Gilles Deleuze

SPINOZA
PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY





BENEDICTUS DE SPINOZA
Cui natura. Deus. rerum cui cognitus ordo.
Hoc Spinoſa ſtatu conſpiciendus erat.
Expreſſere viri faciem. ſed pingere mentem
Zeuxidis artifices non valuere manus.
Illa viget ſcriptis: illic ſublimia tractat:
Hunc quicunque cupis noſcere. ſcripta lege.

Spinoza: Practical Philosophy

by Gilles Deleuze

Translated by Robert Hurley



City Lights Books
San Francisco

This book was originally published as *Spinoza: Philosophie pratique,* ©1970 by Presses Universitaires de France. A revised and expanded edition was published ©1981 by Les Editions de Minuit.

First edition in English, City Lights Books, 1988

Translation and preface ©1988 by Robert Hurley

Cover: *Meditation by the Sea* (Unidentified Artist) ca. 1855.
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Book design by Patricia Fujii

Library of Congress Cataloging-in Publication Data

Deleuze, Gilles.
Spinoza : practical philosophy.
Translation of: Spinoza, Philosophie pratique.
1. Spinoza, Benedictus de, 1632-1677. I. Title.
B3998.D38513 1988 170'.92'4 88-2600
ISBN 0-87286-220-8
ISBN 0-87286-218-6 (pbk.)

City Lights Books are available to bookstores through our primary distributor: Subterranean Company, P.O. Box 10233, Eugene, OR 97440. (503) 343-6324. Our books are also available through library jobbers and regional distributors. For personal orders and catalogs, please write to City Lights Books, 261 Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94133.

CITY LIGHTS BOOKS are edited by Lawrence Ferlinghetti & Nancy J. Peters and published at the City Lights Bookstore, 261 Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94133.

Table of Contents

Preface i

Chapter One: Life of Spinoza 3

Chapter Two: On the Difference between The *Ethics* and a Morality 17

Chapter Three: The Letters on Evil (correspondence with Blyenbergh) 30

Chapter Four: Index of the Main Concepts of the *Ethics* 44

Chapter Five: Spinoza's Evolution (On the Noncompletion of the *Treatise on the Intellect)* 110

Chapter Six: Spinoza and Us 122

Preface
by Robert Hurley

This work is provocative from the start: a book on Spinoza, subtitled *Practical Philosophy*, that starts with the name Nietzsche. As Deleuze will say, we always start from the middle of things; thought has no beginning, just an outside to which it is connected. The kinship of Spinoza and Nietzsche will be made quite clear in these pages, but there is also a historical line of connection between the two that Deleuze discusses elsewhere*; this line passes through the form that we call, all too familiarly, Man. Spinoza is prior to that form, and Nietzsche sees beyond it. What they share, on this line, is a philosophy of forces or powers that compose such forms. In Spinoza's case, the historical problem was what to make of limited composites such as human beings, in their involvement with perfect, i.e., infinite, forces that make up the form known as God. As we know, Nietzsche is associated with the death of the latter form, but Deleuze points out that, after Feuerbach, the death of God could be taken for granted, and Nietzsche was more concerned with the death of His successor, Man. This seems to be a useful perspective: one reads backward from Nietzsche through Man to Spinoza, and God is naturalized (One of the most fascinating parts of this book deals with Spinoza's criticism of theology. God the legislator and judge, the planner and protector, simply does not survive); one reads forward from Spinoza through Man to Nietzsche, and the Overman is naturalized (The forces that are composed need not have the human reference). In any case, it seems that, for us, the stronger term of Spinoza's famous equation *God or Nature* is Nature: the Ethics "merely" justifies the capital letter. Something happens to the term, however, when we join it to Man. There is an affect that weakens it, affecting us

*In the last chapter of his recent study of Michel Foucault, *Foucault*, Editions de Minuit, 1986.

with sadness: Man and Nature, a tragedy, Man in Nature, a pious homily, Man against Nature, a hecatomb.

A new kind of attention, practical rather than contemplative, has been drawn to Spinoza by deep ecologists*. Arne Naess, the Norwegian ecophilosopher, has outlined the points of compatibility between Spinoza's thought and the basic intuitions of the (radical) environmental movement.** Among them is this one: "14. Interacting with things and understanding things cannot be separated. The units of understanding are not propositions but acts. To the content of ideas in the 'attribute of nonextension' there corresponds an act in the 'attribute' of extension.'" It is to the deep ecologists' credit that they read Spinoza as a philosophy of action. But perhaps it can be said, amicably, that they have not yet been able to describe any of the modalities of interaction except through cold science or passionate poetry. In scientific ecology, what passes between "things" is information (as in Bateson); in poetry, it is affects (as in Spinoza), but poetry tends naturally to form inadequate ideas of affections: through it we are acted upon. Deleuze offers a model in this regard: the unit of understanding is not the form or function or organism but the composition of affective relations between individuals, together with the "plane of consistency" on which they interact, that is, their "environment". In this conception, some rather neutral notions, such as environment and individual, are re-animated. The environment is not just a reservoir of information whose circuits await mapping, but also a field of forces whose actions await experiencing. In a human sense, it can be called the unconscious, or at least the ground on which the unconscious is constructed. Which of these actions are we capable of experiencing? What is a walk in the forest (where the tick is waiting to experience *us*)? And what new individual do we compose when we "think like a mountain?" For Deleuze (for Spinoza), Nature itself is an Individual, composed of all modes

*See especially *Deep Ecology*, Bill Devall and George Sessions, Gibbs M. Smith, Inc., 1985.

**See his crystal clear enumeration in "Spinoza and ecology", *Speculum Spinozanum, 1677-1977*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977.

of interaction. Deleuze opens us to the idea (which I take as a contribution to ecological thought) that the elements of the different individuals we compose may be nonhuman *within* us. What we are capable of may partake of the wolf, the river, the stone in the river. One wonders, finally, whether Man is anything more than a territory, a set of boundaries, a limit on existence.

I am aware that I have said next to nothing about Spinoza. The fact is that Spinoza is difficult. And this book on Spinoza is difficult. But the situation is helped by the author's word to the wise: one doesn't have to follow every proposition, make every connection—the intuitive or affective reading may be more practical anyway. What if one accepted the invitation—come as you are—and read with a different attitude, which might be more like the way one attends to poetry? Then difficulty would not prevent the flashes of understanding that we anticipate in the poets we love, difficult though they may be. The truly extraordinary thing about Deleuze is precisely the quality of love that his philosophy expresses; it is active in everything he has written. I like very much a phrase in Arne Naess' article, referred to above. Speaking of Spinoza's *amor intellectualis Dei*, he says that it "implies acts of understanding performed with *the maximum perspective possible*" (my underline). As I see it, just such a performance awaits the reader here. Deleuze maximizes Spinoza.

"Let me ask you what brought you to Spinoza? Is it that he was a Jew?"

"No, your honor. I didn't know who or what he was when I first came across the book—they don't exactly love him in the synagogue, if you've read the story of his life. I found it in a junkyard in a nearby town, paid a kopek and left cursing myself for wasting money hard to come by. Later I read through a few pages and kept on going as though there were a whirlwind at my back. As I say, I didn't understand every word but when you're dealing with such ideas you feel as though you were taking a witch's ride. After that I wasn't the same man . . ."

"Would you mind explaining what you think Spinoza's work means? In other words if it's a philosophy what does it state?"

"That's not so easy to say . . . The book means different things according to the subject of the chapters, though it's all united underneath. But what I think it means is that he was out to make a free man of himself—as much as one can according to his philosophy, if you understand my meaning—by thinking things through and connecting everything up, if you'll go along with that, your honor."

"That isn't a bad approach, through the man rather than the work. But . . ."

Malamud, *The Fixer*

Chapter One

LIFE OF SPINOZA

Nietzsche understood, having lived it himself, what constitutes the mystery of a philosopher's life. The philosopher appropriates the ascetic virtues—humility, poverty, chastity—and makes them serve ends completely his own, extraordinary ends that are not very ascetic at all, in fact.[1] He makes them the expression of his singularity. They are not moral ends in his case, or religious means to another life, but rather the "effects" of philosophy itself. For there is absolutely no *other* life for the philosopher. Humility, poverty, and chastity become the effects of an especially rich and superabundant life, sufficiently powerful to have conquered thought and subordinated every other instinct to itself. This is what Spinoza calls Nature: a life no longer lived on the basis of need, in terms of means and ends, but according to a production, a productivity, a potency, in terms of causes and effects. Humility, poverty, chastity are his (the philosopher's) way of being a *grand vivant,* of making a temple of his own body, for a cause that is all too proud, all too rich, all too sensual. So that by attacking the philosopher, people know the shame of attacking a modest, poor, and chaste appearance, which increases their impotent rage tenfold; and the philosopher offers no purchase, although he takes every blow.

Here the full meaning of the philosopher's solitude becomes apparent. For he cannot integrate into any milieu; he is not suited to any of them. Doubtless it is in democratic and liberal milieus that he finds the best living conditions, or rather the best

1. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* III.

conditions for survival. But for him these milieus only guarantee that the malicious will not be able to poison or mutilate life, that they will not be able to separate it from the power of thinking that goes a little beyond the ends of the state, of a society, beyond any milieu in general. In every society, Spinoza will show, it is a matter of obeying and of nothing else. This is why the notions of fault, of merit and demerit, of good and evil, are exclusively social, having to do with obedience and disobedience. The best society, then, will be one that exempts the power of thinking from the obligation to obey, and takes care, in its own interest, not to subject thought to the rule of the state, which only applies to actions. As long as thought is free, hence vital, nothing is compromised. When it ceases being so, all the other oppressions are also possible, and already realized, so that any action becomes culpable, every life threatened. It is certain that the philosopher finds the most favorable conditions in the democratic state and in liberal circles. But he never confuses his purposes with those of a state, or with the aims of a milieu, since he solicits forces in thought that elude obedience as well as blame, and fashions the image of a life beyond good and evil, a rigorous innocence without merit or culpability. The philosopher can reside in various states, he can frequent various milieus, but he does so in the manner of a hermit, a shadow, a traveler or boarding house lodger. That is why one should not imagine Spinoza breaking with a supposedly closed Jewish milieu in order to enter supposedly open liberal ones: liberal Christianity, Cartesianism, a bourgeoisie favorable to the De Witt brothers, and so on. For, wherever he goes he only asks, demands, with a greater or smaller chance of success, to be tolerated, himself and his uncommon aims, and from this tolerance he judges concerning the degree of democracy, the degree of truth, which a society can bear, or on the contrary, concerning the danger that threatens all men.

Baruch Spinoza is born in 1632 in the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam, into a family of well-to-do merchants of Spanish or Portuguese extraction. At the Jewish school he studies theology and commerce. From the age of thirteen he works in his father's

business firm while he pursues his studies (on the death of his father in 1654 he will manage the business with his brother, until 1656). How does the slow philosophical conversion come about that causes him to break with the Jewish community, with business, and brings him to the excommunication of 1656? We should not imagine that the Amsterdam community is homogeneous during this period; it has as much diversity, as many interests and ideologies as the Christian milieus. For the most part it is made up of former "marranos," that is, of Jews who outwardly practiced Catholicism in Spain and Portugal, and who were obliged to emigrate at the end of the sixteenth century. Even those sincerely attached to their Jewish faith are imbued with a philosophical, scientific, and medical culture that cannot easily be reconciled with the traditional rabbinical Judaism. Spinoza's father is apparently a skeptic himself, who nevertheless plays an important role in the synagogue and the Jewish community. In Amsterdam some go so far as to question, not merely the role of the rabbis and tradition, but the meaning of the Scripture itself: Uriel da Costa will be condemned in 1647 for denying the immortality of the soul and revealed law, recognizing natural law alone; and, more important, Juan de Prado will be made to repent in 1656, then excommunicated, accused of having held that the soul dies with the body, that God only exists philosophically speaking, and that faith is unavailing.[2] Recently published documents testify to Spinoza's close ties with Prado; one may suppose that the two cases were linked together. If Spinoza was judged more severely, excommunicated as early as 1656, this was because he refused to repent and sought the break himself. The rabbis, as in many other cases, seem to have hoped for an accommodation. But instead of repenting, Spinoza wrote an *Apology to Justify His Leaving the Synagogue,* or at least a rough draft of the future *Theological-Political Treatise.* The fact that Spinoza was born in Amsterdam itself, a child of the community, must have made his case worse.

Life becomes difficult for him in Amsterdam. Perhaps follow-

2. Cf. I. S. Révah, *Spinoza et Juan de Prado,* Mouton, 1959.

ing an assassination attempt by a fanatic, he goes to Leyden in order to continue his philosophical studies, and installs himself in the suburb of Rijnsburg. It is said that Spinoza kept his coat with a hole pierced by a knife thrust as a reminder that thought is not always loved by men. While it sometimes happens that a philosopher ends up on trial, rarely does a philosopher begin with an excommunication and an attempt on his life.

Hence one fails to consider the diversity of the Jewish community, and the destiny of a philosopher, when one believes that liberal Christian influences must be invoked to explain Spinoza's break, as if it were due to external causes. Already in Amsterdam no doubt, and while his father was alive, he had followed courses at the school of Van den Ende, which was attended by many young Jews who learned Latin in it, along with the rudiments of Cartesian philosophy and science, mathematics and physics. A former Jesuit, Francis Van den Ende quickly acquired the reputation of being not only a Cartesian but also a freethinker and an atheist, and even a political agitator (he was to be executed in France, in 1674, following the revolt of the chevalier de Rohan).[3] No doubt Spinoza also frequented liberal and anticlerical Christians, Collegiants and Mennonites, who were inspired by a certain pantheism and a pacifist communism. He would encounter them again at Rijnsburg, which was one of their centers: he becomes friends with Jarig Jelles, Pieter Balling, Simon de Vries, and the "progressive" bookseller and publisher Jan Rieuwertz (a letter from Spinoza to Oldenburg, in 1655, evokes the pacifism, and the communitarian theme appears in a letter to Jelles, in 1671). However, it seems that Van den Ende remained attached to a form of Catholicism, despite the difficulties of that religion in Holland. As for the philosophy of the Mennonites and Collegiants, it is completely surpassed by that of Spinoza, in religious criticism as well as ethical conception and political concerns. Instead of thinking of an influence by the Mennonites or even the Cartesians, one can think that Spinoza was naturally drawn to the most tolerant circles, those

3. The novel by Eugène Sue, *Lautréamont,* depicts Van den Ende in his activities as a democratic conspirator.

most apt to welcome an excommunicated Jew who rejected Christianity no less than the Judaism into which he was born, and owed his break with the latter to himself alone.

Among its many meanings, Jewish excommunication had a meaning that was political and economic. It was a rather frequently applied, and often irreversible, measure. Deprived of the power of a state, the notables of the community had no other sanction for punishing those who refused financial contributions or even political orthodoxies. The Jewish notables, like those of the Calvinist party, had kept intact a hatred of Spain and Portugal, were politically attached to the House of Orange, and had interests in the India companies (Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel, one of Spinoza's professors, himself came close to being excommunicated in 1640 for criticizing the East India Company; and the members of the council that judged Spinoza were Orangist, pro-Calvinist, anti-Hispanic, and for the most part, shareholders in the Company). Spinoza's ties with the liberals, his sympathies for the republican party of Jan de Witt, which called for the dissolution of the great monopolies—all this made Spinoza a rebel. In any case, Spinoza broke not only with the religious milieu but with the economic milieu at the same time. Abandoning the family business, he learned lensmaking, he became a craftsman, a philosopher craftsman equipped with a manual trade, capable of grasping and working with the laws of optics. He also began to draw; his early biographer Colerus relates that he drew himself in the attitude and costume of the Neapolitan revolutionary Masaniello.[4]

At Rijnsburg, Spinoza gives his friends an exposition, in Latin, of the work that will become the *Short Treatise*. They take notes; Jelles translates into Dutch; perhaps Spinoza dictates certain texts that he has written previously. In about 1661, he composes the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, which opens with a kind of spiritual itinerary, in the Mennonite manner, centered on a denunciation of wealth. This treatise, a splendid exposition of Spinoza's method, will remain unfinished. Around 1663, for

4. An engraving preserved in Amsterdam (Print Collection of the Rijksmuseum) is thought to be a reproduction of this portrait.

a young man who lived with him and who both gave him hopes and irritated him a good deal, he presents *The Principles of Descartes' Philosophy*, supplemented by a critical examination of scholastic notions (*Metaphysical Thoughts*). Rieuwertz publishes the book; Jelles finances it; Balling will translate it into Dutch. Lewis Meyer, physician, poet, organizer of a new theater in Amsterdam, writes the preface. With the *Principles*, the "professorial" work of Spinoza comes to an end. Few thinkers avoid the brief temptation to become professors of their own discoveries, the seminar temptation of a private spiritual training. But Spinoza's planning and commencement of the *Ethics*, as early as 1661, transport him to another dimension, a different element which, as we shall see, no longer can be that of an "exposition," even a methodological one. Perhaps it is for this reason that Spinoza leaves the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* unfinished, and despite his later intentions does not manage to resume it.[5] One should not think that in his quasi-professorial period Spinoza was ever a Cartesian. The *Short Treatise* already exhibits a way of thinking that uses Cartesianism as a means, not to eliminate, but to purify all of scholasticism, Jewish thought, and Renaissance philosophy, in order to extract from them something profoundly new which belongs only to Spinoza. The complex relationship between the exposition of the *Principles* and the *Metaphysical Thoughts* gives evidence of this double game in which Cartesianism is handled like a sieve, but in such a way that a new and prodigious scholasticism emerges which no longer has anything to do with the old philosophy, nor with Cartesianism either. Cartesianism was never the thinking of Spinoza; it was more like his rhetoric; he uses it as the rhetoric he needs. But all this will receive its definitive form only in the *Ethics*.

In 1663, Spinoza moves to Voorsburg, a suburb of The Hague. He will later establish himself in the capital. What defines Spinoza as a traveler is not the distances he covers but rath-

5. The most precise reason for the abandonment of this treatise is to be sought in the theory of the "common notions" as it appears in the *Ethics*, a theory that makes some arguments of the *Treatise* inoperative or unnecessary (cf. chap. V).

er his inclination to stay in boarding houses, his lack of attachment, of possessions and property, after his renunciation of the paternal inheritance. He continues to work on the *Ethics*. As early as 1661 the letters of Spinoza and his friends show that the latter are acquainted with the themes of the first book, and in 1663 Simon de Vries mentions a study group whose members read and discuss the texts sent by Spinoza. But at the same time that he confides in a group of friends, he asks them to keep his ideas secret, to be careful of strangers, as he himself will be, even with respect to Leibniz in 1675. The reason for his settling near The Hague is probably political: nearness to the capital is necessary if he is to draw close to the active liberal circles and escape the political indifference of the Collegiant group. As to the two major parties, Calvinist and republican, the situation is as follows: the first remains committed to the themes of the struggle for independence, to a politics of war, to the ambitions of the House of Orange, to the formation of a centralized state; and the second, to a politics of peace, a provincial organization, and the development of a liberal economy. To the impassioned and bellicose behavior of the monarchy, Jan de Witt opposes the rational behavior of a republic guided by a *natural and geometric* method. Now, the mystery seems to be this: the people remain faithful to Calvinism and the House of Orange, to intolerance and warmongering. Since 1653, Jan de Witt is the Grand Pensionary of Holland. But the republic nevertheless remains a republic by surprise and by accident, more for the lack of a king than by preference, and it is poorly accepted by the people. When Spinoza speaks of the harmfulness of revolutions, one must bear in mind that revolution is thought of in terms of the disappointments that Cromwell's revolution inspired, or the anxieties caused by a possible coup d'état by the House of Orange. During this period "revolutionary" ideology is permeated with theology and is often, as with the Calvinist party, in the service of a politics of reaction.

So it is not surprising that Spinoza, in 1665, temporarily suspends work on the *Ethics* and starts writing the *Theological-Political Treatise*, which will be concerned with the questions: Why are

the people so deeply irrational? Why are they proud of their own enslavement? Why do they fight "for" their bondage as if it were their freedom? Why is it so difficult not only to win but to bear freedom? Why does a religion that invokes love and joy inspire war, intolerance, hatred, malevolence, and remorse? In 1670 the *Theological-Political Treatise* appears, without an author's name and credited to a fictitious German publisher. But the author is soon identified; few books occasioned as many refutations, anathemas, insults, and maledictions: Jews, Catholics, Calvinists, and Lutherans—all the right-thinking circles, including the Cartesians themselves—competed with one another in denouncing it. It was then that the words "Spinozism" and "Spinozist" became insults and threats. And even the critics of Spinoza who were suspected of not being harsh enough were denounced. Doubtless among these critics there were some embarrassed liberals and Cartesians who nonetheless gave proof of their orthodoxy by participating in the attack. An explosive book always keeps its explosive charge: one still cannot read the *Treatise* without discovering in it philosophy's function as a radical enterprise of demystification, or as a science of "effects." A recent commentator is able to say that the true originality of the *Treatise* is in its considering religion as an *effect.*[6] Not only in the causal sense but also in an optical sense, an effect whose process of production will be sought by connecting it to its necessary rational causes as they affect men who do not understand them (for example, the way in which natural laws are necessarily perceived as "signs" by those who have a strong imagination and a weak understanding). Even when dealing with religion, Spinoza polishes glasses that reveal the effect produced and the laws of its production.

It is his ties with the republican party, and perhaps the protection of De Witt, that save Spinoza from a more specific kind of worry. (As early as 1669, Koerbagh, the author of a philosophical dictionary denounced for its Spinozist leanings, had been arrested and had died in prison.) But Spinoza has to leave the

6. Cf. J.-P. Osier, preface to *L'Essence du christianisme* by Feuerbach, "Ou Spinoza ou Feuerbach," Maspero, Paris.

suburb, where his life is made difficult by the pastors, and take up residence in The Hague. And, above all, this is at the cost of silence. The Netherlands are at war. After the De Witt brothers are assassinated, in 1672, and the Orangist party has returned to power, there can no longer be any question for Spinoza of publishing the *Ethics*; a brief attempt in Amsterdam, in 1675, easily convinces him to give up the idea. "Certain theologians took the occasion to complain of me before the prince and magistrates; moreover, the stupid Cartesians, being suspected of favoring me, endeavored to remove the aspersion by abusing everywhere my opinions and writings, a course which they still pursue."[7] For Spinoza, there is no question of leaving the country. But he is more and more alone and ill. The only milieu in which he might have lived in peace fails him. Yet he receives visits by enlightened men who want to know the *Ethics*, even if this means joining with its critics subsequently, or even denying that these visits were paid to him (as in the case of Leibniz in 1676). The professorship of philosophy at Heidelberg, which the Elector Palatine offers him in 1673, does not tempt him: Spinoza belongs to that line of "private thinkers" who overturn values and construct their philosophy with hammer blows; he is not one of the "public professors" (who, according to Leibniz's approving words, do not disturb the established sentiments, the order of Morality and the Police). "Since it has never been my wish to teach in public, I have been unable to induce myself to accept this splendid opportunity, though I have long deliberated about it."[8] Spinoza's thinking is now taken up with the most recent problems: What are the chances for a commercial aristocracy? Why has the liberal republic foundered? Is it possible to change the multitude into a collectivity of free men instead of a gathering of slaves? All these questions animate the *Political Treatise*, which is left unfinished, symbolically, at the beginning of the chapter on democ-

7. *Letter LXVIII*, to Oldenburg.

8. *Letter XLVIII*, to Fabritius. On the Spinozan conception of teaching, cf. the *Political Treatise*, chap. VIII, 49. "Everyone who asked permission would be allowed to teach openly, at his own expense, and at the risk of his reputation. . . ."

racy. In February of 1677, Spinoza dies, probably of a pulmonary disease, in the presence of his friend Meyer, who takes possession of the manuscripts. By the end of the year, the *Opera posthuma* are published at the expense of an anonymous donor.

This frugal, propertyless life, undermined by illness, this thin, frail body, this brown, oval face with its sparkling black eyes—how does one explain the impression they give of being suffused with Life itself, of having a power identical to Life? In his whole way of living and of thinking, Spinoza projects an image of the positive, affirmative life, which stands in opposition to the semblances that men are content with. Not only are they content with the latter, they feel a hatred of life, they are ashamed of it; a humanity bent on self-destruction, multiplying the cults of death, bringing about the union of the tyrant and the slave, the priest, the judge, and the soldier, always busy running life into the ground, mutilating it, killing it outright or by degrees, overlaying it or suffocating it with laws, properties, duties, empires—this is what Spinoza diagnoses in the world, this betrayal of the universe and of mankind. His biographer Colerus reports that he was fond of spider fights: "He looked for some spiders, and made them fight together, or he threw some flies into the cobweb, and was so well-pleased with that battle, that he would sometimes break into laughter."[9] Animals at least teach us the irreducibly external character of death. They do not carry it within, although they necessarily bring it to each other: an inevitable *bad encounter* in the order of natural existences. But they have not yet invented that internal death, the universal sado-

9. This anecdote appears authentic because it has many Spinozan resonances. Spider fights, or spider-fly fights, could have fascinated Spinoza for several reasons: 1. from the standpoint of the exteriority of necessary death; 2. from the standpoint of the composition of relations in nature (how the web expresses a relationship of the spider with the world, one which appropriates, as such, relations peculiar to the fly); 3. from the standpoint of the relativity of perfections (how a state that marks an imperfection of man, e.g., warfare, can on the contrary testify to a perfection if it is related to a different essence such as that of insects: cf. *Letter XIX*, to Blyenbergh). We will encounter these problems again in a later chapter.

masochism of the tyrant-slave. In the reproach that Hegel will make to Spinoza, that he ignored the negative and its power, lies the glory and innocence of Spinoza, his own discovery. In a world consumed by the negative, he has enough confidence in life, in the power of life, to challenge death, the murderous appetite of men, the rules of good and evil, of the just and the unjust. Enough confidence in life to denounce all the phantoms of the negative. Excommunication, war, tyranny, reaction, men who fight for their enslavement as if it were their freedom—this forms the world in which Spinoza lives. The assassination of the De Witt brothers is exemplary for him. *Ultimi barbarorum.* In his view, all the ways of humiliating and breaking life, all the forms of the negative have two sources, one turned outward and the other inward, resentment and bad conscience, hatred and guilt. "The two archenemies of the human race, Hatred and Remorse."[10] He denounces these sources again and again as being linked to man's consciousness, as being inexhaustible until there is a new consciousness, a new vision, a new appetite for living. Spinoza feels, experiences, that he is eternal.

In Spinoza's thought, life is not an idea, a matter of theory. It is a way of being, one and the same eternal mode in all its attributes. And it is only from this perspective that the geometric method is fully comprehensible. In the *Ethics,* it is in opposition to what Spinoza calls satire; and satire is everything that takes pleasure in the powerlessness and distress of men, everything that feeds on accusations, on malice, on belittlement, on low interpretations, everything that breaks men's spirits (the tyrant needs broken spirits, just as broken spirits need a tyrant). The geometric method ceases to be a method of intellectual exposition; it is no longer a means of professorial presentation but rather a method of *invention.* It becomes a method of vital and optical rectification. If man is somehow distorted, this torsion effect will be rectified by connecting it to its causes *more geometrico.* This optical geometry traverses the entire *Ethics.* People have asked whether the *Ethics* should be read in terms of

10. *Short Treatise,* first dialogue.

thought or in terms of power (for example, are the attributes powers or concepts?). Actually, there is only one term, Life, that encompasses thought, but conversely this term is encompassed only by thought. Not that life is *in* thinking, but only the thinker has a potent life, free of guilt and hatred; and only life explains the thinker. The geometric method, the profession of polishing lenses, and the life of Spinoza should be understood as constituting a whole. For Spinoza is one of the *vivants-voyants*. He expresses this precisely when he says that demonstrations are "the eyes of the mind."[11] He is referring to the third eye, which enables one to see life beyond all false appearances, passions, and deaths. The virtues— humility, poverty, chastity, frugality—are required for this kind of vision, no longer as virtues that mutilate life, but as powers that penetrate it and become one with it. Spinoza did not believe in hope or even in courage; he believed only in joy, and in vision. He let others live, provided that others let him live. He wanted only to inspire, to waken, to reveal. The purpose of demonstration functioning as the third eye is not to command or even to convince, but only to shape the glass or polish the lens for this inspired free vision. "You see, to me it seems as though the artists, the scientists, the philosophers were grinding lenses. It's all a grand preparation for something that never comes off. Someday the lens is going to be perfect and then we're all going to see clearly, see what a staggering, wonderful, beautiful world it is. . . . " (Henry Miller).

