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Naturalism and Intellectualism in Plato and Spinoza*

I. Naturalist Psychology and Intellectualist Theory of Virtue in Plato and Spinoza: Socratic Paradox and Paradoxical Unity of Freedom and Necessity

Michael LeBuffe leads the discussion today of the „thoroughgoing naturalism" of Spinoza's psychology.[1] Spinoza's naturalism comprises a theory of causation and a theory of explanation: things are explained by their causes, and causation itself, ultimately, by the cause of causes, which acts according to a universal and homogenous lawfulness permeating the whole of reality.[2] From an ontological perspective, explanation itself is grounded in the cause of causes; the ability to explain depends on the ability to know the true causes of things and to describe how all things follow from the ultimate ground of their essence and existence. In Spinoza, the cause of causes, origin and ground of all reality is the *substantia infinita, causa sui, natura naturans*, which exists and acts from the necessity of its nature alone and compelled by no other thing, and is conceived through itself alone. From the *substantia infinita* all things follow with necessity, since everything besides substance, being *in another* and *from another*, depends for its being and conception on substance. Spinoza's naturalism is thus of a specific kind. Grounded in a nature which differs with respect to its own cause or source utterly from the nature of individual things, this naturalism determines things to be and act with absolute necessity. Yet the absolutely infinite being, as that which exists and acts *ex sola suae naturae necessitate*, is the only thing that can be called „free" in a proper sense; whereas everything else, insofar as it is caused by another, is and exists in another, is

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[1] Cf. Michael LeBuffe, „Spinoza's Psychological Theory", in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2010 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/spinoza-psychological/; and *From Bondage to Freedom. Spinoza on Human Excellence* (Oxford Univ. Press 2010).

[2] Spinoza's naturalism is both „ontological" and „methodological". Its ontological aspect concerns the causal relationships by which all things come to be, exist and behave. Its methodological aspect regards the manner by which things and their behaviour are to be understood and explained. Cf. D. Papineau, „Naturalism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2009 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/naturalism/>. Cf. LeBuffe's differentiation of Spinoza's „metaphysical naturalism" (according to which all things are „in nature" and so „similar in some basic respects") from his „methodological naturalism" – according to which „all things, including all human beings, may be understood by means of the same kinds of explanation" (*From Bondage to Freedom* 40–41). The *Ethics* is cited by an Arabic number referring to the part, a letter standing for an abbreviation as follows: D=definition, A=axiom, P=proposition, S=scholium, C=corollary, App.=appendix, Pref.=preface.

conceived through another – is *determined* or *compelled* by another to exist and act in a particular way – and not by its nature alone.

Spinoza's descriptive and explanatory naturalism is nonetheless tied to a theory of human virtue and happiness which must in important repects be termed *intellectualist*. [3] To lead us by the hand to a knowledge of the human intellect and its ultimate happiness is the declared aim of part 2 of Spinoza's exposition which he devotes to a specific realm of the things which follow with necessity from the *substantia infinita*, namely, the explication of the origin and nature of the human mind (2Pref.). For as he makes clear in parts 4 and 5, it is the satisfaction of the mind which leads to human freedom and happiness. The satisfaction of the mind, however, lies in the attainment of virtue: the power of the intellect with regard to the affects, a power comprised by adequate knowledge of things, in particular of the affects and their true causes, to which without such knowledge we live in bondage.

Spinoza's *Ethics* is thus from the outset defined by a fundamental paradox: the paradox of the unity and opposition of freedom and necessity, both of the absolute freedom and necessity of the *substantia infinita* and of the specific type of freedom and necessity which may be attributed to human beings, their behaviour and actions. This paradox is rooted in a complex understanding of causality: the infinite, necessary and free, immediate or proximate, immanent and efficient causality of the *substantia infinita* with respect to the entirety of being in all its manifestations: attributes, infinite modes, particular things; and the determined, but in some respect potentially free causality of individual human beings.

The same paradox is at the root of Plato's treatment of virtue, as formulated in the famed *Socratic paradoxes*, and their account of the relationship of knowledge and *arete*, nature and virtue. A comparison of the Socratic paradoxes can thus help us in sorting out the corresponding relationships in Spinoza's *Ethics* and in understanding how Spinoza's naturalism is related to his intellectualism with regard to his theory of freedom and happiness. Consideration of certain aspects of Aristotle's formulation of these relationships as contained in psychology, especially his characterisation of the relationship of motivation and knowledge with respect to virtue, may also help to shed light on Spinoza's apparent aim of synthesizing a naturalist theory of motivation with an intellectualist theory of virtue. The relationship of necessity and free will proves to be intimately connected to this aim. The foundation for the conjunction of naturalism and intellectualism centers meanwhile on certain hitherto unresolved and perhaps insoluble philosophical problems, above all the mind-body problem,

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[3] Cf. *From Bondage to Freedom,* 19f.

i.e. the relationship and interaction of mind and body, the problem of mental and physical causation, and the processing of „external“ and internal stimuli, which constitutes the basis of perception, imagination, memory, belief, knowledge, intention, choice, and action.[4]

The thread of Ariadne leads ultimately to a consideration of the way in which human freedom participates in the paradoxical unity of necessity and freedom in the *substantia infinita*, a theoretical constellation whose model must ultimately be sought in Plotinus' neo-Platonic interpretation of Plato's Idea of the Good as the One beyond being and thought, as exemplified in particular in *Ennead* VI, 8: *On Free Will and the Will of the One*. The striking similarities between Plotinus' account of the paradoxical unity of freedom and necessity with respect to the One and Spinoza's account of the same relationship with respect to the *substantia infinita*, as well as their accounts of the relationship of human freedom to divine freedom suggest an indirect or even direct influence of this treatise on Spinoza. Detailed consideration of Spinoza's reception of Platonic and Neoplatonic thought, however, exceeds the bounds of this essay and must be reserved for another occasion.[5]

II. Human Beings „Part of Nature“

According to Spinoza's naturalistic psychology, human beings, like other particular things („finite modes“), are part of nature and follow the order of nature according to which all things ensue, proceeding from the one *infinite substance* with the same necessity with which „from the nature of the triangle“ follows „that its three angles are equal two right angles“ (cf. *Ethics* 1D1,2,6; 1P17S). There is exactly one self-caused substance, which is in itself and is conceived through itself (1D1, D3), whereas everything else that is, is *in* substance, i.e. is caused by substance and conceived through substance (1A1, A2, D2, D5). The *substantia infinita* is the only thing that can properly be called free (1D7, 1P17 and C2), but it is a

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[4] That naturalism alone cannot account for the causality of actions, perception, memory or empirical knowledge but requres an integrated understanding of „the relations between mind and body, the mental and the physical [...] psychology and the natural sciences“ is made clear by: D. Davidson, „Spinoza's Causal Theory of the Affects,” in *Desire and Affect: Spinoza as Psychologist*, Y. Yovel, ed., (New York: Little Room Press, 1999) 95–111. Davidson analyzes the problem of „acting for a reason“, i.e. „the causal relations of thoughts – of thoughts as the causes of actions, as the effects of perception, and as the causes of other thoughts,“ (97) in particular „the extent to which the causes for certain events are in us and the extent to which they are not“(95). He examines in this respect Spinoza's basic assumptions „of a closed deterministic system of physical nature, of a world of thought that does not interact with the physical, and of a very close connection between the mental and the physcial world“ and Spinoza's answer to the question what the connection between the mental and the physical might be: i.e. „that the mental and the physical are just two ways of viewing and understanding one and the same world“ (99).

[5] Spinoza's reception of Platonic and Neoplatonic thought is the topic of a separate paper under preparation by the author.

freedom which runs counter to our ordinary understanding of free will. For in Spinoza's estimate, only that thing is properly „called free which exists from the necessity of its nature alone, and is determined to act by itself alone“ (ID7). Only infinite substance qualifies in this absolute sense as a free cause, being „cause of itself“, „in itself“, requiring no other thing for its conception or existence and at the same time existing *necessarily*, by virtue of its own nature or concept. Every other thing – which is everything there is except substance [6] – „is called necessary, or rather compelled [...] determined by another to exist and to produce an effect in a certain and determinate manner.“(ID7) From these definitions it follows, in Propositions 28 and 29 of Part 1, that 1) all things are determined „to exist and produce an effect“ by the *substantia infinita* or God's „infinite nature“ (if not „immediately“, as in the case of those things „which follow necessarily from his absolute nature“, then „by the mediation of these first things“ of which God is the „proximate cause“)[7]; so that 2) „In nature there is nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way.“ It follows that in the human mind „there is no absolute, or free, will,“ but rather „the Mind is determined to will this or that by a cause which is also determined by another, and this again by another, and so to infinity“ (2P48). We only think ourselves free because we are conscious of our actions and ignorant of the causes by which we are determined. In other words, the ordinary idea of freedom consists in mere ignorance of the causes of our actions. Thus, when people say that human actions depend on the will, „these are only words for which they have no idea“, since „all are ignorant of what the will is, and how it moves the body“ (2P35S).[8]

Whatever we may think of Spinoza's definition of freedom, this statement must give us pause. If human beings only think they act freely, what sort of ethics is it that Spinoza is proposing? For an ethics to have more than descriptive content, for it to have a meaning that is also normative or prescriptive, human beings must be able to be held accountable for their

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[6] Everything which exists, exists either in itself or in another (1A1). Reality is thus divided into two parts, the *substantia infinita*, „which is in itself and is conceived through itself“, and the „modes“, which are „in another“, through which they are also conceived (1D3,5; cf. 1P15).

[7] If intellect may be attributed to God, albeit in a sense which would differ *toto coelo* from the sense in which the word is used of our intellect, namely not as „by nature either posterior to [...] or simultaneous with the things understood“, but as „prior in causality to all things“, then „God's intellect“ may be said to be „the only cause of things [...] both of their essence and of their existence“. (1P17S).

[8] Everything that exists follows with necessity from God's nature and could have been produced in no other way. Things which we call contingent appear to us to be so „only because of a defect of our knowledge.“ (1P33S1). In fact, the mind „is determined to will this or that“ by a concatenation of causes which stretches to infinity. Our mind thus cannot be properly understood as „a free cause of its own actions“ (2P48). It is only imagination which causes us to regard things as contingent, whereas „[I]t is in the nature of reason to regard things as necessary, and not contingent“. Reason, *by nature*, views things *sub specie aeternitatis*, as they follow from the „very necessity of God's eternal nature“ (2P48 and C2).

actions, i.e. their actions must in some respect qualify as products of intention and freedom. At stake then is the very nature and possibility of human morality.

Spinoza, however, criticizes his predecessors for treating „the Affects, and men's way of living“ not as „natural things, which follow the common laws of nature“ but as things „outside nature“, and for treating human beings and their actions „as a dominion within a dominion“, as if they formed an exception to natural laws, and disturbed rather than followed the order of nature (3Pref.). Insofar as nothing, not even the *mens humana*, is exempt from the universal causality of nature, our emotions, feelings, and thought processes, including our moral reflections, reasoning and concepts, must also be determined by the order of nature and by the conditions of our own nature. Our thinking, willing and acting must accordingly be treated as natural processes.[9] Morality, by this account, is grounded in psychology, psychology in the natural processes of motivation which arise from our physical nature and the external influences which act upon it. These are governed by the same universal laws which govern all natural processes, both in individual things and the universe as a whole, and can and should be explained according to the same principles and method.

