

Spinoza

AND THE CUNNING
OF IMAGINATION



Eugene
GARVER

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Introduction

A book called *Ethics* that starts with God creates certain expectations. It is plausible to think that we will learn that the best way to live consists in some sort of orientation toward the divine. Calling it “ethics according to the geometric method” (*Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata*) sets up further expectations. How to live is going to follow deductively from our knowledge of divine nature.

What couldn't be predicted from its title, or from its table of contents, is the role of the imagination both in people's lives and in forcing the geometric method to take many detours on the route from God to freedom. The simple plot of ascent becomes, because of the imagination, a complex plot full of reversals and discoveries; the development of the *Ethics* is at the same time inevitable and constantly surprising. One could not predict that a presentation of ethics in the geometric manner would be a drama with a complex plot: geometry and drama seem to be incompatible genres, as far apart as the Bible and Euclid are in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*,¹ and it is not usual to talk about works of philosophy as dramas, and to identify their central argument as a plot. In a parody of Hegel's cunning of reason (*List der Vernunft*), I call this complex plot the cunning of imagination.

The challenge of the *Ethics* is to see two sides of the imagination; it is just this ambivalence that drives Spinoza's argument. As Kant says, the imagination is “blind but indispensable.”² Spinoza's imagination comprises ideas of how we are affected, as opposed to the adequate ideas of the understanding which show how things really are. “To retain the customary words, the affec-

tions of the human Body, whose ideas present external bodies as present to us, we shall call images of things. . . . And when the Mind regards bodies in this way, we shall say that it imagines [*imaginari*]" (2p17s).³ Imagination is our original endowment; being guided by reason is an achievement. While imagination is always inferior to reason, there are better and worse ideas of the imagination. In the short run, some ideas are better than others because they are pleasant, and so increase our power to exist and to act, while painful ideas decrease it. In a longer run, some ideas of the imagination bring people together, while others create conflicts. And in the longest run, some ideas of the imagination lead to our being more rational, while others move us in the opposite direction.

The *Ethics* repeatedly shows how the imagination is inferior to reason and can be a barrier to reason's development. And yet the imagination is not only indispensable for life, but the right development of the imagination leads to rationality. The imagination is indispensable even though it can lead us in all sorts of wrong directions. Even completely surrounded by a society of purely rational people, each of us would still have to live by our imaginations as well as reason. Being a philosopher or a sage does not exempt people from needing to lead lives of justice and charity. Consider these two remarks from the *TTP*, first from chapter 2 and then from chapter 4:

Those who have the most powerful imaginations are less able to grasp things by pure intellect. On the other hand, those who have more powerful intellects, and who cultivate them most, have a more moderate power of imagining, and have it more under their power. They rein in their imagination, as it were, lest it be confused with the intellect. (C 2:94, G 3:9)

We ought to define and explain things through their proximate causes. That universal consideration concerning fate and the connection of causes cannot help us to form and order our thoughts concerning particular things. (C 2:126, G 3:58)

Spinoza awards to the imagination many of the powers we normally ascribe to reason—the power to abstract from particulars and form general ideas, the power to make comparative judgments and formulate ideals and goals. Through the imagination, we can use material signs—language—to communicate ideas and emotions to each other. Although he sees all these as effects of the imagination, Spinoza does not see them as powers but weakness.

“Those who have the most powerful imaginations are less able to grasp things by pure intellect. On the other hand, those who have more powerful intellects, and who cultivate them most, have a more moderate power of imagining.” Those who live by imagination alone, whether it’s powerful or not, cannot know what they are missing. As I will emphasize repeatedly, Spinoza would deny Aristotle’s dictum that man by nature desires to know. On the other hand, those with a powerful imagination have a body that can be acted on and can act in many ways; the mind needs such a body if it is going to be rational, and so a powerful imagination and a powerful understanding go together. Those with a more powerful imagination participate in particularly human ways of going wrong. But only people, although we can go wrong in uniquely human ways, are capable of understanding.

For just one example of the power and poverty of a rich imagination, every person has a powerful enough imagination that he or she not only desires pleasure and tries to avoid pain—that is the universal law of the *conatus*—but also wants to get pleasure from specific sources. That is, people have loves and hates and not just pleasures and pains. We therefore construct, through the imagination and emotions, an objective world, a world with objects that cause our emotions and which we can in turn affect. Without this construction of objectivity within the imagination, people would never be able to construct a truly objective, mind-independent, world of adequate ideas and their objects.

The practical success of the *Ethics* depends on overcoming the following paradox. The imagination comprises inadequate ideas. It is part of the nature of inadequate ideas that they cannot recognize their own inadequacy. They can’t because the imagination is practically adequate. Thinking only in terms of inadequate ideas, that is, is sufficient to its tasks and so the imagination cannot realize that there is something better, namely adequate ideas. On this point the *TTP* is one with the *Ethics*:

We are completely ignorant of the order and connection of things itself, i.e., of how things are really ordered and connected. So for practical purposes it is better, indeed necessary, to consider things as possible. (C 2:126, G 3:58)

Intellectual knowledge of God, which considers his nature as it is in itself (a nature men cannot imitate by any particular way of life and cannot take as a model for instituting the true way of life) does not in any way pertain to faith or to revealed religion. So men can be completely mistaken about this without wickedness. (C 2:262, G 3:171)

The practical self-sufficiency of inadequate ideas makes the life of the imagination immune to philosophy. People have neither the resources nor any wish to escape from the self-contained cave of the imagination. The desire to know things adequately, by the second kind of knowledge, cannot arise from the first kind of knowledge. The cunning of imagination allows people to develop adequate ideas without ever aiming at them. Adequate ideas seem to be an alien presence in the mind, rather than a part of the mind, until the drama finally takes a happy turn in *Ethics* 4. The positive side of the imagination, that it is practically self-sufficient, is its negative side, that it doesn't lead beyond itself to reason and adequate ideas. Not only do inadequate ideas not lead us to adequate ideas, but inadequate ideas and passive emotions will resist our attempts to convert them into adequate ideas and active emotions. Knowing that my anger is irrational rarely makes me want to give it up.

SPINOZA'S THREE BIG ORIGINAL IDEAS

Like any great philosopher, Spinoza takes an existing philosophical vocabulary and modifies it to his own purposes. To take an obvious example, substance is defined as what exists in itself and can be conceived through itself (1def3)—nothing original here. But from it Spinoza draws a radical conclusion, that there is only one substance, God, and that everything else that exists is therefore a mode of that unique substance. Similarly, his definition of essence looks conventional enough: "I say that to the essence of any thing belongs that which, being given, the thing is [NS: also] necessarily posited and which, being taken away, the thing is necessarily [NS: also] taken away; or that without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and which can neither be nor be conceived without the thing" (2def2). Traditionally, only substances had essences. But while there is only one substance for Spinoza, anything—individual bodies and minds, but also particular passions and ideas—can have an essence. You, your hat, and your location are all modes of the single substance, God or nature, but you, your hat, and your location all have essences.

In addition to transformations like this, the *Ethics* contains three original ideas. Each is paradoxical, almost a contradiction in terms; each is central to his project, and there is a sense in which the three are identical. Each also receives little attention in the *Ethics* compared to the crucial role they play. They are the "Infinite Modes," the "Second Kind of Knowledge," and the "Active Emotions." Since they involve Spinoza's technical vocabulary, I can only introduce them schematically here.

The first two definitions of the *Ethics* are of *causa sui* and of the finite, and they look like an exhaustive distinction, but infinite modes fit neither. They are caused by something outside themselves, have an essence distinct from existence, making them modes, and yet are infinite. Everything that is either is in itself or in something else (1ax1); that is, everything is either a substance or a mode. Like God, infinite modes are permanent and indestructible. Like other modes, they are plural while God is unique.

The second kind of knowledge, next, is paradoxical because it represents a perfect sort of knowledge unique to finite minds, not shared by God. More paradoxical still, it is a set of ideas whose essence it is to be thought by finite minds, minds with imagination. The finite mind that thinks them somehow does not contaminate them with its finitude. We have the first kind of knowledge, imagination, because we are finite beings, and the connection between being finite and having imaginative and inadequate ideas is direct. But we have the second kind of knowledge because we are finite beings and have the first kind of knowledge. The connection between being finite and having adequate ideas is far from clear.

Active emotions, finally, are paradoxical because as affects, they are modes of being affected, yet as active, the individual, through its adequate ideas, is the complete cause of these affects. Without an external cause, or even the idea of an external cause, the active emotions can't be individuated from each other, and the same holds for infinite modes and adequate ideas. Just as God is unique without being one in number, since number is an imaginative abstraction, so infinite modes, adequate ideas of the second kind, and active emotions are plural without being enumerated. They have no principle of individuation. But one can still have some adequate ideas without having them all.

All three of these original ideas, the infinite modes, the second kind of knowledge, and the active emotions, are ways of finding activity in a sea of passivity, of rising above the imagination, and so finding freedom in the power to be an adequate cause of one's actions without usurping the power reserved for God, of being the adequate cause of one's existence. The latter two original ideas, the second kind of knowledge and the active emotions, are ways of using the imagination to rise above the imagination. This is the cunning of imagination. In the absence of teleology, the cunning of imagination is the only way development and drama are possible.

Spinoza wrote at a time when infinity was beginning to receive a rigorous mathematical understanding. The interrelations between the finite and the infinite forms one of the chief themes of the *Ethics*. Nothing better illustrates

the difference between reason and imagination than their competing conceptions of infinity: for the imagination, the infinite is the indefinite, something incomplete, while only the finite is actual; for reason, the infinite is self-limiting, complete and perfect, while the finite is a limitation of the infinite. The ethical project of the *Ethics* is to show how people can *become* immortal. Becoming immortal is a paradoxical enterprise because immortality seems to be one of those qualities—and the same holds for being finite or infinite—that something either necessarily has or necessarily cannot have. But people can become immortal. They have their beginnings in time but can escape time. Finite and infinite look incompatible and incommensurable. Yet the second kind of knowledge, the knowledge that is specifically human yet fully adequate, is an infinite idea thought by a finite mind. When a mind is dominated by its adequate and infinite ideas, we become immortal. This promise is sufficient reason to want to understand the *Ethics*.

BECOMING IMMORTAL AND THE GEOMETRIC METHOD

The first three parts of the *Ethics* contain those three original ideas. The last two parts constitute the real drama of the *Ethics*. The first three parts show that there are finite and infinite modes, inadequate and adequate ideas, passive and active emotions, but do nothing to interrelate those opposed ideas. In the last two parts, we see how finite and infinite are interrelated, how the finite can constrain the infinite and how the finite can become infinite. These are the possibilities Spinoza calls human bondage and human freedom. While he denies that mind and body can interact, finite and infinite do interact, and that interaction creates the possibility of ethics in the last two parts of Spinoza's argument.

Judging from the first three parts of the *Ethics*, infinite and finite are simply incommensurable. Each finite thing is caused by another finite thing (1p28), with no interventions by anything infinite. The mind contains both inadequate and adequate ideas, but Part 2 develops inadequate and adequate ideas along parallel tracks. In the same way, active emotions appear as a surprise ending to Part 3, and we know nothing about how, if at all, they are related to passive emotions.

Starting in Part 4, though, finite and infinite are commensurable because people have adequate ideas in spite of the fact that their minds are themselves inadequate ideas. Both bondage and freedom are permanent human possibilities, and so a system, even a system without contingency, has to account for

both. When an adequate idea is thought by a mind that is itself an inadequate idea, the issue is which of them, the thinker or the idea, has its nature dominate the result.

Human bondage comes from the fact that, regardless of any adequate ideas we might have, “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” (4p4). It follows that “no affect can be restrained by the true knowledge of good and evil insofar as it is true, but only insofar as it is considered as an affect” (4p14) and “a Desire which arises from a true knowledge of good and evil can be extinguished or restrained by many other Desires which arise from affects by which we are tormented” (4p15). *The finite can be more powerful than the infinite, as passive emotions can bound — make finite — adequate ideas.* Human freedom, on the other hand, consists in the infinite ruling the finite, liberating the finite from its limitations by converting passive emotions into adequate ideas (5p2–4). And so I juxtapose those passages I just quoted from Part 4 with this, which is the focus of my chapter 7, from later in Part 4: “To every action to which we are determined from an affect which is a passion, we can be determined by reason, without that affect” (4p59). The first passages assert that passive emotions, aided by their powerful external causes, can always overpower our adequate ideas; the end of Part 4 and the beginning of Part 5 show that our intellect, constituted by adequate ideas, can conquer the passions. We gradually learn how adequate ideas lead to virtuous action, freedom, and salvation.

While the *Ethics* has a complex plot, it proceeds by the geometric manner and order (*ordine geometrico*). The geometric method does not move from God to human freedom and the immortality of the soul as quickly as possible. Instead, the *Ethics* does justice to the complexity of human experience, the human mind and body, and the complexity of the ethical project of living a life guided by reason. If the purpose of the *Ethics* was to get from God to human freedom as efficiently as possible, it would do all it could to purge the mind of the imagination and the passions, since they are only a hindrance to the final achievement of the human good. Instead, human complexity consists in the richness of the imagination and the passions both as a condition to be overcome and as a set of resources by which people can fully realize their rational essence.

The geometric method, or manner, makes the *Ethics* unusual in three ways. First, in how the book begins. Aristotle tells us to start with what is better known to us and move to what is most knowable in nature. Plato begins with

conversations about some practical problem and from there ascends to the highest objects and most fundamental principles. Descartes starts from his own predicament as a knower in the *Meditations* and the *Discourse on the Method*, and from specific problems in the *Geometry*. None of this for Spinoza. His beginning, “By cause of itself I understand that whose essence involves existence, or that whose nature cannot be conceived except as existing” (1def1) is almost as sublime as Euclid’s opening, “A point is that which has no part” (1def1). It is Euclid’s *Elements*, not Descartes’s *Géometrie*, that supplies Spinoza’s model.

Second, in Spinoza, as in Euclid, there is no privileged position, no “God’s-eye view,” no absolute space and time. God has no perspective. Euclidean space does not distinguish between up and down, right and left. Spinozan adequate ideas do not have what Leibniz will call a point of view.

Third, geometry is the paradigm of the cooperation of imagination and reason. The second kind of knowledge comprises ideas that are adequate but thought by a finite individual, that is, by an individual whose mind is itself an idea of the imagination. The second kind of knowledge embodies that cooperation of imagination and reason. Geometry is the paradigm of the subordination of imagination to reason, showing how the imagination is empowered by such subordination. The *Ethics* begins where imagination cannot go, the existence and nature of God. It ends where the geometric method cannot go, self-knowledge.

To adapt Kant’s terminology, we have to read the *Ethics* first mathematically, that is, separating the knower from the known. The *Ethics* is first a work of the imagination — Spinoza’s ideas, not mine. Reason becomes practical as we come to read the *Ethics* dynamically, as truths about ourselves. In the language of *Republic V* (458d), the challenge is to convert geometric necessities into erotic ones. The *Ethics* models that transition for us. For example, no individual can contain anything that is contrary to its essence (3p4). But individuals in fact contain such things; they are passions, and individuals have to exert themselves to expel them (3p6). That is the difference between reading the *Ethics* mathematically and dynamically, abstractly vs. personally. This is the interrelation between the plot of self-development and the geometric method.

Seeing the geometric method as an ethical project sounds deeply paradoxical. To soften the shock — and Spinoza is never interested in softening the shock of the *Ethics* — we could recall Socrates’s riposte to Callicles:

Wise men claim that partnership and friendship, orderliness, self-control, and justice hold together heaven and earth, and gods and men,

and that is why they call this universe a *world order* [*cosmos*], and not an undisciplined world-disorder. I believe that you don't pay attention to these facts, even though you're a wise man in these matters. You've failed to notice that proportionate equality has great power among both gods and men, and you suppose that you ought to practice getting the greater share. That's because you neglect geometry. (*Gorgias* 508a)⁴

Compare those lines of Plato's with these from the appendix to Part 1 of the *Ethics*:

The truth might have lain hidden from the human race through all eternity, had not mathematics, which deals not in the final causes, but the essence and properties of things, offered to men another standard of truth.

TWO CRITICAL THESES OF THE *ETHICS*

I've identified Spinoza's three original ideas. Part of the plot of the *Ethics* comes from Spinoza constantly coming close to affirming two ideas that he emphatically denies. I call these critical theses because they are not only crucial to his argument, but because much of the forward movement of the *Ethics* comes from places where Spinoza finds himself asserting things that are at least in tension with these two ideas.