11. *Theological-Political Treatise*, chap. 13; *Ethics*, V, 23, scholium.

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Spinoza also wrote, without managing to publish for various reasons:

1650–1660: *Short Treatise on God, Man and His Well-Being.* This was originally an exposition in Latin, but we only know two Dutch manuscripts, resembling an author's notes, to which Spinoza himself may have contributed in certain parts. The whole seems to be made up of texts from different dates, the "First Dialogue" no doubt being the oldest.

1661: *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect,* in Latin. This is an unfinished book. Spinoza also begins writing the *Ethics*; it is probable that certain theses of the *Ethics*, in particular those concerning the "common notions," cause him to regard the *Treatise* as already superceded.

1661–1675: The *Ethics.* A completed book, in Latin, which Spinoza considers publishing in 1675. He gives up the idea for reasons of prudence and safety.

1675–1677: *Political Treatise.* An unfinished book, in Latin.

At uncertain dates, Spinoza wrote two brief treatises in Dutch, *Calculus of Probabilities* and *Treatise on the Rainbow.* And, in Latin, an *Outline of Hebrew Grammar,* unfinished.

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Note on the Translation

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—R.H.

Chapter Two

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE *ETHICS* AND A MORALITY

No philosopher was ever more worthy, but neither was any philosopher more maligned and hated. To grasp the reason for this it is not enough to recall the great theoretical thesis of Spinozism: a single substance having an infinity of attributes, *Deus sive Natura,* all "creatures" being only modes of these attributes or modifications of this substance. It is not enough to show how pantheism and atheism are combined in this thesis, which denies the existence of a moral, transcendent, creator God. We must start rather from the practical theses that made Spinozism an object of scandal. These theses imply a triple denunciation: of "consciousness," of "values," and of "sad passions." These are the three major resemblances with Nietzsche. And already in Spinoza's lifetime, they are the reasons for his being accused of *materialism, immoralism,* and *atheism.*

I. *A devaluation of consciousness (in favor of thought): Spinoza the materialist.*

Spinoza offers philosophers a new model: the body. He proposes to establish the body as a model: "We do not know what the body can do . . . " This declaration of ignorance is a provocation. We speak of consciousness and its decrees, of the will and its effects, of the thousand ways of moving the body, of dominating the body and the passions—but *we do not even know what a*

body can do.[1] Lacking this knowledge, we engage in idle talk. As Nietzsche will say, we stand amazed before consciousness, but "the truly surprising thing is rather the body . . . "

Yet, one of the most famous theoretical theses of Spinoza is known by the name of *parallelism*; it does not consist merely in denying any real causality between the mind and the body, it disallows any primacy of the one over the other. If Spinoza rejects any superiority of the mind over the body, this is not in order to establish a superiority of the body over the mind, which would be no more intelligible than the converse. The practical significance of parallelism is manifested in the reversal of the traditional principle on which Morality was founded as an enterprise of domination of the passions by consciousness. It was said that when the body acted, the mind was acted upon, and the mind did not act without the body being acted upon in turn (the rule of the inverse relation, cf. Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, articles 1 and 2). According to the *Ethics*, on the contrary, what is an action in the mind is necessarily an action in the body as well, and what is a passion in the body is necessarily a passion in the mind.[2] There is no primacy of one series over the other.

What does Spinoza mean when he invites us to take the body as a model? It is a matter of showing that the body surpasses the knowledge that we have of it, *and that thought likewise surpasses the consciousness that we have of it.* There are no fewer things in the mind that exceed our consciousness than there are things in the body that exceed our knowledge. So it is by one and the same movement that we shall manage, if possible, to capture the power of the body beyond the given conditions of our knowledge, and to capture the power of the mind beyond the given conditions of our consciousness. One seeks to acquire a knowledge of the powers of the body in order to discover, *in a parallel fashion*, the powers of the mind that elude consciousness, and thus to be able to *compare* the powers. In short, the model of the body, according to Spinoza, does not imply any devaluation of thought in relation to extension, but, much more important, a devalu-

1. *Ethics*, III, 2, scholium.

2. *Ethics*, III, 2, schol. (and II, 13, schol.).

ation of consciousness in relation to thought: a discovery of the unconscious, of an *unconscious of thought* just as profound as *the unknown of the body*.

The fact is that consciousness is by nature the locus of an illusion. Its nature is such that it registers effects, but it knows nothing of causes. The order of causes is defined by this: each body in extension, each idea or each mind in thought are constituted by the characteristic relations that subsume the parts of that body, the parts of that idea. When a body "encounters" another body, or an idea another idea, it happens that the two relations sometimes combine to form a more powerful whole, and sometimes one decomposes the other, destroying the cohesion of its parts. And this is what is prodigious in the body and the mind alike, these sets of living parts that enter into composition with and decompose one another according to complex laws.[3] The order of causes is therefore an order of composition and decomposition of relations, which infinitely affects all of nature. But as conscious beings, we never apprehend anything but the *effects* of these compositions and decompositions: we experience *joy* when a body encounters ours and enters into composition with it, and *sadness* when, on the contrary, a body or an idea threaten our own coherence. We are in a condition such that we only take in "what happens" to our body, "what happens" to our mind, that is, the effect of a body on our body, the effect of an idea on our idea. But this is only our body in its own relation, and our mind in its own relation, and the other bodies and other minds or ideas in their respective relations, and the rules according to which all these relations compound with and decompose one another; we know nothing of all this in the given order of our knowledge and our consciousness. In short, the conditions under which we know things and are conscious of ourselves condemn us *to have only inadequate ideas*, ideas that are confused and mutilated, effects separated from their real causes.[4] That is why it is scarcely possible to think that little children are happy, or that the first man was perfect: ignorant of causes and natures,

3. Even the mind has a very large number of parts: cf. *Ethics*, II, 15.
4. *Ethics*, II, 28, 29.

reduced to the consciousness of events, condemned to undergo effects, they are slaves of everything, anxious and unhappy, in proportion to their imperfection. (No one has been more forceful than Spinoza in opposing the theological tradition of a perfect and happy Adam.)

How does consciousness calm its anguish? How can Adam imagine himself happy and perfect? Through the operation of a triple illusion. Since it only takes in effects, consciousness will satisfy its ignorance by reversing the order of things, by taking effects for causes (*the illusion of final causes*): it will construe the effect of a body on our body as the final cause of its own actions. In this way it will take itself for the first cause, and will invoke its power over the body (*the illusion of free decrees*). And where consciousness can no longer imagine itself to be the first cause, nor the organizer of ends, it invokes a God endowed with understanding and volition, operating by means of final causes or free decrees in order to prepare for man a world commensurate with His glory and His punishments (*the theological illusion*).[5] Nor does it suffice to say that consciousness deludes itself: consciousness is inseparable from the triple illusion that *constitutes* it, the illusion of finality, the illusion of freedom, and the theological illusion. Consciousness is only a dream with one's eyes open: "The infant believes he freely wants the milk; the angry child that he freely wants vengeance; and the timid, flight. So the drunk believes that it is from a free decision of the mind that he speaks the things he later, when sober, wishes he had not said."[6]

It is still necessary for consciousness itself to have a cause. Spinoza sometimes defines desire as "appetite together with consciousness of the appetite." But he specifies that this is only a nominal definition of desire, and that consciousness adds nothing to appetite ("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

5. *Ethics*, I, appendix.

6. *Ethics*, III, 2, schol.

strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it").[7] We need, then, to arrive at a real definition of desire, one that at the same time shows the "cause" by which consciousness is hollowed out, as it were, in the appetitive process. Now, the appetite is nothing else but the effort by which each thing strives to persevere in its being, each body in extension, each mind or each idea in thought (*conatus*). But because this effort prompts us to act differently according to the objects encountered, we should say that it is, at every moment, determined by the affections that come from the objects. *These determinative affections are necessarily the cause of the consciousness of the conatus.*[8] And since the affections are not separable from a movement by which they cause us to go to a greater or lesser perfection (joy and sadness), depending on whether the thing encountered enters into composition with us, or on the contrary tends to decompose us, consciousness appears as the continual awareness of this passage from greater to lesser, or from lesser to greater, as a witness of the variations and determinations of the *conatus* functioning in relation to other bodies or other ideas. The object that agrees with my nature determines me to form a superior totality that includes us, the object and myself. The object that does not agree with me jeopardizes my cohesion, and tends to divide me into subsets, which, in the extreme case, enter into relations that are incompatible with my constitutive relation (*death*). Consciousness is the passage, or rather the awareness of the passage from these less potent totalities to more potent ones, and vice versa. It is purely transitive. But it is not a property of the Whole or of any specific whole; it has only an informational value, and what is more, the information is necessarily confused and distorted. Here again, Nietzsche is strictly Spinozan when he writes: "The greater activity is unconscious; consciousness usually only appears when a whole wants to subordinate itself to a superior whole. It is primarily the consciousness of this superior whole, of reality external to the ego. Consciousness is born in relation to a being of which we

7. *Ethics*, III, 9, schol.

8. *Ethics*, III, definition of Desire ("in order to involve the cause of this consciousness in my definition . . . ").

could be a function; it is the means by which we incorporate into that being."

II. *A devaluation of all values, and of good and evil in particular (in favor of "good" and "bad"): Spinoza the immoralist.*

"Thou shalt not eat of the fruit . . . ": the anxious, ignorant Adam understands these words as the expression of a prohibition. And yet, what do they refer to? To a fruit that, as such, will poison Adam if he eats it. This is an instance of an encounter between two bodies whose characteristic relations are not compatible: the fruit will act as a poison; that is, *it will determine the parts of Adam's body* (and paralleling this, the idea of the fruit will determine the parts of his mind) *to enter into new relations that no longer accord with his own essence.* But because Adam is ignorant of causes, he thinks that God morally forbids him something, whereas God only reveals the natural consequence of ingesting the fruit. Spinoza is categorical on this point: all the phenomena that we group under the heading of Evil, illness, and death, are of this type: bad encounters, poisoning, intoxication, relational decomposition.[9]

In any case, there are always relations that enter into composition in their particular order, according to the eternal laws of nature. There is no Good or Evil, but there is good and bad. "Beyond Good and Evil, at least this *does not* mean: beyond good and bad."[10] The good is when a body directly compounds its relation with ours, and, with all or part of its power, increases ours. A food, for example. For us, the bad is when a body decomposes our body's relation, although it still combines with our parts, but in ways that do not correspond to our essence, as when a poison breaks down the blood. Hence good and bad have a primary, objective meaning, but one that is relative and partial: that which agrees with our nature or does not agree with it. And consequently, good and bad have a secondary meaning, which is subjective and modal, qualifying two types, two modes of man's existence. That individual will be called *good* (or free, or ration-

9. *Theological-Political Treatise*, chap. 4. And *Letter XIX*, to Blyenbergh.
10. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay, section 17.

al, or strong) who strives, insofar as he is capable, to organize his encounters, to join with whatever agrees with his nature, to combine his relation with relations that are compatible with his, and thereby to increase his power. For goodness is a matter of dynamism, power, and the composition of powers. That individual will be called *bad*, or servile, or weak, or foolish, who lives haphazardly, who is content to undergo the effects of his encounters, but wails and accuses every time the effect undergone does not agree with him and reveals his own impotence. For, by lending oneself in this way to whatever encounter in whatever circumstance, believing that with a lot of violence or a little guile, one will always extricate oneself, how can one fail to have more bad encounters than good? How can one keep from destroying oneself through guilt, and others through resentment, spreading one's own powerlessness and enslavement everywhere, one's own sickness, indigestions, and poisons? In the end, one is unable even to encounter oneself.[11]

In this way, Ethics, which is to say, a typology of immanent modes of existence, replaces Morality, which always refers existence to transcendent values. Morality is the judgment of God, the *system of Judgment.* But Ethics overthrows the system of judgement. The opposition of values (Good-Evil) is supplanted by the qualitative difference of modes of existence (good-bad). The illusion of values is indistinguishable from the illusion of consciousness. Because it is content to wait for and take in effects, consciousness misapprehends all of Nature. Now, all that one needs in order to moralize is to fail to understand. It is clear that we have only to misunderstand a law for it to appear to us in the form of a moral "You must." If we do not understand the rule of three, we will apply it, we will adhere to it, as a duty. Adam does not understand the rule of the relation of his body with the fruit, so he interprets God's word as a prohibition. Moreover, the confused form of moral law has so compromised the law of nature that the philosopher must not speak of natural laws, but only of eternal truths: "The application of the word

11. Cf. the text on suicide, *Ethics,* IV, 20 schol.

'law' to natural things seems to be metaphorical, and the ordinary meaning of law is simply a command. . . . "[12] As Nietzsche says concerning chemistry, i.e., the science of antidotes and poisons, one must be wary of the word law, which has a moral aftertaste.

It is easy, however, to separate the two domains—that of the eternal truths of Nature and that of the moral laws of institutions—if only one considers their effects. Let us take consciousness at its word: moral law is an imperative; it has no other effect, no other finality than obedience. This obedience may be absolutely necessary, and the commands may be justified, but that is not the issue. Law, whether moral or social, does not provide us with any knowledge; it makes nothing known. At worst, it prevents the formation of knowledge (*the law of the tyrant*). At best, it prepares for knowledge and makes it possible (*the law of Abraham or of Christ*). Between these two extremes, it takes the place of knowledge in those who, because of their mode of existence, are incapable of knowledge (*the law of Moses*). But in any case, a difference of nature is constantly manifested between knowledge and morality, between the relation of command and obedience and the relation of the known and knowledge. The tragedy of theology and its harmfulness are not just speculative, according to Spinoza; they are owing to the practical confusion which theology instills in us between these two orders that differ in nature. At the least, theology considers that Scripture lays the foundation for knowledge, even if this knowledge must be developed in a rational manner, or even transposed, translated, by reason: whence the hypothesis of a moral, creating, and transcendent God. In this, as we shall see, there is a confusion that compromises the whole of ontology; the history of a *long error* whereby the command is mistaken for something to be understood, obedience for knowledge itself, and Being for a *Fiat.* Law is always the transcendent instance that determines the opposition of values (Good-Evil), but knowledge is always the

12. *Theological-Political Treatise*, chap. 4

immanent power that determines the qualitative difference of modes of existence (good-bad).

III. *A devaluation of all the "sad passions" (in favor of joy): Spinoza the atheist.*

If Ethics and Morality merely interpreted the same precepts in a different way, the distinction between them would only be theoretical. This is not the case. Throughout his work, Spinoza does not cease to denounce three kinds of personages: the man with sad passions; the man who exploits these sad passions, who needs them in order to establish his power; and the man who is saddened by the human condition and by human passions in general (he may make fun of these as much as he disdains them, but this mockery is a bad laughter).[13] The slave, the tyrant, and the priest . . . , the moralist trinity. Since Epicurus and Lucretius, the deep implicit connection between tyrants and slaves has never been more clearly shown: "In despotic statecraft, the supreme and essential mystery is to hoodwink the subjects, and to mask the fear, which keeps them down, with the specious garb of religion, so that men may fight as bravely for slavery as for safety, and count it not shame but highest honor to risk their blood and lives for the vainglory of a tyrant."[14] This is possible because the sad passion is a complex that joins desire's boundlessness to the mind's confusion, cupidity to superstition. "Those who most ardently embrace every sort of superstition cannot help but be those who most immoderately desire external advantages." The tyrant needs sad spirits in order to succeed, just as sad spirits need a tyrant in order to be content and to multiply. In any case, what unites them is their hatred of life, their resentment against life. The *Ethics* draws the portrait of the *resentful man*, for whom all happiness is an offense, and who makes wretchedness or impotence his only passion. "But those who know how to break men's minds rather than strengthen them are burdensome both to themselves and to others. That is why many, from too great

13. Cf. Spinoza's denunciation of "satire": *Political Treatise*, chap. I, 1, and *Ethics*, III, preface.

14. *Theological- Political Treatise*, preface.

an impatience of mind, and a false zeal for religion, have preferred to live among the lower animals rather than among men. They are like boys or young men who cannot bear calmly the scolding of their parents, and take refuge in the army. They choose the inconveniences of war and the discipline of an absolute commander in preference to the conveniences of home and the admonitions of a father; and while they take vengeance on their parents, they allow all sorts of burdens to be placed on them."[15]

There is, then, a philosophy of "life" in Spinoza; it consists precisely in denouncing all that separates us from life, all these transcendent values that are turned against life, these values that are tied to the conditions and illusions of consciousness. Life is poisoned by the categories of Good and Evil, of blame and merit, of sin and redemption.[16] What poisons life is hatred, including the hatred that is turned back against oneself in the form of guilt. Spinoza traces, step by step, the dreadful concatenation of sad passions; first, sadness itself, then hatred, aversion, mockery, fear, despair, *morsus conscientiae*, pity, indignation, envy, humility, repentance, self-abasement, shame, regret, anger, vengeance, cruelty. . . .[17] His analysis goes so far that even in *hatred* and *security* he is able to find that grain of sadness that suffices to make these the feelings of slaves.[18] The true city offers citizens the love of freedom instead of the hope of rewards or even the security of possessions; for "it is slaves, not free men, who are given rewards for virtue."[19] Spinoza is not among those who think that a sad passion has something good about it. Before Nietzsche, he denounces all the falsifications of life, all the values in the name of which we disparage life. We do not live, we only lead a semblance of life; we can only think of how to keep from dying, and our whole life is a death worship.

This critique of sad passions is deeply rooted in the theory of

15. *Ethics*, IV, appendix, chap. 13.

16. *Ethics*, I, appendix.

17. *Ethics*, III.

18. *Ethics*, IV, 47, schol.

19. *Political Treatise*, chap. X, 8.

affections. An individual is first of all a singular essence, which is to say, a degree of power. A characteristic relation corresponds to this essence, and a certain capacity for being affected corresponds to this degree of power. Furthermore, this relation subsumes parts; this capacity for being affected is necessarily filled by affections. Thus, animals are defined less by the abstract notions of genus and species than by a capacity for being affected, by the affections of which they are "capable," by the excitations to which they react within the limits of their capability. Consideration of genera and species still implies a "morality," whereas the *Ethics* is an *ethology* which, with regard to men and animals, in each case only considers their capacity for being affected. Now, from the viewpoint of an ethology of man, one needs first to distinguish between two sorts of affections: *actions,* which are explained by the nature of the affected individual, and which spring from the individual's essence; and *passions,* which are explained by something else, and which originate outside the individual. Hence the capacity for being affected is manifested as a *power of acting* insofar as it is assumed to be filled by active affections, but as a *power of being acted upon* insofar as it is filled by passions. For a given individual, i.e., for a given degree of power assumed to be constant within certain limits, the capacity for being affected itself remains constant within those limits, but the power of acting and the power of being acted upon vary greatly, in inverse ratio to one another.

It is necessary to distinguish not only between actions and passions but also between two sorts of passions. The nature of the passions, in any case, is to fill our capacity for being affected while separating us from our power of acting, keeping us separated from that power. But when we encounter an external body that does not agree with our own (i.e., whose relation does not enter into composition with ours), it is as if the power of that body opposed our power, bringing about a subtraction or a fixation; when this occurs, it may be said that our power of acting is diminished or blocked, and that the corresponding passions are those of *sadness.* In the contrary case, when we encounter a body that agrees with our nature, one whose relation compounds with

ours, we may say that its power is added to ours; the passions that affect us are those of *joy*, and our power of acting is increased or enhanced. This joy is still a passion, since it has an external cause; we still remain separated from our power of acting, possessing it only in a formal sense. This power of acting is nonetheless increased proportionally; we "approach" the point of conversion, the point of transmutation that will establish our dominion, that will make us worthy of action, of active joys.[20]

It is this theory of the affections as a whole that defines the status of the sad passions. Whatever their justification, they represent the lowest degree of our power, the moment when we are most separated from our power of acting, when we are most alienated, delivered over to the phantoms of superstition, to the mystifications of the tyrant. The *Ethics* is necessarily an ethics of joy: only joy is worthwhile, joy remains, bringing us near to action, and to the bliss of action. The sad passions always amount to impotence. This will be the threefold practical problem of the *Ethics: How does one arrive at a maximum of joyful passions?*, proceeding from there to free and active feelings (although our place in Nature seems to condemn us to bad encounters and sadnesses). *How does one manage to form adequate ideas?*, which are precisely the source of active feelings (although our natural condition seems to condemn us to have only inadequate ideas of our body, of our mind, and of other things). *How does one become conscious of oneself, of God, and of things?—sui et Dei et rerum aeterna quadam necessitate conscius* (although our consciousness seems inseparable from illusions).

The great theories of the *Ethics*—the oneness of substance, the univocity of the attributes, immanence, universal necessity, parallelism, etc.—cannot be treated apart from the three practical theses concerning consciousness, values, and the sad passions. The *Ethics* is a book written twice simultaneously: once in the continuous stream of definitions, propositions, demonstrations, and corollaries, which develop the great speculative themes with all the rigors of the mind; another time in the

20. On the two sorts of passions, cf. *Ethics,* III, general definition of the affects.

broken chain of scholia, a discontinuous volcanic line, a second version underneath the first, expressing all the angers of the heart and setting forth the practical theses of denunciation and liberation.[21] The entire *Ethics* is a voyage in immanence, but immanence is the unconscious itself, and the conquest of the unconscious. Ethical *joy* is the correlate of speculative affirmation.

21. This was a common procedure that consisted in concealing the boldest or least orthodox arguments in appendices or notes (Bayle's dictionary is a later example). Spinoza renewed the procedure with his systematic method of scholia, which refer to each other and are themselves connected to the prefaces and appendices, thus forming a second subterranean *Ethics*.

Chapter Three

THE LETTERS ON EVIL

(correspondence with Blyenbergh)

The correspondence with Blyenbergh forms a set of eight extant letters (XVIII–XXIV and XXVII), four for each correspondent, written between December 1664 and June 1665. They are extremely interesting from a psychological viewpoint. Blyenbergh is a grain broker who writes to question Spinoza concerning the problem of evil. Spinoza believes at first that his correspondent is motivated by a search for truth, but he soon realizes that Blyenbergh has a taste for argument, a desire to be right, a mania for judging: an amateur Calvinist theologian instead of a philosopher. Spinoza replies curtly to certain of Blyenbergh's impertinences as early as his second letter (XX). And yet he continues the correspondence *as if he were himself fascinated by the subject.* Spinoza will not break off until after a visit by Blyenbergh, and when the latter begins to raise questions of every sort, going beyond the problem of evil. Now this is precisely where the profound interest of this group of letters resides: they are the only long texts in which Spinoza considers the problem of evil per se, risking analyses and statements that have no equivalent in his other writings.

As for Blyenbergh, he does not at all appear to be stupid or confused, as he is often said to be (his faults are elsewhere). Although he does not know the *Ethics,* and he begins his first letter with remarks on Spinoza's exposition of Descartes' philosophy, he raises one basic question after another, questions that go to the heart of Spinozism; he forces Spinoza to give example on example, to develop paradoxes, to isolate a very strange concep-

tion of evil. It is as if the love of truth led Spinoza to shed his characteristic caution, to drop his mask, even in front of an individual who he senses is hostile or hateful, and concerning a delicate subject. The great rationalist theory according to which *evil is nothing* is doubtless a commonplace of the seventeenth century, but the way in which Spinoza will radically transform it is the essential business of the correspondence with Blyenbergh. If evil is nothing, in Spinoza's view, this is not because only good has being and produces being, but on the contrary because good has no more being than does evil, and because being is beyond good and evil.

Blyenbergh begins with a general question that he addresses to the Cartesians: How can God be the cause of "evil wills" such as Adam's will to eat of the forbidden fruit? Now, Spinoza answers immediately on his own behalf (it is only later, in Letter XXI, that he will return to Descartes, pointing out certain differences between Descartes and himself). And he is not satisfied with explaining the general sense in which evil is nothing. Taking up Blyenbergh's example, he replies: "The prohibition to Adam consisted only in this: God revealed to Adam that eating of that tree caused death, just as he also reveals to us through the natural intellect that poison is deadly to us (XIX)." In other words, God does not prohibit anything, but he informs Adam that *the fruit, by virtue of its composition, will decompose Adam's body.* The fruit will act like arsenic. At the outset, then, we find Spinoza's basic thesis: what is bad should be conceived of as an intoxication, a poisoning, an indigestion—or even, taking account of individuating factors, as an intolerance or an allergy. And Blyenbergh understands this very well: "You omit the things I call vice because they are contrary to your singular nature, but not because they contain vice in themselves. You omit doing them as we omit eating food that our nature finds disgusting"—but what of a nature that does not have this intolerance, and that "loves" crime (XXII)? How can a personal disgust constitute a virtue?[1] Blyenbergh adds another very interesting question, to which Spinoza will not reply directly: Is it only through experience that one can know that a thing is poi-

1. In XXI, Spinoza had said: "As for myself, I abstain from those things, or try to, because they are explicitly contrary to my singular nature. . . ."

sonous? Is evil only an experiential matter, *a posteriori,* and in that case, what is the meaning of "revelation" or "knowledge" (XX)?

At this level of exactness, where the problem has immediately been carried, one must ask in what a poisoning consists according to Spinoza. Each body has parts, "a very large number of parts"; but these parts belong to it only in terms of a certain relation (of motion and rest) that characterizes it. The situation is very complex, for composite bodies have parts of very different orders, which enter into relations that are themselves diverse; these diverse relations compound to form the characteristic or dominant relation of a given individual, at this or that level. Hence there is an interlocking of relations for each body, and from one body to another, and this constitutes the "form." For example, as Spinoza shows in a letter to Oldenburgh (XXXII), chyle and lymph are two bodies, each determined by its own relation, which compose the blood according to a third, dominant relation. The blood in turn is part of an animal or human body, determined by another characteristic or dominant relation. And there are no two bodies whose relations are identical—for example, individuals with exactly the same blood. What happens then in the case of poisoning? Or in the case of allergy (since the individual factors of each relation must be taken into account)? In these cases, it appears that one of the constitutive relations of the body is destroyed, decomposed. And death occurs when the body's characteristic or dominant relation is determined to be destroyed: "I understand the body to die when its parts are so disposed that they acquire *a different relation* of motion and rest."[2] Spinoza thus makes clear what is meant by a relation being destroyed or decomposed. This occurs when the relation, which is itself an eternal truth, is no longer realized by actual parts. What has been done away with is not the relation, which is eternally true, but rather the parts *between which* it was established and which have now assumed another relation.[3] For example, the poison

2. *Ethics,* IV, 39, schol.

has decomposed the blood, i.e., has determined the parts of the blood to come under different relations that characterize other bodies (it is no longer blood . . .). Here again, Blyenbergh understands very well, and will say in his last letter (XXIV) that the same conclusion must hold for the soul: being itself composed of a very large number of parts, it should undergo the same disintegration, with its parts passing into other, non-human souls. . . .