The fundamental homogeneity of natural processes and the universality of the laws which govern them form the basis for Spinoza's doctrine of the affects, and of human bondage to the affects. But what of the concept of virtue? Spinoza's aim in the *Ethics* is not only to provide a description of how things *are* and *behave* according to their nature, i.e. a descriptive account of the procession of the universe, individual things, mental and physical processes, and the forces which govern them, from their ultimate source, the *substantia infinita*. Had that been the case, his *Ethics* might have finished with part 3 and a certain portion of part 4, a description of the processes by which the affects and our bondage to the affects arise from the natural conditions of our existence. Spinoza's express aim, however, is to provide us with an *ethics* in the proper sense: a guidebook on the road leading from bondage to the affects to

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[9] Spinoza affirms that „nature is always the same, and its virtue and power of acting are everywhere one and the same“ just as „the laws and rules of nature, according to which all things happen [...] are always and everywhere the same.“ For this reason „the way of understanding the nature of anything, of whatever kind, must also be the same, viz. through the universal laws and rules of nature“. The affects, too, or emotions, „follow from the same necessity and force of nature as the other singular things.“ Spinoza, therefore, determines to treat of the affects, and „what the Mind can do to moderate them“, „in the Geometric style“, that is, „by the same Method“ by which in the first two parts of the *Ethics* he treats of God and the Mind, considering „human actions and appetites just as if it were a Question of lines, planes, and bodies.“ (3Pref.) Spinoza's „geometric“ study of nature differs from, although it is not opposed to, the empirical and experimental method of the natural sciences. Its purpose is to discover the true causes of things, based on an account of their essences and properties, as they follow with necessity from the *substantia infinita.* Its standard of truth is thus intrinsic and mathematical, not extrinsic and experimental (Cf. I App., 2D4).

freedom and ultimately to human happiness or *blessedness*.[10] This requires more than an objective description of phenomena or a logical derivation of the necessary succession of events as they unfold from preexisting conditions according to universal natural laws. In order for the *Ethics* to subsist as a unified whole, an integrated theory of human beings, their nature and the ultimate aim of their existence, Spinoza's understanding of virtue and the goal of human happiness must somehow evolve from his psychology and harmonize with it. The derivation of a theory of value from a naturalistic psychology is complicated, however, by a number of factors.

III. Plato, Aristotle and Spinoza on Motivation, Virtue and Happiness

In a naturalistic view of ethics, our physical being and how we interact with the conditions of our existence and of our survival determine what we perceive to be valuable and how we come to understand what we should be. For Spinoza, this is a consequence of what is termed *conatus* (i.e. „*in suo esse persevere*“, 3P6, cf. 3P7): the striving to persevere in one's being, which comprises *the* fundamental characteristic of all finite things, by which their essence is determined.[11] In human beings, *conatus* is accompanied by *consciousness* of that striving, and is called *appetite* (cf. 1App.). Striving to persevere in one's being is conceived of as a universal law of nature, encompassing all things and governing their behaviour, from the purely physical to that unity of mental and physical processes by which human individuals are comprised, but expresses itself in human beings in a particular way, due to our capacity for consciousness of and self-conscious reflection on the causes of our affects and appetites. We perceive, namely, and deem to be *good* that which arouses our appetite and which we are stimulated to pursue as something necessary or „good for“ our survival or perseverence in being, both as individuals and as a species.

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[10] Thus, after laying the ontological groundwork for the treatment of his topic in Part I, *De Deo*, with his explanation of God's nature and properties and the dependence of all things on him, Spinoza proceeds in Part II to the explanation of „those things which must necessarily follow from the essence of God“ or the *substantia infinita*, not, however, all things, since from the *substantia infinita* „infinitely many things must follow [...] in infinitely many ways“, but rather „only those that can lead us [...] to the knowledge of the human Mind and its highest blessedness.“ (2Pref.)

[11] *Ethics* 3P6: „Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being [*in suo esse perseverare conatur*].“ Cf.. ibid. P7.: „The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing.“ It is important to note the universality of this striving, which is best understood – in order to avoid too narrow an interpretation of Spinoza's *conatus*, such as its identification with psychological egoism – as a physical force, analogous to Newton's law of inertia. Even the affections of the body strive to persevere in being, each affection receiving „from its cause the force to persevere in its being, which [...] can neither be restrained nor removed, except by a corporal cause [...] which affects the Body with an affection opposite to it [...] and stronger than it.“ (4P7)

In this respect, Spinoza's point of view shows similarities to Aristotle's view of the natural motivation of human action and morality, the empirical basis of his eudaimonistic ethics.[12] The question of human nature, the nature of virtue and of how human beings become virtuous occupies a central place in both Plato and Aristotle, and it is ultimately this tradition, as transmitted and developed over the centuries through a long filiation of thinkers and sources, from which Spinoza's naturalism may be seen to emerge. At the sensual level, according to Aristotle, we perceive those things to be good which arouse our appetite as capable of ensuring our survival or which appear to be „good for us" for the purpose of ensuring our happiness, and which may serve as a means to that end.[13] The natural mechanism by which we are driven to pursue what is good and avoid what is harmful to us is the experience of pleasure and pain. Pleasure and pain „extend throughout the whole of life", and govern not only human behaviour as a universal law. At the same time, this mechanism is of great importance in education and instruction for the attainment of virtue and happiness.[14]

In Spinoza, the opposition of pleasure and pain is reflected in the opposition between the affects of Joy and Sadness, which are themselves an expression of the success or limitation of the fundamental striving to persevere in one's being, and by the associated *appetite* for things which increase our ability to act, and repulsion from things which diminish the same ability (cf. 3P9S, 3P11S; cf. 4P19). Joy, which is the „*passion by which the Mind passes to a greater perfection"* (perfection being a measure of our ability to act or be the cause of our actions), when „*related to the Mind and Body at once*" is called *Pleasure* or *Cheerfulness*. Sadness*,* the passion by which the Mind „*passes to a lesser perfection*", when related to Mind and Body at the same time is called „Pain" or „Melancholy" (3P11S). Other than these three: *desire*, „defined as *appetite together with consciousness of the appetite*", *joy* and *sadness*, Spinoza admits no other primary affects (3P11S, cf. 3P9S). What we call knowledge of good and evil, moreover, is nothing more than „an affect of Joy or Sadness, insofar as we are conscious of it". Thus we necessarily want what we judge to be good, and conversely are repelled by what we judge to be evil, but this appetite follows from the laws of our own nature, and „is nothing but the very essence, *or nature* of man" (4P19).

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[12] *EN* 1095 a 4 cf. 5 Every art and investigation, every action and endeavour, aims at some good . With regard to the question of what is conceived as the good life, people agree, however, that this is the same as „doing well" or „being happy".

[13] Cf. Aristotle, *De anima* 434a 34–434 b1 cf. 434 b12–19; 25. The senses enable animals „to avoid some things and seize others" harmful or useful to them as a means of survival. The senses are thus primarily „a means to well-being".

[14] *EN* 1172a 20–26.

With regard to a purely naturalist theory of human excellence, the highest good for human beings and their true happiness ought to unfold with necessity from the function to which human beings are determined by their nature (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ ἀνθρώπου). In Aristotle's view, however, the function specific to human beings is something more than the vital life functions shared with plants, and the sentient life shared with animals: it is the practical life of the rational part of the human soul, to wit, it is „the active exercise of the soul's faculties in conformity with rational principle". To perform this function well is to achieve the virtue or excellence proper to human beings.[15]

Spinoza shares Aristotle's distinction of human beings and their specific aim or virtue from other beings and the whole of nature of which they form a part. Spinoza's naturalism, on the other hand, appears to extend into the realm of intellect, making even moral concepts relative to the natural functioning of our intellect. This is evidenced, for example, by Spinoza's declaration that concepts like perfection and imperfection, good and evil are nothing more than „modes of thinking", which designate „nothing positive in things, considered in themselves", but only „notions we are accustomed to feign because we (by nature) compare individuals of the same species or genus to one another." He deems it „useful", nonetheless, to „retain these words" with the meaning he indicates, since we „desire to form a model of human nature which we may look to". He designates accordingly as „good" „what we know certainly is a means by which we may approach nearer and nearer to the model of human nature we have set before ourselves", and as „evil" „what we certainly know prevents us from becoming like that model". People are said to become „more perfect or imperfect, insofar as they approach more or less near to this model." (4Pref.) This seems to imply that human beings are able consciously and intentionally, in other words, to *freely* apply themselves to becoming as like as possible to a particular model of human nature, and that their ability to do so depends on knowledge. „Passing from a lesser to a greater perfection" or vice versa is furthermore the basis upon which human happiness – or lack of it – rests. By „perfection", Spinoza understands the „reality" of a thing, irrespective of its duration, „the essence of each thing insofar as it exists and produces an effect" (4Pref. Cf. 2D6) As regards their reality or essence, however, regardless of whether they are more or less perfect, things „are all equal in value" – wherewith the moral relevance of „passing from a lesser to a greater perfection" appears again to have been relativized.

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[15] *EN* 1098a.

At some level, then, Spinoza's theory of the good for human beings derives from a naturalistic theory of motivation, his „prescriptive" ethics from his descriptive account of human psychology. It remains unclear, however, how *a theory of value*, by definition tied to the possibility of freedom and choice, can arise from a *theory of motivation* based on the natural necessity of a closed, deterministic system of causes, in other words: how human beings can affirm their essence as an expression of the universal striving to persevere which determines everything that forms a part of the natural order and at the same time realize the specific excellence proper to their nature? The meaning of the term *value*, if it is to convey that which is specifically human, cannot be limited to what is capable of ensuring our physical survival only. There must be some further sense in which *moral goodness*, *moral excellence* and *moral perfection* (either as inherent or as „supereminent" qualities) are possible.[16] Human virtue or excellence, insofar as humans like all other species undeniably form „a part of nature", must in Spinoza's account be seen as a specific variation of the natural disposition of all things to persevere in being. The question remains whether human virtue, like the natural striving to persevere we share with all other beings, manifests itself inevitably in accordance with universal laws of nature, or whether *human virtue* requires for its expression something superadditive to the unfolding of a natural process: the application of human knowledge, judgment, freedom and choice according to intentionally espoused values and principles of behaviour.

IV. From a Theory of Motivation to a Theory of Value: Knowledge and Virtue in Plato and Spinoza

The relationship and opposition of these two aspects of virtue: its emergence from a naturalist theory of motivation and its relationship to judgment, intentionality and freedom – is at the root of Plato's investigation of virtue and the question whether virtue – or even happiness, to use Aristotle's formula: „the active exercise of our faculties in conformity with virtue"[17] – can

[16] Cf. Le Buffe's discussion of possible explanations for the „appearance of value in the *Ethics*" and how „morality might associate itself with human motivation" as being instrumental to survival, in that values become associated with the ends of our desires and the means of achieving them, and his own conviction that „the value of valuable things consists in something more than just their being associated in this way," that value „is a thing to be sought for its own sake." *From Bondage to Freedom*, 163; 162f.

[17] *EN* 1100a, 1102a1. That it is the rational part of the soul to which our judgment of the goodness or badness of a person refers, Aristotle finds evidenced by the common belief that when asleep, i.e. reduced to a state in which only the vital functions are active, a good man and a bad man cannot be distinguished (ibid. 1102b 12f.).

be learned or taught.[18] Turning to Plato's *Meno*, and the central question of the dialogue, whether virtue can be taught, one can see why this question depends on the attainment of a proper definition of *what virtue is.* Unable to answer Socrates' question regarding just what the definition or *eidos* of virtue is, Meno brings into focus instead the distribution of virtue according to the variety of functions which human beings perform according to their „particular activity and time of life", and their particular gender or societal role: man or woman, slave or free, old person or child (72a). In response Socrates' insistence on the task of finding what is common to the variety of human virtues, they arrive the preliminary conclusion that human beings, while performing a variety of functions, are good in the same way – by temperance, justice, courage, wisdom – and in striving to obtain what appears to them to be good (73b–c; 74b). What is common to virtue and what is the specific identifying quality of human virtue nonetheless escapes them. When Meno proposes that virtue is desire for beautiful things and being able to attain them, Socrates quickly equates this with the proposition that virtue is the desire for good.[19] This desire, however, is shared by all, and therefore cannot serve as the differentiating mark of excellence in the virtuous man (78b).

The same point is made by Spinoza in Part IV of the *Ethics* when he equates virtue with „human power" as „defined by man's essence alone", that is, „solely by the striving to persevere in his being."[20] Spinoza's words echo Meno's and Socrates' attempt to grasp the specific difference that makes the virtuous man virtuous when he adds to the striving common to all human beings the *ability* to really preserve one's being: „the more one strives, *and is able*, to preserve his being, the more he is endowed with virtue."[21] Nonetheless, the specific thing that makes virtue a moral value is still lacking. Ability to persist as such is of no moral consequence. It is merely the *sine qua non* of both existence and moral behaviour, without which one can neither be nor act morally. For „No one can desire to be blessed, to act well

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[18] Cf. *EN* 1098b*,* 1099b. In answer to the question whether happiness should be regarded as „the result of one's own exertions", „won by virtue and by some kind of study or practice", or rather as a „gift of fortune" Aristotle opts for the former „inasmuch as in the world of nature things have a natural tendency to be ordered in the best possible way, and the same is true of art, and of causation of any kind, and especially the highest." To leave „the greatest and noblest of all things", happiness, to chance „would be contrary to the fitness of things."

