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Active Suffering: An Examination of Spinoza's Approach to *Tristita*

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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Dedication

Although everyone experiences pain of some sort, it is not the case that everyone experiences pain in its severer forms. This dissertation is dedicated to those who do.

Acknowledgements

My interest in Spinoza took root when I was researching the nature of pain. I was planning to write my dissertation on this subject, but it seemed as though this philosopher had, more than three-hundred years ago, anticipated me. I was fascinated. It was not only his approach to pain that struck me but also the fresh and positive tenor of his philosophy as a whole. So the first person I wish to thank for helping me write this dissertation is Benedict de Spinoza.

Now for the people who are presently alive and are responsible for helping me on a more personal level. First is my adviser, Martin Schönfeld, who was always ready to read the chapters I sent and suggest changes to them, no matter where he was or when I sent them. I have learned many things from him. One thing directly relevant to this dissertation is that the study of philosophy is not something separate from contemporary problems but is something that both can and should be used to solve them. Since I've known him, he has never failed to inspire me to be a dynamic teacher, a kind person, and a great philosopher.

Another amazing person is the Philosophy Department's Graduate Program Specialist, Darlene Corcoran. She has cheerfully helped me jump through every administrative hoop imaginable. Without her help, I could not have completed even my first semester of graduate school. I definitely could not have come this far without her.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Alex Levine, Joanne Waugh, Charles Guignon , and Wei Zhang, for taking part in this project and for always being ready to offer helpful opinions and comments.

My caregivers play a huge role in any endeavour I undertake, and this one is no exception. In addition to taking good care of me, they typed for me when I got tired, helped me text and send emails, filled out forms, and carried out innumerable other tasks. But these are not the only things they did. Just as important were their friendship and unfailing encouragement.

I have gone through a lot since I began graduate school, and my family was there every step of the way. My parents, Terry and Suzy Schenk, and my siblings, Cooper Mikler and Stevie Schenk, never ceased to offer both their love and support. My grandparents, Joe and Mary Fernandez, were both instrumental in helping me through my early years of graduate school, and my grandma continued to offer both her love and encouragement (and her home!). The companionship and unbounded joy of my little dog, Atticus, were also invaluable. Thank you all. I could not have come this far without any one of you.

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Abstract

Humans' capacity to attain knowledge is central to Spinoza's philosophy because, in part, knowing things enables humans to deal properly with their affects. But it is not just any sort of knowledge that humans should attain. There are different types of knowledge, but only two of them–rational and intuitive knowledge–enable humans who attain them to know things clearly. Because rational knowledge attends to universals whereas intuitive knowledge attends to particulars, intuitive knowledge is better than rational knowledge at enabling humans to deal with their affects. Most scholars recognize both the importance of knowledge to humans' dealing with their affects and the superiority of intuitive knowledge at enabling them to do this. But these points are particularly relevant to the affect that Spinoza calls "tristitia," which is usually translated as either "pain" or "sadness." I argue in this dissertation that attaining knowledge–especially intuitive knowledge–enables humans to deal properly with their experiences of pain. This ability that humans acquire by knowing things is what I call "active suffering." A person suffers passively when she merely reacts to her pain, in this way allowing an external force to control her. She suffers actively when she uses knowledge to respond to her pain, in this way being in control of herself. This knowledge she uses to deal actively with her pain bears a relation to Spinoza's theory of freedom, since it entails a realization that all events (such as a person's experience of pain) happen necessarily and that embracing this necessity is the same as being free.

Chapter One:

An Introduction

The capacity of humans to know things is central to Spinoza's philosophy. The geometrical structure of his *Ethics* reflects this fact, as does his commitment to the Principle of Sufficient Reason. "For each thing," he writes, "there must be assigned a cause or reason, both for its existence and for its nonexistence" (1p1). Perhaps the best example of the significant role that knowledge plays in Spinoza's philosophy is his equation of an ethical life with a life guided by reason.

This equation of acting rationally with acting morally indicates the unique way Spinoza thinks about human feelings and emotions, both of which he refers to by one word, "affects." He thinks about affects as closely related to knowledge. In the preface to Part 3 of the *Ethics*, he says that he intends to consider each matter concerning the affects "just as though it were a question of lines, planes, and bodies." Knowing things is important, he goes on, because doing so enables humans to deal properly with their affects.[1]

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[1] What I mean by "dealing properly" with affects will become clear, but what I do *not* mean is that they should be eradicated. Hannan (2009) says that Spinoza is like Schopenhauer in that "both philosophers recommend seeking salvation by quieting the passions." This is true of Schopenhauer. And some scholars who study Spinoza interpret him as saying the same thing. But this interpretation is horribly wrong! Spinoza taught that a person should engage with her passions and put them to good use, not "quiet" them. This was perhaps his most important philosophical legacy. And it (along with many other insights) places his thinking far closer to Nietzsche's than to Schopenhauer's.

It is essential not just that humans should know things but also that they should know them clearly rather than in a confused way. Spinoza would say that they should acquire adequate knowledge rather than inadequate knowledge. There are two types of knowledge that can be used to know things adequately: rational knowledge and intuitive knowledge. That both are used to know things adequately, however, does not mean that they are equal. Knowing a thing adequately is not the same as knowing it completely.[2]

To know things rationally is to know about them. Because it involves abstracting away from one particular thing, rational knowledge offers a useful way of knowing a thing's universal aspects. Due to its abstract nature, though, there are problems with it. Surmounting these problems requires going beyond knowing things rationally to knowing them intuitively. To know things intuitively is not to know just facts about them but to know their very essences, to know them from the inside out. It is to know what a particular thing really is, and from there to know facts about it and how it relates to every other thing. We should note that rational knowledge constitutes a necessary step: it is impossible to know things intuitively without first knowing them rationally. In the end, though, and especially when it comes to enabling humans to deal with their affects, intuitive knowledge is superior to rational knowledge. Spinoza writes in Part 5 of the Ethics that "the greatest virtue of the mind" and "the greatest human perfection" lie in knowing things intuitively.

[2] Put another way, knowing a thing adequately is necessary but not sufficient to knowing it completely. Both knowing things rationally and knowing things intuitively produce adequate knowledge of those things; but it is not the case that they both produce complete knowledge of them.

Most scholars recognize that, for Spinoza, knowledge is closely related to affects due to the fact that knowing things enables humans to deal properly with their affects. Moreover, even though the relationship between rational and intuitive knowledge has not received as much attention by scholars as it deserves, many do acknowledge that intuitive knowledge is superior to rational knowledge at enabling humans to deal properly with their affects. But it is not just affects in general that interest me. Rather, I intend to focus here on the affect that Spinoza calls "tristitia," which is usually translated as either "pain" or "sadness." The role tristitia plays in Spinoza's philosophy as well as the way he proposes that humans should deal with it are two areas that have unfortunately been neglected by Spinoza scholars. I intend to take the first step towards righting this wrong.[3] My purpose in this dissertation is to argue that, for Spinoza, knowing things is what enables humans to deal with their experiences of pain[4] and that knowing things intuitively is the best way of enabling them to do this. These two arguments constitute my original contribution to Spinoza scholarship.

Throughout my dissertation, I refer as "active suffering" to this capacity for dealing with pain that humans acquire by knowing things. In other words, I argue that, whenever a person

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[3] Spinoza was for a long time not much studied among Anglo-American philosophers. In the 1960s, however, there was a resurgence, brought about by such scholars as Edwin Curly and Jonathan Bennett. They sought to apply Spinoza's philosophy to contemporary problems. My purpose in this dissertation is similar.

[4] Something should be noted here. I mean by "pain" something other than the discomforts that people in societies like mine experience every day. I mean, for example, both the physical and psychological pain involved in having a severe disability or terminal illness or in undergoing torture or starvation. Of course, the difference between experiencing an instance of everyday discomfort and undergoing an instance of intense pain is one of quantity and not of quality. Both are examples of tristitia; the latter is just the former multiplied by a thousand. The reason I focus on pain in the more serious sense is that looking at the extreme cases of a problem brings its potential solution into sharp relief. I want to analyze Spinoza's approach to pain, and the best way to do this is to focus on the more extreme cases of pain.

experiences pain, she should deal with it by suffering actively. There is generally thought to be only one way to undergo pain, which involves just letting it happen and involuntarily reacting to it. This is the passive way of experiencing pain. The concept is derived from Spinoza's defining a thing as "passive" when something that affects a person is caused–either in part or in full–by a force external to her. A person suffers passively, then, when she merely reacts to her pain, in this way allowing an external force to control her affects. She is totally at the mercy of her pain. But there is another way to undergo pain, which involves taking charge of it and responding thoughtfully. This is the active way of experiencing pain. The concept is derived from Spinoza's defining something that affects a person as "active" if that person herself–in full, not in part–causes it. A person suffers actively, then, when she responds to her pain rather than merely reacting to it, in this way controlling her affects internally. Though she is in pain, she is not at the mercy of pain. She uses knowledge to be always in control of herself.

My argument is that, for Spinoza, knowing things is crucial to being active, which is in turn crucial to dealing properly with pain. Included in this argument is Spinoza's observation that dealing properly with pain–suffering actively–is the same thing as being free. I include it, because being free is part of what it means to suffer actively. According to Spinoza, everything that happens–including everything that has happened and will happen–happens of necessity. So he defines "freedom" not as a person's capacity to act without being constrained by necessity, which is the way freedom is often defined, but as her capacity to determine her actions so that they are in accord with necessity. By doing this, she is aligned with the rhythm of life and wants whatever happens to happen. As one of the things that constitute life, pain is not just something that she tolerates but is something that she wants. And wanting pain–insofar as it is an aspect of

life[5]–is not just a a forerunner of dealing properly with pain but is in fact the same thing as dealing properly with it. To suffer actively is to be free.

I make my argument over the course of five chapters.

In Chapter 2, I look at Spinoza's view of what it means for humans to exist in the world and how they can know about this existence. In other words, I examine his systems of metaphysics and epistemology. My primary purpose is to put into context both his metaphysical theory of mind-body monism and his epistemological theory of mind-body parallelism, since these theories play significant roles in his approach to pain.

In Chapter 3, I look at the forces of striving and emoting that underlie Spinoza's view of being human. In other words, I examine his psychological system–the theories of conatus and of the affects. My primary purpose is to put into context his theory of activity and passivity as well as that concerning a thing's power of acting, since this theory plays a significant role in his approach to pain.

In Chapter 4, I look at how the specific affect tristitia (pain) takes place and at what Spinoza takes to be both the context and the moral quality of this experience. In other words, I examine both contemporary pain theory and the way tristitia fits into Spinoza's system of ethics.

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[5] Let me be quite clear. A person should love pain or want to experience pain only insofar as she has to experience it; by no means am I suggesting that pain should be experienced for its own sake. Saying that someone should suffer in order to become a stronger person or saying that she should suffer in order to inspire other people are just different ways of saying that she should experience pain for its own sake. Moreover, arguing that it is good for people to experience pain if it is not necessary for them to do so is not only unethical and cruel but is also a slap in the face of every person who has no choice but to experience pain. Even the language I use affirms this point: you can't "deal with" something unless you have to experience it. Humans should always seek to help other beings–not only humans–who experience pain and should always seek to prevent pain whenever it is possible to do so. Only when a person's experience of pain cannot be either helped or prevented should it be suffered actively.

My primary purpose is to explore both the identity of physical "pain" and psychological "sadness" and Spinoza's conclusion as to the moral quality of pain.

In Chapter 5, I look at the sense in which, according to Spinoza, it is possible for a person to be free even though everything happens of necessity. In other words, I examine Spinoza's doctrines of necessitarianism and of human freedom. My primary purpose is to shed light on his teachings that all existing things are interdependent and that humans can be free, even in the midst of pain, by internally determining their actions.

In Chapter 6, I look at Spinoza's teaching that a person becomes free in the midst of pain once she knows both its nature and its relation to the world. I examine his theories of knowledge, the ways rational and intuitive knowledge are both similar to and different from each other (particularly with regard to pain), and the ways knowledge, activity, and freedom relate to each other. My purposes in this chapter are to argue that knowing things enables a person to deal properly with pain (i.e. to suffer actively) and that knowing things intuitively is the best way of enabling her to do this as well as to show that suffering actively is the same thing as being free in the midst of experiencing pain.

This dissertation is the result of my attempt to look at a very specific piece of Spinoza's philosophy–his teaching about tristitia–and to show how it fits into the Ethics as a whole. It is also the result of my attempt to discover the best way for a person to deal with her experiences of pain. While Spinoza does not address this problem directly–at least in the way I have articulated it–much of what he writes in the *Ethics* and elsewhere can be used to solve it. I intend this dissertation to be a part of the solution.

Chapter Two:

Being and Knowing: The Metaphysical and Epistemological Background of Spinoza's Doctrine of Active Suffering

"It is clear through itself that the mind understands itself the better, the more it understands of Nature…" (TIE 16).[6]

Spinoza's greatest book is The Ethics, and it can indeed be read as a sort of manual that proves which is the most logical way for humans to act. But it begins with the metaphysics and epistemology on which Spinoza's ethical system–as well as his psychology, religion, and politics–relies. It does so because Spinoza does not think that it is possible to offer such proofs unless it has first been proved what it is for humans to exist in the world and how they can know it.

As I have said, it is not a problem for Spinoza that humans are composed of body as well as of mind. In terms of suffering, a person's mind causes her pain every bit as much as her body does. Understanding Spinoza's approach to human suffering requires looking at the relationship between mind and body and, in particular, at what Spinoza means by saying that the two are really one.

[6] All translations of Spinoza's writings including the Ethics (E), the Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect (TIE), and the Short Treatise (KV) are those of Edwin Curley in Spinoza (1985).

In this chapter, I examine the backbone of Spinoza's system–those two parts on which the rest of his philosophy relies. I examine in particular his teachings about the way mind and body relate to each other.

In making this examination, I look first at his metaphysics or his theory of God. This discussion includes the way he and his contemporaries (especially Descartes) viewed substance, the distinction between dualism and monism (which is divided into different types, including Spinoza's substance monism), and the opposition of conceptual to ontological independence. It also includes the ways Spinoza and Descartes define attributes, how many attributes each thinker posits, and how each thinks these attributes relate to each other. It includes the definition of modes, the identity of substance or "God" with the natural world, the role necessitarianism plays in Spinoza's modal metaphysics, and why substance must be self-causing. And it includes what Spinoza means by saying that a mode is "in" God.

My examination also includes a look at Spinoza's epistemology or theory of human knowledge. This discussion includes his representationalism, in which a thing's cause and essence play vital parts, and the opposition of ontological to epistemological dualism. It also includes Spinoza's theory of parallelism and his teaching that my mind as the idea of my body along with his definition of an individual and the way his theory of ideas leads to a version of panpsychism. And it includes Spinoza's teaching about adequate and inadequate ideas, how they apply to his conception of truth, and the controversy among scholars concerning the sense in which humans can have adequate ideas.

This dissertation is concerned with Spinoza's active approach to human suffering, and grasping his metaphysics and epistemology is essential to this concern. Equally important is

grasping the relation he sees between mind and body. My purpose in this chapter is to enable the reader to do these things.

Spinoza's Theory of God

Spinoza's concept "God" is not a theological concept based on forming a personal relationship with a transcendental creator of the universe.[7] It is instead a philosophical concept based on attaining a rational understanding of both the universe and humans' place in it. For this reason, to grasp the nature of Spinoza's God is to grasp his system of substance monism and the parts that comprise it: substance, attributes, and modes.

Substance

Central to philosophy in the 17th Century was the problem of the relation between mind and body, and the way a philosopher resolved this problem depended on his view regarding the nature of substance. Philosophers adhered to either monism or dualism.

Christian von Wolff first used the term "monism" in his 1728 work Logic to identify a way of thinking about reality that opposed mind-body dualism. But monistic thinking dates back to the pre-socratic philosophers, who each conceived of reality as consisting of one sort of matter. As a philosophical system, monism teaches that everything in existence is fundamentally

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[7] "There are those who feign a God, like man, consisting of a body and a mind, and subject to passions. But how far they wander from the true knowledge of God, is sufficiently established by what has already been demonstrated" (1p15s). In order to avoid confusion, I refer wherever possible to Spinoza's God as "Substance." I also do not personalize the pronouns referring to it.

either one kind of stuff (attributive monism) or one thing (substance monism). Examples of attributive monism include idealism and materialism, for both hold that reality consists of one kind of stuff (either mental stuff or physical stuff). Spinoza was a substance monist, for he taught that only one substance exists and that this substance is infinite.[8] Leibniz was also a monist, though of the attributive sort. He held that reality is composed of many simple, unextended substances called "monads."[9]

Descartes, on the other hand, was a dualist in regard to the nature of substance. For him, there exist only two kinds substance: one that is characterised by thought and one that is characterised by extension. Descartes' works had been widely read by the time Spinoza began writing his Ethics. So in developing his theory of substance monism, Spinoza was strongly influenced by Descartes. In fact, it has been argued[10] that Spinoza's metaphysics is a continuation of Descartes' and that Descartes would have been a substance monist if he had followed his own premises to their logical conclusion. Although Descartes is known for his dualism and Spinoza for his monism[11], Spinoza's theory of substance arises directly from both his agreement with and criticism of Descartes' theory.

They agree, for instance, that a substance is independent of everything else. A substance is for Descartes "a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its

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[8] For a discussion of the way philosophical monism has evolved, see Schaffer 2014.

[9] This is the prevailing interpretation, but the extent to which Leibniz held this view has been debated in recent years. See Garber (2009)

[10] Notably by Della Rocca (2008) and Curley (1988).

[11] Bennet (1963) makes a novel argument that the two do not really differ so much in their thinking about substance.

existence" (Principles 1 51).[12] Spinoza agrees. "By substance," he says, "I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, that is, that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed" (1d3). According to these definitions, a substance is something that has both ontological and conceptual independence. It is ontologically independent in that it does not depend on anything else in order to exist. It is an "ultimate metaphysical subject."[13] It is conceptually independent in that it is possible to think about (i.e. conceive of) it without thinking about (i.e. conceiving of) anything else.

For both Descartes and Spinoza, only God is both ontologically and conceptually independent. "There is only one substance," says Descartes, "which can be understood to depend on no other thing whatsoever, namely God" (Principles I 51). He goes on to say, though, that it is possible for a thing to be independent in one sense and dependent in another. He classifies as a substance any finite thing that is conceptually independent of other finite things, even though he holds every finite thing to be ontologically dependent on God. To deny that finite things are substances would be to characterise them as ways for the substance on which they depend to exist. Since Descartes readily admits that God is the substance on which finite things depend, denying that finite things are substances would amount to viewing them almost as versions of God rather than as God's creature. Not daring to oppose the traditional doctrines of theism, he leaves himself room to say that God is one of many substances.

But Spinoza does dare. He rejects Descartes' proposition that a thing can be independent in one sense and dependent in another. A substance must be, for him, independent in every way

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13 Dutton (2005).

that it is possible to be independent. Since finite things depend on God both ontologically and conceptually (even though they are conceptually independent of other finite things), they cannot be classified as substances. That leaves only one candidate for the role of substance. This substance is God.

Attributes

An attribute, for both Descartes (Principles I 51) and Spinoza (1d4), is that feature of a thing that is essential to it, that makes it what it is. For Descartes, there are only two attributes: thought and extension.[14] He also thinks that, since an attribute is a substance's essence, each substance can have only one attribute.

Limiting himself in this way creates a problem for Descartes. As a consequence of thinking that there are many substances and that the essence of each substance is either thought or extension, he has to figure out how independent attributes of independent substances can interact. Descartes continues to this day to be notorious for his inability to offer a suitable answer to this question: how is it possible for substance with the sole attribute of thought (i.e. a mind) and substance with the sole attribute of extension (i.e. a body) to interact with each other?

The answer is simple, says Spinoza: they can't. Against Descartes, he says that there is an infinite number of attributes, though a human being can comprehend only thought and extension. And he argues that a substance—the one and only substance, for him—can have an infinite

[14] More specifically, there are for Descartes two *principal* attributes. (Principles 1 53)

number of attributes.[15] Spinoza agrees with Descartes that attributes are conceptually independent, but rejects the claim that one attribute can cause changes in another. Even though humans think about (i.e. conceive of) thought as independent of extension (e.g. my mind as independent of my body), they are not conceiving two different attributes of two different substances—as Descartes would have it—but two different dimensions of one substance. Attributes, says Spinoza, are the infinite dimensions of the one substance, of God.[16]

Modes

Because finite beings are not substances, they cannot have attributes. Only God can. But attributes and finite beings are closely connected in that finite beings are modes of the infinite substance. "By mode," says Spinoza, "I understand the affections of a substance, or that which is

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[15] Leibniz, when he and Spinoza met (cf. Matthew Stewart's book *The Courtier and the Heretic*), argued against the Second Premise of Spinoza's argument for substance monism (E1p5: "That two substances cannot share the same nature or attribute"). He thought that it was possible for two substances to share the same attribute but that, because the substances would be indistinguishable if they shared all their attributes, each substance also had to have an attribute that the other substance did not have. Spinoza found this argument unconvincing but did not reply to it. Whiting (2011)

[16] Spinoza says in E1d4 that "by attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance as constituting its essence." The Latin here is "per attributum intelligo id, quod intellectus de substantia percipit, tanquam ejusdem essentiam constituens." There is controversy among scholars regarding both the way attributes relate to substance's essence and the way they relate to each other. Both controversies hinge on Spinoza's use of the Latin word tanquam, which can be translated as either "as" or "as if." Those who read "as" are known as the "objectivists." (Most prominent are Curley, 1988 and Della Rocca, 1996.) They take Spinoza to mean that a substance has multiple essences and that intellect correctly perceives it as having multiple attributes. Because substance really does have multiple attributes, they are distinct from each other. Those who read "as if" are known as the "subjectivists." (Most prominent are Wolfson, 1934 and Bennett, 1984) They, on the other hand, take Spinoza to mean that a substance has only one essence but that intellect incorrectly perceives it as if it had multiple attributes. Because substance only seems to have multiple attributes yet really has only one, these seemingly distinct attributes are really identical with each other.

in another through which it is also conceived" (1d5). In other words, a substance's mode is the way in which that substance exists. That there are so very many finite beings mean that there are so very many ways in which God exists.