Thus Spinoza gives a special meaning to the classical thesis holding that evil is nothing. In his view, in any case, *there are always relations that agree with one another* (for example, the agreement between a poison and the new relations into which the parts of the blood enter). But relations that agree, according to the natural order, do not necessarily coincide with the preservation of a *particular* relation, which may be dissolved, that is, cease to be realized. In this sense there is no *evil* (in itself), but there is that which is *bad* (for me): "Those things are good which bring about the preservation of the relation of motion and rest the human body's parts have to one another; on the other hand, those things are bad which bring it about that the parts of the human body have a different relation of motion and rest to one another."[4] Every object whose relation agrees with mine (*convenientia*) will be called good; every object whose relation decomposes mine, even though it agrees with other relations, will be called bad (*disconvenientia*).

And no doubt, when one goes into the details, the situation becomes more and more complicated. To begin with, we have many constituent relations, so that one and the same object can agree with us in one respect and disagree with us in another. Secondly, each of our relations itself enjoys a certain latitude, so much so that it varies considerably from childhood to old age and death. Furthermore, illness or other circumstances can alter

3. It is along these lines that Spinoza could reply to Blyenbergh's previous objection: being eternal truths, relations and their laws of composition can be the object of a true knowledge or a revelation, although, under natural conditions, we need to go by way of an experience of the parts that realize these relations.

4. *Ethics*, IV, 39, pr.

these relations to such an extent that one wonders if it is the same individual who goes on living; in this sense, there are dead persons who do not wait for the transformation of their body into a corpse. Lastly, the modification can be such that the modified part of ourselves behaves like a poison that disintegrates the other parts and turns against them (certain diseases, and, in the extreme case, suicide.)[5]

The model of poisoning is valid for all these cases in their complexity. It applies not only to the harm that we suffer, but to the harm that we do. We are not only poisoned, we are also poisoners; we act as toxins and poisons. Blyenbergh himself invokes three examples. With the act of killing, I destroy the characteristic relation of another human body. With the act of stealing, I destroy the relation that joins a man and his property. And similarly with the act of adultery, what is destroyed is the relation with the marriage partner, the characteristic relation of a couple, which, though it is an instituted, contractual social relation, nevertheless constitutes an individuality of a certain type.

With this model in view, Blyenbergh raises a first series of objections: 1) How can one distinguish vice from virtue, a crime

5. Two excellent texts of the *Ethics* examine these various situations: IV, 20 schol., and 39 schol. In them Spinoza considers, first, the case of survivals in name only, when certain biological functions are maintained while all other relations have disintegrated; secondly, the case of self-destruction, when certain relations have changed so much due to external influences that they bring about the destruction of the whole (thus suicide, where "external causes so dispose the imagination, and so affect the body, that it takes on another nature, contrary to the former"). Certain modern medical problems seem to correspond exactly to Spinoza's themes; for example, the so-called "autoimmune" diseases which we will consider later; or the polemic around the attempts to keep alive artificially bodies that are "naturally" dead. The courageous statements of Dr. Schwartzenberg, recently, seem to take their inspiration spontaneously from a genuine Spinozism. Thus Schwartzenberg says that death is not a biological problem but rather a metaphysical or ethical problem. Cf. Spinoza, IV, 39 schol.: "No reason compels me to maintain that the body does not die unless it is changed into a corpse. And, indeed, experience seems to urge a different conclusion. Sometimes a man undergoes such changes that I should hardly have said he was the same man."

from a just act? 2) How can one refer evil to a pure nonbeing for which God is not responsible and of which He is not the cause? Indeed, if it were true that there are always relations that enter into composition, while others are decomposed, one would have to acknowledge, on the one hand, that everything amounts to the same, "the whole world would be put in an eternal and lasting confusion, and we men would be made like the beasts"; and, on the other hand, that evil exists to the same degree as good, since there is no less positivity in the sexual act performed with another man's wife than there is with one's own wife (XX).

Concerning the possibility and the necessity of *distinguishing,* Spinoza upholds all the rights of a logic of action, but this logic is so particular that his responses appear extremely obscure. "For example, Nero's matricide, insofar as it comprehends something positive, was not knavery. For Orestes, too, performed the same external action, and with the same intention of killing his mother. Nevertheless, he is not blamed, or at least, not as severely as Nero is. What, then, was Nero's knavery? Nothing but this: he showed by that act that he was ungrateful, without compassion, and disobedient . . . God was not the cause of this, but was the cause of Nero's act and intention" (XXIII). In this instance, a difficult text will be explained by the *Ethics.* What is positive or good in the act of beating? Spinoza asks.[6] What is good is that this act (raising my arm, closing my fist, moving rapidly and forcefully) expresses a power of my body; it expresses what my body can do in a certain relation. What is bad in this act? The bad appears when the act is associated with the image of a thing whose relation is decomposed by that very act (I kill someone by beating him). The same act would have been good if it had been associated with the image of a thing whose relation agreed with it (e.g., hammering iron). Which means that an act is bad whenever it directly decomposes a relation, whereas it is good whenever it directly compounds its relation with other relations.[7] It might be objected that in any case there is both composition

6. *Ethics,* IV, 59, schol.

7. Concerning "direct" and "indirect," *Ethics,* IV, cor. and schol.

and decomposition, a decomposition of some relations and a composition of others. But what matters is knowing whether the act is associated with the image of a thing *insofar as* that thing can compound with it, or, on the contrary, *insofar as* it is decomposed by it. Let us return to the two matricides: Orestes kills Clytemnestra, but she has killed Agamemnon, Orestes' father; so Orestes' act is precisely and directly associated with the image of Agamemnon, with Agamemnon's characteristic relation as an eternal truth with which the act agrees. But when Nero kills Agrippina his act is associated only with the image of his mother, which it directly decomposes. It is in this sense that he shows he is "ungrateful, without compassion, and disobedient." Similarly, when I strike a blow "with anger or hatred," I join my action to an image of something that does not agree with the action, but on the contrary is decomposed by it. In short, there is certainly a distinction between vice and virtue, between a good and a bad action; but this distinction does not bear on the act itself or its image ("no action considered in itself alone is good or bad"); nor does it bear on the intention. It only concerns the determination, that is, the image of the thing with which the image of the act is associated, or more exactly, the relating of two relations, the image of the act in its own relation and the image of the thing in its relation. Is the act associated with an image of something whose relation it decomposes, or to something to which it joins its own relation?

If this is indeed the point of distinction, one understands in what sense evil is nothing. For, from the standpoint of nature or God, *there are always relations that compound, and nothing but relations that compound* in accordance with eternal laws. Whenever an idea is adequate, it precisely captures at least two bodies, mine and another, insofar as they compound their relations ("common notion"). On the other hand, there is no adequate idea of bodies that disagree, no adequate idea of a body that disagrees with mine, insofar as it disagrees. In this sense, evil, or rather bad, only exists in terms of inadequate ideas and in the affections of sadness that follow from them (hatred, anger, etc.).[8]

But, here again, everything will be called back into question.

Let us suppose, then, that evil is nothing from the standpoint of *relations* that compound according to the laws of nature, can the same be said concerning the *essences* that are expressed in these relations? Spinoza acknowledges that, while the acts or deeds may be equally perfect, the actors are not, the essences are not equally perfect (XXIII).[9] And these singular essences themselves are not constituted in the same way as the individual relations are composed. Hence, are there not singular essences that are irreducibly associated with badness—which would suffice to reintroduce the position of an absolute evil? Are there not singular essences to which it *pertains* to poison? Thus Blyenbergh raises a second series of objections: does it not pertain to certain essences to commit crimes, to kill others or even to kill themselves (XXII)? Are there not essences that find in crime, not a poison, but a delicious food? And the objection is carried over from the evil of malice to the evil of misfortune: for, whenever a misfortune befalls me, that is, whenever one of my relations is decomposed, this event pertains to my essence, even if other relations compound in nature. It can therefore pertain to my essence to become a criminal . . . (XX and XXII). Does not Spinoza himself speak of the "affections of essence"?[10] Hence, even if one grants that Spinoza has managed to expel evil from the order of individual relations, it is not certain that he manages to expel it from the order of singular essences, that is, of singularities deeper than those relations.

Spinoza's reply is terse: if crime pertained to my essence, it would be pure and simple virtue (XXIII).[11] But the whole ques-

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8. *Ethics,* IV, 64.

9. "If the question is 'Whether the two acts [of the just man and the thief], insofar as they are something real, and caused by God, are not equally perfect?' then I say that, if we consider the acts alone, and in such a way, it may well be that both are equally perfect. If you then ask 'Whether the thief and the just man are not equally perfect and blessed?' then I answer 'no.' "

10. *Ethics,* III, Definition of desire.

11. "If anyone sees that he can live better on the gallows than at his table, he would act very foolishly if he did not go hang himself. One who saw clearly that in fact he would enjoy a better and more perfect

tion is precisely this: what is meant by *pertain* to essence? What pertains to an essence is always a state, that is, a reality, a perfection that expresses a power or capacity for being affected. Now, a person is not malicious, or unfortunate, according to the affections he has, but according to the affections he does not have. The blind man cannot be affected by light, nor the malicious man by an intellectual light. If he is said to be malicious or unfortunate, this is not because of the state he has, but because of a state he does not have or no longer has. Now an essence cannot have any other state than its own, just as it cannot have any other essence. "For then vision no more pertains to that man without contradiction than it does to the stone . . . Similarly, when we attend to the nature of a man who is led by an appetite for sensual pleasure, we compare his present appetite with that which he had at another time . . . , the better appetite no more pertains to that man's nature than it does to the nature of the Devil, or of a stone" (XXI). Therefore, evil no more exists in the order of essences than it does in the order of relations; for, just as it never consists in a relation, but only in a relation between relations, evil is never in a state or in an essence, but in a comparison of states that has no more validity than a comparison of essences.

It is here, however, that Blyenbergh protests the most: if I am not authorized to compare two essences in order to reproach one of them with not having the powers of the other (cf. the stone that doesn't see), is this also the case when I compare two states of the same essence, where there is a real passage from one state to the other, a decrease or disappearance of a power that I had before? "If I become more imperfect than I was before, I will have become worse inasmuch as I will be less perfect"(XX). Doesn't Spinoza assume an instantaneousness of essence that makes all becoming and all duration incomprehensible? "In your view nothing else pertains to es-

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life or essence by being a knave than by following virtue would also be a fool if he were not a knave. For acts of knavery would be virtue in relation to such a perverted human nature."

sence than what it has *at that moment* when it is perceived" (XXII).[12] It is all the more curious that Spinoza, weary of this correspondence, does not answer Blyenbergh concerning this point, because in the *Ethics,* he himself underscores the reality of the passage to a lesser perfection: "sadness." In the latter there is something that does not come down to the *privation* of a greater perfection, nor to the comparison of two states of perfection.[13] In sadness there is something irreducible, something that is neither negative nor extrinsic: a passage that is experienced and is real. A *duration.* There is something that testifies to an ultimate irreducibility of the "bad": it is sadness as a diminution of the power of acting or of the capacity for being affected, a sadness that is manifested in the despair of the unfortunate as well as in the hatreds of the malicious (even the joys of malice are reactive in the sense that they depend closely on the sadness inflicted on the enemy).[14] Far from denying the existence of duration, Spinoza defines the continual variations of existence by duration, and seems in fact to consider it as the last refuge of the bad.

What pertains to essence is only a state or an affection. What pertains to essence is only the state insofar as it expresses an absolute quantity of reality or of perfection. And no doubt the state or the affection do not merely express an absolute quantity of reality, they also involve a variation of the power of acting, an

12. In XXI, Spinoza had said: "Although God knew the past and present of Adam, he did not on that account understand that Adam was deprived of the past state, i.e., that the past state pertained to his present nature."

13. (1) *Ethics,* III, definition of sadness: "We cannot say that sadness consists in the privation of a greater perfection. For a privation is nothing, whereas the affect of sadness is an act, which can therefore be no other act than that of passing to a lesser perfection . . . "; (2) General definition of the affects: "When I say a greater or lesser force of existing than before, I do not understand that the mind compares its body's present constitution with a past constitution, but that the idea which constitutes the form of the affect affirms of the body something which really involves more or less of reality than before."

14. Cf. *Ethics,* III, 20 (and the whole linked series of sad passions).

increase or a diminution, a joy or a sadness. But this variation does not pertain, as such, to essence; it only pertains to existence or duration, and concerns only the genesis of the state in existence. The fact remains that the states of essence are very different depending on whether they are produced in existence by an increase or by a diminution. When an external state involves an increase of our power of acting, *it is joined by another state that depends on this very power.* In this way, says Spinoza, the idea of something that agrees with us, that enters into composition with us, leads us to form an adequate idea of ourselves and of God. It is as if the external state were compounded by a happiness that depends on us alone.[15] On the contrary, when the external state involves a diminution, it can only be linked with other inadequate and dependent states—unless our power has already reached the point where nothing can impair it. In short, the states of essence are always as perfect as they can be, but they differ according to their law of production in existence. They express in essence an absolute quantity of reality, but one that corresponds to the variation which they involve in existence.

In this sense, existence is a test. But it is a physical or chemical test, an experimentation, the contrary of a Judgment. This is why the entire correspondence with Blyenbergh turns on the theme of God's judgment: does God have an understanding, a will, and passions that make him a judge according to Good and Evil? In reality, we are never judged except by ourselves and according to our states. The physical-chemical test of states constitutes Ethics, as opposed to moral judgment. Essence, our singular essence, is not instantaneous; it is eternal. But the eternity of essence does not come afterwards; it is strictly contemporaneous, coexistent with existence in duration. This eternal and singular essence is the intense part of ourselves that expresses itself relationally as an eternal truth; and existence is the set of extensive parts that belongs to us under this durative relation. If

15. This is the whole movement of the beginning of Part V: the joyful passions, and the inadequate ideas on which they depend, link up with adequate ideas and "active" joys, whereas the sadnesses are linked only with other sadnesses and other inadequate ideas.

during our existence we have been able to compose these parts so as to increase our power of acting, we have at the same time experienced a proportionally greater number of affections that depend only on ourselves, that is, on the intense part of ourselves. If, on the contrary, we have always been engaged in destroying or decomposing our own parts and those of others, our intense or eternal part, our essential part, has and cannot help but have only a small number of affections that come from itself, and no happiness that depends on it. This is the ultimate difference, therefore, between the good man and the bad man: the good or strong individual is the one who exists so fully or so intensely that he has gained eternity in his lifetime, so that death, always extensive, always external, is of little significance to him. The ethical test is therefore the contrary of the deferred judgment: instead of restoring a moral order, it confirms, here and now, the immanent order of essences and their states. Instead of a synthesis that distributes rewards and punishments, the ethical test is content with analyzing our chemical composition (the test of gold or clay).[16]

We have three components: 1) our singular eternal essence; 2) our characteristic relations (of motion and rest) or our capacities for being affected, which are also eternal truths; 3) the extensive parts, which define our existence in duration and which pertain to our essence insofar as they realize this or that relation of ours (in the same way that the external affections fulfill our capacity for being affected). There is "badness" only at the level of this last stratum of nature. The bad occurs when extensive parts that belong to us in a relation are caused by external factors to enter into other relations; or when we meet with an affection that exceeds our capacity for being affected. In this event, we say that our relation is decomposed, or that our capacity for being affected is destroyed. But in fact our relation only ceases to be realized by extensive parts, or our capacity by external affections, without losing any of their eternal truth. All that we call bad is strictly necessary, and yet comes from the outside: the

16. Concerning the test of clay, *Letter LXXVII*, to Oldenburg.

necessity of accidents. Death is all the more necessary because it always comes from without. To begin with, there is an average duration of existence: given a relation, there is an average duration in which it can be realized. But, further, accidents and external affections can interrupt its realization at any moment. It is death's necessity that makes us believe that it is internal to ourselves. But in fact the destructions and decompositions do not concern either our relations in themselves or our essence. They only concern our extensive parts which belong to us for the time being, and then are determined to enter into other relations than our own. This is why the *Ethics,* in Part IV, attaches a good deal of importance to the apparent phenomena of self-destruction; in reality, what is involved is always a group of parts that are determined to enter into other relations and consequently behave like foreign bodies inside us. This is what occurs with the "autoimmune diseases." A group of cells whose relation is disturbed by an external agent, typically a virus, will be destroyed by our characteristic (immune) system. Or, inversely, with suicide: this time the disturbed group gets the upper hand and, in a different relation, induces our other parts to desert our characteristic system ("unknown external causes so affect the body that one takes on another nature, contrary to the former . . . ").[17] Hence the universal model of poisoning, dear to Spinoza.

It is true that our extensive parts and our external affections, insofar as they realize one of our relations, pertain to our essence. But they do not "constitute" this relation or that essence. Moreover, there are two ways of *pertaining to essence.* "Affection of essence" is to be understood first in a purely objective way: the affection does not *depend* on our essence but on external causes acting in existence. Now, these affections sometimes inhibit or jeopardize the realization of our relations (sadness as a diminution of the power of acting), and sometimes strengthen or augment it (joy as an increase). And it is only in the latter case that the external or "passive" affection is compounded by an active affection which depends strictly on our power of acting and

17. *Ethics,* IV, 20

is internal to, constitutive of, our essence: an active joy, a self-affection of essence, such that the genitive now becomes autonomous and causal. In this way, *pertaining to essence* takes on a new meaning that excludes evil and badness. Not that we are thus reduced to our own essence; on the contrary, these internal, immunal affections are the forms by means of which we become conscious of ourselves, of other things, and of God, from within and eternally, essentially (the third kind of knowledge, intuition). Now, the more we attain to these self-affections during our existence, the less we lose in losing existence, in dying or even in suffering, and the better we will be able to say in fact that evil was nothing, or that nothing bad, or almost nothing, pertained to essence.[18]

18. Spinoza invokes an inversely proportional variation, in fact: the more inadequate and sad ideas we have, the greater, relatively, is the part of ourselves that dies; on the other hand, the more adequate ideas and active joys we have, the greater is "the part that remains and the greater the part that is not touched by bad affects" (cf. *Ethics*, V, 38–40. These propositions in Part V on the two parts of the mind are crucial. They would have allowed Spinoza to reply to the objection that Blyenbergh made in his last letter, concerning the existence of "parts of the mind").

Chapter Four

INDEX OF THE MAIN CONCEPTS OF THE *ETHICS*

ABSOLUTE.—1. Qualifies substance as constituted by all the attributes, while each attribute is only infinite in its kind. Of course infinite in a kind does not at all imply a privation of the other kinds, nor even an opposition with respect to them, but only a real distinction that does not prevent all these infinite forms from referring to the same, ontologically unary Being (*Ethics,* I, def. 6 and exp.). The absolute is precisely the nature of this being, whereas the infinite is only a property of each "kind" or of each of the attributes. Spinozism in its entirety can be seen as a movement beyond the infinitely perfect as a property, towards the absolutely infinite as Nature. Its "displacement" of the ontological proof consists in this movement.

2. Qualifies the powers of God, an absolute power of existing and acting, an absolute power of thinking and comprehending (I, 11, schol.: *infinitam absolute potentiam existendi;* I, 31, dem.: *absolutam cogitationem*). Hence there appear to be two halves of the absolute, or rather two powers of the absolute, which are equal and are not to be confused with the two attributes that we know. Concerning the equality of these two powers, *Ethics,* II, 7, cor.

ABSTRACTIONS.—What is essential is the difference in nature that Spinoza establishes between abstract concepts and common notions (II, 40, schol. 1). A common notion is the idea of something in common between two or more bodies that agree with each other, i.e., that compound their respective relations

according to laws, and affect one another in keeping with this intrinsic agreement or composition. Thus a common notion expresses our capacity for being affected and is explained by our power of comprehending. On the contrary, an abstract idea arises when our capacity for being affected is exceeded and we are content with imagining instead of comprehending: we no longer seek to understand the relations that enter into composition; we only retain an extrinsic *sign*, a variable perceptible characteristic that strikes our imagination, and that we set up as an essential trait while disregarding the others (man as an animal of erect stature, or as an animal that laughs, that speaks, a rational animal, a featherless biped, etc.). For the unity of composition, the composition of intelligible relations, for the internal structures (*fabrica*), we substitute a crude attribution of perceptible similarities and differences, and we establish continuities, discontinuities, and arbitrary analogies in Nature.

In a sense, abstraction presupposes fiction, since it consists in explaining things by means of images (and in substituting, for the internal nature of bodies, the effect of those bodies on our own). In another sense, fiction presupposes abstraction, because it is itself composed of abstracts that change into one another according to an order of association or even external transformation (*Treatise on the Intellect*, 62–64: "If we should say that men changed into beasts, that is said very generally . . . "). We will see how the inadequate idea combines the abstract and the fictitious.

The fictitious abstracts are of different types. First, there are the *classes, species,* and *kinds,* defined by a variable perceptible characteristic that is determined as specific or generic (the dog, a barking animal, etc.). Now, rejecting this way of defining by kind and specific difference, Spinoza suggests a completely different way, linked to the common notions: beings will be defined by their *capacity for being affected,* by the affections of which they are capable, the excitations to which they react, those by which they are unaffected, and those which exceed their capacity and make them ill or cause them to die. In this way, one will obtain a classification of beings by their power; one will see which beings

agree with which others, and which do not agree with one another, as well as who can serve as food for whom, who is social with whom, and according to what relations. A man, a horse, and a dog; or, more to the point, a philosopher and a drunkard, a hunting dog and a watchdog, a racehorse and a plow horse—are distinguished from one another by their capacity for being affected, and first of all by the way in which they fulfill and satisfy their life, *vita illa qua unumquodque est contentum* (*Ethics,* III, 57). Hence there are types that are more or less general, that do not have the same criteria at all as the abstract ideas of kind and species. Even the attributes are not specific differences that would determine substance as kind; nor are they themselves kinds, although each one is called infinite in its kind (but "kind" here only indicates a form of necessary existence that constitutes for substance an infinite capacity for being affected, the modes of the attribute being the affections themselves).

Second, there is *number.* Number is the correlate of the abstract ideas, since things are counted as members of classes, kinds, and species. In this sense, number is an "aid to the imagination" (*Letter XII,* to Meyer). Number is itself an abstract insofar as it applies to the existing modes "considered in the abstract," apart from the way in which they follow from substance and relate to one another. On the contrary, the concrete view of Nature discovers the infinite everywhere, whereas nothing is infinite by reason of the number of its parts—neither substance, of which an infinity of attributes is immediately affirmed without going through 2, 3, 4 . . . (*Letter LXIV,* to Schuller), nor the existing mode, which has an infinity of parts—but it is not because of their number that there is an infinity of them (*Letter LXXI,* to Tschirnhaus). Hence not only does the numerical distinction not apply to substance—the real distinction between attributes is never numerical—but it does not even adequately apply to modes, because the numerical distinction expresses the nature of the mode and of the modal distinction only abstractly and only for the imagination.

Third, there are the *transcendentals.* Here it is no longer a question of specific or generic characteristics by which one es-

tablishes external differences between beings, but of a concept of Being or concepts coextensive with Being, to which one grants a transcendental value and which one counterposes to nothingness (being/nonbeing, unity/plurality, true/false, good/evil, order/disorder, beauty/ugliness, perfection/imperfection . . .). One presents as a transcendent value that which only has an immanent sense, and one defines by an absolute opposition that which only has a relative opposition: thus Good and Evil are abstracts of good and bad, which are said concerning a definite existing mode and which qualify the latter's affections according to the direction of the variations of its power of acting (*Ethics,* IV, preface).

The *geometric beings* pose a special problem. Their figure belongs to the abstracts, or beings of reason, in every sense: it is defined by a specific property; it is an object of measure, measure being an aid of the same sort as number; and above all, it involves a non-being (*Letter L,* to Jelles). However, we can assign an adequate cause to geometric beings, whereas the other beings of reason imply ignorance of the true causes. We can in fact replace the specific definition of a figure (e.g., the circle as a locus of points equidistant from one and the same point called the center) by a genetic definition (the circle as a figure described by any line of which one end is fixed and the other movable, *Treatise on the Intellect,* 95–96; or the sphere as a figure described by the rotation of a semicircle, *idem,* 72). Doubtless this still involves a fiction, in keeping with the relation of the abstract and the fictitious. For no circle or sphere is engendered in this way by Nature; no singular essence is assigned thereby; and the concept of a line, or a semicircle, does not in any way contain the motion that is ascribed to it. Whence the expression: *fingo ad libitum causam* (*idem,* 72). Yet, even when real things are produced in the same way as the ideas that represent them, this is not what makes the ideas true, since their truth does not depend on the object but on the autonomous power of thinking (*idem,* 72). So the fictitious cause of the geometric being can be a good starting point, provided we use it to discover our power of comprehending, as a springboard for reaching the power of God (God deter-

determining the movement of the line or the semicircle). For with the idea of God all fictions and abstractions cease, and ideas follow from it in their order just as real singular things are produced in theirs (*idem,* 73, 75, 76). This is why the geometric notions are *fictions capable of conjuring away the abstract to which they relate, and capable of conjuring themselves away.* Consequently they are closer to the common notions than to the abstracts; they imply, in the *Treatise on the Intellect,* a foreshadowing of what the common notions will be in the *Ethics.* We will see, in fact, how the latter maintain a complex relationship with the imagination; and in any case, the geometric method will preserve its full meaning and extension.

ACT. Cf. Power.

ACTION. Cf. Affections.

ADEQUATE -INADEQUATE. Cf. Idea.

AFFECTIONS, AFFECTS.—1. The affections (*affectio*) are the modes themselves. The modes are the affections of substance or of its attributes (*Ethics,* I, 25, cor.; I, 30, dem.). These affections are necessarily active, since they are explained by the nature of God as adequate cause, and God cannot be acted upon.

2. At a second level, the affections designate that which happens to the mode, the modifications of the mode, the effects of other modes on it. These affections are therefore images or corporeal traces first of all (*Ethics,* II, post. 5; II, 17, schol.; III, post. 2); and their *ideas* involve both the nature of the affected body and that of the affecting external body (II, 16). "The affections of the human body whose ideas present external bodies as present in us, we shall call images of things . . . And when the mind regards bodies in this way, we shall say that it imagines."

3. But these image affections or ideas form a certain state (*constitutio*) of the affected body and mind, which implies more or less perfection than the preceding state. Therefore, from one state to another, from one image or idea to another, there are transitions, passages that are experienced, durations through which we pass to a greater or a lesser perfection. Furthermore,

these states, these affections, images or ideas are not separable from the duration that attaches them to the preceding state and makes them tend towards the next state. These continual durations or variations of perfection are called "affects," or feelings (*affectus*).

It has been remarked that as a general rule the affection (*affectio*) is said directly of the body, while the affect (*affectus*) refers to the mind. But the real difference does not reside there. It is between the body's affection and idea, which involves the nature of the external body, and the affect, which involves an increase or decrease of the power of acting, for the body and the mind alike. The *affectio* refers to a state of the affected body and implies the presence of the affecting body, whereas the *affectus* refers to the passage from one state to another, taking into account the correlative variation of the affecting bodies. Hence there is a difference in nature between the *image affections* or *ideas* and the *feeling affects,* although the feeling affects may be presented as a particular type of ideas or affections: "By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained. . . . " (III, def. 3); "An affect that is called a passion of the mind is a confused idea, by which the mind affirms of its body, or of some part of it, a greater or lesser force of existing than before. . . . " (III, gen. def. of the affects). It is certain that the affect implies an image or idea, and follows from the latter as from its cause (II, ax. 3). But it is not confined to the image or idea; it is of another nature, being purely transitive, and not indicative or representative, since it is experienced in a lived duration that involves the difference between two states. This is why Spinoza shows that the affect is not a *comparison of ideas,* and thereby rejects any intellectualist interpretation: "When I say a greater or lesser force of existing than before, I do not understand that the mind compares its body's present constitution with a past constitution, but that the idea which constitutes the form of the affect affirms of the body something which really involves more or less of reality than before." (III, gen. def.).

