Spinoza and an Ethics of Expression

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Certification

I certify that this thesis has not been submitted previously for any degree and is not being submitted as part of the candidature for any other degree.

I certify that this thesis has been written by me and that any assistance received in preparation of the thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in the thesis.

Sarah Redshaw
Acknowledgments

This thesis has been a personal journey for me facilitating a movement from the abstraction of philosophical thinking to a more grounded experiential understanding. From when I was very young, Spinoza presented a way of reaching towards that possibility. Spinoza being the philosopher of immanence, of interconnectedness, of embodiment and affective experience, offered new dreams of finding connection in an experiential sense. Having to evolve, along with the courage to relate to others, a sense of self that is forward moving and which can encompass others, is to some extent the journey of contemporary living – to find a place, meaning, a value, a way to make a purposeful contribution to the world we live in, and recognise and be recognised for whatever contributions we can make.

The internality and self-understanding of reaching into one’s own feelings and emotions and what one makes of the world through them, was central to Spinoza. It is this internality that allows us to recognise the sense in which we reach beyond ourselves to an understanding of others and the ways in which we can relate more effectively to the benefit of each – not through distance but through recognising connection. The emotions do not just allow me to understand others in particular ways but also to evolve that understanding and to enhance it. They bring about personal interaction not just mediated or categorical understanding which often limits us to stereotyped understandings.

Reason to me, as it has been developed and glorified in Western thought, particularly in recent centuries with the development of complex economies and science, has appeared heartless, devoid of connection to anything human and life-affirming. In its instrumentality it has seemed incapable of offering an ethical understanding. Spinoza offered a deeper and richer understanding of knowledge and reason than I have found in any other philosopher.

Many people are suffering from lack of connection whether we take that to be place, belonging, meaningful relations of a positive kind to those around them or purposeful ways in which to express themselves. Asylum seekers are a particular current example, often resented by those whose national borders
they cross, who also feel lacking in a meaningful place or sense of belonging. Western societies focus on the ultimate economic goals while they uphold a position on human rights which contradicts and contravenes those goals, and which they are thus unable to adequately manage. The rationality of economically driven priorities excludes a real confrontation with the experiences of those within, as well as those infringing their borders.

There are many insights in Spinoza’s work that are of contemporary relevance and from which we can continue to build an approach involving reason as ethical and which is centred on emotional, not just intellectual development.

I have many people to thank for the fact that I have got this far, far too numerous to mention. I do thank my parents, Alan and Elisabeth for giving me the opportunity to undertake this journey even without their presence, and especially Cornelia who has stayed with me through a trying period and has shown me so much about worthwhile relationships. Kim Dowe and especially Paula Castle have sustained me throughout the final months of writing with wonderful massages. Sue and Annie have provided much needed support and friendship. Debbie Beaumont has given me careful independent guidance. Special thanks to my dear friend Bramani and Megan Laverty my friend in philosophy.

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I also wish to thank the University of Western Sydney for a Completions Scholarship in 2001/2002 which has allowed me to finish the thesis at this time.
Note on references to Spinoza’s works

References to Spinoza’s Ethics, Short Treatise, Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect and Descartes’ Principles and Metaphysical Thoughts and Letters are from the Curley edition:

References to Spinoza’s political works are from:
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Abstract

There is currently a renewed interest in Spinoza in a range of disciplines that includes philosophers and political theorists such as Gilles Deleuze, Christopher Norris, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, and Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens. The focus on embodiment, agency and affect has resulted in revisiting Spinoza as an alternative to the transcendence of dominant Cartesian thought. The thesis argues that Spinoza has been interpreted through Enlightenment thought, particularly on reason. As a result, affect, embodiment and agency have been considered in limited ways. Spinoza offers a different understanding of reason that incorporates embodied experience through his alternative to abstract universals, the common notions. In the context of feminist and post-modern criticisms of moral and ethical theories for their reliance on abstract universals, and the increasing focus on varied experience in cultural studies, Spinoza is a unique alternative to the dominant Western philosophical tradition. The evolution of Spinoza’s notion of reason is considered and contrasted with Descartes from whom he increasingly distanced himself. Commentators on Spinoza’s moral thought, Edwin Curley and Don Garrett, are discussed in the light of the feminist critique of Seyla Benhabib.

The role of affect and its relation to reason in Spinoza is particularly important and so is discussed in detail in relation to Descartes’ Passions of the Soul. Jonathan Bennett and Edwin Curley’s views on affect, limited by their ideas of reason, are discussed. Deleuze highlights expression in Spinoza which is an alternative to representation and to the conceptualisations of metaphysics and signifies the kind of immanence Spinoza portrays. Deleuze’s discussion is nevertheless limited, it is argued, by the application of liberal ideas of power to Spinoza. Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens offer a productive application of Spinoza’s thought to contemporary issues through a rethinking of imagination in the light of the focus in cultural studies on ‘imagined communities’. However, the inability of philosophy to distinguish abstract universals from alternatives such as Spinoza’s common notions has limited its ability to embrace embodied experience, which in turn limits the possibilities for applying Spinoza’s insights from within philosophy.
The common notions are an alternative to abstract universals which are able to confront the conflicting meanings and differences within them. ‘Queer’ and ‘multitude’ are looked at as examples of common notions in contrast to abstract universals. Common notions have a lot to offer in debates in contemporary political, social and cultural studies.
Spinoza and an Ethics of Expression
Sarah Redshaw

Introduction

Spinoza stands outside the Western philosophical tradition as an exemplary alternative to the centrality and transcendence of reason and yet he has been interpreted within that tradition as an example of rationalist philosophy. Spinoza’s immanence, in which power is determined from within, within nature, individuals and clusters of individuals, contrasts with the transcendence accorded to ‘reason’ in Descartes and the dominant forms of thinking which followed Descartes and Spinoza. The contextual and lived embodied experience\(^1\) that immanence expresses is the most important dimension for Spinoza. This is in contrast to the retreat to ‘objectivity’ and the drive away from the texture and character of experience into pure realms of thought and rational and scientific methods. Spinoza offers an engagement with, not a retreat from, all aspects of experience including embodiment and affective experience. In Spinoza there is the potential for recognising a multiplicity of experience, as opposed to a dualism followed by various structures of reason which serve to constrict and narrow experience to a few determinate elements.

Spinoza has become prominent in current debates in contemporary cultural research and social and political theories. The desire to overcome dualism of mind and body is evident through a turn to considering experience as embodied. Attempts to overcome the generalisations and universalisation prevalent in post-Enlightenment thinking has led a recognition of the need to confront experiences of various groups in their particularity. Engagement with social and political issues of agency and affectivity in an intersubjective rather than individualistic and subject-centred framework, has been central to the concerns of cultural research. Recent examples of where post-modern thought has involved an engagement with Spinoza include the work of Gilles Deleuze, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, Christopher Norris, and feminist philosophers Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd. Engagement with Spinoza has involved criticism of the

\(^1\) The notion of experience is a complex and difficult one in the history of philosophy. I will differentiate it from the main ideas in which it has been specifically related to empiricism and invoke the feminist idea of concrete experience and Merleau-Ponty’s attention to embodiment in contrast to empiricism in which experience is based on the evidence of the senses. This will assist in drawing out of Spinoza the idea of experience that is evident in his ethics. To do more than this would take a thesis on the topic of experience itself.
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Enlightenment and liberal ideals but the extent to which Spinoza has been understood in Enlightenment and liberal terms has not always been appreciated.

While commentators on Spinoza such as Curley, Garrett and Bennett, who will be discussed in this thesis, have looked beyond the alliance of Spinoza with Descartes and questioned his being categorised as a rationalist, it will be shown that they have interpreted Spinoza through the dominant forms of the Enlightenment and liberalism. Other work such as that of Deleuze and Lloyd and Gatens on Spinoza are critical of dominant Enlightenment themes, but are working within the Enlightenment tradition in philosophy nonetheless. There are important aspects of Spinoza that have been overlooked in Deleuze, Lloyd and Gatens due to the undercurrent of interpretations of Spinoza based on Enlightenment and liberal ideals which Spinoza precedes and differs from in important ways. Nevertheless, it is in the context of post-modern thought and cultural studies in particular that it is possible to see themes in Spinoza that are different from those of dominant Enlightenment and liberal ideals. Deleuze’s postmodern thought has a strong basis in Spinoza, and Lloyd and Gatens draw on cultural studies in their analysis.

In what follows in this introduction I will give a brief account of important aspects of the approach I am taking and some of the most important elements of Spinoza’s thought. These include what is meant by embodiment, the prevalent understanding of rationality and its relationship to affectivity and an overview of affectivity in Spinoza. The relation of expression to the focus on affectivity and particularity as well as Spinoza’s difference from Descartes on mind/body relation and ideas, will also be briefly introduced. Spinoza’s criticism of abstract universals is a central theme of the thesis in drawing out the importance of affectivity in the context of immanence as expression and Spinoza’s own idea of reason. Expression suggests that ideas, as embodied, are the experience. They do not merely represent it, they express it. The development of internality and the common notions as an alternative to abstract universals are not often the most noted features of Spinoza’s thought but are significant in the current context.

Embodied experience denotes the contextual, social and political, affective and personal experiences of individuals and groups. The body, the conatus, or striving to persist in being, and the consciousness of an individual are interconnected within a context of embodiment and sociality. This is more than the perceptual observation of empiricism and is closer to Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology in which an immanence of embodied experience attempts to overcome the dualism of the separation of thought and body. It is also more than
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this. It is not the individualism of experience that is central but the interrelatedness.

There is more to Spinoza than a focus on the rational at the expense of the expressive dimensions of human experience. His treatment of the relation to the affects is regarded through the perceived dominance of reason in his thought. However, Spinoza is reaching for deeper dimensions of being than the rational. The mystical, the poetic, the remembered, and imagined are aspects of the immanent expression of which humans are capable through their participation in embodiment, thought and extension. Spinoza treats all of these seriously.

The affects show the interconnectedness of individuals as well as the expressive dimensions in a variety of forms. ‘Affect’ is the term used by Curley to translate the Latin term affectio, ‘affection’ translates affectus. The affects are either passive or active for Spinoza. When they are passive they are passions, while for active affects the term ‘affect’ is used, though Spinoza also uses it in the more general sense to mean affect of either the passive or active form. ‘Affect’ covers a range of ‘feelings’ but tends to denote emotions. Spinoza does not separate a bodily expression of an emotion from a representation of it in thought, as Descartes does. The affect in Spinoza is both idea and bodily sensation whatever forms these might take. Affects are states of body and consciousness alike. This does not mean that when anger is experienced there is a prescribed bodily state of some kind. There will however, be some kind of accompanying bodily state which is determined by the particular individual, the context and the cultural meanings of particular states. Spinoza does not say all this explicitly but there is plenty of textual evidence that these dimensions are included in his consideration of human experiences.

Expression in Spinoza provides an alternative to representation of experience and offers real possibilities for encompassing and engaging with the particular experiences of individuals and groups. Spinoza was critical of reason as the

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2 Nietzsche refers in Beyond Good and Evil to: ‘...that laughing-no-more and weeping-no-more of Spinoza, his so naively advocated destruction of the affects through their analysis and vivisection ...’. Friedrich Nietzsche (1968) Basic Writings of Nietzsche, translated and edited by Walter Kaufman New York: The Modern Library, p.299.

3 Edwin Curley (1985) (editor and translator) The Collected Works of Spinoza Volume 1 Princeton: Princeton University Press. Volume 2 which would contain the political works has not subsequently appeared. All references to Spinoza will be from this volume except the political works. Curley explains his use of the term ‘affect’ in the glossary, p.625.

4 Expression is to be distinguished from expressivism in moral theory as discussed for example by Charles Taylor (1989) Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity Cambridge University Press, p.368ff.
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generation of abstract, universal ideas which excluded particularities. In contrast to the Cartesian view of reason that arose in the Enlightenment, Spinoza was not interested in the pure abstractions of reason or in the dominance of abstract universals. He wanted to confront the everyday and provide a workable way of dealing with the passions, the generalisations and the imaginings that humans are prone to regard as absolute. Spinoza’s common notions are significant in developing an alternative to abstract universals and thus a relationship between the imagined and affective experiences of embodied individuals and groups. Examples of common notions that will be considered later in this thesis are ‘multitude’ and ‘queer’. Both apply to varied and multiple experiences and both require confronting the political dimensions of their respective arenas.

Part of the difficulty in appreciating Spinoza’s mind-body identity has been that identity is understood as representation whether or not identity of mind and body is seen as precluded or promoted by the denial of a causal relation between mind and body in Spinoza\(^5\). Mind/body identity is seen as a matter of mind representing body, the problem then being how this can occur if there is no causal relation between mind and body. The problem of representation is that ideas notoriously do not resemble adequately the things they are ideas of. What then follows is a pursuit of ideas such that they are able to be brought closer to resemblance or adequate representation and thus further and further from the experience they are purported to represent. This is achieved by removal of extraneous elements which interfere with the resemblance, such as emotional states, personal beliefs, perceptual characteristics such as perspective, light, etc., even secondary qualities such as colour (Locke). Spinoza does not take this tack at all, rather he presents mind-body identity as a relation of expression, not representation.

Ideas in Descartes are representative whether this has to do with resemblance or symbolism. The immanence of ideas is a difficult possibility to contemplate. Since we are all so versed in the representative idea of Descartes, it is difficult for us not to imagine ideas as appearing on a screen in our minds, à la the Cartesian theatre\(^6\). For Descartes, ideas represented at a distance, what happens in our

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\(^6\) Even though this is a simplification of ideas in Descartes, it does indicate the most popular adoption of Cartesian ideas.
bodies, the things we perceive outside our bodies and modes of thought themselves. Descartes expressed the problem of representation through the method of doubt: 'For although everyone is convinced that the ideas we have in our mind are wholly similar to the objects from which they proceed, nevertheless I cannot see any reason which assures us this is so.' Universals such as genus, species, etc. involve the idea of resemblance and are seen as representative. Descartes’ description of this shows the abstraction involved in universals in this sense: ‘These universals arise solely from the fact that we make use of one and the same idea for thinking of all individual items which resemble each other: we apply one and the same terms to all the things which are represented by the idea in question, and this is the universal term.’

Spinoza declares in contrast:

... terms called Transcendental ... like Being, Thing and something ... arise from the fact that the human Body, being limited, is capable of forming distinctly only a certain number of images at the same time. If that number is exceeded, the images will begin to be confused, and if the number of images the Body is capable of forming distinctly in itself at once is greatly exceeded, they will all be completely confused with one another. ... Those notions they call Universal, like Man, Horse, Dog, etc., have arisen from similar causes, viz., because so many images (e.g. of men) are formed at one time in the human Body that they surpass the power of imagining ... to the point where the Mind can imagine neither slight differences of the singular [men] (such as the color and size of each one, etc.) nor their determinate number, and imagines distinctly only what they all agree in, insofar as they affect the body.

The criticism of reason as involving abstract universalising is evident here. Spinoza’s alternative to the abstract, disembodied and departicularised universals, the common notions, are conceived through embodiment rather than an abstraction from it. They are commonalities reached through the immanence of embodied experience as inter-connected. Commonality is achieved not by extrinsic characteristics, that is, by resemblance, but by the recognition of the intrinsic expression of commonalities through embodiment. These commonalities furthermore, encompass and express the particularities and multiplicity of experience within them.

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8 Principles of Philosophy, Part One, §59, in Cottingham, p.212. All references to Descartes are from this collection.
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Reason and objective knowledge cannot be taken as having the positivistic meanings in Spinoza that tend to be assumed in Enlightenment terms. Spinoza was concerned with understanding, not the accumulation of ‘objective facts’. Understanding for him requires a sense of the place of humans within an interconnected universe, and reason thus has for him a much more expansive sense than it has in scientific contexts. Ethical understanding is a part of what counts as reason for Spinoza so that much scientific knowledge alone would not amount to understanding in his sense. Spinoza’s reason is also not intended in the impersonal and impartial sense that it has in modern thought which, following Descartes, is also strongly representationalist.

Experiences are expressed in the embodied and interpersonal, social and political context. For Spinoza the affects, are also ideas: ‘The idea of any mode in which the human Body is affected by external bodies must involve the nature of the human Body and at the same time the nature of the external body.’ This is not due to ideas representing what is occurring in the body, or in the mind. It is an expression in thought of what is occurring in the body or in relation to other thoughts.

The relation of mind to body is one of expression in Spinoza. The mind itself is an idea which expresses the actual existence of the body and conceives the body’s affections as actual while the body endures: ‘Whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human Mind must be perceived by the human Mind, or there will necessarily be an idea of that thing in the Mind; i.e., if the object of the idea constituting the human Mind is a body, nothing can happen in that body which is not perceived by the Mind.’ Spinoza specifically excludes resemblance from the character of a true idea: ‘By adequate idea I understand an idea which, insofar as it is considered in itself, without relation to an object, has all the properties, or, intrinsic denominations of a true idea. Exp.: I say intrinsic to exclude what is extrinsic, viz. the agreement of the idea with its object.’ This is the denial of a causal relation or a resemblance between mind and body, thought and extension, ideas and objects. This does not mean that there is no relation between the order of the intellect and the order of things but only that the ways we have imagined it.

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11 Ethics, II, P16, p.463.
13 Ethics, II, P12, pp.456-457. The next propositions go on to establish the unity of mind and body.
14 Ethics, II, D4, p.447.
are not adequate. Expression presents an alternative if it can be considered apart from notions of representation.

The issue of internality appears as a result of considering Spinoza’s expressionism and discussion of affect. Internality in this sense is a constructed internality of the individual and of groups, rather than a constitutive internality which would position the subject as central to accounts of thought. Immanence suggests internality as an alternative to the externalisation of transcendence. Transcendence in a Cartesian sense and in Husserlian phenomenology means separation and disengagement from materiality and from experience, and in these accounts power is external and is exerted externally. A transcendent God is an external one, the body is external to the mind, and power is influenced primarily by external forces. Immanence on the other hand means engagement through a power that is within. For Spinoza God is within nature: nature is an expression of God. Understanding and power are thus immanent rather than transcendent. They emerge from within embodied interaction. Spinoza refers to internality and externality in this sense:

I say expressly that the Mind has, not an adequate, but only a confused knowledge, of itself, of its own Body, and of external bodies, so long as it perceives things from the common order of nature, i.e., so long as it is determined externally, from fortuitous encounters with things, to regard this or that, and not so long as it is determined internally, from the fact that it regards a number of things at once, to understand the agreements, differences and oppositions.

A current political example of the focus on externality is Anthony Burke’s analysis of security in Western societies and political theory. In his discussion of national security Burke shows the focus on external borders and vulnerability to an Other in notions of security: ‘security is imagined on the basis of a bounded and vulnerable identity in perpetual opposition to an outside – an Other – whose

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15 An external/internal distinction is important here to point out the domains which are the focus of theorisations of power in most liberal thought. Internality refers to both the internality of groups and nations as well as individuals. This is not assumed to be a definitive and fixed internality but a shifting and fluid one. Externality is also not fixed but encompasses power as force where it is physical and mental force that is referred to from external sources and this is not matched with internal forces of power. Elizabeth Grosz (1994) uses the idea of the mobius strip to problematise and rethink relations between inside and outside but relates inside to the ‘psychical interior’ and outside to the ‘corpooreal exterior’. (Volatile Bodies St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, p.xii). I am referring to power as embodied here to include psychical and corporeal. Internality is the immanent world of experience and externality is the ‘outside’ world of social relations and force. The interior is considered a constitutive force of the outside as well as being constituted within it.

16 Ethics, II, P29, Schol., p.471.
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character and claims threaten its integrity and safety.\textsuperscript{17} The external focus of maintaining security and the need to constantly reconstruct it has been evident in Australia’s treatment of asylum seekers as a threat. The question of internal issues and dynamics and their contribution to security is not the focus. Rather it is the recreation of fear through re-imagining an external threat. In apparently guaranteeing the safety and wellbeing of the nation it is necessary to look outward and ward off the threat of external power\textsuperscript{18}.

The Australian government has maintained a legalistic stand on the boat people as unethical ‘queue jumpers’ which ultimately rests on the value of national interest. If the boat people were being looked at ethically in the sense that Spinoza intends we would have to consider, not only our own interests, but also those people prepared to get into leaky boats and traverse the high seas in order to escape repression, poverty and starvation. This is clearly an ethical issue but the government is going to great lengths to hide the actual people involved so that we do not see their faces or hear their stories. The government is playing on resentments and fears in the general population and casting refugees aside as ‘people who throw their children overboard’ and as potential terrorists\textsuperscript{19}. Ethical positions usually depend on abstract universals which are not able to encompass differences in experiences or to confront the particular concrete context. Ethics for Spinoza does not mean applying abstract universal principles to certain issues or problems identified as ‘ethical’. Rather, it means looking at the ethical in everything, to encompass the broader picture through a response to concrete experience.

As an illustration of the importance of an awareness of internality in the context of current world politics an example can be found in the current ‘war on terror’. Terror is regarded as caused externally and there is little official acknowledgement of the causes from within Western powers and their global exertions. While internality is shifting and fluid, it is an important component of social relations where there is a tendency to create an externality as separate and other, threatening and evil, as opposed to the righteous good of the dominant ethos. Internality can apply in important ways to individuals and to groups.

Spinoza’s immanence asserts that what is human is not determined by abstract universals masking social and political agendas, but by common notions. Where

\textsuperscript{17} Anthony Burke (2001) \textit{In Fear of Security: Australia’s Invasion Anxiety} Pluto Press Australia, pp.xxiii-xxiv.
\textsuperscript{18} Burke, p.xxi.
\textsuperscript{19} Burke, p.324.
there is a denial of commonality, political agendas are turned into universals based on extrinsic characteristics of resemblance. The United States President’s current determination of who and what constitutes the ‘axis of evil’ is an attempt to dehumanise other cultural and religious standpoints by naturalising what is considered evil. True humanity is good, these others are evil and therefore not to be given the benefit of being regarded as human. In this way, politics produces universals which discriminate on the basis of ‘human’ values. Spinoza’s critique of abstract universals in favor of common notions provides a framework through which to employ reason in a more engaged and contextualised way.

For Spinoza, the affects relate to the particularities of experience and its multiplicity. When the affects are considered there is more engagement with a range of experiences. Spinoza’s view on the affects stands in contrast to the opposition of reason and emotion maintained as the central feature of many philosophical perspectives. In the dominant Enlightenment ideas of reason the separation of reason from the affective, embodied life of particular individuals was a central characteristic. Spinoza has been viewed in this light as also separating reason and the affects. Notions of reason must be abstract, universalising and generalising to be considered valid and Spinoza has thus been read as advocating reason in this sense. A major preoccupation for Spinoza, however, was in working out the affective nature of human expression and the relation between it and reason. In the Political Treatise Spinoza is particularly strong in his statements regarding the treatment of the passions by philosophers:

Philosophers conceive of the passions which harass us as vices into which men fall by their own fault, and, therefore, generally deride, bewail, or blame them, or execrate them, if they wish to seem unusually pious. And so they think they are doing something wonderful, and reaching the pinnacle of learning, when they are clever enough to bestow manifold praise on such human nature, as is nowhere to be found, and to make verbal attacks on that which, in fact, exists. For they conceive of men, not as they are, but as they themselves would like them to be. Whence it has come to pass that, instead of ethics, they have generally written satire, and that they have never conceived a theory of politics, which could be turned to use, but such as might be taken for a chimera, or might have been formed in Utopia, or in that golden age of the poets when, to be sure, there was least need of it. Accordingly, as in all sciences, which have a useful application, so especially in that of politics, theory is supposed to be at variance with practice; and no men are esteemed less fit to direct public affairs than theorists or philosophers.  

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20 Political Treatise, Chapter 1, §1, p.287.
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This excerpt clearly shows that it was not just the way the passions are separated from other aspects of human functioning by philosophers, Spinoza is also arguing against the passions being considered vices for which individuals can be blamed. He is concerned that human relations are not dealt with as they are, and that instead ideals are set up to which no one conforms, and against which men are attacked for not being as those who produce the standards would like them to be. This is no basis for an ethics, he points out, and then refers to the gap between theory and practice. For Spinoza the political and cultural system that produces ignorance and the form of the passions, is as responsible for the particular experiences of individuals and groups. The passions are a dimension of human experience and it is necessary to understand them and what contributes to their excesses without falling back on the explanation of an obstinate free will by which individuals are blamed.

For Spinoza, theory which presented universals in the absence of the particularities of human passion and action was too removed from practice to have any real value in achieving a better society. He was very critical of reason based on universals and proposed instead the common notions to embrace the context and embodiment of social interaction. He thus sought to express a realistic view of humanity in black and white and all shades in between, and to frame reason in such a way that it was able to confront and deal with the myriad of human activities and passions. Again in the Political Treatise he states:

... it is not in the power of any man always to use his reason, and be at the highest pitch of human liberty, and yet that everyone always, as far as in him lies, strives to preserve his own existence; and that (since each has as much right as he has power) whatever anyone, be he learned or ignorant, attempts and does, he attempts and does by supreme natural right. From which it follows that the law and ordinance of nature, under which all men are born, and for the most part live, forbids nothing but what no one wishes or is able to do, and is not opposed to strife, hatred, anger, treachery, or, in general, anything that appetite suggests. For the bounds of nature are not the laws of human reason, which do but pursue the true interest and preservation of mankind, but other infinite laws, which regard the eternal order of universal nature, whereof man is an atom; and according to the necessity of this order only are all individual beings determined in a fixed manner to exist and operate. Whenever, then, anything in nature seems to us ridiculous, absurd, or evil, it is because we have but a partial knowledge of things, and are in the main ignorant of the order and coherence of nature as a whole, and because we want everything to be arranged according to the dictate of our own reason; although, in fact, what our reason pronounces bad, is not bad as regards
the order and laws of universal nature, but only as regards the laws of our own nature taken separately.²¹

Everyone strives as far as they can to use their reason and does nothing beyond nature, since this is impossible. Reason is thus part of what is natural for all humans and natural law cannot be opposed to whatever is possible for humans. Natural law is then not able to serve as that by which some can be judged human and others not according to the expression of passion or reason.

Representation has an indirectness where expression, while it may be partial, incomplete, limited, nevertheless has a validity in its directness. Expression is not refused or denied in its incompatibility with the concepts of reason. When reason is able to encompass nature as eternal it is informed by much more than the immediate human experience or the hard and fast limitations of living according to the ‘laws of nature’. It is in transforming the passions into active affects that human experience is able to reach beyond its immediate limitations. Reason is not then a set of abstract concepts limited by the physicalism of nature. Both reason and nature are much more in Spinoza than what they came to be in the Enlightenment since he regarded reason as limited and as determined by the human context.

Joy requires special mention since it is Spinoza’s ultimate affect and it is tempting to align it with utilitarian notions of happiness. In Spinoza, joy being a state, is a joyous acceptance of what is, and of the potential to be much more. It is a recognition and expression of the most simple pleasures as well as the most enormous, moving, majestic powers that humans are a part of. Joy is embracing of the recognition and expression of others and other forms of being and expression. It will be provoked by different experiences and objects for different individuals²² but the point is that the experience of joy is the founding principle of ethics, of human expression and the appropriateness of political systems. There are for Spinoza, more enduring joys and less enduring joys but all joys produce an increase in the power of acting and being acted upon. A social/political context which encourages the development of enduring joys is the best kind.

²¹ Political Treatise, Ch. 2, §8, pp.294-295.
²² Ethics III, P15, p.503: ‘Anything whatever can be the cause of Joy, Sadness, or Desire.’ III, P56, p.526: ‘There are as many species of Joy, Sadness, and Desire, and consequently of each affect composed of these ... or derived from them, as there are species of objects by which we are affected.’ III, P57, p.528: ‘Each affect of each individual differs from the affect of another as much as the essence of the one from the essence of the other.’
I am interested in recovering the immediacy of immanent experience as it is expressed in Spinoza. Immediate experience arises from immanence and the expression of the phenomenological experience of being embodied. Experience is generally considered to be represented indirectly through the concepts of reason and as thus mediated by frameworks of reason or imagination. For Spinoza imagination is an expression of human experience through signs or images. While signs and images are representative in the sense of resemblance, they nevertheless express, but in a limited way. Reason is understanding, based on a broader connection to experience through the common notions which encompass particular experience. Reason should assist the understanding, according to Spinoza, and not completely determine it as it came to do in Cartesian and Enlightenment thought. A Spinozistic ethics has much to offer in facilitating the expression and acknowledgment of the multiplicity of experience as embodied, through a different understanding of reason and the way it functions in relation to experience. A role for a Spinozistic ethics will no doubt take some extensive debate to fully play out and elucidate. This thesis is intended as a part in that debate.

The thesis focuses on the understanding of the importance of interpersonal relations and how this reflects on the epistemological and ethical in Spinoza. The importance of expression as it is elucidated by Deleuze is central to an alternative interpretation of Spinoza’s ontology. Spinoza uses the term ‘expression’ throughout the Ethics. Deleuze thus gives a prominence to an important aspect of Spinoza’s thought that has been little discussed. Expression is the foundation of immanence in Spinoza and functions as a process rather than a concept. ‘... Spinoza’s philosophy appears as an actual philosophy of actuality: one understands why, in all domains, it denies a rational significance to the notion of virtuality; it is also understood that it is a philosophy of pure expression, of an expression that does not require the mediation of signs in order to take place ... one would search in vain in Spinoza for traces of a universal characteristic.’

The desire to embrace and express embodied experience has chiefly come from feminist critiques of philosophy and from cultural studies. Western philosophy

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itself is deeply committed to the abstract universality and generality of reason which rarely engages with the context of embodied experience. Universals become inflexible because they are notions of reason and there is a reluctance to reframe the notions of reason themselves in the light of conflicting and varied experience. Reason then acts as mediator of experience and there is an inability to respond to experiences which present a challenge to its dominance. Where experience does not fit with the concepts of reason, experience itself is devalued. This has been the case for women, non-whites and non-western peoples along with those with bodily differences and disabilities who have to fight to have their experience recognised and validated.

In order to bring out the centrality of embodiment and the form of reason in Spinoza it will be necessary to distance his thought from dominant Enlightenment and post-Cartesian interpretations. The thesis will be concerned primarily with highlighting the way Spinoza has been interpreted through Enlightenment and Cartesian ideas of reason and passion. It is important to consider the radical differences between Spinoza and Descartes, particularly in how Spinoza understands the relation between the body and thought, in making the site of struggle social relations rather than the body as in Descartes, and in his framing of thought as active overall though with limited expression in imagination.

Although there have been arguments against considering Spinoza as a rationalist, the predominant tendency in philosophy has been to categorise Spinoza as a rationalist along with Descartes and Leibniz. It will be argued that rationalism and empiricism are both Enlightenment ideas of knowledge based on a separation of knowledge from the context of embodiment which has resulted in an exclusion of understanding to some extent. Although empiricism was concerned with knowledge founded in the senses, this was observation detached from the embodied context of the observer.

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26 The point is very general but it will be explored further throughout the thesis, particularly in Chapter 1. There are exceptions including Denis Diderot editor of the Encyclopédie and author of Pensées sur l’interprétation de la nature. In modern thought Maurice Merleau-Ponty in (1962) The Phenomenology of Perception (translated by Colin Smith, London: Routledge) does confront embodiment.

27 Most commentators consider this point and conclude that it is not so simple to classify Spinoza as a rationalist. See in particular, Edwin Curley (1979) 'Experience in Spinoza’s Theory of Knowledge’ in Spinoza: A collection of critical essays edited by Marjorie Grene, University of Notre Dame Press. Errol Harris (1973) Salvation from Despair; a reappraisal of Spinoza’s philosophy The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
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In order to set the scene of the Enlightenment and its major trends in philosophy the first chapter will focus on the emphasis on reason in the Enlightenment as abstracting, universalising and generalising. The discussion will then focus on the context of Spinoza’s thought arguing that rather than seeing reason as removed from the context, Spinoza was concerned that it engage and grapple with the real concerns and issues of people’s experience and political and social organisation. Spinoza will be shown to be engaged with many aspects of seventeenth century Holland, from political strife to the development of mathematical and artistic forms, and the intellectual climate. The discussion will then focus on the employment of his immanence by a number of major European thinkers and in particular the engagement of Nietzsche who maintained the idea that Spinoza was a rationalist and predominantly concerned with reason. Negri and Hardt in Empire pick up on the influence of Spinoza’s immanence and the need to suppress it in modernity in favor of transcendent forms of thought which then came to mediate experience.

Spinoza’s idea of reason evolved through his grappling with Descartes’ mind/body problem, his framing of ideas in relation to dualism and his idea of reason, and the notion of free will. Spinoza wanted to articulate a more workable idea of human nature, one that could confront those aspects which are treated with animosity and contempt. But for Spinoza, Descartes’ dualism and his notion of free will stood in the way of this project, as did the separation of humans from nature. It has been argued that Descartes himself has been misrepresented, that it is the Cartesianism or ‘straw-Descartes’ which emerged subsequently that produced many of the problems attributed to Descartes28. However, there are clearly aspects of Descartes’ own thought, as I will argue in Chapter 2, which have contributed to Cartesianism and which Spinoza pointed out in developing his own thought.

Spinoza’s criticism of universals is a key to understanding what reason amounted to for him. Although the common notions do not appear until the Ethics, the critique of universals as ‘beings of reason’ appears in all his earlier works. The second chapter will follow the development of his thought on reason from these earlier works, to the Ethics with particular attention to the problem he had with universals, and the significance of the common notions as embodied rather than abstract universals. Common notions are meant to engage with experience rather than disconnect from it as in Cartesian reason.

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As an ethical theory, Spinoza’s thought has been treated in much the same way as modern liberal moral thought, through Enlightenment notions of reason and the application of reason to ethical issues. Feminists have criticised the centrality of reason in moral and ethical thought as abstract, disembodied and universal. In the third chapter I will examine Seyla Benhabib’s argument as a feminist critique of modern moral theory and some of the most prominent commentators on Spinoza’s ethics, Edwin Curley and Don Garrett, to draw out the liberal and Enlightenment influenced readings they present of Spinoza’s ethics.

Considerable thought needs to be given to Spinoza’s views on affect due to the tendency to read him in Cartesian and Enlightenment terms. The fourth chapter will outline in detail Spinoza’s position on affect and that of Descartes in The Passions of the Soul. There is an emphasis in Spinoza on the interactive and not only the individual, which is evident in considering his treatment of the affects. I will also discuss some of the commentators on this aspect of his thought who have difficulty allowing for affect as an expression of experience, considering it as cognition which remains disembodied. In focusing on affect in Spinoza, the intention is to consider affect as an expression of experience which is valid and useful but which needs to be approached in the way that Spinoza suggests, as necessary to understanding human nature and human relations.

Deleuze has presented a new understanding of Spinoza which follows from readings of Spinoza by Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche in the European tradition. With Deleuze’s focus is on expressionism in Spinoza, the central features of Spinoza’s thought then become passion and action, power and production and the possibility of human nature as not only an expression (of God or substance) but also as expressive, in all its facets. Deleuze’s thought on Spinoza as a form of expressionism in philosophy, will be outlined and considered in the fifth chapter in order to assess the expression of embodied experience that it allows. I will be arguing that Deleuze falls back on liberal and Enlightenment notions of power as affected primarily by the exertion of external powers over the individual, and ideas as representative, in limiting the application of expression to human activity as reason.

The sixth chapter will look at self-love in Spinoza as a key to the interactive dynamics of affect and the social and cultural emotional economies that determine them. Spinoza’s conatus itself is interactive rather than merely egoistic, and self-love, which is usually considered to be egoistic, is itself framed in relation to the context of interaction. The emotional economies outlined by Spinoza, of praise and blame which is associated by him with imagination, and tenacity and
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nobility associated with reason, reveal a social critique based on affective relations and the need for a transformation of the affects.

The final chapter will draw out the relevance of Spinoza’s common notions in contrast to traditional abstract universals, for contemporary cultural research. I will discuss an application of Spinoza from a philosophical perspective by Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens who focus on the role of imagination in Spinoza, noting the dismissal of imagination by philosophers who regard it as illusory. There are dimensions to imagination, those connected with everyday life, which the philosophical reading, no matter how positive it is about imagination, is unable to encompass. Above all it is grappling with the varied experiential dimensions that is problematic for philosophy, though cultural studies is more comfortable in dealing with these arenas. In re-thinking imagination it is also necessary to rethink reason and its application. The common notions bridge imagination and reason in Spinoza and provide a point from which to critique and negotiate major concepts in their application to experiences. It will be shown that the impasse between universals and particulars can be put aside by embracing a different kind of universal in the common notion. In cultural studies’ engagement with everyday life through the particular dimensions of embodied experience and its struggle with ‘theory’, common notions could present a valuable alternative to abstract universalism.

Pierre Macharey considers the divergent and heterogeneous approaches to Spinoza made by Condillac, Hegel, Russell and Deleuze and asks how far the thought of Spinoza is able to maintain its own identity. Spinoza’s discourse in this ‘dynamic of reproduction’, he says, can be situated in a space of ‘constantly evolving variations, as if it were itself in search of its own true meaning’ or as a ‘manifestation of the power characteristic of Spinoza’s thought itself’, which would finally be revealed as carrying more than a single philosophy’. Rather than casting different readings as good or bad, right or wrong and in the light of the recognition of the influence of history on interpretations of doctrine, he prefers to see them as valuable forms of expression able to show different aspects of Spinoza’s thought: ‘what at first glance appeared to be on the order of planned or involuntary falsification turns into forms of expression which, by virtue of being deviant, are no less authentic in their own way, and in any case are necessary: there are, if I may put it this way, “true errors”, which reveal meanings that no
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one can claim to be radically foreign to the work itself, since the latter deploys through them speculative effects which testify to its intrinsic fruitfulness.29

There have been developments in the interpretation of Spinoza enhanced at each stage through different historical contexts and their understandings. Every interpretation is strengthened by its relation to its age. I would like to acknowledge the benefits of having worked through the various commentators I will discuss in this thesis and my debt to them all in the ongoing task of elucidating the thought of Spinoza. Post-modern thought has allowed possibilities in Spinoza’s thought to emerge in new ways not formerly available in the modernist climate. There is real potential, I believe, as others have, in the application of Spinoza’s thought to contemporary problems and issues. The problems Spinoza’s thought are suited to however, are social and political, rather than abstract in nature.

Descartes, Curley, Bennett and Lloyd and Gatens have all contributed in invaluable ways to modern thought and the interpretation of Spinoza. Lloyd, Gatens and Deleuze see a place for the application of Spinoza’s thought to contemporary issues and have made important contributions in this regard.

1. Embodied Experience and the Will to Reason  
- The Enlightenment and Spinoza

Spinoza is the clear and luminous side of Modern philosophy. He is the negation of bourgeois mediation and all the logical, metaphysical, and juridical fictions that organize its expansion. ... With Spinoza, philosophy succeeds for the first time in negating itself as a science of mediation.¹

Introduction

The thesis explores Spinoza’s notion of reason and his outlining of the affects, and the way in which these have been portrayed by commentators. It will also explore the kind of connection to the social and political context that is involved in the relationship between reason and the affects. Reason in Spinoza has been understood through Cartesian and Enlightenment notions of reason, the emphasis of which resulted in a neglect of Spinoza’s ethics. Cartesian and Enlightenment notions of reason separated reason from many aspects of embodied experience. One of the main aims of the Enlightenment was to produce a transformation of thinking and of social formations through principles of reason, but the concomitant transformation of the affects that is necessary for active living in democratic societies according to Spinoza, was largely ignored.

This chapter will discuss aspects of the Enlightenment that have dominated interpretations of Spinoza, and will begin to demonstrate how Spinoza can be interpreted differently when there is some exposure of and distance from the preferences of Enlightenment thought, particularly where the form and role of reason and the affects is concerned. The Enlightenment interpretation of him is particularly prevalent in philosophers who engaged with Spinoza, such as Hegel and Nietzsche, but many of the commentators such as Jonathan Bennett, Stuart Hampshire, Henry Allison and Edwin Curley also read him in a way that privileges reason as more abstract than is evident when the affects and the common notions are seen more distinctly. Nietzsche’s relationship to Spinoza will be discussed later in the chapter as well as more recent commentators who will also be considered in more detail in other chapters.

¹ Antonio Negri (1991) in The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza’s Metaphysics and Politics Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p.142. In this book Negri explores whether Spinoza was a participant in the foundation of bourgeois ideology. He concludes that he was not.
Aspects of the Enlightenment that are most relevant to understanding Spinoza are related to the role of reason as a mediator between the knower and the knowable world. Reason in the Enlightenment was largely framed by its analytic capacities and the ability to universalise. Features such as these were also central to liberalism which dominates most political and moral theory. Liberation from suffering, inequality and injustice were seen as possible through the application of rational principles and knowledge thought to be derived by analysis of all elements of the natural world. Reason was distanced from concrete, particular experience in the development of this knowledge. As a consequence, experience has been devalued in favour of particular forms of thought pertaining to the evolutions of reason – the rational, general and universalisable.

Some of the main features of dominant prevailing Enlightenment ideas on reason and those of Descartes, whose influence remains within Enlightenment thinking and beyond, will be introduced in this chapter. Reason in Descartes will be discussed in more detail in the second chapter. The placement of reason in the role of mediator of experience, and the implications of empiricism and rationalism for understanding the place of experience in Spinoza will be primary considerations throughout this chapter. Cassirer’s seminal book on the Enlightenment is important in placing Spinoza interpretations in the context of dominant philosophical thought in the first half of the twentieth century. The emphasis on reason as impersonal, disembodied, abstract and universalising is the prevailing characteristic of Enlightenment thought and of interpretations of Spinoza, at the expense of the consideration of the affects and their role. There is also the tendency in philosophical thinking to separate reason from theological issues. This anti-theology of the Enlightenment is illustrated in Cassirer’s treatment of rationalist thought in which he includes Spinoza.

The tendency in liberalism to consider the individual as separate and independent, rather than interdependent, is related to the way in which the role of reason was viewed in the Enlightenment. The independent reasoner is central to moral theories such as Kant’s. The idea of free will stemming from Descartes is an important aspect of modern moral and political theory that has influenced the way in which Spinoza has been understood. There have certainly been efforts to ally Spinoza with liberalism and to claim him as maintaining the best of liberal values. Free will and negative freedom and the way in which power is

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2 One notable example is Lewis Samuel Feuer (1958) *Spinoza and the Rise of Liberalism* Boston: Beacon Hill. Many commentators, as we will see, assumed at least a sympathy on Spinoza’s part toward liberalism.
understood as a force exerted externally are two aspects of liberalism that will be considered in this chapter.

There has been much interest in Spinoza’s ‘immanence’ by thinkers such as Hegel and Nietzsche and more recently Deleuze and Negri and Hardt. The Spinoza of the European tradition is an alternative to the Anglo-analytic tradition but there is still little focus on his criticisms of the universality of reason within this tradition as well as a general agreement with the categorisation of Spinoza as a rationalist, stemming from Hegel and Nietzsche. The more recent argument of Negri and Hardt in *Empire* that there were two modernities and that Spinoza belonged to the original revolutionary force of modernity, also focuses on his immanence. The second half of the chapter will discuss the social and political context of Spinoza’s thought informed by Susan Bordo’s cultural exploration of Descartes which considers seventeenth century thought through ‘the flight to objectivity’ in contrast to Enlightenment reflections. The final section will look at the sense in which experience is expressed in Spinoza, and the meaning he gives to embodiment through his mind-body identity, and his framing of the body, which all show a greater engagement with the context of reason than is acknowledged through the focus on rationalism/empiricism or immanence/transcendence. Spinoza’s critique of reason and the kind of internality he opens up are not sufficiently recognised in even the more recent considerations of Spinoza.

Experience in the sense explored in the thesis means the experience of particular individuals within a social and political context. It is thus not confined to the experience of the senses as the foundation for knowledge as in empiricism and sensationism. It does involve the positing of an internality but this is not a constitutive internality as will be discussed below. The distancing of knowledge from particular experience achieved through the prevailing idea of reason reduced the influence of differences in experience and determined all experience from the point of view of a standard or sets of standards. Particular, concrete experience was relegated to the private realm.

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3 John C. O’Neil (1996) *The Authority of Experience: Sensationist Theory in the French Enlightenment* Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press. Experience was a term that was frequently used in the eighteenth century to refer to the authority of the senses according to O’Neil. To create a theory based on experience is to remain humbly within the confines of the world in which we live and to avoid extravagant, poorly founded explanations. In experience, Condillac finds as much a positive method for attaining the Enlightenment goals of truth and knowledge as a way of rooting out prejudice and mysticism. O’Neil considers the main difference between Locke and Condillac as the latter’s ‘exclusive connection between experience and sensation’ whereas Locke ‘emphasised both sensation and reflection as the sources for our ideas’. (p.14)
Feminists have subsequently critiqued modern, liberal moral and ethical theories for their exclusion of concrete experience⁴. These theories tend to be abstract and so generalised that there is no concrete embodied being to whom they could be relevant. There is nevertheless a shadow which serves as a model of the standard human (white, European, male, middle class, educated, etc) to whom the theories apply, which makes the experience of many, irrelevant and inexpressible (women, non-Europeans, the poor, less educated, etc). There appears to be a great deal of difficulty in mainstream Western moral and ethical theories with going beyond our own conceptualisations of others (cultures, groups, etc) to recognise these others on their own terms⁵.

**Enlightenment**

There is a danger in reducing the Enlightenment to particular forms of thought but there are nevertheless certain factors which come through consistently. Ernst Cassirer was a prominent and influential writer on the Enlightenment who identified these themes. In particular, the Enlightenment involved a focus on the principles of reason as the solution to a wide range of problems from scientific to social issues, through the employment of abstract universals. Cassirer’s emphasis on the development of Kantian philosophy through the appropriation of Cartesian thought shows the direction that readings of Spinoza have taken during and since the Enlightenment⁶.

The seventeenth century was strongly contrasted with the eighteenth century by Cassirer, following Kant, in part through the distinction between rationalism and empiricism. Spinoza has been interpreted through Enlightenment thought even though he preceded the Enlightenment, being categorised as a rationalist⁷ and

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⁵ The recognition and acknowledgement of different experiences has become an important issue in contemporary feminism and cultural studies, for example, Elsbeth Probyn (1993) *Sexing the Self: Gendered Positions in Cultural Studies* London: Routledge.


predominantly understood through post-Cartesian thinking. Though there are profound differences between the two philosophers, he has been interpreted as if he were only in small ways different from Descartes. It is important therefore to highlight those aspects of Enlightenment thought which have contributed to the most prevalent and hence most problematic interpretations of Spinoza.

Recent work has shown the complexity and heterogeneity of Enlightenment thought and social developments to a greater extent than has previously been acknowledged. Dorinda Outram notes, for example, that there was a tendency to see the ideas of the major thinkers as relatively homogeneous:

In this interpretation, Enlightenment was a desire for human affairs to be guided by rationality rather than by faith, superstition, or revelation; a belief in the power of reason to change society and liberate the individual from the restraints of custom or arbitrary authority; all backed up by a world view increasingly validated by science rather than by religion or tradition. A landmark in this approach to the Enlightenment was Ernst Cassirer’s The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, which defined the Enlightenment as a period bounded by the lives of two philosophers: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).8

Historians have written about aspects of civil society during the Enlightenment and the rise of publications and readership9 but philosophy itself maintained a consistent focus on reason. Cassirer identified themes which mark the philosophical thought of the Enlightenment and showed the interpretative tradition in which he was very influential.

Even though he presents a relatively homogeneous account of the Enlightenment Cassirer captures the view of the Enlightenment which became the

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9 Discussed in Outram.
'Enlightenment tradition' and has dominated interpretations of Spinoza. The separation of Enlightenment thought from the rationalism of the seventeenth century was a guiding motivation of Cassirer's account which reinforced the classification of philosophical thought as rationalist or empiricist. In the development of eighteenth century philosophy, the Enlightenment was regarded as producing something different from earlier philosophies, according to Cassirer, and was consequently increasingly contrasted with seventeenth century philosophy. With the development of science and the empirical method, seventeenth century philosophies were contrasted with the explorations of the empirical world, as purely rationalist, and the major systems of Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza were considered as increasingly abstract and transcendent system building, concerned with things 'beyond the realm of reason'. In the philosophies of the seventeenth century, says Cassirer\textsuperscript{10}, reason was seen as concerned with the realm of the eternal, with God and with 'innate ideas'. God and the eternal had come to be considered as ultimate mysteries beyond the power of reason which must confine itself to 'empirical law and order' as a force rather than an a priori body of ideas\textsuperscript{11}.

The focus on reason and the move to universals was the logic that flowed from Descartes in which Spinoza was included and which is exemplified in Kant. Cassirer understands Descartes as moving towards the Enlightenment and universalism but also sees the limits in Descartes' rationalism for the Enlightenment. Descartes provided the conditions on which the Enlightenment was established as explained by Cassirer. The Enlightenment attempts to solve the problems set up by Descartes of free will, mind and body dualism, and the rational method. Spinoza interpreters were caught up in this logic. Kant provided solutions through universals which must be abstracted from experience\textsuperscript{12}. Cassirer argues that the logic of the Enlightenment was developing towards the Kantian position. This move away from concrete experience into abstracted understanding created its own problems and it is these that we are dealing with now. Universals having the status of knowledge of the highest kind have limited and determined experience through abstract analytic categories.

\textsuperscript{10} Cassirer, p.13.
\textsuperscript{11} Spinoza's God was in many ways even more of a mystery for Enlightenment thought, being aligned with nature and pantheism and therefore not related to the God of Christianity nor a complete rejection of God.
In contrasting seventeenth century thought with the differences produced in the eighteenth century, Cassirer notes that the concept of reason as an analytical and then constructive power can be fully characterised as a concept of agency. Cassirer emphasises analysis in contrast to making hypotheses and inventing principles, though mathematics and physics are taken to be central tools of reason in the Enlightenment. Reason as analysis therefore becomes an appropriate instrument to override particular, concrete experience. Certainty is not to be sought in being or in ordinary immediacy, but in the agency of reason as an active, universal force. In contrast experience is passive. Even observation, which is the focus of experience in empiricism, is merely taking in what is there to be seen. It is universal reason which will come to be seen as making most sense and use of what is observed\(^\text{13}\). Cassirer includes Spinoza along with Descartes in his characterisation of seventeenth century reason as passive\(^\text{14}\).

The eternal truths sought by Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza are largely interpreted as general ideas and as intended to express ‘a general and necessary relation between ideas’ within a logical model\(^\text{15}\). Nevertheless the philosophies of Descartes and Leibniz begin to permeate all fields of knowledge, while Spinoza does not appear to have been taken up in such a spirit. Descartes’ influence was both ontological and epistemological, with mind/body dualism being taken up with Cartesian ideas and their status as representing in the mind what occurs in the body. Spinoza’s common notions have suffered from the presumed alliance with Descartes and the distinction of the Enlightenment through abstract universal ideas which were taken to be more connected to the empirical world. Descartes is taken up as part of the movement and Spinoza is interpreted as sharing many features of Cartesian thinking that are picked up in the Enlightenment. Kant becomes the exemplar of what philosophy should be, that is, abstract and universal, and Cassirer demonstrates the workings of this process in his analysis.

\(^{13}\) Debates in science and philosophy throughout the Enlightenment concerned the nature and role of experience but it was experience in the sense of observation rather than personal, concrete experience based on social and cultural position and meanings. The arguments of Voltaire, Kant and Condillac for example, that nothing can be known in itself but only relative to human sense-perception, served in different ways to establish the central role of reason as mediator.

\(^{14}\) Genevieve Lloyd ((1984) *Man of Reason* London: Methuen, pp.50-51) states, however, that Spinoza made reason ‘an active, emotional force’ in contrast to Descartes for whom reason was ‘a uniform, undifferentiated skill, abstracted from any determinate subject-matter’. Reason in Descartes lacked inner, motivational force.

\(^{15}\) Cassirer, p.30. Cassirer is here discussing Leibniz in particular but the statement is taken to equally apply to Descartes and Spinoza.
Cassirer then, propounds the Enlightenment move toward universal reason but argues that Enlightenment thinkers did not merely privilege reason at the expense of the emotions. Eighteenth century thought, Cassirer says, ‘advances beyond the negative characterisation and evaluation of the affects’ in seventeenth century thought, seeking to show that rather than being a mere obstacle, they are ‘the original and indispensable impulse of all the operations of the mind.’\textsuperscript{16} The true operations of reason nevertheless continued to be considered as separate from the emotions in Enlightenment thought\textsuperscript{17}. Hume and Rousseau showed a more prominent place for the emotions but maintained the basic dualism and individualism of Descartes as well as the separation of reason and emotion.

An example of the way in which Spinoza is read closely to Descartes is evident in Cassirer’s discussion of the passions and ideas. The idea that the affects were regarded negatively is not the case for Spinoza, nor arguably, for Descartes. The role and importance of the affects in Spinoza is often underplayed in being read through the overall importance of reason as separate from the affects, even though Spinoza spent the best part of the \textit{Ethics} discussing them. Cassirer states that the idea prevails in Descartes and Spinoza that the essence of the soul consists in thought and cannot be grasped through the understanding of the affects. In clearly Cartesian terms, in which he includes Spinoza, he says:

\begin{quote}
The clear and distinct idea, not the inarticulate affect, is characteristic of the real nature of the soul. Desires and appetites, the passions of sense, belong only indirectly to the soul; they are not its original properties and tendencies, but rather disturbances which the soul suffers as a result of its union with the body.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

This applies very little to Spinoza as the thesis will show.

Reason in the Enlightenment comes to determine what is truth, as the ‘indispensable presupposition of all real certainty’\textsuperscript{19}. Reason’s most potent power or function is analysis, by which everything believed on the evidence of revelation, tradition and authority is dissolved, and everything based on mere concrete, particular experience is distanced from it. Experiment was concerned with finding, through observation, what could be generalised on the basis of beliefs. It was not concerned with the part of the observer or with the ‘private’

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Cassirer, pp.105-106.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} The relationship of reason and the emotions varied amongst different writers but overall they were kept quite separate.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Cassirer, p.105.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Cassirer, p.13.
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concerns of individuals. Through reason a new, more true whole is then constructed based on its own rules, giving reason ‘complete knowledge of the structure of its product’.\textsuperscript{20} It is in this way that reason comes to be the mediator in all areas of human thought and endeavor.

Kant presents an image of the flight of reason into the realms of pure understanding:

The light dove, cleaving the air in her free flight, and feeling its resistance, might imagine that its flight would be still easier in empty space. It was thus that Plato left the world of the senses, as setting too narrow limits to the understanding, and ventured out beyond it on the wings of the ideas, in the empty space of the pure understanding.\textsuperscript{21}

The question for Kant in the \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} was, can we have ‘any knowledge that is thus independent of experience and even of all impressions of the senses’?\textsuperscript{22} Kant sought to abstract from experience in order to apply the principles of reason back to experience. He thus establishes reason as mediator of experience. For Kant, experience is empirical knowledge which denotes the sensation of objects represented in ideas\textsuperscript{23}. As Sullivan explains, for Kant:

In order to know the world – to have either scientific knowledge or the knowledge of ordinary persons (which Kant took to be a kind of crude version of the disciplined experiences of scientists in their laboratories), not only do we need to be able to perceive the world, but our reason must also contribute the rational structure of thought necessary to make those perceptions coherent.\textsuperscript{24}

Kant is an example of the high-rationalist Enlightenment logic through which Spinoza was interpreted. Experience for Kant meant sensory perception represented in ideas and did not encompass the lived, embodied experience of individuals. Pure reason is removed further and further from even empirical experience. The categories are thus categories of the mind or reason and separate from the body. The rational structure was based on abstract categories which were intended to be abstracted from experience. Further, in his moral theory,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} Cassirer, pp.13-14.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, A5/B9, p.47.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Kant, B2, p.42.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Kant, A19-20, p.65, B147-148, p.162.
\end{itemize}
Kant’s categorical imperative is an example of a universal intended as a solution to every dilemma which was nevertheless objective and impartial\textsuperscript{25}.

The role of reason as mediator becomes clear in the dominance of the Kantian idea of reason in Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thought. Our experience as sensory observers is limited by our human mental and perceptual processes but we can come to understand these through reflection and deduction. In transcendental deduction our understanding must become removed from our particular experiences, or experience in general, according to Kant\textsuperscript{26}. The place of reason is to uncover the concepts and mental structures we presuppose, so that we can have experience, that is, empirical knowledge, of the world. What the understanding is looking for is knowledge which orders experience according to the categories of reason, a priori knowledge characterised by necessity and strict universality\textsuperscript{27}. For Kant, it is abstract, universal, a priori knowledge which ‘enables us to have experience and know objects of experience’\textsuperscript{28}.

Reason was generally seen as the central defining characteristic of humans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries following Descartes. The strong interpretation of post-Enlightenment reason considers it as the true nature of consciousness and has invested most in developing and exploiting the facility of reason to the exclusion of the affects. It is our capacity to reason more than anything else which has been seen as defining humans and setting them apart from every other species. This understanding of reason has had the effect of favouring the dominance of particular ways of thinking and seeing the world – as objectified, generalised, categorised and rationalised. The influence of Descartes and what became Cartesianism is clearly seen in the Enlightenment emphasis on reason\textsuperscript{29}.

\textsuperscript{26} Kant, B2, p.42.
\textsuperscript{27} Sullivan, pp.13-14.
\textsuperscript{28} Sullivan, p.14.
\textsuperscript{29} Alternatives within the Enlightenment would include for example, Denis Diderot, though his naturalism differs from Spinoza’s in certain ways that I will not go into here. The difference in imaginations of the natural or material world between Enlightenment and post-modern thought would suggest an alignment of Spinoza’s thought with post-modernism as it is pursued for example in Deleuze’ and Guattari’s (1987) \textit{A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia} (translated by Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press). Brian Massumi (2002) suggests in his recent book \textit{Parables for the Virtual} (2002, Durham N. C.: Duke University Press), that the problems of blind-spottedness or “smudginess” in thought might be a function of thought itself. This may be a way to explain the limitations of Enlightenment thought. However, Spinoza would consider such limitations a function of thought in imagination, whereas in reason, self-reflection helps to come to terms with these limitations. A case could be
Liberal Enlightenment

Fundamental elements of liberalism, particularly the abstract, isolated individual and the negative liberty associated with it, have also contributed to interpretations of Spinoza based on Cartesian and Enlightenment views of the subject, reason and ethics. The two particular aspects of liberal thought which I will discuss here are negative freedom and the exertion of power as force. In the first aspect, freedom is understood as given, with the agreement that the freedom of others will not to interfered with. Individual wills are seen as in competition with each other and necessarily destructive towards others in the exertion of their power. This freedom and power must therefore be constrained. The liberalisms of Locke and Mill, which both express this view of freedom, and the need to constrain power as the ability to effect the freedom of others, have influenced modern ethics and moral theory, as has the Cartesian free will and mind/body split. Spinoza has been considered through these tenets of liberal and Enlightenment moral thinking. An emphasis on individualism and power as coercion have been central to interpretations of Spinoza’s thought as will be shown in the thesis.

The second aspect of liberalism that is of concern in the context of Spinoza’s thought is the emphasis on power as force. Liberalism has been concerned with negative freedom, with the power that governments exert over citizens as well as the power that citizens can exert over each other. Power in this sense is coercive and externally oriented. Power is might, which relates it to physical power and to the power of positions of authority and influence. In modernity and post-modernity this idea of power has been approached differently in the work of Nietzsche, Marx, Foucault, for example, who were influenced by Spinoza but still saw Spinoza as caught up in liberal ideas of power and freedom. Through the Enlightenment, the development of reason and freedom of expression is pitched against the exertion of power and is expected to provide a universalism that is good for all through its abstract principles.

made for the lack of self-reflection in Enlightenment thought where the focus was outward from human functioning itself to objects in the world. For Spinoza nevertheless human thought is limited by its being the expression of a particular type of body but we do not yet know what the body can do. This point will be taken up briefly at the end of the chapter.

In social and political philosophy Spinoza has been allied with Hobbes and understood through the ideals of liberalism which followed them. John Gray notes the similarities between Hobbes and Spinoza as precursors of liberalism: ‘Spinoza shared many of Hobbes’s assumptions about man and society: he ascribed to all human beings (as to every other thing in nature) an overriding inclination to self-preservation and insisted that human society be analyzed and understood in terms of the interactions of such necessarily self-serving agents. ... and, with Hobbes, Spinoza took power and natural rights as the two mutually defining terms of his political theory.’ It is power in the sense of force that Grey is applying equally to Spinoza and Hobbes here. This idea of power, however, is not the major form that power takes in Spinoza.

Gray also considers one area where Hobbes and Spinoza differ, chiefly in what they regard as the best political organisation, authoritarian government for Hobbes, and democracy for Spinoza, which brings Spinoza ‘closer to us and to liberalism in putting freedom at the heart of his political thought’. Spinoza’s political thought, for Gray, is nevertheless not a liberalism since neither he nor Hobbes ‘endorsed the meliorist outlook of liberalism – the belief that human affairs are subject to indefinite improvement into an open future’. It is the fact that there were for Hobbes and Spinoza ‘permanent disabilities of human existence’, namely ‘passion and illusion’ which meant that for Hobbes, society would always fall back into a barbarous state, and for Spinoza, a free man, a man of reason, was a rarity. ‘They are precursors of liberalism rather than liberals, because they did not share the liberal faith (or illusion) that freedom and reason can become the rule among men.’ Spinoza is thus again taken to have a negative view of the human capacity to develop due to the overwhelming and limitation of reason by the passions. In this he is seen through Enlightenment interpretations of seventeenth century thought on the passions and the emphasis on reason. The terms in which Spinoza is understood are linked to liberalism and Hobbes, limiting interpretations through Enlightenment thought.

The application to Spinoza of liberal ideas of individualism, based on the conatus, and the idea of power as it is regarded in liberal thought, as external, coercive

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33 Gray, p.11.
34 Gray, p.12.
35 Gray, p.12.
power exerted over individuals and groups, tends to overlook other dimensions of his thought. In particular, the conatus, the impulse to self-preservation, presents a kind of power which is not merely coercive. It is an immanent power or agency of individuals and groups, which is implicitly connected and concerned with interactions with others. In the case of humans, the development of this power as an internality is not only concerned with expressing power externally, that is, over others, but also with the expression of power as active through the transformation of the affects. Spinoza's apparent individualism then, is based on the interpretation of the conatus as egoistic, and self-preservation as exclusive of concern for others as well as a preoccupation with the exertion of power against external threats. These interpretations developed later in liberal thought in the Enlightenment and modernity. In Spinoza it is possible to see alternative explanations which do not agree with the individualism, the idea of power characteristic of liberal thought, or the application of universally valid moral laws grounded in reason or God.\footnote{There has been some debate as to whether liberalism and Enlightenment should be taken together or separated. A recent discussion between Richard Rorty and John Gray and Slavoj Zizek on this theme exposes some of the debate about the relationship between liberalism and the Enlightenment. The debate is discussed in Richard Rorty (2001) "The Continuity Between the Enlightenment and 'Postmodernism'" in What's Left of Enlightenment, edited by Keith Michael Baker and Peter Hanns Reill Stanford University Press, pp.19-36.}

Liberalism has been largely based on the drive for universalism and has been accompanied by removal from concrete peoples and their concerns. The distinction between public and private expresses the removal from concrete concerns, and the basis of ethical thinking in reason and universalisable principles are characteristic of liberal ethics and social and political theory. Henry Allison notes that in the context of liberal thought, 'natural law is generally construed as a set of universally valid moral rules grounded either in reason or in the will of God ... These rules function as criteria, or norms, for judging the morality of the actions both of individuals and states.'\footnote{Henry E. Allison (1987) \textit{Benedict de Spinoza: An Introduction} New Haven: Yale University Press, p.179. Allison seeks these characteristics in Spinoza.} The depersonalisation that has been central to the employment of reason has resulted in liberalism being based on universals arguably disguising white, Western, male standards. Anthony Burke's examination of the notion of security shows that the way in which national security is imagined in Western societies, for example, is seen as a universal experience, so that 'the concrete \textit{practices} it names and mobilises, along with their social and ethical implications' have been obscured.\footnote{Burke, Anthony (2001) \textit{In Fear of Security: Australia's Invasion Anxiety} Pluto Press Australia, p.xxix.} While promising security...
within the nation, Western societies promote the idea of the Other as a threat. Toleration as a central tenet of liberalism has little basis in acknowledging or confronting the experience of those others who are defined as ‘outsiders’ by the terms of dominant Western discourse.

Liberalism is a major current of thought stemming from the Enlightenment which has also had a strong influence on the way in which Spinoza has been interpreted. The universalism of liberal thought is linked with the idea of Enlightenment reason. The themes of freedom, based on the free will of Descartes, and individualism, in particular have played a part in reading Spinoza. This has meant trying to find in Spinoza the elements of what was regarded as an ethics through the main ideas and expectations of liberalism and that other aspects of his thought have been neglected. Reason has been emphasised at the expense of the affects, and his understanding of freedom and individuality have been slanted towards or appeared incomprehensible in relation to liberal ideals. Spinoza was not a precursor of liberalism but rather, offered alternatives to the individualism, and reason and subject centred paradigms, of liberal and Enlightenment thought.

Beyond Enlightenment

The dominant Enlightenment tradition, even though it is generalised here, shows an acceptance and dominance of particular themes. A number of writers have been critical of the Enlightenment and in post-modern thought have sought ways to go beyond the Enlightenment. Critics of Enlightenment such as Derrida, Deleuze, Adorno and Horkheimer and Foucault preceded by Nietzsche, have drawn out the ideals of the Enlightenment which have governed interpretations of Spinoza and made it possible to move beyond the Enlightenment. This thesis will move beyond interpretations of Spinoza limited by Enlightenment thought to show how Spinoza is important in the context of contemporary concerns and the need to overcome some of the difficulties created by the Enlightenment. Critiques of the Enlightenment are thus important in establishing the possibility for understanding Spinoza in new ways. Nietzsche, Adorno and Horkheimer and Foucault will be discussed briefly here. This will be followed by discussion of Negri and Hardt who are able, through these critiques, to see Spinoza in a new way.
There was a strong engagement with Spinoza by various European philosophers such as Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud\textsuperscript{39}, and later Deleuze, and even amongst British and American philosophers such as Bertrand Russell and John Dewey. These philosophers represented a range of responses to Spinoza and employment of his thought, but Hegel and Nietzsche, though they employed his immanence nevertheless viewed Spinoza as predominantly a rationalist\textsuperscript{40}. Nietzsche provides an example of the affinity with Spinoza felt within an alternative current of Enlightenment thought where Spinoza was nevertheless viewed as preoccupied with reason and emphasising self-interest in an individualistic sense. While Nietzsche broke down the Enlightenment tradition he nevertheless interpreted Spinoza within that tradition.

