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Doctoral Dissertations, 2011-2026

Philosophy

2017

Spinoza on Becoming Eternal

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Princeton, NJ : Princeton University

<http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/dsp011j92gb084>

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SPINOZA ON BECOMING ETERNAL

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY
OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE
BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Advisor: Daniel Garber

June 2017

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In memory of Rhoda, Margot, Boibi, Zaidi, Cynthia, Rochie, and Felicity

Abstract

In this essay, I use Spinoza's neglected theory of pedagogy to offer fresh interpretations of his metaphysics of modes and passions. Chapter 1 reinterprets his metaphysics of modes as an ethical vision reached at the end of spiritual training. Spinoza's account of the metamorphosis of the passions faces an objection parried in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 finds the roots of Spinozistic pedagogy in the medieval theory of *anagogia*. Throughout, I keep in focus Spinoza's challenging idea that he and his students are "beginning to understand things *sub specie aeternitatis*" (5p31s), which entails that they are becoming eternal.

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Preface

Spinoza died in the winter of 1677. He left a five-part manuscript, which his friends soon published. Part One of the manuscript changed the fate of European metaphysics, Part Two altered the direction of psychology, and Parts Three and Four inspired social scientists, poets, and even a revolution in Haiti. But so far, Part Five of Spinoza's *Ethics* has had far less impact. In much of it, Spinoza seems to be speaking in riddles. When his meaning is clear, he sometimes contradicts himself.

In this essay, I will show you how to approach the forbidding Part Five. This final citadel of Spinoza's masterpiece will emerge, in my interpretation, as coherent, reasonable, and even gorgeous — or at least, more so than long-circulating rumors suggest.

The centerpiece of Part Five is a bewitching, bothering, and bewildering idea: the mind can become more eternal. It sounds absurd. “If my mind became more eternal,” one is tempted to infer, “then some bit of it would be temporal now but eternal later. But if this bit were eternal later, it would be eternal now.” How irritating.

I will introduce and defend a new way of unraveling this knot. We must appreciate how Spinoza teaches his philosophy to his readers. As in the discipline

at large, pedagogy is a marginalized theme in Spinoza scholarship, yet it is the key that opens Part Five.

The main idea in Spinoza's pedagogy is: he doesn't just show his readers what the world will seem to be like once it has been understood correctly. He also shows them what the world seems to be like from the point of view of an *ideal student*, whose ignorance is being replaced with knowledge. According to how it appears from this evolving perspective, the mind becomes more eternal.

Foregrounding Spinoza's pedagogy eases two other sources of discomfort.

The first discomfort arises in Spinoza's remarks on sadness, envy, anger, and other passions. In Part Five, he claims that I can change any of these passions into an 'action'. Many readers think this claim implies something absurd: any of my passions can come to have begun differently than it in fact began. In my interpretation, the claim is true from the perspective of that ideal student. The alleged change in the passion is one that merely seems to occur, from this shifting point of view. It is like the change in size that an object might appear to undergo as it is watched through a lens that is changing shape.

The second discomfort concerns Spinoza's famous monism, according to which everything is a 'mode' of one substance (except the substance itself). Spinoza's remarks strongly imply that every effect is a mode of each of its causes. Most commentators either try to free Spinoza's metaphysics of this implication, or let it stand but interpret 'mode' as meaning 'effect'. Scandalously, no interpretation of Spinoza's metaphysics heeds what Part Five says: that the monistic vision is what the ideal student arrives at, after a period of spiritual training. I will argue that 'mode' is a moral notion.

My new interpretation of the monist metaphysics appears in chapter 1, and my new interpretation of the passion theory appears in chapter 2. In my rather different chapter 3, I hope to alter our understanding of how Spinoza communicates. The historical roots of Spinoza's pedagogy, in medieval theories of spiritual development, are discussed. I believe I have discovered the exact technique of representation that Spinoza exploits at 5P31: it is what medieval educators from Dionysius to Dante call "anagogy". The presence of this technique in the *Ethics* helps us decipher Spinoza's riddlesome suggestion that we "experience that we are eternal."

It is time to let Spinoza be who he was: a Golden Age Dutchman steeped in a Judeo-Christian pedagogical tradition. We must choose between a Spinoza who uses familiarly philosophical techniques of representation to make incoherent claims, and a Spinoza who uses unfamiliar techniques of representation to advance a novel philosophy of time and eternity.

I chase here what Susan James has called an "anthropological pleasure...in the strangeness of the philosophical past and its lack of relation to our own outlooks, an excitement in the discovery of ideas suppressed and paths not taken," rather than "the satisfaction of recognizing ourselves in earlier traditions, thus sustaining our sense of philosophical continuity and progress."¹ With mixed success, I tried to resist the pull of the latter pleasure.

¹James (2016, 114).

Abbreviations and translations

I refer to passages from the *Ethics* using abbreviations. These examples show how to decipher them:

1DEF1 means part 1, definition 1;
1A4 means part 1, axiom 4;
1APP means part 1, appendix;
2POST5 means part 2, postulate 5;
2P7 means part 2, proposition 7;
2P7S means part 2, proposition 7, scholium (a scholium is
a commentary);
2L1 means part 2, lemma 1;
3PREF means part 3, preface;
3DEF4EXP means part 3, definition 4, explanation;
3P18S2 means part 3, proposition 18, scholium 2;
3DA1 means part 3, definitions of the affects, definition 1;
and 5P3D means part 5, proposition 3, demonstration.

For short, I call Spinoza's *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* the 'Emendation' and his *Theological-Political Treatise* the 'TTP'. Unless otherwise noted, translations of Spinoza are taken from Edwin Curley's *Collected Works of Spinoza*, of which volume 1 is Spinoza (1985) and volume 2 is Spinoza (2016). When citing the original text I use Gebhardt's edition (Spinoza, 1925). Except where I cite a translator, which is often, translations of other authors are my own. I cite the Gebhardt volumes as volume/page and the Curley volumes as volume:page.

The *Ethics* is written in a somewhat idiosyncratic Latin. The word

sive, which he uses to mean “in other words”, is translated throughout in italics as “*or*”. For example in 4PREF he writes *Deus sive Natura*, which is translated “God, *or* Nature.” Between these two terms Spinoza posits an enigmatic synonymy. In some works of philosophy, synonymous terms can be freely swapped. Not in the *Ethics*. Replace every *Deus* with *Natura* and Spinoza’s arguments lose no validity but something of importance would be lost. Spinoza tries to evoke traditional religious images, so he can tamper with them.

This psychological invasiveness complicates translation. Curley translates 5P17C: “God is not affected with any affect of joy or sadness. Consequently he also loves no one and hates no one [*neminem etiam amat neque odio habet*].” To adapt Spinoza’s thought to the constraints of English, Curley has needed to add a pronoun absent in the original: *etiam amat* has become “*he* also loves”. All English translations of the *Ethics* in print (starting with George Eliot’s) make Spinoza call his God “he”. This masculation is unhappy yet faithful to Spinoza’s intentions. While he does not want his readers *in the end* to imagine God as a man, he does want them to have the traditional image of God in mind *at first*, because he wants to mess with it.

So it is a way of being true to Spinoza to have him refer to God as “he” or even, my preference, “He”. I do this not to make Spinoza look pious or impious, but to highlight a conundrum. To Nature, Spinoza applies a name his first readers judged to be holy. Is he trying to rub its holiness out, or onto the world?

Speaking of masculation, Spinoza’s writings are gender-imbalanced. “A man consists of a mind and a body”, he writes at 2P13C, taking this to suffice for a general account. I follow Hasana Sharp, who “preserve[s] Spinoza’s sexist language

when citing him and referring to his own claims in order to avoid giving a false and anachronistic impression of gender inclusiveness.”²

To make him easier to read, I sometimes omit Spinoza’s internal citations, e.g. “(by 1DEF1)”, add punctuation where appropriate, and modernize the capitalization in Curley’s translation.

²Sharp (2011, 1).

Acknowledgements

The *Ethics* has no acknowledgements section, only a passing nod to unnamed “distinguished men (to whose work and diligence we confess that we owe much)” (3PREF). The book is quiet about its context of discovery. One of my tasks here is to undo this erasure. I try to assess some of Spinoza’s unannounced debts, and to make the acknowledgements he should have made. His quixotic endeavor to place his book somewhat outside European intellectual history — to some degree, outside time itself — is surely one reason why its many sides of vellum, so thickly spread with rapturous ink, are so thin in gratitude.

There is, perhaps, a second reason. Fearlessly frank about the human mind, Spinoza believes that true thankfulness is rare. A display of gratitude, he says, is often little more than “a business transaction or entrapment” (4P71S). Only *liberi* are *gratissimi* (4P71), only the free are deeply thankful. And we are mostly not free.

I don’t know if that’s right. If it were, though, then it would be in moments of great and insistently felt gratitude that we would glimpse the part of us that is free and, by Spinoza’s crepuscular lights, eternal. We would then catch sight of the mind’s noblest part, cresting above our everyday fluctuant cognitions like a

silver flying fish. Spinoza calls the joy that attends such self-witnessing *acquiescentia in se ipso*, contentedness in one's very being.

If there is any sense in that unsober theory, then it may explain why I am so glad to mention the gratitude I feel toward the man who supervised this project. Eight years ago, a willful and blustery computer geek, I first arrived in Daniel Garber's office. While Spinoza's metaphysics intrigued me, much else in early modern philosophy left me cold. Dan patiently thawed me out, and in time made me love just about everything we discussed. Though I see no need to tattoo a methodology on my arm — second-order debates being as fun as first-order ones — after long resistance, I am glad to label myself as a “Garberian Antiquarian”, in Dana Jalobeanu's phrase. That is, I leave to others the important task of searching old philosophy books for kernels of truth, and instead just try to understand them on their own terms.

For I number some of these books among spacetime's most fascinating objects. A hitherto un- or under-explored form of life, discovered within their pages, thrills me more than would any amoeba plucked from the topsoil of an exoplanet. I admit that this approach may be, like Spinoza's own escapist project, an ultimately unrealizable — though for all that still rewarding — endeavor to spy on history from high above, out of its gravity's reach. While hoping this contextualist method will yield philosophical fruit still nourishing today, I mainly just look for the seeds long lost. I am more of a cryptobotanist than a cook.

When Sandy Natson at Penn, whose humor has kept me going, compared writing this to giving birth, I added that it sometimes also felt like trying to squeeze the life out of something. I finished this dissertation with the support of many

midwives and doulas (or alternatively accomplices). Liz Stern kept me snickering (when I wasn't crying into an omelette) and if I have not lost my mind while writing this she is to be praised. Chelsea Davis got me pondering the politics of language. Rachel Cristy is my matchlessly wise interlocutor, always ready with good wine in one hand for toasting, and a glass of cool water in the other to pour on my extravagances. The dissertation would have been gravely worse without the generously detailed feedback from Des Hogan. Itzik Melamed launched me on this journey nine years ago, with his entrancing masterclass on the *Ethics*. My own views on Spinoza took shape against his. Martin Kley showed me the path of Schafkopf. Kristin Primus helped me get my priorities straight. Laura Kotevska taught me about moral cultivation and elaborate botanical metaphors. Hasen Khudairi and Zachary Gartenberg led me down the way of inquiry. Russ Leo got me excited about (everything he has ever mentioned but especially) the religious and aesthetic cultures of early modern Holland; his comments on chapter 3 were a treasured gift. Every meeting of the seminar he led with Anthony Grafton was a guided tour through a beautiful garden. Martijn Buijs, Victoria Juharyan, Jacob Levi, Tim Stoll, Ryan Wilson, Chad Cordova, Mathura Umachandran, and above all Bridget Behrmann threw a railway switch in my thinking, and in a word taught me to take form seriously. Aditi Chaturvedi, Hendrik Lorenz, Nat Tabris, and Charles Kahn prompted me to think about early modern neo-Platonism. Asheesh Laroia taught me to cook lentils and shave yaks — skills I put to constant use while writing this. Lawrence Weingarten reminded me to have a sense of humor about academia. For their friendship and thoughtful comments I am indebted to Joe Anderson, Alex Douglas, Domenica Romagni, and Tessa Paneth-Pollak.

For their wit and wits, will and wine, minutes and moxie, I would also like to thank the following people: Roger Ariew, Omri Boehm, Colin Bradley, Robin Miriam Carlsson, Quinn Collins, Edwin Curley, Sorana Corneanu, Deniz Dagci, Michael Della Rocca, Robin Dembroff, Hugh Desmond, Neil Dewar, Herman De Dijn, Tarek Dika, Kevin von Duuglas-Ittu, Alireza Fatollahi, Aaron Garrett, Don Garrett, Sherif Girgis, Nabeel Hamid, Eric Hansen, Robbie Hirsch, Karolina Hübner, Katheryn Elizabeth Hudson, Erin Islo, Jonathan Israel, Dana Jalobeanu, Mark Johnston, Rishi Joshi, Jack Keefe, Jo Kelly, Maura Kirk, Mogens Laerke, Yena Lee, Adam Lerner, Jacques Lezra, Martin Lin, Errol Lord, Colin Marshall, Brennan McDavid, Larry McGrath, Dylan Meconis, John Morrison, Steven Nadler, Thomas Noah, Courtney Norris, Lisa Miracchi, Pierre-François Moreau, Benjamin Morison, Alexander Nehamas, Cory Nichols, David Nowakowski, Elliot Paul, Daniel Pedersen, Dominik Perler, Lucian Petrescu, Julian Petri, Philip Pettit, Alex Prescott-Couch, Luis Ramos-Alarcón Marcín, Orlando Reade, Jeremy Reid, Francisco Robles, Michael Rosenthal, Mor Segev, Oded Schechter, Eric Schliesser, Ariane Schneck, Daniel Schneider, Roy Scranton, Simon Shogry, Nigel Smith, Kelly Swartz, Rabbi Gordon Tucker, Christina Van Dyke, Steven Vanden Broecke, Dimitris Vardoulakis, Zach Wiener, Helen Yetter-Chappell, Mélanie Zappulla, and audiences in Bran (summer 2012 and summer 2014), in Ghent (summer 2014), at Princeton (2013 and 2014), and at the University of Pennsylvania (2015).

My brother Michael and sisters Miriam, Leora, and Danielle kept me grounded as I wrote. Marie Barnett kept me buoyant. She helped to repair many sections of this essay, but also (thankfully) took over from it as “the primary source

of meaning in Raffi's life."

It was a stroke of good luck to be raised by four brilliant minds: Riva Krut and Harris Gleckman on one side of the Atlantic, Ronnie and Nicki Landau on the other. A skilled psychoanalyst could, I am sure, explain what follows as the result of that ocean-spanning, love-filled childhood.

As is true of its author, this essay would have had far more flaws if others had not intervened, but for those flaws that remain, I alone am the one to blame.

Chapter 1

Spinoza's affections

Once rightly seen, every person, spider, lightning bolt, regret, and every other unit of matter and mental life will show itself to be a *mode* of a single substance — so says Spinoza. Here is one way he says it:

Particular things are nothing but affections of God's attributes, i.e., modes by which God's attributes are expressed.... (1P25C)

This cryptic but clearly sweeping claim is a mainspring in the clockwork of Spinoza's *Ethics*. With it Spinoza demonstrates that God (for the substance is named “God”) thinks (2P1), that each thing strives to persevere in its being (3P6), and that “The more we understand singular things, the more we understand God” (5P24). The quoted claim is also the basis for Spinoza's reflections on “intellectual love of God” (5P36). The similar 1P15 (“Whatever is, is in God...”) is a weapon against the passions (5P14), and a premise in Spinoza's proof that no truth is contingent (1P29D).

The quoted claim describes how things appear from a certain perspective, which I will call “the perspective of eternity”. Spinoza writes: “insofar as we conceive [things] to be contained in God...” — that is, insofar as we conceive things to be

modes of God — “...we conceive [them] under an aspect of eternity [*sub specie aeternitatis*]” (5P29S). To conceive something under an aspect of eternity is to view it from the perspective of eternity. So things appear to be modes when they are seen from this perspective.

What, then, does it mean for particular things to be modes? This question has bothered Spinoza’s readers since the great Pierre Bayle tried to answer it in his 1697 *Dictionnaire*. After a long period of neglect, Spinoza’s ethical theory has been attracting scholarly comment. In this chapter, I argue that we can understand Spinoza’s famed doctrine of modes once we restore it to its proper place within that ethical theory.

I proceed as follows. After preliminaries (section 1.1), I will examine how Spinoza’s deepest metaphysical relations are linked (section 1.2), attending to the neglected relations of involvement and expression (section 1.3). After noting the unusual pragmatics of 1P25C (section 1.4), I will interpret ‘mode’ as an ethical notion (section 1.5).

1.1. Our toolbox

We will have to engage in some spadework, in order to excavate the relations among Spinoza’s concepts, relations that make up the bones of the *Ethics*. In this investigation, Spinoza’s use of the word *sive* will be telling. Spinoza normally uses *sive* to indicate that the words or phrases which flank it are synonymous. For example, he writes “God *or* [*sive*] Nature.” In his impressive article on how Spinoza’s relations are linked, Samuel Newlands takes *sive* to mean “or to put

it more explicitly”.¹ Further, Newlands supposes that the terms to the right of *sive* express more fundamentally what the terms to the left of it express. I don’t quite agree. *Sive* does not express a metaphysical reduction. Spinoza often says something of the form ‘A *sive* B’ and elsewhere writes ‘B *sive* A’, such as ‘cause *sive* reason...reason *sive* cause’ (1P11D2).² *Sive* often precedes an additional, but not a more fundamental, description of what Spinoza has just mentioned. The word does not mean “or to put it more explicitly,” but rather “in other words”.³ Spinoza does use the phrase “or to put it more explicitly” (*vel potius*) in one place, noted below.

To uncover the relations among Spinoza’s concepts, it will also help to study his inferences. In the *Ethics*, we sometimes find pairs of inferences having these forms:

A stands in relation R to B. Therefore, A stands in relation S to B.

A stands in relation S to B. Therefore, A stands in relation R to B.

I will make a common assumption. Such a pair of inferences gives us reason to think that Spinoza regards relations R and S as coextensive — indeed, as necessarily coextensive, for he thinks all truths are necessarily true (1P29, 1P33).

Spinoza often makes inferences that would only be valid if a premise were added. When he does so, we have reason to think he accepts the weakest non-*ad-hoc* premise that would make the inference valid.

¹Newlands (2010, 476).

²Also ‘virtue’ and ‘power’ (3P55S, 4P37S2, 4P52D, 4APP §27, III/26); ‘perfection’ and ‘reality’ (1P11S, 2P1S); ‘idea’ and ‘knowledge’ (2P19, 2P20, 2P22D); and ‘desire’ and ‘striving’ (3P59S, 5P28). He defines ‘modes’ as ‘affections’ (1DEF5), but in the aforementioned corollary writes ‘affections...*sive* modes’ (1P25C).

³As Don Garrett says, “in [Spinoza’s] striking formula ‘God or nature’ (*Deus sive Natura*), both terms of the identity are equally appropriate, and neither notion is employed to the exclusion or reduction of the other.... [T]his is one of many issues of Spinoza interpretation in which it is essential to place equal weight on each side of what he regards as an illuminating identification” (Garrett, 2012, 249). See also Jolley (2011, 1222).

Our first goal is to examine the bones of Spinoza's metaphysics: the relations that link his deepest metaphysical notions together.

1.2. The bones of Spinoza's metaphysics

Uncontroversially, according to Spinoza, for all x , necessarily x is a mode iff x is an affection, and x is an affection iff x is a modification.⁴ I will notate this as claim (A):

(A) IS A MODE $\leftrightarrow$ IS AN AFFECTION $\leftrightarrow$ IS A MODIFICATION.

This statement captures one of the most basic elements of Spinoza's thought. Let that two-way arrow mean that the relations which flank it are *necessarily* coextensive. Here the arrows yoke together a trio of one-place relations, but I will use them chiefly to yoke pairs of two-place relations below. After reviewing some well-known interconnections (section 1.2.1), we will explore how being-caused relates to being-in (section 1.2.2), and then the history of "being in" (section 1.2.3).

1.2.1. Producing, conceiving, and perceiving

We will consider ten basic relations: IS A MODE OF, IS CAUSED BY, FOLLOWS FROM, IS EFFICIENTLY CAUSED BY, IS PERCEIVED THROUGH, IS CONCEIVED THROUGH, IS UNDERSTOOD THROUGH, IS IN, INVOLVES, and EXPRESSES. It is relatively uncontroversial that these relations are linked in the following ways:

⁴At 1DEF5, Spinoza defines *modus* as *affectiones substantiae*, which we can translate "affections of substance" or "affections of a substance." He thinks that "there is nothing except substance and its modes" (1P28D). So something is a *modus* if and only if it is an *affectio*. Modes are called 'modifications [*modificationes*]' at 1P8S2, 1P22D, 1P23D, 1P28D, and 2P10C. Spinoza also uses the term 'accident' (the Dutch term *toevallen* at *Short Treatise* appendix 1 [I:150, n. 2], and the Latin term *accidens* in Spinoza's book *Descartes's Principles of Philosophy*, part 1, proposition 4, scholium; lemma 1 of that same work; and Letter 4 [IV/13–14]). The infinite modes *inhere in* God (Letter 12; S 790). See also Leibniz's report (1978, i.118) of his conversations with Spinoza in 1676. Each finite thing *is predicated of* God (*Short Treatise* i.2.17; I/21.25). The phrase "A is an affection of B" is equivalent to "A is said of B" (I/247).

- (B) IS CAUSED BY $\leftrightarrow$ FOLLOWS FROM $\leftrightarrow$ IS EFFICIENTLY CAUSED BY.
- (C) IS CAUSED BY $\rightarrow$ IS PERCEIVED THROUGH.
- (D) IS PERCEIVED THROUGH $\leftrightarrow$ IS UNDERSTOOD THROUGH.
- (E) IS UNDERSTOOD THROUGH $\leftrightarrow$ IS CONCEIVED THROUGH.
- (F) IS PERCEIVED THROUGH $\leftrightarrow$ IS CONCEIVED THROUGH. From (D) and (E).⁵
- (G) IS CAUSED BY $\rightarrow$ IS CONCEIVED THROUGH. From (C) and (F).
- (H) IS CONCEIVED THROUGH $\rightarrow$ IS CAUSED BY.
- (I) IS CONCEIVED THROUGH $\leftrightarrow$ IS CAUSED BY. From (G) and (H).
- (J) IS IN $\rightarrow$ IS CONCEIVED THROUGH.
- (K) IS IN $\rightarrow$ IS CAUSED BY. From (I) and (J).

I defend these statements in Appendix A. (K) states that things are caused by anything that they exist in. Is the converse true, though? Yes, it is:

1.2.2. *Everything's in what it's caused by*

How does IS IN relate to IS CAUSED BY? This question is a bone of contention among interpreters which, though covered in bite-marks, has an unchewed corner I wish to address. Consider (L):

- (L) IS CAUSED BY $\rightarrow$ IS IN.

Many commentators assert or defend (L).⁶ Importantly, the phrases “is caused

⁵Let me be more explicit. Given that Spinoza accepts (D) and (E), and given that (D) and (E) jointly and obviously entail (F), we have reason to think Spinoza accepts (F). In what follows, when I derive one alphabetic claim from others, what I mean is that, given that Spinoza accepts the prior claim(s), we have reason to think that he accepts the derived claim. The assumption that authors believe what their beliefs obviously entail is standardly made by charitable interpreters. I have some reservations about this assumption, but I leave the task of securing it to the philosophical historiographers. Throughout, I assume that the entailments are obvious enough that Spinoza would not have overlooked them.

⁶For example, Curley (1969), Allison (1987), Della Rocca (2008, 42, n. 28), Newlands (2010), and Lærke (2011).

by” and “is in” express Spinoza’s concepts. Let it be unclear, for now, how these concepts map onto ones familiar to us. At the end of this chapter, I will offer a way of drawing that map.

There is a nugget of evidence for (L) that, to my knowledge, has not yet been discussed. Spinoza offers an opinion, the meaning of which might not, at first, be clear:

Whatever happens in the singular object of any idea, there is a cognition of it in God, only insofar as He has the idea of the same object. (2P9C, modified)

It is uncontroversial that we can paraphrase ‘God, insofar as He has the idea of x’ as ‘the idea of x’, by 2P11C. A cognition is an idea. So the quoted claim may be paraphrased as follows:

If an event happens in something, x, there is an idea of that event in the idea of x. (2P9C, paraphrased)

According to Spinoza, 2P9C follows from 2P7, which reads: “The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.”⁷ As is uncontroversial, that statement may be paraphrased: “For all x and y, x causes y if and only if a perfect idea of x causes a perfect idea of y.” However, 2P9C will not follow from 2P7 without some help. There is a logical gap between 2P7 and 2P9C. (K) and (L), together, would bridge that gap elegantly. This is intuitive. In a footnote, I describe exactly how I think Spinoza is reasoning here.⁸ If Spinoza

⁷In his demonstration of 2P9C, Spinoza also uses 2P3 and 2P9. But the role they play in the demonstration is minor. 2P3 simply establishes that, if there is an event in an object, then there exists a perfect idea of that event. 2P9 establishes simply that “the cause of one singular [i.e. finite] idea is another [finite] idea” (2P9D).

⁸For simplicity, I will write “a perfect idea of x” as “[x]”. I believe Spinoza reasons from 2P7 to 2P9C as follows:

- (1) For all x and y, x causes y if and only if [x] causes [y]. (It is uncontroversial that this claim follows from 2P7.)
- (2) For all x and y, y is caused by x if and only if [y] is caused by [x]. From (1).

accepts both (K) and (L), that would explain why he thinks that 2P9C follows from 2P7.⁹

Two commentators, however, resist (L). Don Garrett will accept (L) only if it is restricted to cases of complete causation. His reason is that, if (L) applies to cases of partial causation, then absurdity ensues: if a carpenter is a partial cause of a table, then the table is partly *in* the carpenter. Since the table and carpenter are distinct, then the table is, bizarrely, partly a mode of the carpenter. But of course, the carpenter need not be near the table at all.¹⁰ One of two things would follow. Either a carpenter can be spatially distant from her modes, or a carpenter is somehow located wherever the furniture that she has made is located.

Yitzhak Melamed also objects to (L), as follows. Surely some effects outlast their causes. If (L) then some modes outlast the things they're modes of.

-
- (3) If an event, e, is caused by something, x, then [e] is caused by [x]. From (2).
 - (K) For all x and y, if y is in x, then y is caused by x.
 - (4) If an event, e, is in something, x, then e is caused by x. From (K).
 - (5) If an event, e, is in something, x, then [e] is caused by [x]. From (3) and (4).
 - (L) For all x and y, if y is caused by x, then y is in x.
 - (6) If an event, e, is in something, x, then [e] is in [x]. From (5) and (L).
 - (7) If an event, e, happens in something, x, then e is in x. (Assumption.)
 - (8) If an event, e, happens in something, x, then [e] is in [x]. From (6) and (7). (This statement is a paraphrase of 2P9C.)

Support for step (7) can be found at 3DEF2. There, Spinoza glosses “something happens, in us or outside us, of which we are the adequate cause” as “something in us or outside us follows from our nature, which can be clearly and distinctly understood through it alone.” He is clearly equating “something happens in us follows from our nature” with “something in us follows from our nature.” This definition does not imply that we can cause something that is *completely* not in us. If it did, then that would count as evidence against (L). This definition pragmatically implies that something can indeed be partly outside someone yet be caused by his or her nature. That, I must admit, weighs against (L).

⁹There are, of course, some other ways of moving from 2P7 to 2P9C. For example, one could use the principle, ‘if x is caused by y and x is an event, then x is in y’. This principle is a restricted form of (L). But the restriction is *ad hoc*. If (L) applies when the cause is an event, why doesn't it apply in other cases? The same can be said for other restricted forms of (L) that can license the move from 2P7 to 2P9C.

Another piece of evidence for (L) is 2P45S. There, Spinoza introduces the idea that the essence of each thing follows from God's nature. He phrases this in a thicket of Spinozese: “the force through which each [thing] perseveres in existing follows from the eternal necessity of God's nature.” From this idea, he reasons to the conclusion that singular things have an existence in God. This inference seems to rely on (L).

¹⁰Garrett (2002, 156, n. 21).

Melamed finds this conclusion to be absurd.¹¹ *Prima facie*, it certainly is. Suppose that I have a clay bowl, handmade by my great-grandma. According to (L), the bowl is one of her modes. If she no longer exists, how could she still have modes?

If we wish to accept (L), we must solve two puzzles:

The Carpenter Puzzle: Given (L), and given that this table is partly caused by a carpenter, how could the table be, partly, a mode of the carpenter?

The Great-Grandma Puzzle: Given (L), and given that this clay bowl was made by my great-grandma who's no longer around, how could the bowl be one of her modes?

I am sticking with (L). In section 1.5.2, I will explain how to solve these two puzzles.

1.2.3. A history of being in

We can now derive (M):

(M) IS IN $\leftrightarrow$ IS CAUSED BY. From (K) and (L).

Now, in the *Ethics*, setting aside some exceptions,

(N) “is in” is synonymous with “is caused by”.

In the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, Spinoza writes:

If [a] thing is in itself, or as is commonly said [*ut vulgo dicitur*], is the cause of itself, then it must be understood through its essence alone. (II/34; I:38–39)

This remark lends some support to (N). It is only weak support, though, for Spinoza puts the phrase “cause of itself” in the mouths of others.¹²

¹¹Melamed (2012, 375).

¹²Spinoza adopts, at the outset of the *Emendation*, this “rule of living”: “To speak according to the intellectual capacity of the common man [*ad captum vulgi*]” (I/9; I:12). But he often breaks this rule.

But why would Spinoza see “is in” and “is caused by” as synonymous? The answer lies in the history of the Latin phrase *est in* (“is in”).

