionally from X means that Y follows from X only with the aid of something else. But the mediate infinite modes satisfy this condition. They follow, not from a divine attribute's absolute nature, but from its nature insofar as it is modified by an infinite modification. So the infinite mediate modes follow from the nature of a divine attribute only with the aid of something else; hence, conditionally. Nevertheless, the infinite modes are also absolutely necessary.[33]

I take the main idea of (3′)[ii] to be that the logical consequences of a conjunction inherit the modal status of the modally weakest conjunct. So, if one of the conjuncts is contingent, the consequence will be contingent, even if it is entailed by a conjunction some of whose members are necessary. Now, in Spinoza's system none of the things that he explicitly recognizes as absolutely necessary – God, God's attributes or God's infinite modes – by themselves seem to entail the existence of any finite mode. 1p28d tells us that the existence of a finite mode only follows from God or an attribute of God insofar as it is modified by a finite modification (which in turn follows from another finite modification of the attribute, and so on, to infinity). This follows from 1pp21–23, which tell us that whatever follows either from the absolute nature of an attribute, or

[33] Perhaps Curley's reply is that the less general propositions follow unconditionally from the more general propositions, but this is not the way Spinoza talks. In any event, the general logical point still stands, something absolutely necessary (the principles involved in an infinite mediate mode) can follow conditionally (i.e., with the aid of the principles involved in an infinite immediate mode) from something absolutely necessary (the nature of a divine attribute).

from the attribute insofar as it is modified by an *infinite* modification, will also be infinite and eternal. So for any finite mode M, M's existence is entailed only by some other finite mode N in conjunction with God's infinite modes. The modal status of M can be no stronger than the modal status of N. The modal status of N, in turn, depends on the modal status of the finite mode O, which together with the infinite modes entails the existence of N, and so on to infinity. We might envision necessity being introduced into the series of finite modes by, for instance, God's necessarily willing the existence of the initial arrangement of finite modes. Necessity would then be transmitted to subsequent finite modes because, Spinoza thinks, a cause entails its effect, by 1a3. However, the regress of finite modes stretches infinitely into the past, Spinoza tells us. So there is no point at which absolute necessity may be introduced into the series of finite modes. What this implies, according to Curley, is that while the existence of each finite mode is entailed by the existence of previous finite modes and the laws of nature, the whole infinite series of finite modes itself is contingent. There could have been a different series of finite modes stretching back to infinity, in place of the one that actually exists. In other words, Spinoza's system allows for a plurality of possible worlds.[34] As a consequence, Spinoza is not a necessitarian.

Garrett, however, maintains that the doctrine of 1p28 is consistent with doctrine that the actual world is the only possible world. The whole series of finite modes of extension may itself be an infinite mode of extension for Spinoza, in which case it would be absolutely (though extrinsically) necessary. Evidence for this claim comes from Ep 83, in which Spinoza responds to a request for examples of the infinite modes. He offers "motion and rest" as an example of an infinite immediate mode of the attribute of extension. An example of an infinite mediate mode of the attribute of extension is "the face of the whole universe." For help understanding the latter idea, Spinoza refers us to the scholium to Lemma 7 following E 2p13. The relevant text reads as follows:

> But if we should conceive a third kind of individual, composed of this second kind [viz. finite composite bodies], we shall find that it can be affected in many other ways, without any change in its form. And if we proceed in this way to infinity, we shall easily conceive that *the whole of nature is one individual, whose parts, that is, all bodies, vary in infinite ways, without any change of the whole individual*.

[34] See Curley and Walski 1999: 241.

Spinoza's notion of an individual is presented in an unnumbered definition a few pages earlier:

> When a number of bodies, whether of the same size or different sizes, are so constrained by other bodies that they lie upon one another, or if they so move, whether with the same or different degrees of speed, that they communicate their motion to each other in a certain fixed manner, we shall say those bodies are united with one another and that they all together compose one body *or* individual, which is distinguished from other bodies by this union of bodies. (G II: 99–100)

A collection of finite bodies composes an individual when there is a "certain fixed manner" in which those bodies interact by communicating their motion to each other. This is highly abstract, but it is not important for our purposes to understand exactly what it means. The scholium to Lemma 7 tells us that there is an individual composed of all finite bodies. This individual is infinite in Spinoza's sense, because it is not bounded or contained by anything of the same kind (1d2). Also, so long as the bodies that compose it communicate their motion to each other in a certain fixed manner, the individual exists "without any change in its form." In Ep 64, Spinoza says that the mediate infinite mode he identifies as the face of the whole universe "varies in infinite ways, nevertheless always remains the same." If we take his reference to the scholium to lemma 7 in that letter to mean that he identifies the infinite individual with the face of the whole universe, then the infinite individual exists at every moment of time. Thus this individual is infinite and eternal in the sense in which these terms are used in 1pp21–23. If Garrett is right about this, and I think that he is, then the existence of the infinite individual is absolutely necessary. So no other sequence of finite modes is possible. The actual world is the only possible world.

If the infinite individual is a mediate infinite mode of extension, it must follow from that attribute insofar as it is modified by another infinite mode, and its conceptual and causal ancestry must ultimately lead back to the absolute nature of the attribute of extension. Working backwards, the identity of the infinite individual is determined by the fixed manner in which the parts of extension communicate their motion to each other. This fixed manner of communicating motion must operate everywhere, since it applies to all the finite bodies in the world and it must operate at all times, if the infinite individual is to always remain the same, as Spinoza says in the scholium to Lemma 7. Hence the fixed manner of communicating motion appears to be an infinite mode of the attribute of extension. How does the conceptual and causal ancestry of this infinite mode lead back to the absolute nature of extension?

In Ep 83, written near the end of his life, Spinoza says:

> You ask whether the variety of things can be demonstrated a priori from the concept of extension alone. I believe I have already shown sufficiently clearly that this is impossible, and that Descartes defines matter badly by extension, but that it must necessarily be defined by an attribute which expresses eternal and infinite essence. But perhaps I will treat these matters more clearly with you some other time, if life lasts.

Matter, Spinoza tells us, must be defined by an attribute that expresses eternal and infinite essence. But, we are told in 2p2 that extension is an attribute of God. We are also told in 1d6 that each of God's attributes expresses an eternal and infinite essence. We must infer from this that Spinoza believes the *Cartesian* conception of extension is not the conception of an attribute that expresses eternal and infinite essence. What is wrong with the Cartesian conception of extension? Ep 83 tells us: it does not allow for the a priori demonstration of the variety of things. The variety of enduring things, as we have seen, requires a certain fixed manner of communicating motion among the parts of extension. The purely geometrical Cartesian conception of extension is insufficient for deducing this manner of communicating motion. Whatever Spinoza's conception of extension is, he thinks it must be rich enough that the manner of communicating motion among its parts follows from it. And from this, in turn, the variety of enduring extended bodies, and consequently the infinite individual they constitute, must follow.

This schematic picture raises a broader issue of interpretation. On Curley's reading there is a fairly sharp distinction between the laws that govern the behavior of finite modes (contained in God's attributes and infinite modes) and the finite modes themselves. Thus it is possible to conceive of a variety of independently specifiable total sequences of finite modes that are consistent with laws of nature, even if those laws themselves are absolutely or metaphysically necessary. This general feature of Curley's interpretation creates room for reading Spinoza as an anti-necessitarian. On the view I've outlined above, the distinction between the laws of nature and the things that fall under those laws is less clear. We cannot specify the total sequence of finite modes independently of the laws governing their behavior. Rather the laws which follow from Spinoza's rich conception of the attribute of extension in turn produce the sequence of finite modes. In other words, no finite modes, or at least no composite finite modes, can be or be conceived without the laws of nature. But then, if the laws of nature are absolutely necessary, and the laws are productive of both the

existence and behavior of finite modes, then it seems that there is only one total sequence of finite modes that is consistent with the laws, the one that is actual. It follows that the actual world is the only possible world. This also explains how Spinoza could deny that any individual finite mode follows from the nature of God or God's attributes alone while maintaining that the total sequence of finite modes – itself an infinite mode – follows from the nature of God or God's attributes alone.

Curley attributes to Spinoza a robust version of the thesis that there is a plurality of possible worlds. According to this version, there is a plurality of complete sequences of finite modes which are consistent with the existence of God and God's attributes. Since I read Spinoza as a necessitarian, I cannot accept this attribution. Nevertheless, I think that we can attribute to Spinoza a weaker version of the plurality thesis similar to the one we find in Leibniz. The conception of a world will exclude God and his attributes but include finite and infinite modes. As Curley says, the infinite modes "have a cause and could have been otherwise, *if* that cause could have been otherwise" (Curley 1988: 46). It is a natural move from here to the claim that other infinite modes could have existed in their place. But "could have existed" has to be understood as "are intrinsically possible."[35] Non-actual infinite modes are not metaphysically possible because, as Curley says, their "cause could not have been otherwise."[36] So a Spinozist possible world can be defined as complete, internally consistent totality of finite and infinite modes. Such totalities will be intrinsically possible but not metaphysically possible. I see no reason to think that the plurality of worlds so conceived is ruled out by anything in Spinoza's system.

III GENERAL REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

Before closing I would like to raise two philosophical problems for the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic necessity. In his *Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, Bennett argues that the distinction between inherent (intrinsic) and acquired (extrinsic) necessity is flawed. In the last section of the chapter on necessity we find the following observations on the distinction:

[35] Note the similarity between what Curley says here and what Leibniz says when he is arguing for the existence of non-actual possibles: "Indeed, even if God does not will something to exist, it is possible for it to exist, since, by its nature, it could exist if God were to will it to exist" (A VI, iv, 1447/AG 20).

[36] Again, this is similar to what Leibniz says when he defines the possible as "anything that, in itself, implies no contradiction, even though its coexistence with God can in some way be said to imply a contradiction" (A VI, iv. 1447/AG 20).

I suggest that Spinoza tended to think that something whose necessity is not inherent but only conferred is still as strongly, completely, absolutely necessary as something inherently necessary . . . In thinking he can distinguish "What necessity does P have?" from "Where does P get its necessity from?," Spinoza is adopting a concept of acquired necessity . . . That would explain Spinoza's use of phrases like "necessary by reason of its cause." It would also provide a way for him to hold (i) that this is the only possible world, while acknowledging (ii) that particular propositions are not necessary *in the way* that truths of logic and mathematics are . . . To get what he needs out of this, Spinoza must hold that there is a single concept of necessity according to which *both* what is necessary is true in all possible worlds, *and* that something that is not inherently necessary can have necessity conferred on it by something else. This assumption is wrong, of course. (Bennett 1984: section 29.7)

Several things Bennett says here seem right to me. The first is that conferred or acquired necessity is as strong and absolute as inherent necessity. Moreover, it is right to see the distinction in 1p33s1 as answering the question "Where does P get its necessity from?" and not "What sort of necessity does P have?" Spinoza thinks the answer to the latter question can be the same, even in cases where the answer to the former question differs. So, for Spinoza there is a single concept of necessity, call it "absolute necessity," under which both inherent and acquired necessity fall. However, Bennett argues that Spinoza cannot have all this. The following, according to Bennett, is the only way of defining "acquired necessity" so that it meets the conditions (1) that what is necessary is true in all possible worlds, and (2) that something that is not inherently necessary can have necessity conferred on it:

P has acquired necessity $=_{df}$ P is entailed by some Q which is absolutely necessary

But this definition, Bennett says, "makes acquired necessity identical with necessity: any P satisfying it is as inherently necessary as an other." As the long passage above indicates, Bennett understands necessity as truth in all possible worlds. Spinoza of course doesn't talk this way, but that doesn't prevent us from doing so in order to clarify and evaluate his philosophical position. On the possible worlds understanding of modality, it is true that if Q is absolutely necessary (true in all possible worlds), and Q entails P (P is true in all possible worlds in which Q is true), then P is absolutely necessary (true in all possible worlds). So, it is true that any P satisfying the definition is *as necessary* as any other, in the sense that every such P is true in all possible worlds.

But, it must be emphasized that notions of inherent necessity and acquired necessity are meant to provide answers to the question "Where does P get its necessity from?" not "What necessity does P have?" The answer

to the latter question, for any P satisfying the definition above, is "absolute necessity." The answer to the former question depends on something besides the modal-logical relationship between P and other absolutely necessary Qs. As Garrett observes, the meaning of "Q entails P," for Spinoza, is not exhausted by "P is true in every possible world in which Q is true":

> For Spinoza, in contrast, to speak of [P as entailed by Q] is to locate [Q] specifically as a necessitating *cause and ground* of [P] within a causal order of the universe that is at once dynamic and logical. Thus, if the Spinozist "following-from" relation is to be identified with a kind of entailment at all, it must be identified with the entailment relation of a "relevance logic," one whose relevance condition is satisfied only by priority in the causal order of nature. (Garrett 1991: 194)

An adequate definition of "acquired necessity" must capture the fact that for Spinoza P's being entailed by Q *is the reason why P is necessary*. Bennett's definition does not do that. According to Garrett, modern relevance logics come closest to capturing this fact. But because of the additional conditions placed on the entailment relation in relevance logics, they do not as a rule yield the theorem that a necessary P is entailed by any Q whatever. If the entailment relation in Spinoza is understood in the way Garrett proposes, we can distinguish something inherently necessary from something with acquired necessity by noting that an inherently necessary R satisfies Bennett's definition only in that R is absolutely necessary and R entails itself. But that is just what Spinoza means by saying that R is inherently necessary. Thus the distinction between inherent and acquired necessity does not appear to collapse, the way Bennett says it does.

It is also possible to challenge the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic necessity more directly. Spinoza says that the concept of an effect contains the concept of its cause (1a4). If this is so, and if a thing's cause is necessary, then it seems that the necessity of that thing's existence is contained in its concept. More specifically, the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic necessity requires that we able to make a clear distinction between what is internal to a thing's concept or essence and what is external to it, with God, in particular, being external to it. But, Spinoza says that everything is conceived through God (1p15). If God's concept forms part of the concept of things, and God's existence entails the existence of whatever is actual, then it seems that whatever is actual contains the reason for its existence in its essence or concept, and is therefore intrinsically necessary.

Leibniz says the similar things, which seem to have similar consequences. In 1701, Leibniz writes to De Volder: "You reply that we need a cause to conceive the existence of a substance but not to conceive its essence. But to

this *I answer* that the concept of a possible cause is needed for conceiving its essence, but to conceive its existence the concept of an actual cause is needed."[37] But, in 1710, Leibniz notes that conceiving possibles through their causes collapses the distinction between the possible and the actual: "In a word, when one speaks of the *possibility* of a thing it is not a question of the causes that can bring it about or prevent its actual existence; otherwise one would change the nature of the terms and render useless the distinction between the possible and the actual."[38] All Leibniz may mean here, however, is that in considering whether a thing is possible we don't take into account what causes *actually* exist. He goes on to say: "That is why, when one asks if a thing is possible or necessary, and brings in considerations of what God wills or chooses, one alters the issue." So it may be, for Leibniz, that the concepts of things contain the concept God as a possible cause, so long as *that* concept does not contain information about God's actual decrees concerning existence.[39] However, more detailed work is required to see if the intrinsic/extrinsic necessity distinction can be rendered consistent with the views of Spinoza and Leibniz on the logical structure of concepts.[40]

Necessitarianism is the position that everything actual is metaphysically (though not intrinsically) necessary, or equivalently that the actual world is the only metaphysically (though not intrinsically) possible world. There is strong textual evidence for attributing this position to both Leibniz and Spinoza. Moreover, it is not clear that this position is tremendously implausible. What makes necessitarianism implausible is the intuition that a non-existent thing, say, a unicorn, is possible. What guides this intuition is that the idea of a unicorn is consistent. Leibniz and Spinoza allow for this, since this is just to say that unicorns are intrinsically possible. But metaphysical principles lead them to the position that not all intrinsic possibilities are metaphysical possibilities. I don't think our intuitions concerning this claim are strong enough to justify saying that it is tremendously implausible. In any event, for Spinoza and Leibniz, the intuitions that guide their metaphysical principles would trump intuitions concerning metaphysical possibility. Spinoza and Leibniz even agree about the nature of divine freedom and its consistency with the necessity of all things.

[37] GP II, 225/L 524. [38] T 235.

[39] There is an excellent, extended discussion of these issues in Adams 1994, ch. 1, sect. 1.

[40] To see how difficult it is to rigorously characterize the notion of intrinsic possibility, consult Sleigh 1990: 81, sect. V of Sleigh 1996, and Sleigh 1999. In the last, Sleigh retracts his earlier analysis of possibility "in its own nature" and, indeed, despairs of ever formulating a general, strict, and accurate account of intrinsic possibility.

In a work that is otherwise highly critical of Spinoza, his commentary on the *Ethics*, when he comes to 1d7 – "A being is *free* which exists and is determined to action by the necessity of its own nature" – Leibniz simply says: "I approve of [this definition]."[41] The most fundamental difference between Spinoza and Leibniz is their conception of the nature which necessitates God's actions. In the *Theodicy* of 1710, Leibniz writes:

> Spinoza . . . appears to have explicitly taught a *blind necessity*, having denied to the author of things understanding and will, and imagining that good and perfection relate only to us and not to him. It is true that Spinoza's opinion on this subject is somewhat obscure . . . Nevertheless, as far as one can understand him, he acknowledges no goodness in God, properly speaking, and he teaches that all things exist by a necessity of the Divine nature, without God making any choice. We will not amuse ourselves here refuting an opinion so bad, and indeed so inexplicable. Ours is founded on the nature of the possibles – that is to say, of things that do not imply a contradiction.[42]

What Leibniz is objecting to here is not Spinoza's necessitarianism, but the fact that the necessity that applies to all things is "blind," unguided by divine wisdom and goodness. And when he says that his position is based on the nature of the possibles it is explicit that he is talking about the plurality of intrinsically possible worlds which he takes to be a necessary condition for God's choice of the best to be non-vacuous. Spinoza's philosophical system has no such requirements. Therefore, even though I have argued that Spinoza is entitled to claim that there is a plurality of possible worlds, where possible worlds are conceived along Leibnizian lines as excluding God and God's attributes, positing such a plurality does no work in Spinoza's system.

[41] A VI, iv, 1766/L 197. [42] T 173, emphasis added.

CHAPTER 5

Epistemic autonomy in Spinoza

Charlie Huenemann

One way to distinguish modern philosophy from post-modern philosophy is by the attitude toward epistemic autonomy. Post-modern philosophies maintain that knowledge is inescapably conditioned by social, political, and cultural forces, and an individual's beliefs are forever at the mercy of the torrents that sweep an age: there can be no objectivity, and no authenticity. But the modern philosophies all find some way for individuals to stand free of cultural forces and determine for themselves what is true, perhaps by the aid of some "skyhook" (such as the natural light) which can pull them out of their circumstances and allow them to see what is at the core of metaphysical reality. This rosy assessment of our abilities found its peak in the Enlightenment, of course, for which Kant supplied the famous motto, "*Sapere aude*! 'Dare to use your own reason!'" Of course, Kant believed that subtle transcendental reasoning was required to leverage some insight into our true epistemic situation, while the early modern philosophers each posited a more direct avenue to deep truth. The access may have been purely intellectual, or purely empirical, but in any event the access was unmediated and unpolluted by spurious ideology. They found it natural to suppose that some sort of pure perception is required in order for any of us to gain intellectual autonomy, which in turn is what we need in order to establish any kind of political or moral autonomy.

This is precisely what made each of the modern philosophies seem so radical to the political and religious institutions of the day, and no one's attitude was judged to be more radical than Spinoza's. As Jonathan Israel argues, "No one else during the century 1650–1750 remotely rivaled Spinoza's notoriety as the chief challenger of the fundamentals of revealed religion, received ideas, tradition, morality, and what was everywhere regarded, in absolutist and non-absolutist states alike, as divinely constituted political authority."[1] This notoriety was caused chiefly by the critique

[1] Israel 2001: 159.

of religious knowledge Spinoza presented in his *Theological-Political Treatise*. His aim in that work was to show that the Bible, properly understood, does not recommend anything that is not also shown through autonomous philosophical reason, and also that sovereigns can grant citizens the liberty to philosophize without jeopardizing the civil order. In short, he championed epistemic autonomy over subordinating oneself to Scripture, and this is what earned him his reputation as an impious radical.

The critique Spinoza brought to revealed religion echoes throughout the epistemology presented in the *Ethics* and in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. Indeed, it is no distortion of Spinoza's philosophy to read everything he wrote as part of an overall campaign to explain and encourage his readers' capacity to figure things out for themselves and break away from superstition and prejudice. But even as Spinoza exhorts his readers to dare to reason for themselves, he places them in a vast causal nexus in which everything they do and think is just as determined and just as necessary as the fact that the sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles. How then, for Spinoza, is it possible for us ever to rise above the causally entangled matrix to discern and obey the dictates of reason? Why are we not all determined to live and think according to the irrational forces conditioning our very existence? One might think that if *anyone* ever had reason to believe that our powers of judgment are forever conditioned by causal forces around us, Spinoza did. And yet he was the greatest inspiration to the thinkers of the Enlightenment. How strange!

I SPINOZA'S EPISTEMOLOGY

To begin to come to terms with how epistemic autonomy is possible for Spinoza, we need to review the basics of his epistemology. A human body, according to Spinoza, is an impressionable compound of soft tissues that maintains its identity over time by keeping a constant metabolism of motion and rest. The environment presses upon the body in many ways, and the body is able to model the environment *physiologically* in response to these pressures. The body is thus a living map of one's experience. When we lift the informational content out of that physiological structure, we are considering the *mind* that is associated with that human body. And that is what Spinoza presumably means when he says that the mind is the idea of the body.

Now this living map is subtle and complex, as our model of the world does not merely contain every large impact our bodies have suffered, but also all the smaller impacts occasioned by whispered rumors and scribbled, scholarly footnotes. Moreover, we cannot help but associate all these

impressions with one another as they repeatedly occur, and make generalizations from their similarities, and so we build up our memories and our imaginative powers. All of this, put together, constitutes our ordinary knowledge of the world, or what Spinoza calls knowledge of the first kind.

But this is not all there is to human knowledge. If it were, the mind would be completely at the mercy of its environment, and it would have very inadequate knowledge:

> I say expressly that the Mind has, not an adequate, but only a confused knowledge, of itself, its own Body, and of external bodies, so long as it perceives things from the common order of nature, i.e., so long as it is determined externally, from fortuitous encounters with things, to regard this or that, and not so long as it is determined internally . . . For so often as it is disposed internally, in this or that way, then it regards things clearly and distinctly . . . (2p29s)[2]

And so what saves us from this confusion is the possibility of our knowledge being determined from *within* – and not from within the body, exactly, but from within the mind itself.

Now here is where matters get tricky. The mind is a particular expression of God's attribute of thought, just as the body is an expression of God's attribute of extension. Thus each mind is substantially identical with God's thought, though it is limited and made particular in a specific way; that is, each mind is a *mode* of God's thought. Since it is substantially identical with thought, the mind bears the central features of thought: features which pertain to the mind as a *thinking* thing, as opposed to any other kind of thing. These central features of the mind are called *common notions*. Spinoza's parallelism licenses him to claim that the common notions are ideas of the correspondingly central features of bodies – those features which pertain to extended things qua extended things. So the mind, as a thinking thing, is no blank slate, but has structural features by its very nature from which, as we shall see, all adequate ideas may be constructed.

Though Spinoza rarely offers examples, the set of common notions surely includes the ideas of extension, of motion and of rest, of geometrical shape and of arithmetic quantity, and of whatever other general features of the extended world are required to construct an adequate physics (see 2p38c).[3] The set no doubt includes other ideas as well, such as the ideas

[2] Translations of Spinoza are Curley's, found in Spinoza 1985.

[3] Edwin Curley has pointed out that Spinoza dissociates geometrical entities from things that are "physical and real" in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, section 95. Geometrical entities are mere "beings of reason." But surely they will be required in constructing an adequate physics. So

of God and of God's infinite essence (which will play a fundamental role in Spinoza's account of the highest form of knowledge). These ideas are all *adequate*. Spinoza calls an idea *inadequate* if it is a confused representation of both an external object and the state of one's body. Every instance of sense perception yields ideas that are inadequate in this way, since each sensation is as much about an object as it is about the state of the sensing organ. But the common notions are not gained through sense perception. They are innate to the mind in virtue of it being a mind, and so they are not confused representations of bodily states and external bodies; and it is for this reason they are adequate (see 2p11c and 2p38).

The task that lies before us, if we want to gain adequate knowledge, is to correct the beliefs we gain through sensory experience by building up the second kind of knowledge, or knowledge that is based upon and constructed from common notions. Ultimately, this is the antidote Spinoza supplies to the poisons of superstition and ignorance. But we are interested in raising the question of how this antidote is possible: how can we lift ourselves out of our physiologically bound imaginations and memories and into some ideal conceptual space in which we can recognize our common notions and build things with them? What causal force motivates us to turn our attention toward this ideal conceptual space – why are we interested in doing this? What laws within Spinoza's universe will determine what we do there? And if those laws are deterministic, is there a threat that the second kind of knowledge may turn out to be just as partial, and subject to bias and corruption, as the first kind of knowledge?

II WHY GAIN ADEQUATE KNOWLEDGE?

Let us turn first to the question of motivation. Spinoza recounts his own found need to enter into an ideal conceptual space and find a secure path to knowledge in the early sections of the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*:

> After experience had taught me that all the things which regularly occur in ordinary life are empty and futile, . . . I resolved at last to try to find out whether there was anything which would be a true good, capable of communicating itself, and which alone would affect the mind, all others being rejected – whether there was something which, once found and acquired, would continuously give me the greatest joy, to eternity.

perhaps geometrical entities are not to be counted among common notions, but instead as ideal things which can be constructed out of more basic notions of "real things" like extension and motion. See Curley 1973: 29–30.

Spinoza is after a "*true* good," of course, and not just anything that will supply him with continuous joy. A few paragraphs later, he focuses on exactly what it is he hopes to acquire: a different human nature, one that is "stronger and more enduring" than his current human nature (section 13). Moreover, he believes that this stronger and more enduring nature *consists in* "the knowledge of the union that the mind has with the whole of nature." Note that gaining the stronger nature is not something we learn how to do once we gain the knowledge; rather, having the stronger nature consists in having the knowledge. This knowledge, he believes, will give him continuously "the greatest joy, to eternity," and he desires others to gain the same knowledge: "That is, it is part of my happiness to take pains that many others may understand as I understand, so that their intellect and desire agree entirely with my intellect and desire" (section 14).