First, the *Ethics* often asserts propositions that come into conflict with the thesis that "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (2p7). Here is a series of examples, all of which, and several more, I consider in detail in what follows.

- The first proposition he proves after 2p7, which is "obvious from the preceding one," is that the ideas of nonexistent individuals are in the "infinite idea of God" in the same way as the ideas of existing things: the idea of something nonexistent is not itself nonexistent.
- The mind cannot act on the body, nor the body on the mind (3p2). But politics depends on a distinction between minds and bodies: bodies can be coerced, but minds, he tells us, cannot.
- Within the mind there are ideas of ideas, and it's hard to see what could correspond in the body to such reflexivity.
- Spinoza interrupts the argument of Part 2 to present what is often called the physical interlude. "To determine what is the difference between the human

Mind and the others, and how it surpasses them, it is necessary for us, as we have said, to know the nature of its object, i.e., of the human Body” (2p13s). We learn, that is, differences between minds by looking at differences among bodies.

- If reason extends further than the imagination, and the imagination consists in ideas of how the body is affected, then the mind has ideas without bodily counterparts: my understanding of Euclid I.47 is as much, or as little, about your body as mine.
- Proposition 1 of Part 3 and 3p3 identify the mind being active with its having adequate ideas, and if the body is active, it seems to be so only derivatively, when the mind has adequate ideas.
- The preface to Part 5 begins by distinguishing the project of the *Ethics* from medicine and logic, which respectively display the “science of tending the body so that it may correctly perform its functions” and “the manner or way in which the intellect should be perfected.” Logic and medicine are distinct, which seems clearly to imply that so too mind and body are distinct.
- Finally, if he proves that the mind, or part of it, is immortal, the same cannot be said for the body.

All these are far from minor points in Spinoza’s argument, and each threatens mind/body identity. That identity is threatened not only when it looks like there are causal relations between mind and body, violating 3p2, but when one seems to act independently of the other, when a predicate applies to one without obvious counterpart for the other, as with adequate ideas being adequate causes, or ideas of ideas without a corporeal counterpart to that reflexivity.

The other idea that Spinoza constantly evades, albeit barely, is that of human uniqueness. People are a part of nature, not a kingdom within a kingdom. The only difference between people and other animals, indeed other individuals, is that we have a more complex body, and so a more complex imagination. And yet the *Ethics* narrows its subject, sometimes explicitly and often not, from finite individuals in general to human beings. What makes people unique, and what lets Spinoza narrow the *Ethics* to people without assuming some human nature, is that people relate to each other in unique ways. *It isn’t human nature that is unique; it is human society that is unique.* Among other things, only people have politics and religion, forms of the imagination that let people become rational as they live together. People form a species in ways that other beings do not. Marx’s formula that man is a species being, or Aristotle’s dictum that man is a political animal, get a new and profound meaning in Spinoza. Nothing is as useful to man as man (4p18s), while many things are more useful to a

dog than other dogs, and the same for other nonhuman animals. The preface to Part 4 says that “we” form a model of human nature; I don’t think that pigs and bears form models of porcine or ursine nature. *Ethics*, at least until the last section of Part 5, is about how to live a life fully engaged in a community.

A clear example of his tacit limitation of a proposition to human beings without giving any reason for the limitation is 4p19: “From the laws of his own nature, everyone necessarily wants, or is repelled by, what he judges to be good or evil.” Its proof says nothing about people in particular. In addition, Spinoza just as often limits the *objects* of the emotions to other people as well. Hatred, he says, “can never be good” (4p45), and in the scholium he clarifies the meaning of the thesis by saying, “Note that here and in what follows I understand by Hate only Hate toward men.” If hate is pain accompanied by the idea of an external cause, and I necessarily try to remove the cause of pain, then in that sense I cannot live without hate. A mosquito causes pain, and I therefore must try to remove or disable it. It is only other people that I should not try to destroy. Sometimes it looks like the narrowing from individuals in general to human beings is not only silent but unfounded.

Our relations with other people are a principal cause of both bondage and freedom. Our emotional relations with other people construct an objective world out of the way things affect us, objective in the sense that it is composed of objects, other people, whom we see as causes of our pleasures and pains, but also as objects on which we can act to increase our power. Human interactions are a great source of increased activity and rationality in the world. The total amount of power in the universe is a constant. But people can act in such a way that action and passion are not contraries. One person can become more powerful not at another’s expense, but as the other person becomes powerful as well. That is the reason that human rationality is of cosmic significance.

THE DRAMA OF THE *ETHICS*

The *Ethics* has a plot which moves toward the ultimate happy ending in Part 5 of people becoming immortal although the mind is a confused idea in Part 2, although Part 3 displays the pathologies of human emotions, and although Part 4 makes human bondage look insuperable. Becoming immortal is a paradox: immortality almost by definition is a predicate that must always apply to a subject if it applies at all. Yet “he who has a Body capable of a great many things has a Mind whose greatest part is eternal” (5p39). To become infinite is to become immortal, and to become immortal without becoming God.

The *Ethics* is an odd drama. There shouldn’t be any suspense in a fully de-

terminate world. There shouldn't be reversals and discoveries in this story presented geometrically. Not only is it hard to see how freedom is possible without a will to be free and in a world without contingency, but it is equally hard to see how the narrative of the *Ethics* could have suspense. But it has development. One theme of that development is the narrowing, starting with Part 3, sometimes explicit but more often tacit, of the subject from all individuals to human beings to people guided by reason and finally to truly rational people whose lives are dominated by the intellectual love of God. A second dramatic development is the interpenetration between finite and infinite. That finite minds can have adequate ideas, as Part 2 asserts, is exactly as surprising as that those adequate ideas, as Part 4 shows, do not necessarily make the individual active. There is then tension, and an unpredictable outcome, in a battle between the finite and the infinite, between imagination and reason, a battle between human bondage and freedom.

I read the *Ethics* as a drama with a complex plot, complete with reversals and discoveries. But one of the most surprising discoveries is that the *Ethics* is a drama at all. Spinoza's model, Euclid's *Elements*, may have discoveries, but it is not a drama. The point of a geometric method is that everything unfolds with necessity. Just as it seems that Spinoza goes out of his way to make ethics impossible—everything happens by necessity; free will is an illusion; the mind cannot act on the body; neither people nor God nor nature acts for an end—his geometric exposition seems to make drama impossible: there are no characters except for God, and “things could have been produced by God in no other way, and in no other order than they have been produced” (1p33). There is substance and there are modes, and they are distinct. There are infinite things, God and the infinite modes, and there are finite things, individual things, and there is no interaction between them. There are minds and bodies, and certainly no interaction between them. The mind is a confused idea of a body, and the unity of the body is simply that some smaller bodies are thrown together and act and are acted upon together, maintaining a proportion of motion and rest (Definition after Lemma 3 following 2p13).

But starting in Part 3, there are not only minds and bodies but individuals, and in particular human beings.⁵ Instead of minds and bodies, these individuals qualify as dramatic characters because their essence is something dynamic, the endeavor to persist as they are. These individuals have imaginative and emotional lives. There were motions in Part 2, but *action* enters the *Ethics* starting with the first two definitions in Part 3. The plot of the *Ethics* is the cunning of imagination, the way the imagination, without aiming at anything

more than survival, becomes, for some people, something other than imagination, namely understanding or intellect.

The characters in the drama of the *Ethics* only appear in Part 3, and in Part 3 we see the variety of lives that people can lead, all rooted in the conatus. The characters who populate Part 3 are blind and ignorant; that is what it means to be led by imagination. They are passively pushed forward, sometimes to dead ends such as jealousy or ambition, and sometimes to the pleasures that come from having adequate ideas and being the complete cause of one's thoughts and action. This is the cunning of imagination. The finite nature of our minds does not prevent us from having adequate ideas, ideas that are not limited by any other ideas (Spinoza's definition of finite). At the same time, we discover in Part 4, the finite nature of our minds can prevent those adequate ideas from fully living up to their nature: we can know what is best and, because of more powerful passions, do something worse. The first interaction between finite and infinite, unfortunately, is the interference of finite passive emotions that prevent our adequate ideas from being fully active. The more complex, specifically human imagination, makes people capable of the mistakes and pathologies cataloged in Parts 3 and 5 that wouldn't fool simpler animals, superstitions and beliefs in free will, in an anthropomorphic God, and in final causes. Yet, eventually, Spinoza leads us to discover within ourselves the power of the intellect over the emotions, that is, as he has it, the power to be free. The drama of the *Ethics* consists in making finite and infinite commensurable so that, as Part 5 has it, the intellect can rule the passions, and people can thereby be free and immortal.

The plot contains a discovery: that its readers can progress, move from being the subjects of the geometric method to being its practitioners. Within the narrative, this discovery is the gradual emergence of a self, an agent. It is only gradually that this story has a main character. That process begins with the conatus, as the individual becomes a dynamic force, endeavoring to preserve itself. But the characters have farther to go. Part 5 is titled "Of the Power of the Intellect, or On Human Freedom"; the power of the intellect is power over the emotions, so by that point reason and passion have become distinct enough for the intellect to be an agent which knows itself by knowing the passions. It is only when virtue is identified with knowledge, and the intellect identified with the self, that the people in this drama become agents. Looking back, we can then see that the self and self-knowledge began to emerge late in Part 3, where we can reliably increase our power by reflecting on the power of the mind: "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” (3p53), and in Part 4 where “we know nothing to be certainly good or evil, except what really leads to understanding or what can prevent us from understanding” (4p27). The development of freedom is the development of agency and an agent, when the mind is finally divided into the intellect and the emotions in Part 5.

The plot contains reversals, the most important of which is the movement (1) from mind/body identity, in which the mind is the idea of the body, but is so identical with the body that it lacks any critical distance that could allow it to be a true idea, to (2) the second kind of knowledge, which makes progress by being impersonal and detached from the perspective of the knower, to (3) a return to knowledge as necessarily first-person, but now self-knowledge, through the third kind of knowledge, of reason having power over the passions and so in union with God. The emotions that modify the first kind of ideas are as tied up with the ideas they modify as the mind is united to the body. The ideas of the second kind of knowledge do not have emotions necessarily attached to them, so that we can do geometry and know the passions dispassionately. But the obverse side of that detachment is that without motives attached to adequate ideas, they cannot play a central role in the life of the individual. In the third kind of knowledge, as with the first, idea and emotion are inseparable: knowledge of God is identical with the intellectual love of God.

There are other reversals and discoveries along the way. The imagination leads to specifically human pathologies, ways in which people act against the *conatus* or self-interest straightforwardly defined, but the imagination leads us astray only to make possible the ascent to rationality. For example, in romantic love the lover not only desires pleasure, but wants that increase in power to come from a specific source. Whenever that source is anything other than God, fixing on an object leads to obsession, vacillation, and disappointment. Yet the imagination also begins to construct an emotionally objective world. In another example, the imagination leads us to construct a model of human nature. With such a model in mind, we make comparative judgments, and so value our accomplishments not because they enhance our ability to preserve ourselves, but because they surpass the achievements of others, which helps not at all in self-maintenance. But the model of human nature also leads to aspirations to greater rationality, much as the universal creed does in the *TTP*. For a final example, people have a complex enough imagination that they wrongly believe that something is desirable because it is good, instead of realizing that good is only the name we give to whatever we find desirable.

Here too a false idea leads to an emotionally and conatively objective external world. But we also learn that there is a good, namely understanding itself, which is not good because people desire it—they may not—but because it has a different form of objectivity from that devised by the imagination. These are examples of the cunning of imagination at work.

The narrative of the *Ethics* has to be full of tension because the necessary connections of the geometric method don't fit the story. The *Ethics* tells a story whose subject is narrowed as the argument proceeds, and that narrowing is not itself a consequence of the argument, as I've already noted concerning the limitations to human nature. Everything tries to preserve itself. All or some individuals not only try to preserve themselves but to increase their power. A much smaller subset, some people, live under the guidance of reason, and a smaller set still can fit Spinoza's account of freedom and the ultimate end of the intellectual love of God. For example, while 4p18s told us that "to man, there is nothing more useful than man," 4p35c1 narrows the proposition to "There is no singular thing in Nature that is more useful to man than a man who lives according to the guidance of reason." Without positing grace or differences among people, there is no explanation of why only a few succeed at this difficult quest. The explanation lies not in the individual but in the individual in the circumstances that surround it, and we can't have demonstrative knowledge of such complex phenomena.

Spinoza's book is called *Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata*. I have not tried to follow Spinoza and use the geometric method myself in my presentation. To do so would reenact the deeds of Borges's Pierre Menard who attempted to rewrite *Don Quixote*, not to translate it, not to copy it, but to re-write it, to write it again as Cervantes did. My method has instead been to focus on some particular problems I find with Spinoza's argument, and use those specific points as proof texts to explore what I take are the central issues at each stage in his argument. Thus my chapter 2 focuses on a single proposition in Part 2 of the *Ethics*, 2p47, which declares that "The human Mind has an adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence," and my chapter 7 focuses on a proposition from Part 4: "To every action to which we are determined from an affect which is a passion, we can be determined by reason, without that affect" (4p59). The critical points I discuss in the other chapters are not so precisely located—and in chapter 3 I worry about exactly why what I take to be

an important claim of Spinoza's, that the desire of every individual to persist in its being involves a desire to increase its power, has no precise location — but each starts with a single problem that, unless solved, stops Spinoza's argument in its tracks.

In the *TTP* Spinoza announces his own method of interpretation, which depends on separating meaning from truth, and only understanding the meaning of the author, not the truth of the text. Applying such a method to the *Ethics*, not worrying about its truth, holds no interest for me; it would only be useful to someone trying to connect Spinoza's thought to his predecessors or to his own subsequent influence, or someone for whom Spinoza's character was the primary object of attention, seeing him either as hero or dangerous atheist.

The *TTP* contrasts his method of interpretation, which he takes to be especially suited to reading the Bible, to how he thinks we read Euclid's *Elements*. "Everyone comprehends the propositions of Euclid before they are demonstrated" (*TTP* C 2:185, G 3:111). It would be silly to follow Spinoza's method of interpretation and read the *Elements* for Euclid's meaning, abstracted from the question of truth, as we're supposed to read the Bible. But I can't read the *Ethics* as Spinoza says we read Euclid, either; its propositions are not immediately comprehensible, and often they stay mysterious even after their demonstrations. The *Elements* contains propositions that can be understood apart from their proofs, as Spinoza says, but the *Ethics*, because of its psychagogic purposes, forces us to understand the proofs in order to understand the propositions proven.

I read Spinoza neither in the way he reads the Bible nor how he reads Euclid, neither divorcing meaning from truth nor deciding in advance that the *Ethics* must be true. I see Spinoza practicing what he preaches by showing ideas as acts of the mind rather than "mute pictures on a panel" (2p49s). Thoughtful activities cannot be objects of inspection and judgment as pictures can; we can't assent to his propositions, and then see how he proves them, the practice he sees for reading Euclid. So I don't see the *Ethics* as a collection of beliefs, opinions, or doctrines, but as, in Darwin's phrase, "one long argument."⁶ Not only do I not assume that it is true, and employ a method to make the assumption come true, but, more emphatically, I don't try to judge whether it is true or not; reading the *Ethics* is not like grading a student paper. Taking it as one long argument means for me reading Spinoza as engaged in a difficult and important inquiry, and doing my best to reenact that argument.

The *Ethics*' earliest readers were able to read the work in manuscript and ask the author for clarifications. I talk to Spinoza and try to get him to talk

back. Partly due to the geometric method, the *Ethics* presents a placid and smooth surface. Treating human emotions as one would lines, planes, and bodies masks how much is at stake in his project of finding human freedom after tearing down most of the assumptions people generally think necessary for it. The geometric method masks how difficult the project is. I emphasize those difficulties, the better to show how impressive Spinoza's achievement.

A PREVIEW OF WHAT IS TO COME

I want to end this introduction with a quick road map of what follows. This précis is full of the technical language of the *Ethics*. I will elucidate all these terms in the book itself, so this outline will not be fully intelligible to someone not already comfortable thinking about the *Ethics*.

