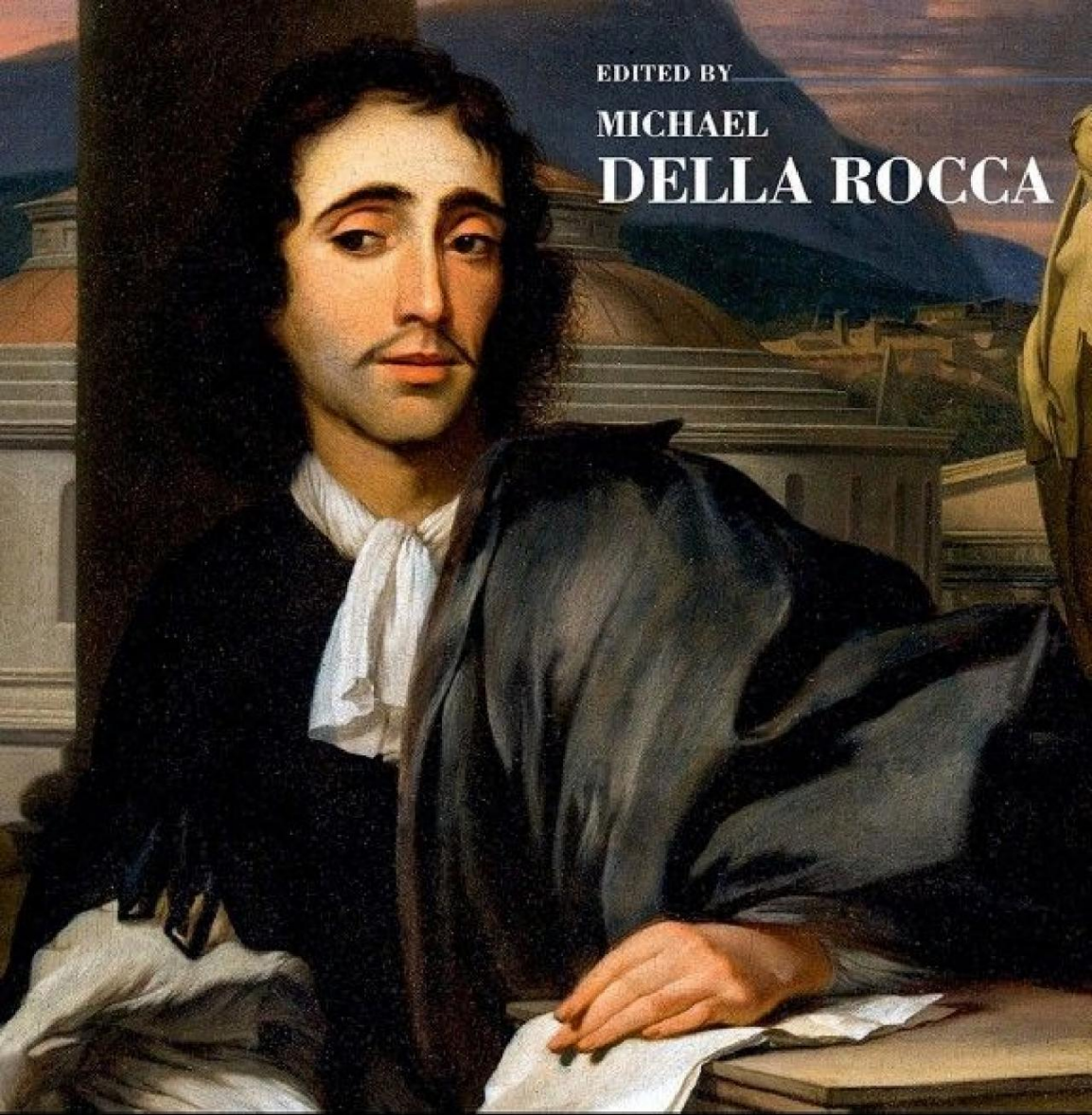

EDITED BY

MICHAEL

DELLA ROCCA

The Oxford Handbook *of*

SPINOZA

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Geistes (2010) and coeditor of the *Handbuch Klassische Emotionstheorien* (2008, 2nd edn., 2012), *Baruch de Spinoza: Ethica more geometrico demonstrata. A Collective Commentary*, and numerous articles. Her book *Die Erklärbarkeit der Erfahrung* has been awarded the Journal of the History of Philosophy Book Prize 2011.

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ABBREVIATIONS

COMMONLY CITED WRITINGS

By Spinoza:

CM *Cogitata Metaphysica* (*Metaphysical Thoughts*)
DPP *Renati Descartes Principiorum Philosophiae* (*Descartes's Principles of Philosophy*)
E *Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata* (*Ethics Demonstrated in Geometrical Order*)
Ep. Epistolae (Letters)
G *Opera Posthuma*, ed. by Carl Gebhardt. 4 vols. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1925.
KV *Korte Verhandeling van God de Mensch en deszelfs Welstand* (*Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being*)
TdIE *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* (*Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect)*
TTP *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (*Theological-Political Treatise*)
TP *Tractatus Politicus* (*Political Treatise*)

By Descartes:

PP *Principia Philosophiae* (*Principles of Philosophy*)
AT *Oeuvres de Descartes*, Edited by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery. 11 vols. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1983.

ELEMENTS OF SPINOZA'S GEOMETRIC WORKS

a axiom
app appendix

c corollary
d definition
d demonstration (when appearing after a proposition number)
da definition of an affect
expl explication
le lemma
p proposition
pref preface
post postulate
s scholium

COMMONLY CITED ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

SPINOZA

The Collected Works of Spinoza. Ed. and trans. by Edwin Curley. Vol. 1. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.

Spinoza: Complete Works. Ed. by Michael L. Morgan. Trans. by Samuel Shirley. Indiana: Hackett, 2002.

Most translations are from Curley. Translations for Ep. 29–84 and the *Political Treatise* are from Shirley, unless otherwise noted. The specific translations used for the *Theological-Political Treatise* will be cited by the individual authors.

DESCARTES

The Philosophical Writings of Descartes. Trans. by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny. 3 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984–1991.

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

SPINOZA

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

MICHAEL DELLA ROCCA

AT the beginning of an important paper in *Mind*, from 1985, the well-known historian of philosophy Ralph Walker could write, "Why should one study Spinoza? The question lacks any obvious answer."[1] Walker went on to make a strong case for studying Spinoza. But in opening the paper this way, Walker gave expression to a sentiment, widespread at the time, in Anglo-American philosophy: Spinoza may in some ways be an important figure in the history of philosophy, but his standing as a philosopher worthy of engagement is at best precarious, and he is perhaps in danger of dropping out of the canon of great philosophers.

Confirmation of this hanging-by-a-thread status comes from some anecdotal evidence. I've known philosophers teaching survey courses in early modern philosophy who simply omit Spinoza—you know who you are!—in their forced march from Descartes to Kant. And I guess I can understand this decision. After all, one can't cover everything; choices have to be made, and Spinoza is just too hard for students to deal with, and so on. I think I understand this, but my experience over many years of teaching such courses has been that despite or perhaps because of the challenges in understanding Spinoza, students—particularly the best students—are often captivated by Spinoza and are, in particular, drawn to his compelling and dramatic personal story, his philosophical rigor, and his unflinching boldness in philosophical exploration. For all these reasons, Spinoza, I believe, represents for many students a paradigm of what a philosopher can be. Students seem to get this point even if sometimes their esteemed professors do not.

The story has been and is different in some nonanalytic traditions, where Spinoza has always played a more central role. Yes, Spinoza was called a "dead dog" by Lessing, but that was only a prelude to the conflagration sparked by Spinoza that gave rise to German idealism; and, in part because of this central role in German idealism, Spinoza has always enjoyed a vital status in much of the non-Anglo-American

tradition. (In this connection, see especially the chapters in this volume by Boehm, Franks, and Goldstein).

But the neglect of Spinoza in Anglo-American circles is changing and is more or less a thing of the past. Indeed, it's hard to imagine a philosopher today voicing the question with which Walker opened his essay only thirty years ago—why should one study Spinoza? The change is reflected in the increasing flurry of excellent articles and books—many by younger scholars of Spinoza—and by the steady stream of students specializing in the history of philosophy in general and in Spinoza in particular, and by the increasing cooperation across philosophical traditions of philosophers interested in Spinoza. The spirit of this cooperation is on display in this volume in its truly international roster of contributors.

Why is there this welcome resurgence of interest in Spinoza among philosophers and historians of philosophy? Why is the profession finally catching up with students? As Spinoza teaches us, there must be a sufficient reason. Of course, this is not the occasion to give anything approaching a full explanation, but, part of the reason certainly comes from outside philosophy proper: recent, influential work in intellectual history portrays Spinoza's thought as deeply implicated in the development of the so-called Radical Enlightenment and crucial to the developing understanding of political liberty in the seventeenth century and, especially, the eighteenth century. Jonathan Israel's work is the centerpiece here, but there are many others working in this vein. Spinoza's newly emphasized bold ideas about the relation between religion and the state and about the importance of freedom of thought have made him a central figure in political thought, and this development has increased Spinoza's standing in other areas of philosophy as well.

Part of the reason for the resurgence of Spinoza also has to do also with developments internal to philosophy itself. For much of the twentieth century, philosophy was dominated by the analytical tradition. This tradition—intertwined as it was with logical positivism or logical empiricism—was hostile to displays of metaphysics, to a priori, rationalist investigation into the nature and structure of reality. In this setting, a philosopher like Spinoza—one whose whole system expresses a great confidence in the power of reason to articulate the structure of the world—could hardly thrive. Spinoza's starting points could—from this point of view—seem hopelessly misguided, and there would seem to be, as Walker expressed, little reason left—apart from purely antiquarian motivations—to study Spinoza.

However, the climate in philosophy gradually became less hostile to metaphysics. In many ways, this movement took shape in the 1970s with the development of the unabashedly metaphysical systems of

philosophers, such as Saul Kripke and David Lewis, which gave new respectability to metaphysical endeavors. But, even so, the ground was not yet prepared for the return of Spinoza. This is because the new metaphysics at first did its best to obscure the extent to which the enterprise of metaphysics is an inherently rationalist one. In other words, there was not yet enough appreciation of the fact that the best reasons for the metaphysical views being advanced are ultimately rationalist reasons; that is, these reasons are responses to an explanatory demand—a demand for intelligibility—that is the heart and soul of rationalism of the kind that Spinoza's philosophy exhibits. This openness to rationalism—understood as the insistence on explanation—is completely compatible with empiricism which concerns the centrality of experience to those explanations. Philosophers have more and more recognized the rationalist core—the explanatory demand or the search for reasons—of even the most empirically minded approaches to metaphysics.

Thus, in what might be seen as a second wave of metaphysics, we see the movement beyond a consideration of the necessary connections among facts to a consideration of whether and how facts ground other facts, serve as foundations for other facts. With the return of grounding and metaphysical explanations, philosophy is finally ready for the return of Spinoza. And, in this light, it is not surprising that an important recent volume was devoted to Spinoza and monism—a mix of historical and contemporary works on the rationalist topic of monism.[2] In the same light, it is also not surprising that there is now great attention to Spinoza's political philosophy and philosophy of religion, both of which have their underpinnings in Spinoza's rationalism and his demand for metaphysical explanation.

Two features of Spinoza's overall system make it ideally suited for engaging with and challenging philosophers working in this vein. First, there is the already mentioned commitment in Spinoza to some kind of rationalism, to some kind of explanatory demand by which we seek to answer the question of why things are the way they are. I defend this kind of rationalist reading of Spinoza in my book *Spinoza* and elsewhere.[3] Spinoza's commitment to seeking and finding this kind of explanation is perhaps unsurpassed in the history of philosophy. Second, and bound up with this rationalism, is a feature that makes Spinoza especially attractive to empirically minded philosophers: naturalism. Spinoza's philosophy is an unsentimental philosophy that does not accord human beings a privileged place in nature. Instead, human beings and everything else play by the same rules: everything is law-governed; and the same laws apply to all beings, including human beings, who therefore don't exhibit any nonnatural or supernatural qualities, such as freedom of the will or a

rationality that is different in kind from the forms of reasoning enjoyed by other beings. Spinoza gives expression to this naturalistic viewpoint in the Preface to Part III of the *Ethics*.

On the twin pillars of this rationalism and his naturalism, Spinoza builds a vast philosophical structure. And so we have Spinoza's metaphysics, his philosophy of mind, his moral psychology, his rationalist theory of the emotions, his philosophy of action, his moral philosophy, his political philosophy, his philosophy of religion, his theory of scriptural interpretation, and his account of the eternality of the human mind and the prospects for some kind of existence apart from the duration of the human body.

Spinoza's philosophical range is unsurpassed, though not unparalleled (consider Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, etc.). But the uncompromising and thoroughgoing way in which he structures this vast system on rationalist principles is, perhaps, unparalleled. Further, this range for a philosopher whose quantity of philosophical output over his short life is relatively small is breathtaking. Page for page, Spinoza is one of the most influential philosophers ever (here, he is in the good company of Socrates and of Spinoza's kindred spirit, Parmenides).

One of the aims of the current volume is to present Spinoza's systematic thinking in each of these areas in keeping with the view of Spinoza as very much a living philosopher with relevance for—and the possibility of challenging—contemporary ways of thinking. At the same time, the volume seeks to articulate and analyze the ways in which Spinoza is indebted to previous philosophy, in particular to Descartes and to Jewish philosophy prior to the seventeenth century, and came to influence all of subsequent philosophy, down to the present day, in ways that set the stage not only for Spinoza's resurgence today but also for the return of Spinozistic ways of thinking to the philosophical mainstream. These dual themes—articulating Spinoza's significance for and challenge to contemporary ways of thinking and showing how Spinoza's philosophy grows out of earlier thought and gives rise to subsequent thought—are essentially connected. For Spinoza, things are individuated by their causal connections. What a thing is how it comes to be and how it acts. This general Spinozistic claim applies to his own philosophy no less than to other things. We can therefore best individuate Spinoza's philosophy and understand what it is by understanding something about how it came to be and about how it affected others, inside philosophy and outside philosophy. Thus while each of the chapters charts such connections, the volume contains a number of chapters devoted to the specific influences on Spinoza (see the chapters by Seeskin and Schmaltz) and to Spinoza's influence on other thinkers (see the

chapters by Laerke, Della Rocca, Boehm, Franks, Yovel, Newlands, and Goldstein).

What follows is a guided tour of the chapters in this volume.