In terms of independence, modes are both ontologically and conceptually dependent on a substance; they are expressions of attributes. That they are means that a mode inheres in or is a state of its substance. To say the modes are states of a substance is just to say that they are ways in which a substance expresses its attributes.

Spinoza's God, as the one and only substance, is not a transcendent being[17] who has created the natural world; he *is* the natural world (Deus sive Natura). He is identical with nature both in its active, substantial form (natura naturans) and in its passive, modal form (natura naturata). This identity of God and the natural world, says Spinoza, is like the identity of a triangle and its three angles. God expresses his attributes through everything that exists, from the laws of the universe (which he calls "infinite and eternal modes") to all animals, plants, and inorganic objects (which he calls "finite and temporal modes").

From Spinoza's conclusion that everything is identical with the one substance it follows that everything is interdependent, i.e. that each thing determines and is determined by each other thing. "In nature," he says, "there is nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way"(1p29). That everything is both a cause and an effect means that God—the substance with which

[17] See 1p17s1: "neither intellect nor will pertains to the nature of God."

everything is identical—necessarily exists.[18] To say that it is necessary for a thing to exist or that it couldn't not exist is to say that it is caused by (i.e. is the effect of) nothing outside of itself, that it is self-caused. Having shown both that everything is identical with the one substance and that everything is interdependent, Spinoza has likewise shown that God (i.e. the one substance) necessarily exists.

Modal Dependence

There is controversy among scholars about the way substance (God) relates to its modes (everything else that exists) or by what Spinoza means by saying that "whatever is, is in God." According to one interpretation (sometimes called the "inherence interpretation"), to say that modes are "in" God is to say that they are states or properties of God.[19] An extended body or a thinking mind inheres in God in the sense that each is a way God expresses one of his attributes. Spinoza seems to support this reading when he says that "particular things are nothing but affections of God's attributes, or modes by which God's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way" (1p25c).

This reading seems intuitively correct, but there are problems with it. Pierre Bayle, a contemporary of Spinoza, objected that, if everything in existence were a property or state of God, then God would be responsible for any wrongdoing.[20] The more philosophical objection,

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[18] See 1p11: "God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists."

[19] For a prominent treatment of the inherence interpretation, see Carriero (1995).

[20] For a refutation of this objection and Bayle's other objections to Spinoza's metaphysics, see Guilherme (2009).

which gets to the root of the problem posed by this interpretation, addresses what it means to be a state or property of God. If everything that exists is a state or property of God, then how can anything have–as everything clearly does have–its own states or properties?

According to another interpretation (sometimes called the "causal interpretation"), to say that modes are "in" God is to say that they are causally dependent on God.[21] An extended body or a thinking mind inheres in God in the sense that God causes it to exist. Spinoza seems to support this reading when he says that "from the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes" (1p16).

This reading highlights an important aspect of the way substance and modes relate, but it overlooks the inherence interpretation altogether. Doing so is a problem, because Spinoza clearly says that God expresses his attributes through modes, not that he merely causes them to exist: "God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things" (1p18).

Both of these interpretations are partially correct. Spinoza clearly means by "whatever is, is in God" that finite things are states of God and that they are causally dependent on God. According to a third interpretation, which has been proposed by Michael Della Rocca, inherence and causal dependence are examples of conceptual dependence. On this reading, inherence just is causal and, ultimately, conceptual dependence. To say that one thing inheres in another is to say that it is conceived through or intelligible in terms of this other.[22] This is an effective way of bringing together the dominant but seemingly opposed ways of interpreting Spinoza on modal

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[21] For a prominent treatment of this interpretation, see Curley (1969).

[22] Della Rocca (2008, 68)

dependence. Because humans are the modes being emphasised in this dissertation, their relation to Spinoza's God is relevant.

Spinoza's Theory of Human Knowledge

Spinoza's object in writing about human knowledge is to show people the way to improve their natural capacity for reasoning.[23] His teaching that everything is one substance gives rise to this theory, which anticipates contemporary debates over representationalism, the scientific character of psychology, and, what most concerns us here, the relation between mind and body. It also takes both agreement with and criticism of Descartes' philosophy as its starting point, and it relies–as all of Spinoza's thinking does–on naturalism and the PSR.

Representationalism

For Spinoza, at the core of the knowledge humans have about their world lies what is now known as representationalism[24]: the theory that, when a person perceives something in the external world, she is not directly perceiving that thing but is instead perceiving her own ideas[25]–

[23] This is the stated purpose of his Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect.

[24] See Tye (1997) for a contemporary version of this theory

[25] Spinoza defines "idea" as "a concept of the mind, which the mind forms because it is a thinking thing" (2def3). Furthermore, an idea amounts to an affirmation or negation of something. See 2p49s: "Those who think that ideas consist in images which are formed in us from encounters with bodies, are convinced that those ideas of things of which we can form no similar image are not ideas, but only fictions which we feign from a free choice of the will. They look on ideas, therefore, as mute pictures on a panel, and preoccupied with this prejudice, do not see that an idea, insofar as it is an idea, involves an affirmation or negation."

representations–of that thing.[26] This makes intuitive sense. When I look at my alarm clock, for instance, I am not perceiving whatever it is that's actually there but rather the thoughts and feelings I have about it. Moreover, perceiving my idea of "it" means perceiving both an effect and that effect's cause; perceiving a thing in this way is the same as perceiving its essence.

Given Spinoza's necessitarianism, everything is the effect of another thing. So to have an idea of a thing is to have the idea of an effect. The PSR dictates that every effect has a cause. So having the idea or representation of a thing actually means having the idea or representation of the thing's cause. "For the idea of each thing caused," writes Spinoza, "depends on the knowledge of the cause of which it is the effect" (2p7d). He says this again in a letter to Tschirnhaus: "the idea or definition of the thing should express its efficient cause" (Letter LX).[27]

A cause is that feature of a thing which brings it into existence, which makes it happen. It follows that to have an idea of a thing's cause is to have an idea of what that thing fundamentally is and of what it is able to do. So to represent a thing's cause means to represent its very essence. A thing's essence is for this reason that feature which distinguishes it from every other thing and which makes it impossible for two things to share the same essence. This is known as Spinoza's "uniqueness of essences". (2def2) That things' essences are unique is, after all, what it means for there to be two things in the first place.

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[26] Spinoza's theory of ideas has undergone much criticism. Radner (1971) offers a classic treatment.

[27] It may be objected that people usually know things without knowing about their causes. Spinoza would say that knowing a thing in that way amounts to not knowing it at all, that such knowledge is inadequate knowledge. We shall discuss the difference between adequate and inadequate knowledge shortly.

It is important to recognise that a thing's essence is unique to that thing, because, for Spinoza, to have an idea of a thing is to have an idea of its essence. A thing's essence is that which most perfectly stands for what that thing really is and from which, for this reason, it cannot be separated.[28] It is that feature of the thing which, out of all its features, does the best job of explaining it, of making it intelligible and understandable. To ask why a thing has a particular essence is as silly as asking why squares have four equal sides. By "a square" is meant or understood its essence–the having of four equal sides.[29]

It follows that representationalism is for Spinoza nothing more than a method of explaining to oneself what things essentially are. I am at this moment looking at my little dog, Atticus. Spinoza would say that I am not actually seeing "Atticus" but am rather forming a representation of what "Atticus" essentially is. In other words, what I'm actually doing when I look at Atticus is explaining or making him understandable to myself.

Due to his thinking that actions such as mine must be described in this way, Spinoza is a dualist. He would say that, in looking at Atticus, I am forming a mental representation of a physical object. But Spinoza's dualism is not at all the same as that of Descartes–it is not ontological. Mental things, Descartes says in Meditation VI, are separate and distinct from physical things. How the two interact–how, say, I can will my arm to move–is a mystery to him.

Spinoza's dualism, on the other hand, is epistemological. In terms of ontology, we have already seen that he is a monist. This point is important for his theory of mind-body relation. A

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[28] See 2def2: "I say that to the essence of any thing belongs that which, being given, the thing is necessarily posited and without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived."

[29] Della Rocca (2008, 97)

mental thing and a physical thing, he says, are by no means separate and distinct things but are in fact the same thing. What is different about them concerns not the way they are but the way they are known. People just look at one thing from two perspectives–a mental one and a physical one.[30] It is the way people explain things that is dualistic, not the things themselves. Moving my arm does not consist of a mental act and a physical act. It consists of only one act, which people find it useful to explain as two separate acts.

Parallelism and the Mind as the Idea of the Body

Spinoza's representationalism plays a central role in explaining what seems to be–but really is not–the interaction between mind and body. Recall that, according to Spinoza's theory, I am not perceiving the physical thing we're calling my alarm clock but rather my idea of that physical thing. Put another way, my mind has no connection with bodies (physical things) but only with ideas (mental things).[31] Spinoza's theory of representationalism is in this way linked with his theory of parallelism.

In geometrical terms, two lines are said to be parallel if they do not intersect or touch at any point. The same rule applies, for Spinoza, to the relation between modes of different attributes. It is, as we have seen, impossible for the mode of one attribute (e.g. thought) to interact with the mode of another attribute (e.g. extension). Yet the thought-mode and the extension-mode are both acting, and, although they do not interact with each other, their actions

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[30] Spinoza in fact says that one thing can be seen from an infinite number of perspectives. But I–as a human being–know only these two.

[31] As we shall see shortly, Spinoza describes the mind as nothing but an idea.

do in fact correspond. Their actions are parallel to each other. This is what is known in the literature as Spinoza's "parallelism doctrine": a mental thought (the idea of a thing) and a physical object (thing itself) do not act *on* each other but rather *in parallel*. "The order and connection of ideas," writes Spinoza, "is the same as the order and connection of things " (2p7). Let's take as an example the way my arm moves when I will it to do so. Recall that my mind and my body are actually the same thing, so there is no difference between the bodily movement of my arm and the idea my mind forms of this movement.[32] That is the reason it makes no sense to talk about mind and body interacting. But we are discussing epistemology, not ontology. And the best way to *explain* my arm's moving is as my mind and body acting in parallel.[33] That a person has an idea about a thing (in this case, an idea about my arm's moving) does not mean that either the idea or the thing causes the other to exist. The existence of the idea perfectly mirrors the existence of the thing (and vice versa), since each in fact is the other seen from a different angle.[34]

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[32] Unlike Descartes, Spinoza does not see will as a mental faculty separate from ideas. See 2p49c: "the will and the intellect are one and the same." My willing something to happen is the same as my forming an idea or a representation of its happening. See: Della Rocca (2003).

[33] See 2p7s: "so long as things are considered as modes of thinking, we must explain the order of the whole of nature, or the connection of causes, through the attribute of thought alone. And insofar as they are considered as modes of extension, the order of the whole of nature must be explained through the attribute of extension alone."

[34] In modal terms, “a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways” (2p7s).

Spinoza's parallelism is linked to his teaching about the mind–that which produces ideas–being itself an idea[35]: the idea of the body. According to this teaching, my mind, as a mode of thinking (and not a substance in its own right), is an idea in the mind of God.[36] So any ideas or representations I form are really God's ideas or representations. Moreover, any idea my mind forms is about my body,[37] as Spinoza writes in the preface to Part V of the Ethics: "the power of the mind is defined by understanding alone." So I perceive external things only only because these things affect my body.[38]

In other words, whenever my mind forms a representation of something (which action is described as mental), my body is performing exactly the same action (now described as physical). What I represent to myself–view from one perspective–as my mind, then, is really just what I represent to myself–view from another perspective–as my body. Let's say that "I" am nameless something x. Spinoza is saying that what I call "my mind" and "my body" are nothing more than two ways I represent x to myself.

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[35] This means that it is not a repository for a person's ideas but is itself the action involved in forming an idea. Let's say that one of my ideas is an affirmation that Atticus is a quadruped. My mind or intellect or will just is my affirming, "Atticus is a quadruped." It is for this reason impossible that there should be a "will" from which ideas issue out as actions.

[36] See 2p11c: "the human mind is a part of the infinite intellect of God. Therefore, when we say that the human mind perceives this or that, we are saying nothing but that God, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he is explained through the nature of the human mind, or insofar as he constitutes the essence of the human mind, has this or that idea."

[37] I feel or am aware of my own body in a way that I am not aware of any other body. 2ax4, 2ax5

[38] This point is important for the purposes of this dissertation, as we shall see, because it suggests that the passions play a valuable role in connecting mind and body. See 2p19: "the human mind does not know the human body itself, nor does it know that it exists, except through the ideas of affections by which the body is affected."

To say that anything is mine–to say that I have a mind and body–depends on my being what Spinoza calls in 2def7 an "individual."[39] An individual (also called a "singular thing") is a collection of things whose members join together to have certain effects. An individual is thus a bunch of things, but these things cannot be isolated. They must form a whole whose parts are not disparate but are unified around something. The cells that make up a human heart, for instance, are joined together for, unified around, the pumping of blood.[40]

In order for my mind and my body to be mine, there must be an "I" with which they are identical. This "I," then, cannot be a disparate bunch of things. It has to be an individual, which means that its parts have to be unified around something. According to parallelism, what is called "my mind" is unified around what is called "my body." I am an individual, and my mind is unified around the idea of my body.

From Spinoza's parallelism and the teaching that mind is the idea of the body follows his theory of panpsychism.[41] Since I am a mode of God (i.e. of Substance), both x and any representations my mind forms of it are in God. So my mind (i.e. my idea of my body) is also God's idea of my body. This means that the representing of x as "my mind" and "my body" is universal. Just as everything has a body, so everything also has a mind.[42] in other words, all

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[39]In saying that they are "my" body and "my" mind, Spinoza clearly does not mean that there is a separate "I" which possesses a mind and a body. I am identical with my my mind and my body, regardless of the words used to express this identity.

[40] Other examples of individuals include, as will later be seen, religious bodies (i.e. churches) and political bodies (i.e. states).

[41] For a discussion of the history of and contemporary arguments for and against panpsychism, see Seager and Allen-Hermanson (2013).

[42] "For of each thing there is necessarily an idea in God, of which God is the cause in the same way as he is of the idea of the human body. And so, whatever we have said of the idea of the human body must also be said of the idea of any thing. (2p13s)

modes have mental representations as well as physical representations. And just as all modes are in God, so are all representations of them. It follows that everything–be it I myself, my little dog, or my rain-jacket–has a mind (i.e. is conscious).[43] Of course, not everything is conscious to the same degree. Spinoza points out in 2p12 that, according to parallelism, a person's mind perceives everything that is happening inside her body, no matter how minuscule it is.

For example: despite the fact that a person perceives everything going on in her body, she perceives the movement of her arm to a much greater degree than she perceives her liver's synthesising of protein. In the same way, although everything is conscious, some things are more conscious than others. I, for instance, have a greater degree of consciousness than does my little dog, who has a greater degree of it than does my rain-jacket. [44]

Adequate and Inadequate Ideas

Everything Spinoza has said about the human mind–that it is in essence representational, that its actions are parallel to those of the human body, that it is itself the idea of its body, and that its functions are to some degree universal–points to the distinction he draws between adequate and inadequate ideas.[45] What he means by "adequate" and "inadequate" is best explained by looking again at the way a person perceives objects that are external to her. As we

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[43] There is some disagreement among scholars about the extent to which, for Spinoza, *everything* has a mind or is conscious. See Bennett (1984).

[44] This is the dominant reading. But some scholars, like Wilson (1999), are unwilling to say that Spinoza defines so broadly what it means for a thing to be "mental" or to possess consciousness.

[45] This distinction is especially important for the purposes of this dissertation, because it is strongly related to his distinction between activity and passivity.

have seen, Spinoza says that my mind is the idea of my body and that my body is the only thing my mind *can* perceive. So I rely on my body for perception of anything else that exists. I perceive external objects, he says, by perceiving their effects on my body. But there's more to it than this.

He goes on to say that I perceive the condition of my own body *more clearly* than I do that of an external object.[46] And this is so because a person is naturally more "confused" about something going on outside of her than she is about something going on inside of her.[47] In his words, perceptions of internal objects are "adequate ideas" while perceptions of external objects are "inadequate ideas." For anything to be adequate (as opposed to inadequate), it has to be the complete cause of itself (like my idea of my body) and cannot depend on anything else.

The distinction is especially important, because Spinoza identifies inadequate ideas with falsehood and adequate ideas with truth. Inadequate ideas proceed from sense experience alone, so they cannot offer the order and oversight of reason.[48] Someone whose knowledge is inadequate has for this reason a false view of things and of the way they work.[49] Adequate ideas,

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[46] "The ideas which we have of external bodies indicate the condition of our own bodies more than the nature of external bodies" (2p16c2).

[47] See 2p29s, where Spinoza identifies this confusion with the having of inadequate ideas.

[48] The word "alone" is important, because all our ideas proceed from sense experience. The point is that reason as well as sense experience is needed.

[49]See 2p29c: "As long as the human mind perceives things from the common order of nature, it does not have an adequate, but only a confused and mutilated knowledge of itself, of its own body, and of external bodies."

however, proceed from sense experience that is tempered by reason.[50] So a person who has adequate knowledge sees things as they truly are.[51] Spinoza explains this distinction in terms of three types of knowledge: opinion, reason, and intuition. The first type, opinion, enables a person to know things only inadequately. The second and third types, reason and intuition, however, enable a person to know things adequately. We shall look closely at Spinoza's three types of knowledge in Chapter 5.

The Problem of Adequate Ideas

There is controversy among scholars concerning whether or not it is possible for humans to have adequate ideas.[52] Michael Della Rocca, in his Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza, articulates a version of the position that it is not possible.[53] He does admit that Spinoza says in more than one passage that it is possible for humans to have adequate ideas.[54] But then he asserts that there is a problem: the requirements Spinoza places on having

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[50] See 2p43s: "A true idea means nothing other than knowing a thing perfectly, or in the best way." See also Letter 60: "Between a true and an adequate idea I recognize no difference but this, that the word ‘true’ has regard only to the agreement of the idea with its object (ideatum), whereas the word ‘adequate’ has regard to the nature of the idea in itself. Thus there is no real difference between a true and an adequate idea except for this extrinsic relation.”

[51] And not only things themselves but also how and why they are that way. As we shall see later, this is because knowing things adequately enables us to understand their part in the causal nexus and to know that they happen necessarily.

[52] This topic is important for this dissertation, because my argument concerns Spinoza's method of active suffering. And a person's being able to do anything actively necessitates her having adequate ideas.

[53] Other versions include Bartuschat (1994), who accuses Spinoza of failing to explain how adequate ideas can be "in us" in any meaningful sense.

[54]See 2p38c: "There are certain ideas, or notions, common to all men...which must be perceived adequately, or clearly and distinctly, by all." See also 2p47: "The human mind has an adequate knowledge of God’s eternal and infinite essence."

adequate ideas make it impossible for humans actually to have them. "In order for a certain idea that the human mind has to be adequate," he writes, "the human mind must include all the ideas that are the causal antecedents of this idea. How could the human mind, in any particular case, have all these ideas?”

There are two problems with this position. One is that it fails to consider that, according to Spinoza, there are two distinct kinds of mode: finite modes and infinite modes. Whereas finite modes–because they are limited by duration–have an infinite chain of causal antecedents, infinite modes–because they are not limited by duration–do not. So it is possible for humans to have adequate ideas of common notions[55] and of God's essence[56] (both of which are infinite modes). It is even possible for humans to have adequate ideas of the essences of finite modes, since Spinoza says that the essence of a finite mode is infinite[57] (and so is not limited by duration[58]).

55 These are intrinsic properties that modes of an attribute have in common. See 2p38c: "There are certain ideas, or notions, common to all men...which (by P38) must be perceived adequately, or clearly and distinctly, by all." Though scholars usually talk about common notions in reference to modes of extension (e.g. motion and rest), modes of thought can just as well be characterised as common notions. This is because, according to parallelism, there is no difference between a mode of thought and a mode of extension.

56 See 2p47: "The human mind has an adequate knowledge of God’s eternal and infinite essence" (2p47).

57 See 2p8: "...the formal essences of the singular things, or modes, are contained in God’s attributes." See also 2p8c: "When singular things are said to exist, not only insofar as they are comprehended in God’s attributes, but insofar also as they are said to have duration, their ideas also involve the existence through which they are said to have duration."

58 He says explicitly in 5p29s that a thing can be conceived either as it exists in duration or through its duration-less essence: "We conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature. But the things we conceive in this second way as true, or real, we conceive under a species of eternity, and their ideas involve the eternal and infinite essence of God."

It seems logical to say that humans can have adequate ideas, and many Spinoza scholars take this conclusion for granted without seeing the need to argue for it directly. Eugene Marshall even argues[59] that adequate are innate to the human mind, because I cannot perceive an external object (a hockey puck, to use his example) without having basic knowledge of it (like motion and rest). My perceiving the puck does not give me this knowledge; it is only the occasion for applying ideas that are innate to my mind. Regardless of some scholars' doubts, Spinoza plainly says that humans can have adequate ideas. Moreover, important parts of his philosophy hinge on their possessing this capacity. The problem of adequate ideas turns out, I think, to be no problem at all.

I conclude that grasping the parts of Spinoza 's metaphysics and epistemology that I have presented in this chapter–in particular his view of the relation between mind and body–is crucial to understanding his argument about active suffering. Moreover, it is essential to understanding the relevant points of his psychological theory, which is the subject of the next chapter.

