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Intersubjective Readings of Spinoza
Guest editor | Martin Lenz

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Critical Comments on Martin Lenz's *Socializing Minds: Intersubjectivity in Early Modern Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press 2022)

General Introduction

Martin Lenz*

Abstract

This is the introduction to the special issue of the *Journal of Spinoza Studies* dedicated to discussion of Martin Lenz's *Socializing Minds: Intersubjectivity in Early Modern Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022). It provides an overview of the topic that the papers in this issue are centered around, an outline of the main theses of *Socializing Minds*, and acknowledgments for the related workshop.

Keywords: Spinoza, intersubjectivity, contrariety, bodies, property

Most of us find it commonsensical to think that our minds are tucked away in our bodies, hidden from others, while the skin provides a boundary of our precious selves. But this is not the only way to think about ourselves. What if thoughts and feelings float in bundles, passing from one to another, transmitted like viruses through physical media or through imitation? Following the reading of Spinoza I explore in my book, you wouldn't have a mind, if it were not for other minds. The central thesis of the book discussed in this special issue is that at least some early modern philosophers start from an intersubjectivity thesis, i.e., the assumption that human minds depend on other minds. One way of cashing out this thesis is to assume that they depend on other minds for their very being. This is what I call a *metaphysical model of intersubjectivity*. As I see it, Spinoza's account of the mind should be read as a metaphysical model of the mind. If this reading is correct, it follows that our minds are only partially our own minds. Ideas strive by themselves, as it were, to survive, to find suitable hosts, and to develop themselves against contrary ideas. The *Comments* in this special issue engage with the intersubjective approach in Spinoza. Since they partly also touch on the general

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claims of the book, I provide a brief overview of the book and the workshop from which the papers emerged.

Socializing Minds provides the first reconstruction of intersubjective accounts of the mind in early modern philosophy. Some phenomena are easily recognized as social or interactive: certain dances, forms of work, and rituals require interaction to come into being or count as valid. But what about mental states, such as thoughts, volitions, or emotions? Do our minds also depend on other minds? The idea that our minds are intersubjective or social seems to be a fairly recent one, developed mainly in the 19th and 20th centuries against the individualism of early modern philosophers. By contrast, this book argues that well-known early modern philosophers often started from the idea that minds are intersubjective. How then does a mind depend on the minds of others? Early modern philosophers are well known to have developed a number of theories designed to explain how we cognize external objects. What is hardly recognized is that early modern philosophers also addressed the problem of how our cognition is influenced by other minds. The book provides a historical and rational reconstruction of three central but different early modern accounts of the influence that minds exert on one another: Spinoza's metaphysical model, Locke's linguistic model, and Hume's medical model. Showing for each model of mental interaction (1) why it was developed, (2) how it construes mind-mind relations, and (3) what view of the mind it suggests, this book aims at uncovering a crucial part of the unwritten history of intersubjectivity in the philosophy of mind.

The *Introduction* to the book explains what intersubjectivity is and why we should care about the history of this idea. Taking issue with the common historiography, this part briefly looks back at Gilbert Ryle's famous *Concept of Mind* that presents us with a discussion of Descartes' *cogito* before developing what is now often referred to as behaviorism. I argue that, rather than just drawing a caricature of Cartesianism, Ryle gains enormous argumentative mileage out of his "Cartesian Myth" for his own approach: Claiming that Cartesian dualism entails individualism about the mind, Ryle runs together two theses that should rather be kept separately. In decoupling mentalism and individualism, I show that minds can be and indeed were taken to interact and directly affect one another.

Chapter One presents Spinoza's concept of the mind as grounded in contrary conative interaction. Since Spinoza thinks that the identity of individuals lies in their striving for self-preservation (*conatus*), his position is often interpreted as a version of individualism. However, given that Spinoza takes individuals to be determined by their convergence in striving, any number of entities striving in the same way can be called an individual. Thus, metaphysically speaking, whole communities can be seen as individuals. But what is the crucial principle according to which minds are related to one another? Building on what it means for an idea to have a *conatus*, the chapter shows that it is the notion of contrariety that is crucial for understanding his metaphysics of the mind.

Chapter Two presents Locke's theory of ideational and linguistic intentionality as based on the acceptance of the speech community. While Locke's view is commonly taken to be individualistic, it is often overlooked that his position is clearly embedded in an anthropological view that deems humans as inherently social animals. I show that his crucial step lies in uniting two traditions that have mostly been kept apart: Aristotelian semantics, on the one hand, and the anthropology underlying the political thought in authors such as Pufendorf, on the other hand. Mediated by language, the content of human thought is determined by tacit consent. What makes the expressions of ideas correct or incorrect is determined by whether they are accepted by other members of the linguistic community.

In contrast to numerous interpretations, it is thus argued that the decisive factor in the determination of ideas turns out to be intersubjective.

Chapter Three presents Hume as endorsing a medical model of intersubjectivity. While it benefits greatly from so-called naturalistic and therapeutic readings, it differs from those in that it takes the references to medicine not as metaphorical. Rather, I will try to spell out how the model shapes Hume's view of the mind. It shall be argued, then, that for Hume medical assumptions help us see how our mental lives are socially shaped. Although Hume is not explicit about the precise medical theories he endorses, he is adamant to defend his account of sympathy against competing explanations, especially against so-called climate theories according to which our mental life is largely shaped by our physical environment rather than through interactions. The emerging position is that the sympathetic interdependence of our minds forms the background against which our views count as normal or good.

The *Conclusion* considers the crucial alterations in the common picture of early modern philosophy of mind that this study leaves us with. Even if early modern authors often seem to consider mental states as arising independently of the social environment, the explanatory focus is intersubjective: For Spinoza, Locke, and Hume mental states of individuals have to be explained in relation to other minds. The conclusion contextualizes the metaphysical, linguistic, and medical models by highlighting their early modern opponents and some current philosophical debates in which these models survive. In a further step, I provide a brief survey of potential receptions of the models in Anne Conway, Condillac, Dugald Stewart, and Immanuel Kant.

The *Comments* on my book by Daniel Bella, Lorina Buhr, Andrea Blättler, and Ivo Eichhorn were first presented at a workshop in May 2023 at Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, kindly organized by Andrea Blättler and Ivo Eichhorn. I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers, commentators, and participants whose instructive contributions still keep me pondering on the issues we discussed. Moreover, I would like to thank the four anonymous reviewers appointed for this special issue for their great suggestions.

All comments engage with the central thesis of my chapter on Spinoza. Here, contrariety is introduced as the central notion explaining how minds relate to one another. Zooming in on the relation between *contrariety* and *agreement* as the basis of the conatus of ideas, Daniel Bella presents his comment as a dialogue exploring which of the two might have priority. Lorina Buhr, in turn, discusses the *Aristotelian background of the notion of contrariety* and offers a reinterpretation of the contrasting relation between ideas as complementarity. Seeing that my book focuses mainly on the attribute of thought, Andrea Blättler asks what the interactionist reading means for the attribute of extension and considers the *relations between bodies*. Since I discuss the ownership of mental states in the light of my intersubjective reading, Ivo Eichhorn raises the question of whether my interpretation attributes to Spinoza a problematic understanding of (*mental*) *property*.

Agreement or Contrariety? A Dialogue¹

Daniel Bella*

Abstract

In one of his blog posts, Martin Lenz refers to Wittgenstein's *Rabbit-duck*: a picture puzzle that can be interpreted as depicting a rabbit or a duck. The point of this analogy is that what we are perceiving corresponds to our personal experiences, which can be shaped in discussions with others even though we remain unable to grasp both pictures at once. The starting point of the following dialogue is exactly such a Rabbit-duck illusion. Reading Lenz's chapter on Spinoza again and again, I remained unsure whether *contrariety* or *agreement* is the fundamental relation which warrants his claim that minds are intrinsically social. The aim of this text is to enter into dialogue on this subject and examine the problems and advantages of both readings. Must it necessarily be the case that contrariety and agreement are mutually exclusive like the two parts of the Rabbit-duck?

Keywords: Spinoza, Martin Lenz, agreement, contrariety, *conatus*

Homologiasphilia: Yesterday, we discussed Lenz's chapter on Spinoza with delight. Would you mind pursuing our conversation since there are some points that I still do not understand?

Enantiouphilia: I am glad we are on the same page. As far as I can remember, we both consent that the notions of agreement and contrariety are key to Lenz's project. However, we have not been dealing with their relation so far. To start with, let me propose one passage that might help us in this regard. Lenz summarizes his position as follows: "On my reading, Spinoza's crucial tenet is that ideas of different minds are related through contrariety or agreement."²

H: Why do you think this quote could be a good starting point?

- 1 I would like to thank all the participants of the workshop for their helpful comments. I am especially indebted to Martin Lenz for sharing and discussing his ideas with us and to Andrea Blättler and Ivo Eichhorn, who not only organized this wonderful event but also offered feedback on an earlier version of this paper.
- 2 Martin Lenz, *Socializing Minds: Intersubjectivity in Early Modern Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 31.

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E: This formulation invites us to reflect upon the question ‘what are the driving forces behind the sociality of ideas: contrariety, agreement, or both?’ More technically, I wonder how we are supposed to understand the *or*. As you know, there are two options. First, we might interpret it as an inclusive *or*, which means that the disjunction is only false if both disjuncts are false. Second, we might understand it as an exclusive disjunction which in addition is false if both disjuncts are true. In the inclusive case, the sentence would imply that mind m_1 and mind m_2 are not related iff they enjoy neither agreement nor contrariety. According to the exclusive interpretation, there can only exist one relation between m_1 and m_2 , which means that they are *either* associated by contrariety *or* by agreement.

H: I wonder whether I can follow what you are saying. As far as I understand, you are unsure whether Lenz’s interpretation allows for minds to be related by contrariety *and* agreement at the same time. However, I simply cannot see how this question might help us to come to grips with Lenz’s project. So, before focusing on your question, let us recapitulate the points we have agreed on already.

E: If I remember correctly, we share the impression that Lenz’s interpretation shifts the focus from ideas in general to a special kind of ideas: minds. This becomes clear if we compare his approach to other engagements with Spinoza’s theory of ideas which often tend to revolve around the question how one and the same idea can exist as an adequate idea in God and as an inadequate idea in finite minds at the same time. Lenz, in contrast, is primarily concerned with the problem how, given mind m is the idea of body b , m can have ideas that are contrary to the nature of b .

H: That’s right. But remember that we also noted that if one adheres to the thesis that the content of ideas is determined in relation to other ideas, there remains only a perspectival difference between these two approaches. Put simply, the problem Lenz deals with comes down to the question how mind m can possess inadequate ideas of its body b .

E: This is, I contend, still a matter of dispute because Lenz seems less interested in the question of where the content of an idea comes from...

H: ...Indeed, but the reason for this is that Lenz is in accord with interpretations which argue that every idea is a belief for Spinoza. The term ‘idea’ does not therefore denote a neutral content which *can* voluntarily be affirmed or denied. Rather, ideas are intrinsically related to affirmations or negations.

E: However, as we examined yesterday, this raises the following question: in virtue of what are ideas affirmed or denied if not by the will of the person holding them? To my mind, our dispute is precisely rooted in this question.

H: I am not so sure. I think there are still further points we agree on. For instance, I reckon we might both concur that, according to Lenz, ideas are affirmed or negated in relation to other ideas already adopted by a mind and that this relation can be characterized in terms of contrariety.

E: I agree. But only because you have described Lenz’s approach in a quite fuzzy way. Things get more interesting as soon as we try to flesh out how exactly this relation is supposed to work and what it means to say that a mind adopts, possesses, or has an idea.

H: I acknowledge that you are always eager to sow the seed of discord. But I beg you not to forget that discord presupposes some kind of basic agreement. By the same token, Lenz makes it unmistakably clear that contrariety presupposes agreement since two ideas are only contrary if they concern the same body. Now, as Lenz emphasizes, agreement and contrariety are explicated with

reference to the *conatus* of an idea. We thus get a picture where every idea possesses an affirmative power unless it encounters an incompatible idea related to the same body.

E: For the record, are you stating that the contrariety of an idea is derivative of its agreement with a body?

H: What do you mean by that?

E: Taken in itself, every idea implies affirmation. Contrariety is thus the result of an idea being related to another idea which possesses at least one non-agreeing property. Consequently, contrariety is an extrinsic property because an idea is only contrary in comparison to other ideas.

H: I subscribe to your description, but I cannot see what your problem with this interpretation is. Indeed, it seems to square nicely with Spinoza's conception of activity: we are active if our *conatus* is not impeded by other forces.

E: If I remember correctly, we already touched upon this issue yesterday, albeit without developing it further. With your agreement, let us examine what Lenz means when he states that an idea has a *conatus*. As you can imagine, I have my own stance on this issue. However, I am inclined to hear your position first. In virtue of what, according to your reading, do ideas possess a *conatus*?

H: I am basically in line with Michael Della Rocca here and think that Lenz defends the same claim. For Della Rocca, ideas are actions. Since actions stem from the *conatus* of an individual and this *conatus* is the 'essence' of this very individual, any action of an individual must be compatible with its existence or it "is not an action of that individual" at all.³ However, this does not imply that individuals are always doing what is good for them, as it is possible that their affirmative ideas are "prevented by other, stronger ideas."⁴ In these cases, our actions are driven by ideas that are not our own since our own ideas are overpowered and are thus inadequate.

E: I doubt that this interpretation holds water. As I see it, a central problem of this approach is that it cannot explain the *social* element of Lenz's theory. If a mind always affirms the existence of its body, the *social* relations to other ideas are only external obstacles. I think that your interpretation bargains away the innovative potential of Lenz's approach, which becomes most evident when he claims "that Spinoza holds an interactive account of ideas in that their affirmative force is explained in virtue of contrariety."⁵

H: Do you think I am unable to see that your insistence on contrariety poses the same problem? If ideas are only interactive or social in virtue of contrariety, interaction and sociality are nothing more than simple impediments.⁶ Indeed, there is a long tradition within Spinoza scholarship that understands the *conatus* as an affirmative force that is identical with the actual essence of an individual.⁷ Against this backdrop, Andrea Sangiacomo recently proposed distinguishing between the *conatus* and the *potentia* of an individual.⁸ While the *conatus* denotes the internal power of an individual, its *potentia* results from the interaction of the *conatus* with external forces. If you set

3 Michael Della Rocca, "The Power of an Idea: Spinoza's Critique of Pure Will," *NOÛS* 37, no. 2 (2003): 208.

4 *Ibid.*, 211.

5 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 45.

6 I owe this point to Andrea Blättler.

7 Cf. for instance Chantal Jaquet, *Affects, Actions and Passions in Spinoza: The Unity of Body and Mind*, trans. Tatiana Reznichenko (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 103.

8 Andrea Sangiacomo, *Spinoza on Reason, Passions, and the Supreme Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 150.

yourself the task to show that Lenz proposes a different conception of the *conatus*, the burden of proof for this claim is on you. However, I am convinced that the dispute between us, if there is any, can be easily solved. So, grant me that the force of an idea is not a sufficient, but only a necessary, condition, since an idea is only affirmed if no contrary idea with a greater force exists.

E: I am deeply aware of the fact that it is part of your nature to seek agreement whenever possible. However, this time I must disappoint you. I think that our dissent is rooted in the fact that we are defending two incompatible conceptions of what it means for the *conatus* of an idea to be actual. As far as I understand, you are saying that ideas are necessarily affirmations as long as they are not overpowered by contrary ideas. My point, in contrast, is that affirmation presupposes that an idea is challenged by a contrary idea. Ideas as such are inert and hence intrinsically social. As Lenz has it: “it is not any single *conatus* but the interaction of ideas, set off by contrariety, that governs the striving and determines which beliefs are held.”⁹

H: If the disagreement among us is as considerable as you described it, it might be suitable to go back from where we started and examine where this rupture stems from. So, let me ask you: Do you agree that Lenz accepts what he calls *doxastic involuntarism*, which means that every idea is affirmed unless it is overpowered by contrary ideas?

E: Of course. How could you expect me to state the contrary?

H: At the same time, you are saying that it is only possible to affirm an idea if a contrary idea exists?

E: Indeed.

H: As a result, you are obliged to hold the view that we only possess ideas that are challenged by contrary ideas?

E: Without any doubt. Indeed, Lenz states precisely this when he writes that

[c]ontrariety explains what sets of ideas against one another such that resisting and thus striving can emerge. At the same time, the contrariety of ideas also bears on the question of identity of ideas. As I pointed out above, the *conatus* of ideas is their essence. How could something sensibly be said to strive, if it were not determinable that there is some possible opposition to this striving? In other words, how could there be sensible talk of affirmation without any possible negation?¹⁰

Consequently, Lenz accords huge importance to contrariety, since it is contrariety that explains why an idea strives and in virtue of what are minds different. An idea only affirms its object if its striving is triggered by a contrary idea. Contrary ideas cannot belong to the same mind. Hence, every idea in mind *m* presupposes contrary ideas which in virtue of being contrary belong to other minds. Consequently, the affirmation of my mind is essentially social. Before we go into the details, let us acknowledge that one of the upshots of this approach is that the *conatus* of an idea is intrinsically related to the striving of contrary ideas. The beauty of this is, of course, that identity presupposes negativity or difference...

⁹ Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 46.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

H: I hope you don't mind if I interrupt you here. I think this description leads us too far astray since it first and foremost reveals your own theoretical convictions.

E: Even though I think that Lenz is on my side here, let us leave the consequences for a while. My worry is simply that your interpretation is too weak to defend the claim of the inbuilt sociality of minds, since if agreement comes first, we end up with a picture of ideas as entirely self-sustaining.

H: As you can imagine, I am tempted to argue in the opposite direction that your interpretation is too strong. Just try, for a second, to recollect different ideas in your mind. Are you capable of finding contrary ideas for all of them? Just take the idea that the earth is spherical. Does your affirmation of this idea really rely on the fact that you met a person who states the contrary assumption that the earth is flat?

E: I think we have reached an important point for better understanding what sets us apart. There are two remarks that I want to make. First, it is essential to grasp the difference between our putative knowledge of a contrary idea and its actual existence. As Lenz aptly shows, we are often not aware that an idea or a desire is in fact contrary to the essence of our body. Just remember his example: My desire to drink a beer might be prompted by the fact of me being hungry. Beer indeed reduces my hunger, but of course it is not the healthiest way to do so. As a result, despite its correlation with satisfying my hunger, beer has many negative side effects on my body that I might be unaware of.¹¹ Second, as we have already noted, the very fact that two ideas are contrary presupposes that they refer to the same body.¹² Now, if we go back to your example, we can see that the idea of the earth being flat and the idea of the earth being spherical refer to the same body. However, the body they are referring to is of course the earth (and not my own body). Since the idea of the earth being spherical strives only in virtue of being afflicted with a contrary idea of the same body, my body does not play any role in explaining why the idea of the earth being spherical strives at all, since "contrary ideas have to be about the same body, but cannot be in the same mind."¹³

H: I am quite surprised to hear you put so much emphasis on agreement. Must I assume that you changed sides furtively?

E: Not at all.

H: So, you are not willing to accept that you provided a formidable argument against the position which you still assume to defend?

E: I am unable to understand what you are saying.

H: Do you agree that both a completely red and a completely green apple are equally useful to a human body?

E: Of course.

H: In addition, you could even add that the two arguments you presented are relying on this very distinction...

E: Yes, the beer example was supposed to show that we are often prone to affirm ideas that are in fact contrary to our body because of our ignorance of other causes. The second example suggests that the contrariety is due to the object of an idea. The idea of a red apple and the idea of a green apple are thus contrary in virtue of one and the same apple being red or green.

¹¹ Ibid., 38.

¹² Ibid., 72.

¹³ Ibid.

H: Now, do you further agree that Lenz holds that an idea *i* belongs to the mind *m* if *i* affirms the body *b* whose idea is *m*?

E: Absolutely. I could even add that *i* fosters the *potentia agendi* of this particular body *b*.

H: Fine. Let's go on and see if we still agree. Do you think that the idea of a completely green and the idea of a completely red apple both foster the *potentia agendi* of a – let's say – particular human body?

E: I will restrain myself from developing further complications for now and willingly grant you that both apples are equally fostering the *potentia agendi* of this body.

H: Now, do you grant that the idea of a completely red and the idea of a completely green apple are contrary?

E: How could I state the opposite? Both ideas are contrary to the extent that one and the same apple cannot be at the same time completely red and completely green, while it is still possible that this apple is neither green nor red (it might be brown, for instance).

H: But if both ideas are contrary, this entails that one and the same mind can affirm contrary ideas. However, this is pernicious since Lenz's conception of the individuality of minds hinges on the assumption "that a competing idea cannot belong to the same mind (E III p 10)."¹⁴

E: At this point, I beg you not to forget that the idea of a green and the idea of a red apple are only contrary if they are related to one and the same apple. However, if they are related to my body, they are equally useful and thus not contrary to each other.

H: Do you then still hold that ideas always presuppose contrary ideas in order to strive?

E: Of course.

H: But if the idea of a green apple and the idea of a red apple are not contrary regarding my body, in virtue of what are they striving? Don't you have to accept that, *pace* Lenz, there are ideas that do not strive at all?

E: Not at all. Rather, I contend, you have outstripped yourself. In order to get back on the right track it might be helpful if we recall a distinction that Spinoza proposes in E2p17. There, our philosopher makes it clear that some ideas cannot be accounted for by our mind alone as they presuppose that our mind is affected by an external body. Your idea that there is now a completely green apple in front of you cannot be explained with reference to your mind alone. We have already touched upon the reason for this earlier: All other things being equal, a completely green apple and a completely red apple are of identical usage for your own body. There is thus no means to decide, with reference to the ideas in your mind alone, if the present apple should be red or green (as your mind is only the idea of your body). For doing so, external affections are necessary, which of course is never a neutral device.

H: That's right. With the existence of ideas that are (partly) due to our body being affected by an external object we enter the realm of imagination. It is here that ideas in my mind arise which are about 'external' objects. But now I want to ask you the following: do you agree that we are here speaking about two different sorts of ideas, namely ideas that constitute a mind and ideas that are in another mind?

E: Of course. Spinoza himself suggests this distinction. But why do you think this point is important?

¹⁴ Ibid., 71.

H: It is important because it shows that contrariety arises first and foremost on the level of ideas that do not constitute the essence of the mind. Every mind is hence a set of ideas that affirms the existence of its body. However, if this body is affected by other bodies and the mind is thus affected by other ideas, contrariety comes into play. But this means that contrariety is restricted to our imagination. In fact, Spinoza proposes to overcome the imagination by a kind of knowledge that concentrates on the properties that are common to “the human body and some external bodies” (E2p39/G II 119).

E: What you are saying is of course not surprising. But please do not ignore the little detail that this second kind of knowledge you are describing does *not* refer to the essences of the things involved.

H: To admit this seems to be a problem only for someone who is so heavily invested in contrariety that she/he might even assume that the essence of everything is due to its incompatible properties. But let us leave this aside for a moment. Rather, I wish to finally come back to the distinction you proposed at the beginning. Do you think we have achieved anything to solve our question?

E: My impression is that we have been dealing with the question of *contrariety* or *agreement*, presupposing that both terms are mutually exclusive. Implicitly we have thus adopted the view that the *or* signifies an exclusive disjunction. Consequently, it is not possible that mind *m*1 and mind *m*2 are related by contrariety *and* by agreement.

H: Both of us have been trying to argue that the concept defended by the other is derivative. Hence, I am trying to tell you that contrariety presupposes agreement, and you are defending the view that affirmation presupposes contrariety. Now, do you think that we agree at least insofar as we both maintain that affirmation and contrariety are opposed to each other. Either affirmation is non-contrariety or contrariety is non-affirmation. If you define one of the two terms you then get the other for free.

E: I think our dispute would be pointless without this assumption.

H: Do you also agree that it might be one of the results of our conversation that there is no such thing as *per se* contrariety, since two ideas are only contrary if they contain incompatible properties and are related to the *same* body. Is the same also true for agreement?

E: How could it be otherwise?

H: From this, I contend, a solution to our question suggests itself. What happens if we adopt the thesis that the relation is indeed inclusive?

E: It would mean that one and the same mind can be related to another mind by contrariety as well as by agreement.

H: To my mind, this sounds promising since it would allow us to assume that both relations presuppose each other mutually.

E: This might be the right solution. Being part of the same attribute, minds must trivially agree on something. However, they are only different minds because they do not agree on everything.

H: I think this succinct summary might be a good starting point for further discussion. For today, I beg you, let us conclude our discussion. It is getting late.

E: You are right. But promise me that we will take up our conversation tomorrow.

H: I agree.