Chapter 1 brings together crucial ideas of the first two parts of the *Ethics*, relations between finite and infinite modes, imagination and reason, inadequate and adequate ideas, drawing connections especially between two of Spinoza's three original ideas, infinite modes and the second kind of knowledge. From his earliest readers, even before the *Ethics* was published, people have worried about how a single, simple, eternal, and infinite substance can include finite individuals that struggle to persist in time. I offer what I think is a novel solution: by introducing into the formal ontology of Part 1, with its distinction between substance, attributes, infinite modes, and finally finite modes, Part 2's identifying the two attributes we know about, thought and extension. The emergence of individuals comes easily for extension, and infinite modes have a natural home within the attribute of thought. Minds are finite ideas, but minds only exist because they are ideas of certain bodies, and their finite nature is derivative from the finite nature of the objects of which they are ideas. On the other side, there are multiple infinite modes, adequate ideas, but it looks like there is a single infinite mode of extension, namely "the face of the whole Universe, which, however much it may vary in infinite ways, nevertheless always remains the same" (Letter 64 to Schuller, C 2:439, G 4:278). These asymmetries set some of the agenda for chapter 1.

More precisely, adequate ideas are the infinite modes of the divine attribute of thought. A case has to be made for this identity because Spinoza does not follow up his very brief distinction in Part 1 between finite and infinite modes, or between immediate and mediate modes, in the rest of the *Ethics*. In Part 1 we don't even know that thought and extension are two of God's attributes. The elaborate ontology of Part 1 recedes into the background when Part 2

introduces the distinction between adequate and inadequate ideas, which I claim correlates with the distinction between infinite and finite modes. One important consequence of this identity is that, because adequate ideas are infinite modes, they have no conatus; the proof of 3p6 restricts the conatus to “particular things,” and I will argue that infinite modes do not fall into that class. They don’t have to exert themselves to persist, since there is nothing outside them that can threaten them, as there is nothing outside God.

That adequate ideas are infinite modes raises in acute form a central issue in what follows: how can a finite mind, which is itself an inadequate idea, contain adequate ideas? Most pointedly, how can finite minds contain an adequate idea of God? Spinoza says that we all have such an idea, but if we do, it doesn’t dominate the lives of most of us, as such an important idea ought to do. Chapter 2 is concerned with just this problem, focusing on 2p47: “The human Mind has an adequate knowledge of God’s eternal and infinite essence.”

In *Ethics* 3 the subject changes from minds and bodies to the individual, and it here that the cunning of imagination first becomes evident, as the imagination is driven toward a progress to which it is blind. Axiom 3 of Part 2 said that ideas are prior to the emotions, and any emotion is a modification of an idea, but in Part 3 the conatus, the desire to persist, comes first, and ideas modify the emotions. My chapter 3 focuses on a crucial inference—or jump—early in *Ethics* 3 from the conatus as the universal desire of every individual to preserve itself to the desire to increase power. I also underline an inference Spinoza does not draw, that the conatus implies, at least in people, a desire to know, to have adequate ideas and to be the adequate cause of their thoughts, actions, and emotions.

Chapter 4 explores a specific pathology of the human imagination, that of romantic love. The cunning of imagination appears here, as romantic love is a parody of devotion to God. In contrast to the universal creed of the *TTP*, which is a set of imaginative ideas, romantic love is not a stepping-stone to devotion to God but a distraction from it.

In chapter 5 the cunning of imagination takes the form of *akrasia*, the specifically human predicament of having knowledge without being able to act on it. Truth and power do not line up as we would like. Their correct alignment has to be achieved because it is not a given. “If men were born free, they would form no concept of good and evil so long as they remained free” (4p68). Achieving the alignment between truth and power is not “better” than being given it; I’d rather be born free and would happily do without a conception of good and evil. Having to achieve the correct alignment of truth and power is

not a better fate than having it given, just as having a fertile imagination that can accompany the intellect is not better than reason alone. But when reason emerges from the imagination, it is not an alien presence, as the idea of God in 2p47 was.

Chapter 6 explores another anomaly in Spinoza's argument, the existence of pleasures that are passive but which increase the power of the whole body. These cheerful or, to use the Latin word for shock value, hilarious pleasures are neither a parody of the intellectual love of God, like romantic love, nor an imitation and tracking of adequate ideas, like the articles of faith in the *TTP* or the model of human nature in the preface to Part 4. They don't lead to wisdom, but on the contrary are only enjoyed by the wise person.

In the final two chapters, we see the cunning of imagination in the simple form that the imagination gives data to be known and converted into adequate ideas. Proposition 59 of Part 4 declares that "To every action to which we are determined from an affect which is a passion, we can be determined by reason, without that affect." Even if that is true, which I take as far from obvious, it doesn't seem enough to overcome what the title to Part 4 calls "human bondage, or the strength of the emotions," and the declaration, which seems contrary to 4p59, that "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" (4p4). In the battle between passion and reason, akrasia never suffers a final defeat.

My final chapter confronts the cunning of imagination in its ultimate form. The imagination is indispensable. Even if it interferes with our knowledge of God, and therefore our achievement of our highest good, we need imagination to negotiate a world which we cannot but see as contingent. I frame this final problem as the relation between the *summum bonum*, the highest good of the intellectual love of God, and the *totum bonum*, the things rightly desired by an individual endeavoring to maintain its existence and essence. The indispensability of imagination seems to make practical reason impossible, and thus threatens the entire project of the *Ethics*. I argue that the one place in our practical and ethical lives where we need reason and not imagination is in self-knowledge. There is never smooth sailing in the drama of the *Ethics*. Starting from universal premises, the *Ethics* ends with the statement that good things are as difficult as they are rare.

First Part

Nothing can be more abrupt than the beginning of the *Ethics*. The shock must be intentional, since the rest of the *Ethics* doesn't behave like that beginning. In contrast, Part 2 begins with a brief explanation of the turn from God to the human intellect, and Parts 3–5 are introduced by extended prefaces. But Part 1 simply presents the reader with eight definitions and seven axioms.¹ The *TIE*² began with a personal narrative that explains why Spinoza has written that treatise, and the *TTP* with a preface that declares the purpose of that work. *Ethics* 1 just starts with a title, Concerning God, and its definitions and axioms. Spinoza gives no explanation for why a work titled *Ethics*, or *Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata*, should start with God. Spinoza does nothing to soften the shock of investigating God geometrically. If the human experience of approaching God is supposed to be an experience of joy, it is hard to see the start of the *Ethics* as fitting that description.

CHAPTER 1

Adequate Ideas Are Infinite Modes

PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE OF MODES: WHY IS GOD MODIFIED?

By mode I understand the affections of a substance, or that which is in another through which it is also conceived. (1def5)

You ask whether a variety of things can be demonstrated a priori from the concept of extension alone. I believe that I have already shown clearly enough that this is impossible. (Letter 83 to Tschirnhaus, C 1:487, G 4:334)

That sentence, which begins Spinoza's letter to Tschirnhaus of July 15, 1676, responds to a concern that has continued to worry his readers ever since. Thus Leibniz says that Spinoza "maintains (1p21) that finite and temporal things cannot be produced immediately by an infinite cause, but that (1p28) they are produced by other causes, individual and finite. But how will they then spring finally from God?"¹ Answering Leibniz's question is not just a matter of providing a coherent interpretation of the *Ethics*, but of addressing Spinoza's ethical project. The overriding questions of my whole inquiry are: how can a human being, a finite individual, have adequate ideas, without which salvation and freedom are impossible? And, in the other direction, how can adequate ideas, which are about everything and therefore about nothing in particular, lead to some specific practical action and to human freedom?² Starting

the *Ethics* with Spinoza's God—an impersonal God without will and without care for people, a God identical with a perfectly determinate nature—makes ethics very unlikely. If there is no derivation of modes—everything other than God—from God, there will also be no route back from us to God, so my epigraph from Letter 83 can't be the end of the story.

I will approach these overarching questions about the relations between the finite and the infinite by showing what happens when we see that the adequate ideas of Part 2 are the infinite modes glancingly introduced in 1p21–23.³ My thesis that adequate ideas are infinite modes has a major implication, that one of the properties they do not share with finite modes is the *conatus*: adequate ideas, as infinite modes, do not endeavor to preserve themselves and persist in existence, because their existence is too secure, too necessary, to be threatened. In addition, working through the thesis that adequate ideas are infinite modes challenges Spinoza's insistence on the identity of mind and body, idea and extension, because while being finite and limited is no flaw or imperfection in bodies, it is in ideas. That is, when an idea is inadequate, it doesn't do its job as an idea very well, while finite bodies do just what bodies are supposed to do. Mind/body identity is threatened because “inadequate” is a predicate that applies to ideas, but not, at least in any obvious way, to bodies. In the case of adequate ideas, the distinction between finite and infinite modes has a normative dimension: adequate ideas as infinite modes are what ideas should be. Adequate ideas fulfill their nature as modes of the attribute of thought. But this normative dimension applies *only* to the attribute of thought, not extension. Only for ideas is being finite an imperfection and a flaw, as well as a remediable one, which is why Spinoza will go on to equate being an adequate cause with adequate ideas (3p1, 3p3), and not some property of the body (3p2).

The *Ethics* begins with a series of eight definitions, of (1) *causa sui*, (2) finite things, (3) substance, (4) attributes, (5) modes, (6) God, (7) free things, and (8) eternity. The definitions themselves do not prove that the things defined exist, and so he spends the first fourteen propositions of the *Ethics* showing that substance, God, and *causa sui* exist, and that these three terms designate the same thing. I'm not interested in his proof of God's existence but in what happens after that happy start.

In particular, I'm interested in the relation of finite and infinite on which the possibility of ethics depends, and prior to that, in making sense of the striking difference between the proof of the existence of God and the lack of a corresponding demonstration for finite modes. Spinoza never attempts to prove the identity between the finite and modes, as he does with *causa sui*,

substance, and God. He never tries to prove it because it isn't true: not all modes are finite.

If we ask how to get from the infinite to the finite and back again, as long as we're talking about the infinite as indeterminate, as the imagination understands it, those transitions are easy. Erect boundaries over an infinite expanse, and the result is a finite magnitude. Remove those boundaries, and what was contained in a finite magnitude becomes unbounded. But that image won't work when we are concerned with moving from the infinite substance to finite individuals and back again, where the infinite is not the unlimited but the self-limiting. We can't understand the infinity of God through the imagination.

Opening the *Ethics* with God challenges the geometric method, since that method depends on the cooperation of imagination and reason, and God is the one object that the imagination cannot grasp at all. In asking why modes exist, we are again running up against the limits of the geometric method, because imagination and reason do not cooperate but compete in their conceptions of the relation of finite and infinite, and so the relation between finite modes and God. I just presented the imagination's picture of the relation between finite and infinite, and said that it was inadequate for thinking about the relation of finite things to God; I haven't yet started to construct reason's understanding of that relation.

I said that the existence of finite and modes (1def2 and 5) couldn't be demonstrated, as is the existence of *causa sui*, substance, and God, and my sentence from Letter 83 seems to say the same, but Spinoza calls the existence of modes self-evident in the proof of 1p16. Its self-evidence then threatens to be a brute datum, self-evident because it cannot be questioned, not because it is obviously and necessarily true. Proposition 16 of Part 1 asserts the existence of modes: "From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes (i.e., everything which can fall under an infinite intellect)."⁴ There seems to be a pun on modes here: a mode is a way that things follow from divine nature. But a mode is defined as an "affections of a substance, or that which is in another through which it is also conceived" (1def5). A way in which something follows doesn't seem identical with an affection.⁵

The "proof" to 1p16 doesn't help; it isn't a demonstration since it cites no definitions, axioms or prior propositions. All it says is

This Proposition must be plain to anyone, provided he attends to the fact that the intellect infers from the given definition of any thing a

number of properties that really do follow necessarily from it (i.e., from the very essence of the thing); and that it infers more properties the more the definition of the thing expresses reality, i.e., the more reality the essence of the defined thing involves.⁶

This is not a satisfying proof. God is no less powerful because there are no unicorns in my neighborhood, and no dodos whose existence overlaps with mine. A principle of plenitude needs some constraints to avoid overpopulating the world (2p8). Worse, the existence of finite modes cannot be entailed by the existence and power of God. Being finite is a privation, and a privation cannot follow from the nature of God. Harold Joachim is exactly right, and shows the gravity of the problem.

No one . . . can be expected to show exactly how and why finite existence, error, evil, change, are and consist with the general nature of Reality. To attempt to “deduce the finite from the infinite” — if Spinoza had really attempted anything of the kind — would betray a serious misunderstanding of the powers of human thought.⁷

And not only of the powers of human thought, but a misunderstanding of the nature of the universe. The declaration of self-evidence covers the hole in the derivation of finite individuals from God. Recognizing that, though, we can see how Spinoza shapes the rest of the story. At stake here is the relation of the finite and the infinite. The trouble is that these two are conceived differently by the imagination and reason.

Part 1 tells us that God has infinite attributes, each of which expresses the infinite nature of God. We also learn that each attribute has modes, finite and infinite. I suggest making sense of infinite modes by taking the examples of the attributes thought and extension that we learn about in Part 2, and looking not at finite and infinite modes in general, but at finite and infinite modes of thought and extension. Focusing on those cases gives the treatment of finite and infinite modes more depth and richness, but, also, something unsettling and threatening happens. Both the identity of mind and body and the bar on causal interaction between them are at risk.

Modes of the attribute of thought are most naturally understood as infinite. Indeed, it isn't at all obvious how one idea can limit another, although Spinoza will eventually explain what that means. I reject the offhand remark that follows 1def2:

For example, a body is called finite because we always conceive another that is greater. *Thus a thought is limited by another thought.* (italics mine)

Can we “always conceive another [thought]” greater than a given thought? Can we ever conceive such a thing? What Spinoza says about modes, finite and infinite, readily make sense for extension, but it is hard to understand what an infinite mode of thought is, and what a finite mode. Bodies are all part of a single space, but there is no whole of which all ideas are a part. If it is hard to see how thoughts can be limited, and so finite, the reverse is the case on the corporeal side. Bodies are by definition limited, surrounded by other bodies. The mediate infinite mode of extension, the total face of the universe, looks like it is infinite simply because it is the total of all finite modes, and since there is nothing outside it, there is nothing bigger to limit it. It is not, as I will argue adequate ideas are, infinite by its nature or cause.

Finite and infinite have different meanings for thought and for extension because for thought, the infinite is the positive term, finite the privation, while for extension bodies are by nature limited, and the infinite is the indefinite negation. The imagination’s picture of the infinite as the indefinite works for bodies, but not thoughts. In both cases the existence of the privation is not evident, neither finite ideas nor infinite bodies. I will argue that the infinite modes of thought are adequate ideas, but this identification does not diminish the strangeness of adequate ideas, at least of the second kind of knowledge, unless we can show how a finite mind that is itself a confused and inadequate idea can have adequate ideas. Identifying adequate ideas with infinite modes doesn’t explain what happens to an adequate idea because a finite mind thinks it, or what happens to a finite mind when it thinks an adequate idea.

But, paradoxical as adequate ideas within a finite mind are, it will turn out that inadequate ideas are equally puzzling, for different reasons. Their existence cannot be deduced from the attribute of thought that they modify. The proof of Part 5’s Proposition 29 tells us that “it is of the nature of reason to conceive things under a species of eternity.” But the mind does not always so conceive things. For the mind not to act according to the nature of reason, there must be an external cause of such deviation, and I want to know what that external cause could be—and how it can be external to the mind but not external to the attribute of thought—and what it is about the mind that makes it vulnerable to external causation. Given the attribute of thought, one could never deduce that there are inadequate ideas; such things exist only because of the identity of mind and body, finite modes of thought and extension.⁸

THE VARIETY OF MODES AND THE PRINCIPLE
OF SUFFICIENT IMAGINATION

But whence now do—not this or that thing, this or that affection, but any affections at all of the divine substance come from? Spinoza gives no answer for this, because he cannot give an answer. . . . It would, so to speak, never occur to him to posit affections in the infinite substance *if he had not discovered any things in experience*, thus it is evident that he admittedly maintains an objective connection between God and things, but never really demonstrates it, the things are certain to him, not *from his principle but from elsewhere*. (F. W. J. Schelling; italics mine)⁹

Spinoza rightly says that he cannot deduce the existence of modes from the essence and existence of God. Once we leave the eternity of the unique substance whose existence follows from its essence, we might be expected to fall immediately into a realm of chaos, of fleeting and undependable existence. As complicated and puzzling as the world of modes is, it is surprisingly orderly, determinate, and, most important of all, intelligible and rational. Order is introduced into this potentially chaotic world through two pairs of contraries, thought vs. extension and finite vs. infinite, and eventually the interrelation between those two pairs.

The scholium to 1p29, which sums up the section that shows that there are finite and infinite modes, provides a better explanation than the propositions 1p21–29 themselves:

Before I proceed further, I wish to explain here—or rather to advise [the reader]—what we must understand by *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. For from the preceding I think it is already established that by *Natura naturans* we must understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, or such attributes of substance as express an eternal and infinite essence, i.e. (by P14C1 and P17C2), God, insofar as he is considered as a free cause.