Nietzsche as a critic of Enlightenment thought, read Spinoza as a rationalist for whom the universe, though immanent rather than transcendent, was determined by logic and rationality. He says in The Will to Power for example, that for Spinoza ‘every moment has a logical necessity, and with his basic instinct, which was logical, he felt a sense of triumph that the world should be constituted that way.’\textsuperscript{41} For Nietzsche Spinoza’s geometrical method seems to express the ‘ideal of philosophy as science’ and to advocate ‘a cold repressive attitude to life and an absolute intellectual asceticism’\textsuperscript{42}. In the Gay Science Nietzsche laments the instincts to laugh, lament, and detest which he sees Spinoza as opposing to the understanding\textsuperscript{43}. Nietzsche, in the Gay Science clearly places Spinoza with Descartes amongst those for whom, ‘conscious thought was considered thought itself’ when for him ‘by far the greatest part of our spirit’s activity remains unconscious and unfelt’\textsuperscript{44}.

Critics of the Enlightenment that followed Nietzsche included Adorno and Horkheimer and Foucault. The Enlightenment was supposed to destroy myth, the superstition of religion and unsubstantiated beliefs about the world, but it has

\textsuperscript{39} See in particular Yirmiyahu Yovel (1989) Spinoza and Other Heretics: The Adventures of Immanence Princeton University Press. Yovel provides a reading of alternatives within Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thought through Spinoza. His reading connects in interesting ways with the argument of Negri and Hardt in Empire, to be outlined later in this chapter, that there were two modernities, one was the revolutionary force of immanence and the other the counter-revolutionary force which was aimed at overcoming immanence by creating new forms of transcendence.

\textsuperscript{40} This will be discussed more at the end of the chapter.


\textsuperscript{42} Yovel, p.116.

\textsuperscript{43} Quoted in Yovel, p.116.

in turn created its own myths through the employment of universals. Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* presented a momentous critique of the Enlightenment as turning away from myth and nature to the mind's mastery over nature.\(^45\) The Enlightenment perpetrated a destruction and perpetuation of myth, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, in the advance of reason and the centrality of the subject. They point to the mediation established through reason which Hardt and Negri will develop in *Empire*:

According to Kant, philosophic judgement aims at the new; and yet it recognises nothing new, since it always merely recalls what reason has always deposited in the object. ... The reduction of thought to a mathematical apparatus conceals the sanction of the world as its own yardstick.\(^46\)

Even Hegel, according to them, lapsed into his own prohibition, and thereby into mythology, when he made the whole process of negation, which exposed the positivity of the Enlightenment, into an absolute\(^47\).

In his discussion of the Enlightenment, Foucault noted the continuities between the Enlightenment and modernity, but rather than see modernity as an era, a period in history, he suggests considering it as an attitude\(^48\). He maintained that the generalising, systematising and homogenising characteristics, and the "stakes" of Enlightenment, be applied more locally and with an emphasis on historical investigation, on self-reflection and on practical critique. He seeks, he says:

... on the one hand, to emphasize the extent to which a type of philosophical interrogation – one that simultaneously problematizes man's relation to the present, man's historical mode of being, and the constitution of the self as an autonomous subject is rooted in the Enlightenment. On the other I have been seeking to stress that the thread that may connect us with the Enlightenment is not faithfulness to doctrinal elements, but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude – that is, of a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era.\(^49\)

The philosophical ethos is characterised as a 'limit-attitude' in which criticism is analysing and reflecting upon limits but moving beyond the 'inside-outside alternative' (of being "for" or "against" the Enlightenment). The Kantian

\(^{46}\) Adorno and Horkheimer, p.26.
\(^{47}\) Adorno and Horkheimer, p.24.
question of knowing the limits of knowledge is turned into a positive one in the context of today: ‘in what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent and the product of arbitrary constraints?’ This is the practical critique that will take the form of a ‘possible transgression’\(^{50}\).

Foucault’s approach draws closer to the recognition of the experience of embodied and individual lives in terms of their own meanings, through the social meanings that they are connected to. The historical and practical critique he is suggesting is not centred on the logicality of statements or their universalism. By reframing the Enlightenment as a philosophical ethos Foucault moves the central feature away from the dominance of universal reason and employs elements of reason on a more local level to reinstate meaning. Foucault’s critique thus suggests an alternative idea of reason which is able to employ reasoning while disengaging the mediation of reason through practical critique. Reason in Spinoza is closer to Foucault’s formulation in the criticism of universals and his desire to connect reason to the context.

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault looks at the power implications of the use of ‘humanity’ and ‘man’ in changing the regime of punishment. The right to punish is shifted from ‘the vengeance of the sovereign to the defense of society’\(^{51}\). The change went from punishing “outlaws” inhumanely to treating in a “humane” way an individual who is “outside nature”. Matching the crime to the punishment produced an economy which made “humanity” the respectable calculators of punishment\(^{52}\). Foucault’s analysis shows the political framing of universals to suit how they are applied, including and excluding to create a social unity through the incorporation of power. Liberty in the Enlightenment according to Foucault, is developed in limited forms which increase social cohesion in favour of the market.

The interest in humanity arising in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been a central feature of critics of Enlightenment such as Adorno and Horkheimer, Foucault, and Deleuze and Guattari. For Adorno and Horkheimer the individual was celebrated in a way that was disempowering:

> Men were given their individuality as unique in each case, different to all others, so that it might all the more surely be made the same as any other.

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\(^{50}\) Foucault (1984), p.45.


\(^{52}\) Foucault (1979), p.92.
But because the unique self never wholly disappeared, even after the liberalist epoch, the Enlightenment has always sympathised with the social impulse.\textsuperscript{53}

Adorno and Horkheimer and Foucault’s critiques of Enlightenment allow features of Enlightenment thought to come forward in a broader context which situates universal reason historically. These critiques have impacted on more recent employments of Spinoza such as Negri and Hardt and Lloyd and Gatens enabling them to go further in their interpretations of Spinoza. The critiques themselves, however, are confined to particular philosophical and political ethos which relate to Enlightenment themes.

Relying on the tradition established by Nietzsche, Adorno and Horkheimer and Foucault, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt in the recent work Empire are able to cast Spinoza in a new light. Negri and Hardt focus on immanence and transcendence in philosophical and social and political thought. According to Negri and Hardt, the Enlightenment was primarily concerned with dominating the immanence of experience by creating an apparatus of transcendence that would discipline the multitude of ‘formally free subjects’. The multitude contrasts with the “people” where the people are the subjects of sovereignty, those represented within representative democracies. The multitude is disparate groups and individuals who express themselves as an ‘ensemble of “acting minorities”’, obstructing and dismantling the mechanisms of political representation. The multitude is the citizens rebelling against the state. In the seventeenth century, the multitude had negative connotations. In Hobbes, for example, it was ‘a regurgitation of the state of nature within civil society\textsuperscript{54}.

Later Enlightenment thinking sought to maintain the negative connotations of the multitude by developing a distinction between public and private: ‘Liberal thinking ... tamed the unrest provoked by the “many” through the dichotomy between public and private: the Multitude is “private” both in the literal sense of the term, being deprived of both face and voice, and in the juridical sense of being extraneous to the sphere of common affairs. In its turn, democratic-socialist


theory produced the dichotomy “collective/individual”: on the one hand, the collectivity of “producers” (the ultimate incarnation of the People) comes to be identified with the State, be it with Reagan or with Honecker; on the other, the Multitude is confined to the corral of “individual” experience – in other words, condemned to impotence.\textsuperscript{55} This also coincided with the distinction between objective and subjective where the objective is the domain of reason and the subjective the domain of the emotions and the personal.

For Virno, as for Negri and Hardt, the marginality of the multitude has come to an end. For Negri and Hardt the plural multitude is like the other head of the imperial eagle, the emblem of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where the first head is ‘a juridical structure and a constituted power, constructed by the machine of biopolitical command’. The plural multitude is the ‘productive, creative subjectivities of globalization that have learned to sail on this enormous sea. They are in perpetual motion and they form constellations of singularities and events that impose continual global reconfigurations on the system’.\textsuperscript{56} We can relate the multitude sailing on the enormous sea of globalisation to the perpetual motion of boat people, asylum seekers moving outside the system to find a haven for themselves and their families.

According to Negri and Hardt there were two modernities which preceded the Enlightenment so that modernity was always in crisis. The first mode of modernity was revolutionary – it ‘destroys its relations with the past and declares the immanence of the new paradigm of the world and life’. This resulted in a counter-revolutionary mode which sought to wage war against the new forces and establish a new power to dominate and expropriate them\textsuperscript{57}. Negri and Hardt refer to a ‘cultural, philosophical, social and political initiative’ which waged a war against the new revolutionary forces since it could neither return to the past nor destroy them. Instead it sought to ‘dominate and expropriate the force of the emerging movements and dynamics’\textsuperscript{58}.

In a series of philosophical developments between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, powers of creation previously consigned to God, began to be attributed to human intellect. This constitutes the ‘discovery of the fullness of the plane of immanence’. With Spinoza ‘the horizon of immanence and the horizon of the democratic political order coincide completely. The plane of immanence is

\textsuperscript{55} Virno, p.201.
\textsuperscript{57} Negri and Hardt, pp.72-75.
\textsuperscript{58} Negri and Hardt, p.74.
the one on which the powers of singularity are realized and the one on which the truth of the new humanity is determined historically, technically and politically.\textsuperscript{59} It is in Spinoza, according to Negri and Hardt that ‘the revolutionary aspect of the origins of modernity can be read in its clearest and most synthetic form’\textsuperscript{60}.

Transcendence, as a functional dualism which replaced the ontological dualism of the ancient world between the transcendent world and this world, Negri and Hardt assert, was necessary to overcome the crisis of modernity through ‘adequate mechanisms of mediation’: ‘Nature and experience are unrecognizable except through the filter of phenomena; human knowledge cannot be achieved except through the reflection of the intellect; and the ethical world is incommunicable except through the schemata of reason.’ The result is that experience is relativised and the immediate and absolute in human life and history are abolished. The ‘movement of self-constitution of the multitude must yield to a preconstituted order’. Descartes positioned reason as the exclusive mediator between God and the world, dualism was thus firmly reestablished as ‘the defining feature of experience and thought’. Although mediation for Descartes only really resides in the will of God and God seems very far removed from the world, God is in fact very close, ‘God is the guarantee that transcendental rule is inscribed in consciousness and thought as necessary, universal, and thus preconstituted’.\textsuperscript{61}

In Negri and Hardt’s view, there was a movement to suppress immanence and the drive of the multitude with the rise of modern democracies, through the mediation of reason. The setting aside of the importance of the emotions as an important expression of both individual and social experience, however, was an implicit part of that which pertained to the general elevation of reason in the Enlightenment. This is also accompanied by an emphasis on the mediation of transcendence and the suppression of immanence and experience. The flow that existed between self and world in previous worldviews is obliterated by the focus on objective, standardised truths in reason, and this creates the necessity for the mediation of all experience through the structures of reason. With Spinoza the old view is not simply maintained nor destroyed, but taken up in a new way.

According to Negri and Hardt:

\textsuperscript{59} Negri and Hardt, p.75.
\textsuperscript{60} Negri and Hardt, note 11, p.430.
\textsuperscript{61} Negri and Hardt, pp.78-79.
The counter-revolutionary project to resolve the crisis of modernity unfolded in the centuries of the Enlightenment. ... It was paramount to avoid the multitude's being understood, à la Spinoza, in a direct, immediate relation with divinity and nature, as the ethical producer of life and the world ... mediation had to be imposed on the complexity of human relations. Philosophers disputed where this mediation was situated and what metaphysical level it occupied, but it was fundamental that in some way it be defined as an ineluctable condition of all human action, art, and association.\(^{62}\)

They argue that a political containment occurred in the Enlightenment primarily aimed at the control of revolutionary tendencies which would result in liberation of the multitude. What is of interest here is Negri and Hardt's point that mediation helped to serve the purpose of containment. The mediation was a political mediation as well as a mediation of knowledge and experience. Reason came to act as a mediator which was not personal or particular but general and universal. This was the thrust of the dominant Enlightenment tradition which flowed from Descartes. Spinoza's immanence belongs to the radical modernity, the revolutionary force for liberation of the multitude. He does not belong to the tradition which placed reason in the role of mediator of knowledge.

Kant and Cassirer exemplify the Enlightenment tradition within philosophy but critiques of reason have enabled the Enlightenment to be seen in a different way and allowed different interpretations of Spinoza, such as that demonstrated in Negri and Hardt, to emerge. Criticisms of the Enlightenment have brought about an alternative question to Kant's abstraction from experience. That is, in what sense can experience in the broader terms of lived, embodied experience, be expressed, embraced and contribute to knowledge, that is, knowledge which goes beyond the immediate experience of any one individual or group? This requires engagement with embodiment in the sense of emotion which offers a form of recognition and engagement unavailable within the context of disembodied reason. It also requires moving beyond the abstract individualism of liberal thought.

**Spinoza's Cultural and Political Context**

It is important to place Spinoza in the context of his thought because his philosophy leads back to the context as will be shown in the thesis. The cultural and political context has tended to be ignored in Enlightenment and liberal traditions. Universal reason leaves out specifics and works away from the

\(^{62}\) Negri and Hardt, pp.78-79.
context, as did Descartes, in looking for abstract universal solutions. Spinoza’s philosophy on the other hand, leads back to the social and political context of interaction, and the specificities it entails. There has been some focus on the intellectual and philosophical tradition on which Spinoza drew but less on the engagement with the cultural and political context demonstrated in his thought. Spinoza did not develop a pure philosophy isolated from the context, nor is his notion of reason separate and abstracted from that context. Due to the emphasis on abstraction and universality in Enlightenment notions of reason through which he is read\textsuperscript{63}, the philosophical frameworks often applied to Spinoza do not capture this aspect of his thought.

Contextualisation is important on a number of levels, the first being political. Descartes did not write about political issues at all since reason for him was not concerned with context. Spinoza, in contrast, put a great deal of thought into the context of seventeenth century Holland, producing two treatises on politics, A Theologico-Political Treatise and A Political Treatise\textsuperscript{64}. These are philosophical texts informed by the major concerns of the time:

Now, seeing that we have the rare happiness of living in a republic, where everyone’s judgment is free and unshackled, where each may worship God as his conscience dictates, and where freedom is esteemed before all things dear and precious, I have believed that I should be undertaking no ungrateful or unprofitable task, in demonstrating that not only can such freedom be granted without prejudice to the public peace, but also, that without such freedom, piety cannot flourish nor the public peace be secure.

Such is the chief conclusion I seek to establish in this treatise; but, in order to reach it, I must first point out the misconceptions which, like scars of our former bondage, still disfigure our notion of religion, and must expose the

\textsuperscript{63} Harry Austryn Wolfson (1934) The Philosophy of Spinoza Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Wolfson attempts to reconstruct Spinoza’s Ethics by tracing the connections to traditional philosophy through the philosophical literature available to Spinoza, allowing for informal conversations with friends of which we can have no knowledge (H.A. Wolfson (1973) ‘Behind the Geometrical Method’ in Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays Edited by Marjorie Grene, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, pp.3-6). Wolfson is criticised by Bennett (1984) and Curley (1988) for focusing on scholastic philosophy to the exclusion of the contemporary thought of Descartes and Hobbes. Bennett is more interested in ‘philosophically interrogating Spinoza’s own text’ given a fair grasp of his immediate background. He says ‘Wolfson places Spinoza in a densely described medieval setting: the labor and learning are awesome, but the philosophical profit is almost nil’. (A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, p.16.) For Curley there is more to gain from considering Spinoza’s relation to Descartes and Hobbes whom he says Wolfson fails to consider adequately (Behind the Geometrical Method Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp.x-xii.) Neither Bennett nor Curley consider any more than the philosophical context of Spinoza’s thought.

\textsuperscript{64} Spinoza (1951) Benedict de Spinoza: A Theologico-Political Treatise and a Political Treatise, translated by R. H. M. Elwes, New York: Dover Publications.
false views about the civil authority which many have most impudently advocated, endeavouring to turn the mind of the people, still prone to heathen superstition, away from its legitimate rulers, and so bring us again into slavery.\textsuperscript{65}

When Spinoza wrote his \textit{Political Treatise} in the 1670s Holland was in the grip of a struggle to maintain itself as a republic. A revolt in the late 1500s had overthrown the stadholder, Prince William II of Orange and no stadholder was nominated until 1672 when the position was reinstated with William III of Orange after the murder of the de Witt brothers\textsuperscript{66}. Johan de Wit had held the position of Grand Pensionary since 1653 and was regarded as a true republican though not a democrat. He maintained the exercise of the powers of the provinces with a constitutional state only involved in issues of war and peace. De Wit thus enjoyed the support of Spinoza and his associates though de Wit’s republicanism was not enough for Spinoza. Religious tolerance was exercised within determined limits in the Dutch republic. De Wit was in favour of freedom of religious belief but nevertheless maintained the pre-eminence of the Reformed faith\textsuperscript{67}.

Spinoza’s views on democracy set him apart from many others of the time. As it is stated in the editor’s preface to the publication of the \textit{Political Treatise} in the post-humous works of Spinoza: ‘OUR author composed the Political Treatise shortly before his death [in 1677]. Its reasonings are exact, its style clear. Abandoning the opinions of many political writers, he most firmly propounds therein his own judgment; and throughout draws his conclusions from his premisses.’\textsuperscript{68}

The careful reasoning of Spinoza’s political works is being drawn attention to especially in this preface as a defence against the reactionary times. Spinoza’s political views were radical for his time. He maintained that ultimately it is the people who govern themselves, and did not grant any special privilege or rights to any in authority except those given to them as the custodians of the welfare of all by the multitude. The multitude as the ultimate sovereign power is clear in his general definition of dominion:

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Theological-Political Treatise}, Preface, §20 & §21, Elwes, p.6.


\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Political Treatise}, Editor’s Preface, p.1.
Where men have general rights, and are all guided, as it were, by one mind, it is certain, that every individual has the less right the more the rest collectively exceed him in power; that is, he has, in fact, no right over nature but that which the common law allows him. But whatever he is ordered by the general consent, he is bound to execute, or may rightfully be compelled thereto.

This right, which is determined by the power of a multitude, is generally called Dominion. And, speaking generally, he holds dominion, to whom are entrusted by common consent affairs of state -- such as the laying down, interpretation, and abrogation of laws, the fortification of cities, deciding on war and peace, &c. But if this charge belong to a council, composed of the general multitude, then the dominion is called a democracy; if the council be composed of certain chosen persons, then it is an aristocracy; and if, lastly, the care of affairs of state and, consequently, the dominion rest with one man, then it has the name of monarchy.69

The Political Treatise was not published until after Spinoza’s death, as to publish it in his lifetime would have been dangerous. It remained unfinished at the time of his death in 1677. The reaction to the publication of the Theological-Political Treatise, a treatise on religion and the state, in 1669, was warning enough. It had been published anonymously with the knowledge that the Reformed consistory had been alerted to ‘certain blasphemous and heretical works that were being published in Amsterdam’.70 Spinoza was deeply affected by the murder of the de Wit brothers by a mob in 1672 but he maintained his radical views on the welfare of the multitude who are ultimately self-governing in democracy. Monarchies and aristocracies, Spinoza argues, are well advised to take into account the welfare of the multitude to achieve a ‘stable’ society:

For the right of the commonwealth is determined by the power of the multitude, which is led, as it were, by one mind. But this unity of mind can in no wise be conceived, unless the commonwealth pursues chiefly the very end, which sound reason teaches is to the interest of all men.71

The political context of unrest and a desire to move forward to new and better forms informed by reason as opposed to ‘superstition’ is one dimension of the time that is relevant to Spinoza’s thought. Spinoza applied the use of reasoning in the sense of understanding, thoughtfulness and carefully structured expression of the understandings he could derive from his observations, experiences and engagement with the thought and political and religious movements of the time. Spinoza’s philosophy leads back to the context instead of being increasingly removed from it. Biographers have pointed out his participation in discussions

69 Political Treatise, Ch. 2, §16 & §17, p.297.
70 Nadler, p.269.
71 Political Treatise, Ch. 3, §7, pp.303-304.
with various progressive religious and intellectual groups, in part responsible for his excommunication from the Jewish community. The lively context of debate in which he engaged was not confined to abstract philosophical issues but connected with the controversies of the time.

Further contextualisation beyond the political can be seen in Susan Bordo’s historical perspective on the time of Descartes and what she terms ‘the flight to objectivity’. Bordo considers the art forms, technology and mathematics of the time as affecting the worldview of Europeans and their place in the world. One of the most significant cultural aspects of seventeenth century Europe was the relationship of humans to nature and the perspective reflected in art and forms of knowledge flourishing at the time, such as geometry. The emergence of the individual and the relation this had to the development of internality is one particular aspect where considering the thought of the time in a broader sense than the philosophical tradition itself, could lead to a deeper understanding of Spinoza and his difference from what subsequently became the dominant paradigm.

This dimension is brought out in Susan Bordo’s discussion of Descartes. Bordo argues that in Descartes’ time an emergence of individuation and the ‘inwardness of mental life’ was occurring culturally: ‘the structuring of experience as interior and enclosed within a self. Correlative to such an experience of self/innerness is the experience of the world as decisively external, as not-self. And for Descartes, ..., an epistemological chasm indeed separates a highly self-conscious self from a universe that now lies ‘out there’.’ This indicates a particular kind of internality that Spinoza could be seen as arguing against while establishing another idea of internality and its dynamics.

The medieval period did not have such a problem of knowledge, Bordo argues, as the worldview was one which involved an interdependence and interconnection between things in the world. The universe was seen as a single organism with a perceived continuity between human experience and the rest of the universe, and so the anxiety over how to bridge the chasm between self and world did not exist. This was not just a philosophical position but ‘a mode of

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experiencing being human and being-in-the-world that permeated ordinary language, and even the most basic levels of perception.\textsuperscript{74}

Bordo adopts a distinction from perceptual psychologist James Gibson between the 'visual world' and the 'visual field' to highlight the difference between medieval continuous perception and the single 'point of view' perspective of the Renaissance. In the former, objects are part of a visual continuum and vision is interrelated with all the other senses as well as with cognitive knowledge. It is the ""familiar, ordinary scene of daily life", the way things appear to us as we go about our business: moving, touching, doing, and paying little attention to the process of perception itself.' The visual field on the other hand, presents a 'perspective' that is fixed spatially, in which one moment is isolated from another. It presents a 'picture' of 'what lies within the frozen boundaries of our vision'. \textsuperscript{75} Medieval art, however, was characterised by a distinct absence of perspective, the absence of an imaginary fixed observer.

Euclidean geometry had a part to play in producing the perspectival form of perception which heightened individuation, in its attention to ordered spacings, fixed markings and constant widths, which became prevalent in the surroundings through 'simple engineered forms'\textsuperscript{76}. Bordo also notes the importance of bookkeeping amongst merchants in producing a ""visual world that would accord with the tidy principles of mathematical order""\textsuperscript{77}. The merchant and the painter both found the need to learn geometry: the merchant for dealing with different quantities and for using the rule of three to determine proportions, and the painter in determining body proportions. This training proliferated amongst painters and their prospective public, and led to a 'common cognitive style' informing the paintings and rendering them accessible to the viewer\textsuperscript{78}.

Bordo notes the human history of perception in Patrick Heelan's account in which the human environment appears 'full of architectural and cultural "cues"' that teach us to "read" the world Euclideanly and to classify as "illusion" anything that clashes with our expectation of the "text". This point also highlights the role that the separation of humans from the world, along with the ordered thinking associated with reason, will come to have in mediating all aspects of experience.

\textsuperscript{74} Bordo, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{75} Bordo, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{76} Bordo, p. 66, quoting Patrick Heelan (1983) \textit{Space Perception and the Philosophy of Science} Berkeley: University of California Press.
\textsuperscript{78} Bordo, p.67.
The development of the human sense of locatedness can be viewed as a process of cultural parturition, from which the human being emerges as a decisively separate entity, no longer continuous with a universe which has now become decisively "other" to it. That universe no longer beats with the same heart as the human being; it has its own laws, which control and contain (in both senses of the word) the activity of the self.  

Reason is the key to knowledge of those laws and hence will become the mediator of the control and containment of humans by the natural world.

Locatedness as a central category of thought emerging in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is distinguished by Bordo from the sense of 'place'. Locatedness involves the location of something in space and time as an independent and individual thing. For the sense of self it is 'experience of oneself as "simply located"'. 'The sense of "place", on the other hand, is the experience of "fit", of belonging where one is, of having a home.' With place there is an assurance of appropriateness and meaningfulness in where one is, in relation to a larger context.

In the new form of self-consciousness that emerges around the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the self is separated out of the picture and privileged in a particular way, so that the surroundings are much more self-consciously constructed, but with an external rather than internal focus. The external world is constructed and reshaped according to the demands and desires of the self but the self is considered fixed and divided – between rational and irrational, conscious and unconscious. This is the 'flight to objectivity' in which a retreat to the external perspective came to dominate the scientific and rational pursuit of knowledge. The self is privileged in a generalised sense as human (male) rather than as personal or individual.

A Spinozistic ethics can be seen as giving a different basis to knowledge through immanence which situates humans within the world, providing continuity and meaning, at the same time as it encourages and develops the awareness of self, invoked by the perceived separation of self and world. Spinoza's philosophy itself argues that it is not possible to disengage from the context and his thought engages with his context in a number of respects which reinforce each other. The affective, the political, the social and individual arise out of his analysis of his

79 Bordo, p. 70.
80 Bordo, p.71. Bordo’s use of the idea of home here is not intended to have the sense it has in contemporary discourse. She wishes to denote the idea of belonging and meaningfulness which is associated with home in the sixteenth and seventeenth century context.
historical context. Spinoza would more usefully be seen as trying to bring together the new geometrical way of seeing things, which becomes dominant in the Renaissance, with the former non-perspectival relation of medieval perception, rather than as attempting to create Cartesian objectivity. He is also doing more than this in developing the sense of self as rational and emotional, individual and social, in a different sense to the removed rational human, separate from the world.

Spinoza was aware of the use of mathematics in the merchant world since he was involved in the family merchant business previous to his excommunication. He clearly saw the geometric way of seeing things as offering a possible way through the problems of superstition and truth since he used it as the framework for the *Ethics* and in the earlier *Descartes’ Principles*. However, he also seems to have been deeply aware that these problems would not be solved by mathematics but required an understanding of human relations and concerns. The geometric form offered a means of sorting out ideas and expressing them in an order that was progressive, building upon the fundamental characteristics of immanence to derive an understanding of human nature. Spinoza never lost sight of the essential human understanding necessary in the world of mathematics. For him the political and emotional were not to be separated from the workings of reason, reason did not operate in isolation from the human situation and mathematics alone could provide frameworks but not solutions.

Spinoza explored many aspects of the new thinking including the science of lens grinding, and even drawing. He is said to have had a preference for portraits and could sketch people with ink or charcoal. Colerus, one of the original biographers of Spinoza claimed to have had a portfolio of drawings by Spinoza which has subsequently never been found. This shows that Spinoza was engaging with the emerging cultural forms of his time and exploring new perspectives and techniques. A geometric framework appealed to him as a means to express the issues he was concerned with – above all, human relations. Geometry, like other aspects of the culture of the time, was thus a means rather than an end point, a way in which he could set out his thoughts as clearly as he knew how.

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81 Discussions of Spinoza’s involvement in the merchant business appear in recent biographies such as Nadler (1999) and Gullan-Whur (1998). Though Gullan-Whur discusses more of the personal aspects of Spinoza such as his emotional life, both focus on reason as the central feature of his work and times.

82 Nadler, p.204.
Spinoza’s practice in lens grinding was well regarded and placed him in the context of debates about technology and visual imagery. His association with Christian Huygens and his brother no doubt meant that he was also aware of Huygens senior and his interest in art and technology of representation. Huygens sought to ‘bind his skills to the new optical technology and the knowledge gained from it. What is interesting for us as viewers of pictures is the immediate connection that Huygens makes between the new technology and knowledge captured in a picture.\(^83\)

Spinoza then, was aware of the characteristic features of the changing perspective of the time, discussed by Bordo. However, he did not produce a view which followed the trends of the time in the way that Bordo argues Descartes did. Reason as it is portrayed in Spinoza does not have the character of reason in Descartes. For Spinoza the emphasis on the rational as an end point, as it has emerged from the Cartesian framework, would be an abstracted expression of reason which cannot be sustained or sustaining. His focus was not the promotion of reason but the use of reason for understanding which would impact on many areas of human endeavour. The development of reason in Spinoza’s thought will be considered in depth in the next chapter.

Descartes moved towards the new perspective, in which the world becomes objectified and humans are set apart from the world, with enthusiasm. He helped to position reason as mediator and abstracted it from ordinary experience by developing the rational method of inquiry. Spinoza on the other hand, drew on aspects of the new perspective as well as previous world views and produced a new synthesis. He was critical of the idea of setting humans apart from the world and did not maintain objectification as the way to truth. A point to reiterate here is that some of the main commentators have sought to find in Spinoza a view of reason and objectivity similar to Descartes as will be discussed in detail in future chapters. Seeing Spinoza’s situating of humans within nature in the context of these cultural developments gives an added dimension to his argument. He was not merely a naturalist but also wanting to maintain an interconnection of humans within the world rather than a separation from that world.

A further significant cultural level of contextualisation is the religious context, the communities Spinoza was part of and the way in which passions were dealt with. The biographer Margaret Gullan-Whurst focuses on Spinoza’s personal passions

and internal struggle with his religious and political context. She sees him as predominantly concerned with reason: 'for Spinoza, everything was in principle knowable through reason, because nature was rationally (that is, logically or mathematically) ordered.'\(^{84}\) Gullan-Whur contrasts Spinoza's rationalism with his own emotional states drawn from textual references, particularly letters which she refers to as displaying 'snappiness, sloppiness and unremitting anxiety'\(^{85}\). She calls him a 'profoundly emotional man'\(^{86}\) and pitches this emotionalism against his own philosophy attempting to show that he himself was struggling to come to terms with his own emotions in his philosophy. Gullan-Whur in paying particular attention to Spinoza's own passions notes that 'passions were in principle deplored by the rabbis in relation to the Jewish religion'. People 'afflicted' with passion were committed to the Amsterdam asylum until the Marrano Jewish community, to which Spinoza belonged, was able to open its own institution. She goes on to say: 'Here lay the origins of Spinoza's concern with the destructive effects of passion: an analytically minded schoolboy must disentangle rational objections to (De la Peyrere's) views from marrano emotion at marrano betrayal.'\(^{87}\)

This view of Spinoza as a rationalist who dealt with emotion by retreating to a rational universe is inadequate. It is possible to see Spinoza as aware of the hypocrisy of the Jewish and Christian treatments of passion as well as the level of passion invested in defending religious beliefs. He wanted to acknowledge the passions and their influence, the need to recognise and deal with them and the importance of the passions in human, as well as particular social and cultural, activity. No doubt he was aware that particular passions were frowned upon and others were righteously maintained, or the same passion was allowed in some contexts and not others, within the Marrano community. He also no doubt observed similar things in Christian communities. He was very critical of the Catholic church and its doctrine\(^{88}\). It is possible to imagine Spinoza as observant of, and sensitive to, the emotions expressed within the views of those he was close to. Rather than being merely dismissive he was intent on understanding and dealing with emotion within himself and within his account of human

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\(^{85}\) Gullan-Whur, p.264.

\(^{86}\) Gullan-Whur, p.281.

\(^{87}\) Gullan-Whur, p.42. De la Peyrere argued for a natural-science interpretation of humankind's origins and offended both the Christians and the Jews.

\(^{88}\) *A Theological-Political Treatise*, Ch. VII, p.107ff.
nature. Gullan-Whur’s analysis limits Spinoza to the context of his community and does not highlight how he leads back continually to the context in order to enhance understanding.

The broader intellectual context of the time following Spinoza demonstrates another layer of contextualisation important in interpreting Spinoza. There was a proliferation of religions and calls for religious tolerance in Holland in the sixteenth century of which Spinoza was well aware and engaged with. However, Spinoza has been considered as identifying God with the ‘laws of nature’ which was one of the characteristics of Enlightenment thinking. The Enlightenment produced many varied responses to religion, the most prominent being expounded through historians such as Peter Gay and Michel Vovelle, as well as Hegel, who saw the Enlightenment as undermining religion. In the Enlightenment, however, religious tolerance became a complex issue between Church and state with rulers recognising the need to allow religious diversity after many years of war between states, as well as conflict within states. Toleration posed many problems, but there was a rising tide of public opinion in favour of it. However, there were attempts within this to make religion conform more to reason which created problems for the interpretation of the Bible.

Science created other problems for religion which had relied on nature and cosmology as evidence of God’s power and benevolence. Science was increasingly presenting a ‘logical’ or ‘rational’ explanation of natural phenomena according to the rational laws of nature. Philosophers such as Hume argued that miracles were impossible because they were logically opposed to the laws of

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89 Gullan-Whur refers here to Part 5 of the Ethics and to Spinoza’s correspondences of his last years as demonstrating confusion, and debunking the myth of his serenity and high-mindedness. Her reading of Spinoza, however, is in part influenced by her determined effort to consider Spinoza as only concerned with reaching a peak of rationalism. She describes the desire to reach the intellectual love of God as ‘a state of mind that soared beyond reason to the intersection of total rational mindfulness with ecstasy’. She sees this as creating tensions in Part 5 of the Ethics. One tension concerns the apparent promise to show the ‘immense power of reason over the affects’, when he then went on to state that reason was not the highest power of the mind, but intuition. Gullan-Whur, p.281-2. This tension in which reason was ‘suddenly relegated’ for Gullan-Whur in Ethics, Part 5, is a result of seeing Spinoza as holding a view of reason which was a result more of Enlightenment and Cartesian ideas of reason than Spinoza’s own view. It is possible to see in all of Spinoza’s works a critique of reason and in particular a critique of a purely logical or abstract and general view of reasoning.

91 Outram (1995), pp.31-34.
92 Outram, p.39.
nature. Many in the Enlightenment were eager to identify the laws of nature with God.

Spinoza was considered amongst those who naturalised God because his God was immanent and not transcendent and because everything for Spinoza possessed a conatus or essence, which meant that Spinoza was considered as an atheist by some and a pantheist by others. God or substance was not identified with nature by Spinoza however. Spinoza’s God possessed infinite attributes of which we as humans only experience two, extension and thought. God was identified with natura naturans while the world of extension and thought was identified with natura naturata. God for Spinoza was not a personal or benevolent or merciless God. His God did appear to have many more logical characteristics than Christian or Jewish ideas of God but most of his thinking can be traced through Western and Jewish philosophical thought. As we will see in Chapter 2, the ‘logical’ nature of his thought varied markedly from analytic ideas of logical philosophical thinking which have emerged since the Enlightenment.

To maintain that Spinoza held the kinds of views towards religion that arose in the Enlightenment is insufficient. He did express the need for a separation between Church and state, for religious tolerance and for a recognition that religions were based on the prejudices and opinions of men rather than the ‘word’ of God. Such views were arrived at in the Enlightenment as Cassirer recognised. He considered ideas of God expressed in religion and the words of the prophets to be a product of the imagination. His view of the imagination was considerably different from the dominant Enlightenment view of imagination in which it was opposed to reason. Imagination was a kind of knowledge for Spinoza and a way of relating to the world that demanded

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93 Outram, pp.41-42.
94 Outram, p.41.
97 Arguments such as these are presented in his Theological-Political Treatise and in the Ethics.
understanding rather than dismissal of it. Spinoza was critical of the Churches and their power and held over the imaginations of the multitude\textsuperscript{99}, but he also advocated understanding and knowledge of God\textsuperscript{100}. Spinoza applied reason to his reading of the biblical texts but did not reduce religious experience to the terms of reason. His highest form of knowledge was intuition which surpassed reason and involved an understanding of our relation to God and the interconnectedness of all things within God\textsuperscript{101}.

Spinoza's attempt to understand through much more than mathematics or an overly rational approach makes him an alternative to dominant Enlightenment thought. His thought has not had the opportunity to be expressed and applied though he has been recognised as an alternative within the philosophical tradition and the political tradition of Europe. The ways in which his thought are being picked up today in European popular thought, show both the extent to which he has come to be regarded as a founding political thinker in Holland, and the tendency to interpret him through liberal and Enlightenment ideas.

In the current political climate in Europe Spinoza's political views are being picked up in the context of the increasing occurrence of extreme right wing groups. In Holland in particular, where there has been a view that such groups would never occur, there are now some very vocal extreme groups appearing, and Spinoza is being referred to as a founding political philosopher of the Dutch republic. The main feature of Spinoza's political thought in this context is his view on freedom of speech, that there should be open expression and debate of a range of views: 'Famous quotations of Spinoza on religion and state which plead for absolute freedom of expression in spoken and written word, received in the last couple of weeks, remarkable currency and refreshment when the nation was alarmed about Islam after a few fundamentalist remarks from the Rotterdam Imam.'\textsuperscript{102} Even though this application of Spinoza tends to have a modernist emphasis in the context of the appeal to founding liberal republican values in Europe, it shows the value of bringing Spinoza into current debates\textsuperscript{103}.

\textsuperscript{99} In his \textit{Theological-Political Treatise} both Judaism and the Catholic Church are subjected to considerable criticism.
\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Ethics}, particularly Part 5.
\textsuperscript{101} Though for both Descartes and Spinoza there was a background assumption of God, they nevertheless held very different ideas of God. God was transcendent and separate from the world for Descartes whereas for Spinoza God was immanent within everything.
\textsuperscript{102} NRC Handelsbl - Cultuur, 'Het Holst van Nederland 13: De polder is de buffer', www.nrc.nl/cultuur/991372603695.html, 19.5.02.
\textsuperscript{103} Jonathan Israel (2001) \textit{Radical Enlightenment} has argued for a more radical reading of Spinoza but one which is nevertheless focused on Enlightenment concerns.
The layers of contextualisation discussed here indicate areas in which Spinoza was moving away from abstraction and universality and toward particularity. He entered into the political, cultural and social debates of his time and these informed his philosophy. Spinoza himself, as an excommunicated Jew, presents a fascinating figure in the history of European politics and the context of current diasporas and debates. We shall see that his thought offers even more in the context of contemporary post-modern thought than it does within the limits of modernity and the Enlightenment and liberalism. An idea of experience to be found in Spinoza, that extends beyond the sensory experience of the Enlightenment, enables engagement with particularities.

**Experience in Spinoza**

The way in which Spinoza refers to experience and the underlying basis of immanent experience in his philosophy will be discussed in this final section. Universal reason and the ethics and social and political theory that have resulted from it are unable to confront the context of experience. Experience is devalued and dismissed in the face of universal concepts presumed to apply to all in the same way. Reason has moved away from the specificities of concrete individuals and their interactions within a broader social and political context. The extent to which Spinoza’s thought encompasses concrete experience will be explored throughout the thesis. This section will outline more specifically what is meant by concrete experience and consider some attempts to look at experience in Spinoza. Experience has tended to mean sensory experience as in empiricism. Here, however, it denotes a broader meaning related to embodiment, to the way people live and the meanings that are relevant to them.

The greatest contribution of a Spinozistic ethics is likely to be its approach to reason and ethics and the understanding of human interaction that is central to it. Spinoza’s ethics encompasses an idea of human capacities and limitations that is very different from the liberal and Enlightenment traditions in its emphasis on the kinds and quality of encounters between individuals in a particular cultural and social context, and within the broader environment. There has been a tendency to move away from these differences within the parameters of Enlightenment and modern thought on ethics, reason and social and political theorising. The way in which individual and community are understood in relation to one another, the role of the emotions in both individual and social life, the understanding of passivity and activity and the transformation that can be achieved in the emphasis on the active life through and for, both the individual
and society, are significant areas where Spinoza has not been sufficiently employed.

Reflecting Enlightenment themes discussed above, some of the most respected commentators on Spinoza such as Jonathan Bennett are completely dismissive of any role concrete experience might play in Spinoza in favour of an abstract rationalism. Bennett will be taken up in detail in a later chapter. Here it is only necessary to briefly point out the problem with interpretations of the Enlightenment which come out of Enlightenment thinking. The analytic focus of Anglo-American philosophy in the 20th century, formed out of the Enlightenment, saw the priorities of reason as abstract and removed from experience and saw Spinoza as a rationalist concerned primarily with instrumental objectified knowing. Bennett is particularly dismissive of Spinoza’s comments on the eternity of mind. Bennett finds Spinoza’s statement, ‘we know through experience’ the eternity of mind, completely incomprehensible indicating that the analytic approach is limited in its understanding of Spinoza on this point as will be discussed in future chapters.104

Edwin Curley has considered whether the label of rationalist is appropriate for Spinoza and concluded that it is insufficient, but that considering Spinoza as either rationalist or empiricist is very complex. While he does provide some useful arguments which help to displace the merely rationalist interpretations of Spinoza, Curley is limited by the rationalist versus empiricist opposition. He points to many threads of empirical thought, but he does not really reach the extent and significance of experience in Spinoza.

Curley argued that Spinoza was more empiricist than rationalist, in that the different kinds of knowledge were all ultimately based on experience, for Spinoza, rather than abstract principles of reason: ‘The view that Spinoza was a rationalist ... is wildly inaccurate. Experience has a much greater role to play in Spinoza’s theory of knowledge than this view can allow for.’106 However, the status of experience even in an empiricist framework is limited by the restriction of experience to the senses, and by the mediating function of reason within it. It is also likely that post-Enlightenment consideration of knowledge in isolation from

104 Jonathan Bennett (1984), see page 357 in particular where Bennett reluctantly tackles the question of the eternity of mind, Part V contains, he says, ‘a failure of a different order—an unmitigated and seemingly unmotivated disaster.’
other factors such as the emotional and social context are responsible for considering Spinoza a rationalist. Curley is confined to understanding Spinoza as either rationalist or empiricist creating difficulties for his interpretation of Spinoza.

Empiricism also has an indirect relationship to concrete experience, mediated by the concepts of reason and producing knowledge to combat the ‘errors’ of experience. Adorno and Horkheimer expressed it thus: ‘Conflict between administrative, reifying science, between the public mind and the experience of the individual, is precluded by circumstances. The conceptual apparatus determines the senses, even before perception occurs; a priori, the citizen sees the world as the matter from which he himself manufactures it.’ The distinction between rationalism and empiricism is itself a result of Enlightenment thinking and is not helpful in its application to Spinoza, whichever side he is seen to fall on. The inclusion of experience in empiricism remains problematic in its confinement to the evidence of the senses and the level of abstraction from the context of experience required. Enlightenment philosophy and empirical science have been accompanied by an abandonment of everyday embodied experience as a reliable source of knowledge. This is in part due to Cartesian skepticism about the ideas of perception and the elevation of reason to a position of mediator which is able to determine true ideas, but it is also due to the restricting of experience to what is presented to the senses in a way that could be verified.

The common notions which are, for Spinoza, the foundations of reason, are problematic in determining whether Spinoza was more rationalist or empiricist since they are not like Descartes’ innate ideas, nor are they merely based on the experience of the senses in the empirical meaning of experience. These ideas would be taken to be ‘innate in the mind’ in the sense that Descartes finds certain ideas to be innate in the mind. However, there is an important difference. Whereas for Descartes, true ideas must be purified, cleansed of bodily experience and are thus removed, abstracted from and transcend the experience of the senses, for Spinoza these ideas must be couched in bodily experience. They are

107 While observation was considered to involve unmediated experience in what later came to be expressed as realism, such a view was disputed in the recognition that conceptual frameworks are required to structure observation. The debate into which John Anderson entered is discussed in his (1963) Studies in Empirical Philosophy (Sydney: Angus and Robertson) where he defends realism stating; ‘we can never know “ideas” but always independent things, or rather states of affairs.’ (p.32) Perhaps less accepted but just as significant is the influence of cultural beliefs and practices. Michel Foucault (1979) Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison Peregrine Books, is an example.

108 Adorno and Horkheimer (1979), p.84.
immanent, not transcendent, and they are immediate in that they express experience. Experience can be seen in Spinoza to have a different meaning from the meaning it has in empiricism where a mind/body dualism is maintained and transcendence plays an important role. Spinoza’s immanence and the central role of expression in experience, result in a different understanding of experience and its role in knowledge which will be explored further in the thesis.

In the Enlightenment, Descartes’ formulation of the role of the will and his idea of freedom can be said to be taken up and maintained in liberal thought. In Descartes, reason is connected to the will which is co-opted in the service of reason – judgement is seen as requiring a separate operation from the perception of the idea. For Spinoza, on the other hand, the idea involves a judgement. It is not a separate event, and this has consequences for the interpretation of actual experience: ‘In the Mind there is no volition, or affirmation and negation, except that which the idea involves insofar as it is an idea. 109

There is an even deeper sense in which concrete experience is encompassed within the framework of Spinoza’s ethics and this is not brought out by considering Spinoza as an empiricist rather than a rationalist. Spinoza’s understanding of the affects is both an acknowledgement and a working through of the role and contribution of affective experience in a number of ways that are not recognised in Enlightenment thinking. Through the Enlightenment, Spinoza tends to be seen as a rationalist concerned with abstract ideas, with the role of reason as mediator between the problematic nature of experience and true principles with which to guide truth and certainty. While the Enlightenment firmly established reason as mediator, all be it on an empirical basis, Spinoza was concerned with a concrete connection with nature in all its aspects – affective, bodily, social, and above all, active.

Spinoza defers to experience throughout his writings. The sorts of things he sees as confirmed or known by experience include the ways in which the body is affected10 and the eternity of mind11 - ‘we feel and know by experience that we are eternal’. It is prejudice and an inadequate understanding which leads us to see things as other than they are known to us by experience, for Spinoza. The postulates on the body ‘hardly contain anything that is not established by experience which we cannot doubt, after we have shown that the human Body

110 Ethics II, P17, p.463-464.
exists as we are aware of it." He says in regard to finding agreement with others by living according to the guidance of reason that we want for others what we also want for ourselves: 'What we have just shown is also confirmed by daily experience, which provides so much and such clear evidence that this saying is in almost everyone's mouth: man is a God to man.' And in the same scholium: 'Men still find by experience that by helping one another they can provide themselves much more easily with the things they require...'.

Embodiment and experience will be approached throughout the thesis in a phenomenological sense. I prefer to use the term 'embodiment' to capture the lived sense of both consciousness and body and to avoid the sometimes more abstract use of being-in-the-world. Embodied experience is intended to encompass the lived body as 'existential ground of culture and self' and to maintain the intentionality and intersubjectivity of experience as agency. Phenomenology also invokes the internality of consciousness but this raises the problem of phenomenology being confined to consciousness or subjectivity. Deleuze's challenge to phenomenology considered whether phenomenology could survive the extension of immanence beyond consciousness. Immanence therefore evokes more than a phenomenology of consciousness which requires that it embrace the internality of embodiment.

For Merleau-Ponty, in contrast to Kant, the body is itself the condition for and integral to, an awareness of space and time, for example. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology was concerned with lived, embodied experience and with the body as both object and lived reality:

What prevents [the body] ever being an object, ever being 'completely constituted' is that it is that by which there are objects. ... the permanence of one's own body, if only classical psychology had analysed it, might have led it to the body no longer conceived as an object of the world, but as our means of communication with it, to the world no longer conceived as a collection of determinate objects, but as the horizon latent in all our

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112 Ethics II, Postulates following P13, p.462 and the comment on this is at II, P17, Schol., p.464.
113 Ethics IV, P35, Schol., p.564.
115 Leonard Lawler (1998) "The end of phenomenology: Expressionism in Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty" Continental Philosophy Review 31, pp.15-34. Lawler argues that it is in The Visible and the Invisible that Merleau-Ponty ((1968), translated by Alphonso Lingis, Evanston: Northwestern University Press) comes closer to phenomenology as expressionism by positing a positive infinite. Merleau-Ponty 'conceives being not as subject but as infinite'. 'A positive infinite, conceived without the seed of negation, is a pure plane of immanence.' (Lawler, pp.28-29.)
experience and itself ever-present and anterior to every determining thought.\textsuperscript{117}

Spinoza makes the statement in the *Ethics* that, 'we do not know what a body can do', and there are other statements which suggest he would not have accepted any conceptualising of the body as adequate enough, as long as it was regarded as a complete understanding of the body. Spinoza has been regarded as a mechanist\textsuperscript{118} in his view of the body and nature but he considered the body in a much more fluid and interactive and thus dynamic sense, interactive that is, with other bodies and the environment, in ways that mechanism is unable to encompass. Mechanism is a way of investigating bodily functions, but it does not provide an adequate understanding of bodies. Spinoza's critique of reason is important here in that conceptualisations such as the mechanistic idea of the body are put into perspective as limited.

'We do not know what a body can do';\textsuperscript{119} we have not yet seen how body/bodies/energy forms among other energy forms are shaped by and shape, formed within cultures, environments, and social dynamics, formations and reformations. Limitations of bodies are political – humans as superior to other species, men as superior to women and white to black (to say nothing of the notion of race which for Spinoza would be a mere abstract universal). Spinoza recognised the role that these various hierarchies played, and railed against them in the Appendix to Part 1 and the Preface to Part 3 of the *Ethics*. Rarely is the openness of 'we do not know what a body can do' recognised as a critique of abstract reason and decontextualised knowledges\textsuperscript{120}.

... no one has yet determined what the Body can do, i.e., experience has not yet taught anyone what the Body can do from the laws of nature alone, insofar as nature is only considered to be corporeal ... \textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{118} This was especially the case at the time, in response to Spinoza's inclusion of nature in God. The Quaker, Ann Conway wrote a critique of Spinoza in the seventeenth century in which she argued that he was a mechanist opposed to any kind of vitalist force. Commentators are inclined to see the issue as more complex. For example Edwin Curley (1988) *Behind the Geometrical Method: A Reading of Spinoza's Ethics* Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp.32-34.
\textsuperscript{120} Negri (1991), gives an account of the transformation in Spinoza's notion of reason between his other metaphysical works and the *Ethics*. Deleuze (1990) also takes up the theme of 'we do not know what a body can do' stating that 'this is practically a war cry', but with different implications (*Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* New York: Zone Books, p.255).
\textsuperscript{121} *Ethics*, III, P2, Schol., p.495.
Spinoza was a keen observer of what was going on around him and how the general population and the religious and political authorities were dealing with difficulties of the time. Spinoza made a concerted effort to move beyond theory and look at the lives of people and their everyday issues. To a great extent this involved analysing and removing universalisms such as what is good and evil and it also involved analysing the social and political appropriation of the passions.

After men persuaded themselves that everything that happens, happens on their account, they had to judge that what is most important in each thing is what is most useful to them, and to rate as most excellent all those things by which they were most pleased. Hence, they had to form these notions, by which they explained natural things: good, evil, order, confusion, warm, cold, beauty, ugliness. And because they think themselves free, those notions have arisen: praise and blame, sin and merit.\textsuperscript{122}

The strong social critique in Spinoza is focused on the prevailing views of human nature and the political uses to which these are applied.

In the empirical researches of modernity what has emerged is the diversity and multiplicity of human cultural forms and expression. John Gray refers to the complete failure of the Enlightenment project in finding universals applicable to the whole human race. This is directly attributed to the results of empirical researches:

What empirical inquiry – anthropological, historical, sociological – discloses is an irreducibility of cultural forms, in which both the contents of morality, and the conception of morality itself, vary widely. And, contrary to the claims of Enlightenment thinkers to this day, there is no form of reasoning whereby this manifest diversity of moral cultures can be corralled within the ring-fence of a single universal civilisation.\textsuperscript{123}

The major criticism of Enlightenment thinking is that it reduces particularity in order to focus on universals and yet, Gray argues, empirical researches have moved closer to the recognition of particularity. Critics of the universal impetus seek to go beyond the confines of Enlightenment reason and connect with concrete experience. This requires encompassing concrete, embodied experience in a non-mediated form or in a form which allows the expression of experience through the mediations of reason rather than the determining and defining of experience through reason. For concrete, embodied experience in all its variety to be encompassed, it is necessary to acknowledge the human experience that is

\textsuperscript{122} Ethics 1, Appendix, p.444.
expressed within and through the processes of reason, as well as imagination and intuition. Foucault's emphasis on practical critique and the abandonment of universals (but not generality which Foucault defines as 'a certain form of problematization that defines objects, rules of action, modes of relation to oneself')\textsuperscript{124} mentioned previously in this chapter, relates to actively looking at the investments in the structures and processes of reason which inform the way knowledge is constituted.

Whereas abstraction and a retreat into conceptual frameworks, removal from the context of the body, interpersonal interaction, emotions, and desires have been the driving force of Enlightenment thinking obsessed with rational knowledge, Spinoza was severely critical of many aspects of such an approach and suspected where an unbalanced development of rational thought would lead. His metaphysics as much as his theological and political writings is directed at the development of human potential which is not dependent only on the expansion of knowledge of the external world. As in his metaphysics and epistemology, many things that have been carefully separated in modern thought, are intricately intertwined in his ethical and political thought. The political and the ethical, the social/cultural and individual are not separated, in the way they have been in modern thought in particular, and the metaphysics is designed to point to the interconnections.

Enlightenment emphasis on reason and the reasoning individual has resulted in an emphasis in ethics on individuals with little importance given to the quality of interactions between individuals in a social context. The transition from passivity to activity, which Spinoza's \textit{Ethics} outlines, is related to the social context and the cultivation of power within it and through it. The social context and its understandings is as much a necessary element in bringing about the development and expression of activity as the understandings of the individual. It is also as much an affective transformation as a 'reasoning' one. The transformation of the affects is in fact more important because without it, the reasoning involved in understanding amounts to little. The end point of the thesis is to consider the implications of a Spinozistic ethics and to arrive at an understanding which places the role of reason in context by elaborating its relation to the affects and the social and political environment.

There is more possibility for a revaluation of Spinoza from the context of postmodern thought due to its criticisms of the Enlightenment which have

\textsuperscript{124} Foucault (1984), p.49.
highlighted the ideals determining the way philosophical thought has been understood and reflected upon. In the post-modern interpretations of Spinoza in Deleuze, Balibar and Lloyd and Gatens to be discussed later in the thesis, the social and political dimensions of Spinoza’s thought are more prominent. As we will see however, there are still some traces of Enlightenment and liberal thought in these interpretations of Spinoza.

The emphasis on reason, impartiality and distance from the personal in the Enlightenment and modernity, has meant that Spinoza has predominantly been read as an accomplice, a precursor. Spinoza differed on a number of significant points that will emerge throughout the thesis. The way in which he employed reason is one of the most important, but also significant are his criticism of universals and presentation of common notions as an alternative, the fact that he did not put humans at the centre of the universe and the engagement with the context that he advocated. His idea of reason in contrast to that of Descartes will be the subject of the next chapter which will work through in detail, reason in Spinoza’s earlier work as well as the Ethics, showing a consistent criticism of universals.

Christopher Norris ((1991) *Spinoza and the Origins of Modern Political Theory* Oxford: Basil Blackwell), for example, argues that Spinoza has been influential in the development of modern critical theory. Although he is critical of other attempts to situate Spinoza in relation to liberal theory (such as Feuer (1958)), he nevertheless maintains many of the fundamental aspects of reason and liberalism that tend to be attributed to Spinoza. Norris recognises the importance of engagement with the context and affects in Spinoza’s thought saying that he ‘can be enlisted on the side of a radically contextualist approach’ (p.171). He argues further, that a ‘distinct metaphysical turn – including the revival of Spinozist themes and arguments – across a range of diverse movements’ has been part of a significant attempt to ‘revoke the Kantian “Enlightenment” paradigm’ by theorists such as Foucault, Deleuze and Levinas (p.33). Norris attempts to situate Spinoza in relation to the New Historicism and the Foucauldian paradigm, Habermas and critical theory. He is more inclined to align Spinoza with Habermasian ideals: ‘...the issue between Spinoza and Hobbes to some extent prefigures the current debate between a rationalist philosopher such as Habermas and those “postmodern” thinkers in the Nietzsche-Foucault line of descent whose project entails a radical rejection of all such Enlightenment ideas.’ (p.186)

Norris is not in favour of a complete rejection of Enlightenment ideals, maintaining the ideals of reason and progress and defending their place in Spinoza accordingly. He states that Spinoza ‘offers a singularly impressive example of the way that philosophy can fix its sights, so to speak, on the highest ideals of reason and truth, while continuing to work with the given realities of socio-political life.’ (p.158) While his interest is thus in bringing reason into closer connection with everyday realities, he does not evoke or discuss the common notions, the central feature of reason in Spinoza. I do agree with many of the points Norris makes for connecting Spinoza to current social, political and theoretical issues, however, reason is not brought sufficiently under the spotlight in his argument. The form and place of reason in Spinoza was very different from that which emerged from the Enlightenment and the development of Cartesian thought.
2. The Evolution of Reason in Spinoza

Love is never directed toward this or that property of the loved one (being blond, being small, being tender, being lame), but neither does it neglect the properties in favor of an insipid generality (universal love): The lover wants the loved one with all of its predicates, its being such as it is.\textsuperscript{1}

Introduction

The chapter will discuss reason in Spinoza and highlight its difference from the abstract and analytic notions of reason which have prevailed since the Enlightenment and have been predominant in interpretations of Spinoza. Because reason was seen as generalising and abstracting from particular experience, Spinoza was generously interpreted along those lines. However, Spinoza was attempting to consider the most useful universal understandings without losing sight of particularity. He distinguished universals that were abstract and lost sight of particularities, from the common notions which related to the actual existence of things. Reason is not the end point in Spinoza but a means, and only then a useful means if it remains in contact with the context of the lived environment and human relations.

The first section will consider Descartes and argue that in Descartes, the idea, or consciousness, is always representative and is mediated by reason/mind/thinking. The second section will discuss reason in Spinoza’s earlier works showing that he was critical of reason and its universals even before he had developed the common notions. The third will discuss Spinoza’s view of reason in the Ethics and look in more detail at the common notions. The final section will deal with Spinoza’s method and his relation to logic. It will be argued that in contrast to Descartes, ideas for Spinoza are always embodied, and reason is connected to the context of social and cultural relations.

The Body of Descartes

The aim of our studies should be to direct the mind with a view to forming true and sound judgements about whatever comes before it.\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1} Giorgio Agamben (1993) \textit{The Coming Community} Translated by Michael Hardt, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p.22.

\textsuperscript{2} Descartes \textit{Rules for the Direction of the Mind} in John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald (1985) (translators) \textit{The Philosophical Writings of Descartes} Murdoch Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, vol. 1, p. 9. All references to Descartes’ text are from this edition.
Descartes' earliest work begins with a presumed separation between the mind and the world. His is a metaphysics of separation. In order to consider the transformation that Spinoza performs on the Cartesian metaphysic, I want to discuss in particular the role of reason as mediator in Descartes. Specifically I will consider the implications for the notion of the idea, which stem from the separation of mind from body and the environment which, in turn, makes the dynamics of experience problematic. Descartes was concerned primarily with an idea of consciousness which focused exclusively on truth and certainty to the exclusion of consciousness as experiencing and dynamic. Consciousness in Descartes is representative rather than experiential and it is this factor more than any other which sets up the abstraction, transcendence and mediation of experience by reason.

Descartes' attribution of consciousness to humans only, and its restriction to reason, is reliant on a conception of the body as mechanistic. The unquestioned assumption of body as machine, opposed to mind as thought or consciousness, gives rise to many of the problematics associated with contemporary thought on consciousness. The related proposal that it is reason that marks consciousness, definitively separating humans from everything else, leaves no room for a more complex understanding of consciousness. This is problematic in the face of evidence of at least elements of reasoning and other indications of consciousness in animals, and the attempt to place humans in the context of nature, evolution, biology.

Because Descartes the identification of consciousness with reason confines consciousness to humans, he limits it to reason as abstract 'clear and distinct' ideas, in opposition to the mechanical functioning of body. It is this aspect of Descartes' thought that has been most exploited in modern thought and which is most connected with the cultural changes discussed by Bordo and the political containment referred to by Negri and Hardt discussed previously.

Baier states that Descartes recognised the importance of the data of the senses in guiding action, and that decisiveness in action could be achieved even when ideas

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3 Annette Baier labels the popular version of Descartes a 'straw-Descartes'. Baier's paper points to some of the subtleties in Descartes' position on the status of persons especially evident in the correspondence with Princess Elizabeth. I am concerned in this section with considering the metaphysical implications that have produced the straw-Descartes while attempting to recognise the more subtle and problematic points that lead one away from the popular version to a more sophisticated one. There are elements of Descartes' position, it seems, which historically lent themselves to the popular interpretation in spite of Descartes' careful attempts to make distinctions which would aid our understanding of human nature, metaphysics and certainty. Annette Baier (1985) "Cartesian Persons" in Postures of the Mind: Essays on Mind and Morals London: Methuen.
are confused, by intellectual standards. Baier accounts for experience in Descartes in *Cartesian Persons*, arguing that Cartesian consciousness is in fact self-consciousness, but she regards experience as passive, and reflective thought as the activity of self-consciousness. She acknowledges however, that the division between the intellectual pursuit of truth and action in the world, remains in Descartes. Baier does not acknowledge experience in any immediate sense as activity. Rather she follows Descartes in privileging thought, which is added to experience, as active.

Baier considers experience as immediate perceptual sensing or imagining, that is, as necessarily non-intentional. Seeing thoughts as experiences then becomes an aspect of the straw-Descartes, the one she wishes to combat. Baier takes experience to mean the sort of passive thing we undergo; ‘... it is a mistake to saddle [Descartes] with a reduction of thought to a sequence of passive experiences’\(^4\). For Baier, the fact that Descartes distinguishes active and passive modes of thought frees him from the accusation that thoughts are merely experienced.

Active and passive are both modes of consciousness but the former is intentional whereas the latter is undergone. The way they are distinguished in Descartes, Baier argues, is that experiences, the passive mode of thought, are the sorts of things that we must become familiar with, learn as distinct, presumably by reflection. Intellectual ideas, on the other hand, are known and familiar as distinct when first discovered. The reflective process itself therefore, she regards as active, whereas the mere having of perceptions, sensations and so on is passive.

In a number of works, Descartes recognises and attempts to come to terms with the problem and naturally what he is attempting to do is to clarify ideas. The problem for him is their confused nature. The difficulty then is to establish that there can be ideas that are clear, definitive, boundary and whole in themselves. This is only possible by abstracting from experience and constructing such ideas in the mind (or identifying those ideas in the mind that are not considered to be derived from experience and have the necessary features), and that then becomes their only source of certainty - being clearly defined in the mind.

Annette Baier, in defending Descartes against the straw-Descartes, does not question the passivity of perception. However, the operations of consciousness in the world involve not only perceptions but also the application of interpretation or

\(^4\) Baier, pp.78-79.
meaning to those perceptions and these cannot be separated. Part of perceiving is to interpret or make meaningful in terms of the concerns and position of that consciousness. Perception cannot occur without an attempt to make sense of, interpret or apply some kind of meaning. This would appear to be an active process, not in any sense a passive one, and to involve a level of engagement and intention, which is the second point that Baier does not seem to consider.

Descartes’ method begins with the process of doubt. *The seeker after truth must, once in the course of his life, doubt everything, as far as is possible*. The purpose is an admirable one; all common opinions must be questioned, or doubted, because our normal experiences teach us things which are not necessarily true. Descartes wanted to replace these opinions with ideas derived from thought, from the principles of reason separated from experience.

Marjorie Grene notes that intuition in Descartes was an act of mind directed toward a simple, wholly lucid and therefore indubitable target. It is a performance at the same time as it is an atom of evidence. When the mind performs in this way, however, Descartes wanted to say it is reasoning which is the nature of the mind, and reason involves investigating ideas. The unity between the process and the object of knowledge involved in an intuition is evident only in Descartes’ Rules. Grene states that the cogito is the ultimate instance of this unity as ‘... there can be no schism between myself thinking now about my thinking and that thinking ... each intuition, each clear and distinct idea exhibits, ideally at least, that coalescence of intention and intended, of thinker and thought’.

The essence of Cartesian method, however, and the reason why Descartes abandons the notion of intuition infavour of idea, is that, as Grene argues, the intellectual process was removed from concrete experience, in the world to the evaluation of ideas in the mind;

... the real individual thing, the individuated atomon eidos, the form, that is the target of Aristotelian science, is here abandoned for the objective of the intellect, what a true thought can place before the mind. Aristotelian form is the very quintessence of the individual, existent thing. Descartes rejects this alleged foundation of knowledge. It is too subtle, too complicated, too diversifying in the varieties of knowledge it produces, or claims to produce.

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6 An element which was central for Spinoza and which will be discussed in detail in later chapters. For Spinoza every idea involves a judgement. This is also an important element of post-modern critiques of positivism.
7 *Principles of Philosophy*, vol. 1, p.193.
9 Grene, p.60.
For it substitutes the unit of evidence, an indivisible, not in the real world, but present, intellectually, for the mind’s inspection.\textsuperscript{10}

Descartes’ rational method\textsuperscript{11} comes from a tremendous move away from embodied experience – a move which modern thought has pursued with great vigor. As Marjorie Grene states; ‘... Descartes had no conception of body ... What he suspends in Meditation One and reinstates in Six is a dim surrogate for body: mere shapes and sizes, not growth and digestion and fatigue, comfort and discomfort - everything that the lived body at once is and means.’\textsuperscript{12} Embodied experience was hence subjected to rational method. Descartes’ notion of intuition rather than embracing experience, moved away from experience to mere representations, through the method of doubt.

For Descartes it is the idea which is immediate in the mind, however its relation to the thing it is an idea of, is indirect. The idea is an image\textsuperscript{13} or whatever is immediately present to the mind\textsuperscript{14} which the mind is able to examine. Some ideas are innate and some represent objects which are presented through the senses\textsuperscript{15}. The idea in the mind thus translates the perceptions of the senses. This is true perception, for Descartes, the perception of the mind which represents information received by the senses\textsuperscript{16}. Ideas have the characteristic chiefly of being able to be examined while at the same time being the means by which perceptions are examined. It is clear that for Descartes nevertheless, ideas are the awareness of fear or a volition or whatever – they are the mind’s attention to that which is felt or sensed.