[59] See Marshall (2008)

Chapter Three:

Striving and Feeling: The Psychological Foundations of Active Suffering

What it is for humans to be and to know gives way to what it is for them to strive and to feel. Striving is more particularly an extension of Spinoza's metaphysics (of being), and feeling is an extension of his epistemology (of knowing). Both striving and feeling are important to the ways in which humans express themselves. For this reason, understanding Spinoza's psychological system requires understanding what it means to strive and to feel.

More to the point is the fact that, for Spinoza, humans are composed of body as well as of mind. As I have said, it is both a person's mind and body that causes her pain. So it is necessary to look at Spinoza's view of the relationship between mind and body and, in particular, the relationship between the affects and rational cognition.

In this chapter, I examine Spinoza's psychological system–his theories of conatus and of the affects–and focus especially on the relationship for him between reason (traditionally associated with mind) and the affects (traditionally associated with body). I look first at his theory of conatus. First, he asserts that there is universal kinship: everything is equally a part of nature, and humans are no exception. Second, what is essential to everything is that it strives to keep on existing. Spinoza calls this characteristic a thing's conatus, and says that it reflects the thing's power of acting. So striving to persevere in being is not just maintaining the status-quo but trying endlessly to increase one's power of acting. Third, conatus relates in a surprising way

to consciousness. It is not merely organisms with big brains or high levels of consciousness that engage in such activity. It is all living beings, who represent this striving to themselves in terms of both teleology and mechanism. I then look at his theory of the affects. First, affects are for Spinoza both emotions and feelings. In keeping with his parallelism, the affects are both mental and physical. But humans conceive of them as heading two separate categories. An affect in the form of a bodily sensation is currently called an emotion, and an affect in the form of a mental representation is called a feeling. Second, affects, being manifestations of a thing's conatus, reflect its power of acting. In a related (but not identical) way, affects are either active or passive. Third, reason can transform the affects from passive to active by taking on the form of an affect, becoming affective reason.

Understanding the arguments I am going to make about Spinoza's approach to human suffering requires a person to understand both his psychological system and the affective aspect of the relationship between mind and body. My purpose in this chapter is to enable the reader to understand these concepts.

Theory of Conatus

Every being has within it something that makes it strive to keep on existing. This observation briefly summarises Spinoza's conatus doctrine and is important for the purposes of this dissertation in two ways. First, it shows that behaving in an active way is part of any being 's nature. Second, it shows that human emotions–including painful ones–are manifestations of humans' striving. Understanding both applications of Spinoza's conatus doctrine is essential to understanding his teaching about active suffering.

Universal Kinship

A logical consequence of substance monism is that everything lies within the natural order, i.e. that nothing falls outside of nature's bounds. Spinoza describes this universal kinship in the preface to Part III of his Ethics:

> The laws and rules of nature, according to which all things happen and change from one form to another, are always and everywhere the same. So the way of understanding the nature of anything, of whatever kind, must also be the same, viz. through the universal laws of nature.

This dissertation is concerned with Spinoza's approach to *human* suffering. In order to address a matter that relates specifically to humans, however, it is necessary to acknowledge that, for Spinoza, a human being is but one mode among the many modes expressing the one substance's attributes. That is, humans are not different from the world around them and are not exceptions to its rules;[60] they constitute only one part of the vast natural system and and are, along with its

[60] Also in the Preface to Part III Spinoza says that "they [most writers on the emotions] appear to conceive man to be situated in nature as a kingdom within a kingdom : for they believe that he disturbs rather than follows nature's order, that he has absolute control over his actions, and that he is determined solely by himself." Kisner (2011) points out that Spinoza refers in the TP to the "kingdom within a kingdom" as applying specifically to human freedom. Many people think of humans as untouched by finite causes and therefore not subject to necessity. We'll look at necessitarianism more closely in another chapter, but for now I want to show that Spinoza's teaching of universal kinship bears on his discussion of human freedom and hence on his approach of active suffering.

other inhabitants, subject to its governance.[61] Their peers are plants, minerals, animals of other species, as well as laws of nature and of the universe.

Conatus and the Power of Acting

I have said that, for Spinoza, everything has within it something that makes it strive to keep on existing. The reason is that this something is the essence of everything. So in striving to keep on existing a thing is just doing what is most essential to it. In Spinoza's terms, each sort of being mentioned above–humans, other animals, plants, minerals, natural laws–is a mode of God and as such expresses God's essence. And in God's essence lies God's power.[62] So, in its act of expressing God's essence, each mode is at the same time expressing God's power. God's essence or power is in this way identical with the essence or power of God's modes. Moreover, this is not simply one feature among many features that a being possesses. As the principle by which a mode expresses God's essence,[63] it constitutes the mode's essence as well. The essence of every mode manifests itself as what Spinoza calls a mode's conatus.

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[61] It is sometimes argued that humans are more important than other beings because they have certain characteristics (e.g. reason, consciousness, personality) that other beings either lack entirely or do not have to the same degree. Spinoza's point is that it doesn't matter which characteristics a particular being (such as a human) has, because *every* characteristic is a manifestation of a being's conatus, which is something that every being has. So humans are not more important than other beings, because they are not really different from them. For a comprehensive discussion of the relation between humans and Spinoza's Conatus doctrine, see Lebuffe (2015).

[62] See 1p34: "From the sole necessity of the essence of Gof it follows that God is the cause of himself and of all things. Wherefore the power of God, by which he and all things are and act, is identical with his essence."

[63] See 3p7: "The striving by which each thing seeks to persevere in its being is nothing but the thing's actual essence."

The etymology of conatus sheds light on its meaning and function in Spinoza's philosophy. "Conatus" is a perfect passive participle that derives from the Latin verb conor (which means "to endeavour") and was first used (along with the Greek hormē) by Hellenistic philosophers to indicate the soul's moving toward an object and the physical state that results from this movement. Used by thinkers throughout the histories of both metaphysics and physics, conatus has been translated into English as effort, endeavour, impulse, inclination, tendency, undertaking, and striving.[64] Descartes modernised the concept and used it to refer in a purely physical sense to the tendency of an object to persevere in existence.[65] Hobbes did so as well.[66] Spinoza, not (like Descartes) viewing the mind as separate from other physical objects, applied it to human emotions in particular and to every being's psychology in general. He describes it this way: "Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being" (3p6)

It is important to recognise that striving to keep on existing or to persevere in being carries within it a striving to enhance that existence or being. In other words, striving to exist is not separate from striving to make that existence better. Rather, striving to make existence better *is what it means* to strive to exist.[67] Existing or "persevering in being" is in a way equivalent

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[64] Interestingly, Hassing (1980) argues that Spinoza's particular way of conceiving conatus does not derive from physics but comes instead from the ancient teaching of eudaimonia and the related theory of the soul.

[65] See Garber (1994).

[66] LeBuffe (2006)

[67] A problem in understanding this point arises from thinking that striving to survive means something different from and inferior to striving to live (to enhance one's life). An example is the film WALL-E, in which the spacecraft's commander says, "I don't want to survive. I want to live." What he means is heroic, but he uses the wrong words. The nature of life makes it impossible for "survive" and "live" to have different meanings. I can't try to survive without at the same time trying to live. See Yovel (2001).

with not being destroyed. But not being destroyed is hardly a simple, straightforward accomplishment. In order for a thing to exist, it must do more than maintain the status quo. It must have an internal ambition to prevail against all odds and make itself better and better. That's why I say "strive to *keep on* existing" and why Spinoza says "strive to *persevere* in existence."

A thing's conatus, then, is not its striving to maintain the status quo but rather its striving to enhance itself. Another way of describing a being's conatus is as a constant striving to be able to perform more and more activities. In Spinoza's terms, by striving to persevere in its being a thing is striving to increase its power of acting. It acts (or is active) when it brings about an effect through its own capacities. Its power of acting is its ability to be the cause of effects. This ability, this power of acting, is part of what it means to be.[68] As such, Spinoza equates a being's power of acting with its happiness and self-fulfilment. An increase or decrease in a being's power is the same thing as its becoming more or less happy.

Conatus and Consciousness

It seems that striving to persevere in being or to keep on existing (and to enhance that existence) should require a great level of consciousness. How else is a being to know what will enable it to survive and thrive as well as where it should go and what it should do to realise these goals? Actually, these goals are automatic to every being, as are the means it employs for

[68] What Spinoza calls "conatus" Schopenhauer calls "the will to life" (der Wille zum Leben) and Nietzsche calls "the will to power" (der Wille zur Macht). As with the striving to exist and the striving to enhance existence, the three are inseparable: having a conatus is the same as having a will to live, which is the same as having a will to increase one's power. Egyed (2007) makes a similar argument but also points out that Schopenhauer denies this will whereas Spinoza and Nietzsche affirm it.

realising them. In order to persevere in its being, a thing does not need to be conscious or even to possess any sort of brain at all. It needs only to strive. That everything has this within it this inclination to strive can be seen in even the simplest organisms, such as the paramecium. Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio asks his readers to picture this unicellular organism swimming in its bath. Though it has no brain, it detects and avoids danger in the process of locating the best available nutrients. Every living being, he points out, engages in what is at bottom the same behavior: "detection of the presence of an object or event that recommends avoidance and evasion or endorsement and approach" (40).[69] The ability to engage in such behavior is not taught to organisms but is genetically hardwired into them. That it is, he says, "shows that nature has long been concerned with providing living organisms with the means to regulate and maintain their lives automatically, no questions asked, no thoughts needed" (41).

Because this striving is inherent and automatic, it requires the possession neither of consciousness nor even of any brain at all.[70] So it can be said that a paramecium or a dandelion or a grain of sand strives to persevere in its being. Many beings do of course possess brains, some of which are quite complicated. But they, no less than the paramecium, manifest the basic characteristics of internal ambition: identification of things that ought to be either avoided or approached.

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[69] Everything in existence--from my refrigerator to a park bench to the stone lying in the middle of the road--is, fundamentally speaking, a living being. That is, everything is composed of particles that are in themselves living beings. So everything is characterised by Spinoza's conatus and hence cannot help but strive to persevere in its being. This teaching and others like it, Spinoza has been influential in the deep ecology movement. For a discussion of the connection between Spinozist and ecological thought, see Naess (1977). For an alternative view, see Kober (2013).

[70] As Curley (1990) points out, the Latin verb *conatus* could just as well be translated "to tend," which would clearly imply that no conscious effort is involved in striving.

It may be objected that beings with complicated brains do a lot more than detect and evade danger in the process of locating nutrients. Though this seems to be the case, however, it is true only superficially. Behind the love affairs, the displays of aggression or fear, and the arguments of all sorts in which these complicated beings engage lies the same striving that lies behind the actions of every being. In humans, who possess brains that are very complicated, it motivates everything from political races to scientific discoveries to works of art.

Conatus and Teleology

An important issue in 17th-century philosophy was whether to give the actions of beings a teleological or a mechanistic explanation. Do beings perform an action in order to achieve an end (final cause of the action) or because they are put together in such a way that their parts perform the action in question (efficient cause of the action). Being a firm mechanist, Descartes rejects final causes throughout all of natural philosophy.[71] In contrast, Leibniz thinks that everything can be explained in two ways: both in terms of efficient causation and in terms of final causation.[72]

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71 See Principles 1:28: “It is not the final but the efficient causes of created things that we must inquire into... So we shall entirely banish from our philosophy the search for final causes." See also Meditation 4: "The customary search for final causes is totally useless in physics."

72 See "A Specimen of Dynamics": “All existent facts can be explained in two ways—through a kingdom of power or efficient causes and through a kingdom of wisdom or final causes." He goes on to say that “the way of final causes” is often useful in “divining important and useful truths which one would be a long time in seeking by the other, more physical way [presumably, the way of efficient causes].”

Spinoza clearly rejects a teleological explanation of the natural world. God/Nature does not act in order to achieve an end but simply because that is the way Nature is put together.[73] But there is controversy among scholars concerning the extent to which Spinoza rejects teleological explanation. Does his rejection of divine providence entail a rejection of *all* teleological explanation[74], including both unthoughtful teleology (the Aristotlean doctrine that all living things pursue ends, even if they do not choose them rationally) and thoughtful teleology (the idea that human actions are purposive)?

Some scholars–notably Bennett (1983)–argue that it does.[75]According to him, Spinoza's conatus argument does not suggest that humans (and all other beings) strive *in order to* persevere in being but that their striving is simply a consequence of the way their parts are organised. Bennett cites Spinoza's reducing of human actions to the concept of biological appetite.[76] A person no more walks across the room in order to get a glass of water than the levers of a watch work together in order to indicate the correct time. Humans act, just as watches do, because that is the way humans are put together. All human actions, says Bennett, should be

[73]Spinoza makes this clear in the Appendix to Part 1 of the Ethics: "Not many words will be required to show that Nature has no end set before it, and that all final causes are nothing but human fictions."

[74] It is important to draw a distinction here between the parts of nature (whose mechanistic or teleological nature is disputed) and nature as a whole (the non-teleological nature of which is undisputed).

[75] Another example is Greetis (2010), who agrees that Spinoza rejects all forms of teleology but argues against Bennett that this rejection is consistent with the rest of his philosophy.

[76] See the preface to Part 4 of the Ethics: "What is termed a final cause is nothing but human appetite in so far as it is considered as the starting-point or primary cause of some thing. For example, when we say that being a place of habitation was the final cause of this or that house, we surely mean no more than this, that a man, from thinking of the advantages of domestic life, had an urge to build a house. Therefore, the need for a habitation in so far as it is considered as a final cause, is nothing but this particular urge, which is in reality an efficient cause."

understood mechanistically and not teleologically: we do what we do because, given Spinoza's necessitarianism, it is impossible for us not to.

Other scholars–notably Garrett (1999)–argue that Spinoza's rejection of divine teleology does not entail a rejection of all teleological explanation.[77] Evidence that Spinoza views human action as goal-oriented, says Garrett, ies in informal statements[78] as well as in the structure of his moral psychology.[79] Moreover, he argues that Spinoza uses the concept of appetite to explain the correct ordering of a teleological account of human action. A person's end in walking across the room is not the glass of water itself but her representation of it (her idea, for instance, that it will quench her thirst). Since it occurs before rather than after the action, this Spinozistic version of an end is explainable in mechanistic terms. This explanation of a teleological account's correct ordering, says Garrett, applies to Spinoza's conatus argument. The object of striving is the representation of perseverance in being, which can, because it occurs before the striving, be explained mechanistically.

Whether Spinoza characterises human striving (and the striving of all other beings) in mechanistic or teleological terms is not important only for the interpretation of his conatus argument but also for the interpretations of his ontology and moral psychology. It seems to me, however, that there is not really an important difference between the two interpretations. Beings

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77 Curley (1990) is another notable proponent of this position, as are Lin (2006) and Manning (2001).

78 See another section of the appendix to Part 1: "All prejudices I here undertake to expose depend on this one: that men commonly suppose that all natural things act, as men do, on account of an end."

79 See 3p28: "We strive to further the occurrence of whatever we imagine will lead to joy, and to avert or destroy what we imagine is contrary to it, or will lead to sadness."

pursue ends (whether thoughtfully or unthoughtfully), and they do so because that is the way they're put together. This unification of efficient and final causation is not new,[80] and Spinoza's development of it–most obviously in his doctrine of parallelism–has been recognised by other scholars.[81]

Theory of the Affects

Spinoza's theory of the affects is the centrepiece of his psychology. Although earlier thinkers such as Descartes, Hobbes, and the Stoics influenced him in forming this theory, he, unlike them, is determined to view humans' feelings and emotions–their affects–as parts of nature and as governed by its laws and by causal necessity. In keeping with this view, he regards the affects as expressions of humans' striving to persevere in existence.

Affects as Both Feelings and Emotions

An affect, says Spinoza in Def. 3 of Part 3, is two things. First, it is something which makes it so that "the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained." This means that an affect relates to a mode under the attribute of extension (i.e. to a body). An affect

[80] Lagerlund (2011) argues that the unification of efficient and final causality maps onto the unification of mind and body and that this unification began in the fourteenth century. Such thinkers as William Ockham and John Buridan introduced a more mechanical view of reality, which explained the natural world in terms of efficient causation and relegated final causation to the human mind.

[81] Carriero (2005), although he recognises that it is Spinoza's object to unify efficient and final causation, thinks that he has difficulties doing so.

is also "the idea of" this something.[82] This means that an affect relates to a mode under the attribute of thought (i.e. to a mind). So I experience an affect when my body undergoes a change in its power and my mind simultaneously forms an idea of this power-changing event.[83] In other words, "affect" could refer either to a bodily sensation or to a mental representation of that sensation. Spinoza's parallelism dictates that these two ways of conceptualising "affect"–as either mental or physical–are in fact one way: an affect is both mental and physical.

What Spinoza calls "affect" is usually called both "feeling" and "emotion." The current term in psychology for a bodily sensation is "emotion," which is a response to an external event. Emotions occur in the subcortical regions of a person's brain and alter her physical state by sending biochemical messages to her body.[84] The term for a mental representation of it is "feeling," which is a person's response to her emotion that occurs in the neocortical regions of her brain. A feeling is the mind's idea or representation of whatever emotional state the body is in at a given time.[85]

As a consequence of this representational relation, emotions precede feelings. Experiencing something causes a person to react emotionally and then to have feelings about her emotions. If I eat a spoonful of mint-chocolate-chip ice cream, for instance, my body will be in a

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[82] See 3def3: "By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these f."

[83] See 3p11: "Anything that increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our body's power of acting, also increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our mind's power of thinking."

[84] See Griffiths (1997) for a discussion of the commonly accepted way to distinguish and classify emotions.

[85] See Damasio (2000) for a discussion of feelings as maps a person creates to chart her body's emotional states.

state of pleasure (as evidenced by the endorphins rushing to my brain, the smile appearing on my face, and many other emotional states of my body–visible as well as not-so-visible). Following my body's emotions of pleasure are my mind's representations of these emotions: my feelings of joy.[86]

Spinoza's affects correspond to mind and body in the same way that feelings and emotions do. As the three primary affects–joy (laetitia), sadness (tristitia), and desire (cupiditas)[87]–make clear, an affect for him is the body's striving together with the mind's consciousness of striving. The same is true of the forty-eight other affects he discusses, such as love, hatred, and longing. These are all combinations of the primary three together with the influence of some cognitive state.[88] Let's see an example of the way an affect combines the actions of mind and body. When I strive after something (which striving of the body he calls "appetite"), I am, based on a number of factors, either more or less likely to achieve my goal. If I am conscious that I am striving (which striving of the mind he calls "desire"), everything

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86 This is by no means to say that emotions cause feelings. Since–as Spinoza would say–the body and its emotions are really no different from the mind and its feelings, there is no causal relation here. Feelings do not cause emotions, any more than emotions cause feelings. Feelings and emotions are two ways of representing one thing.

87 These present a problem for translators. Since a Spinozistic affect is both an emotion and a feeling, should the relevant emotion-words (pleasure, pain, and appetite) or the relevant feeling-words (joy, sadness, and desire) be used? Most scholars follow Curley's "joy" and "sadness." Others follow Shirley's "pain" and "pleasure." Bennett prefers "pleasure" and "unpleasure." I myself side with Curley, since Spinoza's concern in Part 3 is with the affects' psychological dimension.

88 See 3def48, in which all affects are said to be "nothing but these three [desire; joy or pleasure; and sadness or pain], each one generally being called by a different name on account of its varying relations and extrinsic denominations." For instance, love and hatred are joy and pain together with awareness of the affect's object. Longing is desire together with memory of the object.

changes. It then becomes my desire to achieve my goal, and that "more or less likely" turns into a profusion of feelings and emotions.[89]

Affects and the Power of Acting: Active and Passive

Recall from Section 2.1 that a being's conatus can defined as its striving to increase its power of acting (i.e. to enhance its capacity to perform activities). Affects are manifestations of this striving. It is possible to look at a person (and with more effort at any other being) and to say, based on the affect she is displaying, either "her power of acting is being increased" or "her power of acting is being decreased."[90]

The fact that affects are manifestations of a person's striving is what connects them to her power of acting. Another way of saying that a person's power of acting is increased rather than decreased is to say that she is more active and less passive.[91] She is now better able to act on her own (more active) without relying on anything external (less passive). The same is true of an affect. It is more active if it enables the person experiencing it to feel things on her own and more passive if it causes her to rely on other things to determine the way she feels. For example, I feel

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[89] Since every being is conscious to a degree–given Spinoza's panpsychism–every being is to a degree able to desire things. Perhaps Spinoza focuses in Part III on human psychology and human desires because, since humans are more conscious than are other beings, their desiring is magnified.

[90] See 4pref: "...when I say that somebody passes from a state of less perfection to a state of greater perfection, I mean… that we conceive his power of activity, insofar as this is understood through his nature, to be increased or diminished."

[91] It is important to notice that Spinoza recognises gradations of activity and passivity. As his language of increase/decrease and greater/less perfection indicates, no affect is *absolutely* active or passive. When, for example, Spinoza calls an affect "active " he means only that it is more active than passive. Harris (2012) offers further discussion of this issue.

passive joy when I gaze at a sunset, because the sun's setting is what (in part) causes me to experience the affect joy. When I cause myself to feel joy (i.e. I am not feeling it due to the sun's setting or to any other event outside me), I experience active joy. In other words, whether an affect is active or passive depends on the way it influences a person's power of acting. The more it increases her power of acting (i.e. the more powerful it enables her to become), the more active it is. The more it decreases her power of acting (i.e. the less powerful it makes her), the more passive it is.

