The Ethics of Joy

Spinoza on the Empowered Life

Andrew Youpa

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ANDREW YOUPA

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Abbreviations

Translations of Spinoza's works are from Edwin Curley's *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, Volumes I and II, unless I indicate otherwise. References to passages in Spinoza's *Ethics* cite the part by Arabic numeral, and then I use the following abbreviations:

a	axiom
App	appendix
c	corollary
d	demonstration
l	lemma
D	definition
DA	Part 3 Definitions of the Affects
G	Gebhardt edition's pagination
GDA	Part 3 General Definition of the Affects
exp	explication
p	proposition
post	postulate
Pref	Preface
s	scholium

For example, 4p28d refers to *Ethics*, Part 4, proposition 28, demonstration.

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Introduction

This book offers a reading of Spinoza's moral philosophy. Specifically, it is a philosophical exposition of his masterpiece, the *Ethics*, that focuses on his moral philosophy. Central to the reading I defend is the view that there is a way of life that is best for human beings, and what makes it best is that it is the way of life that is in agreement with human nature. I begin this study with Spinoza's theory of emotions, and I do so because it is one of two doctrines that fundamentally shape the structure and content of his vision of the way of life that is best. The other is his view that striving to persevere in being is the actual essence of a finite thing (3p7). Together these make up the foundation of Spinoza's moral philosophy, and it is from these two doctrines that his moral philosophy emerges. In saying this I am not denying that his substance monism, the doctrines of mind-body parallelism and identity, the tripartite theory of knowledge, and his denial of libertarian free will, among others, also belong to the foundation of his moral philosophy. Each of these contributes in its way to the portrait of the best way of life, and they play important roles in the chapters that follow. But it is his theory of emotions and the theory of human nature on which it rests that are chiefly responsible for the structure and content of his moral philosophy.

The reading I offer in this book is the result of my interest in what Spinoza's ideas contribute to our understanding of human life and how it should be lived. It is this interest that informs the approach I take to the *Ethics*. In taking this approach I have helped myself at times to philosophical concepts and terminology from contemporary philosophy that shed light on his views. Although the language I use is in some cases drawn from contemporary philosophy, the underlying concepts are of much older origin and are at home in the philosophical tradition. To take one example from the following chapters, chapter 3 is about what I call Spinoza's "moral realism." I believe that Spinoza is a moral realist in an important and illuminating sense of the term "moral realist." I do not think we can claim to understand his moral philosophy unless we understand the type of realism on which it rests. Still, talk of Spinoza's moral realism may strike some readers as out of place and

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might raise concerns about anachronism. My goal is to get Spinoza right. I do not wish to place his views in a framework for which they are ill suited, even if that framework might make his thought appear more fashionable (or less unfashionable) than it is. While I have sought to avoid the pitfall of anachronism, I have also sought to avoid treating Spinoza's moral philosophy merely as a chapter in the history of ethics. I apply contemporary terms to Spinoza, but I do so only when they best enable me to explain his views and demonstrate their enduring relevance.

Throughout this book I use the phrase "moral philosophy" to refer to the practical project that is contained in the *Ethics*. Here, at the outset, I wish to clarify how I use this phrase and to explain how I use the word "moral" in reference to Spinoza's practical doctrines. It is important to see that Spinoza's moral philosophy does not fit within a framework that takes accountability as an essential function of morality. An ethics of accountability is about what a person deserves. It is a system for taking account of an individual's moral worth, and its currency is praise and blame, and reward and punishment. An ethics of accountability nicely fits an economic model of morality. On this model an essential feature of morality is that it assigns credit and debt to individuals for their contributions in the economy of good and evil.

If a requirement for being a moral philosophy is acceptance of the view that accountability is an essential function of morality, Spinoza's *Ethics* does not contain a moral philosophy. The ethics of the *Ethics* is not about what a person deserves. Its focus is not what makes a person praiseworthy and blameworthy, morally or otherwise. Rather, it is about how to live joyously and lovingly, not sadly and hatefully. But I am not convinced that accountability is an essential function of morality, and I see no good reason to restrict our conception of moral philosophy to the accountability project. On the contrary, moral thinking is assisted by encountering perspectives that challenge us and help us overcome the moral blindness that accompanies dogmatism and complacency. A broader conception of moral philosophy assists moral thinking more effectively than a conception restricted exclusively to the accountability project. In this book I use "moral philosophy" in a broad sense that includes the accountability project and the type of project of which Spinoza's is an instance, and I use the word "moral" to refer to doctrines that compose such projects.