Medieval Aristotelians distinguished two kinds of accident. Real accidents are qualities that can separate from their bearers on special occasions like the Eucharist. But not all accidents have this ability.¹³ To emphasize the inseparability of such accidents, medieval philosophers often said that such accidents have no existence of their own, but are merely *ways* that a substance exists. So they began to call them *modi* (‘ways’), a word often translated ‘modes’.¹⁴

Aristotelians use the locution “is in” to describe the relationship between a non-essential quality and its bearer. For example, *paleness* is in Socrates. *Human being* does not exist in Socrates, but since it is essential to him, it is *said of* (“predicated of”) him. Aristotelians say that “An accident is that which exists in [another] thing”¹⁵ and an accident is “what is in another.”¹⁶

The recent commentator John Carriero focuses upon Spinoza’s definition of substance as “what is in itself” (1DEF3) and his definition of mode as “that which is in another” (1DEF5). According to Carriero, Spinoza uses “is in” in

¹³See for example Heereboord, *Logica*, 75–76.

¹⁴The view that a quality does not exist separately from its substrate is embraced by several authors. Aquinas writes that “Whiteness is said to exist not because it subsists in itself, but because by it something [i.e. the substance] has existence-as-white” (*Quodlibet*, ix.2.2). In 1343 Nicole Oresme says: “If it is said that whiteness begins to be through alteration, this does not hold, because whiteness is nothing other than *this-being-white*” (*Quaestiones super septem libros physicorum Aristotelis*, i.2). The term *modus* came into vogue to stress that inseparable accidents have no being over and above the being of their substrate. In 1344 John of Mirecourt writes: “...action is nothing, and neither is motion or thought, but these are modes of how things stand [*modi se habendi rerum*]” (*Quaestiones in librum primum Sententiarum*, i.2). Marsilius of Inghen writes: “Accidents are only modes in which substances stand, and are not distinct from substances” (*Quaestiones in Aristotelis libros De anima*, iii.7). In his *Praelectiones physicae* (c. 1629), Joachim Jungius writes: “[T]here are not as many entities in the natural world as there are attributes; an attribute does not always add to its subject some *res* distinct from that subject, but often only a mode as it were of being [*modum quasi entis*]” (Jungius, 1982, 96). These translations are taken from Pasnau (2011).

¹⁵Abraham ibn Daud, *Sefer ha-Emunah ha-Ramah* (c. 1160), i.1 (quoted in Wolfson, 1934, 64).

¹⁶Aquinas, *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, quodlibetal 9, q. 3, ad. 2.

close to the Aristotelian sense, and Spinoza's definitions of substance and mode show "a surprising degree of faithfulness to the Aristotelian conception of the substance/accident distinction."¹⁷

True, Spinoza's definitions may look Aristotelian when juxtaposed with the Aristotelian tradition. But *est in* does not necessarily carry its Aristotelian meaning in Spinoza. Latin authors sometimes use *est in* ("is in") to signal nothing fancier than causal dependence. Cicero, for example, rooted for his exiled friend:

fortem fac animum habeas et magnum, quod *est in* uno te; quae *sunt in* Fortuna temporibus regentur.... (*Epistulae ad familiares*, vi.10.6)

Keep a brave and lofty spirit — that *depends on* you alone. What *depends on* Fortune will be governed by circumstances... (tr. Shackleton Bailey, 304–05)

Here "est in uno te", literally "is in you alone", means "(causally) depends on you alone". The same author elsewhere insists:

illa autem est civitas popularis (sic enim appellant), in qua *in populo sunt* omnia. (*De Re Publica*, i.42, §26)

But a popular government (for so it is called) exists when all the power *is in the hands of the people*. (tr. Keyes, 66–67)

Here "in populo sunt omnia", literally "all are in the people", means "everything (causally) depends upon the people."¹⁸

The Latin preposition "in" may sometimes be translated "by means of".

Spinoza's friend Lodewijk Meijer asks, "by what right or privilege does this text

¹⁷Carriero (1995, 249).

¹⁸These examples (emphasis mine) are taken from the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, "in", entry 26b (Glare, 1968, 857). In seventeenth-century English, too, "in" can mean "by means of", as in: "Penelope knew which of her Suitors cou'd shoot best in her Husband's Bow" (Juvenal, *Satires*; tr. Dryden, xiv.296; quoted in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "in", entry 13a). Compare our phrases "in virtue of", "by virtue of", and the obscurer "through virtue of".

come to be interpreted *in, through, or from* that one [*in illum, ut per illum aut ex illo*]?"¹⁹

Spinoza writes, "Whatever is, is in God" (1P15). He is presumably alluding to Paul's speech to the Athenians, which he quotes in Letter 73: "All things, I say, are in God and move in God, and this I affirm together with Paul..." The reference is to Acts 17:28: "*In [God]* we live, move, and *exist*, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His *offspring*'" (my emphasis).²⁰ The term "offspring" indicates that Paul is describing a causal relation.²¹ Since Spinoza refers to Paul's words, there is a defeasible presumption that he is quoting Paul's words with the meaning that Paul put on them.²² It would be odd indeed if the phrase "we exist in God" denoted a purely causal relation in Letter 73 but a non-causal relation at 1P15. Since the *Ethics* makes this phrase coextensive with "is caused by", and since in ordinary Latin "is in" (*est in*) can mean "is caused by", (N) is well evidenced.

To better understand Spinoza's claim that almost everything is a mode

¹⁹ *Philosophia sacrae scripturae interpres*, xi.2, 69. Translated in Preus, 2001, 47, my emphasis.

²⁰ Jasper Reid observes that "[j]ust about *every* early modern philosopher cited [the quoted verse] at some point or other in their works, to support one position or another" (Reid, 2012, 216). In one of the Latin bibles found in Spinoza's library, this verse is translated: "In ipso enim vivimus, & movemur, & sumus: sicut & quidam vestrarum poetarum dixerunt, Nam hujus progenies etiam sumus" (Junius, ed., *Testamenta novum*, 825).

²¹ Spinoza's use of this verse may seem puzzling. One's thoughts may wend in the following way. Suppose that Spinoza takes 'we remain in God' to mean that we exist in God. Then, surely, it follows that he must take 'He remains in us' to mean that God exists in us. Yet, if the verse involves no equivocation, then it says that God depends on us. And Spinoza does not believe that God depends on us.

The plot thickens. Spinoza calls God an immanent cause, literally an 'in-remaining' cause (1P18). So Spinoza is not merely decorating the *Theological-Political Treatise* with a Bible verse he thinks will please his Christian readers. He thinks this verse gets things right.

The solution is simple. We exist in God, in the sense that we depend upon him. God exists in us, in the sense that he is 'involved' in us. As I argue below, Spinoza takes this to mean that one can perceive God by perceiving one of God's creatures correctly.

²² Spinoza sometimes quotes authors *against* their intentions. I examine and explain this phenomenon in chapter 3. In those cases, evidence exists that defeats the aforementioned defeasible presumption of faithfulness to the author's intentions. Here the presumption stands.

of one substance, let us give one of his most neglected relations some of the attention that it deserves.

1.3. Involvement

The *Ethics* includes no fewer than 116 claims of the form ‘A involves B’. These appear in Spinoza’s disquisitions upon numerous topics: self-causation (1DEF1), our knowledge of causation (1A4), sensory perception (2P16), our knowledge of substance (2P45), the eternal part of the mind (5P23), and elsewhere. Yet commentaries on Spinoza’s use of “involve” (*involvere*) are seldseen, brief, and often undertaken from the armchair. To modern ears, the word may sound like a vague cover for confused thinking. To Spinoza and his predecessors, however, it had a vivid meaning.

1.3.1. A history of being involved

Its ancestor is the Greek adjective *katororugménon* (‘buried’, ‘covered over’) which Plato uses to describe latent, discoverable instances of, or capacities for, knowledge. “[W]hen the eye of the soul,” says Socrates, “is really buried [*katororugménon*] in a sort of barbaric bog, dialectic gently pulls it out and leads it upwards...”²³ The thought echoes in Proclus: “the soul...holds things buried [*katakeoxsména*] not potentially but actually.”²⁴ As some Neoplatonists say, to discover a mind’s latent knowledge is to ‘unfold’ (*anaptýsso*) that mind, as though it were a book.²⁵

²³ *Republic*, book vii, 533c–d (tr. Grube, 1149). See also *Cratylus*, 414c, 415d, and 418b.

²⁴ *On Plato’s ‘Cratylus’* (tr. Duvick, 35). See Van den Berg (2008, 160, n. 85).

²⁵ See for example the anonymous *Commentary on Plato’s ‘Theaetetus’*, col. 47, ll. 42–45 (Bastianini and Sedley’s 1995 edition, 392). One historian observes that

the Neoplatonists employed several metaphors to describe...dim awareness and to characterize the concealed state of the soul’s knowledge.... The word ‘unfold’ (*anaptussein*) will also return in Proclus. Together with similar metaphors (*anelissein*,

As the philosophers of Europe begin to speak Latin, *katororugménon* becomes *involuta* (involved, implicit). Cicero, for example, marvels at how the Stoic definitions of courage “lay bare the hidden and implicit [*involutam*] notion of courage that we all possess” (*Tusculan Disputations*, iv.24).²⁶ These usages concern latent or tacit *knowledge*, but others use *involvere* more broadly to mean “to include implicitly, or covertly”. The braggart Bacon, boasting of a clever cipher he invented, explains how the hidden message is “involved [*involvitur*]” in the visible message.²⁷ Leibniz also puts “involve” to epistemic use. He writes that “the effect involves its cause; that is, in such a way that whoever understands some effect perfectly will also arrive at knowledge of its cause.”²⁸ Especially before the twentieth century, “involve” in English could mean “include covertly” too. In §119 of the *Principles*, Berkeley rebukes those arithmeticians who “have dreamed of mighty mysteries involved in numbers.”

One meaning of “involve” (*involvere*) can, therefore, be captured in this definition:

An idea of A involves an idea of B iff B can be discovered by inspecting A.

Cicero calls the definition of *courage* “involved”: discoverable. Bacon says that a hidden message is “involved” in a cipher: discoverable in it. To involve something

anhaploun), *anaptussein* was initially used in the context of reading. It signifies ‘to unfold the rolls (on which books were written)’ or ‘to open (a book / a roll) for reading’. The words could be used in an epistemological context, given that from Plato onwards the soul was frequently compared with a book or writing tablet. (Helmig, 2012, 283–84)

²⁶The Stoics hold that the learner unfolds a notion that is not innate but acquired early in life. They call the soul’s dominant part “a small papyrus apt for registrations” (Crivelli, 2010, 374).

²⁷*De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum* (Spedding et al.’s 1858 edition, i.659).

²⁸*Meditation on the principle of the individual; Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, VI.iii.490 (tr. Parkinson, 51).

is to act as an *envelope* for it, to be a vehicle by which it is communicated. Let's call this the *epistemic sense* of the word.

Before I show that Spinoza uses “involve” in this epistemic sense, a few things must be noted. Strictly speaking, for him the only things that can involve anything, or be involved in anything, are ideas. He once mentions that an idea involves a body: each mind “involves the essence of [its] body” in a certain way (5P23S), and the essence of a body is itself a body.²⁹ But when he claims that an idea involves a body, I take him to mean simply that the idea involves an idea of that body. He also speaks as if he believes that some bodies involve ideas. He writes: “[T]he modes of each attribute involve the concept of their own attribute” (2P6D). So the modes of extension (i.e. bodies and their properties) involve the concept of extension, and the concept of extension is an idea,³⁰ so some bodies involve ideas. But again, I take this to be just a way of speaking. For a body to involve an idea is just for an idea of that body to involve the idea in question. When I say that one body involves another body, I mean that the idea of the first body involves an idea of the second body.

A next step:

(O) “is involved in” means “can be perceived through”.

A good piece of evidence for (O) is the following passage:

[W]hether [a] thing is considered as a part or as a whole, its idea, whether of the whole or a part, will *involve* God's eternal and infinite

²⁹For the essence of a thing is causally related to it (evidence: 2DEF2), and only bodies can be causally related to bodies (evidence: 2P6 and 2P7S). Each mind is an idea (2P11).

³⁰At least in one of its uses ‘concept’ is synonymous with ‘idea’. See 2DEF3: “By idea I understand a concept of the mind that the mind forms because it is a thinking thing.” But see Newlands (2012). The status of ideas of attributes and ideas of substances is murky to me. Spinoza seems to hold that these ideas are involved in ideas of modes (2P45).

essence. So what *gives a cognition* of an eternal and infinite essence of God is common to all, and is equally in the part and in the whole. (2P46D, modified, my emphasis)

Here, Spinoza treats the claim that a certain idea *involves* God's essence as equivalent to the claim that this idea *gives a cognition* of this essence.

There is a second good piece of evidence for (o). Some of Spinoza's remarks take the form, "A expresses B, i.e., A involves B". For example, he says:

the intellect infers from the given definition of any thing a number of properties...and it infers more properties the more reality the definition of the thing *expresses*, that is [*hoc est*], the more reality the essence of the defined thing *involves* [*quo plus realitatis rei definitio exprimit hoc est quo plus realitatis rei definitae essentia involvit*]. (1P16, my translation and emphasis)

With *hoc est*, he equates phrases with the forms "the definition of *x* expresses reality" and "the essence of *x* involves reality." A thing's definition is its essence. He is, therefore, incidentally equating 'expresses' and 'involves'. He also refers to an "idea that *expresses* the essence of the body" as a respect in which our mind "*involves* the essence of the body."³¹ That is the reason (P) is true:

(P) "involves" means "expresses".

There is some evidence that Spinoza uses 'expressed' interchangeably with 'manifested'. He writes, "just as God's [power]...must be unique, although it is *manifested* variously in its effects, so also His volitions and decrees...are not many, although they are *expressed* through created things..." (I/263, my emphasis). This remark takes the form, "just as there is only one *x*, although it is *manifested* variously in

³¹5P23S. See also 3P27D: "So if the nature of the external body is like the nature of our body, then the idea of the external body we imagine will *involve* an affection of our body like the affection of the external body. Consequently, if we imagine someone like us to be affected with some affect, this imagination will *express* an affection of our body like this affect" (my emphasis).

its effects, so also there are few *ys*, although these are *expressed* in each of their effects.”³²

I conclude that Spinoza uses “involve” in the traditional, epistemic sense. For him, to be involved *in* something is to be perceptible *in* it. To involve something is to be that through which it can be perceived.

As we saw above, “to involve” can mean “to contain implicitly”, i.e. “to veil”. Does this mean that, for Spinoza, what is involved is forever veiled, forever hidden? Not in the least. Consider Bacon’s claim that a cipher “involves” a hidden message. This means that the cipher is that in which the message can be discovered. Of course, a cipher does not cease to “involve” the hidden message once you have discovered that message. After the message has been discovered, it is still discoverable in it. Similarly, a pragmatic implicatum is in some sense implicit, even when it is obvious.

1.3.2. Earlier interpretations of “involve”

I have benefited greatly from studying earlier interpretations of “involve in Spinoza. However, these discussions have not considered the epistemic usages cited above. I’ll examine two such discussions here.

Alan Gabbey notes that in the seventeenth century *involvere* can be used

³²Spinoza also uses ‘express’ as a synonym of ‘indicate’. Or, at any rate, this hypothesis is encouraged by his thinking that a certain idea “must indicate or express [*indicare vel exprimere*] a constitution of the body” (3DEF4EXP).

Spinoza emphasizes that to involve something is, somehow, to *put it forward*. He mentions “an idea that involves the nature of the external body, i.e., an idea that does not exclude, but posits [*ponit*], the existence or presence of the nature of the external body” (2P17D). I take it that here he is working within the traditional metaphor that casts manifestation as spatial inclusion. He is justifying his use of the word “involves” by pointing out that to “exclude” something means, metaphorically, *to represent its absence*. And if so then surely to ‘involve’ something is to *represent its presence*. This use of *exclude* is well attested throughout Parts 2 and 3. On how Spinoza extends metaphors see section 3.2.2.

to mean ‘logically imply’.³³ This interpretation elegantly fits 1P11D2, where Spinoza says that “the very nature of a square circle indicates the reason why it does not exist, viz. because it involves a contradiction.” I believe that this logical interpretation does not quite fit 2P16, where Spinoza claims that it is only in virtue of the fact that the states of our body “involve” outer bodies that we represent them (2P16). If ‘involve’ means ‘logically imply’, in something close to the familiar meaning of that phrase, then it is not clear why Spinoza says this. Conversely, the epistemic reading of ‘involve’ fits 1P11D2 moderately well. We can take Spinoza to mean that the idea of a square circle contains an *implicit* contradiction, one that we will discover within it on reflection. In this contest, Gabbey’s interpretation snugly fits 1P11D2 but misfits 2P16, while my interpretation snugly fits 2P16 but fits loosely onto 1P11D2. As I see it, the balance of considerations favors the epistemic reading.

Samuel Newlands interprets ‘involve’ to mean ‘conceptually contain’. As evidence he cites Spinoza’s claim that “the concept which we have of our thought does not involve, *or* contain [*non involvit, sive non continet*] the necessary existence of the thought” (I/245). Newlands comments:

Here, conceptual independence is glossed as a kind of containment relation, an account Spinoza also embraces in the *Ethics*.... At the very least, we must admit that Spinoza never develops a theory of conceptual containment relations as rich as the one Leibniz will later champion.³⁴

In this interpretation, ‘involvement’ in Spinoza is an embryonic form of what will appear more explicitly as ‘conceptual containment’ in Leibniz. It is true that Spinoza equates ‘involve’ and ‘contain’. So what does ‘contain’ mean? Plainly, Spinoza is

³³Gabbey (2008).

³⁴Newlands (2010, 484).

speaking metaphorically, for one idea cannot spatially enclose another. But what metaphor is he using?

According to Newlands, he is using the Leibnizian metaphor of conceptual containment. I reply that the literal meaning of *involvere* is “to have (something) rolled up inside”. That is very similar to “to contain”. So I believe that, in the passage under consideration, Spinoza is just using “contain” as a variant of “involve”, and the phrase “involve, *or* contain” is not such a helpful clue about what the words mean. In my view, ‘involve’ and ‘contain’ are nodes in a familiar network of metaphors concerning representational ‘content’.³⁵

1.4. Spinoza’s Groucho moments

Spinoza defines ‘mode’ as follows:

By ‘mode’ I understand the affections of a substance, *or* that which is in another through which it is also conceived. (1DEF5)

Since IS IN implies IS CONCEIVED THROUGH — this was claim (J) — we can safely ignore “through which it is also conceived.” Thus, a mode is something that is in another:

(Q) IS A MODE OF $\leftrightarrow$ IS IN $\wedge$ IS DISTINCT FROM.

As noted,

³⁵One might wonder why he added ‘contain’ if it does the same work as ‘involve’. I have three replies. First, early modern philosophical communication is governed by a variety of norms, some of which are peculiar to the period. In his 1512 *De copia*, Desiderius Erasmus advises varying up expressions to sustain the reader’s interest. So does Gerardus Vossius in his 1647 *Poeticarum institutionum*. Spinoza sometimes writes like a Golden Age Dutchman. Second, like many early moderns, Spinoza thinks ill of words’ power to represent phenomena exactly. So he may see the need to *triangulate* the phenomenon he is targeting by describing it in multiple ways. Similarly, someone who cannot read a text in the original might try reading it in several translations, to compensate for any distortions introduced by the translators. Third, Spinoza is writing for multiple communities of readers. Some of them may prefer ‘contain’, others ‘involve’. (In section 3.4.3, I will examine Spinoza’s efforts to engage readers whose minds have been trained differently.)

(I) IS CONCEIVED THROUGH $\leftrightarrow$ IS CAUSED BY. From (G) and (H).

(M) IS IN $\leftrightarrow$ IS CAUSED BY. From (K) and (L).

And so:

(R) IS A MODE OF $\leftrightarrow$ IS CAUSED BY $\wedge$ IS DISTINCT FROM. From (M) and (Q).

(S) IS A MODE OF $\leftrightarrow$ IS CONCEIVED THROUGH $\wedge$ IS DISTINCT FROM. From (I) and (R).

Time for (T):

(T) “involves” means “is that through which one can perceive”. From (O).

We can now appreciate the truth of (U):

(U) “involves” means “is conceived through”

Spinoza says,

For to say that A must involve the concept of B is the same as to say that A cannot be conceived without B. (2P49)³⁶

It is beyond debate that ‘is conceived through’ means ‘cannot be conceived without’.³⁷ We can now infer (V):

(V) IS A MODE OF $\leftrightarrow$ INVOLVES $\wedge$ IS DISTINCT FROM. From (S) and (U).

As mentioned, ‘involve’ can be used in a strict sense and in a loose sense, which I will distinguish as ‘involves_S’ and ‘involve_L’. For an idea to involves_S another idea is for

³⁶In light of Spinoza’s necessitarianism (1P33) ‘involve’ and ‘must involve’ need not be kept distinct. As mentioned, I am using “body A involves body B” to mean “the idea of A involves the idea of B”.

See this claim too:

For each must be in itself and be conceived through itself, *or* the concept of the one does not involve the concept of the other. (1P2D)

³⁷Spinoza writes, “But modes (by 1DEF5) can neither be nor be conceived without substance. So they can be in the divine nature alone, and can be conceived through it alone” (1P15D).

the first idea to be that through which the second idea can be perceived. No body involves_S anything, nor is involved_S in anything. However, a body can involve_L things and be involved_L in things. Let [x] mean 'a perfect idea of x'. For a body B to involve_L an idea I is for [B] to involve_S I. And for a body B to involve_L another body C is for [B] to involve_S [C]. Finally, for an idea I to involve_L a body B is for I to involve_S [B]. In (v), 'involve' is used in the loose sense.

A further step can be taken:

(w) IS A MODE OF $\leftrightarrow$ EXPRESSES $\wedge$ IS DISTINCT FROM. From (p) and (v).

But why would Spinoza accept (w)? How do modes relate to 'expression'? In pursuit of an answer, let us read 1P25C in the original:

Res particulares nihil sunt nisi Dei attributorum affectiones sive *modi* quibus Dei attributa certo et determinato *modo* exprimuntur. (my emphasis)

Curley translates this corollary like so:

Particular things are nothing but affections of God's attributes, *or* **modes** [*modi*] by which God's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate **way** [*modo*]. (1:431, my emphasis)

Curley translates the first occurrence of *modus* as the technical term 'mode', but the second occurrence as the non-technical term 'way'. Consistency would, of course, requires translating both occurrences in the same way. "The syntax of this famous passage is somewhat odd," observes Aaron Garrett.³⁸ It reminds me of Groucho Marx's mock-legalese: "the party of the first part shall be known in this contract as the party of the first part...." The *Ethics* includes four more Groucho moments:

³⁸Garrett (2008, 208, n. 34).

By body I understand a mode [*modum*] that in a certain and determinate way [*modo*] expresses God's essence insofar as He is considered as an extended thing (see 1P25C). (2DEF1)

Singular thoughts...are modes [*modi*] that express God's nature in a certain and determinate way [*modo*]. (2P1D)

So also a mode of extension [*modus extensionis*] and the idea of that mode [*idea illius modi*] are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways [*modis*]... (2P7S)

The essence of man is something which is in God, and which can neither be nor be conceived without God, *or* an affection, *or* mode [*modus*], which expresses God's nature in a certain and determinate way [*modo*]. (2P10CD)

To understand these curious phrases, we must recognize that Spinoza sometimes juxtaposes two usages of a word, one technical, one non-technical. For instance, he identifies the following mental act as an example of “**intuitive** [*intuitiva*] cognition”:

Given the numbers 1, 2, and 3, no one fails to see that the fourth proportional number is 6 — and we see this much more clearly because we infer the fourth number from the ratio which, in one **glance** [*intuitu*], we see the first number to have the second. (2P40S2)

In his account of the passions, Spinoza uses the verb *fluctuari* in a non-technical way, in order to clarify his psychological term of art, “vacillation” (*fluctuatio*):

[T]he main affects and **vacillations** [*fluctuationes*] of mind...arise from the composition of the three primitive affects, viz. desire, joy, and sadness. ... [L]ike waves on the sea, driven by contrary winds, we **toss about** [*fluctuari*, literally ‘to move in waves’], not knowing our outcome and fate. (II/189, modified, my emphasis)

Similarly, having said that the brain remembers because it retains “**traces** [*vestigia*]” of the body's encounters with external objects (2POST5 and 2P17C), Spinoza illustrates the point by referring to the *vestigia* (tracks) of an animal.³⁹

³⁹ Another example occurs at Letter 9: “By substance I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, i.e., whose concept does not involve the concept of another thing. I understand the same by attribute, except that it is called *attribute* in relation to the intellect, which *attributes* such and such a definite nature to substance” (I:195, my emphasis).

[E]ach of us will pass from one thought to another according to how each one's training has ordered the images of things in the body. A soldier, for example, having seen a horse's **tracks** [*vestigis*] in the sand, will immediately pass in his thoughts from a horse, to a horseman, to a war, and so on. But a farmer will pass in his thoughts from a horse, to a plow, to a field, and so on. And so each one, according to how he has been trained to join and connect the images of things in this or that way, will pass from one thought to another. (2P18S, modified, my emphasis)⁴⁰

In these passages, Spinoza juxtaposes technical and non-technical uses of a term in order to explain the technical use. 'Intuitive cognition' is aptly so called because it includes a mental act that is as simple, immediate, and unforced as a glance (*intuitus*). Mental 'vacillation' (*fluctuatio*) is aptly so called because it is similar to wave-like motion (*fluctuatio*, in the literal sense). For the vacillator is, like a wave, buffeted by massive and unpredictable forces that often drive him in opposite directions. Brain 'traces' are aptly so called because, like a horse's "tracks" (*vestigia*), they lead people with different pasts to think of different things.

At 1P25C, Spinoza introduces a clarificatory juxtaposition between two uses of *modus*. In so doing, he strongly suggests there that a 'mode' is so called

The reason that Spinoza juxtaposes non-technical and technical uses of a term is clear from his remarks on 'true' and 'false':

To perceive these two, the *true* and the *false*, rightly, we shall begin with the meaning of the words.... But since ordinary people first invent words, which afterwards are used by the philosophers, it seems desirable for one seeking the original meaning of a term to ask what it first denoted among ordinary people... The first meaning of *true* and *false* seems to have had its origin in stories: a story was called true when it was of a deed that had really happened, and false when it was of a deed that had never happened. Afterwards the philosophers used this meaning to denote the agreement of an idea with its object and conversely. So an idea is called true when it shows us the thing as it is in itself, and false when it shows us the thing otherwise than it really is. For ideas are nothing but narratives, *or* mental histories of nature. But later this usage was transferred metaphorically to mute things, as when we call gold true or false, as if the gold which is presented to us were to tell something of itself that either was or was not in it. (1/246; I:312)

Here Spinoza notes that in order to understand the philosophical use of "true", we need to view it in light of the lay usage of which that philosophical usage was a metaphorical extension. In just the same way, Spinoza seems to be trying to clarify the philosophical meanings of *intuitiva*, *fluctuatio*, and *vestigia* by (indirectly) helping us see how these meanings arose naturally from lay usages by a process of metaphorization.

⁴⁰For more on this horse, see section 3.4.3.

because it is a way in which something is expressed.⁴¹

In his Groucho moments, Spinoza is employing a rhetorical technique well known to his peers, who called it *antanaclasis*. A silly but helpful example of this technique is Benjamin Franklin's zinger: "Your argument is sound, nothing but sound."⁴² He repeats "sound" in a new context, revealing its "true" meaning. As master rhetoricians Quintilian and Vossius explain, the technique reveals what a term means, sometimes in a surprising or humorous way.⁴³

Buridan observed that Socrates is ridiculous as a human being, but not as a philosopher; the moral of this observation is, perhaps, that what may seem absurd from one angle may seem wise from another. So we shouldn't be too quick to call the technique of antanaclasis unworthy of a philosopher. A philosophical instance of it occurs in a 1656 translation into English of Hobbes's *De corpore*, supervised by Hobbes himself. In it, we read: "a body...is called the *Subject*, because it is so placed in and *Subjected* to Imaginary Space, that it may be understood by Reason, as well as perceived by Sense."⁴⁴ By placing the word "Subject" into the phrase "Subjected to Imaginary Space", the sentence suggests that "subject" is short for "thing subjected to imaginary space".⁴⁵ Spinoza is likely doing the same thing at 1P25C, where he remarks that particular things are "modes by which God's attributes are expressed

⁴¹In his study of Spinoza's *Ethics*, Deleuze (1968) "underline[s] the interplay in the Latin original of the two registers — 'technical' or Scholastic, and nontechnical or 'informal' — of *modus*, each as it were illustrating the other," says the commentator Martin Joughin in Deleuze (1992, 403). I would adapt this insight as follows. For Spinoza, the technical sense of a term arises from the literal sense by a process of metaphorical extension. For example, the natural philosopher makes a metaphorical use of the courtroom term "law". But the effect must be understood through the cause. The literal meaning illuminates the metaphorical, not vice versa.

⁴²Quoted in Corbett (1971, 482).

⁴³Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ix.3.68; Vossius, *Elementa rhetorica*, 21. Antanaclasis resembles the Spinozistic device that Aaron Garrett calls "ironic contextual quotation" (Garrett, 2008, 124ff.).

⁴⁴Hobbes (1656, part 2, chapter 8, p. 75), his emphasis.

⁴⁵Zarka (1996) discusses this translation.

in a certain and determinate mode.” He is trying (maybe awkwardly, to modern ears) to make “mode” into an abbreviation of “mode of expression”, i.e., a means by which something is expressed. That is why he accepts (w).

It might be worried that, on my interpretation, Spinoza’s use of ‘mode’ would have been so unorthodox that he couldn’t have reasonably expected his reader to understand what he meant. This objection makes assumptions about Spinoza’s approach to philosophical communication that could be resisted. But even if we grant these assumptions, I think Spinoza could reasonably have expected his readers to notice how he was using ‘mode’. For other philosophers also use it, or a close correlate, to mean ‘mode of expression’.