This relationship between a person's power and her degree of activity raises what is sometimes called "the problem of passive joy." According to Spinoza, a thing is passive if its actions are determined by external causes and is characterised by joy if its power of acting is increased. As I have said, a thing's activity/passivity is related to an increase/decrease of its power but is not identical to it. It seems unproblematic, given these definitions, for a thing to be both passive and characterised by joy.[92] Yet some scholars do not think it is. They argue that, if a thing's action is determined by an external cause, that thing's power of acting cannot undergo an increase. Only a thing whose actions are determined by it's own power–an active thing–can, they claim, undergo an increase in its power of acting.

The resolution of this controversy depends on something deeper than a controversy about how to define a particular affect; it addresses one of this dissertation's main issues, which is whether human passivity should be regarded in a positive or negative light. I shall delve more deeply into this issue in Chapter 5.

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[92] See 3p58: "Apart from the joy and desire which are passions, there are other affects of joy and desire which are related to us insofar as we act."

Most of the affects that Spinoza discusses are passive, because most of a person's feelings and emotions are caused by external stimuli. Despite this fact, some scholars paint the passive affects as bad and the active affects as good.[93] One reason for doing this is that Spinoza categorises activity with adequacy[94] and passivity with inadequacy. A more important reason is that he plainly identifies being governed by the passive affects (or "passions") with being in a state of bondage.[95] Yet I don't think that Spinoza attributes greater value to active affects than to passive ones or that he regards passive affects as bad. He says this plainly in the Preface to Part 3, where he contradicts those people who say that what humans feel and emote "is opposed to nature and is vain, absurd, and horrifying." He argues instead that "in Nature nothing happens which can be attributed to its defectiveness," that having emotions and feelings is a natural part

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93 For example, Dutton (2005) says that Spinoza "vilifies" the passions, and Nadler (2001) says that he is trying to "expurgate" them. It is true that, when I write a paper or lift weights, I perform the task more actively the more of my own power I put into it. But who is to say that that means I perform it better?

94 See 3p1: "Our mind is in certain cases active, and in certain cases passive. In so far as it has adequate ideas it is necessarily active, and in so far as it has inadequate ideas, it is necessarily passive." Recall from Chapter 1 the distinction between adequate and inadequate ideas, which pertains to the way a person perceives something external. To have an adequate idea of it is to perceive it clearly and distinctly, and to have an inadequate idea of it is to perceive it in a confused and unclear way. Having an adequate/inadequate idea is a lot like experiencing an active/passive affect, because both qualifications are concerned with the extent to which a person uses her own power when interacting with things outside her.

95 See 4p4: "It is impossible that man should not be a part of nature, and that he should be able to undergo no changes except those which can be understood through his nature alone, and of which he is the adequate cause. From this it follows that man is necessarily always subject to passions, that he follows and obeys the common order of Nature, and accommodates himself to it as much as the nature of things requires."

of being human, and that humans should seek to understand them through "the universal laws and rules of Nature."[96]

Affective Reason

Spinoza's distinction between between active and passive affects is especially important when it comes to his discussion of what scholars call "affective reason." Spinoza makes it clear that he intends to treat the affects in the same rational and "geometrical" way that he treats everything else in his philosophy.[97] But what exactly does this mean? According to some scholars, Spinoza is pointing out that reason has the capacity to transform affects that are passive and inadequate into affects that are active and adequate.[98] Other scholars argue that, since Spinoza thinks that affects are too powerful to be changed by reason, a rational treatment of the affects means that humans should eliminate their passions as far as possible.[99]

This debate concerning the role of reason in the affects seems senseless to me. Of course Spinoza says that affects are too powerful to be changed by reason.[100] He never suggests, though, that humans should transform their affects by studying theoretical physics! That is, the mere act of reasoning about something–particularly something that is unrelated to the affects–is not by

[96] In Chapter 3, I shall discuss in more detail the normative status of passive affects–particularly that of sadness (tristitia). In Chapter 5, I shall offer a more in-depth argument that recognising the importance of the passions plays a significant role in Spinoza's doctrine of active suffering.

[97] See 3pref: "I shall consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a question of lines, planes, and bodies."

[98] See for example Lloyd (2003) and Kisner(2013).

[99] See for example LeBuffe (2001) and Nadler (2001).

[100] Bennett (1985, 286) points this out. See 4def14: "No affect can be restrained by the true knowledge of good and evil insofar as it is true, but only insofar as it is considered as an affect."

itself enough to transform affects.[101] As Lloyd writes,"the whole point is that reason engages with what the mind is currently undergoing" (39). Spinoza's argument is that it is only another affect–not reason itself–that is powerful enough to transform affects.[102] In other words, reason influences affects by taking on the form of an affect. Reason thereby becomes what I like to call "embodied understanding.”

This convergence of rationality and affectivity[103], Lloyd (2003, 42) points out, can be seen in Spinoza's treatment of "that elusive form of joy" that he calls hilaritas.[104] According to her it is an example of a "reflective pleasure" or a "pleasure of reason." In other words, hilaritas represents reason taking on the form of an affect and thereby acquiring the capacity to transform passions into active affects.[105]

It should be noted here that Spinoza's rational transformation of the passions is quite different from Descartes's manner of dealing with them. Recall from Chapter 1 that Descartes

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[101] See 4p14: "No affect can be restrained by the true knowledge of good and evil insofar as it is true, but only insofar as it is considered as an affect."

[102]See 5p14s: "Each of us has—in part, at least, if not absolutely—the power to understand himself and his affects, and consequently, the power to bring it about that he is less acted on by them."

[103] This convergence, called "affective reason," should not be confused with "cognitivism," the view that emotions or affects have some cognitive content. This view's best-known opponent is Hume, who held that affects are brute feelings. Most scholars (including myself) read Spinoza as being a cognitivist. But the claim that reason can become affective and transform the passions is altogether different from the claim that the content of affects is cognitive. See Marshall (2008) for further discussion of cognitivism.

[104] See 4p42d: "Hilaritas is a joy which, insofar as it is related to the body, consists in this, that all parts of the body are equally affected."

[105] It should be pointed out that, although Spinoza says that hilaritas relates chiefly to the body, he certainly does not think that it relates only to the body. It relates to the body in a way that is crucial to the action of the mind, because it creates the bodily conditions necessary for the exercise of reason.

introduces a mechanism called "the will" as a way for the mind to interact causally with the body.[106] By imposing its dictates on the body's actions, he says, this rational will frees a person from the tyranny of her passions.[107] Again recall the difference from Spinoza's position. For Spinoza, there is no "will" that mediates between mind and body. My "willing" something to happen is really just my mind's forming an idea or representation of its happening. Instead of a rational will imposing its dictates on an irrational body, Spinoza sees a mind forming representations that reflect the body's affective actions. (2p49) In other words, reason is not a force external to the body that counters actions. Rather, the mental being part of the physical, reason works with the body (in parallel to it, actually) to understand its actions. It is through understanding these actions–not by countering them–that reason becomes embodied understanding and thereby enables a person to become free.[108]

I conclude that grasping the parts of Spinoza 's psychology that I have presented in this chapter–in particular the affective aspect of the relationship between mind and body–is crucial to

[106] See Meditation 4, Part 2: "The intellect allows us only to perceive ideas, not to make judgements about them... [But] exercising the will consists in affirming or denying, pursuing or avoiding..."

[107] As I shall argue in Chapter 4, I do not think that a person's bondage to her passions is the fault of the passions (i.e. that it is due to their "tyranny"), and neither–I argue–does Spinoza. But Descartes, given his the opposition he claims to find between mind and body, necessarily thinks this.

[108] Writes Lloyd (2003, 37-38): "Through understanding the affects, replacing the inadequate ideas they initially involve with more adequate ones, we do not simply retreat from the turmoil of passion into a realm of thought. The affect is itself transformed from a passion—an inadequate idea of a transition to a greater or lesser state of activity—to an active rational emotion, incorporating an adequate idea. This is Spinoza's remedy for the passions—the passage from passivity to activity, from bondage to freedom through understanding."

understanding his argument about active suffering. Moreover, it is essential to understanding the relevant points concerning the affect he calls *tristitia*, which is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Four:

Pain and Sadness: A Theoretical Analysis of the Nature and Functioning of *Tristitia*

Knowing the natures of striving and feeling helps a person to know what pain is and how it works. Of course, everyone knows what it feels like to experience pain. But that's not what I mean. I mean a knowledge of pain's nature, of the way it functions in the body, of its causes and effects, of the ways people perceive it and conceptualize it, of its place in the field of ethics. This knowledge of pain is quite different from experiential knowledge of it. Spinoza teaches that only by gaining such a theoretical–not merely experiential–knowledge of pain, which is the affect that he calls *tristitia*, can a person free herself from it. So my purpose in this chapter is to provide the theoretical knowledge that she needs.

In this chapter, I examine both the predominant contemporary theory of pain and Spinoza's theory of pain. Prominent in contemporary theory are debates about pain's being a representation that a person forms of damage her body has undergone. An important part of this process is called "nociception," which takes place before a person's brain realizes that she has experienced pain. Because of the complexity involved in experiencing pain, it is impossible to separate physical from psychological pain. The two are in fact identical; Spinoza would say that they work in parallel. Important to Spinoza's own theory are the ways in which people during the Early-Modern period perceived pain as well the ways in which thinkers of the period developed pain theory. Thinkers such as Descartes and Hobbes as well as ancient philosophers like the

Stoics and Aristotle are generally recognised to have influenced Spinoza in his work on pain, specifically its taxonomy. Spinoza also evaluates pain in terms of his ethical system and demonstrates a person's moral obligation to herself, to other people, and to other beings.

Contemporary Theory

Humans have for a long time tried to understand what pain is and how it works, but it is only within the last fifty years that a person's experience of pain has come to be understood as a neurological representation of either psychological or physical damage. Even more recent topics of study–in fields such as philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, biology, and medicine–are the relationship between physical and psychological pain as well as the way a person's perception of pain affects her experience of it.

Pain as Representational

Recall from Chapter 1 that representationalism is the theory that, when a person perceives something in the external world, she is not directly perceiving that thing but is instead perceiving her own ideas[109]–representations–of that thing. This theory applies to pain[110] in that pain itself does not exist in nature. There exists in nature only a "something" that happens to organisms and makes them less able to do things. The organisms in question experience–represent to

[109] Spinoza defines "idea" as "a concept of the mind, which the mind forms because it is a thinking thing" (2def3).

[110] Not all scholars of pain theory think so. Visually perceiving an object, some say, is fundamentally different from experiencing pain.There are not only different views about the way pain is perceived but also different versions within the representationalist camp. For a good overview of the debate, see Tye (2006) and Aydede (2013).

themselves–this "something" as pain. Experiencing pain is in this way similar to looking at an object like an alarm clock: I am not perceiving whatever it is that's actually there but rather the thoughts and feelings I have about it.

In the case of pain, this "whatever it is that's actually there" (i.e. the thing that pain represents) is what the International Association for the Study of Pain identifies as "tissue damage." It defines pain as an "unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage."[111] The way a person represents that tissue damage to herself, however, constitutes her own idea, a concept formed in her own mind.[112]

This is not to say that a person's representation of her pain is still a representation even if it has no being in reality. Take the cases of phantom limb pain or referred pain. A person might experience pain in her left arm even if she has no left arm or has actually undergone damage to a different part of her body. These are cases of hallucination or illusion, not of representation. Although representations are by nature different from the things they represent, mental concepts that mislead or are inaccurate are not representations at all.

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[111] This definition of pain is widely accepted by the scientific community and is cited as definitive by most scholars of Pain Theory. For more information about the association's taxonomy, see http://www.iasp-pain.org/Taxonomy

[112] In this way, representationalism about pain opens up questions concerning the relationship between body and mind. According to this theory, I am not perceiving the damage that my body's tissue has undergone but rather my mind's idea of that damage (which is called "pain"). Put another way, my mind has no connection with bodies (physical things, like tissue damage) but only with ideas (mental things, like pain). This contemporary theory about the nature of pain confirms Spinoza's teaching that mental and physical things do not interact but instead act in parallel to each other.

Moreover, that pain is representational in nature agrees with common sense. It is often said that pain is the body's warning signal, a flag which alerts a person to the fact that something is wrong.[113] A signal or flag is a thing that stands for something else, even though perceiving the signal itself is quite different from perceiving the thing it stands for. So it is with pain, which is a subjective sensation that serves only to represent an objective something which has gone wrong with the body.

Nociception Process

Neuroscientists call the process in which a person's brain realizes (by receiving neural information) that she has undergone tissue damage "nociception." A different part of her brain then turns this realisation into the subjective experience we call "pain."[114] In this way, a person represents tissue damage to herself as pain. If I sprain my ankle, for example, I undergo tissue damage, which lessens my ability to do things. What has actually happened to my body seems very straightforward. But my body's realisation of what has happened, and the experience resulting from my brain's turning its realisation of my sprained ankle into pain, is a lot more complicated.

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[113] Here is the connection between a person's experience of pain and Spinoza's theory of conatus. Pain's main function of to draw a person's attention to dangers and to motivate her to avoid them. As we saw in Chapter 2, alerting an organism to events that threaten its survival is a crucial part of its striving to preserve itself.

[114] For more information on the distinction between nociception and pain (as well as the nociception process in general), see the National Research Council (US) Committee on Recognition and Alleviation of Pain http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK32658/?report=reader

Physiologist Craig C. Freudenrich explains in a 2013 article about the way pain works that there are four steps involved in the nociception process: 1) contact with a stimulus (or stimuli), 2) reception, 3) transmission, and 4) pain center reception. A stimulus can be either mechanical (a type of pressure or puncture) or chemical (a type of burn). The stimulus in the case of my ankle is a type of pressure that causes the ligament to tear. A nerve ending senses this injury, whereupon it sends a signal–via my nerves–from my foot to my central nervous system. Once there, the signal is processed among various neurons in the brain, producing the sensation called “pain."

The nerves sending a signal when I perceive an ordinary change in light, pressure, or temperature are of a different type from the ones that send a signal when I experience pain. In such cases of ordinary change, the nerves at work are called "normal somatic receptors." When I experience pain, however, the nerves sending the signal are called "nociceptors." There are three kinds of nociceptors, the main difference among them lying in the speed at which they send the signal "pain" to the brain. The pain I experience when I first sprain my ankle is so sharp that it causes me to scream. The fastest kind of nociceptor is at work. It is followed by its slower compatriots, which cause my foot to ache in varying degrees over the next few months.

These nociceptors, in the process of getting the body to realize that part of it has undergone damage and of then sending the signal "pain" to my brain, travel upwards through different segments of my spinal cord and form synapses (connections) with neurons there. (It should be pointed out here, given that there is often confusion about a pain's exact location, that a nociceptor does not confine itself to synapsing with another neuron only on the segment through which it is traveling. It may synapse several segments above or below its pathway. For this

reason, though it is fairly easy in the case of a sprained ankle to locate exactly the pain's source, it is in many other cases more difficult.) At this point, the nociceptors have reached my brain stem and alerted my body to the fact that something is wrong with it.

I don't feel "pain" until the nociceptors reach the higher levels of my brain. Here, a nociceptor typically synapses with neurons in the medulla (the area of the brain that controls physical reactions) and the somatosensory cortex (the area that controls certain physical behaviours). There is no single area that is "in charge" of pain, though; depending on the nature of the pain, nociceptors synapse with a variety of neurons throughout my brain. When I sprain my ankle, it is for the most part nociceptors synapsing with neurons in my anterior insula and anterior cingulate cortex that causes my foot quickly to retract and involuntarily to twitch. In this way, a person's body realizes that part of it has undergone tissue damage and then turns this damage into the experience of pain. Yet there are other factors involved in producing this experience.

Identity of Physical Pain and Psychological Sadness

It should be obvious by now that pain is a complex event. It involves not only physical factors (e.g. the nociception process described above in the case of my sprained ankle) but also psychological ones. These psychological factors are called in the literature on pain theory "modulatory influences" on pain and include such things as fear, anxiety, and stress.[115]

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[115] See the section on Modulatory Pain by the National Research Council (US) Committee on Recognition and Alleviation of Pain http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK32658/?report=reader. See also Ploghaus (2003), who analyses functional neuroimaging studies and shows that psychological factors constitute a significant part of pain.

Besides using nociceptors to alert myself to the fact that I have undergone tissue damage, I react in other ways to spraining my ankle. For instance, I scream, cry, and turn red. I also feel sad, worried, and scared. We usually label these reactions as either "physical" or "psychological." (The nociception process would also be labelled "physical," but, since it is a cause necessary to a person's feeling pain and can't be perceived outwardly the way screaming, crying, and turning red can, it's not usually considered to be a "reaction" at all.) We might say that screaming, crying, and turning red are physical reactions, while feeling sad, worried, and scared are psychological reactions. But the truth is that we can't separate our reactions to pain into neat little categories, because each reaction is mixed up with and dependent on the other ones. This makes it impossible to tell which reaction falls under which category. How is screaming to be distinguished from feeling sad or scared? Or feeling worried from turning red? Moreover, humans experience many, many other emotions and feelings. How is any one of these to be distinguished from any other? It can't be. In the process of doing something as seemingly clearcut as spraining my ankle I set in motion a slew of jumbled-together feelings and

emotions.[116] Our affective reactions to experiencing pain cannot possibly be divided into "physical" and “psychological."

There is a very good reason that they can't be. Humans' experiences cannot be divided into physical and psychological because humans themselves cannot be divided into body and mind. As Spinoza pointed out more than three-hundred years ago, mind and body–the physical and the psychological–are identical.[117] And they don't interact. It isn't the case, for example, that the mind feels pain and then induces the body to emote it. Rather, as Spinoza also pointed out, mind and body work in parallel. There is really only one unit that experiences pain: the body-mind, if you will. This body-mind experiences pain and then expresses that pain in a variety of ways. Some of these ways humans find it convenient to call "physical" and others "psychological." But both are in reality expressions of one unit.

This phenomenon of the body and the mind working in parallel–what Spinoza called "parallelism"–is evident in everyday life. It is not only the case that both my body and my mind (i.e. both the physical and the psychological) react to the physical pain involved in spraining my

[116] One might conclude from reading this that "I" am neither mind nor body but a jumbled-together slew of both. Although this area is somewhat controversial, I think, coming down on the materialist or physicalist side of the debate, that it would be a mistake to draw this conclusion. This "I" that experiences pain–that experiences anything at all, really–is body only; what humans call "the mind" is nothing more than a conceptual illusion that helps them to understand the workings of the body. Neuroscience teaches that everything called "mental"–including all thoughts, feelings, and wishes–derives from an area in the brain. Because the brain is part of the body, so is the mind. McLeod (2007) provides a good overview of this debate. Stoljar (2015) examines various defenses of physicalism. The clearest argument against the sort of physicalism I defend here states that physicalism cannot fully explain the nature of felt experience. It is given by Jackson (1986). As a consequence of physicalism to contemporary pain theory, the brain is interconnected in a massive way with the rest of the body. So psychological pain really is physical pain whose source is not as readily apparent.

[117] Recall from Chapter 1 Spinoza's saying that "the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (2p7).

ankle. It is also the case that they both react to the psychological pain, such as that involved in breaking up with my boyfriend. Some people think that pain of this sort is not "real,"[118] perhaps because its cause and workings are not as straightforward as they are in the case of a sprained ankle. Yet breaking up with my boyfriend is no less painful–and sometimes it is even more painful–than is spraining my ankle.

Of course, pain is characterized by ontological monism but conceptual dualism. In other words, pain is the same thing whether it applies to the mind or the body but is easier to understand and to talk about if it is separated into physical and psychological. For this reason I distinguished between the pain involved in spraining my ankle and the pain involved in breaking up with my boyfriend. In reality, however, there is no difference between the body's experience of pain and the mind's experience of it. Psychologist Alan Fogel (2012) writes that "our bodies use a single neural system to detect and feel pain, regardless of whether [that pain] is physical or psychological." There is to the body of an organism no difference between experiencing pain as a physical emotion or a psychological feeling.

Even though pain is easier to talk about and understand if it is separated into physical and psychological, it is nevertheless one thing. Yet this one thing itself is, as I have pointed out, hardly simple and straightforward. According to McGrath (1994), "Pain is a complex, multidimensional perception that varies in quality, strength , duration, location, and

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[118] Some college professors are notorious for this. If a student breaks her arm and asks to take tomorrow's exam at a later date, they will inevitably grant the request. But if a student breaks up with her boyfriend or girlfriend and makes the same request
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unpleasantness." Pain's complexity is evident in the fact that the neural pathways used in the nociception process are quite different from those used in the process of experiencing pain. Moreover, the way a person experiences pain–"perceives" it, as scholars of pain theory say–is subject to differences in gender, ethnicity, personality, and socioeconomic level.[119] These differences do not affect merely pain reports–the way people say that they experience pain. They actually affect the way a person's body undergoes pain.

Spinoza's Theory of Pain

There was very little understanding in the Early-Modern Period about what pain was and how it worked. Despite the fact that Spinoza thought and wrote during this period, however, his theory of pain–of *tristitia*– shares remarkable similarities with contemporary theories. Included in Spinoza's theory is an evaluation of pain's nature in terms of ethics, which deals both with questions concerning pain's goodness/badness and with the moral obligations it implies. . M

The Early-Modern Perception of Pain

Physicians, scientists, and philosophers both before and during the Early-Modern Period knew very little about what pain was and how it worked. For one thing, they thought that humans alone could experience pain and did not consider that non-human animals were also sentient.[120]

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[119]It is subject to a lot of other differences as well. Jarrett (2011) takes a comprehensive look at these. He writes that "people's beliefs and upbringing also affect the way their bodies respond to pain" (418). Other factors that influence the way people experience pain, such as attention to it and expectations about it, are examined by Hansen and Streltzer (2005).

[120] Spinoza challenged this thinking with his metaphysics and particularly with his panpsychism, according to which every being is conscious to some degree.