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Contrariety and Complementarity: Reading Spinoza's Intersubjective Holism of Ideas with Aristotle's Two Accounts of Motion

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Abstract

Do minds and ideas connect, interact, or even depend on each other, and if so, how exactly do they connect and interact? How should we conceive of the mode and process of minds and ideas being in a network and connected in some way, that is, being intersubjective or social? Martin Lenz's study *Socializing Minds* convincingly shows that, contrary to widespread opinion in philosophy of mind, at least some early modern philosophers, here Spinoza, Locke, and Hume, actually give a positive answer to the first question and present models that respond to the second question, thus addressing what Lenz proposes calling 'the contact problem' and repudiating the idea that mentalism is necessarily bound to individualism. In this comment, I focus on a detail in Lenz's reconstruction of Spinoza's 'metaphysical model' of the intersubjectivity of minds, namely the Aristotelian physical dynamism that would underlie Spinoza's idea of the interaction of minds. While I agree that Spinoza's model of interaction of minds refers to the Aristotelian conception of motion, I argue that the guiding principle in natural motion is best understood not only in terms of contrariety but also in terms of complementarity. Admittedly, my proposal goes beyond Spinoza's model of ideas in contact, and probably beyond Lenz's interpretation of that model, but it might enrich the imagination of the socialising of minds and ideas from a kinetic point of view, which, at least as I understand it, is precisely what Spinoza and Lenz thrive on.

Keywords: Spinoza, Martin Lenz, Aristotle, motion, contrariety, complementarity, *conatus*, idea

1 In Search of the Underlying Model for Contrariety and Agreement

When analysing an abstract or concrete entity, an idea, a constellation, or a relationship, it is a common and current practice to explore the guiding principles that constitute, guide, or orient the entity in question. Starting from the well-established reading that Spinoza develops a concept of

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internal and external networks of minds (internal in the sense that a single mind consists of associated ideas, external in the sense that minds interact), a kind of 'holism of ideas' or 'ecology of minds,' Lenz is interested in the particular way and mode in which minds are connected and interact within these networks.¹ More specifically, the relationship in question is the dependence of minds (the minds of different people) on other minds, and how this relationship is in turn shaped by a particular conceptual resource. For Spinoza, Lenz sees the dependence of minds "rooted in the metaphysical model governed by a specific understanding of contrariety and agreement."² So the question is, what is the underlying model that guides the idea of contrariety and agreement as the two guiding principles or modes for the interaction and interdependence of minds? The answer to this question promises a well-drawn analysis of Spinoza's (metaphysically driven) 'model of intersubjectivity.' This model can be read as a response to the contact problem of minds, i.e., the question of how to conceive the concrete connection and interaction of ideas and minds.

Before embarking on a search for the underlying model, we should first sketch the general idea of an intersubjective or *social* holism of ideas (this is Lenz's interpretation of Spinoza's holism of ideas), and the basic 'mechanism' by which different minds are related to each other, and thus brought into some kind of social relationship. Based on the principle of a basic interrelatedness of things and of ideas (in general: mental states), "the content of an idea depends on the content of other ideas."³ Focussing on the content of ideas, this epistemological approach can also be called 'content holism.' What does this mean? Against an intramental and 'atomistic' interpretation of knowledge that states a simple "*idea-object relation*," Lenz spots an "*idea-idea relation*" which involves heterogenous ideas in one mind but also in other minds.⁴ For this "*intermental relation*"⁵ of ideas (and minds) in Spinoza's theory of mind, three elements are essential in Lenz's reading; they also consolidate the relating mechanism between ideas. Firstly—and this is a metaphysical axiom—ideas have a particular striving (a *conatus*), and ideas precisely connect to each other by confronting each other with their striving. Secondly, the confronting ideas and minds can be qualified as affirming ideas or contrary/opposing ideas. Thirdly, the contrariety of ideas (and minds) results in the exclusion of a belief or idea, with bodily affects determining (and also mediating) the holding or repudiation of an idea. As Spinoza puts it with regard to the idea of the existence of an external body:

If the human body is affected with a mode that involves the nature of an external body, the human mind will regard the same external body as actually existing, or as present to it, until the body is affected by an affect that excludes the existence or the presence of that body (E2p17/G II 104).

1 Martin Lenz, *Socializing Minds: Intersubjectivity in Early Modern Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 31–32.

2 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 33.

3 Ibid., 51.

4 Ibid., 51.

5 Ibid., 45.

Lenz refers to this proposition to emphasise what I would call the *inertia* of beliefs, or what he calls “belief fixation”⁶ or the “principle of the priority of belief”;⁷ that is, “[e]verything is believed unless it is excluded.”⁸ Technically, I would reformulate the belief fixation and the aspect of sociality of minds as follows:

An idea or belief *A* counts for a mind *a* as valid as long as or unless no stronger belief *B* appears that contradicts belief *A*.

This describes the basic process of belief fixation or ‘inertia of beliefs.’ Now suppose that belief *B* is in an external mind *b*, that is, applying a ‘socialised’ reading of belief fixation:

Belief *B* in mind *b* prompts mind *a* to exclude belief *A* (or the content of the idea) and to consider belief *B* to be valid.

Put the other way round, belief *A* is held by mind *a* as long as idea *B* in mind *b* supports or affirms or agrees with belief *A*. This is a strong version of a ‘socialised’ exclusion of beliefs; a weaker version would say that mind *a* holds belief *A* as long as there is no overriding belief *B* in mind *b*.⁹

According to Lenz, the mechanism of inclusion and exclusion of an idea, or, what Lenz calls the “principle of exclusion,” is based on the metaphysical aspect of contrariety: since “things (and minds) are of contrary nature,” they initiate interaction in terms of inclusion and exclusion. The question is then, if contrariety determines the principle of exclusion and the relation of ideas, what in turn determines contrariety? Answering this question also reveals the underlying model or principle that governs how networks and beliefs operate. For this, we need to go back to Spinoza’s general metaphysics and its theoretical sources.

Keeping in mind the pivotal *conatus* principle (“each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being,” E3p6/G II 146) and the natural philosophical foundation of Spinoza’s metaphysics (that I would also see as *meta-physics*¹⁰), which put the emphasis on bodies in motion and rest (as modes of/in God), it is by far not unplausible or inconsistent to also attribute to minds and ideas a *conatus*, i.e., a striving, and to conceive the exclusion principle and contrariety in a natural philosophical light, thus rejecting a merely logical or linguistic reading of contrariety. This is also the interpretative road Lenz takes.¹¹

6 Ibid., 39.

7 Ibid., 43.

8 Ibid., 54.

9 I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for this insightful distinction.

10 See on this notion Lorina Buhr, *Macht und Bewegung. Zur Meta-Physik im sozialen und politischen Machtbegriff im Ausgang von Aristoteles’ dynamis* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2023).

11 See Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, chap. 1.3.1.

2 Lenz's Physical Reading of the Contrariety of Ideas

Traditionally, since the Ionian philosophy of nature, but certainly since Aristotle's *natural philosophy* and (what is generally considered as) *metaphysics*, the key concept of natural philosophy has been motion (*kinēsis*, *metabolē*) and, as a subset of motion, change.¹² Early modern philosophy is still heavily influenced by Aristotle's *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, either formally (e.g., Hobbes, Descartes) or substantially, and Spinoza is no exception. Against this backdrop, it is not surprising to see Aristotelian seeds and residues in Spinoza's metaphysics, and it appears absolutely coherent to read the conative striving (in general and the striving of an idea) and contrariety as dynamic or kinetic notions, i.e., as notions that are "crucial for the explanation of change."¹³ So far, so good. But if we think of motion in Aristotelian terms, then powers and principles of motion come into play—and this is where confusion comes in.

When explaining the dynamism underlying the notion of contrariety, Lenz identifies the theoretical root in the "contrary properties or powers" that "play a fundamental role in [Aristotle's] physical and biological explanation."¹⁴ These explanations are explanations of motions and processes in the organic and non-organic world. For Lenz, Spinoza "blends the opposition of physical forces into the contrariety of ideas, thus allowing for metaphysically conative [...] understanding of contrary relations between ideas."¹⁵

The problem I see with this reading is that there are no opposing or contrary powers (or forces, force is really an early modern notion) in Aristotle's account of natural motion, rather I see *complementary* or contrasting *powers* and *opposing principles*. This is because there are two accounts of motion in Aristotle's *Physics*, a principle-based account in *Physics* I.5–7, and a powers-based account of motion in *Physics* III.1. Both accounts should not be mixed up analytically, rather, I would argue, they provide two distinct but also complementary resources for conceptual and theoretical profiling. In the following, I will briefly sketch the two accounts of motion and then outline how they might lead to a diversified account of the principle of contrariety.

3 A Closer Look at Aristotle's Two Approaches of Motion

The first approach to motion in Aristotle's physics is the triadic structure of motion, based on the three principles of form (F, determination of a thing), privation of form (~F), and matter (subject/ substratum of change). According to this, motion can be understood as the change from a non-existent determination or 'relative not-yet-determination' (privation, lack, *sterēsis*) of a form (~F) to a specific, desired or target determination F (form). This change proceeds on/in a substratum underlying the change (Phys. I.5-7; Met. VII.7). Thus, the opposing or polar principles of the (yet) non-existence

12 One might object that Aristotle excludes substantial change (*genesis*) from the category of motion (see *Physics* V.1). I prefer a reading of the concepts of motion and change as one (pivotal) category of Aristotelian natural philosophy and metaphysics, thus standing in a Thomistic tradition of reading these concepts in a broader sense.

13 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 68.

14 Ibid., 66. Lenz sees the theoretical root of the notion of contrariety primarily in Aristotle's *Physics*, see 23, 56, 66–70.

15 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 68.

of a form/state and the form/state F are the starting and endpoint of a motion. For Aristotle all changes such as becoming thin, ill, white, healthy, skilled, or growing, constructing a house and decreasing, are motions. In terms of contrariety, the triadic principle-based approach describes motion as the turnover or change from a ‘negative’ or non-existent state/principle 1 (let’s say, for instance, weak or not strong) to a realised ‘positive’ state/principle 2 (strong) at a material basis (principle 3, a foal). The first two principles take up the familiar scheme in the history of (transcultural) thought of oppositely organised and irreducible first principles in the form of a principle dualism (e.g., fire & earth, fullness & emptiness, good & evil) (see Phys. I.5, 188a19-30). With the help of the two principles and the setting of the third principle (*hypokeimenon*), which underlies an emergent motion, Aristotle wants to demonstrate the basic comprehensibility of all accidental motions.

Whereas the triadic and principle-based model is best understood as a grid for analysing motions and not as a definition of natural motion in the strict sense, Aristotle’s second approach to motion indeed provides a definition of natural motion and is based on a dyadic structure.¹⁶ Let us first have a look at the dyadic structure. From a conceptual and analytical perspective, natural motion presents a specific relational structure comprising two components: a moving body (*to kinoun*) and a moved body (*to kinoumenon*); or of moving (*kinein*) and being moved (*kineisthai*).¹⁷ The moving and the moved can be conceived as two abstract moments of a motion, as two distinct things in one entity, or as two distinct ontic units that are unified in a motion. As already known from the triadic structure, motion always takes place on a bearing subject, a subject of change or motion, and motion is the becoming of a form or the bringing into form of a thing. Or, as Aristotle puts it: “motion is the fulfilment of the movable as movable” (Phys. III.2, 202a7). For this to happen, the thing/body that is moved must in principle be designed for this motion, it must have a principle or power for becoming able to be moved, and the moving thing/body must have an active power for being able to activate a particular motion on the thing/body being moved. From this definitional perspective, two powers (*dynameis*), or as some translate them ‘potentialities,’ an ‘active’ and a ‘passive,’ constitute a motion when they get in contact and are both ‘in fulfilment’ (*entelecheia*) (Phys. III 2, 202a21–24). Here we seem to be dealing with opposite or contrary powers that determine a particular motion or change, but since they present a kind of ‘fit’ or ‘match,’ they are best understood as correlative or complementary powers rather than as contrary powers. More precisely, the aspects of complementarity and correlativity are key to understanding the relationship of the powers involved in motion.

To summarise the brief outline of Aristotle’s account of motion, we find a triadic, principle-based approach, which is indeed based on the idea of contrariety of principles. Here the transition from a privative state/principle (weak or not strong) to a realised state/principle/form (strong) of or in a body describes motion along a scale of contrariety. The contrariety of the principles is determined by an inner relation, namely the privation and fulfilment of a form. We can also say that the realised form replaces the privative state. The dyadic approach, however, is based on complementary powers,

16 For the distinction between a description and a definition of motion in Aristotle, see Rémi Brague, “Aristotle’s Definition of Motion and Its Ontological Implications,” *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 13, no. 2 (1990): 1–22.

17 Eugen Fink, *Zur Ontologischen Frühgeschichte von Raum – Zeit – Bewegung* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1957), 170.

namely active and passive (or 'agentive' and 'patient') powers, which, both activated and in connection with each other (*hapsis*), constitute a motion in the subject of the motion. These powers are extended to notions of potentiality and activation (some scholars interpret it as 'actuality') and fulfilment, which in turn, I would argue, support the emphasis on complementarity instead of contrariety.

4 Contrariety, Complementarity, and Contrast

Let us now bring Aristotle's accounts of motion, as introduced above, back to Lenz's claims that first, contrariety responds to the contact problem of minds, and second, the principle of contrariety found in Spinoza's philosophy of mind is a natural philosophical notion that uses Aristotle's thoughts on motion, in particular the idea of "opposing forces" as a conceptual resource.¹⁸

As for the second claim, I think that Spinoza's statement about the exclusion of opposing ideas of existence, as expressed in E2p17, fits well with Aristotle's triadic structure of motion and supports Lenz's claim about contrariety as the core issue in the intersubjective holism of ideas. We can think of the transition of an affected body (and mind) from the state of holding an idea (there is a unicorn on the lawn, to take Lenz's example) to the state of rejecting the idea (there is no unicorn on the lawn) as a change from one principle to the opposite principle in a mind, whereas the holding of the final idea can be caused by an idea in the same mind or by an idea from a different mind. Here, contrariety connects the starting point of a motion/affection with the end point of a motion/affection and characterises the relationship between the principles of motion/ideas that are valid for a particular mind. In other words, contrariety is realised in motion or change. That is why this approach could also be referred to as the 'contrariety-in-motion model' or 'kinetic model of contrariety,' as I would suggest. The contrariety-in-motion model nicely shows how two opposing ideas (the idea of the existence of a unicorn and the idea of the non-existence of a unicorn on the lawn) can come into contact by being part of a change in the holders' beliefs. Thus, the reconstruction of contact and contrariety as referring to Aristotle's triadic model of motion appears accurate. However, contrary to Lenz's assumption, no powers (or "forces") are involved here.

Nevertheless, I suggest that the powers-based approach to motion can expand the understanding of pairs of affects, emotions, and ideas, such as love and hate, joy and sorrow. Although Spinoza himself speaks of "contrary affects" with regard to the state of mind (e.g., E3p17s/G II 153-4), this kind of contrariety might better not be thought of in the narrow sense of privation, such as existence and non-existence, weak and strong, ill and healthy. Rather, we can think of the contrariety of affects and ideas in analogy to the principle of complementarity and correlation that governs the relation of the powers (or potentialities) constituting a motion in the subject of motion. This means thinking of an affection as an interplay of two complementary and correlative ideas: no idea of joy without the idea of sorrow and sadness, no idea of health without the idea of being ill. The focus on complementarity could help to further develop the exclusion principle. As Lenz points out, "not every idea can enter" the mind, but rather "the content of ideas seems negatively determined by the

18 To put it bluntly, Lenz's claim can also be reformulated as saying that the notion of contrariety at stake is an Aristotelian notion.

ideas of other minds in that it is set apart by contrariety.”¹⁹ But how should we understand this negative determination? I suggest that the negative determination can be informed by the principles of complementarity and contrast. To elaborate on this point, we can even go one step further, beyond Aristotle’s dyadic approach of motion, and think of complementarity as a kind of contrasting complementarity, as we find it in the concept of contrasting colours in the field of art.²⁰ Contrasting colours, such as green and red, blue and yellow, create a kind of dynamism; they have a moving effect when juxtaposed. Here we find opposition and complementarity at the same time, mediated by the effect of contrasts. Applied to Spinozean pairs of ideas, we could imagine that love and hate, just as red and green, appear on the one hand as opposites, but, on the other, also as contrasts and complements, and by creating a contrast, these ideas become associated in some way. Then, in turn, the connection of ideas arises precisely from this contrasting and complementary juxtaposition. From this perspective, it is the complementarity in the juxtaposition of love and hate that sets ideas of sociality in motion. This does not mean that contrasting ideas, such as love and hate, must be present at the same time, that is, that one must love and hate a thing at the same time; rather, it inspires us to conceive of contrasting ideas as contoured by their complementary counterpart.

Admittedly, this suggestion needs further investigation in Spinoza’s philosophy, and current philosophies of mind. For this reason, I would not regard this interpretative suggestion as a correction of Lenz’s reading, but rather as inspiration for further research on modelling sociality and social relationships.

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¹⁹ Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 55.

²⁰ See, for instance, Jonathan Itten, *Kunst der Farbe* (Berlin: Urania, Freiburg, 1991).

Socializing Minds, Socializing Bodies: The Implications of the Bodily Side of Lenz's Spinozist Theory of Mind

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Abstract

Martin Lenz introduces Spinoza to us as a bundle theorist of mind, for whom there cannot be a single finite mind. Since Spinoza conceives of the mind as the idea of the body, there will be a bodily side to any reinterpretation of his theory of mind. This contribution embarks on what could be characterized as a corporeal interlude to Lenz's Spinozist theory of mind. I investigate what follows for Lenz's theory if one takes into account more explicitly the structural complexity of the attribute of extension, expressing itself in the plurality and variability of bodies. While Lenz reads Spinoza through a lens of intersubjectivity and parallelism, my reflection leads to the consideration that the plurality and variability of bodies might call for a transindividual rather than an intersubjective account and suggests conceiving of body and mind as equal rather than parallel. This could complicate Lenz's account of the identity of the mind over time. But such a complication would be a boon rather than a problem. It invites developing Lenz's thought beyond what the context of his book allows, helping us to navigate the intricate dynamics in which we strive for our bodies to become more capable and our minds more eternal.

Keywords: Spinoza, Martin Lenz, body, mind, bundle theory of mind, identity, intersubjectivity, transindividuality, parallelism, equality

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1 Introduction

The idea that “our minds are intersubjective or social”¹ seems to be fairly recent, assumingly developed “against the individualism of early modern philosophers.”² Martin Lenz shows that, to the contrary, this thought is in fact what at least Spinoza, Locke and Hume “even started from.”³ He introduces Spinoza to us as a bundle theorist of mind,⁴ for whom there cannot *be* a single finite mind, that is, who cannot think of minds but as socialized.⁵ Such an interpretation, it seems to me, is rare: while philosophers working on Spinoza’s theory of mind often do so within an individualist paradigm,⁶ scholars questioning individualist premises in materialist and feminist readings tend to focus, at least in Hasana Sharp’s assessment, more on bodies and affects than on minds and ideas.⁷

Lenz’s rational reconstruction obviously appeals historically: it inverts the common picture of Spinoza as an individualist rationalist. Yet I think it also unfolds considerable systematic potential, which I would like to explore. To do so, I pursue what could be characterized as a corporeal interlude to Lenz’s Spinozist theory of mind. When developing his understanding of the mind as the idea of the body (E2p11-13), Spinoza interrupts himself to “premise a few things on the nature of bodies” (E2p13s). In the wake of this way of proceeding, I interrupt Lenz’s enquiry of Spinoza’s oeuvre “[v]iewed under the attribute of thought” with a view to the bodily side.⁸ Bringing into sight more explicitly the structural complexity of the attribute of extension, expressing itself in the plurality and variability of bodies, might complicate Lenz’s account of the mind and its identity over time. But such complication would be a boon rather than a problem. It invites developing Lenz’s interpretation of Spinoza beyond what the context of his book allows, helping us to navigate the intricate dynamics in which we strive for our bodies to become more capable and our minds more eternal.

To start, (1) I explain why it is plausible to transpose Lenz’s interpretation of (human) minds to (human) bodies. Subsequently, (2) I enquire how Lenz speaks about the body and, in turn, (3) outline how Spinoza’s notion of the body concurs with Lenz’s account of the mind. I then (4) probe in what sense considering the former more explicitly could complicate the latter. My reflection leads to (5) the consideration that the plurality and variability of bodies might call for a transindividual rather than an intersubjective account of the mind, and suggests conceiving of body and mind as equal rather than parallel. Developing Lenz’s account further in this vein might help us (6) understand rather than mourn the challenge of ourselves and of living good lives.

1 Martin Lenz, *Socializing Minds: Intersubjectivity in Early Modern Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 17.

2 Ibid., 1.

3 Ibid., 1.

4 Ibid., 31.

5 Ibid., 12.

6 Lenz refers, for example, to Diane Steinberg (Ibid., 66f) and Dominik Perler (Ibid., 88).

7 See Hasana Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 62, cf. Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 6.

8 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 78.

2 Transposing Lenz's interpretation of (human) minds to (human) bodies

My starting point is that since body and mind are “one and the same thing” (E3p2s) for Spinoza, any reinterpretation of his theory of mind should be plausible with a view to the body. Lenz subscribes to a parallelist reading of the famous proposition that lays the ground for conceiving of body and mind as one and the same thing, namely, that “[t]he order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things” (E2p7). It is questionable whether this starting point is as innocent as he assumes,⁹ because conceiving of the attributes as “parallel lines” renders them, “[e]xcept for their position in space,” as “similar and interchangeable.”¹⁰ One risks interpreting “unity as uniformity” and being hardly able to grasp nature's diversity.¹¹ Chantal Jaquet instead suggests conceiving of mind and body as equal, rendering the “body's power of acting and the mind's power of thinking” as an “equality of aptitudes to express all the diversity contained in each person's nature.”¹² As I will suggest towards the end, such an interpretation could serve as a starting point to get the specific structural complexities of the attributes, and thus of body and mind, into sight.

Yet, also in a parallelist reading one should be able to desist a plausible view of the body from a reinterpretation of Spinoza's concept of mind. That is, if a body is the same modal expression of substance as a mind, comprehended differently, then it should be possible to transpose Lenz's interpretation of (human) minds to (human) bodies. Even more so, if we consider that he gains his explanation of what governs the striving of ideas via physics. In both Aristotelian and Cartesian natural philosophy, contrariety is an important explanatory factor for change and motion. Spinoza, Lenz holds, “blends the opposition of physical forces into the contrariety of ideas.”¹³ That is, he renders ideas as forces that, as all things (E3p6), strive with and against other ideas for their perseverance, thereby fighting each other, enforcing one another, and causing further ideas,¹⁴ “like memes that can spread across our minds and coordinate our mental and social lives.”¹⁵ Arguably, what is transposed from physics to the thought of thought should continue to count for the thought of extension. If ideas are conative forces interacting with other ideas contrarily and cooperatively across minds, as Lenz holds, then one will assume bodies to be conative forces interacting with other bodies contrarily and cooperatively across bodies.

Spinoza, as I will argue, indeed conceptualizes bodies in such a vein. Thus, Lenz's account of the mind does not create interpretative problems with regard to the body. Yet, how does Lenz himself speak about the human body? Could his writing display implicit assumptions about the body working to safeguard a more metaphysically robust sense of the identity of the mind over time than his account—for good reasons—lends itself to? To probe this suspicion, I will, in a next step, sketch how Lenz conceives of the body.

9 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 12, 59, but see 52.

10 Chantal Jaquet, *Affects, Actions and Passions in Spinoza. The Unity of Body and Mind* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 17.

11 Ibid 17.

12 Ibid., 24.

13 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 68.

14 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 68-9.

15 Ibid., 85.

3 How does Lenz speak about the body?—The object of triangulation

As Lenz rationally reconstructs Spinoza to provide a case study for intersubjectivity in early modern accounts of mind, he does not focus on the (human) body. Yet, since the latter is “the object of the idea constituting the human mind” for Spinoza (E2p13), it obviously figures in Lenz’s reading of Spinoza’s theory of mind. Let us see how.