An existing mode is defined by a certain capacity for being af-

fected (III, post. 1 and 2). When it encounters another mode, it can happen that this other mode is "good" for it, that is, enters into composition with it, or on the contrary decomposes it and is "bad" for it. In the first case, the existing mode passes to a greater perfection; in the second case, to a lesser perfection. Accordingly, it will be said that its power of acting or force of existing increases or diminishes, since the power of the other mode is added to it, or on the contrary is withdrawn from it, immobilizing and restraining it (IV, 18 dem.). The passage to a greater perfection, or the increase of the power of acting, is called an affect, or feeling, of *joy;* the passage to a lesser perfection or the diminution of the power of acting is called *sadness.* Thus the power of acting varies according to external causes for the same capacity for being affected. The feeling affect (joy or sadness) follows from the image affection or idea that it presupposes (the idea of the body that agrees with ours or does not agree); and when the affect comes back upon the idea from which it follows, the joy becomes *love,* and the sadness, *hatred.* In this way the different series of affections and affects continually fulfill, but under variable conditions, the capacity for being affected (III, 56).

So long as our feelings or affects spring from the external encounter with other modes of existence, they are explained by the nature of the affecting body and by the necessarily inadequate idea of that body, a confused image involved in our state. Such affects are *passions,* since we are not their adequate cause (III, def. 2). Even the affects based on joy, which are defined by an increase of the power of acting, are passions: joy is still a passion "insofar as a man's power of acting is not increased to the point where he conceives himself and his actions adequately" (IV, 59, dem.). Even though our power of acting has increased materially, we will remain passive, separated from our power, so long as we are not formally in control of it. That is why, from the standpoint of the affects, the basic distinction between *two sorts of passions,* sad passions and joyful passions, prepares for a very different distinction, between *passions and actions.* An idea of *affectio* always gives rise to affects. But if the idea is adequate instead of being a confused image, if it directly expresses the essence of the

affecting body instead of involving it indirectly in our state, if it is the idea of an internal *affectio,* or of a self-affection that evinces the internal agreement of our essence, other essences, and the essence of God (third kind of knowledge), then the affects that arise from it are themselves actions (III, 1). Not only must these affects or feelings be joys or loves (III, 58 and 59), they must be quite special joys and loves since they are no longer defined by an increase of our perfection or power of acting but by the full, formal possession of that power or perfection. The word *blessedness* should be reserved for these active joys: they appear to conquer and extend themselves within duration, like the passive joys, but in fact they are eternal and are no longer explained by duration; they no longer imply transitions and passages, but express themselves and one another in an eternal mode, together with the adequate ideas from which they issue (V, 31– 33).

AFFIRMATION. Cf. Negation.

ANALOGY. Cf. Eminence.

APPETITE. Cf. Power.

ATTRIBUTE.—"What the intellect perceives of substance, as constituting its essence" (*Ethics,* I, def. 4). The attributes are not ways of seeing pertaining to the intellect, because the Spinozist intellect perceives only what is; they are not emanations either, because there is no superiority, no eminence of substance over the attributes, nor of one attribute over another. Each attribute "expresses" a certain essence (I, 10, schol. 1). If the attribute necessarily relates to the intellect, this is not because it resides in the intellect, but because it is expressive and because what it expresses necessarily implies an intellect that "perceives" it. The essence that is expressed is an unlimited, infinite quality. The expressive attribute relates essence to substance and it is this immanent relation that the intellect grasps. All the essences, distinct in the attributes, are as one in substance, to which they are related by the attributes.

Each attribute is "conceived through itself and in itself" (*Letter II,* to Oldenburg). The attributes are distinct in reality: no at-

tribute needs another, or anything pertaining to another, in order to be conceived. Hence they express substantial qualities that are absolutely simple. Consequently, it has to be said that a substance corresponds to each attribute *qualitatively or formally* (not numerically). A purely qualitative formal multiplicity, defined in the first eight propositions of the *Ethics,* makes it possible to identify a substance for each attribute. The real distinction between attributes is a formal distinction between ultimate substantial "quiddities."

We know only two attributes and yet we know there is an infinity of them. We know only two because we can only conceive as infinite those qualities that we involve in our essence: thought and extension, inasmuch as we are mind and body (II, 1 and 2). But we know that there is an infinity of attributes because God has an absolutely infinite power of existing, which cannot be exhausted either by thought or by extension.

The attributes are strictly the same to the extent that they constitute the essence of substance and to the extent that they are involved in, and contain, the essences of mode. For example, it is in *the same form* that bodies imply extension and that extension is an attribute of divine substance. In this sense, God does not possess the perfections implied by the "creatures" in a form different from that which these perfections have in the creatures themselves: thus Spinoza radically rejects the notions of eminence, equivocity, and even analogy (notions according to which God would possess the perfections in another form, a superior form . . .). The Spinozan immanence is therefore no less opposed to emanation than to creation. And *immanence* signifies first of all the *univocity of the attributes:* the same attributes are affirmed of the substance they compose and of the modes they contain (the first figure of univocity, the two others being that of cause and that of the necessary).

AUTOMATON. Cf. Method.

BEINGS OF REASON, OF IMAGINATION.
Cf. Abstractions.

BLESSEDNESS. Cf. Affections.

CAPACITY. Cf. Power.

CAUSE.—"By cause of itself I understand that whose essence involves existence; or that whose nature cannot be conceived except as existing" (*Ethics,* I, def. 1). Spinoza has a reason for beginning the *Ethics* with a definition of cause of itself. Traditionally, the notion of cause of itself was employed with many precautions, by *analogy* with efficient causality (cause of a distinct effect), hence in a merely derivative sense; cause of itself would thus mean "as if by a cause." Spinoza overturns this tradition, making cause of itself the archetype of all causality, its originative and exhaustive meaning.

There is an efficient causality nevertheless: that in which the effect is different from the cause, where either the essence and existence of the effect differ from the essence and existence of the cause, or the effect, itself having an existence different from its own essence, refers to something different as its cause of existence. Thus God is the cause of all things; and every existing finite thing refers to another finite thing as to the cause that makes it exist and act. Differing in essence and in existence, the cause and the effect appear to have nothing in common (I, 17 schol.; *Letter LXIV,* to Schuller). And yet, in another sense, they do have something in common: the attribute, in which the effect is produced and by which the cause acts (*Letter IV,* to Oldenburg; *Letter LXIV,* to Schuller); *but* the attribute, which constitutes the essence of God as cause, does not constitute the essence of the effect; it is only involved by this essence (II, 10).

That God produces through the same attributes that constitute his essence implies that God is the cause of all things *in the same sense* that he is the cause of himself (I, 25, schol.). He produces in the same way that he exists. Hence the univocity of the attributes—in that they are said, in one and the same sense, of the substance whose essence they constitute, and of the products that involve them in *their* essence—extends into a univocity of the cause, in that "efficient cause" is said in the same sense as "cause of itself." In this way, Spinoza overturns tradition doubly since efficient cause is no longer the first

meaning of cause, and since cause of itself is no longer said with a meaning different from efficient cause, but efficient cause is said with the same meaning as cause of itself.

A finite existing thing refers to another finite existing thing as its cause. But it will not be said that a finite thing is subject to a dual, horizontal and vertical, causality, the first being constituted by the indefinite series of other things, and the second by God. For at each term of the series one is referred to God as to that which determines the cause to have its effect (*Ethics,* I, 26). Thus God is never a remote cause, but is reached from the first term of the regression. And only God is a cause; there is only one sense and one modality for all the figures of causality, although these figures are themselves various (cause of itself, efficient cause of infinite things, efficient cause of finite things in relation to one another). Understood in its one sense and its single modality, the cause is essentially *immanent;* that is, it remains in itself in order to produce (as against the *transitive* cause), just as the effect remains in itself (as against the *emanative* cause).

CITY. Cf. Society.

COMMON NOTIONS.—The common notions (*Ethics,* II, 37–40) are so named not because they are common to all minds, but primarily because they represent something common to bodies, either to all bodies (extension, motion and rest) or to some bodies (at least two, mine and another). In this sense, common notions are not at all *abstract* ideas but *general* ideas (*Theological-Political Treatise,* chap. 7).

Each existing body is characterized by a certain relation of motion and rest. When the relations corresponding to two bodies adapt themselves to one another, the two bodies form a composite body having a greater power, a whole present in its parts (e.g., chyle and lymph as parts of the blood, cf. *Letter XXXII,* to Oldenburg). In short, a common notion is the representation of a composition between two or more bodies, and a unity of this composition. Its meaning is more biological than mathematical; it expresses the relations of agreement or composition between existing bodies. It is only secondarily that common notions are

common to minds—more or less so, since they are common only to minds whose bodies are affected by the composition and the unity of composition in question.

All bodies, even those that do not agree with one another (for example, a poison and the body that is poisoned), have something in common: extension, motion and rest. This is because they all compound with one another from the viewpoint of the mediate infinite mode. But it is never *through* what they have in common that they disagree (IV, 30). In any case, by considering the most general common notions, one sees from within where an agreement ends and a disagreement begins, one sees the level at which "differences and oppositions" (II, 29, schol.) are formed.

Common notions are necessarily adequate ideas; indeed, representing a unity of composition, they are in the part and the whole alike, and can only be conceived adequately (II, 38 and 39). But the whole problem is in knowing how we manage to *form* them. From this point of view the importance of the greater or lesser generality of the common notion becomes apparent. For in several places Spinoza writes as if we went from the more general to the less general (*Theological-Political Treatise,* chap. 7; *Ethics,* II, 38 and 39). But there we are dealing with an order of application, where we start from the most general notions in order to understand from within, the appearance of disagreements at less general levels. So the common notions are assumed to be already given. Their order of formation is a different matter altogether. For when we encounter a body that agrees with ours, we experience an affect or feeling of joy-passion, although we do not yet adequately know what it has in common with us. Sadness, which arises from our encounter with a body that does not agree with ours, never induces us to form a common notion; but joy-passion, as an increase of the power of acting and of comprehending, does bring this about: it is an occasional cause of the common notion. This is why Reason is defined in two ways, which show that man is not *born* rational but also how he becomes rational. Reason is: 1. an effort to select and organize good encounters, that is, encounters of modes that enter into

composition with ours and inspire us with joyful passions (feelings that *agree* with reason); 2. the perception and comprehension of the common notions, that is, of the relations that enter into this composition, from which one deduces other relations (reasoning) and on the basis of which one experiences new feelings, active ones this time (feelings that *are born* of reason).

Spinoza explains the order of formation or the genesis of the common notions at the beginning of Part IV, in contrast to Part II, which confined itself to the order of their logical application: 1. "As long as we are not dominated by affects contrary to our nature . . . ," affects of sadness, we have the power of forming common notions (cf. V, 10, which explicitly invokes the common notions as well as the preceding propositions). *The first common notions are therefore the least general ones,* those that represent something in common between my body and another that affects me with joy-passion; 2. From these first common notions, affects of joy follow in turn; they are not passions but rather active joys that join the first passions and then take their place; 3. These first common notions and the active affects that depend on them give us the force to form common notions that are more general, expressing what there is in common *even* between our body and bodies that do not agree with ours, that are contrary to it, or affect it with sadness; 4. And from these new common notions, new affects of active joy follow, overtaking the sadnesses and replacing the passions born of sadness.

The importance of the theory of common notions must be evaluated from several viewpoints: 1. The theory does not appear before the *Ethics;* it transforms the entire Spinozan conception of Reason, and defines the status of the second kind of knowledge; 2. It answers the fundamental question: How do we manage to form adequate ideas, and in what order, given that the natural conditions of our perception condemn us to have only inadequate ideas? 3. It brings about a thorough recasting of Spinozism. Whereas the *Treatise on the Intellect* only reached the adequate starting from geometric ideas still permeated with fiction, the common notions form a mathematics of the real or the concrete which rids the geometric method of

the fictions and abstractions that limited its exercise.

The common notions are generalities in the sense that they are only concerned with the existing modes, without constituting any part of the latter's singular essence (II, 37). But they are not at all fictitious or abstract; they represent the composition of real relations between existing modes or individuals. Whereas geometry only captured relations *in abstracto,* the common notions enable us to apprehend them as they are, that is, as they are necessarily embodied in living beings, with the variable and concrete terms between which they are established. In this sense, the common notions are more biological than mathematical, forming a natural geometry that allows us to comprehend the unity of composition of all of Nature and the modes of variation of that unity.

The central status of the common notions is clearly indicated by the expression "second kind of knowledge," between the first and the third. But the kinds are related in two very different, non-symmetrical ways. The relation of the second with the third kind appears in the following form: being adequate ideas, i.e., ideas that are in us as they are in God (II, 38 and 39), the common notions necessarily give us the idea of God (II, 45, 46, and 47). The idea of God *is valid* even for the most general notion, since it expresses what there is in common between all the existing modes; namely, that they are in God and are produced by God (II, 45, schol.; and especially V, 36, schol., which recognizes that the entire *Ethics* is written from the viewpoint of the common notions, including the propositions of Part V concerning the third kind). The idea of God serving as a common notion is even the object of a feeling and a religion peculiar to the second kind (V, 14–20). But the idea of God is not *in itself* a common notion, and Spinoza explicitly distinguishes it from the common notions (II, 47). This is precisely because it comprehends the essence of God, and serves as a common notion only in relation to the composition of the existing modes. Thus, when the common notions lead us necessarily to the idea of God, they carry us to a point where everything changes over, and where the third kind will reveal to us the correlation of the essence of God and the

singular essences of real beings, with a new meaning of the idea of God and new feelings that go to make up this third kind (V, 21–37). Hence there is no break between the second and the third kind, but a passage from one side to the other of the idea of God (V, 28); we go beyond Reason as a faculty of the common notions or a system of eternal truths concerning existence, and enter into the *intuitive intellect* as a system of essential truths (sometimes called *consciousness,* since it is only here that ideas are redoubled and reflected in us as they are in God, giving us the experience of being eternal).

As for the relation of the second kind with the first, it is manifested in the following way, despite the break between them: insofar as they apply solely to existing bodies, the common notions have to do with things that can be imagined (indeed, this is why the idea of God is not in itself a common notion, II, 47, schol.). They represent compositions of relations. Now, these relations characterize bodies insofar as they combine with and affect one another, each one leaving "images" in the other, the corresponding ideas being imaginations. Of course the common notions are not themselves images or imaginations, since they attain an internal comprehension of the reasons for agreement (II, 29, schol.). But they have a dual relation with the imagination. First, an extrinsic relation, for the imagination or the idea of an affection of the body is not an adequate idea, but when it expresses the effect on us of a body that agrees with ours, it makes possible the formation of the common notion that comprehends the agreement adequately from within. Second, an intrinsic relation, for the imagination apprehends as external effects of bodies on one another that which the common notion explains through the internal constitutive relations. So there is a necessary harmony between the properties of the imagination and those of the common notion, such that the latter depends on the properties of the former (V, 5–9).

COMPREHEND. Cf. Explain, Mind, Power.

CONATUS. Cf. Power.

CONSCIOUSNESS.—The idea's property of duplicating itself,

of redoubling to infinity: the idea of the idea. Every idea represents something that exists in an attribute (objective reality of the idea); but it is itself something that exists in the attribute of thought (form or formal reality of the idea); so it is the object of another idea that represents it, etc. (*Ethics,* II, 21). Hence the three characteristics of consciousness: 1. *Reflection:* consciousness is not the moral property of a subject but the physical property of the idea; it is not the reflection of the mind on the idea but the reflection of the idea in the mind (*Treatise on the Intellect*); 2. *Derivation:* consciousness is secondary in relation to the idea of which it is the consciousness, and is worth only what the primary idea is worth. This is why Spinoza says that there is no need to know that one knows in order to know (*idem,* 35) but that one cannot know without knowing that one knows (*Ethics,* II, 21 and 43); 3. *Correlation:* the relation of consciousness to the idea of which it is the consciousness is the same as the relation of the idea to the object of which it is the knowledge (II, 21). Spinoza does say, however, that between the idea and the idea of the idea there is only a distinction of reason (IV, 8; V, 3); the explanation is that both are included in the same attribute of thought, but refer nonetheless to two different powers, a power of existing and a power of thinking, in the same way as the object of the idea and the idea.

Consciousness is completely immersed in the unconscious. That is: 1. We are conscious only of the ideas that we have, under the conditions in which we have them. All the ideas that God has essentially elude us insofar as he does not just constitute our minds but bears an infinity of other ideas; thus we are not conscious of the ideas that compose our souls, nor even of ourselves and our duration; we are only conscious of the ideas that express the effect of external bodies on our own, ideas of affections (II, 9 *et seq.*); 2. Ideas are not the only modes of thinking; the *conatus* and its various determinations or affects are also in the mind as modes of thinking. Now, we are conscious of them only to the extent that the ideas of affections determine the *conatus* precisely. Then the resulting affect enjoys in turn the property of reflecting back on itself, in the same way as the idea that

determines it (IV, 8). This is why Spinoza defines desire as the *conatus* having become conscious, the *cause* of this consciousness being the affection (III, def. of desire).

Consciousness, being therefore naturally a consciousness of the inadequate ideas we have, ideas that are mutilated and truncated, is the seat of two basic illusions: 1. *The psychological illusion of freedom:* considering only effects whose causes it is essentially ignorant of, consciousness can believe itself free, attributing to the mind an imaginary power over the body, although it does not even know what a body can do in terms of the causes that actually move it to act (III, 2 schol.; V, preface); 2. *The theological illusion of finality:* grasping the *conatus* or appetite only in the form of affects determined by the ideas of affections, consciousness can believe that these ideas of affections, insofar as they express the effects of external bodies on our own, are truly primary, are true final causes, and that, even in the domains where we are not free, a provident God has arranged everything according to relations of means-end; thus, the desire appears to be secondary in relation to the idea of the thing judged good (I, appendix).

Precisely because consciousness is the idea's reflection and is worth only what the primary idea is worth, conscious realization has no power by itself. And yet, since falsity as such has no *form*, the inadequate idea does not reflect back on itself without manifesting what is positive in it: it is false that the sun is two hundred feet away, but it is true that I see the sun as being two hundred feet away (II, schol.). It is this positive kernel of the inadequate idea in consciousness that can serve as a regulative principle for a knowledge of the unconscious, that is, for an inquiry concerning what a body can do, for a determination of causes and for the forming of common notions. So once we have attained adequate ideas, we connect effects to their true causes, and consciousness, having become a reflection of adequate ideas, is capable of overcoming its illusions, forming clear and distinct ideas of the affections and affects it experiences (V, 4). Or rather, it overlays the passive affects with active affects that follow from the common notion and are distinguished from the passive affects only by

their cause, hence by a distinction of reason (V, 3 *et seq.*). This is the goal of the second kind of knowledge. And the object of the third is to become conscious of the idea of God, of oneself, and of other things; that is, to make these ideas reflect themselves in us just as they are in God (*sui et Dei et rerum conscius,* V, 42 schol.).

DEATH. Cf. Duration, Existence, Good-Bad, Negation, Power.

DEFINITION, DEMONSTRATION.—Definition is the statement of the distinctive mark of a thing considered in itself (and not in relation to other things). Furthermore, the distinction stated must be a distinction of essence, internal to the thing defined. In this sense, Spinoza reformulates the dichotomy of nominal definitions/real definitions: *Treatise on the Intellect,* 95–97. Nominal definitions are those that use abstracts (kind and specific difference: man is a rational animal), or *propria* (God, an infinitely perfect being), or a property (the circle, a locus of points equidistant from one and the same point). Hence they abstract a determination that is still extrinsic. Real definitions, on the contrary, are genetic: they state the cause of the thing, or its genetic elements. An especially striking example is developed by Spinoza (*Ethics,* III): the nominal definition of desire ("appetite together with the consciousness of it") becomes real if one adds "the cause of this consciousness" (i.e., the affections). This causal or genetic character of real definition applies not only to things that are produced (such as the circle, the movement of a line of which one end remains fixed) but to God himself (God, a being constituted by an infinity of attributes). Indeed, God is amenable to a genetic definition in that he is the cause of himself, in the full sense of the word cause, and his attributes are true formal causes.

A real definition can be *a priori,* therefore. But there are also real definitions *a posteriori;* they are those that define an existing thing, an animal, for example, or man, by what its body is capable of (its power, its capacity for being affected). This can be known only from experience, although the power in question is the essence itself, insofar as it experiences affections. Moreover, real definitions can be conceived even for certain beings of rea-

son. For example, a geometric figure is indeed an abstract, according to a simple nominal definition, but it is also the abstract idea of a "common notion" that can be apprehended through its cause and according to a real definition. (Thus the two preceding definitions of the circle, nominal and real.)

Demonstration is the necessary consequence of the definition. It consists at least in deducing a property of the thing defined. But so long as the definitions are nominal, only a single property can be deduced from each definition; in order to demonstrate others, it is necessary to bring in other objects, other points of view, and to place the thing defined in relation with external things (*Letters LXXXII* and *LXXXIII*). In this sense the demonstration remains a movement that is external to the thing. But when the definition is real, the demonstration is capable of deducing all the properties of the thing, at the same time that it becomes a perception; that is, it captures a movement that is internal to the thing. In this way, demonstration connects up with the definition, independently of an external point of view. It is the thing that "explains itself" in the intellect, and not the intellect that explains the thing.

DESIRE. Cf. Consciousness, Power

DETERMINATION. Cf. Negation.

DURATION.—The continuation of existence from a beginning onward. Duration is said of the existing mode. It involves a beginning but not an end. In reality, when the mode comes to exist through the action of an efficient cause, it is no longer simply comprehended in the attribute, but it continues to exist (*Ethics*, II, 8), or rather tends to do so; that is, it tends to persevere in existing. And its very essence is then determined as a tendency to persevere (III, 5). Now, neither the essence of the thing nor the efficient cause that posits its existence can assign an end to its duration (II, explication of def. 5). This is why duration by itself is an "indefinite continuation of existing." The end of a duration, which is to say, death, comes from the encounter of the existing mode with another mode that decomposes its relation (III, 8; IV, 39). Hence death and birth are in no way symmetrical. So

long as the mode exists, the duration is made up of the lived transitions that define its affects, constant passages to greater or lesser perfections, continual variations of the existing mode's power of acting. Duration contrasts with eternity because eternity has no beginning and is said of that which possesses a full, unvarying power of acting. Eternity is neither an indefinite duration nor something that begins after duration, but it coexists with duration, just as two parts of ourselves that differ in nature coexist, the part that involves the existence of the body and the part that expresses its essence (V, 20, schol. *et seq.*).

EMINENCE.—If a triangle could speak, it would say that God is *eminently* triangular (*Letter LVI,* to Boxel). What Spinoza finds wrong with the notion of eminence is its claiming to save the specificity of God while defining him in anthropological or even anthropomorphic terms. People attribute to God features borrowed from human consciousness (these features are not even adequate to man as he is); and, in order to provide for God's essence, they merely raise these features to infinity, or say that God possesses them in an infinitely perfect form that we do not comprehend. Thus we attribute to God an infinite justice and an infinite charity; an infinite legislative understanding and an infinite creative will; or even an infinite voice and infinite hands and feet. In this respect, Spinoza does not make any distinction between equivocity and analogy, denouncing them both with equal force: it matters little whether God possesses these traits in a sense *different from* or *proportional to* ours, since in either case the univocity of the attributes goes unrecognized.

Now, this univocity is the keystone of Spinoza's entire philosophy. Precisely because the attributes exist in the same form in God, of whose existence they constitute the essence, and in the modes that involve them in *their* essence, there is nothing in common between the essence of God and the essence of the modes, and yet there are forms that are absolutely identical, notions that are absolutely common to God and the modes. The univocity of the attributes is the only means of radically distinguishing the essence and existence of substance from the essence and existence of the modes, while preserving the absolute

unity of Being. Eminence, and along with it, equivocity and analogy are doubly wrong in claiming to see something in common between God and created beings where there is nothing in common (confusion of essences) and in denying the common forms where they do exist (illusion of transcendent forms); they fracture Being and confuse the essences at the same time. The language of eminence is anthropomorphic because it confuses the modal essence with that of substance; extrinsic because it is modeled on consciousness and it confuses the essences with the *propria;* and imaginary because it is the language of equivocal signs and not of univocal expressions.

ENCOUNTER (OCCURSUS). Cf. Affections, Good, Nature, Necessary, Power.

ERROR. Cf. Idea.

ESSENCE. — "Necessarily constitutes the essence of a thing . . . , what the thing can neither be nor be conceived without, *and vice versa, what can neither be nor be conceived without the thing*" (*Ethics,* II, 10, schol.). Every essence is therefore the essence of something with which it has a relation of reciprocity. This rule of reciprocity, added to the traditional definition of essence, has three consequences:

1. There are not several substances of the same attribute (for the attribute conceived at the same time as one of these substances could be conceived without the others);

2. There is a radical distinction of essence between substance and the modes (for, while the modes can neither be nor be conceived without substance, conversely substance can very well be and be conceived without the modes; thus the univocity of the attributes, which are affirmed, in the same form, of substance and of the modes, does not entail any confusion of essence, since the attributes constitute the essence of substance, but do not constitute that of the modes, which merely involve the attributes; indeed, for Spinoza the univocity of the attributes is the only means of guaranteeing this distinction of essence);

3. The nonexisting modes are not possibilities in the intellect of God (for the ideas of modes that do not exist are comprehend-

ed in the idea of God in the same way that the essences of these modes are contained in God's attributes [II, 8]; now, every essence being the essence of something, the nonexisting modes are themselves real and actual beings, the idea of which is therefore necessarily given in the infinite intellect).

If the essence of substance involves existence, this is owing to its property of being the cause of itself. This is demonstrated first for each substance qualified by attribute (I, 7), then for substance constituted by an infinity of attributes (I, 11), depending on whether the essence is referred to the attribute that expresses it or to substance expressing itself in all the attributes. The attributes do not express the essence, therefore, without expressing the existence that it necessarily involves (I, 20). The attributes are so many forces of existing and acting, while essence is an absolutely infinite power of existing and acting.

But what of the modal essences that do not involve existence and are contained in the attributes? What do they consist of? Each essence is a part of God's power insofar as the latter is explained by the modal essence (IV, 4. dem.). Spinoza always conceived the modal essences as singular, starting with the *Short Treatise.* Hence the texts of the *Short Treatise* that seem to deny the distinction of essences (II, chap. 20, n. 3; app. II, 1) actually only deny their extrinsic distinction, which would imply existence in duration and the possession of extensive parts. The modal essences are simple and eternal. But they nevertheless have, with respect to the attribute and to each other, another type of distinction that is purely intrinsic. The essences are neither logical possibilities nor geometric structures; they are parts of power, that is, degrees of physical intensity. They have no parts but are themselves parts, parts of power, like intensive quantities that are composed of smaller quantities. They are all compatible with one another without limit, because all are included in the production of each one, but each one corresponds to a specific degree of power different from all the others.

ETERNITY.—The character of existence insofar as it is involved by essence (*Ethics,* I, def. 8). Existence is therefore an "eternal truth" just as essence itself is eternal, and is distin-

guished from essence only by a distinction of reason. Eternity thus contrasts with duration—even indefinite duration—which qualifies the existence of the mode insofar as the latter is not involved by essence.