The geometrical method with which Spinoza presents his philosophy in the *Ethics* and elsewhere has always challenged and intimidated his readers. Bergson speaks of "that complication of machinery, that power to crush which causes the beginner … to be struck with admiration and terror as though he were before a battleship of the dreadnought class."[4] Nietzsche speaks of this method more derisively as "the hocus pocus of mathematical form with which Spinoza clad his philosophy … in mail and mask."[5] A crucial question surrounding Spinoza's puzzling virtuoso display is, how does Spinoza arrive at his starting points in the *Ethics*—the far-from-intuitive definitions and axioms concerning God, substance, attribute, mode, and causation? Is there a way on Spinoza's terms to justify these starting points, or must we see Spinoza as—disappointingly—regarding these opening moves as brute deliverances of some mysterious faculty? In his chapter, "The Virtues of Geometry," Aaron Garrett offers an original and powerful suggestion: Spinoza's starting points correspond to innate ideas that the mind clarifies and sharpens through the process of carrying out deductions via the geometrical method itself. In this way, the demonstrations themselves provide justification for the starting points of the *Ethics*. Garrett pursues this original idea in a penetrating fashion and along the way offers insights into Spinoza's relation to Descartes, Hobbes, Pufendorf, Viète, and others on the topic of philosophical methodology.

Harry Austryn Wolfson famously labeled Spinoza "the last of the mediaevals,"[6] and Spinoza was indeed an heir to a great tradition of medieval rationalist Jewish philosophers. Spinoza offers some backhanded praise of that tradition when he speaks of the oneness of thought and extension in God and says that "[s]ome 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" (E2p7s). Here Spinoza welcomes the move toward unity between God and nature, which is adumbrated in the tradition and which Spinoza's monism took to an extreme. At the same time, as Kenneth Seeskin explains in his chapter, "From Maimonides to Spinoza: Three Versions of an Intellectual Transition," Spinoza's rationalist predecessors did not embrace, as Spinoza did, the thoroughgoing intelligibility of all things including God. God's nature remained for Maimonides—who is the focus of Seeskin's chapter—in principle inaccessible to us. Drawing on Maimonides as well as other medieval Jewish philosophers, such as Gersonides, ibn Ezra, and Crescas, Seeskin explores this ambivalence among Spinoza's

predecessors and the way in which Spinoza broke free of it.

Medieval Jewish philosophy and Descartes's philosophy were two of the largest influences that shaped Spinoza's thought. Like the medieval rationalists, Descartes had an ambivalent attitude toward universal intelligibility. Descartes's philosophy appeals at various points to the incomprehensibility of God and of God's actions and to the freedom of God's will in a way that Spinoza's less conflicted rationalism does not allow. As Tad Schmaltz explains in his chapter, "Spinoza and Descartes," despite this disparity, there is at least as much of significance that is common to both. Descartes and Spinoza each insist on some kind of separation between the notions of thought and extension, the two notions that are fundamental to the rest of their respective philosophical systems. Most surprisingly, as Schmaltz explains, Spinoza is very close to Descartes with regard to two aspects of Descartes's voluntarist conception of God's activity. First, despite the fact that Descartes and Spinoza differ about whether God acts from freedom of the will, they agree that the kind of causation at work in God's causation of anything—including essences and eternal truths—is efficient causation. Second, Descartes and Spinoza agree—in contrast to more anthropocentric concepts of God's activity—that God produces effects simply in virtue of his power and without any regard for the perfection of those effects. In this second respect especially, Spinoza turns out to have generally unnoticed affinities, which Schmaltz analyzes, with Descartes's doctrine of the creation of the eternal truths.

Spinoza's engagement with Cartesian metaphysics is also central to Yitzhak Melamed's chapter, "The Building Blocks of Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance, Attributes, and Modes." Spinoza is masterful at appropriating traditional notions and, as Melamed shows, making seemingly slight alterations that lead to revolutionary consequences. This adoption—and transformation—of traditional concepts is nowhere more evident than in Spinoza's treatment of substance, attributes, and modes. With care and flair, Melamed shows how Spinoza understands these notions and how he constructs his heterodox metaphysical system on their basis. Throughout the discussion, Melamed offers controversial new interpretations of Spinoza's pantheism, of the infinity of the attributes, of the role of the intellect in the definition of attribute, and of the nature of modes, including finite things, such as you and I, as not merely caused by but as inhering in substance. Melamed also insightfully challenges interpretations of Spinoza that would attempt to assimilate the relations of causation and inherence in Spinoza.

At least as shocking as Spinoza's view that finite things are mere modes or properties of God is his view that each thing that exists

exists necessarily, or, in Spinoza's words, "[t]hings could have been produced by God in no other way, and in no other order than they have been produced" (E1p33). This thesis—Spinoza's necessitarianism—is at work not only in the *Ethics* but also in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. There has been much debate over just what form it takes. Does he hold that each thing that exists is absolutely necessary and that there is, in effect, only one possible world, instead of Leibniz's luxurious modal space of infinitely many possible worlds? Or, does Spinoza's necessitarianism amount only to some form of determinism according to which each finite thing is not absolutely necessary, but necessary only hypothetically, only given that certain other finite things exist? In "But Why Was Spinoza a Necessitarian?," Charlie Huenemann does an end run around this debate by inquiring why Spinoza should adopt the strong form of necessitarianism. Huenemann shows that neither Spinoza's substantive metaphysical views nor his ethical views nor his critique of religion requires that he be a necessitarian in the strong sense. Instead, Huenemann boldly offers, Spinoza's methodological commitment—expressed most vividly in the geometrical method and in his version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR)—to seeking an explanation for each thing inevitably leads to necessitarianism in its strong form. As Huenemann pithily sums up this reading, "[T]o explain is to render necessary." And so it's no wonder that a philosopher like Spinoza, wedded to the intelligibility of all things. is also moved to see all things as necessary.

In his contribution to this volume, "The Principle of Suffient Reason in Spinoza", Martin Lin explores the underpinnings of Spinoza's rationalism and, in particular, the nature of his commitment to the PSR, the aforementioned principle according to which each fact or thing has an explanation. Lin shows how—in surprising and illuminating ways—this principle is expressed by or at work in nearly all the axioms of Part I of the *Ethics*. The PSR is thus, says Lin, "a defining feature of Spinoza's system." However, as Lin goes on to argue, the PSR is not *the* defining feature of Spinoza's system; despite its crucial background roles in reaching certain conclusions typically associated with Spinoza, such as the Identity of Indiscernibles, necessitarianism, the Principle of Plenitude, and the existence of God, the PSR is not the sole or even the most important factor at work in establishing these claims. (With regard to necessitarianism, Lin's claim may be in some tension with one of the themes of Huenemann's chapter.) Lin's chapter is thus an important challenge to interpretations going back at least to Jacobi that see the PSR as driving Spinoza's entire system.

Like other early modern philosophers, Spinoza was steeped in the new science and was also to some extent a practitioner of it. Scholars

tend to assume that, as Eric Schliesser says in his rich chapter, "Spinoza and the Philosophy of Science: Mathematics, Motion, and Being," Spinoza was a fellow traveler of the mechanical philosophy and, in particular, was fully on board with the then-widespread ambition to use mathematics to measure and understand both time and natural objects. Further, Spinoza's adherence to a mathematical approach to science is, for many, enshrined in his geometrical method. Schliesser, however, boldly argues that each of the above points is mistaken. Instead of regarding mathematics as making natural knowledge possible, Spinoza is deeply skeptical of our ability to achieve such knowledge, and he regards mathematics, when applied to nature, as offering, at best, imaginative inadequate ideas. Schliesser provides considerable textual evidence to document this Spinozistic skepticism, and he enriches his account with illuminating contrasts with many other natural philosophers of the period. Schliesser closes the chapter by exploring the possibilities Spinoza sees for a kind of nonmathematical adequate knowledge of things grounded in intuitive self-knowledge.

Although Schliesser's chapter suggests that scientific understanding is not as rigorous as we may have thought, Spinoza's naturalism does commit him in general to a science of the mind that is every bit as strict as the science of the physical. One of the reasons that a potential science of the mind has seemed elusive is that there does not seem to be a good account of how our ideas or mental states come to represent things and have content. The problems of providing a theory of content are exacerbated in Spinoza's case because the parallelism between thought and extension which he embraces for general metaphysical reasons stemming ultimately from the PSR seems to commit him to a pair of extremely implausible views: (1) all of our ideas are true and so error and misrepresentation are impossible and (2) we have a vast range of imaginative ideas including ideas of all the causal antecedents—no matter how remote—of the physical state that is parallel to a given idea. Such implausible results seem, as many have argued, to show that Spinoza's theory is completely unworkable. In his chapter, "Representation, Misrepresentation, and Error in Spinoza's Philosophy of Mind," Don Garrett aims to rescue Spinoza's theory and, in so doing, reveals the surprisingly compelling and modern resources available to Spinoza to solve the problems Garrett describes. The key, for Garrett, emerges if one invokes Spinoza's notion of striving, or *conatus*, and his view that each thing strives for self-preservation. Garrett powerfully shows how one can plausibly address the problems for Spinoza's theory by tying the representational content of ideas to an individual's self-preservatory activity. The content of an idea—whether or not it is erroneous—is a

function of "the *manner* in which the idea directs or influences self-preservatory activity." This functional account of content in Spinoza is further evidence of the role of teleological ways of thinking that, as Garrett has argued elsewhere, may have a surprisingly central role in Spinoza's philosophy.[7]

While Don Garrett focuses on important problems surrounding Spinoza's theory of the content of particular ideas, Ursula Renz, in her chapter, "Finite Subjects in the *Ethics*: Spinoza on Indexical Knowledge, the First Person, and the Individuality of Human Minds," addresses difficulties concerning Spinoza's understanding of what it is to be the subject of mental states in general. Many interpreters—including Hegel, some British idealists, and some more recent interpreters—have sought to cast Spinoza as denying the reality of finite subject. For Renz, by contrast, the major thrust of Spinoza's philosophy of mind is to affirm the reality of the finite and of finite subjects as such. Developing arguments from her award-winning recent book, *Die Erklärbarkeit von Erfahrung* (soon to appear in English translation), Renz contends that Spinoza's philosophy of mind is centered not on the relation between conscious states and physical states but, rather, on safeguarding the ontological status of distinct, finite subjects of experience. Here Renz draws an illuminating contrast with Averroist views, according to which there is a unified, singular intellect for all human beings. Compelling evidence for Spinoza's embrace of the reality of finite subjects comes, as Renz stresses, from the axioms of Part II of the *Ethics* which highlight what finite individuals feel and perceive, and Renz expands her argument by challenging the prominent view that ideas in the human mind are simply ideas that God has. Renz closes by characterizing the kind of rationalism that Spinoza's subjectivity-friendly view expresses, a kind of rationalism that is a nuanced alternative to more radically rationalist readings that may unnecessarily highlight intelligibility at the expense of experience.

Renz can be said to explore the epistemological underpinnings of Spinoza's metaphysics and philosophy of mind. Dominik Perler, in his chapter, "Spinoza on Skepticism," turns things around by exploring the metaphysical underpinnings of Spinoza's epistemology. This strategy enables Perler to argue convincingly that although Spinoza has seemed to many commentators not to grapple seriously with radical skepticism of a Cartesian variety in the *Ethics*, he does indeed have a sophisticated way of providing a theoretical—as opposed to therapeutic—diagnosis of skepticism. Spinoza's strategy consists in revealing that the scenarios the skeptic constructs presuppose certain controversial philosophical theses, including an antinaturalism according to which there can be an inexplicable gap between the realm

of the mind and its contents, on the one hand, and the world as it exists apart from the mind, on the other. Spinoza also sees the skeptical scenario as presupposing a semantic atomism that regards the content of ideas as fixed in a piecemeal fashion instead of holistically. Perler shows that, in rejecting these presuppositions of skepticism, Spinoza relies on his rationalism and PSR-driven denial of inexplicability, and he thus attempts to shift the burden to the skeptic to defend her very controversial assumptions. For Perler, this attractive approach of turning the tables on the skeptic by focusing on what is required to explain the content of ideas bears illuminating affinities to recent holistic strategies for defusing skepticism, strategies to be found in authors such as Donald Davidson.

Two of Spinoza's strangest theses—at least to the modern ear—are his view that different individuals can enjoy greater or lesser degrees of reality and that our highest perfection or reality consists in knowledge of God. We are inclined to respond that reality is an on-or-off matter, not something that comes in degrees, and to wonder why, even if there are degrees of reality, they are a function of the extent to which an individual knows God. These theses are not only strange, but are absolutely central to Spinoza's system, and, if we don't understand them, then at a fundamental level, we don't understand Spinoza. In "The Highest Good and Perfection in Spinoza," John Carriero sheds considerable light on these most challenging notions by understanding Spinoza in a historical context that stretches back to Aristotle and Aquinas and forward at least to Leibniz. Aristotle, in book 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, grounds our perfection in contemplation of the good, and Aquinas calls this contemplation *visio dei*—"vision of God." Spinoza adopts versions of these claims. However, Spinoza—with his perhaps greater commitment to the intelligibility of things—allows, and indeed stresses, that we have knowledge of the essence of God, something we can grasp, for Aquinas, only with special help from God. This knowledge of God in Spinoza is the source of our knowledge of particular things each of which follows from God's essence and each of which is what it is because of its place in the network of causes and effects. Extending the contrast with Aristotle and Aquinas, Carriero explains how the activity of things that follow from God's nature is not fundamentally end-directed, but is to be explained by efficient causation in a plenum in which the whole is ontologically prior to the parts. Throughout the chapter, Carriero puts Spinoza into close engagement with Leibniz: Carriero shows how Spinoza, without compromising on intelligibility, denies that goodness and desirability play the fundamental role that they would later play in Leibniz's philosophy which is, in this respect, in the spirit of Aquinas's and Aristotle's systems. Carriero shows how, for Spinoza,

there is a maximally real order that plays much the same role that Leibniz's best of all possible worlds plays, but without the fundamental role to be played by God's will and by teleology.

Although, as many of the chapters in this volume explore, Spinoza's philosophy of mind is indebted to Descartes's, there is at least one key respect in which Spinoza apparently completely overturns the Cartesian position. As Spinoza sees it, Descartes claims to be able to understand the human mind directly, as it were, and prior to appealing to knowledge of God. Thus, for Spinoza, Descartes accords epistemological priority to the finite mind, and he claims that I exist as a thinking thing before claiming that God exists, even though in some sense, as Descartes would agree, God is ontologically prior to my mind. However, as Olli Koistinen argues in "Spinoza on Mind," Spinoza's philosophy of mind can be said to be both epistemologically and metaphysically top down: in order to understand the human mind, we must first understand God and, in particular, God's intellect. Koistinen explores how Spinoza's parallelism between thought and extension is a result of God's having a true idea of himself. Along the way, Koistinen offers a new account of why thought, unlike, for example, desire, counts as an attribute and of the way in which mind and body are one and the same thing. This claim, which is often interpreted as an identity claim, is actually, Koistinen claims in keeping with his top-down reading, most appropriately seen as a claim about the nature of mental representation in God's mind: when God thinks of the circle, he does so directly. The object of God's thought is not the idea of the circle but rather the circle itself. Koistinen closes by turning to one of Renz's themes: subjectivity and the first-personal perspective in Spinoza. For Koistinen, unlike Renz, certain subjective ideas are, surprisingly, neither adequate nor inadequate in Spinoza's technical sense of those terms.