‘I understand this term [idea] to mean the form of any given thought, immediate perception of which makes me aware of the thought’.\textsuperscript{17} This must be distinguished from immediate experience of perceptions or sensations themselves which belong to the body. Descartes appears to mean by experience, the existence of ideas in the mind derived from sensations. The ideas themselves that he wishes to focus on, are distinct from the sensations they are based on - they are representative. The ideas are immediately perceived, not sensations.

\textsuperscript{10} Grene, p.61.
\textsuperscript{11} Spinoza’s critique of the universals on which Descartes’ rational method is based will be discussed in the next chapter.
\textsuperscript{12} Grene, p.20.
\textsuperscript{13} As in Third Meditation, vol. 2, p.25.
\textsuperscript{16} Optics, vol. 1, p.152ff.
\textsuperscript{17} Second Set of Replies, vol. 2, p.113.
Descartes thus guides the pursuer of knowledge toward that which is clearly and distinctly perceived as an idea in the mind, and this is never sensory information. It is henceforth the idea of extension\(^\text{16}\) that must be the focus of attention, not the body. In the Second Meditation, Descartes describes how the mind is better known than the body; through the changing qualities of the wax as it is heated, the mind perceives that it is the same piece of wax and Descartes concludes:

> I now know that even bodies are not strictly perceived by the senses or the faculty of the imagination but by the intellect alone, and that this perception derives not from their being touched or seen but from their being understood; and in view of this I know plainly that I can achieve an easier and more evident perception of my own mind than anything else.\(^\text{19}\)

In the Principles, in relation to how we can know the distinction between substances, for example, Descartes states; "...even though we may not yet know for certain that any extended or corporeal substance exists in reality, the mere fact that we have an idea of such a substance enables us to be certain that it is capable of existing."\(^\text{20}\) Our knowledge of the nature of a thing is derived not from a relation to the thing itself but from the idea of it that is in the mind. This holds even for our own bodies which we thus know only indirectly, through an idea of the body. For Descartes, we relate to the body in terms of an idea of what we think the body is like or understand about the functionings of the body through reason. This idea is superior to any sensing or information derived from the body and is given as knowledge.

In the Sixth Meditation, Descartes clearly distinguishes between ideas as objects of the mind and imaginings and perceptions\(^\text{21}\). Imagination, he says there, is related to the body and is even evidence that the body exists (in that he considers imaginings to be based on bodily experience), though not sufficient evidence. The understanding or intellect appears to extend further than the imagination - while it is possible to have an image of a triangle, it is not so easy to have an image of a chiliagon, a thousand sided figure, even though I can comprehend such a thing. This is evidence for Descartes that the intellect, which can grasp the concept of a chiliagon, extends further than the imagination which is unable to form an image of a chiliagon.

Imagination is at once a tool of the intellect and distinguished from it. Descartes recognises the value of imagination in various writings where he is almost forced

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\(^\text{16}\) Principles of Philosophy, vol. 1, 54, p.211.
\(^\text{19}\) Second Meditation, vol. 2, pp.22-23.
\(^\text{20}\) Principles of Philosophy, vol. 1, 60, p.213.
\(^\text{21}\) Sixth Meditation, vol. 2, p.50ff.
to review his notion of idea. The part that it plays in the interface between mind and body is its most problematic aspect. Descartes does not want ideas of the intellect to be regarded as mere pictures or images. He considers ideas as more abstract entities with a greater distance from the original object of the ideas of imagination and, because the imagination derives its ideas from objects, he relates it more to corporeal nature.

The external world is not excluded by Descartes, although the relation between ideas in the mind and the external stimulus is as problematic as the relation between mind and body. What has been excluded is immediate experience or a direct relation to a stimulus as knowledge, whether derived externally, through the senses, or internally, in terms of affect. For Descartes all experience is mediated through ideas in the mind because that is what we have access to most clearly and distinctly and what is henceforth the focus of knowledge.

For although everyone is commonly convinced that the ideas we have in our mind are wholly similar to the objects from which they proceed, nevertheless I cannot see any reason which assures us that this is so. On the contrary, I note many observations which should make us doubt it.²²

In this instance the idea seems to be the sensation itself which is under examination and provides Descartes with an example of an idea from perception that is in itself inadequate²³. Descartes attributes the problem to the nature of ideas derived from perception and not the relationship of reason to those perceptions, or the way in which the perceptions are conceptualised in the mind. He does not see the problem in terms of the isolation of one idea from others which help us to make sense of them.

Although there is a difference between what we feel when tickled by a feather and the properties the feather actually possesses, and we are likely to think of feathers in terms of their ability to tickle us or the tickle sensation on our skin when we are touched by a feather, Descartes goes further. He shifts the ground of knowledge from experience or sensation to the object itself and its properties determined in abstraction from any sensation and from the object itself, so that because our relationship with the object is primarily through the senses, it is not even the object that becomes important, but the idea of the object formed in the mind, sterilised of bodily sensation.

²³ Emily Michael and Fred S. Michael in their paper “Corporeal Ideas in Seventeenth Century Psychology” (Journal of the History of Ideas, 1989, 50, 1, pp.31-48) confirm the point that Descartes is using ideas here to apply to the awareness in the mind that is correlated with brain impressions, not to the brain impression itself (p.34).
The focus thus becomes, for Descartes, the properties of objects, as objects separate from our sensations of them, through ideas of objects formed in our minds by the special faculty of the intellect which is freed from the errors and encumbrances of bodily sensation. Our relationship to objects and our perception of them through sensation, cannot be improved for Descartes, only our relationship to and perception of ideas can be improved. Descartes' formula for knowledge thus does not improve or focus on the quality of our relationship to the world. In fact it exploits that relationship through the presumed superiority of ideas.

In the *Discourse on the Method* he states: '...after all, whether we are awake or asleep, we ought never to let ourselves be convinced except by the evidence of our reason. It will be observed that I say our reason, not our imagination or our senses.'\textsuperscript{24} And in the *Principles of Philosophy*:

\begin{quote}
...we see very clearly that neither extension nor shape nor local motion, nor anything of this kind which is attributable to a body, belongs to our nature, but that thought alone belongs to it. So our knowledge of our thought is prior to, and more certain than, our knowledge of any corporeal thing; ... By the term thought, I understand everything which we are aware of as happening within us, in so far as we have awareness of it. ... if I take seeing or walking to apply to the actual sense or awareness of seeing or walking, then the conclusion is quite certain, since it relates to the mind, which alone has the sensation or thought that it is seeing or walking.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

The incoherence and inconsistencies involved in Descartes' attempts to explain mind/body unity are explored by Marjorie Grene\textsuperscript{26} in her discussion of Descartes' statements regarding passions in animals and Descartes' thesis that bodies are mere machines or automata which makes it difficult to ascribe passions of any kind to them. What becomes clear however, is that Descartes regards passions attributed to bodies and thus animals, as mere movement without thought, to which a purely mechanistic explanation and definition can be applied. The passions of the soul, on the other hand are different in that they do involve thought through which they are interpreted. The passions of the soul are not mere mechanical responses as the passions that could be ascribed to the body are. True feeling for Descartes, is therefore feelings which are reflected upon, not merely felt.

For Descartes there is no feeling in an unmediated sense of simply experiencing a fear or a pain or joy without reflection in which the intellect or mind dictates what is experienced. Grene notes that Descartes had formerly insisted that a sheep does

\textsuperscript{24} *Discourse on the Method*, vol. 1, p.131.
\textsuperscript{25} *Principles of Philosophy*, Part One, 8 and 9, vol. 1, p.195.
\textsuperscript{26} Grene, pp.23-52.
not fear a wolf; it is only a question of the light reflected in its eyes. Later, however, Descartes refers to natural impulses of anger, fear, hunger and so on and Grene asks:

... how can anger, any more than fear, be interpreted as other than a feeling?... how can Cartesian animals be held to sense? Sensing is either just motion, and so non-sentient, or it is thought: even when I sense or see (that is, seem to see), that is something I do as res cogitans; it is a mode of mind.  

From a Cartesian standpoint what appear to be feelings in animals, and in human bodies, are merely bodily sensations which can be explained in purely physicalistic terms. It is not simply that Descartes has placed the power of the intellect in such a position that it can override all feelings but that he has dismissed the sensation of feeling as feeling in any sense at all. Feeling for Descartes, is the thought that I have about a feeling.

Grene concludes after considering a reply of Descartes to a letter from Elizabeth in which many of the main ideas of the later Treatise are expressed; ‘...passions, strictly speaking, far from being direct effects of body on mind, are effects of body on mind consequent on actions of mind both in itself (judgement) and on the brain (imagination). In terms of this account, we would suppose, animals are indeed passionless; vivisect all you like, you are not causing pain, only motions - which, for some odd reason, are contrived to imitate the motions that, in us, accompany pain. After all, we kick and scream, too, sometimes, without knowing we’re doing it.’

Sometimes Descartes makes it clear what he does regard as thought. In the seventh set of objections, Bourdin claims that it is necessary for thought to know that it is thinking as well as to think. Descartes replies that incorporeal things do not think when they have sense awareness and therefore it is not necessary to state thinking about thinking as a characteristic of thought.

Descartes’ metaphysics made it very difficult to resurrect the existence of knowledge of an external world. This has the effect of making what counts as knowledge a result of separation from the context rather than engagement with it. Descartes’ program not only guides the reader and the philosopher away from sense experience but also from immediate experience towards mediated experiences and insights.

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27 Grene, p.51.
28 Grene, p.46.
experience, which is always translated through ideas constructed in the mind and separate from the body and experience. Descartes gives us the mediation of rational ideas to take place over and above experience. Experience is henceforth mediated through ideas which will represent reality to us in an abstract form. Reality is not perceived or communicated with directly through perception but only in terms of the indirect perception of the mind which is separate from and mediates the senses.

Reason in Spinoza’s Earlier Works

The contrast between Descartes and Spinoza develops in Spinoza’s thought culminating in the Ethics with the common notions. Spinoza’s main concern from his earliest work was to connect knowledge to its context, that of embodied experience. The following section will discuss reason as it is developed through Spinoza’s works. Although his idea of reason does appear to evolve, there is evidence in all of his works that he thought of reason in a different form than it has come to have since the 18th and 19th centuries. It is also evident that he was very critical of abstract concepts which philosophers thought of as a foundation for knowledge. Spinoza attributed them to imagination rather than reason. The discussion in this section is most concerned with drawing out Spinoza’s own use of reason and his framing of it throughout his work, rather than relating different phases to particular philosophical approaches.

Spinoza says at the beginning of the Emendation of the Intellect that reason is: ‘[The] Perception that we have when the essence of a thing is inferred from another thing, but not adequately’. This is a result of inferring the cause from the effect or from a universal\(^{31}\). Two examples are given, the first, that because we clearly perceive that we feel our body we infer that the mind is united to this body and, the second is, once we know the nature of our vision and that the size of things changes in relation to our proximity to it, we infer that the sun is much larger than it appears\(^{32}\). We can say with this kind of knowledge that we have an idea of a thing and can make inferences without danger of error, however, it is not the means of achieving our perfection\(^{33}\). This is because reason is seen as more abstract here than in later texts. In not getting to the essences of things reason cannot achieve real understanding. Spinoza wants reason to do much more than know things by their properties. I will present examples form the earlier works to show the criticism Spinoza makes of reason and his criticism of abstract


\(^{33}\) Emendation of the Intellect, §28, p.16.
The Evolution of Reason in Spinoza

universals.

In one of his earliest works, Spinoza’s use of the definition of life as: ‘the force through which things persevere in their being’, demonstrates the way in which he originally intended general concepts to maintain their concreteness. The force, he says, is distinguished from the things themselves, by which he means that it extends through all individual things, things participate in this force. God is life and so is not separate from the force because ‘the power by which God perseveres in his being is nothing but his essence’. The striving by which individual things persevere in their being is not equal to the force through which they persevere in being. In the Ethics Spinoza no longer speaks of the force as such and has replaced this notion with the conatus, the striving or the power of the individual thing, which is not equal to, or the same as, the source of that power.

This definition given in the Metaphysical Thoughts, published as an Appendix to Spinoza’s exposition of Descartes’ Principles, is concerned with God’s life and ‘what in each thing is denoted by its life’. The Metaphysical Thoughts have been considered by earlier commentators, as merely following from the exposition of Descartes, and as an exposition of medieval and late scholastic writings. Wolfson in particular traces the medieval and ancient elements in the Metaphysical Thoughts but he sees Spinoza as concerned with metaphysical issues based on abstract universals in this. The discussion of life as power, for Wolfson for example, centres around the enumeration by Spinoza of the medieval attributes. However, there is another very strong dimension to the Metaphysical Thoughts which is noted in Spinoza’s opening words:

‘The end and purpose of this Part is to show that the common Logic and Philosophy serve only to train and strengthen the memory, so that we rightly remember the things which are presented to us, through the senses, randomly and without order or connection, and by which we can be affected only through the senses; but these disciplines do not serve to train the intellect.’

Spinoza then begins Chapter 1 with the heading ‘Real Beings, Fictitious Beings and Beings of Reason’. Although at this stage he is still working out how he can best distinguish these, Spinoza is working from a Cartesian framework in commenting on his geometric expression of Descartes’ Principles, and considering

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38 Metaphysical Thoughts, Part I, C. p.299. This sentence is from Balling’s translation which Curley sees no reason to consider as anything other than the words of Spinoza himself (p.224).
and critiquing it along with those noted by Wolfson from medieval and ancient philosophy, on the basis of the confusion between abstract universals or 'beings of reason' and 'real beings'.

The concept of life is only a universal for Spinoza in a certain particular sense which at this stage he has not fully worked out. In the *Ethics* power will be presented as a common notion. Life or power is not a mere concept because God or the whole as divine or intelligent is real, and all things follow from and exist within and through this. It is life, and the source from which mind as well as body follow, through their distinct attributes. It is therefore an expression of something which has an existence beyond the categories of reason or the individual mind in a way that notions of class and species are not. The particular mind and body are related to nature as a whole. Minds and bodies are expressions of real elements in the universe which they share with other things. These are the general concepts with which Spinoza is concerned, those that relate to and express what really exists, and are not merely 'beings of reason'.

The development of Spinoza's notion of reason through his work, culminating in the *Ethics*, ties in closely with the clarification of the issue of beings of reason, definitions and universals. The way in which common notions function and how they differ from merely abstract universals has a bearing on the final form of reason as achieving understanding through certain kinds of general concepts without becoming removed from concrete experience. Spinoza regarded the tendency of reason towards abstraction as highly problematic. Universals that defined things in terms of certain properties denied the fundamental character of individual things and reduced them to a class of things which is a mere concept of the mind. Spinoza defines things according to their causes and not only their properties.

Spinoza is working at the notion of reason on two important levels. The first is distinguishing abstract and concrete universals which has more significance than is often assumed because of the difficulty of understanding universals in any other way than they have been considered in Cartesian and Enlightenment thought. The second, equally neglected and important, is that Spinoza wants to show the limits of reason. Reason is not the ultimate form of knowledge, and as concrete as the universals might be, reason is still limited by its use of them. Overall Spinoza wants to emphasise the importance of the singular thing rather than general concepts. In Part V of the *Ethics* Spinoza emphasises 'how much the knowledge of singular things I have called intuitive knowledge ... can accomplish and how much more powerful it is than the universal knowledge I have called knowledge
of the second kind." Fixed and eternal things are expressed in and through singular things and Spinoza clearly regarded an understanding of singular things in their essence as the ultimate form of knowledge. Reason requires an understanding of the fixed and eternal things but these are not mere general notions. The fixed and eternal things are expressions of the one substance expressed in singular things, and so reason must find universals which can adequately express them in a concrete way.

There is a tendency in modern thought to emphasise abstract universal concepts as the concepts of reason. Spinoza sees reason as limited in a way that makes it the most problematic of the three kinds of knowledge even though it is the one most assumed in the philosophical tradition to reveal knowledge. Spinoza's concern about the status of reason is reflected in the fact that in the *Emendation of the Intellect* it is presented as an inadequate form of knowledge, compared to intuition which is presented as adequate, and in the *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well Being* its status also appears much less certain than it is in the *Ethics*. At the same time, however, reason plays a large part in the development of human knowledge and understanding, and in the transition from passivity to activity.

Reason, the third kind of knowledge outlined in the *Emendation of the Intellect*, is seen as inadequate because it does not involve an adequate understanding or perception of the essences of things. Spinoza’s issue with definitions and abstractions is formulated at this point in such a way that it is only grasping the essence of a thing that can be counted as adequate knowledge. A definition must include the essence of a thing and not just its propria or properties. Inferring the essence of something from the essence of another thing by inferring the cause from an effect or inferring something from a universal, does not provide adequate definitions or knowledge of things. Knowing the true order of things involves knowing the true causes, but the essences of things cannot be known in the same way. Following in our minds the true order of things cannot reveal the essences of things. Intuition is defined as perceiving a thing through its essence alone or through knowledge of its proximate cause. Reason meanwhile must work towards this grasp of essences by developing an understanding of the true order of things which does provide more knowledge than that based on random experience. The

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39 *Ethics*, P36, Schol., p.613.
40 As Bennett notes, some of Spinoza’s language sounds like nominalism but there are too many inconsistencies with nominalism for it to be a plausible interpretation of Spinoza. Bennett (1984), p.39.
41 *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, §19, 12f.
understanding involved in reasoning must not then become abstract, however, it must still maintain a relationship with experience.

Spinoza comments on the use of abstract universals in relation to the real origins of Nature in the *Emendation of the Intellect*:

... as for knowledge of the origin of Nature, we need not have any fear of confusing it with abstractions. For when things are conceived abstractly (as all universals are), they always have a wider extension in our intellect than their particulars can really have in Nature. And then, since there are many things in nature whose difference is so slight that it almost escapes the intellect, it can easily happen, if they are conceived abstractly, that they are confused. But since, ..., the origin of Nature can neither be conceived abstractly, or universally, nor be extended more widely in the intellect than it really is, and since it has not likeness to changeable things, we need fear no confusion concerning its idea ...  

Here he is considering the problem of things being considered through abstract concepts which is the 'greatest deception' since a true idea is 'mixed up' with a confused one[^44]. In order to avoid such a mistake Spinoza recommends in Cartesian fashion, considering all perceptions 'according to the standard of a given true idea'. The mistake arises firstly, he says, from the fact that such things are conceived too abstractly and this is related to applying what is conceived in the true idea (that which can serve as the 'given true idea') to something else to which it appears to apply given the properties of the thing[^45]. Secondly the mistake arises from not understanding 'the first elements of the whole of Nature' – the result is that they proceed 'without order and confusing Nature with abstractions (although they are true axioms), they confuse themselves and overturn the order of Nature'.

The important point here is that though the axioms may be true, confusion can nevertheless reign. The universals are too abstract and thus slight differences between things escape the intellect. Rather than being Nature, the foundation is human ways of thinking; lack of understanding of the basis of universals. The source and origin of Nature, he maintains, will serve as a sure foundation and such investigation will not proceed in an abstract manner. Spinoza will make more of the tendency of knowledge to overturn the true order of nature in the


[^44]: *Emendation of the Intellect*, §74, p.33.

[^45]: *Emendation of the Intellect*, §75, p.33 - 'I cannot apply what I conceive in its true object to something else'.
Ethics where he considers the ends that are purported to exist in nature\textsuperscript{46}.

In the Ethics Spinoza will distinguish natura naturata and natura naturans. While the whole of nature is natura naturata, God can only be identified with natura naturans\textsuperscript{47}. Reason must be concerned with natura naturata and a way of aiding reason in this process involves seeking the kinds of ideas that will offer the most concrete access. In the Emendation of the Intellect he has not yet made that distinction and instead focuses on distinguishing real beings and beings of reason while attempting to account for the way in which ideas can relate to the things they are ideas of. He is concerned that ideas should not lose touch with ‘real things’. Natura naturans is not however, an abstract or ideal realm but an infinite and eternal one which we can only relate to through intuition.

The mind cannot understand more things than there are in nature to be understood, but ideas can be abstracted from nature and thus range more widely than it. The intellect must maintain its connection in order to ‘reproduce the connection of Nature’\textsuperscript{48}. The intellect needs to be in touch with ‘real beings’ so that it knows the real connections in nature - not just those between ideas in the intellect. To order itself, the intellect begins with the being which is the cause of all things so that all our ideas will follow from the objective essence of the ultimate cause and this is a concrete being, not an abstract universal concept. All ideas must be deduced from real things, proceeding from one real thing to another in the series of causes so that we do not end up passing over to ‘abstractions and universals, neither inferring something real from them, nor inferring them from something real. For to do either interferes with the true progress of the intellect.’\textsuperscript{49}

The series of causes of real things however, is not that of singular changing things, rather it is ‘the order of fixed and eternal things’. If we were to follow the series of singular things from the standpoint of reason, we would fail to realise that there are infinite circumstances in one and the same thing, any of which can be the cause of its existence or non-existence. In other words we could be led to take any of these things as the cause when they have nothing to do with the essence of things. Existence does not follow from their essence. The essences of singular things cannot be understood or reached from the series because all it reveals are extrinsic denominations, relations, circumstances which are not the essences of things\textsuperscript{50}.

\textsuperscript{46} Appendix to Part 1, pp.439-446 and Preface to Part 4, pp.543-546.
\textsuperscript{47} Curley’s note 56, p.33 and Ethics, I, P29, Schol., & P30, p.434.
\textsuperscript{48} Emendation of the Intellect, §95, p.39.
\textsuperscript{49} Emendation of the Intellect, §99, p.41.
\textsuperscript{50} Emendation of the Intellect, §99-100, p.41.
Reason has the status of inadequate knowledge in the *Emendation* because Spinoza sees adequate knowledge as requiring the inclusion of the essences of things. He is in the process of working this out however, through seeking the given true idea, which is the source and origin of Nature. The essence can only be gleaned from fixed and eternal things and the laws inscribed in these. These fixed and eternal things are singular but are everywhere, in all things, and so are 'like universals, or genera of the definitions of singular, changeable things, and the proximate causes of things'\(^{51}\). The fixed and eternal things do resemble the common notions of the *Ethics*. The boundaries between reason and intuition are not yet distinctly drawn in the way they will be in the *Ethics*. Here Spinoza regards the only 'good' universals as those that include the essence of things and he does not consider intuition in terms of the apprehension of particular things. Essences are more closely related to universals here and are only to be found in the 'fixed and eternal things' and the 'laws inscribed in these ... according to which singular things come to be, and are ordered'.

According to Antonio Negri the *Emendation of the Intellect* stops in full idealism: 'The formative power of reason is developed entirely on the basis of itself. Here, consequently, Spinoza's inversion of Cartesianism is blocked.'\(^{52}\) The 'ideal pole is now under its own power, reality is under the power of the idea. Reality is not negated, it is reduced to the dimensions of the idea. ... The weight of the ideal in the pantheistic concatenation obstructs the concrete from showing itself as material power.'\(^{53}\) In other words, Spinoza is unable to get beyond the universal in its traditional form as abstract concept. Negri explains the failure of the earlier work to reach the anticipated goal which is reached more to Spinoza's satisfaction in the *Ethics*.

Clearly Spinoza is falling short of his aims and is not satisfied, which is why he wants to include the essences of things:

... the properties of things are not understood as long as their essences are not known. If we neglect them, we shall necessarily overturn the connection of the intellect, which ought to reproduce the connection of Nature, and we shall completely miss our goal.\(^{54}\)

Spinoza gives the example of the figure of a circle defined as:

... a figure in which the lines drawn from the centre to the circumference

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51 *Emendation of the Intellect*, §101, p.41.
53 Negri, p.38.
54 *Emendation of the Intellect*, §95, p.39.
are equal, no one fails to see that such a definition does not at all explain the essence of the circle, but only a property of it. And though, as I have said this does not matter much concerning figures and other beings of reason, it matters a great deal concerning Physical and real beings.\(^{55}\)

The true idea must agree with its object in the sense that it must agree with the order and connection of ideas which is the same as the order and connection of things. Spinoza’s concern about the abstraction that results from knowledge gained by universals and definitions means that the separation between the thing and the idea of it, is an indication that the idea is not a true one. At this stage the only way the idea could be true is if it contains the essence of the thing which will later be the quality of intuition. My aim here is to show the misgivings Spinoza has about reason’s ability to access truth. In the Emendation he has not yet found a way to get beyond or insure against the abstraction of reason. In the Short Treatise discussion of the three kinds of knowledge Spinoza says that ‘true belief’, which is reason, ‘... shows us ... what it belongs to a thing to be, but not what it truly is ... it can never unite us with the thing we believe.’ When we really know that something is true then it is inside us, not as if it were outside us, as he puts it\(^{56}\).

The Short Treatise is quite revealing in terms of Spinoza’s misgivings about the use of reason as dependent on universals of an abstract kind. Essentially reason, or ‘true belief’ is: ‘the way to true knowledge, awakening us to things that are truly worthy of love, so that the final end we seek, and the most excellent thing we know, is true knowledge.’\(^{57}\) It is thus the way to true knowledge, it is not itself that knowledge, and its motivation is love rather than a desire to know. This statement about reason confirms the status of the ultimate form of knowledge, intuition, though in different terms to those outlined in the Emendation of the Intellect.

Spinoza begins the division of knowledge in the Short Treatise by considering those ‘modes of which man consists ... which are first known to us’, and that is, ‘certain perceptions, or the consciousness, of the knowledge of ourselves and of those things that are outside us’\(^{58}\). These perceptions are acquired, he says, through belief by experience or report, through true belief or through a clear and distinct concept. The second and third are not prone to error as is the first. In the next chapter, belief is called opinion because it is based on guessing and speculating, not certainty, while true belief is called belief and it is explained that ‘the things we grasp only through reason, we do not see, but know only through a

\(^{55}\) Emendation of the Intellect, §95, p.39.

\(^{56}\) Short Treatise, Part II, Ch. 4, 2, p.102-103.

\(^{57}\) Short Treatise, Part II, Ch. 4, p.104.

\(^{58}\) Short Treatise, Part II, Ch. 1, pp.96-97.
conviction in the intellect that it must be so and not otherwise’. The third, clear knowledge, he says, ‘comes not from being convinced by reasons, but from being aware of and enjoying the thing itself’\footnote{59}. This statement clearly evokes the immanence and experience that Spinoza is attempting to express in his formulation of knowledge and concepts.

In Chapter 4 Spinoza discusses belief, having discussed in the previous chapter, the relation between the passions and opinion. Spinoza says in a note: ‘Belief is a strong proof based on reasons, by which I am convinced in my intellect that the thing truly is, outside my intellect, such as I am convinced in my intellect that it is.’\footnote{60} True belief tells us about a thing but not what it truly is. We do not get inside it so to speak. The rule of proportionality from Spinoza’s famous mathematical example, is understood, but it is considered as if it were a thing outside the mind. In the mathematical example from the \textit{Ethics} Spinoza offers the possibility of understanding the rule of three in distinct ways. In order to find the fourth number of a series of three one can go through a procedure of reasoning, multiplying the second by the third and dividing the product by the first. In simpler examples such as 1, 2, 3, and ..., the answer 6, can be seen ‘in one glance’, that is intuitively, from the ratio of the first number to the second\footnote{61}. The mind is not united with what is believed in reason, it is not experienced as immediate to it and so must involve a process of reasoning in the application of a law.

Although true belief leads us to a clear understanding, which in turn leads to a love of God, this is not the ultimate form of knowledge and in a sense we are disconnected from what we understand. This is exemplified in the distinction between inside and outside, a theme that Spinoza uses at this stage, in sorting in his own mind the difference between good and bad universals. With true belief, something understood is spoken of as if it were outside us whereas in clear knowledge we see truly how something is and it is in us, not outside us\footnote{62}. The issue here is reason’s ability to understand its own concepts as concepts, not real things outside it, and distinguishing what is in us from what is outside us, without radically separating and removing us from the object. Part of the function of reason is related to the movement between subject and object such that the objective does not become too objectified, just as in imagination the issue is distinguishing the subjective such that the objective does not contain too much of the subjective, in terms of the bodily affects.

\footnote{59 \textit{Short Treatise}, Part II, Ch. 2, pp.98-99.} \footnote{60 \textit{Short Treatise}, Part II, Ch 4, note a, p.102.} \footnote{61 \textit{Ethics}, II, P40, Schol. 2, p.478.} \footnote{62 \textit{Short Treatise}, Part II, Ch 4, p.103.}
Reason, which is presented as inadequate in the *Short Treatise*, is related to the giving of reasons whether the true causes are known or not. The main distinction between reason and intuition rests on the relation between the mind and the idea or concept that it grasps, such that in reason the concept is mistakenly considered as something outside the mind. Reason, or true belief, would seem to require some self-understanding or an understanding of the limits of reason in much the same way as it is necessary to understand the limits of imagination. Whereas in imagination, the ideas of singular things are taken to be generalisable, in reason the ideas are generalisations but can be taken to be real things outside the mind, rather than tools of reason.

The tools of reason are considered in the *Metaphysical Thoughts*, revealing something of the status of reason in Spinoza’s thought, as he is most critical of Aristotle’s categories and the definitions of philosophers who are blinded by the perceived infallibility of reasoning. Spinoza points out that what is often taken as reason is in fact no more than a tool for the memory or explanation, the so-called beings of reason. Even time, number and measure are not real things but concepts or ideas we use to explain the relations between things and compare them to one another. It seems that Spinoza wanted to distinguish the functioning of reason from these kinds of functions and to say that reason was more than this. He wanted to frame reason in such a way that its limitations and the distinction of a concept of the mind from a real existing thing could be understood. Concepts of the mind are real things as modes of thinking, not modes of extension. However, Spinoza’s objections to Cartesian reason extended further than this.

Negri sees the *Metaphysical Thoughts* as putting in motion a ‘war machine against every possible form of idealism’. The definition of being is the central point, according to Negri, but it is posited in two ways – as that which is clearly and distinctly conceived as being, both necessary and possible, and as distinguished from unreal being, fiction, illusion, being of reason. The second category of unreal being includes ‘all the forms of thought in which we consider, explain, imagine, and memorize ... The apprehension of true being must be radically distinct from all that which does not lead towards the apprehension of being in its immediacy.’ The Platonic and Aristotelian traditions have produced ‘pure names’ in ‘the presence of right reason’ which become useful if they are ‘brought back to their acknowledged function of qualitatively identifying the real essence, to the function of “common names” (common names, not universal names).

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63 *Metaphysical Thoughts*, Part I, Ch. 1, pp.299-303.
64 Negri (1991), pp.41-42.
65 Negri, p.42.
Nowhere else in the history of metaphysics does the process of the demolition of the universal go so far, the demolition of the universal and of philosophy itself.\(^{66}\)

**The Common Notions in the *Ethics***

Reason is distinguished from the other kinds of knowledge in the *Ethics* by its employment of the common notions. These are appropriate universals that do not deny the peculiarities of individual things. A feature of reason that is apparent in Spinoza and is part of the nature of common notions, is the need to keep the concepts of reason in context, to see them as universal ideas which enable a new understanding to be arrived at while not themselves replacing, reducing, over-writing the real existing individual things.

‘Those things which are common to all, and which are equally in the part and in the whole, can only be conceived adequately. ... there are certain ideas, or notions, common to all men. For all bodies agree in certain things, which must be perceived adequately, or clearly and distinctly, by all.’ \(^{67}\) ‘If something is common to, and peculiar to, the human Body and certain external bodies by which the human Body is affected, and is equally in the part and in the whole of each of them, its idea will also be adequate in the Mind.’ The corollary to this proposition states: ‘From this it follows that the Mind is the more capable of perceiving many things adequately as its Body has many things in common with other bodies.’\(^{68}\)

Wolfson says that the third class of ideas, those which are adequate and true for Spinoza, are ‘common notions and ideas which follow by logical reasoning from common notions’\(^{69}\) but Spinoza intends something much more substantial than a logical process. He intends a process that connects ideas and embodied experiences of materiality as Negri argues. Wolfson points out the use of doctrines of common notions in Aristotle and Descartes which do indicate a logical function\(^{70}\), however, Spinoza’s idea of common notions does not relate explicitly to Descartes and Aristotle. Rather it is a complete reframing of the definition and function of common notions.

Wolfson goes on to consider the influence of Hebrew thought and Maimonides in particular, on Spinoza’s framing of common notions and finds the relation to sense-perception to be part of the character of Spinoza’s common notions which

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\(^{66}\) Negri, p.42.  
\(^{67}\) *Ethics*, II, P38 & Cor., p.474.  
\(^{68}\) *Ethics*, II, P39 & Cor., pp.474-475.  
\(^{69}\) Wolfson (1962), ii, p.117.  
\(^{70}\) Wolfson, ii, p.118.
he has adapted from Maimonides\textsuperscript{71}. But Wolfson states, they are also more than this and refers again to Aristotle and the universals which are the content of sense-perception\textsuperscript{72}. Wolfson concludes that the common notions for Spinoza are axioms of physics, the physics of bodies\textsuperscript{73}. However, Wolfson then resumes his focus on the common notions as ‘the premises in syllogisms from which by the proper application of the rules of logic conclusions can be derived\textsuperscript{74}. But it is precisely to move away from the logical relation between ideas that Spinoza has reframed the common notions. Spinoza does indeed wish to return to bodies, not only as the laws of science, but as the ground of experience within an interconnected universe where bodies share things in common with each other. When Spinoza says in P40: ‘Whatever ideas follow in the Mind from ideas that are adequate in the mind are also adequate\textsuperscript{75}, ‘follow’ does not refer to a logical process. It refers to the order and connection of ideas and the corresponding order and connection of things\textsuperscript{76}.

Perceiving the essence of a thing, as in intuition, the highest form of knowledge, means having a much more expansive understanding of the thing. If we do not perceive the essence we only have partial knowledge of the thing and therefore this will seem changeable, as one time we will understand one thing, at another time something else about the thing. The essence contains the whole thing, it is a complete knowledge, or at least as complete as it can be within human experience. The intellect’s power is not total, it is limited by its partiality as a particular idea. Reason involves coming to terms with this limit in order to cultivate the movement of human thinking to the highest form of knowledge, the apprehension of essences. Reason itself is not based on an understanding of the essences of things but it begins the process of recognition through the dynamic it sets up between common notions and experience.

Reason differs from imagination because the kind of knowledge it involves extends beyond the individual mind and body. The intellect is able to make generalisations and to draw inferences and form associations, but if it only does this in relation to itself, then the knowledge it produces will be inadequate. Reason can sort good universals from bad, and mere aids to the memory from the real function of reasoning which, in the end, is understanding. Reason must keep its own limitations in context, however, by realising that its universalising perspective does not involve an apprehension of the essences of things. It must

\textsuperscript{71} Wolfson, ii, pp.122-123.
\textsuperscript{72} Wolfson, ii, p.127.
\textsuperscript{73} Wolfson, ii, p.125 & p.128.
\textsuperscript{74} Wolfson, ii, p.129.
\textsuperscript{75} Ethics, II, P40, p.475.
\textsuperscript{76} Ethics, II, P7, p.451.
relate to the context of bodies and their interactions in a lived sense. As Susan James puts it: 'Substance is not just a static, abstract statement of the most powerful causal concepts by which nature is governed; it is the actual instantiation of those concepts in nature.'\textsuperscript{77} To the same extent, common notions are not just powerful causal concepts by which nature is governed, but the actual instantiation of what is common in nature. They are not concepts in the usual sense we apply to concepts of the mind since Kant, but are expressive ideas\textsuperscript{78}. Spinoza wants concepts to 'express an action of the mind'\textsuperscript{79} and the 'object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body'\textsuperscript{80}. To return to P39: 'If something is common to, and peculiar to, the human Body and certain external bodies by which the human Body is affected, and is equally in the part and in the whole of each of them, its idea will also be adequate in the Mind.'\textsuperscript{81} It is common notions that help us to form adequate ideas because they express an instantiation of what is common between bodies.

The definition of reason in the Ethics is that: 'we perceive many things and form universal notions ... from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things'\textsuperscript{82}. The order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas so that whatever is common to all bodies will have an idea expressing it and this idea will necessarily be adequate. The mind can perceive itself and its own and external bodies, and can therefore perceive this idea adequately. There are ideas, Spinoza says, which can be perceived by all human minds because all bodies agree in certain things\textsuperscript{83}. It also follows, Spinoza says, that the mind will perceive many things adequately the more it perceives its body as having things in common with other bodies\textsuperscript{84}. These ideas are embodied notions, they express an experience of embodiment, but an experience of a different kind, one which is based on a broader understanding of the connections between things.

As Curley notes\textsuperscript{85} this is the first appearance in the Ethics of Spinoza's distinction between true universals, or common notions, and bad universals, or


\textsuperscript{78} Gilles Deleuze (1990) *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* New York: Zone Books. Expression in Spinoza will be discussed at greater length in a later chapter on Deleuze.

\textsuperscript{79} *Ethics*, II, D2, Exp., p.447.

\textsuperscript{80} *Ethics*, II, P13, p.457.

\textsuperscript{81} *Ethics*, II, P39, pp.474.

\textsuperscript{82} *Ethics*, II, P40, Schol. 2, pp.477-478.

\textsuperscript{83} *Ethics*, II, P38, Cor., p.474.

\textsuperscript{84} *Ethics*, II, P39, Cor., p.475.

\textsuperscript{85} *Ethics*, n.57, p.474.
generalisations. Bad universals are fictions of reason or ideas formed in our minds which aid the memory by grouping things together in convenient ways. They deny difference in that they are generalisations which take over from individual things and thus produce an understanding based only on common properties between things. One cannot fully understand something by knowing only those properties common to things of the same kind or to every thing. The ultimate understanding is of singular things. Reason, however, is able to aid our understanding of singular things and their relation to each other and to the whole, through the common notions, by recognising those things that are truly common or in agreement, between things.

It is characteristic of reason then that; ‘...there are certain ideas, or notions, common to all men ... all bodies agree in certain things, which must be perceived adequately, or clearly and distinctly, by all.’ These notions do not explain the essence of singular things so they must be conceived without any relation to time. Two things are being stated here; firstly, that because reason perceives what is common to things and therefore what is necessary, it perceives these things without relation to time, if they are necessary, they are unchanging and not affected by the fluctuations and movements of finite things. Secondly, Spinoza points to the distinction between reason and intuition; reason understands things in terms of the common notions and not the individual essences of things which are grasped in intuition.

In understanding reason in Spinoza it is important to consider the intellect and its relation to the whole, substance or God. The mind is able to express many adequate ideas and this follows firstly from the fact that every idea of things that actually exist ‘involves the eternal and infinite essence of God’ and this knowledge of God’s eternal and infinite essence involved in each idea is adequate and perfect. Thus there are many things that we know adequately including the infinite and eternal essence of God, however, it is more difficult for us to have as clear a knowledge of God as we do of common notions because we are continually being affected by bodies. We are being affected by what is finite, changeable and contingent through our physical interaction with the world. While we all share the same basic relationship to God and the whole and thus have a shared experience of God through the common notions, we cannot imagine God as we can bodies. We must conceive our relation to God through the common notions in order to facilitate the formation of the third kind of knowledge which enables a fuller

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86 Ethics, II, P38, Cor., p.474.
87 Ethics, II, P44, Cor. 2, Dem., p.481.
88 Ethics, II, P45-P47, pp.481-482.
understanding of the interconnection between ourselves and the whole not limited to the perspective of our own bodies.

Our knowledge is based first of all on our embodied experience. We begin with bodies, as Deleuze says in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, and our own experience of our bodies and ideas. In reason what is in the whole is recognised as equally in the part, it is everywhere, and is what we recognise in other bodies and minds as that property which is shared by all. This recognition is already phenomenological but this does not mean that we necessarily grasp the idea or common notion as an adequate idea. The singular thing as an isolated individual is an abstraction. Singular things, when truly recognised in terms of their essence and even through the common notions, are seen in their relation to the whole, their interconnection with other things. The emphasis on interconnection rather than separation tends to be more personalising allowing the acknowledgement of interests, those that are similar and those that are different, but connected to the same existence.

The truth is something actively engaged in for Spinoza; ‘... to have a true idea means nothing other than to know a thing perfectly, or in the best way. And of course no one can doubt this unless he thinks that an idea is something mute, like a picture on a tablet, and not a mode of thinking, viz. the very act of understanding.’\(^9\) Reason engages with nature as; ‘It is of the nature of reason to perceive things truly, viz. as they are in themselves, i.e., not as contingent but as necessary.’\(^10\) The external focus of the imagination perceives things as changes in time and place, as contingent. Reason perceives things without any relation to time, that is, ‘under a certain species of eternity’\(^11\). Reason could be seen as grasping the unchanging laws determining this world of variety and change but this would not be adequate to Spinoza’s idea of reason.

The common notions are related to the real life of existing things, they do not abstract from them such that individuals become insignificant. At the same time they require a perspective in the mind that keeps them in context as real things that are common to all things. Reason’s focus is the achievement of this perspective. General concepts that are aids to the memory are not the essence of reason. Strictly speaking they belong to the imagination. The role of reasoning is to know the place of generalisations or bad universals, and to distinguish them from the common notions, thus seeking deeper concepts which return to the nature of

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\(^10\) *Ethics, II, P43, S.*, p.479.


\(^12\) *Ethics, II, P44, Cor. 2 & Dem.*, p.481.
things.

Reasoning then, recognises, understands, and is guided by, common notions, the good universals. The position that Spinoza takes does not deny that general concepts are useful but he does contend that if we fail to be aware of the limits of these generalisations, we fail to achieve real knowledge. Generalisations are tools of the imagination, aids to memory, such as the use of classifications in terms of class and species and so on. These are concepts or ideas peculiar to the mind, they have no real existence. Common notions on the other hand, are a different matter, they have a different point. They are distinguished from generalisations of this kind, in that they represent real agreement between things. They are not just convenient concepts used to group things together, which do not help us to understand the way in which things function in relation to one another. Common notions help us to see the connections between things which brings about real understanding.

They are the features shared between things and obviously begin with the most basic level on which all things are connected, that is, substance, and branch off into areas where likenesses become more and more limited to particular kinds of things. Humans thus have more in common with other humans than with other species. It is not the concept of species, which is an abstract creation of reason, that is important here, but the real things that humans have in common with each other and then with other species. The understanding of common notions in human experience must begin with the least ‘universal’, with those closest to human experience⁹⁵.

Looking closely at what Spinoza means by ‘reason’ reveals a certain mode of operating that is concerned with a way of existing in the world. Clearly it does not just stress analysing as an objective observer separate from the world we live in, as Cartesian thought does. Spinoza emphasises in common notions the connectedness of humans to other things as well as the specific joy that belongs essentially to humans. It is not reason that is the most significant characteristic of being human for Spinoza. Rather it is the experience of the greatest possible understanding and joys that humans are capable of. Reason plays a part in this but it is a comparatively small part in comparison to the emphasis that has been given to reason as the basis of knowledge since the Enlightenment.

Spinoza and the Generality of Logic

In this section I will further outline the difference between Spinoza’s common notions and ordinary universals of which he is very critical. It is important to emphasise here the kind of inquiry Spinoza is engaging in, that is, whether his focus is on logic and its form, or a method of understanding. Spinoza talks about reflection and reflexive knowledge particularly in the *Emendation* where he considers method, which is 'not the reasoning itself by which we understand the causes of things, much less the understanding of the causes of things, it is understanding what a true idea is by distinguishing it from the rest of the perceptions; by investigating its nature so that from that we may come to know our power of understanding ... ; and finally by teaching and constructing certain rules as aids ...’94. The emphasis is on reasoning as a method. Reason does not reveal true knowledge but assists in sorting out the basis of true ideas. The universal notions are a problem to him at this stage, but he had not yet worked out how to differentiate the different kinds of universals. By the time he wrote the *Ethics*, reason had a very different form from the reason which is separated from the context of the reasoner - abstract, objectified, dispassionate and disembodied.

In the *Ethics* reason depends on the common notions which differ quite significantly from the abstract, disembodied universals employed in modern philosophy. Reason as disinterested and detached has been the hallmark of good science and philosophy since the Enlightenment. Spinoza’s common notions in contrast, are a result of experience and embodiment and could not exist without the context of encounters between bodies. However, reflection is also necessary to the development of awareness of the common notions. It is reflection on the encounters between bodies and particularly on what they have in common, that leads to the recognition of the agreement between them95. The reflective process must always be couched in experience and not merely abstracted from it. Reasoning involves, in addition to reflection, understanding, and this gives an ethical dimension to the process of reasoning. Understanding requires looking at the broader context of ideas and their relations within the social and political context.

Concrete experience must involve the participation of ideas as well as the affects and embodiment. Embodiment is not merely the physical body, but a socially contextualised physical body which has certain meanings embedded in it. There

94 *Emendation of the Intellect*, §§37, pp.18-19.
95 Reflection is normally applied to ideas not to bodily activities but for Spinoza these are always at the same time ideas.
must be a relationship between ideas and objects which allows the participation of one in the other, not complete separation as in objectivised forms of reason.

Spinoza’s objection to certain kinds of ‘universals’, ‘Transcendentals’ such as ‘Being’, ‘Thing’ and ‘something’ and ordinary universals such as ‘Man’, ‘Horse’, ‘Dog’, is that they fail to address or recognise essential differences. He says in II, P40, Schol. 1, that the mind uses these kinds of universals because it is unable to grasp all at once the differences of each singular thing when it imagines many, or to imagine many in terms of a determinate number. It therefore ‘imagines distinctly only what they all agree in, insofar as they affect the body.’

Since these notions are formed on the basis of how the body is affected, they are formed in different ways by different persons according to how they have been affected. These are notions formed by images so that ‘each will form universal images of things according to the disposition of his body.’ Some will thus understand man as an animal of erect stature, others as an animal capable of laughter, a featherless biped, or a rational animal. For Spinoza ‘... the transcendental are the most confused ideas of all, since they reflect the intellect’s inability to make distinctions between singular things of the same kind. Spinoza is aiming for another understanding.

The common notions, which he formulates as an alternative to such universals, are for him universals in the real sense of an adequate understanding of the causes of things in at least some of their complexity. They apprehend things in view of what is shared between them and these are experienced in an embodied sense. Spinoza’s concern with universal notions such as ‘man’ is that the focus is on a few properties of things as they affect us and not those which are constitutive of the thing. If, as in the case of common notions, the focus is on the causes of things and what they have in common in a constitutional sense that all share in being part of nature, then an awareness of the differences will also be present and they will not simply describe man, for example, merely by one or two features. The kinds of universals that Spinoza is interested in then, are those that express characteristics of nature. Each thing is an expression and brings into existence the common notion. The metaphysics and epistemology is intended to provide an

expression of that relationship.

While Spinoza appears to be doing the same thing as most philosophers have done in recognising the influence of our particular constitution on the way in which we perceive and understand things, he goes beyond merely acknowledging these influences and seeks also to incorporate them. They do not merely disappear in superior knowledge which is cleansed or purified of its content, but are considered in the context of human understanding. Reflective knowledge as an aspect of reason, must always take into account the way in which human understanding and perception operates and not set it itself over against it.

Many commentators have considered Spinoza's reason as abstract and general, such as Henry Allison who considers intuition, in contrast to reason, as concrete and particular. This could well apply to the Emendation but even there it is inadequate given Spinoza's criticisms of universals.\textsuperscript{99} Spinoza wanted the concepts of reason to be more than merely general and abstract by maintaining a relationship to the concrete. Hampshire considers the common notions as based on 'ideata', the properties which modes possess in being modes of extension, thus placing the emphasis on properties rather than the causes of things. He states: 'What distinguishes common notions from universal notions is that the former impose themselves as logically necessary to the conception of extended things as such, while the universal notions are constituted by a confused mixture of logically unrelated ideas.'\textsuperscript{100} Spinoza is concerned with the common notions having a connection to each other which is systematic, but the connection is through their expression of the nature of things and the connection that pertains there, and not in the logical relations between ideas in themselves.

Spinoza was not primarily concerned with the logic connecting ideas in themselves. He was more concerned with the ideas as expressions of the order and connection of things. There is a phenomenological order rather than a logical order in the propositional sense, which is emphasised in Spinoza. Richard Mason in The God of Spinoza considers whether and in what sense Spinoza is concerned with logic. As he notes, Bennett, in considering Spinoza's commitment to contingency and necessity, has concluded that Spinoza was not a logician, that his 'modal thinking seems to have been neither skilful nor knowledgeable'\textsuperscript{101}. Both

\textsuperscript{99} Allison, p.117.

\textsuperscript{100} Stuart Hampshire (1976) Spinoza Penguin Books, p.95. The emphasis on properties relates to another issue to do with definitions which will be dealt with later in this chapter.

acknowledge however, that it is clear Spinoza is concerned with causality. But Mason argues that it is wrong to assimilate causality into a logical consequence, ‘so that ‘a causes b’ ends up looking like a statement that one proposition or statement follows from another’, that is, that ‘a causes b’ can be considered equivalent to ‘b follows from a’.

Consider Bennett’s summation: ‘we have found Spinoza according an absolutely necessary status to a system of propositions embodying the logic, the geometry and the physics of every possible extended world. These propositions extend to the world its ‘infinite and eternal’ features: they are instantiated everywhere and always, so they do not include features the world has locally or temporarily.’ Bennett’s focus is on the metaphysics as a set of propositions where the most important concern is with the relationship between the propositions themselves and not as an expression of the concrete world. Propositions cannot ‘extend to the world its infinite and eternal features’. Spinoza intends the propositions to be an expression of things in the world, not ideas which are logically connected in themselves. Post-Enlightenment and Cartesian philosophical thinking has tended to give greater prominence to the ideas themselves and the way they are related, and to emphasise logical relations between ideas as a true representation of knowledge.

The traditional argument relating to universals has been broadly about whether they denote things which exist apart from the world, like Plato’s forms or whether they are concepts pertaining to the mind as for Kant. Spinoza has both – those that express what is shared between things are common notions, those that categorise objects or characteristics of objects, he considers universals and these are conveniences. Common notions are not the ‘real things’ in the way that Plato’s forms are intended to be, however, and they are not intended to exist independently of things in the world. They express immanent qualities of the world, bodies, minds and so on. Enlightenment thinking has tended to focus on universals as ideas or concepts of the mind thus separating them from a relation to the concrete world, while at the same time they have also been seen as what is most general and in that sense common, to each human being. But these have tended to be the kinds of things that can vary from one to another such as, ideas of freedom, justice and equality without any real means of dealing with these

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104 Bennett (1984), p.112 (emphasis added).
105 Bennett, p.112.
differences and incorporating or negotiating them.

Bennett restricts his analysis to a logic of propositions which excludes an understanding of the workings of human affect, imagination and intellect. Although Spinoza attributes contingency to the imagination, it is not thereby seen as illusory. The imagination has a significant role to play in human functioning, and for Spinoza, it must be understood and seen in the context of human affects and societies, and nature. Genevieve Lloyd’s analysis, in contrast to Bennett’s, allows some of the deeper dimensions of Spinoza’s ethics to come forward. To understand how Spinoza posits the relation between necessity and contingency Lloyd considers his denial of divine purpose, with the human desire to seek order and harmony. In Spinoza there is no divine will mediating providence, and order is not the creation of a purposeful God. Order is a result of how we are affected by things and is thus a function of the imagination, as is contingency. Lloyd maintains that for Spinoza the ‘order’ of the imagination (contingency) and the order of the intellect (necessity) are identified in seeing order as a result of the ways in which the human body is affected\footnote{Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gaters (1999) Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present London: Routledge, pp.63-64. Lloyds, p.64.}.

As an example of what is necessary to human understanding, the portrayal of imagination is important for Spinoza’s formulation of contingency. Lloyd argues that contingency is a result of the workings of imagination which allows for contingency and necessity to be understood as co-existing in humans, and not in some universal sense as a quality of the world. Spinoza, in the Appendix to Part 1 of the Ethics, sets out to attack the idea of purpose in nature and to reconstitute human good without reference to either the purposiveness of nature or the virtuous individual free will. In her analysis of Spinoza’s relation to the Stoics, Lloyd states: ‘... if the Ethics can be seen as an unflinching affirmation of necessity, it is no less true that it is a resolute engagement with the challenge of living with contingency, without retreat to any reassuring ‘sanctuary of ignorance’\footnote{Lloyd, p.64.}. While Spinoza dismisses Stoic beliefs in providence, she argues, he takes up a ‘purer form of Stoicism’ involving ‘an ideal of freedom and virtue as residing in understanding rather than will, and an affirmation of ‘order’ as grounded in necessity with no reference to will.’

Commentators such as Bennett have read Spinoza through Enlightenment ideas of reason which have emphasised abstract universalism without distinguishing different kinds of universals or the ways in which they function. Abstract
universals are not meant to have a connection to particular things or to indicate connections between things. Universals in this sense tend to function as general notions which treat all in the category as the same and to focus on these characteristics at the expense of others.

Reason and Ethical Understanding

The understanding which is aided by reason is much more extensive for Spinoza than the discoveries of science. With the development of science much of human experience has come to be determined by the scientific view of bodies and behaviour, technology and the mastery of nature. Much of scientific understanding and investigation would not amount to reasoning for Spinoza. Reason in his sense requires a much greater understanding of the interconnections between things in nature and their impact on one another such as we are beginning to find in new sciences such as ecology. Reason must involve an ethical understanding not just a ‘rational’ one.

According to Jonathan Bennett ‘.... strands in Spinoza’s rationalism concern ‘reason’ not as the name of a cognitive faculty but rather as involved in the notion of a reason for a belief or a reason why something is the case’¹⁰⁹ Here he comes closest to seeing the role of reason in Spinoza not as the definitive author and governor of truth, as having more to do with living than with logical connection or abstraction. But even here Bennett’s idea of reason remains reductive. Reason for Spinoza is limited in a way that post-Enlightenment philosophers find hard to acknowledge. Its relation to the context requires an ethical understanding that is not focused on facts per se.

The accepted universalism of reason in most Enlightenment and liberal thought is not to be found in Spinoza and the assumption that they are has resulted in an inadequate understanding of the radical nature of the common notions. Universals and abstract categories have been a way of refusing the need for questioning and critique in relation to practical concerns and issues. They have a political force, however. Thus where universals like security – and powerful related categories, such as “sovereignty” and the “national interest” - are invoked, they must be challenged.¹¹⁰

In Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinking, reason has been seen as the

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¹⁰⁹ Bennett, p.29.
sole means of determining ethical issues. It is therefore important to consider how reason has been understood. The next chapter will explore a recent feminist critique of moral and ethical theories by Benhabib who argues that these theories are too abstract and disembodied. Spinoza’s interpretation in ethical theory will be discussed through two commentators who have considered Spinoza’s ethics at great length – Edwin Curley and Don Garrett. While Benhabib highlights many of the problems of abstract ethical theories she does not distinguish the different kinds of generalisations or universals which could effect the way an ethics functions. I will argue that while Benhabib, Curley and Garrett maintain the central position of reason, Benhabib’s critique nevertheless offers the possibility of re-framing the place and understanding of reason.
3. Feminist Critiques of Ethics and Post-Enlightenment Readings of Spinoza’s Ethics

For the practical and tolerant Chinese, spirituality was closer to philosophy than to religion; it was a question of ethics, never dogma.¹

Introduction

The project of this thesis is to get beyond the rationalistic post-Enlightenment interpretations of Spinoza and to highlight a Spinozistic ethics as one which is not restricted by the liberal, Enlightenment outlook that has been critiqued by recent feminist and postmodern theorists. I will do this by considering the scope and nature of experience as it is elucidated within the framework of Spinoza’s ethics. This chapter will consider a feminist critique of moral and ethical theories by Seyla Benhabib and then discuss the Anglo-American views of Curley and Garrett on Spinoza’s ethics, both of whom employ a traditional analytic approach. European philosophy has employed Spinoza’s thought in ways that Anglo-American analytic thought has not, the latter focusing more on the metaphysics and epistemology of Spinoza. Following chapters will discuss the European interpretation of Deleuze on Spinoza and contemporary applications of a Spinozistic ethics by Gatens and Lloyd.

This chapter will emphasise the Enlightenment tendencies of interpretations of Spinoza, and begin to highlight aspects of a Spinozistic ethics and its significance for contemporary concerns. More traditional interpretations tend to focus on the central role of reason, and look for signs of liberal ideals such as the promotion of individual freedom and autonomy. Such attempts to classify Spinoza’s ethics remain within the terms that have emerged since the Enlightenment.

Benhabib presents a feminist critique relating to the history of ethical ideals in western philosophy. She demonstrates a tendency to regard ethical theories as general and applying in the same way to all when, rather, they mask an underlying model based on educated, white, middle class males. While ethical theories have progressed from being what she describes as narcissistic, to a more generalised perspective, neither is satisfactory since both are formulated on the basis of the same standard of being human.

Spinoza’s ethics is neither narcissistic nor an example of a generalised ethics based

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solely on reason. Spinoza deals with the narcissistic form that ethics can take by considering the tendency to want others to see things the way we ourselves do, but he is critical of this and sees it as a limitation. At the same time he does not replace a narcissistic ethics with a generalised ethics. While his ethics is related to reason, it is an expansive idea of reason as understanding and is accompanied by a transformation of the affects.

Experience in the sense of contextualised, embodied, particular experience does not appear in accounts of Spinoza’s ethics such as those of Curley and Garrett to be discussed here. This is not due to a lack of confrontation with experience in Spinoza’s ethics itself, but to the way in which ethics is approached in the post-Enlightenment analytic tradition from which both speak. It is important to consider why experience matters in the context of contemporary ethics. Not only is there the epistemological issue of whether experience can count as a form of knowledge in any sense and whether truth should only be a result of abstract theories - abstracted that is from any actual experience. There is also the issue of whether a human being, with a human embodiment, can know anything by virtue of being human. There have been many claims to knowing on the part of male philosophers who confine knowledge to a mediation of experience by particular forms of cultivated reason. Women, among others, have not been seen as knowing in any sense that matters.

In his article ‘Spinoza’s Moral Philosophy’, Edwin Curley notes the neglect of Spinoza’s ethical theory stating that ‘hardly anyone is willing to devote to the study of his system the time and patience and care that most other major philosophers are granted as a matter of course’. Little has changed since this was written. Don Garrett’s paper “Spinoza’s Ethical Theory” appeared in the recent edition of The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza but Spinoza has certainly not been taken up in mainstream ethics in any form, let alone as a significant contributor to ethical understanding in the Western tradition.

I will firstly discuss the critique of moral theory by Seyla Benhabib in order to begin to outline some of the feminist criticisms of moral theory and indicate

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possible differences between a Spinozistic ethics and the dominant moral theories of the liberal tradition. The papers previously mentioned on Spinoza’s moral and ethical thought by Curley and Garrett will then be discussed. An outline of some of the features of Spinoza’s ethics and metaethics, and the rationalist, liberal lens through which his work has tended to be interpreted, will begin to emerge from these discussions.

The Good Life and Commonality

Seyla Benhabib in her critique of moral theories argues that modern contract theories brought about a distinction between justice and the good life which did not exist in the Aristotelian view. This point emphasises, as will be explained further below, the fact that Aristotelian ethics did not maintain a separation between the concrete interests of individuals and a generalised view of the individual which is required by rule-governed theories of justice. Aristotelian ethics focuses on interactions between individuals and their effects on a more interpersonal level as is evident in Aristotle’s discussion of friendship.

Benhabib’s argument is that there was a conception of the good life toward which ethical relations were aimed: ‘Ancient and medieval moral systems show the following structure: a definition of man-as-he ought-to-be, a definition of man-as-he-is, and the articulation of a set of rules or precepts that can lead man as he is into what he ought to be. In such moral systems, the rules which govern just relations among the human community are embedded in a more encompassing conception of the good life. This good life, the telos of man, is defined ontologically with reference to man’s place in the cosmos.’

The emphasis on the good life included considerations of the quality of human interaction even though this was confined to an elite. Friendship is as much a part of the ideal human as rationality and provides a model of relations with others within a society. In being part of a teleology, the ethics placed humans in the context of a broader framework within nature which in later theories became the domain of private individuals, according to Benhabib. In the emancipation of morality from cosmology Benhabib argues, the separation between public and private, concentrated moral theory on justice as distinct from the good life.

The view of what man ‘ought’ to be in Rousseau and Kant, ‘is derived from the

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rational form of the moral law alone.' Justice is subsequently only related to the public sphere which is also the domain of rationality.

The sphere of justice from Hobbes, through Locke and Kant is regarded as the domain where independent male heads of household transact with one another .... . An entire domain of human activity, namely, nurture, reproduction, love and care, which becomes the woman's lot in the course of the development of modern, bourgeois society, is excluded from moral and political considerations, and relegated to the realm of 'nature'.

While Aristotle also excluded nurture, reproduction and care, he had no formulation of a separate sphere in which these qualities found expression. Benhabib refers to the ultimate picture emerging from the 'state of nature metaphor' employed in contract theories, as the 'men as mushrooms' vision. Autonomy is understood as belonging to man alone and independent in the state of nature. He is not even thought of as born of woman and so has no ties of dependency and, in Rousseau, only occasionally encounters a female to mate with. For Benhabib this autonomous individual is a narcissist, seeing the world in his own image; 'who cannot see himself through the eyes of another'.

What Benhabib sees as most characteristic of this image and reappearing in more contemporary moral theories such as those of Kohlberg and Rawls, is the 'disembedded' and 'disembodied' nature of the autonomous self; 'moral impartiality is learning to recognise the claims of the other who is just like oneself; fairness is public justice; a public system of rights and duties is the best way to arbitrate conflict, to distribute rewards and to establish claims.'

Benhabib describes this public, disembedded and disembodied subject of moral theory as the 'generalised other'. Individuality and concrete identity are abstracted from so that needs, desires and interests can be seen as the same for all. It is based on generality; 'We assume that the other, like ourselves, is a being who has concrete needs, desires and affects, but what constitutes his or her moral dignity is not what differentiates us from each other, but rather what we, as speaking and rational acting agents, have in common.'

The generalised other is contrasted by Benhabib with the concrete other which is based on acknowledgement of difference. From the standpoint of the concrete other; 'Our relation to the other is governed by the norms of equity and complementary reciprocity: each is entitled to expect and to assume from the other

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6 Benhabib, p.83.
7 Benhabib, p.85.
8 Benhabib, p.87.
forms of behaviour through which the other feels recognised and confirmed as a concrete, individual being with specific needs, talents and capacities.¹⁹

A more personalised emphasis is being suggested here which requires more than looking at others through generalities. Where moral theories tend to be general and universal there is a tendency to move away from personal interaction, or recognition of differences which requires a more personal identification. A moral theory based on relatedness requires an inclusion and acknowledgement of (at least some of) those aspects of human interaction deemed private in order to encompass different perspectives and to confront negative constructions of identities.

In order to recognise the other as concrete other, it is necessary to see the individual through and with their ‘concrete history, identity and affective-emotional constitution’. According to Benhabib this requires that we ‘abstract from what constitutes our commonality’. It does seem odd for Benhabib to place the emphasis on the need to abstract from what constitutes our commonality but this is a point I will take up in a moment. Recognising the other requires seeing individuals in terms of interactive norms which are private and noninstitutional, and an acknowledgement of the concrete other: ‘In treating you in accordance with the norms of friendship, love and care, I confirm not only your humanity but your human individuality’¹⁰. Her argument is that ‘contemporary universalist moral psychology and moral theory’ focuses on the generalised other and that this is inadequate to taking into account the standpoint of the other in moral accounting.

It is not possible to take into account the other’s perspective while their concrete identity is removed from consideration - ‘the other as different from the self, disappears’¹¹. She states that in contract theories the other was constituted through projection but in the contemporary theories of Rawls and Kohlberg it is ‘a consequence of total abstraction from his or her identity’. Where the other is understood through the framework of the generalised other, only a monologue is possible. The other’s needs, interests and concerns must be filled out from the perspective of the self judging the other, from one’s own perspective. The generalised idea of the other is based on a standard of familiarity, because the other does not appear in terms of their own concrete needs, interests and concerns.

Benhabib goes on to emphasise a relational view which she believes enables the

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¹⁹ Benhabib, p.87.
¹⁰ Benhabib, p.87.
¹¹ Benhabib, p.89.
possibility of a dialogue rather than a monologue through deliberations between distinct selves with particular identities. In a relational-interactive theory the self is seen as a self within a community of selves; 'Every act of self-reference expresses simultaneously the uniqueness and difference of the self as well as the commonality among selves.'\textsuperscript{12}

Benhabib’s critique of dominant moral theories indicates the level of abstraction from personal factors toward a generalising perspective which denies difference. The abstract, general and universal tendencies of these theories at the very least fails to acknowledge differences in any useful way or to engage with agents in the context of community and the social constitution of meanings. The critical points made by Benhabib indicate the importance of investigating how the relationship between commonalities and differences are formulated within moral theories. Her critique also indicates the importance of considering moral agents in inter-relational terms, within the context of a community of meaning.

Underlying the acknowledgement of concrete individual needs, however, it would seem there does need to be an understanding of commonality that does not reduce or exclude difference nor emphasise difference at the expense of commonality. This is based on an engagement with the concrete individual as particular rather than on a generalised notion of human needs and wants. In this sense commonality is not the same as generality. While generality often amounts to generalising from one perspective to all others, commonality can involve recognising the diversity in nevertheless human concerns and interactions.

Benhabib does not make this distinction in outlining the contrast between the generalised and concrete other. In her statement that we must abstract from what constitutes our commonality, Benhabib appears to be seeing generality as the same as commonality. It does seem important to unravel the way in which commonalities are constituted but this does not mean that commonalities are merely abstract generalities or that to recognise concrete individuals we must \textit{abstract} from commonalities. Where generalities require abstraction, commonalities may not. This is a point which I will take up in a later chapters in reference to Spinoza. Commonalities are expressed in the common notions in Spinoza, where they are not mere generalities or abstract universals.

Benhabib’s critique highlights some of the problematic tendencies of modern moral theories. The emphasis on the autonomous individual and the abstracted

\textsuperscript{12} Benhabib, p.94.
generalised perspective results in the exclusion of the experience of many and offers very little response to the context, in which individuals act and deal with moral dilemmas. Such moral theories tend to be separated from an engagement with the political and social context and to rely on rational principled determinations of decontextualised, disembodied and abstracted individuals. Many commentators approach Spinozistic ethics in a similar vein and seek the same kind of Enlightenment influenced propensities encompassing liberal ideals of autonomy, freedom of the will and the application of a standard set of principles, based on reason, in an abstract way. Such analyses are divorced from the political understanding that is central to Spinoza’s ethics and offer only an account of the affects that is complementary to the functioning of reason.