Lenz’s argumentation gets off the ground by way of solving a puzzle that has been troubling interpreters for a long time. How do we square the common experience that we often entertain ideas that considerably lessen our body’s power to act with Spinoza’s conviction that “[a]n idea that excludes the existence of our body cannot be in our mind but is contrary to it” (E3p10)? If “the first and principal [tendency] of the striving of our mind [...] is to affirm the existence of our body” (E3p10d),¹⁶ why are we so easily mistaken about what is beneficial for ourselves?¹⁷ This puzzle can be solved within Lenz’s intersubjectively interactionist account of Spinoza’s theory of mind. He presents a gradual—one could maybe even say vitalist—reading of the proposition at stake. Since Spinoza conceives of the sets of ideas “affirming and those denying something’s existence [...] not only as logical but as physical relations,” Lenz argues, “it makes sense to assume that logical contradictions [...] can be cashed out as contraries. [...] The ‘negation’ of one’s existence could then be ‘performed’ by any predication that indicates a decrease of one’s power of acting or conatus.”¹⁸ On this basis, he explains how ideas decreasing one’s body’s power to act can arise in one’s mind: ideas in the mind, Lenz holds, do not (necessarily) strive for the sake *of* the mind, but, as all things (E3p6), for their *own* perseverance. That is, he renders the mind less a steerer than a bundle of ideas within an “ecosystem of ideas”¹⁹ across minds. He invites us to conceive of the attribute of thought as a network of ideational forces competing and combining with one another across individuals. In these dynamics, it can happen that ideas which are not conducive to a certain individual’s striving gain currency and strength. As a result, they will likely also take effect in the bundle of ideas which is the mind of the respective individual. In other words, we can conceive of the human body as an object over which a plethora of ideas triangulate, some (more or less) strengthening the respective individual’s striving to persevere in being, some (more or less) weakening it. With a view to the above-mentioned puzzle: all ideas triangulating over our (human) body arise in our mind. But not necessarily all of them are ideas “in our mind” in the strong sense of furthering the power to act of the object of our mind, i.e., our body (E3p10).²⁰

To ward off the worry that “this holistic picture of minds as dynamic and interactive bundles” leaves “no sense left in which we can reasonably talk about our own minds,” Lenz labors to show the “systematic place of a self” in the conatus doctrine.²¹ *Our* mind is what strives “to affirm the existence of our body” (E3p10d), that is, pursue ideas that increase or aid *our* body’s power to act

16 Cf. *Ibid.*, 65.

17 *Ibid.*, 64.

18 *Ibid.*, 70. Vice versa, any idea furthering one’s power to act would affirm one’s existence.

19 Lenz gains this notion Hasana Sharp, “The Force of Ideas in Spinoza”, *Political Theory* 35, no. 6 (2007): 745, see Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 94-5.

20 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 75-6.

21 *Ibid.*, 79, 80, and 81 respectively.

(E3p12). Thus, there is, Lenz holds, a sense of identity in Spinoza's thought, but it amounts less to a fixed self than to a belonging, a relational identity.²² Given that we will always be part of nature (E4p2-5) and thus in interaction²³ and that we can only track ourselves via affection (E2p19, E2p23),²⁴ our emotions track interactions which are in agreement with our nature, that is, aid our body's power to act (see E4p29d). In pursuing ideas stemming from these interactions, we are (rather more) active (than passive) (E3d1-2).²⁵ Thus, we can distinguish which ideas of all those triangulating over our body are our own—and thus identify our mind—through their expression in our body's power to act.

This picture, painting ideas as memes striving to flourish while competing and cooperating with other ideas in the ecosystem of thought, easily lends itself to rendering bodies as centers of gravity over which fluctuating ideas triangulate. Bodies, it seems, amount to solid reference points for our identity vis-à-vis the dazzling dynamic of ideas. Concerning ideas, Lenz underlines that they strive for their own perseverance rather than for the perseverance of a larger unit such as the mind.²⁶ Minds thus have their ideational content determined in a dynamic play of forces across minds. They therefore cannot be conceived of in the singular but only as socialized.²⁷ In contrast, Lenz usually does not hesitate to speak about the body in the singular.²⁸ I will only give two examples. By way of introducing his Davidsonian notion of triangulation, he holds “that bodies *other than my own* can very well be the object of *my ideas*.”²⁹ And, to mark the rhetorical contrast, he holds that “the distinction between ideas through contrariety is [...] a distinction [...] between *two kinds of ideas*: between *an idea that denies the existence of our body* and *an idea affirming this existence*.”³⁰

To be fair, Lenz's writing also exhibits a tendency to conceive of bodies in a similar way as we think of minds. It might be best visible where he parallels Spinoza's concepts of mind and individual with reference to the physical interlude:

So [...] for instance, *the idea that affirms the existence of my right foot, strives in unison with other ideas that affirm the existence of other parts of my body*. In view of what Spinoza says about the composition of individuals (L5 following E II p 13) we can think of the mind as composed of smaller individuals [...]. In this sense, we might consider the mind a functional union in the way that is suggested in the ‘physical interlude’ [...]:

22 Ibid., 83.

23 Ibid., 89.

24 Ibid., 81.

25 Contrarily, ideas restraining our body's power to act “follow from interaction in disagreement with [...] our] nature” (ibid., 89); in pursuing them, we are (rather more) passive (than active).

26 Ibid., 62.

27 Ibid., 12.

28 One could argue that Lenz's rhetoric mirrors Spinoza's, who often speaks about the human body (“our body”) in the singular (e.g., E2p17). Yet, in Spinoza's text, this is paralleled by his usual reference to the human mind (“our mind”). Conceiving of minds as socialized bundles of ideas is Lenz's interpretative gesture. Since I find it plausible, I investigate it with a view to the object of the idea that is the mind, i.e., the body. Spinoza, in fact, points to a bundle account of the body almost more explicitly than that of the mind; see the postulates after E2p13s. He however does refer to this concerning the mind, too (E2p15).

29 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 74, emphasis added.

30 Ibid., 70, emphasis added.

parallel to the individual parts that form the body of a human being, the individual ideas that affirm the individual ideas that strive in unison and affirm the existence of my whole body.³¹

Yet, Lenz makes it abundantly clear that “it would certainly be equally superstitious to assume that individual ideas are made for the sake of a human mind” as “to assume that things in nature are arranged for the sake of humans.”³² By contrast, he does not direct this critique of teleology from the appendix to the first part of the *Ethics* against the notion of the body.³³ I think this is not by accident. It could complicate his account considerably if he were. To probe this conjecture, I next outline how Spinoza conceives of the body and show that this is structurally similar to the way in which Lenz conceives of the mind. Subsequently, I will discuss how such an account of the body might complicate the picture Lenz draws of the mind.

4 How to conceive of individuals?—Bundles of ideas, bundles of bodies

In Spinoza’s thought, bodies, generally speaking, are finite things (E1d2) that in a certain and determinate way express nature insofar as it is considered extended (E2d1). For all finite things it obtains that if several of them so concur in one action that together they are all the cause of one effect, they can be considered one singular thing (E2d7). If bodies so concur, “communicating their motions to each other in a certain fixed manner,” Spinoza considers them to jointly compose one body (definition following E2p13s): a simple body, if the composing bodies are only distinguished from one another by motion and rest, speed and slowness; a complex body when “composed of a number of individuals of a different nature” (E2lemma7s). Human bodies, for Spinoza, are such complex bodies. They are “composed of a great many individuals of different natures, each of which is highly composite” (E2post1). Each of these highly composite bodies composing a human body is “affected by external bodies in very many ways,” which is “consequently” also the case for “the human body itself” (E2post3). Such a human body “to be preserved, requires a great many other bodies, by which it is, as it were, continually regenerated” (E2post4). In correspondence with Lenz’s account of the mind, a human body, and the diverse bodies composing, affecting, and regenerating it, are continuously in interaction with further bodies. Spinoza indicates this by holding, for example, that bodies are continuously affected by other bodies (E2post3), which they affect (E2p14d) and are able to “move and dispose” in a great many ways (E2post6).

With a view to the ideational side of the picture, the diverse bodies composing, affecting, and regenerating a human body are all objects of ideas. Thus, Lenz’s hypothesis of ideas triangulating over bodies is plausible from the perspective of extension, too: indeed, numerous ideas, corresponding to numerous smaller and larger bodies, triangulate over a human body. Yet, in contrast to Lenz’s rhetoric, Spinoza’s notion of human bodies invites a pluralizing account no less than, as Lenz shows, his notions of ideas and minds. Considering that human bodies continuously affect other bodies and

31 Ibid., 62, emphasis added.

32 Ibid., 63.

33 Ibid., 63.

are affected by them, which counts for the bodies composing and regenerating them too, it is plausible to assume an ecosystem of extension, mirroring the ecosystem of thought. Therein, bodies, as physical forces, constantly interact with other bodies, plausibly joining forces with some in some instances, fighting some in others.

Such a pluralizing view of the human body makes Lenz's claim that ideas do not strive for the sake of minds even more plausible. They are, as it were, ideas of smaller and larger bodies involved in the composition, affection, and regeneration of a human body. And, as "it would be wholly un-Spinozistic to say that certain individuals are designed to strive for the sake of the greater whole,"³⁴ why should we believe all the bodies involved would strive for the sake of a unit, a respective human body? Rather, these bodies—like ideas and all things (E3p6)—strive to persevere in their *own* being. Thus, transposing Lenz's text, we can say that although my body "can be rightly called an individual,"³⁵ the bodies making up my body are individuals, too."³⁶ And "there is no reason to suppose that smaller individual modes strive for the sake of larger individual modes," so, "the question of what governs the striving" of bodies "should not be seen as a teleological issue."³⁷ While some of the bodies composing a human body might be aiding the respective individual in its striving to persevere in being, others might be constraining or even endangering it. And in both aiding and constraining, the bodies involved can be aided or constrained by further bodies they are interacting with, within and across the human body we are looking at. The dynamics of cellular growth in the development of cancer is an obvious example. Now, the diverse bodies involved in the composition, regeneration, and affection of a human body, be they aiding or constraining the individual's striving, will all have an ideational expression. These ideas affirm *their* object, that is, a specific smaller or larger body—fighting against and joining forces with other smaller or larger bodies—and not, necessarily, the human body as a whole. For example, think of the psychophysical constellation of the competition between drives to control and drives to survive in cases of anorexia.

So, it seems plausible to say that Spinoza conceives of the body in a similar way as Lenz conceives of the mind. (Human) minds, according to Lenz, are bundles of ideas striving for their own (and not the mind's) perseverance,³⁸ within an ecosystem of ideas that spans across individuals.³⁹ (Human) bodies for Spinoza, it seems to me, are bundles of bodily elements striving for their own, not the (human) body's perseverance, within an ecosystem of bodies spanning across individuals. As seen, this concept of the body even strengthens Lenz's claim that ideas do not strive for the sake of the mind but of themselves. However, it could also complicate his picture of the mind and its identity over time in two ways, which we can dub *plurality* and *variability*.

34 Ibid., 63.

35 Ibid., 63.

36 Ibid., 63.

37 Ibid., 63.

38 Ibid., 58.

39 Ibid., 78.

5 How does a bundle account of the body complicate Lenz's story?—Plurality, variability

Extending Lenz's account of the mind with a similar view of the body amounts to conceiving of the human individual as a bundle of bodies and of ideas, respectively. The bodies and ideas so bundled interact with further bodies or ideas, which again interact with further bodies or ideas, and so on. In these dynamics of bodily and ideational interaction, and this points to a *first complication* for Lenz's account, an idea can increase the force of parts of a human body, without aiding the overall striving of the individual. In cases of anorexia, parts of an individual strive to exert control by starving other parts, while the latter, in turn, strive to survive, often in ways not conducive to the overall striving of the individual either. Vice versa, ideas can decrease the force of parts of a human body whilst affirming the striving of the respective individual. Furthermore, the bodies and corresponding ideas involved in interactions can strengthen some bodily elements composing the individual while lessening others. Thus, there can be conflicts within and across the bundles of bodies—and, concurrently, the bundles of ideas—we are. That is, the *plurality* of Spinoza's notion of the human body might make it even more complex to distinguish between active ideas (conducive to an individual's striving to persevere in being) and passive ones than Lenz assumes when he counters the objection that his account might not be truly interactive in the end. It is not, he holds, as if interaction would always lead to inadequate ideas, rendering the individual passive, while adequate ideas would arise from their inner nature alone, in the pursuit of which the individual is active. If we consider that we will always be part of nature (E4p29d), we cannot retreat from interaction. Rather, what we have to do is to seek activity in interactions in agreement with our nature, while avoiding interactions in disagreement with our nature, which render us (more) passive.⁴⁰ Now, if, as I have argued, it would be hardly less un-Spinozist to assume bodies strive for the sake of a larger unit than ideas strive for the sake of minds, distinguishing between active and passive ideas comes down to assessing, in each respective case, which ideas affirm bodily elements that enhance our striving rather than hinder it.

How would we navigate such complexity? We could orient ourselves by how Spinoza assesses the excellence of minds (E2p13s). All that makes a body more capable of “doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once,” and thus makes a mind more capable “of perceiving many things at once” (E2p13s), enhances the individual's striving. The same applies to all that contributes to “the actions of a body depend[ing] more on itself alone,” thus rendering the “mind more capable of understanding distinctly” (ibid). We have a reflexive structure at hand: what increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, a body's power to act, increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, a mind's power to think (E3p11, see E4p38d). Therefore, a mind strives to imagine what increases or aids the body's power of acting (E3p12). It is all the more successful in this the greater the body's power is to act, because increases in the body's power to act are increases in the mind's power to think (E3p11). The extent of the body's power to act, in turn, is linked to how constructively it is regenerated (see E2post4) and affected (see E2post3) in its interactions with further bodies (E4p2-5, E4p26d).⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ibid., 89-90.

⁴¹ Ibid., 89.

Now, and this leads us to the *second complication* for Lenz's account, what composes, regenerates, and affects a human body in a way that is conducive to its power to act (and thus to the mind's power to think) can be subject to change.⁴² As "we live in continuous change" (E5p39s), Spinoza holds, we aim at changing for the better, which makes us happy (rather than for the worse, making us unhappy). Thus, he continues, "we strive in our lives" that our body "may change" towards being more "capable of a great many things and related to a mind very much conscious of itself, of God, and of things" (ibid.).⁴³ That is, considering that we aim at "what leads to understanding" (E4p26d) and that our mind's power to think is increased by what increases our body's power to act (E3p11), *regenerating* the body can amount to striving that our body *changes*. In this case, what the body, "composed of a great many parts of different natures, which constantly require new and varied nourishment" (E4p45s) needs in its composition, regeneration, and affection to continuously "be equally capable of all the things which can follow from its nature" (E4p45s), will change. And that means, which interactions will yield activity for an individual, that is, which interactions are in agreement with its striving, will change too. Sometimes, something which previously was conducive to composing and regenerating a body needs to be terminated in the course of the individual's striving.⁴⁴ Sometimes, what had been affecting it with joy becomes hindering. For instance, a bodily figure and its characteristic postures might have been good for an individual when performing a specific social role that he has grown into. They might no longer be good but hindering when, in the course of striving for a body more capable of acting, a mind more capable of thinking, he begins to assume different social roles. In this process, the kinds of nourishment and exercise needed to regenerate his body change, as do the habits of affecting and being affected. In the same way, the contexts in which being embedded is conducive to his flourishing are changing and, thus, his *ratio vivendi* (E4p45s). That is, the sets of interactions that are in agreement with his nature underlie *variability*. If some interactions were helpful in maintaining the formerly characteristic bodily figure, they can now become hindering. Ideas springing from such interactions were once active but have become passive. Ideas still affirming something that the body is striving to discontinue had been in agreement with the nature of the individual and were thus active. But they have come more and more into disagreement with it and have thus become passive—whilst still affirming something that, as it is not possible for him "to suddenly make a clean sweep of all his behavioral patterns,"⁴⁵ is still involved in his composition.

Thus, due to the *plurality* and *variability* of the body, it might always be a question of specific conjunctures which interactions yield ideas that affirm the existence of bodily parts which at this specific point in time contribute to an increase in my power to act, i.e., which are in agreement with

42 Lenz's account shows sensitivity for such changes concerning the mind (ibid., 84).

43 This sentence relates to striving that the infant body may change towards a body more capable of many things. Yet, Spinoza, in the same vein, generalizes the condition of infancy: "And really, he who, *like* an infant or child, has a body capable of very few things, and very heavily dependent on external causes, has a mind which considered solely in itself is conscious of almost nothing of itself, or of God, or of things" (E5p39s, emphasis added).

44 For aspects of this, see Pascal Sévérac, *Renaitre. Enfance et éducation à partir de Spinoza* (Paris: Hermann, 2021), 47-83, e.g., his distinction between organic and affective death, 71.

45 Chantal Jaquet, *Zwischen den Klassen. Über die Nicht-Reproduktion sozialer Macht* (Göttingen: Konstanz University Press, 2018), 125, my own translation. For a conceptual reading of how Jack London's character, Martin Eden, transforms from a muscular sailor successful with women to a cultivated and well-dressed writer, see ibid., 111ff.

my nature. Thus, what interactions yield ideas in the pursuit of which I am active is variable. The task of differentiating them from those rendering me passive must consider this variability. That is, due to the variability of (my) nature, which ideas “are essentially in my mind” is subject to change.⁴⁶ This suggests that explicating a bundle theory of the body corresponding to Lenz’s bundle theory of mind could make it even harder to indicate in which sense “we can reasonably talk about our own minds”⁴⁷—a worry Lenz is visibly troubled with. To see why, we must make explicit what we tapped into, namely, what the structural complexity of the attribute of extension, expressing itself in the plurality and variability of bodies, implies for the human mind.

6 The implications of the structural complexity of the body for the (identity of the) mind—Transindividuality, equality

To assess the excellence of minds, Spinoza tasks us with studying bodies (E2p13s). Thus, he refers the complex idea that a mind is to its object, a body (E2p15). In the two preceding sections, we have begun to circumscribe the structural complexity of the attribute of extension that expresses itself in the body. If we now refer our corporeal digression back to the reality of the mind, the latter emerges as even more complex than Lenz’s reading can unveil. Working on the premise that mind and body might be equal rather than parallel, we can now sketch the implications of the complexity of the body for conceiving of the mind.

Lenz holds that ideas decreasing our body’s power to act are not in our mind essentially.⁴⁸ Rather, they triangulate over our body while decreasing or restraining its power to act. Following my reflection, there can be bodily elements *involved* in composing, regenerating, and affecting our body without increasing our power to act—think of the example of anorexia. Moreover, there can be bodily elements that had been increasing our power to act but do so, while still being involved in composing, regenerating, and affecting our body—think of the example of changing postures. In other words, the “internal-external boundary” might be at least as “dynamic” for the body as for the mind.⁴⁹ That is, it could be only half the story to hold, as Lenz does, that we can learn more and more what is *really* good for us and thus internalize what we formerly deemed external. Rather, firstly, the inner plurality of our bodies implies degrees of *conflictuality* between bodily elements and thus between ideas triangulating over a body. While a drive to control as a sense of how much of certain things is conducive to one’s striving is beneficial, a drive to control as the reduction of more and more of one’s interaction with things to digest can become severely harmful. Secondly, as we live in continuous *change*, we cannot know at a certain point in time what will be truly beneficial for us sustainably. When embedded in an affectionate context, being disposed to hold one’s hands similarly as the other family members at the dinner table aids one’s power to act, as feeling at home strengthens one’s confidence. Yet, when getting culturally involved in ways differing from the familial context, because one senses this will help in gaining a better understanding of oneself and

46 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 76.

47 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 80.

48 Ibid., 76.

49 Ibid., 84.

things, the same bodily posture might easily become an obstacle when trying to engage in relationships that could contribute to one's effort with respect to living within this new context.⁵⁰

Looking to the bodily side of Lenz's picture, emotionally tracking interactions that lead to active rather than passive ideas presents itself as a conjunctural task. Such tracking is the way in which, according to Lenz, individuals gain a sense of their own mind: by tracking interactions agreeing with their nature, they learn who they are.⁵¹ Thus, as the structural complexity of the body renders the distinction between interactions yielding active ideas from interactions yielding passive ideas conjunctural, the complex idea that is our mind amounts to a snapshot in time of our diverse and changing body. That is, the plurality and variability of the corporeal ratios of movement and rest unfolding over time do not seem to have a *parallel 1:1* mental correspondence. However, seen within a framework of attributive *equality in diversity*,⁵² we could say that it concurs with the challenge of *identity*—a challenge that visibly troubles Lenz. As indicated, he labors to show that his account does not lose a “robust metaphysical ground for the identity of minds.”⁵³ He argues that we gain ownership of our ideas, and thus our minds, through emotionally tracking interactions that enhance our power to act.⁵⁴ However, as we have seen, what is being tracked here can be conflictual and underlie variation over time. We might be emotionally attached to contexts that had been good for our flourishing but no longer are, and feel lonely in contexts contributing to our effort at enhancing our power to think. Thus, the “sense of *belonging*” that according to Lenz affords us ownership of our mental lives could be “under pressure.”⁵⁵ Determining what ideas are *my* ideas refers me to identifying what bodily elements—within the dynamics of interaction among and across bodies—involved in my composition, regeneration, and affection they concur with, and sensing how well the latter contribute, at this specific point in time, to my striving to persevere in being. In other words, which ideas are “essentially in my mind”⁵⁶ could be subject to *conflict* and *change*.⁵⁷ Thus, maybe the ground that emotional tracking provides for the identity of the mind, if considered as identity over time, is rather semi-robust. What remains identical over time is a striving movement to persevere in one's being. But what this amounts to—e.g., postures, tastes, habits and all the ideas concurring with these bodily characteristics—might change so much over time that we could ask ourselves “whether the idea of an ego that remains identical with itself through all transformations does not lose all plausibility.”⁵⁸

Thus, it seems to me, asking “[w]here is my mind?” with Spinoza could call for a much more conjunctural answer than Lenz explicates.⁵⁹ In fact, what hinders him from such explication could be his very endeavor to present Spinoza's account as intersubjective. When conceiving

50 For an illustrative autobiographic example, see Édouard Louis, *Anleitung ein anderer zu werden* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2022), 65ff.

51 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 80ff.

52 See Jaquet, *Affects*, 156.

53 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 83.

54 Ibid., 81ff.

55 Ibid., 83; see the notion of a “complexion [*ingenium*] under pressure” in Jaquet, *Klassen* 153ff, my own translation.

56 Ibid., 76.

57 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 83.

58 Jaquet, *Klassen*, 106, my own translation.

59 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 79.

individuals—which is the term Spinoza uses much more than subjects—as *subjects* entertaining relations *between* each other, one is inclined to provide—as *relata*—some kind of stable reference points between which relations unfold. This might be perfectly adequate to make sense of Locke who, as Lenz puts it, “sounds more individualistic than Spinoza and Hume.”⁶⁰ As far as Spinoza is concerned, on Lenz’s reading, minds are less steerers than bundles of ideas. In the same way, the bodily object over which such ideas triangulate is more a bundle than a whole, constantly abandoning “certain parts of itself, while constantly incorporating some parts from others,”⁶¹ as Etienne Balibar puts it. Individuals are thus always co-constituted within plural and variable dynamics of forces; they mutually

‘mingle’ with one another because they exchange constituent parts [...], or because they are constantly ‘analysed’ and ‘synthesised’, decomposing into more basic parts and recomposed into relatively autonomous units.⁶²

Rather than *entertaining relations between each other*, as the notion of intersubjectivity implies, individuals mutually *implicate one another in what they are*. That is, reconstructing Spinoza’s theory of mind and body might call for a transindividual rather than an intersubjective account.⁶³

7 Cum Lenz towards interactions yielding activity

I suggested that in contrast to Lenz’s rhetoric, Spinoza conceives of the body similar to how Lenz renders his account of the mind, that is, as a bundle of bodies. This is good news for the interpretative plausibility of Lenz’s reconstruction, given that body and mind are “one and the same thing” for Spinoza (E3p2s). Yet it might complicate Lenz’s account of the identity of the mind over time. Considering that *our* mind is what strives “to affirm the existence of our body” (E3p10d), Lenz argues that we gain such a sense of identity by distinguishing which ideas of all those triangulating over our body—within the play of ideational forces across minds—are our own via their expression in our body’s power to act. Yet, if our bodies are plural, we can be right about something aiding parts of our bodies, whilst nevertheless being wrong about whether it enhances our striving. And if our bodies are variable, we continuously need to learn anew what—within the play of corporeal forces—aids our bodies’ power to act. That is, what ideas are ours in the strong sense of affirming our nature, and, thus, what constitutes our mind, is subject to conflict and change.

The complexities this implies for conceiving of what we are might be just what follows from the fact that the idea that is the human mind has such a structurally complex object as the human body. If we strive not to mourn but understand things as they are (TP I.4/G III 274, see E3pref, E4p26), the complications that the structural richness of the attribute of extension could imply for

⁶⁰ Ibid., 12.

⁶¹ Etienne Balibar, “Individuality and Transindividuality in Spinoza,” in: *Spinoza, the Transindividual* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 53, with reference to E2p24d.

⁶² Ibid., 55.