For example, Maimonides uses it this way. Maimonides had a great influence on Spinoza.⁴⁶ In the *Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides argues that God has no qualities. God is not “the substratum of accidents” (chap. 51). For “no attribute coming under the head of quality in its widest sense, can be predicated of God” (*loc. cit.*). But Maimonides still insists that God has “attributes” that are not qualities. To grasp what this means we need to observe that Maimonides explains this claim by referring to Moses’s request of God: “Show me now thy *ways*, that I may know thee” (Exodus 33:13, my emphasis). God acquiesces: “I will make all my goodness to pass before thee.” Maimonides interprets God’s term “goodness” here to mean Creation, which God called good back in Genesis. “Consequently,” remarks Maimonides, “the knowledge of the works of God is the knowledge of His attributes, *by which He can be known*” (tr. Pines, 105–06, my emphasis). For Maimonides, the synonymous phrases “God’s ways” and “God’s attributes” do not refer to God’s

⁴⁶ Harvey (1981) uncovers Spinoza’s enormous debt to Maimonides; see also Chalier (2006), Fraenkel (2006), and for a different view Parens (2012).

qualities but rather to His effects by which He can be known.⁴⁷ Thus Maimonides's use of 'ways of God' is very similar to Spinoza's use of 'modes of God'.

Hobbes uses *modus* as an abbreviation for *modus concipiendi* ("way of conceiving"). He praises those who

define an *accident* to be *the manner by which any body is conceived* [*modum corporis, juxta quem concipitur*, translated in *De Corpore*; his emphasis], which is all one as if they should say, *an accident is that faculty of any body, by which it works in us a conception of itself*.⁴⁸

He adds: "I define an accident to be *the manner of our conception of body* [*concupiendi corporis modum*]."

Thus, there are precedents for using the phrase 'mode of x ' to mean 'that through which x is perceived'. Spinoza's use of mode to mean 'means of expression' would not have been so unorthodox that he could not have reasonably expected his readers to follow his meaning.

Some metaphysicians believe that 'modes' are qualities, ways that something exists. In their view, qualities happen to be that through which a substrate is perceived: we perceive the apple by perceiving its redness, its shape, and its taste. In Spinoza's view, to be a mode of something is simply to play this epistemic role, to be that by which it is perceived. There is no further, more intimate metaphysical relation between God and God's modes. Thus, Spinoza's doctrine that everything is a mode of a single substance is much more traditional than some have held. It is simply the idea that God is displayed to us through His creations.

However, this doctrine includes (L), which is indeed strange. It implies that, if something causes something other than itself, then the effect is a mode of

⁴⁷See Biale (2008, 349). Maimonides argues that these attributes do not disclose God's essence to us.

⁴⁸*Elements of philosophy*, ii.8 (*Works*, i.103, his emphasis).

its cause. And that, in turn, means that we can perceive the cause by perceiving the effect.

But how could that be so? It is time to approach this question.

1.5. The perspective of eternity

We have now almost completely uncovered the skeleton of Spinoza's metaphysics. We will shortly put away the chisel, brush, and magnifying glass of the paleontologist, step back, and make a reasonable guess about how this beast moved.

1.5.1. Mapping Spinoza's concepts onto ours

As we have seen, in Spinoza's thinking,

(B) IS CAUSED BY $\leftrightarrow$ FOLLOWS FROM $\leftrightarrow$ IS EFFICIENTLY CAUSED BY,

(D) IS PERCEIVED THROUGH $\leftrightarrow$ IS UNDERSTOOD THROUGH,

(I) IS CONCEIVED THROUGH $\leftrightarrow$ IS CAUSED BY,

(M) IS IN $\leftrightarrow$ IS CAUSED BY,

(U) "involves" means "is conceived through", and

(T) "involves" means "is that through which one can perceive".

We can now derive (X) and (Y):

(X) INVOLVES $\leftrightarrow$ IS CAUSED BY. From (I) and (U).

(Y) IS CAUSED BY $\leftrightarrow$ IS THAT BY WHICH ONE CAN PERCEIVE. From (T) and (X).

Therefore, all ten of the relations that I mentioned at the start of this chapter are necessarily coextensive:

(Z) IS CAUSED BY $\leftrightarrow$ IS EFFICIENTLY CAUSED BY $\leftrightarrow$ FOLLOWS FROM
 $\leftrightarrow$ IS CONCEIVED THROUGH $\leftrightarrow$ IS PERCEIVED THROUGH $\leftrightarrow$
 IS UNDERSTOOD THROUGH $\leftrightarrow$ IS IN $\leftrightarrow$ INVOLVES $\leftrightarrow$ EXPRESSES $\leftrightarrow$ IS
 THAT THROUGH WHICH ONE CAN PERCEIVE. From (B), (D), (I), (M), (X),
 and (Y).

A problem has now become starkly clear. (Z) entails:

IS PERCEIVED THROUGH $\leftrightarrow$ IS THAT THROUGH WHICH ONE CAN
 PERCEIVE

Spinoza's metaphysics is like an old wedding dress whose many wrinkles I have tried to iron smooth. This implication may seem like a burn in the dress. One may wonder, did my iron produce the burn or merely uncover it?

This implication is not as dire as it may seem. The two occurrences of 'through' have different meanings. Each effect is perceived through its cause, in the sense that a complete perception — or rather, a complete account — of the effect mentions its cause, as Aristotle says. But to be 'that through which one can perceive x' is to *reveal* x, in the way that, in vision, a state of my brain (or eyeball) reveals an outer body.

As noted, some of Spinoza's core phrases are synonymous:

(N) "is in" means "is caused by".

(O) "is involved in" means "is discoverable in" are synonymous.

(T) "involves x" means "is that through which one can perceive".

(U) "involves" means "is conceived through"

These concepts form a circle of interdefined terms. But they remain black boxes.

How do they relate to *our* concepts? How can we break into the circle?

How we proceed from here will be governed, not by the data, but by the intuitions that we bring to the task of interpreting. I will canvass five approaches.

We could adopt a “modification-first” approach: take ‘is in’ and ‘is caused by’ to mean something close to what *we* mean when we say ‘is a modification of’. This approach has a downside. It won’t easily be able to solve the two puzzles mentioned above (section 1.2.2):

The Carpenter Puzzle: Given (L), and given that a table is partly caused by a carpenter, how could it be that the table is partly a mode of the carpenter?⁴⁹

The Great-Grandma Puzzle: Given (L), and given that this clay bowl was made by my great-grandma who’s no longer around, how could it be that the bowl is a mode of her?

We could instead pursue a “causation-first” approach. That is, we could take Spinoza’s notion of causation to be something like an amended version of our notion of causation. (Needed amendments include that Spinoza’s causes don’t need to precede their effects in time.) Then we would have to understand ‘inherence’, ‘involvement’, ‘expression’, etc. simply as causation. Unfortunately, this approach leaves us unable to explain (Y):

(Y) IS CAUSED BY $\leftrightarrow$ IS THAT BY WHICH ONE CAN PERCEIVE.

Why would an effect make its causes perceptible? On our notion of causation, that seems bizarre. And we can’t reduce “makes perceptible” and “expresses” to “is caused by”, because in Spinoza’s account of how we represent the world, he importantly infers from “so-and-so has an idea that expresses x” to “so-and-so

⁴⁹(L) is the proposition that IS CAUSED BY $\rightarrow$ IS IN. Spinoza believes (L), as I showed on p. 5.

perceives x”:

The idea of any mode in which the human body is affected by external bodies must involve [i.e. express] the nature of the human body and at the same time the nature of the external body.... (2P16)

From this it follows...that the human mind perceives the nature of a great many bodies together with the nature of its own body. (2P16C1)

It would be very strange if this were in fact the inference from “so-and-so has an idea that is caused by x” (where “is caused by” has roughly the sense we would put on it) to “so-and-so perceives x”. Our notion of causation just doesn’t allow an inference like that.

We could also adopt an “expression-first” approach: understand ‘is in’ and ‘is caused by’ in terms of expression. This approach has a disadvantage too. Under this approach, the claim that God produces the world (1P16) is to be understood as the claim that God is manifest through God’s creatures. But intuitively that would leave the existence of the world unexplained.

Another approach would be to *surrender*. Say that Spinoza’s system can be understood only in its own terms — only circularly, that is to say, not at all. Adopt the interpretive stance known as the *modus psittacinus*, the mode of the parrot, explaining Spinoza’s claims by repeating claims we do not understand, and deducing from them claims we do not understand. Speak in Spinglish (Spinozese translated into English) without knowing what its words mean. (Worse: let our peers think we were speaking in English, so that we seemed to understand Spinoza’s claims.) We would neither know how to see the world as Spinoza does, nor how to take his advice.

A better approach is to use our notions of causation and making-known

to make sense of Spinoza's modes. To do so, I suggest that we restore Spinoza's substance-mode metaphysics to its proper place within his ethics.

1.5.2. 'Mode' as a moral notion

I will now develop a new interpretation of the concept "mode" in the *Ethics*. With an understanding of this notion in hand, we will be able to ken Spinoza's account of our place in nature, which he characterizes in the aforementioned corollary:

Particular things are nothing but affections of God's attributes, *or* modes by which God's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way. (1P25C)

Following on the work of the previous sections, I am seeking an interpretation according to which modes "are caused by their substrate" and "reveal their substrate", in something close to our sense of those terms.

To conceive things as being "in God" is to conceive them *sub specie aeternitatis* (from the perspective of eternity). Spinoza writes:

We conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to be *contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature*. But the things we conceive in this second way as true, *or* real, we conceive *sub specie aeternitatis*, and to that extent their ideas involve the eternal and infinite essence of God. (5P29S, modified, my emphasis)

I would therefore like to change the question slightly. Instead of asking "What is it to be a mode of the substance?", let's ask, "What is it to conceive something as being a mode of the substance?" This, in turn, is equivalent to the question, "What is it to conceive things *sub specie aeternitatis*?"

When we think of something as a mode of God, then we have intuitive knowledge of it (2P40S2, 5P31). From this knowledge there arises "intellectual love

of God” (5P33). This love, the author rhapsodizes, is the mind’s “greatest good” (4P28). To see something as a mode, to see it as something *in* which its causes can be perceived, is to have a mysterious experience which Spinoza seems to have devoted much of his life to describing. To see the world in this way, to see things as modes, is to be virtuous. Spinoza’s ethical theory is not primarily a rulebook for living, but rather an account of how things are. For him, to be virtuous just is to see things aright.

A neglected feature of “mode” must be remembered. Spinoza defines the term on the first page of the *Ethics* —

By mode I understand the affections of a substance, *or* that which is in another through which it is also conceived. (1DEF5)

— which may initially suggest that one should know *how* to conceive things as modes before turning to the second page. However, he later stresses that it is difficult to conceive things in this way. For to conceive something as a mode is to view it from the perspective of eternity. This is the perspective of the “wise man”, mentioned on the last page of the *Ethics*:

[T]he 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. (5P42S)

Spinoza calls this state of mind “salvation” and closes the *Ethics* with a note of consolation and warning. Reaching this state of mind is no cakewalk:

For if salvation were at hand, and could be found without great effort, how could nearly everyone neglect it? But all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare. (*loc. cit.*)

Here, then, are the desiderata on a correct interpretation of the “perspective of eternity”. From this perspective, causes appear to be present in their effects, in

something close enough to the familiar sense of the words. The perspective is difficult to adopt. And the perspective gives rise to “intellectual love of God”.

At this point the data have, properly speaking, given out. We’ve dug up the bones of the *Ethics*, the structure of relations among its concepts, but now we must affix meaning to this structure in a way that goes beyond what is given, just as, standing beneath a dinosaur skeleton, we imagine a dinosaur body and mind. I cannot think of anything that can carry us the rest of the way, except charitable interpretation. As Augustine warned, “Non intratur in veritatem, nisi per caritatem.” This could be translated: One does not enter into truth, except through charity.⁵⁰

Hume thought that the idea that one could see the cause in the effect was ludicrous. “The mind can never possibly find the effect in the supposed cause, by the most accurate scrutiny and examination” (*Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, §4). We sometimes say that we do see causes in effects, though — not when in the metaphysics room, but when in a certain strange mood. To remind us what this mood is like, some philosophers tell stories, like this one:

A visiting friend (I’ll call him ‘Tom’, since that is his name) decided, on a cold and rainy winter morning several years ago, to come along while I drove my son to school; we were in a hurry and, since he did not intend to get out of the car, he threw a raincoat over his pyjamas and didn’t bother to wear any shoes. On arriving at the school, I realized I had a flat tyre and no idea of how to replace it. Since all the children were arriving at the same time, traffic was very heavy and my disabled car provided a major obstruction. While I was standing there in confusion, Tom leapt out of the car — barefoot, in pyjamas and raincoat — and took over. The children stared in complete fascination, some of the adults offered to help, others just watched or made jokes (one, a colleague, told me she loved my friend’s outfit). Oblivious to his audience, Tom fixed the tyre, drove us to a gas station, where, still in pyjamas, he discussed the situation with the owner, and returned home ready to start the day’s work while I collapsed in a useless heap. ...

⁵⁰ *Contra Faustum Manichæum*, xxxii.18.

Where others saw an amusing eccentric or a bother (both of which he was), I saw in Tom's action an expression of much that I knew of him already *and*, in addition, a promise both fulfilled and newly made through his actions that morning — a promise only he, with his history, could make, and only I, with my own history, could see, a product, in fact, of our history together, in which no one else can share. In his action, I saw Tom *himself*, and that 'self' is what love is about.⁵¹

Nehamas has adopted a certain perspective toward Tom, and when Tom is seen from this perspective, he seems to be present in his actions, in his effects.⁵² When this loving eye falls upon Tom's action, it sees Tom himself *in* the action. When this eye is cast upon a table, it sees the carpenter. When it sees a clay bowl, hand-made by great-grandma, it sees *in* the bowl, in its surfaces and striations, the moving fingers, decisions, and mind that created them. Obviously these are illusions, but Spinoza audaciously judges them veridical.

Spinoza's theory of the one substance and its infinitely many modes deserves to be addressed in the first part of a book titled *Ethics* because it is a description of a moral worldview, in particular, of what the world looks like when seen lovingly. If some people think love an illusion, Spinoza replies that if we don't yet have love for something, then we are not yet in a position to understand its

⁵¹Nehamas (2010, 278–79).

⁵²Ruth Millikan makes a point about cognition which has a similar feel:

Consider an extraordinary ability that we all have, the ability to recognize, for example, one's mother, or a sibling, one's spouse, one's best friend. Suppose one of these persons in your life is named Bert. Here are some of the ways that you can probably recognize Bert. You can do this by seeing Bert in the flesh, 20 meters up the street, perhaps at 1,000 meters by his or her walk, certainly at 30 centimeters, from the front, from the back, from the left side or the right or most any other angle, half hidden behind another person or a chair or a table or a book, sitting, standing, lying down, yawning, stretching, running, eating, holding still or moving in any of various ways, in daylight or moonlight, under a street lamp, by candlelight, through a fog, in a photograph, on TV, through binoculars, by hearing Bert's voice from any of many distances or as it passes through a variety of media such as lightweight walls, under water, over the phone, despite many kinds of masking sounds such as wind, or rain, or other people talking, and so forth. (Millikan, 2012, 100)

If we are already fond of Bert by the end of this passage, it is perhaps because we have practiced recognizing him in his effects.

metaphysical structure.

In this one respect, at least, Spinoza's ethics resembles Kant's. Kantian ethics has been called an attempt to smuggle up the ivory tower a piece of folk wisdom, disguised in a scholar's robe:

Kant wanted to prove, in a way that would dumbfound the common man, that the common man was right: that was the secret joke of this soul. He wrote against the scholars in support of popular prejudice, but for scholars and not for the people.⁵³

The *Ethics* teaches philosophers how to live; the scriptures as interpreted through Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise* teach the folk how to live. But the secret joke of Spinoza's soul is that these texts carry almost the same key message. The key teaching of scripture is "to love God above all else, and to love your neighbor as yourself" (III/165), understood as an normative imperative. In the *Ethics*, philosophers encounter the same teaching as an epistemic imperative. "Scientiam vel potius amorem [knowledge, or to put it more explicitly, love]", Spinoza writes (III/67). Augustine had already spotted the connection. He warned, "Non intratur in veritatem, nisi per caritatem." This could be translated: One does not enter into truth, except through love.⁵⁴

⁵³Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §193 (tr. Nauckhoff, 140).

⁵⁴I refer any nauseated readers to section 3.4.2.

Chapter 2

The role of aspects in Spinoza's philosophy of mind

In the *Ethics*, Spinoza argues that anyone can rid himself or herself of passions simply by forming clear and distinct ideas of them. As Spinoza puts it, any passion “ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it” (5P3). Spinoza believes, in particular, that any passion can transform into an *action*.

However, there is a simple and well-known objection to this claim. According to Spinoza, a mind can gain or lose power. If this change is caused entirely by that mind, it is an action. But if it is *not* caused entirely by that mind, it is a passion. Suppose then that I am sad. Part of what makes my sadness a passion rather than an action is that one of its causes lies outside my mind. Thus, if my sadness can transform into an action, then it can come to no longer have been caused by that thing. However, it seems obvious that the past cannot change in this way. So this remedy for the passions apparently conflicts with Spinoza's metaphysics of passion. No one can change how a passion *was* brought into being. Analogously, I cannot “become royal by altering who my parents were,” as Jonathan

Bennett put it.¹

In this chapter, I will show that there is no conflict at all between 5P3 and Spinoza's metaphysics of passion. To do so I will ask: according to Spinoza, what does it take for someone to "form a clear and distinct idea" of a passion? Roughly, I answer that, to form such an idea is to see the passion anew. More technically, for someone to form such an idea is for that person to change which aspect of the passion she cognizes. I sketch this solution in section 2.2. I then argue for this solution in two stages. First, I adopt an 'aspectual' interpretation of the mind-body distinction. I give a new argument for this interpretation in section 2.3. Then, in section 2.4, I show that the sadness-joy distinction is also an aspectual distinction. Thus the transformation of sadness into an action is not an intrinsic change in the passion itself, but a case of 'aspect dawning'. That is, it is a change in which aspect we conceive the sadness under. This change resembles a change that would have been familiar to any lens grinder: the change in size that something seems to undergo as one looks at it through a lens that is changing shape.

Let's review the alleged conflict in more detail.

2.1. The problem

According to Spinoza, we can make ourselves more joyful and more free. To do so, we can use a few techniques which he calls "remedies for the affects" (5PREF). According to Jonathan Bennett, Spinoza's main remedy doesn't work, by Spinoza's own lights. The reason, Bennett says, is that the remedy requires the impossible: it will not work unless an instance of sadness comes to have begun differently than it

¹Bennett (1984, 336).

began. I unpack the objection in this section.

Spinoza says that each of us has a mind and a body. Our minds and bodies are powerful: each mind has the power to think, while each body has the power to move. An increase or decrease in the power of a mind or a body is called an *affect*. Your empowerments and disempowerments have various causes. Some are caused just by you, and these are your *actions*. Here's a geometrical example: suppose that two of your thoughts—that all squares are rectangles and that all rectangles are polygons—jointly lead you to believe that all squares are polygons. This is a change in your mind, and your own thoughts bring that change about, by themselves. To make an inference like this is to perform an action. Intuitively, Spinoza is right that such an action is an increase in your mental power; equipped now with the thought that all squares are polygons, you can make further inferences.

By contrast, some changes in your mind's power result not only from thoughts you already have, but from those thoughts acting in concert with the thoughts of others. Spinoza calls these collaboratively produced changes your *passions*.² Any change in mental power with a cause outside the mind—no matter how long ago that cause took effect—is a passion. For example, sadness is a passion because it is a decrease in mental power that is caused partly by the thoughts of the sad person and partly by the thoughts of other beings.³ Even melancholy rumination is a passion, as (Spinoza insists) the causal history of any rumination includes at

²The passions are: sadness, pain, melancholy, wonder, disdain, hate, inclination, aversion, devotion, mockery, hope, fear, confidence, despair, gladness, disappointment, favor, indignation, overestimation, scorn, envy, compassion, contentedness, humility, pride, despondency, love-of-glory (*gloria*), shame, bashfulness (*verecundia*), longing, emulation, gratitude, benevolence, anger, vengeance, cruelty, timidity, daring, cowardice, consternation, courtesy, ambition, gluttony, drunkenness, greed, and lust, and certain versions of joy, love, and pleasure (3DA1–3DA48).

³According to Spinoza, all things that exist have minds, even rocks and lakes (2P13S).

least one thought not had by the ruminator, be it recent or not.⁴

Spinoza thus draws a bright line between the changes that a mind's own thoughts induce in that mind by their own strength, and other changes.⁵ I shall call these “wholly native” and “partly alien” changes, respectively. To summarize, Spinoza accepts the following claims:

- (A) If a mind M is joyful, then M 's state of joy is wholly native to M .
- (B) If a mind M is sad, then M 's state of sadness is partly alien to M .

In the *Ethics* Spinoza describes an exhilarating, ecstatic experience he calls “intellectual love of God”. A component of this love is *joy*.⁶ According to Spinoza,

⁴Spinoza maintains that an effect must be understandable in terms of its cause. He holds that mental effects cannot be understood in terms of material causes (or vice versa). So he concludes that nothing material causes anything mental (nor vice versa).

Spinoza allows that a single mental state can be shared by more than one mind. For example, some of my mental states are also the mental states of the larger minds of which my mind is a part. Thus Spinoza's definitions of sadness and joy curiously imply that a mental state that is sadness relative to my mind is, at the same time joy, relative to a larger mind that includes the causes of my sadness. My sadness is the joy of a larger system.

⁵Here's the textual basis for these claims. Spinoza defines ‘affect’, ‘passion’, and ‘action’ like so:

By *affect* I understand affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections.

Therefore, if we can be the adequate cause of any of these affections, I understand by the affect an *action*; otherwise, a *passion*. (3DEF3, my emphasis)

Here “affections” means “changes in the state or condition of the body” (Lewis and Short, 1879, ‘affectio’). So we can reword the start of the quote as:

By ‘affect’ I mean increases or decreases in the body's power of acting, or changes that aid or restrain this power. At the same time, I mean ideas of these changes.

By “adequate cause” Spinoza means “complete cause”. We can thus reword the rest of the quote as:

Therefore, if we can be the complete cause of any of these changes, I understand by the affect an action; otherwise, a passion.

Spinoza's term ‘affect’ therefore covers wholly native and partly native surges and slumps in the power of the body. (As it happens, he believes that the body can't, all by itself, cause itself to be less powerful.) According to Spinoza, these surges and slumps in the power of the body are accompanied by surges and slumps in the power of the mind (3P11).

⁶Spinoza characterizes such intellectual love as joy accompanied by the idea of an internal cause. Spinoza's definitions of love seem flat, and drew mockery from Schopenhauer (*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*; tr. Haldane and Kemp, iii.338). To Schopenhauer I reply that Spinoza's concept of a *complete idea* already contains certain marks characteristic of love as traditionally conceived. See p. 33.

joy is an increase in the power of a mind or body. A joyful mind is becoming more mentally powerful: more able to think. When a body is joyful, it is becoming more physically powerful: more able to move. In a sad mind and body, these abilities are waning.⁷

In a much-debated passage Spinoza writes:

If an affect is a passion, it ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it. (5P3)

Most commentators, including Bennett, infer that Spinoza accepts:

(C) A state of sadness can become a state of joy.

That is, something can cease to fit Spinoza's definition of 'sadness' and come to fit Spinoza's definition of 'joy'.

According to Bennett, it is just here that Spinoza blunders. Sadness is partly alien and joy is wholly native, so sadness can become joy only by coming to *no longer have been* partly caused by something outside the mind of the saddened person.⁸ But surely what was the case at time t will always have been the case at t , and nothing can come to have been different than it was.⁹ Otherwise, jokes Bennett, one could "become royal by altering who [one's] parents were."¹⁰ Unless

⁷As he explains (3DA20EXP), 'sadness' and 'joy' are among the many terms Spinoza uses unconventionally. Those who, following Leibniz, castigate Spinoza for such linguistic eccentricity should remember that Spinoza's predecessors commonly regarded extant terms as apt for redefinition. For example, Descartes decides that "when appropriate words are lacking, I shall use what seem the most suitable words, adapting them to my own meaning" (Adam and Tannery, 1964–1974, x.369). Continuing the trend, Arnauld and Nicole "view the word 'soul' [*âme*] as if it were a sound that does not yet have a meaning," and give it a new sense (*Logique*, 86; tr. Biroker, 60).

⁸Great philosophy is "a species of involuntary and unconscious autobiography": this remark by Nietzsche (1966, §6) perhaps gains some confirmation here, since the transition envisioned neatly mirrors Spinoza's efforts to become no longer defined by his foreign ancestors.

⁹This is an axiom in John Lemmon's minimal temporal logic $\mathbf{K}_t$ (cf. Rescher and Urquhart, 1971, 55). I ignore that past entities can undergo certain "Cambridge changes": for example, the construction of a new skyscraper might cause a building destroyed long ago to no longer be the tallest ever built.

¹⁰Bennett (1984, 336).

Spinoza denies this truism, he must accept:

- (D) What is partly alien to a given mind cannot later come to be wholly native to that mind.

Unfortunately (A), (B), (C), and (D) are jointly inconsistent. If Spinoza accepts all four of them, then he inadvertently places his cure for sadness out of his own reach.

Against Bennett, Olli Koistinen protests that a passion can become native to me by coming to be *sustained* wholly by me. Suppose that I acquire my belief in the Pythagorean Theorem from a teacher, then acquire it anew by reflecting on axioms using innate abilities. Then my alien belief would have become native. Sadness also could lose its alien status through such reacquisition.¹¹ Colin Marshall files a similar complaint on Spinoza's behalf. We can sometimes remove the traces of a cause from an effect. A bully can flatten a clay figurine to erase the sculptor's influence. An overzealous coauthor can edit out the other author's input. Likewise, I can rework my sadness until it shows no sign of an external cause.¹²

Sadly these replies don't work. As Martin Lin explains, a mental state that is sustained by internal mental processes could not be *identical* to an earlier alien passion. The reason is that things with different causes are different by Leibniz's Law.¹³

¹¹Koistinen (1998).

¹²Marshall (2012).

¹³Lin (2009). Two more reasons why they don't work: First, according to Spinoza every effect wears traces of its causes, traces that are often imperceptible (1A4). Consequently, a person who fully understands an effect will thereby improve his or her understanding of the cause. These traces cannot be removed. For example, God leaves traces in all things (2P45), and a understanding of anything created by God will lead to a better understanding of God (5P24). Second, in the case of the overzealous coauthor, if the other coauthor had exerted a different influence on the text, then different revisions would have been required to remove that influence. Likewise, every reworked passion once had an external cause, and if this cause had been different then (all other things being equal) different reworking would have been needed. So, suppose that a sad mind could rework its sadness until this sadness no longer bore a trace of any external cause. Had the external cause been

To summarize: Bennett ascribes to Spinoza the inconsistent tetrad (A), (B), (C), and (D). I reply that Bennett has misread the passage that seems to commit Spinoza to (C). In exploring this possibility we will uncover the underappreciated dialogical character of the *Ethics*.

2.2. A sketch of a solution

As we've seen, Spinoza claims that sadness can turn into joy; Bennett argues that Spinoza's core commitments imply that it can't; and some replies to Bennett are unpersuasive. The claim that sadness can turn into joy occurs at 5P3:

Affectus qui passio est, desinit esse passio simulatque ejus claram et distinctam formamus ideam.

This proposition describes two changes: our formation of a clear and distinct idea, and the passion's ceasing to be a passion. Curley's translation construes the second change as coming on the heels of the first:

An affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion *as soon as* we form a clear and distinct idea of it.

Yet I believe these processes unfold *simultaneously*, and therefore prefer this translation:

An affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion *as* we form a clear and distinct idea of it.

The ceasing and the forming happen in parallel. To better understand the quoted sentence, it will help to consider these example sentences:

As the course wound on, the material became clearer.

different, the reworking would have been different. Thus the transformed mental state could not be causally explained in terms of the activity of reworking alone. To explain why these particular acts of reworking gave rise to this particular mental state, one would need to mention the original external cause. To change a mental state's apparent past is not to change its past.

As I regained consciousness, several hundred patient opera-goers came into focus.

Consider too these excerpts from Martin Amis’s novel *Time’s Arrow*, the narrator of which travels backwards in time at a rate of one second per second.¹⁴ This narrator describes a gardener thus:

All the tulips and roses he patiently drained and crushed, then sealed their exhumed corpses and took them in the paper bag to the store for money. All the weeds and nettles he screwed into the soil—and the earth took this ugliness, snatched at it with a sudden grip. (18–19)

Water moves upward. ... Smoke falls. (42)

Each of these sentences describes what we might call a *secondary change*, a species of secondary quality. A secondary change is one that seems to happen, and seems to because of a change in the observer. To better understand Spinoza’s sentence, let us examine the sentence, “As the course wound on, the material became clearer”. It embeds three thoughts:

According to the perspective of a beginning student — let’s call this perspective P_1 — the material was unclear.

According to the perspective of an experienced student — let’s call this perspective P_2 — the material was clear.

According to a perspective that shifts from P_1 to P_2 , the material changed from being unclear to being clear — it became clearer.

Here, we use a verb of change to describe a change that *seems* to happen. It does not, in fact, happen. But the reason it seems to happen is that the observer is changing perspective.¹⁵

¹⁴Amis (1991). To use Lewis (1976)’s phrases, the speaker is traveling into the past at a rate of one second of “personal time” per one second of “external time”.

¹⁵Compare the sentence “First I came to London, and then I came to Paris.” Its *deictic center*, which governs whether we use ‘come’ or ‘go’, crosses the English Channel midsentence. The phenomenon is known as “deictic perspectival shift” (cf. Oshima, 2006). As Stockwell (2008, 595) explains, “several deictic centres can be overlaid and blurred in the reading process.” For

5P3 also embeds three thoughts:

According to the perspective of the imagination — for short, call this perspective *Pim* — a passion is an affect that is produced in part by forces outside my mind.

According to the perspective of the intellect — call this perspective *Pin* — that same affect is produced entirely by forces within my mind and so is an action.