But by *Natura naturata* I understand whatever follows from the necessity of God's nature, or from any of God's attributes, i.e., all the 15 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.¹⁰

While it is impossible to demonstrate the existence of anything whose essence and existence are distinct, it turns out that proving that there are immediate

and mediate, infinite and finite modes, is easier than proving the existence of modes in general, because modes in general are possible only if there are immediate infinite modes. Something—God or substance—without parts cannot be altered. Whatever it means to modify an attribute, it cannot mean to change it, since attributes cannot change. Only an immediate infinite mode can modify an attribute without altering it.

The argument for the existence of modes is that *natura naturans* implies *natura naturata*. God is not only the cause of itself, *causa sui*, but necessarily the cause of other things as well (1p25s), and since God is the only substance, those other things must be modes, not other substances. Saying that everything is either a substance or a mode means that everything is either understood through itself or through something else—nothing is unintelligible. As we go on, we will see that conclusion under considerable strain as it looks like there are many elements of our ordinary experience—the imagination—which cannot be known adequately: pain and error are the most obvious candidates.

It's not that God would be incomplete without modes. God does not create the world out of benevolence, or need, but simply out of power. Nor are the modes necessary because otherwise God would not be intelligible since in that case nothing would be predicated of it.¹¹ It is the nature of substance to be supremely intelligible. God is intelligible through the attributes, and doesn't need the modes to become intelligible. Pierre Macherey expresses the point clearly: "If no determinations at all were given in God, it is the existence of things and not its own specific existence that would be called into question."¹²

Even if God doesn't need modes to be complete, Part 1 of the *Ethics*—"On God"—is incomplete without the rest of the *Ethics*. We don't even know that thought and extension are divine attributes until the first two propositions of Part 2.¹³ Once we know that these two are divine attributes, we can, I will argue below, then infer that there are finite and infinite modes. So even if God does not need modes, and even if modes cannot be deduced from God's nature, our *understanding* of God does require the rest of the argument.

Here I think is the link that allows commerce between God and modes, given the impossibility of demonstrating anything where essence and existence are distinct and where God does not need anything outside itself. To ask why there are modes is identical to the question of why reality has appearances. Reading modes as appearances answers the question of how God can have modes while never changing. Something is not changed when someone looks at it. Everything has a mode; everything appears, even God, whose appearance is *natura naturata*. *Natura Naturata* is *facies totius universi*, and *facies*

is appearance or image. The modes of both thought and extension *are* appearances. (And we need to know that thought and extension are divine attributes [2p1-2] in order to know that modes are appearances.) The difference between an attribute and its immediate infinite mode is the difference between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, between reality and its appearance. Attributes are wholes without parts, while infinite modes are divisible, and so can be modified in whole or in part. Therefore infinite modes can be modified either by further infinite modes or by finite modes.

One step further. Being an appearance and perceiving appearances are two faces of the same phenomenon. Anything that appears is also affected by and so perceives other appearances. To be a finite mode is to be affected by things outside itself. Finite individuals are temporary nodes of stability too evanescent to be known adequately, and the minds of such individuals can only know how they are affected. Spinoza's "panpsychism," the idea that every finite individual is alive and has a mind, then follows immediately. Finite modes are parts of larger wholes, and to be alive is to be aware—not necessarily veridically—of one's place in a greater whole. Everything finite both affects other things—is perceptible—and is affected by other things—is a perceiver. Neither seeing nor being seen inherently changes the subject or object.

If Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason says that everything must have a reason, my parallel principle for the imagination—a Principle of Sufficient Imagination—and for finite modes says that everything must be a reasoner, or, at least, a thinker. My exposition of Spinoza overall turns on the cunning of imagination parallel to Hegel's cunning of reason, and here Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason has its twin too, the principle of sufficient imagination.¹⁴ According to the principle of sufficient reason, everything is knowable and explicable. By my principle of sufficient imagination, everything is perceptible. And, what looks much harder to accept, everything is a perceiver. To be, for finite modes, is to be perceived, or at least perceptible, and to be is to be a perceiver. If everything is both perceptible and a perceiver, then nothing—almost nothing—is unimaginable. Apart from God, there is nothing outside the scope of the imagination. This is the promise of the geometric method.¹⁵

Not only are modes—and therefore appearances and imaginations—not illusory, but they are built into the structure of being. The imagination is just as real as the intellect. As Gilles Deleuze puts it: "The kinds of knowledge are modes of existence." Invoking the imagination does not mean, with Hegel, that modes are unreal. On the contrary, it will mean that the imagination is real.¹⁶

Proving That Adequate Ideas Are Infinite Modes

The intellect, even though infinite, pertains to *natura naturata*, not to *natura naturans*. (Letter 9 to De Vries, C 1:195, G 4:45)

Here is a simple and valid argument that proves that adequate ideas are infinite modes: They are modes, since they aren't substances or attributes. They are not finite modes, because they are not limited by other things of the same kind. Therefore adequate ideas are infinite modes.

Here is a second simple and valid argument: Adequate ideas are *about* infinite modes. The objects of the second kind of knowledge (2p40s2), are things equally true in the part and in the whole. Since the objects of adequate ideas are infinite modes, adequate ideas themselves must be infinite modes. Inadequate ideas are ideas of finite modes—bodies and the ideas of those bodies, and the interactions among bodies and among minds. Inadequate ideas are themselves finite modes, limited by other inadequate ideas. There has to be a proportion between knower and known, and so infinite modes are known by infinite modes, just as finite modes are known by finite modes. “Ideas differ among themselves, as the objects themselves do, and one is more excellent than the other, and contains more reality, just as the object of the one is more excellent than the object of the other and contains more reality” (2p13s). As 2p38 argues, if something is eternal so is its idea, if something has duration, so does its idea.¹⁷

Although both these arguments are sound, they need elaboration. At a minimum, they need an articulation of the difference between finite and infinite modes. Once these two short arguments are recognized as compelling, the weighty significance of the identification of adequate ideas with infinite modes of thought will become clear. By showing that adequate ideas are infinite modes, I supply something for infinite modes equivalent to what Spinoza proves for God on the one hand and finite modes on the other. Early in Part 1, Spinoza shows that “God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists” (1p11) and “absolutely infinite substance is indivisible” (1p14). All divine attributes are expressions of a single reality: God is extension, fully and without remainder, and is fully intellect. Proposition 7 of Part 2 declares that not only are the attributes of thought and extension identical, but so are their finite modes: “The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.” While all attributes express the nature of a single God, and while

the finite modes of each attribute correspond to the finite modes of any other attribute, Spinoza does not explicitly correlate the infinite modes of different attributes. I will argue that adequate ideas are infinite modes identical to the infinite modes of extension that they know. Not only is there a single *natura naturans*, whether expressed in thought or extension, but the same holds for *natura naturata*. There is a single structure for infinite modes, whatever the attribute, and a single structure for finite modes, whatever the attribute.

*The Taxonomy of Modes and the Difference
between Finite and Infinite Modes*

The imaginative faculty is also an angel.

(Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed* II.6)

Spinoza's assertion in 1p16d that the existence of modes is self-evident is made good by distinguishing immediate from mediate modes, and finite from infinite modes. While, as I just argued, he cannot prove that there are modes in general, if he can show that there are immediate infinite modes of the attributes, he can then demonstrate that there are mediate modes, and then finite modes. The modes of the divine substance must be immediate and infinite. Immediate because, if there are modes at all, at least one of them will have to modify substance immediately and not through another mode. And infinite because they modify substance overall, since substance has no parts and so cannot be modified in part, and thus by finite modes.¹⁸ As he says in 1p21: "All the things which follow from the absolute nature of any of God's attributes have always had to exist and be infinite, or are, through the same attribute, eternal and infinite." Therefore immediate modes of the attributes have to be infinite. There can be no immediate finite modes. The immediate infinite mode in turn generates two kinds of modifications, those that affect it as a whole and those that affect it only in part. These are the mediate infinite modes and the finite modes. Finite modes do not modify God directly, but only via infinite modes.

However, although Spinoza doesn't say so, there is nothing unique about God that allows it to be modified. Anything, substance or mode, can have modes, this despite the definition of modes as "the affections of substance" (1def5). (The second half of the definition abstracts from that condition: a mode is "that which is in another though which it is also conceived.")¹⁹ For one absolutely crucial example, emotions are modifications of ideas: "There

are no modes of thinking, such as love, desire, or whatever is designated by the word affects of the mind, unless there is in the same Individual the idea of the thing loved, desired, etc. But there can be an idea, even though there is no other mode of thinking" (2ax3). Even more critically, the conatus and the mind were modes of each other. All desires are modifications of ideas, but the conatus, our basic desire, is modified by ideas.

Problems with the Existence of Modes

Following Spinoza's argument, and temporarily setting aside my complaints about the lack of parallelism between modes of thought and of extension, then, has led to the following taxonomy of modes. There is an immediate infinite mode that immediately modifies each attribute. There are no immediate finite modes, since attributes cannot be modified in part, because they have no parts. Any mode can be the subject of further modifications. Infinite modes can be modified by finite or infinite modes, since they do have parts. Finally, finite modes can only be modified by further finite modes. There are no infinite modes of finite modes, even if some mode modifies the whole of a finite mode. The whole idea of a fragmentary idea is itself fragmentary.

I said, *pace* 1def5, that anything, substance or mode, can be modified. But there is a difference between how substance has modes and how modes have further modes. Only God or substance or an infinite mode can be the complete cause of its modes. For example, my mind is modified by the ideas that I affirm. But the mind is not a complete explanation of why I have the ideas I have. It follows that those ideas are inadequate, since if the mind were a complete cause, it would be an adequate idea. That finite modes themselves can be modified introduces error and imperfection into God's creation. Finite modes are all privations. (Recall that God itself is modified only by immediate infinite modes, not finite modes, so none of the modes of God is imperfect or privative.)

But of what is a finite mode deprived? Here is where the distinction between the modes of thought and extension becomes useful. The finite modes of extension are deprived of being infinitely extended, but are not for that reason imperfect or incomplete. For a thought to fail to be infinite, by contrast, is not only a privation but an incompleteness. Inadequate ideas—all ideas—*ought* to be adequate, while it is not the case that bodies ought to have infinite extension. Therefore the normative side of the *Ethics* emerges already in the finite modes of thought. Being finite is one thing; error another. Inade-

quate ideas contradict this, because an inadequate idea is not identical with its essence; it is a fragment of an adequate idea, and contains associations foreign to the essence of the idea. If everything was perfect, then nothing would need to struggle to continue in existence: there would be no conatus. The conatus shows that the finite individual cannot be “considered in itself.” That makes finite ideas inadequate and finite bodies limited by others. Individuals are an abstraction, although they don’t know it.

INFINITE MODES

Infinite Modes vs. Finite Modes

At this point, I’ve done my best to show why, if God exists, then finite modes exist as well. This implication holds because immediate infinite modes supply a middle term, infinite like God yet divisible and not self-caused like finite modes. If there is an immediate infinite mode, then there are finite modes, because whatever is not an attribute, i.e., whatever is a mode, is divisible.²⁰

The geometric method helps here. God is known only by reason without the imagination. Finite modes are only knowable by the imagination. Infinite modes are subject to both reason and imagination, which makes them uniquely suited to be the subject of the geometric method and the second kind of knowledge. “Since in fact to be finite is in part a negation and to be infinite is the unqualified affirmation of the existence of some nature, it follows from 1p7 alone that every substance must be infinite” (1p18s1). The existence of infinite modes shows that the converse is not true: not everything that is infinite is a substance. Spinoza is not just inserting terms to bridge an unbridgeable gap, as though one could traverse an infinite distance by dividing it in half. It is just because infinite modes are knowable by a combination of intellect and imagination that they can be known adequately by finite minds.

Finite modes are paradoxical because it is mysterious how the infinite could ever lead to the finite. As I’ve suggested, one important manifestation of this paradox will be the great difficulty in accounting for inadequate ideas, a point to which I will return. But infinite modes are paradoxical too because they are caused by something outside themselves, have an essence distinct from existence, and yet are infinite and eternal. They have an external cause that does not limit them or threaten them. Infinite modes can be infinite and still have external causes. This will be crucial when identifying infinite modes with adequate ideas, since there too essence does not determine existence:

ideas, whether adequate or not, have to be thought by minds, but the mind that thinks an adequate idea plays no causal role in explaining its essence. If the problem for inadequate ideas is to see why they exist at all, the problem for adequate ideas will be to see how they can exist in a mind that is itself a confused and inadequate idea.

Here is another difference between finite and infinite modes that helps us to understand infinite modes. The proof of the existence of finite modes tells us nothing about what those finite modes are like. The proof allows for the possibility that all finite modes of extension are spheres five inches in diameter, and that they move in straight lines for three minutes and then stop.²¹ Individual finite modes are not necessary; it is only their causal connections to other finite modes that are necessary. Every finite mode can then be part of a larger whole, and also, as we learn in the case of the human body, can be replaced by another finite mode without changing the essence of that larger whole. But infinite modes have a necessity that finite modes lack, an *internal* necessity and not just the necessity of their connections to other modes. For each attribute, there is a single immediate infinite mode. The nature of the attribute determines the nature of the immediate infinite mode, as it cannot determine the nature of any finite mode.

Infinite Modes and Substance

The existence of infinite modes shows that the definitions in Part 1 do not form a set of exhaustive oppositions — not all modes are finite. Only because there is room for a *tertium quid* between God and the finite is human freedom possible. Ethics is possible because *people can be the adequate causes of their actions without being the adequate causes of their existence*, a power reserved to God. Ethics is possible if we can separate the two parts of Part 1's definition of free things (1def7): "That thing is called free which exists from the necessity of its nature alone, and is determined to act by itself alone." If anything other than God, *causa sui*, can be free, it will be "determined to act by itself alone" without existing "from the necessity of its own nature alone." The free person has his or her being in another — the definition of a mode — but, to the extent one is free, one has powers, one's adequate ideas, that cannot be overcome by something more powerful — the definition of finite. *The free person is therefore an infinite mode*. Infinite modes are what we want to be, adequate causes of our actions without being the adequate causes of our existence.

God is necessarily unique; finite modes are necessarily plural, since by the

definition of finite they come in series of containers and things contained, but it isn't clear whether infinite modes here have the property of being *infinite* like God or being a *mode* like finite modes, and it is therefore unclear whether the infinite modes of a given attribute could be plural or individuated.²² The reasons God is unique (1p14) cannot apply to infinite modes, nor does the reason that makes finite modes of a given attribute necessarily plural, that they come in series that limit one another. Like the medieval angels each of which had to be its own species because, lacking matter, they had no principle of individuation, there is no kind to which infinite modes belong—and in this respect the infinite modes bear a resemblance to Kant's noumena, which are equally hard to individuate and count.²³

Here is a further peculiarity of infinite modes. Only finite things can be contrary to each other. God has no opposite, nor does any infinite mode. When a finite thing is limited by another, and yet tries to exert itself, it finds that it can't do as it likes, and so the other thing is contrary to it. Infinite modes have no contraries because they modify without altering their subject; they are pervasive, modifying their subject in its entirety and in all its parts. All adequate ideas about a given attribute are coextensive, since they all have unlimited scope. They are plural; at least finite minds can have one adequate idea without having them all. But we now have a stronger result: all the mediate infinite modes that modify a single attribute and its immediate infinite mode imply each other. Adequate ideas have inferential and causal relations to one another, but these relations, unlike those of formal logic, cannot be cashed out in ways that involve negation.²⁴

Finite Modes

As soon as we try to understand finite modes, we find differences between the finite modes of thought and extension. "Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being" (3p6). What Spinoza does not say is that each finite thing *has to* endeavor to persist in its own being. To be finite is to be threatened. Thoughts are finite because, and to the extent that, they can be destroyed by another thought. They are finite because they are vulnerable, not because they are surrounded by something greater.

Finite modes, whether of thought or extension, can be destroyed. They can also, unlike God and the infinite modes, become more or less powerful. The world of finite modes is a world of changeable things. Because they can be destroyed, because they come into being and pass away, they admit of degrees of

power. Neither God nor the infinite modes can change their power, since they cannot be affected at all, that is, they are perfect. Finite modes can be more or less perfect. Ethics depends on this necessary feature of finite modes. For every finite mode, that quantum of power has a minimum, since it can always be destroyed. In chapter 7 I will show that that quantity can also have a maximum, but at this point my claim is less ambitious. Because finite modes can change, they must have some properties other than that of the attributes they modify. A finite mode must be more than just something extended or thought, and must be something other than its essence. They modify some attribute, and exist and are conceived through the attribute, but have at least two additional sets of qualities. First, finite modes are perceptible, and perceptible by the imagination. This feature will be important later in this chapter, where I argue that the imagination is not just an imperfect way of knowing but a constituent feature of the universe. Second, they possess qualities that can vary continuously, and so increase or diminish the power of the mode. Spinoza sees things other than substances as having essences, and for finite modes there is at least one property distinct from its essence.