Spinoza offers a more detailed account of this in parts 3 and 4 of the *Ethics*. In surveying this account, the first step is to recognize that he defines the actual essence of each individual thing as a *striving* for its own continued existence (3p7). The actual essence of a mind then, is the striving for its own continued existence. Spinoza thinks that a direct consequence of this proposition is that the mind strives to imagine only those things which posit its power of acting (3p54). That is, the mind, as it strives to continue to exist, welcomes images of conditions for its continued existence. Naturally, this kind of striving can lead to plenty of error and confusion, since Spinoza here is describing just a propensity on our part to see ourselves in favorable lights. We welcome praise and flattery, and daydream about all sorts of accomplishments, merely because the mind feels joy in those images (see 3p55s).

As a second step in Spinoza's account, if we focus more narrowly on a part of the mind – the part consisting of common notions and adequate ideas, which Spinoza calls "reason" (2p40s2) – then we can make similar claims on its behalf: reason also seeks its own continued existence, and enjoys the exercise of its own power. What power is this? Reason, Spinoza argues, "does not judge anything useful to itself except what leads to understanding" (4p26). This is because the essence of reason is to understand things clearly and distinctly. Thus the striving which constitutes the essence of reason is a striving for adequate ideas.

So we are motivated to enter an ideal conceptual space in order to satisfy a longing housed in a part of our mind, the longing for adequate ideas. Still, why shouldn't this desire be overwhelmed by other irrational parts of the mind, such as the part that seeks the esteem of others, or the one that seeks the pleasures of self-deception? To be sure, Spinoza thinks this is the case all too often – that is the problem. But the particular drive for adequate

knowledge, when it is satisfied, leads to *self-esteem*, which Spinoza thinks is "the highest thing we can hope for":

> Self-esteem (*acquiescentia in se ipso*) is a joy born of the fact that man considers himself and his power of acting (by Def. Aff. 15). But man's true power of acting, *or* virtue, is reason itself (by 3p3), which man considers clearly and distinctly (by 2p40 and p43). Therefore self-esteem arises from reason.
>
> Next, while a man considers himself, he perceives nothing clearly and distinctly, *or* adequately, except those things which follow from his power of acting (by 3d2), that is (by 3p3), which follow from his power of understanding. And so the greatest self-esteem there can be arises only from this self-reflection. (4p52d)

This *acquiescentia in se ipso* appears again at the end of part 4 of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza advises us to gain a clear picture of our powers, what we are able to do and what we must abide by, and to understand ourselves as part of nature. "If we understand this clearly and distinctly," he writes, "that part of us which is defined by understanding, that is, the better part of us, will be entirely satisfied with this, and will strive to persevere in that satisfaction (*acquiescentia*). For insofar as we understand, we can want nothing except what is necessary, nor absolutely be satisfied with anything except what is true." This, perhaps, is a recognition that comes only after one learns that "all the things which regularly occur in ordinary life are empty and futile."

III COMMON NOTIONS

But even if we have strong motivation to form adequate ideas, it is not yet clear that we have the ability to do so. Somehow, the common notions must enjoy a special sort of status to allow us to gain a privileged type of knowledge. What is this special status?

To help to see the nature of the problem, consider first how widely the common notions are distributed. They are inherent to minds in virtue of their being minds – they are intrinsic to the nature of thought. But this makes them intrinsic to *every* mind – and in Spinoza's metaphysics, this means the idea of each and every physical entity: "Whatever we have said of the idea of the human Body must also be said of the idea of any thing" (2p13s). How then does the presence of common notions in *our* minds give *us* any special ability to use them in gaining adequate knowledge of the world? What makes us any more epistemically privileged than (say) a carrot?

Spinoza does note that not all ideas are equal, and he would recognize the idea of a human as different from the idea of a carrot insofar as the idea

of a human body is "more excellent" and "contains more reality" than does the idea of the carrot. In general, says Spinoza, "in proportion as a Body is more capable than others of doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once, so its Mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once" (2p13s). And so presumably the human mind is more excellent than the "mind" of the carrot because the human body is capable of building a more complex internal model of its environment, and is capable of a wider range of responses to its environment.

But this point about our bodies' capacities seems only to explain why we would be better than carrots at gaining knowledge of the first kind: we are better at employing our imaginations. It is difficult to see why this should allow us a greater range of adequate knowledge – *if* adequate knowledge requires something other than the imagination. Does it? At 2p25c, Spinoza claims that "insofar as the human Mind imagines an *external body*, it does not have adequate knowledge of it" (emphasis added). But what if the mind is imagining not an external body, but the object of some idea internal to itself, such as a semicircle or a sphere? The problem with imagining external bodies is that the human mind will possess only the information that is yielded through causal contact with the body; through that experience, the human mind will have no information regarding all the other forces conditioning the external body's existence. If we want to translate this point into Spinozistic god-talk, we will say that the idea of the external body is not adequate in God's mind insofar as God constitutes the human mind; it is adequate only insofar as God constitutes the idea of the external body itself.[4]

But when it comes to employing the imagination in forming complex ideas out of simpler ingredients that are internal to the human mind, perhaps the limitations of the imagination will not matter: the imagination is not drawing upon the fragmented and partial information yielded through sense experience, but instead has full access to the information contained within the mind's innate common notions. Spinoza does not explicitly discuss using the imagination in this way – that is, working in partnership with common notions – though it would seem that he has to invoke it at some point if he wants to explain why human beings are smarter than carrots. (At 2p39, he does claim that when human bodies are "usually" affected by external bodies by virtue of some feature they both share, the human mind will have an adequate idea of that feature; this at

[4] For a thorough discussion of the relativity of the adequacy of ideas, see Della Rocca 1996: chs. 3 and 6. See also Bennett 2001: vol. I, sect. 78.

least opens the door to letting the imagination play some role in the construction of adequate ideas.) So let us suppose that if we run our imaginations using only the common notions provided by reason as input, then we can construct more complex adequate ideas. (Kant, for whatever it is worth, advocated something like this in the case of synthetic a priori intuition.)

We have some confirmation for this proposal in 2p17s, where Spinoza writes that

> . . . the imaginations of the Mind, considered in themselves, contain no error, or the Mind does not err from the fact that it imagines, but only insofar as it is considered to lack an idea that excludes the existence of those things that it imagines to be present to it. For if the Mind, while it imagined non-existent things as present to it, at the same time knew that those things did not exist, it would, of course, attribute this power of imagining to a virtue of its nature, not to a vice – especially if this faculty of imagining depended only on its true nature, i.e. (by 1d7), if the Mind's faculty of imagining were free.

The invocation of 1d7 at the end of this passage recalls Spinoza's sense of freedom as self-determination: when an entity's behavior is determined by its own nature, then it is said to be free. The mind's faculty of imagining is in this case free to the extent that (a) the basic ingredients out of which ideas are being formed (that is, the common notions) belong to the mind itself; (b) the processes of the imaginative faculty are autonomous; and (c) the mind suffers from no illusion about what it is doing, or whether the ideas it forms correspond to existent objects.

Now this self-determination in forming ideas is paralleled, of course, by some kind of self-determination of the body. Or, as Spinoza puts it in 2p13s, "In proportion as the actions of a body depend more on itself alone, and as other bodies concur with it less in acting, so its mind is more capable of understanding distinctly." So to the extent that our bodies' motions are determined by internal forces, the actions of our minds are also determined by internal forces. Self-determined actions of the mind – whether volitions or calculations or conceptualizations – lead to real understanding precisely because they are self-determined, and there is no opportunity for the kind of confusion that arises in the case of the first kind of knowledge. Epistemic autonomy and physical autonomy are of a piece: to the extent that my actions are determined by myself, and not by others, then to that extent my thoughts are determined by internal, autonomous, and reliable forces, and are not skewed by the external and thoroughly unreliable forces of superstition, illusion, ignorance, and confusion. Here we find a metaphysical foundation for Spinoza's political liberalism.

IV AUTONOMY IN MIND AND BODY

We have seen that adequate knowledge, for Spinoza, is founded on both mental and physical autonomy: when the mind is self-determined and (in parallel) the body is self-determined, then the ideas the mind forms will be adequate. But, of course, the human body is caught in a great causal nexus, according to Spinoza, in which one body's behavior is determined by another's, and that by another's, and so on *ad infinitum*. Similarly, each idea is conditioned by another, and so on. The human self, according to Spinoza, is only a finite mode of a substance, always at the mercy of more powerful modes surrounding it. In such a scheme, how is it ever possible for a mind or a body to act autonomously?

If Spinoza takes this autonomy seriously, then he needs to carve out free spaces for both the mind and the body – spaces in which they can each be self-determined, and not pushed around by other things. Perhaps for the body this is less of a problem. For although it may never actually happen that a body's trajectory is completely determined by its own inertia (or, in more complex cases, the ratio of motion and rest among a body's parts perhaps is never perpetuated completely on its own without interruption), we can still make sense of the body's *own* contribution to its behavior. That is, we can parcel out the portions of its behavior that are due to the body's own powers, and speak of *the extent to which* a body's behavior is self-determined. But how are we to do this for the mind? What is it for a mind to act autonomously?

Note that we should not simply exploit Spinoza's doctrine of parallelism and let the mind's autonomy ride piggy-back on the body's. If thought and extension are as conceptually distinct as Spinoza believes they are, such a piggy-back ride is not legitimate. There should be something Spinoza can say about the determination of ideas that does not force us to fall back on the physical. We should take Spinoza at his word when he writes in 2p7s: "Hence, so long as things are considered as modes of thinking, we must explain the order of the whole of nature, *or* the connection of causes, through the attribute of Thought alone."

So we need to focus on the way in which the intellect thinks autonomously, or the way that the intellect, on its own steam as it were, passes from state to state, which is supposed to run in parallel with the body's autonomous passage from state to state. Describing and prescribing this autonomous passage of thought is the central concern of the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. Spinoza's prescription there is what he calls "the Method," and its ultimate aim is to deduce all our ideas from the "fixed and eternal things" so that "our mind will reproduce Nature as much

as possible" (sections 99–106). Autonomous thought is also one of Spinoza's deepest concerns in parts 2 through 5 of the *Ethics*, where he distinguishes epistemic autonomy from psychological determination, or the passage of thought that is determined by the idiosyncrasies of one's own experience and temperament.[5] The overarching theme of Spinoza's ethical philosophy is that to the extent our thinking and behavior are determined by "the common order of nature, i.e., so long as they are determined externally, from fortuitous encounters with things, to regard this or that" (2p29s), we suffer from confusion and we act in irrational ways. But to the extent that our thinking is determined by *reason*, we have the best chance of leading our lives equitably. The passage of autonomous thought is thus determined logically, not psychologically.

But it seems odd that the logical determination of thought should run in parallel with whatever the body is doing while the thinker thinks autonomously. Indeed, what is the body doing when we reason? When we are engaged in the first kind of knowledge, reflecting surrounding bodies and tripping along from imaginative association to imaginative association, then it is more plausible to think that our experience will run in parallel with our physiological states. But matters seem like they should be very different when we lift ourselves into an ideal realm, contemplating lines, planes, motion, and so on. Linking this style of thought to certain physiological processes seems to rob reason of its chief virtue, namely, its ability to stand above the causal fray and draw its conclusions independently of whatever forces the body is subject to.

Let us cast the point in a ham-fisted way: if using reason is identical with (say) "K fibers" firing in the brain, then it seems like the firing of "K fibers" can always be disturbed in some way – perhaps by listening to long lectures, or by ingesting certain varieties of mushroom, or by brain surgery. Wouldn't this physical susceptibility turn around and compromise the validity of reason? The question, really, is how Spinoza can insulate the intellect from the ways in which the body can get things wrong, given the parallelism between mind and body.

V AUTONOMOUS AND EMBODIED REASON?

In earlier works, Spinoza seems to have given in to the rationalist's (or the Stoic's) temptation to make reason somehow detachable from the

[5] But there are also significant differences in the accounts offered in the *Treatise* and the *Ethics*; see again Curley 1973: 40–54.

body.[6] In the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, the *Short Treatise*, and the *Metaphysical Thoughts*, Spinoza describes the soul's capacity to break its attachment with the body and join itself instead to God. The soul does this when it employs reason as a stepladder to intuitive knowledge, which is a love-infused union with God and the soul's greatest joy. (This is, perhaps, why Spinoza writes in the *Treatise* that gaining a stronger and more enduring nature *consists in* attaining the highest kind of knowledge – since by gaining that knowledge, we have united ourselves with an eternal being, and have somehow left behind the dead weight of the flesh.) But – at least in a large portion of the *Ethics* – Spinoza has abandoned the proposal that any part of the mind is detachable from the body, though he still wants to maintain that reason can act autonomously. It would appear that Spinoza wants all the ontological advantages of a naturalistic psychology alongside rationalism's grand prize, which is to be determined by the forces of reason alone. Can he have it both ways?[7]

Of course this is not a question Spinoza ignores. He tries to explain exactly how the mind is able to engage in reason, and his account draws upon the body's own physical nature – specifically, the features the body has in common with all bodies in the universe. The outline of the strategy is already familiar: since the body has features in common with all other bodies, the mind has ideas in common with all minds, and it is in virtue of these parallel commonalities that the mind is able to reason adequately about the true nature of extended things. But this implies that when we reason, the body is somehow activating those features it has in common with all other bodies. In other words, if we ask what the body is doing when we reason, the answer is that it is somehow engaging with the facts that it is extended, and is capable of motion, and so on. But how does a body "engage" with these facts, or "activate" them? Our earlier suggestion was that, when we reason, we employ the imagination in conjunction with the common notions in order to construct adequate ideas; if so, then similarly it seems that the body should exercise its own imaginative machinery (whatever that is) upon those features it has in common with other bodies. That is, the body's own extension and mobility should become objects processed in some fashion by the physiological process of the imagination.

[6] For more discussion of Spinoza's attitudes, both early and late, to the question of immortality, see Nadler 2002: ch. 5.

[7] Compare Bennett 2001, vol. I: 205: "Spinoza, uniquely among the philosophers that I know, tries to have it both ways: thoroughly a naturalist about reason, which he openly treats as a causal process, he nevertheless claims it to be infallible and offers to explain why."

The good news here is that the body's being extended and mobile (and so on) cannot be disturbed by one's partaking of long lectures or mushrooms or brain surgery. But the bad news is that surely the physiological processes of the imagination can be disturbed or distorted by such things. To the extent that reasoning must run in parallel with some complex bodily process, and any such process is susceptible to alien interference, Spinoza's reason loses its autonomy. And thus it appears that, despite Spinoza's careful epistemological engineering, our ability to reason can indeed be compromised by the body's own weaknesses.[8]

Did Spinoza embrace this conclusion? There are many passages which suggest he did. Consider 4p4c, where Spinoza takes himself to have demonstrated that "man is necessarily always subject to the passions, that he follows and obeys the common order of Nature, and accommodates himself to it as much as the nature of things requires," and the preface to *Ethics* part 3, where he mocks those who think of human beings as living in some insulated dominion within nature's dominion.[9] Maybe human reason is a lot like our body's trajectory: always pushed or pulled by other things, but striving so far as it can to maintain its own self-determination. If so, then in fact we have no epistemic autonomy except under very rare and ideal conditions.

But at the same time, there are passages which suggest that we can take the initiative, block those alien cognitive influences, and reason for ourselves. This is the "self-help" side of the *Ethics*. Spinoza's principal business in part 5 is to demonstrate what power the mind can have over its passions, and he writes there that "if clear and distinct knowledge does not remove [the passions], at least it brings it about that they constitute the smallest part of the Mind" (5p20s). In the end, Spinoza does want to secure a remedy against the corruption of the affects; he wants to regard reason as a reliable and safe haven, a space we can always enter when we want to separate ourselves from the fortuitous affects of the body and direct our minds to what is fixed and eternal. This is not just a matter of our being lucky enough to find a quiet spot in which we can reason. We can establish these quiet spots ourselves, by lifting ourselves out of the mix. It is

[8] One is reminded here of Nietzsche's critique of Spinoza himself in *Beyond Good and Evil*, sect. 5, calling his geometrical method "that hocus-pocus of mathematical form in which, as if in iron, Spinoza encased and masked his philosophy . . . – how much personal timidity and vulnerability this masquerade of a sick recluse betrays!" (Nietzsche 1973: 37).

[9] He even writes in the *Political Treatise* that "it is not in every man's power always to use reason and to be at the highest pitch of human freedom," but the *uniuscujus hominis* might mean only that not every single one of us is capable; maybe a privileged few are. Ch. 2, sect. 8, trans. Samuel Shirley (Spinoza 2000: 41).

Spinoza's skyhook – one to which he is not really entitled (as is the trouble, alas, with skyhooks in general).

VI DETACHED REASON

I said earlier that through large portions of the *Ethics*, Spinoza does not regard reason as separable from the body. Large portions, yes – but not all. In other parts of the *Ethics* (chiefly in part 5), Spinoza clings to a descendent of his earlier view that the mind can detach itself from the body.

The motivation for holding this view should be apparent, given the problem we have just seen of coupling reason with any kind of complex physiological process. Those processes can always be disturbed; but if the mind could somehow float free of them, there would be no worry of reason going astray. Moreover, perhaps we can see how Spinoza might convince himself that at least part of the mind can be detached from the body. The mind's common notions, as we have seen, are not unique to any particular individual – they are common to all minds, or ideas of all extended things. Set aside for now the suggestion that we employ our individual imaginations when we build complex ideas out of common notions, and suppose that – somehow – we can build up adequate ideas just through those common notions alone. Insofar as we "think through" just these common notions, we are thinking not as particular individuals, but as the power of thought itself – that is, we are uniting our minds with the infinite intellect of God. We have left behind the features and forces which individuate us from all other finite modes, and are thinking *sub specie aeternitatis*. As we have seen, this cannot really work in Spinoza's system, since constructing complex ideas must require more processing above and beyond the mere fact that one has a body that is extended and mobile and so on. (Otherwise, carrots would be capable of such tranquil meditation.) Still, it is plausible that Spinoza thought something like this detachment is possible for us, especially given many of his claims throughout the second half of the *Ethics*. Let us call this hopeful illusion of his the "detachment view."

According to the detachment view, as we exercise our intellects, we are in a certain sense leaving behind the circumstances that individuate our body from the rest of the cosmos, and are drawing our ideas from more fundamental and pervasive features of the universe – "the fixed and eternal things," again. Our thoughts are not determined by fortuitous motions of the body, but by thought's own laws; we become like a "spiritual automaton" following whatever laws of logic govern the intellect (*Treatise*, section 85). These logical laws determine our thoughts, but in a way that is distinct

from the causal determination that pertains to ideas of affections of the body. The passage from the sight of hoofprints to the thought of a horseman to the thought of a soldier is causally determined in a way that is similar to the passage from brain state A to state B to state C, but it is different from the passage from the thought of a line, to the possibility of rotating it, with the result of a circle. Causal determination can lead to various mistakes and confusions, but logical determination cannot.

Thus, on the detachment view, when Spinoza says that the mind and body are *the same thing* considered under different attributes, the identity has to be construed much more loosely. There may be tight overlap when we are considering imaginative ideas and physiological states of one's body. But when it comes to ideas drawn from the intellect, the identity is not between ideas and brain states, but instead between ideas and the objects represented in the ideas (which are often, though not always, entities that are or would be extended). When Spinoza writes of the idea of a circle, for instance, he takes its object to be a circle existing in nature, and not the brain state of someone who is thinking of a circle (2p7s). Indeed, what makes the intellect so special is that its ideas are drawn from features common to all things, and so the ideas are capable of representing genuine physical possibilities rooted in the true nature of things, and not rooted merely in one's own arbitrary experience or one's physiology. The intellect's ideas are *about* real possibilities, and not *about* the peculiar state of one's own body.

This would mean that when our thought is determined by the laws of the intellect, according to the detachment view, we are having an out-of-the-body experience; at least, out of *our* body, though not necessarily out of *body* in a very general sense, since our mind is directed toward features that are present somehow in corporeal nature. We attain epistemic autonomy by engaging in reflection that is not bound by the limitations of our individual, sense-organ-based minds, and find that union our intellects have with the mind of God.

Attributing the detachment view to Spinoza would explain how, in part 5 of the *Ethics*, he can turn his attention to "those things which pertain to the Mind's duration without relation to the body" (5p20s), a passage which is otherwise notoriously baffling. The mind, Spinoza goes on to demonstrate, is aware of the body only while the body endures; and when the body is destroyed, something of the mind remains. "We feel and know by experience that we are eternal," he says, and that eternal part of us is reason, or our ability to understand things *sub specie aeternitatis*. And our greatest joy is not just gaining this understanding, but also experiencing the tremendous intellectual joy that accompanies it, which leads to a deep intellectual love of the final object of our understanding, God or Nature.

This is the appropriate place to bring the third kind of knowledge into play. In addition to the first two kinds of knowledge, Spinoza believes we are also capable of coming to know certain things in virtue of our intellects containing an adequate idea of God's essence. At times we can recognize a truth immediately as a consequence of that essence. We simply *see*, without the mediation of rational demonstration, that something is so, and we see rightly. Our greatest joy, and our greatest love, arises from this kind of insight, as it is the consciousness of our union with God and the various ways in which things are rooted in God's nature – precisely the kind of knowledge Spinoza said he wanted in the beginning of the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*.

I believe Spinoza did indeed hold the detachment view, though he was not entitled to it. Moreover, as we shall see next, the view led him into a philosophical position which is inspiring to any mystic, but which also ends up compromising the epistemic autonomy he esteemed so highly.

VII ENLIGHTENMENT

It is strange that Spinoza does not make more use of the third kind of knowledge, given its importance to him. Many times he gives an example of the *sort* of thing direct apprehension is (seeing immediately that two is to four as three is to six, for example), but he never offers a claim and then justifies it by saying that this is something he has perceived directly as a consequence of God's attributes. He does not call intuition into service in the way Descartes presses the natural light into service. He is coy about it, and merely tantalizes us with the claim that having it brings us the highest kind of joy and love we can possibly experience.

It is possible that he did not believe words could convey the things he had come to understand through this pure intuition. Many mystics feel this way. But it is also possible that Spinoza intended to leave the matter open-ended so as to encourage his readers to try to discover what they can for themselves. After claiming that "we feel and know by experience that we are eternal", he goes on to say that "the Mind *feels* those things that it conceives in understanding no less than those it has in memory. For the eyes of the mind, by which it *sees* and *observes* things, are the demonstrations themselves" (5p23s; emphases added). Here Spinoza is gesturing toward a personal experience that goes beyond knowing *that* a certain claim is true. In this passage, when he claims that the eyes of the mind are the demonstrations themselves, he is *not* making the claim that the sorts of demonstrations that Spinoza offers for propositions in the *Ethics* are eyes of the mind;

rather, the intellectual vision one experiences in knowledge of the third kind is itself the only demonstration needed for the truth that is apprehended. The vision is irreducibly first-person, as are the joy and love that come along with the vision. It simply would not serve any purpose to have a list of things Spinoza has discovered through intuition, since intuition is valuable only because of the great *acquiescentia* that one experiences with it. So, in short, Spinoza is telling us not only to dare to use our own reason, as Kant says, but also to dare to trust what our minds feel.

So Spinoza, like many mystics, encourages his readers to seek their own apprehension of the truth, and not rest content with what they hear from others. But also like other mystics, the goal Spinoza aims toward is a state of being in which the notion of epistemic autonomy becomes empty. For who is the subject of this mystical epistemic autonomy? Follow what happens to our understanding of the self as we trace through Spinoza's program. Our greatest striving is toward the third kind of knowledge and the intellectual love of God. As we gain more of this knowledge and love, a smaller portion of our mind is bound up with conclusions drawn from the first kind of knowledge; so, gratefully, we fear death less, and love God more. We begin to associate ourselves less and less with our body – which is known to us only through the imagination – and take up our residence in the infinite intellect of God, so that a greater part of our mind is eternal. But as we succeed, we lose touch with all of the features that made us who we thought we were to begin with. We work toward identifying ourselves with ideas that were in existence in God long before our bodies were born, and our existence after our bodies die will be about as meaningful to us as our pre-existence was. In the end, what has become of the self seeking to gain epistemic autonomy? The self ultimately resides in the infinite intellect of God; it is only for a brief interim that a connection to a body has confused it into thinking it was anything else. But really, as Spinoza writes,

> it is clear that our Mind, insofar as it understands, is an eternal mode of thinking, which is determined by another eternal mode of thinking, and this again by another, and so on, to infinity; so that together, they all constitute God's eternal and infinite intellect. (5p40s)

This account of the true self is surely meant to be uplifting and inspiring, though there is more than a hint of oblivion as well. In the end, it is an idea in God's intellect that has adequate knowledge, and enjoys *acquiescentia in se ipso*, at least as much as any changeless and eternal thing can. But this idea has had adequate knowledge all along. It is only a fragmented individual – i.e., a mode of thought, considered *not* insofar as it is contained within

God's intellect – that has gradually accomplished some degree of self-knowledge. And this individual, we have discovered, is not the greatest or most excellent part of the mind.

Finally, we can point out as well the problem of how it is still possible to act for the sake of other autonomies (such as moral and political autonomy), once we have gained epistemic autonomy. How is it possible to have concern for morality and politics, once one has a vision of things *sub specie aeternitatis*? Once we attain *acquiescentia in se ipso*, we gain the recognition that what is, is necessary, and nothing can be avoided. This is the solace one seeks when the burden of the world becomes too wearisome. But Spinoza, out of a hope he cannot legitimately have, tries to return from that mystical self-knowledge and assert the importance involving oneself in change. This is surely a problem to pursue on another occasion, but for now it seems that in Spinoza's philosophy, mystical enlightenment has become an obstacle for the philosophical Enlightenment.[10]

[10] I thank the audience at the 2005 Pacific Northwest / Western Canadian Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy for helpful criticism of an earlier version of this paper, and I thank Russell Wahl for extensive comments on a later version.

CHAPTER 6

Spinoza and the philosophy of history

Michael A. Rosenthal

Hegel famously characterized Spinoza as "philosophically inadequate" because he supposedly lacked a proper theory of history.[1] More recent interpretations have qualified and disputed that charge. Some (such as Smith 1997) have argued that Spinoza was central in the transformation of the idea of history from a divine to a secular process.[2] It has also been popular to claim (e.g., by Smith or André Tosel) that there is a theory of historical progress either tacit or explicit in his philosophy.[3] Others (such as Moreau 1994: part 2, ch. 4) have sought to make sense of his views in light of the context of early modern historiography, particularly the recuperation of the idea of "fortune." In this paper I intend to critique and build on this work by showing the systematic relation between Spinoza's theory of action in the *Ethics* and his use of historical sources and methods in the *Theological-Political Treatise*. Further, I shall claim that the use of historical narratives in the TTP is part of a larger pattern of the use of narrative, which can also be found even in the last part of the *Ethics*. I shall argue that: (a) the narrative representation of the self in time is a natural by-product of the individual's *conatus*; (b) historical accounts (*historia*), whether divine or secular, are more or less adequately based on these fundamental conceptions of the self in time; (c) narratives, whether expressed as an interpretation of the ideal of the "free man" or as stories that help us use rational insights in the mastery of the passions, are an important part of Spinoza's ethical project; and (d) Spinoza's philosophy of history consists not in some master narrative of the development of nature, whether providential or immanent, but in the systematic use of exemplary narratives as a necessary feature of individual and collective human striving.