This thinking was probably due to the Church's teaching that humans were the only significant part of nature and that only their actions were meaningful. In addition, people were confused about the cause of pain. They thought that a person experienced pain through evil spirits, as punishment from God, or because her "vital fluids" were unbalanced. Perhaps worst of all was ignorance about the basic working of pain. It was thought to be a passion of the "soul" rather than a sensation of the body (including the mind), and its source was assumed to be the heart rather than the brain.[121]

Things started to change in 1644 with the publication of Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy.* In it, he discussed phantom limb pain and realized that the pain in question was real and not imaginary. Even more significantly, he theorized that pain was a sensation felt by the brain rather than by the limb itself.[122] Assuming, however, that the mind had to interact with the body in order for pain to be experienced at all, he introduced a "soul" or "animal spirits"–functioning via the infamous pineal gland–as the means of their interaction.

Descartes' *Passions of the Soul* was published in 1650 and his *Treatise on Man* in 1664, and they revolutionized studies about both the physiology and the theory of pain. The most important thing they did was to start people thinking about the body as a sort of machine. Descartes incorrectly saw pain as a way that this machine malfunctioned (and not just as a signal that it had done so), but he was correct in theorizing that pain was conveyed by nerve fibres

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[121] See Rey (1998) for an excellent history of the way pain was perceived within the cultures of this period as well as the prevailing medical theories about it.

[122] Scholars conjecture that, in forming both this theory and later ones concerning pain, Descartes was influenced by William Harvey's 1628 discovery of systematic circulation . Its significance lay in the fact that it offered a rational, scientific way of understanding the way the body worked.

(neurons had not yet been discovered) to the brain. The image that he painted in this book of the basic way that pain functions has become famous in many academic circles. The image was of a hammer striking a man's hand. He imagined a hollow tube running from the man's hand and connected to a bell in his brain. When the hammer struck the man's hand, he wrote, the message "pain" would travel through the tube and ring the bell. Descartes' image demonstrated that the source of pain lay in the brain rather than the heart and that bodily actions were mechanical and predictable.[123] This meant that questions concerning the nature of pain and the way a person experiences it were no longer to be "answered" by charlatans and religious mystics but by scientists.

But it also meant that a person's feelings and emotions (traditionally attributed to the body) had nothing to do with her cognitive processes (traditionally attributed to the mind). As Damasio explains in his 2005 book *Descartes' Error*, a person's feelings and emotions are in fact essential to the functioning of her cognitive processes. She cannot reason without them. Moreover, the fact that they work in parallel is the key to understanding such things as consciousness and individuality. So, in spite of his important contributions to pain theory, Descartes left a negative impact on much of the academic community by separating mind from body.[124]

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[123] See Olson (2013) for a discussion of the way Descartes' theories about pain fit into contemporary treatments of pain.

[124] There has been disagreement among scholars about the extent to which Descartes tried to create a union between the workings of mind and body. The classic treatment of this issue is given by Radner (1971). Recent scholars tend to focus on applying Descartes' "real distinction" between mind and body to contemporary problems. Duncan (2000) argues, for example, that many readings of Descartes have been selective and misleading. He proposes that scholars should reevaluate Descartes' attempts to unify mind and body, particularly in regard to pain theory.

Spinoza's Influences and Taxonomy

Spinoza did not write about the way pain worked in the human body, as Descartes and other philosophers before him had. After all, the purpose of the Ethics was to show readers that leading an ethical life was akin to leading a rational life. Analyzing the role played by the affects in such a life was important, but analyzing their technical workings was not. For this reason, Spinoza's writings on pain were exclusively theoretical.[125]

Before he begins discussing the affects, Spinoza points out that no one has ever treated them in the way that he is about to do.[126] And he's right. More to the point, Spinoza is unique–as far as predecessors go–in the way he teaches people to deal with their experiences of pain. But other philosophers did influence him in developing this teaching. Most influential, of course, was Descartes, who, as we've seen, wrote prolifically about pain. Although it is likely that Spinoza was familiar with Descartes' writings on the physiology of pain, he did not comment on them. Nevertheless, he was clearly aware of Descartes' discovery that a person's brain controlled her experiences of pain. This awareness is reflected in the fact that he held tristitia (as well as all the other affects) to be in part a representation or idea formed by the mind. In this way, Spinoza's theory about pain is akin to the contemporary theory that we discussed earlier.

Spinoza departed from Descartes in asserting that a person's mind and body worked in parallel to produce her experience of pain. A related point of departure, which has already been mentioned and will be discussed in more detail later, was Descartes' teaching that the mind can

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125 Schmitter (2014).

126 See 3pref: "No one, to my knowledge has determined the nature and powers of the Affects, nor what … the Mind can do to moderate them."

have absolute control over the passions (which he attributed to the body), particularly over the painful ones.[127] Spinoza's teaching was quite the opposite. Because he did not separate mind from body, he would not have considered it even possible that the one could have control over the other. The passions were for him both physical and mental, and he held that a passion could be controlled only by another passion.[128]

In holding this, Spinoza was opposing not only Descartes but also the Stoics.[129] It is true that both Spinoza and the Stoics treated the affects in a rational way, but they differed sharply on what it meant to do this.[130] According to the traditional interpretation, the Stoics thought that treating the affects rationally meant eliminating them as far as possible.[131] Dealing with pain amounted to a person's pushing it aside and forcing herself to act as though she were not really

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[127] See Article 18 of *Passions of the Soul*, which Spinoza quoted in *Ethics.*

[128] Recall 4p14: "No affect can be restrained by the true knowledge of good and evil insofar as it is true, but only insofar as it is considered as an affect."

[129] There is some controversy among scholars about the extent to which the Stoics influenced Spinoza. It is important to recognize their similarities in metaphysics, psychology, ethics, and politics. DeBrabander (2007) devotes an excellent book to examining these similarities. But it is also important to recognize the ways in which Spinoza differed from the Stoics. Douglas (2013) highlights these differences and suggests alternative reasons for some of the similarities. The decisive point for me is that, even though the Ethics features quotations from several Stoic thinkers, there is no evidence that Spinoza studied Stoicism in detail. A contrast, as Manzini (2009) points out, is the extensive study he made of Aristotelianism. Everything that I write is influenced by the books that I read, the movies that I watch, and the music that I listen to. Sometimes I quote from these sources. Maybe Spinoza did the same thing. There is no reason to make more than this of Spinoza's connection to the Stoics.

[130] See Miller (2015, 5).

[131] Actually, some scholars argue that the Stoics wanted to eliminate only the negative passions, not the ones that aid a person in pursuing virtue. But most scholars think that such an argument goes against the very core of Stoic philosophy. Employing passions to help become more virtuous is a hallmark of Aristotelianism, not of Stoicism. The Stoics thought that people could attain virtue only through being rational and that anything attained through being passionate isn't virtue at all.

experiencing it.[132] Spinoza, on the other hand, thought that it meant using reason to transform passive affects into active ones. As we shall see in more detail later, Spinoza taught that a person should deal with pain by engaging with it and thereby putting herself into a better emotional state.

Pain as well as the affects deriving from it were foremost among the passions that Spinoza thought should be transformed. These derivatives included such affects as anger, hatred, fear, envy, and contempt. It doesn't seem quite right that affects such as these, especially ones like hatred and envy, should derive from pain. After all, we typically feel sorry for people who are experiencing pain but strongly disapprove of those who hate or envy others. Maybe this is because we consider the person experiencing pain to be the victim of her pain but consider the person who is being hated or envied (rather than the one doing the hating or envying) to be the victim of hatred or envy. But that is not accurate. Of course, the actions that a person commits as a result of hatred often victimize other people. But those same actions as well as the affect giving rise to them also victimize the person doing the hating. In fact, Spinoza thinks that, because everything we do is subject to necessity (including the painful affects that we experience), the person doing the hating is just as much a victim as is the person who is hated. This is not to say that such a person should be pitied, since, as we shall see, Spinoza points out that pity is just

132 A famous story is told by Diogenes Laertius about the slave/Stoic philosopher Epictetus. Epictetus was working in the fields one day, when his owner, displeased at something Epictetus had done, began to twist his arm behind him. As the owner continued to twist his arm, Epictetus calmly informed him, "you are breaking my arm." When the owner's twisting did indeed break his arm, Epictetus reported just as calmly, "my arm is broken." As uplifting as that story may be (especially to someone who frequently confronts physical pain), it is obvious that a person cannot control the way she reacts to having her arm broken but can control only the way she responds.

another painful affect. We shall examine the relationship between pain and Spinoza's necessitarianism more closely in the next chapter. For now, it is enough to observe that Spinoza was justified in claiming that affects such as hatred and envy derive from pain.

Another affect deriving from pain, which victimizes both subject and object, is pity. "Pity," writes Spinoza, "is pain together with the idea of something bad that has happened to someone whom we imagine like ourselves" (3def58). Pity is a derivative of pain. As we shall see, Spinoza thinks that, since pain is a decrease in our power of acting, we should not seek to experienced it. It is sometimes thought that a person has to feel sorry for other people in order to help them. Spinoza's thinking is, however, quite the opposite. See 4p50: "Pity in a man who lives in accordance with the guidance of reason is in itself bad and unprofitable." Feeling sorry for other people, which amounts to experiencing the same sort of pain that they're experiencing, decreases a person's ability to help them in a calm, rational, and effective way.[133] Even if it did not, though, it would still not make sense that one person should experience pain just because another person does. Moreover, as Nietzsche–whose views on pity were clearly influenced by Spinoza–pointed out, pity by its nature distances people from each other and forces the person being pitied into a position beneath that of the person doing the pitying. As an example, it is impossible for two people who have been shipwrecked to pity each other, because they are both in the same position.

The reason I have given a sampling instead of a precise taxonomy of the affects derived from pain is that this is just what Spinoza does. In fact, his haphazard treatment extends to all the

[133] See Bloom (2016) for the argument that empathy, an emotion closely related to pity, is opposed to what he calls "rational compassion," the correct response to others' pain.

affects. That it does may seem strange, given the meticulous way in which Spinoza organizes every other part of his philosophical system. Yet he states in the Preface to Part 3 that he aims in this and the following parts "to determine the powers of the affects and the power of the mind over the affects." To do this, "it is enough to have a general definition of each affect" (3p56s), or "to enumerate only the main affects" (3p59s). His reason for supplying only general definitions? "From what has already been said," he writes, "I believe it is clear to anyone that the various affects can be compounded with one another in so many ways, and that so many variations can arise from this composition that they cannot be defined by any number" (3p59s). According to Spinoza, it is neither possible nor necessary to give a precise taxonomy of the affects, including those that derive from pain.

Spinoza's Ethical Evaluation of Pain

As we have seen several times, pain is for Spinoza a decrease in a being's power of acting. And, since he equates a being's power with its happiness and self-fulfilment, it is also the case that pain causes beings to be less happy and less self-fulfilled. That it does so means , for Spinoza, that pain is bad. The reason it means this is that Spinoza is both an ethical and a psychological egoist. He is an ethical egoist in thinking that every being ought to seek only its own advantage, and he is a psychological egoist in thinking that every being *can* seek only its own advantage.

Spinoza's position entails that a thing is good or bad for a being depending on whether or not that thing agrees with that being's nature. Pain is bad for a person because it goes against her nature. It is not natural for a person to experience pain. Nevertheless, says Spinoza, all beings

evaluate things from their own perspectives. An acorn, for example, takes on different ethical qualities when looked at from different standpoints. I may judge it bad if it falls on my head; a squirrel may judge it good if it is edible; another animal may judge it to be indifferent.[134] Yet it is also true that each perspective is arbitrary, because it does not define goodness and badness independently of individual perspectives.

Saying that a thing ought to agree with a being's nature is the only non-arbitrary, non-perspectival, purely rational way of defining goodness and badness.[135] This is the reason Spinoza writes that "virtue is nothing but acting from the laws of one's own nature" (4p18s). Since every being strives by its nature to increase its power of acting and in doing so to be happier and more self-fulfilled, goodness just is this striving. (4def8) So Spinoza writes, "By good here I understand every kind of joy, and whatever leads to it" (3p39s). Evaluating things in terms of what they are in themselves prevents external, arbitrary standards from being imposed on them. My actions are good if they help me to increase my power of acting (i.e. to persevere in my being) and bad if they do not help me. (There is no difference here between "not helping" and

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[134] See the preface to Part 4: "As far as good and evil are concerned, they also indicate nothing positive in things, considered in themselves, nor are they anything other than modes of thinking, or notions we form because we compare things to one another, for one snd the same thing can, at the same time, be good, and bad, and also indifferent. For example, music is good for one who is melancholy, bad for one who is mourning, and neither good nor bad to one who is deaf."

[135] This is the prevailing interpretation. It is not absolutely clear to me, however, whether Spinoza saw "agrees with my nature" as a non-perspectival way of defining goodness or as just a very good perspective from which to define it. I am thinking here of Nietzsche's perspectivism. In Section 481 of *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche says that the world is "interpretable" and "has countless meanings." This sounds a lot like Spinoza. So does Nietzsche's writing in the same section that, according to perspectivism, "it is our needs that interpret the world; our drives and their For and Against." Cf. 3p9s: "We neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it." We call something "good" because we strive after it. This may be enough for Spinoza.

"hurting." If an action isn't helping me persevere in my being, it is doing the opposite.) Indeed, anything–an acorn, a squirrel, even I myself–is good to the extent that it is powerful and bad to the extent that it is not. Experiencing pain makes me weak and powerless. This is just another way of saying that pain is bad.

If a thing agrees with my nature and so increases my power of acting–if it is a good thing–then I am morally obligated to pursue it. (4p18s) Pursuing it is the right thing to do. Spinoza asserts that the nature of any human being is, as we have seen, to reason about things, to understand them, to form adequate ideas of them. Doing these things increases a person's power of acting, which is to say that it makes her happier and more self-fulfilled. It follows that humans are morally obligated to be rational. Reasoning about stuff is the right thing to do. As we saw in Chapter 1 and will see again in Chapter 5, the best sort of stuff about which to reason–or, rather, the best *way* to reason about stuff–falls under the category of the third kind of knowledge.

This talk of moral obligation and rightness in the context of pursuing one's own advantage sounds strange. It sounds that way because people are used to thinking that they ought to help others and that serving others' interests is the right thing to do. And so it is. According to Spinoza, it is right to help others and to serve their interests. Doing these things is part of what it means to be rational.[136] Serving others' interests is in this way a natural consequence of pursuing

[136] This is a major point of both the *Ethics* and the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*

one's own interest (i.e. of being rational).[137] In other words, Spinoza does not teach people to be altruistic *in spite of* the fact that he is an egoist but rather *because of* this fact.[138]

There is another way in which serving others' interests is a consequence of pursuing one's own interest. Since Spinoza holds that it is in every person's interest to be rational, it follows that I am pursuing my own interest whenever I act rationally. But that is not all I am doing. If being rational is in everyone's interest, it cannot be only in my interest but must be in the interest of every other person as well. So, whenever my being rational results in others' being rational, I am in fact pursuing both our interests at the same time. Spinoza says that this happens all the time. "There is no singular thing in nature which is more useful to man," he writes, "than a man who lives according to the guidance of reason" (4p35c1). I make other people rational simply by being rational myself. And, because making other people rational is in effect the same thing as being rational myself, it can be said that I am morally obligated to make other people rational.

My moral obligation extends beyond other humans. Spinoza writes in the same Corollary that "what is most useful to man is what agrees most with his nature..." The category "those who share my nature" includes the category "those who are rational," so "those who share my nature"

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[137] It is clear that Spinoza's brand of egoism is different from the ethical doctrines of similar thinkers, notably Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes thought that a person should help others so that they would in turn help her. Spinoza's teaching was, unsurprisingly, based on doing what is natural. This meant a person's pursuing her own interest by acting rationally–and serving others' interests as a consequence. The distinction is subtle but important.

[138] It is irritating to me that some Spinoza scholars, such as Stephen Nadler, fail to recognize this causal relationship between Spinoza's egoism and his altruism. Although his article is excellent in many ways, Nadler (2013) writes that Spinoza, "despite the fundamental egoism, engages in behavior toward others that is typically regarded as "ethical", even altruistic." Why discuss the consequences of Spinoza's egoism only to attack their source?!

includes the other members of my species, *Homo sapiens*.[139] So I ought to act rationally towards these members. But "those who share my nature" does not include only other humans. This is because, in addition to being rational, I am also a living being. As such, I share a nature not only with all humans but also with all other animals, all vegetables, and all minerals. This is a major point of Spinoza's metaphysics: humans are modes just like all the others and do not constitute a "kingdom within a kingdom." It is also a crucial part of his conatus doctrine and of his panpsychism.[140] Because it is in my interest–I am morally obligated–to act rationally towards those who share my nature, and because I share my nature with all living beings, it follows that I am morally obligated to act rationally towards all living beings. According to Spinoza, doing this is part of what it means to live "according to the guidance of reason."

A person's moral obligation to herself, to other people, and to other living beings relates to the way she ought to deal with pain. As we have seen, Spinoza holds that, because pain is a decrease in a being's power of acting (and so is something that makes it less happy and less self-fulfilled), it follows that pain is bad. So beings shouldn't seek to experience pain. This directive is really pointed at *human* beings, since they are the only beings that are known to act against

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139 It is quite, quite clear that not all humans reason about things as accurately as other humans do. More than a few people leap to my mind. In a biological sense, though, one human is as rational as the next. The biological sense is used when Spinoza refers to other people as "those who share my nature."

140 This interpretation is similar to that of Arne Naess (1977), who associates humans' moral obligation to other living beings with their level of activity "in the world." Against Naess's interpretation, Genevieve Lloyd (1980) claims that Spinoza was a "speciesist" who confined his discussion of ethics to ethical action by humans and towards humans. She argues that Spinoza did not intend his system of morality to apply to any living beings other than humans. In his response to Lloyd's article, Naess (1980) admits that Spinoza's ethical system is centered around humans but points out that the very structure of his philosophy is built on the unity of living beings. For more recent arguments regarding both the validity and soundness of Spinoza's take on animal ethics, see Wilson (1999) and Grey (2013).

their natures. So *humans* shouldn't seek to experience pain. Nor should they seek for other people or any other beings to experience pain. This obviously means that they oughtn't inflict pain on other beings. But it also means that they should help other beings when those beings do experience pain and that they should prevent other beings from experiencing pain whenever it is possible to do so. They should do these things because doing them is part of what it means to act rationally and because acting rationally is in their interests. But what about the pain that cannot be avoided, helped, or prevented? Each person has to deal with her own experience of such pain. Spinoza offers a rational way to do this, which we shall examine closely in Chapter 5. For now, it is enough to point out that dealing with pain is different when a person *must* undergo it–when it cannot be avoided and when no one else can enable her not to experience it.

I conclude that grasping the aspects of pain theory that I have discussed in this chapter–both the predominant contemporary theory and Spinoza's treatment of the affect called *tristitia*–are crucial to understanding his argument about active suffering. Moreover, they are essential to understanding the relevant points concerning Spinoza's necessitarianism and its relationship to human freedom, which are the subjects of the next chapter.

Chapter Five:

Necessity and Freedom: An Examination of the Relationship in Spinoza's Philosophy Between Necessitarianism and Human Freedom

Knowing what it means to experience pain and sadness enables a person to grasp both the nature of necessity and the fact that there are necessary connections among all things, which are the concepts underlying Spinoza's theory of freedom. It is often thought that necessity is the opposite of freedom, but this is far from being the case. The purpose of this chapter is to show not just that it is possible to be free even though everything happens necessarily but also that it is possible to be free *for the very reason that* everything happens necessarily. Understanding this relationship between necessity and freedom is crucial to the way Spinoza thinks that a person should deal with her experience of pain.

In this chapter, I examine both Spinoza's doctrine of necessitarianism and his related doctrine of human freedom (as well as relevant contemporary positions on these topics). I look first at what necessitarianism is and at the ways in which it is both different from and similar to determinism. Spinoza is perhaps the most famous proponent of necessitarianism, and, although there are scholars who disagree with this assessment, most scholars not only agree with it but even regard it as a crucial to understanding the rest of his philosophy. Recognizing the distinction between necessity and compulsion is important to getting a thorough grasp of necessitarianism, as Spinoza points out. I look next at the history of the debate over the compatibility of free will

with determinism, which is called "the compatibility problem," and especially at the formation of compatiblism and incompatiblism by Hume and Kant. Relevant to this discussion is the relationship between the compatibility problem and moral responsibility as well as the problems inherent in both. By rejecting free will and embracing necessitarianism, Spinoza develops a theory of human freedom that both resolves these problems and begins to show how a person should deal with her experience of pain.

Necessitarianism

Necessitarianism is a principle in metaphysics that denies all mere possibility: its proponents never say merely that an event *can* happen the way it happens but instead always say that it *must* happen the way it happens. As a result, the world could not be different than it is (not even in the smallest way). It is important in looking at necessitarianism to recognize the ways it is both similar to and different from determinism. Though determinism is perhaps the better-known principle, necessitarianism has its own following among philosophers even today. Its most famous philosophical proponent, however, is Spinoza, who pointed out the relationship between necessitarianism and other key concepts in his philosophy.

Determinism and Necessitarianism

The metaphysical theories of determinism and necessitarianism are closely linked. Determinists hold that every event[141], from a pine tree's existing to my deciding to become a vegetarian, is determined by antecedent events to happen exactly the way it happens. For example, each of my actions is determined by my previous actions (each of which is determined by the action previous to it, from my action to my mother's action to my grandmother's action, etc.). What I'm doing now, in thirty seconds, in ten years, and for the rest of my life is mapped out in what Spinoza calls "an infinite chain of causes" (1p28). In this way, my actions follow a set path.