[19] *Men.* 77b. The expression *ta kala* refers to the outer form which makes the good man admirable, and might be translated with „fine" or behaviour suitable to a gentleman. The term *kalakagathos*, used to designate the conventional ideal of the „perfect" or noble gentleman (cf. *EN* 1124a 4; cf. Platon *Ap.* 21d), shows how closely related in the Greek mind the beautiful and the good, the outward form and the inward character are.

[20] 4D8: „By virtue and power I understand the same thing, i.e (by IIIP7) virtue, insofar as it is related to man, is the very essence *or* nature, or man, insofar as he has the power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the law of his nature alone."

[21] 4P20 (my emphasis); cf. *Men.*78c f.

and to live well, unless at the same time he desires to be, to act, and to live, i.e. to actually exist.“ (4P21)

Virtue in Plato and in Aristotle is excellence of soul, and not of the body, although in Plato's scheme of education cultivation of the soul requires also cultivation of the body and presupposes the body. Plato's preoccupation with the system of education in his model of the state in the *Republic* is in fact a preoccupation with the question of how one may be educated to virtue, i.e. how justice may be realized in the individual and in the polity. In Plato, education to virtue requires appropriate nurture of the emotive, volitional and intellectual parts of the soul.[22] In the opening lines of the *Meno*, three possible ways by which virtue may be attained are differentiated: 1) by instruction 2) by practice 3) by nature (70 a). In the *Republic*, justice, the epitome of virtues in which all virtues are united, is achieved by each part of the soul fulfilling its proper function and all cooperating together,[23] yet this cannot be achieved without proper education. The highest object of instruction (*megisthon mathema*), by which the ruler acquires the virtue of the philosopher-king and the ability to realize justice in his own soul and in the state is *knowledge of the good* culminating in the vision of the Idea of the Good. This is illustrated in the three central Analogies of the *Republic*, devoted respectively to the Idea of the Good (Analogy of the Sun), the stages or capacities of human knowledge by which to ascend to knowledge of the Good (Analogy of the Line), and (in the Analogy of the Cave) to *paideia* or education of the philosopher who ascends through the stages of knowledge to the vision of wisdom, virtue and truth and descends again in order to assist those who have yet to discover the true order of things, free them from their preoccupation with the weak reflection of reality which is the phenomenal world, and lead them upwards on the path to true knowledge.[24]

Knowledge, in this case, appears to be what differentiates the mere capacity for good from its realisation. Knowledge is what also results in the situation typical of our human lot, in which one „sees the better for himself“ and yet „is forced to follow the worse“. This state, in which a human being is not under his own control, but that of „fortune“, Spinoza calls *bondage*, the lack of power to moderate and restrain the affects (4Pref., 4P17).[25] The basis of human freedom, on the other hand, is knowledge, or, to be more precise, „adequate“

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[22] The *epithumetikon, thumoeides* and the *logistikon*, cultivated respectively by the appropriate form of *mousike, gumnastike* and the various arts and sciences *tehnai* and *epistemai*, along with proficiency in abstract reasoning cf. *Rep.* 521e ff., cf. 525b ff.
[23] Cf. *Rep.* 554 e.
[24] *Rep.* 504a ff.
[25] The reason it is possible to „see the better“ and „follow the worse“ must lie in nature itself, which exists and acts „for the sake of no end“ but according to necessity (4Pref.).

knowledge of affects and their causes, which is a specific case of knowledge in general as based on knowledge of true causes and their effects: „For the idea of each thing caused depends on the knowledge of the cause of which it is the effect." (2P7) „To attain freedom, on Spinoza's account, requires knowledge"[26], self-knowledge, knowledge of things, knowledge of God (cf. 4App.IV). The human mind attains knowledge and hence freedom through the formation of „adequate ideas". Lack of knowledge, or „inadequate ideas", on the other hand, is the cause of human bondage: „The power of the mind is defined solely by knowledge; its lack of power is measured, however, solely from the privation of knowledge, or passion, that is solely by that through which ideas are called inadequate" (5p20).

Spinoza's account of virtue, then, is riddled with paradox: the essence of human nature is striving to preserve one's being, and appears to follow with *necessity*, being „nothing but acting from the laws of one's own nature" (4D8, P18S). „Striving to preserve oneself" is insofar „the first and only foundation of virtue" (4P22 & C). On the other hand, a person can be said to act from virtue only insofar as he *understands*; and understanding is said to be equivalent to his doing „something which is perceived through his essence alone" (4P23). Both „acting from the laws of one's own nature" and doing something which is perceived through one's essence alone correspond moreover to the definition of *freedom* given in Part I (1Def6). To act from virtue is then nothing more nor less than „*acting, living, and preserving our being* [...] *by the guidance of reason, from the foundation of seeking one's own advantage*." (4P24) Living by the guidance of reason is nothing more nor less than striving for understanding (4P26). What's more: „striving for understanding" is equated with „striving to preserve oneself" and is, like this, called „the first and only foundation of virtue" (P26) In other words: while our essence is at base a necessary striving to persevere, *virtue* or the perfection of our being is knowledge or *understanding*.

V. From Striving to Persevere in Being to Striving for Understanding: Human Nature as the Basis for Human Excellence

The essence of human nature is the same striving to persevere in existence which is shared by all particular things; yet in human beings our striving to persevere in being is expressed, and perhaps most fully expressed, in our striving for understanding. The striving which defines our humanity must then be seen against the backdrop of nature and necessity, something which seems opposed to our usual understanding of human excellence and its attainment.

[26] *From Bondage to Freedom,* 20.

There is according to Spinoza no final cause or aim at which God or Nature aim: „Nature does nothing on account of an end“, and „That eternal and infinite being we call God, *or* Nature, acts from the same necessity from which he exists.“ Our own striving appears to aim at something and to express an aim or intention. The apparent purposiveness of human striving, however, is determined by appetite for the things which appear to ensure our survival: „What is called a final cause is nothing but a human appetite, insofar as it is considered as a principle *or* primary cause of some thing.“ (4Pref.)

Good and evil, perfection and imperfection are in this respect nothing but modes of thinking which we posit because of our habit of forming universal ideas of things and comparing „individuals of the same species or genus to one another.“ We nevertheless form „an idea of man, as a model of human nature“ and seek the means to approach that model. Good and evil, perfection and imperfection are defined with respect to those means and the actual realisation of our aim of becoming like our model (4Pref., D1, D2).

The realisation of our „perfection“, i.e. our greatest good or virtue, then, insofar as it depends on our obtaining *adequate knowledge* or ideas of the true (or „adequate“) causes of things and in particular of the affects, is based on the differentiation of truth and falsity (4P1, cf. 2D3, D4, 3D1). On the basis of adequate knowledge, i.e. insight into causes of things whose effect may be clearly and distinctly perceived through those causes (which causes thus conceived are also said to be „adequate“ 3D1) we achieve the ability to *act*, i.e. to *be* the adequate cause of something which „happens, in us or outside us“ (3D2). If „we can be the adequate cause“ of any of the affects –i.e. „affections of the body by which the Body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained“ together with the „ideas of these affections“ – the affect ceases to be a passion and becomes an action (3D3) This, in short, is the path by which in Spinoza bondage to the affects is overcome and true freedom and happiness attained. In speaking of ourselves as „adequate cause“ of our actions, however, we are again describing something in us or outside of us which „follows from our nature“, that is, with a certain type of necessity, and „which can be clearly and distinctly understood“ through our nature alone (3D2.)

Thus we come full circle, and return to the paradoxical unity of freedom and necessity which is the fundamental characteristic of the *Ethics*: to achieve freedom we must act in accordance with our nature and the laws of our nature. To act in accordance with the laws of our nature requires that we act according to the guidance of reason and understanding, which is true freedom.

VI. Motivational States and Value Judgments: The Good One Desires for Oneself

At the root of this conundrum at the heart of Spinoza's ethical theory lies the same constellation of relationships which formed the basis for the famed paradoxes of Socrates: no one does evil voluntarily or knowingly, or no one can desire evil – and: knowledge is virtue.[27] The first relies on an affirmation of the unswerving natural desire of living beings for their own good, which they may, depending on circumstances, mistakenly or correctly identify; the second affirms the specifically human means of achieving that end.

These paradoxes have been taken together to express what is called Plato's „intellectualism", an epithet which has generally been taken to imply overemphasis of the intellect and neglect of the will – and as such to „contradict facts".[28] With respect to the original Socratic paradoxes, Santas differentiates the first, „prudential" paradox from the second, „moral" paradox. The first: no one desires what is bad or harmful (*kaka*), one can only desire what is beneficial to oneself, is, as in Spinoza, an expression of our natural striving for self-preservation and does not involve anything like moral judgment. Santas' analysis of the textual evidence leads him to differentiate in this regard between *epithumia* and *boulesis*: While Plato (like Spinoza) admits there can be „bad pleasures", i.e. that some desires (*epithumiai*) can be bad or harmful, he denies the thing desired is *conceived of* as harmful: „the object of every desire (ἐπιθυμία) is a pleasure, and the object of every wish (βούλησις) is a good". Santas concludes that, „[I]n no case can the intended object of a desire (ἐπιθυμία) be a bad thing, but the actual object can be, and often is, a bad thing; whereas in the case of wish (βούλησις), neither the intended nor the actual object of wish can ever be a bad thing."[29]

With Frege, Santas proposes that „a conviction or a belief is the ground of a feeling". But he goes on to differentiate the conception we may have of an object from what it in fact is: for while our „conception of what the object is" forms the ground of our desire, this is „not (necessarily) what the object in fact is".[30] Thus, while someone may desire something that is in fact harmful to him, he does not *know* that it is harmful to him, the „intended object" of his

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[27] Cf. Gerasimos Santas, „The Socratic Paradoxes", *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (Apr. 1964), 147–164; 147 and n., cf. 157. *Meno* 77b–78b, *Prot*. 345e; 358c, 360d3, *Gorg*. 468c5–7; 460b–d, 509ge5–7; "indirect statements of the doctrine occur in *Meno* 87, 89; *Laches* i98; *Charm*. 173."

[28] Cf. Santas, 148. Critics of Plato's intellectualism have included Aristotle, Thomas of Aquinas, W. Jaeger and Cornford (cf. Santas, 148 and n.).

[29] Santas, 152, n 15.

[30] Ibid., 153, cf. and n. 18. Cf. G. Frege „On Sense and Reference", in: *Translations from the Writings of Gottlob Frege*, ed. by P. Geach and M. Black (Oxford 1952), 66.67.

desire being something he regards as beneficial to him.[31] The proposition „no one does evil voluntarily“ expresses then „one of the most common presuppositions made in accounting for human behavior“, that people naturally choose what appears to them to be to their advantage, even when it might in fact not be. This paradox is thus not paradoxical in the sense of contradicting facts, but rather insofar as it contradicts our conviction that people sometimes actually choose to do what is evil or harmful.[32]

The second paradox, knowledge is virtue, may be interpreted to mean: „if one has knowledge one is virtuous; if one is virtuous one has knowledge.“ Like the first paradox, this one appears to contradict the „fact of moral weakness“, in other words, it „seems to deny also the fact that sometimes men have morally bad desires (that is, the fact that sometimes to do injustice or wrong is the intended object of men's desires)“ – or to speak with Spinoza: that one can see the better and follow the worse.[33] The second half of the proposition derives its validity from the first, but also from the fact, ascertained by the first paradox, that no unjust action „is ever done for its own sake and that every action [...] is done for the sake of possessing what the agent considers a good.“[34]

The meaningfulness of the second paradox depends, clearly, on our understanding of what is meant by knowledge. For the assertion: „knowledge is virtue“ to make sense, knowledge must be more than knowledge of *what* (virtue is) – otherwise it could not account for the common experience of „knowing the better and following the worse“. For Santas, this implies that knowledge which is virtue includes knowledge *that it is always better to be virtuous*, and furthermore: „that if a man knows what is virtuous (and what is not) and also knows that it is always better for one to behave virtuously, then he will always do what is virtuous and will not even desire to do otherwise.“[35] From the point of view of ordinary experience, nonetheless, this second paradox appears not to have advanced us beyond what was given by the first. For even if I know that it is always better for to behave virtuously, can I not want the lesser good for the sake of my immediate pleasure?