[1] Hegel 1995: 288. According to Hegel, all distinctions among things are ultimately obliterated in the unity of Spinoza's substance. There is no internal principle of consciousness and action, and, without "a principle of spiritual freedom," which substance strives to achieve through its determinate striving, there is no philosophical sense to history. See the discussion of this passage in Smith 1997: 84–85.

[2] Smith 1997: ch. 4. [3] Tosel 1990: 306–26.

I SPINOZA'S USES OF HISTORY

In order to answer some of these questions we need to look at Spinoza's texts carefully.[4] Interestingly the word "*historia*" occurs only once in the *Ethics* (4p67s; G II: 261/26). Of course that does not means the *Ethics* has nothing to teach us about this subject, and we will return to this issue, but the place to look first must be in the TTP where Spinoza repeatedly quotes historians and uses the terms "*historia*" and "*narratio*" (and their variants) frequently. Spinoza uses the term "*historia*" in several different senses and in this section I shall canvass them with some reference to other works.

The first term I want to examine is "*fabula*," and it is important because I think it clearly indicates one possible meaning of "*historia*." It is used twice in the TTP, chapter 10, and in both cases it refers to some narrative that is not entirely credible, as when it refers to prophecies of Isaiah that have not been preserved (10.7; G III: 142), or apocryphal additions to the book of Ezra, which Spinoza characterizes as having been added by "some trifler" (*ab aliquo nugatore*). In the *Political Treatise*, we find the phrase used in an important context, to which we will return later, where Spinoza writes, "we have seen that reason can indeed do a great deal to restrain and moderate the affects; but at the same time we have seen that the road which reason teaches us to follow is very difficult, so that those who are persuaded that the masses, or people who are separated into parties by public affairs, can be induced to live only according to the prescription of reason are dreaming of the golden age of the Poets, *or* of a myth (*fabulam*)" (TP 1.5; G III: 275).[5] A fable is obviously fabricated, possibly false, and very likely misleading. The word "*historia*" is sometimes used in just the same way. Spinoza makes the point quite clear when, in the crucial chapter 7 of the TTP, he writes that, "it happens quite frequently that we read similar stories (*historias*) in different books and make very different judgments about them" (7.61; G III: 110). For instance, we find a story of men flying in *Orlando Furioso*, Ovid, and in the Book of Judges and Kings, yet "we make a very different judgment about each of them: that the first wanted to write only trifles (*nugas*), the second, political, and the third, finally, sacred

[4] All quotations from the *Ethics* and early works are from Spinoza 1985. All quotations from the *Theological-Political Treatise* are from a draft of Edwin Curley's forthcoming translation of them. References are to chapter and section number.

[5] Translations vary. For G III: 142 Curley has "legend," Shirley, "myth," and Lagrée and Moreau, "*fable*"; for G III: 146, Curley has "legend" again, Shirley, "story," and Lagrée and Moreau, "*fable*"; and for G III: 275, Curley has "myth," Shirley, "fairy tale," and Lagrée and Moreau, "*une histoire imaginaire*."

matters" (7.62; G III: 110). It all depends not so much on the story itself but on our opinion of the writer.

The second sense of history must go beyond that of trifles and entertainments and point to something real, especially in politics. These we can, with Spinoza, call "chronicles" which relate some narrative of events.[6] These chronologies or annals (the terms are used interchangeably at 10.24, G III: 145) are written by chroniclers (10.9; G III: 142) or scribes or historiographers appointed by governors, princes, or kings (10.24; G III: 145). The main point of distinguishing these chronicles is to indicate another kind of history, which is composed of them. This third kind of history I propose to call "super chronicles." In other words, they are arranged by an historian or editor out of the work of other chroniclers. Spinoza thinks that the books of Daniel, Ezra, Esther, and Nehemiah, for instance, are all written by one historian who sometimes even refers to his sources, such as, in the case of Esther, the "Chronicles of the Kings of Persia" (10.23; G III: 145). Interestingly enough, many of the super chronicles, although they often take on the form of a narrative of events, are chronologically confused and inaccurate. Spinoza says that, in the case of Jeremiah, the sources "have been plucked up and collected from various chroniclers," and are "piled up confusedly, with no account taken of the times of the events recorded" (10.10; G III: 142). In fact, as his work in chapters 8 and 9 show, conflicting and confused accounts in just about all of the books of Scripture, including the Pentateuch, exhibit the same composed nature, and testify to the fact that there was not a single author of them.

Spinoza's point in making this observation takes us to the next level, or sense, of history, which is the one most often referred to in commentaries, namely, the Baconian sense of the term.[7] In chapter 7, Spinoza states that "to liberate our minds from theological prejudices, and not to recklessly embrace man's inventions as divine teachings, we must discuss in detail the true method of interpreting Scripture" (7.6; G III: 98). This he famously identifies with the method of interpreting nature, which requires that we "prepare a straightforward history of Scripture and to infer the mind of the authors of Scripture from it, by legitimate reasonings, as from certain data and principles" (7.7; G III: 98). History in this sense is a systematic catalogue of the observed phenomena. In this case it must: (a) contain the

[6] See, e.g., 10.9; G III: 142.

[7] The influence of Bacon has been noted by several commentators, including Curley in Spinoza 1985 and Smith 1997.

nature and properties of the language of the books of Scripture and their authors (7.15; G III: 99); (b) collect the sayings of each book and organize them under main headings (7.16); (c) note those sayings which are ambiguous, obscure, or inconsistent (7.16); (d) describe the life, character, and concerns of the author of each book (7.23; G III: 101); and (e) the fate of each book, i.e., its reception, interpretation, and editions (7.23). When Spinoza examines a Biblical narrative, which has been taken by tradition to have a single author, and then shows that it is composed of several narratives, each of which does not neatly cohere with the other, then he undercuts the traditional interpretive practice of assuming coherence and seeking devices to demonstrate it.

Nonetheless, the purpose of this enterprise is not to deny any meaning or value to Scripture. On the contrary, Spinoza emphasizes that the purpose of the method is to discover "what is most universal, what is the foundation of the whole of Scripture, and finally, what all the Prophets commend in it as an eternal teaching, most useful for all mortals" (7.27; G III: 102). From these universal principles, which I would call "meta-narratives," and which have been arrived at through induction (i.e., the Baconian method of classification, etc.), we can then deduce more particular teachings that can guide us in the constantly changing circumstances of life (7.29; G III: 103). Spinoza is always careful to note that the moral principles are only inductively established and gain certitude through their practice and not through any internal epistemological criterion, as a truth of reason would. They function well to the extent that they emulate the rational truth. Thus, the purpose of the historical method is to discover teachings that stand at the very limit of history, in the sense that they are supposed to endure through the vicissitudes of that within which they are found. Still, the principles or teachings do not transcend history itself and remain subject themselves to further investigation following the same method by which they were discovered. The lessons gained from history are employed within concrete historical circumstances in order to control them, though they are constantly affected by those same circumstances.

Spinoza's use of history in the TTP, like Bacon's, remains tied to a humanist idea of deliberative rhetoric, in which examples are used to persuade an audience of a particular good or course of action. The goal is not to eliminate the authority of the sacred texts but rather to find a new basis for it outside of rational theology and within the texts themselves.[8]

[8] Whether Spinoza is successful in this – i.e., whether he does not surreptitiously have recourse to some rational principles that guide his interpretation – is open to question.

The art of the rhetorician is to accommodate the principles he wishes to teach to the understanding and experience of the audience. Spinoza is no longer trying to accommodate the transcendent principles of reason to the mutable minds of man, as a theologian would, but historically contingent principles of action to the mutable minds of his readers.[9]

II *HISTORIA* AND *CONATUS*

Although the tools of this enterprise have subsequently been adopted by modern historiographers, Spinoza uses them for quite different ends. When Spinoza rejects the path taken by Maimonides and Lodewijk Meyer, in which reason is the principle of Scriptural interpretation, he replaces a-historical reason with a thoroughly historical method in which the patterns of association within the imagination are the basis of judging the validity and use of Scripture.[10] Some commentators have claimed that Spinoza does not exhibit any sense of historicity, at least in the TTP. What that means is that he apparently does not offer any explicit reflection on the shape of history itself and the relation of the historian to the shaping of that history, as for example in the Hegelian notion of increasing historical self-awareness of a subject as a cause in the fulfillment of history itself.[11]

Other writers have thought differently. Henri Laux argues that although Spinoza does not use modern language like "historicity" in his work, the concept itself has a very real meaning within his system.[12] To paraphrase: the idea of history is not an external category but belongs to the logic of the system itself, what Laux calls "une ontologie de la puissance" (Laux 1993: 291). Likewise, Pierre Macherey argues that there is a non-Hegelian theory of history in Spinoza, a non-idealistic form of dialectic, in which, at the same time as the material changes occur, the conditions of their intelligibility do as well (Machery 1979: 259). Warren Montag describes this as the "dialectic of the positive."[13] For Etienne Balibar, Spinoza's radical naturalism does not render history meaningless but rather gives it a new meaning based on the interpretive procedure of explaining events by their causes (Balibar 1998: 36). The interpretation of Scriptural narratives in the TTP in

[9] On accommodation as a principle of Scriptural interpretation in Spinoza and others, see Funkenstein 1986: section IV.B, 214–71.

[10] For a discussion of the context of such arguments, such as Van Velthuysen's principle of "historical cognition," see Preus 2001: 126.

[11] For a discussion and citations, see Preus 2001: 182.

[12] Laux: 1993: 291: "Si la notion d'historicité n'appartient pas au langage du Spinoza, elle acquiert toutefois chez lui un statut réel."

[13] Introduction to Balibar 1998: xiv.

terms of Spinoza's theory of passions and human interaction, as described in parts 3 and 4 of the *Ethics*, desacralizes them and gives them new meaning as part of a science of human nature. As we understand the causes of these narrative events we are then able to act more efficaciously within analogous circumstances. Divine will is no longer acting on us but through us in the course of a history in which we, through our understanding, have become agents.

There is much compelling in these accounts offered by some of the very best French expositors of Spinoza's thought. However, as Balibar himself notes, a historical theory of human social passions does not itself amount to a philosophy of history because it does not offer a "single, unambiguous explanatory schema," of that history (Balibar 1998: 38). And, while it seems to be a commonplace among several of these thinkers to claim that there is an internal forward dynamic to history, they offer little evidence to support it beyond noting that the *conatus* found in individuals also expresses itself in institutions, whose course can be predicted. Why this implies historical progress is somewhat mysterious to me.[14] At most Spinoza seems committed, especially in the TP, to some theory of *anacyclosis*, in which one institutional form tends to turn into another, related one, through predictable internal causes and external pressures.

In any case, let me briefly sketch in the remainder of this section a somewhat different view of Spinoza's philosophy of history, influenced by these thinkers, yet differing from them in some key points. In order to find the explicit grounds of a philosophy of history proper we must look at the *Ethics*, and there we find three points that can serve as the basis for such a claim. (Let me note as an aside that for the first and third points I have, for brevity's sake, resorted to their statement in what Deleuze would call the "other *Ethics*," namely the appendix and preface, rather than a detailed exposition of their basis in the propositions and demonstrations.[15])

First, Spinoza makes the negative claim that there is no teleology in nature. He argues for this point most vehemently in the appendix to part 1. God does not create or direct the world out of his own free nature; rather, the world is eternal and all things follow from God necessarily. Because men are for the most part ignorant of the causes of things, they imagine that nature works as they believe themselves to act, that is, on account of some end, or advantage. Whatever in nature works to their advantage they

[14] This question is also discussed in Tosel 1990.

[15] Deleuze writes about the different "speeds" (*vitesses*) of the different parts of the *Ethics*: "les propositions et les scolies ne vont pas à la même allure" (Deleuze 1981: 170).

believe must have been planned by some divine will to that end. But all such ends or final causes "are nothing but human fiction," and the attribution of such ends "turns Nature completely upside down," for God's perfection determines all things and He does not act for the sake of something (i.e., some end) that He lacks (G II: 80). This does not mean that events are random and do not have a cause. History in the sense of a perfectly determined order of events exists, but the intelligibility of such events only belongs to God. There is no beginning, middle, or end to divine history and therefore it cannot have any narrative structure. Human beings can use glimpses of this knowledge – as found in common notions, for instance – not to replace their conception of history (that is, as an account of action toward some end) but to understand better the causes of events within their inadequately conceived narrative structure.

Second, Spinoza argues that, because all individuals strive to persist in their nature, and because nature as a whole is always more powerful than any individual *conatus*, each individual's striving to persist will often be expressed as a striving to increase the individual's power through the control of external things.[16] The only true individual is substance, or God, but substance internally differentiates itself through the causal production of finite modes, which are, in a strict metaphysical sense, only relative individuals. (Here it is important to note that by individual Spinoza does not only mean human beings. Any organized collection of modes that has a rationally discernible principle of organization might be defined as an individual. So an ecosystem or institution might also have a *conatus*.) Each finite mode acts as a causal agent in a determined causal chain and that action expresses its essence as a finite mode of being. Spinoza calls this principle of activity in each finite thing, a striving to persist in its existence, or *conatus* (E 3p6). Seen in isolation, each striving would persist indefinitely. However, since each finite mode is part of a least one causal chain it must be acted upon by other finite modes, some of which might harm it or even destroy its existence. Because each finite mode is infinitely surpassed by the totality of other modes in nature, the duration of its existence understood in relation to the power of external things on it,

[16] There is an important literature on the role of teleological explanation in Spinoza. On the one hand, there is Jonathan Bennett who, in chapter 9 of Bennett 1984, denies that there is any divine or finite teleology. On the other hand, Edwin Curley and Don Garrett have argued that Spinoza does accept teleological explanation for human action (see Curley 1990b and Garrett 1999). The claim of this paper would support the view that there is thoughtful teleology in Spinoza, but that it only occurs when finite modes exist and strive to preserve themselves in relation to other finite modes. Hence the importance of the imagination in teleology, which, of course, Spinoza defines as ideas that result from the effect of other finite modes on an individual.

which Spinoza calls *fortuna*, is limited.[17] Thus the striving of an individual to persevere in its existence varies in intensity and duration according to the influence of *fortuna*.

Third, Spinoza claims that the desire to persist is aided when individuals devise fictional models of either a future or past state, which guides their action. In the preface to part 4 of the *Ethics*, he describes the process through which the models and ideals are constructed. The model – a perfect house, for instance – is based on some account of the construction of one. A builder has a plan, gathers material for it, and builds the house. The builder judges the perfection of the completed model in relation to his ideal and perhaps the ideals of others he knows or surmises. The inadequately conceived universal ideal of a house is then used to judge the works of others and the diachronic origin of the ideal – that is, its origin in a narrative with a specific beginning and an end – is perhaps necessarily forgotten. Necessarily forgotten because it could not function as a universal if it were deconstructed into the many specific narratives (e.g., of particular houses) that have been elided into one.[18] Spinoza thinks that although these models are only "modes of thinking," kinds of fictions not found in nature itself, but only comparisons relative to particular individuals and situations, and potentially misleading, they are nonetheless useful as a guide to action. Because humans inevitably act with ends in view, in the constant struggle against *fortuna*, we require intellectual means to select and refine those ends. The model in question need not be solely synchronic, as some ideal of human nature. The historical narrative itself may be one such exemplary model, whether the life of Christ, or the history of the Israelite nation.

Together these elements constitute a theory of history. Individuals inevitably tell the story of their actions in reference to such models in terms of a narration with a past, present, and future goal. That is, the structure of human action within nature is perceived by those actors as a

[17] Spinoza defines *fortuna* in E 2p49s (G II: 136) and also in TTP, 3.11 (G III: 46).

[18] Interestingly enough, in chapter 6 of the *Metaphysical Thoughts* appended to Spinoza's presentation of Descartes's philosophy, he talks about the origin of the truth and falsity of ideas in relation to narratives: "The first meaning of *true* and *false* seems to have had its origin in stories: a story was called true when it was of a deed that had really happened, and false when it was of a deed that had never happened. Afterwards the Philosophers used this meaning to denote the agreement of an idea with its object and conversely. So an idea is called true when it shows us the thing as it is in itself, and false when it shows us the thing otherwise than it really is. For ideas are nothing but narratives, *or* mental histories of nature. But later this usage was transferred metaphorically to mute things, as when we call gold true or false, as if the gold which is presented to us were to tell something of itself that either was or was not in it" (Spinoza 1985: 312; G I: 246). This obviously requires more comment.

diachronic narrative, though it can be informed by synchronic factors, and the use of historical rhetoric, as in the TTP, to influence the deliberations of others is the most effective means to spur action.[19] The content of the rhetoric – the super-chronicles, as I have named them above – is an effective aid in the deliberation of those it aims to affect to the extent that it is able to modify the models which the members of the audience use to guide their actions, and modify them in ways that will benefit those who use them.

The histories individuals tell are natural expressions of their *conatus*, which are designed to aid it but also could hinder it, if the models are inadequately conceived. There is a fictional narrative structure within the striving of any individual, not as God sees it (adequately), but as we see it inadequately. It seems at times in the fifth part of the *Ethics* that the individual's goal is to approach a purely synchronic grasp of oneself, but that would be only in terms of the laws that shape our actions. Any finite mode is also known by God in terms of its causal history, that is, the train of causes adequately perceived. So the purely synchronic view would be inadequate, and a diachronic grasp of our nature in terms of its causal history may be conceptually possible. Perhaps the goal of rational reconstruction of history – such as Spinoza's meta-narrative reconstruction of Scripture with the Baconian tools of philology and classification – is to re-form continually the naturally inadequate and imaginative diachronic grasp of our place in things, to replace imaginative narrative with a pure rational narrative of causal history.

III NARRATIVES AND ETHICS

However, even in the place where we would expect Spinoza to have finally replaced inadequate with adequate knowledge – part 5 of the *Ethics* – we still find that imaginative narratives can play an important role. After having thoroughly analyzed in part 4 of the *Ethics* the causes of "bondage," or "man's lack of power to moderate and restrain the affects," in part 5 Spinoza turns to the "means or ways leading to Freedom," that is, the power of reason over the affects. In the first twenty propositions of part 5 Spinoza points out five (or perhaps six)[20] ways in which the rational person can

[19] By "diachronic" I mean an idea involving duration, and by "synchronic" I mean an idea *sub specie aeternitatis*.

[20] As H. A. Wolfson notes, the list in E 5p20s omits reference to the technique discussed in E 5p6 (Wolfson 1934, vol. 2: 266).

attain mastery over the affects in the present life, that is, with respect to the body (E 5p20s). However, while Spinoza is confident that the philosopher can attain a degree of blessedness (*beatitudo*), he remains aware that the limitations of reason noted at the beginning of part 4 still remain obstacles. Because "man is necessarily always subject to the passions" (E 4p4c), reason must continually take account of the power of the passions in the struggle to master them. Thus, in addition to enumerating the kinds of power that the mind has over the affects, he needs to indicate precisely how these powers can be used in the ethical project. Here I will focus on the fifth kind of power mentioned in the scholium to E 5p20, the power "by which the Mind can order its affects and connect them to one another" (see E 5p10) and the more specific techniques that he recommends in E 5p10s, such as the use of "a correct principle of living" (*rectam vivendi rationem*) and "sure maxims of life" (*certa vitae dogmata*) that are imaginatively associated with particular situations, which help the individual to overcome the lingering power of the affects. In particular, I shall argue in this section that: (1) although the maxims he points to are rational in themselves, their employment necessarily involves the associative principle of the imagination and the passive affects; (2) the application of the maxims requires *fortitudo*, or strength of character, which although defined in part 3 as living according to a rational rule (E 3p59s), nonetheless relies on a model (*exemplar*) of human nature that is always imaginative to some degree (E 4 preface); and (3) without these imaginative techniques and notions of character, the powers of reason would remain ineffective.

In the opening lines of the preface to part 5 Spinoza says that he wants to know "the power of reason . . . [and] what it can do against the affects" (G II: 277/9–10). Unlike Descartes and the Stoics, who held that reason could command absolutely, Spinoza has shown earlier that "man is necessarily always subject (*semper obnoxium*) to passions, that he follows and obeys (*sequi . . . et parere*) the common order of nature, and accommodates himself to it as much as the nature of things requires" (E 4p4c). Since reason "does not have an absolute dominion" over the passions, it must find ways to get them to obey. The first twenty propositions of part 5 are supposed to explain the various techniques that reason can employ to overcome the passions and to rule peacefully in its dominion. I want to focus on the last of these techniques in order to show that although reason can succeed in this task it cannot do it alone but in fact needs the passions and the imagination to help it.[21]

[21] I want to leave it an open question whether this point applies to the other five techniques as well.

The fifth technique mentioned in E 5p20s is based upon proposition E 5p10, which reads: "So long as we are not torn by affects contrary to our nature, we have the power of ordering and connecting the affections of the Body according to the order of the intellect." Although it is quite important, let us set aside for a moment the first clause of the proposition and focus on the second. The demonstration and scholium indicate how this mechanism is supposed to work. Underlying the power is the striving of the mind to understand things (E 4p26) and the power to form clear and distinct ideas. When the mind has understood at least one thing clearly and distinctly it is then able to deduce "some from others" (*alias ex aliis*). As the supporting reference to E 2p40s and E 2p47s makes clear, Spinoza means that the second kind of knowledge, common notions, is the starting premise from which knowledge of particular things can be deduced. But if deduction is to work then we need to supply the minor premise. Since the (ideas of the) affections of Body cannot be clear and distinct (E 2p27), then they cannot be the major premise. They must be the minor premise. Hence we can counter the influence of the affects not by eliminating them, which would be impossible, but by using them as the minor premise in a deduction whose major premise is some adequate idea and whose conclusion is an adequate idea of some particular affect.

In the scholium Spinoza provides several examples of this technique. Let's examine the first of them. Initially, he wants to explain what kind of common notions are relevant. He says that, lacking perfect knowledge of the affects, we should "conceive a correct principle of living, or sure maxims of life, to commit them to memory, and to apply them constantly to the particular cases frequently encountered in life" (E 5p20s). One maxim in life already established by reason in part 4 is that "Hate is to be conquered by Love, or Nobility (*generositate*), not by repaying it with Hate in return" (E 4p46). Following our model above this maxim ought to be the major premise. It is a general principle that covers many cases but not any particular one. Now we need to supply the minor premise, which is some particular affection, in this case hate. The conclusion would be a more particular form of the maxim, i.e., conquer that affection with love. Hence, whereas the usual order of affections would be to return hate with more hate (see E 3p13s and E 3p20), now that we have a rational principle, we can use it to reorder our affects and return hate with love instead.

However, this account of how reason gains power over the affects seems to be inconsistent with his own warnings about the limits of reason at the start of part 5. In his book *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*,

Alexandre Matheron has described this process of reordering as an *automatic* process.[22] So if the mind has a natural desire to understand, and the application of the technique is automatic, then it would only be a matter of time before reason triumphed over the affects completely. But this interpretation runs entirely contrary to Spinoza's critique of Cartesian neo-Stoicism in the preface and his insistence there that reason is limited in its power. In order to solve this apparent problem we need to remind ourselves of the first clause of 5p10, that reads, "So long as we are not torn by affects contrary to our nature . . ."[23] Because we are always subject to at least some affects contrary to our nature, this clause significantly qualifies the power of our own rational notions and the automatic processes that work to reorder our affects. Of course, while this clause saves Spinoza from a charge of inconsistency, it seems to put the reader back at the beginning, wanting to know exactly how reason can improve its standing over the passions.

Here we arrive at the crux of the technique. Reason cannot simply conquer the passions automatically through understanding alone; it needs to enlist the help of the passions and the imaginative mechanisms that underlie them. To overcome this obstacle Spinoza adds a supplemental process. We need to commit to memory a few of these rational maxims and "apply them *constantly* to the particular cases frequently encountered in life" (E 5p10s, emphasis mine). So it not just a matter of reordering our affects through the deductive process when the occasion demands. Rather, we need to create a series of connections in advance that allow us to make a more systematic response to any particular affect, what Matheron calls a "protective network" (*réseau protecteur*) (Matheron 1969: 561). So, to continue our example above, if we are to have the maxim that "Hate is to be conquered by Love, or Nobility, not by repaying it with Hate in return" ready at hand to apply in any particular instance, then, Spinoza says, "we ought to think about and meditate frequently on the common wrongs of men, and how they may be warded off best by Nobility" (E 5p10s). The image of the wrong is joined to the image of the maxim and this, along with a host of other positive associations (which we will discuss below), allows us

[22] "Ainsi vont se monter les *automatismes* qui permettront à nos sentiments rationnels de triompher" (Matheron 1969: 560, emphasis mine).

[23] "*Quamdiu affectibus, qui nostrae naturae sunt contrarii, non conflictamur* . . ." Jean-Marie Beyssade pointed out to me in conversation that the verb I have underlined, which Curley translates here and elsewhere as "torn by" (and in at least one place as "troubled by" (see E 5p39dem)), also has the connotation of being "subject to," which only further serves to emphasize the political implications of this passage. See E 4p34 and p35 for some other relevant contexts.

to overcome the affect once it has been experienced. For instance, although I have not yet been publicly insulted when reading a paper, I must try to imagine the hateful act in advance and link it to my image of the proper rational maxim, so that if and when the insult occurs I am able to immediately overcome the urge to be hateful and respond instead with understanding and compassion. The ability to overcome the affects in general depends then on the degree to which I have already endeavored to prepare myself in advance to overcome any particular affect.