Spinoza's uncompromisingly naturalistic philosophy of mind seems to collide head-on with his mystical-sounding claims about the intellectual love of God which is constitutive of human blessedness and salvation. How can Spinoza, the ardent naturalist, find a place for salvation in his system? Steven Nadler's chapter, "The Intellectual Love of God," seeks to show how Spinoza's doctrine, which explicitly comes on the scene in the *Ethics* only at the end, is not some kind of last-minute lapse into traditional religious dogma on Spinoza's part but rather intelligibly grows out of and indeed represents the culmination of Spinoza's views about the human mind, its knowledge, and its affects. Not only does Nadler elegantly account for and demystify all the key passages in which Spinoza discusses intellectual love, he offers an illuminating perspective on this notion by comparing it to Maimonides's treatment of the same topic. According to Nadler,

the love of God is, for Maimonides as for Spinoza, an intellectual achievement of the highest level. However, for Maimonides, this intellectual love is restricted to the elite. Spinoza is characteristically more democratic on this point. And Maimonides's intellectual love is imbued with fear and awe in the face of the divine. For Spinoza, such passive affects have no place in intellectual love and are instead replaced by self-confidence and the awareness of our own power in our union with God.

The notion of the intellectual love of God is but one aspect of Spinoza's overarchingly intellectualistic account of our emotional life, of the ways in which we control and, more often, are controlled by our emotions or passions or what Spinoza calls our "affects." Lilli Alanen's chapter, "The Metaphysics of Affects or the Unbearable Reality of Confusion," offers a comprehensive treatment of the workings of the affects: how they develop, how they are related to physical states, and what role they play in human well-being. Spinoza's strict parallelism, Alanen argues persuasively, commits him to a science of the psychological that is as strict as the mechanistic, physical science that Spinoza endorses. Despite some important affinities between Spinoza's account of the mind and Davidson's famous "anomalous monism"—both of which reject certain kinds of explanation of mental phenomena in physical terms—Spinoza, unlike Davidson, holds out hope for law-like explanations in purely mental terms. Drawing on Spinoza's views on biblical interpretation, Alanen shows, however, that Spinoza "may have been prepared to settle for less than strictly adequate causal explanation in mechanistic terms when it comes to moral sciences, including psychology." Here the contrast Alanen draws between what she sees as two of Spinoza's projects is illuminating: the salvation project, which aims "at lasting self-contentment through adequate knowledge," and the political project, which centers "on practical action and communal life." At those points at which Spinoza downplays the reality of the affects—and at which there may be an opening for overly rationalistic interpretations of Spinoza—the salvation project may seem to be ascendant in Spinoza's thinking. But the realism of practical life is often at work in Spinoza, and when it is, Alanen argues, Spinoza's political project dominates.

Nicely complementing Alanen's treatment of the metaphysics of the passions, Karolina Hübner's chapter, "Spinoza's Unorthodox Metaphysics of the Will," boldly explains how Spinoza's metaphysical commitments—in particular, his naturalism—lead to his wholly nonteleological understanding of the will, appetite, and desire. Even though Spinoza's panpsychism dictates that all things, even apparently inanimate objects, have appetites and wills, Spinoza claims that

nothing acts for the sake of an end. Hübner argues, in opposition to many other leading commentators, that because of his naturalism, Spinoza does not allow for an exception to this general claim, even for human beings. As Hübner explains, Spinoza rejects any apparently end-directed behavior as a mere illusion to which we are subject because of confused ideas. Hübner insightfully articulates Spinoza's reasons for not being swayed by common sense or by considerations of mere plausibility. The naturalistic, nonteleological account that Spinoza offers is so exceptionless that, as Hübner shows, for Spinoza even God can be said to strive and will. Hübner closes her chapter by raising and exploring the question of whether such an end-less account of even human behavior is capable of "honoring beliefs we value" and whether it deserves to be regarded as an ethics.

Taking on one of the most challenging notions in Spinoza, Chantal Jaquet's succinct contribution, "Eternity," explores how, for Spinoza, not only God, but also modes—both infinite and finite—can be said to be eternal. "Eternity," as Jaquet says, "is no longer God's prerogative" because, for Spinoza, even modes are such that their existence follows from their definition. Here Jaquet helpfully points out that Spinoza's definition of eternity (E1d8) specifies that eternity is existence that follows from the definition of an eternal thing and does not say that the existence follows from the essence of an eternal thing. This focus on definition is significant because while a mode's existence does not follow from its essence, its existence does follow from the mode's definition. The definition of a thing, according to Jaquet, is broader than the thing's essence and includes the thing's causes. This close analysis of the definition of eternity enables Jaquet to explain how, for Spinoza, the body, as well as the mind, is in a sense, eternal. Jaquet closes the chapter by suggesting that the feeling of eternity that Spinoza says the mind enjoys is the feeling of certitude that comes with having adequate ideas.

Spinoza's unorthodox views on the eternality of the human mind are but one way in which he engages with traditional religious thought. His attitude toward Scripture is another. As Carlos Fraenkel powerfully shows in his chapter, "Spinoza's Philosophy of Religion," from early in his career Spinoza felt the need to position himself with regard to a skeptical view that sees reason as subservient to Scripture and a dogmatist view that "subjects Scripture to reason" and sees Scripture, in its way, as articulating truths of reason. Much of Spinoza's religious and political thought is in the dogmatist tradition. Indeed, Spinoza's aim in this strand of his thinking is to provide a philosophical reinterpretation of Christianity and of Christ and to do so in a way that protects the freedom to philosophize. However, Spinoza's version of dogmatism comes into conflict with his critique

of religion, which, in the end, denies the truth of Scripture. In striving to preclude a skeptical view that reason is inferior to Scripture, Spinoza rejects the truth of Scripture. But since dogmatism, like skepticism, presupposes the truth of Scripture (though in different ways), Spinoza, in challenging skepticism by challenging the truth of Scripture, also undermines his own dogmatist view. This conflict may have been avoidable because, as Fraenkel argues, Spinoza's "political argument for freedom of thought and expression does not require settling the question of the truth of Scripture."

Spinoza's philosophy of religion is, of course, entwined with his political philosophy. This was certainly true of Hobbes as well, and, indeed, Spinoza's political philosophy is obviously indebted to Hobbes's. But there are many significant differences, as Michael Rosenthal highlights in his contribution, "Spinoza's Political Philosophy." Rosenthal's key insight is that instead of regarding Spinoza's thought through the prism of natural law theory or social contract theory or through a theory of interest politics, Spinoza's thought is most usefully seen as an instance of civic republicanism. His version of republicanism is evident in his view that monarchy is the least ideal form of government and in his preference—at least in *TTP*—for democracy. Civic republicanism also emerges in Spinoza's view that a state is more virtuous and stable to the extent to which there is greater participation and political engagement by citizens in general. This stability and participation is made possible by Spinoza's distinctive way of avoiding free-rider problems that plague other theories. Given Spinoza's theory of human psychology and, in particular, his account of the imitation of affects, which stresses the inherent sociability of human beings, citizens are led to cooperate not just through fear of punishment or injury but as expressions of their own natures. That Spinoza can achieve such a result is all the more remarkable in light of the fact that Spinoza—even more rigorously than Hobbes—assimilates right and power, and in light of the fact that, for Spinoza, there is thus no sharp distinction between the state of nature and the civil state.

Besides the many chapters in this volume that directly concern either the influences on Spinoza or the intrinsic character of his thought, this volume offers seven chapters devoted to the effects of Spinoza's philosophy on subsequent thinkers. As I suggested earlier, this strategy of the volume is in keeping with the view—endorsed by Spinoza—that meanings are best grasped in and constituted by a network of causes *and* effects. This series of chapters begins with one that focuses on the only one of these subsequent thinkers who actually met Spinoza (in 1676). The Spinoza-Leibniz connection has been the subject of much work both scholarly and popular (see in this

connection, Matthew Stewart, *The Courtier and the Heretic*). But no work on this topic is as magisterial and definitive as Mogens Laerke's recent book *Leibniz Lecteur de Spinoza*. Developing some of the themes in that book, Laerke's chapter, "Leibniz's Encounter with Spinoza's Monism, October 1675 to February 1678," zeroes in on the period immediately prior to and after Leibniz's fateful meeting with Spinoza. At the outset of this period, during Leibniz's Paris years, Leibniz was surprisingly open to Spinoza's metaphysical views and seriously considered adopting a version of Spinoza's monism of substance. However, by 1678, when Leibniz was settled in Hanover and finally had the opportunity to read Spinoza's *Ethics*, he had come to reject monism. Laerke explores both the contextual reasons—having to do with Leibniz's changing circle of acquaintances—and the philosophical reasons for this shift. In the latter connection, Laerke usefully distinguishes in Spinoza a unity theory of monism—according to which finite things are merely modes of the infinite substance—and an identity theory of monism—according to which there is a simple substance characterized by a multiplicity of fundamental attributes, including thought and extension. Despite his initial flirtation with both forms of monism, Leibniz comes to reject them. Laerke explains the rejection of the unity theory of monism by appealing to Leibniz's rejection of what he saw as Spinoza's conflation of causal implication and logical implication. The rejection of the identity theory of monism turns on Leibniz's more detailed characterization of the kinds of predicate that an attribute can and cannot be. Laerke's engaging and meticulous work thus sheds much-needed light, not only on Leibniz's philosophical development, but also on the metaphysical options available to Spinoza.

Unlike Leibniz, who is often regarded as having many natural affinities with Spinoza, Hume appears to be a committed opponent of Spinoza: Hume the extreme empiricist, Spinoza the extreme rationalist. Indeed, as I stress in my chapter, "Playing with Fire: Hume, Rationalism, and a Little Bit of Spinoza," Hume has the distinction of giving and emphasizing an extremely powerful argument against the PSR. In my chapter, I explore the roots of this antirationalism in Hume. In the course of this journey, I uncover some surprising rationalist sympathies in Hume: he regularly relies on principles that have, perhaps, their most natural home in a rationalist system driven by the PSR. At the conclusion of my investigation, I reveal—in the manner of a whodunit—the unexpected source of Hume's rejection of the PSR in his aversion to Spinozistic monism. This guiding rejection of monism may help to explain the famous dismissal of Spinoza late in Book 1 of Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* and also highlights possible internal tensions within Hume

between the rationalist-friendly principles he often relies on and his promotion of a general argument against the PSR. Hume's engagement—both positive and negative—with Spinozistic rationalism thus helps to shed new light on Hume's system and clarifies the clash between rationalism and empiricism.

Hume, as Kant says, awoke him from his dogmatic slumber, and, as we've just seen, Hume engaged significantly with Spinoza. But did Kant similarly grapple with Spinoza? Traditionally, the answer has been that Kant did not. He rarely mentioned Spinoza and does not do so at all in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. On this standard view, only after Jacobi initiated the Pantheism Controversy that engulfed German intellectual life in the 1780s did Kant come, grudgingly, to consider the relevance of Spinoza to his own system. However, in his chapter, "Kant and Spinoza: Debating the Third Antinomy," which builds on his important recent book *Kant's Critique of Spinoza*, Omri Boehm makes a compelling case that before the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in it, and in Kant's subsequent work, Kant struggles with and argues against Spinoza's extreme rationalism and the constitutive role Spinoza accords to the PSR. Boehm's arguments rest on historical textual grounds as well as philosophical ones. Boehm makes Kant's third Antinomy the centerpiece of his chapter. In combating the position of the antithesis in the Antinomy—which challenges freedom because of the PSR—Kant is usually seen as engaging with Leibniz. However, Boehm demonstrates that here Kant must have regarded Spinoza as his opponent, not Leibniz. And, further, once the Kantian position is seen in this light, the debate between Kant and Spinoza comes down to how one can have a grasp of an infinite whole that is prior to any parts it may have. Spinoza, of course, argues that we can have such a grasp, and Kant eventually comes to agree. However, Kant also argues that this grasp can only be in the form of an experience of freedom or of the sublime, a kind of experience Spinoza seems to deny to us. For this reason, Spinoza may have—according to Boehm—shut himself off from the kind of experience of the infinite that his system needs in order to be coherent.

A number of the chapters in the volume explore the extent to which the PSR may structure Spinoza's thought. In the interpretation of Spinoza in Hegel and in German idealism more generally, the version of the PSR that is seen as central to Spinoza is "nothing comes from nothing." And it is this version of the PSR that leads Hegel to attribute to Spinoza (somewhat misleadingly) the guiding principle that all determination is negation. In his chapter, "'Nothing Comes from Nothing': Judaism, the Orient, and Kabbalah in Hegel's Reception of Spinoza," Paul Franks offer much philosophical and historical evidence to support the view that this interpretation of Spinoza can be

understood against the background of Spinoza's possible connection to Kabbalah, a collection of Jewish mystical writings that, beginning in the late seventeenth century, had become available to a broader philosophical audience. For Jacobi, who spearheaded the revival of Spinoza in the late eighteenth century, the PSR led, in Spinoza, to the denial of the reality of the finite. This nihilistic view has its source, for Jacobi, in the philosophy of the Kabbalah, which, as Jacobi sees it, is "nothing but undeveloped or newly confused Spinozism." After exploring the links among Jacobi, Spinoza, the PSR, and Kabbalah, Franks takes on the puzzle of explaining why Hegel—whose reading of Spinoza was in many ways indebted to Jacobi—failed to discuss Spinoza's possible relation to Kabbalah. This omission is especially perplexing given that, as Franks stresses, there are "significant affinities between kabbalah and Hegel's own thought." For Franks, part of the answer lies in Hegel's dialectical interpretation of history, which led him to see Judaism and Kabbalistic thought as a precursor to Christianity. Kabbalah was thus, for Hegel, relegated to antiquity, and he saw Spinoza as a post-Jewish philosopher who prepared the way for Hegelianism.