The essence of the mode possesses a certain form of eternity nevertheless, *species aeternitatis.* This is because the essence of a mode has a necessary existence that is peculiar to it, although it does not exist through itself, but by virtue of God as its cause. So not only is the immediate infinite mode eternal, but also each singular essence that is a part agreeing with all the others without limit. As for the mediate infinite mode, which governs existences in duration, it is itself eternal to the extent that rules of composition and decomposition together form a system of eternal truths; and each of the relations that correspond to these rules is an eternal truth. This is why Spinoza says that the mind is eternal insofar as it conceives the singular essence of a body under the form of eternity, but also insofar as it conceives existing things by means of common notions, that is, according to eternal relations that determine their composition and their decomposition in existence (V, 29, dem.: *et praeter haec duo nihil aliud ad mentis essentiam pertinet*).

The difference in nature between eternal existence and existence that endures (even indefinitely) remains nevertheless. For duration is expressed only insofar as the existing modes realize relations according to which they come to be and cease to be, enter into composition with and decompose one another. But these very relations, and *a fortiori* the modal essences, are eternal and not durative. This is why the eternity of a singular essence is not an object of memory, presentiment, or revelation; it is strictly the object of an actual experience (V, 23, schol.). It corresponds to the actual existence of a part of the mind, its intensive part that constitutes the singular essence and its characteristic relation, whereas duration affects the mind in the intensive parts that temporarily pertain to it under this same characteristic relation (cf. the differentiation of two kinds of parts, V, 38, 39, 40).

In the expression *species aeternitatis, species* always refers to a concept or a knowledge. It is always an idea that expresses the

essence of a particular body, or the truth of things, *sub species aeternitatis.* It is not that the essences or the truths are not in themselves eternal; but being eternal through their cause and not through themselves, they have that eternity which derives from the cause through which they must necessarily be conceived. Therefore *species* signifies form and idea, form and conception, indissolubly.

EXISTENCE.—By virtue of the cause of itself, the existence of substance is involved in essence, so that essence is an absolutely infinite power of existing. Between essence and existence, then, there is only a distinction of reason, insofar as one distinguishes the thing affirmed from its affirmation.

But the modal essences do not involve existence, and the finite existing mode refers to another finite existing mode that determines it (*Ethics,* I, 24 and 28). This is not to say that essence is really distinguished from existence: it can be so distinguished only modally. As concerns the finite mode, to exist is: 1. to have external causes that exist themselves; 2. actually to have an infinity of extensive parts which are determined by outside causes to enter precisely under the relation of motion and rest that characterizes that mode; 3. to endure, to tend to persevere, that is, to keep these parts under the characteristic relation, so long as other external causes do not determine them to be subsumed by other relations (death, IV, 39). The existence of the mode is therefore its very essence in that it is not only contained in the attribute but it endures and possesses an infinity of extensive parts; it is an *extrinsic modal reality* (II, 8, cor. and schol.). Not only does the body have such intensive parts, so does the mind, being composed of ideas (II, 15).

But the modal essence also has an existence that is peculiar to it, as such, independently of the existence of the corresponding mode. Moreover, it is in this sense that the nonexisting mode is not just a logical possibility but is an intensive part or a degree endowed with a physical reality. All the more reason why this distinction between the essence and *its own* existence is not real, but only modal: it signifies that the essence exists necessarily, but that it necessarily exists by virtue of its cause (God) and as con-

tained in the attribute; it is an *intrinsic modal reality* (I, 24, cor. and 25, dem.; V, 22, dem.)

EXPLAIN-IMPLY (EXPLICARE, IMPLICARE)—Explain is a "strong" term in Spinoza. It does not signify an operation of the intellect external to the thing, but an operation of the thing internal to the intellect. Even demonstrations are said to be "eyes" of the mind, meaning that they perceive a movement that is in the thing. Explication is always a self-explication, a development, an unfolding, a dynamism: the thing *explains itself.* Substance is explained in the attributes, the attributes explain substance; and they in turn are explained in the modes, the modes explain the attributes. And implication is not at all the opposite of explication: that which explains thereby implies, that which develops involves. Everything in Nature is a product of the coexistence of these two movements; Nature is the common order of explications and implications.

There is but a single case in which explain and imply are dissociated. It is the case of the inadequate idea. The inadequate idea implies our power of comprehending, but it is not explained by it; it involves the nature of an external thing, but does not explain it (*Ethics,* II, 18 schol.). This is because the inadequate idea always has to do with a mixture of things, and only retains the effect of one body on another; it lacks a "comprehension" that would be concerned with causes.

As a matter of fact, comprehending is the internal reason that accounts for the two movements, explaining and implying. Substance comprehends (comprises) all the attributes, and the attributes comprehend (contain) all the modes. Comprehension is what founds the identity of explication and implication. Spinoza thus rediscovers a whole tradition of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, which defined God through "complicatio": God complicates all things, while each thing explains and implies God.

It remains to be said that comprehension, explication, and implication also designate operations of the intellect. This is their *objective meaning.* The intellect "comprehends" the attributes and the modes (I, 30; II, 4); the adequate idea comprehends the

nature of the thing. But in fact the objective meaning follows from the *formal meaning:* "What is contained objectively in the intellect must necessarily be in nature" (I, 30; II, 7, cor.). To comprehend is always to grasp something that exists necessarily. Comprehending, according to Spinoza, is the opposite of conceiving something as possible. God does not conceive possibilities; he comprehends *himself* necessarily in the same way that he exists; he produces things in the same way that he comprehends himself; and he produces the form in which he comprehends himself and all things (ideas). In this sense all things are explications and implications of God, both formally and objectively.

FALSE. Cf. Idea.

FEELINGS. Cf. Affections, Affects.

FICTIONS. Cf. Abstractions.

FINALITY. Cf. Consciousness.

FREEDOM—The whole effort of the *Ethics* is aimed at breaking the traditional link between freedom and will—whether freedom is conceived as the ability of a will to choose or even create (freedom of indifference), or as the ability to adjust oneself to a model and to carry the model into effect (enlightened freedom). When one conceives God's freedom in this way, as that of a tyrant or a legislator, one ties it to physical contingency, or to logical possibility. One thus attributes inconstancy to God's power, since he could have created something else instead—or worse still, powerlessness, since his power is limited by models of possibility. Further, one grants existence to abstractions, such as nothingness in the case of creation *ex nihilo,* or the Good and the Better in the case of enlightened freedom (*Ethics,* I, 17, schol.: 33, schol. 2). Spinoza holds that freedom is never a property of the will: "will cannot be called a free cause"; the will, whether finite or infinite, is always a mode that is determined by a different cause, even if this cause is the nature of God under the attribute of thought (I, 32). On the one hand, ideas are themselves modes, and the idea of God is only an infinite mode according to which God comprehends his own nature and all that follows

from it, without ever conceiving possibilities; on the other hand, volitions are modes involved in ideas, which are identical with the affirmation or negation that follow from the idea itself, without there ever being anything contingent in these acts (II, 49). Hence neither the intellect nor the will pertain to the nature or essence of God and are not free causes. Necessity being the only modality of all that is, the only cause that can be called free is one "that exists through the necessity of its nature alone, and is determined by itself alone to act." Thus God, who is constituted by an infinity of attributes, is the cause of all things in the same sense that he is the cause of himself. God is free because everything follows necessarily from his essence, without his conceiving possibilities or contingencies. What defines freedom is an "interior" and a "self" determined by necessity. One is never free through one's will and through that on which it patterns itself, but through one's essence and through that which follows from it.

Can it ever be said in this sense that a mode is free, since it always refers to something else? Freedom is a fundamental illusion of consciousness to the extent that the latter is blind to causes, imagines possibilities and contingencies, and believes in the willful action of the mind on the body (I, app.; II, 35, schol.; V, pref.). In the case of modes, it is even less possible to link freedom to the will than it is in the case of substance. In return, modes have an essence, that is, a degree of power. When a mode manages to form adequate ideas, these ideas are either common notions that express its internal agreement with other existing modes (second kind of knowledge), or the idea of its own essence that necessarily agrees internally with the essence of God and all the other essences (third kind). Active affects or feelings follow necessarily from these adequate ideas, in such a way that they are explained by the mode's own power (III, def. 1 and 2). The existing mode is then said to be free; thus, man is not born free, but becomes free or frees himself, and Part IV of the *Ethics* draws the portrait of this free or strong man (IV, 54, etc.). Man, the most powerful of the finite modes, is free when he comes into possession of his power of acting, that is, when his *conatus* is

determined by adequate ideas from which active affects follow, affects that are explained by his own essence. Freedom is always linked to essence and to what follows from it, not to will and to what governs it.

GEOMETRIC BEINGS. Cf. Abstractions, Common Notions, Method.

GOOD-BAD.—Good and bad are doubly relative, and are said in relation to one another, and both in relation to an existing mode. They are the two senses of the variation of the power of acting: the decrease of this power (sadness) is bad; its increase (joy) is good (*Ethics,* IV, 41). Objectively, then, everything that increases or enhances our power of acting is good, and that which diminishes or restrains it is bad; and we only know good and bad through the feeling of joy or sadness of which we are conscious (IV, 8). Since the power of acting is what opens the capacity for being affected to the greatest number of things, a thing is good "which so disposes the body that it can be affected in a greater number of ways" (IV, 38); or which preserves the relation of motion and rest that characterizes the body (IV, 39). In all these senses, what is good is what is useful, what is bad is what is harmful (IV, def. 1 and 2). But it is important to note the originality of this Spinozist conception of the useful and the harmful.

Good and bad thus express the encounters between existing modes ("the common order of nature," extrinsic determinations or fortuitous encounters, *fortuito occursi,* II, 29, cor. and schol.). Doubtless all relations of motion and rest agree with one another in the mediate infinite mode; but a body can induce the parts of my body to enter into a new relation that is not directly or immediately compatible with my characteristic relation: this is what occurs in death (IV, 39). Although inevitable and necessary, death is always the result of an extrinsic fortuitous encounter, an encounter with a body that decomposes my relation. The divine prohibition against eating of the fruit of the tree is only the revelation to Adam that the fruit is "bad"; i.e., it will decompose Adam's relation: "just as he also reveals to us through the

natural intellect that a poison is deadly to us" (*Letter XIX,* to Blyenbergh, and *Theological-Political Treatise,* chap. 4). All evil comes down to badness, and everything that is bad belongs to the category that includes poison, indigestion, intoxication. Even the evil that I do (bad = malicious) consists only in the fact that I join the image of an action to the image of an object that cannot bear this action without losing its constitutive relation (IV, 59, schol.).

Therefore everything that is bad is measured by a decrease of the power of acting (sadness-hatred); everything that is good, by an increase of this same power (joy-love). Whence Spinoza's all-out struggle, his radical denunciation of all the passions based on sadness, which places him in the great lineage that goes from Epicurus to Nietzsche. It is a disgrace to seek the internal essence of man in his bad extrinsic encounters. Everything that involves sadness serves tyranny and oppression. Everything that involves sadness must be denounced as bad, as something that separates us from our power of acting: not only remorse and guilt, not only meditation on death (IV, 67), but even hope, even security, which signify powerlessness (IV, 47).

Although there are relations that compound in every encounter, and all relations compound without limit in the mediate infinite mode, this does not mean that we shall say that all is well and good. What is good is any increase of the power of acting. From this viewpoint, the formal possession of this power of acting, and of knowing, appears as the *summum bonum;* it is in this sense that reason, instead of remaining at the mercy of chance encounters, endeavors to join us to things and beings whose relations compound directly with our own. Thus reason seeks the sovereign good or "our own advantage," *proprium utile,* which is common to all men (IV, 24–28). But once we have attained the formal possession of our power of acting, the expressions *bonum, summum bonum,* too imbued with finalist illusions, disappear to make way for the language of pure potency or virtue ("the first foundation," and not the ultimate end), in the third kind of knowledge. This is why Spinoza says: "If men were born free, they would form no concept of good and bad, so long as they re-

mained free" (IV, 68). Precisely because the good is said in relation to an existing mode, and in relation to a variable and not-yet-possessed power of acting, the good cannot be totalized. If one hypostatizes the good and the bad as Good and Evil, one makes this Good into a reason for being and acting; one falls into all the finalist illusions; one misrepresents both the necessity of divine production and our way of participating in the full divine power. This is why Spinoza stands fundamentally apart from all the theses of his time, according to which Evil is nothing, and the Good causes one to be and to act. The Good, like Evil, is meaningless. They are beings of reason or imagination that depend entirely on social signs, on the repressive system of rewards and punishments.

IDEA.—A mode of thinking, primary in relation to the other modes of thinking, while being different from them (*Ethics,* II, ax. 3). Love presupposes the idea, however confused, of the thing loved. This is because the idea represents a thing or a state of things, whereas feeling (affect, *affectus*) involves the passage to a greater or lesser perfection corresponding to the variation of states. So there is at the same time a primacy of the idea over feeling and a difference in nature between the two.

The idea is representative. But we have to distinguish the idea that we are (the mind as idea of the body) from the ideas that we have. The idea that we are is in God; God possesses it adequately, not just insofar as he constitutes us, but in that he is affected with an infinity of different ideas (ideas of the other essences that all agree with ours, and of the other existences that are causes of ours without limit). Therefore we do not have this idea immediately. The only ideas we have under the natural conditions of our perception are the ideas that represent *what happens* to our body, the effect of another body on ours, that is, a mixing of both bodies. They are necessarily inadequate (II, 11, 12, 19, 24, 25, 26, 27 . . .).

Such ideas are images. Or rather, images are the corporeal affections themselves (*affectio*), the traces of an external body on our body. Our ideas are therefore ideas of images or affections that represent a state of things, that is, by which we affirm the

presence of the external body so long as our body remains affected in this way (II, 17): 1. Such ideas are *signs;* they are not *explained* by our essence or power, but *indicate* our actual state and our incapacity to rid ourselves of a trace; they do not *express* the essence of the external body but *indicate* the presence of this body and its effect on us (II, 16). Insofar as it has ideas, the mind is said to *imagine* (II, 17); 2. These ideas are connected with one another according to an order that is first of all that of memory or habit; if the body has been affected by two bodies at the same time, the trace of one prompts the mind to recollect the other (II, 18). This order of memory is also that of extrinsic fortuitous encounters between bodies (II, 29). And the less constancy the encounters have, the more equivocal the signs will be (II, 44). This is why, insofar as our affections mix together diverse and variable bodies, the imagination forms pure fictions, like that of the winged horse; and insofar as it overlooks differences between outwardly similar bodies, it forms abstractions, like those of species and kinds (II, 40 and 49).

Adequate ideas are altogether different. They are true ideas, which are in us as they are in God. They are not representative of states of things or of what happens to us, but of what we are and of what things are. They form a systematic set having three summits: the idea of ourselves, the idea of God, and the idea of other things (third kind of knowledge). 1. These adequate ideas are *explained* by our essence or power, as a power of knowing and comprehending (formal cause). They *express* another idea as cause, and the idea of God as determining this cause (material cause); 2. They cannot be separated, therefore, from an autonomous connection of ideas in the attribute of thought. This connection, or *concatenatio,* which unites form and material, is an order of the intellect that constitutes the mind as a *spiritual automaton.*

We may note that while the idea is representative, its representativeness (objective being) does not explain anything about its nature: on the contrary, the latter follows from the internal properties of the idea (II, def. 4). When Spinoza says "adequate," he has in mind something very different from the Carte-

sian "clear and distinct," although he continues to use these words. The form of the idea is not sought in a psychological consciousness but in a logical power that surpasses consciousness; the material of the idea is not sought in a representative content but in an expressive content, an epistemological material through which the idea refers to other ideas and to the idea of God. Logical power and epistemological content, explication and expression, formal cause and material cause are joined in the autonomy of the attribute of thought and the automatism of the mind that thinks. The adequate idea represents something truthfully, represents the order and connection of things, only because it develops the order of its form and the automatic connections of its material in the attribute of thought.

One sees, then, what is lacking in the inadequate idea and the imagination. The inadequate idea is like a consequence without its premises (II, 28, dem.). It is separated from, deprived of its two—formal and material—premises, since it is not formally explained by our power of comprehending, does not materially express its own cause, and remains attached to an order of fortuitous encounters instead of attaining the concatenation of ideas. It is in this sense that the false has no form and does not consist of anything positive (II, 33). And yet there is something positive in the inadequate idea: when I see the sun two hundred feet away, this perception, this affection does represent the effect of the sun on me, although the affection is separated from the causes that explain it (II, 35; IV, 1). What is positive in the inadequate idea must be defined in the following way: it *involves* the lowest degree of our power of understanding, without being *explained* by it, and *indicates* its own cause without *expressing* it (II, 17 schol.). "The mind does not err from the fact that it imagines, but only insofar as it is considered to lack an idea that excludes the existence of those things that it imagines to be present to it. For if the mind, while it imagined nonexistent things as present to it, at the same time knew that those things did not exist, it would, of course, attribute this power of imagining to a virtue of its nature, not to a vice" (II, 17, schol.).

The whole problem is therefore: How do we manage to have,

to form adequate ideas, since our natural condition determines us to have only inadequate ideas? We have defined the adequate idea without having the least idea of how we can attain it. The answer will be given by the production of *common notions;* and even here Spinoza begins by defining what the common notions are (Part II), before showing how we can produce them (Part V). We have considered the problem above (cf. Common Notions). But an idea, whether adequate or inadequate, is always followed by feelings-affects (*affectus*) that result from it as from their cause, although they are of a different nature. Inadequate and adequate thus describe an idea first of all, but they also describe a cause (III, def. 1). Since the adequate idea is explained by our power of comprehending, we do not have an adequate idea without being ourselves the adequate cause of the feelings that result, and that consequently are active (III, def. 2). On the contrary, insofar as we have inadequate ideas, we are the inadequate cause of our feelings, which are passions (III, 1 and 2).

IMAGE, IMAGINATION. Cf. Affections, Common Notions, Idea.

IMMANENCE. Cf. Attribute, Cause, Eminence, Nature.

INDIVIDUAL.—This term sometimes designates the unity of an idea in the attribute of thought and its object in a determinate attribute (*Ethics,* II, 21, schol.). But more generally, it designates the complex organization of the existing mode in any attribute.

1. The mode has a singular essence, which is a degree of power or an intensive part, a *pars aeterna* (V, 40), each essence being utterly simple and agreeing with all the others. 2. This essence is expressed in a characteristic relation, which is itself an eternal truth concerning existence (for example, a certain relation of motion and rest in extension). 3. The mode passes into existence when its relation actually subsumes an infinity of extensive parts. These parts are determined to enter into the characteristic relation, or to realize it, through the operation of an external determinism. The mode ceases to exist when its parts are determined from without to enter into a different relation, which is not com-

patible with the former one. Duration is said, then, not of the relations themselves, but of the way in which actual parts are subsumed under this or that relation. And the degrees of power, which all agree with one another insofar as they constitute the essences of modes, necessarily come into conflict in existence inasmuch as the extensive parts that pertain to one degree under a certain relation can be conquered by another under a new relation (IV, ax. and V, 37, schol.).

An individual is thus always composed of an infinity of extensive parts, insofar as they pertain to a singular essence of mode, under a characteristic relation (II, after 13). These parts (*corpora simplicissima*) are not themselves individuals; there is no essence of each one, they are defined solely by their exterior determinism, and they always exist as infinities; but they always constitute an existing individual to the extent that an infinity of them enters into this or that relation characterizing this or that essence of mode; they constitute the infinitely varied modal material of existence. These infinite sets are those which the letter to Meyer defines as greater or lesser, and as relating to something limited. Indeed, given two existing modes, if one has a degree of power double that of the other, it will have under its relation an infinity of parts two times greater than the other under its relation, and can even treat the other as one of its parts. To be sure, when two modes encounter one another in existence, it can happen that one destroys the other, or on the contrary helps it preserve itself, depending on whether the characteristic relations of the two modes decompose each other or compound with one another directly. But there are always, in every encounter, *some* relations existing as eternal truths. So that, according to this order, Nature in its entirety is conceived as an Individual that composes all relations and possesses all the sets of intensive parts with their different degrees.

As a modal process, individuation is always quantitative, according to Spinoza. But there are two very different individuations: that of essence, defined by the singularity of each degree of power as a simple *intensive part,* indivisible and eternal; and that of existence, defined by the divisible set of *extensive parts*

that temporarily actualize the eternal relation of motion and rest in which the modal essence is expressed. (Concerning these two kinds of "parts" in the mind, cf. V).

INFINITE.—*Letter XII* to Meyer distinguishes three infinites:

1. That which is unlimited by nature (either infinite in its kind as is each attribute, or absolutely infinite as is substance). This infinite forms part of the properties of a Being involving necessary existence, together with eternity, simplicity, and indivisibility: "For, if the nature of this being were limited, and conceived as limited, that nature would beyond the said limits be conceived as nonexistent" (*Letter XXXV*);

2. That which is unlimited by virtue of its cause. Here Spinoza is referring to the immediate infinite modes in which the attributes are expressed absolutely. And doubtless these modes are indivisible; yet they have an actual infinity of parts, all of which agree with and are indissociable from one another: thus the modal essences contained in the attribute (each essence is an intensive part or a degree). It is for this reason that, if we consider one of these essences abstractly, apart from the others and from the substance that produces them, we apprehend it as limited, external to the others. Moreover, since the essence does not determine the existence and duration of the mode, we apprehend duration as something which may be more or less, and existence as being composed of more or fewer parts; we apprehend them abstractly as divisible quantities;

3. That which cannot be equal to any number, although it is more or less large and comprises a maximum and a minimum (the example of the sum of inequalities of distance between two nonconcentric circles, in the letter to Meyer). This infinite refers to the finite existing modes and to the mediate infinite modes which they compose under certain relations. Indeed, each modal essence as a degree of power comprises a maximum and a minimum; and insofar as the mode exists, an infinity of extensive parts (*corpora simplicissima*) pertain to it under the relation that corresponds to its essence. This infinite is not defined by the number of its parts, since the latter always exist as an infinity that exceeds any number; and it can be more or less large,

since to an essence whose degree of power is double that of another there corresponds an infinity of extensive parts two times greater. This variable infinite is that of the existing modes, and the infinite set of all these sets, together with the characteristic relations, constitutes the mediate infinite mode. But when we conceive the essence of a mode abstractly, we also conceive its existence abstractly, measuring it, counting it, and making it depend on an arbitrarily determined number of parts (cf. #2).

Hence there is no indefinite that is not abstractly conceived. Every infinite is actual.

INTELLECT (INFINITE INTELLECT, IDEA OF GOD).— The intellect, whether infinite or finite, is only a mode of the attribute of thought (*Ethics,* I, 31). In this sense, it does not constitute the essence of God any more than does will. Those who ascribe intellect and will to God's essence conceive God according to anthropological or even anthropomorphic predicates. As a result, they can save the distinction between essences only by invoking a divine intellect that surpasses our own, has a pre-eminent status compared to ours, and is related to ours through simple analogy. In this way, one falls into all the confusions of an equivocal language (as with the word *dog* which designates both a heavenly constellation and a barking animal, I, 17, schol.).

The *Ethics* conducts a twofold critique of a divine intellect which would be that of a legislator, containing models or possibilities according to which God would rule creation, and of a divine will which would be that of a prince or tyrant, creating *ex nihilo* (I, 17, schol.; 33, schol. 2). These are the two great misunderstandings that distort both the notion of necessity and the notion of freedom.

The true status of the infinite intellect is captured in the following three propositions: 1. God produces with the same necessity by which he understands *himself.* 2. God understands all that he produces. 3. God produces the form in which he understands himself and understands all things. These three propositions show, each in its own way, that the possible does not exist, that all that is possible is necessary (God does not conceive contingencies in his intellect, but 1. merely understands everything that

follows from his nature or his own essence; 2. necessarily understands everything that follows from his essence; 3. necessarily produces this understanding of himself and of things). It should be pointed out, however, that the necessity invoked by these three propositions is not the same in each case, and that the status of the intellect seems to vary.

According to the first, God produces as he understands himself and as he exists (II, 3, schol.). The necessity for God to understand himself appears to be not just based on the necessity of existing but equal to it. Hence the idea of God comprehends substance and the attributes, and produces an infinity of ideas just as substance produces an infinity of things in the attributes (II, 4). And there corresponds to the idea of God a power of thinking equal to that of existing and acting (II, 7). How does one reconcile these characteristics with the purely modal being of the infinite intellect? The answer is in the condition that the power of the idea of God must be understood *objectively:* "Whatever follows formally from God's infinite nature follows objectively in God from his idea in the same order and with the same connection" (*idem,* II, 7, cor.). So to the extent that it represents the attributes and the modes, the idea of God has a power equal to that which it represents. But this "objective" power would remain virtual, would not be actualized, contrary to all the requirements of Spinozism, if the idea of God and all the other ideas that follow from it were not themselves *formed*—that is, if they did not have their own formal being. Now, this formal being of the idea can only be a mode of the attribute of thought. Indeed, this is how the idea of God and the infinite intellect are distinguished terminologically from one another; the idea of God is the idea in its objective being, and the infinite intellect is the same idea considered in its formal being. The two aspects are inseparable; one cannot dissociate the first aspect from the second except by making the power of comprehending an unactualized power.

In the first place, this complex status of the idea of God as infinite intellect is what explains that the idea of God has as much unity or substance as God himself, but is capable of imparting

this unity to the modes themselves—hence the central role of II, 4. Secondly, this complex status accounts for the attribute of thought, as we will see when we consider the relations of the mind and the body.

Furthermore, our intellect is explained as an integral part of the divine intellect (II, 11, cor.; 43 schol.). Indeed, the fact that the infinite intellect is a mode explains the adequation of our intellect to the infinite intellect. Of course we do not know everything pertaining to God; we only know the attributes that are involved in our being. But all that we know of God is absolutely adequate, and an adequate idea is in us as it is in God. The idea that we have of God himself—that is, what we know of him—is therefore the idea that God has of himself (V, 36). So the absolutely adequate character of our knowledge is not just based in a negative way on the "devalorization" of the infinite intellect, reduced to the condition of a mode; the positive basis is in the univocity of the attributes which have only one form in the substance whose essence they constitute and in the modes that imply them, so that our intellect and the infinite intellect may be modes, but they nonetheless objectively comprehend the corresponding attributes as they are formally. This is why the idea of God will play a fundamental role in adequate knowledge, being considered first according to a use that we make of it, in connection with the common notions (second kind of knowledge), then according to its own being insofar as we are a part of it (third kind).

JOY-SADNESS. Cf. Affections, Good, Power.

KNOWLEDGE (KINDS OF—). Knowledge is not the operation of a subject but the affirmation of the idea in the mind: "It is never we who affirm or deny something of a thing; it is the thing itself that affirms or denies something of itself in us" (*Short Treatise,* II, 16, 5). Spinoza rejects any analysis of knowledge that would distinguish two elements, intellect and will. Knowledge is a self-affirmation of the idea, an "explication" or development of the idea, in the same sense that an essence is explained through its properties or that a cause is explained through its

effects (*Ethics,* I, ax. 4; I, 17). Conceived in this way, knowledge as an affirmation of the idea is distinguished: 1. from consciousness as a reduplication of the idea; 2. from affects as determinations of the *conatus* by ideas.