Instead of an ethics of accountability, Spinoza's is an ethics of joy. By this I mean that it is centered on what, with respect to mental and physical wellness, deserves our attention and what, with respect to mental and physical

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wellness, does not deserve our attention. Spinoza's ethics of joy reminds us that every way of life enacts and embodies a system of triage in its allocation of care to ourselves, care to others, and care to things in the world around us. Not every system of triage—not every way of life—is arranged such that it expresses mental and physical wellness and such that it promotes mental and physical wellness in oneself and others and at the same time alleviates mental and physical illness in oneself and others. Some ways of life do the opposite: they impair and degrade us mentally and physically and they impair and degrade our loved ones mentally and physically. Spinoza's moral philosophy is a framework for a system of triage that promotes mental and physical wellness and that alleviates mental and physical illness. Spinoza's ethics of joy belongs to a philosophical tradition that follows a medical model of morality.[1] Accordingly, the purpose of morality is not to assign credit and debt in the economy of good and evil. Its purpose is to heal the sick and empower the vulnerable, which is to say it is for each and every one of us.

The overriding concerns for Spinoza's project are one's way of life and how one allocates one's attention. In contrast, an ethics of accountability is concerned with choices and actions, and less so with one's way of life. An ethics of accountability gravitates toward a decision procedure that we can use in every circumstance to give us the single right choice and right action, and there can, it seems, be only one correct decision procedure owing to the demands of accounting. Multiple procedures that issue in sometimes conflicting decisions and actions would create a problem for calculating a person's moral worth. Unlike an ethics of accountability, Spinoza does not offer a decision procedure. Furthermore, Spinoza's moral philosophy is pluralistic in that there are as many good ways of life as there are ways of living joyously and lovingly. There is a variety of empowered ways of life and there is a variety of disempowered ways of life.

It is not that Spinoza has nothing to say about and nothing to contribute to an ethics of accountability. However, the accountability project is, in Spinoza's view, the primary function of the state. The rules and standards that set out what a person deserves is a function of the state and the common agreements that constitute the basis of the state. Spinoza's view is that the norms by which

[1] In this regard Spinoza's moral philosophy can be seen as a descendant of the Hellenistic philosophical tradition. In chapter 5, I maintain that Spinoza's moral philosophy can also be seen as a naturalistic ancestor of our contemporary fields of biology, psychology, and medicine. Regarding the centrality of the medical model of moral philosophy in the Hellenistic philosophical tradition, see Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton University Press, 1994).

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we judge what an individual deserves are artificial.[2] They are created by a social contract and enforced by the state apparatus by means of a system of rewards and punishments. For Spinoza, a theory of the accountability project belongs to a treatise on political philosophy. His *Theological-Political Treatise* and the unfinished *Political Treatise* contain his thoughts on the foundation of the accountability project, the form it should take in the constitution of the state, and its limits.

An important feature that accountability projects and way of life projects have in common is that they are normative, although normativity takes different shapes in these distinct projects. Normativity for the accountability project standardly takes the form of claims about what a person morally ought to do and morally ought not to do. In a way of life project, normativity standardly takes the form of claims about what virtue calls for and what a model human being would do. While normativity takes different shapes in these types of projects, both are normative in the sense that their doctrines constitute standards of success and failure. Just as it is possible to fail to do what one morally ought to do, it is possible to fail to do what virtue calls for and what the model person would do. Neither the accountability project nor the way of life project takes an exclusively descriptive, anthropological approach to human life. They are action-guiding. They are intended to guide the actions and lives of rational agents insofar as we are rational.

A key doctrine in the foundation of Spinoza's moral philosophy is the *conatus* doctrine (i.e., 3p6). This much is uncontroversial. While scholars agree that the *conatus* doctrine is pivotal, scholars have not always agreed on how to understand it, and divergent understandings of the *conatus* doctrine lead to diverse readings of his moral philosophy. An important passage for my understanding of the *conatus* doctrine is 4D8: "By virtue and power

[2] For Spinoza, the central notions of the accountability project are disobedience (*inobedientia*), obedience (*obedientia*), sin (*peccatum*), and merit (*meritum*), and he holds that these notions have content only in the civil state where "it is decided by common agreement what is good or what is evil" (4p37s2). Such notions are empty where is there no common agreement about what is good and what is evil, such as in the state of nature. This is also true of the notions of just and unjust as these relate to property norms. Although the accountability project's norms—the norms by which an individual is judged deserving (undeserving) or worthy (unworthy) of praise, blame, rewards, and punishments—are established by common agreement and enforced by the state, it does not follow that an ethics of joy and its notions of good, evil, joy, sadness, freedom, and bondage are artificial. For a reading congenial to the view I am putting forward here about Spinoza's theory of the accountability project, see Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the Latent Processes of His Reasoning*, volume II (Harvard University Press, 1962[1934]), pp. 246–249; David Bidney, *The Psychology and Ethics of Spinoza: A Study in the History and Logic of Ideas* (Yale University Press, 1940), pp. 327–330; John Carriero, "The Ethics in Spinoza's *Ethics*," in *Essays in Spinoza's Ethical Theory*, ed. Mathew J. Kisner and Andrew Youpa (Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 20–40.