Whereas Hegel sees Spinoza as a misguided philosopher whose thought was a necessary step that must be transcended on the way to Hegel's own philosophy, Nietzsche sees Spinoza as a kindred spirit whose thought has great affinities with Nietzsche's own but also sharply conflicts with it at crucial points. Nietzsche and Spinoza are thus, as Yirmiyahu Yovel aptly puts it in his contribution, "Nietzsche and Spinoza: Enemy-Brothers." Yovel's chapter—which is an updated version of his chapter on the two philosophers in his important book *Spinoza and Other Heretics*—explains how Spinoza and Nietzsche are united by their fundamental rejection of all transcendence, including any transcendent creator and any source of value over and above the natural world, and by their naturalistic rejection of all teleology. Each thinker calls for the affirmation and, indeed, celebration of this naturalistic world. Spinoza expresses this affirmation as *amor dei*, the infinite intellectual love of God, and Nietzsche expresses it as *amor fati*, the love of fate. And here, Yovel shows, is where the differentiation between Spinoza and Nietzsche begins to emerge. For, according to Nietzsche, with Spinoza's talk of *amor dei*, Spinoza retains some "shadows of the dead God," some "longing to believe that in some way the old God still lives." This longing is evident in Spinoza's commitment to the rational world exhaustively governed by causal laws. While Nietzsche approves of Spinoza's rejection of teleology, Nietzsche views Spinoza's reliance on mechanistic causation, which replaces teleology and which characterizes the workings of the one, permanent substance as a manifestation of

Spinoza's theological "hangover." Without what Nietzsche sees as the crutch of the appeal to permanence and rational order, the Nietzschean hero—the *Übermensch*—exhibits more agency, as Yovel shows, than his counterpart in Spinoza. Yovel closes his chapter by raising the compelling question of whether there can be a more rationalist Nietzschean, a thinker who embraces both finitude (without the appeal to permanence) and stability, and who also embraces reason.

Spinoza's philosophy and his character have been both an inspiration and a challenge to subsequent Jewish thinkers. Michael Morgan's wide-ranging contribution, "Spinoza's Afterlife in Judaism and the Task of Modern Jewish Philosophy," explores the varied features of this engagement. Morgan first considers the ways in which Spinoza was seen by Jacobi, Maimon, and others as indebted to kabbalah and the ways in which the nineteenth-century Jewish socialist thinker Moses Hess took Spinoza as a guide (though not necessarily with good reason—Spinoza could hardly be called a socialist). Morgan then explains how three significant twentieth-century Jewish thinkers—Strauss, Fackenheim, and Levinas—grappled with Spinoza's implications for modern Judaism. A key theme for Morgan is the manner in which Spinoza's thought provided an occasion for Jewish thinkers to navigate between, on the one hand, a pure Platonism—with its dualities of the eternal and the changing, of the spiritual and the material, of reason and emotion—and, on the other hand, a "Platonism of the streets" in which these dualities are much less rigid.

Samuel Newlands opens his penetrating and engaging chapter, "Spinoza's Relevance to Contemporary Metaphysics," by exploring ways in which a long-dead philosopher can be relevant to contemporary concerns in philosophy either as an outsider whose views—by virtue of their alienness—can open up new perspectives for us or as a ancestor whose views, as precursors to our own, make the philosopher well-suited to be a conversation partner with us. Newlands's own approach to Spinoza is a nuanced blend of both models. His chapter also manifests the conviction that, as he puts it, "there is no deep divide between studying philosophy and studying its history." This approach yields immediate benefits, for it enables Newlands to articulate ways in which Spinoza's systematicity and commitment to PSR-driven naturalistic explanation leads him to a distinctive form of monism in which the "One must give rise to the Many." Here, Spinoza's view that plenitude is a form of perfection is in play. The dependence of the Many on the One must, for Newlands, be a form of conceptual dependence that is more stringent than the kind of dependence now championed in many areas of contemporary metaphysics. This invocation of a nonpsychologistic type of

conceptual dependence enables Spinoza to avoid the limitations of conventionalism and of idealism while also avoiding the inexplicabilities of a robust realism about modality that is attractive to many contemporary theorists.

Such is the richness of Spinoza's thought that it not only, as Newlands shows, helps to shape and provide insight into contemporary analytical metaphysics, but it also is a continuing source of inspiration for literary endeavors. As Rebecca Newberger Goldstein shows in her groundbreaking chapter, "Literary Spinoza," it is not simply Spinoza's philosophy that has fueled literary imaginations, but also the compelling example of Spinoza the person: renegade Jew, so-called moral saint, uncompromising rationalist, Enlightenment hero. Goldstein masterfully charts the ways in which Spinoza, for whom matters literary did not loom large, nonetheless became injected into the "literary bloodstream" through Jacobi's critical engagement with Spinoza, which had the perhaps unintended effect of inspiring many writers in the romantic movement, including, especially, Goethe, Hölderlin, and Novalis, to declare themselves Spinozists. Goldstein details various occasions on which Spinoza played the role of a literary muse for writers working in different genres, such as Coleridge, Wordsworth, George Eliot, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Malamud, Borges, and others down to the present day. Throughout her chapter, Goldstein grapples with the paradox that Spinoza the arch-rationalist, who abandons the "entanglement with particularity," should nonetheless have such a profound influence on literature whose "very substance" is precisely such an entanglement. This irony—also a theme of Goldstein's book *Betraying Spinoza*—is one of the many compelling reasons to engage with Spinoza's thought, as the contributors to this volume do in their many different ways.

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[1] Walker, “Spinoza and the Coherence Theory,” p. 1.
[2] Goff, *Spinoza on Monism*.
[3] For a debate regarding this interpretation of Spinoza, see the exchange between Daniel Garber and myself, found in Garber, “Superheroes,” and Della Rocca, “Interpreting Spinoza.”
[4] Bergson, “Philosophical Intuition,” p. 113.
[5] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, sec. 5.
[6] Wolfson, *Philosophy of Spinoza*, vol. 1, p. vii.
[7] See Garrett, “Teleology in Spinoza.”

CHAPTER 2

THE VIRTUES OF GEOMETRY

AARON GARRETT

THE full title of Spinoza's *Ethics* is *Ethics Demonstrated in Geometric Order*. The *Ethics* was one of three geometrical works written by Spinoza. The unfinished *Tractatus Politicus*[1] appeared in Spinoza's *Opera Posthuma* along with the *Ethics* in 1677. *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy Demonstrated in the Geometric Manner* had appeared fourteen years before. One of Spinoza's very earliest works, the *Short Treatise*, had also included geometrical demonstrations. In Spinoza's very earliest letters (1661), Henry Oldenburg approved of Spinoza's "geometric style of proof" on the basis of a manuscript the contents of which corresponded to at least E1p5, E1p6, and E1p18 (Ep. 3/G 4:10). Since TP was the last work Spinoza wrote, KV one of the very first, if not the first work by Spinoza we possess, and DPP was the only work published under Spinoza's name in his lifetime, it is uncontroversial that the use of geometrical demonstrations in presenting his ideas was a constant over the course of Spinoza's philosophical career. Indeed, his consistent association with a single form of argument separated him from most of his peers, who were far more methodologically and stylistically eclectic—Descartes, Hobbes, Leibniz, Malebranche, Gassendi, and Pufendorf, to name a few.

But from the consistent use that Spinoza made of geometrical demonstrations over the course of his philosophical career, it does not follow that he took geometrical demonstration to be synonymous with the one true philosophical method, or even that he took it to be the best method for all purposes. It does not even follow that Spinoza held that geometrical demonstration was a "method" in anything but a loose way of speaking. Spinoza sometimes referred to the use of geometrical demonstrations as an "order" and sometimes as a "manner," but never directly as a "method."[2] The Scholastic textbooks on which Spinoza drew distinguished between *order*—the arrangement or presentation of propositions—and *method*—an instrument for acquiring new knowledge.[3] If geometrical demonstration is only an order or arrangement, then it might not be a method for securing new truths but

a means to present truths acquired in some other manner.[4]

Even if Spinoza considered geometrical demonstration to be a method in the sense of a means for securing new truths, he might still have thought of it as only one stage in an overarching, multi-staged, philosophical method. Indeed, in the unfinished *Tractatus de Intellectu Emendatione*, Spinoza describes and argues for "a way of healing [or emending—AG] the intellect, and purifying it" (TdIE §16) that might precede geometrical demonstration. And TP, which Spinoza meant to follow the *Ethics* and also considered to be a geometrical work, is not argued from definitions and axioms set out at the beginning of each part (although Spinoza does define basic concepts and draw on definitions and demonstrations from the *Ethics*).

In line with a method of which geometrical demonstration is a stage or a part, Spinoza sometimes discussed philosophical method in very general terms: method is "reflexive knowledge," and a true method "shows how the mind is to be directed according to the standard of a given true idea" (TdIE §38). If the true philosophical method is any method that shows how to direct the mind according to the standards given by true ideas, then there could be different forms of philosophical method, with geometrical demonstration as one way of ordering propositions (i.e., as following from axioms and definitions) and a particularly efficacious means to secure true propositions.

So, geometrical demonstration might be the one true method, a method, a part of method, a variant or one instantiation of a more general method, or not a method at all. However the method is construed, there's a puzzle that dogs Spinoza's philosophical method. Toward the end of TdIE Spinoza claimed that

> the right way of discovery is to form thoughts from some given definition. This will proceed the more successfully and easily, the better we have defined a thing. So the chief point of this second part of the Method is concerned solely with this: knowing the condition of good definition, and then, the way of finding good definitions. (TdIE §94)

In the final paragraphs of TdIE, after offering a list enumerating those "properties of the intellect" that had been previously discussed and that he understands clearly (TdIE §108), Spinoza then turned to establishing "something common from which these properties necessarily follow, *or* such that when it is given, they are necessarily given, and when it is taken away, they are taken away" (§110). This formula was later used to define "belongs to an essence" in the *Ethics* (E2d2). It is clear that Spinoza means by "something common" a proper definition of intellect from which he can deduce the list of

properties of the intellect he had enumerated, as well as other properties not yet discussed. A list is insufficient for a geometrical demonstration, and a definition is essential to unify to the properties on the list (and countless others) and for a successful method.

Unfortunately for the reader, no definition of the intellect or general procedure for acquiring true definitions is given. TdIE breaks off with the just-quoted sentence ending with "taken away." The puzzle is, how does one acquire these definitions given that Spinoza stated that a central component of the method was setting out the means of finding them and that the success of the method depended on good definitions?

To provide an answer to this puzzle, I will first consider what Spinoza might have thought to be the advantages or virtues of geometrical demonstration. I will discuss transparency, force, security, scale, compactness, flexibility, generality, and sense-independence. Most of these virtues are not exclusive to geometrical demonstration—syllogisms are transparent and Cartesian analysis is sense-independent. But geometrical demonstration possesses all these virtues (and more that I have not discussed). I will then consider Spinoza's relation to Descartes through the common distinction between analytic method and synthetic method, their different sense of geometrical order, and a further virtue: ease.[5] I will conclude by arguing that the idea of an emendative method as outlined in TdIE provides a solution to the puzzle just outlined (though not to the historical puzzle of why Spinoza never finished TdIE).[6] One warning, I will discuss Spinoza's works other than the *Ethics* (particularly the nongeometrical TdIE and TTP) and the works of authors other than Spinoza more than I will discuss the *Ethics* itself. My hope is that these will shed light on why Spinoza makes the choices he does in the *Ethics*.

THE VIRTUES OF GEOMETRY

In DPP, Spinoza demonstrated in a geometrical manner what he took to be the main conclusions that Descartes had argued for in the first two parts and some of the third part of the *Principles*. Spinoza had not initially intended to make these demonstrations available to the public, they were written for the private use of his philosophical circle, but he was persuaded by his friends to publish on the condition that they would take care of all of the publication details. Notably, Spinoza did not even write the Preface to his work; it was instead written by his

friend Lodewijk Meyer.[7] Given the circumstances of publication, Meyer's proximity to Spinoza, that the book appeared under Spinoza's name, and that Spinoza did not later repudiate the Preface or the work, it is safe to assume that Spinoza fully endorsed the Preface.

Meyer begins the Preface:

> Everyone who wishes to be wiser than is common among men agrees that the best and surest Method of seeking and teaching the truth in the Sciences is that of the Mathematicians, who demonstrate their Conclusions from Definitions, Postulates, and Axioms. (G 1:127)

This passage equates Euclidean demonstration with a mathematical *method*. This passage is evidence that Spinoza thought of geometrical demonstration as some sort of method, although, as we have just seen, there are many possibilities for just how.

Although "everyone" was an overstatement, Meyer was correct that Spinoza was far from the only early modern philosopher who presented his arguments in a geometrical form. Hobbes, Descartes, Pufendorf, Samuel Clarke, and some who are less well known today, such as Descartes's critic Jean-Baptiste Morin[8] and Leibniz's teacher Erhard Weigel, wrote whole works or passages of their works patterned on the axiomatic style of Euclid's geometry with definitions and rules or axioms, and then demonstrated propositions from the definitions.

For example, Pufendorf's *Elementorum jurisprudentiae universalis libri II* appeared in 1660, when Spinoza was writing his earliest geometrical works. Pufendorf had modeled it on Weigel's *Aristotelica ex Euclide restituta*, which had appeared two years earlier. Book I of *Elementorum*[9] comprises twenty-one definitions of moral and political concepts, each definition subdivided into more precise definitions. Book II comprises two axioms and then five "observations," conclusions derived from the definitions and the axioms. The proofs and interconnection of definitions, axioms, and conclusions is much less precise and intricate than in Spinoza's *Ethics*, but the form of the demonstration is overtly Euclidean.