Determinism depends on the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR), which is the idea that there must always be a reason for or a cause of everything that exists. This means that even the most ordinary fact–like a pine tree's existing–demands an explanation. Brute (i.e. unexplainable) facts are not really facts at all. The connection between determinism and the PSR is clear. As we shall see in a moment, the PSR's connection to necessitarianism is even clearer.[142] At the root of determinism is the idea that every fact can be explained, that every event has a reason for happening in exactly the way it happens.

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[141] I say "every event" rather than "everything" because this is the accepted way among scholars to speak about determinism. See Hoefer (2016). Maybe the reason for its being the accepted way is that there really are no static things, only actions. So it is more accurate to speak of events like existing and deciding than of static things like a pine tree or my vegetarianism.

[142] That the PSR implies necessitarianism makes it unattractive to some scholars. Yet a successful argument has never been made against it. For a discussion of this issue as well as a defense of metaphysical rationalism in general, see Dasgupta (2014).

Necessitarians take the determinist position to its logical conclusion. They say that, because it is impossible for any event to happen in any way other than the way it is determined to happen, the world[143] (including both its past and future) could not be different from the way it is. It is that way necessarily. In other words, the set path of my actions cannot be any other way than the way it is, because every one of my actions depends on every other action. Hence the path itself depends on each individual action. In short, because the path that my actions follow is determined by every one of those very actions, the path could never have been and can never be different. It is the way it is of necessity.

One way to think of the relationship between determinism and necessitarianism is to consider that all existing things arise from an interconnected web of cause and effect. They are interdependent. In other words, every event is both a cause and an effect of another event.

An example is the pencil that is lying in front of me. It is the effect of many causes (of all causes, actually). It is made of wood, lead, paint, metal, and rubber. Some person grew the tree from which the wood came; she relied on the proper soil and weather conditions in order to do so. Someone else, using tools produced by other materials and other people, cut the tree down. After a third person formed the tree into lumber, a fourth transported the lumber to a factory, where a fifth used the lumber—in addition to the other materials, each of which was manufactured in a similar way—to produce the pencil that is lying in front of me. And don't

[143] It makes no difference that what humans call "the world" is constituted to some degree of the way they perceive it. As Wittgenstein said, "tell me how you are looking and I'll tell you what you'll find." The world is governed by necessity, even though that necessity is, like the world, constituted to some degree of the way humans perceive it. Moreover, humans' act of perceiving the world is part of the causal chain. They will always perceive it to be exactly the way they perceive it to be.

forget: each person and each material involved in the pencil's story has its own story (that involves other persons and other materials with its own story…)

There are far too many causes of this one little happening—that there is a pencil lying in front of me—for me to enumerate. Besides the many material and efficient causes that I have named are many formal causes. Why, for instance, is the pencil lying in front of me instead of behind me? Why is it not stuck instead into the wall of an apartment belonging to a fellow named Takao who lives in Japan? Why is the object lying in front of me a pencil and not a glass of whiskey or a copy of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*?

Any event—such as the pencil's lying in front of me—happens as it does and not in another way because it is the effect of one cause and not of another. Every cause is also an effect; it is the effect of a different cause. The tree is one cause of the effect that there is a pencil lying in front of me. The tree is also an effect of the soil, the weather, some person’s intention to grow a tree, the reasons for her having that intention, the reasons for those reasons, etc. That the pencil lies in front of me is a cause as well as an effect. It is one cause, for instance, of my writing about it in this paper. It is the cause of a great many events that I either don’t know about or don’t wish to try enumerating. As Douglas Adams’s holistic detective, Dirk Gently, might say: that the pencil is lying in front of me is in some way the cause of a miniature poodle named Harriet, who resides in Sussex, having to sneeze at 4:14 on the morning of February 26, 2009. Everything that happens is both the cause and the effect of another thing’s happening. That it is demonstrates the way determinism leads logically to necessitarianism.

Spinoza's Necessitarianism

It is quite clear that Spinoza is a necessitarian. In fact, he says that his views on the necessity of things are the "principle basis" of the Ethics. (1p75) Without necessitarianism, it does seem as though crucial parts of his system would not make sense.

Most scholars agree with this assessment.[144] Garrett (1991), for example, argues that all finite modes (which is Spinoza's term for what I have called "things" or "events") exist necessarily because they derive from Substance. Recall from Chapter 1 that Substance causes itself to exist (i.e. is self-caused) and thus exists necessarily by definition.[145] Garrett argues more specifically that each finite mode should be looked at in terms of the whole collection of finite modes and that this collection is governed by the infinite modes, which derive immediately from Substance.[146] Since the whole collection, being indirectly derived from Substance, exists necessarily, so does each finite mode. Garrett demonstrates in this way that Spinoza is a necessitarian. A similar point is that the identity of modes and Substance logically implies that everything is interdependent, i.e. that each thing determines and is determined by each other thing. As Spinoza puts it, "in nature there is nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain

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[144] Such scholars include Curley, Bennett, Della Rocca, Garrett, and Lin. It is the standard interpretation that Spinoza was a strict necessitarian. It should be noted that Curley has in recent years interpreted Spinoza's position as being one of modified necessitarianism. See Curley and Walsaki (1999). It seems to me that their interpretation leaves out Spinoza's insistence that there exists only one possible world.

[145] 145 See 1p11: "God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists."

[146] Recall from Chapter 1 that finite modes are what we usually call "things" and infinite modes are the overarching laws of nature.

way"(1p29). And "things could have been produced by God in no other way, and in no other order, than they have been produced" (1p33).

Spinoza's commitment to the PSR also lends strong support to the case for his necessitarianism. This commitment can be seen in his saying that everything is conceivable (i.e. explainable)[147]: "What cannot be conceived through another, must be conceived through itself" (1a2). He later states the principle explicitly: "For each thing there must be assigned a cause, or reason, both for its existence and for its nonexistence" (1p11d2).[148] This implies that there is a reason for every event's happening exactly the way it happens. It is the reason Melamed and Lin (2016) call the PSR "the primary motivation behind Spinoza's strict necessitarianism."

As I have said, most scholars agree that Spinoza endorsed full-blown necessitarianism, and that is the standard interpretation of his position. Despite so much evidence to the contrary, however, there are some scholars[149] say that Spinoza makes a case for determinism but not for necessitarianism. (Non-necessitarianism Newlands argues, for example, that, even if Spinoza sees finite things as existing necessarily, they can exist that way (as we saw Garrett pointing out) only in relation to the whole collection of finite things. But he goes on to claim that it is impossible for humans to conceive of finite things in such an all-encompassing way. More specifically, he points out that forming such a conception requires, for Spinoza, having adequate ideas about the finite things in question, and he thinks–in spite of very good arguments to the

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[147] See Della Rocca (2008) for an excellent discussion of the way that a thing's ability to be conceived implies its ability to be explained.

[148] He says similarly in 1p8s2 that "if a certain number of individuals exists, there must be a cause why those individuals, and why neither more nor fewer, exist."

[149] Such scholars include Christopher Martin and Samuel Newlands.

contrary (which we looked at in Chapter 1–that it is impossible for humans to have adequate ideas. So he writes that "while necessitarianism is true from God's complete perspective, and while we can understand the metaphysical principles which guarantee the truth of necessitarianism in virtue of the existence of such comprehensive ways of conceiving the world, the ways of conceiving finite objects we tend to adopt will rarely, if ever, be sufficiently complete so as to entail true predications of necessitarianism."

This argument is problematic for more than one reason. First, Newlands makes a mistake in his treatment of adequacy. As we saw in Chapter 2, Spinoza plainly says in several places that it is possible for humans to attain adequate knowledge of both infinite and finite modes.[150] Key parts of his philosophy hinge on their having this ability. Second, Newlands's general argument that humans do not have the capacity to grasp the necessity underlying everything presents a problem that is separate from his specific conclusion about adequate ideas. Spinoza writes: "Insofar as the mind understands all things as necessary, it has a greater power over the affects, or is less acted on by them" (5p6). Teaching people to have such power over the affects is a central theme of the Ethics, but Spinoza explicitly states here that humans cannot attain this power unless they grasp the necessity of everything. So the debate over Spinoza's necessitarianism concerns not only issues of theoretical importance but also those of practical importance. Fortunately, the majority of Spinoza scholars agree that the non-necessitarian interpreters don't have a case.

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150 See 2p38c: There are certain ideas, or notions, common to all men...which must be perceived adequately, or clearly and distinctly, by all."

Necessity vs. Compulsion

When discussing necessitarianism, it is important to distinguish between necessity and compulsion. In legal terminology, necessity is a plea to excuse the breaking of one law because doing so is necessary to preserve another law. Let's imagine that a drunk person chooses to drive her car. It is against the law for her to do so. She won't be convicted of a crime, however, if she drove while drunk in order to stop a bank robbery. Her lawyer would argue that, in these circumstances, it was necessary for that person to break the law against drunk driving in order to preserve the law forbidding theft. The person would plead compulsion, on the other hand, if someone had held a gun to her head and thereby forced her to drive while drunk.[151] The legal difference between necessity and compulsion lies in choice. A drunk driver pleads necessity when she chooses (for a good reason) to break the law. She pleads compulsion when someone else forces her (i.e. chooses for her) to break the law.

The philosophical difference between necessity and compulsion also lies in choice. In philosophy, necessity does not refer to an illegal action that a person undertakes for the purpose of preserving a law but rather to the chain of events formed by each event's determining and being determined by each other event. When our drunk driver stopped the bank robbery, for example, she did so because every other event necessarily caused that event to occur. Yet no other person or thing forced it to occur.[152] It seemed to her that she could just as well not have stopped the robbery. In philosophical as well as legal terms, this person was under no

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[151] See Christie (1999) for an in-depth exploration of the legal concept or necessity.

[152] This definition of compulsion as the external forcing of a person's actions plays an important role, as we shall see, in the compatiblist conception of freedom. This is the reason Spinoza says that freedom opposes not necessity but compulsion.

compulsion to drive while drunk. A philosopher would point out that people perform necessary actions by choice (as it seems to them) but compulsory actions by force.

In fact, a philosopher did point out this distinction. Spinoza writes that a thing is "compelled" if it is "determined by another to exist and to produce an effect in a certain and determinate manner" (1def7). And he says that a thing is "necessary" in the same way that "the three angles of a triangle are necessarily equal to two right angles." That is, they could not ever be any other way, even though nothing and nobody compels them to be equal.[153] He explains this distinction further in Letter 56. Here he opposes freedom (which we'll look at closely in the next section) not to necessity but to compulsion: "A man's will to live, to love, etc., is not the result of compulsion, yet it is necessary."

Human Freedom

It is often thought that the terms "freedom" and "free will" are interchangeable or at least that, to be free, a person must be able to choose her actions from among alternative possibilities. Such thinking is the basis for much of the writing, both historical and contemporary, on the topic of human freedom. Most writers on this topic are either compatiblists or in compatiblists. Although they are opposed in regards to the issue of free will's compatibility with determinism, they are alike in judging the concept of free will to underlie that of freedom. That Spinoza did not judge this to be the case–that he posited human freedom to be entirely separate from free

[153] A similar point is that they could not ever be unequal because it is in their nature to be equal. They fit together and are part of each other. He says the same thing in Letter 56 about heat being a necessary effect of fire. The same is true of all modes of Substance. It is in their nature to fit together and be part of each other. That is what makes them necessary.

will–sets his theory of freedom apart from those of most other philosophers. By embracing necessity, it also offers a new and better way to deal one's experience of pain.

The History of Compatibilism and Incompatibilism

The current literature on free will deals largely with the debate about whether or not free will and moral responsibility are compatible with determinism.[154] On the two sides of this debate, which is often referred to as "the compatibility problem," are the incompatiblists (who hold that there cannot be free will if determinism is true) and the compatiblists (who hold that there is no such conflict). This debate has a long philosophical history.

Although the ancient philosophers developed theories about both determinism and moral responsibility, they had no concept of "will" as a faculty separate from other faculties and capable of making free choices. The notion of "free will" was not introduced until the Middle Ages, when Augustine wrote *On the Free Choice of the Will.* Motivated by a desire to justify the Christian idea of "sin" and humans' moral responsibility in general, Augustine refers here to a separate faculty that humans have "to do otherwise" or to have alternative possibilities for the choices that they make. He famously calls this supposed faculty to make free choices liberum arbitrium. Both the concept of "will" and its capacity to make free choices came under fire in the

[154] See O'Connor (2014) for a discussion of the history of free will and of its relationship to contemporary positions on the compatibility problem..

17th century as the determinism of an emerging mechanical philosophy became prominent.[155] It was during the 18th century, however, that the contemporary arguments surrounding the compatibility problem were shaped.

Hume influenced the arguments for compatiblism by analyzing "Liberty and Necessity" in Part 3 Sec. 1-2 of his *Treatise on Human Nature* and in Sec. 7 of his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. He argues in these sections that, although necessity governs all actions, both free will and moral obligation are possible. In fact, he thinks that necessity is the condition for the possibility of liberty. He makes this argument by distinguishing between two kinds of liberty. The first kind he calls the "liberty of indifference." Being identical with the free will of Augustine's liberum arbitrium, it is opposed to a scientific knowledge of necessity. Moreover, because it allows for uncaused causes, it denies an agent moral responsibility for her actions. For both reasons, Hume leads contemporary compatiblists in standing against the liberty of indifference.

The second of liberty he calls the "liberty of spontaneity." It is consistent with a scientific knowledge of necessity and is opposed only to compulsion. But it is consistent with necessity only to the extent that it views an agent's actions as determined; only she herself is the cause of her motives for carrying out those actions. In this way, a person can be held morally responsible for the decisions that she makes, even though the actions to which those decisions lead are

155 Most philosophers of this period developed a theory about the relationship between free will and determinism. Descartes, for example, taught that the physical world was wholly determined; it is due only to his archaic mind-body dualism that he retained the liberum arbitrium and identified the mental world with the capacity for making free choices. Hobbes was a full-blown determinist and held that there was no free will, only freedom from external compulsion. Leibniz, much like Spinoza, taught that everything was governed by necessity and that free will was a useful illusion. We'll closely examine Spinoza's theory in a moment.

determined. For these reasons, both Hume and contemporary compatiblists are attracted to the liberty of spontaneity.

Other philosophers, however, decry Hume's soft version of free will and see the compatibility of free will and determinism in quite a different light. Among these philosophers is Kant, who called compatiblism a "wretched subterfuge" and shaped the position of contemporary incompatiblists in his *Critique of Practical Reason* and later in his *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. In the *2nd Critique*, Kant distinguishes between the determinism that appears in the phenomenal realm and the free will (Augustine's liberum arbitrium, which allows for alternative choices) of the noumenal realm that underlies this apparent determinism. He argues that an agent can be morally responsible for her actions only if those actions are truly free and are not subject to the determinism of the phenomenal realm. The problem is that few people ever realize the freedom that underlies determinism. Most remain stuck in the phenomenal realm. And it's not useful to say that, because most people do not realize that they are free, they are not morally responsible for their actions.

So Kant makes a further distinction in the *Religion* between free will (Wille) and freedom of the power of choice (freie Willkür), which is something like a more powerful form of free will. It, like free will, is akin to liberum arbitrium in holding that an agent is morally responsible for her actions only if she can choose freely among alternative possibilities.[156] Yet the determinism of the phenomenal realm does not exempt her from moral responsibility. Freedom of the power of choice trumps determinism and makes an agent morally responsible for her

[156] Wolf (1990) makes an even stronger argument, though it is one with which Kant would probably agree. She argues that, even if a person chooses to do something that is good, she did not act freely unless she had the capacity to do something bad.

actions in spite of the fact that that they are determined. This seems like an argument for compatiblism, but it's not. Kant is saying that people's freedom to choose is the essential thing and that this freedom goes beyond (and so is not compatible with) determinism.

Hume and Kant shaped opposing arguments concerning the compatibility of free will and determinism, but there is really no difference in the way each defines moral responsibility. For both philosophers, an agent is morally responsible for her actions as long as those actions proceed from her own will or motives. In other words, neither views determinism as thoroughgoing. Hume says that everything is determined, but he does not include a person's motives in "everything." Kant says that most things are determined but that an agent's freedom to make alternative choices transcends determinism. Kant is just more honest, because he doesn't redefine "free will" and "determinism" in order to make his theory work out. He simply states that the two concepts are incompatible.

The Compatibility Problem and Moral Responsibility

Central to the contemporary debate over the compatibility of free will and determinism–the compatibility problem–is the issue of an agent's moral responsibility for her actions. Scholars on both sides of this debate agree that the criterion for moral responsibility is free will, which can be loosely defined as an agent's having enough control over her motives to choose among alternative ways of acting.

There are various perspectives on this debate within both the compatiblist and the incompatiblist camps. Although contemporary compatiblists follow Hume's position pretty closely, there are many disagreements among these scholars about how to define such terms as

"free choice" and "alternative possibilities."[157] Among the incompatiblists, there are those who think that determinism is definitely true and those who think that, whether it is true or not, it is incompatible with free will.[158] There are also those, the libertarians, who think that determinism is false. In spite of these differences, however, contemporary incompatiblists tend to follow Kant's position pretty closely.

The problem with both compatiblists and incompatiblists is that they see a person's moral responsibility as depending on her possession of free will. But developments in neuroscience, biology, and psychology are increasingly showing that everything is utterly determined and that free will does not exist. So moral responsibility, at least in the sense that a person's actions can be attributed to her capacity to make alternative choices, cannot exist either.

Moreover, it may be a good thing that moral responsibility cannot exist. To say that I am morally responsible for my actions is, given the present model of moral responsibility, to say that I ought to be either praised or blamed for having carried them out. It is to say not merely that my

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157 Frankfurt (1969) argues, for example, that a person can be morally responsible for an action that she takes without having chosen from alternative possibilities to take it (i.e. without having performed it through free will). He uses a famous example involving two persons named Black and Jones. Black is going to compel Jones to do something, but only if Jones would not otherwise choose to do it. It turns out that Jones does choose to do it. So Black doesn't have to compel him. Frankfurt's point is that Jones–or any other person–can be morally responsible for what he does even though he is not choosing from among alternative possibilities. The problem with his example is that it pits moral responsibility against a straw man, in this case Black's external compulsion. Frankfurt does not actually eliminate free will or the capacity to choose among alternative possibilities. Much like Hume, he just redefines it in a way that suits his argument.

158 See, for example, van Inwagen (1983), who argues that a person cannot act freely unless there are various possible ways for her to act in the future. This is called the Consequence Argument. Also see Kane (1998) more strictly that she cannot will freely unless she is the one who originates her action. This is called the Origination Argument. It's not clear, though, that these are distinct arguments. Being able to choose among different ways of acting requires that the agent wills or originates her actions.

actions are either good or bad (an objective fact) but, even more, that I am either right or wrong in having performed them (a subjective judgment). In other words, the term "moral responsibility" is currently used to make a claim about an agent's moral character.

For both these reasons, the present model of moral responsibility is no good. It cannot work, and it should not work. An alternative model, one that does not rely on an agent's having free will and that makes claims about an agent's actions instead of her character, must be found. Spinoza's position on the compatibility problem offers just such a model.

Spinoza on Free Will vs. Freedom

We have already seen that Spinoza is a hard determinist, a necessitarian, in fact. So it is no surprise that he strongly critiques the concept of free will.[159] "There is in the mind," he writes, "no absolute, i.e. no free will, but the mind is determined to will this or that by a cause, which is again determined by another [...] and so on to infinity" (2p48).[160] Whenever a person chooses to do one thing instead of another, she is not exercising free will but is making the choice that the series of her previous decisions determined her to make. The problem is that no person can see the path of her actions as a whole; she can see only each individual action as she takes it. As

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[159] Recall from Chapter 1 that Spinoza, in opposition to Descartes, denies that the existence of "will" as a separate faculty for making decisions. This so-called "will," he says, is the same thing as intellect or reason. Recall also that mind or intellect (or will) is itself an idea. This means that it is not a repository for a person's ideas but is itself the action involved in forming an idea. An idea, again, amounts to an affirmation or negation of something. My mind or intellect or will just is my affirming or negating of that something. It is for this reason impossible that there should be a "will" from which ideas issue out as actions. Moreover, according to Spinoza's doctrine of parallelism, the mind does not cause the body's actions but rather acts in parallel to the body. So, apart from his direct arguments against the concept of free will, it is interesting that he does not think that "will" can exist in the first place.

[160] Pereboom (2005) alludes to this passage in his critique of libertarian free will.

Spinoza explains, "they are conscious of their own actions, and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined." (3p2s)[161] But even if people realize this fact and know better than to think that they have the capacity to choose their actions from among alternative possibilities, it nonetheless seems to them as though they are making just such a choice. The notion that agents act from free will is in this way an illusion.[162] The key is to avoid falling for this illusion. "Those people who believe that they do anything by a free decree of the mind," says Spinoza, "dream with their eyes open" (3p2s).

[161] Spinoza expands on his critique of free will in a letter that he writes in 1674 to G.H. Schuller, in which he asks Schuller to imagine that a falling stone is conscious. "Conceive, if you please, that while continuing in motion the stone thinks, and knows that it is striving (conatus) as far as it can, to continue in motion. Now this stone, since it is striving as far as it can and is not at all indifferent, will surely think it is completely free, and that it continues in motion for no other reason than that is so wishes. This then, is that human freedom which all men boast of possessing, and which consists solely in this, that men are conscious of their desires and unaware of the causes by which they are determined. In the same way a baby thinks that it freely desires milk, an angry child revenge, and a coward flight. Again, a drunken man believes that it is from his free decision that he says what he later, when sober, would wish to be left unsaid. So, too, the delirious, the loquacious, and many others of this kind believe that they act from their own free decision and not that they are carried away by impulse." (Letter 58)

[162] An example is the way humans perceive the sun. We perceive it as near to us, even though we know that it is really far away. See 2p35s: "When we look at the sun, we imagine it as about two hundred feet away from us, an error which does not consist simply in this imagining, but in the fact that we imagine it in this way, we are ignorant of its true distance and the cause of this imagining. For even if we later come to know that it is more than six hundred diameters of the earth away from us, we nevertheless imagine it as near. For we imagine the sun so near not because we do not know its true distance, but because an affection of our body involves the essence of the sun insofar as our body is affected by the sun."