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I understand the same thing, i.e. (by IIIP7), virtue, insofar as it is related to man, is the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as he has the power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone." The reading I offer in this book is largely a matter of taking up and running with Spinoza's identification of an individual's *conatus* with adequate causal power. A finite existent is a finite system of adequate causal power. Our lives are shaped in part by expressing God's power directly—that is, through the actual essence that is our adequate causal power. Our lives are also shaped by expressing God's power indirectly through the causal influence of finite things whose natures do not entirely agree with human nature. The best way of life is that which follows from our actual essence. It is the way of life that follows from God's power directly.

In chapters 1 and 2, I argue that Spinoza believes that emotions *qua* mental items are symptomatic representations of changes in the power of the subject's body and as such constitute what I call "axiological information." An episode of joy is axiological information in the sense that the qualitative character of an episode of joy informs the subject that his body's power is increasing. The qualitative character of an episode of sadness informs the subject that his body's power is decreasing. In maintaining that emotions as mental items are symptomatic representations of changes in the power of the subject's body, I am not denying that emotions are at the same time increases and decreases in the mind's power. There is no question that they are increases and decreases in the mind's power. My characterization of emotions as symptomatic representations is intended to capture Spinoza's talk in the "General Definition of the Affects" about how an emotion "affirms of its Body, or of some part of it, a greater or lesser force of existing than before." It is also meant to capture his claim in the Explication of the "General Definition of the Affects" that an emotion must "indicate or express a constitution of the Body (or some part of it)." He also uses the word "sign" (4p47s) to describe this aspect of emotions.

Spinoza's theory of emotions is relatively foreign to the mainstream of contemporary philosophical psychology, but it may be closer to the truth than the mainstream view. The latter is a descendant of Hume's theory of emotion, and Spinoza's theory stands in sharp contrast to Hume's view that a passion is an "original existence."[3] According to Hume, a passion "contains not any

[3] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford University Press, 2000), 2.3.3, p. 266.

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representative quality, which renders it a copy of any other existence or modification. When I am angry, I am actually possest with the passion, and in that emotion have no more a reference to any other object, than when I am thirsty, or sick, or more than five foot high."[4] Whereas Hume denies that an emotion has a representative quality, Spinoza maintains that an emotion, as it exists in the mind, represents a change in the power of the subject's body.

Because emotions in Spinoza's view are representational in the sense that they inform us about enhancements and impairments to our nature, his theory of emotions is a bridge to the conception of human nature on which his moral philosophy is founded. In chapter 3, I argue that Spinoza subscribes to a type of moral realism, and I show that the source of his moral realism is the realism in his conception of human nature. Although I borrow the language "moral realism" from contemporary philosophy, I do not borrow a specific conception of moral realism from contemporary philosophy and impose it on Spinoza. I stipulate that "moral realism" is a theory of the way of life that is best for us as human beings, a theory based on a view on which goodness and badness are objective properties. This conception of moral realism is recognizably moral in that it is about an account of the way of life that is best for human beings. It is recognizably realist in that it holds that goodness and badness are objective properties. The main purpose of my discussion of his moral realism is not to bring Spinoza into dialogue with contemporary moral philosophers. My goal, as I said, is to get Spinoza right, and I do not think we get him right unless we understand the foundation of his moral philosophy. On the reading I defend, it is a finite thing's actual essence—its adequate causal power—that serves as the foundation of his moral philosophy.

In his *From Bondage to Freedom: Spinoza on Human Excellence*, Michael LeBuffe defends a reading according to which Spinoza is a type of moral anti-realist. I examine LeBuffe's anti-realist reading in chapter 4, and I also examine three passages from the *Ethics* that appear to conflict with the realist reading I favor. Any broad reading of the *Ethics* will have its share of strengths and weaknesses. Any such reading will nicely fit and illuminate some passages and will be an awkward fit with and obscure other passages. This is as true for a reading that focuses on his metaphysics as it is for a reading that focuses on his moral philosophy. Because no reading can avoid running up against passages that challenge it and raise difficult questions for it, arriving at the most reasonable view is in part a matter of assessing the

[4] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2.3.3, p. 266.

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challenges that it faces. In this chapter I argue that the challenges that my reading faces are less severe than the ones that LeBuffe's powerful and sophisticated alternative faces.