An “Objective” Ethics

Edwin Curley demonstrates the tendency, discussed by Benhabib, of theorists and commentators to place ethical frameworks within the liberal Enlightenment tradition by seeking to draw out general, objective standards as the defining characteristics of an ethics. This is the emphasis of Curley and Garrett who both work extremely hard to relate Spinoza to liberal, Enlightenment themes. I will analyse their work to demonstrate how problematic it is to place Spinoza within these frameworks.

Curley starts off his discussion of Spinoza’s ethics by attempting to place Spinoza within modern liberal frameworks of interpretation that emphasise rational standards. His first point is thus concerned with whether Spinoza’s ethics is a metaethical theory or normative ethics. He says that he will be considering both Spinoza’s metaethical theory and the normative ethics which he says is the greater portion of Spinoza’s ethics. The metaethical aspect revolves around the idea of good as being about what is good or bad for us and not about the properties of things. ‘ ... each one, from his own affects, judges, or evaluates, what is good and what is bad, what is better and what is worse, and finally, what is best and what is worst.’\(^{13}\) What is good is determined by comparison to a standard – one which is determined from one’s own point of view - which appears to make it a relative judgement. The fact that the standard will thus vary from one kind of thing to another makes it relative in another sense\(^{14}\). The result is that no standard is privileged since one person’s standard is no more correct than another’s. Such standards are based on general ideas of the imagination which for Spinoza are

\(^{13}\) *Ethics*, III, P39, Schol., p. 516.

confused and arbitrary. However, for Spinoza when the standards of one individual or a group of individuals are turned into universal standards by which all are judged, the standards are just as problematic.

In his emphasis on objectivist, generalised standards, as noted by Benhabib, Curley is concerned to determine whether there could be an objectivist position in Spinoza: ‘The implications of [Spinoza’s] analysis of ethical language seem radically subjectivist’. For Curley, other features of Spinoza’s analysis, seem to reinforce the subjectivist tendencies such as Spinoza’s account of how ideals are derived from general ideas. Yet these are the very forms of ethical judgement based on imagination which Spinoza wants to expose.

Reason has been seen as providing an objective standard to balance the ‘subjective’ stance of imagination. In considering Spinoza’s apparently subjectivist ethics, Curley is compelled to turn against anything that may be considered merely “subjectivist” in order to retrieve an “objective position” within Spinoza, to maintain the ‘disembodied’ and ‘disembedded’ subject Benhabib argues is central to modern moral theory. This is a very difficult task since Spinoza does not formulate his ethics with the objective/subjective distinction in mind and it is difficult to maintain the distinction between imagination and reason in Spinoza.

Curley notes that Spinoza does think it possible to ‘construct a standard of judgement for which a cogent justification can be given’. He argues that Spinoza offers an alternative idea of human nature which can rightly be used as a standard of judgement. He is referring to Part IV of the Ethics: ‘... when Spinoza talks of setting before us a model of human nature, of conceiving a human nature stronger than his present one, a character which he strives to attain, both for himself and for others, he must be saying that we can form an idea of human nature, which is rightly used as a standard of judgement. Whatever may be the case about other ideas of human nature, there must be something which gives this one a privileged status.’

The most promising way in which Spinoza would defend his ideal according to Curley, is through his conception of human nature. Here the conatus, a central element of this idea of human nature, becomes important in helping to avoid the problems of the naturalistic fallacy. Benhabib made the point that Ancient and

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15 Curley, p.356.
16 Curley, pp.363-4.
17 Curley, p.364.
18 Curley, p.366.
Medieval moral systems took the form of defining man as-he-ought-to-be, man-as-he-is and then articulating a set of rules to lead from what is to what ought to be, but that these were couched within a broader cosmology which situated humans and the good life within it. As Curley argues, Spinoza does not appear to be following the ancients in this structure. Spinoza does not offer an argument of simple inference from factual premises to ethical conclusions, from what is to what ought to be.\(^{19}\)

Curley’s argument is primarily focused on relating Spinoza to modern moral theory rather than the ancients.\(^{20}\) His analysis deals with the role that obligation might play but he concludes that the language of obligation would only introduce incoherence into Spinoza’s thought. Rather than being about obligations, Spinoza’s ethical program is about advocating a particular way of living. Given that it is necessary for each to strive to persevere their being, it does not make much sense to tell people to do this. ‘He is much more concerned with telling us to cultivate certain ‘affects of the mind’ as necessary means to that necessary end.’\(^{21}\)

In Spinoza the lack of a prescription of what humans ought to be is evident in the way in which he deals with praise and blame, which are central to his social and interactive ethics. Curley notes that for Spinoza, prescribing conduct that is possible under certain conditions or only impossible under certain conditions is thus perfectly sensible in such a program, even though it is not concerned with establishing obligations.\(^{22}\) Curley’s point here is related to what is necessary, but not necessary to prescribe, such as seeking the preservation of one’s being, or what is impossible, for which a prescription is also unnecessary. However, Curley’s emphasis is on identifying moral imperatives which have a double generality – prescribing particular kinds of conduct and prescribing it to all men alike.\(^{23}\) This is the Kantian categorical which Curley appears keen to find in Spinoza even though in Spinoza explicit examples, particularly of the second kind of generality, are rare.\(^{24}\)

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\(^{19}\) Curley, p.366.


\(^{21}\) Curley, p.371.

\(^{22}\) Curley, p.372.

\(^{23}\) Curley, p.372.

\(^{24}\) Curley notes *Ethics IV, P72, (p.586)* as an example. Curley, p.372, n.26. In the Scholium Spinoza states: ‘If reason should recommend that [a man save himself from present danger by treachery], it would recommend it to all men. ...This absurd’ In a footnote to the scholium to P72 in Spinoza’s text (p.587) Curley as editor states; ‘The Kantian rigour of this passage seems difficult to reconcile with the spirit of other passages’. He gives as a counter-example IV, Appendix, VIII (p.589) where Spinoza states: ‘It is permissible for us to avert, in the way that seems safest, whatever there is in
Curley's explanation of the role of praise and blame in Spinoza's ethics follows the line of thinking which he has established; to find imperatives Spinoza separates blame which is retrospective, from exhortation and punishment, which is prospective, in providing a prescription for a way of life. If a past action could not have been otherwise given the circumstances then blame is not only irrelevant but irrational. Punishment, however remains necessary in dealing with bad actions, as is exhortation in determining how circumstances could be otherwise. The key is in providing the circumstances under which future actions would be as we wish them to be.

Curley is still somewhat dissatisfied with this account of Spinoza's 'prescriptive ethics' in that it tends to over-estimate the importance of exhortation. Another dimension of Spinoza's model of human nature which Curley picks up from Iris Murdoch, is the focus on the quality of the consciousness within which choices are made. 'Spinoza', he says 'would have had a great deal of sympathy both with the view of human nature, and also with the conception of the task of moral philosophy, ... advocated by Iris Murdoch.' Murdoch is critical of the lack of complexity and depth in modern moral theory's accounts of choice and human personality. It has focused, she says, on 'inspiring ideas' like freedom, sincerity and rationally discerning duty, on the moment of choice, rather than on enduring states of mind. His citation of Murdoch seems odd given Curley's commitment to finding in Spinoza the elements of modern moral theory Murdoch is most critical of.

However, it may not be so odd for Curley to focus on the critique of modern moral theory offered by Murdoch if, as it seems, both are assuming an individual that is 'naturally selfish', whose endeavor to persevere in being, requires that it be 'put in the service of a better informed consciousness'. This is another element of the liberal and Enlightenment traditions which has favoured the idea that it is ultimately the individual that must not only be allowed freedom and autonomy, but also made to concede to the freedom of others, which would not be easily given without social rules to prevent the freedom of one interfering with the freedom of the other. Curley, in considering the role of the conatus that is central

nature that we judge to be evil, or able to prevent us from being able to exist and enjoy a rational life.'

27 Curley, p374.
28 Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill are examples of such an approach to ethics though it is also evident that Locke and Kant held to the idea that human nature is basically selfish and purely self-interested.
to this model of human nature, notes that it could run into difficulties in that it appears egoistic. An egoistic psychology can easily be dismissed as either blatantly false or vacuous, according to Curley. Either it denies the possibility of disinterested action or considers egocentric action so broadly that no action could be considered disinterested. Spinoza is saved from this dilemma by the qualification that everything will strive for the preservation of its being *insofar as it is not being acted on by something external to it*.

Curley relates the conatus principle to the principle of inertia - both, he says, 'profess only to describe how things act insofar as they are not acted on by other things'. The external factors qualification could potentially make the principle unfalsifiable but as with the principle of inertia, if investigation did not find external factors correlating in a law-like way with deviations from the conatus principle, it would then be replaced. Spinoza's conatus, he says, needs to be investigated within a systematic psychology that can account for any apparent deviations. The qualification 'not being acted on by something external 'saves the conatus principle from a potential logical problem. The implications of the conatus and its qualification is an important point that will be taken up later in the thesis in Deleuze's analysis of the ability to affect and be affected and in looking more closely at the forms of self-love in chapter six.

Curley offers an interpretation of Spinoza's ethics which is empirically based in emphasising the observation of human behaviour which can be investigated within a systematic psychological theory. The model of human nature appears to him to provide the best justification for a Spinozistic ethics against some of the logical difficulties and fallacies which might befall metaethical and normative theories of ethics. The model of human nature is being interpreted according to liberal and Enlightenment ideas of human being. By focusing on the idea of human nature Curley is remaining on the level of generality required by modern ethical theory and considering human nature as an entity separate from the social and political context in which it is expressed. Such an analysis fails to engage with the emphasis of a Spinozistic ethics which is less concerned with establishing a fixed model of human nature than with providing a means to critique social and political forms on the basis of the extent of human and individual expression they allow or inhibit.

Curley does not challenge the idea that the conatus, upon which the idea of human nature is primarily based, is fundamentally egoistic, but rather takes

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29 Curley, pp.375-6.
logical steps to avoid the complications of the naturalistic fallacy, and finally relies on psychology to test Spinoza’s proposed model of human nature. The focus on psychological verification does not really help to highlight the ethics Spinoza proposes but merely postpones its elucidation. The empirical interpretation Curley seeks to impose on Spinoza’s ethics, relies on a conception of ethics that is distanced from the interpersonal and the personal in a way suited to modern liberal moral theories criticised by Benhabib but not characteristic of Spinoza’s ethics.

Curley relies on the subjective/objective opposition to make sense of Spinoza’s ethics, which further limits it to Enlightenment paradigms which relate ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ to oppositions between ‘public’ and ‘private’, ‘general’ and ‘personal’. Curley clearly wants a Spinozistic ethics to be objective in the sense criticised by Benhabib, since he takes the charge of subjectivism to mean instant dismissal by any reasonable thinker. Objective ethics is detached, disembodied and disembedded in Benhabib’s sense, in not recognising the importance of the personal, particular or private or responding to the context of ethical concerns. Curley is more concerned with showing that Spinoza has a standard of ethical prescriptions which can be considered objective in the sense of verifiability, than with examining, for example, the elements of the idea of human nature Spinoza presents or the enduring states of mind he proposes.

Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism

Don Garrett’s paper covers a number of different aspects of Spinoza’s ethics and argues its aim is: ‘To show human beings how to achieve a mode of life that largely transcends merely transitory desires and which has as its natural consequences autonomous control over the passions and participation in an eternal blessedness.’ To describe the ethics of Spinoza in such Kantian terms indicates the tendency to interpret Spinoza by what has occurred in moral and ethical theorising since Spinoza, rather than by the nuances and complexities of Spinoza’s approach as it is brought to bear on contemporary issues. The liberal and Kantian emphasis of Garrett’s reading is clear, it will be argued, in its emphasis on autonomy and the individual achievement of one’s own advantage in isolation from the social context of interpersonal relations.

The ethical terms that are of note in Spinoza, according to Garrett are ‘universals’, ‘perfect’ and ‘imperfect’ and of course ‘good’ and ‘evil’. ‘Virtue’ and ‘power’ are

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also noted to be significant terms in a Spinozistic ethics and to have particular usages which fit within Spinoza’s system of thought. ‘Power’ relates to the role of conatus, central in the Ethics and in the model of human nature, and the discussion of natural right found mostly in Spinoza’s theological and political treatises.

‘Virtue’ is more obviously an ethical term, but it is also centred on the conatus and the expression of power. ‘It follows for Spinoza that a human being’s power, and hence virtue, is simply the capacity to strive for and achieve one’s own advantage, conceived as self-preservation’. Garrett considers the relation between reason and virtue and the statements in Spinoza which indicate that ‘it is the same thing’, that is, ‘acting from virtue’ is ‘acting under the guidance of reason’. Reason it appears, amounts to understanding, when the virtues are looked at more closely. The mind’s striving is for knowledge, and it truly has knowledge when it has adequate knowledge and is the active cause of its ideas. This depends on the mind’s ability to find agreement between things, which is the basis of the common notions which Garrett takes to be universals in the traditional sense. It is by focusing on a central tenet of dominant liberalism, namely, that it is reasonable to achieve one’s own advantage, that Garrett emphasises the Spinozistic line that ‘human beings necessarily ‘agree in nature’ to the extent that they are guided by reason’.

Garrett finds, in looking at the use of ethical terms in Spinoza, that there is a distinct lack of terms of obligation, as Curley has also noted. Terms such as ‘ought’, ‘must’, ‘should’ and ‘may’ are almost completely absent. Many of the terms Spinoza does use, he uses to denote what is possible or permissible, namely that which will contribute to one’s advantage or the enhancement of one’s power. Similarly the term ‘right’ is used to denote the extent of the ‘highest right of nature’ to judge what is good, what is evil and consider one’s own advantage according to one’s temperament or from the necessity of one’s nature. Spinoza emphasises the right of each and what follows from living by the ‘guidance of reason’. He rarely states the liberal premise which tempers self-expression with the principle that no harm be done to any other. It is thus not offered as a command but a result.

31 Garrett, p. 276, emphasis added.
32 Garrett, p.277.
33 Garrett, p.285.
35 Ethics, IV, P37, Schol., 2, p.567.
Feminist Critiques of Ethics and Post-Enlightenment Readings of Spinoza’s Ethics

Garrett considers Spinoza’s terms in isolation from the political and religious context which Spinoza was addressing and is more interested in evaluating Spinoza’s terms against more recent uses of them. Spinoza was arguing against the way in which the churches and the state determined desert and blame and his use of ethical terms was related to this. The Scholium that Garrett refers to above could be considered as addressing these concerns rather than as a statement of liberal ideals.

It is important to note also, that in the absence of terms of obligation, Spinoza does not fit the ancient formula for a moral system outlined by Benhabib. In Spinoza morality is emancipated from cosmology in the sense that there is no good or evil in nature, and at the same time what is just is related to the common agreement maintained within a state, not to what is ‘natural’ or to universal reason. Thus man-as-he-ought-to-be is not established in any predetermined form for Spinoza by either God or reason.

According to Garrett, Spinoza’s ethical propositions serve to ‘evaluate, using four ethical terms of evaluation; ‘good’, ‘virtue’, ‘guided by reason’, and ‘free man’.’

It is in elucidating the meaning and interconnection of these terms that Spinoza’s ethics is held to take shape. Garrett notes that there is a particular philosophical meaning for each of the terms Spinoza uses which he sees as intended to overcome the difficulties of common usage where there are fundamental mistakes in the attribution of human desires and purposes to nature and other objects etc: ‘It is, evidently, only ethical evaluations understood in their naturalistic Spinozistic senses that are clearly true.’ The relations between these terms of ethical evaluation, however, appear to be arbitrary according to Garrett. They are coextensive and are often identified with one another, virtue is ‘acting from the guidance of reason’ at Ethics IV, P24 and P37, Schol. 1, for example. Garrett suggests, however, that Spinoza is showing that he can accommodate ‘many of the formulae of his disparate predecessors’ and so he simply alternates ‘the cognitive-advisory language of “guiding reason” with the character-centred language of “virtues” and also with the consequentialist language of “good and evil” – as if to imply that at least many of his ethical doctrines can be expressed equally well in any of these terms.’

The term “good” is not considered by Garrett to be coextensive with the others for

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36 Garrett, p.286.
37 Garrett, p.288.
38 Ethics, pp. 556 and 565-6.
39 Garrett, p.288.
Spinoza since what it is good to do may diverge from what is virtuous, in accordance with reason or in keeping with the idea of a free man. Freedom means seeking one’s own advantage, which is traditionally considered on the individual level. When it comes to considering how the good can be applied in general practical terms, however, Spinoza talks in terms of agreement on a social level and says that reason must always recommend most highly, that which brings human beings into cooperation with one another: “The greatest good of those who seek virtue is common to all, and can be enjoyed equally by all.” And in P37 he states: “The good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men.”

In looking at the ‘practicality of reason’ Garrett focuses on the relation between ideas and affects and how reason can provide a motivating force to control the passions. Ideas for Spinoza, according to Garrett, are representations of modifications of the body but they are not merely representations in that they also, in some cases at least, have an affective character. A desire is not then a ‘simple feeling that is caused by, or accompanied by, an idea of some state of affairs involving its object’, rather, ‘the desire is the idea of this state of affairs’.

An adequate idea as well as an inadequate idea can produce a desire and the understanding involved in an adequate idea will also be a desire. Reason thus has motivational force and this also emphasises the affective nature of reason, though it does involve active affects, not merely passive ones. Thus, where Hume and Kant treat affects and ideas as separate mental events, Spinoza connects them. But Garrett agrees with Hume and Kant to the extent that he considers ideas as representations, with the addition of desire as a part of the idea.

Garrett considers Spinoza’s ethics as both consequentialist and virtue ethics. He considers consequentialism as evident in that Spinoza considers ‘the most important or fundamental ethical evaluations to be evaluations of actions in terms of their consequences’. Virtue is in a sense then only instrumentally desirable as a way of achieving self-preservation and the affective states of joy and blessedness. At the same time however, evaluating a person’s character or virtue seem also to be important ethical evaluations for Spinoza, even to the point of denying the

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40 Garrett, pp.292-293.
41 Ethics, IV, P36, p.564.
42 Ethics, IV, P37, pp.564-565.
43 Garrett, p.295.
44 Garrett, p.296.
45 This is another point that will be taken up in discussing Deleuze’s expressionism and in considering the nature of ideas in Spinoza.
46 Garrett, p.297.
instrumentality of virtue. He suggests that we ought to want virtue for its own sake. Virtue thus seems to be instrumental and at the same time to be important in itself.

Garrett’s resolution of this apparent dilemma is to draw attention to the highest virtue, blessedness, participation in the eternal, as itself a kind of self-preservation rather than presenting virtue as a means to it. As a consequence blessedness is ultimately a ‘state of character’. The role of joy, for Spinoza, as an indication of a transition to a greater state of perfection and capacity for action, is then merely instrumental. The state of greater perfection is what is valued most highly and what the conatus is necessarily aiming to produce. This state is virtue and it is the affective state of blessedness, which is not merely a consequence of a virtuous character. Virtue and blessedness are identified: ‘Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself.’

There is a great deal of the language of liberal thought in Garrett’s account of Spinoza’s aims, language which he himself did not use. ‘Autonomous control’ has been an aspect of moral theory that has been much discussed and debated. Autonomy is a central ingredient in Enlightenment as well as in more contemporary liberal moral theories but feminists and other theorists have criticised its implied isolation of the individual from the social context of interpersonal relations. There are a number of ways in which Spinoza varies from this approach. A number of French publications on Spinoza’s political and social thought have drawn out the emphasis on the interdependence of individuals within his framework.

47 Ethics, IV, P18, Schol., p. 556.
49 Ethics, V, P42, p. 616
Alexandre Matheron (1969) Individu et communaute chez Spinoza Paris: Minuet. Balibar includes a list of French works of these aspects of Spinoza which are lacking in English. Matheron’s work has not been translated into English but has been used by some writers in English such as Moira
The result of a Spinozistic emphasis on a mode of life which leads to eternal blessedness does not involve 'control of the passions' and it is certainly not about transcendence, as commentators such as Curley and Garrett suggest. Ultimately a Spinozistic ethics involves transforming the passions in a way that is quite different from the idea of control that has been central to liberal and Enlightenment thought, which opposes reason and emotion and relies on the representation through reason, of the affects.

Spinoza wants to encourage the desire for adequate knowledge and to show how it can be achieved, but he also shows how important the affects are and encourages looking more closely at them and the role they play in social life, as well as individual lives. The affects are the central theme in developing human potential. The ultimate experience is joy which can be gleansed from many encounters, the highest form however, which Garrett himself notes, is in seeing how we are connected to God, as within God, 'to participate more completely in what might be called the affective life of God'. In this sense knowledge is instrumental rather than virtue, or both are so interrelated that it is difficult to say that one is more important than the other.

There are some important points to be made in regard to the placement of Spinoza in relation to these contemporary ethical paradigms. The first point relates to the idea that Spinoza's ethics is a virtue ethics and the second to the idea of blessedness as a kind of self-preservation. Spinoza's ethics is not simply about describing good character and how to weigh up the personal virtues of a 'good' person. It is much more about the social context and how the expression of being human can be brought out in community with others. It is less about the individual 'good' person and more about the goals towards which a good society should aim. The active life is ethical living for Spinoza in his special sense of acting as acting according to one's own nature and being the active cause of one's own affections, and it is the dynamics of interaction, the power to affect and be affected, which above all provide the means for active living. The form of the active life needs more elaboration, but the point is that it is not so focused on individual character as such. '... if we consider our Mind, our intellect would of course be more imperfect if the Mind were alone and did not understand anything except itself.'

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54 Ethics, IV, P18, SchoL., p. 556.
Spinoza’s ethics is not a virtue ethics in the sense of describing the good person, but it could be seen as a virtue ethics in being concerned with highlighting those virtues which would be predominant in circumstances which promote active living. Spinoza denotes what is possible by showing the influential factors in our make up, as human beings, as part of nature, as active participants in substance/God, and in suggesting ways our understanding and awareness can be enhanced, in order that we may know our activity and understand it. This is important in distinguishing a Spinozistic ethics from virtue ethics. Spinoza postulates human nature in a dynamic sense that is not really brought out in Curley and Garrett’s accounts of Spinozistic ethics. While Garrett is focused on virtue in the sense of individual virtue, Spinoza is more interested in the kind of society which would best cultivate those virtues. Spinoza’s ethics is concerned with the extent to which a society can and does encourage and cultivate the virtues which express human nature rather than with the social production of virtuous individuals.

The advantage of a virtue ethics is that it does appear to be more responsive to individual circumstances in that the idea of acting as a good person involves weighing up particular virtues as they present themselves in a given context, where applying a principle or exceptionless rule would be too limiting. However, the virtues or values, such as honesty, loyalty and so on, are not for Spinoza the indicators of an active life. One can demonstrate a range of virtues or hold a range of values which we might regard as good in that they are conducive to positive relations with others and the expression or experience of joy, but it is the way that we relate ourselves to them that is more important. Demonstrating loyalty because it is more highly valued than self-determination, in the case of women in unsatisfying marriages, for example, would not be an example of active living for Spinoza yet it has been highly valued in other forms of virtue ethics and in ethics based on obligation.

The second point relates to the highest virtue or the greater perfection as the affective state of blessedness. Garrett says this is not merely a consequence of a virtuous character, it is virtue in that virtue and blessedness are identified, but he takes this to mean a virtuous character is one that has reached the state of blessedness. This needs to be taken further. Spinoza’s statement at V, P42, suggests that it is not blessedness towards which we should aim as a kind of reward for virtuousness. He says at P41 that even if we did not know the mind was eternal we would still regard certain things as of the utmost importance,
namely ‘those things we showed to be related to Tenacity and Nobility’\textsuperscript{55}. Clearly, living a virtuous or active life is amongst these things, but we need to be living an active life in order to attain blessedness. The active life is its own reward and is blessedness. Spinoza is not offering a reward, a motivation for being virtuous: ‘Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself; nor do we enjoy it because we restrain our lusts; on the contrary, because we enjoy it, we are able to restrain them.’\textsuperscript{56} Active living is the expression of the power of the conatus in relations with others that are joy producing and in turn it is the experience of joy which produces a greater expression of power. The expression of power is guided both by the experience of joy and what follows from reason in recognising commonality and cultivating agreement through acknowledging the experience of others.

In dealing with the issue of moral responsibility Garrett also reads Spinoza as producing a virtue ethics. He focuses on the terms ‘favour’ and ‘indignation’ which he says are Spinoza’s primary moral ‘reactive attitudes’\textsuperscript{57}. Praise and blame which may be considered primary in Spinoza’s ethical framework, he sees as related more to the individual who is affected, while favour and indignation are instances of love and hate, not merely joy and sadness, not restricted to the imagination and are ‘attitudes towards actions affecting human beings generally, and not merely oneself’\textsuperscript{58}. Garrett is not quite right about praise and blame here since Spinoza uses them in a much broader sense to apply to social and political contexts, not just individuals. Garrett considers favour and indignation as having a greater application by their definitions because his focus is on individuals.

The point being made about favour and indignation is that favour is shown to those who benefit others and those who are free do not indulge in indignation since it is necessarily evil, being a form of hate and thus of sadness. Indignation leads to the desire to harm or destroy that which is hated and this is contrary to the aims of reason. ‘Those who do evil are never free and, accordingly, indignation toward them is never in accordance with reason.’ The perpetrator is not the adequate cause of their actions and it does not further the cause of freedom or understanding to repay their actions with hatred.

Favour, however, can agree with reason and arise from it\textsuperscript{59} in that it ‘can arise

\textsuperscript{55} Ethics, V, P.41, Dem., p.615.
\textsuperscript{56} Ethics, V, P42, p.616.
\textsuperscript{57} Garrett (1996), p.300.
\textsuperscript{58} Garrett, pp.299-300.
\textsuperscript{59} Ethics, IV, P51, p. 574.
from an adequate understanding of another’s actions. Garrett says here that seeing someone benefit another accidentally is not to be regarded with favour or the favour does not arise from reason because the person is not the adequate cause of their actions. However, I think this is his own gloss since Spinoza says in the Scholium to IV, P51 only that the joy in seeing someone benefiting another is accompanied by the idea of him who has benefited another. While we may want to think that the person themselves is the cause of the action of benefiting another we may also be joyful that another is benefiting by an unintentioned good as long as there is no spite or resentment involved on our part.

It does matter more what the person experiencing favour towards another understands and it also matters what the favour then results in. Nobility is the best key to this and what it means is seeking to always return hate with love, ‘the Desire by which each one strives, solely from the dictate of reason, to aid other men and join them to him in friendship’ where favour is ‘Love toward him who has done good to another’. Aiding other men can only involve the joyful affects and so favour is one of those affects, and one which clearly applies beyond oneself, but it is not applied only to those we judge to have had the right motives. This is a point where it is evident that Spinoza’s ethics is less individualistic than it is taken to be. The focus for Garrett is on individual motives whereas Spinoza’s interest is in the overall social context within which individuals function.

In his individualistic focus Garrett seems to be suggesting that moral responsibility is about being able to judge the moral behaviour and attitudes of others. Garrett goes on to say Spinoza has a notion of ‘assymetrical freedom’ whereby ‘we sometimes freely do good, but can never freely do evil. Evil is always the result of passion or lack of power, and hence not the result of one’s own adequate causality’. Rational assignment of moral responsibility is then also assymetrical which Garrett takes to mean that by reason we love and favour ‘those who freely do good, without hate or indignation for those who do evil’. This limits the scope of where love and favour may be apportioned somewhat, which is not really Spinoza’s intention in that it relies too much on interpreting the intentions of others. Spinoza does not place emphasis on judging others and he is concerned to develop an awareness of the judgements that are part of each idea. This has an ethical sense, one aspect being, that moral responsibility is more about taking responsibility for one’s own actions and judgments and this could be

60 Garrett, p.300.
61 Ethics, III, P59, Schol., p.529.
62 Ethics, III, P22, Schol., p.507.
Moral responsibility in Spinoza does require a close examination of praise and blame which he discusses a great deal more than favour and indignation in the *Ethics* as well as in the political works, and which provides a framework with which he evaluates the ethical nature of social/political dynamics. Moral responsibility in Spinoza has much more to do with developing one’s understanding of oneself as well as the social/political context. The application of blame can only be bad as it brings about sadness, although it may be seen as having a purpose if it can lead to understanding. However, the understanding generally achieved by blame implies a free choice of a course of action which the wrongdoer has willingly and vindictively carried out. Spinoza explicitly excludes the possibility that wrongful acts are committed freely. Blame is quite different from holding those who have committed wrongful acts responsible. Even more it implies that the person is bad or evil and is bad or evil by a free choice, rather than focusing on the behaviour or action which is bad or wrong or what can be changed about the circumstances which led to the wrong in the first place. There is more scope here for looking at the social circumstances which have produced wrongs, such as poverty, or the meanings attached to ‘wrong’ behaviour in cases where there are cultural differences, for example in what is regarded as right or wrong.

The social dimension is not a dimension of Spinoza’s ethics that Garrett considers. For Spinoza an action is ultimately wrong in that it is not free, and by our own imagination it is wrong from the point of view of harm done to us or another like us. There are two important elements here. Firstly an action occurs within the context of a society that blames and determines things from the point of view of imagination only – what appears bad for us, and thus such a society does not offer freedom overall. The individual who does wrong is not thereby considered within a framework of merely individual actions but of a system which encompasses an emotional economy of praise, blame, fear and revenge. Secondly it is society that determines what is right and wrong, reason helps to determine these things in association with the human ability to affect and be affected but it does not come up with universal principles of right and wrong.

The role of imagination is significant in how all of the terms of ethical reference noted by Curley and Garrett have been used and applied, and Spinoza redefines them for his own use as well. Thus the ‘good’ is ‘what we certainly know to be useful to us’ and ‘evil’ is ‘what we certainly know prevents us from being masters
of some good’⁶⁴. What is regarded as good is attributed to human embodiment and experience. Reason can be used to assist in sorting out how the goods are dealt with but it does not itself determine which goods are the best. It is evident that there are no “objective” standards in the sense that Curley and Garrett are looking for in the determination of the good. These are worked out in the context of community for Spinoza.

The conatus in Spinoza presents a very different individuality from the simple egoism of most liberal thought. The sense in which the conatus itself requires that the individual interact with and respond to the environment, contains within it the seeds of self-preservation as involving and leading to the preservation of others in the environment. Being affected by things is a power which is reciprocal to the power to act - the conatus itself. A broader understanding of the notion of conatus is central to his ethical program as is his emphasis on the development of consciousness.

The central feature here is the qualification ‘being acted on by external forces’, which Spinoza regards us as ordinarily having got quite wrong - seeing ourselves as the cause of things by our free will when we are actually being acted upon by external forces, social/cultural influences for example, and not seeing ourselves as the cause of those things which are under our own control, such as how we respond to the action of external forces upon us, or the power to be affected. The agreement or the awareness of agreement between things can emerge from imagination, and there is always necessarily agreement to some extent, whether that is the basis of awareness or not.

Understanding the form that reason takes for Spinoza is particularly important in this regard and neither Curley nor Garrett make any comment about what reason amounts to. Clearly reason involves seeing things in terms of their causes for Spinoza, but it is also intimately bound up with the ‘way of life’ Spinoza is advocating. In order to understand the causes of things it is necessary to have a well thought out view of nature and the place of humans within it, as well as to develop the affective understanding necessary to evaluate our own collective and individual ideas, and ways of thinking. This is a fairly expansive view of reason and it is important to consider its possibilities as well as its limitations. Reason is not the end point for Spinoza⁶⁵.

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⁶⁴ Garrett, p.273, Ethics, IV, D1 and D2, p. 546
⁶⁵ Bennett takes morality to be ‘any set of universal principles offered as something to live one’s life by’ which he means that, according to him, Spinoza can count the dictates of reason as moral
Being guided by reason for Spinoza encourages agreement because it involves a greater awareness within the context of a particular view of human nature. This is not merely a logical or principled, that is, generalised and universal agreement of reason, but an embodied and affective agreement. This is a different notion of reason from that which emerges in the centuries following Spinoza. In particular Enlightenment reason is concerned with separating out different elements and abstracting the most general which are presumed to apply to all in the same way. The concern is with sterilising and purifying the important general ideas from the complex variability of the context and experience. This has been the tendency of modern moral thought.

Spinoza offers a framework for cooperation with others that makes morality something that must be negotiated and agreed upon as a way of living conducive to the development of the freedom of all. Spinoza’s framework highlights the moral superiority that is often central to moral frameworks as a system of praise and blame where the actions of others are judged by our own standards as being inferior. In the only proposition referring to rule governed actions in the Kantian sense Spinoza shows the limits of reason. Reason can only show the consequences of actions, that if we harm others then we are agreeing to a system whereby harm can come to ourselves. It cannot provide the ground or motivation for an ultimate or absolute right by which all others are determined in and of itself if it is functioning only according to generalised ideas of what is right. However, ethical understanding can emerge from reason when it is used to confront concrete reality and to see interconnections and implications rather than abstracted logical ideas.

Virtue ethics and ethics based on liberal ideals are individual centred ethics which involve judgement of the behaviour and intention of others. In Spinoza there is more emphasis on understanding ourselves and our own judgment and the context within which we interact, and how it can be improved for the benefit of all. It is not a matter of deciding what is an ethical issue but of looking at the ethical aspect in everything. This encompasses most importantly the quality of interaction on a personal and a social level. For Spinoza, reason is ethics, an ethics of living and engaging with the difficulties of living and experiencing. It is very

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66 Ethics, IV, P72, Schol., p. 587. This is a point Curley also notes where Spinoza ‘shows himself alive to the importance of the ... generality’ of prescriptions which apply to all men alike. Curley (1973), p.372, n.26. Curley finds this uncharacteristic of Spinoza as he notes in a footnote to the actual text: ‘The Kantian rigour of this passage seems difficult to reconcile with the spirit of other passages.’ (Ethics, p.587.)
difficult to place Spinoza in relation to modern ethical paradigms as they focus primarily on the derivation of universal principles of reason. They are also generally focused on the individual and on obligation and coercion. Reason serves to determine what it is reasonable and rational to apply coercion to, but ultimately obligation involves judgment. Those who are in the position of determining the rational terms of this obligatory, coercive framework are looking for universal, "objective" principles to apply to all people at all times.

**From the Impersonal to Value-Pluralism**

The emphasis on the impersonal and impartial remains in moral theory and was revived in the 1970s by John Rawls with the publication of his *A Theory of Justice*. Being based on an analytic approach to moral philosophy which emphasises the neutrality of reason, Rawls' project is removed from the context of ethical and moral dilemmas. John Gray states in criticism of Rawls: ‘The Kantian liberalism sponsored by Rawls, which has secured a dominant place for itself in Anglo-American political philosophy, has the dubious distinction of lacking anything like a philosophical anthropology, or any other sort of metaphysical commitment. It takes its bearings, not from an account of human nature or the more permanent features of the human circumstance, but from a conception of the person that is, avowedly in the work of the later Rawls, a distillation of the conventional wisdom of liberal democratic regimes.’

This "new liberalism", says Gray, professes to having a practical goal of ‘securing agreement on principles of justice that allow for peaceful coexistence in a constitutional democracy of persons having divergent and sometimes incommensurable conceptions of the good life and views of the world’. Gray points out that this purpose is maintained and elaborated at a 'vast distance from political life in the real world'. These theorists speak for no political interest or constituency, even in their own contexts, and few of the 'political classes in their respective countries know what these theorists are thinking, and none cares'. Gray takes particular note of the category of the person in Rawl’s work and the intellectual tradition spawned by it: ‘... this is a cipher, without history or ethnicity, denuded of the special attachments that in the real human world give us

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69 Gray, p.3.
70 Gray, p.3.
the particular identities we have."\textsuperscript{71} It is also genderless. In this conception of the human being the concern is with its own internal consistency and not with the 'good of any actual human being'\textsuperscript{72}.

The non-perspectival representational view of reason is characteristic of the emphasis in modern thought on the view from nowhere which constructs a picture that applies to no one and yet places human consciousness at the centre of the picture. Human experience is limited in this view to the categories of abstract reason through which it is interpreted. Charles Taylor gives a summary of the dominant conception of reason as portraying in representational terms, '... the picture of an agent who in perceiving the world takes in "bits" of information from his or her surroundings, and then "processes" them in some fashion, in order to emerge with the "picture" of the world he or she has; who then acts on the basis of this picture to fulfil his or her goals, through a "calculus" of means and ends.'\textsuperscript{73}

The view from nowhere has an impact in political terms on the experiences of those within as well as those outside Western culture. The application of universalism within Western societies is inadequate, being based on middle class, educated male cultural positions unable to incorporate or engage with female, class or ethnic 'others', and it is even more inadequate when applied to cultures outside the West. The historical philosophy on which the Enlightenment project is based, John Gray argues, incorporates the expectation that cultural differences will yield in the end to 'rationality and generic humanity as these are embodied in a universal human civilization, modernization and Westernization are and must be one and the same thing'.\textsuperscript{74}

The individualism and reasoned principles of liberal moral thought following Enlightenment ideals, are abstract and depersonalised, with an emphasis on the internal consistency of the reasonings rather than a reference to the contexts within which political, social and cultural conflicts and ethical dilemmas are played out. Approaches to Spinoza have tended to find these characteristics in his thought. As an ethics Spinoza's thought does not fit easily within modern categories as is indicated by the problem Curley and Garrett have in placing it in relation to modernist ideas of ethics.

\textsuperscript{71} Gray, p.4.
\textsuperscript{72} Gray, p.4.
than the objectivism he wishes to find. Curley’s approach, while acknowledging the importance of the view of human nature incorporated within Spinoza’s ethics, refers it to a psychological verification which, if it remains within the positivistic framework of psychology that he suggests, would yield little of value for such an ethics. The desire to avoid subjectivism itself is a result of a positivistic and analytic approach which is unable to embrace the intersubjective and contextual emphasis of Spinoza’s philosophy.

Spinoza’s ethics is also unable to be related very easily to virtue ethics or to modern categories such as consequentialism which capture too little of the depth and breadth of Spinoza’s thought. Both Curley and Garrett employ forms of reason and ethics which are insufficient for their own appreciation of Spinoza. The liberal emphasis on obligation and coercion is clearly not the framework within which Spinoza’s ethics functions as both Curley and Garrett acknowledge. However, implications of this lack of terms of obligation are lost within a liberal framework however.

The placement of the good as what has to negotiated within social contexts in Spinoza could more usefully be situated within the debate currently raging over the compatibility of value-pluralism with liberalism. Value-pluralism maintains that there are differences in values between different people and groups and that the incommensurability of values enters into liberal principles themselves threatening the desire for a comprehensive system of principles. Conflicts then, cannot be decided simply by appealing to any theory or principle but only in practice. John Gray refers to the liberal value-pluralism of “agonistic liberalism”75:

> Since it is characteristic of political practice, as distinct from that of law, that it issue in settlements that are open to renegotiation, embody compromises of interests and ideals, and carry no presumption of unique rational authority, agonistic liberalism is a genuinely political liberalism in a way that Rawlsian liberalism in which political life is evacuated of virtually all substance, manifestly is not.76

The emphasis here is on engagement with the political context and the real concerns and experiences of people and groups rather than a preoccupation with theory in abstraction from those concerns. I do not wish to enter into the debate about the fit between value-pluralism and liberalism here but only to suggest that Spinoza could be read quite differently in relation to that debate. Spinoza should be situated with moral theories which are aiming to engage with the cultural,
social, political context rather than with those that are characterised by their removal from it.

Reasoned ways of knowing with a universal emphasis are abstract, removed and intended to exclude ‘mere’ experience. Knowledge must be presented in certain forms to be recognised, connected (logically) and exploited. Knowledge is thus represented but in particular conventional ways. Knowledges are hegemonic and privileged representations, and experience is often made to depend on them. Experience is thereby subsumed into representation and the repertoire of representational forms in turn limits experience. Experience is overtaken by representation, as if the representation is adequate, to communicate the total experience, as though the experience is nothing beyond its representation. But is there more than representation in experience? I would argue that representation occurs within experience as part of a field which includes bodies, culture and language.

There is more to be said about experience than the rational or “objective” knowledge it might produce. Experience is important in an ethics which is meant to connect with concrete embodied people and to connect them with one another in fruitful ways, in informing and renegotiating an ethics that can encompass an embodied consciousness. A Spinozistic ethics offers a greater level of confrontation with experience, with immanence, in a way which is not always and only mediated by abstract reason. The task of future chapters will be to draw out the characteristics of Spinoza’s ethics which allow confrontation with the dynamics of experience.

The next chapter will focus on the relation between reason and the emotions which is central, both to a Spinozistic ethics and to the understanding of reason involved in it. It is intended that this exploration of reason and the emotions will draw closer to an understanding that is more encompassing of experience because it does not exclude, but rather attempts to come to terms with, affective experience.
4. Reason and the Emotions – Embodiment, Experience and Activity

Introduction

The dominant tradition stemming from Plato has usually portrayed the relationship between reason and the passions as one where reason has the task of brutally controlling the appetites even though recognising they have an important part to play in the functioning of reason. In his Phaedrus Plato makes the black horse represent appetite, and the white horse reason, and argues that both are equally necessary for a balanced and healthy soul and in the pursuit of knowledge. Firstly, however, the black horse must be tamed by the charioteer who tears the bit from its teeth and makes its mouth bleed until finally it succumbs and instead of racing boldly after the fulfillment of its desires, it walks subdued beside the white horse.

The driver ... with a still more violent backward pull jerks the bit from between the teeth of the lustful horse, drenches his abusive tongue and jaws with blood, and forcing his legs and haunch against the ground reduces him to torment. Finally, after several repetitions of this treatment, the wicked horse abandons his lustful ways; meekly now he executes the wishes of his driver, and when he catches sight of the loved one is ready to die of fear.1

While a very violent and suppressive relationship is presented here between reason and the appetite and passions derived from it, Martha Nussbaum argues that the Phaedrus is well known as the work in which Plato changes his portrayal of the relation between reason and appetite2. It is in this dialogue that Plato allows knowledge to develop from an experience which contrasts with the usual exclusively intellectual formation of knowledge. Through a lover and a certain kind of interaction involving respect for the other and a passionate engagement that is not fulfilled sexually, the lover experiences knowledge in a complete sense. What is sought between the lovers is a: ‘... transformation of the entire soul, including the intellect’3. This transformation, this glimpse of the truth, is not reliant on the intellect but achieved through the passions themselves. As Nussbaum

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3 Nussbaum, p.217.
states: ‘Appetite is curbed not by contemplative intellect, but by the demands of the passions it has awakened.’

Reason is then not seen as opposed to and needed to suppress the appetite. The appetite is necessary to the functioning of the whole soul in order to achieve a workable balance. Reason is not given free reign, any more than appetite is, and what emerges from the new harmony is another relationship to truth, a closer glimpse of truth and reality through an earthly experience grounded in feeling for and with another. Nussbaum argues that this is much more than an intellectual transformation. She looks at the four main points of ‘Plato’s indictment of the passions’ and finds that in the Phaedrus, he has ‘recanted or seriously qualified all of them’.

There has been a counter-tradition in interpreting the relationship between reason and the passions which has not been highlighted as much as the more traditional interpretation of the opposition. Nussbaum shows how a more complex and significant account of this relationship can be drawn from Plato’s Phaedrus. It is also evident that Spinoza offers a more complex discussion which is not reducible to an opposition between reason and the passions. The structure of Spinoza’s formulation of the role of reason in relation to the passions is quite similar to the position Nussbaum argues Plato arrives at in the Phaedrus. Spinoza’s account includes connection to others and reframes the reason/emotion nexus.

The task for reason in Spinoza’s schema is to understand the way in which the appetites function, and rather than force them to submit to the superiority of reason, as if reason were something external to them, to work through the affects or emotions, and cultivate the most productive ones. Reasoning emerges out of experience and affects and can be developed more by seeking deeper and more lasting connections within experience. None of the emotions or appetites are bad in themselves, they are not naturally inclined to excess and Spinoza does not advocate driving them into submission.

In this chapter the affects in Spinoza will be explored in relation to an active idea of both mind and body. Spinoza’s formulation of emotion is in contrast to Cartesian conceptualisations of mind and body where both mind and body appear passive, and emotion is related to the passivity of the mind to the body. There is a great deal of confusion and inconsistency in Descartes’ account of the passions and the

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4 Nussbaum, p.217.
5 Nussbaum, pp.221-222.
activity and passivity of mind and body. An extensive discussion of the passions in Descartes’ *Passions of the Soul* will bring out the complex difficulties of Descartes’ approach and its ultimate dependence on the notion of the will.

The path of Spinoza’s thought from a Cartesian approach to a more independent one will be traced by considering the treatment of affect in Spinoza’s earlier works, particularly the *Short Treatise on God, Man and his Well-Being*. The final section of this chapter will consider the treatment of affect in Spinoza by commentators such as Bennett, Curley and Garrett, discussed in previous chapters. What emerges from the discussion is a stronger sense of the role of affect in Spinoza as having an important place in relation to reason and imagination, of affect being transformed rather than overcome or overwhelmed by reason.

Susan James argues that a greater focus on the way in which the passions were dealt with can ‘substantially revise our views about the character and achievements of philosophy in the seventeenth century’. She argues that passions conceived as straddling both mind and body ‘enabled philosophers of this period to confront with subtlety and insight questions about the interconnections between thoughts and bodily states, questions about the development of individual identity and questions about the significance of the bodily expression of passions’⁶. James is critical of the way reason has been split off from passion which, she argues, obscures from view ‘a fruitful conception of the emotional character of learning and the role of the passions in rational thought and action’⁷.

In considering passion and action, James’ focus is on the relation between passions as the ‘thoughts or states which represent things as good or evil for us, and are therefore seen as objects of inclination or aversion’, and the action which they subsequently bring about⁸. The passions have tended to be regarded as reactive bodily responses involving no thought but James talks of humans as being like animals in ‘assessing’ and ‘evaluating’ their surroundings and their own states. These assessments and evaluations are emotions ‘which move us and guide our actions’, and their intrinsic physical manifestations, noted by the theorists she discusses, bridge emotion and action⁹.

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⁷ James, p.17.

⁸ James, p.4.

⁹ James, p.4.
James, then, regards the body and mind as active in the generation of passions and their accompanying actions, and she regards many seventeenth century thinkers, including Descartes, as having been misunderstood on these matters due to the lack of attention in subsequent thought to their work on the passions\(^\text{10}\). She attributes this exclusion to the influence of Hume and other Enlightenment thinkers as well as to the preoccupation with science in twentieth century thought\(^\text{11}\). She is concerned with the ways in which seventeenth century thought grappled with this issue and that there has not been a consideration of this aspect in enough complexity due to the exclusion of passion from reason. She looks more closely at the way in which passivity and activity are attributed to mind, body and will in her discussion of thinkers such as Descartes and Malebranche, Spinoza and Hobbes.

While I agree with James that insufficient attention has been paid to the passions in thinkers such as Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza and Hobbes, and that the interpretation of them has been strongly influenced by the scientific aims of the Enlightenment, I will nevertheless emphasise some differences. In particular I will argue that the underlying activity of mind and body is more difficult to maintain in Descartes than it is in Spinoza due to the emphasis in Descartes on the will and the narrow idea of knowledge as confined to rational thought.

The relationship of reason to the emotions will be discussed in the light of Descartes' discussion of the passions in *The Passions of the Soul*. I will argue that the strongest point of contrast between Descartes and Spinoza on the emotions and reason is the overall passivity of mind and body in Descartes and the activity of mind and body in Spinoza. This is evident in the fact that Spinoza does not arrive at his distinction between passivity and activity until the *Ethics*. Following discussion of Descartes in this chapter there will be an exploration of Spinoza's earlier work in which he is taking up and separating himself from Descartes. I will then discuss Spinoza's views on passion and activity in the *Ethics* and then some of the commentators on Spinoza who have concentrated on the value of what is regarded as Spinoza's cognitive, psychotherapeutic technique.

\(^{10}\) James, p.17 and subsequent discussion. She argues that it is philosophy of mind that has maintained an absolute distinction in Descartes between states of the body and states of the soul and that this sort of account 'will not stand up once the Cartesian account of the passions is taken into account' (p.17).

\(^{11}\) James, p.15ff.
The Passions in Descartes

*The Passions of the Soul* is being considered here as it is Descartes’ fullest account of the emotions and it is in presenting this account that Descartes is confronted with the problems of the radical separation of mind and body. In Descartes’ representation of the passivity and activity of the mind as he presents it in *The Passions of the Soul*\(^\text{12}\), only ideas in the intellect are active, all perceptions, including those caused by the soul and those caused by the body, are passive.

In the structure that Descartes presents in *The Passions of the Soul* the ideas of the intellect are operations of the will (volitions) and voluntary imaginings. The passions caused by the soul are the perceptions of volitions (reflection) and those caused by the body are neural and non-neural imaginings. Amongst the neural imaginings are those which refer to the body, those which refer to the soul, and those which refer to external objects. Those which refer to the soul are the passions of the soul in the restricted sense. ‘After having considered in what respects the passions of the soul differ from all its other thoughts, it seems to me that we may define them generally as those perceptions, sensations or emotions of the soul which we refer particularly to it, and which are caused, maintained and strengthened by some movement of the spirits.’\(^\text{13}\)

Perceptions of volitions and the passions which refer to the soul are examples of reflection – of volitions in the first case and of perceptions in the second, as was discussed in a previous chapter. However Descartes takes the passions referring to the soul to be the emotions themselves. This means that the emotions are reflections or representations, since for Descartes ideas only represent. The emotions then are representations - of what is happening in the body which causes them.

In contrast the perceptions themselves are not passive for Spinoza. He proposed in opposition to Descartes, that our perceptions are not simply viewed ‘like pictures on a mute panel’\(^\text{14}\) but that they are produced in our minds in relation to a particular body through the ability of the body to affect and be affected\(^\text{15}\). In other words they are interpreted in relation to the affections of our own bodies.


\(^{13}\) *Passions of the Soul*, Part One, § 27, pp.338-339.

\(^{14}\) *Ethics*, II, P43, Schol., p.479.

\(^{15}\) Susan James (1997) makes the point that Spinoza has removed the distinction between perception and will found in Descartes thereby abandoning the distinction between will as active and perception as passive (pp.150-151).
with which we are familiar, and it is in being confined to the perceptions pertaining to our own bodies that they become confused. Except perceptions in the mind or of the ideas of the mind itself, all perceptions for Descartes are passive and it is thus necessary to focus only on the ideas in the mind because bodily affections can by nature be wrong and truth can only be derived from ideas in the mind. Spinoza does not see the perceptions of the body as in themselves deceptive as long as we know the nature of our senses and their limits.

Descartes expected a neutral state to be possible and wanted to portray the mind as a place from which the world could be viewed neutrally, as a place where the world and the perspective of the body could be transcended. The body is dismissed because it does not offer that neutrality and certainty. Descartes had to remove the mind further and further from corporeal existence in order to reach a neutral state where ideas were no longer corrupted by interactions in the world. Spinoza’s philosophy on the other hand engages with the world, with the body and its senses and the affections and interactions, to arrive at an understanding which is adequate because it is not neutral, it is engaged in active existence.

The will is an action of the mind for Descartes, and it appears at times in his writings that it is the only action of the mind, assenting to or denying the truth of an idea in the mind. In the Passions of the Soul Descartes relegates everything ‘irrational’ to the body: ‘It is to the body alone that we should attribute everything that can be observed in us to oppose our reason.’ There are no separate parts of the soul he says, it is both sensitive and rational and ‘all its appetites are volitions’. The passions are those emotions brought about in the soul by the body. The mind’s relation to the functions of the body is passive in Descartes, even though the mind is meant to have control over all the workings of the mindless machine, because it thinks where the body does not. This appears very confused in Descartes’ account of the passions.

The reason why the soul does not have full control over the passions is that the disturbance of the body, especially with the stronger passions such as rage (‘the stronger and more violent ones’), is such that the soul cannot distract itself with thoughts of other things. Descartes concludes that the conflict is between the

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16 Marjorie Grene (1985) states: ‘There are plenty of passages that support an ‘activist’ view of Cartesian thought. ... What we have to weigh against all such pronouncements, however, are the straightforward statements about the passivity of mind (Descartes Sussex: The Harvester Press, p.27).
18 Passions of the Soul, §46, p.343.
soul and the irrational drives of the body, rather than there being conflict within the soul itself, between sensitive or feeling and rational parts. The strength of the soul against the passions is in its ability to make good judgements by which to guide itself. Conflict between opposed passions is actually brought about by opposing judgements. In fact it appears that passions are only thoughts from the point of view of the soul, as the soul is purely a thinking thing in the narrow sense that Descartes gives to thinking. Descartes points out that the weakest souls, rather than being determined by judgements, are carried away by present passions. In such persons the will is unable to make a judgement because the judgements involved in two immediate passions are opposed to one another and the will is unable to distinguish which is the better judgement.\(^9\)

The stronger souls have worked out some systematic judgements which they follow in avoiding passion; ‘... very few people are so weak and irresolute that they choose only what their passion dictates. Most have some determinate judgements which they follow in regulating some of their actions.’ These judgements are often false being based on passions by which the will has been conquered in the past, however, if the will is able to follow the judgement even in the absence of the passion, this is preferable and shows a strength of will in resisting ‘present passions which are opposed to them’.\(^2\) The implication is that judgement excludes all passion and this is preferable to having passions of any kind. There is the risk, in following judgements based on false opinion rather than true knowledge, of later regretting or repenting, but in the case of true knowledge this risk is removed. This further suggests that ultimately, in true knowledge there are no emotions.\(^2\)

Reason thus defeats the passions by repeated attention to the judgements attached to certain passions. It is not clear here whether the passions have caused

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\(^9\) Passions of the Soul, §48, p.347.

\(^2\) Passions of the Soul, §49, p.347.

\(^2\) Even the weakest souls are able to train themselves to completely overcome their passions. In the last paragraph of Part One Descartes tells us that we can join certain movements of the gland which indicate disturbances of the body, to different thoughts than they had previously been joined to. He makes the point that this happens in language. By association the sounds of certain words come to mean certain things. This association between a bodily disposition and certain thoughts can be broken and joined to others. We have the ability to learn very quickly to have different associations with things as when we suddenly find that a favourite dish tastes foul and we cannot eat it for some time. We can use this ability to learn the things that are good and bring about control of our passions. Since we can teach an animal devoid of reason new tricks, even the weakest souls can master the passions given the right training and guidance according to Descartes. Descartes presents here a very mechanical solution which involves using associations of ideas, which are caused by the body, to trick the body into forming different associations. (Passions of the Soul, §50, p.348)
certain judgements through habit or the mistaken judgements have caused the passions. Descartes maintains that the body causes the passions in the soul and that the soul can causally interact with the body to overcome the passions. This does not mean that bodily processes can be changed simply by the will, however.

Ultimately the passions are brought about by objects which ‘stimulate the senses’, so that they are passively perceived. There is little activity at the level of perception or the relation between the object and its effect, that is, the passion it incites. The passions vary primarily because of variations in the object which causes them. At the beginning of Part Two of the *Passions of the Soul* Descartes considers ‘the primary causes of the passions’; ‘They may sometimes be caused by an action of the soul when it sets itself to conceive some object or other, or by the mere temperament of the body or by the impressions which happen to be present in the brain, ... however, it appears that all such passions may be excited by objects which stimulate the senses, and that these objects are their principal and primary causes. From this it follows that, in order to discover all the passions it suffices to consider all the effects of these objects.’\(^{22}\) This idea of the object as the cause of the passions has had a great influence on the way emotions are understood - as caused by external influences even though the individual is ultimately meant to control them.

The objects causing the passions have their impact on the body which is then the principal cause of the passions for Descartes in a way that makes the individual literally passive to the effects of the body on them and the passions that subsequently arise. This they cannot overcome, they can simply learn to use their judgement to override this passivity so that the thinking soul is in charge and not the body. The only responsibility the individual has is to use the intellect to override, to distract them from the body and its uncontrolled, irrational passions, since they cannot control their emotional responses in themselves. The lack of control is due to the desires of the body and the objects that present themselves to the mind through the body. The common view in Cartesian and liberal Enlightenment thinking demands that the individual control ‘themselves’ even though the passions are a result of the body and the effects of objects on it. Control must be exerted through reason which is perceived as able to dominate and override the passions.

Descartes arrives at the idea that the passions are ultimately a kind of motivator, informing the will what it is useful for us to desire and maintaining this desire,

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\(^{22}\) *Passions of the Soul*, §51, p.349
bringing about the attainment of the things desired\textsuperscript{23}. The objects stimulating the senses bring about different passions in us because they have different values to us in that they may be harmful or beneficial. Spinoza will take up this point and give it a different foundation. For Descartes, while the soul brings something to the encounter with the object and so must bear some of the responsibility, this does not mean any kind of activity on the part of the soul. The soul is led to want certain things by the irrational desires of the body. Clear thought can effectively judge what is harmful or beneficial and the will, not concerned with the truth of the matter, institutes whatever the intellect or the body require. Ultimately it is a battle for control of the will between the intellect and the body where the two are sharply distinguished.

As has been argued in the second chapter, for Descartes, ideas in the mind mediate the sensations of the body and mind which ultimately means that experience that is not mediated by reflective thought does not count in any significant sense as knowledge. Rational thought is narrowly confined to conscious or even self-conscious thought and this is abstracted from the context of experience. Descartes’ focus is the individual mind with no consideration of the context of social interaction and its part in the formation of ‘rational’ ideas.

The overall passivity in Descartes contrasts with the overall activity of mind and body in Spinoza. Spinoza understands passivity in a different sense to Descartes. For Spinoza, passivity means not so much that we are at the effect or mercy of things external to us, but that we have knowledge which is limited to the understanding that can be derived from our own mind/body interaction with the environment, and this includes the personal social/emotional environment as well as the broader social and cultural environment. We often make mistaken judgements based on our own affections and associations, largely as a result of ignorance or ‘privation’.

For Spinoza, our body is never free of affectivity, it can never be in a neutral state, otherwise we would not be able to affect or be affected by anything. Therefore we bring an affective body, a body of affects into contact with another affective body rather than a body free of affects. The mind never encounters bodies except through the body. It is not through representations in the mind, separate from the body, that bodies are encountered as in Descartes. The states of the body are affections in the mind formed in relation to the object affecting the body, causing it to change its state. The mind, then, does not view objects passively as if it were

\textsuperscript{23} Passions of the Soul, Part Two, §52, p.349.
separated from the body and its affections. The mind is that body and its affects, and so is involved and immersed in the interaction.

**Spinoza's Earlier Work – Through the Cartesian Prism**

In considering Spinoza’s earlier works and then his final position in the *Ethics* it is possible to see a development which begins close to a Cartesian position on the passions and gradually develops into a philosophy which contrasts strongly with the main features of Cartesianism. In order to arrive at Spinoza’s mature understanding of the relation between reason and the affects it is useful to take a slight detour through an earlier account presented in the *Short Treatise*. At this stage Spinoza seems to adopt much of Descartes’ *Passions of the Soul*. He seriously entertains the idea of the body as cause of the passions in order to critique it. He also begins, however, to propose an argument in which the cause of the passions moves from the body in isolation from the mind, to the understanding. He maintains a consideration of the affects through the objects that appear to cause them, apparently, like Descartes, maintaining a kind of neutrality of the body and mind as it is brought in relation to the object. However, even in the *Short Treatise* Spinoza holds that the body and mind are united and he has a more expansive idea of the task and purpose of dealing with the affects than Descartes. For Spinoza the affects are part of the process of maximising human potential, not just for reason, but for life and they therefore have a higher purpose than rational thought. There are resemblances of what will appear in Spinoza’s mature thought in the assessment of the affects and in the part played by reason in human enhancement.

Spinoza begins in the *Short Treatise* from the point Descartes has arrived at the end of the *Passions of the Soul*. Whereas Descartes acknowledges that the soul has some part to play in the determination of the affects he does not carry this far enough to challenge the idea that the soul is passive in relation to the appetites and desires of the body. The *Passions of the Soul* demonstrates the limits of Cartesianism, in particular, the separation of mind and body. To begin to establish what is brought by the mind in its unity with the body to any encounter, Spinoza states that as there is no good or evil in the nature of things, what we call good is firstly, what follows from our desires, and secondly, whatever will help us to attain our perfection. Spinoza takes up what is essential to human desires and their derivation, and then looks at how this can be turned to the greatest advantage, rather than attempting to exclude their influence on ideas.

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24 *Short Treatise*, Ch. 4, p.103
The derivation of desires and affects is related to the context of understanding, personally, socially and culturally, through considering the part that knowledges of different kinds play in determining the desires and affects. The investigation of the emotions for Spinoza is thus aimed firstly at considering what is of use to us in maximising our potential in a broader sense than the domination of reason. Reason is itself something useful in achieving this perfection and it is able to help us determine what is good in line with this goal. The relation between reason and the emotions, in the *Short Treatise* as in the *Ethics*, is expressed in the determination of which emotions are more effective and appropriate to virtuous living. Hate and aversion are not seen as useful as they lead to 'desolation, weakening and destruction' whereas love produces 'improvement, strengthening and increase', given that in reason, it is not directed in a way that is corrupting. These are social effects and not limited to the workings of the individual mind in isolation from a wider context of interaction.

Spinoza’s argument in the move from the body as cause of the passions, to the individual and social context, involves denying that the will is part of the mind separate from ideas, as it is in Descartes. Spinoza distinguishes volition from desire in Chapter 16 which involves a discussion of the relation between truth and falsity and good and bad. The idea of the will is for him an abstract universal. There is no will as such but only the affirming or denying that is involved in an idea. Our judgement involves affirming or denying something of an object without regard for whether it is good or bad. Desire is concerned with acquiring or doing something in relation to what is seen as good or bad in the object. Will is the affirmation or denial related to a particular idea, and desire is the particular desire to pursue or avoid something, related to a particular perception. Truth then, will enable us to determine adequately, what is good and bad for us. This is often determined by past associations and habits as Spinoza works out in more detail in the *Ethics*.

Reason is able to correct opinions based on report but not those 'we have through experience'. Here Spinoza is arguing for the importance of what is inside us, such as reason, 'which has more power over us than anything which comes from outside', in relation to the power that things outside us have over us. He has

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25 *Short Treatise*, Ch. 6, p.109.
27 *Short Treatise*, Ch 16, §8, p.125 and Ch 17, §5, p.127.
29 *Short Treatise*, Ch 21, §2 and §3, p.138.
maintained the passivity of the intellect\textsuperscript{30}, stating that rather than affirming or denying something of a thing ourselves, ‘it is the thing itself that affirms or denies something of itself in us’\textsuperscript{31}. But then, in dealing with falsity he says ‘the object is the cause of what is affirmed or denied of it, whether it is true or false, i.e., because we perceive something coming from the object, we imagine that the object affirms or denies this of itself as a whole (even though we perceive very little of it)’\textsuperscript{32}. The idea then is not that we perceive the object falsely but that we understand our perception in an incorrect way, as applying more broadly than it does, such as inferring that all swans are white because we have never seen a black one. While Spinoza appears to be stating that the intellect is passive he is actually arguing against the idea that the will and desire are separate from the intellect.

In considering the path to ‘Blessedness’ in Chapter 19, Spinoza states that the first and principal cause of the passions is the body and it must be determined whether there are other causes\textsuperscript{33}. At this point the interactions between body and mind are described by Spinoza in fairly mechanical terms, even employing the terminology of animal spirits which Descartes has used in the \textit{Passions of the Soul}. However he does maintain that the body and mind are only seen in separate ways through the attributes of extension and thought from which they follow respectively. This allows him to hold that the body and mind are united: ‘the soul, being an idea of the body, is so united with it, that it and this body, so constituted, together make a whole’\textsuperscript{34}. Movement is attributed here to the body and perception to the soul, following Descartes. Causation between mind and body has not been ruled out as it will be in the \textit{Ethics}.

Spinoza argues more fully in the chapter ‘Of Our Blessedness’, that the body is not the principal cause of the passions. He considers the soul as affected by the effects on the body insofar as the body is an object affected by other objects\textsuperscript{35}. The argument is most concerned with establishing that it is the perceptions applied by the soul as a thinking thing, to the effects of objects upon the body, which is the cause of the passions. The causes of the passions must be sought in the soul, not the body, because there is no other effect of the body on the soul other than that it

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Short Treatise}, Ch 16, §5, p.124.
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Short Treatise}, Ch 16, §5, p.124.
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Short Treatise}, Ch 16, §7, p.125.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Short Treatise}, §3, p.130.
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Short Treatise}, §11, p.132.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Short Treatise}, Ch19, §15, p.133-134.
'causes the soul to perceive it, and thereby to perceive other bodies also'\(^{36}\). The particular judgements applied to the perception of other bodies are a result of the soul itself. Spinoza concludes the chapter by stating; ‘... love, hate, sadness and the other 'passions' are produced in the soul in various ways, according to the kind of knowledge the soul has each time’\(^{37}\).

Spinoza goes on in the next chapter to distinguish 'the perception of the soul when it first becomes aware of the body and the judgement it directly makes as to whether it is good or bad for it'\(^{38}\). The soul perceives things in the body and 'depending on the way that the soul comes to conceive them, generates love or hate, etc.'\(^{39}\) Spinoza's assessment of the effective or more favourable passions is designed to lead to an understanding of how a greater experience of these affects can be achieved, whether through reason or in another way. In order to do this it is necessary to outline the structure of the passions and how they are derived and function. In the Short Treatise there is only the bare bones of this analysis, which is carried out more fully in the Ethics.

In the Short Treatise Spinoza takes the example of love and says that whether a particular emotion of love is to be destroyed or aroused, a change in the emotion must be produced through the way in which it is conceived and this only occurs when one comes to know there is something bad in the object of this love or finds something else that is better\(^{40}\). Spinoza recognises that this knowing something bad or finding something better is not purely an intellectual exercise but is an experience that is achieved first of all on the affective level. Reason can recognise the principle that a greater love will overcome a lesser one but it is inadequate to account for the actual experience of that love.