This supplemental associative process is possible owing to three fundamental powers. First, as Matheron points out, Reason (with a capital "R") directs the associative process.[24] This makes sense because, first, the major premise in any one of the examples of a deduction is one explicitly derived from reason, and, second, the goal of the technique is to allow reason to increase its power over the affects. In other words, reason is fundamental to the larger process by which the striving to understand can attempt to break the unreflective associative processes of the imagination and reorder them for the good of the individual. Second, although reason directs the process, the associative mechanism itself is produced by the imagination. The proposition that Spinoza relies upon to establish the associative mechanism in the first place is E 2p18, which explains how the body, having been affected by two or more bodies at the same time, subsequently when it imagines one immediately recollects the other as well. In the scholium to E 2p18 Spinoza notes that this associative mechanism is the basis of memory and explicitly contrary to the order of the intellect.[25] Hence, reason together with the imagination forms a complex that Pierre Macherey, in his commentary, calls the "*ars imaginandi*," by which the mind gradually tries to heal itself from its affective afflictions (Machery 1994: 78). But as Macherey also points out, there is a third factor involved, the body itself, which strives to rationalize itself at the same time as the mind by developing habits that allow it to predict and compensate for the expected actions of external bodies on it (Machery 1994: 79). Thus, unlike the Cartesians or Stoics, Spinoza does not assume that reason alone can overcome the passions. Reason is certainly important, but it cannot achieve its ends without the associative mechanisms of the imagination and the body.

[24] "La Raison, par son exercice même, anticipe sur l'expérience en se créant un réseau protecteur qui lui permet de parer à toute éventualité" (Matheron 1969: 561).

[25] "I say . . . that this connection happens according to the order and connections of the affections of the human body in order to distinguish it from the connection of the ideas which happens according to the order of the intellect" (E 2p18s).

We have seen that in order for reason to triumph, it is not enough to know particular techniques, such as the deductions from rational maxims, or to understand the underlying powers and mechanisms that make the technique possible in the first place, such as the associative power of the imagination; we must also have a protective network of associations that are ready at hand in cases when we are affected by the passions. Now the question arises what set of ideas and principles structure this protective network itself. I want to argue (a) that the maxims and the associative techniques through which they are applied must be anchored in some conception of the virtuous life, and (b) that the virtuous life also requires the use of the imagination, particularly in the construction of a model of human nature.

The examples that Spinoza uses in E 5p10s to illustrate this technique reveal to us something not only about the particular mechanisms and powers that it relies upon but also about the general features of the struggle. In the first example, Spinoza speaks about the importance of "nobility" (*generositas*) in overcoming hatred. In the second example, Spinoza says that in order to overcome fear, "we must think in the same way of tenacity (*animositas*): that is, we must recount and frequently imagine the common dangers of life, and how they can be best avoided and overcome by presence of mind and strength of character (*fortitudo*)." It is not a coincidence that the two examples illustrate the two aspects of "strength of character" that Spinoza discusses in E 3p59s. There he defines "tenacity" as "the desire by which each one strives, solely from the dictate of reason, to preserve his being," and "nobility" as "the desire by which each one strives, solely from the dictate of reason, to aid other men and join them to him in friendship." These definitions do not describe particular affects, but rather constitute a set of affects that are related insofar as they are based on reason, and two subsets, one that relates to the striving of the individual to preserve him or herself, the other that relates to the striving to aid others. Spinoza provides us examples of specific affects that belong to these groups: moderation, sobriety, and presence of mind in danger all fall under tenacity; while courtesy and mercy fall under nobility (E 3p59s). The examples of particular techniques in E 5p10s are in this way embedded in the broader notion of a virtuous life, discussed first at the end of part 3 and then developed in far more depth in part 4.

Although these virtues are all related through the fact that they are based on reason, reason alone does not order their relationship into a virtuous life. The same qualification that we found in E 5p10 applies here as well: if it were the case that we could always act on the basis of reason, then virtue

and blessedness would be automatic, which would beg the question of how we become virtuous. Instead, Spinoza recognizes that in order to overcome the bondage of the affects individuals must imagine a more perfect version of themselves, what he calls "a model of human nature" (*exemplar naturae humanae*), that guides them in becoming more reasonable.

Spinoza mentions the idea of an exemplar in the preface to part 4 of the *Ethics* in the midst of a complex discussion of the etiology of value judgments like "perfection" and "imperfection." On the one hand, although we naturally form these ideas, these ideas are without basis in nature itself. We first use the word "perfection" in a quite literal sense as the completion of some particular action. When we are not aware of the intention of the actor, we then tend to supply an intention to an action and thus establish a corresponding standard of perfection. Given that there are no final causes in nature, this abstraction, which involves supplying a final cause or intention when and where we are ignorant of one, often leads to a significant philosophical error. There is no value intrinsic to nature itself. On the other hand, these value judgments are still useful to us insofar as they provide a basis of comparison. As long as we do not mistake our judgment of the relative utility of some action for an objective fact about nature, we can use them to enhance our power of striving. Consequently, Spinoza says, while good and evil "indicate nothing positive in things considered in themselves . . . still we must retain these words . . . because we desire to form an idea of man, as a model of human nature which we may look to." Whatever helps us to achieve some aspect of this model we call "good"; whatever hinders us we call "bad." Here the model must be something like that of a "free man," developed at the end of part 4, who is led wholly by reason and does not suffer any passions.[26] Of course, such a state is impossible, as Spinoza goes on to note in the first propositions of part 4 (see E 4p4c in particular), and therefore is nothing more than "a mode of thinking," or a useful fiction.

The imaginative construct of a fully virtuous human nature is exactly the kind of idea that can structure the set of associative techniques and rational maxims into a coherent protective network. The fictional ideal of a virtuous life, led by the putative "free man," would be characterized by the twin pillars of tenacity and nobility, around which particular virtues, such as self-control and mercy, would flourish. The ideal of a life is at heart a kind of narrative that is action-guiding. These broad ideas of a

[26] For a more detailed discussion of the *exemplar humanae naturae* see Garrett 1996b: 290–95, and Garrett 1994.

virtuous life would help us order the rational maxims and choose just which imaginative associations to develop between the maxims and particular cases.

Still, it is important to remember that, although we can structure the relations of the model to particular virtues and to particular actions in almost deductive terms, the model itself is not a wholly rational idea but an imaginative fiction. Hence, the relation cannot itself be an automatic deductive process, beginning from the abstract ideas of virtue and concluding in the particular actions that make us virtuous; rather, there is a complex interdependence between the abstract notions and the particulars. This tension is reflected in the two possible translations of the Latin term "*exemplar*" as either a "model" or an "example." On the one hand, the stories that Spinoza urges us in E 5p10s to tell ourselves constantly are particular cases (or examples) that already presuppose some larger moral significance based on our ideal model of human nature. On the other hand, because the larger picture, the "model (*exemplar*) of human nature," is really nothing more than the conglomeration (or inadequate generalization) of a whole series of particular examples (see E 2p40s1), it is really (epistemologically speaking) nothing more than an image itself. The model of virtue is only a generalization of the particular cases of virtuous action which we use in order to make value judgments in our actions. Because the generalizations are only as good as they are useful, they are always subject in principle to correction and revision. Hence, the imaginative and uncertain status of the underlying exemplars reinforces Macherey's (and Aristotle's) idea that the ethical project is not like a demonstration but more like an *art*, which requires constant practice (i.e., habituation), and whose general principles must be subject to revision on the basis of this experience as well as reason.

IV CONCLUSION

It is clear that Hegel was right in at least one sense, i.e., that Spinoza does not have a theory of history in the grand sense. There is certainly no teleology of nature or intrinsic principle that guides and shapes the development of substance. However, we do find that history in another sense – one that was common in the seventeenth century – is important throughout Spinoza's work. What we have discovered is a systematic application of the imaginative narrative structure that is intrinsic to our conception of human action. In the *Theological-Political Treatise*, instead of suggesting that we do away with historical narratives, he argues that we need to use reason in

order to properly understand them and then use them to guide our collective action. In the *Ethics*, although he criticizes inadequately conceived grand narratives, such as those concerning God's providential direction of the world, Spinoza does think that there is a role for narratives in his ethical project. In order to realize the model of human nature towards which we strive, the fictional ideal of the "free man," we must conceive our own life as a kind of story that we write. We take the rational insights gained through a study of nature and apply them with the aid of the imagination to guide our actions toward blessedness. Not only are the methods of the two works related, but so is the content.[27] Since our ability to achieve our individual goals depends in part on the political situation in which we find ourselves, the individual ethical narrative will be related in myriad ways to the collective historical imagination. The rational individual will demand a reform of national history as an essential part of the reform of his of her self-understanding.[28] These activities in turn express the very essence of our nature, the striving to persevere in our being. History, far from being an illusion to be overcome, is instead a fundamental feature of our collective action as human beings and our individual endeavor to live in accordance with our distinct natures.[29]

[27] For an important statement on the relation of the TTP to the *Ethics*, which has stimulated my thinking on this subject, see Curley 1990: 109–60.

[28] For an interesting account of this kind of project see Gatens and Lloyd 1999: chapter 6.

[29] I am indebted to Charlie Huenemann for undertaking this volume and inviting me to contribute. Above all I would like to thank Ed Curley who has generously supported my work on Spinoza ever since I was a graduate student. I have learned from him in conversation, in lectures, and above all in his writings, which I always read, and reread, with profit and pleasure.

CHAPTER 7

Democracy and the good life in Spinoza's philosophy

Susan James

One of the features of Spinoza's philosophy that makes it attractive to many twenty-first-century readers is its defence of democracy as the constitutional form of an ideal state. Although the *Tractatus Politicus* breaks off before spelling out the details of a democratic constitution, other texts encourage the reader to envisage a free way of life as most fully realizable in an inclusive polity, where subjects advance their understanding and liberty by following laws they have made themselves. The view that human beings have the potential to live most freely in democratic states[1] is exceptional among seventeenth-century writers, and Spinoza is the best-known of a small group of Dutch authors who are justly celebrated for defending it. Focusing on this claim, a range of commentators of various ideological persuasions have hailed him as the initiator or inspiration of the modern democratic tradition. According to Jonathan Israel, for example, "Spinoza was the first major European thinker in modern times – though he is preceded here by Johan de la Court and Van den Enden – to embrace democratic republicanism as the highest and most fully rational form of political organisation, and the one best suited to the needs of men."[2]

This is indeed one way to read Spinoza and, as I shall argue, it draws on a central and inspiring strand of his thought. There are, however, other strands, perhaps less straightforwardly susceptible to celebration, but equally pertinent to an understanding of his assessment of democracy.

[1] While many writers defended the view that one can only be free if one lives in a free state, i.e. a republic as opposed to any form of monarchical regime, comparatively few authors regarded democracy as a form of state conducive to freedom.

[2] Israel 2001: 259. Israel's claim is part of a broader debate about the history of democratic thought, which embraces not only Spinoza but also his predecessor Thomas Hobbes. See Matheron 1997. See also Tuck 2006: 171, where Hobbes is described as "a sophisticated and deep theorist of democracy." Perhaps the most influential advocate of Spinoza as a theorist of democracy is Antonio Negri, according to whom Spinoza develops a novel conception of the multitude, and articulates "the democracy of the multitude as the absolute form of politics" (see Hardt and Negri 2000: 77). See also Negri 1997.

My aim in this chapter is to explore one of them, namely Spinoza's view of the role played by imagination in the exercise of sovereignty. Successful sovereigns, as he describes them, need to deploy the skills of prophets in order to devise legal systems that their subjects will obey. (All politics, one might say, is in this sense prophetic.) While Spinoza gives us reasons for concluding that the ends of the state are in principle best realised under a democratic constitution, the art of creating and sustaining a democracy depends on the imaginative ability of sovereign and subjects to legitimate and realize a democratic way of life. To achieve this, they have to be able to interpret the bare definition of democracy as a state in which the law is made by the body of the people, by working out, for example, who is to be included in this body and what it takes for such a body to make laws.

As Spinoza himself allows us to see, these questions can be answered in a variety of ways. His own unfinished account of a stable, democratic constitution begins by listing several classes of people who are to play no part at all in government: aliens, on the grounds that they are not bound by the law; women, servants, children and wards, on the grounds that they are not independent; and criminals and others on the grounds that they are dishonourable (TP 11.3). In the context of seventeenth-century political thought, these exclusions are not surprising, and it would be pointless to criticise Spinoza for advocating them. Nevertheless, I shall suggest, they serve to draw attention to a limitation in his imaginative power – a limitation he would himself describe both as a lack, and as the effect of some obstacle standing in the way of his ability to imagine a fully inclusive form of freedom. More generally, the gap between the democratic ideal Spinoza offers us and his own imaginative grasp of what a democratic society would be like inadvertently exemplifies one of the problems with which he is explicitly concerned. Because the pursuit of freedom is held back by the imaginative limitations of communities, part of the task of the sovereign is to cultivate the kind of insight possessed by prophets, and make a free way of life imaginatively accessible.

In the past generation, our understanding and appreciation of Spinoza has been transformed by Ed Curley. His outstanding textual scholarship, together with his profound insight into the problems Spinoza was trying to solve, has opened up numerous invigorating lines of enquiry; and the care and acuity of his own philosophical writing has set a high standard for others to reach. One of Curley's central aims has been to examine the interconnections between Spinoza's works and those of Descartes and Hobbes, and in doing so he has helped us to gain a fuller picture of the way Spinoza draws on and transforms the doctrines of his great

predecessors. Curley's invaluable research has, among other things, enlarged our understanding of the theologico-political debates in which Hobbes and Spinoza were both engrossed, and revealed the subtler similarities and differences in their respective political positions. Democracy is, of course, one of the issues on which these two giants disagree,[3] and in attempting to clarify the nature of Spinoza's commitment to a democratic society this chapter aims to follow out Curley's philosophical approach, as well as one of his many philosophical interests.

I SOVEREIGNS AND PROPHETS

Sovereignty, according to Spinoza, can be held equally well by an individual or by a collectivity, and to make it easier to keep this fact in mind I shall always refer to the figure of the sovereign as "it." However, regardless of whether the sovereign is an individual or a group, its task is always the same: to promote peace and security by ensuring that its subjects obey the law; and to counteract vices which, whilst they are not contrary to law, nevertheless diminish the state. For example, when a long-lasting peace makes citizens slack and slothful, sovereigns must find ways of redirecting their energies into activities that enhance security (TP 10.6). A sovereign therefore bears responsibility for creating both a legal structure and a broader way of life that successfully reconcile the diverse desires of individuals, and for inducing its subjects to promote harmony and co-operation within the state.

At one point in the *Tractatus Politicus*, Spinoza contrasts security with liberty, and seems to suggest that sovereigns need only concern themselves with the first. The virtue of the state, he writes, is security, whereas liberty is a private virtue (TP 1.6). Elsewhere, however, he is adamant that security and liberty are so closely intertwined that the one cannot exist without the other. As the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is largely designed to show, states are most secure when their subjects are not coerced into obeying the law, but obey willingly because they realise that it is in their interest to do so (TTP Pref. 12). Furthermore, subjects who understand the benefits of co-operating by obeying the law are freer than those who do not. The ultimate purpose of the state (*res publica*) "is not to exercise dominion nor to restrain men by fear and deprive them of their independence, but on the contrary to free every man from fear so that he may live in security as far as

[3] This claim has recently been challenged by Tuck 2006. Responding to Tuck, Kinch Hoekstra has offered a thorough defence of it. See Hoekstra 2006.

possible . . . It is not, I repeat, to transform men from rational beings into beasts or puppets (*automata*), but rather to enable them to develop their mental and physical capacities in safety, to use their reason without restraint and to refrain from the strife and vicious mutual abuse that are prompted by hatred, anger or deceit. Thus the purpose of the state is, in reality, freedom" (TTP 20.6).[4] Sovereigns should therefore aim to cultivate circumstances in which individuals have enough security and freedom to appreciate the advantages of a co-operative form of existence, and to be in a position to enhance it. Although it would be too much to hope that such a policy will eliminate conflict completely, it can nevertheless minimize threats such as faction, corruption and civil war, any of which can undermine the sovereign's power and ultimately destroy the state.

Abstracting from the merits and disadvantages of specific constitutional forms, Spinoza provides a general account of the problems a sovereign confronts and the means by which it can ameliorate them. The root of its difficulties lies in the inadequate ideas that constitute human imagination, and specifically human passion (E 4p37s2). Affects such as desire, sadness and joy are part of our everyday way of responding to the world; but because they reflect our disposition to imagine ourselves as singular things, and obscure our understanding of the extent to which we depend on other parts of nature, they give us a partial and sometimes distorted view of what will damage or benefit us. Furthermore, it is hard to recognize and avoid the harms to which our affects expose us. For one thing, the phenomenology of freedom – the sense that, when we experience and act on our affects, we are in control of ourselves and what we are doing – obscures the need to take stock of individual passions and get some critical distance on them. In addition, we are in Spinoza's view naturally prone to certain patterns of feeling and action which have a strong hold over us. Some of these dispose us to productive affects such as love and compassion; but others incline us to negative passions such as hatred or fear, which tend to inhibit co-operation. (E 3p33–5; p55s). Together with the causal sequences in which they are embedded, these latter passions habitually feed insecurity, and left to themselves are liable to undermine the effectiveness of the state. The first task of the sovereign is therefore to contain them.

[4] Against this interpretation, Balibar believes that there is a marked shift in Spinoza's view. Whereas Spinoza argues in the TTP that the end of political society is freedom, in the TP "freedom is no longer the declared 'purpose' of the state. The central preoccupation now is civil peace or security." See Balibar 1998: 116.

One way to achieve this end is to terrorize subjects into obedience, but while threats and force are essential tools of government, Spinoza joins many of his contemporaries in urging that they should be used sparingly. Quoting Seneca, he repeatedly reminds his readers that sovereigns who resort to strong-arm tactics rarely survive for long, because subjects who obey the law only out of fear will do what they can to resist (TTP 5.8; 16.9). However fiercely they are oppressed, they always constitute a formidable threat.[5] Sovereigns therefore do better to ensure that their subjects' devotion to the law is stronger than their desire to pursue illegal goals. Even when this strategy succeeds, individuals may still find themselves torn between an inclination to obey and a desire to break the law, or between a desire to conform to standards of civic virtue and a longing to satisfy their private interests. But the mixture of encouragements and threats implicit in legal and other institutions and practices will on the whole guarantee that co-operation wins out. Passion will counter passion, and subjects will experience the decision to abide by the law as a choice they have made willingly, albeit sometimes reluctantly (E 4p7).

Where this level of co-operation has been achieved, individuals have already begun to identify their interests with those of the polity. In doing so, they have simultaneously begun to think of themselves not merely as singular things, but also as members of a community that is, "as it were, one body and one mind" (E 4p18s3). To realize that the best way to serve one's own interests is to play one's part in maintaining and strengthening the security of the community is, according to Spinoza, to understand an important truth, which in turn strengthens one's desire to resist affects that undermine co-operation. Once one appreciates the social damage that envy can do, one has a reason for trying to control it in oneself and in others by understanding how it comes about and what can be done to prevent it. Equally, once one understands that fear tends to breed hatred, which in turn brings a string of debilitating effects in its train, one has a reason for trying not to cause fear in others, and trying not to succumb to it oneself. Modifying one's passionate dispositions is, however, a complex project and cannot be undertaken in isolation. It depends on the guidance and support of other individuals, and on standards of co-operation encouraged and enforced within a society (TTP 16.5). Part of the sovereign's task is

[5] In the Latin *Leviathan* of 1668, Hobbes brings this general point to bear on the history of the Netherlands. "For the common people are the strongest element of the commonwealth ... The sedition of those in Holland, called the Beggars, ought to serve as a warning how dangerous it is in the commonwealth to scorn citizens of modest means" (Hobbes 1994: 227–28 (ch. 30)).

therefore to use its power to sustain an environment in which subjects can, so to speak, co-operate in increasing their ability to co-operate. As they do so, they protect themselves from the destructive effects of their own passions, thereby increasing the security of the state.

This process is an eminently practical one, requiring not only a more or less philosophical understanding of the laws of nature, but also a flair for applying them to particular situations (TTP 5.9). A sovereign may know, for example, that one passion can be used to control another, and have a rough grasp of our disposition to imitate one another's affects. However, while general knowledge of this sort is helpful, it will not be enough. To motivate its subjects to obey its commands, a sovereign will also need to take account of their own particular affective dispositions, and will need to pose questions such as "Are these people susceptible to shame, or are they too alienated to care what others think of them?" or "Will fear of divine anger weigh with these subjects, or are they so scared that they will break the law to worship a golden calf?" (E 3p39). To arrive at answers, sovereigns must possess the sort of local knowledge that Spinoza classifies under the heading of imagination, and must be able to enter into the imaginative business of devising laws with which their subjects will be in sympathy. In the process they may make use of education, civil associations or religion to create a climate of co-operation, but it is up to them to find effective ways of deploying these resources.

This imaginative aspect of the sovereign's task bears comparison with the role of the prophet. In the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Spinoza characterizes prophets as individuals whose exceptional powers of imagination enable them to perceive the vital importance of a co-operative way of life, and to express their insights in a manner accessible and persuasive to a particular community (TTP 1.27). When philosophers explain the value of co-operating with others by arguing from premises about the nature and circumstances of human beings, their audiences may or may not be convinced. Individuals or groups who are wrapped up in their own passionate interpretations of themselves will not always find this kind of reasoning persuasive. By contrast, the genius of a prophet lies in the ability to employ images or stories that appeal to the situation and temperament of a specific people, thus offering them a compelling account of the benefits of living co-operatively, or of resolving a current problem in a co-operative fashion. In giving meaning to a situation, a prophet suggests a way of dealing with it that is both acceptable and more or less within reach.

There are, Spinoza stipulates, no longer any prophets to whom the divine law is revealed (TTP 1.7). Nevertheless, the integrity of a political

society depends on civil laws that re-enact the precepts of their divine counterparts in the form of commands imposed by the sovereign. Like the God of the prophets, the state commands obedience, and the need to make its laws acceptable remains as pressing as ever. Communities still need to build harmonious ways of life, and subjects still have to be encouraged to resolve the tensions between their civic and private interests in favour of the law. In the state, the task of achieving these ends falls to the sovereign. Like prophets, sovereigns must offer subjects empowering accounts of their situation and prospects, so that the courses of co-operative action specified by the law will strike them as desirable and attainable. However, whereas the narratives of prophets centred on the relation between a community and God, a sovereign's narrative focuses on its own law. Explicating and justifying the law is therefore a means of explaining a community to itself by interpreting its needs and possibilities in terms that it can accept and put into practice.

The parallel between sovereign and prophet is confirmed in a note to the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* which points out that, rather as a prophet's authority rests on a revelation that an audience cannot experience for itself but has to accept, so the sovereign's authority cannot be derived from the law but must be accepted as its source (TTP 1 n. 2). In each case, authority stems from the very act of giving meaning, whether in the form of revelation or law, and in each case survival or power depends on the ability to perform this action in a way that is compelling and practically efficacious. The prophet who cannot convince his people that the divine law has been revealed to him, thereby persuading them to do as he says, ceases to be a prophet; and the sovereign who cannot impose his authority by getting subjects to obey the civil law ceases to be a sovereign (TTP 17.4).

In many states, past and present, politics largely proceeds in imaginative terms. Sovereigns legitimate the law by means of narratives and images that they and their subjects find compelling, thus uniting individuals whose passions are otherwise conflicting and disparate. Spinoza evidently believes this strategy can work extremely well; for example, the success of the Jewish state under Moses was primarily due to his imaginative power, which far outstripped his understanding of nature. However, there are also cases in which the efficacy of imagination and the demands of philosophical understanding conflict, and have to be reconciled. This problem is explored at an individual level in Book IV of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza outlines the characteristics of the free man, who does his best to live as his understanding dictates, and cultivates the two key virtues of *animositas* (the determination to live in accordance with his understanding) and *generositas*

(the determination to co-operate with others) (3p59s). Nevertheless, in the course of his everyday life he has to deal with people whose understanding is less extensive than his own, and who are therefore apt to engage with him in passionate and potentially destructive ways. Building on Spinoza's own account of this situation, we can imagine a free man who has been given special treatment by a merchant and expects the favour to be returned. The free man knows that partiality can generate envy and suspicion, and wishes he had been able to avoid the favour; but since it has been incurred, he has to decide how to respond. If he refuses to reciprocate, the merchant will feel angry and resentful, and co-operating with him will become more difficult. So, taking account of what is *utile* as well as what is in line with *ratio*, the free man concludes that the best course will be to return the favour in some way that is legal (and so does not undermine the authority of the law) yet acceptable to both parties (4p70).

In working out what to do, the free man does not insist on standards of behaviour that he knows to be virtuous, but bends to the passions he encounters. Rationality, and thus freedom, does not consist in sticking to the norms of virtue come what may, but lies in maintaining a co-operative way of life, thus keeping open the possibility of enhancing understanding. So although he feels the tension between the demand of understanding and the demand of his total situation, the free man resolves it by giving priority to maintaining harmony in the community of which he sees himself as a part (4p73). Moreover, his capacity to solve the problem in this way depends on his sensitivity to the imaginations of those around him, and on his appreciation of the passionate consequences of different courses of action. As individuals become more free, they lose some of their affective investment in practices that have grown up around passionate dispositions they no longer share, but they cannot turn their backs on the imagination. It is, after all, one of their objects of study, as well as an unavoidable aspect of their lives.

In the *Ethics*, Spinoza suggests that retaining a sensitivity to other people's passions while refraining from responding to them in passionate terms is a continual demand upon the wise. As he explains, "It requires a singular power of mind to bear with each one according to his understanding, and to restrain oneself from imitating their affects" (4 Appendix 13). Nonetheless, as he had earlier pointed out, it is a good rule "to speak according to the power of understanding of ordinary people (*vulgi*), and to do whatever does not interfere with attaining our purpose. For we can gain a considerable advantage if we yield as much to their power of understanding as we can. In this way, they will give a favourable hearing to the

truth" (TdIE, Introduction, 17). Unless the wise accommodate themselves to the less wise by speaking and acting in terms that the latter can understand, the less wise will not find the claims of reason appealing, and their *animositas* will be held back. This in turn will impede their understanding of the value of co-operation, with the result that the freedom of the community as a whole will suffer. To avoid this outcome, the free man will do his best to enhance the *animositas* of those around him by cultivating the qualities of the prophet, and interpreting and implementing his knowledge in a manner that makes it attractive and accessible. Freedom, as Spinoza conceives it, is therefore always dependent on the extent to which particular individuals and communities are able to imagine ways of life that embody the general truths revealed by reasoning, thereby bringing co-operation within reach.