According to a perspective that shifts from *Pim* to *Pin*, this affect changes from being a passion to being an action.

If correct, this interpretation would save Spinoza's cure for sadness, his philosophical pharmaceutical, from Bennett's objection. To support this interpretation I shall investigate three questions: First, according to Spinoza, how does sadness differ from joy? This question is pressing. For the conventional answer to the question implies that Spinoza's solution to the mind-body problem is incoherent. Second, if sadness does not exist from the perspective of the intellect, does Spinoza believe that his own remarks on sadness are *false*? Third, since the *Ethics* has a Euclidean format, how can it include more than one perspective?

2.3. How does sadness differ from joy?

I argued above that when Spinoza says that sadness changes into joy, he means that there is something that we stop thinking of as sadness and start thinking of as joy. But the difference between sadness and joy isn't just in our thoughts: the difference lies also in the mental state itself. For sadness and joy are different aspects of a single mental state. When we think of this state as sadness, then we accurately represent an aspect of it. Once we think of this state as joy, then we accurately represent a

example, the novel-opening sentence "Tomorrow was Monday" contains two such centers: 'was' is licensed by the narrator's point of view, 'Tomorrow' by the character's.

different aspect of it. For sadness to turn into joy (for a certain observer) is for that observer to represent a different aspect of a certain underlying mental state.

Aspects are familiar entities. For example, when we consider, not English itself, but English as a second language, we are considering an aspect of English.

To defend the solution I have sketched, I shall pursue the following strategy. First, I shall attend to a much-debated question: according to Spinoza, how is a person's mind related to his or her body? I shall show that, according to Spinoza, each mind and its body are aspects of the same thing. Some commentators have argued that the difference between the mind and body is just a difference in how we think of them; with this I shall disagree. I will infer that, since the mind and body are aspects of one thing, sadness and joy are also aspects of one thing.¹⁶

2.3.1. The mind and the body are co-aspects

In what follows I shall use a special notation: by “[whatzit]” I shall mean “the idea of whatzit”. Spinoza claims:

...a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways. (2P7S)

A “mode of extension” is a body (2DEF1). So the quoted sentence can be reworded as follows:

For any body — let's call it BODY — BODY and [BODY] are one and the same thing, and there is something x such that BODY expresses x in way W and [BODY] expresses x in way V .

Spinoza holds that each mind is an idea. In particular, the mind of any given human body BODY is simply [BODY]. As Spinoza puts it, “the human mind is the idea...of

¹⁶What are the mind and body aspects *of*? Though I won't defend this claim here, I assert that they are aspects of a single underlying mode, which Spinoza calls “a man”.

the human body” (2P19). For every body B there is an idea which represents B (2P3, 2P7s). And for every idea D there is an idea which represents D (2P20). So there is an idea of each human mind. This idea is “united to the mind in the same way as the mind is united to the body” (2P21).¹⁷ In other words, for any body BODY, the identity relation that obtains between BODY and [BODY] is of the same genus as the identity relation that obtains between [BODY] and [[BODY]]. This point will bear much weight in what follows.

Spinoza holds that, for anything Z (other than the One Substance):

Z and $[Z]$ are one and the same thing.

There is something x such that Z expresses x in way W and $[Z]$ expresses x in way V .

So he holds:

For any idea IDEA, IDEA and [IDEA] are one and the same thing.

For any idea IDEA, there is something x such that IDEA expresses x in way W and [IDEA] expresses x in way V .

Since each mind is the idea of the body, there is something x such that the mind expresses x in way W and the body does not express x in this way. By Leibniz’s Law, each mind is numerically distinct from its body. However, each mind is “one and the same thing” as its body. How could that be? The short answer is that for Spinoza, *sameness is not identity*. There are two traditionally recognized kinds of sameness that are not identity. So there are two likely ways that the mind and the body could be numerically distinct while, at the same time, being the same thing.

¹⁷Uncontroversially, when Spinoza says that “the human mind” has a certain property, he means that every human mind has that property, much as one might say “The lion is a noble beast” to mean that each lion is.

First, the mind and the body could be *conceptually distinct*. This would mean that the difference between the mind and the body consists in nothing more than there are thoughts about the mind which are not about the body. (Compare the idea that Mark Twain and Samuel Clemens are different, but this difference amounts to nothing over and above the difference in how they are thought of.)

Second, the mind and the body could be *aspectually distinct*. This would mean that the distinction between the mind and the body is a distinction between two aspects of a single underlying entity. I shall defend this second hypothesis.

2.3.2. Aspects and aspectual distinctions

A good way to introduce the notion of an aspect is to describe a theory that uses this notion. Here is such a theory.

In my wallet is a dollar bill. This bill is a *social object*. That is to say, it is an object that exists partly in virtue of collective human behavior. Here is one way of seeing this point. Suppose that, an eon ago and a light-year away, a clump of matter accidentally coalesced, for a brief moment, into something whose intrinsic properties are those of a dollar bill. It would not be a dollar bill. To be one, it has to be linked in the right way with human beings, and what they get up to.¹⁸

The dollar bill is a cloud of atoms. (A relatively thin, flat cloud.) This cloud is not a social object. It does not exist in virtue of collective human behavior. Suppose I am holding a dollar bill. Then I am also holding a cloud of atoms. So am I holding two objects? Intuitively, no. But the cloud and bill differ: only one is a social object. So how are they related? Here are four answers:

¹⁸This discussion draws on Searle (1995, chapter 1) and Jansen (2009, 19ff).

Call the thing in my wallet ‘THIS’. For short, I will write ‘is social’ to mean ‘is a social object’.

- (i) THIS is social. And THIS is not social.
- (ii) THIS, as a dollar bill, is social. But THIS, as a cloud of atoms, is not social.
- (iii) THIS-as-a-dollar-bill is social. But THIS-as-a-cloud-of-atoms is not social.
- (iv) THIS is social-as-a-dollar-bill. But THIS is not social-as-a-cloud-of-atoms.

Let us look at each in turn. (i) involves a contradiction. (ii) does not, but involves an ambiguity. (iii) and (iv) resolve the ambiguity in different ways. (iii) puts adverbs into the grammatical subjects. (iv) puts adverbs into the grammatical predicates.

Consider (iii). It says that the dollar bill is THIS-as-a-bill, and the cloud of atoms is THIS-as-a-cloud. Call these different *aspects* of THIS. ‘Aspect’ may be defined as follows:

Aspect: For any A and X, A is an aspect of X just in case there is some property F such that A is X-as-a-bearer-of-F.

We can now define ‘aspectual distinction’:

Aspectual distinction: For any A and B, A and B are aspectually distinct just in case there is some X such that A and B are numerically distinct aspects of X.¹⁹

Traditionally, if two entities are numerically distinct and yet one and the same, they are either conceptually or aspectually distinct. (Later I shall argue that, since the

¹⁹Here is a version of the definition that does not use the term ‘aspect’:

Aspectual distinction: For any A and B, A and B are aspectually distinct just in case there is some X, and some numerically distinct properties F and G, such that A is X-as-a-bearer-of-F and B is X-as-a-bearer-of-G.

distinction between the mind and the body is not a conceptual distinction, it is an aspectual distinction.)

We can now characterize two further phenomena:

Aspect shift: An aspect shift occurs in x for an observer S just when S ceases to represent x qua F and comes to represent x qua G .

Secondary change: A secondary change from F to G occurs in x for an observer S just when x appears to S to lose feature F and gain feature G because an aspect shift is occurring in x for S .

For example, consider the dollar bill. I can *flip* between thinking of it as a cloud of particles and thinking of it as a dollar bill. That's an aspect shift. When I do this, I *can* — somewhat perversely — think of the object as 'turning into a social object' and 'turning back into a non-social object'. That's a secondary change.

I will argue that the transformation of a passion is a secondary change. Of course, this will require showing that Spinoza is, at least by our standards, speaking somewhat perversely. Note that, if this transformation were an aspect shift, then the aforementioned problem does not arise. Suppose that I am sad. My sadness is an aspect of some underlying mental state; call this state x . Thus there is some F such that my sadness is x qua F . It is possible for x qua F to have one causal history while x qua G has another. Thus Spinoza is fully aware that his remedy for the passions (at 5P3) has the consequence that what is now a passion can come to no longer have been caused by something external to the impassioned mind. This consequence is unobjectionable, since the envisioned change is simply the change that the passion appears to undergo as we shift from one perspective to another.

To better understand Spinoza's aspectual distinctions, we should bring his use of *quatenus* under the microscope. This Latin adverb occurs in the *Ethics* no fewer than 444 times, usually in pairs such as here:

[W]hen we say that the human mind perceives this or that, we are saying nothing but that God, not insofar as [*quatenus*] he is infinite, but insofar as [*quatenus*] he is explained through the nature of the human mind,...has this or that idea. (2P11C)

A German idealist calls this adverb “the charm that makes everything possible with Spinoza.”²⁰ A French idealist warns: “The metaphysical part of the *Ethics* is, in truth, only a tissue of propositions whose incompatibility is disguised by the precious, continual *quatenus*.”²¹ But Spinoza uses the adverb with care. By “*X* is *F* insofar as [*quatenus*] *X* is *G*” Spinoza means that the aspect of *X* which is *F* is also *G*. For example he claims that water is divisible, insofar as it is water, but not insofar as it is substance (1P15S). He means that water has two aspects: water-qua-substance, which cannot be divided, and water-qua-water which can be.²² Spinoza calls each

²⁰J.F. Herbart (quoted in Erdmann, 1890, ii.90).

²¹Renouvier (1886, 366). According to William James, *quatenus* in the writings of Spinoza and his followers is a conjurer's device:

Spinoza's philosophy has been rightly said to be worked by the word *quatenus*. Conjunctions, prepositions, and adverbs play indeed the vital part in all philosophies; and in contemporary idealism the words ‘as’ and ‘quâ’ bear the burden of reconciling metaphysical unity with phenomenal diversity. Quâ absolute the world is one and perfect, quâ relative it is many and faulty, yet it is identically the self-same world — instead of talking of it as many facts, we call it one fact in many aspects. (James, 1908, chapter 2)

There is another phrase that Spinoza uses synonymously with *quatenus*, *ex eo quod*. “The mind does not err,” he says, “from the fact that [*ex eo quod*] it imagines, but only insofar as [*quatenus*] it is considered to lack an idea excludes the existence of the things which it imagines to be present to it” (2P17S, translation modified). This claim has the familiar form “*x* qua *F* is *Z* but *x* qua *G* is not *Z*”; both *quatenus* and *ex eo quod* mean *qua*. This contrast echoes 2 Corinthians 8:11–12, verses which use *ex eo quod* in the translation Spinoza owned (*Testamenta novum*, 867).

²²By contrast Douglas (2016) infers as follows: Suppose the aspectival interpretation is correct. Then Spinoza's God has *inter alia* two aspects, God-qua-infinite and God-qua-finite. Thus God bears the properties *is infinite* and *is finite*. But these properties are contradictory. So Spinoza's use of aspects does not save his God from contradiction. I reply that the properties *is infinite* and *is finite* strictly speaking belong to their respective aspects. So the contradictory properties are insulated from one another. To say that God insofar as he is infinite knows the Pythagorean Theorem is to say that there is a particular aspect of God which is both infinite and knows the Theorem.

body a mode of substance-qua-extended. “By body”, he writes, “I understand a mode that, in a certain and determinate way, expresses God’s essence, insofar as he is considered as an extended thing.”²³

For Scotus, an aspectual distinction differs from a conceptual distinction. An aspectual distinction arises “on the side of the thing [*ex parte rei*]”, i.e. it is mind-independent.²⁵ Thus an aspect is not a perspective. Different perspectives on a given thing sometimes represent different aspects of it. But remove the perspectives and the distinct aspects remain.

2.3.3. Conceptual distinctions

An aspectual distinction differs subtly from a conceptual distinction. When I say that things are conceptually distinct, I mean that what makes them distinct is that they are thought of differently. More precisely:

Conceptual distinction: For any A and B, A and B are conceptually distinct just in case one of the facts that make them distinct is that the set of thoughts about A is distinct from the set of thoughts about B.

²³2DEF1, modified. Spinoza never claims that bodies and minds are modes that directly belong to the substance itself. If he did, he’d land in trouble. For him ‘is a mode of’ implies ‘is an effect of’.²⁴ So if bodies and minds were modes of the substance, both would be caused by the substance. This would mean that bodies and minds are causally connected. But Spinoza denies that they are connected at 2P6, 2P7, and 2P7S.

²⁵As Schmidt (2011) argues, Spinoza’s notion of an aspectual distinction likely comes from Scotus, by way of Caterus. Scotus calls a conceptual distinction a *distinctio rationis ratiocinantis* (an unlovely mouthful meaning “distinction of reasoning reason”). What I call an “aspectual distinction” corresponds roughly to what he called a *distinctio formalis* (“formal distinction”) or alternatively a *distinctio rationis ratiocinatae* (“distinction of reasoned reason”).

On how such distinctions were drawn before Spinoza, see Adams (1976); on how after, see Frank (2014). Allan Bäck’s history of *qua* (Bäck, 1996) is so monumental he may be forgiven for omitting Spinoza (and Kant). Some treatments of ‘aspects’ confuse the two distinctions that Scotus sharply keeps apart. Some commentators on Spinoza (Parkinson, 1993, 292) and on neo-Spinozism (e.g. Vesey, 1968) characterize the aspectual distinction as a distinction between “parallel manifestations of a single underlying reality”, though this would be a conceptual distinction. The simile of the “inside and outside of a curve”, used by Jevons (1914, 66ff.) and Collingwood (1946, 25ff.), ultimately provides little guidance.

By ‘thoughts about x ’ here I mean ‘thoughts having x as part of their content’. For example, Twain and Clemens are conceptually distinct because what makes them distinct is just the fact that the set of thoughts about Twain is distinct from the set of thoughts about Clemens.

The above definition leaves an important question open: how are the sets of thoughts distinct? Usually, a conceptual distinction is grounded immediately in sets of thoughts that are non-intensionally distinct, i.e. extensionally distinct. But the distinction between these sets of thoughts could be conceptual or aspectual.

In the *Ethics*, my body is *not* conceptually distinct from [my body].²⁶ To see why, suppose it is a conceptual distinction. Then when Spinoza says that “a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways”, by “expressed” he means “thought of”. But consider the distinction between any X and $[X]$. It is of the same genus as the distinction between $[X]$ and $[[X]]$. For as noted above “[the] idea of the mind is united to the mind in the same way as the mind is united to the body” (2P21). Uncontroversially this claim holds of any idea and its object, not just the human mind and the human body. If my body and [my body] are conceptually distinct then [my body] and [[my body]] are thusly distinct; so too with [[my body]] and [[[my body]]]; and so on endlessly. Here the conceptual-distinction interpretation runs into trouble.

To see what the trouble is, consider that we can count things in different ways: *extensionally*, treating conceptually distinct things as one thing, or *intensionally*, treating conceptually distinct things as two things. For example, if we count extensionally, then Oedipus’ mother and lover are one and the same

²⁶Remember that by “[whatzit]” I mean “the idea of whatzit”.

fictional character. But if we count intensionally these are two characters.

Suppose that the distinction between an idea and its object is of the conceptual variety. If Spinoza counts extensionally then:

He should count my body and [my body] as *one thing*. For they are merely conceptually distinct.

The objects just mentioned are expressed, respectively, as [my body] and [[my body]]. He should also count these as *one way of being expressed*, for they too must be merely conceptually distinct.

He should therefore say, “a mode of extension and idea of that mode are *one thing*, expressed in *one way*.”

But he doesn’t say that. So if the conceptual-distinction interpretation is right then Spinoza is counting intensionally. But if he were counting intensionally then:

He should count my body and [my body] as two things, since they are conceptually distinct.

Since the objects just mentioned are expressed, respectively, as [my body] and [[my body]], he should count these as *two ways of being expressed*, for they are conceptually distinct.

He should then say: “a mode of extension and idea of that mode are *two things*, expressed in *two ways*.”

But as mentioned Spinoza instead says: “...a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are *one* and the same thing, *but* expressed in *two ways*” (2P7S, my emphasis).

Under the conceptual-distinction interpretation, Spinoza changes how he is counting midsentence.²⁷ That’s a reason to resist it.

²⁷I would also be switching counting strategies if I said: “Oedipus’ mother and lover are one and the same fictional character, but his father and the man he slew are two characters.” As Baxter (1988) says,

Consider the express check-out line in a grocery store. It says ‘six items or less’. You have a six-pack of orange juice. You might well wonder if you have one item or six items. But you would never hesitate to go into the line for fear of having seven items: six cans of orange juice plus one six-pack.... In counting, we either count the whole as one, or each part as one. If we count the whole, we do not count the parts. If we count the parts, we do not count the whole.

Likewise, if we count the aspects then we do not count the aspect-bearer (the thing they are aspects of). And if we count the aspect-bearer then we do not count the aspects.

Since the mind-body distinction is an intensional distinction, but not a conceptual distinction, it is an aspectual distinction.²⁸

Crucially, the sadness-joy distinction and the mind-body distinction are distinctions of the same genus. So the sadness-joy distinction is also an aspectual distinction.

As we saw earlier, a central process in Spinoza's philosophy — the transformation of a passion into an action — is *prima facie* ruled impossible by some of Spinoza's core commitments. But interpretive charity supports an alternative interpretation.

Above I asked: According to Spinoza, how does sadness differ from joy? I answered that these two states are merely aspectually distinct. My interpretation raises a second question: If sadness does not exist from the perspective of the intellect, then:

2.4. Do Spinoza's remarks on falsehood imply their own falsehood?

The short answer is: Spinoza believes that his remarks on sadness (and other false ideas) are true only from a perspective that is itself incorrect. This section tells the longer story.

According to Spinoza, for every inadequate (i.e. false) idea there is a merely aspectually distinct adequate idea. He writes:

All ideas are in God; and, insofar as [*quatenus*] they are related to God, they are true, and adequate. And so there are no inadequate or confused ideas except insofar as [*quatenus*] they are related to the singular mind of someone (see 2P24 and 2P28). (2P36D)

²⁸Deleuze (1968), Klein (2003), and Schmidt (2011) agree. Compare Grey (2014). Della Rocca (1996) argues that the mind-body distinction is intensional, and leaves open whether it is conceptual or aspectual.

Taking *quatenus* to mark an aspectual distinction, we can paraphrase part of the quoted claim as follows: For each idea X, if X has an aspect A such that X qua A is false, then X has another aspect B such that X qua B is true.

It is thus clear that some of Spinoza's claims are implicitly perspective-relative. He often says that there are false ideas (such as passions). When he does so, he is not speaking from the point of view of a perfect mind, but from the point of view of an imperfect one. From the point of view of a perfect mind, no passions exist at all. As Spinoza says:

[T]he passions are not related to the mind except insofar as it has something which involves a negation, *or* insofar as it is considered as a part of nature which cannot be perceived clearly and distinctly through itself, without the others. (3P3S)

When we truly understand what initially seemed to be a passion, that is, when we understand it as being *in* God — as being caused by God — then it reveals itself to be no passion at all. Spinoza clarifies this issue in his brief theodicy:

But, it can be objected, while we understand God to be the cause of all things, we thereby consider God to be the cause of sadness. To this I reply that insofar as we understand [*intelligimus*] the causes of sadness, it ceases to be a passion, i.e., to that extent it ceases to be sadness. And so, insofar as we understand God to be the cause of sadness, we rejoice. (5P18S)

That is, insofar as we understand the idea we call 'sadness' — insofar as we grasp this idea with our intellects — this idea is adequate. In other words, there is something that appears to the imperfect part of my mind to be sadness, and which appears to my intellect to be an adequate idea (joy). Spinoza calls the imperfect part of my mind my "imagination", and the perfect part my "intellect".

Thus, sadness and joy are a single mental state understood in two ways. What is sadness when imagined is joy when understood. Further, the distinction

between joy and sadness is marked with the locution 'insofar as' (*quatenus*). Insofar as I understand my sadness, it is not sadness at all, but joy. So if I suffer from a passion (e.g. sadness) then the passion is an aspect of something — call this something 'X'. X also has another aspect, which is an action (joy). When I "convert" my sadness into that action, I am in fact ceasing to think of X as a passion, and coming to think of it as an action (joy).

The "improvement" of my intellect is a change in which aspect under which I conceive my inadequate ideas. A paradox thus arises. The conversion of any inadequate idea into an adequate idea consists in the conversion of an inadequate idea of the underlying aspect-bearer into an adequate idea of it. This second conversion must then consist in a deeper conversion, and so on endlessly. I shall return to this below.

From the standpoint of eternity, our mind undergoes no change at all. But from another standpoint, our mind undergoes various changes: it becomes more joyful, more free, and more eternal. Fittingly, Spinoza asks us to imagine that we are becoming more eternal:

[A]lthough we are already certain that the mind is eternal, insofar as it conceives things under an aspect of eternity, nevertheless, for an easier explanation and better understanding of the things we wish to show, we shall consider it as if it were now beginning to be, and were now beginning to understand things under an aspect of eternity, as we have done up to this point. (5P31S, translation modified)

Here Spinoza says he will speak *as if* the mind were coming to understand things under an aspect of eternity. Since a mind that conceives things under this aspect is itself eternal (a tacit premise in 5P23D) he is speaking *as if* our minds were becoming eternal. When exiting this perspective — i.e. the perspective according

to which we are becoming eternal — he describes it as a fiction:

...the mind has had eternally the same perfections which, in our fiction [*finximus*, also translatable as “we imagine non-veridically”], now come to it. (5P33s)

Throughout his discussion of the passions and all inadequate ideas, and throughout his discussion of how the mind can become more eternal, Spinoza is speaking from within this temporary fiction. Here we see further confirmation of my thesis that the perspective of the *Ethics* shifts: since the mind seems eternal when considered from the perspective of eternity, it seems to understand things from that perspective when it is considered from that very perspective. By the same token, the mind seems to *begin* to understand things under the perspective of eternity when it is considered by someone who is themselves *beginning* to understand the mind under the perspective of eternity. Thus the perspective that Spinoza adopts here is that shifting perspective. In short, a mind seems eternal only to an eternal mind, and a mind seems to become eternal only to a mind that is itself becoming eternal.

According to Spinoza’s perspective of eternity, change is an illusion. All states of affairs are eternal. Yet Spinoza represents certain eternal conditions as if they were temporal. Representations of this kind are traditionally called ‘anagogical’.²⁹

Here’s another piece of evidence for my interpretation. Spinoza knows that certain propositions in the *Ethics* imply their own falsehood. Here are two examples:

A free man thinks of nothing less than of death, and his wisdom is a meditation on life, not on death. (4P67)

²⁹In chapter 3, I explore Spinoza’s uses of anagogy.

If men were born free, they would form no concept of good and evil so long as they remained free. (4P68)

According to Spinoza, a perfectly free man is omniscient, in the sense that he believes all and only the true propositions.³⁰ Let us suppose that the quoted claims are true. Then, a free man doesn't think about death, and he doesn't think about evil. Of course, he doesn't think any thoughts that involve death. He doesn't think, "Death is bad" or "Death is good". And he doesn't think, "A free man thinks of nothing less than of death." Similarly, he doesn't think "Evil is everywhere" or "Evil is an illusion". And he doesn't think, "If men were born free, they would form no concept of good and evil so long as they remained free." If he doesn't have the quoted thoughts, he certainly doesn't believe that they are true. However, he is omniscient. So the quoted claims must be false. Or at least, that follows from the supposition that they are true. So if these claims were true, then they would be false; thus they are false.

By penning these lines, Spinoza is asking us to accept them *temporarily*. Such representations of false ideas are temporary scaffolding — 'falsework', as architects say. If we could reach perfection, we would discard them on the way there.³¹

In *Ethics* Part 5 Spinoza distinguishes a spatiotemporal perspective and the perspective of eternity:

We conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature. But the things we conceive in this second way as

³⁰The logician Patrick Grim argues that the notion of omniscience is incoherent (Grim, 1991, 8, 132-22), and that there is no set of true propositions (*op. cit.*, 91-93).

³¹On this theme in Spinoza see De Dijn (2004) and Borchering (2016).

true, *or* real, we conceive under a species of eternity, and to that extent their ideas involve the eternal and infinite essence of God.... (5P29S)

The perspective of eternity is the intellect's point of view. For Spinoza, the intellect and reason are the same (4APP, §4: "the intellect, *or* reason"). He tells us:

It is of the nature of reason to perceive things under a certain species of eternity. (2P44C2)

Your reason, a.k.a. intellect, a.k.a. set of adequate ideas, can't do anything that is not in its nature, for then it would be partly affected from outside, and adequate ideas are not at all affected from outside. So the spatiotemporal perspective must somehow be part of the perspective of the imagination.³²

According to Spinoza, some propositions in the *Ethics* describe how things seem from the perspective of the imagination. But other propositions in the same book describe how things seem from the eternal perspective. That is, some of his propositions describe what he imagines to be the case, and some describe what he understands to be the case. Consider for example 4A1 and 5P37S:

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. (4A1)

4A1 concerns singular things insofar as they are considered in relation to a certain time and place. (5P37S)

Here he puts forward an assertion (that each singular thing in nature is destructible) and then says that this assertion is true only of things considered from the spatiotemporal perspective. This perspective cannot be part of the perspective

³²Is the perspective of time the same as the perspective of the imagination? The evidence is inconclusive. Here's one reason to think they are the same. If something is not eternal, then it is temporal. That's a reason to think that there is no third option between the perspective of the intellect (which represents things as eternal) and the perspective of the imagination. But here's a reason to think they're different perspectives. Surely Spinoza holds that we can have a false representation of something without representing that it exists at a particular location and time, for example, a representation of a square circle.

of the intellect, for the intellect and reason are the same, and from the perspective of reason, nothing is viewed as happening at a time (2P44C2, 2P44C2D).

In the *Ethics* Spinoza is strangely enough explaining what the world looks like not only to his intellect but also to his imagination. When he says that the world contains passions transforming into actions, or intellects improving, he is describing what the world looks like to someone who is gradually ceasing to see the world from the perspective of the imagination and gradually coming to see it through the perspective of the intellect. Thus the book is written from a shifting perspective — from the perspective of someone who is shifting from one perspective to another.

It may help to think of the *narrator* of the *Ethics*. This narrator is the implied referent of “I” as it occurs in the book. For example, Spinoza writes: “there remain certain things *I* must warn you of” (2P49S) and “By God *I* understand a being absolutely infinite” (1DEF6). From the perspective of this narrator, her own mind — let’s say she is a woman, to distinguish her from Spinoza — is gradually ceasing to consist of passions and other inadequate ideas, and gradually ceasing to have any temporal states. Her body is gradually ceasing to consist of passions and other temporal states. That is, her mind and body are gradually ceasing to be temporal, and gradually becoming eternal. When she says that passions can be changed into actions, she is saying that a change in perspective can change how they appear. She is like someone who points to a waiting airplane and says there is a way of making all the trees and houses smaller.

There is a paradox here. From what perspective is it true that the narrator is ceasing to be temporal? The ceasing is itself a process that unfolds in

time. So the ceasing itself cannot be taking place from her intellect's perspective. Is this fatal to my interpretation? No. The shifting perspective, like the imaginative perspective, exists only from its own point of view.³³ The conversion of a false idea A into a true idea B consists in a change in how A is perceived. That is, it consists in the conversion of a false idea of A into a true idea of A. And this conversion itself consists in the conversion of a false idea of [A] into a true idea of [A]. And so on endlessly. So the perspective from which it is true that my inadequate ideas are turning into adequate ideas itself consists of an inadequate idea turning into an adequate idea. Spinoza sometimes lets certain mental states infinitely iterate.

Does the perspective of eternity too exist only for itself? This possibility is worth taking seriously. If so, then we can think about this perspective because (at least according to that perspective) we each have an intellect (which takes this perspective). If this is the case, then Spinoza never nominates any one of these perspectives as objectively correct. The *Ethics* simply depicts one perspective leading to another. If he calls the intellect better, he is simply expressing his intellect's opinion, which his imagination might not share. But which perspective is objectively correct? This question may be foreign to Spinoza.

2.5. The two Spinozas

Taking inspiration from Euclid's *Elements*, Spinoza wrote the *Ethics* in geometrical form, as an argument of nearly 300 steps. The text thus has seemed to most readers to convey a single train of thought. Could it truly convey two? Perhaps surprisingly,

³³ Another example of such a perspective is the perspective according to which there are ideas: the attribute of thought. For there to be an attribute is for the intellect to perceive something as expressing the essence of the substance (1DEF4). Under the attribute of extension, there are no perceptions or intellects and thus no attributes. Thus the attribute of thought is self-positing; it exists only for itself, just like the imaginative perspective.

yes, the *Ethics* can also be read as a dialogue. Unlike Plato's dialogues, it doesn't take place among several people but instead within one mind, the mind of the narrator. And it rarely says who is speaking: it is an unmarked, inner dialogue.

The seeds of this writerly practice can be found in Spinoza's earlier works. He wrote another unmarked dialogue, the *Metaphysical Thoughts*. This curious text sometimes expresses Descartes's point of view, sometimes Spinoza's own, never indicating when one voice yields the floor to the other. The young Spinoza also wrote a short inner dialogue, the *Dialogue between the Intellect, Love, Reason and Lust*. The *Ethics* is modeled on these two early pieces.

In its structure, the *Ethics* shows neo-Platonic influence.³⁴ Yet a far earthier literary form may have shaped it too: the classical Roman comedy. Throughout the *Ethics*, Spinoza quotes the comedies of Terence and Plautus.³⁵ He even once trod an Amsterdam stage as the character Simo in a production of Terence's *The Girl from Andria*. Both this play and Terence's *Phormio* use a comic device borrowed later by Molière and Wilde: a young man wants to marry a girl who seems to be foreign and low-born, but his father wants him to wed a native high-born girl. What a mess! The conflict evaporates when the first girl turns out to have been native and high-born after all. Just like what Spinoza calls an 'inadequate idea', the

³⁴The *Ethics* is a geometrical work. Yet it also has a triadic structure familiar from Proclus's *Elements of Theology*: remaining, procession, return (*mone, proódos, epistrophe*). Herrera's *Gate of Heaven* depicts a procession (Hebrew *hitpaštut*) followed by a reversion (*histalqut*).