The argument Spinoza is working towards is that it is better for the well-being of the individual, to love something truly good and the ultimate object of love is God, so it is the greatest good to love God. This ultimate object and the love that results from it will transform the undesirable passions. In order to replace a lesser love with a greater one it is necessary to have an affect related to the greater love. Thus Spinoza will say in Chapter 21 that reason cannot change opinions we have

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\(^{36}\) Short Treatise, Ch 19, §13, p.133.

\(^{37}\) Short Treatise, Ch 19, §18, p.134.

\(^{38}\) Short Treatise, Ch 20, §2, p.135.


\(^{40}\) Short Treatise, Ch 19, §10, p.132.
from experience, even though it can change those that come about through report. Obviously we can gain more information which can change our ideas on something we know from report, but something ‘known’ through an affect must be changed in a different way, chiefly through an affect related to a greater object. Reason does not have the power ‘to bring us to our well-being’

‘All the passions which are contrary to good reason arise .. from opinion. True belief indicates to us everything that is good or bad in them. But neither of these, either separately or together, is powerful enough to free us from them. Only the third way, true knowledge, makes us free of them.’

Reason or true belief can determine what is good or bad in our opinions but to actually change them (those from experience) another kind of knowledge is necessary, known in the *Short Treatise* as ‘clear knowledge’, ‘which comes not from being convinced by reasons, but from being aware of and enjoying the thing itself’. From the first kind of knowledge, opinion, ‘come all the passions which are contrary to good reason’. From the second kind of knowledge, belief, come ‘the good Desires’ and from the third, clear knowledge, ‘true and genuine Love, with all that comes of that’. Ultimately it is knowledge that brings about the ‘passions’ of the soul, (rather than animal spirits). Without knowledge of some kind we would not be moved to Love, or Desire or any other affect. The problem then is the kind of knowledge we have, and the objects toward which our desires are directed which can transform the affects we experience.

The status of reason in the *Short Treatise* is more limited than it will be in the *Ethics* as here there is no conception of the common notions or a form of generalising that is not abstract. Reason is caught in abstraction at this stage of Spinoza’s thought and this links in with his conceptualisation of the emotions. He does not yet have a detailed analysis of how they are to be dealt with. The idea of passivity is presented in terms of the action of objects on us such that the soul is passive even though Spinoza also emphasises that it is the knowledge that is brought to

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41 *Short Treatise*, p.138.
42 *Short Treatise*, p.129, n. (b).
43 *Short Treatise*, Ch. 2, §2, p.99. It is unclear whether clear knowledge here corresponds to intuition in the *Ethics* though it would certainly seem to. Spinoza talks about four kinds of knowledge in the *Short Treatise* (Ch 1, §3, pp.97-98) but it appears that the first two kinds – knowledge from report and opinion are put together in this section as knowledge from opinion. In the *Ethics* Spinoza outlines three kinds of knowledge, imagination, reason and intuition (II, P40, Schol. 2, pp.477-478).
44 *Short Treatise*, Ch 2, §3, p.99.
bear on perceptions that determines what kind of emotion will be experienced.\footnote{Joachim (1901), p.147ff. Joachim is commenting on Spinoza's statement in the Short Treatise (ii, 16, §5, p. 120) that the intellect is "wholly passive".} Spinoza makes it clear that the body is not the cause of the passions in the sense that it is for Descartes, but at this stage Spinoza has not ruled out mind/body causation – that the body can cause ideas in the mind.

Spinoza begins to develop his own differences from Descartes in the \textit{Short Treatise} but in his mature thought in the \textit{Ethics}, passivity will appear as the result of an undeveloped understanding. The more fully we understand, the more active we are, and this understanding is important especially in relation to ourselves, our bodies, our habits and our associations. Spinoza's position involves an active engagement with the objects of the senses such that the influence the state of our bodies has on the perception of the object is recognised, and the relationship we have to it is explored. For him, passivity only results from inadequate knowledge which is not the same as a lack of knowledge: 'There is nothing positive in ideas on account of which they are called false. Falsity consists in the privation of knowledge which inadequate, or mutilated and confused, ideas involve.'\footnote{\textit{Ethics}, II, P33 \& P35, p.472.} Spinoza gives the example of our perception of the sun as 200 feet away from us. The error is not in our imagining the sun in this way but in our ignorance of its true distance from us. Even if we know the true distance we will still see it as if were 200 feet away because this is the constitution of our bodies in relation to it\footnote{\textit{Ethics}, II, P35, Schol., p.473.}.

Perceptions are in themselves affective states of the body. It is the state of the body in relation to the object that tells us anything about it: 'The human Mind is capable of perceiving a great many things, and is the more capable, the more its body can be disposed in a great many ways.'\footnote{\textit{Ethics}, II, P35, p.472.} The body is affected in many ways by external bodies and also affects external bodies in many ways, and the understanding is comprised of ideas which express everything that happens in the body\footnote{\textit{Ethics}, II, P14, p.462.}. The body is affected in such a way, however, that the idea involves both the nature of the body itself as well as the nature of the external body\footnote{\textit{Ethics}, II, P14, Dem., p.462-463.}. These ideas are not adequate knowledge of an external body because they include the 'nature of the body and mind' itself and are thus perceiving things from the 'common order of nature'. In this way the mind is 'determined externally, from fortuitous encounters with things, to regard this or that, and not ... determined
internally, from the fact that it regards a number of things at once, [and understands] their agreements, differences and oppositions.51

Spinoza does, then, move towards a more complex understanding of the mind-body nexus as Susan James argues.52 Mind and body are both involved in the affects and how they are to be approached. Although Spinoza is not offering solutions to the affects based on the body, he is implicitly including the body in the transformation of the affects since mind and body both express the overall affective state in knowledge of imagination and reason.

Knowledge and understanding of our affects, enables us to distinguish them from the perceptions of an object, and to influence our relationship to the affects we experience in relation to an object: ‘The human Mind perceives not only the affections of the Body, but also the ideas of these affections.’53 It is then possible to evaluate and moderate or transform the affects. This is more than reflective thinking or the application of the method of reasoning, and allows an evaluation of life by considering the experiences of joy and sadness and their causes, brought about within the way life is lived. This kind of evaluation can be applied to individual lives in the context of society as a whole. How a society fosters and encourages experiences of joy, and the kinds of joy that are possible within it, is the indicator of the extent of expression and understanding a society offers.

Spinoza considers in depth his differences from the Cartesian position at length in the Short Treatise where he has only partially distinguished his main ideas from those of Descartes. He already posits mind-body unity and denies a separate will but he maintains the passivity of the emotions. Most importantly though, there is an evident emphasis on developing knowledge of the perception and constitution of the body as a key to understanding the affects.

**Embodiment and Activity**

*Most of those who have written about the Affects, and men’s way of living, seem to treat, not of natural things, which follow the common laws of nature, but of things which are outside nature. Indeed they seem to conceive man in nature as a dominion within a dominion. For they believe that man disturbs, rather than follows, the order of nature, that he has absolute power over his actions, and that he is determined only by himself. And they attribute the cause of human impotence, not to the common*

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51 Ethics, II, P25, p.469 & P29, Schol., p.471.
52 Susan James (1997).
53 Ethics, II, P22, p.468.
power of nature, but to I know not what vice of human nature, which they therefore bewail, or laugh at, or disdain, or (as usually happens) curse. And he who knows how to censure more eloquently and cunningly the weakness of the human Mind is held to be Godly.\textsuperscript{54}

By far the greatest part of Spinoza's Ethics is devoted to discussion of the affects – Parts 3 and 4 are almost exclusively concerned with outlining the way in which the affects function and the detail necessary to understanding how to deal with them. While Spinoza is offering a fairly detailed psychology which includes some reflections on the nature of the mind and consciousness, his discussion, rather than centering on abstract notions, focuses on the workings of affect, imagination and reason within a social context of interaction. In spite of this, the emphasis in post-Enlightenment discussion of Spinoza, has been overwhelmingly devoted to the metaphysics and the propositional workings of reason as they apply to abstract individuals\textsuperscript{55}, with less emphasis on the other aspects of human functioning the propositions are intended to express. This will be seen in the final section where commentators such as Bennett, Curley and Garrett will be discussed. This section will consider the notion of affect in Spinoza and argue that Spinoza presents an active view of mind and body.

The above quote from the Preface to Part III of the Ethics shows Spinoza's argument against casting the affects as an aberration of human nature which is used to disdain some and elevate others. In his account of the affects, Spinoza has an active formulation of the mind and body. Through the notion of the conatus he portrays humans (to the same extent as all other things) as fundamentally active in striving to persevere in being\textsuperscript{56}. The conatus is the power of a thing or its essence\textsuperscript{57}, and the capacities of the body and mind\textsuperscript{58}. It is the agency expressed in human endeavour, rather than the will as a faculty of the mind\textsuperscript{59}. It is expressed through the ability to affect and be affected\textsuperscript{60}. Passivity results from the limitation of the understanding by the associations and opinions formed through random experience.

\textsuperscript{54} Ethics, Preface to Part III, p.491.
\textsuperscript{55} The idea of abstract individualism has been discussed at length by Stephen Lukes (1973) Individualism Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
\textsuperscript{56} Ethics, III, P6 and P7, pp.498-499.
\textsuperscript{57} Ethics, III, P7 and Dem., p.499.
\textsuperscript{58} See especially the series of Lemmas following P13 in Part II of the Ethics, pp.458-462. Spinoza focuses primarily on the human striving but it is possible to infer from various propositions that the conatus in every thing is related to the complexity of its body and thus its mind (which is the idea of the body).
\textsuperscript{59} Ethics, III, P9 and Schol., pp.499-500.
\textsuperscript{60} Ethics, III, P11, p.500.
An even greater level of self-determination is possible for humans than the fundamental level of activity denoted by the individual conatus\(^6\). Thus for Spinoza, within the context of the active conatus, humans can act passively but are also able to become more active. The social environment of humans can encourage greater passivity or activity. Passivity, however, is not an overall concession to the effects of materiality upon us\(^6\), rather it is an expression of our relation to active engagement. The *Ethics* is intended as a program for developing a greater level of activity and therefore, self-determination. The role of reasoning in this development is intimately related to affective experience in Spinoza.

The affections express the transition from lesser to greater or greater to lesser states of being in a phenomenological sense, as embodied experience. Deleuze notes that the affect is not a *comparison of ideas*, and that this excludes any intellectualist interpretation\(^6\). Spinoza distinguishes the affect (*affectus*) as immanent expression of engagement with the context of being, from the affective transition from a greater to a lesser or a lesser to a greater state of well being known as the affection (*affectio*). The affect as immanent expression follows from the dynamics of bodies outlined in Part II of the *Ethics*\(^6\) as well as from the order and connection of ideas and things\(^6\). The fact that the body can be disposed in a great many ways and the mind is thus capable of perceiving many things\(^6\) contributes to the ability to affect and be affected of the human mind/body. Affection is closer to emotion, though Curley has reservations about translating it as such\(^6\). The problem with the term emotion is that it does not facilitate the distinction between active and passive affects though there really is no other adequate term as Curley notes\(^6\).

\(^6\) The propositions from *Ethics*, II, P14 – P18, pp.462-466, set up the complexity of the human conatus and then at *Ethics*, III, P3, p.497 Spinoza relates actions of the mind to adequate ideas and the passions to inadequate ideas before going on to outline the human conatus as it is expressed in the affects, imagination and reason.

\(^6\) This is the question of human powers in relation to the power of other things which will be considered more in the next chapter.


\(^6\) From *Ethics*, II, P13 and the series of lemmas following it, pp.457-462.

\(^6\) ‘The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.’ II, P7, p.451.


\(^6\) Edwin Curley (1988) *The Collected Works of Spinoza* as editor and translator Curley provides an extensive glossary of the Latin and Dutch terms. See the terms affect and affection at p.625 and emotion on p.635.

\(^6\) Brian Massumi ((1995), “Autonomy of Affect”, *Cultural Critique*, no. 31, pp.83-110.) distinguishes affect from emotion, relating affect to intensity and emotion to subjective content, ‘the socio-linguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal.’ Massumi cites Spinoza, Bergson and Deleuze as philosophers who can
It is important to recognise the dimension of embodiment in considering affect in Spinoza. He elaborates the social and cultural dimension of interaction, another aspect of embodiment not usually considered in liberal Enlightenment discussions of emotion. The experience of the individual brings with it a complex set of associations and social and cultural understandings which come into play in the emotions expressed as active or passive in Spinoza's terms. In order to highlight these dimensions of Spinoza's approach to affect it is necessary to work through several of the main ideas contributing to the overall view on affect in Spinoza. These include firstly, the relation between mind and body, and secondly, the conatus, which will be discussed as the agency of both body and mind in Spinoza. The kinds of knowledge and how they relate to the transformation of the affects from passive to active will then be discussed.

Spinoza's account of the mind and body, is that: 'The object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body, or a certain mode of extension which actually exists, and nothing else.'\(^69\) Mind and body are united, he says, since 'the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that. So also a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways.'\(^70\) Mind and body are the same thing, considered under the different attributes of thought and extension. Mind is not a separate thing from the body, as in a Cartesian theatre in which ideas represent bodily activities, but the idea of the body, the body expressed as an idea. By the same token, however, we cannot understand the mind by investigating the body, nor the body by investigating the mind. Each must be understood in their own terms, so that one is not reducible to or denied by the understanding of the other.

The idea in the mind, and the state of the body are the same thing seen from different perspectives, so that different things can be said about each\(^71\). The ideas do not represent what is happening in the body but rather express the state of embodiment. The affect is both bodily state and 'idea', which is immanent

\(^69\) *Ethics*, II, P13, p.457.

\(^70\) *Ethics*, II, P7, Schol., p.451.

\(^71\) One could, for example, imagine a chemical and neurological account of bodily operations, as well as a social/psychological or hermeneutic account of the mind or behaviour, co-existing as explanations, without one discounting the other. Further, it could even be plausible to investigate how these different understandings intermesh.
experience for Spinoza. Idea here is not related only to the mind but is applied more broadly to embodied consciousness. It is not a Cartesian idea. There is also the idea of the affection in Spinoza which he begins to outline from II, P19 making it clear that the affection is an immanent idea which cannot be separated from bodily state\textsuperscript{72}.

In Descartes, ideas are abstracted from any process of generation either through experience, or from feeling. Descartes reduced the knowledge of the senses in favour of ideas in the mind which mediate the information of the senses. Ideas are privileged over and above the sensations of the body which are immediately subject to suspicion because they can be deceptive. The mind for Descartes is separate from the body so that ideas are distinct from states of the body and only derived indirectly from them. The notion of ideas must be purified of any relation to bodily sensations in order to have any validity for Descartes. Since perceptions are fallible, in order to have ideas that are certain, it is necessary to conceive of ideas as removed from the influence of sensations. Sensation has proved difficult to control with the will, however, even though ideas are the province of the will.

For Spinoza the mind is the idea, or awareness of the body and the same thing as the body. The relationship between the body and mind then, is not the same as an object being viewed by a subject, a view expressed but also criticised in the *Short Treatise*. This removes any necessary indirectness between body and mind. When something is experienced in the body, it is experienced as an affect which is expressed as an idea. The bodily sensation and the affect are the same thing except that the mind can reflect on the affection as an idea of an idea, and then distinguish between ideas in terms of their adequacy.

Spinoza rejects the idea that there are different faculties in the mind – ‘... there is in the Mind no absolute faculty of [willing], understanding, desiring, loving, etc.’\textsuperscript{73}. The mind itself is an idea and it is active, therefore there are activities of the mind which are the expression of affecting and being affected, imagining, reasoning or intellection and intuition. ‘Both insofar as the Mind has clear and distinct ideas, and insofar as it has confused ideas, it strives, for an indefinite duration, to persevere in its being and it is conscious of this striving it has.’\textsuperscript{74} In imagining however, Spinoza says; ‘the soul has the nature of something acted on’, whereas in reasoning it has the nature of something active. In imagination the mind has the

\textsuperscript{72} *Ethics*, II, P19–P23, pp.466-468.
\textsuperscript{73} *Ethics*, II, P48, Dem. & Schol., p.483.
\textsuperscript{74} *Ethics*, III, P9, p.499.
nature of 'something acted on' in the sense that things like the ability to make pictures in the mind, memory, the use of language and so on do not adequately express the activity of the mind. The reference here is to the imagination as representation where the use of signs as the focus of understanding removes it from the immanent experience. More will be said about the difference between representation and expression in the following chapter on Deleuze.

The role of the conatus in Spinoza is in contrast to the will in expressing an agency of body and mind that is lacking in Cartesian ideas of mind (apart from volition) and particularly body. There are important implications for many areas of ethics and moral theory in this contrast, which require considering a Spinozistic ethics in quite different terms than allowed for in Cartesian and Enlightenment thought. There is more possibility for acknowledgement of agency, engagement and interplay between selves, and material being as affective experience in a Spinozistic account of human functioning.

Ethical frameworks based on Enlightenment ideas of liberalism tend to posit the Cartesian will as the basis of ethics. In liberal thought the individual will is the sole expression of agency in opposition to the complete passivity of the body as machine, and experience as generalised and abstracted. Reason is seen as the source of autonomy central to liberal ideas of freedom. Autonomy in these frameworks tends to involve a separate self which is independent rather than interdependent. Agency in Spinoza is not free will, it is the expression of being in the context of human development, or 'being in becoming', which entails the development of activity within a context of engagement. The emphasis on reason in liberalism is disembodied; justice requires a denial of particularity or personness so the values of liberalism can apply to everyone in the same way. The idea of blind justice signifies a specific form of rationality for which the body and emotion are intrusions thus effectively excluding the personal voice.

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Spinoza’s framework for human activity is based firstly on the conatus, showing both body and mind as active, engaged and interactive: ‘The idea of any thing that increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our Body’s power of acting, increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our Mind’s power of thinking.’<sup>79</sup> This does not mean that mind is passive in relation to the body, however: ‘The Mind, as far as it can, strives to imagine those things that increase or aid the Body’s power of acting.’ Nor is there a causal relationship between mind and body: ‘The Body cannot determine the Mind to thinking, and the Mind cannot determine the Body to motion, to rest, or to anything else ...’<sup>80</sup> The relationship between affections of the body and ideas in the mind is one of agreement, that is, they are the same thing: ‘By affect I understand affections of the Body by which the Body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections.’<sup>81</sup> Within the activity of mind and body there is a passive orientation and an active one: ‘... if we can be the adequate cause of these affections, I understand by the Affect an action, otherwise, a passion.’<sup>82</sup>

What Spinoza means by ‘be the adequate cause’ requires working through his idea of reason as adequate knowledge and its relation to the affects.<sup>83</sup> Reason is not opposed to the imagination or the passions, nor to the body. There is no sense of the rational being defined in opposition to the irrational. In Enlightenment thought reason tends to be opposed to imagination, emotions and the body but in Spinoza reason builds on the functioning of imagination, which is conducive to the development and facilitation of reason. The body and the emotions are included in the functioning of reason which involves an ethical engagement with the world, sensations, affects and others, through the body. The presence of adequate ideas informing our judgement means an expansive understanding, not one governed by quantitative knowledge or universal ideas, as in liberal individualism where these tend to come together to constitute the subject.

The term ‘affect’ in Spinoza includes emotions and could be said to denote on a general level, more complex forms of engagement within a human context. The affects involve the nature of the context or object engaged with as well as the nature of the experiencing individual as embodied: ‘By affect I understand affections of the Body by which the Body’s power of acting is increased or

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<sup>79</sup> *Ethics*, III, P11, p.500.
<sup>80</sup> *Ethics*, III, P2, p.494.
<sup>81</sup> *Ethics*, III, D3, p.493, emphasis added.
<sup>82</sup> *Ethics*, III, D3, p.493.
<sup>83</sup> It also requires working through the way Spinoza compares our own power with things ‘outside’ us which will be discussed further in the following chapter on Deleuze.
Reason and the Emotions – Embodiment, Experience and Activity

...diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of those affections. 

Therefore, if we can be the adequate cause of any of these affections, I understand by the Affect an action; otherwise, a passion.

Experience is grounded in feeling: ‘We feel that a certain body is affected in many ways’ and ‘We neither feel nor perceive any singular things, except bodies and modes of thinking.’ Feeling and perceiving are the same thing as Spinoza emphasises in this definition of affect.

In Spinoza’s program for the transformation of the affects, an affect cannot be changed by an act of will or by reason understood as an idea separate from an affect. The presence of a true idea does not remove whatever is positive in a false idea, namely the present constitution of the human body, and an affect can only be restrained or removed by ‘an affect opposite to, and stronger than, the affect to be restrained.’ The sense in which reason is involved in the transition to activity, is through the affects themselves which must transform and be transformed.

Desire plays a significant part in reason because desires arise from affects: ‘Desire is man’s very essence, insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something.’

An affection of the human essence is here explained as ‘any constitution of that essence’, whether innate or derived externally, conceived through the attribute of Thought alone, or the attribute of Extension alone, or referred to both at once. Desire is then ‘any of man’s strivings, impulses, appetites, and volitions, which vary as the man’s constitution varies ...’

Being ‘conceived from some given affection’ is particularly aimed, he says at highlighting man’s consciousness of his desire. Desire is based on the striving of the conatus but then has the added dimension of consciousness and the aim to do something in particular. The aim of desires has to do with the determination of good and evil, that is, avoiding what is harmful or evil, and pursuing what is beneficial or good.

‘The knowledge of good and evil is nothing but an affect of Joy or Sadness, insofar as we are conscious of it.’ Good and evil are what we regard as useful or harmful to us in preserving our being, in other words, ‘what increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our power of acting.’ It is when a thing affects us with Joy or Sadness that we determine it as good or evil, so that knowledge of

84 Ethics, III, D3, p.493.
85 Ethics, II, A4 and A5 respectively, p.448.
86 Ethics, Part IV, P1, p.547, P7 & Schol., p.550.
87 Ethics, III, Definitions of the Affects, I, p.531.
88 Ethics, III, Definitions of the Affects, I, Exp., p.531.
89 Ethics, IV, P8, p.550.
90 Ethics, IV, P8, Dem., p.550.
good and evil is nothing other than an 'idea of Joy or Sadness which follows from the affect of Joy or Sadness itself'. The idea is the same thing as the affect, not separate from it\textsuperscript{91}.

Given that the conatus is the striving to persevere in existence\textsuperscript{92}, the mind seeks (strives to imagine) those things that increase the body's power of acting and the mind's power of thinking\textsuperscript{93}. It is joy, and affects related to joy, that increase our power and it is sadness and related affects that decrease our power\textsuperscript{94} so what we seek overall is to maximise our experiences of joy: 'The Mind, as far as it can, striveth to imagine those things that increase or aid the Body's power of acting.' Spinoza then proceeds to go through various factors contributing to the experience of joy or sadness such as how we are affected by images of past things and present things\textsuperscript{95}. Here he is dealing with the passions which result in sadness and related passions such as hate, or less enduring joys. At Part III, P58 he begins to deal with the affects which are experienced insofar as we act: 'Apart from the Joy and Desire that are passions, there are other affects of Joy and Desire that are related to us insofar as we act.' These affects are related to the mind's conceiving adequate ideas and to its desire to understand\textsuperscript{96}. All affects related to us insofar as we act are species of joy and desire. Spinoza emphasises here 'affects related to the Mind insofar as it understands' and this is where he begins to talk of 'living by the dictate of reason'\textsuperscript{97}.

It is Spinoza's portrayal of reasoning that departs from the Cartesian opposition of the rational and the emotional. In its relation to the body and sensations, reasoning functions through the affects, to maximise those states most expressive of the essence and hence the power of each individual. Rather than being opposed to imagination or the affects, then, reason in fact develops out of and with them. Reason itself is affective, that is, expressed through emotions of joy, and these affects contribute to understanding.

Reason is Spinoza's second kind of knowledge, imagination being the first and intuition the third. It is adequate and therefore not prone to error in the way that imagination is\textsuperscript{98}. The key to reason is understanding, which is more than the

\textsuperscript{91} Ethics, IV, P8, Dem., p.551.
\textsuperscript{92} Ethics, III, P6, pp.498-499.
\textsuperscript{93} Ethics, III, P12, p.502.
\textsuperscript{94} Ethics, III, P11, Schol., pp.500-501.
\textsuperscript{95} Ethics, III, P18, p.504.
\textsuperscript{96} Ethics, III, P58, Dem., p.529.
\textsuperscript{97} Ethics, III, P59, Dem. And Schol., p.529.
\textsuperscript{98} This is the position arrived at in the Ethics, II, P40, Schol. 2, & P41, p.478.
accumulation of knowledge, and this is achieved through the affections of the body which is the only way in which we experience our own bodies and external bodies: 'The human Mind does not know the human Body itself, nor does it know that it exists, except through ideas of affections by which the Body is affected.' 'The Mind does not know itself, except insofar as it perceives the ideas of affections of the Body.' 'The human Mind does not perceive any external body as actually existing, except through the ideas of the affections of its own Body.' In these propositions Spinoza is talking of knowledge of the body, knowledge of the mind and knowledge of external bodies. All of these rely on the affections first of all. At the same time as Spinoza is denoting the ideas as immediate expressions of the affections of the body which are not separate from them, he is also distinguishing the idea of the idea in order to show that the ideas of the affections follow the common order of experience and not the order and connection of ideas as it is in God. Cartesianism in contrast, places 'man' in the position of 'God' rather than inside the dominion of nature as in Spinoza which makes it difficult to distinguish experience and the ideas of the intellect except by negating experience.

For Spinoza ideas express as consciousness, the sensations of the body or the affects, as well as the associations and imitations which result from random experience. Reason is not merely reflection on affects and their ideas, then, but considered in relation to the context of their functioning. It is part of the functioning of an embodied, interconnected (within nature as well as within culture) organism. Spinoza strongly emphasises both the affections as the source of knowledge of mind, body and external things, and the fact that ideas ordered according to the affections are inadequate.

Perceiving things adequately, the expression of 'truth' for Spinoza, is not only to have truth in the analytic sense, nor is it the equivalent of scientific truth. It is also intended as the tool by which the greatest expression can be achieved for humans. It is the way to understand and identify how to bring the most benefit to human lives. Common notions involve recognition of what is shared between things without denying their individual differences. Universals of the undesirable kind generalise from individuals and become increasingly abstract and removed from them. Individual things are then interpreted through the generalisations as if these were adequate to refer to actual individuals:

100 Ethics, II, P20, Dem., p.467 and P29, Cor., p.471. It is at P29 that Spinoza talks explicitly of the idea of the idea of the affections which makes it clearly distinct from the idea of the affection, though not separate from it.
‘Those notions they call Universal, like Man, Horse, Dog, etc., have arisen from similar causes, viz. because so many images (e.g., of men) are formed at one time in the human Body that they surpass the power of imagining ... to the point where the Mind can imagine neither slight differences of the singular [men] (such as the color and size of each one) nor their determinate number, and imagines distinctly only what they all agree in, insofar as they affect the body.’

Spinoza’s concept of reason is not intended to offer mere generalisations or abstracted logical solutions. It involves distinguishing the real universals or common notions from the undesirable ones which are limited to generalisations and are thus not adequate. The understanding can use generalisations, but part of the function of reason is to know that they are concepts of the mind and not real things.

As we have seen in chapter 2, the common notions relate to our actual experience and thus to real dimensions of being. Reason involves the development of a particular sort of orientation to the world that encompasses and recognises larger and larger wholes and the place of humans within them. Beginning with individuals within society, it moves out to the whole of humanity, recognising what is common between humans and eventually realising what humans have in common with all other things. This is essentially the ethical development leading to increased activity and expression of our power as humans through an understanding of our position in the whole.

Spinoza’s portrayal of the expression of embodiment contrasts with the representation of the body and the senses in Descartes. The mind ‘knows’, experiences, expresses, primarily through its being the idea of the body, through the affections of the body. The three kinds of knowledge all incorporate knowledge through the senses but each represents a different understanding of how ideas are related. Sense perception is not in itself false or deceiving, but in imagination ideas are seen as being caused by external things and represented in ideas, whereas in reason, ideas are understood as expressing what is perceived but as caused by other ideas. ‘The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.’ In reason the aim is to perceive things adequately, understanding the order and connection of ideas and its relation to the order and connection of things. It is the way the experience generated through the senses is regarded that is important, that is, whether it is seen as represented or expressed, in ideas. In expression the immediacy of the connection is

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101 Ethics, II, P40, Schol, p.477.
maintained whereas representation creates a relationship of mediation between experience and ideas.

**Overcoming or Transforming the Affects**

Commentators on Spinoza such as Bennett and Curley have tended to deal with the relation between reason and affects in Cartesian terms, maintaining a separation between mental and physical functions. They also consider Spinoza to be offering a psychotherapeutic solution to the problem of the affects which is individual focused. These approaches do not come to terms with the complex internality that is evident in Spinoza's discussion of the affects and reduce the complexity to matters of language and logic. In order to arrive at a more fruitful understanding of reason and affect it is important to work through these interpretations of Spinoza. Jonathan Bennett has taken Spinoza to be dealing with the emotions primarily through the intellect or 'mentalistically'. Bennett picks up on a distinction between the mental and physical aspects of emotions – the mental is mostly related to belief and desire or attitude, and the physical to bodily or physiological expressions such as crying, sweating, shaking and so on. Bennett says that 'having adopted a taxonomy in terms of idea content, Spinoza is cut off from a taxonomy of them in physical terms'.

For Bennett, Spinoza contrasts;

‘the life of the affects with the life of reason, saying that they involve bondage and freedom respectively, and interprets this in terms of his contrast between being acted on from the outside and being self-caused. It does not work at all well; and Spinoza might have done better to retain the affect/reason contrast and align it with bondage/freedom, with this being divorced from outer/inner and instead being understood in terms of the difference between being and not being in thrall to one’s own emotional turbulence’.

It all makes little sense to Bennett because he wants to interpret Spinoza according to an affect/reason, imagination/reason distinction and align these with bondage and freedom respectively, which is a post-Enlightenment Cartesian reading. It clearly does not fit with Spinoza's intentions for whom the relationship between reason and imagination, reason and affect is much more expansive than Bennett is able to acknowledge. Spinoza contrasts the life of the passions, not the life of the affects, with the life of reason. There are clearly affects expressed in reason and without which reason would amount to little. The affects provide motivational

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104 Bennett, p.270.
force for Spinoza which is not merely related to the level of belief or reasons for feeling, behaving, thinking in certain ways. Bennett relates the affects to the nature of belief understood in analytic terms, thereby reducing their functionality to the machinations of belief. His priority is clearly reason in a sense which is important to Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophy.

Spinoza says in the *Ethics*: ‘If we separate emotions or affects from the thought of an external cause, and join them to other thoughts, then the love or hate toward the external cause is destroyed, as are the vacillations of mind arising from these affects.’ Bennett takes this to mean that what is required is separating the state of hatred for example, from one thought and joining it to other thoughts thus bringing it about that the unpleasant state is displaced by others – ‘what else could separating and joining be?’ The focus is purely on cognition and does not involve an acknowledgement of the affect/s in relation to the individual’s own experience.

Bennett then goes on to discuss the relation between belief and bad feelings and concludes that ‘many harmful emotions would indeed disappear if we were to rid ourselves of the beliefs on which they rest.’ Bennett clearly regards this as highly problematic and inapplicable because so difficult to apply, and resting on the command of the will. Changing or ridding ourselves of beliefs appears as merely a cognitive exercise which Bennett acknowledges is problematic, but he is unable to consider the experiential dimension as relational, as expressing meaning rather than truth.

Curley suggests that Bennett finds this point incomprehensible because he fails to take into account that Spinoza recognises there may be times when we cannot control an affect and as a result we may only be able to moderate or restrain it. Curley’s argument is that it is the element of belief that distinguishes different affects from one another, so that different affects involve different beliefs, and that this makes it possible to consider the affect as rationally justified or not explaining the connection between affect and object. By destroying or weakening the belief attached to an affect one can effectively weaken or destroy the affect. Curley considers this as a form of cognitive therapy. In order for this to work it is

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105 *Ethics*, V, P2, p.597.
106 Bennett, p.334.
107 Bennett, p.334.
109 Curley, p. 130.
necessary that we have some control over the belief, though it is noted by Curley also that Spinoza does not believe we can choose to believe or disbelieve at will.\footnote{Curley, p.130.}

Curley's emphasis in dealing with belief in relation to affects is that the evidence for the belief must be weighed up: 'Ridding ourselves of a belief may involve a difficult process of looking again at our evidence for the belief, testing alternative theories which might explain that evidence equally well, criticizing the logic by which we have arrived at the belief, and so on.'\footnote{Curley, p.130.} This is a good example for Curley, of the application of reason to dealing with the affects. Reason here would amount to external validation, checking what is believed with the external circumstances.

Bennett on the same point, attacking the beliefs on which harmful emotions are based, discusses Hampshire, who maintains a similar cognitive position to Bennett though he does see greater possibilities for therapeutic solutions in Spinoza. Bennett finds in his interpretation of Spinoza's psychotherapy no solutions that satisfy him. 'I am to reform my emotional life by scrutinising such beliefs about the objects of my emotions, asking of each whether it was arrived at rationally.'\footnote{Bennett, p.349.} If beliefs turn out to be ill-founded they will be less believable and their emotional impact will be reduced. The problem is, says Bennett, 'few of our harmful emotions are based on false or highly questionable beliefs.'\footnote{Bennett, p.349.} The reliance on rationality as the measure is the problem in that it is personal meaning that makes most sense of beliefs and these are not held in isolation but are reinforced in a social and cultural context of interaction.

The vital point that Curley and Bennett miss is that for Spinoza, we are wrong to regard our affections (emotions) as accurate representations of the interaction between our body and external bodies and as caused by external objects. We consider our affections as 'natural' or inevitable responses to something that has happened to us, and as representative, when they are expressive. If someone takes something from me I 'naturally' feel affronted and angry but this is not a 'natural' or necessary response so much as one that I personally may be inclined to have and that is regarded culturally as an appropriate response.

Affections are not caused by external objects for Spinoza and this point is central to the transformation of the affects. They are a result of other ideas which have

\footnote{Ethics, II, P49, Schol., pp.487-488.}
contributed to the affection as well as ideas corresponding to bodily states of varying degrees of subtlety and complexity. An affection is an idea with a corresponding bodily state, and so is caused by other ideas and these ideas are based on experience, a complex of associations, habits, beliefs and affective states. The affection expresses a state of greater or lesser well-being in relation to the object, rather than being caused by something external to the mind. The sensations of the body, for which there is an affect, are not taken to be accurate representations of a relation to or experience of an external object. Spinoza proposes a more active account of the affects which emphasises the relation to things ‘outside’ us rather than the representation of objects by a subjectivity.

Beliefs contribute to the affection because they are ideas. It is not the belief as such that is the problem but the idea that an external object causes the affection. Bennett would still equate this with belief since he is concerned with all ideas as rationally connected whether they are well-founded or not. We experience an affect as if it were caused by the external object. By joining the affection to other thoughts we realise the connections between ideas which have caused the affection. There is an obvious need here to reconsider the status of an idea – beyond that of a rational, cognitive, abstract notion separated from embodiment as in Cartesian ideas.

Bennett bases his assessment of the psychotherapeutic qualities of Spinoza’s ethics on the presupposition that: ‘What we do know about the mental realm mostly concerns its indirect representative features, i.e., the contents of beliefs; but those are central to Spinoza’s techniques for emotional control, and so in this area the emphasis is on the mental.’ \(^{114}\) The kind of emphasis Bennett is talking about, however, is on the intellectual or rational level which he is equating with the mental. He says that Spinozist psychotherapies focus on thought content as if the mental were a series of rational propositions. On a more experiential level, however, Spinoza’s focus is on the thoughts and experiences that contribute to an affect\(^ {115}\).

The example Bennett gives is, ‘When you are angry with someone, think about something else instead.’ \(^{116}\) But Spinoza is not advocating simply thinking about

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\(^{114}\) Bennett, p.331.

\(^{115}\) Jerome Neu (1977) Emotion, thought and therapy: a study of Hume and Spinoza and the relationship of philosophical theories of the emotions to psychological theories of therapy. Berkeley: University of California Press. Neu states: ‘Recognising a thought as a memory, as referring to the past, may change an emotion.’ (p.87) His argument recognises psychological dimensions that Bennett is unable to consider in his analytic approach.

\(^{116}\) Bennett, p.332.
something else instead, rather he maintains that we have to understand the affect, expressed as anger in this case, in relation to other ‘thoughts’ which contribute to how we interpret that anger. Thoughts in this sense are experiences which involve beliefs and propositional kinds of thoughts but are also embodied dimensions of being which are not reducible to cognitions, in the Cartesian sense of thoughts as representative.

The important point here is to consider the conglomeration of experiences, some of which are beliefs, assumptions, and so on, amounting to cognitions, that one brings to any encounter. What is important is not just the characteristics of the external experience which we can attempt to validate in some way. If someone does something to which I react with anger, my anger is not caused by the other person’s actions but by my response to their actions. This will be fairly complex. I may react with anger because I see what they did as an affront to me personally and an infringement on my personal space and even my identity. However, these associations are not related to the apparent immediate cause of my anger. Rather they emerge in the social context of responses to certain kinds of actions where there are systematic socially and culturally condoned ways of responding, informing personal experience.

Where is the expression of anger going to get me? It may cause me to over-react and then I have more consequences to deal with. If I am being assaulted and anger assists me to cry out for help or block the attack or hit back, then it is extremely useful, but if someone failed to say hello to me this morning and I react with anger, it is not going to help the situation whatever the circumstances, and it is going to take a long time to get over it. I then need to consider very carefully where such a reaction came from, and according to Spinoza it is more fruitful to look at reasons related to the context of myself and my relation to others for why I might react in such a way than to look for external ones. External ‘reasons’ include why that person might have ‘caused’ my anger – the way they looked at me, the fact that they don’t say hello half the time I say hello to them. Trying to imply motivations on the part of the other person for why they failed to do what I wanted them to do is a classic example of looking for external validation for my feelings. My reaction, if I look for internal reasons, will relate to my experiences, my feelings and my identity and the social and cultural context of these, not simply to an external cause. Reasons in this sense constitute internal motivations rather than rational propositions which require external justification and validation.
Bennett is right in suggesting that investigating the external validity of belief is not easily going to change the affection but he is wrong in suggesting that this is what Spinoza is advocating. Spinoza is suggesting that looking for internal reasons for my reaction is more empowering since it is something I can do more about. It is thus preferable to imputing causes from the other person’s point of view (often not very generous ones), which involves assumptions and conjectures about the other’s state or experience that I most likely know nothing about.

Bennett’s analysis is restricted to regarding all mental events as merely cognitive. An affect in the sense of an immanent embodied experience not reducible to propositional cognitions, is either excluded from the realm of the mental or reduced to an idea in the propositional sense. He notes Spinoza’s proposition that an affect cannot be restrained except by another affect and then gives an example which involves replacing jealousy with disgust towards oneself. He remarks that this sounds unSpinozistic since it conflicts with the thesis that the affects are to be restrained by reason\textsuperscript{117}. He says that Spinoza has restricted himself to cognitive therapies when he states that it will be by the mind’s cognitions alone that remedies for the affects will be determined. What Spinoza is excluding, however, is any reference to animal spirits and pineal glands, or the external circumstances which for him cannot provide a remedy for the emotions\textsuperscript{118}.

The statement Bennett refers to actually reads: ‘Therefore, because the power of the Mind is defined only by understanding, ... we shall determine, by the Mind’s knowledge alone, the remedies for the affects.’ Knowledge and understanding are more multi-dimensional than cognition which Bennett is using in a Cartesian sense limiting it to abstract representation rather than the experience of being in a certain state. Bennett goes on to look at possibilities where ‘reason worked through affects’. Ultimately the issue remains incomprehensible because he is unable to regard the affects as mental events in the sense that ideas or cognitions are, which means his idea of reason is opposed fundamentally to the experience of affects\textsuperscript{119}.

\textsuperscript{118} *Ethics*, Preface to V, pp.594-597.
\textsuperscript{119} Other theorists who have considered Spinoza as offering a therapeutic approach, include Stuart Hampshire (1976 *Spinoza* Penguin Books) and Don Garrett. The idea of therapeutic technique they are suggesting however, like Bennett’s, fails to take account of the complex intersubjective internality and embodiment in the understanding of the affects in Spinoza. Garrett, for example, lists six features from Part V of the *Ethics* which he says for Spinoza represent the way to achieve freedom. For Garrett these revolve around the overcoming of the passions, ‘having power over the affects’. The first is understanding the passion so that perception of it becomes adequate. In the second, the mind separates the affect from the thought of an external cause which takes the power away from the cause itself. This is the belief or
The Propositions of Part IV of the Ethics are intended to reveal the fundamental laws that express the functioning of emotion. We need to be aware of these factors in order to lead a better life. If these are taken into account, along with the propositions of Part III, a very different perspective on the functioning of human embodiment is formed. It involves a much deeper, more intimate knowledge of the meaningful connections made in an individual's life within a context of social relations. Spinoza attributes significant power to the imagination as expressing the individual, rather than general perspective. In contrast, commentators such as Bennett suggest that the imagination is just passive. Reason and imagination are separated and contrasted as passive to active. For Spinoza it is some thoughts that are passive in the particular sense of the privation of knowledge, but this does not mean the individual is always acting passively or that imagination is only passive. Reason can only function by working with and extending some of the functions of the imagination.

Recognising that some affects are more enduring than others, for example, and then discerning the ways in which these might be further cultivated is a task for reasoning. Deleuze offers a description of the process by which common notions are derived from the bodily existence of individuals beginning with the 'least general' common notions. These 'represent something in common between my body and another that affects me with joy-passion'. From this, active joys follow which 'join the first passions and then take their place' and in turn more general common notions are formed from these which are able to express what is common between my body and bodies that disagree with mine, producing the

judgement involved in the idea as affect. The third involves an understanding of time whereby the affect is related to something common which is always present, and is therefore more powerful. The fourth deals with the multiplicity of causes which strengthen an affect based on the common notions (V, P9) and the fifth with the power of the order and connections of the affections when they are based on 'the order of the intellect' or the common notions (V, P10). The sixth is the understanding of necessity which decreases the power of the affects that may be associated with an event by which one is effected.

All of these points could be regarded as techniques applying to individuals. Garrett makes the point that only the fifth could be regarded as anything like a therapeutic technique, however, and that the rest are not intended by Spinoza to be techniques in that sense but to 'suggest the value of undertaking specific lines of thought about affects' in the case of the first two, and overall to show how adequate knowledge 'tends to produce a lessened susceptibility to the affects in the long run'. Garrett thus also emphasises the role of knowledge in liberation from the passions in a Spinozistic ethics. Thought is detached from affect and for Garrett the aim remains for thought to 'transcend' affect. Like Plato in the Phaedrus, Bennett, Curley and Garrett all attempt to reduce affect to a cognitive function that can be mastered by rational thought. Affect is not seen as involving any meaningful dimensions of interaction or association but as an aberration of individual rational thought processes.

more enduring active joys\textsuperscript{120}. Although Deleuze does not sufficiently distinguish the common notions from the abstract generality of universals, he does signal the broader understanding involved in reason.

Common notions are formed through reason's relation to the imagination. It is in part through ideas of ideas and consideration of affective states and their associations, that commonalities are recognised. It is from these that we derive an understanding of what will ultimately lead to a maximisation of the experience of joy and expression of power. The common notions are experiential in an important sense. They are not just rational or general propositions but express a relation to the context of embodiment and are expressed in affects of joy. An essential part of the development of common notions then is the experience of enduring joys and a transition to a greater state of well-being through them. The joys themselves produce more useful associations and engagement with the context that is more productive, more conducive to the development and expression of activity.

In a social context where there is encouragement of active joys there would not be so much need for a reflective process intervening to facilitate the production of activity. In this sense reason is not just a reflective process. The reflective process will be required more or less, according to the context, and the extent to which more or less enduring joys are prevalent. The prevalence of joys then is an important measure which is more than the prevailing beliefs and their validity. This is an aspect of reason and the role of affect within it which Bennett and Curley are unable to consider.

The next important point about the functioning of affect for Spinoza, is that an affect can only be replaced by an affect stronger than and opposed to it. Spinoza then tells us how this is achieved through a few tricks of the imagination. Firstly, it is noted, an affect is stronger if we imagine its cause as present to us, and if we imagine that something will be present soon rather than further into the future, we will experience a more intense affect. The same goes for things that are in the past, the affect fades with the memory. Something we imagine as necessary, affects us more intensely than something that is merely possible or contingent, and what remains possible will affect us more strongly than what we know to be contingent (principle of uncertainty)\textsuperscript{121}. If we imagine it as necessary that we are

\textsuperscript{120} Gilles Deleuze (1988), pp.56-58. I will take up the issue of the common notions as 'representing' what is common in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{121} Ethics, IV, P7-13, pp.550-553.
worthless we will experience an affect of sadness which affects us strongly. However, if we imagine that we have ways of fulfilling ourselves that are worthwhile we will experience an enduring form of joy. What we imagine will contribute to our overall experience of joy.

Knowledge of good and evil, even if true, cannot in itself, restrain an affect unless it also is an affect\textsuperscript{122}. This is in opposition to Descartes for whom a true judgement changes our relationship to the passions in and of itself\textsuperscript{123}. True knowledge of good and evil is also an affect and brings with it a desire. A desire based on a true knowledge of good and evil is no stronger than any other desire that may torment us, and so it can be restrained by these other desires if they result from a focus on external causes which are more powerful than our own. We are passive when we focus on external causes more than on the power of our own essence in relation to the external cause. We are active insofar as the desire follows from our own nature\textsuperscript{124}. Furthermore, pleasures of the moment are stronger than desires for the future, or concerning contingent things, based on true knowledge of good and evil\textsuperscript{125}.

These are the factors that we must take into consideration in attempting to express more of our power. Against these characteristics of affects and desires Spinoza presents the idea that a desire based on joy, because it is aided by the affect of joy and increases our power of acting, is stronger than one based on sadness which is restrained by the affect of sadness\textsuperscript{126}. We necessarily want what we judge to be good and avoid what we judge to be evil, and knowledge of good and evil is an affect of joy or sadness of which we are conscious. The greatest virtue is to strive to preserve oneself and to seek one’s own advantage and living from virtue follows from the fact that we understand. Reason is intimately related to desire and affect and is thus concerned with virtue. It involves each loving themselves, seeking their own advantage, wanting what will lead ‘man’ to a greater perfection and wanting this for others as well as for ourselves\textsuperscript{127}.

The imagination is to be used through an understanding of how it functions, just like any other thing in nature that we investigate ‘as if it were a question of lines, planes and bodies’\textsuperscript{128}. Knowledge of good and evil is the consciousness of an affect

\textsuperscript{122} Ethics, IV, P14, p.553.
\textsuperscript{123} Cottingham (1985), et al., Vol. 1, Passions of the Soul, p.347.
\textsuperscript{124} Ethics, IV, P15 & Dem., p.553.
\textsuperscript{125} Ethics, IV, P14-17, pp.553-554.
\textsuperscript{126} Ethics, IV, P18 & Dem., p.555.
\textsuperscript{127} Ethics, IV, P18, Schol., pp.555-556.
\textsuperscript{128} Ethics, III, Preface, p.492.
and an affect can only be changed by another affect stronger than and opposed to it. In fact, even true knowledge of good and evil can only restrain an affect insofar as it is an affect itself\textsuperscript{129}. Seen in isolation, the knowledge itself has no impact on an affect. However, because knowledge always is an affect, the idea and the affect are united in the same way that the mind and body are. 'Therefore this knowledge of good and evil is nothing but the affect itself, insofar as we are conscious of it'\textsuperscript{130}.

This changes the structure of the relationship between reason and the emotions quite dramatically. It suggests that the affect could be a measure of the truth of the knowledge of good and evil; if we all strive to have that which is good and avoid what is evil and we can be wrong because good and evil are judgements made in accordance with our beliefs or imaginings, then the way to distinguish what is truly good and evil is in terms of the affects produced. That may appear problematic because things that seem good in the immediate short term are not necessarily so. Spinoza takes as a measure of good and evil, whatever is appropriate to the well-being of an individual. This is not simply an emotion but a tendency to increased experiences of joy and love of oneself, others and God.

Spinoza considers the complexity of what each brings to an encounter with an object demonstrating the complexity in the affects, which are not simply determined by the object. This is where experience matters most and where past experience brings us in relation to objects in ways that are culturally as well as individually determined.

Active living in Spinoza's sense, involves more experience of joy and a deeper consideration of power and the way in which we are affected. This will be discussed further in the following chapters which deal with Deleuze's analysis of Spinoza as expressionism in philosophy. A consideration of the role of self-love in Spinoza in the sixth chapter will demonstrate the way in which activity is limited and how it can be cultivated. To be affected, to be at the effect of, things outside us, beyond our control is often taken to mean we are disempowered. The following reading of Spinoza demonstrate that a greater ability to be affected relates to a greater power of expression.

\textsuperscript{129} Ethics, IV, P8 & P14, pp.550 & 553.
\textsuperscript{130} Ethics, IV, P8, Dem., p.551.
5. Deleuze’s Spinoza – An Ethics of Power

In Leibniz as in Spinoza expression has theological, ontological and epistemological dimensions. It organises their theories of God, of creatures and of knowledge. Independently of one another the two philosophers seem to rely on the idea of expression in order to overcome difficulties in Cartesianism, to restore a Philosophy of Nature, and even to incorporate Cartesian results in systems thoroughly hostile to Descartes’ vision of the world. To the extent that one may speak of the Anticartesianism of Leibniz and Spinoza, such Anticartesianism is grounded in the idea of expression.¹

Introduction

In this chapter I will firstly give some introductory background to Deleuze and his interpretation of Spinoza. Following the introduction there will be a more detailed account of expressionism as it is found in Spinoza and elucidated by Deleuze. The focus of Deleuze’s interpretation of Spinoza is power, beginning with the conatus, which will be the focus of the second section. This will be followed by a consideration of the comparison of powers in Spinoza and Deleuze’s discussion of the conatus. The final section will argue that Deleuze’s application of expressionism in Spinoza is limited by a problem in his consideration of signs and adequate and inadequate ideas. Expression I will argue, is an alternative to representation within which representation is couched.

Deleuze focuses on aspects of Spinoza’s thought not evident in the traditional Anglo-American approaches discussed previously, which have tended to focus on Spinoza’s thought in Enlightenment terms. In this chapter I will discuss Deleuze’ work on expression in Spinoza in which expression is seen as offering a significant alternative to Cartesianism. Expression places more emphasis on immanence and immediacy as alternatives to representation: representation is central to Cartesian thought, in which reason acts as mediator of all knowledge. By considering the role of expression in Spinoza’s philosophy Deleuze is able to give more prominence to immanence than to the logical rationalism in Spinoza’s thought.

While Deleuze places a great deal of emphasis on the ontological dimensions of expression, his focus on immanence as expression also draws out the ethical

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intention of Spinoza’s work\textsuperscript{2}. His analysis of power in relation to the conatus is more expansive than the consideration given by other commentators, as is his discussion of the relevance of the social context and its dynamics. While it does more to highlight the interactive and affective dimensions of social dynamics, Deleuze’s discussion of power falls back onto liberal and Enlightenment ideas of power and the individualism of the conatus. It will be argued that there is an undercurrent of liberal Enlightenment ideas of power and representation which restricts his analysis of Spinoza. Spinoza attempts to place human power within the context of, and in contrast to the power of God and of nature whereas Deleuze emphasises a ‘struggle of powers’. While Spinoza wants to shift the understanding of power from an external focus to an immanent, internal one, Deleuze remains concerned with the ‘external’ dimensions of power as power over.

Deleuze has expressed different ideas about internality and externality through notions such as ‘the fold’\textsuperscript{3} and the ‘body without organs’\textsuperscript{4}, with the purpose primarily to shift the focus from the internality of subject-centred psychoanalytic approaches. Disrupting the centrality of the subject has meant that feminists have found affinities with Deleuze and Guattari but they also have many concerns\textsuperscript{5}. Deleuze’s argument about the fold and what constitutes the outside is related to immanence and to Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of immanence in *The Visible and the Invisible*\textsuperscript{6}. The abstract conceptualisation of Deleuze’s ontological argument; that the subject’s internality is not given as constituted, has a bearing on the nature of experience and knowledge, but most of Deleuze’s focus is on the conceptual problem of the subject.

\textsuperscript{2} I will be discussing only the work of Deleuze on Spinoza and will not discuss his other work in any detail.
\textsuperscript{5} Elizabeth Grosz (1994) *Volatile Bodies* St Leonards: Allen and Unwin. Grosz discusses the issues feminists have with Deleuze and Guattari’s work specifically. See especially p.161ff.
\textsuperscript{6} Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968) *The Visible and the Invisible*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, Evanston: Northwestern University Press. Grosz (1994) discusses the shift in the terms in which Merleau-Ponty understood perception and the mind/body problem and the interrelations of inside and outside. Focusing on the central notion of ‘the flesh’ in this text she states: ‘While it does not displace perception as the thematic object of investigation, it is a more elementary and prior term, the condition of both seeing and being seen, of touching and being touched, and of their intermingling and possible integration, a commonness in which both subject and object participate, a single “thing” folded back on itself.’ (p.95)
As Badiou puts it:

Identifying the being of thought with a subject endows this being with a constitutive interiority, which refers both to itself (reflexivity) and to its objects, which are given as heterogeneous to interiority (negativity). ... Admittedly ... there does ultimately exist a pertinent opposition between the outside and the inside, or, more exactly, a folding of the outside that creates the interiority of a self. However, this interiority, far from being constitutive, is itself constituted: it is a result. It cannot serve to identify thought which, moreover, is not produced by the self, but is the construction of the self – the act of folding (or unfolding). And this act will prove to be absolutely homogeneous to Being, it will prove to be a fold of Being.\(^7\)

The argument of this chapter is not so concerned with the ontological issue that the fold refers to in Deleuze. It is not a pure externality that I will be discussing, but power relations as external and internal where internal refers to the interiority of interpersonal relations, and the embodied individual in their experience of their own and other’s power. The interiority is what each embodied individual has to deal with through their affective relations, and it is the experience of the power that they are able to bring to any encounter, as well as the power that is being expressed by others, that is important. Elspeth Probyn cites Negri in an interview with Deleuze: ‘The subject is the limit of a continuous movement between the inside and the outside.’\(^8\) It is the inside as it is experienced rather than a constitutive inside that I am concerned with here.

Feminists have criticised the traditional approach to ethics and moral theory as too abstract, excluding concrete embodied experience in its effort to arrive at the most universal and general perspective. The mediation of experience by signs, by culture, by discourse has been a focus of postmodern thought at the same time as there is more demand to express and recognise different experiences – that of women, blacks, and disadvantaged cultures and groups. The incorporation and recognition of different experiences, rather than the dismissal and exclusion of them, is more likely where there is recognition of immanent embodied experience as opposed to a focus on experience as represented through the concepts of reason as separate from embodiment. Different forms of experience can be highlighted through aspects of Spinoza that are dismissed by rationalist interpretations or those that privilege reason and remain confined to an analysis of logical or propositional structure. In

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Deleuze’s interpretation of Spinoza, experience has the potential to be
acknowledged through the notion of expression, and the analysis of power
and production. The expression of the immanence of embodied experience
nevertheless is problematic in Deleuze’s perspective, however, since for
Deleuze only adequate ideas in Spinoza can be said to truly express, even
though Spinoza’s immanence as expression suggests that experience is not
transcendent and thought is not only representative.

For Spinoza, more active expression results from the cultivation of active
affections and adequate ideas and this is what amounts to freedom. Affections
and adequate ideas are interlinked in such a way that the possession of
adequate ideas would not be possible without the concomitant expression of
active affects. Passivity results from the lack of expression of agency, but in
Spinoza this is not merely individual agency, it is also the agency of the
multitude. It is not only an individual attainment but also a social
development, which is suggested by Spinoza’s ethics and politics.

Deleuze’s analysis of power explores Spinoza’s ethical program as a concern
with how we can favour active affections in a way that maximises the
experience of active rather than passive affections, thus enhancing power and
expression. This is based on the idea of the equivalent powers in Spinoza
where power is the power to act as well as the power to be affected. The way
power operates is thus as action or production as well as affection, which has
implications for the conception of human nature and interaction embodied
within it. Given that affections can be passive or active depending on the way
in which they are constituted, the ethical project is to favour the active affects,
and not merely to avoid being affected. Deleuze takes the source of the
affections as the key to maximising the active affects - those that are derived
from the effects of other things on us are passive whereas those which are
derived from our own nature are active. He thus appears to favour the idea of
avoiding being affected by things outside us, as a way of maximising active
affections.

According to Deleuze, ‘The entire Ethics presents itself as a theory of power, in
opposition to morality as a theory of obligations.’ This is in agreement with
Curley and Garrett who both note the absence of a theory of obligations in

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9 Michael Hardt (1993) Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy, Minneapolis:
University of Minnesota Press, p. 73
10 Gilles Deleuze (1988) Spinoza: Practical Philosophy San Francisco: City Lights Books,
p.104
Spinoza’s ethics, but do not consider the sense in which it is a theory of power. For Deleuze, the immanent dimensions of Spinoza’s ontology are more apparent than the metaphysics if considered as a set of intellectual propositions. The propositions can hence be seen to express dimensions of substance, the physical and mental dimensions of the universe, as humans experience them. Deleuze opens up the possibility of recognising the expressive dimensions of Spinoza’s metaphysics but this is immediately reduced by his emphasis on the notion of expression in its ontological dimensions. Deleuze places most emphasis on a comparison of powers whereby internality is overwhelmed by the powers of external things in comparison with our own power.

The power in embodiment and interpersonal relations, and the internal workings of power through the affects for Spinoza, is displaced in Deleuze by the focus on the comparison of powers. The comparison of powers is partly a comparison of the power of modes in a struggle with each other, and it is also a comparison of God’s power with that of modes. Spinoza wants to show a careful differentiation of God’s power from that of humans as modes while maintaining a consideration of the power that humans do have. Deleuze does not allow for the implications of Spinoza’s differentiation of human and divine power in the context of seventeenth century religion which attributed an absolute power to humans through the will.

The important point about power in Spinoza as Deleuze highlights it, is that the powers of acting and being acted upon are equivalent powers, but Deleuze refers to the power of being acted upon as ‘suffering action’\(^{11}\). He notes that this distinction replaces the distinction between power and act but he aligns ‘suffering action’ with affections produced by external things, the passions, and acting with affections explained by the essence of the thing\(^{12}\). The distinction between the power to act and to be acted upon are the nexus of experience. This is where the dynamic of experience is really played out, but Deleuze focuses on the external powers, thus maintaining a view of power as a struggle of the individual against everything outside itself. Spinoza’s solution to the passions is not a struggle of powers, it is a focus on the inner being of experience and how it is brought to encounters with other powers.

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\(^{11}\) Deleuze (1990), p.93.

\(^{12}\) Deleuze (1990), p.93.
The internal focus that is central to Spinoza’s consideration of power is also absent in Deleuze’s discussion of ideas as expressive. While Deleuze argues that ideas in Spinoza do not merely represent, but express, he falls back on transcendent notions of consciousness and ideas by tending to focus on the outward circumstances to the exclusion of the inner dynamics of human thought. Spinoza’s immanence and expression demand a recognition of agreement on a number of levels that contribute to it in a phenomenological, that is, embodied sense, in addition to the material disagreements that occur between modes. Deleuze focuses more on the material disagreements and thus compromises the immanence of agreement that is implicit in expression.

Deleuze has drawn attention to the role of expression in Spinoza which extends from the level of substance to the modes and ideas. Expression, as Deleuze elucidates it, begins to merge with truth since only adequate ideas can be said to truly express. Expression in this sense involves the expression of truth, of what is, but these ideas must be considered as not only propositional. They are phenomenological, embodied, interconnected and related to the power of each thing to exist, or its essence. In order to consider how expression functions within Spinoza’s thought, the powers pertaining to God and modes will be discussed below, as well as Deleuze’s argument in relation to the powers. The next section will outline the role of expression in Spinoza as Deleuze highlights it. Deleuze’s study provides a valuable insight and alternative understanding of Spinoza to the rationalist and analytic interpretations.

Expression and Power

Deleuze has noticed a dimension of Spinoza’s philosophy to which little attention has been given. Spinoza’s use of the term exprimere, which translates as ‘to express’¹³, appears throughout the Ethics and other works¹⁴: ‘By God I understand a being absolutely infinite; i.e., a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence.’¹⁵

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¹⁵ Ethics, I, D6, p.409. Italics added.
Each attribute 'expresses the reality, or being of substance'\textsuperscript{16}. 'Whatever exists expresses the nature, or essence of God in a certain and determinate way the power of God, which is the cause of all things. So from everything that exists some effect must follow.'\textsuperscript{17} 'By Body I understand a mode that in a certain and determinate way expresses God's essence insofar as he is considered as an extended thing.'\textsuperscript{18} An idea is a concept which expresses an action of the mind\textsuperscript{19}. 'Singular thoughts, or this or that thought, are modes that express God's nature in a certain and determinate way.'\textsuperscript{20} Singular things are modes 'that express, in a certain and determinate way, God's power, by which God is and acts'\textsuperscript{21}. 'The Mind neither expresses the actual existence of its Body, nor conceives the Body's affections as actual, except while the Body endures ...'\textsuperscript{22}

In spite of all these references to expression Deleuze states: 'The idea of expression is neither defined nor deduced by Spinoza, nor could it be.'\textsuperscript{23} Deleuze looks at the philosophical use and implications of expression in contrast to emanation in the history of philosophy, with which it has often been taken to be synonymous\textsuperscript{24}. Expression has also been taken as another word for explication which has resulted in Spinoza's substance being considered lifeless and 'his expression intellectual and abstract', by post-Kantian philosophers\textsuperscript{25}. 'Rather than expression being comprehensible in terms of explication, explication in Spinoza, as in his forerunners seems to me to depend on some idea of expression.' In the case of emanation: 'I would further claim that emanation hardly helps us understand the idea of expression, but that the idea of expression explains how Neoplatonism developed to the point where its very nature changed, explains, in particular, how emanative causes tended more and more to become immanent ones.'\textsuperscript{26}

Expression in Spinoza does not operate as a theory of expression, rather it is a practical philosophy of expression. As Pierre Macherey puts it, Deleuze shows

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\textsuperscript{16} Ethics, I, P10, Schol., p.416.
\textsuperscript{17} Ethics, I, P36, Dem., p.439.
\textsuperscript{18} Ethics, II, D1, p.447.
\textsuperscript{19} Ethics, II, D3, p.447.
\textsuperscript{20} Ethics, II, P1, Dem., p.448.
\textsuperscript{21} Ethics, III, P6, Dem., p.499.
\textsuperscript{22} Ethics, V, P21, Dem., p.607.
\textsuperscript{23} Deleuze (1990), p.19.
\textsuperscript{24} Deleuze, p.17. Wolfson considers emanation briefly in Harry Austryn Wolfson (1934) \textit{The Philosophy of Spinoza} Cambridge: Harvard University Press, I, pp.88ff.
\textsuperscript{25} Deleuze, p.18.
\textsuperscript{26} Deleuze, p.19.
that Spinoza’s philosophy “expresses”\textsuperscript{27}. The idea of expression is marked in Spinoza’s text and is thus not the idea behind it: ‘it is found in a form which, without being that of an objectified concept, refers to the very fact of conceptualizing.’\textsuperscript{28} Expression as it appears in Spinoza and Leibniz, according to Deleuze, implies ‘a rediscovery of Nature and her power and a recreating of logic and ontology: a new “materialism” and a new “formalism”.’ Expression applies on three fundamental levels; to ‘Being determined as God, insofar as God expresses himself in the world’, to ‘ideas determined as true, insofar as true ideas express God and the world’ and to ‘individuals determined as singular essences, insofar as singular essences express themselves in ideas’\textsuperscript{29}. Being, knowing and acting, as three fundamental determinations, are ‘measured and systematized by this concept’\textsuperscript{30}.

The principle of what Deleuze calls the ‘triad’ of expression is first of all the distinction between substance, attribute and essence: ‘Substance expresses itself, attributes are expressions, and essence is expressed.’\textsuperscript{31} The third term linking each pair of substance and attribute, attribute and essence, essence and substance is important in making expression intelligible: ‘We everywhere confront the necessity of distinguishing three terms: substance which expresses itself, the attribute which expresses, and the essence which is expressed. It is through attributes that essence is distinguished from substance, but through essence that substance is itself distinguished from attributes: a triad each of whose terms serves as a middle term relating to the two others, in three syllogisms.’\textsuperscript{32}

The third term is not really a term: ‘it is stated in a verb and not by a name; this last element is what allows the expressor to be expressed in the expressed.’ This third element then, is ‘the act of expressing or being expressed, which simultaneously constitutes every reality and renders it thinkable.’ It is ‘nature insofar as it is effected with action, and at the same time is included in the action that brings it about.’\textsuperscript{33}

Expression thus demonstrates the dynamic character of nature, of substance, attributes, and essences as well as immanence in Spinoza. Expression is more a


\textsuperscript{28} Macherey, p.122.

\textsuperscript{29} Deleuze (1990), p.321.

\textsuperscript{30} Deleuze, p.321.

\textsuperscript{31} Deleuze, p.27.

\textsuperscript{32} Deleuze, pp.27-28.

\textsuperscript{33} Macherey (1998), p.123.
process, a dynamic, than a principle or a definable function. Expression brings the immanence of production to the fore showing it as immediate. God is not mediator of the world, the world is immanent expression of God. God is not transcendent from, separate or outside the world as we experience it or as it exists as in the Christian idea of God. Spinoza has been considered a pantheist and an atheist because he denies that God is separate and transcendent, because he associates God with matter and things of this world, and because he denies divine intervention or that God has a will. The association of God with nature, is not an equivalence, in that God is not equal to nature or nature equal to God. God has infinite attributes of which thought and extension are two. These are the ones we experience. Humans then are an expression of God’s power and existence. We exist because God exists and we participate in God. At the same time as human power is an immanent expression of God, it is no more than the expression of God’s power in human form. The human form is itself a finite expression which expresses its own power, a kernel of God’s power. It is a mode or modification of God’s attributes.