FINITE BODIES FORM A WHOLE;
ADEQUATE IDEAS ARE WHOLES

Finite Ideas and Infinite Bodies

Spinoza's exposition of the taxonomy of substance, attributes and the variety of modes is completely formal. No matter the attribute, there is an immediate infinite mode and further modes, finite and infinite. Most attempts to make sense of Spinoza's idea of infinite modes, including Spinoza's own, focus on the infinite modes of extension, not thought.²⁵ I've already complained that even the definition of finite (1def2) explains the finite for extension, not thought: "A body is called finite because we always conceive another that is greater. Thus a thought is limited by another thought." Reversing Spinoza's own procedure, it is by identifying adequate ideas with infinite modes that we can make sense of infinite modes in general, without relying on spatial analogies. What it means, for example, for something to be "external" to an idea is not obvious, and is not clarified when we think about something outside a body, nor is it obvious how one thought can limit another. I propose to make sense of infinite modes by concentrating on the infinite modes of thought, and make sense of finite modes by concentrating on the finite modes of extension.

Infinite modes of thought, I will show, are easy to understand, and the same for finite modes of extension. Understanding the infinite modes of extension and the finite modes of thought, that is, inadequate ideas, will be that much more difficult.²⁶

If Spinoza had introduced thought and extension in Part 1, he might have to say — as I'm saying on his behalf — (1) that the attribute of thought has infinite modes, and (2) finite modes of thought are privations, while (3) finite modes can be read off the definition of the attribute of extension, but not of thought, and (4) that infinity for extension is the indefinite, the infinite understood as quantity. Spinoza cannot do what I want him to do, declare that thought and extension are the only attributes, because then each could be defined through opposition to the other, which would make them finite.

Bodies, we learn in Part 2, are made of smaller bodies, down to the hypothetical simplest bodies, while the simplest idea is the idea of the whole, of God, and more complex ideas are modifications of that simplest idea. Neither God nor the idea of God has parts — the idea must be grasped all at once, and so in intuition, the third kind of knowledge — while each body has parts, which are prior to any whole. Being finite comes naturally to extension, while it is the nature of thought to be infinite. We have inadequate ideas, finite thoughts, only because the mind is a confused idea of a body. Extension easily divides itself into bodies, and bodies can be individuated by their location in a single space. Inadequate ideas are individuated by their corresponding bodies, and not by their nature as modifications of the attribute of thought. Unlike there being a single space in which all bodies are related to each other, inadequate ideas are only related to other inadequate ideas in someone's mind.

The fact that the modes of extension are by nature finite — extension lends itself naturally to division into finite parts — while the modes of thought are by nature infinite — ideas are not naturally surrounded by a sea of other ideas — locates the ambivalent status of the imagination. The imagination comprises inadequate ideas, finite modes of thought which exist only because the mind is the idea of a certain body, ideas of how some individual is affected by things outside it. *The imagination consists in ideas that behave like bodies.*

Extension is divisible, and infinitely so. The finite parts of extension are externally related to each other both causally and spatially. Thus the total face of the universe is supposed to be an infinite mode, but it looks infinite only in the sense of unbounded: there is nothing outside it. Finite modes of extension are different from infinite modes of extension, but are not contrary to them. Finite modes of thought, though, as inadequate ideas, are not only distinct from adequate ideas but contrary to them, as passions are contrary to actions.

Therefore the relation of finite and infinite is different for ideas and for bodies. Finite ideas are fragments of infinite ideas, while finite bodies are not fragments of an infinite body. Here 4p18s is illuminating:

We can never bring it about that we require nothing outside ourselves to preserve our being, nor that we live without having dealings with things outside us. Moreover, 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. There are, therefore, many things outside us which are useful to us, and on that account to be sought.

If the mind were alone, it would understand nothing beyond itself, and then there wouldn't be much to know. The body needs things outside itself to preserve itself, while the mind could survive without drawing on things outside itself; it just wouldn't be as perfect and powerful. "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" (4p73). Postulate 4 after 2p13 says that "the human Body, to be preserved, requires a great many other bodies, by which it is, as it were, continually regenerated," but it would take argument, and not just reliance on mind/body identity, to assert the same for the human mind.²⁷

Individual finite bodies are constituted because some external bodies force some bodies together and then they act as one, with a fixed ratio of motion and rest (definition after 2p13). Bodies and changes in bodies are caused by other bodies. Things are much more complex and doubtful for ideas. Because inadequate ideas can't be derived from the attribute of thought, as bodies can from the attribute of extension, it is hard to say what causes an inadequate idea, a problem to which I devote a separate section below.

Differences in what it means for bodies and for ideas to be finite continue. It is because a body is one among many that it has to be conceived as an individual, even though that individuality, and the individual essence, are temporary and fragile. Because the mind is not an entity among competing minds, it has no individuality apart from that of the body: "The object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body" (2p13).²⁸ The definition after 2p13 sets the identity condition for bodies, and singular things, but Spinoza offers no parallel identity conditions for ideas.

In extension, the finite is prior. Infinite extension is made up of smaller bodies. The infinite is the totality of extension, which has no bounds, and is therefore infinite. The situation for thought looks quite different. The infinite

is found within individual adequate ideas, not only in thought as a whole. Each adequate idea is itself infinite, and cannot be limited by any other idea.

There is no causation between ideas and bodies. At least that part of 2p7 rests secure. But the difference between the relation of finite and infinite for ideas and bodies opens up the possibility of interaction between finite and infinite. There is a permeable boundary between the finite and the infinite. Therefore there are two kinds of order, the common order of nature (2p29c, 4p4c) and the order of intellect (5p10s), both of which can be present in both ideas and bodies, since “the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things” (2p7). It is possible to arrange finite bodies and passive affects by the order of the intellect and so have adequate ideas of them (5p2-4). The *Ethics* will be able finally to assert that the intellect has power over the passions, and therefore over the body, without violating the independence (and identity) of mind and body.

Infinite Modes and the Kinds of Knowledge

The language of finite and infinite modes disappears after its brief appearance in Part 1, and the language of adequate and inadequate ideas takes over. The second kind of knowledge, as the name suggests, lies between the imagination, the first kind of knowledge or inadequate ideas, and the third kind, which he calls intuition, which does entirely without imagination. The second kind of knowledge is necessarily knowledge by a finite knower, someone with imagination. The individual knower causes the existence but not the essence of ideas of the second kind of knowledge. An adequate idea in my mind is identical to that idea in someone else’s mind, unlike inadequate ideas, which are necessarily indexed to the minds that think them.²⁹ The second kind of knowledge, exactly like the geometric method, and exactly like the *Ethics*, proceeds by coordinating imagination and reason. The second kind of knowledge comprises adequate ideas whose essence it is to be thought by finite minds. The third kind of knowledge, which we share with God, might just happen to entail ideas known by our finite minds, but being known by finite minds is not part of the essence of the third kind of knowledge. The second kind of knowledge comprises adequate ideas defined in contrast to inadequate ideas, infinite modes defined as contraries to finite modes. Reality is defined by contrast to appearances. The second kind of knowledge consists of adequate ideas that are not thought by God and which are not about God. Its need for imagination leads Spinoza to call the second kind of knowledge abstract; it is inferior to the third kind of knowledge while still adequate.

Natura naturans is active, *natura naturata* passive. But within *natura naturata* there is another active/passive distinction, that between activity and passivity, adequate and inadequate ideas. The *Short Treatise* puts it clearly: “We shall divide *Natura naturata* in two: a universal and a particular. The universal consists in all those modes which depend on God immediately. . . . The particular consists in all those singular things which are produced by the universal mode” (C 1:91, G 1:47). That there can be activity within *natura naturata* is paradoxical; it is the paradox of infinite modes, the paradox that the second kind of knowledge is an activity only possible for finite, confused and passive minds. Adequate ideas become, in Part 3, adequate causes; while people cannot cause their existence, they can be complete causes of their actions, and that, eventually, is human freedom.

Like infinite modes, the ideas that comprise the second kind of knowledge are divisible, and so can be fragmented and only partially grasped. That is how we get to have inadequate ideas. Like the attributes, ideas of the third kind of knowledge are indivisible, and so Spinoza can say that there are no false or inadequate ideas of God; someone either knows the divine essence adequately or is completely ignorant and merely mouthing empty words.³⁰ Because of their divisibility, ideas of the second kind of knowledge can be associated with images; because of their simplicity, ideas of the third kind of knowledge cannot. Starting in chapter 3, I will show how imagination and reason cooperate in the second kind of knowledge.

ADEQUATE IDEAS HAVE NO CONATUS

Imagination and opinion seem to be sorts of motions.

(Aristotle, *Physics* VII.3.254a29)

Infinite modes do not fit our ordinary understanding of modes, and the reasons they don't fit help make the case for identifying adequate ideas with them. I want to focus on four ways in which infinite modes diverge from our usual idea of modes. Infinite modes (1) are pervasive, (2) are affections of whatever they modify without altering what they modify, (3) have no contraries, and, finally, (4) have no conatus. The first two are obvious, although at odds with how we normally conceive of modes or affections; the other two have not, as far as I can tell, been noted by other commentators on the *Ethics*. The first three properties will be needed to show the final one, that adequate ideas have no conatus.

First, infinite modes are pervasive: they modify the whole, and not some

part, of the subject. Attributes have no parts, and so the infinite modes that modify them must modify them as a whole. Finite modes by contrast modify only part of their subject. For example, the emotion that modifies some (inadequate) idea can be detached from that idea, so it doesn't exhaust the idea. Infinite modes are, as Spinoza says of adequate ideas, equally in the part and the whole. An infinite mode of thought must be *about* something equally in the part and the whole. An infinite mode qualifies all of its subject, whether that is an attribute or another infinite mode. Some bodies are heavy and some are light, some surfaces are rough and some are smooth. But an infinite mode must be a pervasive characteristic of its subject, without by this fact being absorbed into the subject. The immediate infinite mode of extension, recall, is "motion and rest."

Second, as a corollary of the fact that infinite modes are pervasive, they modify but do not alter that of which they are modes. The attributes of God, thought and extension, are modified by immediate infinite modes, and God does not change as a result of having such modes. While its parts change, the whole of *natura naturata* remains unchanged, and *natura naturans* is not changed when modified by *natura naturata*. A finite mode could alter whatever it is a mode of—another reason to deny that God can have finite modes attributed to it—altering it in part or for part of its duration. But if an infinite mode modifies all of whatever it modifies, that modification cannot be an alteration.

Third, it follows that infinite modes have no contraries. Surfaces can be rough or smooth, sounds can be soft or loud, but an infinite mode modifies its subject in the only way possible. The subject of an infinite mode determines what the infinite mode will be.³¹ They are true of every part and every whole. That is why adequate ideas cannot be destroyed, as any finite or inadequate idea can, by a more powerful idea. On the other hand, finite ideas can be contrary to adequate ideas: Jacob's hatred for Leah and Laban is contrary to the dictate of reason that he hate no one. Because infinite modes are divisible, there can be finite modes that are contrary to them. Infinite modes cannot be contrary to each other, but a finite mode can contradict an infinite one. Although, then, infinite modes cannot be destroyed, by either another infinite mode or by a finite mode, they can be rendered impotent by a finite mind: that is *akrasia*.

Once adequate ideas are identified with infinite modes, we see a fourth property of infinite modes, in contrast to inadequate ideas and finite modes. Every inadequate idea, like each body, and every finite mode in general, has a

conatus. “Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being” (3p6); “The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing” (3p7). Each inadequate idea tries to maintain its essence and existence.

An adequate idea cannot be assaulted from outside, just because it is infinite and cannot be limited and threatened by things outside it. It has a different kind of essence and existence than do inadequate ideas. Existence is no longer duration, but reality itself. “By eternity I understand existence itself, insofar as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the definition alone of the eternal thing” (1def8). In adequate ideas, the effort to preserve itself is replaced by a necessity of continued existence. Adequate ideas have and exercise power, but not a power to preserve themselves from danger.³²

Thus Spinoza says (4ax): “There is no singular thing in nature than which there is not another more powerful and stronger. Whatever one is given, there is another more powerful by which the first can be destroyed.” Just because adequate ideas cannot be destroyed, they cannot represent the essence of any particular individual, because those essences always can be destroyed (2p37). Adequate ideas have a necessary existence, while individuals do not. Without a conatus, adequate ideas themselves are not part of the mind that thinks them. Therefore the question, which I will finally try to answer in chapter 8, of how the presence of adequate ideas can do the individual any good.

HOW FINITE MODES BECOME INFINITE

I noted in the introduction that while Spinoza distinguishes finite and infinite modes in Part 1, inadequate and adequate ideas in Part 2, and passive and active emotions in Part 3, he does nothing in the first three parts of the *Ethics* to show what relation there is between the terms of these three distinctions. The payoff of my identification of adequate ideas as infinite modes is in using the relations between the infinite and the finite to explicate the puzzling relations between adequate and inadequate ideas, and especially the climactic and difficult thesis that inadequate ideas become adequate as they are known by adequate ideas (5p3, 5p4, 5p4s). The surprising result in the last section was that, because adequate ideas are infinite modes, they have no conatus. The corresponding surprise here is that, if inadequate ideas become adequate then the process of emanation of the finite from the infinite can be reversed and the finite can become infinite. The temporally limited can become everlasting.

One might reasonably think that things either are immortal or they are not;

immortality is not a property that is only contingently connected to something but must be part of something's essence. And yet Spinoza tells us that "he who has a Body capable of a great many things has a Mind whose greatest part is eternal" (5p39); as we convert inadequate ideas into adequate ones, more of our mind becomes eternal. *Immortality is a matter of degree* (5p31s, 33s). While the rest of my book is devoted to showing how people's minds can become immortal, I can say a little here about the relation between finite and infinite.

A finite mode doesn't become infinite by removing its limitations, becoming so powerful that nothing else of its kind can exceed and limit it; in chapter 3 I will associate that vision of the finite and the infinite with Hobbes. That is the imagination's idea of how to become infinite, what Hegel calls the bad infinite. Adequate ideas are not finite and bounded by something else of the same kind because they are self-limiting, and *therefore* not limited by anything else. Adequate ideas are self-limiting because they contain within themselves all it takes to be a true idea, and therefore no other idea can prevent someone from affirming it (2def4). Inadequate ideas, like prophecy in chapter 2 of the *TTP*, require an external sign to be credible (*TTP* C 2:96, G 3:32); adequate ideas are their own guarantee (2p43).

I need to pause for a minute over the central inference in the last paragraph: adequate ideas are not finite because they are self-limiting, and *therefore* not limited by anything else. It might seem obvious to say that being infinite precludes something being finite, but it deserves a more careful look. If something (other than God) is self-limiting, although there can still be things outside it, they do not limit it. I have the adequate idea that I should repay hate with love. Also in my mind is my hatred for politicians who foment and validate people's worst instincts, and an angry desire somehow to destroy them, if only I could. That idea is external to my adequate idea of repaying hate with love. But it doesn't limit it. It may limit its efficacy and reach—that is the *akrasia* that will be the subject of chapter 5—but the adequate idea itself is untouched. If it really is an adequate idea, the contrary ideas don't create doubts in my mind that maybe repaying hate with love isn't such a good idea. Adequate ideas are self-certifying, and therefore cannot accommodate an external sign. If I have an adequate idea of Euclid I.4, then an external sign of Euclid's authority makes no sense. Therefore, if an idea is self-limiting, it cannot be limited by something else.

While finite and infinite modes form distinct causal systems—1p22 shows that finite modes can only follow from finite modes; infinite modes follow from infinite modes—without causal interaction between finite and infinite modes, there is interaction of another kind, and ethics, both its problems and

their solutions, depends on this interaction: finite modes can lose their limitations and become infinite as inadequate ideas become adequate. And infinite modes can have effects on finite modes, and can remove a particular inadequate idea from its causal nexus and place it within a different one, namely the order of adequate ideas, not the common order of nature but the rational order of adequate ideas. There is no mind/body interaction, but there is interaction between finite and infinite, between inadequate and adequate ideas.