³⁵As Curley notes, Spinoza's account of "vacillation" (3P17S, 3P50S) seems drawn from Terence's *Self-Torturer* (946), and his account of doubt seems drawn from Terence's *The Girl from Andria* (266). He likely borrowed his theory how to speak with the wise (III/111) from Terence's *Phormio* (541), if not Plautus' *Persa* (729). When Spinoza mocks "boys or young men who cannot bear calmly the scolding of their parents, and take refuge in the army" (II/270) he is likely alluding to Clinia in the *Self-Torturer*. He alludes to Terence's ideas repeatedly, at 3P2S, 3DA16 (II/195), 4P17S, 5P10S (II/289), II/203.5 ff., 4P45C2S (II/244.18 ff.), 4P54S, and 4P57D (see the footnotes to these passages in Spinoza, 1985). 4P18 reiterates a point made by a character in Terence's *Adelphi*. The *Adelphi* (68) may have inspired Spinoza's claim that "no deity, nor anyone else, unless he is envious, takes pleasure in my lack of power and my misfortune; nor does he ascribe to virtue our tears, sighs, fear, and other things of that kind, which are signs of a weak mind" (4P45C2S).

girl turns out to have local parentage, and her foreignness turns out to have been an illusion. Bennett is right that a passion cannot genuinely gain a new history any more than one can “become royal by altering who [one’s] parents were.”³⁶ But in the *Ethics*, as in a Terence play, what seems imperfect and foreign metamorphoses into something perfect and native when its real parentage is discovered.³⁷

But why would the *Ethics* contain two different incompatible perspectives? I answer that the text adopts a literary structure Spinoza found described in Maimonides’ *Guide for the Perplexed*.³⁸ As we saw above (p. 58), one part of the *Ethics* is built on 4A1. At 5P37S, Spinoza reveals that 4A1 belongs to the perspective of the imagination. One part of the *Ethics* rests on a certain axiom, another part rests on a second axiom, and the two axioms contradict one another.³⁹ Spinoza here implements a device that Maimonides describes as follows:

In speaking about very obscure matters it is necessary to conceal parts of them and to disclose others. Sometimes in the case of certain dicta this necessity requires that the discussion proceed on the basis of a certain premise, whereas in another place necessity requires that the discussion proceed on the basis of another premise contradicting the first one. In such cases the vulgar must in no way be aware of the contradiction; the author accordingly uses some device to conceal it by all means. (*Guide*, part I, introduction; tr. Pines, 18)

Whether [such] contradictions...are to be found in the books of the prophets is a matter for speculative study and investigation. Statements about this should not be a matter of conjecture. (*Ibid.*, tr. Pines, 19)

³⁶Bennett (1984, 336).

³⁷The same spirit of humorously unmasked one-and-the-same-ness can perhaps be felt in Spinoza’s claims that nature is God in another guise (4PREF), that the mind is the body in another guise (2P21S), that the will is just the intellect in disguise (2P49C), that to make a decision is to be determined by external causes (3P2S), and that ambition is a disguised form of the impulse to do good (5P4S). See also 5P36 and 5P36C. I say ‘one-and-the-same-ness’ because the mind and body are not numerically identical.

³⁸See 24, n. 46.

³⁹I use ‘contradict’ loosely. The *Ethics* purposefully contains pairs of claims of the form ‘*p* is true for perspective *P*’ and ‘*p* is false for perspective *Q*’.

Maimonides cites the Haggadah (a ritual text that retells the exodus from Egypt) as one document containing such contradictions. Spinoza takes no great pains to *conceal* the contradiction in the *Ethics*; to discover it one only needs to read 5P37S against his remarks about the nature of the imagination. Yet the *Ethics* seems otherwise to follow Maimonides's instructions precisely: it contains two pictures of the world that contradict one another in their foundations. Notably, another potential influence on the structure of the *Ethics* — which is, after all, a book leading us from bondage (Part 4) to freedom (Part 5) — is simply the emancipation tale of Exodus.

Let us review what we have seen so far. I have argued that in the *Ethics* the mind-body distinction is an aspectual distinction, and that the sadness-joy distinction is too. And I have argued that the claim that sadness changes into joy should be understood as true only from a certain perspective. Specifically, it is true from the perspective of someone who is shifting between the two main perspectives that Spinoza describes in the *Ethics*: that of time and that of eternity. Consequently the sentences of the *Ethics* express different points of view, and the book is an unmarked dialogue between two parts of one mind. Though the book is evidently modeled on Euclid's *Elements*, it lacks that work's purely monological character.

Henri Bergson once quipped: "Every philosopher has two philosophies: his own and Spinoza's."⁴⁰ That's true of at least one philosopher, for Spinoza has two philosophies. The first, which we might call "Spinoza's philosophy", deems us mere modes created by, preordained by, and inhering in an immanent God; such

⁴⁰Quoted in Gilson (1960).

modes cannot be sad. The second, which we might call “*his* philosophy”, is an earthlier vision of human affairs that colors us vulnerable to pain and passion. In the *Ethics* we can hear both voices.

Chapter 3

A neglected technique of representation in Part 5 of the *Ethics*

It is all too familiar that some of the bitterest conflicts among human beings are rooted in disagreements over how to assign meanings, for example to laws, to history, and to holy texts. Spinoza found a way to use his skills — as a writer, metaphysician, historian, and philologist — in the service of promoting peace. One result of his efforts is the *Theological-Political Treatise*, where he introduces a new method for interpreting scripture. He does this not because he sees scripture as a source of information, but because he sees it as a compendium of narratives and images that dominate early modern European consciousness. Promulgating a reinterpretation of these is a means of prompting social change. Since a mind is a bundle of interacting drives (2P15, 2P43S), unsupervised by a free and independent will (2P48), the images we carry within us have an agency of their own (3P6) and can “stubbornly cling” to us (4P6). Thus it is often more practical to try to alter their effects than to

destroy them.¹ In his *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza therefore tries to alter the effects of scriptural narrative within his readers' minds.

According to Spinoza's new method of reading the Bible, holy writ itself is not at all supernatural, and can therefore be interpreted using the methods of the natural philosopher. We can detect the true meaning of a Bible story as though we were detecting the hidden nature of a beetle or gunpowder or snow. "[T]he true method of interpreting Scripture," he insists, "...does not differ at all from the method of interpreting nature, but agrees with it completely" (III/98).

A flourishing tradition understands Spinoza to be arguing that the right tools for interpreting scripture can be found, not in the traditional hermeneutic toolkit, but instead (surprisingly) in the writings of the New Scientists.² According to this received view, Spinoza modeled his conception of how scripture should be interpreted on an antecedently formed notion of how science should be done. It is illuminating to see how this understanding of Spinoza is not quite right. Spinoza instead formed his theories of scripture and science *in tandem* — as his philosophy developed, each theory shaped the other. To understand Spinoza's conception of how to seek the truth, we must restore the *Ethics* to its proper place within the European religious hermeneutic tradition from Augustine to Lodewijk Meijer.

In this chapter I will defend two related claims. The first is that the Spinozistic scientist must — like the reader of scripture (as envisioned by Aquinas

¹We can thus see Spinoza as practising a politics of *détournement* — an attempt to redirect how the public interpret a set of images in which they are already invested — familiar from contemporary authors as diverse as Eco (1968) and Haslanger (2000). On such "guerrilla semiotics" see Dery (1993).

²See for example Rosenthal (2008) and Rudavsky (2014). Savan remarks: "Spinoza showed that the methods of the natural sciences could be fruitfully extended to the scientific study not only of the Bible but of historical texts generally. Spinoza is the founder of scientific hermeneutics" (1986, 97). According to Kisner, Spinoza applies a "Baconian method" to "particular, probabilistic, empirical knowledge" (2005, 152). Van Cauter (2016) explores the Spinoza-Bacon relation.

and others) — perform an *anagogical interpretation* of his or her sensory experiences. An anagogical interpretation is one in which a representation first taken to present something temporal is taken to represent something eternal. In other words, though we seem to perceive objects interacting in time, as we make scientific progress we will, Spinoza says, take our perceptions to disclose eternal objects (namely, the essences that underlie what we see).

Spinoza not only believes that we represent the world anagogically, but he also represents the world to us, as he sees it, in an anagogical manner. The second half of *Ethics* part 5 contains three anagogical representations:

1. At 5P31s, Spinoza depicts the already-eternal mind as though it were “beginning to understand things under a species of eternity.” This is an anagogical representation, as I will argue in section 3.2.1.
2. Spinoza’s hitherto cryptic remark that “we feel and know by experience that we are eternal” (5P23s) is an anagogical representation, as I will argue in section 3.2.2.
3. 5P36s points out a link between two senses of the Latin word *gloria*. In section 3.3, I will argue that this enigmatic remark also makes use of anagogical representation.

Section 3.4 contains a series of short commentaries on anagogical representation. After clarifying Spinozan anagogy by relating it to other linguistic and aesthetic phenomena (section 3.4.1), I will argue that Spinoza looks to such representation to strengthen his readers’ resolve to pursue the good (section 3.4.2) and to ‘tame’ their wildness and militancy (section 3.4.3). As he does in the *Theological-Political*

Treatise, Spinoza pursues an irenic project in the *Ethics*. I close with reflections on Spinozistic mimesis (section 3.4.4) and bricolage (section 3.4.5).

3.1. Allegorical experience

3.1.1. Preliminaries

Some background will be useful. According to Spinoza, your mind is a bundle of ideas. Some of these ideas are ‘adequate’. Adequate ideas have three features. First, they are *complete*. But in what sense?

Suppose Alice understands the Pythagorean theorem. For her to understand the theorem is just for an idea of the theorem to be included in the bundle that we call ‘her mind’. And suppose she understands exactly why it is true. That is, she can derive it from first principles. Spinoza does not see Alice’s understanding of the theorem and her understanding of its demonstration as separate mental acts. Instead, Alice’s understanding of the derivation is part of her understanding of the theorem. If she does not yet understand why the theorem is true, then she does not yet have a complete idea of the theorem.³

Since a bundle is just a set, the set of ideas we call ‘her mind’ has many subsets. At least some of these subsets are also minds. Thus Alice’s mind includes several smaller minds. Thus it could be that the theorem is also included in one of these smaller minds. An idea can be part of more than one mind. Minds overlap.

³This result follows elegantly from proposition (z), which we ascribed to Spinoza in chapter 1 (p. 27). If the theorem *follows from* a certain premise, then it *involves* that premise. In representing the theorem, one represents this premise. So, if one does not represent this premise, then one does not represent this conclusion.

It is standardly held that there are two criteria for adequacy: that an idea *is completely in* one’s mind and that it *is completely caused by* one’s mind. See Marshall (2008a). Jonathan Bennett condemns Spinoza for not carefully distinguishing these criteria (Bennett, 1984, 177–78). However, the two criteria are really one. To be *in* something is to be *caused by* it. In chapter 1, I called this proposition (N) and ascribed it to Spinoza on p. 8.

Suppose Bob also understands the Pythagorean theorem and understands why it is true. Spinoza does not think that Alice's idea of the theorem is distinct from Bob's idea. The ideas are numerically identical. The two minds overlap.

Suppose Charlie can state the theorem but does not understand why it is true. Then he has an inadequate idea of the theorem. For a mind to have an inadequate idea of something is for an adequate idea of that thing to be in that mind only partially. No idea is intrinsically inadequate. Spinoza does *not* hold that an idea of x is inadequate in a mind iff that mind *completely* contains a *partial* idea of x . Instead, he holds that an idea of x is inadequate in a mind iff that mind *incompletely* contains a *complete* idea of x . What is incomplete is not the idea, but the relationship between the idea and the mind in question.

According to Spinoza, the material world is Euclidean. So every body exemplifies the Pythagorean theorem, in this sense: every body is such that, if it had the shape of a triangle, then the square of its hypotenuse would equal the sum of the squares of the other two sides. Spinoza says that, although we may think of the Theorem as a universal property, it is in fact a *body*. It is one of the “fixed and *eternal* things” that “because of their presence everywhere, and most extensive power [are] to us like universals, *or* genera of the definitions of singular, changeable things” (I/36, my emphasis). Spinoza stresses that these fixed things are eternal: they do not exist in time.

In 1662 Spinoza tinkered in his makeshift chemistry lab with nitric acid, a colorless liquid now used in explosives. Giving the liquid a vigorous twirl with a spoon, he noted that “the particles...having been considerably stirred up, keep one

another in motion.” By Spinoza’s lights, this vortex is not merely an aggregate of particles; it is an “individual”. What makes it so is that its components transmit motions to one another in a certain pattern. The vortex spinning now is the same individual as the vortex spinning a moment ago because a certain pattern of motion-transmission was exhibited then and now.⁴

As with the vortex, so with the human body. Mine is composed of smaller bodies: head, shoulders, knees, and toes, etc. This aggregate of bodies counts as an individual because these bodies transmit motion to one another in a certain pattern. The pattern itself, like the Pythagorean theorem, does not exist in time.⁵

The second feature of adequate ideas is that they *perfectly match reality* (1A6). The third feature of adequate ideas is that they *conform to a cognitive ideal*. Spinoza calls a perfect mind “God’s infinite intellect”. He believes that this mind exists, and is the sum of all perfect representations of what exists. Our mind can

⁴A vortex is what we might call a *fluid individual*: a composite body at least some of whose parts move relative to one another (2A3’). One way that a group of bodies can count as an individual is in virtue of the fact that they “move, whether at the same speed or at different speeds, so that they transfer their motions to each other in a certain fixed relation [*ratione*]” (II/99, my translation). Thus a hurricane, a whirlpool, and your circulatory system are all fluid individuals, because each is composed of bodies that transmit momentum to one another in such a way that a particular pattern of movement is preserved.

Each individual is associated with a distinctive pattern of motion. It exists wherever and whenever this pattern is realized, no matter what bodies realize it. The wake of a ship, for example, is a fluid individual in virtue of its distinctive pattern of motion. Although many gallons of water particles rapidly enter and leave the wake, the wake persists over time just as long as some particles continue to move relative to one another in that pattern.

Fluid individuals can share parts. When two ocean ships cross paths near one another, at the point where their wakes overlap, there is a portion of water that takes part in several fluid individuals: the first wake, the second wake, and a third fluid individual, characterized by the distinctive kind of motion generated by the interference of the two wakes. While some patterns are complex (whirling, wobbling, vibrating), some are simple. A bend in a river is a fluid individual whose pattern of motion is simply a certain direction of motion. If water moves through a pipe that makes two sharp turns, then each straight stretch of the pipe is a distinct fluid individual. I borrow the phrase ‘fluid individual’ from Bernstein (2000).

⁵So Garrett (2009) argues. He suggests that, according to Spinoza, each essence is, like the property of conforming to the Pythagorean theorem, omnipresent in the following sense. Any collection of bodies could, in principle, host your characteristic pattern of motion. The bodies that compose the body of your worst enemy or your toaster or the Sun could, in principle, host the pattern of motion that is characteristic of your body. Thus, like the Pythagorean Theorem, the possibility of hosting this pattern is a property of all bodies. And, like the Theorem, the possibility of hosting this pattern does not exist in time.

come to include some of the ideas in this mind. In this sense, “the human mind is a part of the infinite intellect of God.” Spinoza expected us to be shocked at the ramifications this proposition seems to have: “Here, no doubt, my readers will come to a halt, and think of many things which will give them pause” (2P11s).⁶

Some beings exist in time. Some beings do not: God, the laws of nature, and the essences of things. One’s inadequate ideas represent temporal beings, while one’s adequate ideas represent atemporal beings. The sum of my adequate ideas is my intellect. The sum of my inadequate ideas is my imagination. Thus these two faculties are not homunculi or separate powers within the mind, but bundles of mental representations. Since an idea and its object are co-aspects, they do not differ in their temporality. The intellect represents a world of eternal things, and the intellect itself is one of them. The imagination represents a world of temporal things, and the imagination itself is one of them. We may thus speak of the perspective that the intellect has, and the perspective that the imagination has.⁷

Spinoza distinguishes eternity from existence-at-all-times (i.e. sempiternity).⁸ Though what exists eternally exists outside of time, Spinoza does not define eternity as the negation of temporality — for that would introduce an uncomfortable downward dependence of the eternal upon the temporal — but instead defines it as

⁶The three features discussed here correspond to three separate meanings of the Latin word *adaequatus*: complete, matching reality, and conforming to an ideal. This too might give us pause. On p. 112, I will show that Spinoza uses the phrase *experientia vaga* (often translated ‘random experience’) in three meanings at once.

⁷In section 2.4, I discussed an interesting consequence of this doctrine: the imagination exists only from its own perspective, and the intellect exists only from its own perspective.

⁸“[E]ternity ... cannot be explained by duration or time, even if the duration is conceived to be without beginning or end” (1DEF8–1DEF8EXP). “[I]n eternity there is no when, nor before, nor after, nor any other temporal property [*affectio temporis*]” (1/243, modified). Daniel Garber notes some passages that are hard to square with this understanding of Spinozistic eternity. I agree with him that “Spinoza is reasonably clear that it is not the sempiternity of the mind, its immortality, its existence for all time, but the eternity of the mind that is his primary interest, its existence in a way that puts it outside of time altogether” (Garber, 2005, 104).

necessitation by something self-necessitating.⁹

The philosophers have powerful intellects. Their counterparts, the prophets, have powerful imaginations.

3.1.2. *Prophetic vision*

The first chapter of the *Theological-Political Treatise* is entitled “Of prophecy”. We read:

[t]he prophets perceived and taught almost everything in metaphors and enigmatic sayings [*parabolice, & aenigmatice*], and expressed all spiritual things corporeally. For all these things agree more with the nature of the imagination. (III/28–29; II:92)

For example, the prophets saw and described God in various ways: as an old man dressed in white, as a fire, and as a dove. These prophetic descriptions of God as corporeal are metaphors to help the human mind, which finds it easier to think about what is tangible (cf. 2P47S). Curley translates *aenigmatice* as “in enigmatic sayings”. However, the quoted passage states that the prophets not only taught but also *perceived* things *aenigmatice*. Since *aenigma* also means ‘allegory’, the first clause above is better translated, “the prophets perceived and taught almost everything in parables and allegories,....” Evidently, according to Spinoza, the prophets perceived almost everything allegorically. That is, not only did they describe certain unimaginable things in the guise of imaginable things, but they also perceived certain unimaginable things in the guise of imaginable things. That is, the prophets had *allegorical experiences*. An experience of this kind has two layers of content: a patent content (e.g. a fire, a dove, or something else that is relatively easy

⁹Spinoza defines eternal existence as existence which either is itself self-necessitating or follows from the existence of something that is (IDEF8). The first disjunct of this definition qualifies God as eternal, while the second qualifies God’s creatures as eternal.

to imagine) and a latent content (something that is hard or impossible to imagine, e.g. God). This claim can be understood better when it is examined in the context of certain medieval theories of allegory.

3.1.3. *Three kinds of allegory*

‘Allegory’ comes from the Greek *allos* (other) and *agora* (assembly or public marketplace, two venues for public speeches). Accordingly, to use allegory is to say something in public but mean something else. The allegorist “speaks out loud and sotto voce.”¹⁰ Since allegories engage people insofar as they are not fully rational, they are used by clever politicians, to exploit the public’s irrationality, and by good teachers, to help improve the minds of their students. Since religion too is held by many to engage man’s non-rational side, religious speech often uses allegory as well. I will focus on several medieval allegations that the scriptures make use of allegory. Though they are seldom explored in studies of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, these theories shed some light on familiar themes from this book.

In the medieval period, many Jewish readers of Torah hold that its narratives and assertions have multiple layers of content. For example, Deuteronomy 24:16 reads, “Fathers shall not be put to death for sons, nor sons be put to death for fathers.” According to one eleventh-century Spanish rabbi, this law carries not only its obvious literal meaning but, simultaneously, a deeper metaphorical meaning: “testimony of relatives for or about each other is invalid.”¹¹ The verse is twice true, he claims, true both literally and metaphorically (like “No man is

¹⁰Schoonover and Galt (2016, 124).

¹¹Judah ibn Bal’am, quoted and translated in Cohen (2011, 69).

an island”).¹² Heeding the Talmud’s warning that “one Biblical verse may convey several teachings” (*Tractate Sanhedrin*, 34a), another Spanish rabbi of the same period concludes that “it is not impossible for a text to yield two or more distinct correct meanings,”¹³ and that “there is no harm in accepting seven interpretations” of Leviticus 19:26.¹⁴ Some medieval rabbis detect four layers of meaning in the Pentateuch.¹⁵ Such interpretations act as prisms, showing each ray of light cast by scripture to be a braid of many-colored beams.

Many Christian theologians agree that scripture is multifaceted: its narratives sometimes mean more than one thing at the same time. Jerome finds that some words of scripture are “full of meaning [*plena...sensibus*].”¹⁶ The Author of scripture, Augustine explains, “ensur[ed] that the same words could be understood in several ways.”¹⁷ Of the species of allegory discerned by the Christians, three matter here.

First there is the *psychophysical allegory*, as we might call it, a narrative that literally represents something corporeal but which indirectly represents something incorporeal. One motive for positing such allegories is Paul’s declaration that “since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made....”¹⁸ A classic remark on this subject is offered by a character in a first-century

¹²I owe the example to Cohen (1976).

¹³Jonah ibn Janah (tr. Halivni, 1991, 198, n. 63).

¹⁴*Kitab al-Anqih*, 347; quoted in Cohen (2011, 65). See Bal’am (1970, 58–59, 108–109).

¹⁵The first layer is the literal meaning (*peshat*); the second is the allusive meaning (*remez*); the third is the meaning gleaned by comparing one passage with others (*derash*); and the fourth is the esoteric meaning (*sod*).

¹⁶Letter 53 to Paulinus (Jerome, 1837, 234).

¹⁷*De Doctrina Christiana*, iii.27.38 (tr. Hill, 185–186).

¹⁸Romans 1:20, New International Version.

text, who notes that human beings ascribe to God “a human body...seeking to indicate that which is invisible and unportrayable by means of something portrayable and visible.”¹⁹ Augustine says,

if [our soul] is borne along to corporeal representations and from them to spiritual ones, which are symbolized by those figures, it gains strength from this transition, it is enkindled like fire shaken in a torch, and by that more ardent love it is carried on to rest.²⁰

Aquinas explains that we “attain to intellectual truths through sensible objects, because all our knowledge originates from sense. Hence in Holy Writ spiritual truths are fittingly taught under the likeness of material things.”²¹ Spinoza’s above-quoted report that the prophets “expressed spiritual things corporeally” refers to psychophysical allegories.

A second kind of allegory is the *typological allegory*, a narrative that literally represents an event that occurred at a certain time but indirectly represents events that occurred (or, will occur) at a later time. Such allegories describe past events as being *fulfilled* by later events, as though the universe made promises and never broke them.

Aquinas holds many narratives in the Old Testament to be typological allegories foreshadowing the events of the New Testament. He concludes that “those things which are of the Old Law signify the things of the New Law.”²²

¹⁹Dio Chrysostom, *Olympic Discourse* 12.59 (tr. Cohoon).

²⁰Augustine, Letter 55 (tr. Parsons, 277).

²¹*Summa Theologiae*, i.1.9 (tr. English Dominican Fathers). Milton takes a similar position in *Of Education*: “because our understanding cannot in this body find it selfe but on sensible things, nor arrive so cleerly to the knowledge of God and things invisible, as by orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature, the same method is necessarily to be follow’d in all discreet teaching.” In *Paradise Lost*, Raphael announces that “what surmounts the reach / Of human sense, I shall delineate so, / By lik’ning spiritual to corporal forms, / As may express them best...” (Book V).

²²Tr. in Minnis and Scott (1991, 242). Cf. Hebrews 8:5, Hebrews 10:1, and Colossians 2:17. Some commentators distinguish between allegories that signify past events that themselves signify future events (here, future events are signified by past *events*), and allegories that directly signify past things but indirectly signify future things (here, future events are signified by the text of the

Such allegorical interpretations were popular. For example, the binding of Isaac was read allegorically as a disguised description of the Crucifixion.²³ As O’Keefe observes, “This interpretive practice of seeing the mystery of the Christian economy hidden beneath the veil of the literal text of the ancient Scriptures allowed...[many] patristic interpreters...to retain the Old Testament as a living text of the Christian church.”²⁴ Augustine calls the Old Testament the shadow of the New cast backward in time.²⁵ He situates the Jews in Plato’s cave, but at the same time assigns them an indispensable supporting role within the medieval Christian worldview, as couriers of a treasure chest that, unbeknownst to them, contains a hidden compartment that will remain sealed until the Incarnation. It is in this sense that some of the Church Fathers believed that the Jews only understood the Old Testament superficially, in accordance with its letter but not its spirit.²⁶

In a letter to Pieter Balling, Spinoza describes a kind of dim precognition: “the mind can confusedly be aware, beforehand, of something which is future” (IV/77; 1:353). He is probably alluding to typological allegories, as will shortly become clear.

In addition to the psychophysical allegory and the typological allegory, there is the *anagogical allegory*. An allegory of this kind is a narrative that literally represents temporal matters but indirectly represents eternal matters, especially heaven.²⁷ It is called ‘anagogical’, from the Greek for ‘leading upward’, because it

allegory). I ignore this distinction here.

²³According to 1 Corinthians 10:1–11, the manna received from heaven and water drawn from a rock foreshadow the Eucharist, and the rock represents Christ. At Galatians 4:21–31, Paul interprets the sons of Abraham — one mothered by a slave, the other by a free woman — as symbols of the two covenants. See Monti (1979, 20–21).

²⁴O’Keefe (2004, 49).

²⁵*De civitate Dei*, xvii.1 (cited in Bloch, 1965, i.90).

²⁶The classic discussion of scripture’s layers of meaning is de Lubac (1959). The layers of meaning are sometimes labeled “history, tropology, allegory, anagogy.” See also Stump (1989).

²⁷There are other ways of using the phrase ‘anagogical allegory’. For example, according to

draws the reader's attention from worldly affairs to heaven, whether this be heaven as conceived in scripture or heaven in a wider sense, a condition in which everything has been mended. Bonaventure claims that the anagogical level of meaning in scripture "lifts us up to what we should desire — the eternal happiness of the blessed"²⁸ and that anagogical allegories teach us "how to be united to God."²⁹ Aquinas notes that the anagogical sense of a story concerns that which relates to "eternal glory."³⁰ The Talmudist Moses Nachmanides offers interpretations in which, according to one commentator, "entities in the lower, mundane level of reality symbolize ones in a higher, supernal one."³¹ Origen interprets the story of how the presence of God made the skin of Moses glow (Exodus 34:29–32) as an anagogical representation of the fact that the contemplation of God makes the mind more divine.³² Anagogy is also exhibited by the many secular artworks which hint at a utopia on the horizon, a better state of things to come.³³

This allegorical tradition matters for our purposes, not least because it

Aquinas, anagogical allegories represent features of the future triumphant Church. Some authors say that the anagogical sense represents what we can hope for.

²⁸ *Breviloquium*, Prologue §4.1 (tr. Monti, 1979, 34).

²⁹ *De reductione artium in theologiam*, 5; 5:321 (tr. Monti, 1979, 17). In a *Summa theologiae* sometimes credited to the 13th-century theologian Alexander of Hales, we read that the Jerusalem depicted in scripture can be interpreted in four ways: "[F]ollowing the historical [=literal] sense Jerusalem is a city; allegorically it signifies the Church; according to the tropological [=moral] sense...it is the soul of any faithful Christian; according to the anagogical sense it is the life of all heavenly beings [who come to see God]" (tr. Minnis, 2000, 239). See also Cassian, *Collationes*, xiv.8. This fourfold depiction of Jerusalem is especially clear from Galatians 4:22ff. (cf. Grant, 1984, 85).

Some decry these allegorical interpretations as willful and under-evidenced. One historian reports,

A critic...had been told that the red color of the sacrificial cow [i.e. the red heifer God wants burnt at Numbers 19:2] pretypified the blood of the passion of Christ. 'It would all be the same,' he said, 'if the cow had been black; the allegory is worthless; whatever the color of the cow, some sort of allegory could be found for it.' (Grant, 1984, 87)

³⁰ *Summa theologiae*, i.1.10 (tr. English Dominican Fathers).

³¹ Cohen (2017, 55).

³² *Commentary on John* (Origen, 1993, xxxii.338–40). Cf. Dawson (2001, 199–200).

³³ Cf. Simpson (2015).

can shed light on the mind-body problem in Spinoza.

3.1.4. *The allegorical structure of nature*

As we have seen, according to Spinoza, the prophets perceived as corporeal what can also be perceived as spiritual. In a famous passage that we scrutinized in chapter 2, he states that all things can be perceived in these two ways:

[T]he thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that. So also a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways. Some of the Hebrews seem to have seen this, as if through a cloud, when they maintained that God, God's intellect, and the things understood by Him are one and the same. (2P7S)

This doctrine is sometimes called 'parallelism'. Let us note that this doctrine *can* be framed in terms of allegory: the universe itself has the structure of a psychophysical allegory in which both interpretations are patent and neither is primary.³⁴ The question remains whether Spinoza thinks of parallelism in this way. Evidence that he does can be found in the last sentence quoted above, in which Spinoza interprets certain Jewish thinkers as being dimly aware of the parallelism. In his view, these thinkers held a belief whose patent content was false but whose latent content was true.³⁵ This curious remark alludes to typological interpretation, in particular to

³⁴Psychophysical allegories come in two kinds, which I shall call 'serial' and 'parallel'. A serial one represents a material phenomenon which itself symbolizes a mental phenomenon; for example, one may write "the Israelites crossed the Red Sea" to describe a certain interaction of bodies which interaction itself symbolizes the spiritual process of Christian rebirth. A parallel psychophysical allegory represents both a material phenomenon and, simultaneously, a mental phenomenon; for example, "no man is an island" represents the material proposition that no one is literally an island and simultaneously the mental proposition that no one suffers alone. Spinoza's parallelism is a parallel psychophysical allegory reified into an ontology.