In chapters 5, 6, and 7, I provide a reading of Spinoza's various statements about goodness and badness, including his view of the highest good. At the center of the reading I defend in these chapters is the pair of doctrines I refer to as the *Wellness as Underivative Goodness Doctrine* and the *Illness as Underivative Badness Doctrine*:

> *Wellness as Underivative Goodness Doctrine*: The goodness of wellness is underivative—that is, enhancements in power are good in and of themselves.

> *Illness as Underivative Badness Doctrine*: The badness of illness is underivative—that is, impairments of power are bad in and of themselves.

These doctrines make up the normative core of Spinoza's moral philosophy. What makes our lives good is that we are mentally and physically well; what makes our lives bad is that we are mentally and physically ill. Further, Spinoza's view is that mental and physical wellness is the source of the goodness of our good deeds; mental and physical illness is the source of the badness of our bad deeds. Good deeds follow from mental and physical wellness (i.e., joy and love). Bad deeds follow from mental and physical illness (i.e., sadness and hate).

With respect to external objects, it is their causal contribution to human wellness and illness that makes them good and bad. Spinoza subscribes to a relational theory of value with respect to external objects. It is relational, but not relativistic, in the anthropologist's sense of "relativistic." External objects are good insofar as they contribute to increases in human wellness, and they are bad insofar as they cause increases in human illness. The underivative goodness of human wellness and the underivative badness of human illness are the sources of the goodness and badness of human deeds and of external objects.

Chapter 7 addresses the question whether Spinoza shares Hume's view that reason is a slave of the passions. According to Hume, knowledge is not an independent source of emotions and desires.[5] It is not a source of

[5] Hume writes, "Since reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to volition, I infer, that the same faculty is as incapable of preventing volition, or of disputing the preference with any passion or emotion. . . . Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2.3.3, p. 266).

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emotions and desires independent of preexisting emotions and desires. If Hume is right, knowledge is motivationally inert. Does Spinoza share this position? Is it the case that, for Spinoza, knowledge is motivationally inert? It can seem as if he agrees, for he writes, "From all this, then, it is clear that we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it" (3p9s). This seems to suggest that judgments of good and evil are not an independent source of emotions and desires. Judgments of good and evil arise from emotions and desires. They do not give rise to emotions and desires. Now, it seems reasonable to think that if any knowledge is an independent source of emotions and desires, knowledge of good and evil is such a source. Therefore, if knowledge of good and evil is not a source of motivation, knowledge generally, it seems, is not a source of motivation. In chapter 7, I show that this line of reasoning does not hold up as an understanding of Spinoza's view. Knowledge, for Spinoza, is an independent source of emotions and desires. Metaphysical knowledge is identical to an enhancement of our power and as such is, or is accompanied by, joy.

There is considerable debate among early modern scholars about Spinoza's view of the type of freedom that human beings can achieve. There is also debate about whether the free human that appears in propositions 4p67, 4p68, 4p69, 4p70, 4p71, and 4p72 is the model of human nature that Spinoza mentions in the Preface to Part 4 of the *Ethics*. In chapter 8, I argue for a specific conception of Spinozistic freedom that I call the "Causal Adequacy reading," and I make a case for the view that the free human is, according to Spinoza, the model of human nature and that actual human beings can achieve the freedom that the model illustrates. A life of genuine freedom is not inaccessible to us, contrary to the view of some scholars.

Chapters 9 and 10 take up Spinoza's theory of virtue and his concrete doctrines about the best way of life. In these chapters I focus primarily on Spinoza's conclusions about living well and less on the arguments by which he reaches his conclusions. I have two reasons for this approach. First, I am not convinced that Kantians in ethics are Kantians because of an argument that Kant or Korsgaard makes. Nor am I convinced that utilitarians are utilitarians because of an argument that Bentham or Mill or Singer makes. This is not how moral thinking works, and we miss something important when we imagine otherwise when engaging with Spinoza's views. What we miss is an alternative way of thinking about our lives—an alternative that is

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illuminating and insightful. As far as moral thinking is concerned, the presentation of an illuminating alternative is arguably the best that a philosopher can do.

Second, and relatedly, in chapters 9 and 10, I set aside the geometric apparatus in an effort to get to the heart of Spinoza's moral philosophy. Careful attention to his demonstrations can be useful for this, but the demonstrations can also be a hindrance. The geometric method can be a distraction. It can distract us from Spinoza's vision of the best way of life. No doubt Spinoza attempts to establish his vision of the good life through the apparatus of definitions, axioms, and theorems. But whether we are or are not Spinozists in ethics has little, if anything, to do with the apparatus by which he attempts to establish his account of the best way of life. Insofar as we are not Spinozists in ethics, it is because his ethical doctrines leave us cold and do not ring true from the standpoint of our moral expertise. Insofar as we are Spinozists, it is because his ethical doctrines resonate with us and do ring true from the standpoint of our moral expertise.