Pufendorf's *Elementorum* also allows us to distinguish another sense in which a method could be geometrical. In the course of his argument, Pufendorf literally applied geometrical figures and relations to elucidate moral and political concepts. For example, Pufendorf made geometrical computations of the quantity of sin in conjunction with the diagram of a "moral sphere."[10] This was "geometrical" not only insofar as it used the demonstrative style of Euclid's *Elements*, but also by virtue of analyzing moral concepts *as if* they were geometrical figures. Many philosophers other than Pufendorf—

including Spinoza and Hobbes—wished to treat questions in metaphysics, mind, and morals *as if* they were questions concerning geometrical figures. Notably, when Spinoza explained the different kinds of knowledge in KV and the *Ethics*, he used geometrical proportion to clarify the distinction (E2p40s2, and also see E1p8s). Here Spinoza was analyzing a problem not ordinarily thought to involve geometrical relations using a concept from geometry. Thus, it is evident that geometry was appealing to quite a few philosophers, even if Meyer exaggerated the ubiquity of its use. But what exactly was it that was so appealing? A good place to start in answering this question is with Hobbes's conversion to geometry as described in John Aubrey's *Brief Lives*:

> He was forty years old before he looked on Geometry, which happened accidentally, being in a Gentleman's Library in …, a Euclid's *Elements* lay open, and 'twas the 47th Element liber I. He read the Proposition. "By G—," sayd he, "this is impossible." So he reads the Demonstration of it, which referred him back to such a Proposition: which proposition he read: that referred him back to another which he also read, and sic deinceps [slowly but surely], that at last he was demonstratively convinced of that trueth. This made him in love with Geometry.[11]

Aubrey describes Hobbes as finding himself convinced of the truth of a proposition he had initially thought to be impossible by first reading and understanding the demonstration of the controversial proposition, and then reading and understanding the demonstrations of the propositions on which the controversial principle rested and following back all the demonstrations to intuitively obvious definitions, axioms, and rules for the construction of geometrical figures. Hobbes was able to follow the argumentative links back to first principles, with all the argumentative links fully accessible, because geometrical demonstration possesses the virtues of *transparency* and *force*. Geometrical demonstrations make the justifications of all propositions (or the lack of justification of propositions) evident, easy to access, and easy to assess. And once accessed and assessed, the justifications possess great argumentative force insofar as they give compelling motivating reasons. If the argument is valid, there is no escape except by denying the premises or equivocating.

The transparency of geometrical demonstration further requires that the obvious definitions and axioms, on which the demonstrations and propositions draw for their justification, actually do provide a stable and sufficient foundation for the claims educed. As Meyer put it, "since a certain and firm knowledge of anything unknown can only be derived from things known certainly beforehand, these things must be

laid down at the start, as a stable foundation on which to build the whole edifice of human knowledge" (DPP Preface/G 1:127). A valid geometrical demonstration consequently exhibits the virtue of *security*: any proposition upstream, if validly deduced, is secure if it rests on a solid foundation.

Transparency is not unique to geometrical demonstration. Individual syllogisms also make evident how and whether a conclusion is justified. A syllogistic argument is valid if it is in a valid syllogistic form and the conclusion follows from the premises by virtue of the demonstration. But, unlike geometrical deductions, syllogisms need not rest on axioms and definitions and are rarely interconnected in a long, transparent chain. Consequently, although syllogisms are transparent, the premises on which syllogisms rest are often more difficult to assess (and often less secure) than the definitions and axioms of geometrical deductions. Of course, a chain of syllogisms could lead back to self-evident propositions, in which case it could be part of a geometrical deduction. But, in practice, syllogisms are often unconnected enthymemes. Meyer saw this as a more general problem with non-mathematical philosophical arguments. Non-mathematical arguments intermix merely probable arguments with certain definitions and consequently foist "on the public a huge heap of huge books, in which you will find nothing that is firm and certain" (DPP Preface/G 1:128).

Scale, *compactness*, and *flexibility* are three further virtues that hold of geometrical demonstration. Geometrical demonstrations allow readers to take in large-scale arguments relatively easily in comparison with syllogisms, and to keep track of where they are presently in the argument and where they are headed. One reason that it is easier to keep track of large-scale arguments in a geometrical presentation is the *compactness* of the arguments. Propositions are built on previous propositions. Since the demonstrations of the previous propositions are secure and transparent, one need only refer to the conclusion of the previous demonstrations to know that the proposition being built on them is secure. This allows for highly compact arguments, which can be made less compact by following back the chain of demonstrations for each of the propositions on which a downstream proposition rests. To take a metaphor from Leibniz by way of Gilles Deleuze, each proposition is like a pleat or fold in a Baroque curtain, which, one realizes as one unfolds it, envelops bolt after bolt of pleated cloth. As each proposition is unfolded, longer and longer demonstrations and justifications emerge until the whole argument up to that point is like one long, seamless piece of cloth.[12] But at the level of the "pleats," it is wonderfully beautiful and compact.

Also, though syllogisms come in a variety of forms and flavors,

they do not allow much *flexibility* in argument. A philosopher working exclusively from syllogisms is limited to stringing together one or another of the syllogistic forms. The geometrical method allows flexibility in argument techniques (indirect proof, reductio ad absurdum, relatively complex arguments) that are not easily available in syllogisms without compromising the justificatory virtue of transparency it shares with syllogistic reasoning. Spinoza often makes use of each of these argument forms in the geometrical demonstrations of the *Ethics*.

Geometrical demonstrations also allow a philosopher to more naturally present corollaries and scholia to the main propositions. Some of Spinoza's most important claims in the *Ethics* are in corollaries, scholia, appendixes, and the like. Because of the forceful, linear, and compact character of the deduction, geometrical demonstration is remarkably flexible in allowing side excurses without losing sight of the main argumentative flow. The use of corollaries, scholia, and so forth, was the historical legacy of Euclid's *Elements*, but the flexibility in allowing different sorts of digression owes to the structure of geometrical deductions.

Even more important than flexibility was the connected virtue of *generality*, which for Spinoza went hand in hoof with the crucial virtue of *sense-independence*. One of the main advantages of geometrical demonstrations as advocated by Hobbes and others was that they can be applied to *any* sort of subject matter, and the conclusions arrived at hold irrespective of the content. Euclidean demonstration was certainly not the only candidate for a universally applicable philosophical method. Bacon's *Novum Organum* was an attempt to construct a modern, universal canon of method. Descartes, in his *Regulae* and the *Discourse on Method*, argued for the importance of a *methodus universalis* in opposition to an Aristotelian order of topics[13] that set the order and nature of inquiry by subject matter. Aristotle had claimed in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that a philosophical inquiry should proceed in a manner appropriate to its content, and that the sort of clarity possible when one is discovering the cause of an eclipse may not hold of politics.[14] Descartes argued that this led to the obscuring of the solutions to often only apparently difficult problems.

For example, when trying to solve a difficult geometry problem, if the proof strategy is dictated by the appearances of geometrical objects (the way that curves appear curvy to human eyes and human touch), then potential solutions drawing on non-phenomenal properties will be obscured by our tendency to concentrate on phenomenally attractive properties. In particular, we will fail to search for structurally important unifying elements that are not available through the senses. The more the method operates on common properties with common

axioms, the less it will depend on anthropomorphisms and particular perceptual or psychological artifacts.

Euclid's *Elements* I:47 (which, as we saw earlier, made such an impact on Hobbes) is the now familiar theorem that the square of the hypotenuse in right triangles is equal to the sum of the squares of the two other sides. Hobbes found I:47 counterintuitive, but insofar as the demonstration was valid and the premises it rested on were true, he was forced to accept it. The conclusion of a geometrical demonstration is sometimes at odds with the ways in which we experience the sensible world and the intuitions and the unreflective inferences we generally draw from these orderings. Euclid showed a deep, simple, and certain structural relation between the sides of a class of plane figures that depended on relations between generic properties of figures.

If a geometrical proof can be so surprising and so at odds with our ordinary intuitions about the properties of visible objects, then when we move from plane figures to metaphysics, mind, and morals, there is even greater potential for counterintuitive results and an even greater need to provide counter-ballast for our customary beliefs. Furthermore, this application of geometry has a leveling effect insofar as it shows that reason is applied generally and in the same manner regardless of the area of inquiry. In the Preface to Part III of the *Ethics*, Spinoza stated—clearly echoing a famous passage from Hobbes to be discussed later[15]—that he would treat the human affects in just the same way as planes, lines, and points. Spinoza was implying not just that one method was sufficient for all inquiries but also that the appropriate method when applied to an unfamiliar object would have the effect of critically undermining false beliefs about the human affects dictated by local concerns and interests.[16] He was also implying, against the assumptions of many religionists, that the very same reasoning applied to God in Part I applied to the human affects in Part III.

Spinoza also emphasized *sense-independence* as a central virtue of geometrical demonstration[17] related to generality. In a Scholium to his demonstration of Descartes's indefinite extension of matter in DPP, Spinoza criticized Zeno's paradoxes denying local motion, such as the paradox of Achilles and the hare. Drawing a distinction between his own criticisms and Diogenes the Cynic's attempt to refute Zeno by walking around the room, Spinoza concluded:

> But here I should like my Readers to note that I have opposed my reasonings to Zeno's reasonings, and therefore I have refuted him by reason, not by the senses, as Diogenes did. For the senses cannot provide anything else to one who is seeking the truth except the

> Phenomena of nature, by which he is determined to investigate their causes. They can never show him that something is false that the intellect has clearly and distinctly found to be true. For so we judge. And therefore, this is our Method: to demonstrate the things we put forward by reasons perceived clearly and distinctly by the intellect, and to regard as negligible whatever the senses say that seems contrary to those reasons. As we have said, the senses can only determine the intellect to inquire into this matter rather than that one. They cannot convict it of falsity, when it has perceived something clearly and distinctly. (DPP2p6s/G 1:195–196)

In other words, sense experience can initiate a line of inquiry, but it can't provide a standard by which to distinguish truth from falsity. Spinoza's famous claim in the *Ethics* that "the eyes of the mind, by which it sees and observes things, are the demonstrations themselves" (E5p23s) tacitly counterpoises the adequate eyes of the mind to the inadequate eyes of the body. Demonstrations provide the means by which the more universal eyes of the mind are freed to discover rare, surprising, and powerful truths. When the inadequate ideas of the body are relied on for fundamental truths, only partial, situated, easy, and often anthropomorphizing perspectives are offered.[18]

SYNTHESIS AND ANALYSIS: DESCARTES AND HOBBES

The generality and sense-independence of the method allow those utilizing it to acquire general and essential knowledge[19] and help to undermine partial beliefs that impede proper understanding. If the knowledge acquired is sense-independent, it is independent of the particular contingent artifacts of our senses. If the method holds generally then it could provide demonstrations that utilize common notions and access essences. But, as I noted earlier, geometrical demonstration was not the only sort of method with claims to generality and sense-independence. Descartes outlined a method (or methods), first in his early works and then in the *Discourse and Essays* and the *Meditations*, that laid claim to generality, sense-independence, and many of the other virtues just outlined.

Many philosophers, mathematicians, and natural scientists were already analyzing problems in a manner similar to the way Descartes argued that mathematical and natural scientific problems should be tackled in the *Regulae*, *Discourse*, and in the *Essays*. At the time

Descartes was writing, analysis was particularly associated with the breakthroughs in algebraic formalism in mathematics, in particular François Viète's *In Artem Analyticem Isagoge*[20] (1591) and the great advances in mathematical problem-solving by Viète and others, including Descartes himself.

"Analysis" in this context means breaking down what is to be known into simpler, more basic, constituent elements. The second of Descartes's four rules in the *Discourse* was "to divide each of the difficulties I examined into as many parts as possible and as may be required in order to resolve them better" (AT 6: 18). The parts that are arrived at through analysis might be metaphysically more basic or logically prior as such, or they might be more basic just for the needs of a particular problem. For example, certain units might be more amenable to mathematical reconstruction than others but not metaphysically simple, and vice versa. I will refer to an analysis that seeks the appropriate simples to successfully solve a problem as "methodological analysis" and to an analysis seeking metaphysically basic essences or logically prior simples as "metaphysical analysis." Of course, the two types of analysis might be identical or might overlap, or one might be a subset of the other. For example, all successful methodological analysis might be, or at least might depend on, metaphysical analysis.

"Analysis" was normally contrasted with "synthesis" and the two were normally viewed as complementary, not as mutually exclusive. Hobbes's method, for example, had both an analytic and a synthetic component and the two were sometimes mixed.[21] Synthesis was the way in which the parts were put back together once analysis had been performed. And, just as analysis was by no means solely identified with Descartes, synthesis was not solely identified with Euclidean demonstration—syllogisms, for example, were commonly interpreted as a form of synthesis. Any demonstrative argument constructed from parts reached through analysis could be "synthesis."

The first of Descartes's rules was "never to accept anything as true" without evident knowledge that it was true (AT 6:18). In the *Discourse* and in the *Meditations*, Descartes identified this rule with the method of skeptical doubt. The method of skeptical doubt was a method of metaphysical analysis insofar as it took something large and complicated—our experience—and broke it down to reveal metaphysical simple natures. At least once in one's life, one had to break through confused and unjustified sense experience and access clear and distinct simple natures in such a way that the truth and constitution of the simple natures was impervious to doubt and could act as a transparent foundation for future inquiry. For Descartes, this gave us knowledge of real essences, in particular the essence of the

human mind and of bodies. One could only be certain of the knowledge acquired by methodological analysis if the methodological analysis rested on the proper foundation of metaphysical analysis.

Which is not to say that Descartes had no place for synthesis or geometrical reasoning. In the Synopsis of the *Meditations*, Descartes asserts that the work as a whole is in a *geometrical order*, by which he understood the exhaustive setting out of all the premises on which a conclusion depended before drawing conclusions (AT 7:13). Indeed, it was a (or even *the*) central principle structuring the work, and the geometrical order explained why an argument of the immortality of the soul does not directly follow the *cogito* argument—all relevant premises must be collected before educing the conclusion, even if they seem to be connected with radically different topics. The *Meditations* also contained numerous synthetic arguments drawing together elements discovered by prior analysis, and Descartes's *Principles of Philosophy* was written entirely in a non-geometrical synthetic form of argument. Furthermore, in response to criticisms of the *Meditations* made by the author of the Second Objections, Descartes restructured some of the contents of the *Meditations* into geometrical definitions, postulates, and axioms, and then derived from them four propositions and one corollary[22] that presented some of the most important results of the *Meditations*—that is, the proofs of God and the real distinction between mind and body. But Descartes cautioned that this geometrical synthetic order was no substitute for the analytic *method* used in the main body of the *Meditations*—it was at best auxiliary.

In other words, synthetic order gave the reader no understanding of how the few important foundational ideas were acquired. Analysis was a *method* of discovery; it explained how confused ideas were to be chopped, doubted, and dissected so as to acquire or uncover new clear and distinct ideas. *Analytic order* was the order of discovery; that is, the sequence of the investigation was determined by the actual order in which concepts and propositions were rigorously discovered (in the *Meditations*, following hyperbolic doubt). This did not conflict with a *geometrical order* in Descartes's sense; the two were mutually supporting. Geometrical order guided the analytic order in a general way: we need to discover all relevant premises before setting out conclusions, but we need to do so in a way that reflected the actual analytic order of discovery that depended on the analytic method.

For Spinoza, though, geometrical order was not just a support to the analytic order and analytic method. Indeed, the subtitle of the *Ethics* is "*ordine Geometrico demonstrata*" and the geometric order is advertised as a primary commitment. What Spinoza understood by geometrical order was not just the exhaustive list of relevant premises but also the arrangement of definitions, axioms, or other propositions

from causally and explanatorily "prior by nature" as such—not just for the purposes of a particular investigation—to causally and explanatorily posterior as such. Descartes's geometrical order was a methodological arrangement of premises in service of a metaphysical investigation. Spinoza's geometrical order was in addition a metaphysical arrangement of premises.