In this respect, Spinoza's theory of attributes resembles Eriugena's theory of *multiplex theoria* (*sans* the negative theology). In his *Periphyseon*, Eriugena holds that scripture admits of a spiritual interpretation, a material interpretation, and infinitely many others (cf. Moran, 1996, 256). Substituting 'nature' in place of 'scripture' yields Spinoza's theory of the attributes.

³⁵Spinoza may be referring to Jewish Aristotelians such as Abraham ibn Ezra, Maimonides, Gersonides, or Judah Abrabanel, as Carlos Fraenkel observes (2006, 175–76, esp. 176 n. 26).

allegories that depict the Jews as guardians of symbols that contain a truth hidden from them. This surprising remark must be grasped in the context of two other things that Spinoza believes.

First, Spinoza has a theory of double content. As we just saw, Spinoza argues that certain Hebrews held a belief that had a patent content (the false proposition, “God, God’s intellect, and the things understood by Him are one and the same”) and a latent content (the true proposition, “the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that, and a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways”). Spinoza holds that many beliefs have two contents, a false patent content, a true latent content. For example, he asserts that, to counter those who believe the false proposition, “what quickly comes to be, quickly perishes,” it would be effective “to show them...in what manner this proposition — what quickly comes to be, quickly perishes — is true” (1P11S). That is, the sentence is true when taken in an alternative, non-literal meaning. He asks us to look charitably past the surface meanings of false utterances to the deeper truths they express (2P47S). Certain philosophers who are misled “do not understand what they themselves say” (1P15S).

Second, his remark about the Hebrews must be seen in light of his view of the Old Testament’s relation to the *Ethics*. In maintaining that certain Hebrews saw part of his philosophy “through a cloud,” he is alluding to the traditional Christian doctrine that the New Testament supersedes the Old one because the New contains the same content, now made plain. Spinoza mentions this doctrine at III/163, remarking that the novelty of the New Testament lies not in what it

says but in how it says it. As Carlos Fraenkel has shown, Spinoza situates his own theoretical philosophy as, similarly, making plain what is implicit in the Old Testament.³⁶ Spinoza interprets the story of Adam and Eve as an allegory whose latent content is made plain in his own 3P27, 4P18S, 4P35C2, and 4P67: “[certain] things I have now demonstrated seem to have been indicated by Moses in that story of the first man [i.e. Adam]” (4P68S). He thinks his own *Ethics* expresses the latent content of the Old Testament better than the New Testament does. It is worth wondering whether Spinoza could be trying to distance himself from his ancestors by portraying them as inspired wisemen whose words, as Augustine says, contain a truth hidden from them.³⁷

Spinoza likens someone who does not search properly for causes to someone who focuses on a book’s handwriting while neglecting its meaning. In his textbook on Descartes’s *Principles*, he says:

Suppose someone sees two books — one the work of a distinguished philosopher, the other that of some trifler, but both written in the same hand. If he attends not to the meaning of the words (that is, does not attend to them insofar as they are like images), but only to the handwriting and to the order of the letters, he will recognize no inequality between them which compels him to look for different causes. They will seem to him to have proceeded from the same cause in the same way. But if he attends to the meaning of the words and the discourses, he will find a great inequality between them. (I/156; I:245)

The religious subtext of this comparison would have been obvious to Spinoza’s earliest readers: he who neglects causes is taking a “Jewish” approach to reality,

³⁶Fraenkel (2008).

³⁷In his remark about the Hebrews, Spinoza may be practising a kind of *cladonancy*. This was the ancient practice of taking a casual remark, uttered perhaps by a person of low status, to be an omen that contains a deeper meaning unforeseen by the speaker. According to the historian Auguste Bouché-Leclercq, “a word related to its true object does not constitute an *omen* [according to ancient Greek augurs]; it is thus necessary that the word be diverted [*détournée*] from its sense and construed as a covert reference [*appliquée, par voie d’allusion*] to another object” (1882, 136). Cf. Cicero (1920, 286) and Ogilvie (1965). An example occurs at *Odyssey*, book XX.

focusing on the letter and not the spirit of things.³⁸

This association is alarmingly present in Spinoza's writings. In his opinion, the Jews are hopelessly unwilling to seek causal relations:

the Jews never mention — nor do they heed — intermediate, *or* particular, causes, but...always recur to God. For example, if they have made money by trade, they say that God has given it to them; if they desire that something should happen, they say that God has so disposed their heart; and if they even think something, they say that God has told them this. (III/16–17; cf. III/23–24)

No wonder, then, that they “have not ceased to postulate miracles” (III/82, modified). Spinoza associates the Jews with the imagination, calling them “fluctuating and inconstant” (III/173), adjectives he applies to the imagination and to those in whom that faculty predominates (2P40S1, 2P40S2, 4P33). If this is antisemitism, it is not the essentializing variety. According to Spinoza, the Jews act differently because they have a different culture.³⁹ And if Spinoza deems the imagination a somehow Jewish faculty, then in his judgment every mind is half Jewish.

³⁸Porphyry similarly distinguishes between those who appreciate how to interpret images of God correctly and those who “look upon stelae as stones, writing tablets as wood, and books as woven papyrus” (tr. in Krulak, 2011, 353).

³⁹“It remains now to ask,” Spinoza writes,

what the causes were for the Hebrews' failing, so often, to obey the law, why they were so often subjugated and why, in the end, the state could be completely destroyed. Now perhaps someone will say that this happened because the people were stiffnecked. But this is childish. For why was this nation more stiff-necked than the others? Was it by nature? Nature, of course, creates individuals, not nations, individuals which are distinguished into nations only by differences of language, laws and accepted customs. It is only from the latter two factors, i.e., from laws and customs, that it can happen that each nation has its particular mentality, its particular flavor, and its particular prejudices [*praejudicia*]. (III/217).

[T]he foundations of their religion...make [the Jews] womanish in heart [*animos effoeminarent*]. (III/57, modified)

Despite these troubling remarks, Spinoza also holds several remarkably egalitarian views. The Jews are neither inferior nor superior intellectually to others: “In intellect and true virtue no nation is distinguished from any other” (III/56). In 3P46, he diagnoses the psychological roots of prejudice against nations and classes. In his judgment, within the mind of a person who thinks in terms of social groups, positive and negative attitudes toward other people spread like kudzu. If I love (or hate) someone under the description “Jew” or “Spanish” or “rich”, then I will more easily come to love (or hate) others that I classify in the same way. Spinoza maintains that concepts that group people together by color are highly confused (2P40S1). This appears to be among the earliest psychological theories of prejudice. This theory and his nominalism may be mutually reinforcing.

3.1.5. *The anagogical structure of perception*

According to Spinoza, while nature has, approximately, the structure of a psychophysical allegory, each sensory perception has the structure of an anagogical allegory. In his opinion, each sensory experience has two contents. For example, suppose I am hearing a cat purr. In Spinoza's view, my auditory experience represents a certain state of my body induced by the purring, presumably a state of my eardrums or brain. Nevertheless, Spinoza writes:

The idea of any mode in which the human body is affected by external bodies must involve the nature of the human body and at the same time the nature of the external body. (2P16)

The words before 'must' could be paraphrased, "Each sensory perception". Thus my sensory perception of a cat purring not only represents my own body's reaction to this purring, but this very same perception also 'involves', i.e. represents, both the nature (i.e. essence) of my own body and the nature of the cat's body. The cat's nature is, somehow, implicit in my auditory experience of the purring.

How exactly it is implicit is hard to know. Perhaps the nature is implicit in the sensory experience in the way that an emotion is implicit in a facial expression. As one learns how to decipher such expressions, emotions gradually become explicitly perceptible in visual experiences of them. For example, before learning that chimpanzees grin to show fear, one doesn't see the fear in the grin. After learning this, however, upon remembering seeing Charlie the Chimpanzee grinning, one can now see his fear. Consider the idea that something that was already implicit in the sighting of a chimpanzee grin has now been made explicit. Similarly, according to Spinoza when the zoologist learns the underlying nature that

generates the cat's purring, she can remember a previously heard purring and can now discover the nature that was all along making itself heard in that sound.

Thus to do natural science is, according to Spinoza, to make explicit the essences that have always been implicitly involved in our sensory experiences. Don Garrett has persuasively argued that, according to Spinoza, essences are eternal.⁴⁰ Thus natural science is, according to Spinoza, not merely the interpretation of sensory experience; specifically, it is the activity of making the latent eternal content of our sensory experiences patent. For this reason, it can be fairly thought of as the anagogical interpretation of sensory experience. Before I examine whether Spinoza thinks of it that way, I will consider two objections.

It may be objected that, on my interpretation, Spinoza cannot believe what he says: "the true method of interpreting Scripture...does not differ at all from the method of interpreting nature, but agrees with it completely" (III/98). For my Spinoza wants us to interpret nature anagogically, but he clearly wants us to avoid recourse to metaphor and allegory as much as we can when interpreting scripture: "we must depart from the literal meaning as little as possible" (III/101). According to Spinoza, we may interpret scriptural claims metaphorically in order to avoid imputing contradiction, but not in order to avoid imputing falsehood. For example, scripture states that "God has no likeness to any visible things" (Spinoza's paraphrase) and that "the Lord your God is a consuming fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24). According to Spinoza, to avoid imputing any contradiction, the second statement must be interpreted metaphorically as meaning that God is jealous (III/101), though in fact He is anything but jealous (5P17).

⁴⁰Garrett (2009).

I reply that, though Spinoza holds that the methods of the scientist and the scripture-reader “agree...completely,” he explicitly recognizes at least two differences: First, *a priori* reasoning is a good guide to reality, but a poor guide to scripture. Second, nature is *causa sui*, completely self-explanatory, whereas scripture must be understood in terms of linguistic and historical facts which it does not contain. And surely he recognizes other obvious differences. For example, the interpreter of scripture should read it all before offering professional comment, but the interpreter of nature must comment while the ‘text’ is still being written. A similar exaggeration occurs at III/10: “Scripture...has nothing in common with Philosophy.”

But can my interpretation be squared with Spinoza’s criticism of his predecessors who “did not observe the [proper] order of philosophizing”? These predecessors, he complains,

believed that the divine nature, which they should have contemplated before all else (because it is prior both in knowledge and in nature) is last in the order of knowledge, and that the things that are called objects of the senses are prior to all. That is why, when they contemplated natural things, they thought of nothing less than they did of the divine nature; and when afterwards they directed their minds to contemplating the divine nature, they could think of nothing less than of their first fictions, on which they had built the knowledge of natural things, because these could not assist knowledge of the divine nature. (2P10s2)

Slandering sensory perceptions as ‘fictions’, Spinoza denies that any route leads from them up to the summit of eternal truth. According to Yitzhak Melamed, the quoted passage declares that it is impossible to make epistemic ascents such as the ascent that Diotima describes in Plato’s *Symposium*.⁴¹ I have argued that, according to

⁴¹Melamed (2013, xv).

Spinoza, we can discover eternal things by examining our sensory perceptions. Does the quoted passage cast doubt on my reading?

I reply that Spinoza infers from this premise —

Each idea of each body...involves the...essence of God. (2P45)

— to this conclusion:

The human mind...perceives...external bodies.... And so (by 2P45 and 2P46) it has an adequate knowledge of God's...essence. (2P47D)

Since our sensory perceptions of external bodies *involve* the essence of God, each of us knows God's essence (consciously or not). As discussed in §1.3, to involve something is to be that through which it is perceived.⁴² Spinoza later infers, in 5P24D, from the premise that each mode expresses (i.e. manifests) God's essence (1P25C) to the conclusion that "The more we understand singular things, the more we understand God" (5P24). Clearly, there is a sense in which our sensory perceptions disclose the essence of God. We cannot carry out a *constructive ascent* in which we build ideas of eternal objects out of our ideas of temporal objects. However, we can carry out a *detective ascent*. In an ascent like this, we begin with our complex mental representations of temporal objects (which represent their temporal and atemporal features) and then *detect*, in these representations, certain mental representations of atemporal features — representations we already have.⁴³

⁴²He again argues that our adequate knowledge is involved in our inadequate knowledge as follows:

Let A be [a property common to the human body and the bodies that tend to affect it.] ... Let it be posited now that the human body is affected by an external body through what it has in common with it, i.e., by A; *the [inadequate] idea of this affection will involve [an idea of] property A* (by 2P16). [This premise enables him to conclude:] this idea [of A] is...adequate in the human mind. (2P39D)

The second bracketed interpolation is justified by 2P26CD. The third bracketed interpolation is justified by remarks made on p. 19.

⁴³To detect one of these representations is not to create a second-order representation of it. The reason is that any idea *i* is a co-aspect of the idea of *i* (§2.3.1). Instead, to detect a representation

Epistemic ascent requires that when we contemplate natural things, we become aware of the divine nature that they express. Unfortunately, “when [Spinoza’s predecessors] contemplated natural things, they thought of nothing less than they did of the divine nature.” Their mistake lay not in beginning with their observations of the natural world, but rather in leaving these observations uninterpreted and then accepting their deliverances as accurate. They then converted these early-formed opinions into a dogma that conditioned all later natural and theological reasoning. Spinoza clarifies this theory in the *Emendation*:

[A]fter [the soul] has feigned something, *and offered its assent to it*, it cannot think or feign it in any other way, and is also compelled by that fiction so that even other things are thought in such a way as not to conflict with the *first fiction*, just as here too because of their own fiction, they are forced to admit [various] absurdities.... (I/23, my emphasis)

The soul’s problems begin when it assents to its imaginations (cf. 2P17S). What the philosophers who came before Spinoza ought to have done is to look through their observations to the essences implicated in them. Among these essences they would have discovered the essence of God.

As we have now seen, Spinozistic science *may* be thought of as a form of anagogical interpretation. A question remains, however. Would Spinoza, himself, have thought of science that way? There is surprisingly ample evidence that he

to become *conscious* of it. Since an adequate idea’s coming to consciousness is not an intrinsic change in it, it must be a change in one or more inadequate ideas. If we are not conscious of one of our own adequate ideas, that is because that idea is obscured by a cloud of inadequate ideas. As Klein (2003) observes, one goal of the *Ethics* is to increase adequate ideas, but to do this is not to produce new adequate ideas (“it is not a question of production”) but rather to “reduc[e] the power of imaginative constellations and prejudices so as to be able to apprehend the intelligible pattern...already inherent in nature.” Fittingly Spinoza says that the free man is “conscious of himself, and of God, and of things” (5P42S) and that this man possesses an infinite “power of ordering and connecting the affections of the body [i.e. his imaginations] according to the order of the intellect” (5P10). To develop consciousness of certain things is, I believe, to harmonize one’s imagination with one’s intellect.

would have. No fewer than three anagogical allegories can be found in the second half of *Ethics* Part 5. Two are easy to spot.

3.2. Two anagogical allegories

Jonathan Bennett famously pronounced the final pages of the *Ethics* “an unmitigated and seemingly unmotivated disaster” and “rubbish which causes others to write rubbish.”⁴⁴ Two passages that Bennett scorned as blatherskite are in fact anagogical allegories.

3.2.1. “...we shall consider [the mind] as if it were now...beginning to understand things under the aspect of eternity...”

According to Bennett, a simple fact “ruins” Part 5: that the mind cannot become more eternal, since “the facts which determine how much of my mind is eternal are themselves eternal truths.”⁴⁵ Bennett claims to have caught Spinoza trying to hide this problem in the following passage:

...although we are already certain that the mind is eternal, insofar as it conceives things under the aspect of eternity [*sub specie aeternitatis*], for an easier explanation and better understanding of the things we wish to show, we shall consider [the mind] as if it were now beginning to be, and were now beginning to understand things under the aspect of eternity [*sub specie aeternitatis*].... (5P31s, modified)

In light of the aforementioned allegorical tradition, we can now see precisely what Spinoza is up to and why. Here Spinoza says that in order to make the eternal mind easier to understand he will describe it as though it were a temporal being,

⁴⁴Bennett (1984, 374, 357).

⁴⁵Bennett (1984, 363).

undergoing change.⁴⁶ This scholium introduces an anagogical allegory.⁴⁷

3.2.2. “...we sense and experience that we are eternal...”

The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal. (5P23)

Concerning this promise, Spinoza comments:

And yet we cannot possibly remember that we existed before the body, since the body could not possibly show any traces of this, and eternity cannot be defined in terms of time, nor stand in any relation to time. But nonetheless we sense and experience that we are eternal. For the mind, in understanding, senses the things that it conceives, no less than it senses those things it has in the memory. For the mind’s eyes, by which it sees and observes things, are demonstrations [*demonstrationes*] themselves. Therefore, though we do not remember that we existed before the body, we nevertheless sense that our mind, insofar as it involves the essence of the body under the aspect of eternity, is eternal. (5P23S, my translation)⁴⁸

Bennett pooh-poohed the remark that demonstrations are “the eyes of the mind” as “vague and metaphorical.”⁴⁹ Others have interpreted it as saying that Spinoza’s substance shows itself directly through his proofs,⁵⁰ that intuitive self-knowledge is

⁴⁶That is, the claim that “mind is becoming eternal” is not true from the perspective of the intellect, for from that perspective the mind is simply eternal. Nor is it true from the perspective of the imagination, which sees the mind as temporal. But it is true from the perspective of someone shifting from the first to the second perspective. That is the perspective that Spinoza adopts here. In §2.2, I argued that Spinoza sometimes adopts this shifting perspective when describing the mind.

⁴⁷I therefore agree with Efraim Shmueli that some of the prefaces, scholia, and appendices in the *Ethics* contain “anagogic...illuminations” (Shmueli, 1977, 211). In contrast with Shmueli, I do not see anything non-naturalistic about these gestures.

⁴⁸Why translate the scholium this way? “And yet” (*tamen*) stresses this contrast: The mind understands that the body’s essence exists eternally, but the mind cannot remember existing before the temporal body. Spinoza seems to be suggesting that since “in eternity there is neither when, nor before, nor after” (1P33S2), we cannot derive from the body’s eternity that we existed before the temporal body (and, presumably, we didn’t). Foreshadowing the next sentence (*non minus*), Spinoza writes “But nonetheless” (*At nihilominus*) to stress this contrast: We sense things by means of traces in the brain (2P17S), and so cannot *literally* sense our eternity. However, “sense” (*sentire*) can be taken *metaphorically* to refer to what the intellect does. Cf. III/170: “For invisible things, which are the objects only of the mind, cannot be seen by any other eyes than by demonstrations.” Cf. also Letter 55 and Letter 67a.

⁴⁹Bennett (1984, 16).

⁵⁰Deleuze (1992, 22).

joyful,⁵¹ that a certain mystical experience can be had,⁵² that our eternity is evident to us,⁵³ that something about our eternity can be ‘shown’ but not ‘said’,⁵⁴ and that we feel certain that we are eternal⁵⁵ — a diverse range of intriguing suggestions that reflects the variety of epistemic communities claiming custody of Spinoza. There is another way of looking at the quoted passage, though, and it is a way that construes this passage as both substantive and sober. The passage is an anagogical allegory. It portrays something eternal — our cognition that we are eternal — in the guise of a temporal process, a sensory experience.

The allegory builds upon a word that echoes throughout the *Ethics*: “demonstration”. A *demonstratio* is, literally, a making-visible. Onto this word, mathematicians have grafted a second metaphorical meaning: ‘proof’.⁵⁶ Spinoza extends the metaphor: if proofs are (metaphorically) *makings-visible* then they enable us to (metaphorically) *see*, so they are (metaphorically) the mind’s *eyes*, and so *seeing* something in this way is (to stretch the metaphor) a kind of *sensation*. According to Spinoza, mathematical representations do not occur in time; the part of the mind that engages in mathematics is eternal. (When studying mathematics, we do not acquire new knowledge, but merely make conscious to ourselves what we

⁵¹Marshall (2008b, 23, n. 68).

⁵²Huenemann (2008, 108–109).

⁵³LeBuffle (2010, 213–15).

⁵⁴Amrine (2013, 253).

⁵⁵Jaquet (forthcoming).

⁵⁶As noted in section 1.4, Spinoza believes that ‘intuitive cognition’ is aptly so called because of the similarity between an intuition (*intuitus*, in the technical sense) and a glance (*intuitus*, in the non-technical sense). There is some evidence that Spinoza believes that philosophical uses of words arise from lay uses by a process of metaphorical extension (p. 22, n. 39). So he presumably believes that philosophers took the word *intuitus*, which has a literal meaning (in which it denotes a temporal, sensory process), and gave the word a metaphorical meaning (in which it denotes an eternal action). I am suggesting that Spinoza’s use of *demonstratio* is very similar. It has a literal meaning, in which it denotes a temporal, sensory process. Mathematicians gave it a metaphorical meaning, in which it denotes an eternal action.

already, eternally, know.) He is taking words that literally refer to temporal things, and using them metaphorically to describe eternal things.

Spinoza notes that “demonstration” refers both to a temporal process occurring in the imagination and to an eternal action occurring in the intellect. Indeed, the word is like an anagogical allegory unto itself: it describes something eternal as though it were temporal. Let us call this word an ‘anagogical metaphor’. Note that Spinoza extends this anagogical metaphor into a chain of metaphors — a complete anagogical allegory. A further scholium shows the same pattern.

3.3. God’s love, and its shadow

[O]ur salvation, *or* blessedness, *or* freedom, consists...in a constant and eternal love toward God, *or* in God’s love toward men. In the Sacred Scriptures, this love *or* blessedness is called ‘glory’, and not without reason. For whether this love is related to God or to the mind, it can rightly be called ‘contentedness of mind’, which is really not distinguished from glory (by 3DA25 and 3DA30). (5P36S, modified)

Scholars have paid almost no attention to this enigmatic suggestion. Yet it is illuminating to study. Let’s take a closer look at one of its main ideas.

3.3.1. Contentedness

In the *Ethics*, Spinoza says little about *felicitas* (happiness), much more about *laetitia* (joy) and *acquiescentia* (contentedness). Spinoza borrows the term *acquiescentia* from Descartes’s *Passions of the Soul*.⁵⁷ In Latin, this word can refer to a tantalizing range of things: tranquility, stillness, rest, peace, submission, consent, satisfaction, and even (metaphorically) death.

⁵⁷Many commentators trace this term to Descartes. In his 1519 letter *Contra Martini Ludder*, the theologian Johannes Eck claims to have found the term earlier in Augustine, though I know not where.

The English phrase “self-contentedness” can refer to smug self-satisfaction, as in the phrase, “The wide prevalence of self-contentedness and self-complacency.”⁵⁸ Or it can refer to the blessed self-contentment of the spiritually developed, as in John Norris’s remark, “What an inward sufficiency and self-Contentedness there is in true Goodness.”⁵⁹ Spinoza likewise distinguishes two versions of “self-contentedness” (*acquiescentia in se ipso*). One version arises from a false self-image.

The glory that is called ‘vain’ [*vana*] is a self-contentedness [*acquiescentia in se ipso*] that is fed only by the high opinion of the masses. (4P58S, my translation)

A second version arises from reason.

A self-contentedness [*Acquiescentia in se ipso*] can arise from reason, and only that self-contentedness which does arise from reason is the greatest there can be. (4P52, modified)

These two versions of *acquiescentia in se ipso* are aspectually distinct (see p. 47). Spinoza writes that false ideas, “insofar as they are related to God,...are true” (4P1D). For any false idea, there is a true idea such that the two ideas are aspects of the same thing (see §2.4). *Acquiescentia in se ipso* is a case in point: it is a representation (2A3); the version of it that arises from a false image of ourselves is of course false, while the version of it that arises from reason is true. These two versions are merely aspectually distinct: the higher is the lower seen from a different point of view.

As we make our way through the *Ethics*, this phrase turns its other side toward us. It first means ‘self-contentedness’ in the sense of ‘smug self-satisfaction’, but later means ‘self-contentedness’ in the sense of ‘inner peace’.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Hazlitt (1897, 34).

⁵⁹*Practical discourses*, iii.242.

⁶⁰Carlisle (2017) argues that *acquiescentia* is a species of cognition, and accordingly comes in

3.3.2. *Glory*

In the passage under consideration, Spinoza writes that “contentedness of mind...is really not distinguished from glory [*gloria*]” (5P36s). In Latin, *gloria* can refer to pleasure taken in being recognized for one’s superiority over others. This eristic notion of glory plays a key role in Spinoza’s exposé of modern government:

[I]t is certain that leaders can suppress the people only with an army to whom they pay a salary, and that they fear nothing more than the freedom of citizen soldiers, who, by their virtue, work, and great expense of blood, bring about the freedom and *gloria* of the state. (III/213)

For love of esteem, kings send men to die on the battlefields. Spinoza calmly explains:

The greatest secret of monarchic rule, and its foremost concern, is to keep men deceived, and to adumbrate, under the specious pretext of religion, a terror so gripping that men will fight for their slavery as they would for their salvation, and will not be ashamed, but greatly honored, to spend their life and their blood so that one man may brag.... (III/7, my translation)⁶¹

Spinoza captures this notion of eristic glory in his definition of *gloria* as “a joy accompanied by the idea of some action of ours which we imagine that others praise” (3DA30). The horde holds up eristic glory (vainglory) as the highest good. Spinoza scathingly observes:

The glory which is called ‘vain’ is a self-contentedness [*acquiescentia in se ipso*] that is fed only by the high opinion [*opinione*] of the masses. When that ceases, the contentedness ceases, i.e., the highest good

three different *kinds*: imaginative, rational, and intuitive. I would prefer to say that the imagination and rational versions of it are different *aspects* of the same underlying phenomenon. (I don’t know what to say about the intuitive aspect of *acquiescentia*.) Cooper (2013, 91) argues that *acquiescentia* is a polyvalent affect. I would prefer to call it a polyvalent word that can refer to several different kinds of affect (which are, in themselves, not polyvalent).

⁶¹The political philosopher Ann Cudd takes a similar line, arguing that “the oppressed are made to participate in their own oppression rather than resist it” (2005, 25) and are “co-opted through their own short-run rational choices to reinforce the long-run oppression of their social group” (2006, 22).

For Spinoza, Religion is a light so brilliant (*speciosus*) it creates the shadow (*adumbrare*) that amplifies men’s fear. Meanwhile, the genuine truth “makes the darkness plain” (2P43s).

that each one loves. That is why he who glories [*gloriatur*] in the high opinion of the masses frets, strives, sacrifices, and schemes every day in order to preserve his reputation [*fama*]. For the masses are fickle and inconstant; one's reputation is fast destroyed if it is not guarded. Indeed everyone, because he craves the masses' applause, willingly slanders everyone else. And since the struggle is over a good thought to be the highest, there stirs in each man a monstrous lust to vanquish everyone else however possible. (4P58S, modified)

There is, however, another side to *gloria*: "God's glory" is His loving-presence.⁶²

Spinoza mentions this form of *gloria* when noting that the prophet Isaiah "commends freedom and loving-kindness towards oneself and one's neighbor. In return for these he promises that... 'your light will burst forth like the dawn... and the glory of God will gather you' " (III/71; II:141).

3.3.3. "Not without reason"

The logic of 5P36S can now be brought into focus. Recall that in 5P23S, Spinoza uses the anagogical metaphor of "demonstration" to develop a chain of metaphors, each of which depicts an eternal action or object as if were a temporal process. The chain goes: if proofs enable us to (metaphorically) *see* then they are (metaphorically) the mind's *eyes*, and so *seeing* something via a proof is (metaphorically) a kind of *sensation*. The earlier steps in the chain help to justify the later steps. Since we see what is shown to our eyes, it only makes sense that we metaphorically 'see' what is metaphorically 'shown' to our metaphorical 'eyes'.⁶³ His reasoning at 5P36S is

⁶²Calvin compares this world to "a theater in which the Lord presents to us a clear manifestation of his glory." *Commentary on I Corinthians*, 85 (*Opera*, xlix.326).

⁶³Here Spinoza uses a kind of analogical reasoning very similar to what he calls "intuitive knowledge" (2P40S2). An example of intuitive knowing is: "Given the numbers 1, 2, and 3, no one fails to see that the fourth proportional number is 6 — and we see this much more clearly because we infer the fourth number from the ratio which, in one glance, we see the first number to have the second" (2P40S2). There is a similar kind of analogical reasoning in the argument I am ascribing to Spinoza here, namely, that if the eristic meanings of two words are related in a certain way, then the irenic meanings of those words are related in the same way.

Spinoza's conception of "intuition" may echo Aristotle's theory of analogy-based metaphors: "a cup is to Dionysus what a shield is to Ares; so [the poet] will call the cup 'Dionysus's shield' and

remarkably similar:

In the Sacred Scriptures, [God's] love *or* blessedness is called 'glory', and not without reason. For whether this love is related to God or to the mind, it can rightly be called 'contentedness of mind', which is really not distinguished from glory (by 3DA25 and 3DA30). (5P36s, modified)

Gloria refers literally to the pleasure taken in triumphing publicly over others.

In this meaning it is synonymous with eristic *acquiescentia in se ipso* (smug self-contentedness). But *acquiescentia in se ipso* can also refer to irenic self-contentedness. Spinoza infers that the scriptures are, to a degree, justified in using *gloria* metaphorically to refer to this contentedness as well.⁶⁴ That is, since bathing in eristic glory makes one eristically self-contented, it just makes sense that bathing in irenic glory makes one irenically self-contented.

In 5P36s, Spinoza uses his definition of eristic glory (3DA30) to derive a conclusion about divine glory. His argument shifts between these two senses of 'glory'. Just as he brazenly equivocates in his use of *acquiescentia*, he commits the same crime with *gloria*. The equivocation occurs because Spinoza is asking us to switch from interpreting the term *gloria* as referring to something temporal to interpreting it as referring to something eternal. This is exactly the shift in interpretive attitude that an analogical interpreter must make.

the shield 'Ares' cup'" (*Poetics* 1457b; tr. Fyfe).