Spinoza's sketch of how the free man negotiates with others offers us an insight into the way that reason and imagination can work together to enhance co-operation and liberty. If we now return to the sphere of government, we see that a sovereign who has some understanding of the nature and purpose of the state needs to pursue a comparable policy. Just as free men aim to accommodate the passions of the people with whom they have dealings, sovereigns do best to accommodate the passions of their subjects, while simultaneously doing all they can to encourage an appreciation of the benefits of obeying the law. As Gatens and Lloyd put the point, "the best authority structures are ones which are realistic about the need to regulate human passions without cancelling the capacity for all to develop reason."[6] There is, however, an important difference between the individual and political cases. Whereas a free man's pursuit of freedom is shaped by his obedience to the law, the main arena in which sovereigns aim to marry imagination and understanding is precisely that of legislation. In exercising their legal authority, they are guided by whatever knowledge of nature they possess; but they will only succeed in making the law acceptable and effective if they take account of their subjects' imaginative grasp of their own condition. And for this, as we have seen, they need a share of the skills pre-eminently possessed by prophets.

II SECURITY, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

If we accept this account of the sovereign's task, we can move on to consider whether there are reasons for thinking that democratically

[6] Gatens and Lloyd 1999: 120.

organized societies are better adapted to the cultivation of security and freedom than states with other kinds of constitution. To put the question in the terms we have been examining, is there any reason to think that, when sovereignty rests with all the people, the law can be imaginatively represented in a way that is particularly compelling, and therefore moves subjects to obey it more willingly than otherwise? One way to reach an answer is to continue to pursue the implications of Spinoza's account of the free man. To begin with, we need to put aside the limiting case of a community made up of individuals who are so perfectly co-operative that they no longer have a use for coercion, and therefore in a sense have no need of the state. Following Spinoza's lead, we can view this condition as the unrealizable culmination of a schematically represented process in which human beings who are passionate and prone to conflict (and who therefore need a sovereign with power to coerce them) create ways of life in which they can be progressively more free. The question then is whether there is anything in this process that inclines them in the direction of democracy.

We learn in the *Ethics* that freedom grows with rational understanding, which brings with it an appreciation of the need for co-operation. Free men co-operate, or join themselves to others in friendship (E 4 Appendix 11) because they realize that this is the best way to foster a community capable of developing the kind of knowledge that enables individuals to limit the damaging effects of their passionate dispositions. To some extent their undertaking is a matter of extending a community's shared understanding of universal laws of nature; but as we have seen, it is also a matter of creating circumstances in which local knowledge can be brought to bear on the task of harmonizing the desires of particular, historically situated individuals (TP 3.7). What, though, are the political implications of this project? According to Spinoza, the only systematic way to moderate the destructive effects of passion, and harmonize individual interests, is to live under a sovereign in a state (4p73). So what sort of sovereign will free men favour? Since their ultimate aim is to include each individual in the collective enterprise of devising a co-operative way of life, and since an absolutely crucial element of such a *modus vivendi* is the law, free men will presumably regard as optimal a system that gives every member of the community a voice in making legislation. Democracy will have the benefit of allowing each individual to raise the quality of political debate by contributing relevant items of knowledge. Furthermore, it will enable each individual to play a part in the imaginative task of formulating laws that make sense, and are therefore effective.

Given that each embodied human being differs from every other and has a history of their own, each imagines to some extent in their own way, and can bring a different experience to bear on the collective project of creating a way of life that is secure and free. Under a democratic constitution, a state therefore increases its chances of devising laws, and indeed other institutions, that are responsive to the values and desires of its subjects and are consequently likely to be willingly obeyed. (To put this point the other way round, excluding subjects from the task of contributing to legislation endangers the security of the state by increasing the risk that its laws may turn out to be unacceptable to some sections of the population, who will therefore have to be forced to conform to them.) In addition, a democratic state can use the imaginative capacities of all its subjects to articulate the benefits of its own particular form of co-operation under the law, and to work out ways of extending the liberty of subjects. To settle for a less inclusive form of constitution would therefore be to deprive the state of the very insights it needs in order to sustain and develop a secure and harmonious way of life. Subjects who appreciate the force of this argument will recognize that democratically made laws reflect both the rational and imaginative resources of the community, and are liable to be well adapted to its needs. They therefore have a general reason for obeying them. Furthermore, as members of the community, who share some aspects of its outlook and are comfortable with the terms in which law is justified and made intelligible, they are likely to find its particular laws relatively easy to accept and follow.

Spinoza encourages us to understand his account of the free man and the life he leads as an exemplar or model (E 4 Pref.). While it sets a moral standard that human beings may not be able fully to attain, it nevertheless provides a norm of perfection against which individuals and communities can measure and assess their own conceptions and enactments of the good life.[7] If we now consider what sort of political constitution would enable a community to approach this condition, we arrive at a complementary model of a democratic state. It holds out an image of a perfectly inclusive polity that is, like its moral counterpart, beyond human reach;[8] but in spite

[7] I am indebted here to a magisterial discussion of the role of this exemplar in Spinoza's ethics by Moira Gatens. See "Imagination, Religion and Morality: the Vicissitudes of Power in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*" (unpublished). The view that the image of democratic society implicit in the *Ethics* functions as an exemplar offers a response to Verbeek's claim that democracy is for Spinoza a nostalgic ideal. See Verbeek 2003: 141.

[8] See Matheron 1994: 164.

of this, it serves as a means of thinking critically and creatively about politics.[9]

Although Spinoza does not explicitly advance the view that we should think about democracy in this manner, his account of the free man's way of life undoubtedly incorporates a strong pull towards a democratic state. In addition, the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* contains a different argument for democracy, not as the kind of state consonant with the rich forms of freedom that emerge out of the collective pursuit of understanding and co-operation, but rather as the type of constitution it would make sense to choose if one were in a state of nature. This argument follows the lines laid down by Hobbes, who had contended in *De cive* that "when men have met to erect a commonwealth, they are, almost by the very fact that they have met, a *Democracy*."[10] As soon as individuals in the state of nature come together to form a polity, they must agree to be bound by the will of the majority in choosing a sovereign to represent them; but in agreeing to this rule they have already in effect set up a democracy. Echoing this thought, Spinoza explains that, when individuals in the state of nature transfer their right to the community, "such a community's right is called a democracy, which can therefore be defined as a united body of men which corporately possesses sovereign right over everything within its power" (TTP 16.8). Moreover, a democracy is "the most natural form of state, approaching most closely to that freedom which nature grants to every man. For in a democratic state, nobody transfers his natural right to another so completely that thereafter he is not consulted; he transfers it to the majority of the entire community of which he is a part. In this way all men remain equal, as they were before in a state of nature" (TTP 16.11).

Here the emphasis is not so much on the collective benefit of giving all subjects a voice in the process of making the law as on the individual

[9] This interpretation offers a way to understand Spinoza's claim that "absolute sovereignty, if such a thing exists, is really the sovereignty held by the whole people." (TP 7.3). Compare Negri 1997. In keeping with the interpretation offered here, Balibar describes democracy as "the 'truth' of every political order, in relation to which the internal consistency, causes and ultimate tendencies of constitutions can be assessed" (Balibar 1998: 33).

[10] "When men have met to erect a commonwealth, they are, by the very fact that they have met, a *Democracy*. From the fact that they have gathered voluntarily, they are understood to be bound by the decisions made by the agreement of the majority. And that is a democracy, as long as the convention lasts, or is set to reconvene at certain times and places. For a convention whose will is the will of all the citizens has sovereign power. And because it is assumed that each man in this convention has the right to vote, it is a Democracy . . ." Hobbes 1998: 94 (ch. 7, sect. 5). Kinch Hoekstra points out that Hobbes is talking here about the origin of "commonwealths by institution" and not "commonwealths by acquisition," and is therefore not claiming that all commonwealths start out as democracies. See Hoekstra 2006: 207–09.

disadvantage of being excluded from this process. The argument invites us to address the issue in the light of our natural inclination to conceive of ourselves as separate individuals, and to focus on the question of how best to maintain our right or power. When we view ourselves in this light, we are led to see that democracy is in a sense the most minimal form of state, where individuals retain as much right as possible. And from the perspective of the state of nature, this is the state to choose. "In a community where sovereignty is vested in all the citizens, and laws are sanctioned by common consent," each person can bind themselves to follow the law, and in a sense no one need obey it, "since obedience consists in carrying out orders simply by reason of the authority of one who commands" (TTP 5.9). If we put this argument together with the case for democracy as a political ideal, democracy emerges, conceptually speaking, as the first and last form of state. It marks the most natural transition from the state of nature because it best preserves our natural right; and it is also most consonant with the forms of freedom that emerge from the shared understanding and mutual cooperation of subjects.

Why, then, are there any non-democratic states? When Hobbes addresses this question in *De Cive* he outlines the various transfers of power through which democracies can be transformed into aristocracies or monarchies.[11] Spinoza approaches the problem from a different angle by dwelling on the gap between a principled defence of democracy and the qualities that are in practice needed to create and sustain a democratic sovereign. As we have seen, it takes a certain imagination and understanding to realize a democratic way of life, and in communities where this is lacking the form of life will be unsustainable. So even if we allow Hobbes's point that some political societies start out as democracies, a democratic constitution will only endure if a particular community is able to maintain it. Although the potential benefits of democracy militate in its favour, they do not by themselves ensure that a given political society will be attracted by them, or guarantee that existing democratic states will be successful. Everything will depend on the history and circumstances of the relevant community and its members.[12] Spinoza illustrates these points

[11] Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, ch. 7, sects. 8 and 11 (Hobbes 1998: 95–96).

[12] Matheron argues that obstacles to democracy are always external to the power of the multitude. "The existence of every non-democratic regime is explained by the conjunction of two factors: on the one hand, the power of the multitude, which desires to live in common agreement, which consequently attempts to find a terrain of understanding among all its members, which thus attempts to organise itself into a democracy; and on the other hand, external causes that prevent it from directly realising this tendency and obligate it to satisfy it by diverted paths and by resorting to a mediator" (Matheron

by appealing to various historical cases. First, democracies are not always stable. For instance, when the Jews escaped from slavery they proved psychologically unequal to self-government and, out of fear, abandoned their attempt to form a democracy in favour of a kind of theocratic monarchy under the rule of Moses (TTP 17.7). Or to take another example, this time mentioned in the *Tractatus Politicus*, a democracy may turn itself into an aristocracy by deciding to exclude a class of aliens from government (TP 8.12).[13]

In neither of these cases is it clear that Spinoza regards the movement away from democracy as a turn for the worse. He praises the Jewish state as exceptionally peaceful, and long-lived; and, judging from the *Tractatus Politicus*, he is also convinced that well-designed aristocracies can be stable and harmonious (TP 8.9). Transitions from a more to a less inclusive form of constitution are therefore not necessarily to be deplored, and in some circumstances a non-democratic form of government may be better able to guarantee security, and thus a degree of liberty, than a democratic one. Equally, transitions in the other direction are, in Spinoza's view, not always beneficial. For example, when the English executed their king and set up a republic in 1649, they turned out to lack the understanding and imagination needed to make their new constitution stable, and after a short time reverted to a monarchy (TTP 18.8).[14] On the whole, then, "every state must necessarily preserve its own form, and cannot be changed without incurring utter ruin" (TTP 18.10).

In assessing a state of any type, we therefore need to consider how successfully its sovereign is fulfilling its task. (How far is it managing to make laws that are obeyed, and how lively is its subjects' sense of the benefits of co-operation?) As a claim about security, this view makes a certain amount of sense; but as a claim about the freedom with which security is supposed to be yoked, it may be harder to accept. Surely, one might object, the subjects of an absolute ruler such as Moses, who play no

1997: 217). I think this interpretation underestimates the extent to which the obstacles that prevent states from moving towards a freer way of life can in Spinoza's view be constitutive of what Matheron calls the power of the multitude, rather than external to it.

[13] The Aristotelian view that different constitutions suit different societies was not uncommon in seventeenth-century Holland. For example, it was advocated in the 1640s at the University of Leiden by Franco Burgersdijk, who argued that, although democracy is by nature the most imperfect form of state, there can be conditions where it is preferable to the alternatives. The same view was defended a decade later by Boxhorn, who held that no particular form of government was the best in all circumstances. See Burgersdijk 1686: 189–90 (cited by Blom 1995: 97). See also Boxhornius 1657: 4 (cited by Wansink 1981: 100).

[14] The harm purportedly done by the English civil war is even more vividly portrayed by De la Court: 1662: Part III, Book III, ch. 6.

role in making the law, are bound to be less free than those of a democratic sovereign. Still worse, didn't the prophetic basis of the Jewish state encourage utter subservience to God and Moses, thus holding back the growth of understanding? To appreciate Spinoza's response, we need to distinguish his model of ideal democracy from the particular democratic societies that have been, and might be, established in the course of human history. Subjects whose way of life approaches the standard of the first will indeed possess more freedom than is possible under an absolute monarchy or indeed any other form of non-democratic constitution; but Spinoza's examples, together with his warnings about the way that passions such as fear and the need for admiration can undermine political stability, remind us that democracies can also fail. Where a democratic sovereign and subjects cannot between them create basic forms of security, and therefore find themselves in a situation that they experience as unacceptably precarious, they may as a matter of fact abandon their constitution for one that is less inclusive. Furthermore, it is possible that, under their new form of government, they may achieve forms of co-operation that were lacking earlier on, and constitute an increase in freedom.

To summarize the arguments discussed so far, there are according to Spinoza two reasons why effective democratic constitutions are in principle desirable: they enable individuals to retain as much of their natural right as possible; and they provide optimal political circumstances for cultivating a free way of life. In practice, however, historically situated polities may or may not be able to realize these potential advantages, because each is shaped by its own history and traditions, which will always play a major part in determining the kind of constitution it can achieve. Appealing to the democratic ideal, we can distance ourselves from these constraints and assess some societies as more free than others. But once we come down to earth, we are bound to recognize that a theocratic, monarchical or aristocratic constitution may deliver all the freedom that a particular community is at that time capable of attaining. To take the starkest of Spinoza's examples, when the Jews emerged from slavery they could only co-operate effectively under threat of divine punishment, and were not in a position to exercise the liberty that comes with voluntarily obeying the law. The form of freedom they enjoyed was limited; but it was nevertheless the most they could manage to achieve (TTP 2.15). If we now extrapolate to less extreme circumstances, where a non-democratic community already has a way of life that gives its members some appreciation of the benefits of co-operation, we can see that its constitution need not be inimical to freedom. Non-democratic constitutions are therefore not

always destructive of liberty. On the contrary, they may protect it, and provide the conditions for its enhancement.

III THE LIMITS OF FREEDOM

A troublesome feature of this argument is the implicit suggestion that the subjects of any state, however oppressive, can be said to be free. Is there, then, a lower boundary of liberty, below which a political community that has not yet disintegrated is nevertheless so dysfunctional that its sovereign can be described as failing to provide security and freedom for its subjects? To put the point differently, what is it to live under a sovereign and yet be *un*free? Drawing on a republican discourse stemming from Roman Law, Spinoza couches this question in terms of the difference between subjects and slaves. Will people say, he wonders, that subjects who are bound to obey the sovereign have in effect been reduced to a condition of slavery (TTP 16.10)? A long line of republican writers had defined a slave as someone who is subject to arbitrary power, and had argued that a sovereign exercises arbitrary power when it is in a position to enforce laws to which its subjects have not consented. For example, when a monarch makes use of prerogative powers it turns its subjects into slaves; but when the citizens of a republic are bound by laws to which they have agreed, including laws licensing punishment, they remain free men.[15] Spinoza both appeals to and modifies this position by implicitly reinterpreting its understanding of the distinction between arbitrary and non-arbitrary power. In order to determine whether subjects are free men or slaves, he argues, one must ask whether the law serves the common good. If it does, subjects remain free. Only when the law fails to meet this condition are they enslaved. By implication, then, a sovereign whose laws serve the common good does not exercise arbitrary power, and its capacity to coerce its citizens does not remove their liberty.

This argument is open to more than one interpretation. Concentrating on what they call the democratic *conatus* within Spinoza's philosophical system, commentators such as Negri and Matheron have inferred that only a democratically made law can serve the good of the community as a whole.[16] In order to be a free man, one must play a part in making laws

[15] See Skinner 1998.

[16] See for example Matheron 1997: 216–17, and Negri 1997: 227–28: "In Spinoza the conception of the magistrate and the magistracy . . . is absolutely unitary . . . Just as each subject is a citizen, so each citizen is a magistrate – but the magistracy is the moment of revelation of the highest potential of unity and freedom."

that bind each individual to act "for the common good, and thus for his own good" (TTP 16.10). This reading accords with Spinoza's image of exemplary democracy, and helps to explicate the rich form of freedom that such a polity can guarantee. However, it neglects a crucial dimension of Spinoza's discussion. The question concerning him in this stretch of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is whether the coercive power of the law removes subjects' freedom, and his answer is that subjects are not enslaved unless the law fails to uphold the common good. If it were the case that the common good is protected only when the law is made by a democratic sovereign, then the only way to escape slavery would be to live in a democracy. But this is not the conclusion Spinoza draws. Instead, he appeals to the analogy between a sovereign and a father to indicate how it is possible for subjects to be free while also being bound to obey laws they have not made. Fathers, Spinoza assumes, have a paternal duty to look after their sons by directing them to act in ways that will benefit them, and sons are correspondingly obliged to obey their fathers' commands. When a son fails to recognize that it is in his interest to do what his father tells him, his father may force him to obey, and in these circumstances he is subject to coercion. But as long as his father has his interests at heart, he is not enslaved.[17] Similarly, a sovereign may have to coerce individuals into obeying the law; but as long as it enforces laws that protect the welfare of the people, it rules over subjects rather than slaves.

This argument secures the possibility that subjects can be free in non-democratic states by setting a minimum standard for what is to count as liberty. It therefore offers a means to characterize the inhabitants of at least some aristocracies and monarchies as free. In addition, however, it provides a way to justify the view that some subjects should be prohibited from contributing to the business of legislation. Spinoza's analysis of the relationship between fathers and sons presumably also applies to the various classes of people who, even in the democratic constitution broached at the end of the *Tractatus Politicus*, are held to be ineligible to play a part in making the law: servants, minors, wards, women, poor men, aliens, criminals and other dishonourable persons.[18] Individuals who fall into these categories are excluded from politics. Yet as long as the law secures the common good and thus their own good, they remain free. Some of them,

[17] This argument rides on a Latin pun. Sons who are not enslaved remain *liberi*, which can be translated both as 'free persons' and as 'children'.

[18] These exclusions are sometimes glossed over. See for example Israel 2001: 260. Their incongruity with other aspects of Spinoza's philosophy is powerfully illuminated by Gatens 1996, and discussed by Montag 1999: 83–86.

such as married women and servants, have simultaneous duties to obey other authorities, such as husbands or masters; but although this gives them a distinctive legal status, it does not of itself turn them into slaves.

In defining the lower boundary of a free way of life, Spinoza offers sovereigns and subjects a guiding principle: if slavery is to be avoided, the law must uphold the common good. However, as we have come to expect, this principle stands in need of interpretation. In making the law, a sovereign relies on its imaginative capacity to envisage legal arrangements that it and its subjects can recognize and accept as a credible representation of the common good; and where it is successful, subjects will be able to conceive of themselves as free. Drawing on the *Ethics*, we can envisage an ideal democracy where the sovereign, constituted by the whole body of the people, guarantees its own common good. Not only does each subject participate in making legislation, but because the members of the community appreciate the advantages of co-operation, they do all they can to devise laws that reconcile divergent desires and enhance their collective efforts to enrich their own freedom. In his other works, however, Spinoza offers a more cautious account of what it takes to satisfy his conception of political liberty. The *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* defends the view that sovereign monarchs and aristocratic assemblies need not enslave their subjects, and may provide them with as much freedom and security as they are capable of attaining. The *Tractatus Politicus* offers us an image of a democratic constitution where only a proportion of male subjects make the law, and represent the voices of politically invisible classes such as women and servants. Here, then, a subset of the population is exclusively invested with the capacity to determine the common good.

So while democracy functions for Spinoza as an exemplar or ideal on the basis of which we can try to enlarge our freedom, he also holds that it can only exist in certain circumstances. The secure freedom that states should aim to create depends on the understandings and imaginations of particular communities, and only some of them are in a position to sustain a democratic way of life. Where the resources needed to manage this are lacking, a community may maximize the freedom and security available to it under a non-democratic constitution. A sensitivity to the imaginative demands of politics therefore shapes Spinoza's view of constitutional forms such as monarchy and aristocracy. But in a different way it also moulds his treatment of democracy itself.

Against the inclusive spirit of his democratic exemplar, the *Tractatus Politicus* defends what is to modern eyes an incomplete form of democracy. This limitation is worth examining; for although, as many commentators

have pointed out, it is unsurprising that Spinoza should hold the view he does, his account of the democratic state nevertheless provides a vivid illustration of the extent to which our freedom depends on our imaginative capacities. As we have seen, Spinoza's philosophical writings contain a subtle and suggestive exploration of the role of imagination in politics. Nevertheless, when he comes to envisage a democracy – a society in which the whole body of the people makes laws that answer to the common good – he excludes a large segment of the population. The body of the people, as he interprets it, just *is* a community of propertied men, and the implication that the common good can be upheld by the laws they make does not appear to cause him any disquiet. Viewed from the perspective of the democratic ideal, this interpretation embodies a grave imaginative failure; it falls short of envisaging the kind of truly inclusive democracy in which, as we learn from the *Ethics*, freedom and security are most fully realized. But it also illustrates one of Spinoza's most central claims: that successful democracies crucially depend on the imaginative abilities of their sovereigns and subjects, and that lack of imaginative power is among the chief factors that hold them back.[19]

[19] I am deeply grateful to Moira Gatens and Quentin Skinner and to Theo Verbeek and his colleagues at the University of Utrecht for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

CHAPTER 8

Spinoza's unstable politics of freedom

Tom Sorell

Spinoza maintained that the state should accommodate, and even encourage, personal freedom. According to the *Theological-Political Treatise*, the appropriate constitution for such a state is democratic. According to the *Political Treatise*, a kind of monarchy and kinds of aristocracy can also make room for free human beings. But these forms of government were not supposed to be very close to actual or typical political arrangements in Spinoza's day. In typical monarchies and aristocracies, Spinoza suggests, the need for obedience could be overdrawn, and power could be overconcentrated in one man, or in a council of patricians drawn from too few families or too few places.

All of these claims put Spinoza's political philosophy in conflict with one of its main sources: namely Hobbes's theory of the state and of the state of nature.[1] Hobbes holds that when sovereignty is vested in an assembly, democratic *or* aristocratic, it is liable to be divided and disunited, and he associated disunity with war, that is, with the *absence* of political order. He thought many actual states were internally unstable because power was not concentrated *enough*. The purpose of sovereignty, according to Hobbes, is collective security, and this is best achieved if each of the many give up self-rule and submit to an undivided, all-powerful lawmaker. Submission is what Hobbes reduces citizenship to. He does not think it is for subjects to use their judgment in deliberation over common purposes. Instead, subjects are vehicles for the sovereign's will in everything the sovereign's legislation touches. In a Spinozan state, by contrast, citizens *are* supposed to use their judgment, and they count as mere slaves if they do not. Although membership in a political order comes with obedience, according to Spinoza, obedience is not the total submission it is in Hobbes. Total submission is out of keeping with human nature, and the preferred

[1] For discussions of Spinoza and Hobbes, see Den Uyl 1983 and Donagan 1988: 173ff. The interpretation that follows is my own.

political order helps to realize human nature. Or so Spinoza sometimes claims. In Hobbes, on the other hand, belonging to a commonwealth is not natural for human beings, and free citizenship is not a way of realizing the possibilities of being human. Hobbesian absolute sovereignty confines and maybe even extinguishes freedom in Spinoza's sense.

So Spinoza's politics is unHobbesian. But it is also unstable. The instability results in part from the presence in Spinoza's theory of unreconstructed Hobbesian elements alongside unHobbesian ones; the instability also arises from different Spinozan understandings of freedom. Sometimes freedom is associated with a perfectionist rational detachment from the passions; at other times it is associated with the de facto inalienability of certain rights in rational *and* irrational human beings. To the extent that Spinoza's politics relies on the second type of freedom, it escapes the criticism he directs at traditional philosophical theories of the state: that they do not take people as they are, and so are hopelessly impracticable. But it is the first type of freedom that is important to his ethical theory, and that he sometimes claims to derive his understanding of civil law from. So either political freedom parts company with ethical freedom, in which case his politics, while realistic, may not have the kind of demonstrative basis he sometimes claims for it, or else political freedom and ethical freedom do go together, in which case we do not have a theory that clearly takes people as they are. By trying to have it both ways, Spinoza produces a political philosophy whose fault lines are close to the surface.

I SPINOZA AND THE STATE

A good place to begin is with Spinoza's answer to the question of what the state or political life is for. In the *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza often answers in ways that recall Hobbes. Politics "fulfills the desire for security and good health" (TTP 3; Spinoza 2002: 417). Human law – the law that governs commonwealths – is for making life "more secure and convenient" (TTP 4; Spinoza 2002: 426). "The formation of a society is advantageous, even absolutely essential not merely for security against enemies but for the efficient organization of an economy" (TTP 5; Spinoza 2002: 438). And similar, Hobbesian-sounding claims are to be found in the *Political Treatise*: Civil order is established "for the purpose of removing general fear and alleviating distress" (TP 3.6; Spinoza 2002: 691). "The purpose of civil order is nothing other than peace and security of life" (TP 5.2; Spinoza 2002: 699). These remarks seem to echo passages in *Leviathan*, chs. 13 and 18, where Hobbes says that the purpose of the many

in establishing a commonwealth is "their Peace and common defence" (ch. 18; Hobbes 1996: 121), and that what people have to lose by destroying a commonwealth is nothing less than "Industry," "culture of the earth," "navigation," "commodious Building," and everything else that makes life convenient (ch. 13; Hobbes 1996: 89).[2]

In other places in both political works, however, Spinoza unsettles the impression that he has a Hobbesian understanding of the purpose of the state. The most striking evidence of a break from Hobbes comes in chapter 20 of the *Theological-Political Treatise*:

> It follows quite clearly from my earlier explanation of the basis of the state that its ultimate purpose is not to exercise dominion nor to restrain men by fear and deprive them of their independence, but on the contrary to free every man from fear that so that he may live in security as far as possible, that is, so that he may best preserve his own natural right to exist and act, without harm to himself and to others. It is not, I repeat, the purpose of the state to transform men from rational beings into beasts and puppets, but rather to enable them to develop their mental and physical faculties in safety, to use their reason without restraint and to refrain from the strife and mutual abuse that are prompted by hatred, anger or deceit. Thus the purpose of the state is, in reality, freedom. (Spinoza 2002: 567)

Here the purpose of the state goes well beyond what Hobbes is after: security and convenience. Spinoza demands more than a form of a social organization that discourages violence between individuals and permits self-interested co-operative behaviour, including the division of labour. The state is supposed to help people to develop their faculties, both mental and physical, so that they rise above the fear, aggression and general resourcelessness of human beings in the state of nature. The passage does not say that this elevating purpose is reserved for a few in the state whose powers of reason and self-control make them able to cultivate their powers. It implies that to be human is to be rational, and that the design of a state for humans must reflect this.