My examination of his theory of virtue discloses the importance Spinoza assigns to friendship and education in the best of way of life. First and foremost we need to be friends to ourselves and friends to others. The virtue of tenacity calls for taking intelligent care of oneself, and the virtue of nobility calls for taking intelligent care of others. While there is much in the world that is useful for taking care of ourselves and others, such as nourishing things to eat, the universe is indifferent to our happiness and misery, and the number of things that are detrimental to our nature is endless. Our finitude makes us vulnerable to overwhelmingly powerful causal factors, and it is impossible for us to overcome our vulnerability and make ourselves impervious to external things. Nor is it possible to eliminate every source of human suffering. But despite our limitations and despite the factors that cause suffering, we can achieve blessedness, the greatest happiness. To achieve blessedness, it is necessary to intelligently care for ourselves and others no matter what challenges and hardships we encounter. Intelligently caring for ourselves and others involves, above all, education. Education is the greatest source of empowerment and thus the greatest source of joy. The best way of life, in Spinoza's view, is a life of learning.

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Spinoza's Symptomatic Theory of Emotions

Introduction

My thesis in this chapter is that Spinoza believes that an emotion—an episode of joy, for instance—represents a change in the power of the subject's body in the way that a symptom represents that of which it is symptomatic.[1] On the reading I defend, some emotions symptomatically represent increases in the power of the subject's body. Others symptomatically represent decreases in power. Regardless of whether it is symptomatic of an increase or a decrease, an episode of an emotion *qua* mental item is symptomatic of the state of the power of acting of the subject's body, and an emotion serves as a symptom, I argue, in virtue of its qualitative character. It represents a change in power by virtue of the way it feels to experience an emotion. While an episode of the qualitative character of joy signals an increase in the body's power, an episode of the qualitative character of sadness signals a decrease in its power.

1. Emotions as Symptomatic Representations

According to Spinoza, an emotion is a change in a finite thing's power (3D3, 3p11s). Here and throughout this book I use the term "emotion" in place of

[1] There is, comparatively speaking, considerable agreement among scholars that emotions track increases in power and decreases in power, although among those who accept this view, not much discussion is devoted to the way that emotions track changes in power. For instance, see C. D. Broad, *Five Types of Ethics Theory* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1930), pp. 51–52; William K. Frankena, "Spinoza on the Knowledge of Good and Evil," *Philosophia* 7, no. 1 (March 1977): 23; Steven Nadler, *Spinoza's* Ethics: *An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 200–208; Michael LeBuffe, *From Bondage to Freedom: Spinoza on Human Excellence* (Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 140–142; Matthew J. Kisner, "Spinoza's Virtuous Passions," *Review of Metaphysics* 61, no. 4 (June 2008): 778; and Kisner's *Spinoza on Human Freedom: Reason, Autonomy and the Good life* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 192–195; Valtteri Viljanen, *Spinoza's Geometry of Power* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 137.

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Spinoza's term *affect* (*affectus*), which he uses broadly to refer to emotions, desires, and what we call a mood (e.g., cheerfulness, melancholy). I use the word "emotion" in an equally broad sense. Spinoza believes that all such states are changes in an individual's power. They are either increases in power or decreases in power. An increase is either an increase in a part of an individual or it is an increase in the individual's power as a whole. Likewise, a decrease is either a decrease in a part or it is a decrease in an individual's power as a whole.

The power that an emotion is a change in is the power to causally produce effects such that the effects can be understood through the individual's power alone. An emotion, in other words, is a change in a thing's power of acting, which I will refer to as its *adequate causal power*.[2] God causally produces infinitely many effects that can be understood through God's power alone because God's adequate causal power is infinite (1p16, 1p16d). A finite thing causally produces a finite number of effects that can be understood through its power because it is a finite expression of adequate causal power (1p36, 1p36d, 3p6, 3p6d).[3] A finite thing is a limited system of adequate causal power. Not every effect to which a finite thing causally contributes can be understood through its power alone. As a result, a finite thing is not the adequate cause of every effect to which it causally contributes (3D1). In such instances a finite thing is an inadequate, or partial, cause (3D1).