⁶⁴Spinoza here anticipates the principle of "analogical semantic change" not thoroughly discussed in linguistics until the nineteenth century. On the history of this principle, see Stern (1931) and Hock (2004).

In the *Short Treatise* at I/102, Spinoza also reasons analogically about the Dutch term *geesten* ('spirit'), inferring that since it can refer to what Descartes calls 'animal spirits' or to divine spirit, the term 'birth' can be used to refer either to biological birth (the mind's union with the animal spirits) or, metaphorically, to Christian rebirth (the union between the mind and the divine spirit). Spinoza discusses the ambiguities in the Hebrew word for 'spirit' at III/21.

The idea that words evolve through metaphorical extension is an old one. Leibniz observes, "The good philologist, and even the philosopher, must deduce the use of a word from its origin by a continuous sorites (so to speak) of figurative uses [*troporum*]" (Leibniz, 1978, iv.140).

Parts 3 and 4 of the *Ethics* are about the human tragicomedy: that long-running spectacle featuring recurring character-types like “the proud man [who] loves the presence of parasites, *or* flatterers” (4P57); the man who “from timidity regarding death, eats what he is repelled by” (4P63S); the ironic “young men who cannot bear calmly the scolding of their parents, and take refuge in the army” (II/270); the people who, like Ovid’s witch Medea, steadfastly approve one thing and then watch themselves do just the opposite (4P17S); and the spurned man who cannot help imagining his beloved in bed with her new lover (3P35S). This tragicomedy never ends thanks to our endless desire to acquire self-contentedness through vainglorious displays of power, and our bottomless lust for ever-increasing control over resources and even other people. From 5P36S it curiously appears that according to Spinoza this tragicomedy is itself a kind of anagogical allegory. He seems to think of earthly human affairs as the shadow of eternal life, vanity as the shadow of divine love.⁶⁵

In the fourth part of the *Ethics* (which concerns “human bondage” to passion), *acquiescentia* can mean ‘submission’, while in the fifth part (which concerns “human freedom”), *acquiescentia* is the essence of our freedom (5P36S). We may wonder whether Spinoza is trying to uncover an isomorphism between our bondage and our freedom, whatever this might mean, and show them to be sides of the same coin. He claims that tyrants use religion to dupe citizens into “fight[ing] for their slavery as though it were their salvation [*salute*, also translatable as ‘freedom’]”

⁶⁵In this respect, Part 5 resembles the final scene of the *Wizard of Oz*, in which Dorothy discovers that Oz mirrors Kansas, and that the strange characters she met on her journey were somehow the folks she knew from back home, transposed into an alternate reality. So too the joys of eternal heaven are, according to Spinoza, somehow already present in the lower world in disguised form. Though this chapter stresses Spinoza’s interest in transcendence, here lies an underexamined dimension of Spinoza’s commitment to immanence.

(III/7). He may intend his own religion to have the opposite effect, to make us desire eternal ‘acquiescence’ as if it were worldly ‘acquiescence’, and make us pursue eternal ‘glory’ with the vigor with which we now pursue worldly ‘glory’.⁶⁶

Another entry in Spinoza’s lexicon undergoes a similar semantic shift.

3.3.4. Law

Most of those who have written about the affects, and men’s way of living, seem to treat, not of natural things, which follow the common laws of nature, but of things which are outside nature. Indeed they seem to conceive man in nature as a dominion within a dominion [*imperium in imperio*]. (3PREF)

The phrase *imperium in imperio*, also translatable as “kingdom within a kingdom” or “state within a state,” calls to mind the Jewish community of Amsterdam, which was included within the city but permitted to have its own judges. A committee of sixteen such judges, the Amsterdam Mahamad, excommunicated Spinoza in the summer of 1656. Spinoza declares that he will examine the passions, not in the manner of lawyers, but in the manner of Euclid. He acknowledges how strange this plan may seem:

To those who prefer to denounce [*detestari*] the affects and actions of men, rather than understand them, no doubt it will seem astonishing that I am setting about to treat men’s faults and absurdities using

⁶⁶A similar double meaning can be seen in Spinoza’s use of *potiri* (‘possess’) and its cognate *compotes* (‘possessor’). At 3P35–3P35S he uses it to refer to possessing resources and lovers:

If someone imagines that a thing he loves is united with another by as close, or by a closer, bond of friendship than that with which he himself, alone, *possessed* the thing, he will be affected with hate toward the thing he loves, and will envy the other. (3P35, my emphasis)

But at 5P20S, noting that “we can never be complete possessors [*compotes*]” of resources or lovers (II/294), he observes that intellectual love of God is, by contrast, “a love toward a thing immutable and eternal, of which we really are complete possessors [*revera sumus compotes*]” (my translation), immediately citing 2P45 which states that every mind has knowledge of the essence of God. The semantic transition here is exactly like the ones we have just seen: just as we should not pursue eristic but irenic *gloria*, so too we should not seek eristic possessions but irenic ones. Though we *can* see this as a shift in the meaning of *compotes*, we can also think of it as a shift merely in its connotation.

the geometric method.... But this is my reason. Nothing happens in nature which can be attributed to any fault in it, for...the laws and rules [*leges et regulae*] of nature, according to which all things are produced and change from one form to another, are the same always and everywhere.... I shall therefore treat the nature and powers of the affects, and the power of the mind over them, by the same method that I used in the preceding parts [of the *Ethics*] to treat God and the mind, and I shall consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a question [*quaestio*] of lines, planes, and bodies. (3PREF)

This announcement blends legal and scientific discourse. In the claim that some people “denounce” (*detestari*) the affects, *detestari* is a lawyer’s word literally meaning “to testify against.” Early modern Spanish and Portuguese Christians who suspected their formerly Jewish neighbors of secretly practising Judaism would sometimes “denounce” them in the Inquisition courts.⁶⁷

Spinoza argues that “the laws and rules of nature...are the same always and everywhere.” “Laws” and “rules” are obviously lawyers’ words too. The relevance of this fact becomes clearer when we consider Spinoza’s interest in the semantic change *lex* was undergoing in his lifetime. He notes that, taken literally, a ‘law’ is “a principle of living man prescribes to himself or to others for some end” (III/58). Yet *lex* is also “applied metaphorically [*per translationem*] to natural things” (my translation).⁶⁸ *Lex* first meant a goal-oriented command, and so was used metaphorically to mean ‘law of nature’, which became a second literal meaning of the word, by metaphorical transference.⁶⁹ Thus the chief mental faculty involved in the establishment of judicial laws is the faculty that thinks in terms of final

⁶⁷Cf. Silva (2015).

⁶⁸In this metaphorical sense of *lex*, “it is a universal law [*lex*] of all bodies...that a body which strikes against another lesser body loses as much of its motion as it communicates to the other body” (III/57–58; II:125–26; cf. Descartes, *Principles*, ii.40).

⁶⁹In this period “natural law” can mean an exceptionless principle that guides change, or a moral truth inscribed in the mind. Spinoza runs these together, e.g. at TTP adn. XXXIV (II:292–93, n. 21).

causes, the imagination (1APP, 4PREF). But the chief mental faculty involved in establishing natural laws is the intellect (2P38, 2P40S2). *Lex* is a stereophonic word: it evokes different things for the different sides of one's mind.

The passage quoted above famously concludes, "I shall consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a question [*quaestio*] of lines, planes, and bodies." *Quaestio* is stereophonic too. It can mean 'intellectual inquiry', as it does in Descartes's *Regulae*.⁷⁰ And it can mean 'trial'. Since a trial involves the application of human laws and the apportionment of blame, it is a chiefly imaginative activity.

The preface to Part 3 has a hidden depth. We can reveal it with the help of a translation that complements the one given above, perhaps something like this:

To those who prefer to **pronounce guilt upon** [*detestari*] the affects and actions of men, rather than understand them, no doubt it will seem astonishing that I am setting about to treat men's faults and absurdities using the geometric method.... But this is my reason. Nothing happens in nature which can be attributed to any fault in it, for...the laws and rules of nature, according to which all things are produced and change from one form to another, are the same always and everywhere.... I shall therefore treat the nature and powers of the affects, and the power of the mind over them, by the same method that I used in the preceding parts [of the *Ethics*] to treat God and the mind, and I shall consider human actions and appetites just as if it were an **interrogation** [*quaestio*] of lines, planes, and bodies. (3PREF, my translation)

In this preface, Spinoza details his plan to subject the passions not to an imaginative (temporal, eristic, judicial) interrogation but to an intellectual (eternal, irenic, scientific) interrogation, governed not by man-made laws but by divine laws of nature. As we read, these Latin words drift from earthly to divine meanings. We are to feel *lex* (law) sliding from its (historically prior) literal to its (historically later)

⁷⁰ Adam and Tannery (1964–1974, x.428–30).

metaphorical meaning, as though it were reliving its evolution. The text prompts us to analyze and then reanalyze the semantics of these terms. Such prompted reanalysis is common to many art forms, from the comic's one-liner to the Chopin étude.

Further evidence for this reading appears in a footnote to the *Theological-Political Treatise* where Spinoza again discusses legal and scientific laws. He argues that, as we learn more about the world, the imperative "to love God," which we previously represented as a piece of legislation, we will come to embrace not as legislation but as a "natural divine law," i.e. as a law of nature:

As for natural divine law, whose chief precept we've said is to love God, I have called it a law in the same sense the philosophers call laws the common rules of nature, according to which all things happen.... Moreover, we've shown that the divine laws seem to us to be laws, *or* things instituted, just as long as we do not know their cause. But when this is known, they thereby cease to be laws, and we embrace them not as laws, but as eternal truths. ... We cannot embrace the divine laws as divine so long as we are ignorant of their cause; and we cannot, by reason, conceive God as establishing those laws like a prince. (II:292–93, n. 21)

This passage makes clear that, for Spinoza, as we improve our minds, certain things which seemed to be laws in the legal sense will reveal themselves to be laws in the scientific sense. To put it differently, what seemed to be a normative imperative will show itself to be an epistemic imperative.⁷¹

Other commentators have also observed that Spinoza exploits ambigui-

⁷¹See p. 34. For Spinoza, laws of nature are eternal truths and vice versa, as can be seen by comparing 4DEF8 (where he calls a man's essence the "laws of his nature") with 1DEF8EXP (where he calls the essence of a thing "an eternal truth"). He extends another legal metaphor in the *Emendation*:

The inmost essence of things...is to be sought only from the fixed and eternal things, and at the same time from the laws inscribed in these things, as if in their true codes [*tanquam in suis veris codicibus, inscriptis*], according to which all singular things come to be, and are ordered. (I/36; I/41; modified)

Here he extends the metaphor of "laws of nature," calling an essence a "code of law" (*codex*).

ities in Latin terms. For example, according to Nancy Levene, Spinoza’s term *servitus* exhibits a “rigorous multivalence,” carrying the twin senses of ‘slavery’ and ‘servitude’.⁷² François Zourabichvili thinks that Spinoza riffs on the polysemy of the word *ratio*.⁷³ According to Spinoza as interpreted by Martin Lin, just as two bodies count as distinct in virtue of not having the same pattern (*ratio*) of motion and rest, so also two minds count as distinct in virtue of not having the same sort of rationality (*ratio*).⁷⁴ Charles Jarrett observes that during the *Ethics* the term *virtus* first means simply ‘power’ (one meaning of the word) but later acquires a normative meaning, i.e. ‘virtue’ in the moral sense.⁷⁵

Though a historian of philosophy should generally aim to clear up vagueness, indeterminacy, and ambiguity in the text under study, to overdo this is to be like a zealous art restorer who brightens or neatens the parts of a painting that were meant to be dark or dappled. Certain ambiguities in Spinoza’s text are deliberate — signal rather than noise — and thus deserving of rigorous attention and unambiguous commentary. “There is a difference,” the physicist Schrödinger observes, “between a blurred or out-of-focus picture and a photograph of clouds and patches of fog.”⁷⁶ As they say, ambiguity has a mixed reputation. It is favored in the dark arts — duplicity, evasion, and propaganda — but also in re-enchantment efforts.

⁷²Levene (2004, 72).

⁷³Zourabichvili (2002, chapter 2).

⁷⁴Lin (2009, 263).

⁷⁵Jarrett (2014, 72–73).

⁷⁶Tr. Fine (1986), 66.

3.4. Notes on Spinozan anagogy

3.4.1. Some related linguistic and aesthetic phenomena

Spinoza prompts us to interpret *acquiescentia*, *gloria*, *lex*, and *quaestio* anagogically — first as referring to something temporal, then as referring to something eternal. We thereby witness them fading from their lower to their higher meanings.

A word that evokes different meanings for the two different sides of the mind — one meaning for the imagination, another for the intellect — has what we might call a stereophonic semantics. If you listen on headphones to funk or dance tunes, you might sometimes hear the music stereofade: crescendo in one ear while quietening in the other. Think of a *stereofading word* that first evokes one meaning for your imagination and then faintly evokes a meaning for your intellect, a meaning that grows more salient while the first meaning grows less salient. The words *acquiescentia*, *gloria*, *lex*, and *quaestio* stereofade as we read through the *Ethics*. *Quaestio* and *lex* do it right away, while the others do it over the course of the book.⁷⁷

Spinoza believes that the conflict between the imagination and the intellect sometimes produces semantic ambiguity. Whether he is right is beyond my scope here. Suffice it to note that mental fragmentation can produce *pragmatic* ambiguity. Suppose my great-aunt says to me, “Thank you for not smoking,” as I hold aloft a cigarette. I have recently quit, and am torn over whether to light it. The part of me that is planning to light it hears the utterance as a scolding injunction.

⁷⁷This piece of commentary evokes a similar feeling: “When Spinoza talks about that which ‘remains’ on the destruction of the body, he must be using the term in an atemporal sense, as when we talk about the remainder in a long division” (Garber, 2005, 106; cf. Harris, 1971, 673). This interpretation is Spinozistic in form. We feel the word “remain” fade from a spatiotemporal meaning to a mathematical one.

Meanwhile, the part of me that is planning to discard it hears the same utterance as a genuine thank-you. The double pragmatics of the utterance issues from, and illuminates, my condition of self-conflict.⁷⁸

Upon reading a stereofading word, the reader may feel a sense of motion. We may have a similar feeling when viewing M.C. Escher's lithograph *Up and Down* (p. 103). As our eyes move from the floor at the bottom of the picture to the ceiling at the center, we reinterpret this ceiling as the floor where we began. Suddenly we are seeing the same scene from a higher point of view. We seem to have been hoisted upwards, as though by a hidden elevator. The pulley that works the elevator is the ambiguous ceiling/floor, which anchors us as we shift our interpretive attitude in order to see the upper part of the picture correctly. In a way, the ambiguities in the *Ethics* also serve as pulleys like this. The act of reading, then rereading and reinterpreting Spinoza's words *prompts* a grander shift in interpretive attitude.⁷⁹ Spinoza's metaphors help ferry us to the next world, which is meet, for 'metaphor' means 'a carrying over'.

Spinoza's allegories give us license to juxtapose the *Ethics* with another anagogical structure: the Basilica of St. Denis, north of Paris. Upon entering this church, one abbot felt "transported from this inferior world to that superior

⁷⁸Wajnryb (1998) discusses similar cases of 'pragmatic ambivalence', such as "I noticed you trying to use some of X's suggestions," said by the supervisor to the trainee as simultaneous praise and criticism.

⁷⁹On "the shifts in attitude that regularly result from the use of metaphorical language," see Black (1955, 289).

As Russ Leo pointed out to me, the elevator could also go downward. Talk of heavenly *acquiescentia*, *gloria*, and *leges* could send our thoughts back to their earthly correlates. Spinoza may not have anticipated this problem.

In Pierre-François Moreau's similar metaphor, in Spinoza's writings "common usage forms a kind of trampoline for those who wish to distance themselves from this usage" (1994, 366–67; tr. Lærke, 2014, 523).

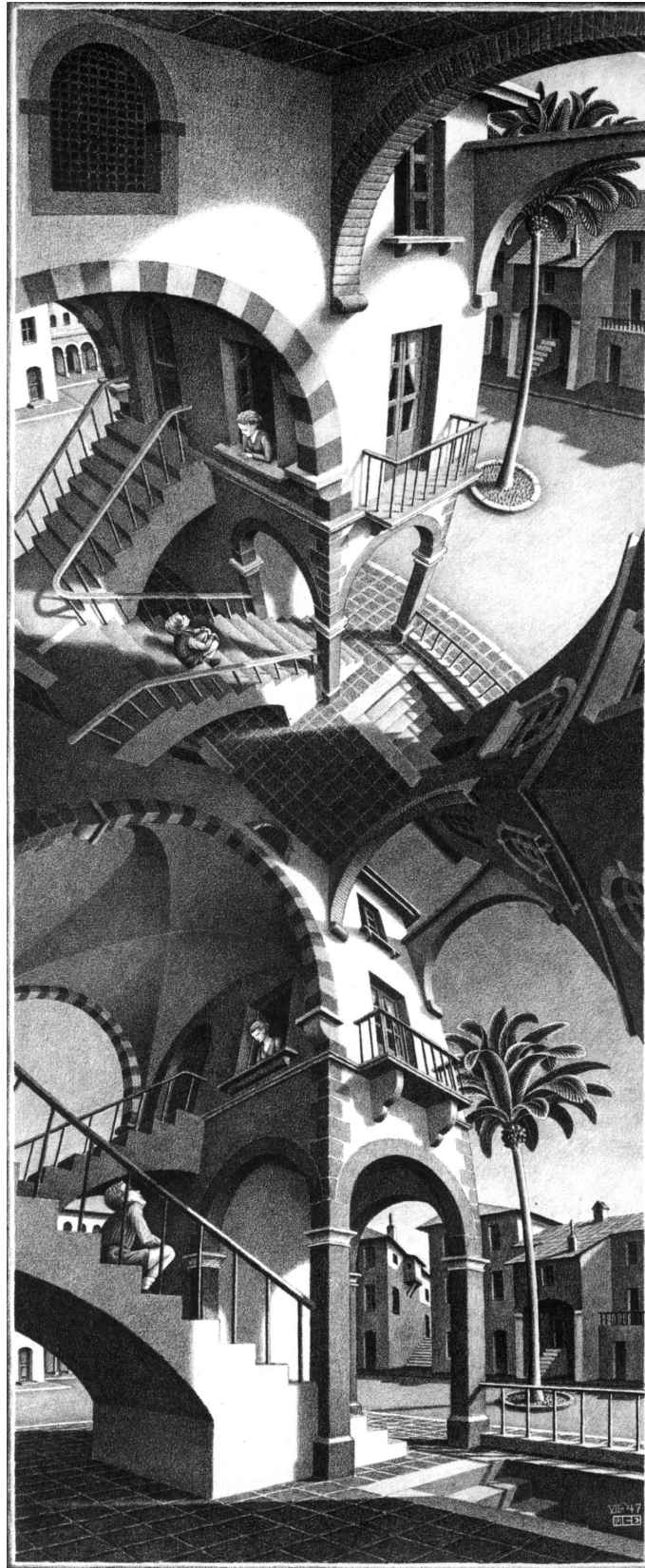


Figure 3.1: M.C. Escher, *Up and Down* (1947). © 2016 The M.C. Escher Company, The Netherlands. All rights reserved. Used with permission. <http://mcescher.com>

one in an anagogical manner [*anagogico more*].”⁸⁰ In the pages of the *Ethics*, Spinoza offers not only a feat of that-supports-this engineering but also, through its vaulting inferences and chiaroscuro atmosphere, a feeling of the sacred in *pianissimo*. Spinoza’s geometric structures, his helices of heresies, compose “an architecture which enables movement and circulation through the text.”⁸¹ At last, he shows the everyday melancholy world to be merely a sort of basement we can exit via mechanical elevator.

3.4.2. Attraction and repulsion

Many of the medieval philosophers hold that allegories pique our interest. Augustine, for example, observes that

truths which are presented to us in figures tend somehow to nourish and arouse the flame of love by the impulse of which we are carried upward and inward toward rest, and they stir and enkindle love better than if they were set before us unadorned, without any symbolism of mystery. It is hard to explain the reason for this; nevertheless, it is true that any doctrine suggested under an allegorical form affects and pleases us more, and is more esteemed, than one set forth explicitly in plain words.⁸²

Aquinas concurs that “the very hiding of truth in figures is useful for the exercise of thoughtful minds.”⁸³ Montaigne too finds concealment helpful: “Nature is intended to exercise our ingenuity, like a painting veiled in mists and obscured by an infinite variety of wrong lights.”⁸⁴ Anagogical allegories are especially hailed for their powers of seduction. Alexander of Canterbury compares anagogy to an intoxicant:

⁸⁰Abbot Suger, *Liber de rebus in administratione sua gestis* (tr. Panofsky, 64). See discussion in Nolan (1977, 35ff.).

⁸¹Rawes (2012, 82).

⁸²Letter to Januarius, *Epistles* 55.13 (tr. Harrison, 1992, 120–21, modified).

⁸³*Summa Theologiae*, i.1.9 (tr. English Dominican Fathers). He adds that hiding the truth provides “defence against the ridicule of the impious, according to the words *Give not that which is holy to dogs* (Matthew 7:6)” (*loc. cit.*; tr. English Dominican Fathers).

⁸⁴*Essais* (tr. Screech, 602).

“whosoever shall drink from...anagogy, howsoever little he shall have tasted of it, shall immediately become drunk because of its marvelous sweetness.”⁸⁵ One historian notes that anagogy “stirs up the desire for eternity in us.”⁸⁶

Spinoza employs anagogy to make his eternal vision more tantalizing. He does so for two reasons. First, he believes that if he merely identifies the highest good without rendering it attractive, he will only worsen our condition of akrasia.⁸⁷ As he argues, there is no guarantee that knowledge of the highest good will overcome our desires for fleeting temporal goods.⁸⁸ The *Ethics* must, then, do more than illuminate the gap between how we presently act and how we would act if we were virtuous. The book must also give us the moral adrenaline needed to leap that gap — it must evoke in us a powerful desire for the highest good, so that we not only hear but follow the voice of our reason. To guide the semi-rational reader, Spinoza must “prefigure rationality by less-than-rational means, and suggest the horizons of reason as a temptation.”⁸⁹

Second, Spinoza believes that the geometrical method may in fact make its subject unattractive. If applied incautiously, the method may backfire, eliciting aversion to the highest good. This concern shows itself in Spinoza’s discussion of mathematics, which he praises:

⁸⁵ *On the similes of Saint Anselm*, chapter 104 (tr. de Lubac, 1998–2009, ii.192, modified).

⁸⁶ De Lubac (1998–2009, ii.197). Luther, on the other hand, calls anagogy “a beautiful harlot, who proves herself specially seductive to idle men” [*Lectures on Genesis*, Comments on Genesis 3:15–20; quoted in @Kaiser1994].

⁸⁷ Soyarslan (2014) discusses Spinoza’s theory of akrasia. Huebner (2016) discusses one kind of akratic — the avowed egalitarian with implicit racial prejudices — in an explicitly Spinozist spirit.

⁸⁸ If we know good from evil, this knowledge is an affect (4P8) which competes with our other affects, and the fact that this affect is a piece of knowledge gives it no edge in the contest (4P14). So even if — say by reading arguments — we gained knowledge of good and evil and came to desire the true good, this desire would be very easily “extinguished or restrained” by our passionate desires for fleeting, temporal goods (4P15), which desires are relatively strong since they are kindled in us by relatively strong causes (4P15D).

⁸⁹ Yovel (1989, 145).

Mathematics, which is concerned not with ends, but only with the essences and properties of figures, [has] shown men another standard of truth. (1APP)

He distinguishes mathematical discourse, in which elements are connected rationally to first principles, from scriptural discourse, which

hands things down and teaches them as each person can most easily perceive them, i.e.,...it does not deduce things from axioms and definitions and connect them with one another in that way, but...speaks only simply,...relating these matters in a style and with expressions most apt to move people's hearts [*animus*]. (III/167)

Spinoza is therefore also ambivalent about using Euclid's method in ethics. Since it is better suited for proving than moving, mathematics may pluck at the heart-strings with unappealing rigidity. This ambivalence is neither conspicuous nor disguised.

[M]en judge things according to the disposition of their brain, and imagine, rather than understand them. For if men had understood them, the things would at least convince them all, even if they did not attract [*allicerent*] them all, as the example of mathematics shows. (II/83, my emphasis)

Mathematics may persuade but seldom attracts. Though he surely knows the pleasures of geometry, Spinoza also believes that the geometrical method can render its objects of study distasteful to some.⁹⁰ So a geometrical work of ethics risks winning the mind but losing the heart.

Unsurprisingly, the way to Spinoza's theory of the heart is through his theory of the stomach. "It is the part of a wise man," he writes, "to refresh and restore himself *in moderation* with pleasant food and drink" (4P45C2s, my emphasis). Overconsumption dampens desire:

[T]his remains to be noted about love: very often it happens that while we are enjoying a thing we wanted, the body acquires from this enjoyment a new constitution, by which it is differently determined,

⁹⁰Schliesser (forthcoming) discusses other reservations Spinoza has about mathematics.

and other images of things are aroused in it; and at the same time the mind begins to imagine other things and desire other things.

For example, when we imagine something that usually pleases us by its taste, we desire to enjoy it — i.e., to consume it. But while we thus enjoy it, the stomach is filled, and the body constituted differently. So if (while the body is now differently disposed) the presence of the food or drink encourages the image of it, and consequently also the striving *or* desire to consume it, then that new constitution will be opposed to this desire *or* striving. Hence, the presence of the food or drink we used to want will be hateful. This is what we call *disgust* and *weariness* [*fastidium et taedium*]. (3P59S, modified)

One craves a tiramisu most when hungrily contemplating an image of one, in one's memory or on the menu. Once sated with delicious tiramisu, one becomes temporarily averse to any further tiramisu. If any remains, one will grow disgusted by it, at least slightly. The reason is that the *presence* of the tiramisu makes one crave it again,⁹¹ and this new craving conflicts with one's new tiramisu-averse constitution, thus somewhat restraining the activity of that constitution.⁹² When one's power of acting is restrained, one feels sad (3P37D). Since sadness accompanied by the idea of its cause is hatred, one comes to hate the tiramisu.⁹³

Spinoza's reflections on food matter here because, as he observes in the quoted passage, they illustrate that any love may curdle into contempt. Geometrical philosophy thus has a danger.⁹⁴ It brings truths before the mind with great clarity,

⁹¹The comment about *presence* chimes with Menninghaus's definition of 'disgust' as "the experience of a nearness that is not wanted" (2003, 1).

⁹²Kant offers a remarkably similar account of "loathing [*Ekel*]": "in this strange sensation, resting on sheer imagination, the object is represented as if it were imposing the enjoyment which we are nevertheless forcibly resisting" (Ak. 5:312; tr. Guyer and Matthews, 190). He notes in the *Anthropology* that "debauchery...gorges with pleasure and eventually causes disgust [*Ekel*]" (Ak. 7:276; tr. Louden, 147).

⁹³Spinoza gives a similar explanation of how sexual jealousy can produce repulsion: one is saddened by a mixture of desire and aversion (3P35, 3P35D, 3P35S).

⁹⁴Maimonides, at *Guide* i.33, compares teaching too much "divine science" to a young person too quickly to

someone feeding a suckling with wheaten bread and meat and giving him wine to drink. He would undoubtedly kill him, not because these ailments are bad or unnatural for man, but because the child that receives them is too weak to digest them so as to derive a benefit from them. Similarly these true opinions were not hidden, enclosed in

and with clarity comes presence (5P7D). If too many facts become too present too quickly, our hunger for them may give way to aversion.

Spinoza worries that his Euclidean formulas will repel the reader in this way. In Part 2 he announces that he will *not* discuss certain axioms with “this [geometrical] method of ours,” partly because “I do not wish to create disgust through excessive comprehensiveness [*prolixitatem*]” (2P40S1, my translation). Spinoza again mentions “our prolix [*prolixo*] geometric order” (my translation) at 4P18S.⁹⁵ Curley comments on these uses of *prolixo*: “I take it that Spinoza feels somewhat defensive about his preferred manner of writing, recognizing that it makes great demands on the reader’s patience and perseverance, and will inevitably encounter resistance” (1:555). For Spinoza, overexposure to the sunlight of truth can lead to philosophical sunburns, or what Plato calls *misologia*, hatred of reason (*Phaedo* 89d). The geometrical method, if pursued *ad nauseam*, will be too satiating and won’t leave one wanting more. Spinoza keeps his philosophy partly covered, as though the torch he carries would flicker out if overexposed.

Schopenhauer expressed a similar distaste for forthrightness in his

riddles...because of something bad being hidden in them, or because they undermine the foundations of the Law, as is thought by ignorant people who deem that they have attained a rank suitable for speculation. Rather they have been hidden because at the outset the intellect is incapable of receiving them.... (tr. Pines, quoted with revisions in Fraenkel, 2008, 18)

⁹⁵His concern about the counterproductive affective force of the geometrical method also shows itself in his textbook *Descartes’s Principles of Philosophy*. In this text, Spinoza briefly exposit some themes from the *Meditations*, in a non-geometrical style. He explains why he has chosen to do so:

Before we come to the propositions themselves and their demonstrations, it seems desirable to explain concisely why Descartes doubted everything, how he brought to light solid foundations for the sciences, and finally, by what means he freed himself from all doubts. We would have reduced even all these things to mathematical order, if we had not judged that the prolixity [*prolixitatem*] required by such a presentation would prevent them from being understood as they ought to be. For they should all be seen in a single act of contemplation [*obtutu*], as in a picture. (1/141; 1:231)

A similar worry surfaces at 4APP: “The things I have taught in [Part 4] concerning the right way of living have not been so arranged that they could be seen at a glance [*aspectu*]” (11/266).

handwritten notes on Aristotle's *De Anima* iii.5:

The darkness of expression appears, after one discovers the meaning, as obviously deliberate, especially when one bears in mind with what revolting [*eckelhaften*] scope and explicitness Aristotle sometimes deals with the simplest truths.⁹⁶

To these authors, inexplicitness is pleasingly evocative and inviting, while alethic nudity is garish and sickly. They prefer dawn and dusk to starkest noon. Sensitive to this concern, Spinoza spices his deductive inferences with seductive allegories.⁹⁷

3.4.3. *Swords into shares*

I have argued that the terms *acquiescentia*, *gloria*, *lex*, and *quaestio* each slide from an eristic meaning to an irenic meaning. This shift sets an anabatic wind blowing at the backs of Spinoza's readers, encouraging them to ascend from the eristic (temporal, imaginative) perspective to the irenic (eternal, intellectual) perspective. This shift, at once semantic and perspectival, evokes a famous prophetic vision:

[God] will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer fight against nation, nor train for war anymore. (Isaiah 2:4, New International Version)

Here Isaiah foresees a time of world-wide disarmament. A universally respected supranational judge will render war obsolete. Reforging their weapons into agricultural tools, people will train one another no longer to fight, but to farm instead. Similarly, Spinoza tries to retrain his reader's imagination, making it less prone to conflict (with itself and with others) and more at peace (with itself and with others). The reader is to continue to think with various ethical terms (or 'images'), and use them no longer in a conflictual way, but instead in a collaborative way.