This conception of the state can fairly be claimed to reflect Spinoza's theory in the *Ethics*, and chapter 20 of the *Theological-Political Treatise* is not the only place where that theory surfaces. It is implicit in the terms of the social contract that takes people from a Spinozan state of nature to a Spinozan commonwealth. These terms are set out in chapter 16:

> . . . [I]n order to achieve a secure and good life, men had necessarily to unite in one body. They therefore arranged that the unrestricted right naturally possessed by each individual should be put into common ownership, and that this right should

[2] Cf. also *De Corpore*, ch 1, sect. 7.

no longer be determined by the strength and appetite of the individual, but by the power and will of all together. Yet in this they would have failed had appetite been their only guide (for by the laws of appetite all men are drawn in different directions), and so they had to bind themselves by the most stringent pledges to be guided in all matters only by the dictates of reason (which nobody ventures openly to oppose, lest he should appear to be without capacity to reason) and keep appetite in check insofar as it tends to another's hurt, to do to no one what they would not want done to themselves, and to uphold one another's right as they would their own. (Spinoza 2002: 528)

A mutual pledge of individual submission to the dictates of reason and control of the anti-social appetites can indeed be reinterpreted as a determination to escape the bondage of appetite and to acquire Spinozan freedom.

This is a far cry from Hobbes. But it also sits uneasily with other things Spinoza says about the capacity of the masses to get the better of passions, and it raises the question of how so rational a mutual pledge can be made prepolitically. In other words, the social contract may presuppose the cultivation of powers that it is supposed to deliver.

To come first to the departure from Hobbes, consider the very different contract made in the state of nature of the *Elements of Law, De Cive* and *Leviathan*. Although there are variations in formulation in Hobbes's three political treatises, this much is constant: the many agree amongst themselves simultaneously to transfer to a third party the right each has ("the right of nature") to see to their individual security and well-being. The third party accepts the right transferred – becomes sovereign – and exercises this right by making laws that keep the many from harming one another, and that enable the many to make a modest living by working.[3] The laws the sovereign makes and that the many agree to keep are not required by the social contract to be rational. Nor do the contractors promise anyone to go in for *self*-control. At best they submit to external control. What they agree to is a new regime in which there are penalties – externally enforced – for anyone's not doing as the sovereign commands. As for what the sovereign's laws bring about when they are effective, this is by no means the cultivation of human powers in general or the power of judgment in particular. If the sovereign is wise, he will create conditions for people to enjoy a modest prosperity over and above bare security from attack.[4] But he

[3] In all of the political treatises, Hobbes sees dangers in arrangements that allow subjects to acquire superfluities.

[4] See *The Elements of Law* Pt 2, ch. 28, sect. 4; *De Cive* ch. 13 sect. 6; *Leviathan*, ch. 30 (Hobbes 1996: 231).

will be working *against* the overriding goal of civil peace, according to Hobbes, if he allows people to engage in debate about the rightness or wrongness of private actions or public policies, or the relative merits of different religious views. Private judgment of these matters is one of the ingredients of war, and the state, being essentially a war-avoiding mechanism, must suppress private judgment, or at least suppress talk and action that is the expression of it.

Now the whole point of the *Theological-Political Treatise* is to demonstrate that states can be secure *without* outlawing religious and political dissent. This conclusion is supposed to be reached without denying that human nature contains the ingredients of war, and without denying that the state is, among other things, a war-avoiding mechanism. In other words, the conclusion about dissent is supposed to be reached from at any rate *some* premises that Hobbes and Spinoza both accept. A proposition which supports Spinoza's conclusion about dissent is that the purpose of the state is freedom. That proposition is not part of the common ground with Hobbes, and the question is whether it is consistent with what common ground there is.

I think the answer to this question is "No." In order to argue that the purpose of the state is freedom, and that the state should not rule by fear and force, Spinoza has to assume that human beings are naturally able to subject themselves to reason. But he also thinks that human beings are naturally warlike, and that they are bellicose partly because the passions are dominant in all but a few people. One question is how the very passionate can be party to the sort of social contract Spinoza describes. Another is how the very passionate can be free, since being in the thrall of the passions is bondage. A third question is how, *other* than by fear and force, very passionate members of the commonwealth can be kept from one another's throats. If very passionate human beings cannot – are not naturally disposed to – engage in a mass pledge to restrain individual appetites; if very passionate people cannot really be free; if very passionate people can only be kept by force from harming one another, then a Hobbesian state and a Hobbesian social contract may be the most that very passionate people can take part in.

Spinoza seems to come close to conceding all of this in chapter 5 of the *Theological-Political Treatise*:

> All men do, indeed, seek their own advantage, but by no means from the dictates of sound reason. For the most part the objectives they seek and judge to be beneficial are determined only by fleshly desire, and they are carried away by their emotions, which take no account of the future or of other considerations.

Hence, no society can exist without government and coercion, and consequently without laws to control men's lusts and their unbridled urges. (Spinoza 2002: 438)[5]

This much could have come straight out of Hobbes. Spinoza goes on immediately to say, however, that even though the coercion of passionate people is inevitable, it cannot be total, because there are elements in passionate human beings that limit the effectiveness of obedience from fear. Even if he is right about that, it does not follow that the political order has to be founded on general consent, or that the content of what is consented to is captured by a mutual pledge to follow the dictates of reason and practice self-control, as Spinoza claims eleven chapters later. It may turn out that there is no solution for passionate people to the problem of the unpleasantness of obedience except the institutional one of attaching such harsh penalties to *dis*obedience that obedience, unpleasant as it is, is less unpleasant than disobedience. This is the Hobbesian solution. It calls on no reserves of self-control and no understanding of or subscription to the dictates of reason. But, on the other hand, it makes no claim to be regulated by the ideal of human freedom.

The Hobbesian solution would not be the only solution if Spinoza's theory identified some rational mechanism in even passionate human beings that credibly enabled them to make an unpassionate decision to form a commonwealth. If passionateness were just a phase that human beings passed through until reason naturally asserted itself, then human beings who bargained for life in the state once they had reached the age of reason might be understood to bargain at the same time for Spinozan freedom. But when Spinoza says, in chapter 17 of the *Theological-Political Treatise*, that "the masses are governed solely by their emotions, not by reason" (Spinoza 2002: 538), that does not seem to leave room for an operative rationality in the majority of members of the commonwealth, or a merely temporary irrationality in that majority. Nor is the *Political Treatise* any more optimistic on this score:

> . . . those who believe that ordinary people or those who are busily engaged in public business can be persuaded to live solely at reason's behest are dreaming of the poet's golden age or of a fairy tale. (1.6; Spinoza 2002: 682)

[5] For a parallel passage, see TTP 16: "Now if all men could be readily induced by reason alone to recognise the supreme advantage and the necessity of the state's existence, everyone would entirely forswear deceit. In their desire for this highest good, the preservation of the state, all men would in absolute faith abide entirely by their agreement, and would regard it as the most important thing in the world to keep their word, this being the strongest shield of the state. But it is by no means the case that all men can always be readily induced to be guided by reason; for each is drawn by his own pleasure, and the mind is frequently so beset by greed, ambition, anger, envy and the like that no room is left for reason. Therefore . . . nobody can rely on another's good faith unless the promise is backed by something else . . ." (Spinoza 2002: 529).

Spinoza's mutual pledge would work perfectly well and make sense for the rational few, but the rational few do not need the penalties of the law to do what the law says, and perhaps they only need the state with its coercive laws for the passionate majority because the rational few are not self-sufficient and need some of the things that the tamed passionate majority supply.

Although the rational few are perfectly plausible parties to the mutual pledge to follow the dictates of reason, they can only be parties to that pledge if it is possible to be ruled by reason prepolitically. But if it is possible to be ruled by reason prepolitically, then life in the state is not necessary in order to be ruled by reason. Since according to Spinoza the irrational majority cannot be ruled by reason even when the state exists, it looks as if the existence of the state is not *sufficient* for putting people under the rule of reason either. But being neither necessary nor sufficient for making people rational, the state can hardly be relied upon to make people who are not naturally rational, who on the contrary are passionate and irrational, free. This conclusion verges on inconsistency with Spinoza's claim that the *purpose* of the state is freedom, since exercising reason and getting passions under its control is what freedom is. How can something that cannot be relied upon to produce freedom have the purpose of producing freedom?

There may be an answer to this objection, to the effect that the passionate majority are ruled by reason when rational laws constrain them, even though, as individuals, they lack rational self-control. But then how is the state contributing to the development of their mental and physical capacities, as Spinoza claims? Either the rationality is personal, in which case Spinoza owes us an explanation of how the typically very passionate and irrational human being can achieve personal rationality, or it is impersonal, in which case, though the state is rational, the people whom it governs are not, and are therefore not free, either.

It might be thought that the *Ethics* gets Spinoza out of this difficulty, for it identifies a human reason that can autonomously – independently of a political order – extricate itself from the rule of the passions. If this extrication is available in principle to everyone, then even the very passionate can in principle get into the position where they take the mutual pledge of allegiance to the dictates of reason. But the idea that everyone can get to this position from a starting point in abject bondage certainly sounds utopian, contrary to the aspiration Spinoza has of telling it like it is in politics. And even if this problem is set aside, if human freedom is available independently of the political order, how can the political order be *for*

freedom? It is more plausible to say that the political order is for making passionate action unpleasant, for redirecting human activity by force to productive and reasonably co-operative economic life, which in turn allows those who have the right personal gifts of attention and reflection to arrange for contemplation of the order of nature, including the passions, and to get thereby to the detachment from the passions and freedom. Not freedom, but the possibility of it, not the possibility of it for everyone but for the few capable of abstract reflection, is the by-product of a secure – in more or less Hobbes's sense of secure – political-economic order. The by-product, not the primary purpose.

II THE RIGHT OF NATURE

I have been considering difficulties for the claim that the purpose of the state is freedom in the sense of detachment from the passions when it is a fact of life supposedly acknowledged by Spinoza's politics that the masses are unlikely ever to achieve such detachment, even within a civil order. Although freedom as detachment is the sense of "freedom" that fits the strikingly unHobbesian passage quoted earlier from chapter 20 of the *Theological-Political Treatise*, and that is explicitly intended in other passages in that work,[6] it is not the only sense of "freedom" relevant to Spinoza's political writings. There is another sense of "freedom," connected with each person's retaining the right of nature and being free to doing whatever seems to promote his advantage.

Spinoza departs from Hobbes in holding that this right is always retained, and not laid down when the state is formed. In the state of nature and in the commonwealth alike, a person is free to do whatever he thinks is in his interest, even if this means breaking promises (TP 2.12; Spinoza 2002: 686) or killing those who get in his way.[7] The difference made by the state is that the costs of being completely ruthless are raised, and meted out more reliably, so that the advantage there might have been in acting ruthlessly in the state of nature diminishes. The prospect of possible retaliation by one's competitors, probably slight if one is powerful oneself in the state of nature, are vastly increased if one answers for one's breaches of faith to a sovereign or a unified, powerful majority within the state. Fear

[6] ". . . the real slave is one who lives under pleasure's sway and can neither see nor do what is for his own good, and only he is free who lives wholeheartedly under the sole guidance of reason" (TTP 16; Spinoza 2002: 531).

[7] Spinoza seems to outdo Hobbes in condoning an ineradicable natural egoism. For an interpretation that challenges this understanding, see Collier 1991: 69–92.

and hope, but especially fear, constrain one's self-interested action both in and out of the commonwealth. They constrain it far more than reason if one is a typical human being, but Spinoza does not think that rational agents have more of a right of nature than irrational ones. One is equally one's own judge of what it is best to do, whether one is rational or irrational, whether one is a citizen or a law unto oneself in the state of nature.

Once the state has been created, the threat of punishment for breaking the law weighs with imperfectly rational agents, and keeps them from violence and defections from agreements. But, Spinoza says, there is a limit to how far one can get even irrational people to behave lawfully by fear alone:

> Yet human nature will not submit to unlimited repression, and, as Seneca says in his tragedy, rule that depends on violence has never long continued; moderate rule endures. For as long as men act only from fear, they are doing what they are most opposed to doing, taking no account of the usefulness and the necessity of the action to be done, concerned only not to incur capital or other punishment. Indeed, they inevitably rejoice at misfortune or injury to their ruler, even when this involves their own considerable misfortune. (TTP 5; Spinoza 2002: 438)

There are two possible solutions to this problem of men behaving badly in the way the passage describes: (a) for the government to explain to them why the thing they do only from fear is to their advantage, so that they do it from hope of advantage as well as, or instead of, from fear; (b) for the government to abolish, or keep only temporarily in force, laws obeyed from fear alone.[8]

Spinoza goes on to say (Spinoza 2002: 439) that when the constitution of a state is democratic, the problems of prolonged obedience from fear do not arise, since within a democracy law is not externally imposed or imposed from above: obedience to law is obedience of all to all rather than of all to one or to a few. By the same token, democracy is suited to the fact that human beings have a strong reluctance to submit to those who are their natural equals. In a submission of all to all, no one is set above the rest. In the preferred form of democracy, what is more, law would get some of its motivating power from the advantage of following it rather than the fearfulness of disobedience, implementing solution (a) above. Nor would the natural resistance in non-democracies to the abridgment of freedom be

[8] For connections between Spinoza's concern to limit the operation of fear and both (a) his approach to superstition and (b) the debilitating effects of fear, see Gatens and Lloyd 1999: 88ff.

displayed in democracies that increased legislation, for legislation would only be introduced by consent.

For the state to go with the grain of human nature by trying to win voluntary compliance with its laws is not necessarily for the state to have the purpose of fostering freedom. As the reference to Seneca indicates, it may be in the interest of a government concerned only with its own *survival* to recognize that voluntary or understanding compliance with laws is more stable compliance than forced compliance. Again, a democracy or any other form of government constrained not to outlaw too many of the public's strong but irrational preferences might maximize freedom in the form of allowing people doing what they want, while not necessarily reducing unfreedom in the form of slavery to the appetites. For example, a law allowing 24-hour drinking might accord with the desires of the majority of people who like to drink, while going no way at all toward solving the well-known social problems of alcohol dependence.

When Spinoza argues against strongly coercive or tyrannical regimes, he sometimes argues from the *futility* of going against what people have a strong natural propensity to pursue or avoid. It is no good making a law that requires people to kill their parents or to swallow poison, because human beings cannot bring themselves to comply or be brought by others to comply. It is not in people's nature to treat their families like mortal enemies or to destroy themselves, according to Spinoza. But an argument from the futility of certain laws is not an argument for the immorality of what the laws require. For example, it is futile to legislate that everyone love their neighbour, but there is nothing wrong with complying. Again, it may be futile to pass a prohibition law because most people like alcohol too much to give it up, and would carry on drinking even if it were illegal; this does not mean that people shouldn't give up alcohol. The futility of making certain laws is sometimes tied to the strength of people's appetites or the weakness of people's will, and when it is, the freedom that consists in going with the grain of national propensities is in tension with the unfreedom of feeding by that permissiveness, for example, the alcohol dependence of large sections of the population.

So we find two quite distinct sorts of freedom being argued for by Spinoza: on the one hand the freedom that consists in actions that are left open by gaps in legislation and actions that cannot be repressed or produced by coercive law, and, on the other, perfectionist freedom, the kind that consists of disciplining oneself to pursue only those things it is rational to pursue. The two kinds of freedom can be brought together up to a point, for to the extent reasons can be given for laws, and to the extent

that laws are introduced only if they can be rationally supported, reason rather than appetite is able to motivate individual compliance, and so reason can start to take the place of fear in co-operative social life. But because strong natural propensities can be passionate as well as rational, and since these cannot be rooted out in either the democratic citizenry or the democratic legislature, the rule of reason through law that is approved by a majority of the citizenry is unlikely to be total.

Spinoza sometimes claims, to the contrary, that when human beings do what a shared authority asks, the result is rule by reason. In the *Political Treatise*, chapter 3, he says that "... nobody acts in a way contrary to what his own reason prescribes insofar as he does that which the law of the commonwealth requires to be done" (3.6; Spinoza 2002: 692). And a few lines later:

> The right of a commonwealth is determined by a people that is guided as though by a single mind. But this union of minds could in no way be conceived unless the chief aim of the commonwealth is identical with that which sound reason teaches us is for the good of all men. (3.7; Spinoza 2002: 692)

Spinoza seems to be claiming that there could not be strong national unity under irrational legislation. But especially where legislation reflects some supposed national destiny or some racial myth with a wide following, this is a pretty tendentious line of thought. And it seems to be inconsistent with the concession, also in chapter 3 of the *Political Treatise*, that "a man who is guided by reason has sometimes to do, by order of the commonwealth, what he knows to be contrary to reason" (3.6; Spinoza 2002: 691). The upshot is that it is both implausible and inconsistent of Spinoza to claim that the rule of government is the rule of reason, and, consequently, that what the state is for is freedom in the form of self-rule by reason.

III HOW DOES THE STATE BENEFIT THE SAGE?

The two senses of freedom, and the Hobbesian and unHobbesian conceptions of the state, are both present in Spinoza's political writings, because his political philosophy explains what both relatively unperfected people *and* relatively perfected people get from life in the state. Unperfected people, who live at the mercy of their passions, and who are consequently at one another's throats, get more security, the division of labour, a more convenient life, and perhaps some of the benefits of law-making from more than a selfish point of view. But what do relatively perfected people get out of the state? That is, what do people get out of the

state who are anyway able to form adequate ideas in the sense of the *Ethics*, and who are anyway able to get some insight into the natural order, including human nature? What could Spinoza himself, presumably largely perfected if he was able to write the *Ethics*, get out of life in the state? It is one thing for largely unperfected people to live with one another, but how can the Spinozan sage need to join forces with people who are not only unfree, but uncomprehending of, and hostile to, such a sage?

Part IV, Proposition 73 of the *Ethics* says that "the man who is guided by reason is more free in a state where he lives under a system of law than in solitude where he obeys only himself." This far from obvious claim requires some conception of the rule of law according to which the rule of law is not redundant for a rational person, and according to which there are advantages for even a person in charge of his passions from active political life, as opposed to, e.g., life on the fringes of society – a sort of outsider status – or solitude itself. I consider first whether we get the required account from the *Ethics*, and then whether it is to be found in the *Theological-Political Treatise*.

The proofs of E 4p73 refer the reader to 4p37, according to which the man of reason will want the good he pursues not only for himself but for everyone else. The first proof dwells on the connection between the pursuit of knowledge of God and the desirability of that knowledge impersonally – not just for the man of reason but for people who are not fully rational. The second proof says that the joint pursuit of the same good reinforces the desire for that good among the pursuers. The man of reason can see that it helps the pursuit of knowledge of God by anyone if it is pursued by many (presumably in concert rather than independently). The first scholium emphasizes the shareability of the good of knowledge of God, as opposed to the exclusiveness of goods pursued under the influence of emotion. There is a sense in which the goods pursued under the influence of emotion either cannot be enjoyed by many people or decline in attractiveness if they are. Although this line of thought may show that it is to the advantage of rational people to pursue the good of knowledge of God in concert, it does not seem to connect the pursuit of the knowledge of God with the rule of law, and it does not answer the question why solitude does not promote freedom in the sense of freedom from dependence on external things (the freedom recommended in the *Ethics*), when the alternative to solitude is being caught up in the emotion-driven tumult of pre-rational or not wholly rational people.

Does the *Theological-Political Treatise* answer the questions that the *Ethics* leaves open? Yes and no. The work tells us that one benefit of life

in the state is the division of labour, and even the Spinozan sage is helped by the existence of bakers, builders and bookbinders. These helpers allow the sage to put more time and energy into the contemplation of the natural order, or perhaps into the development of some new, wholesome practical skills, skills of playing a musical instrument or painting, say.[9] The division of labour can make even the sage more capable, and, in that sense, freer. But the benefits of the division of labour are compatible with withdrawal from the political process, and with activity that, while within the law, is not kept within legal bounds by consciousness of what is illegal. Proposition 73 seems to connect the greater freedom the sage can experience in the state with the rule of law rather than the division of labour. But the *Theological-Political Treatise* actually goes against this suggestion:

> Now if men were so constituted by nature as to desire nothing but what is prescribed by true reason, society would stand in no need of any laws. Nothing would be required but to teach men true moral doctrine, and they would then act to their true advantage of their own accord, wholeheartedly and freely. (5; Spinoza 2002: 438)

Admittedly the sage is not *born* desiring nothing but what is prescribed by true reason; he is self-made as a continent agent. But the point remains: such a person would not need laws, and would already be acting freely. Why, then, isn't self-rule for rational people as good as rule by laws? The *Theological-Political Treatise* seems to say that self-rule *is* as good. But if that is true, 4p73 of the *Ethics* is false.

The rule of law protects the sage, like everyone else, from the bloodbath there could be if the right of nature in each person were authoritative and the goods suggested to each agent by their emotions were ruthlessly pursued. Is Spinoza's idea the plausible one that enhanced security for the sage is empowering and that insecurity is debilitating? These natural thoughts are not entirely at home in a Spinozan framework, for the sage knows that the mind is in some sense eternal (E 5p23) and that the fear of death can be exaggerated (cf. E 5p38). Although things that preserve the body are advantageous, an important kind of survival does not depend upon it. This means that the costs for a sage of the war of all against all are less than for those not guided by reason. But, by the same token, the

[9] Or perhaps art is not a natural outlet for the Spinozan sage. Hampshire claims that Spinoza underrates imagination as a source of some fine art, and probably exaggerates the inferiority of imagistic knowledge (something the Spinozan sage would perhaps not be expected to rely on, even in his leisure time). See the title essay of Hampshire 2005: lvii. For an interpretation that makes Spinoza friendlier to imagination, see Gatens and Lloyd 1999: *passim*.

advantage of a delivery from the war of all against all cannot be quite as great as it would be if survival consisted of bodily survival. And in any case, the claim we are considering critically is not that life in the state is more advantageous than life in solitude but that it is more *liberating* even for someone is already guided by reason. We have not yet seen how this is established by Spinoza.

Doesn't the rule of law enable the rational to join forces or to achieve a meeting of minds? And does not this joining together have effects that might bear out E 4p73? In other words, might not a sage among like-minded friends or acquaintances be freer than a sage on his own, and might not this sort of association only be available within the state? Unless the state is liberal, or unless it meets the specifications Spinoza gives in the political treatises, the answer can well be "No." It is implausible to claim, as Spinoza seems to at E 4p73, that any old rule of law, no matter how much it restricts a public life of the mind, leaves the rational person freer than solitude.

Not the rule of law in general but the rule of law in democracy suits Spinoza's purposes. It is true that sages who were also members of a democratic legislature might be better able to live without disgrace, and therefore meet the eligibility requirements for legislators or councils of advisors that Spinoza gives in the political treatises. It is true that as legislators, sages would be able to see some patterns of harmful behaviour among the citizenry as the operation of natural forces that might be counteracted. So both as makers of laws for the irrational and as makers of law able to make room under law for the life of the mind, they might be freer in the state than outside it.

IV THE STATE AND TYPICAL PEOPLE

We have come some way toward bearing out Spinoza's claim that life in the state makes even the rational freer. Although the advantages of life in the state for the rational are not entirely obvious, they undoubtedly exist. Still, the already rational are not likely to benefit the most from life in the state. The people who are done most good are the not yet rational or the not fully rational. Law is far superior to emotion as a guide to behaviour, and it is only through life in the state that the irrational – that is to say, typical human beings – have access to this standard. We still have the shadow of the objection that the rational do not need more from the state than an efficient division of labour. The rational are not really made freer, or are freer only at the margins.

Turning to the less than rational, the benefits of law to them remain even when the state is the strongly illiberal one that is inhospitable to the Spinozan sage. This is because people guided by their emotions alone are kept by their emotions from having stable co-ordinated behaviour and stable co-operative behaviour. The only rule of behaviour before the rule of law is "Do what is to your advantage," but there is no stable or widely recognized criterion for what is to human advantage or even personal advantage in the state of nature. Fluctuating perceptions of where one's advantage lies undermine promises between individuals, as well as willingness to persist in an endeavour that will only get a result over a long period of time. Fluctuating perceptions of where one's advantage lies are also affected by local imbalances of power between individuals and passing alliances. The more fluctuating the relevant valuations, the greater the distrust and the greater the probability of each taking the next person as an aggressive competitor.

Now reason can supply the stable criteria that are otherwise lacking: the *Ethics* is full of indicators of the difference reason discloses between real and apparent goods, or at least of arguments for the illusoriness of goods in the form of fleeting satisfiers of fleshly desires. Hobbes's political writings contain similar things. But reason discloses little to those whose minds or knowledge do not allow for the registration of the natural order in any depth.[10] And few minds caught in the tumult of the competitive pursuit of pleasure are attuned to the real order of causes and effects.[11] Political authority can do some of the good that reason does. Even if it arises out of the terror that is able to be exerted by the most powerful, political authority is able to introduce some impersonally stable criteria of right action, e.g. by raising the costs for everyone of violent acts, and by increasing the general incentives for the production of things that people, when they've stopped fighting, recognize are beneficial to everyone, like food and shelter. By making violence fearful, and the production of food profitable, political authority enforces behaviour also recommended by reason. In this way, political authority can introduce standards of behaviour, even rationally defensible ones, where previously there were none.

But where terror and reward are the only instruments for altering typical human behaviour, standards may disappear with any change to the balance

[10] To reach the multitude, special rhetorical effects may be needed and also theological devices in addition to the non-utopian outline of a democracy. See Yovel 1985.

[11] Quite apart from the external tumult of ruthless competition, there is the inner disorder of fantasy and obsession. See Hampshire 2005: 181.

of terror and reward. If the only thing that makes it advantageous on balance to desist from violence is the fear of being punished for violence, then no durable motivation for non-violence exists. It is different when the grasp of something timelessly true or true for most times – namely that violence prompts revenge and revenge more violence – underpins non-violence, for then there are reasons for not being violent even at times when it is likely one will escape state punishment for violence. The communication of *reasons* for things that are otherwise demanded by commands of the form "Do this – or else" is only possible within a political order. And once the reasons, as opposed to the fear of punishment, start to be understood and acted upon by the many, the distance citizens have travelled from the state of nature is very considerable.