When an emotion cannot be understood through an individual's adequate causal power alone, it is a passive emotion—that is, a passion (3D1, 3D3). In contrast, an emotion that can be understood through a finite individual's adequate causal power alone is an active emotion (3D1, 3D3). Whether an emotion is passive or active hinges on whether the causal history of the occurrence of an emotion includes something other than a finite thing's adequate causal power. If the causal history of a particular occurrence of an emotion includes a factor other than the subject's adequate causal power, it is a passion. If not, it is an active emotion.[4]

[2] Each and every finite thing is, at its core, a system of adequate causal power (3p7). Such power is said to be a finite thing's "actual essence" (*actualem essentiam*) (3p7). It is also referred as a thing's "given essence" (*datâ essentiâ*) (3p7d). On the reading I favor, what Spinoza means in part by "actual essence" and "given essence" is a property that a thing possesses in virtue of expressing God's essence. A finite thing's actual/given essence is identical to a finite configuration of God's essence. Because power is God's essence (1p34), a finite thing's actual/given essence is a finite configuration of God's power.

[3] I argue for this view in Andrew Youpa, "Spinoza on the Very Nature of Existence," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 35 (2011): 310–334. For further discussion see chapter 8, this volume.

[4] As I understand Spinoza's view, passivity and activity are relative to an individual's mind and body in the sense that the mind and the body are sources of causal power. What makes a finite mind

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The "General Definition of the Affects" gives the following definition of a passion: "[1] An Affect that is called a Passion of the mind is a confused idea, [2] by which the Mind affirms [*affirmat*] of its Body, or of some part of it, a greater or lesser force of existing than before, which, [3] when it is given, determines the Mind to think of this rather than that." According to the first clause of this definition, a passion is a confused idea. The fact that passions are said to be ideas supports the view that passions are representational in some sense, and this holds for active emotions too, even though the "General Definition" is about passions. As manifested in the mind all emotions are ideas and are, as a result, representational states.

For Spinoza, an emotion is representational in the sense that, according to the "General Definition," it is a confused idea "[2] by which the Mind *affirms* of its Body, or of some part of it, a greater or lesser force of existing than before" (GDA, emphasis added). What does this mean? Specifically, what does it mean to say that an emotion is an idea that "affirms" something of the body? Some light is cast on the way that an emotion *affirms* something of the body in the "Explication" of the "General Definition" where Spinoza writes,

> For all the ideas we have of bodies indicate [*indicant*] the actual constitution of our own body (by IIP16C2) more than the nature of the external body. But this [idea], which constitutes the form of the affect, must indicate [*indicare*] or express [*exprimere*] a constitution of the body (or some part of it), which the body (or some part of it) has because its power of acting, *or* force of existing, is increased or diminished, aided or restrained. (GDA exp)

Here the words "indicate" (*indicare*) and "express" (*exprimere*) are used to clarify the way an episode of joy or sadness affirms the body's power.[5] An

passive is not that its ideas result from causes external to the mind where the mind is regarded as a storehouse of ideas, some of whose ideas are adequate and some inadequate. Rather, it is passive in virtue of the fact that its ideas result from causes external to the mind where the mind is a system of adequate causal power. Similarly, what makes a finite body passive is not that its states and constitution result from causes that are spatially external to it. It is passive in virtue of the fact that its states and constitution result from causes that are external to it as a system of adequate causal power.

[5] Absent from this explication is 2p49: "*In the Mind there is no volition, or affirmation and negation, except that which the idea involves insofar as it is an idea*" (emphasis in original). Rather than invoking 2p49, Spinoza invokes 2p16c2: "It follows, second, that the ideas which we have of external bodies indicate the condition of our own body more than the nature of the external bodies." It is important to note that the demonstration of 2p49 does not rely on 2p16c2. I discuss and respond to the potential difficulty that 2p49 presents for the emotion as symptomatic representation reading in the present chapter.

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emotion affirms an increase in the body's power or an increase in some part of the body by *indicating* and *expressing* such an increase. But, now, what does it mean for an emotion to indicate and express an increase or decrease in power? This is best understood on the model of a symptom and the way that a symptom indicates and expresses a condition.[6] An emotion indicates and expresses an increase in the body's power similar to the way that a symptom indicates and expresses a condition of the individual who exhibits the symptom. A particular episode of joy, for example, indicates and expresses an increase in the body's power in that it is symptomatic of an increase in the individual's power. That is to say, an episode of the qualitative feeling of joy is symptomatic of an increase in the power of the joyous subject's body like an episode of the qualitative feeling of an abnormally high body temperature is, in some cases, symptomatic of an infection. Unlike the qualitative feeling of an abnormally high body temperature, an episode of joy, in Spinoza's view, infallibly signals an increase in part of the body's power or in the body's power as a whole.