But mind/body symmetry does seem violated when we look more closely at infinite modes and the second kind of knowledge. Different inadequate ideas have different counterparts in the body, connected through the passions. But all adequate ideas correspond to the same modification of the body, namely the preservation of the proportion of motion and rest and an increase in the power of the whole. That one couldn't distinguish the operations of one adequate idea from another seems like a weakness, and a violation of the identity of idea and thing in 2p7. But now we see that this isn't a bug but a feature, not a violation but a deepening of 2p7. Different adequate ideas *should* have the same counterpart in the body, because they preserve and increase the power of the body as a whole. Inadequate ideas have different corporeal counterparts, because they are correlated to changes only in parts of the body. And so I will argue later for the identity not only of the second kind of knowledge with infinite modes of thought, but the identity of both with the active emotions.

To conclude this section. Adequate ideas, as infinite modes, have no conatus. Inadequate ideas, like any finite modes, have to exert themselves to preserve themselves. I need one more premise to set up the problems of ethics that will follow. Inadequate ideas do not endeavor to become adequate ideas. They can become adequate ideas, but if they become adequate, it is not because they want to. Nothing internal impels an inadequate idea to become adequate. Inadequate ideas and passive emotions have to back into the ethical progress of becoming adequate ideas and active emotions. That development is the cunning of imagination.

HOW ARE INADEQUATE IDEAS POSSIBLE?

No one has ever really explained what a "causal relation"
between ideas is. (Elhanan Yakira)³³

I've argued that adequate ideas have no conatus, and that adequate ideas represent the possibility of a finite mind becoming immortal as its inadequate ideas become adequate. The relation of the finite and the infinite for ideas,

though, creates a corresponding problem in the other direction. From the beginning, Spinoza's readers have questioned how to derive the finite from the infinite, the problem with which I began. Even if that problem has a solution, explaining the existence of inadequate ideas is a further problem, since inadequate ideas are a very strange kind of finite mode. Inadequate ideas are modifications of the attribute of thought that, anomalously, do not follow from the nature of that attribute, but exist only because the mind is the inadequate idea of a confused object, a finite body that constantly interacts with other bodies and therefore has an essence that is not stable enough to be known adequately. We know that the attribute of thought has finite and infinite modes, but that those finite modes should be inadequate cannot be deduced from the attribute of thought. "Forming true ideas pertains to the nature of thought" (*TIE* §73; *C* 1:33, *G* 2:28). These ideas are inadequate precisely because they do not follow from the nature of the attribute they modify.

Why finite modes should exist is no problem for the attribute of extension. Infinite extension is divisible, and the result of that division is finite bodies. Thought is different. The anomalous position of inadequate ideas makes it hard to see their causes.

1. They can't be caused by bodies (2p7, 3p2).
2. If they were caused only by other ideas in the mind, they would be adequate ideas.
3. An idea can't be caused by ideas outside the mind, since these would be in someone else's mind. (Recall that ideas are defined as "conceptions of the mind which the mind forms because it is a thinking thing" [2def3], which means that all ideas are in someone's mind.) An inadequate idea or a change in an inadequate idea cannot be caused by an idea outside the mind—the action of one mind on another looks like action at a distance.
4. There is a fourth alternative, that inadequate ideas are directly caused by ideas in the mind of God. This is the root of occasionalism; it contradicts 1p21: "All the things which follow from the absolute nature of any of God's attributes have always had to exist and be infinite, or are, through the same attribute, eternal and infinite." To invoke God's ideas to explain inadequate ideas is perverse, equivalent to naming God as the cause of evil.

Collision explains changes in bodies. Spinoza also has an account of the existence of bodies, and it too has no parallel for ideas or minds. In the definition following 2p13,

When a number of bodies, whether of the same or of different size, are so constrained by other bodies that they lie upon one another, or if they so move, whether with the same degree or different degrees of speed, that they communicate their motions to each other in a certain fixed manner, we shall say that those bodies are united with one another and that they all together compose one body or Individual, which is distinguished from the others by this union of bodies.

It is impossible to translate that meaning of the cause of an individual, and the meaning of a single body and its individuality, so that it applies to thoughts.³⁴

And yet we know not only that there are inadequate ideas, but, we also know, from the case of prophecy in the *TTP*, and the mention of symbols in the explication of the first kind of knowledge in 2p4os2, that inadequate ideas in one mind do cause inadequate ideas in another mind. Interpretation, the counterpart of prophecy, seems to be an instance of body/mind causality. Someone gets an idea through an encounter with a physical object, a voice or written text. Spinoza's remarks about the uncertain text of the Bible, and the ambiguity inherent in a text without vowels, concern the bodily nature of the Bible. Interpretation extracts a meaning, an idea, from a body. The goal of interpretation is to grasp the meaning of a text, and that meaning is an inadequate idea in its author's mind. Interpretation separates meaning from truth; when we understand an adequate idea, by contrast, we're not looking for an idea in someone else's mind, but an idea that can be thought by any mind.

I offer a preliminary solution to the question of what causes an inadequate idea. We know from the imitation of affects (3p27s) that emotions in one person can cause that same emotion in another. Passive emotions modify inadequate ideas. Since emotions can be transmitted from one person to another, the inadequate ideas they modify can be transferred on the back of the emotions. The genesis and transmission of passive emotions accounts for the genesis and transmission of inadequate ideas.

One datum in support of this interpretation is that when Part 5 turns us to the power of the intellect, or human freedom, its opening propositions do not say that all inadequate ideas can be known adequately, and transformed into adequate ideas by being known. Propositions 2–4 argue for the more limited idea that all passive emotions can be the object of an adequate idea and, when they are, they are no longer passive. I propose to limit the movement of an inadequate idea from one mind to another to inadequate ideas accompanied by passive emotions, and that is all that will be needed, or possible, in

Part 5 to generate human freedom. If the transmission of inadequate ideas is a mystery, the imitation of emotions is less so, and so explains what causes inadequate ideas.

I've raised this puzzle about what causes an inadequate idea to shed further light on the second kind of knowledge. As odd as the imagination is, since it is hard to pin down the causes of inadequate ideas, the second kind of knowledge is an even odder sort of thing. These ideas have a nature that does derive from nothing but the attribute of thought, unlike inadequate ideas, but they are only thought by minds that are themselves inadequate ideas. They are adequate ideas that involve the imagination. The second kind of knowledge, then, like the imagination, cannot be fully understood through the attribute of thought alone. The first kind of knowledge cannot be read off the attribute of thought because the mind that houses them is an inadequate idea. The second kind of knowledge cannot be read off the attribute of thought either, because of its relation to the imagination. Yet adequate ideas are not contaminated by the minds that think them. In fact, who thinks them is irrelevant to their nature as adequate ideas. That is why their abstract nature is an effect of their power, and not a weakness. Since their objects are omnipresent, we can't be prevented from thinking them by the interference of some contrary idea. If they are available to anyone, they are accessible by everyone (2p38c).

Prior to the final paradox of the *Ethics*, that of becoming immortal, we have the paradox of a finite mind grasping infinite truths. The metaphysical problem of becoming immortal is solved through the ethical project of showing how a finite mind can have infinite ideas, not only ideas of infinite objects, as with the knowledge of God, but ideas that are infinite in power. Spinoza tells us that we can know more and be more active through association with other people than we would by being alone (4p73). Similarly here we know more and are more active as we engage with our own passions than if we were somehow finite yet disembodied. That the second kind of knowledge consists in adequate ideas thought by a finite mind, while it makes the second kind of knowledge inferior to the third, also means that we can take advantage of embodiment to become more intelligent and rational. This is not the immortal soul of the *Phaedo*, where the intellect is imprisoned in the body. The mind, even when it thinks adequate ideas, and even when it is immortal, never stops being the idea of a body. The analogy between mind and body in 4p18s, which I rejected earlier, now makes some sense, because our embodiment is an advantage to the mind.

To sum up, for different reasons both inadequate and adequate ideas

are hard to understand. Bodies are easier for the imagination to grasp than thoughts. Inadequate ideas cannot be deduced from the nature of the attribute of thought, and it is consequently difficult to see how they are caused. On the other side, adequate ideas look unlikely, because ideas are always ideas in someone's mind, and every mind is a confused and inadequate idea.

THE RELATION BETWEEN ADEQUATE AND
INADEQUATE IDEAS AS A RELATION
BETWEEN INFINITE AND FINITE MODES

Like all modes, both adequate and inadequate ideas have distinct causes of their essence and their existence. There is this difference between them, though: adequate ideas are identical with their essence. They can't fail to live up to their essence, and contain nothing apart from their essence, no accidental properties, not even a variable amount of power. Because they are identical with their essence, the mind that thinks them is not part of their essence. The mind that thinks an adequate idea is not among its accidental properties, even though that mind is the cause of the idea's existence. Among the nonessential properties belonging to inadequate ideas is the variable amount of power each has. Adequate ideas don't have anything that their essence does not have, as the mind contains passions that are contrary to its essence, and inadequate ideas contain extraneous material that cause confusion. If adequate ideas included things other than their essence, then they could be affected through those things, and so be passive. Inadequate ideas are fragments of adequate ideas, conclusions without premises (2p28); inadequate ideas are confused ideas because they contain things that the corresponding adequate idea does not. Because adequate ideas are nothing but their essence, adequate ideas are true (2p34). They have enough of the right form to be true, and they have nothing superfluous through which one could validly infer to something false. As infinite, they have no external relations, despite the fact that, as modes, they are conceived through something else.

The infinite modes are the intermediary between God and finite individuals because they are infinite, not indefinite, yet modes, not substance. They are known by both the imagination and reason and therefore can form the transition from imagination to reason. Hence the affinity to *dianoia* and mathematical hypotheses in the divided line. Aristotle's account of Plato's idea of mathematics is apposite: "Besides sensible things and forms [Plato] says there are the objects of mathematics, which occupy an intermediate position, differing

from the sensible things in being eternal and unchangeable, and from forms in that there are many alike, while the form itself is in each case unique.”³⁵ As is the case for Plato, mathematical objects are the place where the imagination reinforces reason and does not deflect from it. The *Ethics* proposes to show that this configuration of imagination and reason is not unique to mathematics, but that the geometric method can treat human passions as lines, planes, and bodies, and so reason practically about our lives in a way that, as with mathematics, uses the imagination to lead us to reason and not to distract us from it. Spinoza’s method is not a general axiomatic or mathematical method, but specifically a geometric method, which enlists the cooperation of reason and imagination.

Our Knowledge of God and Its Place in Ethics

One reason I find Spinoza so attractive is his honest refusal to make the difficult task of ethics seem easier than it is. That sense of difficulty seems absent in his almost casual demonstration that finite minds can have adequate ideas, without which ethics is impossible. Spinoza has no trouble showing that adequate ideas exist. “All ideas insofar as they are related to God are true” (2p32). Of course the infinite modes of thought must be true. But that proposition, which is supposed to follow directly from 2p7c, falls short of showing that anyone has such ideas. As Diane Steinberg put it, “Spinoza is unable to give an account of the ability of the mind to engage in adequate thinking, for there can be no physical process which corresponds to the mental function of adequate thought.”¹ Instead of proving this crucial truth, Spinoza raises the stakes and proves something even more unlikely, that “the human Mind has an adequate knowledge of God’s eternal and infinite essence” (2p47).² This proposition seems out of order not only because Spinoza, and the mind, can’t do anything with the adequate idea it proclaims, but because he should first prove that the mind, a confused idea and finite mode, can contain—that is, affirm—adequate ideas in general, before going on to demonstrate the harder case, that we can have an adequate idea of God, the most difficult idea of all.

“THE HUMAN MIND HAS AN ADEQUATE KNOWLEDGE
OF GOD’S ETERNAL AND INFINITE ESSENCE” (2P47)

If we have an idea such as an adequate knowledge of God’s eternal and infinite essence, it should be obvious to us, and most people don’t seem aware of it. It

reminds me of Jacob's remark after receiving God's promises in a dream: "Indeed, the Lord is in this place, and I did not know" (Gen. 28:16). "He who has a true idea at the same time knows that he has a true idea, and cannot doubt the truth of the thing" (2p43) seems false. Possessing such an idea should make all the difference to our lives. But it doesn't.

Part 1 ends with the proposition that "nothing exists from whose nature an effect does not follow" (1p36). Great effects may follow from the nature of an adequate idea of God's nature, but those effects do not in fact follow in the lives of most of us. If everyone has this all-important idea, for almost all of us it is impotent and inert, and in that sense unconscious.³ It isn't until 5p16 that Spinoza can declare that "this Love toward God must engage the Mind most." The idea of God in 2p47 is inert because has no affects attached. Nothing follows from it because it *cannot* — at least at this point — be modified by an emotion.

Even worse, while 2p47 states that all humans have such an idea, the proof implies something far stronger, that *all* minds have it. If the minds of lox and bagels, and people whose lives are governed by superstition, have such an adequate knowledge, it isn't apparent: that knowledge has no discernible effects on the other ideas that those minds have.⁴ And 2p47 is derived from 2p45 and 46, neither of which is about human beings: the fateful shift is not from all individuals to people but from ideas to minds. Thus 2p45: "Each idea of each body, or of each singular thing which actually exists, necessarily involves an eternal and infinite essence of God"; and 2p46: "The knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence which each idea involves is adequate and perfect." Placing an adequate idea of God in a mind that is itself a confused idea must have no effect on that adequate idea, but the scholium's assertion that people's idea of God is both adequate and confused creates a doubt that such a movement is licit. "Men do not have so clear a knowledge of God as they do of the common notions" (2p47s).

God's essence makes every idea possible, as it makes everything possible; therefore God's essence is involved in every idea, and therefore (2p47) since people have ideas, they must have an adequate idea of the eternal and infinite essence of God. But there is a difference between saying that the idea which is the human mind *involves* an adequate idea of God and saying that the mind *includes* an adequate idea of God.

The proof of 2p47 has its problems, but it also seems to break the direction of argument of Part 2 and to pull a rabbit out of a hat. The thrust of Part 2, from 2p13 on, is to show how the complexity of the human body, and therefore of

the human mind, gives people the power to do things that other minds cannot, to have thoughts not available to other individuals. However, 2p47 ignores these details about the human body and mind.

In proportion as a Body is more capable than others of doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once, so its Mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once. And in proportion as the actions of a body depend more on itself alone, and as other bodies concur with it less in acting, so its mind is more capable of understanding distinctly. (2p13s)⁵

But all that direction of argument is swept away by 2p47. The demonstrations of 2p47 and the two propositions that lead to it, 45 and 46, make no use of any proposition specifically about human beings and the complexity of body and mind developed after 2p13. In the *TIE* Spinoza says “for we do have a true idea” (*habemus enim ideam veram*) (§33; C 1:17, G 2:14). A similar pure assertion seems at work here.

Both 2p47 and 2p32, which leads to it—“All ideas are true insofar as they are related to God”—seem too strong to be useful. This is what Melamed calls “the trivialization of the knowledge of God’s essence by making the knowledge of God’s essence something one *cannot fail to have*.”⁶ All ideas are true; everyone has an adequate idea of God. These propositions are proved so easily that they do nothing to lead to the conclusion we really want, how some people can be adequate causes, be free, or have the intellectual love of God. They obliterate the difference between adequate and inadequate ideas, as well as between cabbages and kings, between beings that do and do not possess this idea of God. Spinoza proves 2p47 long before we’re in any position to do anything with it. It does nothing in the *Ethics* until it can have a place in ethical life. We don’t hear again from 2p47 until 4p36.

The problem I want to address in this chapter is, what is an adequate idea of God doing in a mind that is a confused idea of a body?⁷ As far as Part 2 goes, the adequate idea of God is present in a mind without either affecting the other, without the adequate idea being degraded by the mind that thinks it—the independence of the knower and the knowledge—nor the mind seeming to be elevated by the presence of this crucial idea.