Geometrical order is evident in the sequence of the parts of the *Ethics*—from God to Mind to human affects, and, in the first proposition—"A substance is prior in nature to its affections." Beginning with the more general and moving to the more specific was not unique to Spinoza's geometrical order; it was a basic assumption of Aristotelian science.[23] But this conflicts with Descartes's understanding in a non-trivial way. On Spinoza's interpretation of the geometrical or proper order, one cannot begin with the soul and move to God, as Descartes does in the *Meditations*, since this would be to move from a principle posterior by nature to one prior by nature.

This was of great importance for Spinoza since many of the ideas acquired early in an investigation were not sufficiently general to serve as a standard by which to evaluate ideas discovered later. For example, Descartes acquires the *cogito* early on in the investigation, and an analysis of the *cogito* leads to the discovery of the will, which becomes central to the subsequent arguments. But, if Descartes had already demonstrated a more general metaphysical thesis from definitions and axioms that were prior by nature that committed him to determinism, this would likely have restrained questionable voluntarist inferences about the nature of the human and of the divine will. In other words, if the order of the investigation was determined by the order of discovery and a weak Cartesian notion of geometrical order, then one might, in absence of more general standards, be misled in ways that terribly skew the investigation. One might end up with a demonstrably false belief in a voluntarist God, for example.

The general criticism, then, is that the analytic order, when combined with the geometric order, in Descartes's sense, has insufficient metaphysical backbone; that is, has an insufficiently evident metaphysical structure of generality and priority or, put differently, is insufficiently guided by the principle of sufficient reason to prevent the investigator from being drastically and destructively misled in the investigation. Descartes could, of course, reasonably object that this metaphysical backbone is what is at issue; that is, it must be discovered as certain and evident and not presumed. But the fear that Descartes's order was insufficiently metaphysically strong to prevent him from being misled in his own investigation was a serious one.

And if Descartes himself could be misled, what about his readers?

> But though a certainty which is placed beyond any risk of doubt is found in each way of demonstrating, they are not equally useful and convenient for everyone. For since men are completely unskilled in the Mathematical sciences, and quite ignorant, both of the Synthetic Method, in which they have been written, and of the Analytic, by which they have been discovered, they can neither follow for themselves, nor present to others, the things which are treated, and demonstrated conclusively, in these books. That is why many who have been led, either by a blind impulse, or by the authority of someone else, to enlist as followers of Descartes, have only impressed his opinions and doctrines on their memory; when the subject comes up, they know only how to chatter and babble, but not how to demonstrate anything, as was, and still is, the custom among those who are attached to Aristotle's philosophy. (DPP Preface/G 1:129)

As Meyer points out in this passage from DPP, even if Descartes had discovered his central philosophical arguments through analysis, this would not guarantee that his readers would be able to grasp his arguments when presented in the analytic order in which Descartes had discovered them. Furthermore, if readers of Descartes's analytic works were swayed by his standing as a great philosopher but unable to grasp the arguments because of their own failings or because of the argument's intrinsic difficulties, they would become Cartesian "enthusiasts" in the pejorative early modern sense: blind and uncomprehending zealots. Because synthetic arguments in Spinoza's geometrical order are relatively simple and clear; because they pretty much guarantee—or at least guarantee more closely than analysis would—that the reader will need to understand each step in order to go on; and, more important, because the metaphysical backbone is always evident and present, the reader will not become an enthusiast quite as easily. This worry that a little bit of knowledge of Descartes could be destructive was indeed what had motivated Spinoza to write *DPP*. The work was originally created for and dictated to Johannes Caesarius, a young member of Spinoza's circle. Caesarius was "more anxious for novelty than for truth" (Ep. 9/G 4:42), and Spinoza was careful not to communicate any of the content of the *Ethics* to him for fear that it would be misunderstood. Spinoza must have thought that the synthetic order of the *Principles* was not sufficient to insure that Caesarius properly understood the Cartesian philosophy, which in turn was the precondition for understanding the *Ethics*. In addition to its other virtues, the *ease* of geometrical demonstration served the crucial purpose of undermining both enthusiasm and potentially destructive philosophical misunderstandings that neither analysis nor some other forms of synthesis adequately counter. This held for both writer and reader.

This insight is, at least in part, Hobbesian. Hobbes was clearly the major influence on Spinoza's conviction that geometrical demonstration had the power to upend and undermine false beliefs ("this is impossible"), to convince the reader of the truth of counterintuitive propositions, and to progress in areas where schools and sects had done little good. A few years after his geometrical awakening, Hobbes wrote *De Cive*, his most widely read political work on the continent. In the Preface he argued that geometrical demonstration was not merely propaedeutic (i.e., for those incapable of analysis); rather it was capable of ushering in a millenarian age:

> True Wisdom is simply the knowledge [*scientia*] of truth in every subject. Since it derives from the remembrance of things, which is prompted by their fixed and definite names, it is not a matter of momentary flashes of penetrating insight, but of right Reason, i.e. of Philosophy. For Philosophy opens the way from the observation of individual things to universal precepts… . In treating of figures it is called Geometry, of motion Physics, of natural law, Morals, but is all Philosophy; just as the sea is here called British, there Atlantic, elsewhere Indian, so called from its particular shores, but all is Ocean. The Geometers have managed their province outstandingly. For whatever benefit comes to human life from observation of the stars, from mapping of lands, from reckoning of time and from long-distance navigation; whatever is beautiful in buildings, strong in defense-works and marvelous in machines, whatever in short distinguishes the modern worl'd from the barbarity of the past, is almost wholly the gift of Geometry. For if the pattern of human action were known with the same certainty as the relations of magnitudes in figures, ambition and greed, whose power rests on false opinions of the common people of right and wrong [*jus et iniuria*], would be disarmed, and the human race would enjoy such secure peace that (apart from conflicts over space as population grew) it seems unlikely that it would ever have to fight again.[24]

This passage was almost certainly read by Spinoza.[25] On Hobbes's account, the demonstrations used by geometers are Philosophy as such, applied specifically to geometrical figures. Philosophy can also be applied to other subjects, and the degree of rigor will be that appropriate to the subject. If the same sort of demonstrations were consistently applied to other areas of human endeavor, the rest of human life would be transformed as rapidly as mathematics has been. The previously mentioned passage from the Preface to the third part of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza asserts that he will treat the human affects in just the same way as planes, lines, and points seems a direct extension of Hobbes's praise of geometry.

Philosophy for Hobbes, then, *just is* geometrical demonstration preceded by some sort of analysis appropriate to the objects or problems under investigation. The apparent differences in the method applied by Hobbes to different areas, from physics to psychology to politics, are not actually differences in method but differences in the rigor with which the method can be effectively applied. Since Spinoza's understanding of philosophical method was strongly influenced by Hobbes, this gives us a plausible answer to the question asked at the beginning of this chapter: is geometrical demonstration one among many true methods, the only true method, an application of a broader concept of method, or a stage in a method? If Spinoza is following Hobbes, then Philosophy provides causes or reasons between propositions that are ultimately secured by self-evident propositions or definitions or axioms. In politics, this is bound to be somewhat less precise than in physics. And in metaphysics, the degree of rigor can be very exacting, including explicit definitions and axioms and rigorous arguments that show these causal and rational connections, precisely because we are dealing with the most knowable sorts of propositions.

On this account, the geometrical demonstrations in the *Ethics* would not be synonymous with Philosophy in general but would be the most rigorous expression of Philosophy—that is, of causal explanation and demonstration in a proper geometrical order. This level of rigor would be appropriate to some subjects—that is, subjects we can know in a rigorous manner, such as metaphysics or mind—and would possess the virtues of geometry outlined in the previous section to the highest degree. The discussions of "true method" in TdIE would provide a broad characterization of Philosophy that then would take on different degrees of rigor appropriate to the content. But a true method would show "how the mind is to be directed according to the standard of a given true idea" (TdIE §38) whether the true idea was the definition of God and the showing via geometrical proofs, or definitions of the state and less rigorous demonstrations (i.e., the "unfettered spirit" of mathematics in TP 1.4).

This helps us to make further sense of Spinoza's apparently peculiar decision to order Descartes's synthetic *Principles* as a geometrical demonstration in DPP. The decision is apparently peculiar since Descartes's *Principles* are already presented in a synthetic order. But the peculiarity vanishes if we compare Descartes's *Principles* with Spinoza's "physics" after E2p13. Spinoza's physics is in the form of a rigorous geometrical demonstration with definitions and lemmas. Descartes's synthetic ordering is not nearly as transparent, compact, or secure. So Spinoza was translating a synthetic presentation that was insufficiently rigorous for the content being presented into a more

rigorous and geometrical presentation, the sort of presentation with which he presented his own physics in the *Ethics*.

But the potential Cartesian objection remains a worry, a worry connected to the puzzle associated with TdIE with which I began this chapter. Does geometrical demonstration come after a presupposed stage of analysis or does it involve analysis, or not? If it doesn't come after analysis, then how can the definitions be evident and their priority understood in a clear and evident manner? If it *does* come after analysis, then what sort of analysis? In the passage from *De Cive* quoted earlier, the examples Hobbes gives of the wonders of geometry are all examples of construction, reform, and reconstruction. Lands and oceans are mapped by organizing them according to geometrical principles; and superior buildings, strong defenses, and marvelous machines are constructed according to geometrical principles. But in all these examples the geometer begins with a nominal definition or starting point—a geometer charts the sea and land and picks out particular points, sometimes arbitrarily, sometimes not, to serve as the elements in the construction and then analyzes the starting points to educe principles which can serve for a causal explanation. When a sailor is navigating the sea, he resolves the shifting sea into lines that are then used, to set the ship's path, in conjunction with lines used to coordinate information gathered from the stars. This would be a paradigmatic example of methodological analysis: the analysis solves a particular problem and the principles educed are justified pragmatically.

Or, put differently, not just any definitions or principles will do when one is attempting to provide demonstrations of metaphysical truths. As Spinoza stated in the concluding section of TdIE, we need to get at true ideas, essences, and real definitions. This was a main selling point of Descartes's metaphysical analysis: unlike synthesis, which only arranged previously discovered definitions, analysis got at the essences themselves and solid, indubitable foundations. Spinoza's use of geometrical demonstration seems to harmonize Descartes's and Hobbes's insights—that is, to advocate a Hobbes-inspired geometrical science of morals, politics, and the human mind but to build it on a metaphysical foundation and knowledge of the essences of things. But Spinoza did not provide any explicit metaphysical analysis, unlike Descartes. The whole of the *Ethics* is one geometrical demonstration that begins from definitions and axioms arranged in a geometrical order in Spinoza's sense, which at least appear to be essential definitions of basic metaphysical concepts and laws, and then adds more and more definitions and axioms but gives little or no explanation of how these definitions are acquired or how priority among them was established previous to the demonstration.[26] So,

although we now understand Spinoza's method a bit better, we still have our puzzle.

REPRESENTATION AND DEFINITION

There are at least three ways we might respond. First, we might just admit that this is a serious problem that Spinoza didn't think through. A strong piece of evidence for this view is that Spinoza never offers any explicit response to this problem. Given that he studied Descartes and Hobbes quite seriously and given the discussion in TdIE, though, it is overwhelmingly likely that he did think about it.

Or, we might hold that Spinoza did think the problem through but was unable to come up with any good solution. The fact that TdIE is incomplete and ends just at the point when Spinoza is about to explain how we get the true definitions that we will use in our geometrical demonstrations provides support for this view—perhaps the puzzle we have discussed was an unsolvable one for Spinoza. Indeed, the last line of TdIE is "we must now establish something common from which these properties necessarily follow, *or* such that when it is given, they are necessarily given, and when it is taken away, they are taken away" (TdIE §110). That seems like a failed search for a stable foundation for the definition.

Or, we can argue that Spinoza does have a solution to this problem, or that he at least has the resources to try to solve the puzzle. This does not mean that the solution is ultimately philosophically satisfactory; rather, the solution is consistent with other positions held by Spinoza throughout the *Ethics* and his other writings. This is the tack I will take, but it is perfectly warranted to conclude that Spinoza failed to solve the problem.

A good place to start is by asking whether there is analysis in Spinoza's writings or whether all his writings are synthetic. Two likely candidates for analysis are TdIE and TTP. TdIE is explicitly presented as a work preparatory to what would become the *Ethics*, and Spinoza engages in analysis in the opening passages of TdIE, where he sifts through his own life and tries to discover what is most important to him. But TdIE is more a work in philosophical methodology than an analysis insofar as the primary purpose of TdIE is to reflexively describe a procedure for acquiring true ideas and definitions and avoiding false ideas (as opposed to acquiring particular definitions, axioms, propositions, etc). I will return to this procedure in a moment.

Spinoza does engage in a lot of analysis, though, in TTP. He analyzes many passages from the Hebrew Bible, Hebrew etymologies, and works by Jewish medieval commentators and philosophers and tries to draw out the true meanings of these passages and the terms they employ. For example, TTP opens with an analysis—in the technical sense—of prophecy: "the sure knowledge of some matter revealed by God to man" (TTP 1/G 3:15).[27] Spinoza presents two conflicting interpretations of this definition held by opposed interpreters of Scripture. On one interpretation, prophecy includes natural knowledge; on the other, it excludes natural knowledge because natural knowledge cannot be divine. Both interpretations appear to be consistent with the definition, but because they are directly opposed, only one of them can stand.

The authors of Scripture use the Hebrew word for "spirit" when they describe prophets being filled with the "spirit of God," and interpreters of Scripture who hold that natural knowledge is not prophecy tacitly draw on "spirit" to support their positions. Together, what Scripture says about "prophecy" and about "spirit" are taken to imply that natural knowledge cannot be divine.

But, there is a wide range of interpretations of the definition of spirit. Those who deny that natural knowledge can be divine interpret spirit in such a way that the consequence—that natural knowledge cannot be divine—follows from it in conjunction with the definition of prophecy. Let's call this interpretation "spiritX."

To show that spiritX is an implausible interpretation of "spirit," Spinoza fixes the extension of plausible interpretations of "spirit" by analyzing the contexts in which it occurs in Scripture. Untenable interpretations can then be ruled out by showing that they are not supported by any uses made of the Hebrew word for "spirit" in said contexts. This results in a restricted set of plausible interpretations of "spirit" that does not include "spiritX"—"since we find no mention in Scripture of any other means than these, it is not permissible for us to invent any" (TTP 1/G 3:28). Since "spirit" interpreted as "spiritX" was one of his opponent's premises, we can conclude that they have not established that natural knowledge cannot be divine.