[6] C. D. Broad writes,

> There remains one other point of general ethical interest to be mentioned before we leave Spinoza and pass to Butler. This is the position of pleasure and pain in Spinoza's ethical system. He is not a Hedonist, in the strict sense. States of mind and actions are not good *because* they are pleasant or conducive to pleasure, nor are they bad *because* they are painful or conducive to pain. But pleasure and pain, though they are thus not the *ratio essendi* of good and evil, are the *ratio cognoscendi* thereof. Pleasure is the infallible sign of heightened vitality, pain is the infallible sign of lowered vitality, and these are the only ultimate good and evil. (Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, pp. 51–52)

"Pleasure" and "pain" are Broad's terms for what I, following Curley's translation, refer to as joy and sadness, and "vitality" is Broad's term for the *conatus*. The reading I am defending is a version of Broad's view that joy (pleasure) is a sign of increased vitality and that sadness (pain) is a sign of decreased vitality. In this chapter I show that episodes of joy (pleasure) and episodes of sadness (pain) are, in Spinoza's view, signs in the way that a symptom is a sign.

The reading I defend can be contrasted with the interpretation maintained by commentators who hold that emotions are propositionally structured ideas. According to this reading, emotions are propositionally structured judgments about states of the body. There is an extreme version of this propositionalist reading and a moderate version. According to the extreme propositionalist reading, emotions are nothing but propositionally structured judgments; they have no phenomenologically qualitative features. According to the moderate reading, emotions are propositionally structured judgments, but it is not the case that they are nothing but propositionally structured judgments. For a defense of the extreme view, see Gideon Segal's "Beyond Subjectivity: Spinoza's Cognitivism of the Emotions," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 8, no. 1 (2000): 1–19. See also Michael Della Rocca's "The Power of an Idea: Spinoza's Critique of Pure Will," *Noûs* 37, no. 2 (June 2003): 200–231; Della Rocca, "Rationalism Run Amok," in *Interpreting Spinoza: Critical Essays*, ed. Charlie Huenemann (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 26–52; and Della Rocca, *Spinoza* (Routledge, 2008), ch. 4. For defenses of the moderate propositionalist reading, see Eugene Marshall's "Spinoza's Cognitive Affects and Their Feel," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (2008): 1–23; Justin Steinberg, "Affect, Desire, and Judgement in Spinoza's Account of Motivation," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 24, no. 1 (2016): 67–87; Lilli Alanen, "The Metaphysics of Affects or the Unbearable Reality of Confusion," in *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*, ed. Michael Della Rocca (Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 314–342.

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Spinoza's discussion of shame and pity strongly supports this reading: "The things which must be noted about Shame are easily inferred from what we said about Compassion and Repentance. I add only this, that like Pity, Shame, though not a virtue, is still good insofar as it indicates [*indicat*], in the man who blushes with Shame, a desire to live honorably. *In the same way pain* [dolor] *is said to be good insofar as it indicates* [indicat] *that the injured part is not yet decayed*" (4p58s, emphasis added). This makes clear that these emotions—shame and pity—indicate a condition similar to the way that a symptom indicates a condition. Just as pain indicates that the damaged part of the body is not yet completely decayed (*putrefactam*), an episode of shame indicates that an individual still has a desire, however feeble, to live honorably.

Further support for this reading is found in the scholium to 4p57 where he says, "For as I said in the Preface of Part III, I consider men's affects and properties just like other natural things. And of course human affects, if they do not indicate [*indicant*] man's power, at least indicate [*indicant*] the power and skill of nature, no less than many other things we wonder at and take pleasure in contemplating" (4p57s). It is evident that Spinoza is talking about passive emotions and active emotions alike: active emotions are included in the reference to affects that "indicate man's power" while passive emotions are those that "indicate the power and skill of nature." Emotions disclose the status of the power of the subject's body.

Regarding hope and fear Spinoza writes, "We may add to this that these affects *show* [*indicant*] a defect of knowledge and a lack of power in the Mind. For this reason also Confidence and Despair, Gladness and Remorse are *signs* [*signa*] of a mind lacking in power" (4p47s, emphasis added). The word "sign" (*signa*) is used in this passage to make the very same point as he makes using "indicate" (*indicant*), and so it stands to reason that the terms have the same meaning in this context. An episode of any particular one of these emotions indicates a condition of the body, that is, it signals the status of the power of the subject's body. Just as episodes of hope and fear indicate a lack of power, confidence, despair, gladness, and remorse indicate a lack of power also.

Emotions are not cognitively empty. They carry information. They carry information about the status of the power of the subject's body. An episode of joy, for example, carries information about the status of the subject's power: it signals that the subject's power is increasing.[7] An

[7] As William K. Frankena puts it, "It [a joy or pleasure] is or involves a cognition, however confused, of a certain fact, and is not simply a blind feeling, as emotivists and hedonists usually conceive it to be." See Frankena, "Spinoza on the Knowledge of Good and Evil," p. 24.