Even though Spinoza is a hard determinist and an outspoken critic of free will, however, he nevertheless has a theory of freedom.[163] Not only does he point out the logic underlying necessitarianism; he also devotes many of his writings to discussing freedom–whether psychological, moral, political, religious, or environmental. His version of freedom amounts to the concept of activity: a thing is free to the extent that it acts from its nature.[164] More precisely, he describes it as "free" if it "exists from the necessity of its nature alone, and is determined to act by itself alone" (1def7).[165] He offers in Letter 58 the example of God or Substance: "God, although he necessarily exists, yet exists freely, because he exists from the necessity of his own nature alone." For humans, as we saw in Chapter 2, to act from one's nature means to act rationally.[166] And acting rationally means, as we saw in Chapter 1, forming adequate ideas about necessary events in the world (both the internal and the external world).[167] Since, given

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163 Kluz (2012) argues that, in a way, this makes Spinoza both a compatiblist and an incompatiblist. But I don't think that it is useful to look at him in this way. Spinoza never shows an interest in either reconciling free will with determinism or in arguing that the two concepts are irreconcilable. This is partly because the great debate between Hume and Kant had not taken place. But I think that it is mostly because his theory of freedom naturally precludes the concept of free will and naturally requires the concept of determinism. An explicit argument concerning compatiblism and incompatiblism is not needed.

164 Recall from Chapter 2 that the concept of activity is defined by the extent of a person's ability to act rather than to be acted upon. It is bound up with the concepts of "power of acting" and "conatus," which is synonymous with a being's "nature." The more active a person is, the greater is her capacity to act from her nature or to strive to preserve herself.

165 Notice that the language of necessity and determinism finds a place in the very definition of freedom.

166 In terms of affective reason and acting as a whole person, it means acting intuitively. (Recall the discussion in Chapter 1 of the three kinds of knowledge.) We'll look more closely at this application of intuitive knowledge in Chapter 5.

167 Recall that, for Spinoza, all knowledge proceeds from sense experience. Adequate ideas are no different. But the sense experience from which they come must be tempered by reason. Contrast this to inadequate ideas, which proceed from sense experience alone.

necessitarianism, all events are necessary, acting rationally means forming adequate ideas about everything. This is Spinoza's theory of human freedom. Humans are free, he says, to the extent that they reason about the necessary connections undergirding the worlds both inside and outside them. So it is not just the case that there is no conflict with determinism and that freedom is possible in spite of the fact that humans lack free will. It is possible for humans to be free, writes Spinoza, precisely because they lack free will and are determined in their actions.[168]

Spinoza bases important parts of his philosophy–like his teaching about the way a person should deal with her experience of pain–on this theory. We shall look closely at this teaching in the next chapter. Suffice it to say for now that a person can be free by employing what Spinoza calls "internal determination."[169] The difference between internal and external determination lies in the extent of one's understanding. If a person's actions are externally determined, they result "from fortuitous encounters with things" and end up producing a "confused and mutilated" knowledge. If a person's actions are internally determined, however, they result from "the fact that [this person] considers a number of things at once, to understand their agreements, differences, and oppositions" and end up producing a "clear and distinct" knowledge. In other words, my actions are externally determined when I happen to learn a little something about them by accident. They are internally determined when I determine myself to know completely

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[168] Spinoza argues against free will in 2p49 and then writes in the Scholium, "it remains now to indicate how much knowledge of this doctrine [against free will] is to our advantage in life."

[169]See 2p29s: I say expressly that the Mind does not have adequate knowledge, but only a confused and mutilated knowledge, of itself, it's own Body, and external bodies so long as it perceives things from the common order of nature, that is, so long as it is determined externally–namely, from fortuitous encounters with things–to consider this or that; and not so long as it is determined internally, from the fact that it considers a number of things at once, to understand their agreements, differences, and oppositions. For so often as it is disposed internally, in this or another way, then it regards things clearly and distinctly.

what things are, why they exist, and how they are all connected. It should be noted that, if a person acts through external determination, she is passive: she acts only because some knowledge about things happens upon her. If she acts through internal determination, on the other hand, she is active: she acts because she herself has made the effort to understand things thoroughly.

Of course, whether a person does or does not determine her actions internally–hence whether she is free or unfree–is itself necessitated. But, since the resulting freedom is distinct from the concept of free will, this fact does not cancel out the importance of internal determination or render it impossible for a person to be really and truly free.[170] In fact, it is important in establishing a new and better model of moral responsibility. For example, we can use this theory to condemn the action of stealing–and even to demand that the thief repay what she has stolen–without branding her as a horrible person. Because Spinoza's version of freedom is based on a thing's nature and activity instead of a supposed ability to choose among alternatives, it justifies the praising or blaming of an agent's actions rather than of her moral character.

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[170] Spinoza's model of someone who is really and truly free is his "free man." By "really and truly free," though, I do not mean to suggest–as I've said many times before–that Spinoza paints a picture of the free man as someone who both can and should get rid of all influence on him by the passions. The traditional interpretation is that Spinoza does paint just such a picture. But many scholars are now rethinking this old-fashioned view and interpreting the free man as someone who tries to understand rather than extirpate his emotions. See, for example, Tucker (2015), Nadler (2015), and Youpa (2010).

I conclude that grasping the aspects of both necessitarianism and human freedom that I have discussed in this chapter are crucial to understanding Spinoza's arguments about understanding and active suffering, which are the subjects of the next chapter.

Chapter Six:

Active Suffering: An Examination of Spinoza's Approach to Dealing With One's Experience of Pain

Grasping the relationship between necessity and freedom enables a person to realize how important it is to engage with all of her experiences, even the painful ones. It enables her to realize this because, as Spinoza never tires of pointing out, there is a strong relationship between knowledge and activity. Knowing things (as well as the way in which things are known) is closely related to doing things.

It is this connection between knowledge and activity that makes it possible for a person to know the way she should deal with her experience of pain, or, as I like to put it, the way for her to suffer actively. And actively dealing with pain is the same thing as being free. My purpose in this chapter is to show how understanding her pain–rather than trying to escape it–enables a person, while she's in the midst of experiencing it, to be active and in this way to be free.

To show this, I devote much of this chapter to examining the ways that, according to Spinoza, a person knows things. Two of these ways–the rational and the intuitive–produce adequate ideas, so I focus on them. That is not to say, though, that they are equally effective. It turns out that knowing things intuitively is superior to knowing them rationally. I also devote much of the chapter to analyzing Spinoza's teaching that a person should apply this knowledge to her experiences of pain. Here also intuitive knowledge is shown to be superior. I show in the last

section the way knowledge relates to activity, the way they both relate to active suffering, and the identity of active suffering and freedom.

Three Ways of Knowing Things

In order to deal properly with her experience of pain, says Spinoza, a person should improve her understanding or knowledge of it, of necessity, and of things in general. What is it to understand something, though? Recall from Chapter 1 that to understand something or to have knowledge about it is the same as to form an idea of it. But the idea in question cannot be fuzzy and confused (i.e. what Spinoza calls an inadequate idea); it has to be clear and distinct (i.e. what he calls an adequate idea). So to understand something is to form an adequate idea of it.[171] How, then, does a person form adequate ideas? She does it by increasing her knowledge. But it has to be the right sort of knowledge.

Recall again from Chapter 1 that Spinoza arranges understanding or knowledge hierarchically.[172] The first type is opinion (opinio), which describes the natural way humans know things. Because it is based on imagination, prejudice, and superstition, it is inadequate and

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[171] There is a strong relationship here between adequacy and activity. Knowing something clearly and distinctly is obviously similar to using one's power to act. This similarity highlights the relationship between understanding and active suffering, which will be discussed later in more detail.

[172] Spinoza's teaching about the three types of knowledge is akin to Nietzsche's three metamorphoses of the spirit (from camel to lion to child; cf. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Part 1) and to Kierkegaard's three stages of human existence (from slave to knight of infinite resignation to knight of faith; cf. Fear and Trembling, Part 2). All three are similar to the Zen Buddhist parable about a monk who first sees mountains only as mountains, then learns to see them not as mountains at all, then realizes that they are indeed mountains but are also much more. The progress in each of these examples is from a reliance on sense experience to a focus on the universal to a realization of reality's nature.

so false; it is for this reason the lowest type. The second type is reason (ratio), which describes a person's forming an intellectual conception of things. Because it is based on conceiving universal properties, it is adequate and so true. Yet there are limitations to it; it is for this reason not the highest type. The third type of knowledge is intuition (scientia intuitiva), which describes a person's knowing the essences of things. Because it is based on conceiving individual properties rather than universal ones, Spinoza considers it not only both adequate and true but also the highest type of knowledge.

Given that opinion, the first type of knowledge, is inadequate (and hence leads people to understand things falsely), examining it closely is not useful for our purpose of showing the way Spinoza thinks that a person should deal with her experience of pain. But both reason and intuition, the second and third types of knowledge, are adequate (and hence lead people to understand things accurately), so examining them closely is useful. But, as I pointed out, reasoning about something and knowing it intuitively do not produce equal forms of knowledge. Because it enables a person to know what things really are (rather than to know just information about things), intuition is superior to reason. But it is a mistake to think that a person can "skip over" reasoning about things and go from knowing them by opinion to knowing them intuitively. Knowledge doesn't work that way. There are steps to understanding things, and taking one step is necessary for taking another. A person naturally has opinions about things. She improves her understanding by learning to know them first rationally and then intuitively. Although they are not equal, both reason and intuition do produce adequate knowledge. For this reason, they deserve our close attention.

Knowing Things Rationally

As we just saw, humans naturally know things when those things affect their imaginations; this type of knowing produces false or inadequate ideas. The reason it does so is that it is a passive sort of knowing. It is not really knowing at all, in fact, but, because a person's thinking is determined by things that are external to her, is instead like looking at things "as mute pictures on a panel" (2p49s2). When a person knows something in this way, she is not thinking for herself but is relying on the opinions of others to form her ideas. When she stops relying on opinion and starts thinking for herself, however, she has made the transition to understanding or knowing things rationally. This type of knowing is active, since a person is determined only by things (thoughts and feelings, in this case) that are internal to her. So it produces true or adequate ideas.

We know from Chapter 1 that an idea is adequate if it is complete in itself, if it perfectly describes its object without having to refer to anything else.[173] In a letter to Tschirnhaus, Spinoza gives the example of the idea of a circle. The idea is adequate, he says, if a person can deduce from it all the properties of a circle. (Letter LX) Yet the capacity to form adequate ideas is not specific to reason. How does a person form adequate ideas by reasoning about things? Spinoza says that she does it "from the fact that [humans] have common notions and adequate ideas of

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173 Spinoza was influenced here by Aristotle's developing the term "definition" in his Metaphysics. An adequate idea just is an expression of an object's definition.

properties of things" (2p40s2).[174] In other words, a person reasons about a thing–thus forming an adequate idea of it–by having a common notion of its properties.[175]

What makes a notion common, Spinoza writes in 2p38, is that it is something that all things share: "Those things which are common to all, and which are equally in the part and in the whole, can only be conceived adequately." He gives the example of motion and rest[176], and other examples that he has mentioned before are thought and extension[177]. Notions are also common if all things of a certain type share them. Spinoza gives the example in 2p39 of human beings, who share characteristics with all other members of their species: "If something is common to, and peculiar to, the human body and certain external bodies by which the human body is usually affected, and is equally in the part and in the whole of each of them, its idea will also be adequate

174 Although Spinoza wrote in his earlier works about many aspects of epistemology that he later developed in the Ethics, common notions are an exception. Even his treatment of them here is scant. Possibly, he never fully worked out this theory.

175 In fact, he says in the previous scholium that common notions are "the foundations of reason."

176 See 2d2: All things are similar in that "they can move now more slowly, now more quickly, and absolutely, that now they move, now they are at rest."

177 In other words, attributes are counted among common notions. Marshall (2008) suggests that infinite modes should be included as well.

in the mind." The same is logically true of every other species[178] and ushers into Spinoza's approach to attaining knowledge what Delahunty (2010) calls an "empirical element."[179]

Rational Knowledge and Pain

As we saw in Chapter 4, Spinoza says in 2p29s that the mind forms adequate ideas when it "considers a number of things at once, to understand their agreements, differences, and oppositions." And we have just seen that the mind uses reason to form these adequate ideas by applying common notions to the things in question. In other words, a person reasons about something by applying what she knows about things in general (i.e. her knowledge of common notions) to that thing in particular.[180] And applying common notions includes knowing the ways

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[178] Common notions are characteristics that things–both things in general and things of a specific type–share in common. Given panpsychism, all living beings–not just humans–can have common notions. See 2p13s: "The things we have shown so far are completely general and do not pertain more to man than to other Individuals, all of which, though in different degrees, are nevertheless animate. For of each thing there is necessarily an idea in God, of which God is the cause in the same way as he is of the idea of the human body." Because every being is a mode of substance, each is conscious to a degree. Some though like humans have a more complex and developed capacity to reason than others. It is a difference in quantity, not in quality.

[179] Delahunty is specifically concerned to show that Spinoza's common notions are not at all like the innate ideas of Descartes and Leibniz. In contrast, some scholars, such as Allison (1987), argue that the relationship between common notions and innate ideas is quite strong. The question, I think, comes down to this: if all beings can, to some degree, have common notions, are these notions similar to innate ideas? In line with their rationalism, Descartes and Leibniz thought that God had placed certain ideas into a person's mind so that they were innate to her. (A contemporary version is nativism, which holds that the brain is structured in such a way that ideas must be innate to it. For a look at nativism within the context of the historical debate over innate ideas, see Stamet [2008]). It is true that Spinoza's common notions are in a sense innate, both because they are shared by every being and because every being is a mode of substance. But, from the very fact that they are not universal only among humans, it follows that they, unlike innate ideas, have to be formed in order to become notions. This fact suggests that Spinoza's philosophy contains elements of both empiricism and rationalism.

[180] Note that applying common notions is in this way the basis of scientific thinking.

in which that thing is both the same as and different from other things as well as how it is causally connected to everything else (i.e. understanding its necessity).

For our purposes here, the particular thing to which common notions are being applied is the affect that Spinoza calls tristitia.[181] So the question is, how should a person apply common notions to her experience of pain? Quite simply, she should apply her general knowledge of what pain is and how it works to the particular instance. We saw in Chapter 3 that such common notions about pain include a knowledge of pain's nature, of the way it functions in the body, of its causes and effects, of the ways people perceive it and conceptualize it, of its place in the field of ethics. And we saw in Chapter 4 that knowledge about pain must include knowledge about the way in which it is causally connected to every other event (I.e. about its necessity).

If I sprain my ankle, for instance, knowing about my pain in these ways offers me as much control over the situation as possible. To an extent, I do not passively receive pain but am rather in charge of my experience. And being in charge enables me to respond instead of react.[182] It is I and not my pain who is in control of my experience, so I can breathe and calmly figure out how to treat my injury and deal with my pain instead of just screaming due to being hurt and

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[181] See 5p4s: "We can devise no other remedy for the affects which depends on our power and is more excellent than this, which consists in a true knowledge of them. For the mind has no other power than that of thinking and forming adequate ideas."

[182] Of course initially reacting to something is only natural for any being. That I jump when startled, turn my head when called by name, and scream when hurt and afraid are instinctive reactions over which I have no control. The same is true of other beings. But the point is that these reactions are natural only at first. They are unnatural when they are extended. It is instructive that no other animal dwells on its pain the way many humans do Reactions should be distinguished from responses, which are thoughtful deliberations about what to do next.

afraid.[183] Treating one's injury and dealing with one's pain are, as we saw in Chapter 3, two different things. Because pain itself is so multifaceted, a person understands her experience of pain only when she understands the things and events relating to it. As we saw in Chapter 2, Spinoza thinks that any bit of understanding (i.e. adequate knowledge) increases a person's power and so so her ability to deal properly with her affects.[184] Yet we also saw that she deals best with those affects when they themselves are the objects of her understanding. A case in point is 5p4s, where Spinoza writes that "each of us has, in part at least, if not absolutely–the power to understand himself and his affects, and consequently, the power to bring it about that he is less acted on by them." That I sprain my ankle is one event in a causal nexus that encompasses everything that has ever happened as well as everything that will ever happen. Getting to know as much as I can about these things–especially the ones that relate more immediately to the spraining–helps me deal with my particular experience. And understanding the causal nexus as a whole enables me to realize that it is necessary and that wishing it away would be both pointless and against the grain of life itself.[185]

Spinoza clearly thinks that reasoning about things is important. As we just saw, he holds that it is necessary for a person to acquire rational knowledge in order to deal with her experience of pain. Acquiring rational knowledge is necessary because having adequate ideas is

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183 Note the similarity here to my argument in Chapter 3 against pity. Rational deliberation and action is a proper response to pain, whether I am or someone else is experiencing the pain.

184 In the same way, Rutherford (2008) argues that what Spinoza calls the "dictates of reason" are not normative principles but simply results of the mind's having adequate ideas.

185 What I mean by this will be explained fully in the next section. Suffice it for now to say that, as necessary, pain has a place in life. To wish away pain is to make the mistake of wishing away a part life.

necessary for dealing with pain. And, by applying common notions to particular things, reason produces adequate ideas. Yet, precisely because this is the way it produces adequate ideas, reason has its limits. Spinoza points this out in 4p17s by advising us to "know both our nature's power and its lack of power, so that we can determine what reason can do in moderating the affects, and what it cannot do." Reason can do a lot to enable a person to deal with her experience of pain. But it cannot do everything.

Spinoza points to *akrasia* as the problem infecting rational knowledge.[186] An Ancient Greek word meaning "lack of strength" (α + κρατος) and is usually translated as "incontinence" or "lacking self-control," *akrasia* was used by ancient philosophers[187] to describe a person's acting against her better judgement. Most philosophers interpreted this acting as a conflict between reason and passion[188], but medieval thinkers, in keeping with their introduction of the concept "will" into philosophical discourse, began instead to treat the state of acting against one's better judgement as weakness of the will. Early modern philosophers such as Descartes

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186 See 5pref: "Man's lack of power to moderate and restrain the affects I call Bondage. For the man who is subject to affects is under the control, not of himself, but of fortune, in whose power he so greatly is that often, though he sees the better for himself, he is still forced to follow the worse." Although Spinoza does not actually use the term *akrasia*, it is clear from his description of the conflict between reason and passion that he is referring to this concept.

187 Akrasia is not merely a problem for the ancients. There has been much discussion of it recently in the fields of philosophy, psychology, and even neuroscience. A particular topic of discussion is its relation to self-deception, since doing the opposite of what I know I ought to do amounts to deceiving myself. For different takes on this issue, see Rorty (1986), Pears (1984), and Mele (1987).

188 Some philosophers, such as Plato, interpreted it instead as a lack of knowledge. In the dialogue *Protagoras*, Socrates says that a person would choose not to follow the best course of action only if she did not have sufficient knowledge about what the best course was. Since he was an optimistic rationalist, he did not consider that a person's emotions could dissuade her from what she knew to be the best course .

continued in attributing *akrasia* to a faculty responsible for making decisions, which they also called the will.

As we have seen several times, Spinoza rejects the notion that the mind contains a separate faculty charged with making decisions. He holds instead that every choice a person makes is representational: it is an idea like any other. His account of *akrasia*, then, has much in common with that of the ancient Greeks, for he also thinks that it is a conflict of judgements.[189] More specifically, Spinoza sees it as a conflict between rational ideas and passionate ideas. *Akrasia* takes place in a person when ideas derived from her passive affects become more powerful than ideas derived from her reason.[190]

A thing's power, as we saw in Chapter 2, is its capacity to be the cause of effects (i.e. to cause stuff to happen). A situation is akratic if a person's passionate idea is better than her rational idea at causing her to do something. An example is a student's desire to play a computer game being more efficacious than her decision to write her term paper. In terms of experiencing pain, an example is a person's urge to be a passive recipient of her pain having greater causal effect than her choice to deal actively with it. This inner conflict arises because a person can only

[189] See 4p17s: "With this I believe I have shown the cause why men are moved more by opinion than by true reason, and why the true knowledge of good and evil arouses disturbances of the mind, often yields to lust of every kind. Hence that verse of the Poet: '...video meliora, proboque, detoriora sequor...'" Spinoza here quotes Ovid's Metamorphoses VII, 20-21. Famously, Medea is torn between her passion for Jason and reason's demand that she should remain loyal to her father.

[190] See Lin (2006) and Marshall (2010) for discussions of the way Spinoza explains akrasia as being both a cognitive and an affective matter.

go so far in knowing things rationally.[191] That is why there is for Spinoza another, final level of knowledge.

Knowing Things Intuitively

According to Spinoza, akrasia infects rational knowledge due to the way such knowledge produces adequate ideas. It produces them by applying common notions to particular things, which is an abstract, detached way of producing adequate ideas. But it is not the only way of doing so. Knowing things in a rational way and being led by passion are two motivations for committing an action that necessarily conflict, and passion often wins. That is why Spinoza wants reason to become an affect.[192] When it does so, knowing things ceases to be about abstracting away from them and becomes instead about engaging with them. A person still produces adequate ideas by acquiring knowledge about things, but she has progressed from doing this by acquiring rational knowledge to doing it by acquiring intuitive knowledge.[193]

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[191] See 4p15: "A desire which arises from a true knowledge of good and evil can be extinguished or restrained by many other desires which arise from affects by which we are tormented."