In Santas' view, it is false to assert that Plato did not see the gap between knowledge and action, i.e. the fact that „no matter what knowledge a man has, his desires and passions may prompt him to act against this knowledge.“ While „Plato argues that no man desires

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[31] Santas, 156.
[32] Ibid. 157. The „prudential paradox“ represents „a general fact concerning 'human nature',„ (ἐν ἀνθρώπου φύσει).Cf. Prot. 358d1–2.
[33] Ibid., 157. Cf. above 9, and *Ethics* 4P17S.
[34] Santas, 157.
[35] Ibid., 159.

things that are bad for one“, he also recognizes that a man may still commit injustice – all the while doing what he does for the sake of what he believes to be a benefit for himself. The difference between those who act justly and those who do not or who „only accidentally perform just actions“ – and the foundation for Plato's intellectualism – is knowledge.[36]

An „egoistic theory of motivation“ proves on this account to be as central to Plato's concept of virtue as it is to Spinoza's doctrine of *conatus*. Plato treats the natural desire for what is good or beneficial „as absolutely essential in any account of human behaviour.“[37] Spinoza adopts the same position when he treats the concept of good as an expression of *the striving to persevere in one's being* and of the natural tendency to seek what is conducive to that end. As such, *conatus* is a natural function in which there can be no falsehood; but that is not to say that morally relevant judgment is not possible, only that it is to be sought elsewhere – „for it is Minds, not Bodies, which are said to err, or be deceived“ (*Ethics* 2P35)

While from the point of view of a theory of motivation, *conatus* or striving for that which appears to us to be beneficial for the preservation of our being is not dependent on judgment of value, but rather our judgment of value depends on appetite for what appears to be beneficial for our perseverence in being, there is a level at which and a sense in which judgments of value „precede“ natural motivation. For „to be ignorant and to err are different“, and while we human beings „are born ignorant of the true causes of things“ (1App) , we need not remain ignorant, but may gain adequate knowledge and understanding. The requirement of adequate knowledge as condition for the attainment of human freedom and blessedness makes judgment a condition of morality. However, it is not a question of value judgments in the usual sense (of what is good or evil, just or unjust, courageous or cowardly), but rather judgments of what are the true causes of things, which comprise the basis of freedom and happiness in Spinoza.

Plato does not deny „moral weakness“ any more than Spinoza would deny that human beings live in bondage to their affects. This impression arises only when one loses sight of the connection – or rather disconnection – between the inalienable appetite for what is beneficial to us and the knowledge of what truly constitutes our happiness. To the two types of morally pertinent knowledge distinguished by Santas: knowledge of virtue and knowledge that it is always better to be virtuous, Spinoza adds knowledge which itself constitutes our happiness, which enables us to desire the good which is good in itself *and* ultimately good for us, for he

[36] Ibid., 163
[37] Ibid.

who truly knows virtue, knows that „Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself.“ (5P42) This type of knowledge is perhaps already implied in the original Socratic paradox: knowledge is virtue. In Spinoza, knowledge which is virtue is „adequate“ knowledge not only of the true causes of our affects (desires, emotions) but of everything which follows from the *substantia infinita*.

In Youpa's estimate[38], the relationship of motivational states and value judgments entailed by Spinoza's *conatus* is twofold. On the one hand, Spinoza denies „that a motivational state (i.e. a striving, volition, want, or desire) results from or depends on a judgment about something's goodness.“ On the other hand, he asserts „that a judgment about something's goodness results from, or depends on, a pre-existing motivational state.“[39] While this seems to imply that „value judgments essentially reflect an individual's preexisting motivational states,“[40] Youpa argues that, in fact, there are two accounts of the generation of value judgments in Spinoza's theory of motivation and „two accounts of the psychological order of value judgments and motivational states“: one that refers to the condition of human beings in a state of bondage to the affects, one that refers to the condition of human freedom. According to these two accounts, judgments about value result not only from preexisting motivational states; „under certain conditions a motivational state results from a judgment about something’s goodness or badness.“ To be precise,

> „An individual in bondage is one whose value judgments result from his emotions and desires. A free individual, on the other hand, is someone whose emotions and desires result from his value judgments.“[41]

According to this interpretation, the *Ethics* operates simultaneously on two plains: on one it is devoted to an exposition the psychological motivation of action, dealt with from a naturalistic perspective, on the other it elaborates life of virtue and freedom that is constituted by adequate knowledge of the true causes of things. Only then is it possible to explain, in Youpa's view, that Spinoza can say both that the first and only foundation of virtue is striving to persevere in one's being and that it is striving for understanding (4P26, P22). Spinoza himself differentiates, in the Appendix to Part IV, between strivings or desires (i.e. striving together with consciousness of striving or appetite) which „follow from the necessity of our nature in such a way that they can be understood“ through our nature alone „as through their proximate cause“, and strivings which follow from the necessity of our nature only „insofar as

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[38] A. Youpa, „Spinoza's Theory of Motivation“, *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 88 (2007) 375 –390.
[39] Ibid., 375f.
[40] Ibid., 376.
[41] Ibid.

we are a part of nature, which cannot be conceived adequately through itself without other individuals.“ (4App.I) The former „follow from our nature in such a way that they can be understood through it alone“ and are consequently „related to the Mind insofar as it is conceived to consist of adequate ideas.“ The latter „are not related to the Mind except insofar as it conceives things inadequately“ and are „defined not by human power, but by the power of things that are outside us.“ The former are therefore „rightly called actions“, the latter „passions“, the former „indicate our power“, the latter „our lack of power and mutilated knowledge“. (4AppII) Good and evil, furthermore, are determined to relate to each of these levels in a specific way, good being, on the one hand „whatever there is in nature that we judge [...] to be useful for preserving our being and enjoying a rational life“, on the other, in reference to our specific nature, that which aids us „to enjoy the life of the Mind“ as defined by understanding; while evil, on the one hand, is equated with „whatever there is in nature that we judge to be [...] able to prevent us from being able to exist,“ on the other, with whatever may prevent a human being „from being able to perfect his reason and enjoy the rational life.“ (4App.V, VIII) Of these two: the power to persevere in one's being and the power to perfect our intellect or reason and to achieve understanding, *understanding* ultimately takes priority, as that aspect of virtue which is specific to our nature and involves acting from our own nature and not merely following the „common order of nature“.

VII. Spinoza's Intellectualism: Acting according to the Order of Intellect

The priority of mind and understanding over body and its affections in the realisation of human striving to persevere in being is then the first aspect of Spinoza's intellectualism. This first aspect of Spinoza's intellectualism might be summed up in the words: human virtue is virtue of the *mens humana*. This does not imply a negation of body or of our being „part of nature“. Spinoza agrees with Plato in what might be called the „innocence“ of basic human striving: noone does evil knowingly of willingly, everyone necessarily desires what – rightly or wrongly – appears to him to be good or beneficial to his perseverance in being. Rather it implies the necessity of coordinating our appetites according to our understanding of the true causes of the affections of the body and our ideas of the affections, i.e. the affects. For while „It is impossible for man not to be part of nature and not to follow the common order of nature“, most things which affect us with Joy or pleasure „are related particularly to one part of the body“, and tend in this respect to be *excessive*, by inhibiting our power to act in unity and harmony with our whole being as an individual consisting of Mind and Body and to

persevere as such. To simply follow our affects leads us into bondage to the „pleasures of the moment“ (App XXX). Human power or virtue, insofar as we are forced to follow the common order of nature, is „very limited and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes“. Yet if we follow „the better part of us“, i.e. „that part of us which is defined by understanding“ , we will be satisfied that „we are a part of the whole of nature, whose order we follow“, wanting „nothing except what is necessary“, and at the same time will ultimately find satisfaction with nothing absolutely „except what is true“, i.e. with adequate knowledge of everything which follows from the *substantia infinita*. In this attitude, the greatest possible harmony of our nature with the whole of nature is achieved, so that „the striving of the better part of us agrees with the whole order of nature.“ (4App.XXXII)

Along with seeking human excellence in the harmonisation of our being as part of nature with understanding under the guidance of the reason, Spinoza emphasizes the perfection of the intellect itself as the highest aim of human striving. This is „the ultimate end of the man who is led by reason“, his „highest Desire, by which he strives to moderate all the others“: „to conceive adequately both himself and all things that can fall under his understanding“. Our „blessedness“, i.e. our freedom and happiness, consists in this and „is nothing but that satisfaction of mind that stems from the intuitive knowledge of God“, the perfection of intellect which is „nothing but understanding God, his attributes, and his actions which follow from the necessity of his nature“ (4AppIV).

This second aspect of Spinoza's intellectualism is summed up in the scholium to 5p20: „The power of the mind is defined solely by knowledge; its lack of power is measured, however, solely from the privation of knowledge, or passion, that is, solely by that through which ideas are called inadequate.“ Together with the first aspect of Spinoza's excellence: human excellence is the excellence of the *mens humana*, this second aspect might be formulated as: the excellence or virtue of the *mens humana* is knowledge. This „association of the means to freedom with knowledge“ LeBuffe identifies as „what commentators often call Spinoza's 'intellectualism.'„[42] While LeBuffe sees „a clear basis in Spinoza's conative psychology for valuing knowledge“ he questions whether Spinoza can justify „his claim that knowledge is a complete good“ and asks what the connection is, between what appear to be the „two ends of human action“, that is how to reconcile, „perseverence in being and knowledge.“ LeBuffe's preliminary solution is that „Spinoza's active affects help to reconcile his accounts of striving and the bondage to passion with the view that knowledge and the

[42] LeBuffe, *From Bondage to Freedom,* 21.

means to knowledge are the only things that are always valuable for the human mind."[43] Nonetheless, LeBuffe ventures that „there are not two wholly different moral theories at work in the *Ethics*, one that concerns perseverence in being and the other that concerns the perfection of the mind." Rather, Spinoza „clearly holds that there is an intimate relation of some kind between knowledge and perseverence."[44]

Both Spinoza and Plato distinguish then a conative and a cognitive element in our striving for knowledge and the attainment of our own good. And while these elements in some sense appear to oppose and negate each other, in both Plato and in Spinoza they ultimately form parts of a coextensive unity. Human beings often mistake what it is that ensures their well-being and happiness. Our desire or striving may form its designs on an object that only appears to be good; true knowledge knows and desires what is truly beneficial. For „all those things men ordinarily strive for" – wealth, honour, sensual pleasure – „not only provide no remedy to preserve our being, but in fact hinder that preservation, often cause the destruction of those who possess them, and always cause the destruction of those who are possessed by them." „[L]ove toward the eternal and infinite thing" , on the other hand, „feeds the mind with a joy entirely exempt from sadness".[45]

The path which leads to virtue and happiness in Plato and Spinoza follows the natural order of the whole of being. The whole order of being or nature, on the other hand, the *ordo et connexio rerum*, is reflected by a corresponding order of ideas accessible in and through the human mind. This double aspect of Plato's and Spinoza's ontology gives rise to a paradoxical reciprocity: the participation of the human mind or soul *in the order of nature,* makes investigation and discovery of the true causes of things at the same time a path of self-examination, self-discovery and self-knowledge, and vice versa: the path of self-examination necessarily involves investigation and discovery of the order of nature of which human beings form a part, such that the more one comes to know oneself, the more one understands nature and its ultimate principle God; and the more one comes to know God and nature, the more one comes to know oneself (Cf. 5P24).