In some political orders – a monarchy or aristocracy, for example – the few involved in making laws know the advantages to the public of having the laws followed, and the public are got to obey whether they see the public advantage of doing so or not. In a democracy, the audience for reasons for legislation is the *same* as the audience for the legislation itself. Those who are told to do things are also told the reasons why there ought to be laws requiring those things to be done. In this way, the rule of law and the rule of reason come to coalesce in democracies in a way they do not under other constitutions of the state. Even Spinoza's design of aristocratic and monarchical institutions for free people in the *Political Treatise* helps to ensure that legislation that is only to the advantage of a section of a community is harder to pass than legislation that is to everyone's advantage. The more people are party to legislation – and Spinoza's theory always calls for many – the more those people are required to have a track record of living non-scandalously, and the more any piece of legislation has to be unobjectionable from their many idiosyncratic points of view, the more the legislation has a claim to be acceptable from all relevant points of view, and so has a claim to be rational.

Because laws which people are multiply motivated to follow are likely to have more authority in practice than others, Spinoza's preference for democracy is likely to contribute as much to the theory of making the state last, as to the theory of making the state procedurally fair. Spinoza says that the theory in the *Political Treatise* is without illusions about human behaviour that undermine so much traditional political philosophy (1.1). What he means is that his political philosophy does not assume elevated motivations in ordinary human beings, or overestimate the power of governments to regulate human behaviour down to the last detail. I now elaborate on these points.

Spinoza does not assume elevated motivations: he assumes that people are constituted to act for personal advantage, and that their natural hopes and fears encode the perception of advantage. Sometimes the emotional perception of advantage is distorted, and requires correction by reason. But people cannot be blamed for acting on even their uncorrected perceptions if their rational capacities are not up to effecting the correction. Action on uncorrected perception of advantage is as natural and blameless as any other natural force. Governments are in a position to alter perceptions of advantage by threatening punishments and promising rewards, but their freedom to do this is affected by what people under government at a time are already used to. Something that people are free to do at one time cannot easily be outlawed later without creating resentment, especially when the people doing the outlawing seem no better to citizens than they are themselves. This is the consideration that in a passage quoted earlier we saw being made into an argument for democracy. Other considerations point in the same direction. People cannot be ordered, even with dire punishments threatened, to do just anything. They do not transfer the right of nature completely. Instead, a range of things seem to go against their advantage and to be impossible for them (e.g. killing their parents), no matter what the punishment for non-performance is (cf. TP 3; Spinoza 2002: 692). Here Spinoza outdoes Hobbes, who thought that within the commonwealth the right of nature entitled a subject only to violate those of a sovereign's commands that put him in mortal danger.

Spinoza's realism about the limitations of both governments and the governed might seem to align his politics with Machiavelli's. Ed Curley has cited both Spinoza's anti-utopianism about political philosophy and his republicanism as potential Machiavellian elements.[12] I agree that Spinoza and Machiavelli have republicanism in common, but I wonder whether Spinoza can consistently be realistic about human nature in the way Machiavelli is, so long as he is a rationalist in the way he is.[13]

A passage which helps to bring into focus the issue I am interested in is the following one, from chapter 3 of the *Political Treatise*:

> But the fact is that men are mainly guided by appetite devoid of reason; yet even so they do not violate Nature's order, but necessarily conform to it. Therefore the ignorant or weak-willed man is no more bound by the law of nature to live his life wisely than the sick man is bound to be of sound body. (3.18; Spinoza 2002: 686)

[12] Curley 1996: 327ff. [13] On Spinoza's rationalism, see Frankfurt 1999, ch. 4.

Consider the passage in the light of the following, each of which seems to be acceptable within Spinoza's philosophy:

(a) Men ought to be guided by reason;
(b) Men are bound by the law of nature to preserve themselves in existence;
(c) To be weak-willed is to preserve oneself less effectively than if one is rational;
(d) It is naturally possible for men who are not guided by reason to be guided by reason;

and

(e) Whoever is weak-willed is not guided by reason.

It seems to me to follow from the conjunction of (a) to (e) that

(f) weak-willed men ought to be guided by reason (where "ought" implies "can" in a sense of possibility consistent with (bare) natural possibility).

Moreover, (f) is supported by (a) to (e) in a way that

(g) Men ought to be healthy

is not. In the same way, a sick man does not violate (g), though a weak-willed man violates (a). In short, (g) is not addressed to the will of the sick man, but (a) *is* addressed to the will of the weak-willed man.

If weak-willed men ought to be guided by reason, then they are not the analogues of the blamelessly sick. They may be the analogues of those whose *carelessness* about their health makes them ill, but these latter people are *not* blameless, under the rational precept that people ought to preserve their health.

Another route to the same tension in Spinoza is through his claims about what the pursuit of advantage justifies. Spinoza claims that human beings have the right even outside the state of nature to do what is on balance most advantageous. This means they may break promises if the costs of doing so are less than the rewards, and may do other things not normally allowed by conventional morality. But because Spinoza also recognizes the distinction between apparent and true advantage, and thinks only reason reliably discloses true advantage, he is undermined in his apparently Machiavellian role of making room for a ruthless human nature. If advantage in a particular case is merely apparent, it follows that any action done to produce it has quite a lot to be said against it. What there is to be said against it may not be available to an agent who cannot distinguish between real and apparent advantage, but it is in principle available to human beings whose rationality is capable of being made operative and then dominant. Looking at ordinary agents from the outside and believing what he does about reason, Spinoza is committed to holding

that the rational pursuit of advantage is superior to the emotional pursuit of advantage, and that the emotional pursuit of advantage is sometimes bad. In other words, he is bound to admit that that agents often irrationally pursue things they wrongly think are to their advantage. Since agents who pursue the wrong thing do something they shouldn't, they cannot have a perfect right to pursue that thing, as Spinoza sometimes claims.

Not that Spinoza idealizes human agents by acknowledging an appearance/reality distinction in the area of perceived advantage, but he does seem to commit himself to being more judgmental than Machiavelli. Presumably Machiavelli *can* consistently say that people in the state of nature are blamelessly ruthless if they genuinely think that ruthlessness will help them to survive and prosper. This isn't so in Spinoza, because, according to the *Ethics* at least, people have a natural potential for rationality, and rationality carries with it enough normativity to imply that certain emotion-driven actions shouldn't be performed. There is a sense, then, in which Spinoza's *ethics* does not accept people as they are. To the extent Spinoza's *politics* accepts them as they are, and constrains laws and constitutions to reflect the inevitable presence of irrationality in people, it loses its allegedly tight connection to the freedom promoted by the *Ethics*. Hobbes's moral and political philosophy does not suffer from these tensions. Although its highly illiberal politics may be less attractive than Spinoza's, it coheres better with its far from perfectionist ethics.

CHAPTER 9

Should Spinoza have published his philosophy?

Daniel Garber

The full title of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (TTP) reads as follows:

THEOLOGICAL-POLITICAL TREATISE: Containing several discussions In which it is shown that the Freedom of Philosophizing not only can be granted without harm to Piety and the Peace of the Republic, but also cannot be abolished unless Piety and the Peace of the Republic are also destroyed.[1]

Freedom of thought is quite central to Spinoza's politics in the TTP. In fact, since thought is outside the ability of the sovereign authorities to control, control is not possible. And where control is not possible, there is no right to control. But Spinoza takes this one step further, and argues that from freedom of thought follows the freedom to express publicly that which is thought. Even so, Spinoza recognizes certain limits on the freedom of expression. Expressing one's thoughts is an act, an act that can have effects in the society as a whole. Criticisms of individuals and institutions, even if well-reasoned and true, can lead to consequences which undermine the stability of the state. Criticizing the divinity of the Bible, or the divine authority of the clergy, or the necessity for performing certain ceremonies or keeping to certain divinely ordained laws can lead to the general decline of religion. And insofar as religion can contribute to the stability of the state by inducing people to behave well toward one another, the complete and unrestrained freedom of expression could well have bad consequences for the stability of the state. For this reason Spinoza does recognize that there have to be limits to this freedom: citizens must be restrained in

[1] The TTP is quoted in Ed Curley's new English translation, which he kindly provided me. As much as possible the references are given in the text. When not otherwise identified, the first reference is to the chapter and section of the TTP in Curley's edition, followed by the reference to the text in the volume and page number of Gebhardt edition (Spinoza 1925). The current best text of the TTP is found in Spinoza 1999. This text is keyed to the Gebhardt edition, as is Curley's translation. References to the *Ethics* are in Curley's translation as given in Spinoza 1985.

circumstances in which the exercise of free expression would have such consequences.

But this raises something of an embarrassing question for Spinoza himself. One might well argue that Spinoza's philosophy itself would undermine the practice of religion. When people come to learn that the Bible is a human document, a compilation of texts written for particular people at particular times, compiled by other humans for their own purposes and imperfectly transmitted through the centuries, when they learn that God cannot be understood anthropomorphically, that he doesn't act with justice or mercy, that he requires no ceremonies, and that prophets are just mortals with particularly vivid imaginations, this will certainly undermine the practice of religion. And if that is the case, then it would seem that *by his very own standards*, Spinoza should suppress publication of his philosophy. This, then, is my question: is Spinoza entitled to publish his own philosophy?

Let me be more precise still. There is considerable discussion in both Spinoza and his commentators about who the intended audience of the TTP is supposed to be, and who the actual audience of the book really was.[2] But this is not my question, at least not my central question. In the context of his discussion of the freedom of expression, Spinoza is quite clear that the freedom of expression is not absolute: there are limits on what should be allowed to be expressed, even in what he calls the "free state." My question concerns these limitations on the freedom of expression, and the question as to whether on his own terms, by his very own standards, Spinoza's philosophy falls outside those boundaries.

I FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN THE TTP

Let me begin with a brief discussion of the issue of freedom of expression as Spinoza treats it in the TTP.

In chapter 19, Spinoza sets out his doctrine concerning the powers of the sovereign authorities over the actions of citizens. Spinoza wants to argue here that it is the civil authorities who govern religious practice in the state:

> . . . I want to show that Religion receives the force of law solely from the decree of those who have the right to command, that God has no special kingdom over men except through those who have sovereignty, that Religious worship and the exercise of piety must be accommodated to the peace and utility of the State,

[2] The question of Spinoza's intended audience for the TTP is discussed in more detail below. On the question of Spinoza's actual audience, see Smith 1997: ch. 2.

and hence, must be determined solely by the supreme powers, which thus must also be its interpreters. (TTP 19.2; G III: 228–29)

Spinoza is quite clear here that the power of the civil authorities is limited to the *external* actions of its citizens:

I am speaking specifically about the exercise of piety and about the external practice of religion, not about piety itself and the internal worship of God, *or* the means by which the mind is disposed, internally, to worship God wholeheartedly; for the internal worship of God and piety itself (as we showed at the end of chapter 7) are subject to each person's control, which cannot be transferred to another person. (TTP 19.3; G III: 229; cf. 7.91, G III: 117)

For Spinoza, of course, one has the right to do only that which one is able to do. And thus, insofar as the sovereign authorities don't have the power to constrain the thoughts of its citizens, they don't have the right:

If it were as easy to command men's minds as it is their tongues, every ruler would govern in safety and no rule would be violent. For everyone would live according to the disposition of the rulers, and only in accordance with their decree would people judge what is true or false, good or evil, right or wrong. But as we have noted at the beginning of chapter 17, it cannot happen that a mind should be absolutely subject to the control of someone else. Indeed, no one can transfer to another person his natural right, *or* faculty of reasoning freely, and of judging concerning anything whatever, nor can he be compelled to do this. This is why rule over minds is considered violent, and why the supreme authority seems to wrong its subjects and to usurp their rights whenever it wants to prescribe to each person what he must embrace as true and what reject as false, and, further, by what opinions each person's mind ought to be moved in its devotion to God. For these things are subject to each person's control, which no one can surrender even if he wishes to. (TTP 20.1–3; G III: 239; the reference is to TTP 17.1–2; G III: 201)

In foro interno, one can think as one pleases, as long as one maintains the external behavior demanded by the proper authorities: "Each person, therefore, surrenders only his right to act according to his own decision, but not his right to reason and judge" (TTP 20.14; G III: 241).[3]

But, Spinoza argues, the freedom of thought should entail the freedom of expression as well. The title of chapter 20 reads: "It is shown that in a Free State everyone is permitted to think what he wishes and to say what he

[3] Mogens Laerke has an interestingly different reading of Spinoza's position here. He argues that for Spinoza, unlike for Hobbes, the sovereign has ways of shaping people's thought, though indirectly. But even though there are ways of controling thought, the sovereign should not take advantage of them since they involve violence and lead to the hatred of the people and thus to instability in society. On this see Laerke [in press]: section III–III/2, §§ 2–3. Our differences on this point don't affect the larger questions that concern me in this essay.

thinks" (TTP 20; G III: 239). Now, not every state is necessarily a *free* state, but Spinoza argues that while the sovereign powers may have the power to suppress the freedom of expression, in a sense, it is unwise for them to exercise that power, insofar as to do so may well lead to undesirable consequences for the state.[4] Spinoza notes first that the attempt to suppress freedom of expression will lead inevitably to a kind of corruption in society:

> Suppose this freedom could be suppressed, and men so restrained that they did not dare to mutter anything except what the supreme powers prescribe. This would certainly never happen in such a way that they did not even think anything except what the supreme powers wanted them to think. So it would necessarily follow that every day men would think one thing and say something else, and hence that the honesty which is so very necessary in a State would be corrupted. Abominable flattery and treachery would be encouraged, along with deception and the corruption of all good arts. (TTP 20.27; G III: 243)

But perhaps worse still, it is those who are best educated and most thoughtful who would be led to rebel:

> But it simply couldn't happen that everyone spoke within predetermined limits. On the contrary, the more the authorities try to take away this freedom of speech, the more stubbornly men will resist. Not the greedy, of course, or the flatterers, or others who are weak-minded, and whose supreme well-being consists in contemplating the money in their coffers and having bloated bellies. Resistance will come rather from those whom a good education, integrity of character, and virtue have made more free. For the most part men are so constituted that they endure nothing with greater impatience than that opinions they believe to be true should be considered criminal and that what moves them to dutiful conduct towards God and men should be counted as wickedness in them. The result is that they dare to curse the laws and to do anything they can against the magistrate; they think it, not shameful, but most honorable, to initiate rebellions and attempt any action for the sake of this cause. Now from what we have just established about the dispositions of human nature, it follows that laws made concerning opinions are directed, not at the wicked, but at those who act in a manner worthy of a free man, that they are made, not to restrain those who are ill-disposed, but to aggravate the honorable, and that they cannot be defended without great danger to the state. (TTP 20.28–30; G III: 243–44)

[4] Cf. TTP 20.6–7; G III: 240, where Spinoza argues that insofar as some actions of the sovereign powers may lead to the undermining of the state, they lack the right to do them: "For I concede that they can rightly rule with the utmost violence, and condemn citizens to death for the slightest of reasons. But everyone will deny that they can do these things without detriment to the judgment of sound reason. Indeed, because they cannot do these things without great danger to the whole state, we can also deny that they have the absolute power to do such things. Hence we can deny even that they can do them with absolute right. For we have shown that the right of the supreme powers is determined by their power."

In this way, the very attempt to suppress the freedom of expression will lead to the destabilization of the state.

But even so, Spinoza recognizes that even in the "Free State," there need to be limits on freedom of expression. Expressing one's opinions is an act, and insofar as it can be used with subversive intent to undermine the stability of the state, it can and should be prohibited. Spinoza recognizes that "there are certain opinions which, though they seem to be concerned only with truth and falsity, are nevertheless stated and published in a resentful spirit" (TTP 20.22; G III: 243). And thus Spinoza writes:

> . . . everyone, without any infringement of their right, can think, and judge, and hence also speak, provided merely that he only speaks or teaches, and defends his view by reason alone, not with deception, anger, hatred, or any intention to introduce something into the state on the authority of his own decision. (TTP 20.14; G III: 241)

Spinoza offers the following example to illustrate the difference between the wise and proper use of the freedom of expression, and its improper use:

> For example, if someone shows that some law is contrary to sound reason, and therefore thinks it ought to be repealed, and if at the same time he submits his opinion to the judgment of the supreme power (who possesses the sole power of making and repealing laws), and in the meantime does nothing contrary to what that law prescribes, he of course deserves well of the state, as one of its best citizens. On the other hand, if he does this to accuse the magistrates of unfairness and make them hateful to the people, or if he wants seditiously to disregard that law, against the will of the magistrate, he is just a troublemaker and a rebel. (TTP 20.15; G III: 241)

The wise (and virtuous) person will discuss the imperfections in the law in question only with the supreme power and refrain from a fully public discussion. But the seditious person might use what he discovers through reason as a means of undermining the authority of the state, thus making society more unstable.[5]

There is an obvious problem with Spinoza's view here: is it always possible to distinguish between expression honestly put forward and expression put forward for ulterior motives? Between speech as an expression of honestly held beliefs, and speech as an act of sabotage against the state? Furthermore, one might argue that the intentions of the

[5] It isn't absolutely clear to me here whether Spinoza's view is that we have unlimited rights to freedom of expression which, though, a wise and virtuous person will restrain himself from using in circumstances in which it might undermine the stability of the state, or whether he means to argue that in those circumstances one doesn't have a right to freedom of expression. For what follows, though, I'm not sure that it matters which is the correct reading.

person expressing himself plays too large a role in Spinoza's account of freedom of expression. If it is reasonable for you to expect that an exercise of free expression will lead to the undermining of the stability of the state, then don't you have an obligation to refrain from expression, even if you don't engage in free expression for the *specific* purpose of undermining the state? Once you realize the subversive effects of making your views known, it would seem that you can no longer in good faith make them public with the excuse that you didn't intend to cause harm to the state.

And with this we are led to the embarrassing question. It can be shown, *on Spinoza's own terms*, that the publication of his philosophy may well lead directly to the undermining of faith, and in that way undercut obedience to the central moral imperative that defines the revealed religion of the multitude for Spinoza. And since it is through that kind of faith that the vast majority of the people, who are imperfectly rational, come to obey that central moral imperative and behave well toward one another, undermining faith will lead to instability in society. Given that, it would seem that Spinoza is not entitled *under his own doctrine of the freedom of expression* to publish his own philosophy. Let me begin to flesh this argument out.

II OBEDIENCE, FAITH, AND THE TENETS OF UNIVERSAL FAITH

Spinoza argues that the central teaching of revelation is not knowledge, strictly speaking, but a *command*: "For from Scripture itself we have perceived its general tendency without any difficulty or ambiguity: to love God above all else, and to love your neighbor as yourself" (TTP 12.34; G III: 165; cf. TTP 14.9; G III: 174). And insofar as the central teaching of revealed religion is a command, the central teaching of the Scriptures must be seen as *obedience to this command*. In the title to chapter 13, for example, Spinoza notes that the Scripture ". . . does not aim at anything but obedience . . ." (G III: 167). A bit later in the chapter, Spinoza notes that ". . . the purpose of Scripture was not to teach the sciences. For from this we can easily judge that it requires nothing from men but obedience, and condemns only stubbornness, not ignorance" (TTP 13.7; G III: 168).

But this is not to say that there is no propositional knowledge associated with obedience. Spinoza writes:

> Next, because obedience to God consists only in the love of your neighbor . . ., it follows that the only knowledge Scripture commends is that which is necessary for all men so that they may be able to obey God according to this prescription, and

without which men would necessarily be stiff-necked, or at least lacking in the discipline of obedience. (TTP 13.7; G III: 168)

Similarly, he notes:

. . . everyone is agreed that Scripture was written and published, not for the wise only, but for all people, of every age and kind. From these considerations alone it follows with the greatest evidence that the only thing we are bound by Scriptural command to believe is what is absolutely necessary to carry out this command. So this command itself is the unique standard of the whole universal faith. Only through it are we to determine all the tenets of that faith, those everyone is bound to accept. (TTP 14.10; G III: 174)

This leads directly to Spinoza's definition of faith:

. . . I shall begin with a definition of faith, which, according to the foundation we have given, must be defined as follows: thinking such things about God that if the person disregards them, obedience to God is destroyed, and such that, if obedience to God is posited, they are necessarily posited. (TTP 14.13; G III: 175)[6]

Faith involves thinking things, that is, holding the opinion that certain propositions are true. These propositions are beliefs such that *if* you hold them, then you are necessarily obedient to the central command of revealed religion. And similarly, *if* you are obedient to the central command of revealed religion, then you necessarily hold those beliefs.

Spinoza argues that what is important about the beliefs that constitute faith is just their efficacy in bringing about obedience. And for that reason, faith (belief in certain propositions) is virtually equivalent to works (obedience to the divine command):

. . . Faith is not saving by itself, but only in relation to obedience, or as James says (James 2:17), faith by itself, without works, is dead . . . It follows that he who is truly obedient, necessarily has a true and saving faith. For we have said that

[6] The Latin is somewhat delicate here, and my translation departs somewhat from Curley's. The Latin reads as follows: "*Ut itaque rem totam ordine ostendam, a fidei definitione incipiam, quae ex hoc dato fundamento sic definiri debet, nempe quid nihil aliud sit quam de Deo talia sentire, quibus ignoratis tollitur erga Deum obedientia, et hac obedientia posita necessario ponuntur*." The verb "*sentire*" here means to think or believe in the sense of holding an opinion: it is in this sense that Spinoza talks of ". . . thinking such things about God . . ." Curley translates the next phrase as ". . . that if the person is not familiar with them, obedience to God is destroyed . . ." The translation "not familiar" for "*ignoratis*" doesn't ring true to me. Given the "*sentire*" in the previous clause, Spinoza seems to be saying something stronger, that the person does not hold the opinions in question. I have tried to capture this with the translation: ". . . if the person disregards them." I have also changed Curley's translation in the last phrase. He writes: ". . . if obedience to God is posited, these beliefs are necessarily posited." While we are certainly dealing with beliefs, the word "belief" does not appear in the Latin.

obedience being posited, faith is also necessarily posited . . . From which again it follows that we can only judge people faithful or unfaithful from their works. If the works are good, they are faithful, however much they may disagree with other faithful people in their tenets. Conversely, if the works are bad, they are unfaithful, however much they may agree in words with other faithful people. For given obedience, faith is also necessarily given, and faith without works is dead. (TTP 14.14–16; G III: 175)

But, Spinoza argues, true faith, that is, beliefs that lead to obedience to the moral law, does not require that the beliefs in question be literally true:

So we must not for a moment believe that opinions, considered in themselves and without regard to works, have any piety or impiety in them; rather we should say that a person believes something piously or impiously only insofar as either his opinions move him to obedience or he takes a license from them to sin or rebel. As a result, if anyone becomes stiff-necked by believing truths, his faith is really impious; on the other hand, if he becomes obedient by believing falsehoods, it is pious. (TTP 13.29; G III: 172)

But while it doesn't matter whether or not the beliefs that constitute faith are in fact true or false, it is important that the person who has them *believe* that they are true:

Finally, it follows that faith does not require tenets which are true as much as it does tenets which are pious, i.e., tenets which move the heart to obedience, even if there are many among them which have not even a shadow of the truth, *so long as the person who accepts them does not know them to be false*; otherwise he would necessarily be a rebel. For how could it happen that someone who is eager to love Justice and to obey God should worship as divine something he knows to be foreign to the divine nature? (TTP 14.20; G III: 176, emphasis added)

This is quite crucial: a belief can be efficacious in producing obedience *only* if it is genuinely believed to be true. As soon as it is known to be false, it is no longer capable of supporting the practice of obedience.

But what exactly are the beliefs that, for Spinoza, are taken to support obedience? The first listing of such propositions is given in chapter 12 of the TTP, shortly after Spinoza advances the command that he argues is central to Scripture and religious practice. He writes:

Since, then, it must be maintained that this foundation is uncorrupted [i.e., the command "to love God above all else, and to love your neighbor as yourself"], we must also grant the same about those other [teachings] which uncontroversially follow from it, and are also fundamental: e.g., that God exists; that he provides for all; that he is omnipotent; that in accordance with his decree, things go well with those who observe their religious duties, but badly with the unprincipled; and that our salvation depends only on his grace. (TTP 12.36; G III: 165)

But the issue receives its longest and most careful development in chapter 14, where Spinoza sets out what he calls the "tenets of universal faith (*fidei universalis dogmata*)."[7]

Spinoza begins his exposition as follows:

> And I shall not be afraid now to enumerate the tenets of universal faith, that is, the fundamental principles of the whole of Scripture, all of which (as follows most evidently from what we have shown in the two preceding Chapters) must tend to this point: that there is a supreme being, who loves Justice and Lovingkindness; that everyone, if he is to be saved, is bound to obey this being and to worship him by practicing Justice and Lovingkindness toward his neighbor. (TTP 14.24; G III: 177)

He then enumerates the tenets as follows:

I. that God exists, i.e., that there is a supreme being, supremely just and merciful, that is, a model (*exemplar*) of true life; for whoever does not know or does not believe that he exists cannot obey him or know him as a Judge;
II. that he is unique; for no one can doubt that this too is absolutely required for supreme devotion, admiration and love towards God; devotion, admiration and love arise only from the excellence of one by comparison with the others;
III. that he is present everywhere, or that everything is open to him; for if things were believed to be hidden from him, or people were not aware that he sees all, they would have doubts about the equity of his Justice, by which he directs all things, or at least they would not be aware of it;
IV. that he has the supreme right and dominion over all things, and does nothing because he is compelled by a law, but acts only from his absolute good pleasure and special grace; for everyone is bound absolutely to obey him, but he is not bound to obey anyone;
V. that the worship of God and obedience to him consist only in Justice and Lovingkindness, that is, in the love of one's neighbor;
VI. that all and only those who obey God by living in this way are saved, the rest, who live under the control of the pleasures, being lost; if men did not firmly believe this, there would be no reason why they should prefer to obey God rather than their pleasures;
VII. finally, that God pardons the sins of those who repent . . . (TTP 14.25–28; G III: 177–78)

[7] Again, I have departed from Curley's translation. He translates this as "tenets of *the* universal faith." While it is, of course, correct that Latin doesn't have a definite article and any such addition involves an interpretive decision, his translation suggests that the tenets form the basis of a kind of universal religion, a reading that seems wrong to me for reasons I will indicate below.

These then are the propositions which, if genuinely believed, that is, genuinely held to be true by someone, will guarantee that he will be obedient to the command to love God and his neighbor. And, in turn, anyone who is obedient to the command is obligated to believe these.