But the kinds of knowledge are modes of existence, because knowing embraces the types of consciousness and the types of affects that correspond to it, so that the whole capacity for being affected is filled. Spinoza's exposition of the kinds of knowledge varies considerably from one work to another, but this is chiefly because the central role of the common notions is not established until the *Ethics.* In the definitive formulation (II, 40, schol. 2) the first kind is defined above all by equivocal *signs,* that is, by indicative signs that involve an inadequate knowledge of things, and imperative signs that involve an inadequate knowledge of laws. This first kind expresses the natural conditions of our existence insofar as we do not have adequate ideas. It is constituted by the linking together of inadequate ideas and of the affects-passions that result from them.

The second kind is defined by the common notions, that is, by the composition of relations, the effort of reason to organize the encounters between existing modes according to relations that agree with one another, and either the *surpassing* or the *replacement* of passive affects by active affects that follow from the common notions themselves. But the common notions, without being abstracts, are still general ideas that do not apply to the existing modes; it is in this sense that they do not give us knowledge of the singular essence. It pertains to the third kind of knowledge to reveal the essences: the attribute is then no longer grasped as a common (i.e., general) notion applicable to all the existing modes, but as a (univocal) form common to the substance whose essence it constitutes and to the essences of mode that it contains as singular essences (V, 36 schol.). The figure corresponding to the third kind is a triangle that joins together the adequate ideas of ourselves, of God, and of other things.

The break is between the first and the second kinds, since adequate ideas and active affects begin with the second (II, 41 and 42). From the second to the third there is a difference in nature,

but the third has a *causa fiendi* in the second (V, 28). It is the idea of God that enables us to go from the one to the other. Actually, the idea of God pertains in a sense to the second kind, being linked to the common notions; but, not being itself a common notion, since it comprehends the essence of God, it forces us, given this new perspective, to pass to the third kind which concerns the essence of God, our singular essence, and all the singular essences of other things. It is true that when we say the second kind is a *causa fiendi* of the third, this expression should be understood more in an occasional sense than an actual sense, because the third kind does not occur, strictly speaking, but is eternal and is found as eternally given (V, 31 schol. and 33 schol.).

Moreover, between the first kind and the second, despite the break there is still a certain occasional relation that explains the possibility of the leap from one to the other. On the one hand, when we encounter bodies that agree with ours, we do not yet have the adequate idea of these other bodies or of ourselves, but we experience joyful passions (an increase of our power of acting) which still pertain to the first kind but lead us to form the adequate idea of what is common to these bodies and our own. On the other hand, the common notion in itself has complex harmonies with the confused images of the first kind, and relies on certain characteristics of the imagination. These two points constitute basic arguments in the theory of the *common notions.*

LAW. Cf. Sign, Society.

LOVE-HATRED. Cf. Affections.

METHOD.—1. The aim is not to make something known to us, but to make us understand our power of knowing. It is a matter of becoming conscious of this power: a reflexive knowledge, or an idea of the idea. But since the idea of the idea is worth what the first idea is worth, this *prise de conscience* assumes that we first have a true idea of some kind. It matters little which idea; it can be an idea that involves a fiction, such as that of a geometric being. It will enable us to understand our power of knowing all the better, without reference to a real object. The method thus

takes its starting point from geometry. Already in the *Treatise on the Intellect,* as we have seen with regard to the theory of abstraction, one begins with a geometric idea, even though this idea is imbued with fiction and does not represent anything in Nature. In the *Ethics* the theory of common notions makes possible an even more rigorous assignment of the starting point: one begins with substances, each one of which is qualified by an attribute; these substances are used as common notions and are analogous to geometric beings, but with no fiction involved. In any case, the true idea taken as a starting point is reflected in an idea of the idea that makes us understand our power of knowing. This is the formal aspect of the method.

2. But the true idea, related to our power of knowing, at the same time discovers its own inner content, which is not its representative content. At the same time that it is formally explained by our power of knowing, it materially expresses its own cause (whether this cause is a formal cause as cause of itself, or an efficient cause). The true idea, insofar as it expresses its cause, becomes an adequate idea and gives us a genetic definition. Thus in the *Treatise on the Intellect,* the geometric being is amenable to a *causal or genetic definition* from which all its properties follow at once; and in the *Ethics* one goes from ideas of substances, each qualified by an attribute, to the idea of a single substance possessing all the attributes (I, 9 and 10), as cause of itself (I, 11) and from which all properties follow (I, 16). The procedure is regressive, therefore, since it goes from knowledge of the thing to knowledge of the cause. But it is synthetic, since one does not just determine a property of the cause in terms of a known property of the effect, but one reaches an essence as the genetic reason for all the knowable properties. The method did not start from the idea of God, but it arrives there "as quickly as possible," according to this second aspect. One arrives at the idea of God, either as being the very cause insofar as it is the cause of itself (in the case of the *Ethics*), or as being what determines the cause to produce its effect (in the case of the *Treatise on the Intellect*);

3. As soon as one arrives at the idea of God, everything

changes. For, even from the viewpoint of the *Treatise on the Intellect,* all fictions are left behind, and what was still regressive in the synthetic method gives way to a progressive deduction in which all ideas connect with one another starting from the idea of God. From the viewpoint of the *Ethics,* the idea of God is closely linked to the common notions, to a use of the common notion, but is not itself a common notion; the common notion is capable of doing away with all generalities, carrying us from the essence of God to the essences of things as real singular beings. This connection of ideas does not derive from their representative order, or from the order of what they represent; on the contrary, they represent things as they are only because they connect according to their own autonomous order. The third aspect of the method, its progressive-synthetic character, combines the other two, the reflexive-formal aspect and the expressive-material aspect; the ideas connect with one another starting from the idea of God, insofar as they express their own cause and are explained by our power of comprehending. This is why the mind is said to be "like a spiritual automaton," since by unfolding the autonomous order of its own ideas it unfolds the order of the things represented (*Treatise on the Intellect,* 85).

The geometric method, as Spinoza conceives it, is perfectly suited to the first two aspects above: in the *Treatise on the Intellect,* by virtue of the special fictive character of the geometric beings and their amenability to a genetic definition; in the *Ethics,* by virtue of the deep affinity of the common notions with the geometric beings themselves. And the *Ethics* explicitly acknowledges that its entire method, from the beginning to Part V, 21, proceeds geometrically because it is based on the second kind of knowledge, i.e., on the common notions (cf. V, 36, schol.). But the problem is this: What happens at the third stage, when we cease using the idea of God as a common notion, when we go from the essence of God to the singular essences of real beings, that is, when we reach the third kind of knowledge? The true problem of the scope of the geometric method is not posed simply by the difference between geometric beings and real beings, but by the difference, at the level of real beings, between

knowledge of the second kind and knowledge of the third kind. Now the two famous texts that liken demonstrations to "eyes of the mind" bear precisely on the third kind, in a domain of experience and vision where the common notions are surpassed (*Theological-Political Treatise,* chap. 13, and *Ethics,* V, 23, schol.). It must be concluded, then, that Spinoza's general method does not assign a merely propaedeutic value to the geometric procedure, but, at the end of its movement, and through its original formal and material interpretation, imparts to the geometric method sufficient force to go beyond its ordinary limits, ridding it of the fictions and even the generalities that accompany its restricted use (*Letter LXXXIII,* to Tschirnhaus).

MIND AND BODY (PARALLELISM).—The word *soul* is not employed in the *Ethics* except in rare polemical instances. Spinoza replaces it with the word *mind (mens).* Soul is too burdened with theological prejudices and does not account: 1. for the true nature of the mind, which consists in being an idea, and the idea of something; 2. for the true relation with the body, which is precisely the object of this idea; 3. for real eternity insofar as it differs in nature from pseudo-immortality; 4. for the pluralist composition of the mind, as a composite idea that possesses as many parts as faculties.

The body is a mode of extension; the mind, a mode of thinking. Since the individual has an essence, the individual mind is constituted first of all by what is primary in the modes of thinking, that is, by an idea (*Ethics,* II, ax. 3 and prop. 11). The mind is therefore the idea *of* the corresponding body. Not that the idea is defined by its representative power; but the idea that we are is to thought and to other ideas what the body that we are is to extension and to other bodies. There is an automatism of thinking (*Treatise on the Intellect,* 85), just as there is a mechanism of the body capable of astonishing us (*Ethics,* III, 2, schol.). Each thing is at once body and mind, thing and idea; it is in this sense that all individuals are *animata* (II, 13, schol.). The representative power of the idea simply follows from this correspondence.

The same is true of the ideas that we have, and not just of the idea that we are. For we do not have the idea that we are, at least

not immediately: it is in God insofar as he is affected with an infinity of different ideas (II, 11, cor.). What we have is the idea of that which *happens* to our body, the idea of our body's affections, and it is only through such ideas that we know immediately our body and others, our mind and others (II, 12–31). So there is a correspondence between the affections of the body and the ideas of the mind, a correspondence by which these ideas represent these affections.

What explains this system of correspondence? What must be ruled out is any real action between the body and the mind, since they depend on two different attributes, each attribute being conceived through itself (III, 2, dem.; V, pref.). The body and the mind—what happens to one and what happens to the other respectively—are therefore autonomous. But there is nevertheless a correspondence between the two, because God, as a single substance possessing all the attributes, does not produce anything without producing it in each attribute according to one and the same order (II, 7, schol.). So there is one and the same order in thought and in extension, one and the same order of bodies and minds. But the originality of Spinoza's doctrine is not defined by this correspondence without real causality, nor even by this identity of order. Indeed, similar tenets are common among the Cartesians; one can deny real causality between the body and the mind and still maintain an ideal or occasional causality; one can affirm an ideal correspondence between the two, according to which, as tradition has it, a passion of the soul corresponds to an action of the body, and vice versa; one can affirm an identity of order between the two without their having the same "dignity" or perfection; for example, Leibniz coins the word *parallelism* to describe his own system without real causality, where the series of the body and the series of the mind are modeled rather on the asymptote and on projection. What accounts for the originality of the Spinozist doctrine then? Why is it that the word *parallelism*, which does not come from Spinoza, suits him perfectly nevertheless?

The answer lies in the fact that there is not just an identity "of order" between bodies and minds, between the phenomena of

the body and the phenomena of the mind (*isomorphism*). There is also an identity of "connection" between the two series (*isonomy or equivalence*), that is, an equal valence, an equality of principle, between extension and thought, and between what occurs in one and in the other. In terms of the Spinozan critique of all eminence, of all transcendence and equivocity, no attribute is superior to another, none is reserved for the creator, none is relegated to the created beings and to their imperfection. Thus, the series of the body and the series of the mind present not only the same order but the same chain of connections under equal principles. Finally, there is an identity of being (*isology*) in that the same thing, the same modification is produced in the attribute of thought under the mode of a mind, and in the attribute of extension under the mode of a body. The practical consequence of this is immediate: contrary to the traditional moral view, all that is action in the body is also action in the mind, and all that is passion in the mind is also passion in the body (III, 2, schol.: "The order of actions and passions of our body is, by nature, at one with the order of actions and passions of the mind").

It should be noted that the parallelism of the mind and the body is the first case of a general *epistemological parallelism* between the idea and its object. This is why Spinoza invokes the axiom according to which the knowledge of an effect involves the knowledge of its cause (I, ax. 4; II, 7, dem.). More exactly, it is demonstrated that to every idea there corresponds something (since nothing could be known without a cause that brings it into being) and to each thing there corresponds an idea (since God forms an idea of his essence and of all that follows from it). But this parallelism between an idea and its object only implies the correspondence, the equivalence, and the identity between a mode of thinking and a different mode considered under a specific attribute (in our case, extension as the only other attribute that we know: thus the mind is the idea of the body, and of nothing else). Now, on the contrary, the result of the demonstration of parallelism (II, 7, schol.) amounts to an *ontological parallelism* between modes under all the attributes, modes that differ only in their attribute. According to the first parallelism, an idea in

thought and its object in a different attribute form one and the same "individual" (II, 21, schol.); according to the second, modes under all the attributes form one and the same modification. The disparity between the two is pointed out by Tschirnhaus (*Letter LXV*): whereas a single mode under each attribute expresses the substantial modification, in thought there are several modes or ideas, one of which expresses the mode corresponding to attribute A, another the mode corresponding to attribute B . . . "Why does the mind, which represents a certain modification, the same modification being expressed not only in extension but in infinite other ways, perceive the modification only as expressed through extension, that is, the human body, and not as expressed through any other attribute?"

This *multiplication* of ideas is a privilege in *extension.* But this is not the only privilege of the attribute of thought. A second privilege, in *repetition,* consists in the *redoubling* of the idea that constitutes consciousness: the idea that represents an object has a formal being itself under the attribute of thought, and is therefore the object of another idea that represents it, to infinity. Further, a third privilege, in *comprehension,* consists in the power which the idea has to represent substance itself and its attributes, although the idea is only a mode of this substance under the attribute of thought.

These privileges of the attribute of thought are based on the complex status of the idea of God or the infinite intellect. The idea of God objectively comprehends substance and the attributes, but must be formed as a mode under the attribute of thought. Consequently, as many ideas must be formed as there are of formally distinct attributes. And each idea, in its own formal being, must in turn be objectively comprehended by another idea. But these privileges do not disrupt the parallelism; on the contrary, they are an integral part of it. For the ontological parallelism (one modification for all the modes that differ in attribute) is founded on the equality of all the attributes as forms of essences and forces of existence (including thought). The epistemological parallelism is founded on an entirely different equality, that of two powers, the formal power of existing (con-

ditioned by all the attributes) and the objective power of thinking (conditioned only by the power of thought). And what founds the passage from the epistemological parallelism to the ontological parallelism is again the idea of God, because it alone authorizes the transfer of unity from substance to the modes (II, 4). The final formula of parallelism is therefore: one and the same *modification* is expressed by one mode under each attribute, each mode forming an *individual* together with the idea that represents it under the attribute of thought. The real privileges of the attribute of thought in parallelism should not be confused with the apparent breaks. The latter are of two kinds: 1. in the case of the existing mode, the way in which the body is taken as a controlling model for the study of the mind (II, 13, schol.; III, 2, schol.); 2. in the case of the modal essence, the way in which the mind is taken as an exclusive model, to the point of saying that it is "without relation to the body" (V, 20, schol.). It should be noted first of all that, the mind being a highly composite idea (II, 15), these breaks do not concern the same parts. The model of the body is valid for the mind as an idea that involves the existing body, hence for all perishable parts of the mind that are grouped under the name of imagination (V, 20, schol., 21, 39, 40), that is, for the ideas of affections that we have. The model of pure mind, on the contrary, is valid for the mind as an idea that expresses the essence of the body, hence for the eternal part of mind called the intellect, that is, for the idea that we are, considered in its internal relationship with the idea of God and the ideas of other things. Understood in this way, the breaks are only apparent. For, in the first case, it is not at all a matter of giving a privilege to the body over the mind; it is a matter of acquiring a knowledge of the powers of the body in order to discover, in parallel fashion, powers of the mind that escape consciousness. Thus instead of merely invoking consciousness and concluding hastily in favor of the alleged power of the "soul" over the body, one will engage in a comparison of powers that leads us to discover more in the body than we know, and hence more in the mind than we are conscious of (II, 13, schol.). Nor, in the second case, is it a matter of giving a privi-

lege to the mind over the body: there is a singular essence of this or that body, just as there is of the mind (V, 22). True, this essence appears only insofar as it is expressed by the idea that constitutes the essence of the mind (the idea that we are). But there is no idealism in this; Spinoza only wants to make clear, in keeping with the axiom of epistemological parallelism, that the essences of modes have a cause through which they must be conceived; hence there is an idea that expresses the essence of the body and that makes us conceive this essence through its cause (V, 22 and 30).

MODE.—"The affections of a substance; that is, that which is in something else and is conceived through something else" (*Ethics,* I, def. 5). Constitutes the second term of the alternative of that which is: being in itself (substance), being in something else (I, ax. 1).

One of the essential points of Spinozism is in its identification of the ontological relationship of substances and modes with the epistemological relationship of essences and properties and the physical relationship of cause and effect. The cause and effect relationship is inseparable from an immanence through which the cause remains in itself in order to produce. Conversely, the relationship between essence and properties is inseparable from a dynamism through which properties exist as infinities, are not inferred by the intellect *explaining* substance without being produced by substance *explaining itself* or expressing itself in the intellect, and, finally, enjoy an essence through which they are inferred. The two aspects coincide in that the modes differ from substance in existence and in essence, and yet are produced in those same attributes that constitute the essence of substance. That God produces "an infinity of things in an infinity of modes" (*Ethics,* I, 16) means that effects are indeed things, that is, real beings which have an essence and existence of their own, but do not exist and have no being apart from the attributes in which they are produced. In this way, there is a univocity of Being (attributes), although that which is (of which Being is affirmed) is not at all the same (substance or modes).

Spinoza repeatedly underscores the irreducibility of the modes to mere fictions, or beings of reason. This is because the modes have a specificity that requires original principles (for example, the unity of diversity in the mode, *Letter XXXII,* to Oldenburg). And the specificity of the mode has to do less with its finitude than with the type of infinite that corresponds to it.

The *immediate infinite mode* (infinite intellect in the case of thought, motion and rest in the case of extension) is infinite by its cause and not by nature. This infinite comprises an infinity of actual parts inseparable from one another (for example, ideas of essences as parts of the idea of God, or intellects as parts of the infinite intellect; essences of bodies as elementary forces). As concerns extension, the *mediate infinite mode* is the *facies totius universi,* that is, all the relations of motion and rest that govern the determinations of the modes as existing; and no doubt, as concerns thought, the ideal relations governing the determinations of ideas as ideas of existing modes. Thus a finite mode cannot be separated: 1. by its essence, from the infinity of other essences that all agree with one another in the immediate infinite mode; 2. by its existence, from the infinity of other existing modes that are causes of it under different relations implied in the mediate infinite mode; 3. or finally, from the infinity of extensive parts that each existing mode actually possesses under its own relation.

NATURE.—*Natura naturans* (as substance and cause) and *Natura naturata* (as effect and mode) are interconnected through a mutual immanence: on one hand, the cause remains in itself in order to produce; on the other hand, the effect or product remains in the cause (*Ethics,* I, 29, schol.). This dual condition enables us to speak of Nature in general, without any other specification. Naturalism in this case is what satisfies the three forms of univocity: the univocity of attributes, where the attributes in the same form constitute the essence of God as naturing nature and contain the essences of modes as natured nature; the univocity of the cause, where the cause of all things is affirmed of God as the genesis of natured nature, in the same sense that he is the cause of himself, as the genealogy of naturing nature;

the univocity of modality, where necessity qualifies both the order of natured nature and the organization of naturing nature.

As for the idea of an order of natured nature, one must distinguish between several meanings: 1. the correspondence between things in the different attributes; 2. the connection of things in each attribute (immediate infinite mode, mediate infinite mode, finite modes); 3. the internal agreement of all the essences of modes with one another, as parts of the divine power; 4. the composition of relations that characterize the existing modes according to their essence, a composition that is realized according to eternal laws (a mode existing under its relation compounds with certain others; however, its relation can also be decomposed by others—so this still involves an internal order, but an order of agreements and disagreements between existences, *Ethics,* II, 29, schol.; V, 18, schol.); 5. the external encounters between existing modes, which take place one upon the other, without regard to the order of composition of relations (in this case we are dealing with an extrinsic order, that of the inadequate: the order of encounters, the "common order of Nature," which is said to be "fortuitous" since it does not follow the rational order of relations that enter into composition, but which is necessary nonetheless since it obeys the laws of an external determinism operating proximately; cf. II, 29, cor. and II, 36, according to which there is an order of the inadequate).

NECESSARY.—The Necessary is the only modality of what is; all that is is necessary, either through itself or through its cause. Necessity is thus the third figure of the univocal (univocity of modality, after the univocity of the attributes and the univocity of the cause).

What is necessary is: 1. the existence of substance insofar as it is involved by its essence; 2. the production by substance of an infinity of modes, insofar as "cause of all things" is affirmed in the same sense as cause of itself; 3. the infinite modes, insofar as they are produced in the attribute considered in its absolute nature or modified with an infinite modification (they are necessary by virtue of their cause); 4. the essences of finite modes, which all agree with one another and form the actual infinity of

the constituent parts of the mediate infinite mode (relational necessity); 5. the compositions of existence according to the relations of motion and rest in the modes; 6. the purely extrinsic encounters between existing modes, or rather between the extensive parts that pertain to them under the preceding relations and the determinations that follow therefrom for each one: birth, death, affections (proximate necessity).

The categories of possible and contingent are illusions, but illusions based on the organization of the finite existing mode. For the mode's essence does not determine its existence; thus, if we only consider the essence of the mode, its existence is neither posited nor excluded, and the mode is apprehended as contingent (*Ethics,* IV, def. 3). And even if we consider extrinsic causes or determinations that make the mode exist (cf. #6), we still only apprehend it as possible in that we do not know if these determinations are themselves determined to act. In any case, existence is necessarily determined, both from the standpoint of relations as eternal truths or laws and from the standpoint of extrinsic determinations or particular causes (#5 and #6): so contingency and possibility only express our ignorance. Spinoza's critique has two culminating points: nothing is possible in Nature; that is, the essences of nonexisting modes are not models or possibilities in a divine legislative intellect; there is nothing contingent in Nature; that is, existences are not produced through the action of a divine will which, in the manner of a prince, could have chosen a different world and different laws.

NEGATION.—The Spinozan theory of negation (negation's radical elimination, its status as an abstraction and a fiction) is based on the difference between *distinction,* always positive, and negative *determination:* all determination is negation (*Letter L,* to Jelles).

1. The attributes are really distinct; that is, the nature of each one must be conceived without any reference to another. Each one is infinite in its kind or nature, and cannot be limited or determined by something of the same nature. One cannot even say that the attributes are defined by their opposition to one another: the logic of real distinction defines each nature in itself,

through its independent positive essence. Every nature is positive, hence unlimited and undetermined in its kind, so that it exists of necessity (*Letter XXXVI,* to Hudde). Corresponding to positivity as infinite essence there is affirmation as necessary existence (*Ethics,* I, 7 and 8). That is why all the attributes, which are really distinct precisely by virtue of their distinction without opposition, are at the same time affirmed of one and the same substance whose essence and existence they express (I, 10, schol. 1 and 19). The attributes are both the positive forms of the essence of substance and the affirmative forms of its existence. The logic of real distinction is a logic of coessential positivities and coexistent affirmations.

2. In return, the finite is clearly limited and determined: limited in its nature by something else of the same nature; determined in its existence by something which denies its existence in such and such a place or at such and such a moment. The Spinozan expression *modo certo et determinatio* means precisely: in a limited and determined mode. The existing finite mode is limited in its essence and determined in its existence. The limitation concerns its essence, and the determination, its existence: the two figures of the negative. But all this is true only abstractly, that is, when one considers the mode in itself, apart from what causes it to be, in essence and in existence.

For the essence of the mode is a degree of power. This degree in itself does not signify a limit or bound, an opposition to other degrees, but an intrinsic positive distinction such that all the essences or degrees fit together and form an infinite set by virtue of their common cause. As for the existing mode, it is true that it is determined to exist and to act, that it opposes other modes, and that it passes to greater or lesser perfections. But (1) to say that it is determined to exist is to say that an infinity of parts is determined from without to enter into the relation that characterizes its essence. These extrinsic parts pertain then to its essence but do not constitute it; this essence lacks nothing when the mode does not yet exist or no longer exists (IV, end of the preface). Insofar as it exists, it affirms its existence through all its parts: its existence is therefore a new type of distinction, an ex-

trinsic distinction by which the essence is affirmed in duration (III, 7); (2) the existing mode opposes other modes that threaten to destroy its parts; it is affected by other, harmful or beneficial modes. And depending on the affections of its parts, it augments its power of acting or passes to a lesser perfection (joy and sadness). But at each moment it has as much perfection or power of acting as it can have in terms of the affections that it experiences. So its existence does not cease to be an affirmation, varying only according to its qualified affections (which always involve something positive); the existing mode always affirms a force of existing (*vis existendi*, gen. def. of the affects).

The existence of the modes is a system of variable affirmations, and the essence of the modes, a system of multiple positivities. The Spinozan principle asserts that negation is nothing, because absolutely nothing ever lacks anything. Negation is a being of reason, or rather of comparison, which results from our grouping together all sorts of distinct beings so as to refer them to one and the same fictitious ideal, in the name of which we say that one or another of them falls short of the ideal (*Letter XIX*, to Blyenbergh). It makes as much sense to say that a stone is not a man, a dog is not a circle, or a circle is not a sphere. No nature lacks that which constitutes another nature or that which pertains to another nature. Thus an attribute does not lack the nature of another attribute, being as perfect as it can be in terms of what constitutes its essence; and even an existing mode, compared to itself insofar as it passes to a lesser perfection (for example, going blind, or becoming sad and hateful), is always as perfect as it can be in terms of the affections that now pertain to its essence. The comparison of a being with itself is not any more justified than the comparison with something else (*Letter XXI*, to Blyenbergh). In short, every privation is a negation, and negation is nothing. In order to eliminate the negative, it suffices to reintegrate each thing into the type of infinite that corresponds to it (it is false that the infinite as such does not support distinction).

The argument according to which negation is nothing (nothingness having no properties) is common in so-called pre-Kant-

ian philosophy. But Spinoza gives it a profoundly original meaning and recasts it completely by turning it back against the hypothesis of creation, and by showing how nonbeing or nothingness is never included in the nature of something. "To say that the nature of the thing required this limitation . . . is to say nothing. For the nature of the thing cannot require anything unless it exists" (*Short Treatise,* I, chap. 2, 5, n. 2). Practically, the negative is eliminated through Spinoza's radical critique of all the passions that derive from sadness.

NUMBER. Cf. Abstractions.

OBEY. Cf. Sign, Society.

ORDER. Cf. Nature.

PASSION. Cf. Affections.

POSSIBLE. Cf. Intellect, Necessary.

POWER.—One of the basic points of the *Ethics* consists in denying that God has any power (*potestas*) analogous to that of a tyrant, or even an enlightened prince. God is not will, not even a will enlightened by a legislative intellect. God does not conceive possibilities in his intellect, which he would realize through his will. The divine intellect is only a mode through which God comprehends nothing other than his own essence and what follows from it; his will is only a mode according to which all consequences follow from his essence or from that which he comprehends. So he has no *potestas* but only a *potentia* identical to his essence. Through this power, God is also the cause of all things that follow from his essence, and the cause of himself, that is, of his existence as it is involved by his essence (*Ethics,* I, 34).

All *potentia* is act, active and actual. The identity of power and action is explained by the following: all power is inseparable from a capacity for being affected, and this capacity for being affected is constantly and necessarily filled by affections that realize it. The word *potestas* has a legitimate use here: "Whatever is in God's power (*in potestate*) must be so comprehended by his es-

sence that it necessarily follows from it" (I, 35). In other words: to *potentia* as essence there corresponds a *potestas* as a capacity for being affected, which capacity is filled by the affections or modes that God produces necessarily, God being unable to undergo action but being the active cause of these affections.

Divine power is twofold: an absolute power of existing, which entails a power of producing all things; an absolute power of thinking, hence of self-comprehension, which entails the power of comprehending all that is produced. The two powers are like two halves of the Absolute. They should not be confused with the two infinite attributes that we know; it is obvious that the attribute of extension does not exhaust the power of existing, but that the latter is an unconditioned totality which possesses *a priori* all the attributes as *formal* conditions. As for the attribute of thought, it forms part of these formal conditions that relate to the power of existing, since all ideas have a formal being through which they exist in that attribute. It is true that the attribute of thought has another aspect: by itself it is the entire *objective* condition which the absolute power of thinking possesses *a priori* as an unconditioned totality. We have seen how this theory, far from being inconsistent with parallelism, was an essential component of it. The important thing is not to confuse the strict equality of the attributes relative to the power of acting, and the strict equality of the two powers relative to absolute essence.