The seat of power and expression is God and the way in which Spinoza denotes God’s power is fundamental to understanding how expression works through his thought. God’s power consists in being the immanent cause of all things that follow from his essence: ‘... from the necessity alone of God’s essence it follows that God is the cause of himself and of all things. Therefore, God’s power, by which he and all things are and act, is his essence itself.’ 'God is the immanent, not the transient cause of all things.' Deleuze comments on the identity of power and action by considering potestas (power) and potentia (potential). God has potentia identical to his essence. He has no potestas – God is not will, he does not conceive possibilities in his intellect. '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.' God’s potentia is ‘act, active and actual’. The emphasis here is on the immanence of God’s power. There is no outside to that power to express himself, no decision, no equivocation. God’s intellect is

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34 Ethics, I, P11, p.417 & II, P1 & P2, pp.448-449.
35 Ethics, I, P15, p.420 & P18, p.428.
36 Ethics, II, P10, Cor., & Schol., pp.454-456.
37 Ethics, I, P34, Dem., p.439.
38 Ethics, I, P18, p.428.
not a space of decision but a comprehension which is equivalent to God's expression of himself.

It is the capacity for being affected which most explains the identity of power and action according to Deleuze: '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.' God's power is both an absolute power of existing and an absolute power of thinking or self-comprehension, which is the power of comprehending all that is produced. God, or substance, necessarily exists, exists by the necessity of his own nature and to the same extent he understands himself. God is a power of existing and intellection. He does not have an intellect, God is intellect in the same sense that he is extension and infinitely many other ways that God can be. Spinoza uses the term actual intellect to denote intellection as a process.

Deleuze's discussion of expression in Spinoza is highly fruitful and I agree with him up to this point. However, there are points at which expressionism is not carried through in Deleuze's understanding of Spinoza. These limitations could be a result of Deleuze's preference for radical difference between expressor and expressed. Where Deleuze wants to say the two have nothing in common or no resemblance, Spinoza argues that something which is the cause of something else must have something in common with it. The model of power that Deleuze is focusing on here is one which emphasises the power to produce, with the power to be affected being equalled by God's power to produce. God is the active cause of his affections, there are no external effects upon God of which he is not the cause, so that God cannot be acted upon. This is not the case for modes, the individual things or modifications, affections of God which are in God and conceived through God.

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40 Deleuze, p.98.
42 Leonard Lawler (1998) "The end of phenomenology: Expressionism in Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty" Continental Philosophy Review 31, pp.15-34. Lawler describes Deleuze's double challenge to phenomenology, the challenge of consciousness and the challenge of difference. The challenge of difference is stated in the following terms: 'according to its very notion, a ground must never resemble that which it grounds. In other words, there must be a heterogeneity between ground and grounded ...' Lawler, p.16. For Lawler Deleuze's Difference and Repetition is the text that combines the two challenges to phenomenology in his own philosophy.
43 Deleuze (1990) says in Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza: 'The paradox is that "what is expressed" has no existence outside its expression, yet bears no resemblance to it, but relates essentially to what expresses itself as distinct from the expression itself.' p.333.
or substance. God has the powers of producing and of being affected but these are internal to him and all the things that affect him are within him. God is thus not only the producer but also the experiencer of what he produces. In a sense then, immanence is more internally focused where transcendence is externally focused. Spinoza’s immanence means that God’s power is internal to everything that is. It is not exerted from an ‘outside’ position as in transcendence. Deleuze’s concern is that the internality not be constitutive and not be referred back to a constitutive consciousness.

At the same time as modes are expressions of God’s attributes or affections of God, they are also able to affect and be affected. But this is on a different scale to the affections of God. Deleuze perhaps goes too far in distinguishing the expressor and the expressed, the ground and the grounded. Spinoza wants to emphasise the difference between God’s power and the powers of finite modes in order to overcome some of the prejudices he sees in religions which attribute a free will to humans and an absolute power. God does nothing by an act of free will: ‘The will cannot be called a free cause, but only a necessary one.’ ‘God does not produce any effect by freedom of the will.’ Nothing is produced by God that does not follow necessarily from his nature and infinitely many things follow from God’s nature.

In the end Deleuze says: ‘What is expressed is sense: deeper than the relation of causality, deeper than the relation of representation.’ He does not see mind and body as expressive of each other. He sees in his idea of parallelism a correspondence between idea and object: ‘an idea represents an object, and in a way expresses it’. However, Spinoza says that a true idea agrees with its object which could be taken to mean that the idea is an expression in thought of the object as expressed in extension, that is, that there is a relationship of expression between the attributes.

The distinction Spinoza makes between Natura naturans and Natura naturata is intended to demonstrate the difference between God’s power and that of singular finite things. ‘... by Natura naturans we must understand what is in itself and conceived through itself, or such attributes of substance as express an eternal and infinite essence ... But by Natura naturata I understand

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45 Ethics, I, D5, p.409.  
46 Lawler, p.17.  
47 Ethics, I, P32 & Cor. 1, p.435.  
48 Ethics, I, P16, p.424.  
49 Deleuze (1990), p.335.  
50 Deleuze, p.335.
whatever follows from the necessity of God’s nature, or from any of God’s attributes, i.e. all the modes of God’s attributes insofar as they are considered as things which are in God, and can neither be nor be conceived without God.\footnote{Ethics, I, P29, Schol., p.434.}

The power of God is within himself, it is not dependent on or influenced by anything outside himself since nothing is outside God. God’s power is absolute. Human power is also immanent but it follows from God’s nature and could not exist in itself without God. It is the power of a mode produced by God through a series of causes. The powers are therefore quite different even though humans share in God’s power since God is immanent and humans exist by God’s power. Everything is thus an expression of God’s power and in this sense agreement is implicit in the relations between things: ‘All bodies agree in certain things. For all bodies agree in that they involve the concept of one and the same attribute ...'\footnote{Ethics, II, P13, Lemma 2, p.459.} Agreement relates to truth such that expression is contained within the idea which agrees with its object: ‘A true idea must agree with its object.’\footnote{Ethics, I, A6, p.410.} Agreement will be considered in more depth after looking more closely at the power of modes.

Deleuze’s materialism means that immanence and expression would need to be possible without God. In this he is participating in the anti-theistic Enlightenment assumption that God is unnecessary. In Spinoza however, God or \textit{natura naturans} is necessary. Expression as a materialist tenet comes up against many problems in Deleuze’s ‘transcendental empiricism’\footnote{Gilles Deleuze (1994) \textit{Difference and Repetition} (translated by Paul Patton) New York: Columbia University Press, , p.57.} one of which is that the desire to be rid of a constitutive internality tends to result in an acknowledgement of lived, embodied experience being seen as relying on a constitutive subject. It is clear in Deleuze that Spinoza’s God is not an internality or an externality, nor a subject, but God is expression or that which expresses what is expressed. Without God or substance as \textit{natura naturans} expression becomes an abstract concept without an expressor.

\textbf{Conatus – Power of Modes}

There is a more important sense in which difficulties follow from the limitation of expression in Deleuze. This has to do with the way power is considered in the relation between God and the modes, and the individualism
of the conatus. The basis of Spinoza’s ethics of power is the conatus. The purpose of this section will be to show the essentially interactive nature of the conatus for Spinoza and to begin to draw out the form that power and agreement have in his ethics. Agreement and disagreement express the central character of engagement with external powers or between individuals. As interactive rather than egoistic, the conatus or power of the individual is not merely focused on self-development at the expense of everything around it, nor is it concerned with overwhelming the power of other individuals. It is more concerned with the enhancement of experience in its relation with others and with the whole in which it participates.

In Descartes the will was essentially related only to a rational consciousness and this is also implicit in liberal moral and political theory as the basis of freedom and ethics. For Spinoza there is no will in this sense but there is an implicit striving in each thing, the conatus, which is its essence. The conatus as a central feature of Spinoza’s discussion of human nature is often considered to be fundamentally egoistic. However, as closer consideration of the conatus shows, it cannot be merely egoistic in the sense that it is its ability to affect and be affected, in other words, interact with the environment, which is the central element of its power. It cannot be concerned merely with its own particular ends. Understanding the striving to persevere in existence as pure egoism is a result of Enlightenment ideas of the separate will as the basis of freedom, which serves to separate the individual through his use of reason and the application of his will.

The idea of the conatus has generally been understood through its Hobbesian use which is more egoistic in its emphasis, and even then there has been some discussion of the extent to which Hobbes’ formulation of human nature is as egoistic as it has appeared. Curley concludes that we can at least say of Hobbes that ‘disinterested love of our fellows has a smaller role to play in the explanation of human behaviour than does love of ourselves’. In Spinoza, on the other hand, the conatus principle ‘provides – or helps to provide - a


basis for human sociability which is less calculating than we find in Hobbes'\textsuperscript{58}. Comments such as the following are more common in Hobbes than what Curley refers to as 'disinterested love of our fellows': 'All society therefore is either for gain or for glory, i.e., not so much for love of our fellows, as for love of ourselves.'\textsuperscript{59}

The conatus' primary concern has been considered to be self-interest by some Spinoza commentators. Jonathan Bennett for example states that 'Spinoza's only moral premiss is individual egoism'. Reason is offered by Spinoza as the solution to overcome self-interest according to Bennett: '... the thoughtful egoist will be led by his egoism to care as much for the welfare of others as for his own'\textsuperscript{60}. It is the intervention or mediation of reason which will bring about concern for others in this view. However, inasmuch as it requires relations with others for its existence, the conatus always involves an implicit connection and concern with relations with others. The self-interest of the conatus is not exclusive of others. It is a social individuality, not individuality expressed independently of or in isolation from others. Reason in Spinoza is not the solution to self-interest but aids the development of particular expressions of human striving which are more interactive and active.

Deleuze's account of the conatus recognises the dynamic nature of the power of a mode as an expression of divine power. The essence of a mode is a degree of power which is a part of the divine power: 'Man's power, insofar as it is explained through his actual existence, is part of the infinite power of God or Nature.'\textsuperscript{61} When, by a conjunction of external causes the mode actually exists, its essence is determined as conatus which is its appetite or tendency to persevere in existence. The conatus is also a tendency to maintain and maximise the ability to be affected, this ability depending on the complexity of the body and its ideas.\textsuperscript{62} Whereas for God or substance, the ability for being affected is always active, in the case of existing modes this ability, while it is also realised at every moment, is first of all a result of being affected by things external to it according to Deleuze\textsuperscript{63}.

Deleuze says that it is the effect of external things upon it that produces consciousness in the mode, and that desire in its constitutive role is a lack:

\textsuperscript{58} Curley (1988), p.118.
\textsuperscript{60} Bennett (1984), p.299.
\textsuperscript{62} II, P13, Schol., p. 458; IV, P38, p.568; Deleuze (1988), p. 99
'These affections that determine the conatus are a cause of consciousness: the conatus having become aware of itself under this or that affect is called desire, desire always being a desire for something.'

Spinoza’s definition of desire is: ‘Desire is man’s very essence, insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something.’

Spinoza does not distinguish active from passive affections here and goes on to talk about desire as appetite together with the consciousness of it, with appetite being ‘the very essence of man, insofar as it is determined to do what promotes his preservation’. There is no sense of desire as lack in this. Desire is a positive expressive force in this sense, and is not necessarily in conflict with external determination, as the account of desire as lack implies, although in Nietzsche the great stimulus to life is dissatisfaction. The self-determination of the conatus does require interaction with others, not from lack, but from its essential expressive striving. This interaction could very well be constitutive of consciousness, determined within that interaction, not determined from without, as Deleuze suggests.

The expression of self-determination in the conatus in Spinoza is a power that is connected with the powers of others. In the case of humans the conatus is the first kind of self-love in Spinoza. It is the fundamental power of a mode to persevere in existence: ‘Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being.’

The conatus pertains to mind and body together: ‘The idea of any thing that increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our Body’s power of acting, increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our Mind’s power of thinking.’

The human mind seeks not only to persevere in existence but also to enhance and maximise its existence and so in this sense

64 Deleuze, p.98.
65 Ethics, III, Definitions of the Affects, I, p.531.
66 Robert Pasotti has pointed out that the idea of desire as lack, in Freud, for example, is related to conflict of self and other determination in which inherent forces are pitched against extraneous forces. Pasotti sees the self-determination expressed in the conatus in Spinoza, as in Nietzsche, as abundance rather than lack, as an expression of the ‘natural flow of life energy within’. Robert Pasotti (1976) “The Metaphysician as Healer” in James B. Wilbur (editor) Spinoza’s metaphysics: essays in critical appreciation Assen: Van Gorcum, pp.106-114, p.107.
68 Harry Austryn Wolfson (1962) relates the conatus to natural love and traces its history in The Philosophy of Spinoza Harvard University Press, Vol. 2, p.197. Spinoza refers to the conatus specifically as natural love in his Short Treatise on God, Man and his Well-Being, Appendix II, Curley, p.153; ‘... the natural love which is in each thing for the preservation of its body ...’
69 Ethics, III, P6, pp.498-499.
70 Ethics, III, P11, p.500.
the conatus is fundamentally active and is the basic level of self-agency: 'The Mind, as far as it can strives to imagine those things that increase or aid the Body's power of acting.'\textsuperscript{71} The conatus is important in that it shows the sense in which individuals are seen to have power and self-determination in themselves, and it also shows the connection between the affects and the expression of that power. The significance of the conatus, which is both the body's power of acting and the mind's power of thinking\textsuperscript{72}, as a form of self-love, is related to the structure of the affects.

Deleuze's focus is on the external encounters rather than the transformation of the affective relation or the way encounters with external things are responded to. In distinguishing the active from the passive state as an expression of power he states: 'The conatus, like any state of power, is always active. The difference lies in the conditions under which the action is realised.'\textsuperscript{73} A minimal expression of that power is 'striving to persevere in existing while remaining at the risk of chance encounters'. It is then at the mercy of affections and affects which determine it externally as it strives to increase its power, experience joyful passions, 'if only by destroying that which threatens it'. The expression of power can be maximised in humans however, by ordering encounters in such a way that encounters are with those that agree with its nature and enter into composition with it. '... the adequate expression of the conatus is the effort to persevere in existing and to act under the guidance of Reason, that is, to acquire that which leads to knowledge, to adequate ideas and to active feelings.'\textsuperscript{74}

There is a need here to look carefully at what agreement amounts to in Spinoza, to determine whether it is primarily aimed at ordering external encounters or with understanding the way in which agreement is constituted within an individual and thus the way in which the relationship to things which 'disagree' with us is managed. Affects are defined as 'affections of the Body by which the Body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or

\textsuperscript{71} Ethics, III, P12, p.502. The existence of the mode is of course not ontologically necessary and its agency is subject to controversy to the extent that its relation within the whole is considered significant and not simply determined by its place within substance. In some ways the agency of the mode is at least no more problematic than the autonomy that may be attributed to any non-human organism within the context of its biological determination. This, then, would at least be autonomy in a minimal sense of attributing individual action and behavioural choice to an individual organism which is greater as the complexity of the organism is greater.

\textsuperscript{72} Ethics, III, P9, p.499.

\textsuperscript{73} Deleuze (1988), p. 102.

\textsuperscript{74} Deleuze, p.103.
restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections’. The power of the mode is in its ability to affect and be affected and this implicitly ties it to its relation with its environment and other things. The mode has no power if it does not have expression and impression in its continual interactions. It is not only to be cause but also to be affected that is important, and as either of these, the mode can experience an increase or decrease of its power depending on how much the encounter agrees with it.

The human body can be affected in a great many ways and it is able to affect other things in many ways. Further, the more capable the body is of being affected in many ways, the more capable the mind is of perceiving many things. The body is continually encountering other bodies that agree or disagree with it and coming into relations with them. The individual mode seeks encounters with those things that agree with it and with which it can form relations. This is part of its constitutive nature as a mode, that is, it requires encounters with others and seeks out encounters that will agree with it.

The mode is vulnerable and as an existing thing is inevitably going to be destroyed. Death is not a result of anything internal to it, however, but of its openness to the effects of other things upon it, at the same time as this is what makes it a living, experiencing being. Deleuze states that the modes are involved in a ‘struggle of powers’ since the existing modes do not necessarily agree with one another and there is always something in nature more powerful: ‘Here everything is a struggle of powers therefore; the existing modes do not necessarily agree with one another’. However, it is also equally the case that the modes join with, become part of and take into themselves as well as forming relations with, other modes, so that there is not only a struggle but also affinities and agreements. It is such agreements that constitute a complex entity such as the human body. This can also be seen in a social sense, that is, that a society is a collection of individuals who ‘agree’ in certain aspects of social functioning and interaction, as well as disagree, struggle and find affinities and oppositions.

75 Ethics, II, D3, p.493.
76 Ethics, II, P13, Postulates III and VI, p.462.
77 Ethics, II, P14, p.462.
78 Ethics, III, P12 and P13, p.502.
79 Deleuze (1988) makes this point, p.100.
80 Deleuze, p.100.
81 Ethics, II, L3, A2, Definition & L4 & 5, pp.460-461.
82 Spinoza discusses the essential agreement involved in society over what is ‘good or evil’, ‘just or unjust’, in Ethics, IV, P37, Schol. 2, pp.566-567.
Deleuze distinguishes the power of the mode in essence and in existence. The essence of the mode as a degree of power which is determined as conatus when the mode comes to exist, agrees with other powers in essence but no longer agrees in existence.

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. 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).\(^\text{83}\)

These relations of agreement appear fixed and determinate while there is also scope for managing them so that the hated being, the enemy can become agreeable. Anything could be agreeable or disagreeable at different times and in different contexts. Agreement on the level of essence is also connected to agreement on the level of existence. The conatus is after all the essence, and at the same time, the expression in existence of the thing. It is not that other powers can always overcome the mode but that there other powers greater than our own and we are able as humans to use our power in ways that influence the effect of other powers on us.

The body has a dynamic changing relationship to its environment and within itself due to its give and take, its ability to affect and be affected, with external bodies around it and between its own parts. Its stability is temporary.\(^\text{84}\) Deleuze takes special note of the ability to be affected that is outlined by Spinoza in Postulate III: "The individuals composing the human Body, and consequently, the human Body itself, are affected by external bodies in very many ways."\(^\text{85}\) P14 then follows; "The human Mind is capable of perceiving a great many things, and is the more capable, the more its body can be disposed in a great many ways."

In other words, the ability to be affected is a power of the body which, when expressed actively, concurrently increases the power of the mind. The dilemma is that to the extent to which the human body is affected by bodies external to it, its affections are passive. The affections of God or substance are never passive because it is never affected by anything external to itself. It is

\(^83\) Deleuze (1988), p.100.
\(^84\) Ethics, II, P13, Def. & Postulates, pp.460-462.
\(^85\) Ethics, II, P13, Postulate III, p.462.
the cause of its own affections. In the case of humans however, affections are largely the result of external influences. Deleuze says in relation to this, modes ‘do not exist by virtue of their own nature: their existence is composed of extensive parts that are determined and affected from outside ... Every existing mode is thus inevitably affected by modes external to it, and undergoes changes that are not explained by its own nature alone. Its affections are at the outset and tend to remain passive.’

The proposition Deleuze is referring to here is *Ethics*, IV, P4 where Spinoza states: ‘It is impossible that a man should not be a part of Nature, and that he should be able to undergo no changes except those which can be understood through his own nature alone, and of which he is the adequate cause.’ But in the corollary he also states: ‘From this it follows that man is necessarily always subject to passions, that he follows and obeys the common order of Nature, and accommodates himself to it as much as the nature of things requires.’

There are two things operating here. One is that humans are subject to what occurs around them, and secondly that they can accommodate themselves to the order of ideas rather than see themselves as determining what is being determined beyond them. This recognition itself is part of activity. There is not a surrender to fatalism here but a surrender to the reality of immanence, to being affected as a power. Humans cannot understand themselves through their own nature alone and so must recognise their natures as also part of and implicitly connected to Nature.

In the case of humans, it is through the affects that the relation of agreement or disagreement can be most influenced. The affects involve responses to others and the environment with which the individual is always in contact or relationship. They thus express the particular condition of relations with others which influences the affects experienced. Individual striving and social striving or connection, are implicitly related for Spinoza. He states: ‘We strive to further the occurrence of whatever we imagine will lead to Joy, and to avert or destroy what we imagine is contrary to it, or will lead to sadness.’ And: ‘We shall strive to do also whatever we imagine men to look on with Joy, and on the other hand, we shall be averse to doing what we imagine men are averse to.’ The initial form of social relations is based on praise and blame when we ‘imagine the action of another by which he has striven to

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87 *Ethics*, p.548-549.
89 *Ethics*, III, P29, p.510.
please us’ and the sadness ‘with which we are averse to his action’ respectively.\(^9\)

The power of the individual is expressed through the affects and their accompanying ideas in a passive or active form, according to the extent to which the individual is determined by and through others, and not through their own power in relation to others. Spinoza does not posit the individual as separate from relations to others but considers two different forms that relations with others can have in the expression of individual power – praise and blame, tenacity and nobility. These will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. What is important here is the way the power of the individual is pitched in relation to the power of others and powers that are greater than us. Not only is the conatus often considered by many commentators to be concerned primarily with the individual as an isolated entity but the powers that are greater than us are considered to overwhelm our power to the extent that we are always passive. This will be explored in the next section which will be concerned with how agreement in Spinoza, which is a key to the interpretations of powers, is dealt with by Deleuze.

**Comparison of Powers**

There is a reflection of the individualism and externally focused ideas of power from liberalism in Deleuze’s interpretation of power in Spinoza as a struggle of powers. Enlightenment inspired interpretations of Spinoza maintain the conatus as egoistic and engaged in a struggle with others where power is an exertion of strength over others. This is expressed in Hobbes’ argument that civil society always has the potential to decline into the barbarous natural condition of war where each is against the other.\(^1\) In considering the comparison of the powers of modes in Spinoza, Deleuze emphasises the external powers against which the mode must struggle. Spinoza does place a good deal of attention on the mode as a part of nature and being an expression of that power so that there are always things more powerful than it. He does this in order to situate humans within nature thus denying any notion of humans as being separate from nature and having any special powers.

‘We are acted on, insofar as we are part of Nature, which cannot be conceived through itself, without the others.’ The force by which a

\(^9\) *Ethics*, III, P29, Schol., p.510.

man perseveres in existence is limited and, infinitely surpassed by the
power of external causes.' 'It is impossible that a man should not be
part of Nature, and that he should be able to undergo no changes
except those which can be understood through his own nature alone,
and of which he is the adequate cause.'\textsuperscript{92}

Spinoza also maintains, however, an internal focus on the power of humans,
to relate to external powers in different ways. As modes, humans are not able
to overcome the powers of other modes against them, but through
immanence they are able to deal with their relationship to these powers in
different ways. This is where human power lies for Spinoza, not in over-
powering or even avoiding those things that disagree with them but in
entering into different relationships with them.

Agreement is where the struggle of powers is overcome. If a thing agrees
with us then it empowers us, according to Spinoza, and if it disagrees with us
it decreases our power. Deleuze considers agreement primarily from the
point of view of things that are outside us and can disagree with our natures:

A mode’s essence is a power; to it corresponds a certain capacity of the
mode to be affected. But because the mode is a part of Nature, this
capacity is always exercised, either in affections produced by external
things (those affections called passive), or in affections explained by its
own essence (called active). Thus the distinction between power and
act, on the level of modes, disappears in favor of two equally actual
powers, that of acting, and that of suffering action, which vary
inversely one to the other, but whose sum is both constant and
constantly effective.\textsuperscript{93}

For Deleuze, the fact that there is always something in nature more powerful
has a distinctive impact on the powers of affecting and being affected.
Humans as finite modes are always at the effect of other things upon them.
Deleuze says that the modes ‘suffer’ action upon them. It is true that there are
always things more powerful than us and in this sense we will always be acted
upon. However Spinoza does not entirely base his assessment of human
activity on a comparison with these powers. There is too much emphasis on
external powers compared with human powers in Deleuze’s account. The way
in which Spinoza expresses the relations of action and passion, is not primarily
through a comparison of external powers. Rather he discusses external
powers in order primarily to place humans within the broader context, as part
of nature, in order to displace the idea that man’s power is in some ways
absolute.

\textsuperscript{92} Ethics, IV, P2, P3 and P4, p.548.
\textsuperscript{93} Deleuze (1990), p.93.
Spinoza says in the Preface to Part III of the *Ethics* that man has no absolute power over his actions, that he is not determined only by himself. His point here is to emphasise that humans are part of nature and subject therefore to the ‘forces’ of nature. In not having absolute power humans are not Godly or a dominion within a dominion. They do nevertheless possess a power which is appropriate to them, however. Spinoza begins by placing humans within the context of nature to combat the religious and philosophical views which grant humans an unlimited will. He then proceeds to consider the powers that humans do possess and how these can be maximised to the benefit of all.

Following the preface, Spinoza gives a definition of action and passion on the part of humans in the context of nature: ‘I say that we act when something happens, in us or outside us, of which we are the adequate cause, i.e., when something in us or outside us follows from our nature, which can be clearly and distinctly understood through it alone. On the other hand, I say that we are acted on when something happens in us, or something follows from our nature, of which we are only a partial cause.’ It is clear that we can only ever be partial causes in the broader context of Nature but in the context of human interaction and expression of our natures, there is the possibility of being adequate causes.

In the next proposition the idea of our striving in comparison with powers external to us is stated with regard to the passions: ‘The force and growth of any passion, and its perseverance in existing, are not defined by the power by which we strive to persevere in existing, but by the power of an external cause compared with our own.’ A passion necessarily involves another power compared with our own. In the case of an affect that is active it is possible to explain it as a result of our own power and not the power of another thing compared to our own. It is not that there are always other powers which cause us to experience passions, although there are always other things in Nature more powerful than us. It could not be that an active affect depends on overcoming the powers which are external to us so that our own power is stronger. Rather, I think Spinoza is suggesting here that our power can be strengthened by the desires and affects we experience.

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95 *Ethics*, III, Preface, p.491-492.  
96 *Ethics*, III, D2, p.493.  
97 *Ethics*, IV, P5, p.549.
Knowledge of good and evil, which is essentially what agrees and what disagrees with our natures, will not in itself restrain an affect except insofar as it is an affect\textsuperscript{98}. As an affect it will give rise to a desire which is based on understanding something truly and so ‘follows in us insofar as we act’\textsuperscript{99}. The process of understanding involves situating ourselves within nature, realising our place and the sense in which agreement and disagreement depend on that place, rather than an absolute truth. Agreement and disagreement have to do with our position as humans within nature in that what disagrees with us is what is likely to harm us, poisonous plants for example, or famines or flies or earthquakes. The disagreement is not an absolute incompatibility as things which coexist, it is just simply a result of our embodiment compared with that of the thing which can harm us. Even this is not hard and fast in that poisons are only incompatible with us if we consume them, otherwise they are harmless and could be useful. To Spinoza good and evil are affects of joy or sadness and this is something that can be transformed\textsuperscript{100}. Agreement and disagreement are to some extent, determined by the affects, by whether we judge something to be good or evil.

Spinoza goes on to explain the ways in which humans are, and can be, the adequate cause of what happens both in us and outside us. The key is the transformation of the affects. Deleuze considers the affects and the affections in a great deal of detail as part of the mechanism of power. He maintains that ‘the capacity to be affected remains fixed’ while the power of acting ‘increases’ and ‘diminishes’ according to the proportion of active affections contributing to the exercise of this power at any moment\textsuperscript{101}. There is a problem here in the way he separates the powers of acting and being acted upon.

The key to the comparison of powers is the way in which agreement can be formed. Agreement occurs on fundamental levels in Spinoza’s metaphysics from the nature of God’s ideas, and follows through into the way in which modes operate: ‘All ideas, insofar as they are related to God, are true. For all ideas which are in God agree entirely with their objects, and so they are all true, ...’\textsuperscript{102} ‘All bodies agree in certain things. For all bodies agree in that they involve the concept of one and the same attribute ..., that is, extension\textsuperscript{103}.

\textsuperscript{98} Ethics, IV, P14, p.553.
\textsuperscript{99} Ethics, IV, P15, Dem., p.553.
\textsuperscript{100} Ethics, IV, P8, p.550 & IV, P14, p.553.
\textsuperscript{101} Deleuze (1990), p.93.
\textsuperscript{102} Ethics, II, P32 & Dem., p.472.
\textsuperscript{103} Ethics, II, P13, Lemma 2, p.459.
Bodies form a whole or composite on the most general level in that they have extension, motion and rest in common and when two specific bodies come into contact they modify themselves in relation to one another. Bodies agree with one another on this level so this is not where their disagreement lies. Deleuze states: '... by considering the most general common notions, one sees from where an agreement ends and a disagreement begins, one sees the level at which “differences and oppositions” are formed.'\textsuperscript{104} I believe Deleuze places too much emphasis here on difference as disagreement. For Spinoza the differences are only oppositional when they are responded to in particular ways, when they form particular kinds of relations.

In Spinoza’s view that humans are part of Nature and God is immanent cause within Nature, strictly speaking, there is no ‘outside’. At the same time there is always something more powerful than us. This puts us in our place. We cannot but be a part of Nature and be acted on by Nature and our own power is limited in comparison with that of other things in Nature. At the same time we share in God’s power\textsuperscript{105}. On one level then there is no disagreement because everything is part of the one substance but, since each thing is also not reducible to that whole, commonality does not subsume differences. Difference is not allied with disagreement however.

In \textit{Ethics} III, P56, Spinoza states: 'There are as many species of Joy, Sadness and Desire, and consequently of each affect composed of these ... or derived from them ... as there are species of objects by which we are affected.' And P57: 'Each affect of each individual differs from the affect of another as much as the essence of the one differs from the essence of the other.' The affect depends essentially on individual experience and the relation of the individual to specific objects. These differences can be appreciated as much as the commonalities, once it is realised that each differs in this way. Spinoza is particularly concerned to note the power and character of the affects and how they can be dealt with more effectively. However, in stating that the differences in affect are as the differences in essence between each individual, he is also saying that they are an important part of each individual and therefore part of what needs to be considered in encounters with others.

Bodies as expressive of passion and action can agree and disagree with one another on various levels. When bodies are in agreement the passion of joy is formed and in disagreement, the passion of sadness is formed. It is in the

\textsuperscript{104} Deleuze (1988), p.55.
\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Ethics}, IV, P4, Dem. [i], p.548-549.
experience of joy, the agreement between bodies that a common notion is formed. Joy, which is an increase in the power of acting, is thus an occasional cause of common notions, even in imagination. Deleuze points out that reason is the effort to organise these joy inducing encounters as well as the awareness of the relations that produce them\textsuperscript{106}. The joys formed as a consequence of this recognition are active and enduring joys, being based on the recognition of commonality and connection.

There are thus two ways in which encounters can be organised. One is to organise them in an external sense so that we are less likely to be confronted with disagreeable encounters, form associations of the like minded for example. The second way of organising encounters is internally oriented and involves organising the ideas of encounters and how we are affected by them so that it matters less what encounters we have and more how we are affected by them. We cannot entirely control what is likely to affect us, but we do have control over how we are affected if we understand the causes of things. Deleuze falls here on the side of organised encounters, suggesting associations of the likeminded where we can be assured of and expect agreeable encounters. He states: ‘... it matters little that the effort to persevere, to increase the power of acting, to experience joyful passions, to maximise the capacity for being affected, is always satisfied; it will succeed only to the extent that man strives to organise 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.’\textsuperscript{107}

This would not have been enough for Spinoza as it suggests that the only effort we make is to seek out those who agree with us and not the effort to agree even with those we dislike or who inspire sadness in us. Such a level of agreeability would be insufficient and the downfalls of dogma evident. Spinoza holds that everyone strives to have others love what he loves and hate what he hates and this he calls ambition, the desire that others live according to their own temperament: ‘when all alike want this, they are alike an obstacle to one another, and when all wish to be praised, or loved, by all, they hate one another’\textsuperscript{108}. Remaining connected to those who agree with us in societies of the like-minded only feeds into the desire to have others like what we like.

\textsuperscript{106} Deleuze (1988), p.56.
\textsuperscript{107} Deleuze, p.103.
\textsuperscript{108} Ethics, III, P31, Schol., p.512.
Deleuze refers to IV, P5 in which Spinoza states: 'The force and growth of any passion, and its perseverance in existing, are not defined by the power by which we persevere to strive in existing, but by the power of an external cause compared with our own.'\(^{109}\) Spinoza is concerned with the passions here and the fact that we are affected by other things. The propositions following this, and indeed the rest of Part IV of the Ethics, refer to the development of activity, to transforming passions into active affects. P7 states: 'An affect cannot be restrained or taken away except by an affect opposite to, and stronger than, the affect to be restrained.'\(^{110}\) While this is not a solitary activity in that it does involve association with others, Spinoza is also emphasising the affective constitution of each individual and the need to consider it. In P32 he states: 'Men can disagree in nature insofar as they are torn by affects which are passions; and to that extent also one and the same man is changeable and inconstant.'\(^{111}\) And in P34: 'Insofar as men are torn by contrary affects which are passions, they can be contrary to one another.'\(^{112}\) The point then is to consider the passion which is the source of disagreement and this may not appear obvious. For example, two men who love the same thing agree in this but they disagree in that one has it and the other does not and then one hates the other or feels saddened in not possessing it\(^{113}\). There are clearly ways in which each individual benefits by considering their own affects in relation to others and seeing how they can transform their affects to create agreement.

Deleuze does not give a great deal of attention to this aspect of agreement in Spinoza even though he recognises it. He states that the 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.'\(^{114}\) Reason, as the formation of general notions then, expresses the agreement, but Spinoza is demanding that we actively look more closely at the affects themselves arguing that the process of transforming them will produce agreement. Considering agreement as seeking commonality in this general sense is more like the Enlightenment understanding of reason. It does not require an examination of encounters with others and their fruitfulness in producing agreement or disagreement.

\(^{109}\) Ethics, IV, P5, p.549.

\(^{110}\) Ethics, IV, P7, p.550.

\(^{111}\) Ethics, IV, P32, p.561.

\(^{112}\) Ethics, IV, P34, p.562.

\(^{113}\) Ethics, IV, P34, Schol., p.562.

\(^{114}\) Deleuze (1988), p.56.
The way Deleuze deals with ideas and affects in Spinoza determines his position on the organisation of encounters. The following discussion will outline Deleuze’s elucidation of Spinozistic ideas and the affects and how this influences his account of how maximising the active affects can be achieved.

**Ideas as Expressive**

Deleuze’s analysis of expressionism in Spinoza does not carry through to the modes and the conatus except as adequate ideas. The focus then is not expression as knowing, as only adequate ideas are true for Spinoza. The power of the conatus is an expression of God’s power but it is not seen to be expressive since it cannot be expressive in the sense that God’s power is. Modes however, do have a power that is appropriate to them and thus express themselves in their ideas and affects. All ideas should be seen as expressive in Spinoza’s terms but ideas of the imagination express more of the mode itself, while ideas of reason express the true order and connection of things and in intuition, the essences of things is expressed. In limiting the operation of expression to the adequate ideas of reason, Deleuze resorts to a Cartesian framework of representation through ideas. For Deleuze, all ideas represent, and only adequate ideas express.

Deleuze, in considering expression in Spinoza, has highlighted the way in which immanence as expression is evident in the relation between God or substance and the modes. However, he discusses the mind/body relation and ideas as representative rather than immediate or expressive. In Deleuze’s account of Spinoza’s mind/body correspondence as parallelism, ideas are considered representative. Parallelism implies two parallel sequences that never meet, so that the thinking attribute represents what is expressed in the attribute of extension. In a number of places Deleuze describes ideas as representative, for example in his discussion of the common notions in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* where he says that the common notions ‘represent something in common between my body and another …’ and that they ‘represent compositions of relations’\(^\text{115}\).

Expression, I am suggesting, is the basis of experience, both in being and in thinking. This is an alternative to considering experience as a result of representation in ideas. Ideas in Spinoza, which include affects, are expressive. They are simultaneous with the bodily feeling. As Deleuze says, ideas do not represent or imitate, they express: ‘An idea never has as its cause an object it

\(^{115}\) Deleuze, p.56 and p.58.
represents; rather does it represent an object because it expresses its own cause.\(^{116}\) There is no causal relationship between attributes for Spinoza. An idea is caused by another idea and so on, ideas are only caused by other ideas. Deleuze’s reading suggests, however, that the relationship of objects or things that exist in the attribute of extension to ideas in the attribute of thought is a relationship of expression. The difference between ideas in Spinoza and Descartes, according to Deleuze, is that Descartes’ clear and distinct ideas were confined to the representative content of ideas and thus did not recognise the ‘infinitely deeper expressive content’\(^{117}\). Spinoza’s ideas show the representative content as an appearance determined by a deeper expressive content for Deleuze\(^{118}\). It is participation in the attributes of both thought and extension which gives expression to both ideas and being.

Even though he has stated that ideas in Spinoza do not represent, they express\(^{119}\), Deleuze also says that ideas for Spinoza are representative: ‘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.’\(^{120}\) Deleuze moves away from ideas being immanent expressions of experience, seeing them as representative, and thus removed from the experience of embodiment. This follows from his parallelism in which he sees the mind as representing the body: ‘... given a mode in some attribute, there corresponds to it in the attribute of Thought an idea that represents it ...’\(^{121}\). Deleuze reserves expression for adequate ideas only, making it difficult to maintain that there is an ‘infinitely deeper expressive content’ to ideas in Spinoza\(^{122}\).

Deleuze argues in Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza that ideas of imagination do not express or explain their causes, they involve them but do not contain their expression\(^{123}\). ‘An inadequate idea is an inexpressive idea.’\(^{124}\) This involves the sense that the modes have affections while at the same time they are affections or modifications of God. While all modes participate in the

\(^{116}\) Deleuze (1990), p.139-140.
\(^{117}\) Deleuze, p.153.
\(^{118}\) Deleuze, p.153.
\(^{119}\) Deleuze, p.153.
\(^{120}\) Deleuze (1988), p.73.
\(^{121}\) Deleuze (1990), p.114. In a footnote to this text he states: ‘Thus the soul is an idea that represents solely a certain mode of Extension’ and he cites Ethics II, P13e which discusses the unity of mind and body.
\(^{122}\) Deleuze, p.153.
\(^{123}\) Deleuze, p.147.
\(^{124}\) Deleuze, p.145.
power of God, they are also parts and are influenced by other parts. The affections that a mode has are then the result of the effect of other things on them and not a result of their own power\textsuperscript{125}.

Explaining how human beings can come to have adequate ideas, ideas that are expressive, is the difficulty according to Deleuze, rather than explaining how it is that we have inadequate ideas. Ideas that are expressive are active ideas, ideas that originate from ourselves, from causes that are known to us. Deleuze says, however, that 'we do not possess' the idea that constitutes our soul, 'Or we do not possess it immediately; for it is in God only insofar as he possesses an idea of something else'. There is an important place nevertheless for an immediacy of the idea in the mode.

Deleuze's parallelism removes the immediacy involved in the affective relation which is part of any experience (the mind and the body are the same thing). The idea which constitutes the mind and has the body as its object is an immediate idea and the affections are immediate ideas of the effects on the body. This immediacy has the same status as the affections of the body - they are not in God insofar as he is infinite or 'insofar as he constitutes the nature of the human Mind', but 'insofar as he is considered to be affected by another idea of a singular thing'. The human mind perceives the human body to the extent that 'the ideas of the affections of the Body are in God insofar as he constitutes the nature of the human Mind'\textsuperscript{126}. Ideas of imagination are ideas of ideas but they are formed on the basis of random experience and therefore do not express their causes.

Adequacy for Spinoza involves more than having a certain kind of idea. It involves a more extensive understanding; 'Falsity consists in the privation of knowledge which inadequate, or mutilated and confused, ideas involve.'\textsuperscript{127} And at II, P49, Schol.: '... however stubbornly a man may cling to something false, we shall still never say that he is certain of it. For by certainty we understand something positive, not the privation of doubt.'\textsuperscript{128} The signs in imagination express an experience but the experience is not related to other factors which limit it and thus the sign does not include its cause. We do not recognise in the idea the limitations intrinsic to it which result from the dispositions of our bodies. When we have the idea of the sun as a mere 200

\textsuperscript{125} Deleuze, p.146.
\textsuperscript{126} Ethics II, P19, Dem., p. 466-467.
\textsuperscript{127} Ethics, II, P35, p. 472.
\textsuperscript{128} Ethics, II, P49, p.485.
feet away and we do not also have the idea of the way in which our eyes perceive objects at a great distance then the idea does not contain its cause. It expresses the disposition of our body, an experience.\textsuperscript{129}

Deleuze does not include a discussion of internality specifically in terms of embodied particular experience in his account of Spinoza. In fact he has wanted to move away from suggestions of interiority in his critique, with Guattari, of psychoanalysis.\textsuperscript{130} Deleuze and Guattari present a critique of interiority in order to avoid reinforcing the centrality of the subject such as in psychoanalytic, humanist and phenomenological discourses. Deleuze outlines the notion of ‘the fold’ to present an alternative in which interiority results from a folding which creates an inside and an outside. The subject is not then constitutive of this interiority and the interiority can be seen as resulting from interactions in a social and cultural context. While the conatus then would not be seen as a constituted subject when it comes into existence as a mode, as the essence of the existing thing, it must be able to express itself in forms appropriate to the complexity of the body and corresponding mind, that is, what its body is able to do. The expression of immanent experience as a mode is seen as represented, rather than expressed, in ideas by Deleuze, which results in an exclusion of the immanence of embodied experience.

Deleuze asks the question ‘What can a body do?’ and is concerned to define Spinoza’s ‘materialism’, a physics of bodies which is the ‘modal triad’: ‘a modal essence expresses itself in a characteristic relation; this relation expresses a capacity to be affected; this capacity is exercised by changing affections, just as the relation is effected by parts which are renewed.”\textsuperscript{131} This suggests a level of expression that is always present, the modal essence expresses itself in its own bodily relation and capacity to be affected which is exercised by changing affection. Deleuze refers here to the mode itself and not especially to its

\textsuperscript{129} Feminist philosophies of the body have tended to see the representations of the female body image and sexual difference as involving negations of the body itself. The idea of reason as the ‘negation, repression, or ordering of some prerepresentational matter or presence’ has been critiqued by Deleuze. The body can then be seen as ‘the event of expression’ understood within its ‘becomings, connections, events and activities’ (Abigail Bray and Claire Colebrook “The Haunted Flesh: Corporeal Feminism and the Politics of (Dis)Embodiment”, Signs, Autumn, 1998, v24, i1, p. 1). ‘Deleuze’s work’, according to Bray and Colebrook, ‘offers feminism the possibility of a positive, active and affirmative ethics.’ Ethics in this sense is not the imposition of norms or the negation of law but the way bodies ‘become, intersect, and affirm their existence’ (Bray and Colebrook, p.35). For Bray and Colebrook, Deleuze’s work suggests an attribution of activity or agency to the body/individual. The body is a ‘positive event alongside other positive events’. This is the body as body, not mental representation or image. It is not merely an effect of a ‘specular process’ nor does it involve negation of an interiority according to them. This view of embodiment is what one would expect to find in Spinoza through expression but it is difficult to reconcile this with Deleuze’s statements about representation in relation to Spinoza.

\textsuperscript{130} Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

\textsuperscript{131} Deleuze (1990), p.233.
relations with others which bring about affective changes but what he says here does suggest expression on a fundamental level of bodies. Since the mind is the idea of the body, it too is correspondingly expressive.

Increasing our power, which is the aim of a Spinozistic ethics, should mean expanding, valuing, increasing experience. As Deleuze says: ‘A Spinozian definition of truth must involve the expression of causality, production and power. ... We want truth, or rather adequacy, in order to increase our power to think. The strategy of the adequate idea makes the question of truth a project of power.’ The epistemological discourse is thereby transformed into an ethical project, according to Deleuze: ‘How do we come to form and produce adequate ideas, when we necessarily have so many inadequate ones which divert our power and cut us off from what we might achieve?’¹³² Truth, like freedom, is not ‘given to us in principle, but appear[s] as the result of a long activity through which we produce adequate ideas, liberated from the sequence of external necessity.’¹³³

For Deleuze, Spinoza paradoxically has ‘rediscovered the concrete force of empiricism in applying it in support of a new rationalism, one of the most rigorous versions ever conceived.’¹³⁴ What is required for adequate knowledge is that the idea express its cause and be explained by our power of knowing. Expression of our own power and knowledge of external bodies is generally inadequate, but by experience we can come to have adequate ideas¹³⁵. For Deleuze it is in activity, in adequacy, that there is production and expression, since we are active when we have adequate ideas. This then implies a separation from the ideas of imagination which are inadequate. Spinozian concepts reach beyond the idea to the active dynamic of being, they do not merely represent in abstraction but express the experience in which they are grounded. This is true of the common notions but it is also true in some sense of ideas of imagination and of passions.

The conditions under which adequate ideas can be said to occur are perhaps more accessible than Deleuze would suggest. Interactions produce possibilities

¹³² Deleuze, p.149.
¹³³ Deleuze, p.149.
¹³⁴ Deleuze, p.149.
¹³⁵ Michael Hardt notes that for Deleuze, Spinozian adequacy has the advantage of being applicable to the corporeal plane: ‘since it refers to the nature of being itself and to the genealogy of its production, [it] applies to all the attributes equally: Just like an adequate action of the mind, an adequate action of the body is expressive in that it explains or envelops its cause. The adequate is that which discloses the productive dynamic of being.’ Hardt (1993), p.91.
for the production of adequate ideas to a greater extent than is recognised. Inadequate ideas cannot be said to express since they would not then have any real difference from adequate ideas. Deleuze is looking for objective certainty in the adequate idea here in characterising expression as characteristic of an adequate idea which is neither objective nor subjective in the traditional sense. The expression is contained within a limited field in inadequate ideas, rather than failing to be expressive, it is privation which limits their expression. Deleuze would suggest that such expression is not expression at all, but Spinoza’s universe is interconnected, immanent and related, expression cannot be excluded, but it can be limited. Falsity consists in the privation of knowledge for Spinoza. Inadequate ideas are ideas which do not express or contain their causes and which do not express the essence of a thing. Spinoza says that the mind will perceive many things adequately the more it perceives its body as having things in common with other bodies. Adequacy also involves agreement, the recognition of the immanence expressed in an adequate idea.

Part of the problem here relates to the extent to which having adequate ideas and experiencing agreement depends on the immediacy of experience or whether it depends on ideas as a re-construction of experience. Agreement must exist between bodies whether we are aware of it or not, this is the metaphysics of immanence: ‘All bodies agree in certain things’, and we must have adequate ideas constantly though we may not recognise them as such. Consciousness then must focus awareness on the random order of things outside it or the immediate embodied experiences of agreement in which it will recognise the order and connection of things. How the problem is resolved in Deleuze relies on the way in which the powers of affecting and being affected are dealt with. In previous sections it has been apparent that Deleuze is more concerned with the powers that affect us and less with the ability to be affected as a positive power, or the ability to affect as a power of the mode to moderate how it is affected.

Deleuze makes a great deal of the predominance of inadequate ideas and passive affections in humans; ‘... the first ideas [man] has are passive affections, inadequate ideas or imaginings; the affects or feelings that then flow from them are thus passions, feelings that are themselves passive. One cannot see how a finite mode, especially at the beginning of its existence,

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136 *Ethics*, II, P39, Cor., p.475.
could have any but inadequate ideas, consequently, see how it could experience any but passive feelings. .... Our capacity to be affected is thus exercised, from the beginning of our existence, by inadequate ideas and passive affections.\textsuperscript{138}

In the Cartesian formulation of ideas we cannot be an active cause except in the sense that we have true ideas and can apply the will according to true ideas. For Spinoza both mind and body are active whereas for Descartes only the intellect, with the aid of the will, is active. True ideas are able to be identified in isolation from the context of the body and the world of external objects for Descartes. The effects of other things on us are minimised by the separation and isolation of the rational mind. If only adequate ideas are seen as expressive for Spinoza then he is brought closer to a Cartesian position than Deleuze would want to maintain. In maintaining that the mind represents the body, that affects are represented and that inadequate ideas represent in Spinoza, Deleuze attributes to Spinoza a view of consciousness similar to Descartes. His discussion of the signs pertaining to the different kinds of knowledge in a more recent paper on Spinoza\textsuperscript{139}, demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining the immanence of expression in ideas in the context of ideas as representative.

The problem is the extent to which Deleuze sees humans as having adequate ideas, as well as the confinement of expression to adequate ideas. Adequate ideas depend on activity, not only the innate activity of the conatus, but also the ability to act according to common notions and enduring joys. If we take experience as the key to activity we can see how activity can be increased but at the same time acknowledge experience as having a part to play from the beginning. The experience of embodiment in itself has significance in that its capacity to be affected is a power that can be the cause of active affections. While Spinoza does say that an infant or child has a body that is capable of very few things and is ‘very heavily dependent on external causes’\textsuperscript{140}, he does not say that it is capable of nothing at all or that it is only at the effect of things external to it. It does not necessarily follow that, for Spinoza at the beginning of existence humans have only inadequate ideas. Further, being affected by external causes is not the problem in itself. The problem is rather how we relate to those external causes. It is not a struggle against external powers that

\textsuperscript{138} Deleuze (1990), pp.220-221.
\textsuperscript{140} Ethics, V, P39, S., p.614.
is involved here. For Spinoza, the affects must be separated from the thought of an external cause and joined to other thoughts\textsuperscript{141} and a clear and distinct idea of the affect must be formed in order that we can be the adequate cause\textsuperscript{142}. He states: ‘... each of us has – in part, at least, if not absolutely – the power to understand himself and his affects, and consequently, the power to bring it about that he is less acted on by them.’\textsuperscript{143}

Spinoza is at pains to show that we do have experiences which express our nature, we have experiences of joy, of and through embodiment, and we do, in a sense know the nature of our minds (the eternity of the mind). ‘We do not know what a body can do’, should be taken as a reminder that our understandings of the body, which may be taken for granted, are partial, inadequate and based on a system of beliefs encompassing superstitions which are misleading. Experiences of embodiment may be in contrast to the prevailing ‘knowledges’ of the body, for example\textsuperscript{144}. ‘We do not know what a body can do’ is an openness to the kinds of knowledges about the body, and to the body as experienced.

In considering only adequate ideas as expressive Deleuze is suggesting that for Spinoza true ideas are like the rational ideas of Descartes. Cartesian ideas are separated from the context of embodiment and are based on abstract universals. Deleuze wants to talk about expression on the level of modes and powers of affecting and being affected and the mode as producing, as active in Spinoza, but this appears to be confined to rational ideas and to organising agreeable encounters. The mode is capable in its production and in its being affected, of producing active affections as well as passive ones. Given that the mode creates and is created within the context of its operation it can never be entirely passive.

Experience should be expected to encompass embodied consciousness in such an account. Cartesian consciousness pertains to a disembodied mind distinct from the body and Deleuze does not want to privilege idealism, rather he wants to privilege materialism. The problem then becomes the power of modes or individuals to express themselves, the expression of ideas and the form of those ideas themselves. By reducing the directness of ideas and affects

\textsuperscript{141} Ethics, IV, P2, p.597.
\textsuperscript{142} Ethics, IV, P3, p.598.
\textsuperscript{143} Ethics, IV, P4, Schol., p.598.
\textsuperscript{144} The point is that our experience of embodiment would count for something, possibly more substantial than prevailing “knowledges” which take themselves to be encompassing the truth when ‘we do not know what a body can do’.
as expressive, Deleuze maintains, through his parallelism, the mediation of representative signs and concepts. Regarding expression as an embodied activity whether through adequate or inadequate ideas makes it possible to couch representation within expression. This can give more scope to human expression in different forms than traditional ideas of representation are able to encompass.

The next chapter will outline the emotional economies of praise and blame and tenacity and nobility that are related to the forms of self-love associated with imagination and reason respectively. This discussion will further demonstrate the emphasis in Spinoza on interconnection within human relations and the form that these relations can take to cultivate the best opportunities for all. Emphasising expression helps to maintain the immanence of power characteristic of intersubjectivity in Spinoza. However, there is also a need for recognition of the internality which is not evident of Deleuze's account of Spinoza. Through the forms of self-love Spinoza explores the internality of intersubjective relations, not as isolated individualism or constitutive subjectivity, but as an interactive internality.
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One, therefore, who is anxious to moderate his affects and appetites from the love of Freedom alone will strive, as far as he can, to come to know the virtues and their causes, and to fill his mind with the gladness which arises from the true knowledge of them, but not at all to consider men's vices, or to disparage men, or to enjoy a false appearance of freedom. ....virtue is nothing but acting from the laws of one's own nature and no one strives to preserve his being except from the laws of his own nature .... the foundation of virtue is this very striving to preserve one's own being... ¹

Introduction

In the last chapter it was argued that Deleuze's focus in his discussion of Spinoza is primarily on external powers compared with our own. This chapter will further consider the power of the conatus as an internal power, through an exploration of two forms of self-love derived from Spinoza's discussions of human affects and social understanding in the Ethics. Earlier works will also be considered with an emphasis on the social dynamics related to these, that are central to Spinoza's discussion of power. It will be argued that the different kinds of self-love demonstrate the importance of the affects to the cultivation of human activity in a social as well as individual sense. The essentially interactive nature of the individual in Spinoza's ethical framework and the centrality of concrete experience to an ethics, highlights the need for an awareness of internality and externality and the way they are constituted.

The idea of an emotional economy is intended to draw attention to the affective nature of social interaction and the ways in which it systematically occurs as part of social relations. The greater freedom that Spinoza invokes in rejecting free will, encourages us to confront the interlinked internal and external factors contributing to our actions and to do this in a way that is positive and productive.

On June 18th 1997 an Aboriginal woman, Nance de Vries, made a speech in the

¹ Ethics, V, P10, Schol., p.603 and IV, P18, Schol., p.555.
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NSW parliament. She was speaking of her experiences as a “half-caste” member of the stolen generation, Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their mothers to be brought up as “white”. Nance tells her story very frankly and very emotionally. She tells of the 22 different homes she lived in, before the age of 18. She tells of finally meeting her mother at the age of 53 and her mother’s inability to recognise her as the baby she had lost so long ago. What is most striking about Nance’s story is that she tells it without any blame or any desire to elicit pity. She does not ask for pity, she asks that people be aware of what happened in the past and that enough is done to ensure it can never happen again. There is no doubt of the culpability of governments in the past and the ignorance of white people in their dealings with Aboriginal people. Nance’s dignity, determination and moral manner are a lesson to us all. She provides a model of feeling and expression that is generous, informing and self-contained. Nance does not have to make herself more or less than the rest of us to get her point across.

It was lovely when I went back to Willoughby school that time and spoke to the children on Sorry Day and had my chance to talk to the kids at the school that I’d gone to in the [North Shore] home. And be able to say to those kids “You with your happiness and love and everything wiped away a lot of my tears.” And I really meant that to a lot of those kids. It was just lovely to feel this warmth in an area where I hadn’t known any warmth. So here were these children, these beautiful little children making me feel welcome in the old school where I’d felt so unhappy. It was lovely. It was lovely. That day there was no apartness. We were all one people. We were all Australians and that was it. I was an old lady ... I might have been Aboriginal but who cares? It was so lovely... (Interview, 2001)

Spinoza outlines two emotional economies, praise and blame, and tenacity and nobility. In an economy of praise and blame there is an emphasis on comparison with others, and with social standards. Praise or blame is apportioned according to the notion of free will, that is, that each freely chooses their circumstances, and ability to measure up to what is demanded. The alternatives are tenacity and nobility which amount to self-determination and generosity. Spinoza sweeps aside free will and stresses the need for understanding, since we do not have absolute power over many aspects of our lives and therefore the application of blame is meaningless. Generosity expresses the desire to understand rather than to blame,

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2 The Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, gave a formal apology after Nance’s speech.
and self-determination, the sense of power within oneself, to act, to take account of one's strengths and weaknesses, and to transform the passions. Reason in Spinoza is not devoid of emotion but involves the transformation of the sad passions and the expression of joyful affects.

Nance provides us with a model of tenacity and nobility in Spinoza's sense.

The various kinds of self-love in Spinoza involve a different idea of reason and the engagement of reason with the personal, social and political arenas as they interact. The economies of praise and blame and tenacity and nobility highlighted by Spinoza through his notions of self-love, will be discussed in detail in this chapter to demonstrate the development of freedom in an internal as well as external sense. Free will has involved the idea that freedom is restricted by external circumstances. While in Spinoza the social and political context of interaction influences the extent to which and the types of freedom able to be developed, there is also an internality to the development of freedom. This internality is a self development as much as a social development and requires a form of responsiveness. Responsiveness in this sense is a critical awareness of our responses and an openness and ability to acknowledge and respond to others.

For Spinoza self-love is necessary to the existence of an individual. It is first of all a basic determination to survive, a striving to persist in being, which is unquestionable in that an individual contains within them nothing that would bring about their own destruction. It is the being of the individual and in this sense is similar to Rousseau’s notion of love of self in the state of nature. However, in Spinoza we find that individuals are much more social in nature, they are not seen as existing in isolation, nor are they merely self-interested. The conatus involves an ability to affect and to be affected which is important in considering the fundamental role of self-love. Even though self-love is implicit in

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3 From the exhibition “Aunty Nance” Catalogue, edited by Dr. Fiona Nicoll, Ricardo Peach and Tom Sear, Liverpool Regional Museum (NSW, Australia), 23 February – 1 June 2002.

4 This is suggested by William E. Connolly (1995) The Ethos of Pluralization Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

5 Ethics, III, P6, p.498.

6 Spinoza states in Ethics III, P4; ‘No thing can be destroyed except through an external cause’, p.498.

the sense of a drive, there is a significant sense in which it is shaped in relation to others, which in turn affects the assessment of self. I will be arguing then, that self-love finds its expression in and through relations with others, and at the same time it responds to and with others.  

As has been shown throughout the thesis Spinoza's ethical, social and political thought has been predominantly considered through post-Enlightenment traditions. The liberal tradition in social and political theory emerged from the Enlightenment and the attempt to find foundational principles for freedom, equality and justice. These were the sorts of values that were at stake in the French and American revolutions, liberté, égalité and fraternité. Critiques of liberal theory by feminists and others have highlighted the conception of the individual implicit in social and political theorists from Hobbes to Rousseau which emphasise the separateness and fundamental independence of the individual. Such a conception prevents us from seeing individuals as mutually

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8 Recent research on Aristotle is of interest here because arguments in favour of an Aristotelian ethics have involved considerations of self-love as central to it, particularly in the context of the discussion of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Taking self-love as central shows that friendship in Aristotle's ethics is not merely narcissistic or egoistic but involves concern for others. Although the notion of conatus is originally from Aristotle, self-love in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is not essentially related to the conatus but follows from practical reason. In this sense it is related to Spinoza's third kind of self-love which presents self-love in its most considered form derived from a knowledge and awareness that is not as evident in the other forms. Self-love being thus confined in Aristotle has implications for the way in which it can be understood as having an essential role in the existence of the individual in relation to others which Aristotle nevertheless considers important. Julia Annas (1988) "Self-Love in Aristotle", *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* Vol. XXVII, Supplement, 1-18.

9 The values of égalité, liberté and fraternité were recently referred to by French President Jacques Chirac as founding values of the French Republic after winning the Presidential election from extreme right candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen. *TIME Magazine* reports: '... France's traditional political parties have been saved from articulating a coherent message of change by the specter of Le Pen's success.' (James Graff 'No Winner, Just Losers', *TIME* Australia, May 6, 2002, pp.36-38.) Moral, social and political frameworks have been measured according to the determinations of Enlightenment thinking including the central role of the autonomous, independent, reasoning subject (Michael J. Sandel (1998) *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* Cambridge University Press). Sandel discusses the problems of deontological liberalism which he says is 'prominent in the moral and legal and political philosophy of the day' (p.1).

10 For example Seyla Benhabib "The Generalised and Concrete Other" in *Feminism as Critique: Essays on the Politics of Gender in Late Capitalist Societies* edited by Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987. Annette Baier's notion of 'second persons' and the way in which this has been taken up by Lorraine Code (1991) *What Can She Know?* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, for example, is also a significant shift in the thinking involved in conceptualising individuals. Annette Baier *Postures of the Mind: Essays on the Mind and Morals* London: Methuen, 1985.
interdependent. Feminists and other theorists have offered alternative accounts which place greater importance on the connections between individuals and the ways in which these interdependencies, rather than separateness, are central to an understanding of individuality.\(^{11}\)

Feminists have been critical of dichotomies such as individual and community and have attempted to find other ways to deal with the central issues. Lorraine Code in her book *What Can She Know?* considers Kantian and utilitarian moral theories and the view of autonomy and individuality inherent in them.\(^ {12}\) She notes that the emphasis on independence and separation is often at the exclusion of taking relations to others into account. This is partly due to the abstract nature of the ideals of autonomy and individuality, but it is also due, as Code states, to the separation of reason from emotion such that emotional concerns appear as an infringement on autonomy. The connection between relations with others and emotion is important and the exclusion of one seems to involve the exclusion of the other.

It makes a structural difference whether theory construction moves from autonomy to community or in the reverse direction. Often theorists who see autonomy as a primary, fundamental trait posit a contradiction between self-sufficiency and interdependence at the cost of some measure of autonomy. Theorists who start from communality and interdependence can accommodate the requirements of autonomy better than the theorists for whom autonomous existence is the ‘original position’ can accommodate the requirements of community.\(^ {13}\)

The aim of the chapter will be to demonstrate that Spinoza’s *Ethics* offers a standpoint which starts with the individual as interconnected within community and moves to the individual as a more distinct expression of their essence while necessarily maintaining and cultivating a development within the community itself. Social development is as important in a Spinozistic ethics as individual


\(^{12}\) Code, pp.73-79. Code also notes that more contemporary contractarian theories take individuals involved in social contracts to be independent adult males (p.78).

\(^{13}\) Code, p.79.
development and this involves an affective transformation for both individual and society. This is particularly evident in the forms of self-love Spinoza discusses. The two forms of self-love particularly related to human society are connected to the kinds of knowledge – self-love in imagination and self-love in reason. These express a social, political and emotional economy. Praise and blame are related to self-love in imagination and tenacity and nobility apply to self-love in reason. Self-love in Spinoza is cultivated by the transformation of the affects involved, and these are implicitly concerned with the welfare of others. Any political system, whether a monarchy or a democracy, functions best when it takes into account the welfare of the multitude.

There are other forms of self-love in Spinoza besides those that will be discussed in this chapter. The first form of self-love, natural love or the conatus, which was discussed in the previous chapter in relation to Deleuze’s interpretation of Spinoza, is of a more fundamental nature than the others in that the other forms are essentially human expressions of it and thus generated from it. These are specifically concerned with human awareness and interaction whereas the conatus has a wider application. While the conatus is the basic power or self-determination of a mode, that is, its essence, the other forms of self-love relate to increased self-determination through understanding and affective awareness. There is another form of self-love in Spinoza related to the third kind of knowledge, intuition. However, I am not going to outline it here as it demands particular attention beyond the focus of this thesis.

The complaint made by Rousseau that in society people are inclined to compare themselves with one another, is an issue that Spinoza deals with in quite considerable depth in the Ethics. His second kind of self-love is based on praise and blame and comparison with others, similar to Rousseau’s amour ‘propre’.

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14 Political Treatise, especially Ch. 4. In the treatise Spinoza considers what is the good of all, and can provide unity according to the laws of reason which are guided most by the good of all and in the interests of the multitude. ‘But statesmen, ..., are suspected of plotting against mankind, rather than consulting their interests ...’ Ch1, §2, pp.287-288.

15 Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, p.218ff.

16 Norman Hampson in The Enlightenment considering Pope’s Essay on Man states: ‘Self-love, which an earlier generation would have attributed to man’s turning away from the service of God, is treated by Pope as a necessary force of nature, without which reason would remain inactive.’ Norman Hampson (1968) The Enlightenment Penguin Books, p.101. It is remarkable that in the seventeenth century Spinoza included such a careful consideration of self-love considering the religious influences of the time.
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while the first form, associated with the conatus could be likened to Rousseau’s amour de soi, self-love in the state of nature. Spinoza outlines a portrayal of human relations based on tenacity and nobility that goes beyond praise and blame. The third form of self-love in Spinoza is associated with reason and is a more independent state, but it is also implicitly concerned with relations with others. A third form of self-love, beyond the narcissism of social relations, was more difficult for Rousseau to formulate, because his notion of the individual is more fundamentally separate and individualistic than Spinoza’s.

A notable characteristic of the relational dynamics that are involved in discussion of the affects and particularly self-love, is the internality centred around embodiment that Spinoza develops. The internality of awareness of self in relation to others complements the externality of social relations. The way in which externality is constructed is a significant part of considering internality. The form of individuality that emerges from Spinoza’s ethics stems from the power of the individual and the extent to which that power is expressed actively17. Activity depends on an awareness of one’s relation to others in a phenomenological, that is bodily or affective sense, as well as on an understanding of the associations that bring about affective relations with others. It involves a greater level of awareness of the individual’s own fundamental power to act and be acted upon, or what I am referring to as internality, including the affects and their interpersonal dynamics, which tend to be regarded as external. This power is derived from the individual’s relation to increasingly larger wholes in which each is essentially connected to others in society and as part of nature.

Independence along with free will are two of the most distinct values of liberalism to be contrasted in this chapter to Spinoza’s interdependence. Free will for Spinoza is an abstract universal. He insists on looking at specific judgements and how they restrict or enhance the ability to act rather than relying on a non-specific notion of freedom. Freedom then becomes more like a common notion in that it encompasses specific inconsistencies and contradictions of various ideas and includes the internal as well as external workings of activity/passivity in negotiating freedom.

17 In this sense it is positively defined as the power of the individual rather than negatively as freedom from constraint. Robert Young Personal Autonomy: Beyond Negative and Positive Liberty London: Croom Helm, 1986.
In the mind there is no absolute faculty of willing and not willing, but only singular volitions ... the will is something universal, which is predicated of all ideas, and which signifies only what is common to all ideas, viz. the affirmation ... the singular affirmations differ from one another as much as the ideas themselves do.\(^\text{18}\) Liberalism has tended to focus on freedom as exemplified in social institutions contrasted with the absolute freedom of individuals which is compromised in society. In Spinoza freedom is enhanced by social interaction and negotiation, and of course can be restricted by it. Freedom in Spinoza is less a matter of how many choices you have in the supermarket and more a question of enhancing ability and quality of life in recognising and dealing with choices related to how we interact.