The crucial step in Spinoza's argument is an analysis. Spinoza breaks down a tacitly invoked but confused use of the definition of prophecy into constituent elements and then clarifies the elements in order to restrict the extension of the definition and, consequently, to restrict the conclusions that could follow from it. Spinoza's argument is negative, but there's no reason that a similar procedure could not be used positively. Indeed, one is used positively in Spinoza's arguments for the liberty to philosophize.[28]

But there is an obvious problem in applying this procedure to the

Ethics. The analysis was possible because of contextual definitions, which provided a clear, if not uncontroversial[29] way of restricting the extension of a definition when the total range of the definition has been stipulated. In this case, the range of the definition of "spirit" can't extend beyond the contexts in which "spirit" occurs in Scripture. But, when we are not dealing with a stipulated or nominal definition with a fixed range, it doesn't seem that this procedure will work. If we were trying to define "substance," where would we look for contextual definitions, and what would justify these particular contextual definitions and not others? What principle could be used to limit the extensions of definitions? If we just looked to what philosophers said about substance; that is, if our domain were restricted to philosophers' words, then we might be able to rule out some interpretations of substance as being inconsistent with what philosophers generally say. But that wouldn't rule anything out as being true definitions of substance as such.

I would like to suggest that there is a special connection between deduction or demonstration and the restriction of interpretations of definitions. This is in turn connected with Spinoza's understanding of representation. In TdIE, Spinoza suggested that deduction or demonstration had a central role both in emending our confused but true ideas and in helping us to distinguish between false and true ideas:

> When the mind attends to a fictitious thing which is false by its very nature, so that it considers it carefully, and understands it, and deduces from it in good order the things to be deduced, it will easily bring its falsity to light. And if the fictitious thing is true by its nature, then when the mind attends to it, so that it understands it, and begins to deduce from it in good order the things that follow from it, it will proceed successfully, without any interruption. (TdIE §61)

Spinoza here outlines two consequences of attending to fictitious ideas that depend on two sorts of fictitious ideas. There are ideas that are fictitious yet true by their nature and ideas that are fictitious and false by nature. I take the first sorts of fictitious ideas to be those where the object of the fictitious ideas is true in itself and the "fictitiousness" arises from confusion or fuzziness in the mind of the perceiver in attending to the true object. For example, the fuzziness or confusion in my idea of a scalene triangle is due to my confusions—my misperceptions, my incompetence at mathematics—and not to confusions in scalene triangles themselves. For Spinoza, both the mental state I have (*my* confused representation of a triangle) and its object in the attribute of thought (the idea of a triangle insofar as it is in God's intellect in the attribute of thought) are ideas.[30] The confused

idea or mental state I have is a truncated form of the idea in the mind of God and confusedly represents its object—that is, the adequate idea in God's intellect.[31]

The confused mental state I have just described, which inadequately represents the true idea of triangle, is fictitious, but it is fictitious in a different way from the other class of fictitious ideas, ideas which are both fictitious and false. In a note to TdIE, Spinoza adds:

> Afterwards, when we speak of fiction that concerns essences, it will be clear that the fiction never makes, or presents to the mind, anything new, but that only things which are in the brain or the imagination are recalled to memory, and that the mind attends confusedly to all of them at once. Speech and a tree, for example, are recalled to memory, and since the mind attends confusedly, without distinction, it allows that the tree speaks. The same is understood concerning existence, especially, as we have said, when it is conceived so generally, as being. Then it is easily applied to all things which occur in the mind together. This is very much worth noting. (TdIE §57, fn. x)

The "talking tree" in this example is the result of the happenstance connecting of images that the mind conceives confusedly. A mind forms a notion "talking tree" and then further confusedly judges that the talking tree exists. Importantly, there is nothing new added to my mental stock (nor to the world) by conceiving "talking tree." "There is a talking tree" is just "talking" and "tree" conceived in a particularly confused manner. Both "tree" and "talking" can be conceived in a less confused manner, and then the idea might be fictitious—I might and likely will form confused ideas of "talking" and "tree." These concepts, too, add nothing new, but they at least might represent true ideas (or they might not).

Certainly, though, my idea of a "unicorn" does not refer to the true idea of a unicorn in God's intellect or have a unicorn as its object.[32] The parts which make it up have to represent something, a horse, a horn, inchoate extended blob, and the questionable affect of wonder. But whatever my mental state "unicorn" might be said to confusedly represent, it is not in any way representing the true idea of a unicorn since unicorns are not real objects of my mental states. My idea is fictitious and false, and so it cannot be represented adequately or truly.

Our minds include more or less adequate or true ideas as well as fictitious and false ideas. We evaluate the false ideas using the standard offered by the true ideas. We seek, or at least we should seek, to have fewer false ideas and more true ideas. As we have just seen, fictitious ideas are divided into two classes that can be distinguished by their deductive consequences. When we try to deduce true propositions from fictitious and false ideas, either we are quickly led

to contradictions or the demonstrations lead to dead ends. But Spinoza suggests that when we deduce from a confused idea which has a true object and in the *proper order* (beginning with the most fundamental first principles), we will be able to "proceed successfully, without any interruption"; and as we engage more and more in this sort of deduction, "the haste to feign things will gradually disappear" (TdIE §63).

This last point is crucial, since it implies that demonstration is a gradual corrective of or a mental discipline for hasty tendencies that result in the forming of both sorts of fictitious ideas. Deduction rids us of fictitious and false ideas and diminishes our tendency to form "new" ones in the sense previously described. And fictitious ideas with a true object, confused mental states that do represent, albeit poorly, are, unlike fictitious and false ideas, a crucial bridge insofar as we can adequately conceive their objects. More about this in a moment.

I suggest that demonstration has this effect through imparting some of the epistemic virtues I outlined in the opening section, and that the effect of geometrical deduction on the mind that Spinoza intends is wider than just not forming false ideas while engaged in a deduction. By engaging in geometrical deductions, we use the "eyes of the mind"—we take on an epistemic stance, a stance toward knowledge, that promotes these virtues more generally. Geometrical demonstration is causal demonstration in a geometrical order and offers an objective standpoint on the reasons for and causes of extended things and ideas.

Six of the virtues of geometrical demonstration—transparency, force, security, generality, sense-independence, and ease—seem particularly central to this process. Since the method is general and sense-independent, it holds independently of the particular biases of our experience. Because it has transparency and security, the grounds of evidence are always accessible, and so the importance of offering valid reasons is promoted. The method also provides some motivation. Because it has both force and ease, all but the most bigoted should be convinced (of course, in practice, that is rarely the case). One acquires these epistemic virtues by practicing deduction. Deduction teaches the deducer to see and know the world through the pre-eminence of the principles of sufficient reason and the principle of non-contradiction and conversely to avoid fictitious and false ideas from testimony, memory, and the senses as well as to avoid conceiving them in confused ways.

It is different from Descartes's analytic order, which seems to be specific to the human understanding and faculties. Spinoza's offers us, rather, a view from everywhere. In a footnote attached to the passage about deduction just cited, Spinoza added:

> Although I seem to infer this from experience, and someone may say that this is nothing, because a demonstration is lacking, he may have one, if he wishes; since there can be nothing in nature that is contrary to its laws, but since all things happen according to certain laws of nature, so that they produce their certain effects, by certain laws, in an unbreakable connection, it follows from this that when the soul conceives a thing truly [*ubi rem verè concipit*], it proceeds to form the same effects objectively. (TdIE §61, fn. a)

This passage suggests that the order of deduction mirrors the order of nature insofar as the human mind is a part of nature and the laws that govern it are the very same laws that govern the rest of nature. And it further seems to suggest that the ability of the mind to produce effects depends on both how it conceives (truly or not) and what it conceives (a true idea or not). "Conceives a thing truly (*verê*)" again underscores that it is not just conceiving what is true, but conceiving in a particular adverbial manner, in line with the epistemic virtues that are part of the method.

I have suggested that we think of deduction as having a therapeutic effect in line with the method of emending and purifying the intellect described in TdIE. I would like now to suggest that this therapeutic effect is connected with the problem of definition in Spinoza, that for Spinoza definitions are achievements, and as we achieve them, we purify and emend our minds.

As we saw before, there is a problem in applying the sort of analysis Spinoza practiced in TTP to metaphysics and to Spinoza's idea of a proper or geometrical order. Spinoza was able to rule out false beliefs about the extension and reference of "spirit" on the basis of an analysis of the contexts in which "spirit" occurred. But in the analysis in TTP, he fixed the reference or meaning of "spirit" nominally, or stipulatively. The extension of the "spirit" was fixed by the contexts in which it occurred in Scripture. Spinoza's analysis in this regard, and in other regards, is similar to Hobbes's. But when we want to know about triangles, we are interested in the true ideas of triangle, not the triangles we might read about in Euclid's *Elements*, only insofar as the triangles happen to occur in Euclid. For Spinoza, we are interested in the triangles we read about in the *Elements* because we believe that Euclid's demonstrations about them will tell us about triangles as such. Whether his method was able to make sense of them or not, Hobbes's shock at arriving at Euclid's proposition concerning the relations holding between the squares of the sides was not shock at the relations between the sides of a particular object discussed by Euclid, which was of great value in building fortresses and exploring the seas. It was shock that those relations held between the sides of triangles.

We might have purely instrumental interest in knowledge of this or that triangle-shaped object, but somewhere upstream for Spinoza, this must rest on knowledge of the essences of triangles.

For Spinoza, Euclid's triangles adequately represent triangles as such, triangles insofar as they have a formal essence in the infinite intellect of God. When we follow Euclid's deduction, we conceive triangles truly, and we have less of a tendency to form false ideas. It might be reasonably asked, though, how do we know that Euclid's triangles do represent triangles as such? This is a crucial question that is closely connected with how Spinoza understands the role of analysis in metaphysics and in areas of philosophy closely connected with metaphysics.

Spinoza's answer rests on the premise that all human beings (and perhaps all things) possess true innate ideas. By "innate" is meant "acquired independent of the senses or of any sort of external cause"—our mental instruments and faculties are innate in this sense. Insofar as true ideas cannot arise from the senses or from external causes, all true ideas are innate by definition. This does not mean that we have at all times a clear grasp of all the true innate ideas we possess.[33] For example, Spinoza holds that all human beings have a true idea of God; but he also holds that most human beings have a faulty grasp on the idea of God. So, how can it be the case that we have innate, true ideas that we have only a confused grasp of?

We have a true and therefore innate idea of God in two senses. First, we have a true idea of God insofar as any confused mental state we have that refers to or represents God to any extent, refers to or represents God insofar as it refers to or represents the true idea of God in the infinite intellect (in just the same way any fictitious and confused idea of a triangle we have refers to the true idea of a triangle in the infinite intellect). So, if I have a confused mental state representing God as a "giant, all-powerful, pipe smoking, man," that mental state is "of God" insofar as it refers, not to pipes, men, or even giant, but rather to "all-powerful."

It is possible that some people might be completely deluded—by authority or society or sheer ignorance—such that what they refer to as "God" has no connection whatsoever with God as such. But Spinoza still wishes to assert that those people would have an idea of God insofar as they had those basic metaphysical concepts that allow us to make sense of the world. The deluded persons might not know that they possessed the idea of "God", but they would possess it f they were at all rational or human. This is connected to a second sense in which we can be said to have an idea of God, a sense quite different from the way in which we have a true idea of a triangle. That we possess an idea of God is for Spinoza a necessary condition of

possessing a true idea of a triangle in that the idea of God provides the "truth conditions" of the idea of the triangle.[34] Only if we possess an idea of God can we properly judge other ideas to be true or false. This is again because all the basic metaphysical and epistemic concepts that we use to ascertain the truth derive from the idea of God and can only be made sense of through it.[35] The unique status of the idea of God then anchors Spinoza's confidence about how and that our mental states refer. And it explains why the geometrical order of the *Ethics* must begin with the definition of God.

In E1p8s2, Spinoza remarks that "if men would to attend to the nature of substance, they would have no doubt at all of the truth of E1p7 ["It pertains to the nature of a substance to exist"]. Indeed, this proposition would be an axiom for everyone" (G 2:50). The presumption is that those who hold that substance does not exist (or that there are multiple substances, or that substances are created or tangible, etc.) all have fictitious or confused mental representations of an object or idea that has a real nature or essence. If they attended to the essence of the object, and not to the many fictitious ideas we also have which arise from the senses and testimony, ideas that impede us from drawing correct deductive conclusions, they would see that it was wholly evident that existence belongs to the nature of substance.

Spinoza assumed that his readers possessed background knowledge that was helpful (or even necessary) for understanding the arguments in the *Ethics*.[36] The intended audience of E1p7 was not philosophical geniuses who grasped the essence of substances but rather reasonably educated philosophers like Velthuysen or Henry Oldenburg or members of Spinoza's philosophical circle, who had a confused idea of substance and other basic philosophical concepts but were not hopelessly confused. As Edwin Curley has suggested,[37] Spinoza's main audience was no doubt Cartesians, and the definitions and axioms he presents at the beginning of Part I are familiar from the *Principles of Philosophy* and the *Meditations*. This is clearly right since Spinoza himself placed DPP in a geometrical order as preparation for the *Ethics*. My suggestion is that if Curley's insight is generalized, we can provide the more general justification for the method and the procedure in tandem with a reading of TdIE and TTP as suggested earlier.[38]

In Ep. 2 to Oldenburg (1661), Spinoza presented Oldenburg with a definition of God "a Being consisting of infinite attributes, each of which is infinite, *or* supremely perfect in its kind" (G 4:7) and pointed to the arguments in a geometrical demonstration he had enclosed with the letter[39] which demonstrated a number of Spinoza's central claims about substance, including "that a substance cannot be produced, but that it is of its essence to exist" (G 4:8). Oldenburg objected to

but plausible suppositions at work here: (i) that we all have an idea of God, (ii) that we all interpret it in our own more or less confused ways but it still represents God (in the sense described previously), and (iii) that all adequate ideas of God are wholly consistent or even identical.[42]

This might provide a solution to the puzzle offered by TdIE that I used to motivate my discussion. If so, then the manner in which we restrict the extension of the definition is clear. By engaging in deductions with this and other similarly general and widely interpretable definitions, and axioms as well, we gradually rule out interpretations that do not allow us to "proceed successfully, without any interruption" and gradually restrict the extension. Or, put differently, a questionable interpretation of a definition or axiom will result in the reader being unable to see how a particular proof or demonstration follows. Only once the extension of the definition rules out whatever caused the confusion or contradiction will the demonstration go through.