If Spinoza succeeds in showing that every mind contains the adequate idea of God, then the following issue becomes paramount: Do human and other finite minds have adequate ideas because of or in spite of the imagination?⁸ If,

as the proposition and argument seems to imply, all minds contain this adequate idea of God, then its presence has nothing to do with the imagination. The cultivation of the imagination, the subject of *Ethics* 3 and 4, is beside the point. If the adequate idea of God is in the mind *despite* the mind's own status as a confused idea, then that adequate idea of God will be in any mind, not just a mind powerful and supple enough to have memories and draw comparisons among ideas, and distinguish appearance from reality. On the other hand, if only some powerful minds have that adequate idea of God, then Spinoza will have to draw a connection between the mind's complexity and its ability to have the idea, and I don't see how he could have the resources to make such a connection. There's trouble either way.⁹

Which reading is right is a crux of Spinoza's argument, and I believe that it is not resolved in *Ethics* 2. This ambiguity will power the argument of *Ethics* 3–5. As the imagination gets more powerful, it both makes adequate ideas possible and makes them practically unnecessary. The less the imagination needs reason, since people can flourish with imagination alone, leading lives of justice and piety, the more the imagination makes rationality possible. Thus 2p47 poses the issue of whether reason can do without imagination, but the argument of the *Ethics* is propelled by the issue of whether imagination can do without reason. If we have adequate ideas in spite of the fact that the human mind, like any mind, is a confused idea, then that adequate idea of God will sit as an alien presence, with no effect on our lives. And if we have adequate ideas because of the kinds of minds and bodies we have, Spinoza will have to show that such a perfect idea is not infected by the imperfections of the minds that think it. If this idea of God is an instance of the second kind of knowledge, we have it, as we have all of the second kind of knowledge, because we are embodied, imaginative, finite individuals. If we have it in spite of our imaginations, it's the third kind of knowledge. And Spinoza is not yet in a position to say which. The distinction between the second and third kinds of knowledge is developed in 2p40s–42, mentioned in 2p47s, and not seen again until Part 5. In fact, after distinguishing the three kinds of knowledge, Spinoza does nothing to relate them to each other until Part 5. It is ambiguous whether everyone has this adequate idea of God because of or in spite of minds being finite modes because it is ambiguous whether this idea belongs to the second or third kind of knowledge, and Spinoza is not yet in a position to resolve that ambiguity. Until he can, the adequate idea of God remains inert.

“There are no inadequate or confused ideas except insofar as they are related to the particular mind of someone” (2p36d). But ideas are adequate “in-

sofar as they are related to God” (2p36d), which appears to imply that while adequate ideas are thought by minds that are themselves inadequate ideas, their adequacy has nothing to do with the minds that think them. If we have adequate ideas in spite of our minds’ being finite and confused, then adequate and inadequate ideas operate along parallel, nonintersecting tracks of causality. In a sense, this is as it should be. Inadequate ideas are only caused by other inadequate ideas, adequate ideas by other adequate ideas. But now it looks like that independence goes too far. Not only does the mind have no effect on its adequate ideas, but our adequate ideas have no effect on our minds either, which would make human freedom impossible. The alien presence interpretation makes a finite mind having adequate ideas too easy.

If, on the other hand, we have adequate ideas, at least of the second kind of knowledge, because of our finite minds and our imagination, then the difference between adequate and inadequate ideas can be a difference of degree, and it is at least possible that inadequate ideas can become adequate, and finite individuals can become immortal. When 2p29s says that adequate ideas come from the mind’s ability to regard “a number of things at once, to understand their agreements, differences, and oppositions,” it invites an interpretation of the relation of the first to the second kind of knowledge as a difference in degree. But finite and infinite can never be different only by degree. The alien presence interpretation makes a finite mind having adequate ideas impossible; the interpretation here as a matter of degree makes finite and infinite different only by degree—the imagination’s idea of the infinite as indefinitely large. There are grave difficulties either way. Therefore, making sense of 2p47 depends on addressing the much bigger problem of the relation between intellect and imagination which lies at the heart of ethics *more geometrico*.¹⁰ God is the object for which the geometric method seems completely unsuited. Geometry is the paradigm of the cooperation between understanding and imagination, while God is knowable only by understanding and not at all by imagination, and the exercise of imagination that hinders the operation of our knowledge of God.

Here is another reason to think that if people have adequate ideas, it is in spite of their minds being inadequate ideas. A complex individual can maintain its essence—for bodies, its ratio of motion and rest among its parts—while its parts are replaced. Adequate ideas cannot be swapped out in this way. Once a mind has an adequate idea, it cannot lose it or exchange it. Adequate ideas are not fungible. There is no external cause which could make a mind lose an adequate idea: adequate ideas can be gained but not lost. Once

we have an adequate idea, we know that it is true, and therefore would not replace it by a different idea. An adequate idea can be overwhelmed and stripped of its power by a more powerful emotion, but the person who has an adequate idea cannot be talked out of it. Coming to have adequate ideas, like becoming immortal, is an irreversible process. If adequate ideas cannot be swapped out as inadequate ideas can, then they cannot become parts of a greater whole in the same way that inadequate ideas can. Adequate ideas are in the mind, but are not part of it. That is, given an adequate idea, one cannot infer who is thinking it. Inadequate ideas are images of the world seen from a particular perspective, by a particular individual, limited by the person's other inadequate ideas. The independence of adequate ideas from their knower is their strength—to be adequate is to be nonperspectival—but weakness as well—if adequate ideas are independent of the minds that think them, those minds will be independent of the adequate ideas, and those adequate ideas will consequently be impotent. And so the mind and its passions and inadequate ideas rightly perceives reason as a resident alien, and so not likely to command voluntary obedience.

I asked how a mind that is a confused idea can contain and affirm adequate ideas, and in particular the adequate idea of God, and then refined the question by asking whether, if such a mind contains such an idea, it does so because of or in spite of its finite nature. My general question of whether people and finite minds have adequate ideas because of or in spite of the imagination comes to a head in the *adequate but confused* idea of God to which we are introduced in 2p47. In the rest of the *Ethics*, adequacy and clarity are identical (e.g., 2p35, 2p36 and its proof, 2p40s2, 3p9 and its proof).¹¹ The scholium to Proposition 4 of Part 5 takes 2p40s2 to say that “there is nothing from which some effect does not follow, and we understand clearly and distinctly whatever follows from an idea which is adequate in us.” But 2p47s declares that the idea of God, although adequate in all human minds, is less clear than their adequate ideas of common notions because “they are unable to imagine God as they can bodies.”¹² The adequate idea isn't itself confused, but the mind confuses it with other ideas and images. In all other adequate ideas, imagination and reason cooperate. The principal appeal of the geometric method is that there intellect and imagination cooperate; there the imagination is guided by the intellect, and the result is the second kind of knowledge. But this won't do for God, for whom the imagination is completely ill-suited. The human mind, unless it has followed the argument of the *Ethics*, will confuse that adequate idea of God with other ideas suggested by the imagination.¹³

Not only the lack of clarity but the lack of power of this idea of God comes

from the inability of the imagination to help it. For adequate ideas in general to have power in our lives, and allow us to be active, we need some form of cooperation between adequate ideas and the inadequate ideas that constitute the minds that affirm them, exactly what the geometric method exemplifies. By claiming that we all have this adequate idea of God, Spinoza has elided the prior question of how people can have any adequate ideas at all. For that prior question, we can ask how reason and imagination can cooperate, but there is no imaginative simulacrum to God as there are for the common notions. It is only in the last half of Part 5 that the lack of corresponding images will become a strength for the third kind of knowledge. At this point in Part 2 it is a cause for confusion, both in the idea of God and in the reader trying to follow the argument of the *Ethics*. Just as the adequate idea of God has no power and does no work until the conditions are right—those conditions emerge gradually in Parts 4 and 5—similarly, 2p47 itself has no effect on the *Ethics* until the conditions are right. Both the knowledge of God and 2p47 itself are temporarily dead ends, until Spinoza can develop those conditions. That the mind contains adequate ideas, including the adequate idea of God, does not build on the rest of Part 2; it is simply a function of the relation of the idea to God rather than of the mind to the body. As long as the adequate idea of God is not related to the body, as long, that is, as we have that adequate idea in spite of being a finite mind, adequate ideas cannot be adequate causes of actions and ideas. The climax of the *Ethics* comes in Part 5 where we can have an adequate idea of God *because* we are finite minds and bodies.

If everyone has an adequate idea of God's nature, the possession of that idea should be momentous, but Spinoza does nothing with in the *Ethics* until late in Part 5, where the reader is prepared to have ideas without corresponding images, that is, where the mind's relation to the body is replaced by the mind's relation to God. Without an associating idea of the imagination, the idea of God cannot have an emotion attached to it. In the third kind of knowledge, this becomes a strength, because the intellectual love of God does not modify the idea of God but is identical with it. But that lies far later in the *Ethics*.

IMAGINING SPINOZA'S ARGUMENT: MINDS AND IDEAS

Ethics 2 is titled "Of the Nature and Origin of the Mind." The subject of Part 2 changes toward the end from the *mind* to *ideas*. People have the inadequate ideas they do because inadequate ideas are ideas of how the mind and body

are affected, and therefore how things seem to a particular mind. After being given a list of things of which people can only have inadequate ideas, a list that includes everything we experience, including our bodies, other bodies, and even, or especially, our minds, 2p32 suddenly changes the subject from minds to ideas and says that “All ideas, insofar as they are related to God, are true,” ignoring the definition of ideas in terms of minds. “By idea I understand a concept of the Mind that the Mind forms because it is a thinking thing” (2def3).

All ideas are true insofar as they are related to God. But since I know that I have ideas that are false and inadequate, that proposition doesn't help at all in discriminating true from false or adequate from inadequate ideas. It seems at this point that all ideas are true insofar as they are related to God, and that all ideas are inadequate insofar as they are related to the minds that think them. If “all ideas, insofar as they are related to God, are true,” does that mean that false ideas not related to God? The traditional theological question of whether God creates, or allows, evil, returns, without human free will as a way of letting God off the hook. Part 1 ends with an appendix that denies exactly that option.

Minds and ideas are two different ways of dividing the infinite mode of thought into finite individuals, and each creates its own difficulties.¹⁴ Minds and ideas are two different correlatives to bodies. A given body can be known by many different minds, and so there are many ideas for each body. But there is only one mind for each body. The mind is an idea, but with peculiarities of its own. The mind is a confused idea of the body (2p11). When several bodies move and act together, they are — temporarily — a single body, say, Paul, and there is a mind that corresponds to that composite body. But when that body decomposes, and we are left with smaller minds corresponding to the smaller persisting bodies, nothing prevents Peter from continuing to think of the Paul's body, and of those smaller bodies. Peter's idea of Paul's body will be different from Paul's idea of his body, in that it is only this latter idea that is Paul's mind. Since each of us can form an idea of Paul's body, the infinite number of ideas is of a higher cardinality than the infinity of minds and bodies. Each of those ideas of Paul's body can figure in different causal sequences. Every change in Paul's body is matched by a change in his mind, but Peter does not necessarily perceive or think about those changes in Paul's body. At a maximum, Peter can continue to think about — affirm his idea of — Paul's body after Paul's death, but Paul cannot. Therefore every mind has a set of ideas corresponding to the individual bodies and minds contained in its imagination, and this set, that is, the mind, is identical to things. But in addition, for every thing, there are as many ideas as there are minds with ideas of that thing. This is the identity between mind and world, very different from the identity of ideas and things.¹⁵

Minds differ from other ideas in other ways as well. Spinoza never says that the mind is a true, or false, idea of the body, only that it is a confused idea. Ideas in general must be caused by other ideas, but a mind is not caused by other minds, and it isn't evident how a mind, which is the idea of a certain body, can be caused by other ideas at all. When we overcome the imagination's picture theory of ideas, we learn that ideas are acts of the mind, affirmations. But the mind itself does not look like an assertion. The mind is a confused idea of the body, but mind and body do not have sufficient distance that the idea can be a judgment about its object. A true idea agrees with its object (2def4exp), but the mind doesn't agree with its body—it is the body, expressed now the mode of one attribute, now in another.

Ideas as modes of the divine attribute of thought makes, as I argued in chapter 1, the existence of inadequate ideas mysterious, since inadequate ideas are not deducible from the nature of the attribute of thought, and the natural candidates for their causes won't work. As I put it in chapter 1, being finite is an imperfection for ideas, but not for bodies. We only have inadequate ideas because we have this one inadequate idea, the mind as confused idea of the body. That is why inadequate ideas do not directly derive from the attribute of thought; they come from this unique relation of idea to body, that of being a mind. On the other hand, taking minds rather than ideas as the correlative to bodies makes the possession of *adequate* ideas, and especially the adequate idea of God, seem impossible.¹⁶

The perennial problem of understanding how the finite emerges from the infinite just got harder, since minds and ideas are different answers to the question of what corresponds to the finite modes of bodies. Ideas, like bodies, are all part of a greater whole, the whole of extended and thinking nature. But minds are not part of a greater whole. Bodies can be thrown together, and become, for a while, a single body when they move and act as one. Minds can only become a single united mind in the unique case of human society, so here we not only have another apparent violation of the identity of mind and body, but also a violation of the thesis that there is nothing unique about human nature.¹⁷ When Spinoza says in the *TTP* that laws can coerce bodies but not minds, he recognizes this difference between bodies and minds: bodies make a greater whole, while minds do not. If minds unite, it isn't through coercion.

Not long after he asserts mind/body identity in 2p7, that proposition is already put under serious strain, as 2p13 proposes to explain “the union of mind and body” by “adequate knowledge of the nature of our body. . . . In order to determine the difference between the human mind and others and in what way it surpasses them, we have to know the nature of its object, that is, the

nature of the human body.” Corollary 2p13c is followed by postulates about the human body without parallel for the mind. Thus 2post4: “The human Body, to be preserved, requires a great many other bodies, by which it is, as it were, continually regenerated”; a mental equivalent seems clearly false, as does a mental equivalent for 2post6: “The human Body can move and dispose external bodies in a great many ways.” Most crucially for our purposes, 3post1 states, “The human Body can be affected in many ways in which its power of acting is increased or diminished”; how the human *mind* can be affected, and by what, is unclear at this stage in the argument. Unless that question has an answer, Spinoza’s identity of mind and body will be destroyed.

This apparent violation of mind/body identity has consequences for understanding 2p47. As I noted earlier, 2p47 is, until much later in the *Ethics*, a dead end. This all-important idea is impotent in the human mind until then, and 2p47 is impotent in the *Ethics*. The difference between the second and third kinds of knowledge is announced at 2p40s2, but Spinoza does nothing with that distinction either until late in Part 5. The scholium to 2p47 is ambiguous on whether the knowledge of God belongs to the second or third kind of knowledge, an ambiguity that follows directly from the uncertainty whether people have the adequate idea of God because or in spite of the mind’s being a confused idea: the second kind of knowledge comprises adequate ideas thought by finite minds who have imagination in addition to reason, while the third kind of knowledge is independent of the body and of the imagination. Spinoza’s geometric method proves things, such as 2p47, before the practitioner of the geometric method is ready for them. Such conclusions remain abstract.

Based on how 2p47 is proved, it looks like this idea of God belongs to the second kind of knowledge. For 2p47 is derived from 2p46, which in turn follows from 2p45, and its proof is said to be “universally valid, and whether a thing be considered as a part or a whole, its idea, whether of whole or part, involves the eternal and infinite essence of God.” The second kind of knowledge is knowledge of things that are true of every part and whole.

On the other hand, the scholium to 2p47 refers explicitly to the third kind of knowledge: “Since all things are in God and are conceived through God, it follows that we can deduce from this knowledge a great many things which we know adequately, and so can form that third kind of knowledge of which we spoke in P40S2,” and 5p20s says that 2p47 concerns the third kind of knowledge.

There are reasons, too, *not* to assign the knowledge of the eternal and infi-

nite essence of God to either the second or third kind of knowledge. The second kind of knowledge is defined in contrast to the first kind of knowledge, and 2p47 says that for the idea of God there is no such relation to the imagination. On the other hand, the third kind of knowledge is intrinsically motivating, and the eternal and infinite essence of God is at this point in the argument, like the second kind of knowledge, not motivating.

One way to square 2p47 with the overall line of argument of Part 2 would be to notice that 2p47 is about only a single adequate idea, that of God, and its proof does not apply to another other ideas. On this account 2p47s refers to the third kind of knowledge, and 2p13s and its development in the rest of Part 2 to the second, as the second kind of knowledge emerges in contrast to the first. The second kind of knowledge depends on a complex mind and body so that the mind has an imagination of the kind that can be put to good use by the intellect; the third kind of knowledge stands out from the argument of Part 2 just because it is independent of imagination, and so of the body.

But this result would be worse than paradoxical: it would imply, as 2p47 implies, that the knowledge of God through the third kind of knowledge is easier to come by than the knowledge of common notions through the second kind of knowledge. Such a conclusion would contradict the availability of the second kind of knowledge in 2p38c—“There are certain ideas or notions common to all men”—and the rarity of the third kind of knowledge and the intellectual love of God in the final propositions of Part 5.