⁶³ For an account of the alternative between intersubjectivity and transindividuality in the history of philosophy, see Vittorio Morfino, *Intersoggettività o transindividualità. Materiali per un’alternativa* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 2022).

Lenz's account might be a boon rather than a problem. Driving further on the path he lays out might allow us to get a more adequate understanding of how to discern and foster interactions that yield active ideas aiding the power to act. It might, for instance, push us to undertake conjunctural analyses of what interactions of bodies and ideas to foster when, where, and for whom. Thus, explicating what Lenz's reconstruction amounts to when seen under the attributes of both thought and extension is not only important for making sure Lenz is in line with the parallelism he subscribes to. It could also help us navigate the dynamics within which we strive for our bodies to become more capable, our minds more eternal (E5p39), and "lead us by the hand, as it were, to the knowledge of the human mind and its highest blessedness" (E2pref).

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From Thinking as Property to Thinking in Common: A Note on the Vocabulary of Appropriation in Martin Lenz's *Socializing Minds*

Ivo Eichhorn*

Abstract

That we think our own thoughts and that in thinking these thoughts we are with ourselves, independent of others, is a persistent belief. Martin Lenz unsettles this belief in his volume *Socializing Minds* by showing how Spinoza, Locke, and Hume already envisioned, and to a certain extent conceptualized, more relational or intersubjective ways of how we think. His reconstruction of Spinoza's theory of the mind as a "metaphysical model" goes especially far in laying the ground for a strong relational account of mental activities. This short commentary is guided by the assumption that a critical reading of certain terms can help to strengthen such an endeavor. It examines the notion of appropriation and its connection to property in the construction of the subject to be found in the margins of Lenz's chapter on Spinoza as a Lockean trace, which risks precluding the philosophical and political alternative Spinoza's anti-dualism has to offer. Finally, one such alternative tendency in Spinoza's philosophy is envisaged, which could strengthen Lenz's account.

Keywords: Martin Lenz, Spinoza, Locke, property, appropriation, Balibar, Zourabichvili

1 Problem

Like all those who claim that we do not think so autonomously and completely individually, Martin Lenz must be able to explain why we nevertheless spontaneously or at least predominantly assume precisely that. That our ideas exist foremost in relation, Lenz argues, gives the appearance that we cannot formulate a real "sense of ownership" regarding our mental life. This is why he confronts this picture with some systematic questions, already formulated in the introduction to his volume:

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“Where is my mind?”¹ “How does the illusion of independence arise?”² and finally “Is Interaction always enslaving?”³ Not only do these questions build on each other, already in the imaginary world invoked by Lenz’s phrasing the status of the owner is connected with domination. If it is difficult to conceive of our ideas as our “own,” our “property,” are we then, Lenz asks with Spinoza, not rather slaves or servants than masters in our own house or in our mental life? Can we even speak of the mind as our “own”? Without mental property, dependence and a form of mental servitude seem to arise. The phrasing of these questions could indicate that Lenz’s attempt does not merely involve terminologies which would have social or political implications, as it were, in a second step. Rather, it could form a symptom that such implications were and are *always already* involved in the respective answering or reformulation of these questions. One only needs to remind oneself of the moral question of responsibility for our own deeds and the thoughts that go with it. A legal, and thus a punitive dimension, follows quickly: If our thoughts and the activities associated with them do not belong to us, can we be prosecuted, held responsible, or punished for them? I call up the legal framework and its moral connections with caution. For what is at stake here is a certain construction of the subject, not certain deeds, but an ascribed relationship between the mind and these deeds. Thus, in the determination of guilt in court, in the last instance, it is not about a physical relationship, but about whether the accused is deemed mentally present, whether they acted “consciously”. The attribution of consciousness is decisive in this context, linked closely to the idea that our thoughts belong to us, not because they must have been produced by us, but because we made them our own, or in other words we have *appropriated* them. In contrast, anyone who is denied complete ownership of their own thoughts by means of consciousness, whether “in the heat of the moment” or in principle (here, practices of psychological, medical assessment govern the procedure, i.e., they draw the boundaries between normal and pathological, healthy and sick, mature and immature), will be confronted with a different treatment and punishment.

The legal and punitive procedures are perhaps only the most obvious example of how the attribution of consciousness and associated assumptions of appropriation form social existence. What can Lenz’s account of Spinoza’s metaphysical model tell us about these procedures? He is careful not to speak of consciousness in presenting this model.⁴ Consciousness, after all, is something Spinoza conceives of, if we trace the uses of the term *conscientia* in the *Ethics*, quite differently from what prevails today. But Lenz’s answer to the invoked questions in his treatment of Spinoza’s metaphysical model employs a terminology of appropriation. In answering the notorious question about the status of one’s own mind, i.e., about a self, Lenz struggles with the well-known difficulty in Spinoza concerning the transition from inadequate to adequate ideas. For the latter are declared to be activities by Spinoza and thus to follow from the essence of the particular thing or individual under consideration. It is precisely here that Lenz speaks of appropriation:

1 Martin Lenz, *Socializing Minds: Intersubjectivity in Early Modern Philosophy* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 80.

2 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 85.

3 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 87.

4 See Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 36.

To cut a long story short, we might say that the internal-external boundary is dynamic: that is, ideas “in” our mind might actually be contrary to it and in this sense external. Thus, the sense of ownership or rather belonging is subject to change. The more we understand, that is, the more adequate our ideas become, the more we can *appropriate* facts that we initially deem external as internal. [...] Conventionally understood, swallowing bitter medicine appears as something external and detestable to you. Yet, once you understand its beneficial effect on your preservation, it will become *your* internal reason for action. Seen thus, the medicine is not forced onto you; rather it follows from your *conatus*, and can thus happily affirmed as an increase of your power of acting. In this sense I can also internalize ideas that are entailed by my essence.⁵

In an accompanying footnote “appropriation” is identified as the “upshot of what lies behind Spinoza’s therapeutic recommendations”, i.e., it is considered to be at the heart of Spinoza’s ethical project.⁶ Here Lenz draws on a thesis he developed in an earlier paper: “Spinoza’s conatus doctrine entails an *appropriation thesis*”, which makes it possible to reconcile human freedom and natural necessity in Spinoza’s philosophy.⁷

Such a notion of appropriation seems unproblematic for a relational approach to minds at first, since ideas do not cease to circulate by being appropriated: They are not monopolized by being internalized. At the same time, appropriation gives us a criterion for reformulating the transition from inadequate to adequate ideas in terms of the subject. How a striving idea becomes consistent with the striving(s) of a bundle of other ideas is conceptualized as appropriation. Certainly, the appropriating “subject” also changes in the process; the self thus assumed is dynamic. When the individual appropriates more adequate ideas, the individual changes and can live better as a result. At the same time, however, inadequate ideas must also be considered part of an individual. This also seems suggested by the uses of *conscientia* in the *Ethics* that Lenz reformulates, which are to be found especially in the appendix of the first book. Here, to put it in shorthand, consciousness is ignorance. Its first products are the illusion of free will and thereby of independence (E1app). In the case of the ignorant (*ignarus*), a figure Spinoza employs throughout the whole *Ethics*, the gap between the conscious appetite—or following the definition given later, desire (*cupiditas*) (E3p9s/G II 242)—and its cause is immediately filled with an *imagined* freedom as a first form of consciousness. It is a form that can be roughly articulated with the questions posed by Lenz: They are egocentric and formulated in the perspective of independence, free will, and an accompanying moral worldview. Because we have desires and not merely appetites, Spinoza’s ethical project as the path from the world of imagination inhabited by us, insofar we are ignorant, to intuitive science or the third genre of knowledge figures not as a process of becoming conscious, but as a transition from one form of consciousness to another.⁸ The ethical project aims at a form of consciousness, which Spinoza depicts

5 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 84.

6 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 84.

7 Martin Lenz, “Whose Freedom? The Idea of Appropriation in Spinoza’s Compatibilism,” *Zeitschrift Für Philosophische Forschung* 71, n. 3 (2017): 344.

8 See Etienne Balibar, *Identity and Difference: John Locke and the Invention of Consciousness* (New York: Verso, 2013), 137–8.

in the figure of the sage, who is “conscious of himself, and of God, and of things” (E5p42s). How this transition from ignorant to sage shall be conceived proves to be one of the central difficulties which Spinoza’s *Ethics* demands from its readers. It seems to me that we should not—or only rather cautiously—associate this process of transition with the notion of appropriation, *pace* Lenz. I fear that the terminology of appropriation is burdened with associations that prove inseparable from more dominant ways of conceiving of consciousness, thereby precluding the philosophical and political alternative Spinoza’s anti-dualism has to offer.

2 The Lockean Trace

As Étienne Balibar has pointed out in his study of the invention of consciousness in seventeenth-century European philosophy, which I adhere to in the following, it is John Locke who closely connects appropriation and consciousness in modern European or “Western” Philosophy. For Locke it is clear that thoughts constantly pass through our minds and that these hardly belong to us originally. As Lenz shows in his illuminating chapter on Locke’s linguistic model, Locke conceives of a linguistic community which precedes the interiority of consciousness typically ascribed to him.⁹ Balibar’s reading examines Locke’s answers to the perennial questions of identity in Book II, Chapter 27 of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, focusing on yet another relational operation, namely *appropriation*. Via this movement, the relational in Locke’s account of language, foregrounded by Lenz, becomes commensurable with an understanding of identity and the self.¹⁰ Identity thus becomes a kind of ownership of one’s thoughts, produced by the consciousness that appropriates “passing” thoughts to our self. As Balibar shows, this entails a continuity of past as memory, present as consciousness, and future as responsibility, and thereby judgment in the construction of a subject.¹¹ The self can be considered a retrospective capture, a capturing of the individual’s actions, thereby transforming the individual into an agent who can be considered the sole author of their actions. Following this reading, we are confronted with obvious relations to juridical responsibilities and constructions of the subject, as I hinted at in the beginning. While appropriation is not a term Locke uses systematically in the *Essay*,¹² it is of utmost importance in his considerations on property in the *Second Treatise of Government*. Here, natural right is conceived under the form of a divine prescription: God left the earth to men in common, but gave them the mandate to appropriate it privately.¹³ This prepares the possibility of presenting the state as an essential institution for the protection of property. From labor or effort arises a property claim of the individual to all those

9 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 155.

10 Locke uses the expression in chapter 27 of the second book (§16; §26) and in chapter 2 of the third book (e.g., §8), though here the common use studied by Lenz is the subject of appropriation, no longer the individual consciousness (see John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1975).

11 See Balibar, *Identity and Difference*, 59–61.

12 Cf. Udo Thiel, *The Early Modern Subject: Self-Consciousness and Personal Identity from Descartes to Hume* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 100.

13 See John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 290.

external natural objects that were connected or mixed with precisely their effort or labor.¹⁴ To secure this claim, Locke must assign to property in one's own person a constituent status. The movement of appropriation which Locke presents in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* can accordingly be interpreted as the precondition for appropriating the world by means of individual property.¹⁵

Now, I don't want to argue that Lenz's *appropriation thesis* concerning Spinoza follows such a reading of Locke. I only fear it risks inscribing a *Lockean trace in the reconstruction of the Spinozist model*, by using a notion which leads to giving the "metaphysical model" of Spinoza a more individualistic variant of socialization than necessary. To speak of appropriation could become a track on which the understanding of a subject with its property, and therefore with its labor, responsibility, and guilt, could be reinstalled, even if the process of becoming a subject is thought of as socialized in the mind. This is because also as individual owners—via appropriation—minds can socialize. While Lenz limits appropriation to the transition to adequate ideas and thereby to becoming free and active, such a risk may be present in the fact that the communal conditions he assigns to the production of adequate ideas remain underdetermined. Thus, he writes, "the 'regulative ideal' of adequacy is not individual freedom but the free life in agreement with the community."¹⁶ In this way, he poses a generic community as a condition for obtaining adequate ideas. In fact, in this regard he seems to be following the text of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza writes in his discussion of the free man that he "insofar as he strives to live freely, desires to maintain the principle of common life and common advantage" (E4p73d). This, however, does not even raise the question of *how* social relations and communal conditions must be to enable individuals to attain adequate ideas or common notions. Precisely with respect to such a question, the notion of appropriation could be an epistemological obstacle. Can a community of individual (mental) property owners be a condition for the production of adequate ideas? As Alexandre Matheron has shown, the *Ethics* indicates that the exclusivity of a claim to property is opposed to a reasonable connection of forces.¹⁷ Individual property, including property of oneself, is a passion, which entails an imaginary relation of the mind to "its" ideas and body (E3p2s). Certainly, appropriation is not the same as property or ownership, but the property relation is deeply inscribed in the term. Using the term thus risks false connotations concerning the dynamic between internal and external in the process of how we acquire adequate ideas and thus become active and free following Spinoza.¹⁸

14 See Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 287–8.

15 See Balibar, *Identity and Difference*, 71–2.

16 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 85.

17 See Alexandre Matheron, "Spinoza and Property," in *Politics, Ontology and Knowledge in Spinoza*, ed. by Filippo Del Lucchese, David Maruzzella and Gil Morejón, trans. David Maruzzella and Gil Morejón (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 226–7.

18 Cf. Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 84; Chantal Jaquet, "From the Self to Oneself: Subject and Interiority in Spinoza," trans. Lena Taub Robles, *CR: The New Centennial Review* 17, no. 2 (2017): 63–76.

3 Towards an Alternative

If the notion of appropriation points to a rather individualistic understanding of (mental) socialization, how to conceive differently of the transition from the consciousness of the ignorant to the consciousness of the sage in Spinoza? Could such an alternative specify the communal conditions and social relations entailed in such a transition and thereby strengthen Lenz's account of a relationality of ideas and minds?

To speak simply of transition instead of appropriation, as I do here, begs the question, as long as we do not come to understand how this passage is brought about. In light of the *conatus* doctrine, already to speak of a change or transformation seems difficult, as it conflicts with the idea of a perseverance in being that would be the guide in the envisaged transition, as François Zourabichvili has examined in detail.¹⁹ I am surely not able to offer a terminological and philosophical solution to the tensions and difficulties of this transition. Instead, I can only—following Zourabichvili's reading—point to a direction which seems to me suppressed by speaking of appropriation. In his reading he closely deals with a dense passage near the end of Book V of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza contrasts not only the consciousness of the sage and the ignorant, but by analogy the infant or the child and the adult:

[W]e must note here that we live in continuous change, and that as we change for the better or worse, we are called happy or unhappy. For he who has passed from being an infant or child to being a corpse is called unhappy. On the other hand, if we pass the whole length of our life with a sound mind in a sound body, that is considered happiness. And really, he who, like an infant or child, has a body capable of very few things, and very heavily dependent on external causes, has a mind which considered solely in itself is conscious of almost nothing of itself, or of God, or of things. On the other hand, he who has a body capable of a great many things, has a mind which considered only in itself is very much conscious of itself, and of God, and of things. In this life, then, we strive especially that the infant's body may change (as much as its nature allows and assists) into another [*In hac vita igitur apprime conamur, ut corpus infantiae in aliud, quantum ejus natura patitur eique conducit, mutetur*] capable of a great many things and related to a mind very much conscious of itself, of God, and of things. We strive, that is, that whatever is related to its memory or imagination is of hardly any moment in relation to the intellect (E5p39s/G II 586–588)

Here Spinoza uses the verb *mutare*, speaking of a change that is associated in his political writings only with the ruin, not with the endurance, of states, and in the *Ethics* prominently with the notorious difficulty of death as a rupture of memory (E4p39s). Confronted with the continuous variations of life, not only the differences between sage and ignorant and those between adult and child are at stake, but at the same time the difference between life and death. Don't we die, as Spinoza seems to consider, to a certain extent by becoming adults? We certainly do not die in the same way in which we turn into a corpse, but a part of nature and its *conatus* seems to be not existing anymore (E4p39s).

19 François Zourabichvili, *Spinoza's Paradoxical Conservatism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023).

Don't we, in extension, die to a certain degree, rather than appropriate, when we transition from one form of consciousness to another? In Zourabichvili's reading the striving (*conamur*) depicted in the scholium to change the infant's body into another is indeed not the striving of the infant to persevere in its being, but another striving, the striving of the child's educators, which entails a destructive dimension regarding the infant's nature.²⁰ This seems to be consistent with the end of the scholium, where a striving against the memory of the infant is described. Could this signify that the means by which we become active and form adequate ideas, are not only misconceived, when we detest them like the bitter medicine we swallow, but are really destructive like a bad medicine to the ignorance of our minds?

To conclude this commentary, I would like to open the discussion of this troubling question. Considering such a destructive dimension in the ethical transition might actually strengthen Lenz's central concept of contrariety between ideas and the physical connotations it carries.²¹ If "[c]ertain ideas are contrary to others, namely those that affirm and deny the existence of the same body,"²² why should adequate ideas be seen as things to be appropriated and not as things which are striving against the nature of the dominated or passionate parts of our minds and bodies? How would such a perspective be reconcilable with a perseverance in being of each *conatus*? Being unable to give a satisfying answer, I can only correlate it with another tendency in the quoted scholium. Zourabichvili points to the paradox in conditioning the destructive dimension of the change into another nature "as much as its nature allows" or suffers (*patitur*) and "assists" or even contributes (*conducit*): "For it is certain that no nature 'allows' transformation; it can be a matter only of one and the same nature, which is nevertheless called on to suffer a radical change, a rupture comparable to a metamorphosis."²³ I propose to read the specification of the striving to change the nature of the infant's body "as much as its nature allows and assists" as pointing to a passive or passionate force on the side of the child or the nature to be changed. If we relate this analogy again to the transition to adequate ideas, to becoming free, then we are liberated by the striving of others, but on condition that we can concur with this striving. Regarding such a condition we are on the flip side of contrariety: agreement.²⁴

The destructive dimension of the ethical transition raised in the analogy to education can be relativized, though not neutralized, by understanding adequate ideas like any singular thing as constituted by multiple causes (E2def7). Seen in this light, the transition toward a consciousness of the sage in Spinoza does not mean an isolated activity of a body and its corresponding mind, but the manifold capacities of our body in interaction with other things that produce a being conscious of itself and its relations to both God and other things. It thus means, as Balibar points out, that we become conscious of the extent to which we are active and passive in the causal fabric that determines our actions, and is consistent with the proposition on which the quoted scholium comments: "He who has a body capable of a great many things has a mind whose greatest part is eternal" (E5p39s/G II 584).²⁵ Parts of the small parts of nature that we are therefore indeed die, or are destroyed, in

20 Zourabichvili, *Spinoza's Paradoxical Conservatism*, 20–1.

21 See Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 68.

22 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 66.

23 Zourabichvili, *Spinoza's Paradoxical Conservatism*, 19.

24 See Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 75–7.

25 See Balibar, *Identity and Difference*, 144.

our transition toward the sage (E2p24d; E3p21d), but on the condition of being replaced by other small parts that refer to common notions (E2p39c). The decomposition of our body (and our imagination and memory) is immediately juxtaposed here by a recomposition through agreement, i.e., an increase in the power to act (E4p18).²⁶ Common notions do not arise in the appropriating activity of a self, but originate from agreements between parts of our minds. These adequate ideas have their source not in the relation between several subjects, but between parts of them that are not already conscious. Their formation entails a destruction of other ideas “in” our minds. It is precisely those ideas that make us imagine ourselves as the owners of ourselves (our ideas) that are destroyed in the process of generating common notions.

This opens a way to understand the transition from the consciousness of the ignorant, who spontaneously believes in the subjectivity of the world, to the consciousness of the sage, precisely through overcoming exclusive (mental) property. “Sages” can only emerge in practical relations that do not fabricate thought in property relations, thus making it the thought *of* subjects. Such a perspective conceives of rationality as coextensive with the social invention of forms to make ideas by means of which individuals intervene in the striving of other humans (i.e., education or subject-formation) and in the other parts of nature (i.e., labor and technology or production and reproduction)—not individual or private property but common. It will certainly be imagined a bitter medicine by all those—that is us—who are passionately attached to their (mental) property.

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26 For a discussion of Spinoza’s physics and metaphysics or ontology as conceptualizing movements of decomposition and recomposition see Etienne Balibar, “Individuality and Transindividuality in Spinoza,” in *Spinoza, the Transindividual*, trans. Mark G. E. Kelly (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 36–91.

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Reply to Comments

Martin Lenz*

Abstract

This is a reply to the comments by Daniel Bella, Lorina Buhr, Andrea Blättler, and Ivo Eichhorn. The individual responses attempt to identify the main challenges of the pieces and sketch answers to questions or elaborations on issues raised.

Keywords: Spinoza, intersubjectivity, contrariety, bodies, property

The foregoing comments on *Socializing Minds* critically reflect on my intersubjective reading of Spinoza. Zooming in on the topics of contrariety and agreement, socializing bodies, and the ownership of mental states as property, each of the comments takes crucial claims in my interpretation of Spinoza further and brings out new insights that merit much more engagement than I can offer in the following responses.

Response to Daniel Bella

Back in my student days, when studying linguistics, I learned that most sentences, and especially claims, are expressed in response to earlier sentences. So, one doesn't get up in the morning and utter "I think; therefore, I am." Rather, one makes such a claim, or indeed argument, in response to a prior claim, not rarely a claim to the contrary. If this is correct, contrariety helps us understand how texts and conversations evolve. Much later, it dawned on me that contrariety might also be a principle by means of which Spinoza distinguishes between minds and the strivings of ideas. Hence, according to my reading of Spinoza, the contrariety of strivings is what "sets off" the *conatus* of ideas against one another. Were there nothing contrary to my motion or ideas, no striving on my part would be required in the first place.

I thought it might be worth recalling the initial line of thought that triggered my reading in light of Daniel Bella's thorough and instructive dialogue between Homológiasphilia and Enantiouphilia about the relation between contrariety and agreement. The dialogue comes with a

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number of intriguing insights into the relation, such as the assumption that your mind and my mind “are only different minds because they do not agree on everything.” Apart from the fact that this dialogue presents us with a clear reminder of why this genre should be fostered in philosophy, it shows succinctly that the relation raises a priority question: What is prior, contrariety or agreement? On the face of it, the question seems already answered in that I said that the setting off of any conatus requires contrariety. For striving needs direction, and contrary motion is what affords direction. The *conatus*-related priority seems also in keeping with Spinoza’s premise to the conatus argument that things are of a contrary nature (E3p5). However, as recognized in Bella’s dialogue, contrariety requires that there be something in common, and thus agreement. While I agree with the position that the interlocutors eventually concur on—i.e., that “the same mind can be related to another mind by contrariety as well as by agreement”—the priority question strikes me still as one that merits more pondering. Going from Bella’s insight that our minds are all the same if there is no contrariety, I take it that the very difference of finite minds requires contrariety.

Response to Lorina Buhr

Although the emphasis on difference was famously taken up by thinkers such as De Saussure, Deleuze, and Derrida, it is Aristotle’s physics that Spinoza’s discussion of contrariety and agreement can be traced back to. Lorina Buhr’s contribution sets out the precise models in Aristotle that might have served as pertinent blueprints. Contextualizing contrariety in Spinoza, she succinctly places it as working against what she aptly calls “the inertia of beliefs” and raises the question of what “determines the aspect of contrariety.” Thus far, Buhr agrees with my general assumption that the notion of contrariety must be seen as originating from the theory of motion rather than from the logical context in which it is commonly placed. But as Buhr shows, there are two different places in Aristotle’s *Physics* from which Spinoza could have taken inspiration for his account of contrariety and it becomes clear quickly that it is not immediately obvious which of the two is closer to Spinoza’s account. As Buhr notes: “... there are two accounts of motion in Aristotle’s *Physics*, a principle-based account in *Physics* I.5–7, and a powers-based account of motion in *Physics* III.1. Both accounts should not be mixed up analytically, rather, I would argue, they provide two distinct but also complementary resources for conceptual and theoretical profiling.” One caveat that I would add to Buhr’s reconstruction is that Aristotle’s discussion of contrary motion involves multiple substances, whereas Spinoza’s discussion places all motion within one substance.

Following a careful discussion of both accounts, Buhr suggests that the relation between affects and ideas might be governed, not solely by contrariety, but also by the “principle of complementarity.” Bringing up contrariety is of course reminiscent of Bella’s priority question as to whether agreement or contrariety might be more fundamental. But on reflection, it becomes clear that complementarity offers a third way of conceiving of the relation between different beliefs. Like contrasting colors on a spectrum, beliefs or affects might not be mere contraries but complementing each other. As I see it, the idea of complementarity gains momentum once we invoke, not the perspective of an individual mind taking contrasts as contrary to its own states, but a holistic perspective from which contrasts appear indeed as different colors on a spectrum.