Knowledge of God, or in Plato the idea of the Good, is „the mind's highest good" and „its highest virtue" (4P28).[46] Like Plato, Spinoza takes ideas and *thought* to be the primary

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[43] Ibid. 21f.
[44] Ibid. 22.
[45] *Treatise on the Emmendation of the Intellect,* 9.
[46] Le Buffe points to knowledge of God as prime example of the kinds of goods that go beyond the natural means to survival posited in a naturalistic view of psychological motivation. As Le Buffe sees it: „Understanding then is for Spinoza a complete good in the traditional sense of a good that is to be sought for its own sake, and

characteristic of the *mens humana*,[47] and that which establishes the specific nature of human beings, above and beyond their procession, along with all other individual things, from the *substantia infinita.* Thought is an activity, one which expresses the characteristic nature of the *mens humana*. For this reason, Spinoza prefers to designate its products as *ideas* or *concepts* rather than as *perceptions*, since „perception seems to indicate that the Mind is acted on by the object," while *concept* „seems to express an action of the mind."[48] Thought has primacy before other „modes of thinking", such as love, desire or the so-called „affects of the mind", because, as Spinoza explains, „unless there is in the same Individual the idea of the thing loved, desired, etc.", there can be no such mode of thinking. An idea or concept, on the other hand, can be present without any other mode of thinking having to exist. [49] Thought and being, furthermore, are intimately connected. The tendency of every particular thing to continue in its existence is seen as the physical equivalent of the affirmation or positing of the thing entailed by its idea or definition, something which for Spinoza implies both the thing's inability to *contradict* and and its inability to *destroy* itself.[50]

VIII. Transforming Passion into Action: The Unity of Conatus and Cognition

For human beings, transforming passion into action, inadequate into adequate knowledge, accidental associations among images and memories of bodily affections into adequate ideas of their true causation is the decisive factor in the attainment of our freedom and happiness.[51]

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the best among complete goods, the summum bonum, is the knowledge of God." *From Bondage to Freedom* 164. In LeBuffe's analysis, Spinoza's account of value builds on his definition of good and evil in the Appendix to Part I, his definition of perfection 2d6 , his discussion of the good 3P9s and 3P39s and his account of good, evil, and perfection in the preface to part IV. Therein LeBuffe finds the basis for understanding Spinoza's definitions of good and evil at 4D1 and 4D2.

[47] Cf. *Ethics* 2A2.

[48] Ibid. Def. 3 and Exp.

[49] Ibid. Axiom 3.

[50] That the essence expressed in the idea or conception of a thing involves its affirmation, and its affirmation the conception or idea of the thing is elaborated in *Ethics* II, Prop. 49. This understanding of the connection between the definition and the reality of any actually existing thing is closely related to the view that volition and understanding are ultimately the same, that there is no affirmation except that which is involved in the ideas or conceptions of thought. Cf. ibid. Prop. 48 Schol., 49. Cor.

[51] „Adequacy" is in the *Ethics* the primary criterium of truth, insofar as an idea is considered in itself, and refers to the instrinsic or self-consistency of an idea. „Adequate" is „an idea which, insofar as it is considered in itself without relation to an object, has all the properties *or* intrinsic denominations of a true idea." The term „instrinsic" is used „to exclude what is extrinsic", i.e. correspondence or „agreement of the idea with its object," which for Spinoza is a secondary criterium of truth. *Ethics* II, Def. 4. In a letter to Tschirnhaus, Spinoza differentiates „true" from „adequate" as follows: „the word 'true' refers only to the agreement of the idea with that of which it is the idea, while the word 'adequate' refers to the nature of the idea itself; so that there is really no difference between a true and an adequate idea except this extrinsic relation." Cf. *Epistola* 60, cited by Wolfson II, 101. As Wolfson explains, „internal criteria" of truth, including the Cartesian criteria of clearness and distinctness, „are used by Spinoza as something independent of correspondence", to avoid the impression that a true idea „must be a copy of something which actually happens to exist outside the mind." On the contrary,

The possibility of forming a conception of an affect, that is, of transforming a passion into an action, is rooted in both the nature of affects and the nature of human reason itself. For „an affect is an idea of an affection of the body". In other words, an affect as such already involves „some clear and distinct concept." (5P4C) It is only the way in which that idea is related to the mind which determines whether we suffer or act with respect to it. In Spinoza's view it is in a human being's power „to understand himself and his affects and thus to bring it about that he is less acted on by them." (5P4C) Nevertheless, it is one and the same „appetite by which a man is said to act, and [...] to be acted on" (ibid.) In other words, the same affect can be a passion or an action, depending on our ability to form a clear and distinct idea of it.

To be a part of Nature, however, is to be subject to finitude, transience, corruptibility, perishability, mortality. Our finitude as particular beings prevents us from attaining the absolute freedom enjoyed by the *substantia infinita*. „[I]nsofar as we are a part of Nature, which cannot be conceived through itself" (4P2), we are acted upon, and can only be the partial cause of things which follow from us in our capacity as natural beings (ibid.). The fact that the force by which we strive to persevere in being is limited and „infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes" (4P3), means that we can undergo changes of which we are not the adequate cause and which cannot be understood through our nature alone (4P4). If it were possible that we undergo only changes that could be understood through our nature alone, that is, if we could attain absolute freedom, we would not only always exist, the cause of what followed from our nature would have to be identical with the God's infinite power, the only cause whose being and acting follows and can be conceived of through its nature alone. In other words: the order of the whole of Nature, insofar as it is conceived under the attributes of Extension and Thought, would have to be deduced from the necessity of the divine nature, insofar as it is considered to be affected with the idea of some man", from which „it would follow that the man would be infinite" (4P4).

Affects then are related to both Mind and Body. Our subordination or belonging to the order of nature means that the affects cannot be mastered by reason alone. Insofar as human beings „follow and obey the common order of Nature", they will always be subject to passions (4P4C). It is with regard to the mastery of the affects that the problem of free and necessary causation and the possibility of an interaction or union of mental and physical

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the idea „must agree with the reality of its ideate", but „the reality with which a true idea must agree is not necessarily an external object; it may be its ideal nature conceived by the mind as something necessary in itself, or as something which follows by necessity from that which is conceived as necessary by itself, or as something which follows necessarily from its own nature and definition." (ibid. 104)

causation is most acutely felt. Spinoza's solution, like that of Plato, rests on the original unity of Mind and Body, and of the idea with that of which it is an idea. Our feelings are accompanied by ideas of an external cause (3p30s). Yet Spinoza appears to have ruled out interaction between the physical and mental. Without interaction of the physical and mental, how can we have an idea of an external event or cause?

It is difficult – if not sheerly impossible – to imagine a vocabulary or language to describe the succession of physical states in our body or in nature that is not at the same time a „mental" vocabulary and language, though it is undeniable that description of mental states may be distinguished from description of physical states, and that logical inference and reasoning, including mathematical reasoning, may in turn be distinguished from each of these. The fundamental definitions of Part I of the *Ethics* highlight this difficulty. For example, a finite thing is said to be „limited by another of its own nature", a body by a body, a thought by another thought, but not a body by a thought or a thought by a body (ID2). The *nature* of things, however, whether considered under their physical or mental aspect, requires „conception" in order to be grasped as such: „For example, a body is called finite because we always *conceive* another that is greater."

For the attainment of human excellence, freedom and happiness, understanding the connection between mental and physical events is vital, yet this connection remains problematic. On the one hand, Spinoza denies the possibility of thoughts or minds influencing physical things or bodies and vice versa, when he says: „The Body cannot determine the Mind to thinking and the Mind cannot determine the Body to motion" (3p2). At the same time he asserts that: „The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (2p7). He appears thereby to posit a thoroughgoing parallelism of the realms of mental events and of extended things, a kind of preestablished harmony of the kind asserted by Leibniz.[52] If interaction between Mind and Body is excluded, what basis is there for subordination to or mastery of the affects? How can it even be conceived that human individuals form part of order of nature and its necessary succession of causes and effects and are at the same time capable of achieving an excellence which permits them to rise above the necessary succession of physical causes?

Spinoza's solution appears to lie in the conviction that the mental and the physical are two aspects of the same reality whose ground is the absolute unity of the *substantia infinita*.

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[52] *Die philosophischen Schriften*, 7 vols. Edited by C. I. Gerhardt. Berlin, 1875–90. Reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms 1965, IV 483–485; VI 539, 546. *Philosophical Essays*. Translated and edited by Roger Ariew and Dan Garber. Indianapolis: Hackett 1989, 143.

Wartofsky proposes in this sense that what Spinoza has in mind is not a parallelism but identity. In this view, Spinoza, while rejecting the possibility of „mechanistic“ determination of mental states by bodily states, and of bodily states by mental states, is in fact saying „A change in the psychic character, or intensity [...] of an emotion does not *lead to* a change in a bodily state; it *is* one.“[53] The converse must then also be true, namely, that a change in bodily state does not *lead to* a change in a psychic state, but *is* one. Wartofsky's „identity theory“, as Davidson notes, nevertheless fails to eliminate the problem of causation or to explain why there should be a correspondence between the sequence of mental and bodily states.[54]

Curley sees Spinoza's solution to the problem of causation, and of interaction between bodily and mental states, as fundamentally „anti-dualistic“. In his view, Spinoza's system „is a form of materialistic monism“.[55] Curley argues for a complete parallelism between the complexity of the body and the complexity of thought, thought comprising nothing but knowledge of the body. On this account, the mental is not to be distinguished from the bodily or material at all, but is in itself in fact bodily or material. This view, however, does not adequately account for Spinoza's insistence on two distinct attributes of extension and thought, or for his insistence on the „power of reason“ over the affects, which constitutes freedom and ultimately human happiness or blessedness.

What Davidson characterizes as the absence of „psychophysical causal laws“ or „psychophysical bridging laws“, in other words, the fact that „there cannot be any strict laws connecting particulars characterized in mental terms with particulars characterized in physical terms“, means that a complete or adequate explanation of a mental event cannot be given in physical terms and a complete and adequate explanation of a physical event cannot be given in mental terms.“[56] This is because „mental and physical concepts belong to independent explanatory systems.“[57] As a result, „it makes no sense“ to attempt to explain or understand „the existence or modification of anything except under one or another system of description, that is, as viewed under one attribute or another.“[58] This circumstance is expressed by Spinoza in the preface to Part V of the *Ethics*:

> since there is no common measure between the will and motion, there is also no comparison between the power, or forces, of the Mind and those of the Body.

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[53] Cited in: D. Davidson. „Spinoza's Causal Theory of the Affects,” in *Desire and Affect: Spinoza as Psychologist*, Yirmiyaho Yovel (ed.), (New York: Little Room Press 1999) 95–111; 100.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 103.
[57] Ibid., 104.
[58] Ibid.

Consequently, the forces of the Body cannot in any way be determined by those of the Mind.

Davidson interprets Spinoza's position as an expression of what Spinoza saw as the acceptable manner of explanation in the mental and physical realm, and not as a denial of causal interaction between the two. In Davidson's view, nothing precludes „the causal interaction of particular physical events with particuar mental events“: „The point of EIIIp2 is not, then, to deny that mental events can *cause* physical events [or *vice versa*], but to deny that they can *explain* them (and conversely, of course).“[59]

Even though for Spinoza „the description of the cause and the description of the effect do not belong to the same system of explanation“, it is unnecessary, in Davidson's view, to „saddle Spinoza with the logical absurdity that would result“ from believing a physical event could not *cause* a mental awareness of the event.[60] Even explanations of physical or mental causation that attempt to remain within their system of explanation („intra-attribute“ explanations) , will in some sense involve „inter-attribute“ characteristics, that is, description of the causes of at least some mental events may include physical terms, and physically described events will in any case require minimal inclusion of mental terms.[61] With regard to the ultimate aim of the *Ethics*, the attainment of human freedom and happiness, which depends on gaining adequate knowledge of the affects and hence of their true causes, explanation and understanding cannot exist without assuming some form of interaction and causation between the mental and the physical.

The second part of the *Ethics,* „On the Nature and Origin of the Mind“ posits among its axioms our ability to „feel“ that our body „is affected in many ways“ and to „perceive“ „bodies and modes of thinking“ (2A4, 2A5). The essence of a human being and of a human Mind is determined, in Postulates 12 and 13, to be constituted by a mode of thinking or an idea, whose object is the Body. Spinoza appears even to posit a pre- or subconscious influence of the body on the mind, when he says that we necessarily perceive „whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human Mind“, i.e in the body. The fact that we have ideas of affections of the body Spinoza takes as evidence that these ideas are in God insofar as he constitutes our Mind (according to 2P9C), and this latter as a demonstration that the body exists as we are aware of it.

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[59] Ibid., 104.
[60] Ibid., 104f.
[61] Cf. ibid. 105.