Before unpacking these articles of faith and understanding their connection with obedience, let me begin with the notion of obedience itself. Spinoza's conception of obedience is greatly clarified in one of the later notes he added to the TTP. The note is added to a text from chapter 16, where Spinoza writes: "No one knows, by nature, that he is bound by any obedience to God; indeed, no one can attain this knowledge by reason at all, but only by revelation, confirmed by signs" (TTP 16.53; G III: 198). In his note, Spinoza makes the following remarks:

> As for natural divine law, whose chief precept, as we have said, is to love God, I have called it a law in the same sense the philosophers call laws the common rules of nature, according to which all things happen. For the love of God is not obedience, but a virtue which is necessarily in the man who rightly knows God. Obedience is concerned with the will of the one commanding, not with the necessity and truth of the matter. Moreover, since we are ignorant of the nature of God's will, and on the other hand, know with certainty that whatever happens, happens only by God's power, it is only by revelation that we can know whether God wills that men should worship him, as they do a prince, with some honor. Again, we have shown that the divine laws seem to us to be laws, that is, things instituted just as long as we do not know their cause. But when this is known, they thereby cease to be laws, and we embrace them not as laws, but as eternal truths. That is, obedience passes into love, which proceeds from true knowledge as necessarily as light does from the sun. So we can, indeed, love God according to the guidance of reason, but we cannot obey him according to the guidance of reason, since by reason we can neither embrace divine laws as divine so long as we are ignorant of their cause, nor conceive God as establishing those laws like a prince. (G III: 264)[8]

Spinoza's position seems to be this. One of the laws of nature is to love God.[9] Now, for the person who has "true knowledge," this is something we do of necessity, "as necessarily as light [passes from] the sun." However, not everyone is in this cognitive state. For those who aren't, they must conceive of the natural law in question as if it were the command of a prince. In this way, while the perfectly rational person will love God, he will not do so out of *obedience*, strictly speaking: knowing that God is not the kind of being

[8] The notes on the TTP that we have seem to have been copied from notes that Spinoza made on his own copy of the TTP. On these notes, see Lagrée and Moreau's remarks in Spinoza 1999: 28–37.

[9] Why doesn't Spinoza mention loving one's neighbor here too? Perhaps he thinks that that simply follows from the love of God.

that gives commands, to the extent that we are rational, we simply *can't* obey God. Obedience to the moral law is, in this way, appropriate only for those who follow the moral law because they believe that they are commanded to do so, and not because they understand through reason why they should. The rational person embraces the moral laws "not as laws, but as eternal truths."[10]

This, in turn, illuminates the way in which the tenets of universal faith are connected with obedience. The person with limited intellect doesn't see how the imperative to love God and his neighbor are eternal truths, which once understood must be followed. Instead, he sees them as laws, commands, like the laws that a prince decrees for his subjects. If he genuinely believes that there is a God who is a supreme being, merciful, just, and worthy of love, and at the same time is a lawgiver and a judge, omnipresent, omnipotent, and whose will we are bound to obey, then he would be obedient to this God. If, on the other hand, such a person were to be obedient and determined to follow the command to love God and his neighbor, then it is not unreasonable for him to believe that there is a God who had exactly the properties that are ascribed to him in Spinoza's tenets of universal faith, that he is supreme, merciful, just, a lawgiver and a judge, omnipresent, omnipotent, etc. Furthermore, Spinoza wants to argue that this moral lawgiver has a character that constitutes a model for us to follow: ". . . there is a supreme being, supremely just and merciful, that is, a model (*exemplar*) of true life."[11] One would have to do considerably more work to demonstrate that the precise doctrines Spinoza advances rigorously follow from obedience, and that from these doctrines, it follows rigorously that one must be obedient. But the general idea should be clear enough: obedience to the moral law is closely connected with a belief in the existence of a moral lawgiver, a model of rectitude who demands our obedience.

Now, Spinoza says, it doesn't matter whether these tenets of universal faith are true or false: what is important is that belief in them is required for people to be obedient to the moral law, and that obedience to the moral law requires that they be believed:

[10] This seems not altogether consistent with what Spinoza says in TTP 4.14 (G III: 60), where he implies that one cannot really love God unless it is through understanding that this love is the highest good. If taken seriously, this would seem to imply that obedience is strictly speaking impossible.

[11] The idea of an exemplar of the character toward which we strive is an interesting theme in Spinoza's thought in the TTP. See TTP 13.23 (G III: 171), TTP 14.30 (G: III 178). It is also very prominent in other works, including the *Tractatus de Emendatione Intellectus* and the *Ethics*. On this theme see Garber 2004.

> . . . faith does not require tenets which are true as much as it does tenets which are pious, i.e., tenets which move the heart to obedience, even if there are many among them which have not even a shadow of the truth, so long as the person who accepts them does not know them to be false; otherwise he would necessarily be a rebel. (TTP 14.20; G III: 176)

But *are* they true on Spinoza's own philosophy?

There is every reason to think that at least some of the tenets are not, at least not in the way in which Spinoza articulates them in his principal exposition. Many of the tenets he sets out among the tenets of universal faith are literally true within Spinoza's philosophy. Certainly God exists for Spinoza, as is asserted in the first tenet, at least as he understands what God is. God is certainly unique for Spinoza (tenet II), present everywhere (tenet III), and acts only by his nature (tenet IV). It is, furthermore, not impossible to construe Spinoza's philosophy as holding that worshiping God is just acting with justice and lovingkindness (tenet V) or that only those who live this way can be saved (tenet VI). But there are at least a couple of tenets in Spinoza's list that are very difficult indeed to fit into his own philosophy. As Spinoza understands God, it is very difficult to construe him as "supremely just and merciful," or "a model of true life" or as a "judge." These are definitely anthropomorphic conceptions of God which Spinoza explicitly denies both in the TTP and in the *Ethics*.[12] Nor is it easy to see how Spinoza's philosophy could accommodate the belief that "God pardons the sins of those who repent." Leaving aside the evident anthropomorphism in that tenet, in the *Ethics* Spinoza is quite clear that repentance is inappropriate for the rational person: "Repentance is not a virtue, that is, it does not arise from reason; instead, he who repents what he has done is twice wretched, that is, lacking in power" (E 4p54). Indeed, the whole spirit of the tenets of universal faith are strikingly inconsistent with Spinoza's philosophy. If the tenets of faith are supposed to underlie the view of God as the supreme prince and lawgiver, to whom obedience is due and who will punish us for failing to be obedient, then it is very difficult to see how any set of tenets that could support or follow from obedience could fail to be inconsistent with Spinoza's radically anti-anthropomorphic view of God.

Now, one might try to argue something like this. Even though the tenets of universal faith are false, as stated, there is a way of construing them so

[12] See TTP 13.24 (G III: 171) where Spinoza explicitly notes that the true conception of God is inconsistent with seeing him as a model: ". . . the intellectual knowledge of God, which considers his nature as it is in itself (a nature which men cannot imitate by any particular way of life and cannot take as a model for instituting the true way of life), does not in any way pertain to faith and to revealed religion."

that they are really true. In chapter 3 Spinoza offers various reinterpretations of anthropomorphic conceptions in his own non-anthropomorphic way. For example, Spinoza writes: "By God's guidance I understand the fixed and immutable order of nature, that is, the connection of natural things" (TTP 3.7, G III: 46). Spinoza's translation here seems rather implausible, indeed, stipulative. But if we are allowed to redefine terms in this way ("by 'chalk' I mean 'cheese'"), then, following Alexandre Matheron's important reading, one can certainly grant that the tenets of faith might be construed as being true, strictly speaking ("chalk is excellent with port wine and crackers . . ."). [13] This gains some support by a remark that Spinoza makes shortly after discussing the tenets of universal faith. Spinoza writes:

> It does not matter, I say, as far as faith is concerned, how each person understands these and similar things, provided he does not conclude that he should take a greater license to sin, or that he should become less obedient to God. In fact, as we have already said above, each person is bound to accommodate these tenets of faith to his own power of understanding, and to interpret them for himself as it seems to him easier for him to accept them without any hesitation, with complete agreement of the heart, so that he may, as a result, obey God with full agreement of the heart. (TTP 14.32; G III: 178)

This suggests that what is important is that the tenets of universal faith are true under *some* construal, even if they may be false as they are typically interpreted.

But I don't think that this will really help much. The question is rather similar to that of the interpretation of the Scriptures which Spinoza discusses earlier in the TTP. There he discusses Maimonides's strategy. He writes:

> He [i.e., Maimonides] thought that each passage of Scripture admits various meanings, indeed contrary meanings, and that we are not certain of the true meaning of any passage unless we know that that passage, as we interpret it, contains nothing which does not agree with reason, or which is contrary to it. For if it should be found to be contrary to reason according to its literal meaning, he would still think the passage was to be interpreted differently, however clear the literal meaning seemed to be. (TTP 7.75; G III: 113)

On Maimonides's view (as on Matheron's view of the tenets of universal faith), Scripture can often be interpreted in a number of different and contradictory ways. However, the true interpretation, he claims, is the one

[13] See Matheron 1971: 94–127.

that is in agreement with reason, that is, the one that is true, *even if* it goes against the evident literal meaning of the text. In this way, Scripture must *always* be construed as being true. When the literal meaning of Scripture is false, then Maimonides argues that we should find an appropriate figurative interpretation to make it come out true:

> . . . if it were established for him according to reason that the world is eternal, he would not hesitate to twist Scripture and to explain it in such a way that it would finally seem to teach this very same thing. Indeed, he would immediately be certain that, although Scripture everywhere expressly protests against it, nevertheless it wanted to teach this eternity of the world. (TTP 7.77; G III:114)

Spinoza objects to this on a number of grounds. But one ground is especially relevant to the question at issue with respect to the tenets of universal faith. He argues:

> . . . if this opinion were true, it would follow that the multitude, who for the most part have no knowledge of demonstrations, or cannot give their time to them, will be able to admit nothing about Scripture except on the unaided authority and testimonies of those who philosophize. (TTP 7.79; G III: 114)

Why is this problematic? For one, it would give too much authority to the philosophers over the common people. But more than that, it would make Scripture inaccessible to the common people. If the point of Scripture is to convey simple truths to the multitude who are less capable of rational argument, and make them obedient, then Scripture so construed would be virtually useless: without reason, they could not know what Scripture really says.

There is a similar problem with respect to the tenets of universal faith: while they may be made true by a clever reinterpretation of the terms in which they are framed, such reinterpretations are not accessible to the multitude. As *they* understand the tenets, they are false (though they believe them to be true), and it doesn't matter to them that there may be a construal under which they may really be true. But the situation is even more interesting: the anthropomorphic interpretation that they commonly give them, the interpretation under which they are literally false, is central to their efficacy in supporting obedience. It is because they understand them anthropomorphically, and believe them to be true in that sense that the multitude thinks of the fundamental moral precept as a law, commanded by a divine God, worthy of obedience. And were they to learn the interpretation that makes them true, that is, the interpretation in accordance with which they would be consistent with strict Spinozist principles, they would no longer be anthropomorphic and would no longer support obedience. If

they were to replace the anthropomorphic God, the ultimate prince, giver of laws with a true picture of God the Eternal, then they would have no grounds for obedience to moral principles construed as laws.

What then of Spinoza's claim that different people can interpret the tenets of universal faith differently? This is clarified by another passage from chapter 14, just before he sets the tenets out:

> So since the faith of each person is to be considered pious or impious only on account of his obedience or stubbornness, and not on account of its truth or falsity, and no one doubts that the common mentality of men is extremely variable, and that not everyone finds comfort equally in all beliefs, but that opinions govern men in different ways – those which move this person to devotion move another to laughter and contempt – from this it follows that no tenets pertain to catholic, *or* universal faith about which there can be controversy among honest men. Tenets of the latter kind can be pious in relation to one person and impious in relation to another, since they must be judged only by the works [they encourage]. Only those tenets pertain to catholic faith, then, which obedience to God absolutely posits, and which, if they are disregarded, make obedience absolutely impossible. (TTP 14.22–3; G III: 176–7; cf. TTP, pref. § 28; G III: 11)[14]

Spinoza's point is not that one can interpret the tenets of universal faith any which way one wants: they are not infinitely malleable. However they are interpreted, they are tenets of universal faith only to the extent that they actually lead people to behave in obedience to moral law, to love God and their neighbors. And this would seem to require that they be interpreted in a way that recognizes God as the ultimate lawgiver. That is to say, it would seem to require that they be interpreted as positing an anthropomorphic God. But Spinoza recognizes that different peoples in different historical circumstances with different traditions will be moved by somewhat different ways of thinking about this anthropomorphic God – as the Jewish God of the Tetragrammaton, as Jesus Christ, as Allah, or whatever – and may be moved by performing different ceremonies that they believe are commanded by that God. To this extent he holds that the tenets of universal faith are open to different interpretations. But I see no way in which a properly Spinozistic interpretation of the tenets could lead one to obedience insofar as a properly Spinozistic God is not a properly speaking a lawgiver to whom obedience is due.

Before continuing with the main argument, I should remark on a feature of the interpretation that I am offering of the tenets of universal faith.

[14] I have altered Curley's translation slightly in a way parallel to the way in which I altered the definition of faith: instead of reading "if they [i.e. the tenets] are ignored" I read "if they are disregarded."

There is a tradition of seeing these tenets as a kind of new Spinozistic religion, a minimal credo to which all reasonable people can subscribe. This seems to be Jonathan Israel's interpretation:

> In his discussion, in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, of the essentials of a minimal public confession, or *fides universalis* [universal religion], to which all men of good faith can readily subscribe, Spinoza proposes seven articles which he says every rational person will approve . . . No one has any rational grounds to object to any of these [tenets of universal faith], he [i.e. Spinoza] says, provided everyone remains wholly free to interpret them for himself whether philosophically or theologically, without any priesthood or authority defining what they mean.[15]

Steven Smith argues for a similar position:

> The tenets of the universal creed, like those of the rational theologies expounded by the other framers of constitutional democracy, were intended to frustrate the power of ecclesiastics, who have a professional stake in multiplying the obscurities of religion. The result would be a new liberal civil theology that would lay the basis for a truce between the warring religious sects of Europe and perhaps even beyond . . . The idea of the *fides universalis*, the common civil faith, seems to embody the liberal idea of the "melting pot," here all the old religious and ethnic particularities of a people are refined in order to produce a new universal human identity.[16]

I think that this reading misconstrues what Spinoza was up to in the tenets of universal faith. On my reading, Spinoza's point was to make clear the minimal commitments for obedience: those beliefs that entail obedience, and which, in turn, obedience entails. And, as I have argued, they are not open to just any interpretations: to be efficacious in producing obedience, they must embody the false and anthropomorphic idea of God the lawgiver. In this way they should not be agreed upon by every person of reason, for reason gives us a very different conception of God. Nor does Spinoza argue for a religion that contains *only* these doctrines and nothing more. Different peoples in their different historical circumstances may well require further doctrines (as well as ceremonial practices) to move their hearts. While these tenets will, suitably interpreted, be common to all pious religions, those that move people to proper obedience, they will have no place among the beliefs of the truly rational person, the person moved to love God and his neighbor not from obedience but from reason. But this is not the place to give the full argument for this reading.

[15] Israel 2006: 158–59. [16] Smith 1997: 199, 200.

III PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION, AND THE STABILITY OF THE STATE

In the last section we reached the unavoidable conclusion that the tenets of universal faith are false, strictly speaking, and that Spinoza full well knew this. By itself, this may not be so bad. After all, Spinoza is absolutely explicit about the fact that the beliefs that constitute faith may well be false; what makes them pious is simply the fact that they lead to obedience, not that they are true. But here is the rub. Spinoza also holds that faith works only as long as they are *believed to be true*. What happens, then, when the multitude reads Spinoza's philosophy and learns that they are false?

In a way, there is no problem here. In principle, at least, the person who reads Spinoza's philosophy, the philosophy of the *Ethics*, will see the light, and ultimately get to the point where he loves God and his neighbor, and does so without having to have the crutches that faith and obedience provide. Such a person will, ideally, come to understand through reason alone that "knowledge of God is the mind's greatest good" (4p28) and that "things which . . . bring it about that men live harmoniously, are useful" (4p40). Such a person will not at all be harmed through his exposure to Spinoza's thought: indeed, learning Spinoza's thought will enable him to behave well through reason alone.

The problem, though, is that not everyone is capable of seeing this. It is because of the limited rationality of most people ("the multitude") that Spinoza thinks that obedience as opposed to reason has a permanent role in human societies. As Spinoza writes in chapter 4:

> Since the true end of laws is usually evident only to a few, and since for the most part men are almost incapable of perceiving it and do anything but live according to reason, legislators, in order to bind all men equally, have wisely set up another end, very different from that which necessarily follows from the nature of laws, by promising to the defenders of the laws what the multitude most love, and on the other hand, by threatening those who would break the laws with what they most fear. In this way they have striven to restrain the multitude, like a horse with a harness, as far as they could. (TTP 4.6; G III: 58–59; cf. TTP 5.40; G III: 78)

For such people of limited reason, obedience is what grounds the sociability that is necessary for a stable society.

Now, Spinoza does think that there are some who are capable of full rationality, and who love God and their neighbors from reason and not from obedience. But even someone who is capable of attaining full rationality, or, at least, capable of understanding Spinoza's philosophy, must go through an intermediate stage in which he is on his way to full rationality, a

stage in which he has given up the false and anthropomorphic conception of God that underlies religion and obedience, but in which he has yet to attain an understanding of the full Spinozist system in all its glory. Now, some people in this stage will go on to a full appreciation of the truths of reason, as set out in the *Ethics*, for example. But not everyone who embarks on the path of true wisdom will get to the end.

Such an imperfectly rational person exposed to Spinoza's philosophy may be rational enough to see the falsity of the tenets of universal faith, but not rational enough to see his way to the true grounding of the principle of morality. And here there is a serious problem: such a person may well lose his faith without replacing it with an acceptable substitute. Such a person will be without a guide in life. Insofar as he rejects the tenets of universal faith, he will be incapable of obedience, but insofar as he is not (yet?) fully rational, he will not behave well from reason either. Such a person will not love God, and he will not love his neighbor. We can be confident that he will pursue his own interest and seek to preserve his own existence; this is something true of everyone, rational or irrational, Spinoza would argue. But lacking either the faith that leads to obedience or the love of God that comes from being fully rational, he cannot be depended on to act in a way that will be conducive to social harmony. Having such people in the society will undermine its stability. This was exactly what Spinoza's contemporaries feared when they accused him of promoting atheism: the atheist is a danger to society because in rejecting a God who gives laws and punishes those who transgress those laws, he rejects all standards of proper behavior. For the atheist, and for the imperfectly rational Spinozist, it would seem that anything goes.

This observation, by the way, would seem to undermine one of the central doctrines Spinoza presents in the TTP. In chapters 14 and 15 he argues that:

> . . . there is no connection or no relationship between faith, that is, Theology, and Philosophy. No one can now fail to see this, who knows the goal and foundation of these two faculties, which of course differ completely. For the goal of Philosophy is nothing but the truth, whereas the goal of Faith, as we have shown abundantly, is nothing but obedience and piety. (TTP 14.37–8; G III: 179)

As a consequence, he claims, "faith, therefore, grants everyone the greatest freedom to philosophize, so that without wickedness he can think whatever he wishes about anything . . ." (TTP 14.39; G III: 179–80). Spinoza then goes on in chapter 15 to claim that "Theology should not be the handmaid of Reason [and] that Reason should not be the handmaid of Theology" (TTP 15, title; G III: 180). But this cannot be quite right. Insofar as

obedience requires faith, and faith can be undermined through knowledge of the truth, which is the domain of philosophy, philosophy can thus undermine religion. And Spinoza must have been fully aware of this when he wrote these chapters.

Let me return to the main thread of my argument. Spinoza, of course, was quite sensitive to the question of the proper audience for his philosophy, particularly the philosophy of the TTP. In a letter to Henry Oldenburg, probably written in 1665, Spinoza discusses the TTP, then in progress. He writes:

> I am now writing a treatise on my views regarding Scripture. The reasons that move me to do so are these:
> 1. The prejudices of theologians. For I know that these are the main obstacles which prevent men from giving their minds to philosophy. So I apply myself to exposing such prejudices and removing them from the minds of sensible people [*à mentibus prudentiorum*].
> 2. The opinion of me held by the common people [*vulgus*], who constantly accuse me of atheism. I am driven to avert this accusation, too, as far as I can.
> 3. The freedom to philosophise and to say what we think. This I want to vindicate completely, for here it is in every way suppressed by the excessive authority and egotism of preachers. (Ep 30; G IV: 166)[17]

Here the audience would seem to be "sensible people" misled by the prejudices of the theologians, and the "common people" who think that Spinoza is an atheist.

But by the time he actually published the TTP five years later in 1670, his intended audience seems to have narrowed somewhat. At the end of the preface, he addresses himself to the "philosophical reader (*philosophe lector*)." He adds that "it is not my purpose to commend this treatise to others [those who are not philosophers], for there is no hope that it can please them in any way" (TTP, Pref. § 33; G III:14). Indeed, he wants to exclude the non-philosophical reader altogether:

> I do not ask the common people to read these things, nor anyone else who is tormented by the same affects as the people. Indeed, I would prefer them to neglect this book entirely, rather than make trouble by interpreting it perversely, as is their custom with everything. They will do themselves no good, but will harm others who would philosophize more freely if they were not prevented by this one thought: that reason must be the handmaid of theology. For the latter, I trust that this work will be extremely useful. (TTP, Pref. § 34; G III: 14)

Spinoza well knew the dangers of his thought falling into the wrong hands.

[17] The translation is taken from Spinoza 1995: 185–86.

Given these considerations, it would seem to follow by Spinoza's own standards of free expression that he should refrain from publishing his own philosophy: whether intended or not, the general publication of his philosophy will very likely lead to the instability of society in a world in which most people are only partially rational at best.[18] Had he been a magistrate charged with regulating publication, and armed with Spinoza's own constraints on the freedom of expression, he would have been obligated to oppose its publication. In this way Spinoza was wrong, by his own standards, to publish his philosophy in a way that made it accessible to a general audience, even if it was only for the general audience that could read Latin.[19] The ability to read Latin means that you are educated; it doesn't mean that you are rational.

With this, in a way, the question originally posed has been answered: the case can be made that on his own account of the freedom of expression, Spinoza probably shouldn't have published his own philosophy. But this is not to say that he should have suppressed it altogether. Spinoza clearly thinks that he has discovered something that will benefit society. Remember, again, the full title of the TTP:

> THEOLOGICAL-POLITICAL TREATISE: Containing several discussions In which it is shown that the Freedom of Philosophizing not only can be granted without harm to Piety and the Peace of the Republic, but also cannot be abolished unless Piety and the Peace of the Republic are also destroyed.

Given the benefits that his discovery can have for society, it would be his obligation to share it with the appropriate people. As he writes in the *Ethics*:

> Insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, they are most useful to man . . .; hence . . ., according to the guidance of reason, we necessarily strive to bring it about that men live according to the guidance of reason. (E 4p37d)

But who are the appropriate people in question here? One obvious audience would be those where *are* capable of understanding it to the end, those with sufficient rationality to be able to appreciate the conclusions to which Spinoza ultimately comes at the end of the TTP and the *Ethics*. While it may be too dangerous for society to publish his writings and allow them to

[18] And one might argue that this is exactly what happened as a result of the publication of Spinoza's thought! See Israel 2001 for an extended account of the profound effect that Spinoza and Spinozism had on European culture and society.

[19] In a way, of course, he didn't: the philosophy of the *Ethics* wasn't published until after his death. However, key doctrines from the *Ethics* already appear in the TTP. And he quite clearly intended for his *Ethics* to be published after his death. So it is fair to say that he did, in a sense, publish his philosophy.

fall into the wrong hands, such people can be educated one by one, in small discussion groups in exactly the way that Spinoza discussed his philosophy with small groups of carefully chosen friends. As the number of those brought to greater and greater rationality increases, little by little, society will gain the benefits that his philosophy promises.

But there is another audience perhaps more important still for Spinoza's thought. Let me recall a passage from chapter 20 already quoted above. There, when discussing the proper and improper use of freedom of expression, Spinoza writes:

> For example, if someone shows that some law is contrary to sound reason, and therefore thinks it ought to be repealed, and if at the same time he submits his opinion to the judgment of the supreme power (who possesses the sole power of making and repealing laws), and in the meantime does nothing contrary to what that law prescribes, he of course deserves well of the state, as one of its best citizens. On the other hand, if he does this to accuse the magistrates of unfairness and make them hateful to the people, or if he wants seditiously to disregard that law, against the will of the magistrate, he is just a troublemaker and a rebel. (TTP 20.15; G III: 241)

If we can assume that Spinoza would want to identify himself with the virtuous person, who uses his freedom of expression wisely, then Spinoza would seem obligated to submit his philosophy "to the judgment of the supreme power." Who is this supreme power? I don't think that it can be identified simply with the sovereign. The sovereign can be either one person, or a group of persons, either a group of aristocrats or in a democracy, Spinoza's preferred form of government, the entire multitude. One can imagine the virtuous citizen addressing such concerns to a king, or even an aristocratic assembly, but it doesn't seem reasonable to imagine broadcasting such complaints to the entire multitude. The "supreme power" in this context must mean the person (or small group of people) to whom the sovereign powers have delegated the authority for practical governance. Such a supreme power might learn from Spinoza, for example, that he is to allow freedom of religion and freedom of expression, within appropriate bounds. He might come to believe after hearing Spinoza's arguments that the current laws are unwise, and be induced to replace them with better laws.

But even here, one should be cautious. The supreme power, himself, may be someone of imperfect rationality. In this way, studying Spinoza's philosophy may well undermine his own faith, and thus undermine his ability to function in society. (Should the supreme power be a group of people, the situation is even worse: for then the authority for practical governance would be held by a *group* of people who had lost their faith.) In

this way, perhaps one might say that the ideal private audience for Spinoza's thought would be both fully rational, and in a position in which he is entitled to make the kinds of laws that Spinoza is advocating in the TTP. Or, to put it another way, if you take Spinoza's philosophy seriously, it should be whispered into the ear of the Philosopher King.[20]

[20] I am deeply indebted to Ed Curley for having sparked my interest in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* through his essays and discussion. But my debt to him is deeper still. From the time we first met in Chicago many years ago, he has been important to my education as a historian of philosophy and my guide to all things Spinoza. Without him it is likely that I would have become just another analytic epistemologist. In addition, I would like to thank Charlie Huenemann, Jonathan Israel, Ursula Goldenbaum, Yitzhak Melamed, Steven Smith, Rahel Villinger, and especially Mogens Laerke for their very generous comments on an earlier and even more imperfect draft of this paper. I hold them collectively responsible for any mistakes that remain. I would also like to give my special thanks to my undergraduate Spinoza seminar in Philosophy and Judaic Studies at Princeton in Fall 2006. I hope that they will see in this paper the echo of our lively discussions that made Wednesday afternoons such a pleasure.

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