**Self-love and Imagination – An Economy of Praise and Blame**

The rest of this chapter will focus on the forms of social interaction involved in the different kinds of self-love discussed by Spinoza, firstly self-love in imagination and secondly, self-love in reason. In Spinoza’s first kind of knowledge, imagination, there is a self/other dynamic in which individuals are perceived and perceive themselves through an emotional economy of praise and blame. This economy limits each individual to understanding themselves in terms of others, as praised or blamed by others and hence involves passivity, and limits freedom. Knowledge based only on imagination is inadequate and reflects passivity in the sense of self and relation to the order and connection of ideas and things. There is a complex dynamic involved in the workings of imagination as a kind of knowledge and as a part in the development of self and social relations. The social environment is recognised as significant in the formation of self and knowledge by Spinoza, an aspect largely expressed in the definitions of the affects in the *Ethics*.

Self-love is defined in the *Ethics* as love of esteem in which joy arises from considering oneself praised or blamed by others (through the praise or blame of others)\(^\text{19}\). The sense of self is largely determined in relation to others and what is considered praiseworthy or blameworthy by others. Behaviour is thus oriented primarily to fulfilling the desires of others or society and the determination of the


\(^{19}\) *Ethics*, III, P30, Schol., p.511.
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desires of the self through social requirements. This form of self-love can be likened to Rousseau’s amour propre although in Spinoza there is an element of positivity in it that there does not appear to be in Rousseau. For Spinoza important social relations are established through this self-love and the associations, imitations and desire for being liked involved in it, but they are not optimal.

Already in the Short Treatise Spinoza has defined love of esteem as: ‘... a certain kind of joy which everyone feels in himself when he becomes aware that his conduct is esteemed and praised by others, without regard to any advantage or profit they have in view.’ Spinoza says here that this love of esteem is ‘built on self-love and on an error ... that man is a first cause of his own actions, and consequently deserving of praise and blame’. This is Spinoza’s critique of free will which he maintains throughout all his writings. Free will is based on the idea that humans are first cause of their own actions, but for Spinoza this is rarely the case, we merely fail to understand the causes of our actions as part of nature and not separate from it.

Spinoza appears to regard self-love in the negative sense that it tended to have at the time. He discusses love of esteem, shame and shamelessness together here and says that they all have ‘vanity and imperfection ... in them’. But he goes on to explore what he thinks is of value in self-esteem when it is separated from the error of man seeing himself as a first cause of his actions and hence subject to praise and blame. He says that one should not dress expensively in order simply to seek esteem ‘that arises from self-love’ because this involves no regard for one’s fellow men. If, however, in order to impart his wisdom a man dresses in a way that does not disagree with his fellow men but makes him more like them, he is justified in both his concern for others and his manner of dress. The emphasis is on knowing ourselves in relation to others and paying attention to the quality of encounters with others. In being ‘like them’ Spinoza is recommending establishing a relationship with others based on a broader desire than the desire to be esteemed by others. Rather than seeking conformity, he is asking for a move

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20. Rousseau’s second form of self-love, amour-propre, is very similar to this as argued in an article by M.E. Brint (1988) “Echoes of Narcisse” (in Political Theory, Vol. 16 No. 4, November, 617-635) which investigates the notion of self-love in Rousseau.
21. Short Treatise, Chapter 12, §1, Curley, p.116.
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beyond personal interests and desires towards a concern for the other in the expression of self-love.

The point here is that dressing expensively in order to be esteemed by others involves taking ourselves to be first cause of our behaviour when in fact it is determined by what others praise, making it more self involved. This kind of self involvement is not based on a real self knowledge, and further, shows a lack of concern for others. Esteem in this sense is based on report and impulse rather than our own experience of ourselves and others. Ultimately our actions are determined by the nature of things including humans and their social involvement. Dressing in a way that agrees with others in order to impart wisdom is a more self-directed action in that it comes from one’s own sense of self-esteem that includes a sense of oneself as part of a larger whole. A concern for others is implicit in Spinoza’s expectations of self-love and it is with the way self-love is related to the demands of others that he is most concerned.

True self-love or 'Legitimate Self-Esteem', as Spinoza calls it, is described in Chapter 8 of the Short Treatise, as a self-esteem that ‘does not extend to things outside us and is only attributed to one who knows his perfection according to its true worth, without passion, and without regard to [other’s] esteem of him.’\textsuperscript{23} The definitions of humility, pride and self-deprecation in the next chapter, indicate that Spinoza is concerned with the individual’s ability to make a self-assessment based on a different view of relations to others. This is the first appearance of a specific focus on the strengthening of internality. In contrast to Rousseau however, this internality is not developed in isolation from others. Spinoza’s emphasis is on being self-determined in relation to others and not on being ‘true to ourselves’ as in Rousseau. In order to be truly self-determined we must know our own strengths and weaknesses, not only what others regard as our strengths and weaknesses. We require a knowledge of ourselves derived from a knowledge of the nature of things of which we are a part which includes social relations. This means being aware of when our actions are self-determined and when they are determined by others within a social context or by other desires related to our experiences.

\textsuperscript{22} Short Treatise, 10, §1, §2, §3, pp.116-117.
\textsuperscript{23} Short Treatise, 8, §3, p.111.
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Spinoza, at this stage, places a value on esteem but wants to distinguish different kinds of esteem, where the highest one is more determined by a knowledge of our ‘perfection and imperfection’. This is distinguished from those which attribute to ourselves perfections which do not belong to us, as in pride, and those which attribute imperfections to ourselves which also do not belong to us, as in self-deprecation. It is evident that self-love is not problematic in itself. Disconnected from self-knowledge and relations to others which are not beneficial to all it is not expressed in a form that is as empowering. In fact self-love is necessary. It is not the interdependence implied by the connection to others, that is problematic in this form of self esteem, as it is for Rousseau. Spinoza says in Chapter 12; ‘.. I don’t mean that one must live among men as one would live without them, where Love of Esteem and Shame have no place.’ He goes on to say that these passions can be used for ‘men’s advantage and improvement’.

Spinoza is critical of being moved to help others from a desire to be esteemed. He wants to transform the judgements attached to the desire to relate to others, from a desire to have ourselves esteemed, to a more broadly determined desire for the good of all. He notes in considering favour, that ‘a perfect man is moved to help his fellow man only by necessity ... And therefore he finds himself all the more obliged to help the most godless, since he sees that they have the greater misery and need’. Spinoza is arguing against the kind of judgement in which assisting or refusing to assist others is determined through a desire for esteem, or judgement of the worthiness of the needy. He is saying that need should be addressed as it appears from a broader perspective than our own desires and that it should not be a matter of determining worthiness. It is not a matter of wanting good for someone who has been seen to do good for another, which implicates worthiness in the determination of those seen as having the right intentions and therefore being deserving of assistance, but of wanting to do good for those who are in need of it.

24 Short Treatise, 8, §7 and §5, p.111.
26 Short Treatise, 12, §2, p.117.
27 Garrett makes a point in which he focuses on individual intention where Spinoza, I argue, would give more consideration to the overall social context in which individuals function as discussed in Chapter 3. Because Spinoza denies free will, the attribution of blame to individuals is of little value. Don Garrett (1996) “Spinoza’s Ethical Theory” The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza, edited by Don Garrett, Cambridge University Press.
In the Ethics Spinoza provides a more technical account of internality and the affects than he has in the Short Treatise. There are a number of important features of imagination as inadequate knowledge, as it is developed in the Ethics, which are relevant to understanding the central place of self-love in the dynamic of self-other relations in Spinoza. Self-love in the context of imagination is described in the Ethics as: 'Joy accompanied by the idea of an internal cause, [which] we shall call love of esteem, and the Sadness contrary to it, Shame - I mean when the Joy or Sadness arise from the fact that the man believes that he is praised or blamed.' Since man is conscious of himself through the affections by which he is determined to act, then he who has done something which he imagines affects others with Joy will be affected with Joy, together with a consciousness of himself as the cause, or, he will regard himself with Joy ... The internal cause is the desire to be esteemed by others but we see our actions as having brought about the joy we experience when others esteem us.

As Spinoza has said in the preface to Part III of the Ethics, it is commonly believed that man disturbs rather than follows the common order of nature and that he has absolute power over his actions and is determined only by himself. Man takes himself to be the first cause of his actions. In the Ethics Spinoza is more explicit that in love of esteem one takes oneself to be the cause of joy or sadness when the joy or sadness follows from how we imagine others esteem us - whether they praise or blame us.

Affecting others with joy or sadness also affects us and, because we are conscious of ourselves through our affections, we regard ourselves with joy or sadness correspondingly. The affections, in imagination, reveal more of one's own disposition than that of the other and at the same time are taken as revealing the disposition of the other. This is significant in deriving a functioning idea of the individual as a social being. The social dimension of imagination is its emerging realisation of conatus in relation to the other. However, the other is understood in terms of the individual’s own affections and at the same time the individual understands and interprets themselves through what others determine as

28 Ethics, III, P30, Schol., p.511.
30 Ethics, III, P30, Dem., pp. 510-511.
31 Ethics, II, P16, Cor. 2, p.463.
praiseworthy and blameworthy while regarding themselves as bringing about their own affect in relation to themselves. Each perceives their will to be the source of their own determinations when they are determined by the opinions of others, and perceives themselves to be understanding others when they are predominantly aware of their own affections. ‘... men think themselves free, because they are conscious of their volitions and their appetite, and do not think even in their dreams, of the causes by which they are disposed to wanting and willing... they necessarily judge the temperament of other men from their own temperament.

Each individual understands both their own power and the other in only limited terms due to the confusion of the affects and a misunderstanding of the source of their determination. However, Spinoza does not conclude from this that we perceive only those affections related to our own disposition, there is also something of the object encountered in our affective disposition. The problem is that we fail to distinguish these and in the notion of will, understand ourselves to be determined by our conscious thoughts as if these were separate from our bodily appetites and relations to other things. The distinction between first and efficient causes is important. Man takes himself to be a first cause, especially through the notion of the will, but only God or substance can be a first cause. Man is a finite cause amongst other finite causes which means that many of his actions are caused by a range of influences of which we ourselves are one. Man is not a kingdom within a kingdom, but part of nature.

The second important aspect of imagination is that humans undergo a great many things and in this sense are passive. This is not due, however, to a determination completely outside human agency but to acting on inadequate ideas. We are active to the extent that we act on adequate ideas: ‘Our mind does certain things and undergoes other things, viz. insofar as it has adequate ideas, it necessarily does certain things, and insofar as it has inadequate ideas, it necessarily undergoes other things.’ Even though we undergo many things, we see ourselves as the

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34 Ethics, I, Appendix, p.440.
35 Ethics, II, P16, p.463.
36 Ethics, III, P2 and Schol., pp.494-497.
37 Ethics, III, P1, p.493.
cause of those things and thus do not recognise our power within the things that affect us nor the sense in which our affects are the result of the experiences we bring to the encounter with another, that is, the necessity that results from our own make up.

Passivity is the result of our not understanding the affects and their influence on our behaviour. It is not being affected by other things in itself that brings about our passivity but the way in which we understand our own power in relation to other things. Rather than seeing the influence of external objects upon us as the problem, Spinoza portrays a complex interaction with a world which is not outside us in the sense that it is in the dominant streams of Enlightenment thought: ‘It is impossible that a man should not be a part of Nature, and that he should undergo no changes except those that can be understood through his own nature alone, and of which he is the adequate cause.’ Inadequate knowledge, distinguished from being the adequate cause, is a confusion of the way in which that interaction operates and how we are part of it. It is not only self-knowledge that is involved here but a sense of self and world, inside and outside that is interactive, enmeshed and based on immanence as being within the world, rather than separate from it. It is always the case that we will experience passions, in relation to the larger scheme of things, in being acted on by things more powerful than us, but we can transform the passions and have adequate ideas. It is joyful affects and adequate ideas which make us active, and makes us experience our power within ourselves and our interactions with others, rather than being the adequate cause.

Knowledge is first derived from the affections of the body and the order and connection determined among ideas, some of which are affections, through the individual’s experience. This is confused and mutilated in contrast to the true order and connection of things which we can know through ideas. The confused order on which imagination is based, is brought about by association (where being affected by one thing is related to another thing which may have also affected us at the same time), rather than being based on knowledge of the true order or nature of things. Memory is thus: ‘... nothing other than a certain connection of ideas involving the nature of things outside the human Body - a connection that is

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38 Ethics, IV, P4, p.548.
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in the Mind according to the order and connection of the affections of the human Body.\textsuperscript{40}

In taking the causes of their actions, which are really their appetites, as final causes\textsuperscript{41} individuals are both unaware of the causes of their actions as embodied and as part of a larger whole, and at the same time largely at the affect of external influences. This means we are unaware of our own power to effect and enhance our experience of well-being in a more adequate form. Passivity results from the fact that ideas can be confused due to a lack of understanding of the body’s abilities and limits, and inadequate knowledge of the distinction between our own affects and those affecting us. This is acting with a lower level of self-determination.

Spinoza describes passivity in terms of the way in which affects are produced in us through our encounters when we do not have an adequate knowledge of our self-determination, the determination of other things and the true determinations of all things. The individual in this case acts passively through their relations to others and the external world. Each naturally strives to imagine whatever will lead to joy, which increases their power\textsuperscript{42} and to encourage the occurrence of whatever they imagine leads to joy\textsuperscript{43}. Each individual is inclined to experience joy in considering themselves and their own power of acting and this is encouraged when they imagine themselves praised by others\textsuperscript{44}. Internality here is externally oriented.

When this sense of self-love is translated more directly into relations with others it takes the form of an experience of joy in relation to those we love and their joys, and sadness at their misfortunes, and joy in the misfortune or destruction of those we hate\textsuperscript{45}. These responses, however, will not produce enduring joys\textsuperscript{46} because each is also saddened by the sadness of anything like themselves and by our own hate toward others: ‘If we imagine a thing like us’, Spinoza says, ‘toward which

\textsuperscript{39} Ethics, II, P18, Schol., p.466.
\textsuperscript{40} Ethics, II, P18, Schol., p.465.
\textsuperscript{41} Ethics, Preface to IV, pp.544-545.
\textsuperscript{42} Ethics, III, P11, 12 & 13, pp.501-502.
\textsuperscript{43} Ethics, III, P28, p.509.
\textsuperscript{44} Ethics, III, P53 & Cor., p.524.
\textsuperscript{45} Ethics, III, P19 - 26, pp.505-508.
\textsuperscript{46} Ethics, III, P23, Schol., p.507.
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we have had no affect, to be affected with some affect, we are thereby affected with a like affect.' Likewise the joy in oneself produced through the praise attributed to us by others is not as enduring as our own sense of self-love, endurance and strength. In addition, hate is a restriction in that we are not active and therefore freedom is also limited.

This proposition extends the idea of being affected by others, from those whom we love, to those who are like us, allowing the possibility of pity and benevolence which, though passive emotions, and thus not regarded very highly by Spinoza, are recognised by him as containing an initial responsiveness of humans to others. However Spinoza also states that joys experienced in this way are not enduring ones. Spinoza presents a critique of bourgeois morality that preempts Nietzsche in his criticism of pity and benevolence which he sees as based more on the desire to be esteemed by others than on concern for another.

Self-love in this form, as love of esteem arising from the joy we attach to ourselves as a result of our perceived effect on others, and related to imagination, as it is expressed in relations with others, creates social interaction of a particular kind, which is limited in the kinds of interactions and level of joy it produces. Spinoza stresses this in his discussion of the transition from the passive to the active emotions in Part III of the Ethics. If the mind imagines its lack of power it is saddened, which means that its essential striving to posit or imagine its power is restrained. Spinoza leads to the idea that it makes sense for us to strive to imagine whatever increases the mind’s power and this is aided by understanding the affects and how they are derived.

Everyone is keen, he says, to tell others of their deeds and show off their powers which makes us troublesome to each other and leads to envy, gladness at the weakness of others and sadness at their virtues. He notes how a favourable consideration of ourselves when we have inadequate knowledge and are thus

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47 Ethics, III, P27, p.508.
49 Pity serves to show, for Spinoza, that even in imagination, we are influenced by the experiences of others like us and feel for them. It has a social value in this sense and indicates that Spinoza does not see those confined to the passivity of imagination as totally self-absorbed.
passive, involves seeing others as weaker and that seeing ourselves as weaker compared to others saddens us and inclines us to misinterpret the other or magnify ourselves as much as possible: ‘... if he imagines that his own actions are weaker, compared to others’ actions, he will be saddened, and will strive to put aside this Sadness, either by wrongly interpreting his equals’ actions or by magnifying his own as much as he can.’

Spinoza then shows how it is possible to move from the limited view of experiencing joy in oneself by comparing oneself to others, to considering one’s own actions from the point of view of a common notion. ‘For whenever anyone imagines his own actions, he is affected with Joy, and with a greater Joy, the more his actions express perfection, and the more distinctly he imagines them, i.e., the more he can distinguish them from others, and consider them as singular things. So everyone will have the greatest gladness from considering himself, when he considers something in himself which he denies concerning others.’

Spinoza is pointing to something much stronger than merely the weaknesses of human beings here. As he says in the Preface to Part III, the causes of human impotence are attributed to ‘I know not what vice of human nature’ by those who wish to see man as a kingdom within a kingdom. His whole project is to reach an understanding of how liberation can be achieved and this involves an investigation of the possible evolutions of individuals in their relations with others. By acknowledging first of all that we esteem ourselves in relation to others and with a concern for the way in which we are perceived by others, it is possible to develop from a social perspective that tends to encourage passivity to one that encourages a greater level of activity. Such an awareness is more able to take into account the differences in needs and desires amongst individuals. Imagination begins the development of the individual self through a social context of others and encompasses a particular dynamic that, though to some extent passive, can nevertheless encourage the development of a more active one.

In his political works Spinoza carries through the theme of relations in the social and political context and their determination in relation to the affects. Praise and

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51 Ethics, III, P55, p.525.
52 Ethics, III, P55, Schol., p.525.
53 Ethics, III, P55, Schol., p.525.
blame are not discussed explicitly in the political works but their presence is evident in the way Spinoza discusses obedience. In the *Political Treatise* he makes a reference to the fact that praise and blame are dealt with in the *Ethics*. The introduction to the *Political Treatise* begins by noting the inadequate understanding of the affects demonstrated by theorists:

Philosophers conceive of the passions which harass us as vices into which men fall by their own fault, and, therefore, generally deride, bewail, or blame them, or execrate them, if they wish to seem unusually pious. And so they think they are doing something wonderful, and reaching the pinnacle of learning, when they are clever enough to bestow manifold praise on such human nature, as is nowhere to be found, and to make verbal attacks on that which, in fact, exists. For they conceive of men, not as they are, but as they themselves would like them to be.

Spinoza goes on to argue that statesmen, who are generally regarded with suspicion, in fact have a more realistic view and anticipation of human 'wickedness', their views being based more on experience and practice. Spinoza clearly does not intend to contrast reason and the emotions as oppositional but to consider the role of the passions, for example, hope and fear and their contrast with joy, in political issues.

Every man’s true happiness and blessedness consist solely in the enjoyment of what is good, not in the pride that he alone is enjoying it, to the exclusion of others. He who thinks himself the more blessed because he is enjoying benefits which others are not or because he is more blessed or more fortunate than his fellows, is ignorant of true happiness and blessedness ... a man’s true happiness consists only in wisdom, and the knowledge of the truth, not at all in the fact that he is wiser than others, or that others lack such knowledge: such considerations do not increase his wisdom or true happiness.

This passage in the *Theologico-Politico Treatise* is intended to berate the Jews for regarding themselves as superior and for understanding their happiness in terms of the lack of happiness in others. Self-definition in this sense is related only to the misfortunes of others and not to anything positive in the individuals themselves. The self-love that follows from reason specifically involves a self-assessment such that, while not excluding others, the self is not defined in terms of a comparison with others where others are regarded as lesser or lacking in some way or where

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55, Ch.2, §24, p.300.
56 *A Political Treatise*, Introduction, §1, p.
57 *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, Ch. 3, p.43.
the self is likewise regarded as lacking. It is based first of all on a recognition of commonality or agreement with others and an understanding of their position.

Knowing that esteem tends to result from noting the weaknesses in others and that this makes us subject to fluctuating passions, we can become aware of a more favourable way of esteeming ourselves that is beneficial to our relations to others. This in turn gives us a greater sense of our own power and a more effective use of our power to enhance and increase our abilities and experience of joy, and at the same time that of others around us and society as a whole. The increase in power that is brought about by the experience of enduring joys is related to a social context in which joy is cultivated.

Self-love and Reason – Enduring Joys

The first part of the following section, will outline the features of internality and transformation of the affects that are central to Spinoza’s idea of reason. The discussion will then focus on tenacity and nobility as an alternative emotional economy and the way in which self-love and concern for others are reflected in them. Reason involves the further development of internality into an awareness of affective responses as not externally caused, but caused according to our own dispositions and experiences. Reason relates to the encouragement of joys and an understanding that is based on the order and connection of ideas and things. This understanding must come from understanding ourselves, our embodiment and disposition, and our place in relation to the whole. Rather than being based on abstract, general concepts, reason for Spinoza is based on an internal understanding of commonality which is also a recognition of agreement with others.

In order to achieve a greater level of expression of activity there must be a different basis to our knowledge and understanding. This is the order and connection of things and ideas which is also, in Spinoza, self-knowledge and consciousness which surpasses the individual self and recognises the self in relation to others, the environment and to nature. Whereas the focus in science, and Enlightenment thinking, has been outward from ourselves, understanding objects, power and social structures apart from ourselves in order to distinguish them from human experience, Spinoza also includes self-understanding and
meaning in relation to these and an understanding of the role of affects in social relations. Rousseau includes an internality but it is not in relation to others and the workings of the affects. For Spinoza, since we know everything through our experience, rather than retreat from it, it is necessary to understand how we function as well as to explore the objects around us. We must have a more expansive sense of our own abilities, strengths and weaknesses that is not merely derived in comparison to others. We need to know our own passions in order to distinguish them from the things affecting us. Adequate knowledge involves an understanding of the true order of things, knowing what we can affect and what we are at the affect of. This is not limited to a knowledge and mastery of the world. It involves an awareness of the joyful passions and the experience of connection with the things that affect us with joy.

Imagination is the first kind of knowledge for Spinoza. The second kind of knowledge, reason, involves a self-love in which the self is regarded through its own power of acting and which is connected more directly to the conatus and original self-love as the power to affect and be affected. Reason in Spinoza involves an awareness of the essential connectedness to the other in which the self is more clearly defined than in imagination. There is an awareness of the sense in which we are connected to others and to the world through the functioning of reason, at the same time as there is a different acknowledgment of others involved in understanding the self and the other on their own terms.

...insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, they must do only those things that are good for human nature, and hence, for each man, i.e. those things that agree with the nature of each man ...

Reason is adequate knowledge for Spinoza and is associated with, that is, expressed in, affects which are active. This is the result of recognising what is common between bodies, what is in agreement with our own, which produces joy, an increase in the power of acting and state of well-being. This is in contrast to

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58 *Ethics*, IV, P20 - P27, pp.557-559. In these propositions Spinoza links the conatus with virtue and understanding.
59 The argument presented in IV, P29 - P35 (pp.560-564), involves moving from the broadest sense in which we have something in common with other things and their affect on us (P29) to the way in which agreement and disagreement with others in a society affects us. It is important to note that we can have much in common and yet disagree in nature (if we are subject to passions).
60 *Ethics*, IV, P35, Dem., p.563.
the antagonisms of praise and blame where others are constructed as outside, as a threat and as the enemy. Through the common notions the recognition of commonalities between bodies is possible, they express this commonality. These are not ideas that are common to minds but are essentially what embodied individuals have in common and are derived from phenomenological experience through the affects in relations with others: ‘... there are certain ideas, or notions, common to all men. For all bodies agree in certain things …’61. They are expressed in ideas which all have access to insofar as the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things62. This is the immanence of ideas and things where both are expressions of the same thing, expressed and experienced in different ways.

In reason the affects based on sadness are transformed or limited and those based on joy are maximised. This is a result of a greater connection to the conatus as well as a knowledge of the order and connection of things. In III, P53 Spinoza says: ‘When the Mind considers itself and its power of acting, it rejoices, and does so the more, the more distinctly it imagines itself and its power of acting.’63 In considering the power of acting Spinoza is arguing against an idea of that power as absolute or unrestricted. He is suggesting a practical and interactive idea of power. The next two propositions state that the mind will ‘strive to imagine only those things that posit its power of acting’ and that the mind is saddened when it ‘imagines its own lack of power’64. It makes sense then that the individual not only seeks joy inducing encounters but also seeks encounters in which its power of acting is most enhanced. The affects themselves may be transformed or modified in relation to the encounter in order to maximise the individual’s power of acting and thus the experience of joy.

The pursuit of self-interest required by reason involves an assessment of the self in terms of one’s own essence and not the opinions of others. Hence self-esteem is ‘a Joy born of the fact that a man considers himself and his own power of acting.’65 In this form of self-love, the cause is internal rather than external. It is when each

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63 Ethics, p.524.
64 Ethics, p. 525.
individual acts by their own nature, which is both what each has in common with others and their own self experience, that they live according to reason and are most useful to each other: ‘When each man most seeks his own advantage for himself, then men are most useful to one another.’ Spinoza considers acting by one’s own nature as being able to make an appropriate assessment of one’s strengths and weaknesses. Where pride is ‘thinking more highly of oneself than is just’⁶⁷, it is also possible to ‘think less highly of oneself than is just’ which Spinoza calls despondency⁶⁸. In despondency there is a denial that one can ‘conceive of anything certain’ or ‘desire or do anything but what is wrong or dishonorable’⁶⁹. Too great a fear of shame so that one does not dare to do things that others equal to them would dare, can also result from thinking less highly of oneself than is just.

Spinoza applies several conditions to the effective and true operation of reason. One condition is that we must have an adequate understanding of our own affective responses and their effectiveness in maintaining our well-being. This will in turn make it possible to assess other things more adequately, to distinguish our own states from those of the other. In this sense there is a state of being that is more expressive of our power and involves more generosity and responsiveness to others.

Reasoning in Spinoza’s sense is based on the proper order of things and the common notions: ‘Those things which are common to all, and which are equally in the part and in the whole, can only be conceived adequately.’⁷⁰ It will thus be concerned with the recognition not the denial of what is shared with others. Reason involves a level of experience based on the recognition of commonality as well as the distinction of one’s own affections from those of the other.

Compassion in relation to others is more productive than pity in that it can be a joyful passion. Whereas pity is defined as ‘a Sadness, accompanied by the idea of an evil that has happened to another whom we imagine to be like us’, compassion is defined as ‘Love insofar as it so affects a man that he is glad at another’s good

⁶⁵ Ethics, p.536.
⁶⁶ Ethics, IV, P35, Cor. 2, p.563.
⁶⁷ Ethics, III, Definitions of the Affects, XXVIII, p.537.
⁶⁸ Ethics, III, Definitions of the Affects, XXIX, Exp., p.537.
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fortune, and saddened by his ill fortune." But Spinoza wants to free our affects also from these fluctuations of fortune. Hence while compassion is more productive than pity in that it leads to love, which is a kind of joy, it should not ultimately be subject to the fortunes of ourselves or others.

Hate can be changed into love which is more fruitful in that it produces the affects of joy. Joy is good as it enhances well-being whereas sadness is evil in that it decreases it. Love is Joy accompanied by the idea of an external cause. Disagreement follows from affects which are passions, Spinoza states in Proposition 33 in Part IV of the Ethics. Agreement is not simply the recognition of what is common but the experience of joy produced in encounters with others. The sense in which individuals can be said to agree with one another involves wanting for them the highest level of being and expression: "The good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men ...". The society that offers the best opportunity for such a development is the best form of society.

The generosity and responsiveness implicit in the emotional economy of tenacity and nobility is an empathic understanding. Agreement involves recognising the strength in others as we recognise the strength in ourselves. It does not involve assessing one's strength in relation to the weakness in others. Pity, for Spinoza, is related to the tendency to compare ourselves with others. Pity is related to blame, which is the sadness by which we are averse to another's actions, in that the desire to free the suffering is expressed as a desire to destroy whatever is causing the suffering. What follows from this is that it results in both the one who is feeling pity for another, and the one pitied, experiencing a sadness. Moreover, it maintains a social dynamic whereby wrong is dealt with by imitation of the affects, threat or violence, and Spinoza wants to imagine a context where the

70 Ethics, II, P38, p.474.
71 Ethics, III, Definitions of the Affects, p.536.
72 Spinoza could be seen as offering a distinction between what has been called "sentimentalism" and a form of emotional engagement which is more productive. This distinction, however, does not rely on an authenticity of feeling as opposed to the expression of genuine feeling. It is concerned with what can be most productive and to the benefit of all in increasing the experience of enduring joys. A discussion by William M. Reddy (2000) is useful in considering the historical response to the expression of sentimentalism in "Sentimentalism and Its Erasure: The Role of Emotions in the Era of the French Revolution" The Journal of Modern History 72: 109-152.
73 Ethics, IV, P37, pp.564-565.
passions, the sad emotions are not the basis of social relations.

The desire to free suffering follows from the dictate of reason and by reason we can only do what we know to be good\textsuperscript{74}. Spinoza emphasises generosity but at the social, rather than individual level, suggesting that rather than pitying others we would be better to do something about what creates poverty, for example:

Men are also won over by generosity, especially those who do not have the means of acquiring the things they require to sustain life. But to bring aid to everyone in need far surpasses the powers and advantage of a private person. For his riches are quite unequal to the task. Moreover the capacity of one man is too limited for him to be able to unite all men to him in friendship. So the case of the poor falls upon society as a whole, and concerns only the general advantage.\textsuperscript{75}

An individual or a society in which there is absence of either reason or pity, Spinoza says, is rightly called inhuman\textsuperscript{76}. In particular it fails to express the human essence which is its power or activity, joy, knowledge and understanding, nor does it offer the opportunity to develop that power. Pity is preferable in a society which is not governed by reason or active living to lack of pity, in that it can lead to reason and a greater expression of activity. It offers the potential of fellow feeling where there is not sufficient fellow feeling that can foster generosity in society as a whole.

The recognition of likeness involved in pity involves an imitation of the affects whereby we experience an affect in our own body due to the likeness between our body and that of the other:

\begin{quote}
The images of things are affections of the human Body whose ideas represent external bodies as present to us, i.e., whose ideas involve the nature of our Body and at the same time, the nature of the external body. So if the nature of the external body is like the nature of our Body, then the idea of the external body we imagine will involve an affection of our Body like the affection of the external body. Consequently, if we imagine someone like us to be affected with some affect, this imagination will express an affection of our Body like this affect. And so, from the fact that we imagine a thing like us to be affected with an affect, we are affected with a like affect. But if we hate a thing like us, then we shall be affected with an affect contrary to its affect, not like it, q.e.d.\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{74} Ethics, III, P27, Cor 3 & Dem., p.509 & IV, P50, Dem., p.574.
\textsuperscript{75} Ethics, III, P27, Cor.3, p.509 and IV, P50, Dem., p.574.
\textsuperscript{76} Ethics, IV, Appendix, XVII, pp.590-591.
\textsuperscript{77} Ethics, IV, P50, Schol., p.574.
\textsuperscript{78} Ethics, III, P27 & Dem., pp.508-509.
This is a foundation for the common notions in that it is a recognition of likeness. However, the common notions are not derived from the similarity of affect by which we are affected, but the commonalities of bodies and mind that bring about the experience of like affect. In reason one is not subject to the experience of the affect in the same way. It is not that we imagine likeness but that we recognise agreement\(^79\).

Agreement does not mean sameness however, as Spinoza stresses the differences between one individual and another and the range of affects and desires that can be experienced. III, P56 is concerned with the different kinds of affects produced in relation to external objects\(^80\). P57 then considers the difference in affect produced by the difference in the essence of each species and each individual. In the former Spinoza is considering the extent to which we are passive in relation to the affects and in the latter coming back to a consideration of the power that each thing has in relation to these objects according to, or derived from, its essence. Spinoza says, yes we are affected differently in terms of the nature of the object affecting us and to that extent we are passive, but we are also affected differently according to our own power or essence, and to the extent that we realise this we are active. This is what we bring to the encounter with the object, our essence and our experience, and this is what allows us to be active in relation to the affect.

The gladness or contentment that each individual has with their own nature is the actual idea or soul of the individual which constitutes them\(^81\). This is the conatus which has a specific nature as the essence of the individual. Deleuze gives an explanation on this point based on the idea that Spinoza provides a new ontology of the body that is not based on the form of the body or abstract classifications such as species and genus: ‘A man, a horse, 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

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\(^79\) Bodies agree in the minimal sense that they involve the concept of the same attribute and in movement – fast and slow, and motion and rest, and there is agreement between body and mind – ‘ideas of the affections by which the Body is affected involve the nature of the Body itself. Ethics, II, P13, L2, Dem., p.459 and P23, Dem., p.468.

\(^80\) Ethics, III, P56, p.527.

\(^81\) Ethics, III, P57, Schol., p.528.
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affected, and first of all by the way in which they fulfill and satisfy their life,…"82. Nor is this an idea of a fixed self which must be expressed.

The capacities for affecting and being affected are related to activity and passivity. In the next proposition Spinoza says the mind is active insofar as it considers itself and its power of acting and rejoices, and it necessarily considers itself when it has an adequate idea. Further, the mind has adequate ideas, therefore it conceives these and rejoices, and insofar as it does this it is active. This is described as a characteristic of (human) minds generally so that all have adequate ideas and to the extent that they are able to consider these, are active. The activity of the mind follows from affects which aid, enhance and increase its power. For these affects to be encouraged does not depend only on the individual but also on the social context.

For Spinoza suicide is not brought about by anything internal to the individual but by the overwhelming of the individual’s internal conatus or resources. This emphasises the extent to which the community is fundamental in the survival and enhancement of the individual. For Enlightenment and liberal theories, and for Rousseau, this interdependence is ultimately a limitation since freedom and self-determination are modeled on the idea of the individual as separate, independent and separately self-sustaining. For such theories empowerment requires independence from those around us and, for Spinoza, what would amount to an illusion of self-control since no individual could sustain themselves without the support of others in a community. This is a relation rather than a dependence.

‘…because each one, from the laws of his own nature, wants what he judges to be good, and strives to avert what he judges to be evil, and moreover, because what we judge to be good or evil when we follow the dictate of reason must be good or evil, it follows that insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, they must do only those things that are good for human nature, and hence for each man, those things that agree with the nature of each man."83

Each naturally wants to encourage those affects that increase their power but they can be misled by the associations formed through a social context which limit them to the desire to be approved of by others. They can, however, come to

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understand these associations in terms of the proper order and connection of things, i.e. understand that the associations are chance associations and that while one needs the approval of others, and to imitate the emotions of others in order initially, to conform to society, this can also be a limitation to one’s power and well being. Ultimately each comes to assess their own power in terms of the common notions and the order and connection of ideas. This is as much a social critique as it is a method for the enhancement of active living.

Spinoza suggests other ways in which we might be in agreement, such as in loving the same thing⁸⁴, but these sorts of agreements require the absence of other disagreements – ‘Peter has the idea of a thing he loves which is already possessed, whereas Paul has the idea of a thing he loves which is lost’. We are only troublesome in so far as we disagree with each other. Reason is an expression of human nature and when ‘men live according to the guidance of reason, they are said only to act’ and to agree in nature. Each must act according to his own nature and this makes men most useful to one another.

Knowing what is good and what is evil is a result of having adequate knowledge of the causes of things and knowing what is good for human nature, and for each individual. Knowing those things that agree with the nature of each man is a very different postulate for an ethics of living than those which tend to rely on general principles which are applied to all in the same way. The knowledge of what is good for each relies on the transformation of the affects – being envious and burdensome to each other is transformed in living according to the guidance of reason⁸⁵. Living according to the guidance of reason means to repay another’s hate, anger and disdain with love or nobility – ‘he ... will strive to bring it about that he is not troubled with affects of Hate, and consequently, will strive that the other should not undergo those affects.’⁸⁶

Nobility and love are the only things that can be opposed to the immoderate appetites of gluttony, drunkenness, greed and lust which are themselves species of love. Immoderate desires in the end involve a decrease in one’s power even though they are joys, and they must be turned into more enduring joys by

⁸³ Ethics, IV, P35, Dem., p.563.
⁸⁴ Ethics, IV, P34, Schol., p.562.
⁸⁵ Ethics, IV, P35, Schol., p.564.
transforming them into active affects such as love. In the Preface to Part IV Spinoza considers ideas of perfection and imperfection and good and evil. He notes that these are based on comparison and reveal nothing of the nature of things themselves, they reflect our judgments and opinions of other things in relation to ourselves. ‘As far as good and evil are concerned, they also indicate nothing positive in things, considered in themselves, nor are they anything other than modes of thinking, or notions we form because we compare things to one another. For one and the same thing can, at the same time, be good, and bad, and also indifferent.’

The civil state decides what is to be considered good and evil: ‘... there is nothing in the state of nature which, by the agreement of all, is good or evil ... in the civil state ... it is decided by common agreement what is good or what is evil. From this it is clear that just and unjust, sin and merit, are extrinsic notions, not attributes that explain the nature of the Mind.’ Agreement of this kind then is something that is negotiated within a social structure. It is not based on principles that are the same for everybody or on what is considered natural.

Tenacity and Nobility - Self-love and Concern for Others

The two main features of living according to the dictates of reason are to aim at one’s own advantage and to aim at the other’s advantage, through tenacity and nobility. Spinoza divides strength of character into two forms. Strength of character denotes: ‘All actions that follow from affects related to the Mind insofar as it understands.’ Tenacity, translated from the Latin animositas, is one of the forms of strength of character: ‘... by Tenacity I understand the Desire by which each one strives, solely from the dictate of reason, to preserve his being.’ Nobility, the other form of strength of character, from the Latin generositas, Spinoza defines as: ‘... the Desire by which each one strives, solely from the dictate of reason, to aid other men and join them to him in friendship.’ In tenacity and nobility, Spinoza implicitly interconnects actions which aim at one’s own advantage and those which aim at another’s advantage in establishing an alternative emotional economy to praise and blame.

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85 Ethics, IV, P46, Dem., p.573.
87 Ethics, IV, Preface, p.545.
88 Ethics, IV, P37, Schol. 2, pp.567-568.
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In contrast to liberal values of fairness and tolerance, generosity and perseverance assert power in a responsive rather than coercive or conformist sense. William Connolly contrasts fairness with generosity and ‘critical responsiveness’ in which the ‘self-confidence and concealed judgements of dominant constituencies’ can be challenged. Spinoza can be related more usefully to pluralist views which are concerned with creating recognition and responsiveness rather than the separateness, exclusiveness and antagonism evident in liberal ideas of freedom.

In Part IV of the *Ethics* Spinoza states in P73: ‘A man who is guided by reason is more free in a state, where he lives according to a common decision, than in solitude, where he obeys only himself.’ The idea of man being solitary and obeying only himself is not possible, as Spinoza clearly argues in the *Political Treatise* where he establishes that for human development of the mind and support of life, mutual help is necessary. The point being made in the *Ethics*, as in the *Political Treatise*, is that living by reason contrasts with living by fear. Being guided by reason means desiring to maintain ‘the principle of common life and common advantage’ and therefore living ‘according to the common decision of the state’. It also means hating no one, being angry with no one, envying no one, being indignant with no one, scorning no one and not being at all proud.

The pivotal point which moves from an economy of praise and blame is that: ‘Hate can be conquered by Love, and that everyone who is led by reason desires for others also the good he wants for himself’. Living by the guidance of reason means to strive that one should not experience affects of hate and that others also should not undergo those affects. Hate, he says, is increased in being returned and can be transformed by love; ‘Hate passes into Love’. Avenging wrongs with hate leads one to live ‘miserably’ whereas being eager to overcome hate with love is to strive ‘joyously and confidently’. Further, those who are ‘conquered’ by the return of hate with love, ‘yield joyously, not from lack of strength, but from an increase in their powers’.

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89 *Ethics*, III, P59, Schol., p.529.
91 *Political Treatise*, Ch. 2, §15, Elwes, pp.296-297.
92 *Ethics*, IV, P73, Dem., p.587.
93 *Ethics*, IV, P73, Schol., p.587.
94 *Ethics*, IV, P73, Schol., p.587.
95 *Ethics*, IV, P46, Dem., and Schol., pp.572-573.
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The generosity of this economy is evident in the ‘ordering our thoughts and images’ where we look for the good in each thing so that ‘we are always determined to acting from an affect of Joy’96. Rather than considering only men’s vices or disparaging men, he wants to encourage a focus on what can be achieved. A poor man, he says, who also desires wealth, ‘will not stop talking about the misuse of money and the vices of the rich. In doing this he only distresses himself, and shows others that he cannot bear calmly either his own poverty, or the wealth of others.’97 Another example is of ‘one who has been badly received by a lover thinks of nothing but the inconstancy and deceptiveness of women, and their other often sung vices. All of these he immediately forgets as soon as his lover receives him again.’98

The emotional economy in reason is one where: ‘... one who is eager to overcome Hate by Love, strives joyously and confidently, resists many men as easily as one, and requires the least help from fortune. Those whom he conquers yield joyously, not from lack of strength, but from an increase in their powers.’99 The aim is to increase the powers of all: ‘The greatest good of those who seek virtue is common to all, and can be enjoyed by all equally.’100 This is achieved through understanding102 and through the joyful affects. The affects must be acknowledged and responded to in a way that is unique to Spinoza’s ethics102. It is not obedience that Spinoza is demanding but understanding through engagement and recognition of commonality and heterogeneity.

Commonality is thus recognised in reason, not merely likeness, and the goal is that the affect following from being affected by another will be experienced as something following from one’s own nature, not an identification with the other’s suffering. Rather than experiencing the affect that the other is experiencing, as in pity, a joyful affect will be experienced which expresses something joyful toward

96 Ethics, V, P10, & Schol., pp.601-603.
97 Ethics, V, P10, Schol., pp.601-603.
98 Ethics, V, P10, Schol., pp.601-603.
99 Ethics, IV, P46, Schol., p.573.
100 Ethics, IV, P36, p.564.
101 Ethics, IV, P26, p.559.
102 This can be read as similar to a Christian ethic of returning the other’s hatred with love but Spinoza is demanding something different in avoiding dogma and in the intention that the expression of activity of each individual be fostered and developed for the sake of each and ultimately for all.
the other instead of pity. Pity is a sadness and can decrease the power of both.

In activity it is not merely an increase in the level of well-being or a state of equilibrium that is sought but an adequate and full possession and expression of the power of acting, which is ultimately freedom. Joy, so long as it is not excessive, not related merely to one part of the body, as in pleasure, but to the whole, agrees with reason, as it increases an individual’s power of acting. It is no longer a passion when the individual considers their own power and actions adequately. Self-esteem that arises from reason is the ‘highest thing we can hope for’. In considering themselves, an individual perceives what follows from their own nature, their own power of acting and understanding. Reason is this power of acting itself.

Self-esteem that results only from the opinion of others is empty in that when the encouragement of others ceases, the self-esteem ceases. ‘That is why he who exults at being esteemed by the multitude is made anxious daily, strives, sacrifices, and schemes, in order to preserve his reputation.’ The love of esteem by which we desire to be exulted by others, however, is productive in that it leads to reason and an understanding of one’s own power of acting.

Humility, for Spinoza is not a virtue but a passion. ‘Humility is a sadness born of the fact that a man considers his own lack of power, or weakness.’ Whereas self-esteem is ‘a joy born of the fact that a man considers himself and his own power of acting.’ Thus seeing a lack of power in himself is not true understanding of himself but shows that his power of acting is restrained. However it can be advantageous in leading to reason; ‘... those who are subject to these affects can be guided far more easily than others, so that in the end they may live from the guidance of reason, i.e., may be free and enjoy the life of the blessed.’

In comparing ourselves to others and perceiving a lack of power in ourselves or over-estimating our power, we limit the expression of our power. If conceiving a

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103 The idea here is radically different from a Christian ethic.
105 Ethics, IV, P52, Schol., p.575.
106 Ethics, P58, Schol., p.578.
107 Ethics, III, Definitions of the Affects, XXVI, p.536.
108 Ethics, III, Definitions of the Affects, XXV, p.536.
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lack of power in oneself results in understanding something more powerful than ourselves, and this contributes to our knowledge in determining our own power of acting, then we have a distinct understanding of ourselves which aids our power of acting. The sense of power in this self-esteem involves a shift in focus from comparison with others to seeing ourselves within the broader perspective of powers.

The self-esteem that arises from an assessment of oneself follows from the intersubjective nature of reason which remains intersubjective in its responsiveness to others. Freedom arises out of and only occurs in society. Insofar as an individual strives to live freely, they ‘desire to maintain the principle of common life and common advantage’.

The main defining characteristic of activity for Spinoza, as discussed in Chapter 4, involves the distinction of the affect from the external object perceived to be its cause, thereby recognising affects as self-caused, as resulting from one’s own nature even though one is affected by an encounter with another. In seeing our affects as derived from ourselves, individuals are truly active. Individuals who see themselves as the source of their affective experience, in this sense are productive for one another. The dynamic of praise and blame governing intersubjective relations is superseded and replaced by one which involves generosity towards others maintained by a self-assurance that does not require comparison with others.

Deleuze argues in Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza that there must be something more than the joyful passions themselves that brings about the recognition of the common notions and active affects. His answer is that the state as the representative of what is to be regarded as good and bad, right and wrong for the collective of individuals, brings about this possibility.

110 Ethics, IV, P54, Schol., p.576.
111 Ethics, IV, P53, Dem., p.576.
112 Ethics, IV, P73, Dem., p.587.
113 Ethics, V, P2, p.597-8.
115 The idea of the state must be distinguished from what can be said about human social interaction or society. Spinoza uses the term ‘society’ in the Ethics much more than he uses the term ‘state’. In the political writings on the other hand he uses ‘state’ more frequently than he uses ‘society’ but he uses the term ‘dominion’ more than he talks about
Society involves a transition or development analogous to that of the individual. A society based on the passions is one which is constituted out of fear and anxiety. A society based on reason is one in which individuals are truly free and each seeks his own advantage which is advantageous to all. In Spinoza's ethics, society has an important role in the development of the individual, in a constitutive as well as an instrumental sense. However, the individual is not merely constituted by society and is not limited to social strictures. While we are obliged to act within the rules agreed on by society, society cannot determine our thinking and we are not limited to the 'common collective affections' to which Deleuze claims, we must commit ourselves in transferring the judgement of what is good and bad to society.

A society governed by reason is one in which individuals act from their own power and are more responsive to one another. In separating the cause of the affects from external circumstances, the individual is able to experience others as self-determining, and thus in terms of their difference, as well as to experience their own power as active, rather than a lack of power. Although for Spinoza a civil state is initially based on fear it can evolve into one that is based on mutual relations of support because every individual, while constituted within social relations, at the same time constitutes themselves within those relations. It is this realisation that can bring about a form of social interaction that is mutually agreeable.

Spinoza is able to bring together self-interest with two models of intersubjective relations that are productive for both. Power is not ultimately and irresolvably, the state. Dominion refers to any political organisation and 'society' refers more generally to human sociality, that is, to the interactive dynamics of human relations. For Spinoza humans are necessarily social and organised into various kinds of political organisations. In the Ethics he is dealing mainly with humans as social and in the political works with the political forms of that sociality. In the following I will use the term 'society' since I am referring to the social perspective of the Ethics to consider the point made by Deleuze that it is the deference of the stipulation of right and wrong to the collective that brings about the possibility of the recognition of common notions and active affects.

116 Ethics, IV, P37, pp.564-568 and IV, P73, pp.587-588.
117 Deleuze (1990), p.267. Deleuze argues that in renouncing the right to personally decide what is good or bad, a citizen must 'renounce being determined by *any* personal affections whatever'. I disagree with his view here but am constrained in arguing the point in great detail in this context by demands of space. The relationship between individual and collective affections is important nonetheless.
118 Political Treatise, vi, I, Elwes, p.316.
power over others or at the expense of others, for Spinoza, but is in its fullest expression, a power with others. The power of each individual gains expression in relation to others and is cultivated by the expression of the power of each. The more each sees themselves as the cause of their own affective experience, the less each needs to respond to others aggressively or defensively and the more each responds with active affects which enhance the well-being of every individual. Spinoza's reason is an activism of joy. It encourages doing things to change what is inherently inequitable in a society through peaceful activism and not only through charity. It requires rethinking how good and evil are determined and defined.

The role of the imagination and the common notions in redefining what is included and what is excluded will be considered in the next chapter. The terms by which a society defines social relations influence the kind of passionate engagement that it encourages and this is expressed in how its unity is imagined. The ways in which liberal and Enlightenment thought have considered social relations have been determined by abstract universals, intended to be impersonal and general. This disinterested disengagement of reason is quite opposed to reason in Spinoza and is criticised by theorists in many disciplines seeking to engage with human experience in its myriad forms and to understand rather than determine, the terms within which what is right and wrong can be considered.

119 Ethics, VI, P36, Schol., p.565-568.
7. Social Imagination and the Common Notions - Affectivity and Politics

Introduction

The different forms of self-love implicit in Spinoza's ethics reveal the constitution of social relations, and the different ways in which these are imagined. The alternative to universals presented by the common notions in the post-modern climate indicates a possible bridging of the divide between the demands of Enlightenment reason and the real imagined communities that we are confronted with. Enlightenment imaginings of sociability are constituted by an apparent opposition to an other which is defined as the negative of it. Common notions require looking for the commonalities in disparate imaginings which would appear to have nothing in common. That these imaginings would have nothing shared between them in human experience is impossible in Spinoza's interconnected world. The common notions could therefore have an important role to play in the direction that cultural studies is currently taking, focusing more on particular experience and everyday life, and moving away from the universalising tendencies of reason.

This chapter will highlight a reframing of imagination in Spinoza through the work of Lloyd and Gatens in the book Collective Imaginings: Spinoza Past, Present and Future. It will examine the separation of imagination and reason inherent in their applications. Spinoza's common notions do not tend to be delineated as an alternative to traditional universals, and this is also a problem for Lloyd and Gatens. The focus in Western philosophical thought on the general and universal makes Spinoza's idea of common notions difficult to express. The employment of common notions in Spinoza's sense rather than traditional abstract universals, will be shown to extend beyond the terms of traditional philosophy by which Lloyd and Gatens are limited. Current cultural research emphasises engagement with concrete experience in ways that philosophy has traditionally been opposed to. But cultural studies can itself be unconscious of the philosophical underpinnings it

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1 Anzac Day and Mardi Gras represent very different imaginaries in Australia but, as Fiona Nicoll's work shows, there are points of connection in the national imagination which they share, not on a general level of being imaginaries which bind people together, but also in the effort to express themselves as national events. Fiona Nicoll (2001) From Diggers to Drag Queens: Configurations of Australian National Identity Pluto Press Australia.
employs. Cultural studies can benefit from the adoption of a philosophical framework such as Spinoza’s which offers real alternatives to universalism in the common notions without the exclusions common to philosophy.

Lloyd and Gatens highlight the social and interactive elements of Spinoza’s ethics and use his analysis of the function of imagination to position differing perspectives. However, the reinforcement of reason as a separate activity from imagination, results from their being situated within forms of philosophy which they themselves would want to escape. When imagination is taken seriously as having a role in social relations, reason cannot be detached from the workings of imagination. For Spinoza, the common notions form in imagination and lead to reason, and thus play an important part in cultivating, maintaining and transforming social relations. The lack of confrontation with affectivity in traditional accounts of reason is accompanied by a dependence on abstract universals. The utility of common notions for analyses of current issues needs some consideration. I will present two examples of concepts that function like common notions. The first is ‘multitude’ as used by Spinoza in the Political Treatise and more recently by Negri and Hardt in Empire. The second is ‘queer’ as discussed in a paper by Catherine Mary Dale which argues against Elizabeth Grosz’s criticisms of the notion of queer. ‘Multitude’ and ‘queer’ are like common notions in that they are intended to express the multiplicity of experience they delineate, and they confront the political dimensions implicit within them.

I will also discuss the work of postcolonial writers Dipesh Chakrabarty and Rey Chow, in order to demonstrate the value of the philosophical framework of Spinoza as an alternative to traditional frameworks. Spinoza can be applied within different discourses which seek to go beyond the abstractions of traditional philosophy. The work being undertaken in cultural studies engages with concrete, everyday experience through discussions and analyses of literature, film and other cultural forms. These forms express a range of dimensions of experience and relationships to the social context. Moreover, they often confront the emotional dimensions of experience by revealing the interactive elements fundamental to human expression. In many cultural discussions it is more like common notions which are being developed, rather than universals, to engage with the concrete embodied experience of individuals and collectivities.
Imagination and Collective Responsibility

Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens\(^2\) apply a new understanding of a Spinozistic ethics to current social and political issues such as responsibility and reconciliation. Their aim is to understand imagination in a different way to its traditional sense of merely representing what is not real. Their discussion works against the traditional idea of reason as opposed to imagination. However, Gatens and Lloyd take the position that reason is nevertheless able to overcome the bodily 'realities' of imagination.

Lloyd and Gatens pick up on the notion of imagined communities to argue for collective responsibility for past injustices\(^3\). They explore the relationship between sociability and imagination as they are considered by Spinoza in order to employ the idea of collective imaginings. While imagination is promoted as presenting a reality, it is for them a bodily reality which is contrasted with the mental reality of reason. This is evident in Lloyd’s handling of universal concepts and in her analysis of the letter to Balling about an omen regarding his son which I will discuss in what follows.

Genevieve Lloyd in the first half of the book, traces some of Spinoza’s roots in Stoic thought particularly focusing on imagination and freedom, and what can be said about responsibility from a Spinozistic perspective. Spinoza’s imagination, according to Lloyd, emphasises the nexus between two aspects of the imagination also recognised in the Stoics - the illusory and the capacity to understand universal concepts. It is the capacity to understand universal concepts which will lead to reason and the common notions in Lloyd’s understanding, and will balance the bodily and affective with rational investigation by the intellect. While imagination is being taken seriously as having an important role, reason is taken uncritically as based on universals.

Lloyd notes Spinoza’s example of the concept ‘man’ which he takes as a universal concept, but it is a figment since there is nothing real which can be recognised in

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the world of individual things. Lloyd is using the example here to emphasise the ‘dual role’ of imagination in a way that reinforces reason as a separate activity from the imagination. The dual role of imagination is its universalising and illusory capacities which facilitate reason and detachment. While ‘man’ is a figment since there is no thing in the world to which it corresponds, it is nevertheless a universal concept which Lloyd takes as facilitating detachment.

In elucidating the kinds of ‘fictions’ Spinoza sees in imagination, Lloyd notes three unavoidable and avoidable illusions, those which arise from ‘bodily structure’ and those by which ‘the unenlightened are misled and coerced’, and thirdly, ‘the more adequate fictions through which philosophy is enabled to grasp the elusive truths “of god, of ourselves and of things”’. The third is the universals which Spinoza is critical of, and refers to as ‘fictions’, in contrast to the common notions. The illusory capacity of imagination can be debilitating, according to Lloyd, but Spinoza balances the dual stance of imagination by maintaining that it is not a source of error: ‘The role of imagination is to confront the mind with awareness of the state of the body of which it is the idea.’ Error is a result of a lack of something which Lloyd takes to be supplied from outside the imagination, that is, ‘a lack which only intellect can remedy’.

However, I suggest that while Spinoza indicates that it is the order and connection of the intellect rather than the random order of the imagination which is the source of truth, the order of the imagination has to do with the order of the particular embodied individual in relation to their own experience in interaction with others. This must be understood as a connected experience in which the abstract order of concepts is problematic. Spinoza indicates that the intellect is able to embrace a broader range of experience than that of its own embodiment, not by abstracting from that embodiment but by engaging through it with others. The criticism by Spinoza of impersonal, abstract universals is not discussed by Lloyd so that their difference from the common notions which embrace the variety of experience they encompass is reduced. The most problematic aspect of the ‘dual’ stance of imagination is seen by Lloyd as unavoidable and avoidable illusions arising from

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4 Lloyd, p.18.
5 Lloyd, pp.35-36.
6 Lloyd, p.34.
7 Lloyd, p.34.
'bodily structure' in the first case and from 'superstitions' in the second. These must be corrected by reason in Lloyd's reading. Lloyd sees the personal and universal through the distinction between imagination and reason. In Spinoza's embodied ethics, however, the personal and interpersonal are aspects of both imagination and reason but the way they are lived out is different in each.

Lloyd presents a discussion of a letter by Spinoza to Pieter Balling about an omen mentioned to Spinoza by Balling in a previous letter. She says that the omen is located by Spinoza in the imagination, and the experience of the omen is explained according to rational principles as a 'confused apprehension of the future'. The omen involves Balling hearing sighs from his son when he was well and healthy which he subsequently made when he became ill and eventually died. Spinoza takes the omen very seriously since he can see that Balling's connection with his son did indeed allow him to experience a future thing through the effects of imagination. The omen has a real status but it is not derived from physical causes as Lloyd interprets it: 'To regard omens as belonging with the operations of causal processes in the physical world threatens the rational understanding of that world.' Understanding the workings of imagination involves separating it from an understanding of the external world.

According to Lloyd, it is by locating superstitious ideas in the imagination that Spinoza sees the possibility of freedom from false ideas, not by dismissing all superstition as merely false. Lloyd's concern is that these ideas are not shed but 'reconstructed in a way that reveals them to be no threat to reason'. To be no threat to reason, imagination will be taken seriously as representing an interpersonal connection but a superstitious one nevertheless. The superstition is related to a real connection in which the understanding is based only on embodiment and affectivity. Reason for Lloyd will provide the rational categories which will bring the relation out of superstition. For Spinoza though, reason will recognise a broader order in which the embodied connection between father and son can be situated. This connection maintains its embodiment and affectivity and

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8 Lloyd, pp.35-36.
9 Lloyd, p.19.
12 Lloyd, p.20.
rather than being based on abstracted categories which over-ride the personal and interpersonal, recognises it and transforms it.

It is the experience of Balling himself in his relationship with his son that makes sense of the omen, rather than its status as a figment of imagination. The omen has a reality, a causality that is related to the context of the man Balling, and his relationship with his son. Lloyd expresses this as the ‘mind’s relations with the body, rather than the relations between physical events’\(^{13}\) thus placing the shift in causality from physical events to mind/body interaction. That is, Balling experiences an omen because of the particular relation between his mind and his body. However, Spinoza displaces the causality from external to internal rather than from physical to mental/physical. The reality is Balling’s which is attributable to his embodiment and his relation with his son: ‘because the father, by the union he has with his son, is a part of the said son, the father’s soul must necessarily participate in the son’s ideal essence, its affections, and consequences’\(^{14}\). Lloyd’s explanation focuses on the body rather than the whole experience of union between father and son. Since she wants to emphasise the omen as a reality rather than an illusion, it must have a bodily reality. She states: ‘The father, because of his close awareness, grounded in love, of his son’s body can discern in it intimations of what is to come that are not yet perceptible as present illness.’

Lloyd highlights the sense in which for Spinoza the involvement of emotion and community are bound up with ideas of the future in the imagination: ‘Omens are in effect premonitions, confused intimations of the future, which arise from states of strong emotion in relation to others with whom we form a wider whole.’\(^{15}\) Spinoza relates omens to the association of ideas whereby humans are able to form strong emotional bonds and thus wider wholes in which they participate. Lloyd notes that while these operations of the mind do not follow the order of reason, they are nevertheless a basis for reason. The affects and community are clearly connected to imagination which she considers the non-rational. Spinoza connects reason and imagination in the letter to Balling and does not position them as separate domains in the way that Lloyd suggests.

\(^{13}\) Lloyd, p.21.
\(^{14}\) Spinoza, Letter, p.354.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., p.22.
Spinoza connects the intellect to the imagination in stating that imagination: ‘follows the traces of the intellect in everything and links its images and words together in order, as the intellect does its demonstrations, so that we can hardly understand anything of which the imagination does not form some image from a trace.’ The imagination is ‘determined by the constitution of the soul alone’ which suggests that it follows an internal logic of its own related to embodied experience. It is the internality that explains imaginations and emotions, that is, experience contributes to what we make of the world in an embodied sense which is both mental and physical. And Spinoza is not dismissive or disparaging of this factor as Lloyd points out, rather, he wants to understand it.

The relationship of reason to imagination is stated by Lloyd as rational investigation of ‘what is of itself non-rational’ and as involving exposing ordered patterns. This suggests that Spinoza takes the order and connection of things in the intellect (mental reality) as an order determined by logic or abstract ideas opposed to the random order of experience in the imagination. The imagination is referred to as a random order of experience by Spinoza but he does not set up reason as providing the solution to the conflicts of experience through an order of abstract concepts which over-rides experience. Lloyd examines the role of the common notions in considering the way associations of ideas formed from different images contribute to conflicts between different minds as well as within the same mind. The rational investigation depends on the underlying commonalities between bodies and the associations formed on the basis of those commonalities – ‘the reinforcement of their shared strivings through the forming of larger associations between bodies’. The sociability of the imagination and emotions is related to the fluctuations of imagination which is dependent on varying images and experiences and their systematic relation to the emotions.

The rational understanding of this affective logic of the non-rational becomes the core of Spinoza’s analysis of the forms of political life - analyses which centre on understanding the organisation of the passions rather than the deliberations of a supposedly rational will.

While the imagination is being considered in a much more dynamic sense than it has tended to be in its relation to affect, sociability and community, reason

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16 Spinoza, Letter, p.353.
17 Lloyd, p.25.
remains contrasted as a distinctly different, less personal order, employing
universals. The common notions do not appear distinct from the other kinds of
universals which Spinoza criticises since the reliance in reason on abstract
universals is not brought into question. The sociability of imagination is the main
focus of Lloyd’s discussion but reason remains in the background as a standard of
intellectual understanding which is separated from the fluctuations of experience
and consequently the social and political context.

The order and connection of ideas is the internal order of the embodied individual
in imagination and it is experience that must be understood and extended beyond
the individual. This does not occur by determining experience from the order of
the intellect as a separate, logical and impersonal order. For it is not just the
commonality that is important but the ability to encompass and evoke particularities. Universals are based on the formation of images for Spinoza. These
are formed according to the disposition of the body and so vary according to what
the body is affected by. In them the mind is able to imagine ‘neither slight
differences of the singular (such as the colour and size of each one) nor their
determinate number’19. Spinoza then, considers universals to be images rather
than understandings. Common notions are understandings that recognise the
commonalities and the particularities among things.

Lloyd states: ‘The power of reason resides not in shedding [the passions] but in
understanding them, and to that extent, becoming free.’20 The emphasis is on
understanding and knowledge neglecting the necessity for Spinoza of an
engagement with and transformation of the affects in the functioning of reason to
experience more enduring joys. To change the affects requires a relationship to
other affects and not just reflective or abstracted understanding. Lloyd’s focus is
on building up the elements required to establish Spinoza’s social/political
framework including a consideration of the economy of praise and blame21.
However, the economy of tenacity and nobility which Spinoza associates with
reason is not referred to by Lloyd. Rather, reason as detached observation remains
the ultimate basis from which she understands different ways of re-thinking

20 Lloyd, p.32.
21 Lloyd, p.57 and p.68 in particular.
central political concepts: 'In Spinoza’s philosophy the emphasis shifts away from praise and blame to understanding the operations of affect and imagination in which selves are multiply constituted.' Understanding the operations of affect and imagination is not enough. Reason involves transforming the affects as well as the conceptualisations of affect, imagination and selves.

Lloyd considers the connections between the notion of the social imaginary and Spinoza’s treatment of imagination. Spinoza’s version of the ‘imaginary’, she says, has a social dimension and ‘evokes the powers and limits of human bodies in interaction’. It is precisely the kinds of beliefs and images that make up the imaginary that Spinoza wants to draw attention to. For him there can be an imaginary which is based on something individuals/bodies have in common as well as the knowledge of their differences. A ‘better’ imaginary might be negotiated in terms of the transformation from an economy of praise and blame to an economy of tenacity and nobility in which the transformation of the affects is the key.

Ideas will empower and enhance activity through embodied awareness and the development of an internality that is recognised as affective. The difference, Lloyd states, between passivity and activity is: ‘an affect experienced without understanding it, and the same affect understood.’ However, the latter requires additional elements not normally included in reason such as an understanding of the ‘privation’ of ideas, the internality which is brought in relation to the broader context of experience and the multiplicity of experience within it. The appetite as activity requires dealing with the ways in which we affect and are affected, and complementing what affects us and how it affects us. The point about agreement and overcoming praise and blame has to do with empathic awareness and an overcoming of power as dominance in order to place ourselves in relation to larger wholes. Understanding involves an affective transformation, an experience of the affective context in a different way.

In discussing responsibility Lloyd draws on Balibar’s consideration of the role of the notion of the multitude in Spinoza to highlight the way in which the

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22 Lloyd, p.68.
23 Lloyd, p.39.
24 Lloyd, p.50
circulation of the affects is constituted in a given historical and political context. It is then in understanding and transforming the affective network that responsibility lies\textsuperscript{25}, thus shifting responsibility from individuals to social practices and institutions, as well as changing the dynamic from one of praise and blame to understanding individual/group relations and responsibility itself in new ways\textsuperscript{26}. This offers the possibility of integrating new thinking on identity and difference in the context of cultural diversity and rethinking how we understand taking responsibility for our actions, and what we are, which adds a broader ethical dimension.

In considering the idea of individual and cultural identities as less boundaried and whole, more overlapping and interdependent through Spinoza's analysis of the dynamic of affective relations, Lloyd is able to explore the idea of collective responsibility, not only in the sense of responsibility for what we have willingly participated in, but also for what has brought us to where we are, the contribution of past identities to the present: 'In understanding how our past continues in our present we understand also the demands of responsibility for the past we carry with us, the past in which our identities are formed. We are responsible for the past not because of what we as individuals have done, but because of what we are.'\textsuperscript{27}

Lloyd acknowledges the affective dimension of imagination but the role of the affects in reason does not appear as crucial. The significance of joy and the relation of it to the social context is paramount to an understanding of how Spinoza conceives the part played by reason. There is a need for the development of a framework through which the affects are confronted in their constitutive social and political role in order to play out their transformative significance. This is clearly part of Lloyd's analysis but the analysis focuses more on the dimensions familiar to philosophical discourse where reason is most concerned with conceptual apparatus or 'mental reality' and opposed to the immanence of bodily experience of affect, internality and inter-connection.