Every existing thing, according to Spinoza, must be grasped under some attribute, and the more reality or being a thing has the more attributes it will have. The *substantia infinita*, thus, as the *ens absolute infinitum,* must be conceived as comprised of infinitely many attributes „of which each expresses an eternal and infinite essence." (1D6 and Expl.) The human mind[62], however, perceives things under only two attributes, that of thought or *cogitatio* and that of extension, *extensio* (cf. 2P1,2), which are perceived as *id, quod intellectus de substantia percipit tanquam ejus essentiam constituens* (1D4). Each of these two, though not comprising a separate substance, must, by virtue of its being perceived as „constituting" the essence of the *substantia infinita*, be conceived through itself alone (1P10 and S). Nevertheless, despite the distinctness of the attributes *cogitatio* and *extensio*, God's „power of thinking" and his „power to act" are affirmed, by virtue of the singularity of infinite substance, to be the same (2P7C).[63] Furthermore, just as „substance thinking and substance extended are one and the same substance, comprehended now through one attribute, now through the other," so a mode of extension (a finite affection of substance expressed under the attribute of extension) and the idea of the same modus (the same affection expressed under the attribute of cogitatio) are „one and the same thing considered in two ways" (2P7S).

IX. *Idea* and *ideatum*: The Priority of *cogitatio*, Mind and Ideas with respect to *extensio*, Body and Affections

Despite the equivalent ontological status and paradoxical identity in difference of *extensio* and *cogitatio*, the latter retains a certain precedence before the former. The relationship of what follows from infinite substance under the aspect of one or the other of the two attributes is conceived analogously. Will and Understanding, for example, which are modes of thought (*modi cogitandi*), are related to God's nature in the same way as Movement and Rest, the fundamental modes of extension, i.e. as natural things (*naturalia*) or effects (*Natura naturata*) determined by God (the *Natura naturans*) to exist and to act in a certain way (1PC2). The precedence of thought before extension is carried over to each succeeding level of being. It is thus that the relationship of the two attributes/aspects under which the one *substantia infinita* is perceived proves to be like that of the *idea* to its *ideatum*. Similarly, the indispensable

[62] In reference to the attributes, Spinoza elsewhere explains that „whatever can be perceived by an infinite intellect as constituting an esssence of substance pertains to one substance only" (Cf. *Ethics* 2P7S). Here, infinite intellect is distinguished from the human mind or finite intellect as able to perceive any and all, i.e. infinite attributes. Cf. H.A. Wolfson, I, 215.

[63] On the problem of how to reconcile plurality of attributes with the simplicity of substance, as well as on the „subjective interpretation" of Spinoza's attributes as a possible solution, cf. H.A. Wolfson, I, 142ff.

connection of the human mind (a particular mode of substance conceived under the attribute of *cogitatio*) to a particular body (the same individual mode of substance conceived under the attribute of *extensio*) is expressed as the relationship of an idea to its object. The *first thing* which comprises the actual existence of the human mind is thereby an *idea*, albeit of a really existing individual thing and nothing else (2P11, 2P13).[64]

One result of our being not just intellectual beings, but part of nature is that „an affect cannot be restrained or taken away except by an affect opposite to, and stronger than, the affect to be restrained." (4P7). An affect, or emotion, namely, is an expression of both a physical and a mental state. Its basis is an „affection" of the Body, but it is what it is as the „idea of the Body's affection". The two occur simultaneously, one cannot exist without the other: „When [...] the Mind is troubled by some affect, the Body is at the same time affected with an affection, by which its power of acting is increased or diminished", and vice versa (4P7). Furthermore, affections of the Body result from some external cause (4P5). For the „essence of a passion cannot be explained through our essence alone [...] i.e. [...] by the power by which we strive to persevere in our being", which is our own power to act and produce an effect (4P5). „[I]nsofar as it is related to the Mind," an affect „is an idea by which the Mind affirms of its body a greater or lesser force of existing than before." This means, however, that an affect, „*insofar as it is related to the Mind*, can neither be restrained nor taken away except by the *idea* of an opposite affection of the body stronger than the affection through which it is acted upon."[65] (4P7C)

The relationship of an idea to that of which it is an idea runs like a thread through the whole of the *Ethics*. It is not only used to describe the relationship of the idea which constitutes an individual mind to the body which is its object, but also to describe the relationship of the *substantia infinita* to individual minds. It is used as well to characterize the relationship of ideas (for example, of good and evil) which we form on the basis of the affects

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[64] Cf. also *Ethics* 2P20 and Dem: *There is also in God an idea or knowledge of the human Mind, which follows in God in the same way and is related to God in the same way as the idea* or *knowledge, of the human body*, and Dem; furthermore, 2P 21: *This idea of the Mind is united to the Mind in the same way as the Mind is united to the Body*; and Schol.: „This proposition is understood far more clearly from what is said in P7S for there we have shown that the idea of the Body and the Body, i.e. (by P13), the Mind and the Body, are one and the same Individual, which is conceived now under the attribute of Thought, now under the attribute of Extension. So the idea of the Mind and the Mind itself are one and the same thing, which is conceived under the same attribute, viz. Thought. The idea of the Mind, I say, and the Mind itself follow in God from the same power of thinking and by the same necessity. For the idea of the Mind, i.e. the idea of the idea, is nothing but the form of the idea insofar as this is considered as a mode of thinking without relation to the object. For as soon as someone knows something, he thereby knows that he knows it, and at the same time knows that he knows that he knows, and so on, to infinity." (my emphasis)

[65] My italics.

to the affects themselves (eg. of Joy and Sadness), and of these ideas to the affections of the Body which are their objects and which increase or diminish our power to act. The affects of Joy or Sadness are just such *ideas of affections of the Body* which increase or diminish, aid or restrain our power of acting. What we call good or evil, according to Spinoza, is „nothing but an affect of Joy or Sadness, insofar as we are conscious of it." In other words, our knowledge of good or of evil is an *idea of an idea of an affection* of the Body, an idea which, in Spinoza's view, „follows necessarily from the affect of Joy or Sadness itself" (4P7; cf. Part 2, Gen. Def. of the Affects). The idea of an affect (the idea of an idea of an affection) is „united to the affect in the same way as the Mind is united to the Body (by IIP21)". Nevertheless, the idea of an affect is only „conceptually distinguished" from the affect itself, i.e. the idea of a Body's affection. Spinoza eliminates herewith the logical consequence of an infinite regress which the relationship of idea to ideatum would otherwise entail (4P8).

It is not, however, the idea as knowledge (of good and evil) which is capable of restraining an affect, but only such knowledge „considered as an affect." (4P14, 15) The view that knowledge can be considered as an affect highlights the intimate relationship between an *affect*, i.e. *the idea of an affection of the body,* and *the idea of an idea of an affection*, i.e. the *knowledge* or *awareness* of the affect expressed by our calling it or judging it to be good or evil respectively.

X. Unity of Affect and Idea: Living according to the Guidance of Reason

While it is only by an affect that an affect may be overcome, it is only when an affect has been transformed from a passion to an action that it achieves the capability of setting us free from our bondage to it. Only when we live according to the guidance of reason, however, may we properly be said to act. For „whatever follows from human nature, insofar as it is defined by reason [...] must be understood through human nature alone." (5P35, cf. 3P3, 3D2) It is then that human beings act according to the laws of their nature, desiring what they judge to be good, and striving to avoid what they judge to be evil „because what we judge to be good or evil, when we follow the dictate of reason, must *be* good or evil", and not merely appear to us to be so.[66]

Living according to the dictate of reason entails, moreover, doing „those things which

[66] Ibid. (my emphasis). Cf. 2P41.

agree with the nature“ of every human being. Whereas following the „common order of nature“ by our appetite for the pleasures of the moment leads us into bondage to an array of external causes and so to disunity with ourselves and others, living according to the guidance of reason grounds our affects as actions in the integrated unity of mind and body which is the common basis for our lives as individuals, enabling us to live in harmony with each other. For human beings, to the extent that they „live according to the guidance of reason“, doing those things which agree with to their nature in the fullest sense, „must always agree among themselves“ (5P35)

It is the true nature of human beings and what it means for them to pursue the things that promote their preservation as just this sort of being, i.e. the things which follow necessarily from their own true essence (cf. 2P9S), from which can be derived the character and possibility of human freedom and happiness. Only that which „follows from human nature, insofar as it is defined by reason“ can „be understood through human nature alone“, and by virtue of which human beings may be said „only to act“ (5P35). Things that follow from our nature insofar as it is a part of „external“ nature, such as affects which are passions, cannot be understood as following from human nature alone. Insofar as we live according to the guidance of reason, we act according to the laws *of our own nature* not just *the common order of nature* to which all things belong, and do what is most advantageous both to ourselves and to other human beings (5P35C1, C2). Nevertheless, since the Mind is „a certain and determinate mode of thinking“ (2P48), it has neither „an absolute faculty of understanding“ nor and absolute power of desiring, loving or willing. Thus, „it rarely happens that men live according to the guidance of reason“ alone (5P35S). The nature of human beings is defined by human intellect and understanding, but also by affects that are actions, because for Spinoza human beings and their intellects are rooted in nature in the broadest sense.

The attainment of human virtue, freedom and happiness is dependent then on our ability to grasp the unity of appetite or affect and idea or knowledge. This unity is closely tied to what Spinoza sees as the original unity of will and intellect. Will and intellect (2P49C) „are one and the same“, and „nothing apart“ from individual volitions and ideas.“ Volitions and ideas, however, are nothing „beyond the very ideas of things,“ but merely „universal notions which are not distinguished from the singulars from which we form them.“ (2P48S) Spinoza can say this because he understands will to be nothing but „the faculty by which the Mind affirms or denies something true or something false.“ (2P48S) Spinoza differentiates thereby will from *desire*, which he understands to be „*appetite together with consciousness of the*

appetite“ (2P9). The striving to persevere in being which constitutes our essence, „when related only to the Mind [...] is called Will“, i.e. the capacity to affirm or deny something as true or false. When related to mind and body at the same time, this capacity is called *appetite* (2P9S). The question is how appetite is related to consciousness, and to the affirmation or denial which is the proper activity of will/intellect as expressed in the ideas we have of particular things For there is, in Spinoza's account, no other affirmation or negation in the Mind „except that which the idea involves, insofar as it is an idea.“ (2P49)

Spinoza aims with his identification of will and intellect to prevent our reflections concerning ideas, or volitions, from 'falling into pictures'. For by „idea“ he understands „not the images that are formed at the back of the eye“ or „in the middle of the brain“, but „concepts of thought“, i.e. an „action of the Mind“ (ibid., cf. 2D3) Nonetheless, the affirmation or denial which ideas/volitions comprise is both the defining activity of human nature and inextricably bound to the striving which determines the nature of all things. The aim of the *Ethics* is to clarify how human beings can advance from a striving which is mere appetite aroused by external factors to a striving which is an affirmation of ideas whose truth is intrinsically grounded in our nature and whose effects follow from our nature insofar as our reason is intrinsically grounded in the truth of those ideas.

How the transition from the striving which constitutes our being as part of nature to the striving which makes us specifically human is effected is difficult to lay hold of, although Spinoza makes it clear that it is constituted by the transition from affects which are passions to affects which are actions, from ideas which are perceptions to ideas which are conceptions, and from inadequate knowledge to adequate knowledge. In LeBuffe's account, Spinoza opposes a „formal theory of value“ to the condition of human bondage which gives rise to the „common“ or „ordinary“ understanding of value, whereby the „facts about where we find value cannot change“ (160). The transition in any case involves an affirmation of the union of Mind and Body which constitutes our being as human individuals, as grounded in the infinite reality of the *substantia infinita* and expressed through the attributes of thought and extension. A key statement which Spinoza makes in this regard is that „the appetite by which a man is said to act , and that by which he is said to be acted on, are one and the same.“ (5P4) The transformation of a passion (eg. ambition) to an action and to *virtue* is based on our forming a „clear and distinct idea“ of the affect or idea of the affection of the body. The same appetites which, „insofar as they arise from inadequate ideas“, are passions, „when they are aroused or generated by adequate ideas“ „are counted as virtues“ (ibid.)

While there must be an idea of everything which exists in God, the idea which

constitutes the being of the *mens humana* is „the idea of a singular thing which actually exists“ (2P11), i.e. an individual body (cf. 2P13). Consequently, we only achieve independence of mind insofar as we gain an adequate knowledge of the nature of our body (2P13S). The human mind forms „part of the infinite intellect of God“, only *insofar as our minds have adequate knowledge,* that is, only insofar as we actively conceive the order and connection of things as they follow with necessity from the *substantia infinita*. In perceiving „this or that“, according to their random occurrence in our experience, we participate in God's intellect only partially, in other words, only insofar as God has the idea of another thing „together with the human mind“ (2P11C) It is in understanding things to be necessary, i.e. „to be determined by an infinite connection of causes to exist and produce effects“, that the mind is less acted on by the affects and has a greater power over them (5P6).