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episode of sadness carries information: it signals that the subject's power is decreasing. As we have seen, Spinoza uses variants of the terms "affirm," "indicate," "express," and "signal." These do not refer to four distinct and independent aspects of an emotion. Nor are they four oblique ways of talking about judgment. Rather, they are four essentially equivalent descriptions of the way an emotion carries information. An emotion affirms (indicates, expresses, signals) changes in the body's power similar to the way that a symptom carries information about the condition of the subject who exhibits the symptom.

It is important to see that the reading I am defending is about the representational character of emotions. My characterization of an emotion as a symptomatic representation of an increase or decrease in the body's power is intended as a way of understanding the claim in the "General Definition of the Affects" that an emotion "affirms of it Body, or of some part of it, a greater or lesser force of existing than before" and the claim in the "Explication" that an emotion must "indicate or express a constitution of the Body." No doubt an emotion in the mind is a change in the mind's power (3D3, 3p11s, DA II, DA III, DA III exp). Yet there is also a way an emotion represents greater or lesser power in the body. For the purpose of investigating Spinoza's moral philosophy, in this chapter and the next I am foremost concerned with the way emotions are representational and with their specific type of representational content, not with the metaphysical structure of emotions. It is their representational character that illuminates the structure of Spinoza's moral philosophy.

Emotions are changes in the mind's power and they represent the status of the body's power, but it is not simply as increases and decreases in power that emotions represent the body's power. Increases and decreases in power have distinctive phenomenological qualities, and it is an emotion's phenomenologically qualitative character—what it is like to experience an emotion—that indicates the status of the body's power. The distinctive way it feels to experience joy is an aspect of an increase in power. When someone's body undergoes an increase in power and thereby experiences the buoyant feeling that is joy, this buoyant feeling indicates that the power of the subject's body is increasing. It is an indicator that is accessible to the subject. The same holds for sadness. The way a decrease in power first-personally feels is an aspect of a decrease in power. When someone undergoes a decrease in power and thereby experiences the oppressive feeling of sadness, the oppressive feeling indicates that the power of the

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subject's body is decreasing.[8] Increases and decreases in the power of the subject's body are revealed to a subject through the phenomenologically qualitative character of his emotions.

A human mind, according to Spinoza, is the idea of the human body (2p13). A human body is a system of interacting bodies of various sizes, shapes, motions, and various degrees of hardness and softness (2p13cs post 1, post 2). The composite system of bodies that constitutes an individual's body is mirrored in the composite system of ideas that constitutes the mind (2p15). The ideas that compose the mind are ideas of the individual's body, of its parts, and of changes in the power of the parts and changes in the power of the individual's body as a whole (2p14, 2p15d). Ideas that constitute emotions "indicate or express a constitution [*constitutionem*] of the Body (or of some part of it)" (GDA exp). The constitution of a human body varies due to varying increases and decreases in the power of the parts of the body and in the body's power as a whole. As the idea of the body, the mind has ideas of the varying increases and decreases in the power of the parts of a body and in the body's power as a whole. At the same time, the mind's ideas of increases and decreases in the body's power are themselves increases and decreases in the mind's power. An emotion as a mental item is an idea of a change in the power of a part of the subject's body or in the body's power as a whole, and it is a change in the mind's power, a change that is the mind's counterpart to the body's change in power. An emotion's phenomenal feel is the idea of the change in the body's power. In the case of emotions for which a subject is an inadequate cause, an emotion's distinctive phenomenal feel is a confused idea of an increase or decrease in the body's power. It is an idea whose causal history includes a factor or set of factors other than the individual's adequate causal power.

In the "Definitions of the Affects" joy is said to be an individual's "passage from a lesser to a greater perfection" and that sadness is a "passage from a greater to a lesser perfection" (DA II and III), and this might be interpreted

[8] In "The Metaphysics of Affects or the Unbearable Reality of Confusion," Lilli Alanen opposes a reading of Spinoza according to which emotions are nothing but propositionally structured ideas and have no qualitative features. Alanen argues that, as transitions from one grade of power of acting to another, emotions "must be something more than mere representations" (p. 323). The reading I defend in this chapter is in agreement with Alanen's view that emotions are something more than mere representations when "representation" is understood as *propositional representation*. I believe that my view differs from Alanen's concerning what the something more is that constitutes an emotion. Whereas I maintain that the qualitative character of an emotion is the something more, Alanen holds that the transition between grades of power is that something more. See Alanen, "The Metaphysics of Affects or the Unbearable Reality of Confusion."

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