Response to Andrea Blättler

If we assume identity or parallelism of minds and bodies, it follows that the socializing of minds entails the socializing of bodies. Setting out from questions about Ryle's Cartesian Myth, the socializing of bodies did not seem to propose difficulties as principled as that of minds. After all, our bodies can meet and are thus not subject to what I call the contact problem. But once you recognize that, according to Spinoza, not all thoughts *in* our minds are parts *of* our minds, a similar issue arises for our bodies: Are there parts in our bodies that are not parts of our bodies?

Andrea Blättler carefully pursues this question in the Spinozist framework. While we might be inclined to see the skin as a given boundary of our bodies, this view loses its persuasiveness once we think of diseases like cancer or anorexia nervosa. Accordingly, Blättler writes: "In cases of anorexia, parts of an individual strive to exert control by starving other parts, while the latter, in turn, strive to survive, often in ways not conducive to the overall striving of the individual, either." Taking Blättler's point further we should take into account the medical model, as exemplified by Hume. Here, we can extend this concern to contagious diseases befalling numerous bodies. On the one hand, then, certain strivings inside our bodies might be alien to the purpose of the sick person; on the other hand, strivings emerging from our bodies might transcend their supposed boundaries. In a similar vein, we might think of a dance company striving to perform as a group and thus acting as a single individual. It becomes clear, then, that extending Spinoza's account of the mind to bodies challenges common ways of thinking about bodies. Rather, with Blättler we must see a *plurality* of bodily strivings in one body or across several bodies.

In addition to the plurality of strivings, Blättler also identifies a *variability* of strivings within what is arguably the same body. To give a simple example, I might change my strivings from wanting to be a weightlifter to becoming a pianist. Arguably, the former training of my muscles might now pose a hindrance to my delicate movements when playing piano. Blättler writes:

For instance, a bodily figure and its characteristic postures might have been good for an individual when performing a specific social role that he has grown into. They might no longer be good but hindering when, in the course of striving to a body more capable of acting, a mind more capable of thinking, he begins to assume different social roles. ... That is, the sets of interactions that are in agreement with his nature underlie *variability*. If some interactions were helpful to maintain the formerly characteristic bodily figure, they can now become hindering. Ideas springing from such interactions were once active but become passive.

Again, the assumption of strivings benefitting my body as a whole across time would be too simplistic. While it is true that I have not considered these issues in depth in my study, I see them as pertinent refinements rather than complications of my reading. That the emotional tracking of identity might consequently turn out to be "semi-robust" can indeed be seen as an advantage rather than a problem for Spinoza's account.

Response to Ivo Eichhorn

A clear outcome of Spinoza's account of the mind is that my or your mind might be populated with the thoughts of others. This means that some mental states passing through your mind might actually be the mental states of other people, rather than in any emphatic sense your own ideas. If you're internally reciting a poem, you might actually notice that the verses are not your own thoughts. But many thoughts you might proudly take to be your own might, unbeknownst to yourself, equally be an echo of your grandma's moral sermons. In light of these considerations, I wondered what it is that gives us a sense of "ownership" of our thoughts and in what way this sense can be mistaken, according to Spinoza. Relatedly, I proposed that our transition from inadequate to adequate ideas is one of "appropriation," where we make seemingly external thoughts our own.

Ivo Eichhorn challenges the very question of ownership as one that might be an anachronistic projection, more in line with Locke's views on property than with Spinoza's own tenets. It's true that "ownership" has such connotations, especially when we think of claims to originality, responsibility, or accusations of plagiarism. Eichhorn's reconstruction is a lot more nuanced, but the "Lockean trace" Eichhorn detects brings out an interesting point in the discussion of ownership and appropriation—irrespective of whether I am committed to it or not. Accordingly, he writes: "Certainly appropriation is not the same as property or ownership, but the property relation is deeply inscribed in the term." I particularly like the political dimension Eichhorn highlights. While we might think of owning our thoughts as a particular way of relating to them or embracing them, this talk also has a political ring of someone proudly claiming home-ownership or independence from authorities. There is no disagreement that Spinoza would see this sort of ownership as illusory. But what is important to note is that the insistence on ownership does still have a political dimension, whether illusory or not. As Eichhorn puts it, it will "certainly be imagined a bitter medicine by all those—that is us—who are passionately attached to their (mental) property." That is, we might cherish and cling to certain thoughts as our own, even if we begin to see that there is reason to let go of them. At the same time, it's important to note that Spinoza does recognize a transition from illusory ownership to true ownership in that certain thoughts will be adequate ideas following from people's own nature. As I see it, this is not so much a matter of ownership but of belonging. Like an "ugly duckling," we might slowly become what we are, conditional upon finding the appropriate ecosystem of ideas.

All that said, there is a deep disanalogy between ownership of thoughts and other kinds of ownership. My owning a piece of land would preclude someone else owning it. Not so with thoughts: My owning a thought would decidedly not preclude anyone else owning it. In fact, the more minds are sharing a thought, the stronger it might be said to become.

Spinoza on the Wise and the Free

Steven Nadler*

Abstract

This paper is a response to Sanem Soyarslan's objections to my reading of Spinoza's free person (*homo liber*). She argues that on my interpretation the free person, unlike the wise person (*vir sapiens*), while subject to passive affects, does not experience bondage to the passions; and so only the latter, but not the former, can serve as a viable "model of human nature." I argue in this paper that, in fact, the free person and the wise person are, for Spinoza, one and the same individual, and thus constitute a single ideal model that we can more or less closely approximate.

Keywords: Spinoza, free person, wise person, reason, passions, third kind of knowledge, *acquiescentia animi*

1 Another Puzzle From *Ethics* 5

Part Five of Spinoza's *Ethics* is the gift that keeps on giving. It contains quite a few propositions that continue to perplex commentators. In Part Five, "On the Power of the Intellect, or on Human Freedom," Spinoza presents his doctrine of the eternity of the mind, refers to human "blessedness" and "salvation," and cites the "intellectual love of God" as our highest good—all of which must strike the reader as strange, coming from a philosopher who rejects any kind of providential deity, not to mention inconsistent with a lot of what has been demonstrated in the work's previous parts. The difficulties of Part Five have led one prominent scholar famously to declare much of it to be "an unmitigated and seemingly unmotivated disaster."¹

Among the puzzling and contentious notions of Part Five is "the wise man" (in Latin: *vir sapiens*, or sometimes just *sapiens*). Though this character, recalling the sage of the ancient Stoics, also makes an appearance elsewhere in the text, his principal role is in the final propositions of the

1 Jonathan Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1984), 357.

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work, especially the scholium to Part Five, proposition 42.² Part of the dispute among scholars concerns whether or not the wise person should be identified with “the free person [*homo liber*]” of Part Four,³ that is, with the “model of human nature [*naturae humanae exemplar*]” also introduced in Part Four (Preface; G II 208), in relation to which things are to be judged truly good or bad according to whether they facilitate or hinder our *conatus* (striving to persevere) and our approach to that more perfect condition.⁴ Some, including myself, have assumed (without much argument) that the free person and the wise person are one and the same;⁵ others have argued that they are not, and that there are clear and significant differences between the two both in terms of their character and in the role they play in Spinoza’s moral philosophy.⁶

In an insightful paper, “Two Ethical Ideals in Spinoza’s *Ethics*: The Free Man and the Wise Man,”⁷ Sanem Soyarslan uses the wise person to make the case against the reading of Spinoza’s free person that I defend in “On Spinoza’s ‘Free Man.’” I had argued that the free person is a real possibility for actual, durationally existing human beings, and thus the model or exemplar of human nature which we can and should strive to attain, however rare and difficult such an achievement might be. Soyarslan claims that, in fact, it is the wise person, not the free person, who represents the real possibility for us and, thus, a different, more attainable ideal. This, she says, is because the wise person, despite being governed by reason, is not only still subject to passive affects/passions brought about through interaction with things in the world (as I had argued was the case with the free person), but sometimes even “in bondage” to them (which I had argued is never the case with the model free person). In other words, what in her view distinguishes the wise person from the free person and makes the former, but not the latter, more like us and therefore an attainable moral ideal for actual human beings is that in the former, but not in the latter, the power of the passions is on occasion

2 The translations (occasionally corrected by me) are from Benedictus Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

3 Among the puzzles is why Spinoza uses ‘*vir*’ with ‘*sapiens*’ rather than ‘*homo*’ (as he does with ‘*liber*’). ‘*Vir*’ is exclusively a masculine Latin noun, while ‘*homo*’ can serve as a non-gendered noun (such as ‘human’). But surely Spinoza would not say that only men can be wise, while any human being can be free.

4 I argue elsewhere that the free person and the model of human nature are one and the same; see Steven Nadler, “On Spinoza’s ‘Free Man,’” *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1, no.1 (2015): 103–120 (where I also review the arguments of those who deny that claim).

5 Ferdinand Alquié, *Leçons sur Spinoza* (Paris: Éditions La Table Ronde, 2003), 326; Alexandre Matheron, “Le Moment stoïcien de l’*Éthique* de Spinoza,” in *Études sur Spinoza et les philosophes de l’âge classique* (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2011); Steven Nadler, *Think Least of Death: Spinoza on How to Live and How to Die* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020); and, if I read them correctly, Firmin DeBrabander, *Spinoza and the Stoics: Power, Politics and the Passions* (London: Continuum, 2007), 80; and Andrew Youpa, *The Ethics of Joy: Spinoza on the Empowered Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 47–8.

6 See, for example, Karolina Hübner, “Spinoza on Being Human and Human Perfection,” in *Essays on Spinoza’s Ethical Theory*, eds. Matthew J. Kisner and Andrew Youpa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 137n45; Philippe Danino, *Le Meilleur ou le vrai: Spinoza et l’idée de philosophie* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2014), chapter 4; and Sanem Soyarslan, “Two Ethical Ideals in Spinoza’s *Ethics*: The Free Man and the Wise Man,” *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 5, (2019): 357–370. Also in this camp, if I read them correctly, are Jon Miller, *Spinoza and the Stoics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 130; and Clare Carlisle, *Spinoza’s Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 144.

7 Soyarslan, “Ethical Ideals.”

stronger than the power of rational ideas, though the wise person is well equipped to deal with this unavoidable fact of human existence.

My aim in this response to Soyarslan is limited. I will not reply to all of her points. In fact, I will concede that one of her central claims is correct—namely, that a condition of absolute freedom from *bondage* to the passions is not possible for durational human beings, and thus the free person as the model of human nature is not something we can actually attain. However, it does not follow from this that the wise person represents a distinct ideal from the free person. Indeed, I would like to turn the tables on Soyarslan and show that Spinoza does *not* distinguish the free person from the wise person. Thus, if one is conceived in such a way that, while it is the model of human nature, it is not something actually attainable but only a kind of aspirational asymptote, then likewise so is the other; and if one is conceived in such a way that it is an attainable ideal of human nature, then so must the other. More precisely, if the wise person is understood as Soyarslan understands it, as an individual causally embedded in the world and occasionally overcome by her passions (but generally in control of herself), and for that reason an attainable ideal for existing human beings, then so too is the free person. On the other hand, if the free person *qua* model of human nature is understood to be an unattainable, asymptotic ideal because, though subject to passions, he is *never* in bondage to them, then such is the case with the wise person as well. The key, as I show, is in understanding that both wisdom and freedom come in degrees.

2 The Free Person

There is a popular reading of Spinoza's free person—what Matthew Kisner calls “the standard reading”⁸—according to which the free person is absolutely free in Spinoza's sense of freedom. Possessing *only* adequate or clear and distinct intellectual ideas, and thus incapable of acting otherwise than from his own nature alone, it is not just that the free person is guided exclusively by reason and adequate ideas in his behavior, with passions/inadequate ideas having, relative to adequate ideas, insufficient affective power and efficacy upon his desire and thus his action. Rather, on this standard reading, the free person *does not have any passions or inadequate ideas whatsoever*. The free person so interpreted is not just active, and not just always active; he is purely and solely active, “perfectly active,”⁹ experiencing no passivity whatsoever. His *conatus* or striving to persevere is not ever affected, positively or negatively, by external things. By Spinoza's standards, on this reading the free person is not a part of nature; he stands outside the causal nexus of the world and is essentially a finite simulacrum of God (or Nature) itself. But in that case, the free person cannot really be a model or an achievable ideal for actually existing human beings, since, as Spinoza never tires of reminding us, “[i]t is impossible that a man should not be a part of nature, and that he should be able to undergo no changes except those which can be understood through his own nature alone and of which he is the adequate cause” (E4p4). The condition of the free person so understood would be incommensurable with the human condition and thus in principle unrealizable by finite creatures

8 Matthew Kisner, *Spinoza on Human Freedom: Reason, Autonomy and the Good Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), chapter 8.

9 The phrase also comes from Kisner, *ibid.* 166.

embedded in the world, such as ourselves. Indeed, as so many critics of Spinoza have proclaimed, the free person would be an incoherent notion: a free human being that is not a human being at all. How could such an unrealistic and confused notion serve as a model for our lives?¹⁰

In my 2015 article, I argue that this “standard” reading of the free person, to which such objections are directed, is wrong—that Spinoza’s free person, far from being impossible or incoherent, is indeed the “model of human nature” that we can and should strive to realize in our durational lives, even if—to quote the final lines of the *Ethics*—the task is “difficult” and its achievement “rare” (E5p42s).

The free person does not explicitly appear as such in the *Ethics* until E4p66s. And the way the notion is first introduced makes it evident that the free person is identical to the person who lives according to the dictates of reason. That is, while the terms ‘*liberum*’ and ‘*homo liber*’ do not appear until E4p66s and E4p67, respectively, the concept of the free person has already been at work throughout Part Four in the propositions devoted to the person living under the guidance of reason. This is especially clear if we consider precisely what Spinoza says in that scholium. Having just demonstrated that “[f]rom the guidance of reason we want a greater future good in preference to a lesser present one, and a lesser present evil in preference to a greater future one” (E4p66), Spinoza goes on to say that

[i]f these things are compared with those we have shown in this Part up to proposition 18, concerning the powers of the affects, we shall easily see what the difference is between a man who is led only by an affect, or by opinion, and one who is led by reason. For the former, whether he will or no, does those things he is most ignorant of, whereas the latter complies with no one’s wishes but his own, and does only those things he knows to be the most important in life, and therefore desires very greatly.

The subject here is still the person guided by reason. But then Spinoza immediately notes that “I call the former a slave [*servum*], but the latter a free man [*liberum*]” (G II 260). So, the free person is identical with the person who in her life is led consistently by reason—that is, the individual who has been the subject of the previous forty-seven propositions.

Moreover, Spinoza ends this scholium—and thereby introduces the next seven propositions, all devoted explicitly to the free person and their behavior—by saying that “I wish now to note *a few more things* concerning the free man’s temperament and manner of living” (my emphasis). This, of course, means that what Spinoza has already been discussing in the previous propositions, a life engaged in this world under the guidance of reason, is continued in the subsequent discussion of the

10 See, for example, the different versions of the argument against the attainability of the free person in Daniel Garber, “Dr. Fischelson’s Dilemma: Spinoza on Freedom and Sociability,” in *Ethica 4: Spinoza on Reason and the “Free Man,”* eds. Yirmiyahu Yovel and Gideon Segal, 183–208 (New York: Little Room Press, 2004); Michael LeBuffe, *From Bondage to Freedom: Spinoza on Human Excellence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Kisner, *Human Freedom*; and Piet Steenbakkers, “Living Well, Dying Well: Life and Death in Spinoza’s Philosophy and Biography,” in *Life and Death in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Susan James, 181–196 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). For a contrary view, in addition to Nadler, “On Spinoza’s ‘Free Man,’” see Herman de Dijn, *Spinoza: The Way to Wisdom* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1996), 250–3.

free person. Thus, I see no reason to doubt that the free person and the person living under the guidance of reason are one and the same.

Now, freedom for Spinoza does come in degrees. An individual can be more or less free, can approximate more or less the ideal free person that is the model of human nature. That ideal is someone who always, unfailingly, does what reason dictates, while still undergoing passive affects caused by interaction with other people and things in the world (although probably fewer such affects than less free individuals). Even the ideal or model free person will stub his toe, experience the pleasure of a fine meal, and feel sadness at the death of a loved one.¹¹ As I argued in my earlier article, the free person is, like any human being (whether living under the guidance of reason or not), “a part of nature.” However, the externally caused affections will never determine what the ideal free person does. His behavior is *always* directed by reason, *never* by passions; he is led by the intellect and what he *knows* is truly good, never merely by how something happens to make him feel. As E4p66s states, the free person, the person who is “led by reason,” “complies with *no one’s wishes but his own*, and does *only* those things he knows to be the most important in life” (my emphasis).

3 “An ideal yet perfectly human condition”

In her article, Soyarslan takes issue not so much with this reading of the constitution and character of Spinoza’s model or exemplary free person, but with its suitability for serving as the ideal for which we as actual human beings can and should strive. She grants, for the sake of argument, that my understanding of the free person is correct, but then argues that, even still, it is not an attainable goal, that it remains (like the free person on the standard reading) beyond our reach. This is because the free person as I present it in my article, while subject to passions, is never in bondage to them. My free person, she correctly notes, will never undergo *akrasia*, or engage in action that he knows is contrary to his better judgment. On my account, the rational ideas in the free person are always affectively stronger than his passive or inadequate ideas. This is what guarantees the rationality of everything he does and that he “complies with no one’s wishes but his own.”

Soyarslan says that there is “a very thin line between being subject to passions and being in bondage to them.”¹² In fact, there is quite a clear and significant line between them.¹³ A person who experiences passions but is led by reason is in control of himself. By contrast, a person in bondage is controlled by those affects caused by external things, and so is not in control of himself. This can happen only on rare occasions, or it can dominate one’s life. Be that as it may, Soyarslan is correct to point out that there will in this life always be passions that are affectively stronger than our rational ideas, and thus that determine our actions. She cites E4p3 (“The force by which a man perseveres in existing is limited, and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes”) and notes that “because it is possible for the power of external causes to be greater than the power of any one

11 As Alquié puts it, “l’homme libre ... vit dans le temps, dans le monde, dans la cité” (*Leçons sur Spinoza*, 326). The same is true, he says, of “le sage.”

12 Soyarslan, “Ethical Ideals,” 361.

13 My thanks to Ariel Suhamy for his thoughts on this point.

individual by an indefinite degree, passions often end up being more powerful than rational ideas and determining our action.” She puts the question as follows:

Is it then possible for us to become a free man—that is, someone whose adequate ideas are always affectively stronger than their inadequate ideas? In other words, is it possible for us to attain a state of exceptionless self-determination or a condition wherein “desire always takes its lead from adequate ideas” as Nadler (2015:116) suggests? I submit that it is not. Notably, on Nadler’s account, ‘self-determining’ means that an individual “is not ‘determined to do what the common constitution of external things demands’ but rather ‘what his own nature, considered in itself, demands’ (IVp37s1).” As I see it, achieving exceptionless self-determination in this sense is not an available outcome for us—not even for the most rational ones amongst us ... [E]ven our most powerful adequate ideas cannot promise absolute freedom from bondage to the passions.¹⁴

Given the ineliminability of bondage to the passions in a human life, she concludes that the free person, being an unattainable model, cannot be the ideal toward which we as actual human beings strive and that grounds true judgments of good and bad. But—working on the assumption that there must be *some* attainable ideal in Spinoza’s moral philosophy that so functions to motivate us—she argues that that “ideal yet perfectly human condition” is represented by the wise person.

The difference between the wise person and the free person, Soyarslan claims, is that the wise person does not achieve exceptionless rationality in her actions and thereby fully surmount human bondage. What makes the wise person wise is not that her passions never guide her actions, but that mostly they do not *and* she knows this fact and deals properly with it. The wise person is not unfailingly active, but as active as a real human being can be. Moreover, the fact that sometimes the wise person *is* overcome by passions does not trouble her. She enjoys the peace of mind and tranquility—the *acquiescentia animi*—that comes with intuition or the third kind of knowledge. This is the highest form of knowledge in Spinoza’s system, and consists in an immediate understanding of how the essences of things follow from the essence of God or Nature. The wise person understands that “we do not have an absolute power to adapt things outside us to our use.” Therefore, knowing that she has “done [her] duty” and that the things that adversely affect her could not have been avoided, she shall “bear calmly those things which happen to [her] contrary to what the principle of [her] advantage demands” (E4app32). According to Soyarslan, then,

the wise man has a mind whose *greatest* part is eternal—that is, his “adequate ideas constitute the greatest part of [his] mind” (*Ethics* Vp20s). His mind thus “acts most” (ibid) and can “bring about that [the passions] constitute the *smallest* part of the mind...” (ibid, my italics). Furthermore, having attained intuitive knowledge and, thereby, achieved an affective transformation by assuming an eternal perspective of himself, the wise man lives his life in a special way. More specifically, rather than live an ordinary life, which Spinoza describes as a life dominated by the pursuit of transitory goods like honor, sensual pleasure and wealth (*Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, 3); the wise

14 Soyarslan, “Ethical Ideals,” 361–362.

man lives a life according to the order of the intellect. However, despite the fact that he thus lives a life focused on the pursuit of the eternal good of understanding, he does so while living in time.¹⁵

I will return to Spinoza's account of the wise person below. Soyarslan's point is that the wise person does do what reason dictates, for the most part. But with her understanding of God, of nature and of herself, she also recognizes that there will inevitably be exceptions to such rational action and that on occasion the passions she suffers will be more powerful than her rational ideas. She understands why this is the case and accepts it with equanimity. As Soyarslan nicely puts it, "the wise man is not someone who has completely overcome human bondage, even though he is someone who "is hardly troubled in spirit and always possesses true peace of mind [*vera animi acquiescentia*]" (E5p42s/G II 308).¹⁶

4 The Wise and the Free

I have nothing to say against Soyarslan's account of the wise person, at least in its general contours. She does a beautiful job of illuminating the virtues of this ideal individual. I think she also brings out well a shortcoming of my own reading of the free person by showing that there must always be some bondage to the passions in the life of a human being; this was not something that I adequately acknowledged in my article. Though it is not a text which Soyarslan cites, I would have done well to take more seriously Spinoza's claim in the *Political Treatise* that "it is not in anyone's power to always to use reason and to be at the highest peak of human freedom" (II.8).

What I want to insist on, however, is that there is still no reason to distinguish the wise person (*vir sapiens*) from the free person (*homo liber*), and that in fact there are good reasons to see them as one and the same condition of freedom, rationality and virtue (although I will suggest below that 'free' and 'wise' might refer to different aspects of the individual's constitution). The free person, guided unfailingly by reason, subject to passive affects in the world but never dominated by them, is the *naturae humanae exemplar* for our very human lives. But the free person and the wise person, I shall argue, are the same. Therefore, the wise person must also be that model of human nature. We may not be able to attain such a condition of exemplary and exceptionless rationality and wisdom in this durational life, given (as Soyarslan shows) the inevitability of bondage to the passions. But that does not mean that it cannot serve as an ideal toward which we strive to come as close as is humanly possible.

There is a suggestion that the free person is the wise person in E4p67/G II 261: "The free man [*Homo liber*] thinks least of all of death, and his wisdom [*sapientia*] is a meditation on life, not on death." In the demonstration to this proposition, Spinoza not only identifies the free person with "one who lives according to the dictate of reason alone" (without excluding passive affects from his psyche), but refers to his wisdom in not obsessing over death and what it might bring (since the free and rational person knows there is no personal afterlife, and so nothing to hope for or fear after

¹⁵ Ibid., 367–368.

¹⁶ Ibid., 365.

death). This is fairly inconclusive, however, since attributing *some* kind of wisdom to the free person does not by itself make that individual “*the* wise person.”

A more telling text is the scholium to E4p45. In the midst of his extended account of what it is to “live according to the guidance of reason”, which begins with E4p18s, Spinoza indicates that the life of such an individual is not an ascetic one. She enjoys the pleasures of the world, albeit in moderation. Without any indication that we have moved away from “the person who lives according to the guidance of reason [*qui ex ductu rationis vivit*]” (G II 233, 245), Spinoza notes that

To use things ... and to take pleasure in them as far as possible—not, of course, to the point where we are disgusted with them, for there is no pleasure in that—this is the part of a wise man [*viri est sapientis*]. It is the part of a wise man, I say, to refresh and restore himself in moderation with pleasant food and drink, with scents, with the beauty of green plants, with decoration, music, sports, the theater, and other things of this kind, which anyone can use without injury to another. (G II 244)

This, he adds, is “the best” way of living. The life led consistently by the dictates of reason, which (as I mention above and argue in my original article) is the life of the free person (even though it is not labeled that until E4p66s), is here explicitly identified with the life of the wise person. The wise and the free live and comport themselves in the world in the same manner and for the same reasons.