Because we are embodied, whatever is capable of ensuring our preservation arouses in us an appetite for it. This appetite, as we saw above, when we become consciously aware of it, is called *desire*. Spinoza speaks, however, also of affects which arise from reason (5P7). These are said to be stronger than affects which arise in relation to affection of our Body through an external body. The knowledge of good or evil, when these are correctly judged (and not merely perceived) to be beneficial or harmful to us, necessarily produces in us a desire to attain it. Desire in this sense, i.e. „insofar as it is related to the Mind, is the very essence of the Mind (by Def. Aff. I)“ (4P37). This type of desire, i.e. the type of desire which is grounded in true judgment, extends to all other beings whom we judge to be like ourselves. For one „who seeks virtue desires for another the good he wants for himself.“[67]

True virtue or power consists then in „living according the the guidance of reason“ and not allowing oneself „to be guided by things outside him, and to be determined by them to do what the common constitution of external things demands“ instead of „what his own nature, considered in itself, demands.“ (4P36S) On the other hand, Spinoza recognizes that „our Mind's power of thinking“ depends on the „Body's power of acting“, so that whatever „increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our Body's power of acting, increases or

[67]4P37. Spinoza distinguishes this kind of desire, the desire that others should love what we love, insofar as it is based only on an affect or on one's temperament, from the same desire insofar as it is guided by reason. Insofar as we strive that others love what we love only from affect, we are not of one mind but only insofar as we live according to the guidance of reason (4P36S1). The condition of being subject to the affects and considering one's advantage based on one's temperament or affects and not the guidance of reason Spinoza equates with the state of nature, in which „no one by common consent is Master of anything“ (4P36S2). He contrasts this condition with the civil state, „where it is decided by common consent what belongs to this man, and what to that“, which is „maintained by laws and the power it has of preserving itself“ , where „it is decided by common agreement what i good or what is evil“ (ibid.).

diminishes, aids or restrains our Mind's power of thinking“ (3P11) Similarly, „whatever so disposes the human Body that it can be affected in many ways, or renders it capable of affecting external Bodies in a great many ways, is useful to man“, the more so the more it increases our body's ability to be affected and to affect. This is because „The more the Body is rendered capable“ of affecting and being affected, „the more the Mind is rendered capable of perceiving“ (4P38cf. 2P14).[68] An affect, accordingly, „is only evil, or harmful, insofar as it prevents the Mind from being able to think.“ (5P9) Since it is the essence of the mind to think, and the mind as such must strive to persevere in its being, anything that prevents it from doing so must be considered evil or harmful (5P9). Affects which arise from the affections which singular things produce in our bodies, like these, exclude and replace each other in succession over time, remaining present only through associations with other affections, images and ideas in our memory (cf. 5P7). Affects which arise from reason, on the other hand, are „necessarily related to the common properties of thing“; and so always regarded by us as present. Since „there can be nothing which excludes their present existence [...] we always imagine them in the same way“ (5P7) As related to „a number of causes concurring together“, such an affect is more powerful than those related to fewer causes (5P8).

In keeping with his understanding of the transition from a striving which we share with things as they follow according to the common order of nature to a striving which is virtue, Spinoza distinguishes different levels and types of awareness of physical states or affections of the Body. These correspond to the levels or forms of knowledge outlined in Part II. Affects which are no longer passions, but which are not yet actions, he connects with the activity of imagination, defined as „an idea by which the Mind considers a thing as present“ (4P9; Cf. 2P17S). Imaginations indicate „the constitution of the human Body more than the nature of

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[68]Of the objects of knowledge, there are those which „are completely general and do not pertain more to man than to other Individuals“, and there is a corresponding distinction of ideas, between those which are „more excellent“ and whose objects contain „more reality“, and those which are less excellent and less real. The human Mind is distinguished thereby from „other Individuals“ „all of which“ in his view, „though in different degrees, are nevertheless animate“ (2P13S). The excellence of the human mind is at the same time a factor of the excellence of the human body, which is „more capable than others of perceiving many things at once“ and whose actions „depend more on itself alone“ and less on the „concurrence“ of other bodies in its acting, than the bodies of other species, so that „its mind is more capable of understanding distinctly“.
Whatever contributes to the „preservation of the proportion of motion and rest the human Body's parts have to one another“ is thus good or useful, and whatever destroys that proportion evil. (4P39) It is thus that Spinoza recommends Joy („by which the body's power of acting is increased or aided“, 4P41) as good, and sees Sadness („by which the body's power of acting is diminished or restrained“) as directly evil. Hence, he recommends Cheerfulness (Joy related to Mind and Body at once – 3P11S) as aiding or increasing the Body's power of acting and therefore good, while Melancholy (Sadness related to Mind and Body at once) diminishes or restrains the Body's power of acting and so is always evil (4P42). Pleasure, love, desire can be excessive, if they affect one part of the body more than the others and so disturb the proportion of motion and rest, but pain is only good insofar as it can restrain a pleasure that would otherwise be excessive and thus render the body less capable.

the external thing“ (4P9; cf. 2P16C2), that is, they do not represent true knowledge of the causes of things which affect the body. An affect is thus „an imagination“ insofar as it „indicates the constitution of the body“ (4P9).[69]

In conceiving things as necessary, on the other hand, that is, „to be determined by an infinite connection of causes to exist and produce effects“, the mind „brings it about that it is less acted on by the affects springing from these things“ (5P6). The human mind conceives „things as actual“, according to Spinoza, in one of two ways: either „in relation to a certain time and place“, or as „contained in God“ and as they „follow from the necessity of the divine nature.“ Things known in the first way are known only in a confused and fragmentary manner. Only the things conceived of in this second manner are known adequately. The things we conceive of in the second manner, as true or real, are conceived as Spinoza puts it „under a species of eternity“ – *sub specie aeternitatis*, in other words: „through God's essence, as real beings [...] insofar as through God's essence they involve existence.“[70] The essence of the mind „consists in knowledge (by IIP11), which involves knowledge of God“ (4P37). Ultimately, he essence of the human Mind is defined by its capacity „to have an adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence.“ (5P36, cf. 22P47), for „the greatest good of those who seek virtue is to know God“ (5P36)

XI. Conclusion: Stages of Knowledge and the Perfection of Human Nature

The hierarchical ordering of the stages of knowledge and its connection to the procession of being, intellect and individual things from their ultimate principle Spinoza belongs to a long tradition descended from Plato's Analogy of the Line and its reception from Ancient to modern times. Spinoza distinguishes three or four or stages of knowledge respectively, depending on whether the first two types are counted as one or as two individual stages.[71] In

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[69] When we imagine something future or past, „we are affected by the same affect as if we were imagining something present“ (3P18), but the intensitiy of the imagination depends on whether or not other things are imagined at the same time which exclude „the present existence of the external thing“ which we perceive as cause of the bodily affection“ whose idea the affect is (cf. P9S & C). Neither the image nor the affect nonetheless conveys the *nature* of the external thing which we perceive as the cause of the affection.

[70] *Ethics* V, 29, Schol.

[71] Wolfson refers Spinoza's division to the fourfold classification of knowledge in Plato's Line (133 and note 1, with text references: Rep VI 511 D, VII, 533 E: νόησις (νοῦς, ἐπιστήμη), διάνοια, πίστις, εἰκασία ; and the various classifications in Aristotle (ibid. and note 2: *Analytica Posteriora*, II, 19, 100b, 7-8: δόξα, λογισμός, ἐπιστήμη, νοῦς; *De Anima* III, 3, 428, 4-5 αἴσθησις, δόξα, ἐπιστήμη, νοῦς; *Metaphys.* XII, 9, 1074b, 35-36 ἐπιστήμη, αἴσθησις, δόξα, διάνοια; *Nichomachean Ethics* , VI, 3, 1139b, 16-17: τέχνη, ἐπιστήμη, φρόνησις, σοφία, νοῦς, ὑπόληψις, δόξα. Wolfson notes also in this connection (II, 131f.) the apparent inconsistency of Spinoza's numbering of the „stages of knowledge“: „In the Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione Spinoza explicitly states that the modes of perception (modos percipiendi) are four. In the Ethics he ...divides knowledge

Part II of the *Ethics* three or four types or levels of knowledge are differentiated. They are:

1. *imaginatio*
2. *opinio*
3. *ratio*
4. *scientia intuitiva*

This division corresponds to the main division of Plato's Line into the realm of appearances and opinion (δόξα), and the realm of reality and ideas or true knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), and its subdivision into its component parts, with imagination and opinion corresponding to the subdivision of the lower segment into the lower intellectual capacities of εἰκασία and πίστις, and *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva* corresponding to the higher segment and the higher functions of intellect, διάνοια and νόησις. The manner in which our notions or concepts are formed with respect to this hierarchy determines whether our notions of things will be adequate and our knowledge clear, distinct, and true.

Spinoza „retains“, as he says, the „customary“ expressions with regard to imagination. He calls images of things „affections of the human Body, whose ideas present external bodies as present to us, [...] even though they do not reproduce the figure of things.“ The term „figure“ here refers to a physical representation corresponding to the definition or essence of an individual, as determined by the adequate idea of a thing conceived through God's essence. The mind *imagines* when it regards the affections of its body as representations of external bodies *without* having access to the *figure* of things (like the way the εἰκόνες are formed, as „shadows“ and reflections cast by things themselves: animals, plants, manufactured things, as represented by the lower two segments of Plato's Line, *Rep.* 510 a) (2P17, S) Imagination does not err by imagining per se, since the ideas of its affections follow necessarily, both „from the nature of the affected body“ and from the nature of the body affecting it. Nevertheless, the ideas we form of external bodies by our affections indicate more the condition of our own body than the *nature* of the bodies affecting it (2P16 and C2, 2P17S). Spinoza views the „faculty of imagining“, despite these limitations as a virtue or strength of our nature. At the same time, he emphasizes how much more of a virtue it would be if „the Mind's faculty of imagining were free“, that is: if its functioning „depended only on its own

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(cognitio) into four kinds (genera), but by treating the first and the second...as two modes of regarding things (utrumque contemplandi modum) under one kind of knowledge designated by a single term, he refers to the first three of his original four kinds of knowedge as 'these two kinds of knowledge,' thus making altogether a threefold classification. In the Short Treatise he first enumerates only three, but by dividing the first into two parts he really has a fourfold classification.“ In fact, the division into three or four is dependent on Spinoza's close association of the first two stages, because of their dependency on the senses, and their relative unreliability and subordinate character with respect to the attainment of genuine knowledge.

nature“, instead of on the changing affections which the unending succession of the singular things of our experience produces in our Body.[72]

Memory builds on the functioning of imagination, being „nothing other than a certain connection of ideas involving the nature of things which are outside the human body – a connection that is in the mind according to the order and connection of the affections of the human body.“ Spinoza distinguishes the connection of ideas in Memory which follows „the order and connection of the affections of the body“ from the connection of ideas „according to the order of the intellect, by which the Mind perceives things through their first causes, and which is the same in all men.“ (2P18, S) Although from the representation of affections of the body, and from „signs“ or symbols which call to mind such representations, *common notions* of things are formed, they are formed in a manner that is „mutilated confused and without order for the intellect.“ At this stage of Spinoza's account, two types of intellectual activity can be distinguished: *imagination* and *opinion*, though Spinoza appears to see them as two aspects of a single level or type of knowledge. *Imagination* refers to the production of images, either as *representation* of particular things/external bodies to us on the basis of the affections of the body through the senses, or through recollection of the same, whereas *opinio* seems to refer primarily to the ideas we form on the basis of representation and recollection, or based on „symbols“ or signs which express them, together with the causes we are inclined to associate with the things represented, on the basis of which we form common notions of things, but not according to the order of intellect or with respect to their true causes.[73] Things

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[72]A type of freedom analogous to the absolute freedom of the *substantia infinita* – cf . *Ethics* ID7. The idea of „freedom“ of the imagination is remarkable in the context of what might otherwise be called Spinoza's necessitarianism, and might be compared to – and may perhaps been influential in the formation of – Kant's conception of „intellectual intuition“, which is impossible to human beings but might hypothetically be attributed to a Creator God, and his concept of „productive“ or „spontaneous“ imagination, an expression of the analogous human ability. Cf. *Critique of Pure Reason* B 68, 72; Cf. B 103, 151; *Critique of Judgment* 240–244. The dual functioning of the single faculty of imagination (with the corresponding dual exercise of judgment) is characteristic for both thinkers. Just as in Kant in the production of theoretical knowledge the faculty of imagination (and the corresponding exercise of judgment) performs two types of functions, an involuntary „schematic“ function (with corresponding „determinative“ use of judgment), as it is later called, by which the manifold of sense experience is „automatically“ synthesized and subordinated to the categories of the understanding, and a „spontaneous“, productive, or free function (with corresponding „reflective“ use of judgment), by which a particular individual phenomenon of our experience is identified as a manifestation of some universal value, such as beauty, the sublime, the purposeless purposiveness of organic life, so also in Spinoza it is possible to identify a subordinate and a superordinate role of imagination.