This is the source of the feeling in reading Spinoza that Bernard Malamud refers to in his novel *The Fixer* as "a witch's ride" and the "whirlwind at my back" (and that provides the epigraph for Deleuze's *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*).[43] Reading the *Ethics*, one at first does not know where exactly one is going and why, just forward with a powerful deductive force. Gradually one begins to understand—"Oh, by substance was meant the one and only substance!"; "Thought is an attribute!"; "Oh, that's what E1a4 means, and now I see how that demonstration works!"

At the same time, one is discovering the true, innate ideas that one already has of God, substance, and so on, just as Spinoza suggests in TdIE that mental instruments are innate and clarified through their exercise. I have suggested that there is an obvious problem with the *mos geometricus* that is avoided in Descartes's metaphysical analysis, the problem of identifying a procedure for discovering foundational definitions and axioms. What I have just now briskly described is Spinoza's metaphysical analysis or, quite literally, conceptual analysis. We separate out our false ideas and false and fictitious ideas from our true ideas as we deduce. And, gradually, we adequately conceive and hone in on the proper extension and intention of our innate ideas, now less obscured and confused by fictions. If the geometrical order and an appropriately rigorous geometrical method are observed, there is no need for a prior analysis in metaphysics because the extensions of our concepts are refined, and the true definitions, achieved through the application of the method.

One might reasonably wonder "how we can be engaged in both synthesis and analysis at the same time." The method is both analytic

and synthetic, but we humans who engage with the method move back and forth between synthesis and analysis in applying the method. Each time we read the *Ethics* we have a better grasp on the definitions—which are our innate ideas becoming gradually clearer—and the deduction, and we have a better grasp when we've finished reading it than when we began. Our grasp is imperfect and so we read it again. I submit that this is the experience of reading the *Ethics*: "I don't know what this proposition means, but all of a sudden I have a better insight into one of the propositions I read last week!" The important point is that prior analysis is not necessary given our stock of concepts and the way in which deduction leads us to clarify and revise them. This, in turn, provides the solution to the puzzle of TdIE.[44]

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[1] I take that TP is meant to be *broadly* geometrical from TP 1.4, where Spinoza asserts that he will deduce from human nature in “the same unfettered spirit as is habitually shown in mathematical studies.” I will discuss this further.

[2] The subtitle of the *Ethics* mentions “order,” and *mos geometricus* is used by Spinoza fairly often (see E3pref for an example). Spinoza does indirectly refer to a geometrical method in the *Ethics*—“With this I have explained the cause of those notions which are called *common*, and which are the foundations of our reasoning. But some axioms, *or* notions, result from other causes which it would be helpful to explain by this method of ours” (E2p40s1/G 2:120).

[3] Garrett, *Meaning*, p. 105.

[4] By “only” I do not mean to diminish the importance of “geometrical order,” which is central to my argument.

[5] The names of the virtues, the distinctions between them, and that they are referred to as virtues is my doing, not Spinoza’s (although I obviously think this is consistent with Spinoza).

[6] There are substantial doctrinal differences between TdIE and the *Ethics*. In using TdIE to fill in lacunae in the *Ethics*, I am not denying this, but suggesting that the points of agreement are far more substantial than the points of disagreement.

[7] I presume that Spinoza subscribed to everything in the Preface since DPP was published in his lifetime and under his own name. I also assume that Meyer wrote the Preface instead of Spinoza because Spinoza gave it over to members of his circle for publication, not wanting to invest further time in it.

[8] See Garber, “J.-B. Morin.”

[9] Given that the structure of Pufendorf’s book is modeled on Euclid’s *Elements*, the title seems quite consciously chosen.

[10] Pufendorf, *Two Books*, book I, definition XVII.

[11] Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, pp. 427–428.

[12] See Deleuze, *Fold*.

[13] See Marion, *Sur l'ontologie*.

[14] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.3.

[15] Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, p. 5.

[16] See Ep. 30A.

[17] Although obviously not unique to geometrical demonstration insofar as Cartesian analysis, arithmetic, and many other procedures are sense-independent.

[18] This does not mean that the eyes of the body are not useful, but that they must be regulated by the eyes of the mind.

[19] One major difference between Hobbes and Spinoza concerns what sort of essential knowledge geometrical demonstration gives us access to.

[20] See Viète, "Introduction to the Analytical Art." On the relation between Viète and Descartes, see Smith, "Origins of Descartes' Concept of Mind," 3.1.4.4, pp. 169–175.

[21] See Talaska, "Analytic and Synthetic."

[22] Meyer discusses this in G 1:129–30.

[23] Although this complemented the order of investigation from confused particular to general—see Aristotle, *Physics* I.1.

[24] Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, pp. 4–5.

[25] Spinoza owned the 1647 edition. See Anonymous, *Catalogus*, p. 24.

[26] One might object that the metaphysical backbone itself needs justification. But insofar as it only treats philosophy in the order broadly set by the five parts of the *Ethics*, given the discussion above and the fact that we are moving from more a priori knowable and powerful to less, it seems relatively unproblematic given Spinoza's account of knowledge.

[27] All quotations from TTP are taken from the Shirley translation.

[28] Garrett, "Knowing." I can't justify the whole picture here but I refer the reader there.

[29] Spinoza's opponents could, and likely would, reject Spinoza's literalist interpretation of Scripture (although Spinoza has strong methodological grounds for this interpretation).

[30] The term *mental state* is not Spinoza's. But Spinoza makes the distinction between a definition explicating "a thing as it is NS: in itself outside the intellect" and a definition that explicates "a thing as we conceive it." By the latter he means our mental activity or mental state considered independently of any object (Ep. 9/G 4:43). Consequently, I take Spinoza to be making this distinction, and for convenience, I use the expression *mental state* to stand in for "a thing as we conceive it."

[31] For a far more detailed treatment of these issues, see Della Rocca, *Representation*, chapters 4–6. Thanks to Michael Della Rocca for clarifying this point (the phrasing in the sentence is his).

[32] Earlier in TdIE, Spinoza states that the nature of a Chimera implies its nonexistence (TdIE §54). This suggests that the very concept of "chimera" entails a contradiction like "square circle," and that chimera should be taken as a stock example of a contradictory thing. If chimaeras were possible but did not happen to exist, that would not be sufficient for the distinction he is attempting to draw (see TdIE §69).

CHAPTER 3

FROM MAIMONIDES TO SPINOZA

Three Versions of an Intellectual Transition

KENNETH SEESKIN

BECAUSE Spinoza's relation to medieval Jewish philosophy is controversial, it would be best to start with what is not in question. Like its Islamic and Christian counterparts, Jewish philosophy in the medieval period was heavily influenced by Neo-Platonized Aristotelianism. Although this tradition was anything but monolithic, in broad outlines, it was committed to a world ruled by a unitary and immaterial God who is engaged in pure intellectual activity. God is responsible for everything else either by way of a temporal creation or eternal emanation. Below God are nine heavenly spheres and ten intelligences. Below the tenth intelligence is the earthly realm, which is a composite of earthly matter and form. The goal of human life is to imitate God by perfecting the intellect and controlling or overcoming the impulses of the body.

Though it may seem that the Hebrew Bible presents a different picture of the world, the medieval philosophers argued this impression is the result of reading biblical passages literally. Properly interpreted, biblical passages that ascribe bodily characteristics to God are metaphors or allegories designed to reinforce the view just described. With the exception of Judah Halevi (1075–1141), most Jewish philosophers made no distinction between the God of philosophy and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

No one doubts Spinoza was familiar with this tradition and borrowed from it liberally.[1] In the Chapter 8 of TTP, he praises Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1164) for suggesting that Moses could not have been the author of the Pentateuch. Though he is critical of Maimonides' (1138-1204) view of prophecy in Chapter 1 of TTP and biblical hermeneutics in Chapter 7, there are numerous similarities between the two thinkers both in style and in substance.[2] Both make a sharp distinction between the imagination and the intellect and criticize popular religion for its reliance on the former.[3] Both maintain

deserves.[5] Third, in 1946, Georges Friedmann, a French scholar otherwise known for his work in sociology, wrote a book where he defended the thesis that Leibniz was opposed to Spinozism throughout his entire philosophical career.[6] Friedmann's *Leibniz et Spinoza* was amended and re-edited several times and has, until recently, been the most commonly read commentary. Finally, in 2008, I published *Leibniz lecteur de Spinoza*, which contains a reassessment of the question taking into account the considerable additions to both primary and secondary literature that have appeared since the publication of Friedmann's monograph.[7]

Recent debates in the Anglo-Saxon world have in many ways echoed the controversies that once opposed Stein to the German Leibniz scholars. These controversies mainly concerned the continuity of Leibniz's evaluation of Spinoza, indeed the continuity of Leibniz's philosophy as such.[8] Scholars including Gerhardt, Dillmann, and Fischer all argued against Stein that the main tenets of Leibniz's philosophy were already in place before he had any real notion of Spinoza's philosophy. For this reason, Leibniz was from the outset destined to become an opponent incarnate of the Dutch Jew's philosophy.[9] Similar assumptions about Leibniz's (lack of) philosophical evolution govern Friedmann's account.[10] For readers familiar with the recent debates concerning certain Spinozistic-sounding passages in the set of philosophical fragments by Leibniz from 1675 to 1676 known as *De summa rerum*, the argumentation will sound familiar. It curiously resembles the arguments of G.H.R. Parkinson, Christia Mercer, and others in relation to *De summa rerum*. Thus, in a much-cited article from 1978, Parkinson maintains that any concession to Spinozism in the mid-seventies would be contrary to the "general tendency" of Leibniz's thought.[11] Mercer provides a more elaborate argument in her 2001 *Leibniz's Metaphysics*, arguing that any attribution of Spinozism to Leibniz in this period would contradict central tenets of a "core metaphysics" that Leibniz was committed to from very early on.[12] Such arguments aiming at bringing all speculation about Leibniz's possible "Spinozist penchant" to a definitive halt are, in my view, problematic from a methodological point of view. First, they appear somewhat circular: it always comes back to saying that Leibniz was no Spinozist because he could not have been, that he did not incline towards Spinozism in this or that period or text because he never did. Second, and more importantly, they rely on the assumption that the truth of a philosophical doctrine can be reduced to its "core" and that everything falling outside this "core" can legitimately be ignored as mere metaphysical debris. There are, in my view, good reasons for continuing to discuss Leibniz's

relation to Spinoza once such methodological preconceptions are put aside.

In this article, I focus on a single metaphysical key issue, namely Spinoza's *substance monism* and the stand that Leibniz takes in relation to it. There are two important remarks to make in this connection. First, any historically responsible study of the relations between Leibniz and Spinoza must consider the relation between the two philosophers a *unilateral* one. Spinoza had nothing to say about Leibniz's philosophy about which he knew very little. Therefore, I will not address the hypothetical question of what Spinoza may have thought of Leibniz's interpretation of *Ethics* or about Leibniz's own metaphysics of substance. Second, I address only metaphysical questions. It should however not be forgotten that Leibniz read TTP twice, once shortly after the book appeared, around 1670/71 and around 1675/76.[13] Thus there is a dimension of Leibniz's reading of Spinoza that does not concern metaphysics, or at least concerns it only secondarily. I will nonetheless return to the excerpts from TTP that Leibniz wrote when reading it in 1675/76 because they contain a short annotation that is relevant for the question of substance monism. Moreover, I will focus on a particular period from October 1675 to February 1678. This does not imply that I will not refer to texts written before or after this relatively short time span but only that I believe it is during this time that Leibniz truly engaged with Spinoza's metaphysics. Before October 1675, he did not know it sufficiently to have anything interesting to say about it. After February 1678, when Leibniz read the *Opera posthuma*, there is no evidence that he ever reopened any of Spinoza's works (although he of course often *mentions* Spinoza after that date). Hence, I focus on Leibniz's interpretation of Spinoza during the period he was actually *reading* Spinoza's philosophical texts.

2. What Happened between October 1675 and February 1678?

In September 1675, the German nobleman Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus arrived in Paris. Leibniz had been living there since March 1672. Tschirnhaus, a promising young philosopher, was at the time a follower of Spinoza, whom he had met personally in The Hague in the winter of 1674–1675. Leibniz struck up a close friendship with his fellow countryman that would last until Tschirnhaus' death in

Leibniz had awaited the work with impatience and apprehension. In the first days after he received the volume, he read it carefully, making excerpts and writing annotations and comments. Shortly after, he sent off letters expressing his first reactions to the "strange metaphysics" of *Ethics*.[21] Among these various documents, the most important is without any doubt a text containing extended comments on almost all propositions in the first part of *Ethics*, the *Ad Ethicam Benedicti de Spinoza*.[22] I discuss the text in some detail in sections 4.1 and 4.2.

Between these two important events in Leibniz's life—the day he met Tschirnhaus in Paris and the day Arendt's son brought him the package containing the freshly printed volume of the *Opera posthuma*—there was an important shift in attitude. Thus, as we shall see, at the time of *De summa rerum*, Leibniz seemed largely sympathetic to Spinoza's theoretical outlook or at least quite willing to combine Spinoza's opinions with his own, in accordance with Leibniz's habitual eclectic reading strategy, his "rhetoric of attraction" as Christia Mercer aptly dubbed it.[23] This conciliatory attitude had turned into the opposite after reading the *Ethics*. After 1678, Leibniz remained very hostile to Spinozism and no longer provided room for it within the otherwise extraordinarily open system of knowledge that he spent the rest of his life developing and promoting.[24] Arguably, the only other theory apart from Spinozism that benefited from the dubious privilege of being entirely excluded from Leibniz's *scientia generalis* was juridical astronomy.[25] So what happened? If we put aside the reading of the *Ethics* itself, it is hard to make conjectures about what prompted this change. In any case, it is unlikely that it happened overnight. A whole series of events between late 1676 and early 1678 may have contributed to this change of attitude.

First, when Leibniz left Paris in October 1676, he traveled to England, where he met Henry Oldenburg, secretary of the Royal Society and long-term friend of Spinoza. Oldenburg provided Leibniz with copies of the last three letters he received from Spinoza. These letters discussed a number of issues, including Spinoza's denial of free will and necessitarianism, points of doctrine that Oldenburg considered contrary to religion and dangerous for morality. Leibniz wrote extensive comments on the letters and it did not escape his attention that there was something deeply contrary to his own philosophical and theological project about Spinoza's position.

When Leibniz left England for Hanover in the fall of 1676, he traveled via Holland. Oldenburg asked him to bring a letter to Spinoza. Leibniz however never handed over the letter even though he did meet with Spinoza mid-November 1676. In a letter from November 28, 1676, he wrote to Oldenburg that he had had "serious reasons" for this, reasons he would only be able to explain to him in person.[26]

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