This passage, as well, should forestall any objection to my claim about the identity of the free person and the wise person based on the idea that the wise person does not make an appearance in the *Ethics* until Part Five. Here she is in Part Four, in all her wise, free and rational glory, presented as a dimension of the free person. (Soyarslan herself, as we have seen, regards the wise person as the subject of E4app32) Moreover, the wise person’s presence in E4p45s, where intuition or the third kind of knowledge is apparently not yet in play, should also forestall the objection that in order to qualify as a wise person one must have achieved that highest level of knowing.

In the Appendix to Part Four, which sums up the substance of its propositions and scholia without all the demonstrations, Spinoza notes that “to perfect, as far as we can, our intellect, or reason”—that is, given the prominence of the free person from E4p66s onwards, to become as free as possible—is the human being’s “highest happiness [*felicitas*], or blessedness [*beatitudo*].”¹⁷ He then identifies this blessedness with “that satisfaction of mind that stems from the intuitive knowledge of God [*ex Dei intuitiva cognitione*].” That is, “the man who is led by reason,” the free person, enjoys true *acquiescentia animi* (E4app4/G II 267). The third kind of knowledge and its psychological affect is now explicitly part of the picture. But this intuitive knowledge, blessedness and satisfaction of mind are precisely what, in E5p42s, prominently characterize the wise person (now referred to only as *sapiens*). In this, the very last paragraph of the *Ethics*, Spinoza says that

With this I have finished all the things I wished to show concerning the mind’s power over the affects and its freedom. From what has been shown, it is clear how much the

17 Though the “as far as we can [*quantum possumus*]” indicates that what is in question here may be not so much the unattainable model of human nature itself but our humanly possible approximation of it, this does not affect my main point concerning the identification of the free person and the wise person.

wise man [*Sapiens*] is capable of, and how much more powerful he is than one who is ignorant [*ignaro*] and driven only by lust. For not only is the ignorant man [*Ignarus*] troubled in many ways by external causes, and unable ever to possess true peace of mind [*animi acquiescentia*], but he also lives as if he knew neither himself, nor God, nor things; and as soon as he ceases to be acted on, he ceases to be. (G II 308)

On the other hand, Spinoza, continues,

the wise man, insofar as he is considered as such, is hardly troubled in spirit, but being, by a certain eternal necessity, conscious of himself, and of God, and of things, he never ceases to be, but always possesses true peace of mind.

There are two things to note about this scholium, aside from the fact that by this point both the free person and the wise person have been described as enjoying *animi acquiescentia*.

I. First, the knowledge of the third kind that the wise person is here said to possess—which generates a consciousness of himself, of God and of things and constitutes his blessedness and “the greatest satisfaction of Mind [*summa mentis acquiescentia*]” (E5p27/G II 297)—must be the same knowledge, consciousness and blessedness (“the greatest virtue of the mind,” according to E5p25) possessed (in E4app4) by the free person. For the third kind of knowledge is, affectively, the most powerful state of mind, and thus it explains the model free person’s ability to consistently counter the passive affects and act (always) according to reason. As Spinoza concludes in E5p42dem, “the power to restrain lusts arises from blessedness itself.”

But wait, one might object, the free person does not have the third kind of knowledge! In the propositions of Part Four, does not the freedom of the free person have its source in “reason,” that is, the second kind of knowledge? There is in the propositions themselves no mention of *intuitus*, the third kind of knowledge, only *ratio*. Therefore, the objection would run, the free person does not yet have the full strength of character, and thus the *beatitudo*, that the wise person, endowed with the third kind of knowledge, has, and so this must constitute a significant difference between the free person and the wise person.

There are two responses one could make to this objection. First, as E5p38 indicates, knowledge of the second kind, while not as affectively powerful as knowledge of the third kind, could still be sufficient to ground the free person’s exceptionless mastery over her passions. As Spinoza notes there, “the more the mind understands things by the second and third kind of knowledge, the less it is acted on by affects which are evil, and the less it fears death.” And it seems from both E4p45s and E4p67 that knowledge of the second kind, if that is indeed all that is in play in Part Four, is sufficient as well to constitute her wisdom. As we have seen, the wise person is as present in Part Four as the free person. Once again, the cognitive condition of the free person and the cognitive condition of the wise person are the same, with the power of their ideas—their strength of mind (*fortitudo*)—increasing as they move from the second kind of knowledge to the third kind of knowledge, and thus from *fortitudo* to *beatitudo*.

Moreover, despite the emphasis in the propositions of Part Four on the *rationis dictamina* (E4p18s/G II 222), I do not see in that part of the *Ethics*, or elsewhere in the work, any justification for excluding knowledge of the third kind from the free person. The adequate ideas of *scientia intuitiva* generate the same rational prescriptions as the adequate ideas of *ratio*, so why should we

think that the free person's comportment is explained only by the latter? This is confirmed by E4app4, which, as we have just seen, states that the person who lives maximally under the guidance of reason has indeed reached "intuitive knowledge of God."

II. The second thing to note about E5p42s/G II 308 is that the wise person is there "considered as such [*quatenus ut talis consideratur*]." This suggests that Spinoza is referring to the wise person strictly as wise—to the wisdom that constitutes the wise person—in abstraction from what must be her actual lived experiences in the world. He thereby allows that the ideal wise person must have passions, and that she knows both that those passions can occasionally overpower her rational ideas and that she will deal equanimously with such experiences; without any of this we could not understand what her wisdom consists in. But the wise person "considered as such"—considered purely with respect to her wisdom—does not actually experience having those rational ideas overpowered by those passions, does not actually experience being in bondage. Once again, the wise person looks very much like the free person, with both serving as the model of human nature.

5 Conclusions

I have argued that Spinoza does not distinguish the free person, the model of human nature, from the wise person. This brings me to Soyarslan's claim that the free person is never in bondage, and that this represents the difference from the wise person and the reason why the free person cannot possibly serve as the attainable model of living for any actual human being but the wise person can.

It is important to bear in mind, though, that, as I mentioned above, freedom for Spinoza comes in degrees. At one end of the spectrum is the true *homo liber*. As an ideal and a model of human nature, he is absolutely free. He *always* does what reason dictates. Though he is still subject to passive affects, just because he is a human being and a part of nature, those affects never determine his action. Individuals, then, are more or less free depending upon how closely they come to this ideal—that is, how often or deeply they fall into bondage to passions. The following passage from E5p20s is apt, and applies to both the free person and the wise person:

The power of the mind is defined by knowledge alone, whereas lack of power, or passion, is judged solely by the privation of knowledge, i.e., by that through which ideas are called inadequate. From this it follows that the mind is most acted on, of which inadequate ideas constitute the greatest part, so that it is distinguished more by what it undergoes than by what it does. On the other hand, that mind acts most, of which adequate ideas constitute the greatest part, so that though it may have as many inadequate ideas as the other, it is still distinguished more by those which are attributed to human virtue than by those which betray man's lack of power.¹⁸

The model free/wise person enjoys the peak degree of activity, and the spectrum moves down from there.

¹⁸ My thanks to Pascal Séverac for pointing out the relevance of this passage.

Now Soyarslan is, I believe, correct to say that no actually living human being can be absolutely free of some bondage to the passions; and so no actually living human being can fully instantiate the true *homo liber*, the free person “considered as such.” This is the lesson of the passage from the *Political Treatise* cited above, and something I did not sufficiently acknowledge in my original article. Thus, I gratefully concede this point. However, even if “it is not in anyone’s power to always use reason” and consistently be at the peak of human freedom, I suggest that does not make it any less of an ideal on which to model one’s life. We are to strive to be as rationally virtuous as possible, to be as much like the exemplary free person as we can, even as we remain aware of—and accept with equanimity—the fact that acting from the passions on occasion is inevitable.

All of this applies, equally, to the *vir sapiens*. One can be more or less wise, just as one can be more or less free. In fact, one is as wise as one is free. At the ideal end of the spectrum—at the exact same spot as the true *homo liber*—is the *vir sapiens*. The truly wise person, the true sage (to use the Stoic term), unfailingly does what reason dictates, and is never in bondage to the passions she experiences while living in the world. This would be the wise person “considered as such”—that is, the wise person who, though experiencing passions, always acts from and with wisdom. Actually existing human beings are more or less wise depending upon how close they come to this ideal, a model which (like the free person “considered as such”) no actually living human being who is “a part of nature” can fully instantiate.

In sum, the free person and the wise person “considered as such” are just two different ways of describing one and the same ideal, aspirational, albeit unattainable, condition. Durational human beings strive to be as much like this model as they can, even if they must ultimately face some bondage to passions. There is nothing unreasonable about using a model of freedom and wisdom that is unattainable in itself to motivate oneself to be as free and wise—as virtuous—as possible. (This, I presume, is the role that saints play in Christian morality. Those who have no chance of actually living as the saints did can still take those lives as models and aspire to live as saintly as they can.) As for the condition of the wise person that Soyarslan describes—someone who, though living by reason, durationally experiences with equanimity bondage to the passions—this is a kind of derivative or secondary ideal, an attainable ideal, the best we can do. But, again, there is no reason to think that there is not a corresponding derivative condition of the free person, a durational and attainable approximation of the model that brings us as close to that model as living human beings can come.

If one wants to insist on a difference between freedom and wisdom, it might be that freedom refers to the causal fount and nature of the individual’s comportment—that it is a matter of acting autonomously, by adequate ideas and according to the dictates of reason rather than by the passions. Wisdom, on the other hand, would refer to the free/wise individual’s cognitive and spiritual condition—having achieved the third kind of knowledge, and thus “consciousness of God, of himself and of things”, and especially how the essences of the latter two follow from the essence of God, the free/wise person enjoys *acquiescentia animi* and knows that she would, and is prepared to, handle bondage to the passions with equanimity. The wisdom of the free person consists in just that disposition, a disposition that arises from her exceptional rationality. If I might crassly borrow Spinoza’s own conceptual vocabulary, from when he is describing the fundamental identity of mind and body in E2p7, we could say that the free person and the wise person are one and the same thing, conceived now under this attribute, freedom, and now under that attribute, wisdom.

There is no reason, then, to distinguish the wise person and the free person—whether we are talking about each “considered as such” and thus as the model of human nature, or (allowing for that attainable derivative condition) each insofar as it constitutes the lived condition of a durational human being. Bear in mind that Spinoza contrasts the *homo liber* with the *homo servus*; he also refers to the latter as *ignarus* (E4p66s). He then, in both the Preface to Part Five and its final paragraph, as Piet Steenbakkens has shown, adopts the Stoic opposition between the *sapiens* and the *ignarus*.¹⁹ If the *ignarus* is the opposite of both the free person and the wise person, then I think it safe to assume that the free person and the wise person are the same.

If, as Soyarslan maintains, the wise person can serve as the attainable ideal which actual human beings can and should strive to emulate, just because she experiences and deals appropriately with the occasional bout of bondage to the passions, then *ipso facto* so can the free person. On the other hand, if the true *homo liber*, the free person “considered as such,” can be only an unattainable but nonetheless inspiring model of human nature, because though subject to passions she is never in bondage to them, then the true *vir sapiens*, the wise person “considered as such,” must function in the same way. There is no gap between the free person and the wise person in Spinoza’s *Ethics*. Where the one goes, so goes the other.²⁰

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19 Steenbakkens, “Living Well, Dying Well,” 182–3.

20 I am grateful to Donald Rutherford, Sanem Soyarslan, Pascal Séverac, and Ariel Suhamy for discussing this issue with me and for their comments on earlier drafts.

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Reply to Nadler: Spinoza's Free Person and Wise Person Reconsidered

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Abstract

This article addresses Steven Nadler's response to my objections to his reading of Spinoza's free person (*homo liber*). Nadler argues that there are no clear and significant differences between the free person and the wise person (*vir sapiens*) in their character or in the role they play in Spinoza's moral philosophy; in fact, they are one and the same. I begin by critically examining three inferences which Nadler's reading in part relies on. I then address the differences between the contexts in which Spinoza explicitly invokes the free person and the wise person. I argue that even though there may not be significant differences between the free person and the wise person in terms of their character and comportment, there is still reason to think that the free person plays a particular role in Spinoza's moral philosophy—one which does not hinge on the attainment of the cognitive and affective excellence represented by the wise person at the end of the *Ethics*.

Keywords: Spinoza, free person, wise person, reason, intuitive knowledge, *acquiescentia animi*, intellectual love of God, blessedness

1 Introduction

After introducing the general features of his metaphysics of God in the first part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza informs his readers that he “pass[es] now to explaining those things which must necessarily follow from the essence of God...—not, indeed, all of them...but *only those* that can lead us, by the hand, as it were, to the knowledge of the human mind and its highest *blessedness (beatitudo)*” (E2pref/G II 84, my italics). In thus providing a clear indication of the ultimately practical orientation of Spinoza's thought, this preface sets the agenda not only for the second part, but for the rest of his

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magnum opus.¹ By the time we reach the end of the final part, Spinoza has “finished all the things [he] wished to show concerning the mind’s power over the affects and its freedom” (E5p42s/G II 308), which culminates in his remarks about the wise person (*vir sapiens*). The “true peace of mind (*vera animi acquiescentia*)” (ibid.) and blessedness of the wise person, whom Spinoza describes as someone who is “conscious of himself, and of God, and of things” (ibid.), mark the zenith of Spinozistic freedom, which is excellent yet rare to attain. Spinoza’s remarks about the wise person are thus vital to understanding where the trajectory he announces in E2pref leads.

Interestingly, despite its importance, Spinoza does not give a detailed account of the wise person. He does not explicitly mention the wise person except on a few occasions and most of these instances are in part five of the *Ethics*, which houses in its second half some of the most puzzling elements of his philosophical system, including his doctrines of intuitive knowledge (*scientia intuitiva*), the eternity of the mind, and the intellectual love of God (*amor Dei intellectualis*). By contrast, Spinoza portrays in detail a different ideal condition—or so I argue—represented by “the free person” (*homo liber*), which he describes as someone “who lives according to the dictate of reason alone” (E4p67d/G II 261) within the comparatively more accessible setting of E4. It is in this part that he introduces his accounts of collaborative morality and “dictates of reason” (*dictamina rationis*), which he presents as the foundation of the right way of living exemplified in the life of a free person. Whereas Spinoza’s account of the free person has been extensively studied by scholars, his remarks on the wise person and how they relate to his account of the free person have been mostly overlooked.²

Steven Nadler’s “Spinoza on the Wise and the Free” presents us with an insightful and intriguing reading of this underexamined, yet important, aspect of Spinoza’s thought. Nadler argues against the view that “there are clear and significant differences between the [free person and the wise person] in terms of their character and in the role they play in Spinoza’s moral philosophy.”³ Contra the view that I defend in my 2019 article, “Two Ethical Ideals in Spinoza’s *Ethics*: The Free Man and the Wise Man,” Nadler argues that the wise person and the free person are in fact one and the same; they represent the peak of human freedom and “constitute a single ideal model that we can more or less closely approximate.”⁴ Importantly, in suggesting that the peak of human freedom can be comprehended through the lens of a single ideal model, Nadler’s reading also contributes to a unified understanding of Spinoza’s moral philosophy in the *Ethics*—one which includes Spinoza’s views in the second half of Part V in the picture, rather than dismissing them as irrelevant to his ethics⁵ or “worthless”⁶ as some scholars have.

However, as I will show here, this very virtue of Nadler’s article may open it to some objections due to the differences of emphasis between E4 and E5. Since the free person appears *only* in E4 and

1 Henry Allison, *Benedict de Spinoza: An Introduction* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 84.

2 In the last section of my 2019 article (“Two Ethical Ideals in Spinoza’s *Ethics*: The Free Man and the Wise Man,” *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 5 (2019): 357–70), I examine Spinoza’s remarks about the wise person. But since my main goal in that article was to show contra Nadler that the free person as he conceives of it is an unattainable ideal, the wise person was not the only focus of attention.

3 Steven Nadler, “Spinoza on the Wise and the Free,” *Journal of Spinoza Studies* 2, no. 2 (2023): 48.

4 Ibid., abstract.

5 C. D. Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (London: Routledge, 1930), 15–6.

6 Jonathan Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1984), 372.

most of what Spinoza says about the wise person is found in E5, it is important to consider the differences between the respective contexts in which Spinoza explicitly invokes these ideals—a task mostly overlooked by Nadler as he focuses on the points of convergence between the free person and the wise person. In this response, I will not consider all of the points Nadler brings to our attention—indeed, I concur with him on several, as I explain below. Instead, I will focus on the ones that enable him to make the following three inferences: (i) it is not the case that “in order to qualify as a wise person one must have achieved [intuitive knowledge],”⁷ (ii) both the free person and the wise person can be said to possess *scientia intuitiva* and enjoy the attendant *animi acquiescentia* and *beatitudo*, and (iii) “the adequate ideas of *scientia intuitiva* generate the same rational prescriptions as the adequate ideas of *ratio*.”⁸ After considering these inferences in turn in Sections 3, 4, and 5, I will conclude by addressing the differences between the respective contexts in which Spinoza explicitly invokes the free person and the wise person.

According to my reading, whereas Spinoza introduces the free person in relation to reason in Part IV to show what the “method of living rightly” consists of insofar as “the present life” (E5p20s) is concerned, his remarks about the wise person at the end of E5 “pertain to the mind’s duration without relation to the body” (ibid.). The wise person that Spinoza describes in E4p42s represents someone who has attained intuitive knowledge and, thereby, true peace of mind, which “involves the stillness of eternity.”⁹ If my reading is correct, even though there may not be significant differences between the free person and the wise person in terms of their character and comportment, there is still reason to think that the free person plays a particular role in Spinoza’s moral philosophy—one which does not hinge on the attainment of the cognitive and affective excellence represented by the wise person at the end of the *Ethics*. I begin by presenting the main tenets of Nadler’s reading, some of his objections to the reading I offered in my 2019 article, and the points on which I agree with him.

2 The Main Tenets of Nadler’s Revised Reading

In my 2019 article I had two goals. The first one was to argue, contra Nadler’s former view, that the free person *qua* the model of exceptionless rational consistency cannot be taken to be an attainable ideal within our reach due to the impossibility of achieving absolute freedom from bondage to the passions in the Spinozistic universe. The second one was to show that in the *Ethics* Spinoza presents us with an ideal yet attainable condition, which is represented by the wise person. My second goal was inspired by Nadler’s point about the importance for a moral philosophy to present a human ideal that is within our reach.¹⁰ Although I did not think that Nadler’s free person worked as an attainable ideal, I did assume—following Nadler—that “there must be *some* attainable ideal in Spinoza’s moral

7 Nadler, “The Wise,” 54.

8 Ibid., 55.

9 Clare Carlisle, “Spinoza’s *Acquiescentia*,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 55, no.2 (2017): 229.

10 In Nadler’s words, “If the true and ultimate condition of human well-being is in principle unattainable or even incoherent, that would seem both to represent a serious philosophical flaw in Spinoza’s theory and to detract from its interest as an account of the good life” (Steven Nadler, “On Spinoza’s ‘Free Man’,” *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1, (2015): 105).

philosophy that so functions to motivate us.”¹¹ Given that Spinoza describes the blessedness of the wise person as an attainable, albeit rare, achievement and clearly identifies blessedness as the ultimate condition of human well-being, the wise person seemed like a promising candidate to serve as an ideal yet perfectly human condition.

Nadler's recent article suggests that we are now in agreement about the unattainability of the free person. Importantly, while Nadler acknowledges that “a condition of absolute freedom from *bondage* to the passions is not possible for durational human beings, and thus the free person as the model of human nature is not something we can actually attain,”¹² he no longer thinks that the unattainability of this model “detract[s] from its interest as an account of the good life.”¹³ In the concluding section of his recent article, he explicitly states that “There is nothing unreasonable about using a model of freedom...that is unattainable in itself to motivate oneself to be as free...as possible.”¹⁴ However, Nadler does not think that the unattainability of the free person implies that the wise person and the free person are two distinct ideals. According to Nadler,

...if the free person *qua* model of human nature is understood to be an unattainable, asymptotic ideal because, though subject to passions, he is *never* in bondage to them, then such is the case with the wise person as well. The key, as I show, is in understanding that both wisdom and freedom come in degrees.¹⁵

After showing throughout his article that Spinoza does not distinguish the free person from the wise person, Nadler concludes that they are “just two different ways of describing one and the same ideal, aspirational, albeit unattainable, condition,”¹⁶ which is basically a model of freedom and wisdom we can more or less closely approximate. In Nadler's view, the condition of the wise person that I described in my 2019 article as “...someone who, though living by reason, durationally experiences with equanimity bondage to the passions...is a kind of derivative or secondary ideal, an attainable ideal, the best we can do.”¹⁷ But he adds that “there is no reason to think that there is not a corresponding derivative condition of the free person.”¹⁸

I have no objection to Nadler's revised view that the free person as an unattainable ideal can be aspirational. I too hold that for Spinoza both wisdom and freedom come in degrees. Furthermore, as Nadler points out, Spinoza clearly attributes wisdom to the free person: “The free person thinks least of all of death, and his wisdom [*sapientia*] is a meditation on life, not on death” (E4p67/G II 261). I also find it undeniable that Spinoza attributes “blessedness *or* freedom” to the wise person at the end of the *Ethics*. Importantly, however, Nadler goes beyond maintaining these relatively obvious points. He argues that the free person does not *just* have a certain kind of wisdom; but he is “*the* wise person.” In other words, he proposes that the person whom Spinoza describes as led by

11 Nadler, “The Wise,” 52.

12 Ibid., 49.

13 Nadler, “On Spinoza's ‘Free Man’,” 105.

14 Ibid., 57.

15 Ibid., 49.

16 Ibid., 57.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

reason alone in E4 is the same as the person whom he describes as “hardly troubled in spirit, but being, by a certain eternal necessity, conscious of himself, and of God, and of things...always possesses true peace of mind” (E5p42s) at the end of E5. Nadler’s proposal rests in part on the three inferences I noted in the introduction. I begin by considering the first one: that it is not the case that “in order to qualify as a wise person one must have achieved [intuitive knowledge].”¹⁹

3 The Wise Person and Intuitive Knowledge

Is achieving intuitive knowledge a necessary condition to qualify as a wise person? Since Spinoza describes the wise person as someone who is “conscious of himself, and of God, and of things” (E5p42s) after completing his account of intuitive knowledge and blessedness at the end of the *Ethics*, it had appeared to me plausible in my 2019 article to suggest that the wise person is someone who has attained intuitive knowledge and its attendant blessedness. As I stated earlier here, most of what Spinoza says explicitly about the wise person (which does not amount to much) is included in E5. However, Nadler is absolutely right to remind us that the wise person appears in E4 as well, where Spinoza has not yet explored the affective power of intuitive knowledge. Nadler is also right that I, myself, had considered the wise person to be the subject of article XXXII in the appendix to part four (E4app32) and acknowledged that the wise person appears in E4p45s. I thus concur with Nadler’s first claim that it is not the case that “in order to qualify as a wise person one must have achieved [intuitive knowledge].”²⁰

In my view, however, we can still hold that in order to qualify as someone who is “conscious of himself, and of God, and of things,” and thus enjoys blessedness and true peace of mind, one must have achieved intuitive knowledge. E4p45s/G II 244-5 and the context within which Spinoza presents us with this passage suggest that the person who lives according to the guidance of reason qualifies as a wise person.²¹ In Spinoza’s words, “it is the part of a wise man [*vir est sapientis*] ...to refresh and restore himself in moderation with pleasant food and drink, with scents, with the beauty of green plants, with decoration, music, sports, the theater, and other things of this kind, which anyone can use without injury to another.” It is conceivable that both the person who lives in accordance to the guidance of reason and one who has attained intuitive knowledge would “use things ... and to take pleasure in them as far as possible” (E4p45s). But this still leaves open the possibility that *only* the person who has attained intuitive knowledge can be said to enjoy blessedness and true peace of mind, which, in my view, is the ideal condition represented by *the* wise person at the end of the *Ethics*.