⁹⁶Tr. in Segev (2014, 538).

⁹⁷Masciandaro (2010) discusses the "spiciness" of anagogy.

Spinoza reforges these images, like a blacksmith beating swords into ploughshares or rifles into garden rakes.⁹⁸

Isaiah's famous prophecy can reveal something important about Spinoza's political objectives in the *Ethics*. The labor that soldiers and farmers perform not only trains their muscles differently but also, he emphasizes, trains their imaginations differently:

[E]ach of us will pass from one thought to another according to how each one's training [*consuetudo*] has ordered the images of things in the body. A soldier, for example, having seen a horse's tracks in the sand [*arena*], will immediately pass in his thoughts from a horse, to a horseman, to a war, and so on. But a farmer will pass in his thoughts from a horse, to a plow, to a field, and so on. And so each one, according to how he has been trained [*consuevi*] to join and connect the images of things in this or that way, will pass from one thought to another. (2P18S; II/107; modified)

My hypothesis that this scholium dialogues with Isaiah's prophecy is evidenced by Spinoza's choice of the same verb, *consuesco*, that Calvin uses to translate the occurrence of 'train' in that prophecy.⁹⁹ We are therefore justified in devoting further attention to the soldier and farmer depicted here.

While Spinoza composed the *Ethics* from various municipalities in the Dutch Republic (Amsterdam, Rijnsburg, Voorburg and The Hague), the Dutch fought three wars against the English and one against the French, whose camp

⁹⁸Spinoza discusses Isaiah at length in the TTP, attending to a theme closely related to the aforementioned vision: Isaiah's account of how local customs will one day yield to a universal law (III/70). Isaiah's vision is repeated almost verbatim at Micah 4:3. Weapons are also made into (or from) farm tools in three classical sources. In Martial's *Epigrams* (xiv.34) an anthropomorphized sickle says, "Our Leader's assured peace curved me for quiet employments. I am now the farmer's, I used to be the soldier's" (tr. Shackleton Bailey, 245). Virgil writes, "Respect for the plough is gone; our lands, robbed of the tillers, lie waste, and curved pruning hooks are forged into straight blades" (*Georgics*, i.506–08; tr. Fairclough, 135). In Ovid we read, "Long time did wars engage mankind; the sword was handier than the share; the plough ox was ousted by the charger; hoes were idle, mattocks were turned into javelins, and a helmet was made out of a heavy rake" (*Fasti*, i.697–700; tr. Frazer, 53). See Selms (1979–80). Spinoza alludes to Virgil's *Eclogues* at III/135 and to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* at 4P17s and III/110.

⁹⁹*Commentari in Jesaiam Prophetam*, 13.

Spinoza visited in the summer of 1673. The soldier that he introduces here has, perhaps, survived the Rampjaar, the year of disaster (1672) that included the traumatizing defeat of the Dutch army. The soldier's brain is still echoing with the fire of muskets and cannon. He is primed to see, hear, and smell the ravages of war everywhere, even in a quiet trail of hoof-prints. Like inkblots or caricatures, these amorphous dents leave room for the imagination, and readily uncover to the soldier his habits of memory. At the sight of the same hoof-prints, images of cultivation and agriculture sprout up in the differently irrigated pathways of the farmer's brain.

According to Spinoza, such differences in imaginative training underlie disagreements over the meanings of texts. In the quoted passage, Spinoza seems to me to be trying to give his readers empirical confirmation of that psychological fact.

A soldier, for example, having seen a horse's tracks in the *arena*, will immediately pass in his thoughts from a horse, to a horseman, to a war, and so on. (2P18S)

To illustrate his theory of memory, Spinoza could easily have written, "A soldier, for example, having seen a horse's tracks, will immediately..." He has gone out of his way to use the phrase *in arena*. Why? I suggest that he does so because *arena* is just the sort of word that a soldier and farmer would probably interpret differently. A soldier would sooner take it to mean 'a site of combat'. A farmer, especially on the coast where Spinoza lived, would sooner read it as 'sand'.¹⁰⁰ The scholium therefore illustrates, with its language, precisely the sort of variance in imaginative disposition which it explicitly describes.

The soldier and farmer not only represent two kinds of imagination. The soldier represents the eristic imagination, which Spinoza associates with wildness and

¹⁰⁰These two meanings of *arena* can be found in a dictionary that Spinoza owned (Calepino, *Passeratii sive linguarum novem*, i.104).

melancholy (4P35S). The farmer represents the irenic imagination, which Spinoza associates with cultivation, sociability, and peace. The political goal of the *Ethics* is to tame eristic readers into irenic ones. Like the *Theological-Political Treatise*, the *Ethics* is antiwar.

Spinoza says that the meaning of a word is determined by the imaginative disposition of the reader (2P18S). Thus, just as scripture's meanings were said to shift for the reader as she spiritually develops, certain meanings in the *Ethics* will shift for the reader as her imagination is tamed.

3.4.4. *Mimesis*

These meaning-shifts are part of an illuminating pattern. The form in which Spinoza couches his theories sometimes mirrors what those theories are about. As we have seen, when describing the world as a psychophysical allegory, he offers an allegorical interpretation of certain Hebrew theses. The meaning-shifts he uses in his description of the world imitate the shift in perspective he is trying to trigger. As is well known, the geometrical form of the *Ethics* mimics the structure it ascribes to the world: for the most part, the conclusions of Spinoza's arguments follow from his first principles just as "all things follow from God's eternal decree with the same necessity as from the essence of a triangle it follows that its three angles are equal to two right angles" (2P49S; II/136).¹⁰¹ And the difficulty that *arena* presents the translator at 2P18S may illustrate a hermeneutic conflict of a farmer-soldier type.

Form mirrors content again in Spinoza's famous discussion of the three kinds of knowledge. He maintains that knowledge of the first kind consists of

¹⁰¹In this respect Spinoza pursues a strategy once attributed to Plato, that of "imitating the order of reality" in the way he writes (Westerink, 1962, 20.2–18). Quoted in Sheppard (2014, 78).

universal notions [formed] from singular things which have been represented to us through the senses *in a way that is mutilated, confused, and without order for the intellect*; for that reason I have been accustomed to call such perceptions “knowledge from *experientia vaga*”. (2P40S2, my emphasis)

Curley’s translation of *experientia vaga* as “random experience” only captures part of the phrase’s meaning.¹⁰² In the quoted passage Spinoza explains why he calls this experience *vagus*: because, in such an experience, things are represented in a way that is “mutilated, confused, and without order for the intellect.”¹⁰³ This trio of adjectives could be paraphrased as *lacking a known cause*,¹⁰⁴ *indistinct*,¹⁰⁵ and *disorderly* — three separate meanings that *vagus* has in Latin.¹⁰⁶ So Spinoza is saying here that the phrase *experientia vaga* is thrice apt. It is as if he had said, “This is the riverside ramp of earth where I store my gold, and that’s why I call it a ‘bank’”. The phrase *experientia vaga* is not (or not merely) a pun. It gives the

¹⁰²A well-known earlier user of this phrase is Francis Bacon (cf. Gabbey, 1996, 172ff.), in whom it means “unsystematic experience.” Bacon accuses earlier scientists of basing their judgments on observations gathered not in planned experiments but in ordinary life, which yields only a haphazard manifold of data. Bacon calls such experiences *vagus*, which we could translate as “random” or “higgledy-piggledy”.

¹⁰³*Mutilate, confuse et sine ordine ad intellectum. Ordine ad* could mean “ordered in accordance with,” which is probably what he has in mind. What distinguishes *experientia vaga* is that it does not follow the order of the intellect, though it can be made to do so using the techniques described in Part 5.

¹⁰⁴In the *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza comments that a certain scriptural passage is “*mutilated*.... For it begins thus: ... ‘Saul was a year old when he reigned, and he reigned over Israel for two years.’ Who, I ask, does not see that the text *omits* Saul’s age when he began to reign?” (III/133, my emphasis). Therefore “mutilated” means “omissive”. An inadequate idea is omissive in the sense that it is not accompanied by information about its cause (1A4, 2P11C).

¹⁰⁵The basis for taking ‘confused’ to mean ‘indistinct’ is this remark in the *Emendation*: “[A]ll confusion results from the fact that the mind...attends at once, without making any distinction, to the many things that are contained in each thing” (I/24; I:29). As Melamed (2009, 75) notes: “For Spinoza, universals are mere mental abstractions that compensate for the limited capacities of our imagination by allowing it to represent a large number of things through one vague representation (2P40S1).”

¹⁰⁶Calepino records that *vagus* can mean ‘disorderly’ and ‘inconstant’ (*Passeratii sive linguarum novem*, ii.578). It can also mean ‘without a known source’ (as in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, xi.667). And it can mean ‘vague’ (as at *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, iii.37). Three of these meanings are mentioned at 2P40S2. ‘Mutilated’ refers to the fact that imaginations lack a known cause (2P11C). Imagination is also ‘inconstant [*inconstans*]’ (III/28). So all of these meanings fit the phrase *experientia vaga*. Since meanings are instances of *experientia vaga*, and since such *experientia* involves conflation, it is not at all surprising that Spinoza conflates together these three meanings of *vagus* when defining the phrase. The phrase applies to its own meaning.

reader introspectible confirmation of Spinoza's theory that generic terms (such as *vagus*) evoke a swirling stew of meanings in the brain.¹⁰⁷

It may be worried that Spinoza undermines the *Ethics* by trying to argue that all communication involves a degree of vagueness and instability. Instead I suspect the *Ethics* has the character of the sentence "This sentence is vague," which involves no obvious contradiction.¹⁰⁸

3.4.5. *Bricolage*

When Spinoza appropriates and redefines extant terminology, he is practising what we might call psychological bricolage. The importance of this practice is clear from his comments on appropriation. We may with reason, he says, appropriate anything to our own ends so long as it is not itself a rational being:

[W]hatever there is in nature apart from men, the principle of seeking our own advantage does not demand that we preserve it. Instead, it teaches us to preserve or destroy it according to its use, or to adapt it to our use in any way whatever. (II/274; I:593)

We must become bricoleurs, improvising ways of empowering ourselves by seeking unexpected uses for whatever is to hand: "we may take for our own use, and use in any way, whatever there is that we judge to be good, or useful for preserving our being and enjoying a rational life" (II/268; I:589). The reasonable person recycles what's available, like a chef broiling stale bread into French onion soup. We must also invent new purposes for what we find within us, the affects and images that dominate our thinking:

¹⁰⁷Spinoza holds that generic terms evoke too many memories at once for the mind to keep them clearly apart. The mind "imagine[s] all the bodies [presented in these memories] confusedly, without any distinction" (2P40s1).

¹⁰⁸Russell (1923) and Austin (1962) suggest that 'vague' is vague. Sorensen (1985) argues their case.

[I]n ordering our thoughts and images, we must always attend to what is good [i.e. useful, cf. 4DEF1] in each thing so that in this way we are always determined to acting from an affect of joy. For example, if someone sees that he pursues *gloria* too much, he should think of its *correct use*, the end for which it ought be pursued, and the means by which it can be acquired, not of its misuse and uselessness [*vanitas*]¹⁰⁹.... (5P10S, my emphasis, modified)

Here Spinoza advises us not to try to stamp out our desire for glory but to seek its “correct use.” The same goes for any harmful ideas and images. For example, each man’s desire to convert others to his temperament¹¹⁰ is unhealthy until its correct use is found. The correct use of this desire is to motivate the desirer to teach others how to be rational. This desire, which at first counted as “ambition” (which 3DA44 calls an “excessive desire for *gloria*”), is now “the virtue called morality” (5P4S; II/283; I:598). If we wish to have disciples, we can try to stop or, more effectively, become the sort of person who deserves them.

As we saw above, Spinoza also says that we should seek the correct use for the *images* we find within us (5P4S). For him, the representation of a word, as it exists in the brain, as well as the representation of a word-meaning, are both images (2P18S). (Strictly, an image is something physical — the trace of the brain’s encounter with an external object — while an imagination is an idea of an image; I slur over the distinction.) To mean something by a word or expression is to *use* it with that meaning: “words have a definite meaning only from their use [*usu*]” (III/161). It follows that rational bricoleurs sometimes put the words they find ricocheting through their own heads — which often come from other authors — to

¹⁰⁹Spinoza is referring to the form of *gloria* called *vana gloria* (‘vainglory’).

¹¹⁰He derives the ubiquity of this desire as follows. We naturally imitate the affects of others. So, if our neighbor hates what we love, then we will come to hate it too, at least a bit. At the same time, we will continue to love it. This is uncomfortable. So, we try to get those around us to love what we love, and hate what we hate. See 3P28, 3P31, and 3P31C.

new uses.

Spinoza's tactic of redefining extant terminology may descend from the literary tradition of *cento*. It is widely appreciated that Spinoza owes a philosophical debt not only to Stoic philosophers such as Seneca and Cicero, but also to the neo-Stoic novelist Francisco de Quevedo.¹¹¹ While declaring that prophets know little, in practice Spinoza often treats the prophets, poets, and playwrights as valuable informants about the human condition.¹¹² We are therefore justified in taking seriously the hypothesis that the precise game Spinoza plays, when redefining terms like *acquiescentia* or *Deus*, is a variant of the literary game of *cento*, played by the neo-Stoic Justus Lipsius, and by Quevedo and his circle. In his 1590 *Politica*, Lipsius adopts a "certain unexpected style" (sig. **v.) which he explains as follows:

They say I have quoted certain things incorrectly, and not in accordance with the spirit of the writer in question. How I laughed when I heard this! For in fact these ignorant people accuse me of something for which a more educated person would praise me. What else could I have done, or should I have done, in this work? Am I not weaving a *Cento* (for that is what this work is), in which these departures from the original meaning are always allowed and even praised? They should consult the poets, who in ancient times and in the present have played this game. (*Politica*, 15–16; tr. Waszink, 68–69)

The *Politica* is a *cento*, a text built partly out of quotations taken from earlier authors. Like many *cento* makers, Lipsius delights in quoting authors against their original intentions, using the transposition to make the words mean something new. He defends the practice as biomimicry: "The spider's web [*textus*] is no whit the better because it spins it from its own entrails; and my text no whit the worse

¹¹¹Ettinghausen (1972) surveys Quevedo's Stoicism. Spinoza owned at least three Quevedos (*La cuna y sepultura*, *Obras de Quevedo*, and *Poésías*).

¹¹²On the influence of Terence and Plautus, see pp. 61ff.

because, as does the bee, I gather its components from other authors' flowers."¹¹³
 What flowers make for their own purposes, he borrows for his honeycomb.

The earliest *cento* makers were admirers of Virgil who created new poems by rearranging lines excerpted from his works.¹¹⁴ Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) weaves in quotes from other authors. Especially significant here is the Spanish poet Félix Lope de Vega, who is often read alongside two authors we know Spinoza read avidly: the aforementioned Quevedo and Luis de Góngora (to whom Spinoza refers at 4P39S). In 1605, Lope de Vega published a multilingual

¹¹³*Op. cit.* (tr. Moss, 1998, 424).

¹¹⁴Tucker (2013) tells the story in wonderful detail. The term *cento* may derive from the Greek *kentrone* (patchwork garment). In his 1605 *Remaines of a greater worke, concerning Britaine*, William Camden includes a Latin poem which he "quilted as it were out of shreds of divers Poets, such as Schollers do call a Cento" (quoted in Skinner, 1996, 134). The practice of quoting authors against their intentions may have its roots in cledonomanacy (see p. 80, n. 37).

sonnet composed of lines cannibalized from famous earlier poems.¹¹⁵

Like the centonists, Spinoza shifts the meanings of *acquiescentia* and *gloria* by transferring them into a new context.¹¹⁶ There may well be a second reason that Spinoza lets his meanings shift: he is trying to give us evidence for his audacious thesis that bodies have no less wondrous power than minds.

3.5. Conclusion

Spinoza insists that bodies have their own lively, independent (2P7s), unpredictable powers: “no one has yet determined what the body can do.... [T]he body itself,

¹¹⁵*Rimas*, sonnet 112. Here are excerpts from the first five poems he plundered. Lope de Vega copied each italicized line (sometimes inexactly) into his sonnet, and noted the source in the margins.

1. “*Le donne, i cavalier, le arme, gli amori*, / le cortesie, l’audaci imprese io canto, / che furo al tempo che passaro i Mori / d’Africa il mare, e in Francia nocquer tanto...” (Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*).
2. “A maior parte aqui pasan do dia / *Em doces jogos e em prazer contino*: / Ela nos paços logra seus amores, / As outras polas sombras entre as flores” (Camões, *Os Lusíadas*).
3. “Nebbia o polvere al vento / *fuggo per più non esser pellegrino* / et così vada s’è pur mio destino” (Petrarch, *Il Canzoniere*, “Canzone V”).
4. “O Musa, tu, che di caduchi allori / Non circondi la fronte in Helicon / *Ma sù nel cielo infra i beati Chori* / Hai di stelle immortali aurea corona” (Tasso, *Gerusalemme liberata*).
5. “...suspiret ‘eheu, ne rudis agminum / sponsus lacessat regius asperum / tactu leonem, quem cruenta / per medias rapit ira caedes.’ / *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*: / mors et fugacem persequitur virum / nec parcat inbellis iuventae / poplitibus timidoque tergo” (Horace, *Carmina*, iii.2).

Thus Lope de Vega’s sonnet begins:

Le donne, i cavalier, le arme, gli amori,
 en dolces jogos, en pracer contino
 fuggo per più non esser pellegrino
 ma su nel cielo infra i beati chori
 Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori: ...

We might translate this as follows:

Ladies, knights, wars, passion
 sweet games, and blissful hours,
 I flee to be no more an earthbound pilgrim
 but far in heaven among the blessed choirs;
 To die for native land is sweet and fitting ...

This translation itself plunders five translations: Ariosto (2009, 1), Camões (1776), Petrarch (1999, 461), Tasso (2000), and Horace (2008, 91). Multilingual writing of this kind is sometimes called “macaronic” (see e.g. Beatie, 1967) and occurs elsewhere in the Spanish literature of the Renaissance. Spinoza’s debts to this literature are traced in Yovel (1989) and Blanco Mayor (1994).

¹¹⁶See also the discussion of antanaclasses, p. 23.

simply from the laws of its own nature, can do many things which its mind wonders at” (3P2S). Spinoza thus showcases bodies’ *agency*, understood as diverse fecundity (4P38, 5P39). Few claims in the *Ethics* are bolder than 2P2: “Extension is an attribute of God...” As “corporeal motions” (2P49S), words conceal unforeclosed potencies.

This idea of Latin’s vitality would, of course, become all but obsolete in the century following Spinoza’s death, as the vernaculars took over. By 1790 it was possible for Kant to say that the only books that can help their readers become artists are composed in classical languages, for these languages rest unchanging, insulated from the wear and tear of common use.¹¹⁷ For Kant what makes Cicero’s guides to oratory so effective is something their author could not have predicted: a *rigor mortis* has enveloped the language in which they are written. But it wasn’t so in 1677. Spinoza wanted the Latin lexicon to appear in his work as a striving, developing organism.

In the 1660s and 1670s, Spinoza wrote a theological-political treatise and an ethics. In substance and in style, the passionate author of that treatise — bent on advancing the cause of freedom in his particular time and place — has long seemed to contrast starkly with the ethicist who wires us unemotive telegrams from eternity.

¹¹⁷In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant explains:

The models of beautiful art are thus the only means for transmitting [the “mental powers” needed to make beautiful art] to posterity, which could not happen through mere descriptions (especially not in the field of the arts of discourse); and even in the latter case it is only those in old and dead languages, now preserved only as learned ones, that can become classical. (Ak. 5:309–10; tr. Guyer and Matthews, 188)

[The classical languages] do not have to suffer the alterations that unavoidably affect living languages, which make noble expressions flat, common ones outmoded, and newly created ones of only brief currency. [Each classical language has] a grammar that is not subject to any willful change of fashion but has its own unalterable rules. (Ak. 5:232; tr. Guyer and Matthews, 116)

He echoes this point at Ak. 5:305 (tr. Guyer and Matthews, 184). Cf. Ak. 5:282–83 (tr. Guyer and Matthews, 163), and Ak. 16:144 (tr. Bowman et al., 538).

Yet we can now see, between these two gentlemen, a similarity not previously noticed. The theological-political Spinoza asks us to interpret the scriptures as literally as possible. The ethical Spinoza unlocks the same hermeneutical tool shed, though he retrieves a different spade. In his view, we must recognize that human history itself is merely the patent content of human experience, while its latent content is the framework of eternal essences of which the New Science dreamed.

Appendix A

Causation, perception, and inherence

In chapter 1, I helped myself to ten claims about some of Spinoza’s basic metaphysical relations: IS CAUSED BY, FOLLOWS FROM, IS EFFICIENTLY CAUSED BY, IS PERCEIVED THROUGH, IS CONCEIVED THROUGH, IS UNDERSTOOD THROUGH, and IS IN. I defend these claims here.

A.1. Efficient causation

To understand Spinoza’s remarks on causation, we must observe that he deems three relations coextensive:

(B) IS CAUSED BY $\leftrightarrow$ FOLLOWS FROM $\leftrightarrow$ IS EFFICIENTLY CAUSED BY

The coextensivity of ‘follows from’ and ‘is efficiently caused by’ is clear from 1P28D, where Spinoza uses *sive* to equate “to follow from” and “to be determined to exist and produce an effect by”. He also writes: “whatever follows from human nature, insofar as it is defined by reason, must be understood through human nature alone (by 3DEF2), as through its proximate cause” (4P35D). Further, he infers from ‘follows

from' to 'is efficiently caused by', for example when he moves from the premise that

From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes (i.e., everything which can fall under an infinite intellect) (1P16)

to the conclusion that

God is the efficient cause of all things which can fall under an infinite intellect. (1P16C1)¹

And he infers from 'is caused by' to 'follows from' (1A3). Further he reasons:

God is the *efficient cause*, not only of the existence of things, but also of their essence. (1P25, my emphasis)

If you deny [the claim just quoted], then God is not the *cause* of the essence of things. (1P25D, my emphasis)

If God does not efficiently cause my essence and your essence and so on, then He does not cause them in any way. Spinoza is probably relying on a tacit premise here, because the inference is obviously invalid as it stands. We should take him to accept the weakest non-*ad-hoc* premise that makes it valid. These four premises would make the inference valid:

- (1) If God does not efficiently cause any essences, then God does not cause any essences.
- (2) For any A, if A does not efficiently cause any essences, then A does not cause any essences.
- (3) For any B, if God does not efficiently cause B, then God does not cause B.
- (4) For any A and B, if A does not efficiently cause B, then A does not cause B.

¹Here I follow Newlands (2010, 480–81).

It would be *ad hoc* for Spinoza to accept any of premises (1), (2), or (3) while denying (4). Premise (4) might seem too strong: could it be that some inferences about how God causes things cannot be strengthened into inferences about how non-gods cause things? But Spinoza draws no deep distinction between how God causes and how His creatures do. The causal power of individuals *is* the causal power of God (4P4D). *A fortiori*, my causal power and God's are not of different kinds, though He has more of it, and gets different things done with it. Now, God causes Himself (1DEF1), and this might be taken to suggest that He has a special sort of causality not shared with us. But it isn't so: "God must be called the cause of all things in the same sense in which He is called the cause of Himself" (1P25S).² We should impute nothing stronger than (4), so (4) belongs to Spinoza.³ Thus (B).

We can strengthen (B): for Spinoza "to cause" is often just shorthand for "to efficiently cause". He writes, "In nature there cannot be two substances of the same attribute.... Therefore one cannot be the cause of the other, *or* cannot be produced by the other" (1P6D). Here he uses *sive* to signal the synonymy of 'cause' with 'produce', meaning 'efficiently cause' by 'produce'.

A.2. Causing and conceiving

Basic to Spinoza's metaphysics is another relation, "is conceived through." It is, I believe, coextensive with the relation "is caused by". Consider how Spinoza defines

²As Deleuze points out (1992, 162–64; 375 n. 18), this is a rejoinder to Descartes's *Replies to the First Objections* (Adam and Tannery, 1964–1974, ix.87–88).

³He does posit formal causes; but for him, what formally causes something efficiently causes it. On the importance of non-efficient causality in the *Ethics*, see Guérout (1968, 293–94; 297–99), Carraud (2002, 323–26), Viljanen (2011, especially chapter 2), and Hübner (2015). Whether Spinoza countenances *final causes* in our sense of the phrase is complicated by this possibility: he may think, with some Scholastics, that to act for a final cause is to act with a free will (see Schmid, 2015).

two crucial notions in his theory of knowledge, “adequate cause” and “inadequate cause”:

I call that cause ‘adequate’ whose effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived through it. But I call it ‘partial’, *or* ‘inadequate’, if its effect cannot be understood through it alone. (3DEF1, translation edited)

Here Spinoza uses “*or* [*sive*]” to signal that ‘partial cause’ and ‘inadequate cause’ are synonyms. Thus ‘adequate cause’ and ‘complete cause’ are synonyms too. The quoted passage can be paraphrased: If B is the effect of A, then B can be clearly and distinctly perceived through A. That is: if B is caused by A, then B can be clearly and distinctly perceived through A. Since God has all possible perceptions (2P3), what can be perceived, is perceived. So it’s clear from the quoted passage that

(C) IS CAUSED BY $\rightarrow$ IS PERCEIVED THROUGH.

Spinoza also believes that for any A and B, if A is “perceived through” B, then A is “conceived through” B. We know this because he says that

a mode...can be conceived through God alone. So if a mode is conceived to exist necessarily...it must necessarily be inferred, *or* perceived [*concludi sive percipi*] through some attribute of God.... (1P23D)

He is making this inference:

A mode must be perceived through God.

Therefore, a mode must be conceived through some attribute of God.

An “attribute” of God is God considered in one particular way. So, in some contexts, the term ‘God’ is interchangeable with a phrase denoting an attribute of God, such as ‘Thought’ or ‘Extension’. God is a substance (the only one), and Spinoza writes “substances, *or* what is the same, their attributes” (1P4D). To conceive something

through God is, therefore, to conceive it through an attribute of God. The inference that I just mentioned can thus be rewritten as follows:

A mode must be perceived through an attribute of God.

Therefore, a mode must be conceived through an attribute of God.

Obviously a premise is missing here. The fact that Spinoza draws this inference gives us reason to attribute to him the weakest non-*ad-hoc* premise that makes the inference valid. That premise is: “if something A is perceived through something B, then A is conceived through B.” Weaker premises are *ad hoc*, such as “If a mode is perceived through something then it is conceived through it,” and “If something is perceived through an attribute of God then it is conceived through that attribute.”

A good piece of evidence for

(D) IS PERCEIVED THROUGH $\leftrightarrow$ IS UNDERSTOOD THROUGH

is a definition that we just had under the microscope: “I call that cause ‘adequate’ whose effect can be clearly and distinctly *perceived through* it. But I call it ‘partial’, or ‘inadequate’, if its effect cannot be *understood through* it alone” (3DEF1, my emphasis). The truth of

(E) IS UNDERSTOOD THROUGH $\leftrightarrow$ IS CONCEIVED THROUGH

is clear from 5P28D: “whatever we understand clearly and distinctly, we *understand* either *through* itself, or through something else which is *conceived through* itself” (my emphasis). Thus:

(F) IS PERCEIVED THROUGH $\leftrightarrow$ IS CONCEIVED THROUGH. From (D) and (E).

And so:

(G) IS CAUSED BY $\rightarrow$ IS CONCEIVED THROUGH. From (C) and (F).

A.3. Everything's caused by what it's in

We can see that

(H) IS CONCEIVED THROUGH $\rightarrow$ IS CAUSED BY

from this inference:

If God is not the cause of the essence of things [then] the essence of things can be conceived without God. (1P25D)

The weakest non-*ad-hoc* premise that would make this inference valid is: if B is not the cause of A, then A can be conceived without B. (Restricting the premise, either by putting 'God' in place of A, or 'the essence of things' in place of B, makes it *ad hoc*.) So Spinoza presumably accepts the contrapositive: if A cannot be conceived without B, then A is caused by B. 'Conceived through' is synonymous with 'cannot be conceived without'. Whence (H). And so, as promised at the start of this section,

(I) IS CONCEIVED THROUGH $\leftrightarrow$ IS CAUSED BY. From (G) and (H).

To see why

(J) IS IN $\rightarrow$ IS CONCEIVED THROUGH

consider two definitions:

By 'substance' I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself.... (1DEF3)

By 'mode' I understand the affections of a substance, *or* that which is in another through which it is also conceived. (1DEF5)

"[T]here is nothing except substance and its modes" (1P28D), so things either exist in themselves and are conceived through themselves, or they exist in some other

thingamaroodle and are conceived through it. Either way, if they exist in something, then they are conceived through it. For which reason (J). Therefore:

(K) IS IN $\rightarrow$ IS CAUSED BY. From (I) and (J).

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