The essence of the mode in turn is a degree of power, a part of the divine power, i.e., an intensive part or a degree of intensity: "Man's power, insofar as it is explained through his actual essence, is part of the infinite power of God or Nature" (IV, 4). When the mode passes into existence, an infinity of extensive parts are determined from without to come under the relation corresponding to its essence or its degree of power. Then and only then, this essence is itself determined as *conatus* or appetite (*Ethics,* III, 7). It tends in fact to persevere in existing. Precisely because the modal essence is not a possibility, because it is a physical reality that lacks nothing, it does not tend to pass into existence; but it tends to persevere in existing, once the mode is

determined to exist, that is, to subsume under its relation an infinity of extensive parts. To persevere is to endure; hence the *conatus* involves an indefinite duration (III, 8).

Just as the capacity for being affected (*potestas*) corresponds to the essence of God as power (*potentia*), an ability (*aptus*) to be affected corresponds to the essence of the existing mode as a degree of power (*conatus*). This is why the *conatus*, in a second determination, is a tendency to maintain and maximize the ability to be affected (IV, 38). Concerning this notion of ability, cf. *Ethics*, II, 13, schol.; III, post. 1 and 2; V, 39. The difference consists in this: in the case of substance, the capacity for being affected is necessarily filled by active affections, since substance produces them (the modes themselves). In the case of the existing mode, its ability to be affected is also realized at every moment, but first by affections (*affectio*) and affects (*affectus*) that do not have the mode as their adequate cause, that are produced in it by other existing modes; these affections and affects are therefore imaginations and passions. The feelings-affects (*affectus*) are exactly the figures taken by the *conatus* when it is determined to do this or that, by an affection (*affectio*) that occurs to it. These affections that determine the *conatus* are a cause of consciousness: the *conatus* having become conscious of itself under this or that affect is called desire, desire always being a desire for something (III, def. of desire).

One sees why, from the moment the mode exists, its essence as a degree of power is determined as a *conatus*, that is, an effort or tendency. Not a tendency to pass into existence, but to maintain and affirm existence. This does not mean that power ceases to be actual; but so long as we consider the pure essences of mode, all of them agree with one another as intensive parts of the divine power. The same is not true of the existing modes; insofar as extensive parts belong to each one under the relation that corresponds to its essence or degree of power, an existing mode can always induce the parts of another to come under a new relation. The existing mode whose relation is thus decomposed can weaken as a result, and even die (IV, 39). In this case, the duration that it enveloped as an indefinite duration is terminated

from without. Here everything is a struggle of powers therefore; the existing modes do not necessarily agree with one another. "There is no singular thing in nature than which there is not another more powerful and stronger. Whatever one is given, there is another more powerful by which the first can be destroyed" (IV, ax). "This axiom concerns singular things insofar as they are considered in relation to a certain time and place" (V, 37, schol.). If death is inevitable, this is not at all because death is internal to the existing mode; on the contrary, it is because the existing mode is necessarily open to the exterior, because it necessarily experiences passions, because it necessarily encounters other existing modes capable of endangering one of its vital relations, because the extensive parts belonging to it under its complex relation do not cease to be determined and affected from without. But just as the essence of the mode had no tendency to pass into existence, it loses nothing by losing existence, since it only loses the extensive parts that did not constitute the essence itself. "No singular thing can be called more perfect for having persevered in existing for a longer time, for the duration of things cannot be determined from their essence" (IV, pref.).

Thus, if the essence of the mode as a degree of power is only an effort or *conatus* as soon as the mode comes to exist, this is because the powers that necessarily agree in the element of essence (as intensive parts) no longer agree in the element of existence (insofar as extensive parts pertain provisionally to each power). The actual essence can only be determined in existence as an effort then, that is, a comparison with other powers that can always overcome it (IV, 3 and 5). We have to distinguish between two cases in this regard: either the existing mode encounters other existing modes that agree with it and bring their relation into composition with its relation (for example, in very different ways, a food, a loved being, an ally); or the existing mode encounters others that do not agree with it and tend to decompose it, to destroy it (a poison, a hated being, an enemy). In the first case, the existing mode's ability to be affected is fulfilled by joyful feelings-affects, affects based on joy and love; in the other case, by sad feelings-affects, based on sadness and ha-

tred. The ability to be affected is necessarily realized in every case, according to the given affections (ideas of the objects encountered). Even illness is a fulfillment in this sense. But the major difference between the two cases is the following: in sadness our power as a *conatus* serves entirely to invest the painful trace and to repel or destroy the object which is its cause. Our power is immobilized, and can no longer do anything but react. In joy, on the contrary, our power expands, compounds with the power of the other, and unites with the loved object (IV, 18). This is why, even when one assumes the capacity for being affected to be constant, some of our power diminishes or is restrained by affections of sadness, increases or is enhanced by affections of joy. It can be said that joy augments our *power of acting* and sadness diminishes it. And the *conatus* is the effort to experience joy, to increase the power of acting, to imagine and find that which is a cause of joy, which maintains and furthers this cause; and also an effort to avert sadness, to imagine and find that which destroys the cause of sadness (III, 12, 13, etc.). Indeed, the feeling-affect is the *conatus* itself insofar as it is determined to do this or that by a given idea of affection. The mode's power of acting (Spinoza sometimes says *force of existing*, gen. def. of the affects) is thus subject to considerable variations so long as the mode exists, although it essence remains the same and its ability to be affected is assumed to be constant. This is because joy, and what follows from it, fulfills the ability to be affected in such a way that the power of acting or force of existing increases relatively; the reverse is true of sadness. So the *conatus* is an effort to augment the power of acting or to experience joyful passions (third determination, III, 28).

But the constancy of the ability to be affected is only relative and is contained within certain limits. Obviously, the same individual does not have the same capacity for being affected as a child, an adult, and as an old person, or in good health and bad (IV, 39, schol.; V, 39, schol.). The effort to increase the power of acting cannot be separated therefore from an effort to carry the power of acting to a maximum (V, 39). We see no difficulty in reconciling the various definitions of the *conatus:* mechanical

(preserve, maintain, persevere); dynamic (increase, promote); apparently dialectical (oppose that which opposes, deny that which denies). For everything depends on and derives from an affirmative conception of essence: the degree of power as an affirmation of essence in God; the *conatus* as an affirmation of essence in existence; the relation of motion and rest or the capacity for being affected as a maximum position and a minimum position; the variations of the power of acting or force of existing within these positive limits.

In any case, the *conatus* defines the *right* of the existing mode. All that I am determined *to do* in order to continue existing (destroy what doesn't agree with me, what harms me, preserve what is useful to me or suits me) *by means of* given affections (ideas of objects), *under* determinate affects (joy and sadness, love and hate . . .)—all this is my natural right. This right is strictly identical with my power and is independent of any order of ends, of any consideration of duties, since the *conatus* is the first foundation, the *primum movens,* the efficient and not the final cause. This right is not opposed "either to struggles, to hatreds, to anger, to trickery, or to absolutely anything the appetite counsels" (*Theological-Political Treatise,* chap. 16; *Political Treatise,* chap. 2, 8). The rational man and the foolish man differ in their affections and their affects but both strive to persevere in existing according to these affections and affects; from this standpoint, their only difference is one of power.

The *conatus,* like any state of power, is always active. But the difference lies in the conditions under which the action is realized. One can conceive an existing mode that strives to persevere in existing—in accordance with its natural right—while remaining at the risk of its chance encounters with other modes, at the mercy of affections and affects which determine it from without: it strives to increase its power of acting, that is, to experience joyful passions, if only by destroying that which threatens it (III, 13, 20, 23, 26). But, apart from the fact that these joys of destruction are poisoned by the sadness and hatred in which they originate (III, 47), the accidental nature of the encounters means that we always risk encountering something more power-

ful that will destroy us (*Theological- Political Treatise,* chap. 16; *Political Treatise,* chap. 2) and that, even in the most favorable instances, we will encounter other modes under their discordant and hostile aspects (IV, 32, 33, 34). This is why it matters little that the effort to persevere, to increase the power of acting, to experience joyful passions, to maximize the capacity for being affected, is always satisfied; it will succeed only to the extent that man strives to organize his encounters, that is, among the other modes, to encounter those which agree with his nature and enter into composition with him, and to encounter them under the very aspects in which they agree and accord with him. Now, this effort is that of the City, and, more profoundly, that of Reason. Reason leads man not only to increase his power of acting, which still belongs to the domain of passion, but to take formal possession of this power and to experience active joys that follow from the adequate ideas that Reason forms. The *conatus* as a successful effort, or the power of acting as a possessed power (even if death puts an end to it), are called Virtue. This is why virtue is nothing other than the *conatus,* nothing other than power, as an efficient cause, under the conditions of realization that enable it to be possessed by the one who exercises it (IV, def. 8; IV, 18, schol.; IV, 20; IV, 37, schol. 1). And the adequate expression of the *conatus* is the effort to persevere in existing and to act under the guidance of Reason (IV, 24), that is, to acquire that which leads to knowledge, to adequate ideas and active feelings (IV, 26, 27, 35; V, 38).

Just as the absolute power of God is twofold—a power of existing and producing, and a power of thinking and comprehending—the power of the mode as degree is twofold: the ability to be affected, which is affirmed in relation to the existing mode, and particularly in relation to the body; and the power of perceiving and imagining, which is affirmed in relation to the mode considered in the attribute of thought, hence in relation to the mind. "In proportion as a body is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once, so its mind is more capable than others of doing many things at once" (II, 13, schol.). But, as we have seen, the ability

to be affected relates to a power of acting that varies materially within the limits of this ability, and is not yet formally possessed. Similarly, the power of perceiving or imagining relates to a power of knowing or comprehending which it involves but does not yet formally express. This is why the power of imagining is still not a virtue (II, 17, schol.), nor even the ability to be affected. It is when, through the effort of Reason, the perceptions or ideas become adequate, and the affects active, it is when we ourselves become causes of our own affects and masters of our adequate perceptions, that our body gains access to the power of acting, and our mind to the power of comprehending, which is its way of acting. "In proportion as the actions of a body depend more on itself alone, and as other bodies concur with it less in acting, so its mind is more capable of understanding distinctly" (II, 13, schol.). This effort pervades the second kind of knowledge and reaches completion in the third, when the ability to be affected only has a minimum of passive affects and the power of perceiving has a minimum of imaginations destined to perish (V, 39 and 40). The power of the mode then comprehends itself as an intensive part or a degree of the absolute power of God, all degrees being congruent in God, and this congruence implying no confusion, since the parts are only modal and the power of God remains substantially indivisible. A mode's power is a part of God's power, but this is insofar as God's essence is explained by the mode's essence (IV, 4). The entire *Ethics* presents itself as a theory of power, in opposition to morality as a theory of obligations.

PROPHET. Cf. Sign.

PROPRIA.—Are distinguished both from essence and from what follows from essence (properties, consequences, or effects). A proprium is not an essence, because it does not constitute any part of a thing and does not enable us to know anything concerning the thing; but it is inseparable from the essence, it is a modality of the essence itself. And a proprium is not to be confused with that which follows from the essence, for what follows from the latter is a product having an essence

of its own, either in the logical sense of a property, or in the physical sense of an effect.

Spinoza distinguishes between three sorts of propria of God (*Short Treatise,* I, chap. 2–7): in the first sense of modalities of the divine essence, the propria are affirmed of all the attributes (cause of itself, infinite, eternal, necessary . . .) or of a specific attribute (omniscient, omnipresent); in a second sense the propria qualify God in reference to his products (cause of all things); and in a third sense they only designate extrinsic determinations that indicate the way in which we imagine him, failing to comprehend his nature, and that serve as rules of conduct and principles of obedience (justice, charity . . .).

Ignorance of God's essence, that is, of his nature, has been constant, and the reason is that people have confused it with the propria, disregarding the difference in nature between the propria and the attributes. This is theology's basic error, which has compromised the whole of philosophy. Thus, almost all revealed theology confines itself to propria of the third type, remaining completely ignorant of the true attributes or the essence of God (*Theological-Political Treatise,* chap. 2). And rational theology does little better, being content with attaining the second and third types: e.g., when it defines the nature of God by the infinitely perfect. This general confusion pervades the whole language of eminences and analogies, where God is endowed with anthropological and anthropomorphic properties, elevated to the infinite.

REASON. Cf. Common Notions.

RIGHT. Cf. Power, Society.

SIGN.—In one sense, a sign is always the idea of an effect apprehended under conditions that separate it from its causes. Thus the effect of a body on ours is not apprehended relative to the essence of our body and the essence of the external body, but in terms of a momentary state of our variable constitution and a simple presence of the thing whose nature we do not know (*Ethics,* II, 17). Such signs are *indicative:* they are *effects of mixture.* They indicate the state of our body primarily, and the

presence of the external body secondarily. These indications form the basis of an entire order of conventional signs (language), which is already characterized by its equivocity, that is, by the variability of the associative chains into which the indications enter (II, 18, schol.).

In another sense, the sign is the cause itself, but apprehended under such conditions that one does not comprehend its nature, nor its relation to the effect. For example, God reveals to Adam that the fruit will poison him because it will act on his body by decomposing its relation; but because Adam has a weak understanding he interprets the effect as a punishment, and the cause as a moral law, that is, as a final cause operating through commandment and prohibition (*Letter XIX,* to Blyenbergh). Adam thinks that God has shown him a sign. In this way, morality compromises our whole conception of law, or rather moral law distorts the right conception of causes and eternal truths (the order of composition and decomposition of relations). The word law is itself compromised by its moral origin (*Theological-Political Treatise,* chap. 4) to such a degree that one sees it as a limit on power instead of as a rule of development: one only has to misunderstand an eternal truth, i.e., a composition of relations, in order to interpret it as an imperative. Hence these secondary signs are *imperative* signs, or *effects of revelation;* they have no other meaning than to make us obey. And the most serious error of theology consists precisely in its having disregarded and hidden the difference in nature between obeying and knowing, in having caused us to take principles of obedience for models of knowledge.

In a third sense, the sign is what gives an external guarantee to this denatured idea of causes or this mystification of laws. For the cause interpreted as a moral law needs an extrinsic guarantee that authenticates the interpretation and the pseudorevelation. Here too, these signs vary with each individual; each prophet requires signs adapted to his opinions and his temperament, in order to be certain that the commands and prohibitions that he imagines come from God (*Theological-Political Treatise,* chap. 2). Such signs are *interpretive* and are *effects of*

superstition. The unity of all signs consists in this: they form an essentially equivocal language of imagination which stands in contrast to the natural language of philosophy, composed of univocal expressions. Thus, whenever a problem of signs is raised, Spinoza replies: such signs do not exist (*Treatise on the Intellect,* 36; *Ethics,* I, 10, schol. 1). It is characteristic of inadequate ideas to be signs that call for interpretations by the imagination, and not *expressions* amenable to *explications* by the lively intellect (concerning the opposition of explicative expressions and indicative signs, cf. II, 17, schol. and 18, schol.).

SOCIETY.—The civil state in which a group of men compound their respective powers so as to form a more powerful whole. This state counteracts the weakness and powerlessness of the state of nature, in which each individual always risks encountering a superior force capable of destroying him. The civil or social state resembles the state of reason, and yet it only resembles it, prepares for it, or takes its place (*Ethics,* IV, 35, schol.; 54, schol.; 73; *Theological-Political Treatise,* chap. 16). For, in the state of reason, the composition of men is realized according to a combination of intrinsic relations, and determined by common notions and the active feelings that follow from them (in particular, freedom, firmness, generosity, *pietas* and *religio* of the second kind). In the civil state, the composition of men or the formation of the whole is realized according to an extrinsic order, determined by passive feelings of hope and fear (fear of remaining in the state of nature, hope of emerging from it, *Theological-Political Treatise,* chap. 16, *Political Treatise,* chap. 2, 15, chap. 6, 1). In the state of reason, law is an eternal truth, that is, a natural guide for the full development of the power of each individual. In the civil state, law restrains or limits the individual's power, commands and prohibits, all the more since the power of the whole surpasses that of the individual (*Political Treatise,* chap. 3, 2). It is a "moral" law that is concerned only with obedience and matters of obedience, that determines good and evil, the just and the unjust, rewards and punishments (*Ethics,* IV, 37, schol. 2).

However, like the state of reason, the civil state preserves

natural right. And it does so in two ways: first, because the whole that is formed by the composition of powers defines itself by its natural right (*Letter L*, to Jelles); second, what becomes common in the civil state is not the total power as an object of a positive "common notion" that would presuppose Reason, it is only affections or passions that determine all men as members of the community. In this case, since we are in a constituted society, it is a matter of the hope of receiving rewards and the fear of undergoing punishments (second kind of hope and fear). But these common affections determine the natural right or the *conatus* of each individual, they do not suppress it; each one strives to persevere in existence, but in consideration or in terms of these common affections (*Political Treatise*, chap. 3.).

Consequently, one understands why the state of society according to Spinoza is based on a *contract* that presents two phases: 1. Men must give up their power for the benefit of the Whole which they form by this very renunciation (the surrender bears exactly on this point: men agree to let themselves be "determined" by common affections of hope and fear); 2. This power of the whole thus formed (*absolutum imperium*) is transferred to a state, be it monarchical, aristocratic, or democratic (democracy being closest to the *absolutum imperium* and tending to substitute the love of freedom, as an affection of Reason, for the affections-passions of fear, hope, and even security, cf. *Theological-Political Treatise*, chap. 16).

SPECIES AND KINDS. Cf. Abstractions.

SUBSTANCE.—"What is in itself and is conceived through itself, i.e., that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed" (*Ethics*, I, def. 3). By adding to the classic definition "what is conceived through itself," Spinoza rules out the possibility of a plurality of substances having the same attribute; indeed these substances would then have something in common through which they could be comprehended by one another. This is why the first eight propositions of the *Ethics* are devoted to

showing that there are not several substances per attribute: a numerical distinction is never a real distinction.

That there is only one substance per attribute already suffices to confer unicity, self-causality, infinity, and necessary existence on each qualified substance. But this multiplicity of substances with different attributes should be understood in a purely qualitative way: a qualitative multiplicity or a formal-real distinction, to which the term "several" applies inadequately. In this sense, the first eight propositions are not hypothetical but preserve their truth throughout the *Ethics.*

In return, from the standpoint of being, there is only one substance for all the attributes (and, here again, the term "one" is not adequate). For, if a numerical distinction is never real, conversely a real distinction is never numerical. Hence the really (formally) distinct attributes are affirmed of an absolutely singular substance which possesses them all and enjoys *a fortiori* the properties of self-causality, infinity, and necessary existence. The infinite essences, which are formally distinguished in the attributes that express them, merge ontologically in the substance to which the attributes refer them (I, 10, schol. 1). The formal-real distinction of the attributes does not contradict the absolute ontological unity of substance; on the contrary, it constitutes that unity.

THINKING. Cf. Idea, Method, Mind, Power.

TRANSCENDENTALS. Cf. Abstractions.

TRUE. Cf. Idea, Method.

USEFUL-HARMFUL. Cf. Good- Bad.

VIRTUE. Cf. Power.

Chapter Five

SPINOZA'S EVOLUTION

(On the Noncompletion of the *Treatise on the Intellect)*

Avenarius raised the problem of Spinoza's evolution, distinguishing three phases: the naturalism of the *Short Treatise,* the Cartesian theism of the *Metaphysical Thoughts,* and the geometric pantheism of the *Ethics.*[1] While the existence of a Cartesian and theist period is doubtful, there does seem to be a considerable difference of emphasis between the initial naturalism and the final pantheism. Returning to the question, Martial Gueroult shows that the *Short Treatise* is based on the equation God = Nature, and the *Ethics,* on God = substance. The primary theme of the *Short Treatise* is that all substances pertain to one and the same Nature, whereas that of the *Ethics* is that all natures pertain to one and the same substance. In the *Short Treatise,* as a matter of fact, the equality of God and Nature implies that God is not himself substance but "Being" which manifests and unites all substances; so substance does not have its full value, not yet being the cause of itself, but only conceived through itself. By contrast, in the *Ethics* the identity of God and substance entails that the attributes or qualified substances truly constitute the essence of God, and already enjoy the property of self-causation. The naturalism is just as powerful no doubt, but in the *Short Treatise* it is a "coincidence" between Nature and God, based on the attributes, whereas the *Ethics* demonstrates a substantial identity

1. Avenarius, *Ueber die beiden ersten Phasen des Spinozische Pantheismus . . .* , Leipzig, 1868.

based on the oneness of substance (pantheism)[2]. There is a kind of displacement of Nature in the *Ethics;* its identity with God has to be established, making it more capable of expressing the immanence of the *naturata* and the *naturans.*

At this culminating stage of pantheism, one might think that philosophy would lodge itself immediately in God, and would begin with God. But, strictly speaking, this is not the case. It was true of the *Short Treatise:* it alone begins with God, with God's existence—only to suffer the consequence, that is, a break in the progression between the first chapter and the second. But in the *Ethics,* or already in the *Treatise on the Intellect,* when Spinoza has a method of continuous development at his disposal, he deliberately avoids beginning with God. In the *Ethics* he starts from given substantial attributes in order to arrive at God as substance constituted by all the attributes. He thus arrives at God as quickly as possible, himself inventing this short path that still requires nine propositions. And in the *Treatise on the Intellect,* he started from a given true idea in order to arrive "as quickly as possible" at the idea of God. But people have gotten so used to believing that Spinoza should have begun with God that the best commentators conjecture gaps in the text of the *Treatise,* and inconsistencies in Spinoza's thinking.[3] In reality, reaching God as quickly as possible, and not immediately, is fully a part of Spinoza's definitive method, in both the *Treatise on the Intellect* and the *Ethics.*

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2. The entire movement of chap. II of the *Short Treatise* implies the discovery of a coincidence between Nature and God (and the appendix will again invoke this "coincidence," cf. prop. 4, cor.). In the *Ethics* this relation is a demonstrated identity that derives from the single substance: I, 14 ("From this it follows . . . that in Nature there is only one substance, and that it is absolutely infinite"). Concerning these differences between the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics,* cf.
Gueroult, *Spinoza,* Aubier, I, especially appendix 6. As Gueroult points out, the phrase expressing Spinoza's naturalism only appears rather far into the text of the *Ethics: Deus sive Nature,* pref. Part IV.

3. Cf. *Treatise on the Intellect:* "So in the beginning we must take the greatest care that we arrive at knowledge of the most perfect Being as quickly as possible" (49); "But we shall not need to fear any deception if we begin as soon as possible from the first elements, i.e., from the source and origin of Nature" (75); "It is required, and reason

One notes the general importance of these questions of speed, slowness, and haste in the development of the *Ethics:* a great relative speed is needed at first in order to arrive at God as substance; then everything broadens out and slows down, until new accelerations are produced, always at necessary moments.[4] the *Ethics* is a river that sometimes flows fast and sometimes slowly.

It is true that Spinoza's method is synthetic, constructive, and progressive, and that it proceeds from causes to effects. But this does not mean that one can establish oneself in the cause as if by magic. The "proper order" does go from cause to effects, but one cannot follow the proper order immediately.[5] Synthetically as well as analytically, obviously one starts with the knowledge of an effect, or at least of a "given." But while the analytic method seeks the cause simply as the condition of the thing, the synthetic method seeks, not a conditioning,

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demands, that we ask, as soon as possible, whether there is a certain being, and at the same time, what sort of being it is, that is the cause of all things" (99). This last sentence is generally distorted by translators. And a lacuna is imagined in 46: cf. the arguments put forward even by Koyré, in the Vrin edition, pp. 104–105. Yet the *Ethics,* as much as the *Treatise on the Intellect,* stresses the necessity of a minimum of time before arriving at the Absolute. To be sure, one can object that the substances or the substantial attributes, which serve as the starting point for the *Ethics,* already constitute the essence of God. But, in the first place, one does not yet know this, one only learns it in proposition 10. Second, and above all, the beginning of the *Ethics* does not apprehend the attributes in their essence (third kind of knowledge) but considers them only as "common notions" (second kind): cf. the statements of Spinoza in V, 36, schol. . . . One finds in the *Theological-Political Treatise* the following declaration: "As God's existence is not self-evident, it must necessarily be inferred from ideas so firmly and incontrovertibly true . . . ," which is in strict conformity with the *Ethics.*

4. For example, Part IV presents itself as an accelerated or precipitated movement of demonstrations. One might think that Part IV is only an outline. But this impression is due to the fact that its demonstrations do not have the same rhythm as the preceding parts, and they comprise condensations and flashes. In reality, this part involves the third kind of knowledge, a sort of fulguration. Here it is not even a matter of the greatest relative speed, as it was at the beginning of the *Ethics,* but rather of *an absolute velocity corresponding to the third kind.*

but rather a genesis, that is, a sufficient reason that also enables us to know other things. In this sense, the knowledge of the cause is said to be perfect, and it proceeds as quickly as possible from the cause to the effects. At its beginning, synthesis does contain an accelerated analytic process, but one that it uses only for reaching the principle of the synthetic order. As Plato said, one starts from a "hypothesis" and goes, not towards consequences or conditions, but towards the "anhypothetical" principle from which all consequences and conditions follow.[6]

Thus, in the *Treatise on the Intellect* one starts from a "given" true idea, that is, any true idea, in order to reach the idea of God from which all ideas follow. And in the *Ethics* one starts from any substantial attribute in order to reach substance, which comprises all the attributes and from which all things follow. It is a question of attending closely to these two starting points and of determining the exact nature of the difference between the *Ethics* and the *Treatise.* Now the *Treatise* is quite clear in this respect: the given true idea from which one starts by way of a hypothesis is that of a geometric being, precisely because such beings depend only on our thinking (thus the circle as "the locus of points situated at an equal distance from the same point"). Starting from there, we reach the genetic element from which follow not only the starting property but all the other properties as well; that is, we arrive at the synthetic definition of a circle ("the figure that is described by any line of which one end is fixed and the other movable"; the synthesis is in the joining of line and motion, which refers us to God as a power of thinking superior to our own).[7] Let us see how the *Ethics* proceeds, for its part. The attribute, or the given qualified substance from which we start by way of a hypothesis,

5. This is what Spinoza says in the *Treatise on the Intellect,* 46, where there is no reason to conjecture a lacuna.

6. Cf. Plato, *Republic,* VI, 510 *et seq.* In his book on Fichte, Gueroult observed that the synthetic method does not set itself against the analytic method point for point, but rather integrates an analytic process while subordinating it to its own ends (*L'Evolution et la structure de la doctrine de la science chez Fichte,* Les Belles Lettres, vol. I, p. 174). One will recall the deep Spinozism of Fichte.

7. *Treatise on the Intellect,* 72–73, 95–96.

is grasped in a *common notion,* and from there we reach the sufficient synthetic explanation, that is, the single substance or the idea of God which comprehends all the attributes, and from which all things follow.[8] Thus it is a question of knowing what the difference is between these two starting points, the idea of a geometric being and the common notion of an attribute.