What about the wise person, which I took to be the subject of E4app32 in my 2019 article? There I had argued that the wise person—unlike the free person—does not represent an ideal of exceptionless self-mastery. In other words, I had suggested that the wise person is not someone who

19 Ibid., 54.

20 Ibid.

21 As Nadler puts it “In the midst of his extended account of what it is to ‘live according to the guidance of reason’, which begins with IVp18s, Spinoza indicates that the life of such an individual is not an ascetic one. She enjoys the pleasures of the world, albeit in moderation” (ibid., 54).

has completely overcome human bondage, even though he is someone who “is hardly troubled in spirit” and “always possesses true peace of mind (*vera animi acquiescentia*)” (E5p42s/G II 308). In order to show how possessing true peace of mind could be compatible with being ineliminably in bondage to a certain degree, I had turned to E4app32; for even though Spinoza does not explicitly invoke the wise person in this passage, he does talk about *acquiescentia*, a variant of which he attributes to the wise person at the end of the *Ethics*. As I had put it in my 2019 article,

...here *acquiescentia*...does not arise from having achieved exceptionless self-mastery. Instead, it arises from an understanding of the reason as to why such an achievement is not attainable for us, given just how limited our power is as finite modes and that we do not have ‘an absolute power to adapt things outside us to our use’ (ibid.) ...that our ‘power is very limited and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes’ (EIVAppXXXII) does not mean that we are thereby always necessarily troubled by external causes. It is possible for us to be ‘hardly troubled in spirit’ and experience, instead, a certain kind of peace of mind or *acquiescentia* if we manage to understand and come to terms with the fact that as parts of Nature we do not have absolute power in the face of the passions and, consequently, that we will necessarily undergo instances of bondage that we cannot avoid.²²

I am quoting this paragraph at length, since my wording here has understandably led Nadler to infer that I identify the wise person as “someone who, though living by reason, durationally experiences with equanimity bondage to the passions,”²³ which he took to be “a derivative or secondary ideal, an attainable ideal, the best we can do.”²⁴ Whereas I agree with Nadler that such a conception of the wise person would constitute a secondary ideal, which is attainable, I do not think that it represents the best we can do. Thanks to Nadler’s description of my view, I realize that I was mistaken in my 2019 article in taking the respective occurrences of *acquiescentia* in E4app32 and E5p42s to correspond to the exact same affect and thus describe a single ideal of the wise person.

I would like to take this opportunity to revise my view and suggest that the respective occurrences of *acquiescentia* in E4app32 and E5p42s do not correspond to the same affect. More specifically, I hold that the *acquiescentia* in E4app32 is not the *acquiescentia* that arises from intuitive knowledge, which the wise person at the end of the *Ethics* experiences. It is the one that arises from reason, which Clare Carlisle calls “*acquiescentia* of the second kind.”²⁵ As Carlisle puts it, “the stillness experienced in *acquiescentia* of the second kind is a quality of stability and equanimity.”²⁶ In my view, a person who understands *via* reason that we are a part of the whole of Nature, whose order we follow necessarily, and thus obeys necessity and bears it calmly, would experience *acquiescentia* of the second kind and certainly count as a wise person. But if wisdom and freedom come in degrees as Nadler and I hold, then it seems to me that *acquiescentia* of the second kind does

22 Soyarslan, “Ethical Ideals,” 366.

23 Nadler, “The Wise,” 57.

24 Ibid.

25 Carlisle, “Spinoza’s *Acquiescentia*,” 222.

26 Ibid., 224.

not represent the highest level of wisdom and freedom, which brings us to the wise person at the end of the *Ethics*.

As I read Spinoza, the wise person at the end of the *Ethics* experiences something qualitatively different and more powerful than stability and equanimity; she experiences instead, what Carlisle calls “*acquiescentia* of the third kind,”²⁷ which indicates true peace of mind (*vera animi acquiescentia*) and rest. The wise person at the end of the *Ethics* is “hardly troubled in spirit” (E5p42s). But this is not because she manages to understand and come to terms with the fact that as parts of Nature we do not have absolute power in the face of the passions, as I had suggested in my 2019 article. This is not, in other words, because she is “someone who, though living by reason, durationally experiences with equanimity bondage to the passions,”²⁸ as Nadler describes my earlier view. “The wise [person], insofar as [s]he is considered as such, is hardly troubled in spirit” (E5p42s). This is because she is conscious of herself, and of God, and of things; she *sees* “in one glance” (E3p40s2) that “[she is] in God and [is] conceived through God” (E5p30), and *experiences* her being as a modal expression of God.²⁹ In thus having attained intuitive knowledge, this wise person is not only affected by the *acquiescentia* of the third kind, but she also experiences the intellectual love of God,³⁰ an active affect of joy, which constitutes blessedness, and is “phenomenologically...inseparable”³¹ from the *acquiescentia* of the third kind.

In the beginning of one of his earlier works, the *Treatise of the Emendation of the Intellect*, Spinoza, after expressing his frustration with the “empty and futile” goods of the ordinary life, states that his goal is to “find out whether there was anything which would be the true good, capable of communicating itself, and which alone would affect the mind, all others being rejected—whether there was something which, once found and acquired, would continuously give [him] the greatest joy, to eternity” (TIE/G II 5). From the way Spinoza describes the affective power of intuitive knowledge in the second half of E5, it seems that he has found out what that true good is: “a constant and eternal love of God...or blessedness..., [which] can rightly be called satisfaction of mind (*animi acquiescentia*)” (E5p36s/G II 303). According to Spinoza, “There is nothing in Nature which is contrary to this intellectual love, or which can take it away” (E5p37). This “follows necessarily from the nature of the mind insofar as it is considered as an *eternal truth*, through God’s nature (by P33 and P29)” (E5p37d, my italics). E5p37 concerns the mind “insofar as it is considered as an eternal truth, through God’s nature” (E5p37d), since intuitive knowledge (from which the intellectual love of God arises) depends on the mind’s conception of “its body’s essence under a species of eternity”

27 Ibid., 226.

28 Nadler, “The Wise,” 57.

29 I give a detailed analysis of the affective power of intuitive knowledge and the intellectual love of God in Soyarslan (“From Ordinary Life to Blessedness: The Power of Intuitive Knowledge in Spinoza’s *Ethics*,” in *Essays on Spinoza’s Ethical Theory*, eds. Matthew Kisner and Andrew Youpa (Oxford: Oxford University: Oxford, 2014), 236-257.

30 “From the third kind of knowledge, there necessarily arises an intellectual love of God. For from this kind of knowledge there arises (by P32) joy, accompanied by the idea of God as its cause, that is (by Def. Aff. VI), love of God, not insofar as we imagine him as present (by P29), but insofar as we understand God to be eternal. And this is what I call intellectual love of God.” (E5p32c)

31 Carlisle, “Spinoza’s *Acquiescentia*,” 228.

(E5p31d).³² In Spinoza's words, "insofar as our mind knows itself and its body under a species of eternity, it necessarily has knowledge of God and knows that it is in God and is conceived through God" (E5p30). When the essence of the mind (and the body) is thus grasped from an eternal perspective, the mind conceives of itself as a power of understanding depending timelessly on God (E5p36s). In short, then, the mind conceives of its own eternity, and thereby is affected by both the intellectual love of God and *acquiescentia* of the third kind.

Importantly, right after his demonstration of how powerful the intellectual love of God is in E5p37, Spinoza adds that "IVA1 concerns singular things insofar as they are considered in relation to a certain time and place..." (E5p37s). E4a1 is the only axiom of E4 and reads as follows: "There is no singular thing in Nature than which there is not another more powerful and stronger. Whatever one is given, there is another more powerful by which the first can be destroyed." This axiom grounds Spinoza's account of human bondage in E4, according to which we do not have absolute power in the face of the passions and that "power is very limited and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes" (E4app32). In bringing up this only axiom of E4 in the context of E5 immediately after presenting the power of the intellectual love of God, Spinoza reminds us that what he had told us about the limited nature of our power in E4 concerns us *only* insofar as "we conceive [ourselves] to exist in relation to a certain time and place [—not,] insofar as we conceive ourselves to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature" (E5p29s).

It is, of course, very important to understand *via* reason that we are a part of Nature, our power is irreducibly limited insofar as our durational existence is concerned, and "whatever changes one experiences were absolutely necessary."³³ In fact, we cannot attain intuitive knowledge without gaining this rational insight and its resultant equanimity and stability. But, as I read Spinoza, the wise person at the end of the *Ethics*, in attaining intuitive knowledge, experiences something beyond this. She experiences the intellectual love of God and *acquiescentia* of the third kind, which, as Carlisle beautifully puts it, "involves the stillness of eternity,"³⁴ rather than "a stability of duration."³⁵ She enjoys blessedness by conceiving of "[our] very existence...insofar as [we] are in God" (E3p45s). The wise person, considered as such, represents an excellent, yet rare state of cognitive and affective excellence, which is the best we can achieve as finite minds. She represents someone who has achieved salvation in this life by "understand[ing] that [her] very being as an understanding mind is immutable."³⁶

To take stock, I have shown in this section that even though achieving intuitive knowledge is not a necessary condition to qualify as *a* wise person (given that this term first appears in Part IV as Nadler rightly reminds), it is a necessary condition to qualify as *the* wise person Spinoza describes

32 This is because "the idea, which expresses the essence of the body under a species of eternity, is a certain mode of thinking, which pertains to the essence of the mind, and which is necessarily eternal" (E5p23s).

33 Kristin Primus, "Part V of Spinoza's *Ethics*: Intuitive Knowledge, Contentment of Mind, and Intellectual Love of God," *Philosophy Compass* 17, no.6 (2022): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12838>.

34 Carlisle, "Spinoza's *Acquiescentia*," 229.

35 Ibid. According to Carlisle, *acquiescentia* of the second kind involves a stability of duration.

36 Primus, "Part V," 10. See also Primus ("Scientia Intuitiva in the *Ethics*," in *The Critical Guide to Spinoza's Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) for an excellent analysis of *scientia intuitiva* in the *Ethics*. I agree with Primus that "*scientia intuitiva* and its attendant *beatitudo* are more achievable for finite minds than is sometimes supposed" (ibid., 185).

at the end of the *Ethics*. Whereas a wise person who lives according to the guidance of reason and thus experiences the equanimity and stability of *acquiescentia* of the second kind would count as a secondary ideal, the best we can do is represented by the ideal of the wise person Spinoza describes at the end of the *Ethics* as someone who experiences true peace of mind—that is, *acquiescentia* of the third kind. Having examined Nadler’s first inference about the connection between achieving intuitive knowledge and qualifying as a wise person, we can now turn to his second inference: Can the free person be said to possess *scientia intuitiva* as Nadler claims?

4 The Free Person and Intuitive Knowledge

In order to show that the free person possesses *scientia intuitiva*, Nadler relies heavily on E4app4. According to Nadler, this passage shows that the free person has indeed reached intuitive knowledge and “enjoys true *acquiescentia animi*.”³⁷ Since “this intuitive knowledge, blessedness and satisfaction of mind are precisely what, in E5p42s, prominently characterize the wise person (now referred to only as *sapiens*),”³⁸ Nadler holds that what Spinoza says in E4app4 supports the view that the free person is the same as the wise person at the end of the *Ethics*. Furthermore, in Nadler’s view, even though Spinoza focuses on reason’s dictates in E4 and “there is in the [free person] propositions themselves no mention of *intuitus*, the third kind of knowledge, only *ratio*,”³⁹ these factors do not constitute a reason to conclude that the free person does not have the third kind of knowledge. In Nadler’s words,

...despite the emphasis in the propositions of Part Four on the *dictamina rationis*, I do not see in that part of the *Ethics*, or elsewhere in the work, any justification for excluding knowledge of the third kind from the free person. The adequate ideas of *scientia intuitiva* generate the same rational prescriptions as the adequate ideas of *ratio*, so why should we think that the free person’s comportment is explained only by the latter? That it is not is confirmed by IV, Appendix IV, which, as we have just seen, states that the person who lives maximally under the guidance of reason has indeed reached “intuitive knowledge of God.”⁴⁰

Even though E4app4/G II 267 is thus central to Nadler’s view, he has not examined this passage in detail. It is, nonetheless, important to take into account the entirety of what Spinoza conveys here:

In life, therefore, it is especially useful to perfect, as far as we can, our intellect, or reason (*ratio*). In this one thing consists man’s highest happiness (*felicitas*), or blessedness (*beatitudo*). Indeed, blessedness is nothing but that satisfaction of mind (*animi acquiescentia*) which stems from the intuitive knowledge of God [*ex Dei intuitiva*]

37 Nadler, “The Wise,” 54.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., 55.

40 Ibid., 55-56.

cognitione]. But perfecting the intellect is nothing but understanding God, his attributes, and his actions, which follow from the necessity of his nature. So the ultimate end of the man who is led by reason, that is, his highest desire, by which he strives to moderate all the others, is that by which he is led to conceive adequately both himself and all things which can fall under his understanding.

Notably, when we consider the first sentence here, it is not clear that the first appearance of the term *ratio* corresponds to reason, considered strictly as the knowledge of the second kind. In saying “intellect, *or* reason,” Spinoza seems to use *ratio* more broadly to refer to intellect, which, he elsewhere defines as “the eternal part of the mind (by P23 and P29...), through which alone we are said to act (by IIP3)” by contrasting it to imagination. (E5p40c).⁴¹ Since reason, *qua* knowledge of the second kind, and intuitive knowledge both constitute the intellect (E5p40c)⁴² and lead to understanding,⁴³ we could read the first two sentences to mean that our blessedness consists in the perfection of our intellect, which culminates in our intuitive knowledge of God. What Spinoza says later on about what “perfecting the intellect” is—namely, that “perfecting the intellect is nothing but understanding God, his attributes, and his actions, which follow from the necessity of his nature”—supports this reading.

What about the second occurrence of reason, where Spinoza talks about the “the ultimate end of the man who is led by reason”? Here it seems that Spinoza is using reason in the strict sense to refer to knowledge of the second kind. Now it is true that reason, *qua* knowledge of the second kind, provides a motive or desire to understand things: “What we strive for from reason is nothing but understanding” (E4p26). Since the highest form of understanding is intuitive knowledge, reason also provides a motive or desire to know things *via* intuitive knowledge.⁴⁴ As Spinoza states in E5p28, “The striving, or desire, to know things by the third kind of knowledge cannot arise from the first kind of knowledge, but can indeed arise from the second.” Given these points, to go back to E4app4, “the ultimate end of the man who is led by reason, that is, his highest desire” would be to pursue intuitive knowledge. But does this mean that such a person will actually possess intuitive knowledge? Nadler’s view seems to be that the person who is led by reason or, as he puts it, “the person who lives maximally under the guidance of reason” does not just desire to know *via* intuitive knowledge; she has indeed reached intuitive knowledge. As I see it, while it is possible that such a person has reached intuitive knowledge, we can also conceive of a person who lives maximally under the guidance of reason and desires to know things by the third kind of knowledge, without thereby actually possessing intuitive knowledge.

41 As LeBuffe (*Spinoza on Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 190, n3) also notes, sometimes Spinoza uses *ratio* less strictly; see, for instance, E5pref where he uses reason interchangeably with mind (E5pref) or adequate ideas generally (E4p28d). According to E4p27d/G II 228, the mind has certainty of things “only insofar as it has adequate ideas or (*sive*) reasons.”

42 Spinoza defines the intellect as the “part of the mind that is eternal” (E5p40c).

43 For Spinoza, the power of the mind is defined by understanding (*intelligentiā*). Since both sorts of adequate knowledge increase the power of the mind, they are coextensive with understanding.

44 See LeBuffe (*Spinoza on Reason*, 95) for the view that reason supplies a motive from which we seek more intuitive knowledge, even though reason itself falls short of intuitive knowledge.

I realize that my argument against Nadler's reading of E4app4 is not an exceptionally strong one, given that Spinoza's wording here can also be interpreted to support Nadler's reading.⁴⁵ But I hope to have shown, at least, that this passage is open to another interpretation. E4app4 is one of the numerous passages in the *Ethics*, where Spinoza focuses on the close connection between reason and intuitive knowledge, rather than their differences. It is correct that in Spinoza's taxonomy of knowledge, reason and intuitive knowledge are closer to one another than either is to the first kind,⁴⁶ since they are both 'necessarily true' (E2p41) and consist in adequate ideas.⁴⁷ Moreover, they both constitute the intellect (E5p40c) and lead to understanding, through which an individual can get better at moderating and restraining her passive affects, and thereby become free and virtuous. As Nadler also points out, for Spinoza, "the more the mind understands things by the second and third kind of knowledge, the less it is acted on by affects which are evil, and the less it fears death" (E5p38).

Despite the commonalities between reason and intuitive knowledge, however, it is clear that they are not the same. And their differences are reflected in the way Spinoza constructs his accounts of collaborative morality and dictates of reason based on reason in E4, and his accounts of the intellectual love of God and blessedness based on intuitive knowledge in E5. Even though Nadler himself acknowledges "the emphasis in the propositions of Part Four on the *dictamina rationis*,"⁴⁸ he does not consider this a "justification for excluding knowledge of the third kind from the free person."⁴⁹ In my view, in holding this, Nadler downplays the differences in emphasis between E4 and E5, which are directly relevant to the context in which Spinoza invokes the free person and the wise person at the end of the *Ethics*. Furthermore, in suggesting that the adequate ideas of *scientia intuitiva* generate the same rational prescriptions as the adequate ideas of *ratio*, Nadler also seems to downplay the differences between reason and intuitive knowledge. In the remaining part of my response, I will consider these two points starting with the latter.

5 Intuitive Knowledge and Rational Prescriptions

Can the adequate ideas of *scientia intuitiva* generate the same rational prescriptions as the adequate ideas of *ratio* as Nadler claims? The answer to this question depends on what one takes to be the differences between intuitive knowledge and reason.⁵⁰ For the purposes of this response, I will focus

45 Thanks to Matthew Kisner for the reminder that Spinoza does not use *sive* or *seu* in a systematic way to communicate the "or" of equivalence. Thanks also to Tad Schmaltz for his helpful insights regarding how to read E4app4.

46 According to Spinoza, knowledge of the first kind is the only cause of falsity (E2p41) and consists in inadequate and confused ideas on which the passions depend (E3p3).

47 Moreover, since only reason and intuition can provide adequate ideas, they alone teach us 'to distinguish true from false' (E2p42). For Spinoza, an adequate idea is one that has all the 'internal denominations' (notably, intellectual clarity and distinctness) of a 'true idea' (E2def4). A true idea, on the other hand, is one that fully agrees with what it represents (E1a6).

48 Nadler, "The Wise," 55.

49 Ibid.

50 This is, admittedly, a controversial topic in and of itself due to Spinoza's limited treatment of the distinction between reason and intuitive knowledge in the *Ethics*. For the purposes of this response, I present a partial overview of my own account of this subject, which I defend in detail in Soyarslan ("The Distinction between Reason and Intuitive Knowledge in Spinoza's Ethics," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 24, no.1 (2016): 27-54.). See Yovel ("The Third

on two differences, which I consider to be relevant: (i) whereas intuitive knowledge is “knowledge of singular things,” reason is universal knowledge, and (ii) due to the difference in their respective foundations, intuitive knowledge is not connected to imagination in the way reason is.

(i) In E5p36s, as Spinoza expresses how much “more powerful” intuitive knowledge is than reason, he describes them as “knowledge of singular things” and “universal knowledge” respectively. According to my reading, Spinoza describes reason as a ‘universal’ knowledge since, by its definition, it constitutes a way by which we can “perceive many things and form *universal* notions” (E2p40s2, my italics) based on our apprehension of common notions and adequate ideas of properties of things. Intuitive knowledge, on the other hand, is the “knowledge of singular things” since it relates to their essences. Attaining intuitive knowledge of singular things, namely understanding them by way of their essences, is radically different than conceiving of “singular things insofar as they are considered in relation to a certain time and place...” (E5p37s) *via* imagination. It is our intuitive grasp of the relation of God’s essence to their essences—that is, of “the very existence of singular things insofar as they are in God” (E2p45s). The knowledge of singular things is thus directly correlated to the knowledge of God: “the more we understand singular things [via intuitive knowledge], the more we understand God (E5p24).

(ii) According to Spinoza, reason and intuitive knowledge differ in terms of their respective foundations. The foundation of intuitive knowledge is “the knowledge of God” (E5p20s), namely, adequate knowledge of God’s eternal and infinite essence. By contrast, the foundation of reason is constituted by common notions (E2p40s1), which represent those properties that are “common to all things”⁵¹ and of which we have adequate ideas. After stating in E2p47 that “the human mind has an adequate knowledge of God’s eternal and infinite essence” and, thus, that the foundation of intuitive knowledge is already available to us, Spinoza explains in the scholium that follows why, despite the availability of this foundation, most people do not have true knowledge of God: “that men do not have so clear a knowledge of God as they do of the common notions comes from the fact that they cannot imagine God, as they can bodies...” (E2p47s, my italics). This passage shows that intuitive knowledge is not connected to imagination in the way reason is. For, as seen here, the fact that we can imagine bodies helps to enhance the clarity of our knowledge of common notions, which represent properties *of* actually existing *bodies*, which we not only adequately cognize but also can vividly imagine. Although imagination can sometimes facilitate rather than obstruct common

Kind of Knowledge as Alternative Salvation,” in *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, Vol. I: *The Marrano of Reason* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989)), Nadler (*Spinoza’s Ethics: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)), Sandler (“Intuitus and Ratio in Spinoza’s Ethical Thought,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 13, (2005): 73-90), Curley (“Experience in Spinoza’s Theory of Knowledge,” in *Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Marjorie Grene (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), 25-59), Carr (“Spinoza’s Distinction between Rational and Intuitive Knowledge,” *Philosophical Review* 87, (1978): 241-52), Garrett (“Spinoza’s Theory of *Scientia Intuitiva*,” in *Scientia in Early Modern Philosophy: Seventeenth Century Thinkers on Demonstrative Knowledge from First Principles*, eds. Tom Sorell, G.E. Rogers, and Jill Kraye (Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London, and New York: Springer, 2010), 99-115), Wilson (“Spinoza’s Theory of Knowledge,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, ed. Don Garrett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 89-141), and Primus (“*Scientia Intuitiva*”) for other notable interpretations.

51 See E2p38, E2p38d and E2p38c for Spinoza’s account of common notions. Note that for Spinoza, the ideas of properties that are “common to, and peculiar to, the human body and certain external bodies by which the human body is usually affected” are also adequate in the mind (E2p39).

notions by adding to their intellectual evidence some sensible evidence,⁵² “the knowledge of God,” which comprehends the essence of God, cannot be imagined in any way.⁵³ Since intuitive knowledge consists in inferring from this *unimaginable* foundation adequate knowledge of the essences of things, it deals with things “which we can apprehend *only* by the intellect and *not* by the imagination” (Ep12, Spinoza to Meyer, 20 April 1663 (G II 52-62), my italics).

Given these two important and interrelated differences between reason and intuitive knowledge, I disagree with Nadler that the adequate ideas of *scientia intuitiva* generate the *same* rational prescriptions as the adequate ideas of *ratio*. As I read Spinoza, rational prescriptions or dictates of reason are general guidelines for action, which means that they are instances of universal knowledge rather than knowledge of singular things. Furthermore, even though these prescriptions are grounded in reason to the extent that they are rules of reason, they would need to be applied to particular cases with the help of imagination,⁵⁴ which, as we have seen in the previous paragraph, is connected to reason rather than intuitive knowledge.⁵⁵

In my view, that adequate ideas of intuitive knowledge do not generate rational prescriptions is not a weakness of intuitive knowledge. It is, rather, an indication of its peculiarity and difference from reason. Reason, to be sure, is at the heart of Spinoza’s moral philosophy: it not only generates rational prescriptions, but also enables us to understand ourselves and one another through our shared aspects. Reason constitutes the basis of his account of collaborative morality by leading to the comprehension that for a human being there is nothing more valuable than another human being, who lives according to the guidance of reason (E4p35c1), which, in turn, motivates us to do “only those things which are good for *human nature*” (E4p35d, my italics; see also E3p57s and E4p37s1). Importantly, however, even though human nature is not a concept of imagination *per se*, it is a species-bound notion which can be thought to relate to imagination in the way dictates of reason do.⁵⁶ It is notable that whereas in E4 Spinoza puts a lot of emphasis on the notion of ‘human nature’ in relation to his conception of collaborative morality, in E5, especially in the second half of it, we hardly see this notion in play. Instead, Spinoza uses the term ‘thing’ as we have just seen in his description of intuitive knowledge as “knowledge of singular things” (E5p24 and E5p36s), as well as in his description of the wise person as someone who is “conscious of himself, and of God, and of *things*” (E5p42s, my italics; see also E5p39s).

52 Delahunty (*Spinoza* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 75) invokes this passage in order to support his view that there is an empirical element in common notions.

53 By thus distinguishing the knowledge of God from common notions, Spinoza makes use of a distinction between those things that can be imagined, like the bodies, and those that can never be imagined, like God. In a famous letter to Lodewijk Meyer, Spinoza makes a similar distinction as he warns against the failure to distinguish between “that which we can apprehend *only* by the intellect and not by the imagination,” and “that which can *also* be apprehended by imagination” (Ep 12, Spinoza to Meyer, 20 April 1663 (G II 52-62), my italics).