[73] Cf. 2 P17S, P18, 2P40S2: „From all that has been said above 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 P29C); for that reason I have been accustomed to call such perceptions knowledge from random experience (*cognitionem ab experientia vaga*). 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 (P18S). I shall call both these ways of regarding things knowledge of the first kind, opinion, or imagination.“

in nature cannot be explained, and no reliable general notion of them can be given „merely by the images formed of them“, since these images and our recollection of them vary according to how the body „has more often been affected“. In other words, how the body is most often affected determines what „the mind most easily imagines and remembers“. Therefore „each will form universal images of things according to the disposition of his body.“ (P40S1)

Knowledge based on imagination or opinion comprises then neither „adequate knowledge of the human body“ nor adequate knowledge of the human mind (2P27D, 2P29D). Insofar as the idea of an affection of the human body arises with regard to the body's affection by a certain isolated mode or thing, it cannot express the body's nature adequately, since the body is a complex individual, „which can be affected with many other modes,“ and not just this one. Neither then can the „idea of the idea of the affection“ of the body which arises in the Mind on the basis of such an idea express the nature of the human mind adequately (2P29D). Spinoza concludes that „so long as the human Mind perceives things from the common order of nature,“ that is, „so long as it is determined externally, from fortuitous encounters with things, to regard this or that,“ it has no adequate knowledge, „but only a confused and mutilated knowledge of itself, of its own Body and of external bodies.“ (2P29C,S).

It is only when the Mind is determined „internally, from the fact that it regards a number of things at once, to understand their agreements, differences, and oppositions,“ that it „regards things clearly and distinctly“ (2P29S). This may occur in one of two ways, or rather, occurs in two stages, through *ratio* and through *scientia intuitiva*, which correspond to the two upper divisions of Plato's line, *dianoia* and *noesis* and their production of true knowledge, *episteme*. The second (or third, if we count imagination and opinio as two separate stages of knowledge) type of knowledge, called *ratio* (2P38, C; P39 and C., P40), is the approximate equivalent of *dianoia* in Plato's Line. Formed first on the basis of „notions common to all men“ and „adequate ideas of the properties of things,“ *ratio* comprises ultimately „knowledge of how things are constituted [...] in God, insofar as he has ideas of all of them.“[74]

The „third kind of knowledge“ distinguished by Spinoza he calls *scientia intuitiva*.

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[74] Similarly, in Plato's Line, *dianoia* refers to the capacity by which „the soul is compelled to investigate by treating as images the things imitated in the former division“ (i.e. the „things“ taken by *pistis*, belief or *opinio*, to be the source of the *eikones*, the shadows and reflections produced from sense impressions by *eikasia* or imagination), „and by means of assumptions from which it proceeds not up [i.e. by the method of hypothesis] to a first principle but down [deductively or analytically] to a conclusion“. The next and highest section of the line represents *noesis*, the capacity by which the mind „advances from its assumption to a beginning or principle that transcends assumption [...] which it makes no use of the images employed by the other section, relying on ideas only and progressing systematically through ideas.“ (*Rep.* 510b–511c)

Scientia intuitiva „proceeds from an adequate idea of the absolute essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things.“[75] This recalls the Line's highest segment, which describes that part of knowledge derived from a transcendent first principle, where reason without recourse to images lays hold of

> the other section of the intelligible [...] by the power of dialectics, treating its assumptions not as absolute beginnings but literally as hypotheses, underpinnings, footings, and springboards so to speak, to enable it to rise to that which requires no assumption and is the starting-point of all, and after attaining to that again taking hold of the first dependencies from it, so to proceed downward to the conclusion, making no use whatever of any object of sense but only of pure ideas moving on through ideas to ideas and ending with ideas. (*Rep.* 511c)

By which Socrates according to Glaucon means to distinguish

> The aspect of reality and the intelligible, which is contemplated by the power of dialectic, as something truer and more exact than the object of the so-called arts and sciences whose assumptions are arbitrary starting-points (*Rep.* 511c)

In order to illustrate by a „single example“ the specific characteristic and relationships of his own division of the three (four) kinds or stages of knowledge, Spinoza chooses an *analogy* – a choice which lends weight to the argument for the Platonic provenance of his psychology. For not only does Spinoza deem analogy the appropriate method for explaining the ascending scale of the stages of knowledge, as his primary analogue and point of departure for his comparison he explicitly chooses the law of proportion, a development of the same analogue which served as the basis for Plato's delineation of the stages of knowledge in the Analogy of the Line.[76] Referring to the method of solving a proportion (obtaining the value of a fourth, unknown term) by the multiplication of the means and extremes, Spinoza explains the different approaches taken according to differing levels of knowledge, *opinio* or an acquired but unproven habit of mind, *dianoia* or a method based on axiomatic knowledge, and finally, *scientia intuitiva*, an immediate insight into the truth of the proportion:

> Suppose there are three numbers, and the problem is to find a fourth which is to the third as the second is to the first. Merchants do not hesitate to multiply the second by the third, and divide the product by the first; because they have not yet

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[75] Cf. *Ethics* 5P25 ; P36S.: *scientia intuitiva* is knowledge which follows „from the divine nature and continuously depends upon God.“ Cf. also *Ethics* 2P47S: „From this we see that God's infinite essence and his eternity are known to all. And since all things are in God and are conceived through God, it follows that we can deduce from this knowledge a great many things which we know adequately, and so can form that third kind of knowledge of which we spoke in P40S2“. Wolfson (II, 141f) distinguishes 4 characteristics of *scientia intuitiva:1) „it is a knowledge which is deduced from 'an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God' or from 'the divine nature' or from 'the infinite essence and the eternity of God.',,2) „it arises 'when a thing is perceived through its essence alone',,*; *3) „it arises when a thing is perceived 'through the knowledge of its proximate cause',,; 4) „it is the 'result of clear and distinct conception.'“*

[76] On the central role of the law of proportion to interpretation of Plato's Line cf. M.E. Zovko, „The Way Up and the Way Back“, 326-336.

> forgotten what they heard from their teacher without any demonstration, or because they have often found this in the simplest numbers, or from the force of the Demonstration of P[7][77] in book VII of Euclid, viz. from the common property of proportionals.
>
> But in the simplest numbers none of this is necessary. Given the numbers 1, 2, and 3, noone fails to see that the fourth proportional number is 6 – and we see this much more clearly because we infer the fourth number from the ratio which, in one glance, we see the first number to have to the second. (2P40S2)

The merchants' approach to solving the proportion corresponds to knowledge of the first and second type respectively, using either a kind of trial and error „with simple numbers" physically representable by things of sense (as per *imaginatio*, *eikasia*), or application of rote learning without genuine understanding of the rule „received from a master" (*opinio, pistis*). If the merchant, on the other hand, arrives at the solution by „force of the Demonstration of Proposition 19 in book VII of Euclid", that is, by means of the general property of proportionals, then his knowledge is gained deductively or analytically, i.e. by the second (third) type of knowledge (*ratio, dianoia*) *ex eo, quod notiones communes rerumque proprietatum ideas adequatas habemus*. The final example corresponds to the higher form of perception called *noesis* in Plato. Given a ratio of simple numbers, namely, one to two, and a third number: three, Spinoza explains, „*everyone can see* that the fourth proportional is six." This grasp of the ratio and the analogous relationship of the third term to the missing fourth, provides us, in Spinoza's understanding with a much clearer grasp of the whole proportion, „because we infer the fourth number from the ratio" which we „see the first number to have to the second." This intuitive grasp of the rule is an expression of a type of thought which forms the necessary complement and presupposition to discursive thought. The third (fourth) kind of knowledge, like *noesis*, enables us to see the whole which forms the backdrop and foundation for diachronical reasoning, to formulate hypotheses, gain insight into connections among concepts and discrete units of logical derivation, and overarching solutions of problems.

In Spinoza's view, the third form of knowledge is the sole source of truth. It enables us to conceive things „under a species of eternity", i.e. not „in relation to a certain time and place", but „insofar a we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature" (5P28) It lies in the nature of our intelligence, namely, to regard things not „contingently" or according to the vacillating associations of imagination, but truly, according to „the very necessity of God's eternal nature" (2P44CS,C2Dem). The „greatest striving of the Mind and its greatest virtue" is to understand things by this third kind

[77] Mistakenly translated as Proposition 7 in Curley, 478.

of knowledge, since this type of knowledge alone „proceeds from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things“ (5P25). To understand things by the third type of knowledge is to know God, which is the greatest virtue of the Mind (4P28) It is this type of knowledge which produces „the greates satisfaction of Mind“, since one who possesses it passes „to the greatest perfection“ and is consequently „affected by the greatest Joy, accompanied (by IIP43) by the idea of himself and his virtue.“ (5P27)

Our greatest perfection lies in our greatest ability to act, as opposed to being acted upon, and our greatest ability to act is expressed by the greatest striving and virtue of the mind, which is to understand things by the third kind of knowledge (5P40, 5P24). It is intellect, according to Spinoza, the „eternal part of the mind“ (5P23S), „by which alone we are said to act“, whereas by the imagination, except in its free use, we are acted upon. In light of the primacy of intellect and its natural striving to grasp all things *sub specie aeternitatis*, the more controversial aspects of Spinoza's „naturalist“ psychology – eg. his denial of free will, his equation of striving to persevere in one's existence with our essence, and virtue with seeking one's advantage, etc. – ultimately achieve their adequate explanation. For if it is intellect by which we may most properly be said to act, and if the greatest striving of the mind is to know things by the third (fourth) type of knowledge, then the seeking of one's advantage is nothing else than striving to understand things according to this kind of knowledge. In other words, it is the ascent of knowledge itself on the path to perfection of the human mind. In lieu of attainment of this perfect knowledge, the perfection of human nature and our true freedom and happiness, we can still order our lives according to sound habits of behaviour and judgment. To achieve this, Spinoza recommends that „the best thing [...] we can do [...] is to 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.“ In this manner, our *imagination* will be „extensively affected by them“ so that „we shall always have them ready“. The principle which Spinoza has in mind is „the principle of our own true advantage, and also of the good which follows from mutual friendship and common society.“ Since „the highest satisfaction of mind stems from the right principle of living“, there is an appetite too for this principle, which is consciously felt and understood like other affects: „For the Mind feels those things that it conceives in understanding no less than those it has in memory.“ (5P23S) The insight into the highest principle may be accessible to *scientia intuitiva* even without the *makrotera hodos* of geometrical demonstration, „For the eyes of the mind, by which it sees and observes things, are the demonstrations themselves.“ (ibid.) If we are able to recall, „that men like other things, act from the necessity of nature“, then we will

not be affected by emotions which diminish our ability to act, but will order our thoughts and images by attending to that which is good in each thing, acting thus from an affect of Joy (5P10) One who „understands himself and his affects clearly and distinctly rejoices“ and since his Joy, insofar as his ideas are related to God, „is accompanied by the idea of God“, he may be said in this sense to love God. The paradoxical unity of freedom and necessity insofar as it relates to human happiness is thus permanently rooted in the paradoxical unity of knowledge and affect, intellect and emotion, mind and body, a union which Spinoza affirms as the basis also for the mutual friendship and community which are a prerequisite for the attainment of our true advantage and the goal of our striving to persevere in our being according to our specific nature.

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