\textsuperscript{25} Lloyd, p.69.
\textsuperscript{26} Lloyd, p.72.
\textsuperscript{27} Lloyd, p.81.
Ethology and Collective Life

In the second part of the book Moira Gatens further explores the social and political aspects of Spinoza’s thought beginning with considering Spinoza’s relation to contract theory and his ideas on the individual and collectivities through Deleuze’s use of the notion of ethology. Gatens offers a discussion of Spinoza which seeks to go beyond the usual interpretation of his ideas in liberal, Enlightenment thinking, but remains limited to some aspects of that thinking. Lloyd and Gatens draw on Deleuze and Balibar’s re-readings of Spinoza which are limited by a focus on power as external\textsuperscript{28}. It will be shown that Gatens, in looking at Spinoza from the context of contract theory interprets him through liberal thinking on right and power from Hobbes. In Hobbes, right and power are equal, which is generally taken to mean that right equals might. Power is understood as strength or force. The emphasis on reading Spinoza through contract theories results in attributing an idea of natural right at odds with Spinoza’s political thought. It is particularly in the externalisation of power, power as a force outside us, that the limits of this reading are evident

The relationship between right, power and autonomous thought in Western liberal thought and political forms has had an external focus on identification and control of the other as a threat. Security means, in this context, geographical security through military, economic and diplomatic assertion of power and right for example\textsuperscript{29}. ‘Security has been central to the construction of powerful images of national identity and otherness, and central to their use in bitter political conflicts which were too often resolved in violent and anti-democratic ways.’\textsuperscript{30}

Gatens starts by stating that: ‘Spinoza’s political philosophy represents a critical departure both from traditional conceptions of natural right and from social contract theory.’\textsuperscript{31} In her reading of the \textit{Theological-Political Treatise} however, Gatens first casts Spinoza as having an ambivalent attitude toward the multitude’s rational abilities and as reinforcing an opposition between reason and passion, imagination and superstition. Fear, she says, is seen by Spinoza as a ‘powerful

\textsuperscript{28} Deleuze was previously discussed in Chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{29} Anthony Burke (2001) \textit{In Fear of Security: Australia’s Invasion Anxiety} Pluto Press Australia.
\textsuperscript{30} Burke, p.xxi.
\textsuperscript{31} Gatens (1999), p.87.
force in holding the passions of the multitude in check. The point for Gatens is to emphasise the nature of collective life in Spinoza’s thought and to establish his difference from other natural rights and social contract theories. This is achieved by looking at the role of imagination and fear, and the way in which imaginative forms are used for social control by appealing to the fear of the masses and masking that appeal in images of divine sanction.

Gatens draws on Deleuze’s exploration of the notion of ethology as a way of highlighting the implications of power relations in the way collectivities function. Gatens has set up the problematic of Spinoza’s idea of natural right as the right of each to pursue their own interests. The ethological approach will focus on the relation of each thing with its environment, what aids it and what harms it, rather than claiming to ‘know, ahead of observation and experimentation, what the capacities of this or that being, or the powers which it may come to possess’ are.

It will thus take note of the context and the ways in which this affects the powers and capacities of individuals, and then consider the ‘compositibility’ or agreement between individuals.

The problem for the liberal, post-Enlightenment reader, probably more so for the philosopher, as Deleuze notes, is understanding how to get from the apparent limitation of the sad passions to the joyful affects, from inadequate to adequate knowledge and to consciousness of ourselves, God and Nature. Deleuze sees the liberal, Enlightenment reader as putting the problem the other way around – how is it we have inadequate ideas when our experience is consciousness, consciousness of ourselves, God and Nature. Reflection has been identified with consciousness in Descartes but for Deleuze that is what has to be explained. In Spinoza, human consciousness of appetites and of what systematically produces joy will result in the endeavour to understand and maximise those experiences.

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32 Gatens, p.88.
33 Gatens’ aim in this section, it appears is to draw out the significance of collective life in Spinoza’s Theological-Political Treatise and the role of utility in that. The next section focuses on Spinoza’s interpretation of the story of Adam which has some particularly interesting differences from the traditional religious interpretations. Along the lines of Spinoza’s ‘naturalistic’ interpretation Adam does what is inevitable considering his constitution and his lack of knowledge. Gatens points here to a correlation between ‘ways of knowing and ways of being’ – ‘Adam’s way of knowing is also a way of being’ in order to make the point that Adam acts from a position of ignorance, lacking particularly, ‘knowledge of himself, God and natural law’ (p.97).
34 Gatens, p.101.
through more appropriate collectivities. Liberal thought, however, is concerned with how we can become more reasonable, how it is possible to create harmony and unity where there is discord and disagreement. Gatens states this in traditional liberal terms: 'All human beings can do in order to strive to preserve themselves is to form associations which will be structures such that the respects in which individuals agree outweigh the respects in which they disagree.'

In this interpretation individual power is constrained and organised by collectivities. It is recognised that each individual has the power to compose compatible relations with others and to endeavour to harmonise those powers with others. Gatens states: '... when both the powers of the individual and the powers of the collective are in harmony, they become mutually reinforcing and together constitute a well-functioning unity.' This unity must be born out of an assumed climate of disagreement and disharmony which appears natural. The disagreement, however, is just as much a product of social relations as is agreement.

The emphasis for Gatens on the individual, and agreement with others focuses on the external control of agreement. It has been established that humans are necessarily social for Spinoza and the discussion of bodies and ethology indicates a breaking down of the boundaries which are traditionally seen as separating the individual as an isolated entity from its context and environment. Individuals are thus as much a product of the social context as they are a reinforcer and producer of it. The liberal idea of constraining the rights of each in order to create cooperation is nevertheless being expressed here. In my view however, what Spinoza means by right has more to do with combating the idea that some are more deserving than others of having access to optimum social conditions, than with the might of each individual to assert themselves which must be constrained, as in liberal ideas of right. Social exclusions are based on hierarchies of merit where some are considered more deserving than others because of what they do, how they express themselves, what they look like, and so on. This is what Spinoza is arguing against and what has been lost in the liberal emphasis on both the use and avoidance of coercion to 'protect' individual freedom.

36 Gatens, p.105.
37 Gatens, p.106.
Gatens points out, following Deleuze, that the political problem ('how do we come to form reasonable collectivities?') is also the epistemological problem ('how do we come to form adequate ideas?') and it is this conjunction that equally forms the ethical. Particular ways of knowing are brought together with 'corresponding ways of life', bringing out:

the potential of Spinoza's philosophy to articulate an embodied ethical and political theory appropriate to different kinds of individuals, the different kinds of polities in which they dwell, and the different modalities of self-understanding they express; and it does so without recourse to transcendent, universal norms by which to judge such individuals, associations and understandings.\textsuperscript{38}

As argued in my discussion of Deleuze, it is necessary to distinguish what Spinoza means by agreement and unity from traditional notions of agreement and unity which emphasise representation, with the individual's desires as primary and thus having more significance than the social context. The advantage to be gained from seeing how our powers can be combined to produce something more powerful, if we are in harmony, like an orchestra\textsuperscript{39}, in Spinoza is clear. It is not based on a coercive restriction of the expression of rights however.

Gatens deals with the relation between power and the status of norms given Spinoza's position of immanence and apparent equation of right with power. It appears that natural right does not produce normative judgements, so she asks, how is it possible for a Spinozistic philosophy to condemn some forms of sociability?\textsuperscript{40} Given that nothing is good or bad in itself, it is the overall context which will determine whether a state of affairs is good or bad and this will be determined according to whether human understanding is increased or diminished. Spinoza stresses that laws are human made and will only be respected and obeyed to the extent that they serve the collective.

Tyrannical rule cannot last long since it eventually undermines its own power by decreasing the powers and virtue of its constituency. There is then a sense in which natural right also entails ethical judgement. Balibar's discussion of how political power works out for Spinoza emphasises the dynamic involved in the transfer of power between rulers and ruled. This transfer of power tends to be

\textsuperscript{38} Gatens, p.106.
seen in liberal thought as lessening the power of the individual and hence the multitude, through obedience, but this is not what Spinoza means. Balibar is also reading Spinoza through liberal ideas of power. Spinoza does not see the transfer of power involved as lessening the power of each, but he does see it as giving up the right to determine what is regarded as right and wrong by society. As he says, the power of two is an increase overall and he suggests that a collectivity is the more powerful the more individuals subscribe to it. There is thus an increase in the power of all, depending on the form of the collectivity. But the collectivity is not meant to take power from the individual.

If two come together and unite their strength, they have jointly more power, and consequently more right over nature than both of them separately, and the more there are that have so joined in alliance, the more right they all collectively will possess.  

While also noting that, for Spinoza, ‘human life is originally and necessarily collective life’  

Gatens nevertheless talks in terms of agreement on constraints to natural rights as the elements of collective life found in imagination and the conatus. At this point the imagination and conatus seem to be closely identified, which would suggest an interpretation of conatus as overwhelmingly self-centred. The conatus is the seat of collective and individual striving, the ability to affect and be affected, and this can appear in various forms depending on the relations in the social environment that help to shape and mould it.

Spinoza has a very different sense of ‘natural’ from that of many other theorists of his time due to the fact that he emphasises, often in opposition to those theorists, that man is part of nature and is necessarily social. The result of this is, as Gatens notes, that ‘nothing is forbidden by the law of nature, except what is beyond everyone’s power’. Many aspects of Spinoza’s political philosophy are appreciated in new ways in Gatens’ reading, however there is an implicit equation of power with coercion in her analysis. This equation is evident in theorists such as Hobbes and is implicit in most liberal theories, but does not apply equally to Spinoza.

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41 Gatens and Lloyd, p.108.
42 Political Treatise, Chapter II, §13, p.296.
43 Gatens, p.92.
44 Gatens, p.93.
Spinoza’s idea of right questions any assumption of inequality based on nature. A king has no more right in this sense than the lowliest peasant. Freedom is a result of understanding how we are determined to act. Gatens explains that for Spinoza, authority should therefore frame its institutions so that ‘every man, whatever his disposition, may prefer public right to private advantage’ and should cultivate ‘rational powers’ through education thus allowing people to truly act through their own powers. The success of the polity is indicated by the degree of freedom evident in its citizens. Freedom in Spinoza’s sense is the experience of joy and an increase in the powers of all, not the power of coercion but the power to act and express. This involves understanding the causes, within oneself and others, rather than seeing only external causes or free will as determining our ability to act, or obedience achieved through coercive manipulation of our fears and hopes.

Gatens notes that for Spinoza political forms which rely on oppression lack power and are ‘inconsistent with reason, which attends to specifically human interests’. Laws and institutions framed according to reason organise the affects into ‘stable and relatively congenial forms of sociability’. There will always be passion and disagreement to some extent so it is always a matter of degree. Rationality is associated with understanding, which is ‘our highest power, pleasure and virtue’.

Gatens establishes the materiality of the imagination as it is interpreted by Balibar and Negri, in order to further explore the role of imaginary fictions in social cohesion. These fictions are not false or illusory but serve a real purpose in creating group and individual identities. The meaning and value polities offer their citizens involves an affective investment, the senses of loyalty and belonging, knowledge of the past and shared goals for the future which Gatens says, ‘appeal more to the imagination than reason, and pertain more to sociability than to pursuing one’s individual advantage’. Affective investment remains connected to imagination for Gatens. The affective investment in the affectivity of reason, one which promotes the good of all and is based on generosity and a sense of one’s own power as a productive and generous promotion of enduring joys is not so

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44 Gatens, p.117.
45 Gatens, p.118.
46 Gatens, p.119.
47 Gatens, p.124.
evident for Gatens. Gatens goes on to note, the imagination is an ‘aid to the achievement of rational aims.” However, it is also more than this in that reason is itself an engagement, through the common notions, with the context of affectivity and its transformation.

For Spinoza, reason is not concerned with determining the right or wrong of imaginings but in understanding them and their affective investment, and negotiating between them. Gatens recognises this but the association of affectivity with imagination remains central to her analysis, ultimately leaving reason as a separate non-affective sphere. Gatens does not question the liberal tendency to see power as coercive and individual desires as necessarily conflicting and that these differences will be arbitrated through reason and over-ride power with an objectified set of standards.

The employment and explication of Balibar’s notion of “transindividuality” serves to show how unity and multiplicity can be situated as reciprocal rather than opposed in reading Spinoza on individual in relation to community. However, Gatens notes, there is still the problem of difference - disagreement is related to the passions and agreement to reason which is often interpreted as “the same in all”. The consequence then is that ‘the more wise the polity becomes, the more it will tend toward the promotion of sameness and the exclusion of difference.” This follows from understanding reason in a particular way as based on universals which dissolve and subsume differences into a universally applied category. This is a problem which Gatens does not specifically address. If reason is regarded not only as knowing the true causes of things and the understanding that follows from that, but also as a responsiveness to the context in which that knowledge functions, through the common notions, then it does not simply amount to agreement as sameness.

The tack that Gatens takes is to point out the processual nature of identities and their forming and re-forming through participation in larger wholes. Reason then is ‘an immanent achievement of collective human endeavour, not an innate “faculty”.” Encounters which encourage knowledge of the common notions

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4 Gatens, p.126.
5 Gatens, p.127.
6 Gatens, p.127.
(agreement) can be understood as ‘collective *transformations* of previous identities’\(^{51}\). Reason’s task then, in the pursuit of liberty, is ‘the collective construction in time, of something new, not the discovery of something which already existed. In this sense reason is an embodied capacity of an actually existing human collective which is endeavouring to preserve itself.’\(^{52}\) In this formulation those differences that derive from oppressive power relations are transformed into ‘actively affirmed ways of life’ and other differences remain in ‘revised forms’\(^{53}\).

Harmonious balance depends on variation rather than sameness, Gatens points out, and imposing a minimum set of public norms will not cancel or exclude differences\(^{54}\). Critical reflection on standards and norms is central to the effective functioning of democratic polities. Hierarchical structures will be open to restructuring due to the inevitable resistance to domination and subordination. The liberal/communitarian impasse, which opposes individual and community, thus disappears in a Spinozistic political theory where the relation between individual and community is conceived as reciprocal due to the fact that it confronts power relations and considers the individual in its relations within a social context\(^{55}\). However, this is only possible if there is a basis in common notions rather than in universals, a point that is not emphasised strongly enough by Gatens.

The notion of the social imaginary is used by Gatens to consider the issue of responsibility for the past. The multiplicities that exist within cultures, societies and nations requires recognition and negotiation between conflicting imaginaries. In post-colonial liberal democracies the past has consisted of a violent and enforced colonisation which involved differences being seen as so extreme that possession of law, social institutions of any kind and sovereignty, were denied to the colonised. This also often involved a denial of a common humanity and resulted in the exclusion of the colonised from the process of creating a ‘new’ society. Current social and political institutions thus embody ‘the norms, interests,

\(^{51}\) Gatens, p.127, emphasis in original.
\(^{52}\) Gatens, p.128.
\(^{53}\) Gatens, p.128.
\(^{54}\) Gatens, pp.128-129.
\(^{55}\) Gatens, p.132.
understandings and imaginings of those whom they were designed to serve’ and thus oppress and marginalise those who were excluded\(^5^6\).

The book ends with a consideration of the conflicting imaginaries of ‘terra nullius’ and Mabo. Gatens notes that modern moral philosophers do not accept that collectivities can be responsible\(^5^7\). The problem, according to Gatens, is that they regard these wholes as imaginary and therefore as having no real status. This view she says, can be challenged on two grounds. Firstly, continuity between past and present exists within the juridical system and laws thus sustain a strong diachronic connection between past and present as well as a synchronic one between those existing in the present. Secondly, the rejection of the idea of collective responsibility is a failure to ‘attend sufficiently to the force of the imagination in social and political life’\(^5^8\). Gatens emphasises the status of the social imaginary as constitutive of forms of sociability and as having its own logic which cannot be shaken by ‘demonstrating the falsity of its claims, its inherent contradictions or its aporias’\(^5^9\). The usual strategies of reason cannot be applied, she says, of opposing imagination as fantasy to the logic of reason and overriding all affective and imaginative connection.

The problem here is not only the dismissal of imagination as illusory but also the inability of philosophy to grasp the difference between common notions and abstract universals. As Gatens notes, for contemporary moral philosophers who ‘dismiss the idea of collective responsibility ... national or group identities cannot be seen as genuine because they compose imaginary wholes’\(^6^0\). The abstract universal whole is considered an imaginary by Spinoza because it is partial. Philosophers dismiss imagined wholes in favour of universal ones which for Spinoza have a lesser status than the imagined ones.\(^6^1\) The ‘striving of reason ... is the art of organising encounters’ which is the basis of the formation of common notions. ‘Imaginary wholes’ then, are in a sense, common notions if they can encompass a multiplicity or plurality within them in contrast to abstract universals which regard every individual as the same.

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\(^5^6\) Gatens, pp.138-139.
\(^5^7\) Gatens, p.142.
\(^5^8\) Gatens, pp.142-143.
\(^5^9\) Gatens, p.143.
\(^6^0\) Gatens, p.126, emphasis in original.
\(^6^1\) Gatens, p.105.
Lloyd and Gatens both want to challenge the status of imagination as illusory in philosophy. The overall argument is that imagination is significant in Spinoza and not just dismissed. This is achieved through the idea that there is a bodily reality as well as a mental reality, and that imagination is the source of bodily awareness and encounters. Gatens argues that: 'The social imaginary is constitutive of, not merely reflective of, the forms of sociability in which we live.' The main value and intention of the book is to reframe the imagination's social/political role within the context of philosophical discourse. However, the argument is constrained by limitations of philosophical discourse itself which recognises universals and not common notions. This makes it difficult to explore aspects of Spinoza's reason that contrast to traditional understandings. Yet this would give a greater power to the value of imagination in relation to reason in the context of social and political analysis.

The differentiation of universals from the common notions draws attention to the problem of making abstract categories more real than the connections based on imagination. The philosophers Gatens is critical of favour universal wholes which are abstractions not designed to express multiplicities, and these are the kind of universals Spinoza is critical of. However, a collectivity is intended to denote a multiplicity rather than a general category. It expresses the variety of particular experience existing within it and is therefore more like a common notion. While common notions are described by Spinoza as based on what things have in common, they are also intended to acknowledge particularity and variation within them. Lloyd and Gatens, in their discussion lead away from everyday experience. For Spinoza people engage all the time in imagination but are led away from it through the categories of universal reason. Spinoza himself is more fruitful in his engagement with imaginings on various levels.

It has been argued throughout this thesis that Spinoza's notion of reason has been considered in the mentalist sense of post-Cartesian Enlightenment thinking as abstracted from and mediating experience through universal concepts. It has also been established that reason in Spinoza involves embodiment and affective experience which must be transformed rather than overcome. Other affective

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62 Lloyd, p.12.
63 Gatens, p.143.
economies must be developed which encourage experiences of enduring joys and a self-love based on a self-assessment that is not only individual but also social, and is able to establish alternatives which move beyond the antagonism of praise and blame. Lloyd and Gatens are not able to signify an alternative affective economy because to some extent they consider reason to be beyond affectivity and embodied experience. Reason is seen as the application of standards which are removed from embodied experience, the rational as opposed to the non-rational. These are traditionally abstract standards of perfection and right and wrong in contrast to Spinoza’s standard of community, self-love, and self-other relations. The context of embodied, emotional experience and social interaction is not encompassed within the contrast of rational and non-rational, body and mental or individual and social.

The liberal tendency to emphasise power as external and coercive, and of unity as involving constraint of right, acts as a restrictive discourse in Lloyd and Gatens’ analysis. While affectivity is acknowledged on a political and social level there is no corresponding internality through which intersubjective relations are expressed. The immanent power of Spinoza is an internality and not the externalised expression of strength. The common notions which are not sufficiently contrasted with universal notions are considered as belonging to a ‘mental reality’, not a ‘bodily reality’. The internality of the common notions contrasts with the external focus of the traditional universal and power. The affects pertain to the reality of imagination for Lloyd and Gatens, which is also the source of community and social relations. The internality necessary for the development of community and social relations and the recognition of common notions is absent from their discussion. The application of Spinoza is limited in Lloyd and Gatens by philosophical discourse itself which regards imagination as illusory, but also maintains universals in their abstract and general sense. Reason is separated from a bodily realm into a mental realm maintaining a traditional distinction within philosophy between mind and body on the one hand, and reason and emotion on the other. Imagination is related to bodily, personal reality which allows personal meaning to be included, but for reason to encompass personal experience it must be based on the common notions rather than abstract universals.
While there is an acknowledgment of affectivity in Lloyd and Gatens, it is limited primarily to imagination. The distinction between universals, in the traditional sense, and Spinoza's common notions, could play a much greater part, in moving from the limitations of generalisations and particular imaginaries to the broader perspective of an engaged commonality. The difficulties in Lloyd and Gatens' confrontation with philosophical discourse is partly due to the limitations of the major interpreters of Spinoza that they draw on, namely, Deleuze and Balibar. I have discussed Deleuze at length in a previous chapter, arguing that he is unable to confront particular experience through his ontology of expression by confining expressive ideas to adequate ideas.

Even though Balibar provides a real alternative to an individualistic reading of Spinoza through his "transindividuality", he is confined by his idea of reason. "The Reason that thus imposes a necessary harmony upon men is not in the least transcendent but simply expresses the power of human nature as it manifests itself and develops in its search for what is useful to man." In this idea of reason it is possible to focus on the range of expressions of 'human nature'. Reason is not an imposition on human nature however, but is part of the expression of human nature for Spinoza. Balibar goes on to say that reason in itself does not define human nature for Spinoza, 'human nature is defined both by reason and by ignorance, imagination and passion.' Strictly speaking it would be more appropriate to say that human nature is defined by affect, reason and imagination in community. It is in community that ignorance or wisdom will prevail, expressing the worst aspects of imagination in ignorance through the limitation of the expression of joy and commonality. Wisdom prevails through the most useful aspects of imagination which lead to understanding and the experience and expression of joy and an internal power. The common notions develop out of the transformation of associations and how they are imagined.

The common notions and the transformation of the affects in turn require engagement with and the expression of personal experience and its internality. Deleuze and Balibar, Lloyd and Gatens make a significant difference to the reading and application of Spinoza as an alternative to the dominant Western

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65 Balibar, p.83.
tradition. However, Deleuze’s focus on external powers and the individual in relation to those, is unable to embrace internality and immanent experience in this sense. His analysis, and that of Balibar, focuses on the interconnection of individual and community and the aspects of individuality relevant to that which challenges the individualism of traditional moral and political thought. However this leaves the concrete experience of individuals as a separate domain not able to be engaged with in political thought.

**Multitude and Queer as like Common Notions**

In order to return to the main features of reason for Spinoza I would like to offer a few possible examples of common notions. Common notions, for Spinoza, are based on what things have in common and this is normally taken to be something fixed and enduring in a physical sense, like the motion and rest of bodies. It is possible to see how we could say that commonality refers to something like humanity. However, this is often taken and used as a mere generality, an abstract category, with the result that political problems created by the use of such generalities are denied. For example the treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia, has involved the denial of even the basic recognition of humanity, as Gatens notes. The universals which justify excluding Aboriginal people from various aspects of Australian society do not tend to be questioned. This denial of humanity has been extended to people who look different, such as people with Down’s syndrome and various kinds of disabilities.

There are two problems with the universals. On the one hand they are too abstract in that they presume to encompass experience when they actually override and seek to determine experience. On the other hand they deny the conflicts that are going on within the application of them. Many characteristics of being human have been denied women, such as the ability to reason, but the universal of human reasoning has not been easily reconstructed, rather women’s ability to reason has been promoted. The use of commonalities has been seen as a problem in that commonalities are often taken to mean a very large general category in which

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64 Curley, for example, suggests this in his “Experience in Spinoza’s Theory of Knowledge” in Marjorie Grene (1979) (editor) *Spinoza: A collection of critical essays* University of Notre Dame Press, pp.25-59, where he says that the laws of motion would be common notions (p.51) and talks about inertia as a common notion (p.52).

65 Lloyd and Gatens, pp.138-139.
differences are denied. In other words commonalities are seen as traditional
universals, abstract and removed, as universals were intended to be, from
particular or personal experience\textsuperscript{68}.

Common notions are a very different kind of universal. The attempt to outline
what is meant by multitude and queer present examples of what a common notion
is meant to be \textit{like}. I am hesitant to say these \textit{are} common notions because I think
there are likely to be problems with them since we are coming to them from a
history of abstract universalising, but they are a move in the right direction. It is
evident that more examples of common notion understandings are appearing in
feminist and cultural research, and in discussions of Spinoza's multitude. The two
I have chosen are both very large multiplicities which are intended to involve an
acknowledgment of the differences they express and not a removal from and
denial of those differences. It depends on where and how they are being used as to
whether they function as common notions or not, which will become apparent
from the following discussion.

In the \textit{Political Treatise} Spinoza uses the term 'multitude' in a way that suggests he
intends it to function as a common notion. Spinoza clearly includes foreigners in
the multitude: 'the multitude is augmented by the influx of foreigners'\textsuperscript{69}, and also
both rulers and ruled. There is no superiority of governing over governed, of
monarch or aristocracy over citizens or subjects in Spinoza, and he spends the
major part of the \textit{Political Treatise} establishing that no government or ruler is safe
while they do not keep in mind the welfare of the multitude and consult with
them. The ideal form of government is of course democracy where the multitude
is governing itself. The multitude are both imagining and reasoning and engaging
and expressing through affectivity which is both internal and interpersonal.
Affectivity has a place of paramount importance in the multitude. It is the
intensities and flows of relations and communication which are expressed in and
through knowledges which function in relation to, and in engagement with, those
affectivities and are not transcendent or separate from them.

\textsuperscript{68} The differences between commonalities and generalities was to referred to in a previous chapter
in discussion of Seyla Benhabib (1987) "The Generalised and Concrete Other", in \textit{Feminism as Critique: Essays on the Politics of Gender in Late-Capitalism} (Edited by Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla

\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Political Treatise}, Ch.8, §12, p.351.
Although Spinoza seems to regard the multitude in a fairly derogatory sense as fickle and ignorant on occasions, he does take quite seriously the idea that it should be self-governing. He regarded many of the rulers and institutional leaders themselves as ignorant. The solution is the guidance of laws which are determined by reason and in which there can be evident agreement and benefit for all. The rules are standards extending beyond each individual to encompass, through their grounding in common notions, differences within the multitude. They are thus not absolute but can mediate human relations so that cooperation can be cultivated and developed. Cooperation for Spinoza clearly depends on an inner development which works with and through interpersonal relations on all levels. The emotional life of individuals and societies is a predominant aspect of human existence which reason serves rather than determines. The multitude are not merely the duped masses and religion is not ‘the opiate of the masses’ for Spinoza who regards the inner, emotional and interpersonal life of the individual as just as important in the social and political make-up of the multitude as the material relation to production.

The notion of the multitude, particularly as it is being used by Negri and Hardt in *Empire* is an open multiplicity, historically changing and shaping its own destiny, where there is diversity, agreement and disagreement. The multitude has a political application in that it expresses the relationship between the governing and the governed who are both encompassed within the multitude. Consultation and consideration of the welfare of the multitude is central to the success of any dominion for Spinoza. Those governments, aristocracies or monarchies which fear the multitude because they do not consult with and take into account its welfare and its diversity, are less stable.\(^7\)

This is a very different idea of a stable state which has in liberal theory, generally depended on external boundaries separating a nation from its ‘others’ as Anthony Burke has argued in his *In Fear of Security*. In referring to the Australian government’s response to the plight of a boat load of refugees rescued by the MV Tampa, Burke states: ‘... the Howard government’s ministers speaking of the need to protect Australia’s “sovereignty”, its “territorial integrity” and “national

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interests”\(^\text{71}\), invokes ‘yet again the image of an insecure, vulnerable Australian subject under perpetual threat from the contagion and disorder of the Other.\(^\text{72}\) The military style response and language is out of all proportion to the actual plight of other human beings in need of safety.

The multitude then, embraces a range of political expressions some of which are opposed to the state and others which are in agreement with it. As stated in chapter 1 of this thesis, for Negri and Hardt, the multitude is disparate groups and individuals who express themselves as an ‘ensemble of “acting minorities”’, obstructing and dismantling the mechanisms of political representation. Anyone is a member of the multitude at any time but in Negri and Hardt’s terms it is when there is a need for resistance that the multitude emerges. Those who are content with the political system could be referred to as ‘the people’ in contrast. Spinoza means the multitude in both senses. The multitude as the people in the traditional sense are always potentially resistant to state authority and there is a sense in which everyone performs a resistance to the state or the collective on some level by the way they relate to social ‘rules’, for example\(^\text{73}\).

The multitude in Spinoza’s sense embraces a myriad of experiences and relations to the state or collective. It is a common notion to the extent that it can encompass and express the variety, rather than sameness, of experience as it is expressed politically. Negri and Hardt read multitude as a political category and hence do not develop it as a common notion. The interpersonal dynamics established within a social context contribute to what the multitude is able or likely to accept and to rebel against. The multitude will always, eventually, rise up against a system that does not take into account its welfare and interests. This will affect different groups in different ways at different times, but it is all part of the functioning of the multitude.

Catherine Mary Dale in a paper entitled “A queer supplement: reading Spinoza after Grosz”\(^\text{74}\) considers criticisms of queer theory by Elizabeth Grosz. Grosz is critical of what she considers the lack of specificity in queer and Dale argues that

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\(^{71}\) Anthony Burke (2001) *In Fear of Security: Australia’s Invasion Anxiety* Pluto Press Australia.

\(^{72}\) Burke, p.324.

\(^{73}\) Rules in this sense include both formal and informal systems of regulation.

she has not taken affect in Spinoza far enough to overcome the problem. Another distinction based on the difference between universals could sort out the difficulties between Grosz and Dale. Grosz appears to be reading queer as a traditional universal while Dale is reading it as like a common notion.

Dale argues that ‘queer’ is a fluctuating arena and not a fixed and cohesive community. It is intended to be productive of positive difference rather than representing essential identities or loss or lack as in negative difference\(^\text{25}\). In this sense queer for Dale, upsets the mechanism of social recognition by denying identity or division into designated sets such as gay, lesbian, etc. This denial of identity in the terms that are usually attributed to those identities as fixed and determined by what a body is, supply no position or mode from which they can be characterised in general, structural or analogous terms. It is what a body can do, its ability to affect and be affected, that becomes the defining characteristic in Spinozistic terms. Queer is transformed then, from an identity to a relation, a practice, a way of being. A queer body, Dale argues, is then an open, multiple system. It is Spinoza’s unknown body which exists within an indefinite and unknowable system and is able to increase its relations with other bodies, and its joyful affects, its power of acting\(^\text{26}\).

This also presents the terms on which legitimacy and political loyalty can be questioned. The power to affect and be affected means that relations with other bodies can add to or subtract from the power of either. An analysis of agreeable and disagreeable encounters between bodies gives rise to a new ontology for body and identity. Dale refers here to Gatens’ distinction between profitable and damaging sexual relations. Individuals are then judged by their affective context and composition, and the implied relation between being, and being sexed, then disappears. ‘Sexual reductionism “belongs to a system of classifications (genus,

\(^{25}\text{Difference in this sense comes from Deleuze’s double challenge to phenomenology which was the challenge of immanence, in which immanence is not related only to consciousness. The other challenge is the challenge of difference. The challenge of difference asserts that there is a difference between the ground and the grounded, between the expressor and the expressed. Leonard Lawler (1998) “The end of phenomenology: Expressionism in Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty” Continental Philosophy Review 31, pp.15-34.}

\(^{26}\text{Dale (1999), p.5.}\)
species, kind) that is quite foreign to Spinoza’s thought." A man and a woman may thus have more in common in a certain context than two men or two women.

By failing to extend her use of Spinoza into an application of affectivity, Dale argues, Grosz is unable to further an affirmation of queer. The redefinition of bodies according to their capacities for affecting and being affected through the passive and active affects, is what Dale refers to as ‘Spinozist affectivity’. The generation of passions of joy and sadness expresses the quality of social relations entered into: ‘When a body enters into good relations with our body, that is, when relations with another body increase our powers of acting, Spinoza calls this passion joyful. Alternatively, when we encounter a body that decomposes us, diminishing our power of acting, he calls this passion sad.’ Of course it is then necessary also to take into account the experience of each individual and its contribution to current encounters.

Grosz, it appears, is considering queer as if it were a traditional universal, maintaining traditional classifications within it based on what a body is: ‘Because we are now dealing with sexual specificities, differences between the sexes, and those differences that constitute each sex, I can no longer afford to generalise about “queerness” …’ Dale, on the other hand, is reading queer as more like a common notion in Spinoza’s sense. She says the common notions bridge the practical process of forming active affections beginning with the most general notions shared between bodies: ‘This entails questioning the structure of a body by observing its relations with other bodies in order to ascertain what is common between them and thereby to enable their production of joyful affects. ... The theory of common notions transforms queer as an identity into queer as a relation.' Body in this sense means embodied individual as socially and culturally interactive. What is common is therefore not based only on what bodies share physiologically but also psychically, socially and culturally.

Grosz makes the point in Space, Time and Perversion that humanist and phenomenological paradigms of oppression are unable to encompass those who

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are different. These paradigms are based on an idea of humanity which ‘took as its standard of the human, the presumptions, perspectives, frameworks, and interests of men’. All subjects are then considered on this model of a ‘bare or general humanity’ with those who are different enough from the definition of humanity being rated less than human. Universals such as humanity are political in that they can be and are used to exclude and limit what counts within them. The commonalities they are based on are considered as pertaining to some and not others. This is precisely the problem that Spinoza points to in castigating universals such as ‘man’; ‘... these notions are not formed by all in the same way, but vary from one to another, in accordance with what the body has more often been affected by ...’. The political critique of universal notions is thus necessary and important and will be ongoing.

Spinoza gives the impression in his definition of reason that the common notions are easily found and readily accessible. After stating that ‘... we perceive many things and form universal notions’ from singular things and from signs, Spinoza goes on to define reason as the formation of universal notions from ‘the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things’. It becomes apparent throughout the Ethics however, that it is only by constantly confronting our affective dispositions that we are able to employ common notions. We may experience them all the time but we base our judgements on a more partial application of them from our affective dispositions. We must therefore better understand our affective dispositions and the part this plays in our formation and application of universal notions.

While both include a political critique, neither Grosz nor Dale includes the need for an understanding of the interpersonal internality contributing to the make up of universal notions based on commonalities. It is not that we cannot form universals based on commonalities but that we need to be more aware of the contribution our own affective dispositions make to them. These affective dispositions are as much social as they are individual.

82 Ethics, II, P40, Schol. 1., p.477.
83 Ethics, P40, Schol. 2, pp.477-478.
Both queer and multitude are examples of collectivities that are political and which reflect shifting and varied 'subjectivities'. They must also embrace affectivity in interpersonal relations which is evident more in Dale's definition of queer than in Negri and Hardt's definition of multitude. Negri and Hardt limit their discussion to the external influences in individual/community relations, whereas in Dale there is a suggestion, though not a thorough acknowledgment, of internality. The internality involved in social relations is as important in Spinoza as external relations. The power that each individual and group brings to interactions with other individuals and groups has to do with the internality of the individual and/or the group in relation to larger powers. There is a need for an engagement with the experience of individuals and groups on an affective level which has both internal and external aspects.

Imagination and Cultural Research

In contemporary cultural research there is a concerted effort to engage with the lives and experience of different groups within their social and political context and to explore political aspects of interpersonal relations. Experience is often accessible through interpersonal expression, encompassing both the internal and external, in cultural forms such as film, theatre, popular media, writing, sport and social rituals. The idea of imagined social collectivities has emerged as an expression of the experience of collectivity. For example, the collision and intersection of Australian national imaginaries is explored in Fiona Nicoll's discussion of ANZAC Day and Mardi Gras through the figures of Pauline Hanson and Pauline Pantsdown.84

The way in which the 'imagined' is explored in cultural studies results in the absence of a notion of transcendent reason which would offer an abstract system of standards by which the imagined can be judged. Rather, the focus is on meaning and interpersonal relations and how they are influenced by powers of government, economy and market and the potential to structure internality (subjectivities) in new forms.85 Burke, for example, in his conclusion discusses the possibilities for the formation of new subjectivities which are not determined by

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85 Burke (2001).
the need for security in the sense that it has been encompassed in modern liberal democracies.

The mainstream Western philosophical tradition offers little alternative to the dominance of reason as presenting objective universal standards by which the ‘irrational’ can be dismissed. These universal standards mask a range of prejudices and generally exclude the need for negotiation amongst different social and political standards or imaginaries. Spinoza represents an alternative to the Western tradition when he is considered with some distance from Enlightenment thought. This section will discuss cultural researchers such as Dipesh Chakrabarty and Rey Chow to show where Spinoza could provide an alternative philosophical basis.

The idea of imagination in the construction of nationalism from Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* has been employed by a number of cultural theorists. As part of a critique of Western traditional philosophical discourse, Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that Anderson’s idea of imagination ‘remains a mentalist, subject-centred category’. He contrasts this idea of imagination with *darshan* or divine sight, as ‘plural or heterogeneous ways of seeing’, which ‘belongs to the history of practice and habitus’ and does not require the erection of concepts of the mind. Drawing on Deleuze, Chakrabarty sees *darshan* as bypassing the subject/object distinction rather than dissolving it, and looks at ways in which experience is expressed rather than mediated by Western concepts of reason. Instead of experience being determined and interpreted by concepts of reason he is seeking ways in which experience is expressed through imaginative engagement. This comes out in his discussion of the poet Tagore.

Chakrabarty’s contention that Anderson’s idea of imagination is too cognitive and subject-centred depends on how imagination and community are understood and applied in different contexts. In traditional philosophy notions such as these are employed as general concepts excluding particular experience and reducing the multiplicity of experience to general characteristics. They then relate to the

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privileging of Western representation and the mediation of concepts of reason. However, when they are employed in a way which moves closer to the differences in experience between and within collectivities then they function more like Spinoza’s common notions. Spinoza stands outside the philosophical tradition in embracing affective, embodied experience. Affective experience is a key, in that where affective experience is excluded in favour of the generalised universal, it is at the expense of varied, particular experience. These general ideas are then less informed by concrete embodied experience and do not encompass the multiplicity, and therefore the variety of experience, and points of tension and conflict.

The difference in relating to others through categories of ‘reason’ and engaging with one another through an interconnectedness tied to embodiment is demonstrated in forms of expression which draw out experience in order to reinforce and transform it. Chakrabarty’s discussion of the poetry of Tagore involves an analysis of the critical tradition in Bengali poetry and its relation to national imagination. In the early twentieth century, debates over the characteristics of a new prose of fiction were connected with political modernity and tied to ‘the emergence of the real, and signified a realistic, objectivist engagement with the world’[^88]. This desired realism was also related to historicism as supporting democracy and historical materialism. The writings of Tagore were criticised for their lack of realism and confrontation with the harsh realities of poor people’s lives.

Tagore in return attacked the idea of realism and defended a style of prose-poetry in which he critiqued reason and the historical and objective. He posed a cosmic sense of play based on the Upanishads, which is ultimately ‘about the limits of reason’, and refused to distinguish the everyday and the eternal[^89], ‘the realm of the poetic [which] laced the everyday but had to be revealed by the operation of the poetic eye. ... The poetic then was that which, in the middle of the everyday, helped to transport one to the level of the transcendental.’[^90] By transcendental here is meant the cosmic or greater whole rather than an apparatus of abstract reason.

[^89]: Chakrabarty, pp.167-168.
[^90]: Chakrabarty, p.168.
Amidst criticism of Benthamite utility considered ‘too crude to even be called darshan (outlook/philosophy)’ by some prominent Bengalis, Tagore held that the poetic helped ‘transcend’ the ‘mere thingness of things’. Chakrabarty notes talk of ‘the powers of transport’ of the poetic, ‘seeing beyond the real’ as a means of ‘transfiguring the real and historical’. However, the poetic offers a different way of seeing from the realist which is not necessarily beyond the real conditions but an implicit part of a human relation to those conditions. Where the real is not able to be changed in the immediate in some situations, the poetic can nevertheless produce exhilaration. The poet and the prophet can both be seen as possessing powers of imagination which complement the powers of representing the real. This is Chakrabarty’s critique of Anderson’s notion of imagination. He says his point is that ‘the moment of vision that effected a “cessation of the historical world” included plural and heterogenous ways of seeing that raise questions about the analytical reach of the European category “imagination”.

Imagination must include practices which are ‘sedimented into language itself and not necessarily to concepts either that the mind elaborates or that contain experiential truths’. Chakrabarty suggests here that practices such as darshan, which came to constitute a critical element in the “performative” aspect of peasants’ nationalism’, ‘by-passed the question of the experiencing subject. There is a separation between the intellectual reflection upon and the immediate knowingness and being of the peasant constituted within a relation to the ‘good earth of India’ and the practice of darshan. Reason places a set of conceptualisations of its own on top of the ‘subjectless’ according to this view. The plural and heterogenous ways of seeing that Chakrabarty wishes to be encompassed by “imagination” require more than a reasoned reflection upon a state of affairs that is objective or real. It requires allowing different kinds of expression which are affective and produce affective states not encompassed by realism.

Again reason here denotes representation of experience through prescribed categories in which immanent embodied experience is not able to be

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91 Chakrabarty, p.169.
92 Chakrabarty, pp.170-171.
93 Chakrabarty, p.171.
94 Chakrabarty, p.174.
encompassed. The subject-centred mentalist category represented by imagination in Western discourse, according to Chakrabarty, posits an experiencing subject as the centre rather than relations within the community and with the 'earth' and its processes. The Western idea of the subject as the seat of experience does not precede embodied connection to others. Chakrabarty joins many others in criticising the centrality of the Western notion of the subject and its cognitive character inherited from Descartes. In Spinoza there is already an alternative in Western thought where the Cartesian and Enlightenment ideas of the subject are not central.

Post-Enlightenment Western imaginaries and universals exclude and reduce Others in order to define themselves. Genevieve Lloyd in The Man of Reason exposes the abstraction of the Cartesian method from experience and the association of universality with maleness requiring distancing from everything associated with women such as nature, the body, and emotions. The exclusion of others based on gender, class, race and culture has characterised Western philosophical discourses which have universalised their own political ideals with the oppositions created through their exclusions. In political terms the security and stability Western liberal democracies constantly seek through mastery and control of their 'external' environment, 'becomes a powerful signifier of an ideal political, economic and cultural order, opposed to 'others' designated as inferior or threatening.'

For Rey Chow the kind of analysis carried out in cultural studies 'displaces the essentialism of purely racial considerations onto the equally crucial considerations of class and gender'. "Minority analysis", in which she includes theorists such as Deleuze, Guattari and JanMohamed etc consists of a consideration of difference through the opening up of possibilities: 'coming to terms with otherness means making attempts to seek and listen for the voices of the subordinated others'. In this kind of analysis there is a persistent belief in possibilities of expression,

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95 Chakrabarty, p.175.
97 'External' means the other within and outside the borders of the nation, as that which must be contained and controlled.
articulation and agency. Here it is an otherness-as-diversity that is being denoted rather than an otherness as negativity.

Chow notes the close relation of cultural studies to "theory" in the poststructural sense, in particular Derrida's deconstruction of the centre: 'Between the philosophical underpinnings of deconstruction's imperative to undo the West from within its own logocentric premises and cultural studies' insistent orientation toward pluralism, the structural affinities are more than obvious.'\textsuperscript{100} The challenge brought by cultural studies to theorists through its turn toward the other within language and text but also outside them, has forced poststructuralism to confront race. This challenges poststructuralist theory's own position as the "other" within European tradition\textsuperscript{101}.

Cultural studies then, can acknowledge and directly address the 'exploitative, assymetrical relations inherent in Western studies of non-Western cultures'\textsuperscript{102}. In some ways this is a case of "theory" against "culture" or "monolith" against "pluralism" as Chow puts it\textsuperscript{103} which shows the need to influence theory through embodied experience, to infiltrate theory with other voices. The abstraction of theory needs to engage with and be impacted by experiences which are at odds with it. At the same time as the standards on which theory relies must be brought into question and their limits acknowledged, the theoretical standards that are brought to cultural analysis must be acknowledged in order for different voices to be able to speak and to be heard.

Chow discusses the problem of the other being able to speak for themselves when they must firstly, be granted the right to speak, and secondly, speak through a Western discourse, and thirdly, maintain a resistance to normitivization by 'white culture'\textsuperscript{104}. Chow notes the danger of cultural studies taking a moral high ground in its recognition of diverse contexts and histories against theory and argues for an engagement between theory and cultural studies\textsuperscript{105}. This engagement is crucial in exposing the prejudices of Western thought and its universals. To avoid recognition being a one-way street where white culture is recognising non-white

\textsuperscript{100} Chow, p.4.  
\textsuperscript{101} Chow, p.5.  
\textsuperscript{102} Chow, p.6.  
\textsuperscript{103} Chow, p.7.  
\textsuperscript{104} Chow, p.12.
culture there is a need to consider culture and power, the history of imperialism and the narratives through which they are constructed by white culture. White male culture is the norm to the extent that other cultures only take an oppositional form. Within white male cultures themselves, others are dealt with a lack of generosity, through a tendency to negate and dispense with threatening experiences.

The interaction of internality in the interpersonal and social and their cultural implications on an interpersonal level is examined by Chow through her analyses of the play 'Madame Butterfly', the films 'The Joy Luck Club' and 'To Live', and songs of Luo Dayou. These cultural forms express affective relations, the dynamics of which can be discussed in relation to the context of political power and cultural interaction through interpersonal experiences. The acknowledgment of a variety of interpersonal experiences and their internalities does not require being immersed in the personal as opposed to the social or the political. It requires an engagement with the dynamics of affective interplay within social relations through different embodied experiences. We cannot consider commonalities as sufficient until there is a better ability to express and encompass a range of embodied experiences as different in their internality and interpersonal expression.

Cultural studies investigations could be enriched by a basis in philosophical thinking such as Spinoza’s that is an alternative to the universalism of Cartesian and Enlightenment thought. Affectivity, the common notions and the interconnection of humans within nature require an engagement with, rather than a separation from, the conflicting and shifting context of interaction. Societies based on fear produce precarious identities according to Spinoza in his political works. Nevertheless, for him it is not certainty or a more stable society that will produce more enduring joys and self-expression of a more expansive kind. It is a society that is able to negotiate and to confront in their realities, disparate and divergent groups within the multitude, that will be the most conducive to the fullest expression of human being. A society that can develop generosity and nobility is about an internal security rather than one based on external control of nature, of others and of differences.

Burke calls for a new ethics, one which is ‘open, dynamic and self-critical, the basis for more work rather than renewed certainty’\textsuperscript{106}. By problematising unities of nation and self and turning outward to a different economy, he says, an intertwined series of needs and transformations would be cultivated. These he outlines as connecting Self and Other as interdependent through genuinely ethical principles, connecting human with animal, environment and ecosystem in a similarly ethical relation, developing a ‘permanent ethos of responsibility towards difference’, developing ‘ways of thinking and acting which resist the reflex to control and master uncertainty’ and a permanent critique of totalities and universals\textsuperscript{107}. All of these can be seen as reflected in a Spinozistic ethics as a development of internality, when it is not read through Enlightenment concepts of reason. In the critique of totalities and universals Burke wants to maintain ‘what is ethical and empowering in them’ so that while security is rejected, ideas such as justice, emancipation and community can be rethought\textsuperscript{108}. If these are rethought as common notions rather than universals then they will be more able to provide a basis for a productive and empowering ethics.

Spinoza’s common notions require rethinking the suitability of categories, many of which are taken as suitable universals but are mere generalisations. Rethinking the categories employed in understanding makes it possible to use reasoning for understanding rather than reason acting as a mediator applying the same universals to all in the same way\textsuperscript{109}. An example of re-thinking categories is presented in Fiona Allon’s discussion of the positive role of nostalgia in coming to terms with a relation to place. Nostalgia is not seen as simply a ‘negative preoccupation with the “local”’ or a ‘regressive looking backwards; it is rather a vector of movement, a way of moving forward, into the future-past’\textsuperscript{110}. What is relevant from this discussion is that the analysis focuses on the affective relations involved in the call for a recognition of ‘ways of belonging’ which are constructed through social and political forces or ‘material cultures’. Identity as a static category and place as the ground of identity are reconceptualised as ‘vectors within networks of movement and co-presences’, articulated moments of

\textsuperscript{106} Burke (2001), p.315.
\textsuperscript{107} Burke (2001), pp.315-316.
\textsuperscript{108} Burke (2001), p.316.
belonging, identification and investment. Rather than identity or place being a fixed ground from which 'truth' can be derived, meaning becomes the central factor. Meanings expressing belonging, identification and investment from the point of view of those experiencing them are able to be heard and to effect the theorisations they are interpreted through.

It is the human relations to place and community that is important here rather than a traditional understanding of nostalgia, place and identity. There is positivity and generosity in the reframing of the concepts of reason to work with experiences. The applications of universals of reason has meant the denial and devaluing of experience since concepts of reason are often assumed to be correct and those of experience and imagination misguided. By reworking concepts of theory or 'reason' in relation to experience we are able to move closer to what Spinoza means by common notions.

Tenacity with generosity, the recognition of the striving to persevere in being in each other, not in a derogatory sense, but in a validation of this mutual striving, with an awareness of how it is expressed, provides a model of an emotional economy beyond praise and blame. In order to reach for such an economy it is necessary to critique and overthrow or transform many of the central concepts of Enlightenment and liberal thought. Liberalism is based on the idea that individual expression is a confrontation with others where strivings are mutually exclusive and threatening unless expressed in the same way. Power is considered as an external expression, vented against a threat from 'outside'. The philosophical tradition itself has been argumentative, exclusivist and antagonistic in line with liberal ideals. Spinoza expresses the possibility of the acknowledgment and recognition of different positions through self awareness, extending ourselves beyond our own embodiment toward that of others.

Allon, p.284.
Allon, p.285.
Conclusion - Not a ‘Nice’ Ethics

'The immanent ethics Nietzsche shares with Spinoza can neither recognise altruism nor accept a morality of self-denial, pity or guilt.'

The conclusion will consider the sense in which Spinoza’s ethics can be considered an ethics and present some areas that could be developed in future research. This will essentially be a sketch of what a Spinoza ethics is like and how it could be used. At this stage it would be appropriate to apply a Spinoza ethics to a particular issue but that would require much more than is necessary at this stage of the thesis. Future work will be primarily oriented to looking at specific ethical issues with an application of what is sketched here.

Spinoza did not produce a morality or what would be considered an ethics in modern thought, and yet his major work is called the Ethics. At the same time there has been little work on deriving an ethics from Spinoza’s thought. The focus on universal principles in ethics has meant that an ethics could not be seen in Spinoza’s thought. The logic of the Enlightenment required an ethics of universalism rather than engagement with the social and political context of interaction. The kind of ethics that can be derived from Spinoza is an engaged and responsive ethics that does not rely on abstract universal principles removed from the context of the issues and their participants. Spinoza’s ethics moves towards, rather than away from, the context and particular characteristics to show how, as dynamic human beings, we can strive for the good of all. His is an ethics of interaction guided by the desire to maximise joy involving the maximising of joy for all. It is thus a context sensitive ethics based on a view of human nature which is more flexible and more generous than liberal views generally, and goes beyond humanism in this flexible, fluid idea of human being.

A ‘nice’ ethics seeks to avoid and arbitrate conflict through abstract principles of reason and thereby avoids confronting the emotional make-up of social interactions. An emotional economy of pity and of praise and blame which maintains the power of certain sectors of society at the expense of others can be

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identified in the penal system and the expression of revenge in Western societies which pride themselves on a moral superiority. A Spinozistic ethics requires engagement with the political context and not removal from it and is thus not an ethics that justifies a particular morality or social context. Spinoza’s ethics is not a ‘nice’ ethics in the sense that a ‘rational’ ethics might be considered to be, with its underlying Christian basis. While ethics centred on reason appear to assert clear moral and ethical parameters, they deny and negate forces operating within them to vindicate and justify the inequalities and lack of ethics that they are supposedly struggling against.

William Connolly notes that for Kant ‘only Christianity is truly a moral religion and that the morality applicable to the entire world finds its spiritual anchor in Christianity’. The dominance of white Western paradigms has meant understanding the world in arguably white Western terms, by the application of Western universals taken to apply appropriately to all contexts. The critical responsiveness and generosity that Connolly and Burke refer to involves listening and being receptive to the perspective of others, as well as being critically aware of our own paradigms and tendency to universalise.

The tone of ‘niceness’ carries a politeness that does not confront or challenge power relations or intersubjective relations, and treats morality and ethics as impersonal, able to be generalised and removed from the context of persons and their histories. This is paradoxical in that morality and ethics are implicitly concerned with human relations but nevertheless dealt with on a level of impersonal structure. Reason in the sense of disinterested, neutral, universal general principles which apply apparently to no-one, is unable to confront the intricacies and complexities of the context and its background assumptions. The abstract principles on which ethics is based are disturbed when confronted with

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2 This issue is examined by William Connolly (1995) *The Ethos of Pluralization* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.


4 The tendency to deny that Aboriginal communities have a morality or ethics in any sense we can recognise, for example. Suicide bombers would also easily be regarded as lacking an ethics or morality of any kind.


considerations of gender, race and ethnicity. These are regarded as special considerations in special circumstances but are operative characteristics of the social and political context.

Spinoza does not offer a morality though he does say that morality is important: ‘The Desire to do good generated in us by our living according to the guidance of reason, I call Morality’\(^7\). This has been shown in this thesis to be very different from an impersonal reason within which the determination of what is the best or right action is separated from what is good, as Benhabib has argued. The focus on commonality and not universality or generality in Spinoza is also very different to a morality which prescribes conduct, or an ethics which prescribes the principles according to which conduct ought to be directed as the same in all. It does leave open the necessity to consider action in the light of the context, but Spinoza also presents some solid guidance based on the affects. Thus experiencing joyful affects is preferable for well-being and this can be cultivated in relations with others, love is always preferable to hate, and living by the guidance of reason means seeking to return another’s hatred with love\(^8\). This is the affective transformation that is assisted by reason but requires more than reason in the Enlightenment sense.

It is particularly the emotional economy which is denied in an ethics of ‘niceness’. The rationality of niceness tends to be against the expression of emotion, particularly strong emotion. Spinoza and Nietzsche have both confronted and discussed the emotional economy of praise and blame and contrasted it with alternative economies: in Spinoza economies based on tenacity and nobility and in Nietzsche, the Superman. Spinoza’s tenacity and nobility relate to perseverance and generosity as was shown in the discussion of self-love. A rational ‘nice’ ethics is concerned with finding rules which can override emotional economies rather than interact with, confront and transform them. In order to get beyond the bourgeois morality of niceness Spinoza criticises pity, praise and blame, and free will. These are interdependent concepts on which much contemporary moral thought is based. They can be read as attributing blame to the individual in that free choice implicates ultimate responsibility and blameworthiness for all actions

\(^7\) Ethics, IV, P37, Schol. 1, p.565.
\(^8\) Ethics, IV, P46, p.572.
on the part of the individual who may be helpless to change their circumstances.

Spinoza's definition of pity has been seen as a total rejection of morality and as an appeasement of those with less reasoning ability. This is due to pronouncements such as: 'Pity in a man who lives according to the guidance of reason, is evil of itself, and useless.' Pity is seen by him as having some importance where a society is based on fear and praise and blame: 'This will, or appetite to do good, born of our pity for the thing on which we wish to confer a benefit, is called Benevolence.' It thus represents for Spinoza, an important element in the morality of societies which do not support the growth and emotional development of individuals to experience joyful affects. Spinoza asserts the economy of tenacity and nobility to replace and move beyond emotional economies of interaction based on pity. A failure to go beyond pity as a basis of moral interaction in wealthy societies, with the structures to support further growth and development, does deserve criticism. Pity is thus critiqued by Spinoza, and Nietzsche following him, as part of the bourgeois morality of 'niceness'. In this sense Spinoza went much further in his vision of what is possible for a society, than any of the Enlightenment frameworks.

The thesis has argued that the philosophical interpretations of Spinoza are limited in their understanding, and in what they are able to draw from a Spinozistic ethics due to the influences of Enlightenment thinking. Philosophy itself is limited in the way it is able to approach Spinoza and the terms on which it can apply his insights. Philosophy's traditional separation of the body and other aspects of embodiment from the domain of reason, which is considered the central domain of philosophy, have accompanied the traditional interest of Western philosophy in the general, abstract, and universal concepts of reason. There has not been, as a central interest of philosophy, an engagement with the particular, the personal. Feminist philosophers have begun to draw philosophy in this direction, to claim a place for the particular and personal, and this is indeed a struggle within the context of a discipline with an extensive history of exclusion of these elements,

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9 For example, Mary Midgley (1983) Animals and Why They Matter Penguin Books, p.46. Midgley states: '... in Spinoza's own rationalistic and egoistic view of morality ... pity in general is an evil, first, because it is a feeling, and right actions ought to be produced by thought, second, because pity is painful, and it is the business of each to seek his own pleasure as a mark of his own good.'

10 *Ethics*, IV, P50, p.574.

11 *Ethics*, III, P27, Schol., p.509.
such as philosophy. While in philosophy, various thinkers have sought understanding, insight, wisdom and knowledge, their means of attaining these things has been limited by the increasing tendency, particularly with and since the Enlightenment, to focus on the convolutions and concepts of reason, separated from the lived, embodied and experienced context of the knower or reasoner.

There is more to be gained in the present context by situating the reading of Spinoza I have presented in this thesis in relation to pluralist discourses such as cultural studies. There is greater scope for an attempt to draw out of Spinoza an ethics that is beyond the limits of the traditional disciplines. Understanding invokes more than the concepts of reason. It requires generosity and empathy and an awareness of the social, political and cultural context of interaction, our own placement within it and a sense of the personal and interpersonal as they interact with the objectives of understanding. At the same time, there is a need, from the cultural studies perspective to approach the philosophical in order to be more critical of the underlying basis of much of our thinking in the West. The Cartesian assumptions implicit in the way many issues are approached in contemporary thought are particularly evident in dealing with the body and with representation.

An ethics requires not processes of reason, based on grand universals that are removed from any context, but reasoning which engages with and acknowledges as many aspects of the context as possible. In this sense it requires not pity but empathy, empathy in the sense of being able to acknowledge that another’s perspective involves different attachments, different ideas of what is good, different affective experiences and understandings that are their own and that are meaningful in the way that our own attachments are meaningful to us. It requires an awareness and questioning of our own frameworks of thinking, an activity which must be ongoing given our lack of transparency. It requires looking for the frameworks expressed by others rather than an extension of our own. This extends beyond security and certainty and encompasses a process of engagement in which concepts are negotiated in relation to the context.

Spinoza does make it clear that the idea of human nature which underlies an ethics is important. A generous idea of human nature, one which considers humans favorably and sees each as striving to the best of their ability to do good,
is more productive for an ethics than one which assumes that the other is blameworthy or undeserving. Showing the sense in which human relations are significant and that we are more free in a state in which human potential is cultivated through education and the cultivation of joyful affects, is a more favorable kind of ethics. ‘Human nature’ must encompass much more than the reasoning ability of humans. It must confront the affective context which is varied and complex, couched as it is in an interaction, as well as the placement of humans within nature.

‘Man is part of Nature, and therefore the moralist must be a naturalist; no moral philosopher has stated this principle of method more clearly, or adhered to it more ruthlessly, than Spinoza.’ Spinoza’s naturalism is not easily understood within the parameters of Enlightenment thought. Spinoza was not a romantic like Rousseau, nor is his naturalism a physical reductionism, though there are many assumptions relating to the focus on the physical and material in modern thought which limit how this naturalism can be understood. For Spinoza reason does not make humans exceptional from nature. Reason is a result of the complexity of the human body, the ideas the human mind is therefore capable of, and the interconnection of humans within nature and with each other through the interconnected whole or substance. This expresses a different view of ‘nature’, the body and ideas than those on which the dominant forms of Western thought are based.

In Spinoza reason involves working through the affects, in a social consciousness which is concerned with understanding. Reason and the affects effectively operate in relation to the social context. Reason is not overwhelmed by the affects but involves dynamic reflection and transformation of them. The emotional economy as part of the social consciousness implicated in reason, requires the social transformation of the affective economy contained in its morality to accompany the intellectual development. Modern democracies implicitly rely on emotional economies which encourage work ethics, consumer ethics and production ethics. The emotional economy itself nevertheless remains unquestioned, unable to be negotiated in the denial of its role.

12 Ethics, IV, P73 and Schol., p.587.
Ethics in this sense is not relativised by its abandonment of universals but recognised as requiring negotiation between different conceptualisations and value systems. Agreement needs to be constructed and negotiated through ethics rather than uncovered. In the common notions there is the implication that there is always agreement on various levels immanent in embodiment and sociality, but to the extent that commonality is denied through a lack of recognition of other frameworks, understandings and imaginings, there is a need to create the terms of agreement: ‘Man, …, can wish for nothing more helpful to the preservation of his being than that all should so agree in all things that the Minds and Bodies of all would compose, as it were, one Mind and one Body; that all should strive together, as far as they can, to preserve their being; and that all, together, should seek for themselves, the common advantage of all.’\textsuperscript{14} Living according to reason, which is to live actively, with self-preservation and generosity, will lead to greater experience of commonality in the perseverance of each\textsuperscript{15}.

An acknowledgement of forms of internality is as important as looking outside ourselves as advocated by Burke\textsuperscript{16}. A move away from the certainty and security that has been central to Enlightenment thought and modern economies, requires dealing with the emotional lives of people and groups, and the meanings that these involve. The fluid dynamic between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ is part of the specificity of concrete experience. There are many cultural forms expressing internalities and meanings, from art and film to dance and sport which cultural studies has begun to take seriously. It is important to expose some of the unexamined underlying frameworks implicit within various analyses, and their basis in views of human nature and freedom which are not only Western, but also Enlightenment based.

The employment of notions of social imaginaries in the way Lloyd and Gatens\textsuperscript{17} have done, as discussed in the previous chapter, requires rethinking the place of reason and the form that is attributed to it. The kinds of universals that are constructed show the frameworks and meanings that are being attributed by dominant groups to all others. In looking at imaginaries as constitutive of various

\textsuperscript{14} Ethics, IV, P18, Schol., p.556.
\textsuperscript{15} Ethics, IV, P35, p.563.
\textsuperscript{16} Anthony Burke (2001), In Fear of Security: Australia’s Invasion Anxiety Pluto Press Australia, p.315.
cultures of work, class, and community agency interaction it is possible to examine the forms of interaction and the construction of the client, subject and individual and social groupings implicit within them. Reason has been unable to reach these aspects of human social interaction due to the centrality of inflexible universal notions assumed not to be effected by history or culture or economics.

With the focus on meanings rather than truth, in contemporary readings of Spinoza there is the possibility of deriving an ethics based on negotiation of meanings rather than governing universal principles. Commonalities can be derived by examining the meanings and attachments, disagreements and antagonisms apparent in conflicting imaginaries. There is a generosity in looking at the meanings that people themselves associate with the cultural forms they relate to. Studies of cultural forms such as mass media and popular culture display a willingness to understand from the point of view of those who relate to these forms in a variety of ways as an alternative to dismissal of those meanings by knowledge specialists.

Investigating meaning through ways of looking at emotional economies as they function in social, political and cultural contexts and the part they play in constructing internalities of individuals, groups, nations and their inter-relations is an area for further work. The notion of social imaginaries and the common notions can confront these aspects of social relations and intersubjectivity and go further in understanding than a focus on universal reason as opposed to the particularity of emotion. Within the conceptualisations and negotiations of imaginaries and common notions there is a connection to and recognition of the emotional, contextual, political and cultural.

The development of the idea of expression as an alternative to representation is also an important area for future research. Expression invokes a range of meanings and attachments with various forms of organisation and conceptualisation in contrast to representation which imposes meaning from a conceptual framework that is taken to be fixed and universal. Expression has the potential to embrace what is immanent within the boundaries of discourse, informing, shaping, resisting, reframing, changing, energising and re-energising

them. Understanding cultural and political forms, as well as embodiment and agency as expressive, allows scope for a more dynamic and fluid recognition of differences and potentialities. Representation then appears to be couched within expression, as a form of expression rather than the only means of expression.

The gap between principle and practice, between a law and the personal experience of it was illustrated recently in a point made by a police officer commenting on the new laws which allow police in New South Wales to search people for knives and demand names from people they speak to. Under previous legislation people were able to refuse to give their names. He was explaining from the police point of view how problematic it was when people would not give the police their names and asked the audience how many had a major objection to this. No-one put their hand up and he concluded that it was not really a problem, people just react to it. However, another way to understand this is that most people would agree in principle with the police asking people their names but when it comes to personally being confronted on the street and being asked to give your name in a matter that does not concern you, many people will feel their privacy has been ‘invaded’. The difference between the principle and the experience is often difficult to appreciate by theorists and policy-makers. For the policeman the fact that this was a law meant that it was not about invading people’s privacy. He could not see the disparity or appreciate objections. It is difficult to see things from the other side especially when a policy appears ‘fair’ in dealing with all people in the same way.

An ethics that can confront the emotional and conflictual through an engagement with the meanings and attachments of people in everyday situations is going to be complex but in the end more straightforward than those which rely on reductive universals and generalisations. Spinoza’s philosophy is an ethics with dimensions that are largely unexplored due to the inability to recognise Spinoza’s ethics as an ethics. Not only is imagination able to be rethought through Spinoza, so are reason, affect and ethics. This is quite a considerable contribution to contemporary issues and thinking.

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London: Routledge.
New ways of looking at ethics, such as value-pluralism, will move us closer to the potential value of his thought. In this thesis I have argued that Spinoza interpretations have been informed by the ideals of the Enlightenment. I have shown that there is more to be gleaned from Spinoza than such interpretations have been able to reveal, especially in looking at the common notions, reason and the affects. The need to understand, rather than judge, the meanings of others, is implicit in Spinoza’s analysis of the affects and self-love in the dynamics of interaction within a social context. The common notions can at least produce more debate about the application and use of universals and a conscious awareness of the need to encompass concrete lives through their own meanings.

In the context of current political issues Spinoza’s thought extends beyond modern ideas of democracy and participation. It is important in this context to develop forms of participation in non-adversarial strategies for discussion of social and cultural issues as part of a more responsive social and political environment. This is the form of political action that Spinoza’s thought leads to and which, according to his own political theory, will be increasingly demanded of systems so far unable to confront the daily lives of the people they represent. Political expression and activism thus has a new and far reaching form which demands more of democracy than was imagined in Enlightenment thought.
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