54 For an excellent account of Spinoza’s dictates of reason and how they relate to imagination see Steinberg (“Following a *Recta Ratio Vivendi*: The Practical Utility of Spinoza’s Dictates of Reason,” in *Essays on Spinoza’s Ethical Theory*, eds. Matthew J. Kisner and Andrew Youpa, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 178-96).

55 See E5p10s for instance.

56 It seems plausible to suggest that our perceptual/imaginative grasp of the likeness between ourselves and others and the resultant fellow-feeling can sometimes facilitate our rational cognition of the commonalities and affinities that we share with our fellow humans and allow us to reach agreement on ends.

According to my reading, the wise person at the end of the *Ethics* is someone who has attained intuitive knowledge and, thereby, gained a new insight—namely, insight into her modal expression of God as a singular thing—which is beyond the pursuit of external goods like honor, pleasure and wealth; beyond prescriptions of reason; beyond an identification with humanity; and beyond imagination. She is someone who has achieved blessedness and true peace of mind, which, as we have seen “involves the stillness of eternity,” rather than “a stability of duration.” If the free person can be said to possess *scientia intuitiva* as Nadler holds, then she would be said to have attained the affective and intellectual excellence of the wise person at the end of the *Ethics*, in addition to the exceptionless rational consistency Spinoza details in E4. While I do not reject this reading categorically, I do not think that it was Spinoza’s intention to attribute intuitive knowledge and its attendant affective power to the free person. In order to appreciate this point, we need to pay attention to the differences between the contexts in which Spinoza invokes the free person and the wise person at the end of the *Ethics*, which brings me to the last section.

6 The Differences in Emphasis between E4 and E5

Whereas Spinoza’s accounts of the dictates of reason and collaborative morality dominate E4, E5 focuses on the power of the intellect and the extent of its dominion over the passive affects, with a particular emphasis on intuitive knowledge and its affective power in the second half. As seen earlier, Spinoza defines the free person as someone “who lives according to the dictate of reason *alone*” (E4p67d, my italics), which has been generally thought to be the “model of human nature” mentioned in the preface to E4.⁵⁷ As a model of exceptionless rational consistency, the free person is a perfect and unattainable ideal, a “human construct that we may keep before our eyes to measure our advances *towards* this perfection.”⁵⁸ It is notable that *all* of the occurrences of the free person in the *Ethics* are found in E4 in relation to his account of the dictates of reason, tenacity, and nobility. Even though E5 is on human freedom as suggested by its title, Spinoza *never* explicitly mentions the free person in this part. This, in my view, is a deliberate choice on Spinoza’s part. Spinoza introduces the free person in relation to reason in E4 to show what the “method of living rightly” consists of insofar as “the present life” is concerned. He never explicitly describes the free person as someone who has attained intuitive knowledge and thus knows that their mind is eternal. This is because, in the context of E4, what he wants to provide is an account of moral excellence and freedom that would guide us as human beings who exist in relation to a certain time and place.⁵⁹

After presenting us with his portrayal of the free person as an unattainable model of maximal rationality and right way of living in E4, Spinoza begins E5 as follows:

57 Nadler, “On Spinoza’s ‘Free Man’,” 104.

58 Piet Steenbakkens, “Living Well, Dying Well: Life and Death in Spinoza’s Philosophy and Biography,” in *Life and Death in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Susan James (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 185.

59 It is thus not surprising that the only axiom of E4 emphasizes our limited power insofar as our durational existence is concerned.

I pass, finally, to the remaining part of the *Ethics*, which concerns the means, or way, leading to freedom. Here, then, I shall treat of the power of reason,⁶⁰ showing what it can do against the affects, and what freedom of mind, or blessedness, is. From this we shall see how much more the *wise man* can do than the ignorant... Here, then, as I have said, I shall treat only of the power of the mind...and shall show, above all, how great its dominion over the affects is...For *we have already demonstrated above that it does not have an absolute dominion over them.* (my italics)

As I read this passage, in reminding us that our mind does not have absolute power over the passions, Spinoza wants us to realize that “how much more the wise person can do than the ignorant” cannot be expressed in terms of an absolute dominion over the passions or an exceptionless self-determination, which the free person represents.⁶¹ Spinoza thus signals a change in emphasis in the beginning of E5, which takes yet another turn as we get to the second half of E5. In the Scholium to Proposition 20, Spinoza notifies us in a perplexing statement that having “completed everything which concerns this present life...it is time now to pass to those things which pertain to the mind’s duration without relation to the body.” He thus informs us that he is turning his attention to the eternal order of things rather than things that are determinate and imaginable.

After introducing his doctrines of the eternity of the mind and the intellectual love of God, and explaining the “excellence and utility”⁶² of intuitive knowledge in the remainder of E5, Spinoza states in the penultimate proposition of his masterwork that “even if we did not know that our mind is eternal, we would still regard as of the first importance morality, religion, and absolutely all the things we have shown (in E4) to be related to tenacity and nobility.” He demonstrates this proposition as follows:

The first and only foundation of virtue, or of the method of living rightly (by IVP22C and P24) is the seeking of our own advantage. *But to determine what reason prescribes as useful, we took no account of the eternity of the mind,* which we only came to know in the Fifth Part. Therefore, though we did not know then that the mind is eternal, we still regarded as of the first importance the things we showed to be related to tenacity and nobility. And so, even if we also did not know this now, we would still regard as of the first importance the same rules of reason, q.e.d. (my italics).

E5p41 and its demonstration suggest that in order to appreciate Spinoza’s account of the free person in E4 and to determine what reason prescribes as useful, we do not need to take into account the eternity of the mind, which is closely connected to intuitive knowledge. It thus supports my thesis that Spinoza introduces the ideal of the free person in this part to show us what reason prescribes as useful insofar as “the present life” is concerned, without any reference to the eternity of the mind.

60 As stated earlier, in this Preface Spinoza uses reason interchangeably with mind.

61 As I see it, to the extent that intuitive knowledge and its attendant *beautitudo* are attainable for finite minds, the wise person at the end of the *Ethics* represents an attainable ideal.

62 After explaining how we can form intuitive knowledge in E2p47s, Spinoza states that he will speak of “the excellence and utility” of this knowledge in E5.

By contrast, his remarks about the wise person at the end of the *Ethics* pertain essentially to the eternity of the mind and thus cannot be fully understood without taking it into account.

How does all this bear on the distinction (or lack thereof) between the wise person and the free person? In his article, Nadler suggests that even though there are no grounds on which we can plausibly insist on a distinction between the wise person and the free person, one may conceive of a difference between freedom and wisdom in that “freedom refers to the causal fount and nature of the individual’s comportment.... [whereas] wisdom...would refer to the free/wise individual’s cognitive and spiritual condition.”⁶³ To apply Nadler’s useful distinction between freedom and wisdom to my reading, I hold that the wise person at the end of the *Ethics* and the free person in E4 are inseparable in terms of their freedom. More specifically, I agree with Nadler that in terms of their comportment and character, there are not significant and clear differences between the free person and the wise person. It is entirely plausible to think that they would both act honestly not deceptively, repay the other’s hate with love and nobility, not fear death, and “use things ... and to take pleasure in them as far as possible” (E4p45s), among other things.

However, I disagree with Nadler when it comes to their cognitive and spiritual condition. In terms of their wisdom—that is, their cognitive and spiritual condition—there seems to be a difference between the free person of E4 and the wise person at the end of the *Ethics*, which, in turn, bears on the respective roles they play in Spinoza’s moral philosophy. Whereas the free person is an unattainable model of exceptionless rationality that is designed to guide human beings to act in accordance with the dictates of reason, the wise person at the end of the *Ethics* represents the excellent yet rare state of human perfection, which consists in achieving intuitive knowledge and salvation in this life by appreciating the eternity of our mind and, thus, experiencing the stillness of eternity.⁶⁴ Nadler concludes his article by saying that “There is no gap between the free person and the wise person in Spinoza’s *Ethics*. Where the one goes, so goes the other.” But since the role that the free person plays in Spinoza’s moral philosophy can be fully appreciated within the context of E4 and without having any recourse to the eternity of the mind or any of the other doctrines in the second half of E5, the free person does not have to go where the wise person goes at the end of the *Ethics*. And I am not sure that Spinoza intended her to.⁶⁵

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63 Nadler, “The Wise,” 57.

64 Alquié (*Leçons sur Spinoza* (Paris: Éditions La Table Ronde, 2003), 326) expresses a similar point as follows: “...dans le livre V, l’homme libre sera considere en lui-meme, et dans sa vie interieure, dans sa vie eternelle. Dans le livre IV, il est considere en tant qu’il vit dans le temps, dans le monde, dans la cite.” Whereas I agree with the distinction he draws, I disagree with him that they are both the same ideal. For Spinoza never invokes the free person in E5.

65 I am indebted to Steven Nadler for his comments on an earlier version of this paper and for our many fruitful discussions of Spinoza’s free person and wise person. Thanks also to the editors of this journal for inviting me to write this response, as well as to Raj Ghoshal, Tad Schmaltz, and Matthew Kisner for their helpful comments and suggestions regarding specific parts of this response.

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Jean-Marie Beyssade. *Études sur Spinoza*.
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Abstract

The papers that Jean-Marie Beyssade dedicated to the work of Baruch Spinoza have recently been published under the title *Études sur Spinoza*. This review offers a general overview of the volume and a summary of some of the papers that highlights their underlying continuity by emphasizing Beyssade's methodological approach and his interpretative preoccupation with the problem of ethical salvation in the *Ethics*.

Keywords: Jean-Marie Beyssade, Descartes, Spinoza

Jean-Marie Beyssade's (1936-2016) status as one of the twentieth century's leading French historians of early modern philosophy, alongside Gueroult, Gouhier, and Alquié, was already sufficiently secured by his work as a commentator and interpreter, as well as editor and translator, of Descartes's œuvre.¹ However, he also dedicated much of his life as a scholar to studying Spinoza's work, especially the *Ethics*. His participation as a permanent member of the *Groupe de recherches spinozistes* since the eighties had seen him take on the task of translating the *Ethics* for the new critical edition of Spinoza's complete works for the *Presses Universitaires de France*, on which he worked until 2010 when he regretfully had to abandon the project for health reasons. This "tête-à-tête" confrontation with Spinoza's texts also resulted in a series of important studies, first published or delivered as talks between 1986 and 2002. Their compilation in the volume *Études sur Spinoza*

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- 1 Most of his work dedicated to Descartes have been collected in two volumes: *Études sur Descartes: L'Histoire d'un esprit* (Paris: Points, 2001) and *Descartes au fil de l'ordre* (Paris: PUF, 2001). The monumental task of offering a new critical and annotated edition of Descartes's complete works (for *Gallimard*) was also partially completed under his and Denis Kambouchner's direction: the early works, the *Discours*, the *Meditations*, and the complete correspondence have already been published.

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contributes to consolidating Beyssade's overall legacy and gives testament to his rare capacity for successfully breaching the multi-secular divide that separates Cartesians and Spinozists.

Beyssade's Spinozistic studies—as both Jacqueline Lagrée and Pierre-François Moreau note, respectively, in the volume's preface and postface—are driven by the effort to combine scrupulous attention to the lexicographical issues that necessarily arise in the work of the translator and rigorous engagement, on that basis, with some of the most vexing doctrinal questions that Spinoza's texts present to the interpreter. The originality of Beyssade's approach to the study of Spinoza's works is marked by his conviction that such double effort must be carried out against the backdrop of the Cartesian roots of some of Spinoza's crucial conceptual tools to better measure the original theoretical direction in which he developed them. Beneath the superficial thematic diversity of the studies, the reader will thus find a formal common thread characterised by Beyssade's specific methodological approach, but also, more substantially, by his refusal to lose sight of what constitutes the self-declared purpose of Spinoza's philosophical endeavour, which is to offer an account of the ethical freedom that human beings are capable of achieving despite their being *passionibus obnoxius*, “exposed”—not “subjected,” as Beyssade emphasises (77-78)²—to the passions. Most of the collected texts are thus implicitly guided by the attempt to throw light on some aspect or other of the “Spinozistic itinerary,” centred around the theory of the *active* affects, that comes to fruition in *Ethics* V.

These features, characteristic of Beyssade's approach, are most clearly at play in the first of the collected studies, “De l'émotion intérieure chez Descartes à l'affect actif spinoziste,” first delivered as a talk at the *Chicago Spinoza Conference* in 1986. As its title suggests, Beyssade's aim in this study is to clarify Spinoza's distinction between passive and active affects by tracing its historical origin to Descartes's sometimes overlooked distinction between the passions, properly speaking (i.e., bodily movements that cause a passive, sensual or sensitive, emotion in the soul), and the internal emotions of the soul (i.e., “émotions spirituelles sans cause physiologique” (26) that are caused, in the soul, by its judgments) as it appears in the *Passions of the Soul* (I, 147-148). Against this antecedent, Beyssade seeks to specify the originality of Spinoza's account of the love of God as the paradigmatic active affect on which the process of ethical liberation, as presented in the first half of *Ethics* V, hinges.

Beyssade emphasizes a fundamental innovation presupposed by Spinoza's account of the ethical conversion by which a passion can cease to be a passion (E5p3): namely, the necessary continuity between imagination and reason. In particular, “si l'amour de Dieu doit finir par prédominer, c'est en tant que toutes les idées de l'imagination alimentent la connaissance adéquate de Dieu” (37). Just as there is a common notion to be extracted from the ideas of the imagination, there must be within passive affects an element of joy that their adequate knowledge isolates and through which they can be integrated into the domain of active affectivity.³ In this sense, the passage from servitude to freedom, at least up to the point to which it can be furthered by common notions, consists in a “displacement of equilibrium” (38, my translation) resulting from a struggle of forces:

2 The numbers in brackets refer to the page numbers of *Études sur Spinoza*.

3 Each of our encounters with external causes presupposes some common element through which they affect us, a common terrain that is not a mere “théâtre inerte, mais toujours une affirmation commune, un bien et une joie. Sans renvoyer à ces trois propositions (4p29-31), Spinoza ressaisit avec Dieu, facteur universel de convenance, le principe d'une joie active opérant jusque dans les mauvaises rencontres” (37-38).

even if the mind were to possess the exact same quantity of inadequate ideas that it possessed initially, they are overcome by the fact that the mind is mostly occupied by adequate ideas and thus by active affects, and therefore the former tend to constitute the smallest part of the mind.

Against Descartes, then, Spinoza partly restores the traditional conception of the soul as the dynamic theatre of an internal struggle between different parts (adequate against inadequate ideas, passive against active affects). The second study, “Du combat entre l’âme et le corps à la *fluctuatio animi*,” originally published in 1990, identifies in the *Short Treatise* the “frontier” between Spinoza’s early Cartesian elaboration of the problem of the passions in terms of a combat between two causalities over the control of the movements of the “animal spirits” of the body and his mature elaboration of the problem in terms of a conflict that divides the mind against itself (either as affected by opposite passions, or as divided into a passive and an active part). In KV II.19.11, Spinoza invokes the conflictual interaction between Descartes’s two causalities (the bodily and the mental) to account for a specific phenomenon: an affective state of anguish (*Benaauwtheden*) that we experience without grasping its causes. By naming and isolating this affective state, Spinoza takes a step towards generalising the phenomenon of *fluctuatio animi* that will characterise the *Ethics*. There, Spinoza will come to reject the Cartesian (and the KV’s) account of the interaction between body and soul, therefore excluding also the possibility of following Descartes in explaining ambivalence by the fact that “l’âme a conscience de son union avec le corps, elle n’a pas conscience du corps, de ses mécanismes, des voies par lesquelles il agit sur elle” (51). Consequently,

la *fluctuatio animi* (E3p17s) ne sera plus une passion dérivée ou particulière parmi d’autres—as it is for Descartes—, ce sera le régime général de la composition des affects puisque l’unité de composition n’opère plus, comme chez Descartes, entre l’âme et le corps, mais pour l’âme elle-même autant que pour le corps. (...) Affectivité et ambivalence affective, si l’on accepte cette traduction pour *fluctuatio*, acquièrent la même extension. (51)

A third text, “*Nostri corporis affectus*: peut-il y avoir, pour Spinoza, un affect du corps?”, first delivered as a talk at the 1991 Third Jerusalem Conference (*Ethica* III), explores a further aspect of Spinoza’s account of affectivity. In contrast with the first two studies, here Beyssade approaches Spinoza directly and on the basis of a technical issue that arises from within the text of the *Ethics* itself. Against the trend of distinguishing between *affectio*, as designating the modifications of the body (or of the soul), and *affectus*, as designating the consciousness of those affections in the mind, Beyssade argues in favour of taking the enigmatic reference to affects of the body (E2p17, E3p14d, E3p18d) in all its literality: just as there are affections and affects of the soul, there are for Spinoza affections and affects of the body.

This technical dispute is, however, only a platform for offering a more ample and radical interpretative position: not only are there also affects of the body, but since Spinoza founds his general theory of the affects on his physics, it follows that there is a priority of the affects of the body over the affects of the soul. This is clear from E3p14d, which arrives at its conclusion concerning the laws of association between the affects of the mind by arguing that the mind’s being affected simultaneously by two affects follows *as a consequence* of the body being simultaneously affected by two affects. For Beyssade, this implies that:

L’affect et l’enchaînement des affects sont parfaitement constitués au niveau du corps, ils n’ont aucun besoin que s’y ajoute conjointement (*et simul*) la dimension unifiante de l’âme ou de la conscience. Au contraire c’est par une sorte de dérivation (*et consequenter*) que l’affectivité déjà

constituée au plan du corps se transmet à l'événement de la *mens*, qui redouble l'événement corporel. (65)

Of course, given parallelism (E2p7), there is no affect of the body that is not simultaneously followed or accompanied by an affect of the mind: “c’est une seule et même chose qui est affectée et qui enchaîne ses affects. La physique de l’affectivité établit que cet enchaînement suit l’ordre des affections du corps. La question éthique de l’alternative entre servitude et liberté poussera au premier plan le versant mental du phénomène” (65-66).

This ethical inversion of priority in the relationship between the physical and the mental reveals all of its consequences in “*Vix ou peut-on se sauver tout seul?*”, first published in 1994, where Beyssade takes on the fundamental problem of the relationship between ethics and politics in Spinoza’s overall account of freedom or salvation. Following the procedure, by now familiar to the reader, of taking a specific technical issue as the basis for the resolution of a larger interpretative question, Beyssade argues against the trend of reading Spinoza as being primarily a philosopher of community for whom the salvation of the individual *necessarily* presupposes the mediation of politics. Based on a reading of E4app7 (G II 268) as describing, through the phrase *vix poterit* that appears at its end, the situation of an individual seeking to preserve their nature amidst the most unfavourable of hostile conditions—i.e., interacting with other human beings with whom there is a radical disagreement in nature—the question asked by Beyssade is whether an individual may achieve ethical salvation even in those hostile conditions: “Il s’agit de savoir si un sage peut se sauver sans le préalable d’une libération politique, s’il peut en ce sens se sauver tout seul” (77). Beyssade answers positively, thus going against the grain of the contemporary trend of subjecting in some sense or other the ethical to the political in Spinoza’s thought:

Naturellement nul n’est jamais seul au sens strict ou métaphysique, sans rapport avec d’autres modes finis: c’est absolument impossible. Mais on peut, à la rigueur, vivre à l’écart des autres hommes, ou en dissidence avec ces concitoyens. Si la définition de l’homme comme animal social a fort souri à la plupart, *plerisque valde arriserit*, le cas d’exception n’est donc pas oublié, encore qu’au total la société politique, *ex hominum communi societate*, engendre plus de commodités qu’incommodités. Ni l’État ni même la société des hommes ne sont ainsi des conditions absolument nécessaires du salut (77).

It is here that the core of Beyssade’s interpretation of Spinoza comes directly to the fore: i.e., his interpretation, developed in this and his other studies, of Spinoza’s distinction between passivity and activity as an ethical alternative between the priority of the body, operating as the source of a *passive* ordering of affectivity based on inadequate knowledge, and the priority of the mind as the source of the *active* reordering of the affects based on adequate knowledge. In Beyssade’s reading, it is precisely through the absolute and necessary subjection to the order of nature, understood adequately, that the sage liberates themselves from being subjected to the passions in the domain of their specific interactions with other singular parts of nature, with external causes such as human beings. Beyssade thus concludes that politics is not an absolutely necessary condition for salvation, even if it may facilitate it or render it more probable: as exemplified by Spinoza’s own ascetic isolation, a hostile political environment does not render individual salvation impossible but only rare and difficult. “Car c’est l’éthique qui fonde le politique, et non l’inverse” (78).

The reader will find three other studies that exemplify Beyssade’s willingness to tackle the most complex of interpretative issues: a brief text arguing in favour of identifying the mediate infinite

mode in the order of the attribute of thought with “the infinite love that God has for himself” from E5p36 (“Sur le mode infini médiat dans l’attribut de la pensée”, from 1994); a study that analyzes in detail Spinoza’s argumentation for the impossibility of hating God (in E5p18, its corollary and scholium), which concludes that there is a sense in which God *can* be the object of hate (“*Nemo potest Deum odio habere. Peut-on haïr Dieu?*”, from 1999 and the only previously unpublished of the studies collected); and, lastly, a brief piece initially written as a presentation for the collective volume *Spinoza et la norme* (2002), in which Beyssade suggests that Spinoza’s philosophical framework is constantly supported by, and directed towards, a novel conception of normativity and finality as immanent to essence (“Norme et essence chez Spinoza”). The book closes with a selection of specific key passages from Beyssade’s unfinished translation of the *Ethics*, which most clearly reveal his method of intersecting translation with interpretation—by refusing, for example, to mechanically render a specific technical term with a single French equivalent in different argumentative contexts, such as the demonstrations against the appendixes or prefaces:⁴ the appendix to *Ethics* I, the preface and appendix to *Ethics* III, the appendix to *Ethics* IV, and the preface to *Ethics* V.

4 As pointed out by Moreau in his postface, see 136-137.

Abbreviations and conventions

References to texts by Spinoza are given in the main body of the paper in brackets, e.g., (KV 2.1/G I 54).

Abbreviations:

CM:	<i>Cogitata Metaphysica</i>
DPP:	<i>Renati des Cartes Principiorum Philosophiae</i>
E:	<i>Ethica</i>
Ep:	<i>Epistolae</i>
KV:	<i>Korte Verhandeling</i>
TIE:	<i>Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione</i>
TP:	<i>Tractatus Politicus</i>
TTP:	<i>Tractatus Theologico-Politicus</i>

References to Gebhardt's *Spinoza Opera*: "G II 234" for Gebhardt, volume 2, page 234. In some cases line numbers may also be cited: e.g., G II 234, lines 1-8.

References to Pierre-François Moreau's *Œuvres complètes*: "O III 120" for volume 3, page 120.

Citations of passages in the *Ethics* or DPP: "E2p40s2" for *Ethics*, part 2, proposition 40, second scholium. For the *Ethics*, the following abbreviations apply: a (axiom); app (appendix); c (corollary); d (demonstration); def (definition); exp (explanation); l (lemma); p (proposition); pref (preface); s (scholium). For the axioms, lemmata, etc. between E2p13s and E2p14, Curley's conventions are followed (see *Collected Works*, Volume 1, pp. 458-62).

Citations of passages in the CM: cited by part and chapter, followed by reference to Gebhardt in parentheses.

Citations of passages in the TTP: cited by chapter number and paragraph followed by reference to Gebhardt. E.g., TTP 16.15/G III 192.

Citations of passages in the TP: same form for citations of the TTP but include the section number. E.g., TP 8.38/G III 341.

Citations of passages in the KV: cited by part and chapter, followed by reference to Gebhardt. E.g., KV 1.2/G I 20.

Citations of passages in the TIE: cited by paragraph, can be followed by page number in Gebhardt. E.g. TIE 36/G II 15.

For citations of passages in Ep: cited by supplying the letter number, sender and recipient, date, and the citations in Gebhardt. E.g., Ep 25, Oldenburg to Spinoza, 28 April 1665 (G IV 158).

References to Edwin Curley's English translation of Spinoza's works might be added to the above references, abbreviated with 'C' followed by page number. E.g. TTP 3.5/G III 47/C II 114. When no indication about the translation is given, it is implied that the translation used is Curley's.

The two volumes edited by Curley are:

C I: *The Collected Works of Spinoza. Volume 1*. Edited and Translated by Edwin Curley (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1985).

C II: *The Collected Works of Spinoza. Volume 2*. Edited and Translated by Edwin Curley (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016).

Alternatively, the English translation by Samuel Shirley is referred to as:

S: Spinoza, *Complete Works* with translations by Samuel Shirley. Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by Michael L. Morgan (Hackett Publishing: Indianapolis and Cambridge, 2002).