[192] See 4p14: "No affect can be restrained by the true knowledge of good and evil insofar as it is true, but only insofar as it is considered as an affect." Recall the discussion in Chapter 2 of what scholars call "affective reason." I argue in the following paragraphs that it is what Spinoza calls "intuitive knowledge."

[193] In 2p40s2, Spinoza gives a famous example of knowing a thing intuitively and of how doing that differs from knowing a thing rationally: "Suppose there are three numbers, and the problem is to find a fourth which is to the third as the second is to the first. Merchants do not hesitate to multiply the second by the third, and divide the product by the first, because they have not yet forgotten what they heard from their teacher without any demonstration, or because they have often found this in the simplest numbers, or from the force of the Demonstration of P7 in Bk. VII of Euclid, viz. from the common property of proportionals. But in the simplest numbers none of this is necessary. Given the numbers 1, 2, and 3, no one fails to see what the fourth proportional number is and we see this much more clearly because we infer the fourth number from the ratio which, in one glance, we see the first number to have the second.

Spinoza says in 2p40s that intuitive knowledge proceeds "from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things." Recall from Chapter 1 that God's attributes are his essences, i.e. what it really is. Modes are the ways in which God exists, and they express themselves through his attributes. Knowing things intuitively, then, requires knowing what God really is.

What I'm calling "what God really is," Spinoza refers to as "the essence of God." He uses this term to signify the unity of all things that exist.[194] As we saw in Chapter 1, Spinoza points to this unity many times as the oneness of God, his attributes, and his modes.[195] This is the reason Spinoza emphasizes that it is possible for a person to have an idea of something only if that thing (or whatever makes it up) actually exists. And that a thing exists means that it is a part of God. So having an idea of any thing is like having an idea of God's essence. Spinoza says this in 2p45: "Each idea of each body, or of each singular thing which actually exists, necessarily involves an eternal and infinite essence of God."

Although it is true that an inadequate idea is also based on God's essence, it is nevertheless a confused and fuzzy idea. Only if the idea is adequate does it do a proper job of representing God's essence. "The knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence, which each idea involves," writes Spinoza, "is adequate and perfect." Moreover, because humans are parts of God, each one has adequate idea of this essence: "The human mind has an adequate knowledge

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[194] See 2p3s: "God acts with the same necessity by which he understands himself, that is, just as it follows from the necessity of the divine nature (as everyone maintains unanimously) that God understands himself, with the same necessity it also follows that God does infinitely many things in infinitely many modes."

[195] Fløistad (1972) points out that this unity (and particularly its function in intuitive knowledge) is analogous to the unity of thought and extension or mind and body.

of God's eternal and infinite essence." (2p47)[196] Once again, to exist is to be a part of this substantial unity. By knowing what God really is, a person intuitively knows what things really are.

But intuitive knowledge doesn't proceed in a straight line from the essence of God to the essences of things. Recall from Chapter 1 that the modes of God do not fall only under the category of finite things. They also include infinite modes, whose function it is to mediate between Substance and its finite modes. Spinoza calls the infinite mode by which God forms an idea of his essence as well as of everything that follows from this essence the "infinite intellect" or "idea of God."[197] And we just saw that humans possess the same capacity to form an idea of God.[198] So intuitive knowledge proceeds from knowing what God really is, through knowing the infinite intellect, to knowing the finite modes.

This suggests that intuitive knowledge involves an inferential process. To infer something is to acquire knowledge about that thing from another thing. In the case of intuitive knowledge, a person infers knowledge about a particular thing from knowledge about God. And, due to its

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196 Spinoza continues in the Scholium: "From this we see that God's infinite essence and his eternity are known to all. And since all things are in God and are conceived through God, it follows that we can deduce from this knowledge a great many things which we know adequately, and so can form the third kind of knowledge." This is not necessarily true only of the human mind, given the fact that every existing thing–by virtue of the very fact that it does exist–is a part of God. Hence Spinoza's panpsychism. Just as every being is conscious to a degree, so every being has at least some knowledge of God. Spinoza is clearly focusing in these passages on the human mind. As we saw in Chapter 2, however, varying degrees of both cognition and consciousness should also be attributed to non-human animals, plants, and all other existing objects.

197 Recall from Chapter 1 that to form an idea of something is to represent that thing to oneself. So the infinite intellect is literally the result of God representing himself to himself.

198 Spinoza makes the point again in 2p7c: "What is contained objectively in the intellect must necessarily be in nature."

divine nature, this process is direct and immediate.[199] When a person knows something intuitively, she does so instantaneously. As Spinoza points out in the mathematical example quoted earlier, knowing a thing intuitively is like a merchant's inferring the correct sum "in one glance."

There is controversy among scholars over the relationship between intuitive and rational knowledge. In 2p46d Spinoza says that "...what gives knowledge of an eternal and infinite essence of God is common to all and is equally in the part and in the whole. And so this knowledge will be adequate." Some scholars[200] misinterpret Spinoza as categorizing the idea of God (which is the foundation of intuitive knowledge) as one of the common notions (which are the foundations of rational knowledge). Doing this introduces the problem of distinguishing between the bases of rational knowledge and intuitive knowledge. But the context of the passage tells us that Spinoza is once again making it clear that everyone contains within herself the stuff that enables a person to know things intuitively. It is just that not everyone uses this stuff properly. Recall Spinoza's saying in 2p40s2 that common notions are of "properties of things." Since the idea of God is not the property of a thing, it cannot be a common notion. So there is in fact no problem distinguishing the basis of rational knowledge (common notions) from the basis of intuitive knowledge (idea of God).

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[199] In his Rules for the Direction of the Mind, Descartes distinguishes between deduction and intuition. While the former is characterized by rational steps, the latter takes place in one fell swoop. Spinoza was clearly influenced by this distinction, since he describes intuitive knowledge in a similar way. For more on the inferential nature of intuitive knowledge, see Garrett (2009).

[200] One example is Schliesser (2011). Garrett (2009) does a good job of outlining the arguments on both sides of this debate.

The process by which a person knows a thing intuitively is different on a fundamental level from the process by which she knows it rationally. Carr (1978) calls the difference one of "ordering." With intuitive knowledge, a person proceeds from cause (adequate idea of God) to effect (adequate idea of things). With rational knowledge, on the other hand, the order is reversed. A person proceeds from effect to cause. In other words, both sorts of knowledge involve having an adequate idea of God. In the case of rational knowledge, learning about stuff (which requires applying common notions to particular things) results in acquiring this idea. In the case of intuitive knowledge, however, a person has this idea to begin with and, because she has it, has an automatic idea of each particular thing as well.

Intuitive Knowledge and Pain

As we just saw, a person knows something intuitively by applying her knowledge of what God really is to that thing. The thing in this case is a person's experience of pain or the affect Spinoza calls tristitia. But a person cannot apply her knowledge of what God really is to her experience of pain in the same way that she can apply common notions to that same experience. In the case of rational knowledge, she begins by knowing in general what pain is and how it works. She then applies this general knowledge to her particular experience. In the case of intuitive knowledge, however, she begins in a way with her particular experience.[201] That is, she knows instantaneously what her own pain is and how it works by knowing what God really is (i.e. the unity of everything). Knowing her own pain intuitively, as opposed to knowing it

[201] Note the similarity between Carr's "ordering" (mentioned above) and my explanation of knowing pain rationally versus knowing it intuitively.

rationally, gives her a direct and immediate knowledge of pain's nature, of the way it functions in the body, of its causes and effects, of the ways people perceive it and conceptualize it, of its place in the field of ethics, and of the way in which it is causally connected to every other event (i.e. of its necessity).

Knowing my own pain intuitively not only enables me to have such general knowledge of pain but also gives me control over and enables me to respond actively to situations like spraining my ankle. It does this by making it possible for me to engage with my experience. To engage with something is to become involved in it or to interact with it. I engage with my pain when I know it inside out, so to speak. This means that pain is neither just a sensation (as it is in the case of opinion) nor just something that I know about (as it is in the case of rational knowledge). Pain is still something that I know, but, since my way of knowing is now intuitive, I know it more completely.[202] My mind and body no longer function as independent entities that potentially oppose each other (as they do in the cases of the akrasia that infects rational knowledge). They now work as a seamless whole to deal with such painful situations as my spraining my ankle.

Of course, I don't mean to suggest that the body knows something in the same way that the mind does. I can say "I sprained my ankle," because, based on the signals it received from my brain, my mind has reached that conclusion. My body has also reached that conclusion; it just doesn't express this reaching in the same way that my mind does. We saw in Chapter 3 that damage to one part of the body is communicated to other parts through the process of

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[202] Saying that knowing something intuitively enables a person to deal with her affects is thus the same thing as saying that reason can win against passion (the opposite of what happens in cases of akrasia) so long as that reason is complete.

nociception. This is the way my body knows that I've sprained my ankle. Instead of communicating the thought "I've sprained my ankle," my body reacts to the news by increasing my heart rate, making my breathing shallow, tensing my muscles, and causing me to turn red. Both body and mind are really doing the same thing; they are just doing it in different ways. In Spinoza's terms, mind and body are working in parallel. And the point of parallelism, as we saw in Chapter 1, is that there is in fact no difference between mind's functioning and body's functioning. There is just functioning. All things work as a seamless whole, and it is only by transitioning from knowing them rationally to knowing them intuitively that a person can realize this fact.

As with rational knowledge, I realize that a painful event like spraining my ankle is necessary and that wishing it away would be both pointless and against the grain of life itself. But I no longer know this by means of knowing it rationally. Now I realize it by intuitively knowing the pain involved in spraining my ankle. And intuitively knowing that one event means knowing that it is not one event at all but is rather interdependent with all other events. It means knowing that my spraining my ankle[203] is an inseparable part of the causal nexus, of the seamless whole, of the unity that Spinoza calls "God."

And it means not only accepting or putting up with this fact but even loving it and wanting it to be the case.[204] Bound up with knowing something intuitively, says Spinoza, is loving life in its entirety, the painful and the joyful parts equally. Spinoza calls this love of

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[203] It is useful to think of this one event as bearing the same relation to all other events that a molecule of water bears to all bodies of water. We saw similar examples in Chapter 4.

[204] See 4app: "Insofar as we understand, we can want nothing except what is necessary." Note that he uses the active "want" and not the passive "accept."

necessity that is generated by knowing the essences of things the "intellectual love of God" (amor dei intellectualis).[205] Spinoza here combines love–a bodily passion–with intellect–a concept signifying the mental power used to acquire knowledge–in order to show the importance of embracing life.[206] Intuitive knowledge is in this way like the concept of affective reason that we looked at in Chapter 3. A person transforms reason into an affect (in much the same way that she transitions from knowing things rationally to knowing things intuitively) for the purpose of embracing her experience of pain. We should notice that Spinoza does not distinguish this intellectual love of God from what he calls "blessedness." In 5p36s, he writes that blessedness consists in "a constant and eternal love of God." Bennett (1984) explains that "Spinoza wants 'blessedness' to stand for the most elevated and desirable state one could possibly be in." And this state amounts to embracing the unity of all things. Loving God (the action, not just the result), which means *wanting* to experience one's pain[207], is the same thing as being blessed.

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[205] The similarity between Spinoza's teaching of amor dei intellectualis and Nietzsche's amor fati is rearkable. In fact, philosophers such as Yovel (1983) argue that the latter is but a slight modification of the former. Of course, as we have seen, the philosophies of Spinoza and Nietzsche are similar in general. In particular, though, both these doctrines take a positive and even enthusiastic approach towards the necessity of everything that exists. Compare Spinoza's teaching with Nietzsche's, as he describes in Section 10 of Ecce Homo: "My formula for greatness in a human being is amor fati: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely to bear what is necessary, still less to conceal it—all idealism is mendacity in the face of what is necessary—but to love it."

[206] To get the order straight, it is helpful to look at the pattern of definition. Recall from Chapter 2 that Spinoza defines love as "a joy, accompanied by the idea of an external cause" (3def6). In 5p32c, he defines the intellectual love of God as "joy, accompanied by the idea of God as its cause." We just saw that the idea of God is the result of God's representing himself to himself. For a discussion of the way intellectual love of God fits with Spinoza's definition of love in general, see Melamed (forthcoming).

[207] Nadler (2016) points out that a person's having an intellectual love of God affects all other aspects of her life. That it does makes sense, because the object of this love–the unity of everything–is a seamless whole.

The Relationship Between Knowledge, Activity, and Freedom

A person's acquisition of either rational or intuitive knowledge as well as her application of this knowledge to her experience of pain is strongly related to her level of activity.[208] Recall from Chapter 2 that whether a person's affect is active or passive depends on the way it influences her power of acting. The more it increases her power of acting (i.e. the more powerful it enables her to become), the more active it is. The more it decreases her power of acting (i.e. the less powerful it makes her), the more passive it is.

Another way to explain activity/passivity draws on the discussion of adequacy found in Chapter 1 and in the previous sections on knowledge. Note that this explanation changes the subject of activity from a person's affect to the person herself. This really isn't a change at all, however, since a person's affects make her in part who she is. Spinoza says in 3d2 that "we are passive as regards something when that something takes place within us, or follows from our nature externally, we being only the partial cause" but that we are active "when anything takes place, either within us or externally to us, whereof we are the adequate cause." And by adequate cause he means "a cause through which its effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived" (3d1). I am active if I, all by myself (i.e. with no outside help), cause a thing to happen. This thing can be either internal to me (e.g. a feeling I have) or external to me (e.g. weights that I lift). And the only way I can cause this thing to happen is by thinking clearly about it (by applying either

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[208] There has been controversy among scholars concerning Spinoza's presentation in two different works of the active/passive nature of knowledge. In the Short Treatise, he presents knowledge as passive. In the Ethics, however, knowledge becomes something active and autonomous. For a discussion of this debate, see Mignini (1986).

common notions or the idea of God to it) and in this way coming to know what it really is. Spinoza would say that a person's being active depends on her knowing such things adequately.

As we just saw, there are two ways of acquiring such adequate knowledge about things: the rational way and the intuitive way. Even though both types of knowledge produce adequate ideas about things, however, we have seen that intuitive knowledge allows for a greater level of activity than does rational knowledge. In other words, a person is more active if she knows something intuitively than if she knows it rationally. The reason is that knowing things intuitively amounts to knowing their essences, and knowing a thing's essence amounts to knowing that thing completely. And, as we just noted, the better a person knows something, the greater is her power of acting. Hence the more active she is. She in this way transcends the division between mind and body or, as in cases of akrasia, between what she knows she ought to do and what she feels like doing.

Because it reflects the convergence of thinking and acting, Spinoza's emphasis on the relationship between knowledge and activity is crucial to understanding his approach to suffering. Knowing things, because it makes her active, enables a person to deal with her experiences of pain. But, as we have seen, there are better and worse ways of dealing with these experiences. It is not just the fact that a person knows things, but also the way she knows them that determines how well she deals with pain. Since the intuitive way of knowing things is better than the rational way at producing adequate ideas and hence at causing a person's level of activity to increase, the intuitive way is also better than the rational way at enabling a person to deal with her experience of pain. As we saw in the last section, it is better because it means

knowing things completely and loving life (i.e. the interactions among things) by embracing its necessity.

Doing these things while experiencing pain is what it means to suffer actively. There are two ways for a person to suffer (i.e. to deal with her experience pain): either passively or actively. She suffers passively when she doesn't deal directly with her pain but tries either to distract herself from it (as in cases of opinion) or to resign herself to it (as in cases of rational knowledge). A person suffers actively, however, when she does deal directly with her pain by knowing it inside out and embracing it as a part of life.

Note that loving life and embracing pain as a part of life do not amount to the same thing as loving one's experience of pain. It is not enjoyable to experience pain, and it never will be. Pain is by definition unpleasant. As Spinoza would put it, tristitia always decreases one's power of acting.[209] Recall from chapter 3 that Spinoza considers it our duty to take away others' pain and even, where possible, to prevent it. A person should suffer actively only when it is necessary for her to suffer at all. The object of her amor should not be pain itself but life as a whole. In other words, a person should love and want pain only insofar as it is a necessary part of life.

When a person suffers actively in the face of necessary pain, she is free. Note that freedom is not some reward achieved in the end after years of suffering. A person does not suffer so that she can one day be free. Rather, her suffering actively just is her being free. Recall from Chapter 4 that, because all events happen necessarily, freedom cannot be based on the concept of free will but can exist only within the bounds of necessity. So a person is free only if she

[209] For this reason, tristitia itself can never be made active. Most scholars have pointed this out. See Schmitter (2014) for a comprehensive discussion. Though it is impossible to make tristitia active, the way we deal with pain both can and should be made active.

internally determines herself to act from her own nature.[210] This identity of freedom and active suffering–the fact that a person's suffering actively is the same thing as her being free–suggests that it is not possible for a person to be free from experiencing pain.[211] It is possible only for her to be free in the midst of experiencing pain.

I conclude that, according to Spinoza, knowing things clearly enables a person to be active. So knowing things clearly enables her to deal with her pain or to suffer actively. And knowing things intuitively is the most effective way of enabling her to do this. By knowing things in this way she is free.

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[210] We have seen multiple times that the nature of all humans is to know things. As regards dealing with pain, then, a person acts from her nature when she knows her pain inside out and, in doing so, embraces the necessity inherent in life

[211] Of course , it is possible for her pain to be taken away or prevented. But, given Spinoza's unique version of freedom, that is not the same as her being free from pain.

Chapter Seven:

A Conclusion

In this dissertation, I addressed an area of Spinoza scholarship that is important but has unfortunately been neglected: the role that tristitia plays in Spinoza's philosophy as well as the way he thinks humans should deal with their experiences of it. They should deal with them, I argued, by knowing things adequately, which means knowing them either rationally or intuitively.

It became clear that, though necessary, knowing things adequately is not sufficient to deal with pain. Since pain is by nature both physical and psychological, affective knowledge–the act of knowledge becoming an affect–must be used. Using affective knowledge demands a level of particularity that rational knowledge, which is characterized by universality, cannot offer. Only intuitive knowledge can. Knowing things intuitively, I argued, is the best way for a person to deal with her experiences of pain.

Dealing with pain by knowing things intuitively is what I called throughout this dissertation "suffering actively," a concept that is based on Spinoza's distinction between a passive thing (which an external force controls) and an active thing (which the subject herself controls). This concept takes for granted Spinoza's system of ethics and his conclusion that people are morally obligated to alleviate and prevent pain. This conclusion is important. But my argument took the perspective not of those who are able to do something about other beings' pain

but of those who have themselves to deal with pain. It centered around the idea that it is best for a person experiencing pain if she is the one who, as much as possible, is in control of these experiences. To be in control of them is what it means to suffer actively. And suffering actively is, I pointed out, the same thing as being free in the midst of experiencing pain, a concept based on Spinoza's definition of freedom as a person's internally determining herself to be in accord with necessity.

In making these arguments, I examined in Chapter 1 Spinoza's systems of metaphysics and epistemology and in Chapter 2 his system of psychology. Special attention was paid to the identity of mind and body and the extension of this relationship to parallelism as well as to the affective nature of conatus and the activity/passivity of the affects in general. I took a close look in Chapter 3 at tristitia and in Chapter 4 at Spinoza's theory of freedom. Special attention was paid to the nature and context of pain as well as to a person's ability to be free in the midst of necessity by internally determining her actions. I drew everything together in Chapter 5 for the purpose of arguing that knowing things intuitively is the best way for humans to deal with their experiences of pain.

But should this matter of dealing with pain pertain only to humans? I pointed out in Chapter 1 that, according to Spinoza's doctrine of panpsychism, all beings are conscious to a degree. I then pointed out in Chapter 2 that the human species does not, for Spinoza, constitute a "kingdom within a kingdom" and should be considered as one part of nature. And I pointed out in Chapter 3 that he thinks pain should be either alleviated or prevented as it regards all species, not just humans. It follows that this dissertation is only a beginning. It encourages research into

the ways that all beings suffer as well as the ways that their suffering can be either alleviated or prevented.[212]

This dissertation also encourages further research into the affect that Spinoza calls tristitia as well as the use of intuitive vs. rational knowledge to deal with one's experience of it.[213] There's more. Such concepts as impermanence and interdependence are not only foundations of Spinoza's metaphysics but are foundations of Buddhist metaphysics as well. Also, a person's use of intuitive knowledge to guide her actions is an important part of Buddhist ethics. And her using intuition to gain awareness of any of her experiences–whether the pleasant or the unpleasant ones–is characteristic of the Buddhist practice known as mindfulness. Of course, a lot has been written about the connection between these Buddhist teachings and a person's experiences of pain.[214] But it would be useful, I think, to scholars both of Buddhism and of Spinozism, if research were done into the remarkable similarities between these two philosophies.

In sum, figuring out the best way for humans to deal with their experiences of pain is crucial to leading a good life. Because Spinoza is committed to helping humans lead such a life, he offers in the Ethics what he thinks is the best way for them to deal with their experiences of

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[212]By "all beings" I clearly mean to include animals of other species. The relevant field of study is cognitive ethology, in which De Waal (2016) writes about the cognitive abilities of primates and other animals. Braitman (2016) writes more specifically about the suffering of other species. These are but two examples; a lot of work is currently being done in this field. Less work–though more now than ever before–is being done in the field of plant intelligence. A good example is Wohlleben (2016), who devotes several chapters to the suffering undergone by trees. It should not be forgotten that vegetative beings constitute a no less valuable part of nature than humans and other animals do.

[213] Excellent work has already been done in the area of intuitive vs. rational knowledge by Soyarslan (2011) and (2013). But *tristitia* remains largely unexplored.

[214]One excellent example is Nhat Hanh (2012), who writes about the relationship between suffering and such metaphysical concepts as impermanence and interdependence.

pain. Though it is certainly not the only way to deal with these experiences, I am confident that following it will enable humans–especially those who have no choice but to experience pain–to lead a good life.

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