It seems in fact that the common notions are a particular contribution of the *Ethics.* They do not appear in the previous works. It is a matter of knowing whether their newness is only that of a word, or of a concept entailing consequences. According to Spinoza, every existing thing has an essence, but it also has characteristic relations through which it enters into composition with other things in existence, or is decomposed in other things. A common notion is precisely the idea of a composition of relations between several things. Consider the attribute of "extension." It has an essence itself, and it is not in this sense that it is the object of a common notion. Bodies in extension are themselves essences, and it is not in this sense that they are the object of common notions. But the attribute of extension is also a form common to the substance whose essence it constitutes, and to all possible bodies whose essences it involves. The attribute of extension as a common notion is not to be confused with any essence; it designates the *unity of composition* of all bodies: all bodies are in extension. . . . The same reasoning holds for more restricted conditions: a given body enters into composition with some other body, and the composite relation or unity of composition of the two bodies defines a common notion that cannot be reduced either to the essence of the parts or to the essence of the whole; e.g., what there is in common between my body and a particular food. So the common notions oscillate between two thresholds, the maximum threshold of that which is common to all bodies, and the minimum threshold of that which is common to at least two bodies, mine and another. Which is why Spinoza dis-

8. Cf. *Ethics,* V, 36, schol.

tinguishes between the most universal and the least universal common notions.[9] And this is a privileged meaning which Nature acquires in the *Ethics:* this composition of relations or this unity of composition, which will show what is in common between all bodies, between a certain number or a certain type of bodies, between a particular body and some other body . . . Common notions are always the idea of that in which bodies agree with one another; they agree under this or that relation which is established between varying numbers of bodies. In this sense there is indeed an order of Nature, since not just any relation enters into composition with any other relation: there is an order of composition of relations, going from the most universal notions to the least universal notions, and vice versa.

This theory of common notions of the *Ethics* has a decisive importance from at least four points of view. In the first place, the common notions, whose object is the composition of relations between existing bodies, do away with the ambiguities that still encumbered the geometric concepts. In reality, the common notions are physico-chemical or biological Ideas rather than geometric ones: they present Nature's unity of composition in its various aspects. If they are geometric, it is in the sense of a natural, real geometry that captures a real relation between real, physical, existing beings. By contrast, there was a good deal of ambiguity in the preceding works, concerning geometric beings: the sense in which the latter remained abstract, or fictitious . . .[10] But once Spinoza defines the status of the common notions, these ambiguities are explained: a geometric concept is an abstract idea or a being of reason, but it is the abstract idea of a common notion, so that by drawing out this common notion, one also frees the geometric method of the limitations that affected it, forcing it to

9. *Theological-Political Treatise,* chap. 7. The *Ethics* gives an exposition of the common notions in II, 37–38 (the most universal) and 39 (the least universal).

10. Concerning the ambiguous nature of geometric entities, cf. Gueroult, *Spinoza,* vol. 1, appendix 11.

operate through abstractions.[11] Owing to the common notions, the geometric method becomes adequate to the infinite, and to real or physical beings. So one can see that there is a great difference between the *Treatise on the Intellect* and the *Ethics* in that the former relies on geometric concepts with all their remaining ambiguities, whereas the latter relies on the newly isolated common notions.

There also results a great difference regarding the classification of the kinds of knowledge. In the *Ethics* the common notions are strictly adequate ideas that define the second kind of knowledge. In contrast, what corresponds to this second kind in the *Short Treatise,* or still in the *Treatise on the Intellect,* is defined as right belief or as clear but not adequate knowledge, and it consists only in inferences or deductions that still go by way of abstractions. Consequently, the sudden emergence of the highest or third kind of knowledge remains a mystery in the *Short Treatise* and even in the *Treatise on the Intellect.* In the *Ethics,* on the contrary, the strict adequacy of the common notions ensures not only the consistency of the second kind, but the necessity of the passage to the third. This new status of the second kind plays a decisive role throughout the *Ethics;* it is the most substantial modification in comparison with the previous works. Not that the second kind spoken of in the *Ethics* ceases to incorporate very diverse and even unforeseeable procedures. In the sphere of the composition of relations, it is not merely reason that intervenes, but all the resources of the programming of physico-chemical and biological experiments (for example, investigations concerning the unity of composition of animals among themselves).[12] Now, as it happens, when the *Ethics* works

11. *Letter LXXXIII,* to Tschirnhaus, affirms that the limitations of the geometric method are not due to the method itself, but only to the abstract nature of the things it considers. And the *Treatise on the Intellect* already expressed the desirability of putting "physical things or real beings" in the place of geometric and logical concepts that hinder the true progress of the intellect (99).

12. Indeed, unlike the simple inner essences, which refer to the intuition of the third kind, the composable or decomposable relations refer to all types of processes (second kind). We have no *a priori* knowledge of

out the theory of common notions, the latter guarantee the consistency and adequacy of the second kind of knowledge, regardless of the variety of procedures, since in any case one will go "from one real being to another real being."

Let us consider, then, the way in which one passes from the second kind to the third. In the *Ethics,* everything becomes clear in this regard: the second and third kinds of knowledge are systems of adequate ideas, but very different from one another. Ideas of the third kind are ideas of essences, inner essences of substance constituted by the attributes, and singular essences of modes involved in the attributes; and the third kind goes from essence to essence. But ideas of the second kind are ideas of relations, the most universal relations formed by the existing attribute and its finite mode, and less universal relations formed by this or that existing mode in the attribute. Thus, when the attribute serves as a common notion, is understood as a common notion, it is not apprehended in its essence nor in the essences of modes to which it applies, but only as a form common to the existing substance whose essence it constitutes, and to the existing

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relations of composition; they require experimentation. If we look for successors of Spinoza, it seems that we have to include Geoffroy-Saint-Hilaire, or, on lesser grounds, Goethe, when they undertake investigations concerning Nature's unity of composition, informed by a "principle of connections." Now, this research implies all sorts of experiments and variations, including imaginary ones; for example, the "foldings" by means of which one goes from one animal to another, each type of animal being a realization of the Animal in itself or under this or that relation. Present day molecular biology has taken up this experimental problem of the unity of composition, posed by Geoffroy not only at the anatomical level, but already at the level of particles (and posed by Spinoza himself at the level of "the simplest bodies"). In Spinoza, experimentation plays a very particular role, not only in the *Ethics* but in the form of a presentiment that emerges at the end of the completed pages of the *Treatise on the Intellect:* a brief but intense call for experiments (103). Jules Lagneau said that Spinoza had not finished the *Treatise on the Intellect* because "he had not applied, tested, the experimental method" (*Célèbres leçons et fragments,* P.U.F., 2nd edition, p. 52). The program of experimentation that appears in the *Ethics* should also be understood in this way. But it should be noted that this program is subordinated to the discovery of the common notions.

modes whose essences it involves. Hence the possibility of starting from a common notion while still knowing nothing of the essences. But once one starts from the attribute as a common notion, one is necessarily led to knowledge of the essences. The way is as follows: being adequate (although they do not of themselves constitute any essence), the common notions necessarily lead us to the idea of God; now, the idea of God is not itself a common notion, although it is necessarily linked to the common notions (it is not a composition of relations, but the source of all relations that enter into composition); so it is the idea of God that will enable us to pass from the second kind to the third, because it has one side facing the common notions and one side facing the essences.[13]

Therefore everything is clear if one makes common notions the point of departure. However, there remains the question: How can we form the common notions themselves, since immediate experience gives us the effects of this or that body on ours, but not the relations that compose these bodies? The explanation comes late in the *Ethics.* If we encounter in experience a body that does not agree with ours, it has the effect of affecting us with sadness (diminution of our power of acting); nothing in this case inclines us to form a common notion, for if two bodies disagree, this is not *because of* what they have in common. But, on the contrary, when we encounter a body that agrees with ours, and has the effect of affecting us with joy, this joy (increase of our power of acting) induces us to form the common notion of

13. The common notions give us the idea of God: II, 45–46. But the idea of God is itself distinguished from the common notions: II, 47. Thus, the idea of God will have two sides, which will be presented in Part V (the impassive God of the second kind, the loving God of the third kind).

Most of the *Ethics* is written from the standpoint of the common notions and the second kind of knowledge; Spinoza notes this explicitly in V, 36, schol., and 41, dem. The third kind appears only in Part V, which accounts for the latter's different rhythm and movement. Moreover, it appears expressly only beginning with V, 21; now, it is the idea of God that causes us to pass to the third kind, or serves as its "foundation" (V, 20, schol.).

these two bodies, that is, to compound their relations and to conceive their unity of composition.[14] Now let us suppose that we have selected enough joys: our art of common notions will be such that, even in the case of disagreements, we will have become capable of apprehending what there is in common between the bodies, at a sufficiently broad level of composition (for example, the attribute of extension as the common notion of all possible bodies).[15] In this way, *the order of practical formation of the common notions goes from the least universal to the most universal,* whereas the order of their theoretical exposition went rather from the most universal to the least. Now, if one asks why this explanation appears so late in the *Ethics,* the reason is that the exposition of Part II was still a theoretical one showing what the common notions were. But as to how one arrives at them, in what practical circumstances, and what their function is, one does not understand this until later, in Part V, and in an abbreviated form. So it appears that the common notions are practical Ideas, in relation with our power; unlike their order of exposition, which only concerns ideas, their order of formation concerns affects, showing how the mind "can order its affects and connect them together." The common notions are an Art, the art of the *Ethics* itself: organizing good encounters, composing actual relations, forming powers, experimenting.

The common notions have a decisive importance, therefore, as concerns the beginning of philosophy, the scope of the geometric method, the practical function of the *Ethics,* etc. And since they do not appear before the *Ethics,* they make it possible to date Spinoza's final evolution, and at the same time to determine why the *Treatise on the Intellect* remained unfinished. The reasons invoked thus far are often arbitrary (a lack of time?) or contradictory (the futility of a method divorced from its exercise or application? But the *Treatise* itself never attempted anything so abstract). Actually, in our view there appears to be a very precise reason for the noncompletion of the *Treatise:* when he dis-

14. *Ethics,* V, 10, dem.

15. *Ethics,* V, 10, schol. (and 6, schol.).

covers and invents the common notions, Spinoza realizes that the positions of the *Treatise on the Intellect* are inadequate in several respects, and that the whole work would have to be revised or rewritten. Spinoza seems to say this in the *Ethics* when, referring to the *Treatise on the Intellect,* he nonetheless announces another, future treatise.[16]

And what makes this hypothesis plausible is that, in the *Treatise on the Intellect* itself, Spinoza expresses a clear presentiment of the common notions, towards the end of the existing text. In a famous and difficult passage, he speaks of "the series of fixed and eternal things" which are not to be confused with essences, but which imply laws, apply to existing beings, and constitute knowledge of the latter. Now, only the common notions have this dual character of being eternal and of forming a "series," since there is an order of composition of relations.[17] We may suppose, then, that the discovery of the common notions occurs precisely at the end of the edited part of the *Treatise,* and at the beginning of the writing of the *Ethics:* in about 1661–1662. But why would this discovery have forced Spinoza to abandon the already-existing version of the *Treatise?* The explanation is that the common notions emerge at a time when they cannot fulfill their functions or develop their consequences. They are discovered too late relative to the text of the *Treatise.* They would have to establish a new point of departure for philosophy; but the point of departure has already been set in the geometric ideas.

16. Cf. *Ethics,* II, 40, schol. 1: recapitulating, apropos of the common notions, a group of logical and methodological problems, Spinoza alludes explicitly to work he has done previously, but he also refers to a future treatise. Similarly, in *Letter LX,* to Tschirnhaus (1675), Spinoza begins by recalling certain themes of the *Treatise on the Intellect,* but adds: "As for your other inquiries, concerning motion and method, my observations of them are not yet written out in due order, so I will reserve them for another occasion."

17. Cf. *Treatise of the Intellect,* 99–101. These "fixed and eternal things" seem to coincide with what Spinoza will call common notions. Therefore they should not be identified with the attributes and infinite modes. Such an interpretation would be too broad and too narrow at the same time. Too broad, because the attributes and infinite modes

They would have to determine an adequate mode of knowledge of what exists, and show how one passes from this mode of knowledge to the ultimate mode, knowledge of essences. But because the modes of knowledge have already been defined in the *Treatise,* there is no place left for the common notions or for the series of fixed and eternal things, which are thus shifted over to the ultimate mode of knowledge, with the knowledge of essences.[18] In short, in order to give the common notions their place and function, it would have been necessary for Spinoza to rewrite the entire *Treatise.* It is not only that they invalidate the finished part, but they would have modified it. Spinoza prefers to write the *Ethics* from the perspective of the common notions, although it means postponing a new treatise that would have focused on the practical problems that are merely outlined at the end of the *Ethics,* concerning the origin, the formation, and the series of these common notions, along with the corresponding experiments.

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intervene here only in a precise sense (their application to changeable singular things, that is, their use as common notions). Too narrow, because the common notions in their "series" also include the idea of what is common to two bodies only.

18. Actually, Spinoza says at the same time that fixed and eternal things should give us knowledge of the inner essence of things, but also that they have no meaning except in relation to variable existing beings (*Treatise on the Intellect,* 101). In this instance there is a mixing of what the *Ethics* will distinguish as the second and third kinds of knowledge.

Chapter Six

SPINOZA AND US

"Spinoza and us"—this phrase could mean many things, but among other things, it means "us in the middle of Spinoza." To try to perceive and to understand Spinoza by way of the middle. Generally one begins with the first principle of a philosopher. But what counts is also the third, the fourth, or the fifth principle. Everyone knows the first principle of Spinoza: one substance for all the attributes. But we also know the third, fourth, or fifth principle: one Nature for all bodies, one Nature for all individuals, a Nature that is itself an individual varying in an infinite number of ways. What is involved is no longer the affirmation of a single substance, but rather the laying out of a *common plane of immanence* on which all bodies, all minds, and all individuals are situated. This plane of immanence or consistency is a plan, but not in the sense of a mental design, a project, a program; it is a plan in the geometric sense: a section, an intersection, a diagram.* Thus, to be in the middle of Spinoza is to be on this modal plane, or rather to install oneself on this plane—which implies a mode of living, a way of life. What is this plane and how does one construct it? For at the same it is fully a plane

* The French word *plan,* used by the author throughout this chapter, covers virtually all the meanings of the English "plan" and "plane." To preserve the major contrast that Deleuze sets up here, between *plan d'immanence ou de consistance* and *plan de transcendance ou d'organisation,* I use "plane" for the first term, where the meaning is, roughly, a conceptual-affective continuum, and "plan" for the second term. The reader should also keep in mind that "plan" has the meaning of "map" in English as well. [trans. note]

of immanence, and yet it has to be constructed if one is to live in a Spinozist manner.

How does Spinoza define a body? A body, of whatever kind, is defined by Spinoza in two simultaneous ways. In the first place, a body, however small it may be, is composed of an infinite number of particles; it is the relations of motion and rest, of speeds and slownesses between particles, that define a body, the individuality of a body. Secondly, a body affects other bodies, or is affected by other bodies; it is this capacity for affecting and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality. These two propositions appear to be very simple; one is kinetic and the other, dynamic. But if one truly installs oneself in the midst of these propositions, if one lives them, things are much more complicated and one finds that one is a Spinozist before having understood why.

Thus, the kinetic proposition tells us that a body is defined by relations of motion and rest, of slowness and speed between particles. That is, it is not defined by a form or by functions. Global form, specific form, and organic functions depend on relations of speed and slowness. Even the development of a form, the course of development of a form, depends on these relations, and not the reverse. The important thing is to understand life, each living individuality, not as a form, or a development of form, but as a complex relation between differential velocities, between deceleration and acceleration of particles. A composition of speeds and slownesses on a plane of immanence. In the same way, a musical form will depend on a complex relation between speeds and slownesses of sound particles. It is not just a matter of music but of how to live: it is by speed and slowness that one slips in among things, that one connects with something else. One never commences; one never has a *tabula rasa;* one slips in, enters in the middle; one takes up or lays down rhythms.

The second proposition concerning bodies refers us to the capacity for affecting and being affected. You will not define a body (or a mind) by its form, nor by its organs or functions, and neither will you define it as a substance or a subject. Every reader of Spinoza knows that for him bodies and minds are not sub-

stances or subjects, but modes. It is not enough, however, merely to think this theoretically. For, concretely, a mode is a complex relation of speed and slowness, in the body but also in thought, and it is a capacity for affecting or being affected, pertaining to the body or to thought. Concretely, if you define bodies and thoughts as capacities for affecting and being affected, many things change. You will define an animal, or a human being, not by its form, its organs, and its functions, and not as a subject either; you will define it by the affects of which it is capable. Affective capacity, with a maximum threshold and a minimum threshold, is a constant notion in Spinoza. Take any animal and make a list of affects, in any order. Children know how to do this: Little Hans, in the case reported by Freud, makes a list of affects of a draft horse pulling a cart in a city (to be proud, to have blinders, to go fast, to pull a heavy load, to collapse, to be whipped, to kick up a racket, etc.). For example: there are greater differences between a plow horse or draft horse and a racehorse than between an ox and a plow horse. This is because the racehorse and the plow horse do not have the same affects nor the same capacity for being affected; the plow horse has affects in common rather with the ox.

It should be clear that the plane of immanence, the plane of Nature that distributes affects, does not make any distinction at all between things that might be called natural and things that might be called artificial. Artifice is fully a part of Nature, since each thing, on the immanent plane of Nature, is defined by the arrangements of motions and affects into which it enters, whether these arrangements are artificial or natural. Long after Spinoza, biologists and naturalists will try to describe animal worlds defined by affects and capacities for affecting and being affected. For example, J. von Uexküll will do this for the tick, an animal that sucks the blood of mammals. He will define this animal by three affects: the first has to do with light (climb to the top of a branch); the second is olfactive (let yourself fall onto the mammal that passes beneath the branch); and the third is thermal (seek the area without fur, the warmest spot). A world with only three affects, in the midst of all that goes on in the immense for-

est. An optimal threshold and a pessimal threshold in the capacity for being affected: the gorged tick that will die, and the tick capable of fasting for a very long time.[1] Such studies as this, which define bodies, animals, or humans by the affects they are capable of, founded what is today called *ethology*. The approach is no less valid for us, for human beings, than for animals, because no one knows ahead of time the affects one is capable of; it is a long affair of experimentation, requiring a lasting prudence, a Spinozan wisdom that implies the construction of a plane of immanence or consistency. Spinoza's ethics has nothing to do with a morality; he conceives it as an ethology, that is, as a composition of fast and slow speeds, of capacities for affecting and being affected on this plane of immanence. That is why Spinoza calls out to us in the way he does: you do not know beforehand what good or bad you are capable of; you do not know beforehand what a body or a mind can do, in a given encounter, a given arrangement, a given combination.

Ethology is first of all the study of the relations of speed and slowness, of the capacities for affecting and being affected that characterize each thing. For each thing these relations and capacities have an amplitude, thresholds (maximum and minimum), and variations or transformations that are peculiar to them. And they select, in the world or in Nature, that which corresponds to the thing; that is, they select what affects or is affected by the thing, what moves it or is moved by it. For example, given an animal, what is this animal unaffected by in the infinite world? What does it react to positively or negatively? What are its nutriments and its poisons? What does it "take" in its world? Every point has its counterpoints: the plant and the rain, the spider and the fly. So an animal, a thing, is never separable from its relations with the world. The interior is only a selected exterior, and the exterior, a projected interior. The speed or slowness of metabolisms, perceptions, actions, and reactions link together to constitute a particular individual in the world.

Further, there is also the way in which these relations of speed

1. J. von Uexküll, *Mondes animaux et monde humain*, Gonthier.

and slowness are realized according to circumstances, and the way in which these capacities for being affected are filled. For they always are, but in different ways, depending on whether the present affects threaten the thing (diminish its power, slow it down, reduce it to the minimum), or strengthen, accelerate, and increase it: poison or food?—with all the complications, since a poison can be a food for part of the thing considered.

Lastly, ethology studies the compositions of relations or capacities between different things. This is another aspect of the matter, distinct from the preceding ones. Heretofore it was only a question of knowing how a particular thing can decompose other things by giving them a relation that is consistent with one of its own, or, on the contrary, how it risks being decomposed by other things. But now it is a question of knowing whether relations (and which ones?) can compound directly to form a new, more "extensive" relation, or whether capacities can compound directly to constitute a more "intense" capacity or power. It is no longer a matter of utilizations or captures, but of sociabilities and communities. How do individuals enter into composition with one another in order to form a higher individual, ad infinitum? How can a being take another being into its world, but while preserving or respecting the other's own relations and world? And in this regard, what are the different types of sociabilities, for example? What is the difference between the society of human beings and the community of rational beings? . . . Now we are concerned, not with a relation of point to counterpoint, nor with the selection of a world, but with a symphony of Nature, the composition of a world that is increasingly wide and intense. In what order and in what manner will the powers, speeds, and slownesses be composed?

A plane of musical composition, a plane of Nature, insofar as the latter is the fullest and most intense Individual, with parts that vary in an infinity of ways. Uexküll, one of the main founders of ethology, is a Spinozist when first he defines the melodic lines or contrapuntal relations that correspond to each thing, and then describes a symphony as an immanent higher unity that takes on a breadth and fullness ("natural composi-

tion"). This musical composition comes into play throughout the *Ethics,* constituting it as one and the same Individual whose relations of speed and slowness do not cease to vary, successively and simultaneously. Successively: we have seen how the different parts of the *Ethics* are assigned changing relatively velocities, until the absolute velocity of thought is reached in the third kind of knowledge. And simultaneously: the propositions and the scholia do not proceed at the same pace, but compose two movements that intercross. The *Ethics,* a composition whose parts are all carried forward by the greatest velocity, in the fullest movement. In a very fine text, Lagneau spoke of this velocity and amplitude, which caused him to compare the *Ethics* to a musical work: a lightning "speed of thought," a "wide-ranging power," a "capacity for discerning in a single act the relationship of the greatest possible number of thoughts."[2]

In short, if we are Spinozists we will not define a thing by its form, nor by its organs and its functions, nor as a substance or a subject. Borrowing terms from the Middle Ages, or from geography, we will define it by *longitude* and *latitude.* A body can be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea; it can be a linguistic corpus, a social body, a collectivity. We call longitude of a body the set of relations of speed and slowness, of motion and rest, between particles that compose it from this point of view, that is, between *unformed elements.*[3] We call latitude the set of affects that occupy a body at each moment, that is, the intensive states of an *anonymous force* (force for existing, capacity for

2. Jules Lagneau, *Célèbres leçons et fragments,* 2nd ed., P.U.F., 1964, pp. 67–68. This is one of the great texts on Spinoza. Similarly, Romain Rolland, when he speaks of the velocity of thought and the musical order in Spinoza: *Empédocle d'Agrigente, suivi de l'Eclair de Spinoza,* Ed. du Sablier, 1931. As a matter of fact, the theme of a velocity of thought greater than any given velocity can be found in Empedocles, Democritus, or Epicurus.

3. Cf. what Spinoza calls "the simplest bodies." They have neither number nor form nor figure, but are infinitely small and always exist as infinities. The only bodies having a form are the composite bodies, to which the simple bodies belong according to a particular relation.

being affected). In this way we construct the map of a body. The longitudes and latitudes together constitute Nature, the plane of immanence or consistency, which is always variable and is constantly being altered, composed and recomposed, by individuals and collectivities.

There are two very contrary conceptions of the word "plan," or of the idea of a plan, even if these two conceptions blend into one another and we go from one to the other imperceptibly. Any organization that comes from above and refers to a transcendence, be it a hidden one, can be called a theological plan: a design in the mind of a god, but also an evolution in the supposed depths of nature, or a society's organization of power. A plan of this type can be structural or genetic, and both at the same time. It always involves forms and their developments, subjects and their formations. Development of forms and formation of subjects: this is the basic feature of this first type of plan. Thus, it is a plan of organization or development. Whatever one may say, then, it will always be a plan of transcendence that directs forms as well as subjects, and that stays hidden, that is never given, that can only be divined, induced, inferred from what it gives. It always has an additional dimension; it always implies a dimension supplementary to the dimensions of the given.

On the contrary, a plane of immanence has no supplementary dimension; the process of composition must be apprehended for itself, through that which it gives, in that which it gives. It is a plan of composition, not a plan of organization or development. Perhaps colors are indicative of the first type of plan, while music, silences and sounds, belong to this one. There is no longer a form, but only relations of velocity between infinitesimal particles of an unformed material. There is no longer a subject, but only individuating affective states of an anonymous force. Here the plan is concerned only with motions and rests, with dynamic affective charges. It will be perceived with that which it makes perceptible to us, as we proceed. We do not live or think or write in the same way on both plans. For example, Goethe, and even Hegel in certain respects, have been considered Spinozists, but they are not really Spinozists, because they never ceased to link

the plan to the organization of a Form and to the formation of a Subject. The Spinozists are rather Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche, because they think in terms of speeds and slownesses, of frozen catatonias and accelerated movements, unformed elements, nonsubjectified affects.

Writers, poets, musicians, filmmakers—painters too, even chance readers—may find that they are Spinozists; indeed, such a thing is more likely for them than for professional philosophers. It is a matter of one's practical conception of the "plan." It is not that one may be a Spinozist without knowing it. Rather, there is a strange privilege that Spinoza enjoys, something that seems to have been accomplished by him and no one else. He is a philosopher who commands an extraordinary conceptual apparatus, one that is highly developed, systematic, and scholarly; and yet he is the quintessential object of an immediate, unprepared encounter, such that a nonphilosopher, or even someone without any formal education, can receive a sudden illumination from him, a "flash." Then it is as if one discovers that one is a Spinozist; one arrives in the middle of Spinoza, one is sucked up, drawn into the system or the composition. When Nietzsche writes, "I am really amazed, really delighted . . . I hardly knew Spinoza: what brought me to him now was the guidance of instinct,"[4] he is not speaking only as a philosopher. A historian of philosophy as rigorous as Victor Delbos was struck by this dual role of Spinoza, as a very elaborate model, but also as a secret inner impulse.[5] There is a double reading of Spinoza: on the one hand, a systematic reading in pursuit of the general idea and the unity of the parts, but on the other hand and at the same time, the affective reading, without an idea of the whole, where one is carried along or set down, put in motion or at rest, shaken or calmed according to the velocity of this or that part. Who is a Spinozist? Sometimes, certainly, the individual who works "on" Spinoza, on Spinoza's concepts, provided this is done with

4. Cf. Nietzsche, letter to Overbeck, July 30, 1881.

5. Delbos, *Le Problème moral dans la philosophie de Spinoza et dans l'histoire du spinozisme*, Alcan. This is a much more important book than the academic work by the same author, *Le Spinozisme*, Vrin.

enough gratitude and admiration. But also the individual who, without being a philosopher, receives from Spinoza an affect, a set of affects, a kinetic determination, an impulse, and makes Spinoza an encounter, a passion. What is unique about Spinoza is that he, the most philosophic of philosophers (unlike Socrates himself, Spinoza requires only philosophy . . .), teaches the philosopher how to become a nonphilosopher. And it is in Part V—not at all the most difficult, but the quickest, having an infinite velocity—that the two are brought together, the philosopher and the nonphilosopher, as one and the same being. Hence what an extraordinary composition this Part V has; how extraordinary is the way in which the meeting of concept and affect occurs there, and the way in which this meeting is prepared, made necessary by the celestial and subterranean movements that together compose the preceding parts.

Many commentators have loved Spinoza sufficiently to invoke a Wind when speaking of him. And in fact no other comparison is adequate. But should we think of the great calm wind the philosopher Delbos speaks of? Or should we think of the whirlwind, the witch's wind spoken of by "the man from Kiev," a nonphilosopher par excellence, a poor Jew who bought the *Ethics* for a kopek and did not understand how everything fit together?[6] Both, since the *Ethics* includes both the continuous set of propositions, demonstrations, and corollaries, as a grand movement of concepts, and the discontinuous sequence of scholia, as a launching of affects and impulses, a series of whirlwinds. Part V is the extreme extensive unity, but this is because it is also the most concentrated intensive peak: there is no longer any difference between the concept and life. But in the preceding parts there was already the composition or interweaving of the two components—what Romain Rolland called "the white sun of substance" and "the fiery words of Spinoza."

6. Cf. Malamud's text above.