So 2p47 is a dead end until it and its scholium finally appear in the proof for 4p36 and 4p37, and then once more in 5p36s. “The greatest good of those who seek virtue is common to all, and can be enjoyed by all equally,” says 4p36, suggesting that the knowledge of God in 2p47 is the second kind of knowledge. The same goes for 4p37’s assertion that “the good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men; and this Desire is greater as his knowledge of God is greater.” But 5p36 is about the third kind of knowledge and the intellectual love of God, and its scholium invokes 2p47s when it says that the “essence of our Mind consists only in knowledge, of which God is the beginning and foundation” (1p15 and 2p47s). The essence of mind has evolved from being the inadequate idea of a certain body in Part 2, to the conatus in Part 3, to the activity of affirming adequate ideas in Parts 4 and 5: “The very essence of man is defined by reason” (4p36s). “The essence of our mind consists only in knowledge” (5p36s).¹⁸ The project of the *Ethics* is to make God a force in our lives. That project fails if God is already and automatically a force in our lives.

The mind will not be active if it treats adequate ideas, especially the adequate idea of God, as an alien presence, taking the relation of idea to mind as the *Phaedo* takes the relation of body to idea, as a temporary home or prison. We cannot be active if the mind possesses adequate ideas *in spite of* being itself an inadequate idea. To be effective, the adequate idea of God requires full cooperation of the entire mind. This is why, although 2p47 asserts that we all have an adequate idea of God, the life of the intellectual love of God is difficult and rare, and why the full power of the adequate idea of God can only be exercised by a mind that is sufficiently complex and powerful, tied to a sufficiently powerful body. The argument leading to 2p47 and its proof suggest that we all have the adequate idea of the eternal and infinite essence of God in spite of the imagination, but for it to be active in our lives, we have to have it because of the imagination. The mind, which is an inadequate idea of the imagination, must embrace the adequate idea of God, although, faced with the idea of God, the imagination should be silent. This is why proving that we have an adequate idea of God before proving that we have adequate ideas in general is such a strange proceeding. The difficulties I've arrayed about 2p47 are not exegetical puzzles but problems that go the center of Spinoza's ethical project.

According to chapter 13 of the *TTP*, the true idea of God is indeed an alien presence, supplying neither motivation nor direction to the mind. "The intellectual knowledge of God, which considers his nature as it is in itself (a nature men cannot imitate by any particular way of life and cannot take as model for instituting the true way of life) does not in any way pertain to faith or revealed religion" (C 2:262, G 3:171). If the imagination offers ideas that are useful but inadequate, it looks like the knowledge of God in 2p47 is adequate but useless. Knowledge of what is common, the second kind of knowledge, does better. It lets people order their thoughts by the order of nature and correct the passions (5p10).

Spinoza then seems to take away with one hand what he's just given us with the other: everyone has this most important idea of all, but we all have it in a way that doesn't do us any good. He has to have it both ways: this idea of the divine essence has to be an idea of reason without the imagination, since God lies beyond the imagination; yet for the idea to be effective, it has to be an idea of a particular mind, and so of reason coupled with imagination.

The knowledge of God that is a universal possession is especially inert, just as the knowledge of God through the third kind of knowledge in Part 5 is especially potent, as it is identical with the intellectual love of God. Adequate ideas in general, even those that come about because people have finite minds, are impotent because the mind, as a confused idea, cannot recognize an ade-

quate idea when it sees one. The mind, as an inadequate idea, does not recognize its own inadequacy. The imagination sees no need to aim at something better than itself. Because it is practically adequate and sufficient, it does not know that it is not intellectually adequate. For the imagination to take an idea as true, it needs an external sign. Since adequate ideas certify their own truth and can have no external sign, the imagination can't recognize them as true, let alone adequate. If you think you have to trust the author in order to understand Euclid's *Elements*, you're not approaching it correctly. For a mind that is an inadequate idea to recognize an adequate idea as an adequate idea would mean recognizing itself as an inadequate idea. There is a lack of fit between the idea of God and the human mind, between the infinite and the finite, between ideas as they relate to God and to the mind that thinks them.

MINDS VS. IDEAS

To make sense of how finite minds can contain adequate ideas, and in particular the adequate idea of God, I want to develop the distinction I drew earlier between minds and ideas as distinct correlatives of bodies, two distinct ways in which finite modes can divide up the infinite mode of thought. The shift from talking about minds to talking about ideas is the first step in making a mind powerful enough to recognize as its own adequate ideas, and the adequate idea of God.

Minds and ideas are distinct correlatives of bodies that produce two distinct interpretations of 2p7 and its corollary, the one relating minds and bodies, the other ideas and their objects. While the existence and essence of inadequate ideas must be explained only in terms of the attribute of thought, all inadequate ideas derive from the central one, the mind as the idea of the body. All other inadequate ideas are modes of the inadequate idea of the body that constitutes the mind, as their ideata are modes of the body being affected. As I showed in chapter 1, it is the nature of ideas to be adequate, and related to God; it is the nature of minds to be related to bodies, and so to be inadequate.

Proposition 7—“The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things”—asserts what will soon be called a preexisting harmony between idea and world, and another, quite different harmony between mind and body.¹⁹ The relation between mind and body is *identity*. The identity of mind and body means that the metaphysical truth of 2p7, the “parallelism” between ideas and things, is at odds with the epistemological truth of the same proposition, the identity between knowledge and the known.²⁰ “The idea of the mind is united to the mind in the same way as the mind is united to the

body” (2p21). That there are these two distinct relations, of mind to body and of ideas to things, creates many of the problems in Spinoza’s argument, such as the many times when it looks as though he argues against himself and speaks of the mind causing changes in the body and conversely. I don’t think that this ambiguity is a muddle, but that 2p7 takes on different meanings as it is asked to do different jobs. Its first function is to be the counterpart for finite modes to the identity of the divine attributes: as God is, completely, intellect and is, completely, extension, so a singular individual is, completely, mind and body. Starting at 3p2 its function will be to bar causation between modes of one attribute and of another: the mind cannot determine the body to act, nor the other way around.

I draw this distinction between the two interpretations of 2p7 and the two correlates to bodies as the finite modes of thought, minds and ideas, because the shift from minds to ideas that occurs at 2p32 — once again: “All ideas, insofar as they are related to God, are true” — creates the problem that comes to a head in 2p47s. Adequate ideas have been defined without reference to a knower — contrast Spinoza’s axiom that Man Thinks with Descartes’s *cogito*.²¹ Confusion, though, is a property of ideas as they are thought by minds. If we have an adequate idea of God’s essence, then confusion is not due to any imperfection in the idea of God but to other ideas in the same mind.

Ideas other than this one are confused because they are inadequate. The idea of God is uniquely confused because it has no imaginative correlative. The imagination cannot be silent in the presence of such an idea, but has to raise its voice and cause confusion. Therefore the idea of God can be both adequate and confused. This raises the question of how an inadequate idea, such as the images of God we acquire from the Bible, can affect an adequate one, a question to which I will return as I bring finite and infinite together in the second half of the book. It is a hard question because adequate ideas, as infinite modes, should be impervious to anything that a finite mode can do.

Without the interference between these two correlatives to the body there would only be adequate ideas. As we saw in chapter 1, the existence of inadequate ideas does not follow from the attribute of thought. Book 2’s Proposition 5 says that “the formal being of ideas admits God as a cause only insofar as he is considered as a thinking thing, and not insofar as he is explained by any other attribute,” but *minds* are defined as ideas of bodies. Body and idea are defined (2def1, def3), but the definition of mind is *proved* (2p11). Because bodies are finite objects, the minds that are ideas of them are themselves finite. Inadequacy is the way that ideas are finite.

Adequate ideas cannot cause inadequate ideas, and certainly could not be the cause of confusion; they can only cause more adequate ideas. In contrast, the mind is an inadequate idea because its object, the body, has limits—boundaries between internal and external—that are fuzzy since one cannot separate the causal contributions of external bodies from those of the body itself. The adequacy of an idea comes from its formal properties considered without relation to an object, while inadequacy of an idea comes from its object. Inadequate ideas require an external sign, which means that they can't be affirmed purely as ideas.²²

I have drawn an ambiguity in 2p7 depending on whether the correlate to bodies is ideas or mind. There is another ambiguity. The order and connection of ideas and of things are identical, but 2p7 does not claim that ideas and things themselves are identical, except in the special case of the mind as idea of the body. The proposition is purely formal: it doesn't say what that order and connection is. As the *Ethics* proceeds, we learn that there are two possible orderings. Ideas and things can be arranged according to the common order of nature. An individual thing can be affected by any number of other things in multiple ways, and corresponding ideas take whatever arrangement these connected things dictate. But ideas and things can also be connected by the order of the intellect, which makes the things and ideas intelligible. The ideas are then adequate ideas, and the things that are their objects are arranged according to the order of reason. In the first case, the order of ideas follows that of bodies, and in the second, it's the other way around, without the one order ever *causing* the other.

AN ADEQUATE BUT CONFUSED IDEA?

The soul can be united either with the body of which it is the Idea
or with God, without whom it can neither exist nor be understood.

(*Short Treatise*, C 1:141, G 1:103)

One of the problems set by 2p47 is that its proof seems to impute the adequate idea of God to all minds, not only human ones. The predicament is worse still. Not only, as with the complexity of the human mind starting at 2p13, is the human mind and body capable of things simpler minds and bodies cannot do. But in addition, the human mind has a unique source of error, one that bears on the idea of God as both adequate and confused.

Human minds, like all minds, form ideas of the first kind “from singular

things which have been represented to us through the senses in a way that is mutilated, confused, and without order for the intellect" (2p40s2). But people have another source of error, "from symbols." According to 2p41 the source of *falsehood* is located in the first kind of knowledge; 2p47s locates the source of *controversy* in people being misled by language. The latter is a uniquely human failing. If the minds of foxes and hounds, lox and bagels, and superstitious people, whose minds are full of false ideas they think are ideas of God, contain the idea of God's eternal and infinite essence, they lack the power to do something with it. But the human condition is worse: people are led astray by language, and the language with which people speak about God is especially misleading. Our powerful imagination makes our idea of God even more confused than it is for a simpler animal. Ed and David have different inadequate ideas of David's body. The geometer and the tradesman have different ideas, one adequate, the other not, of how to calculate a fourth proportional, but there are no inadequate ideas of God, only an adequate idea and inadequate ideas people wrongly identify with God.²³ Elephants and castles don't have false ideas that they think are ideas of God, in addition to the universal adequate idea of God.

But we have to be careful here. If people have a unique form of error owing to the complexity of their minds and bodies, then only people confuse other ideas with the idea of God. It seems to follow that, if all minds contain an adequate idea of the eternal and infinite essence of God, and it is only in human minds that this idea is both adequate and confused, then simpler minds have that adequate idea without the confusion unique to people. But the implication that the idea of God is clearer in the minds of simpler beings than in people cannot be right. We will have to see why it doesn't follow.

At the beginning I recoiled from 2p47 because it seemed that the most important of all ideas was impotent and useless. It is impotent, and *therefore* liable to confusion with misleading images, because, as my quotation from *TTP*, chapter 13, had it, there is no connection available to people between God's nature and God's effects on us. In the *TTP* that insurmountable gulf between imagination and reason made for the liberation of philosophy from religion, but the project of the *Ethics* requires building bridges across that chasm. In *Ethics* 4 and 5, people gradually learn to see such a connection. The mind will enlist the imagination in unexpected and sophisticated ways to make its adequate ideas more powerful. The imagination cannot distinguish between internal and external causes of increases in power, and, as I will argue in the next chapter, doesn't care about the difference. The conatus just wants to persist and increase its power. But starting with Part 4 reason aims at increased

activity. When that occurs, then adequate ideas are no longer an alien presence but fulfill the promise of 3p3—the active states of the mind arise only from adequate ideas (3p1)—and their presence now makes the mind and body active. While in Part 2 some minds have adequate ideas *in spite of* those minds being themselves confused, Parts 4 and 5 develop the way to have adequate ideas *because of* one's finite and imaginative mind. The second kind of knowledge, recall, is the paradoxical phenomenon of adequate ideas that are specifically the adequate ideas affirmed by a finite mind that also contains inadequate ideas. Even our knowledge of God can be knowledge appropriate to finite minds.

The imagination cannot help the mind to understand God. Therefore the adequate idea of God is usually inert and impotent; the ways in which God affects the mind, which is what the imagination knows, have no connection to God's nature, or, more precisely, no connection accessible to human minds. There is no imaginary correspondent to the adequate idea of God because there is no connection between what God is, the subject of the adequate idea, and how God affects the individual, the subject of the imagination. It is for this reason that intellect and imagination are opposed in a passage I quoted earlier from chapter 2 in the *TTP*:

Those who have the most powerful imaginations are less able to grasp things by pure intellect. On the other hand, those who have more powerful intellects, and who cultivate them most, have a more moderate power of imagining, and have it more under their power. They rein in their imagination, as it were, lest it be confused with the intellect. (C 2:94, G 3:29)

But in other respects, the power of imagination and intellect grow together.²⁴ This correlation might partially account for how finite minds can have adequate ideas, but it doesn't help for the idea of God. Our adequate ideas are infinite modes, and they are divisible and have parts that are finite modes, ideas of the imagination. Therefore the mind can often find a correlative idea of the imagination for our adequate ideas. But the idea of God, like God itself, is infinite and indivisible, and therefore has no finite correlative. There are, as 2p47s shows, no partial truths about God, as there can be for all other adequate ideas. Spinoza is here channeling the beginning of the Decalogue, which states that God cannot be represented by the imagination. The imagination is partial understanding, and there is no partial understanding of God.

The idea of God will remain impotent until the mind can distinguish the

second and third kinds of knowledge. The second kind of knowledge is parasitic on the first, because it is knowledge of the way things are in contrast to their appearance. Common properties are known in the first instance through their contrast to the passive conceptions the mind forms as the body is affected by other bodies. The second kind of knowledge is also derivative because it is knowledge of properties, and properties require subjects that are only given through the first kind of knowledge, even though any subject will do since these are universal properties. The second kind of knowledge is parasitic, finally, because only minds that are inadequate ideas can have the second kind of knowledge: having inadequate ideas is then a necessary condition for having the second kind of knowledge. But Spinoza has no story for how—the fourth way in which the second kind of knowledge depends on the first—adequate ideas develop in such minds, or from such inadequate ideas. This is a lacuna as great as that in Part 1 between God and finite modes, and I will return to it repeatedly, until we finally get such an account toward the end of *Ethics* 4.

At the beginning of this chapter I complained that Spinoza silently elided from the unproblematic existence of adequate ideas to the far from obvious claim that people, or finite minds, had such ideas. That elision occurs in 2p38, which says that “those things which are common to all, and which are equally in the part and in the whole, can only be conceived adequately,” while the corollary states that “there are certain ideas or notions common to all men.” Spinoza here infers from properties being common to all things that their ideas are common to all men. We are finally in a position to redeem that argument: it is legitimate only if minds have no idiosyncratic properties that would prevent common objects from being commonly known. One would have thought that minds as confused ideas were precisely such interfering properties, but adequate ideas rise above such particularity. Inadequate ideas are ideas of how the world looks from, in Leibniz’s term, someone’s point of view. The second kind of knowledge is the ability of a finite mind to have ideas that are not from a point of view. The mind is an idea of a certain body. Adequate ideas, though, are not ideas of individual bodies. Therefore minds, like bodies, have individuality which adequate ideas lack. The example of the fourth proportional in 2p40s2 has to be thought by someone, but if it’s an adequate idea, who thinks it has nothing to do with its essence, only its existence. Adequate ideas are common. They belong to no one. Unlike inadequate ideas, they are not true from a perspective. They are caused by other adequate ideas, but even though they don’t cause themselves, they cannot be destroyed and so are not finite.

WHEN IMAGINATION DOESN'T FAIL

One problem I identified from the start was why Spinoza should first attack the harder problem—how people can have an adequate idea of God—rather than the apparently prior problem of how they can have adequate ideas at all. Now I can offer a hypothetical explanation. For adequate ideas, for the second kind of knowledge, reason relies on the support of the imagination, although it will take most of the rest of the *Ethics* to show just how the imagination empowers reason—the cunning of imagination. By proving 2p47 rather than the more general thesis, he shows that in at least one case, people have an adequate idea without the imagination's help. We still need to know how imagination and reason are coordinated in other cases, but Spinoza starts with the purest indication of the power of the understanding. Here is an adequate idea that uniquely is not abstract or, eventually, motivationally inert. Whether it represents an ideal to which all other adequate ideas should aspire is a question not raised until it receives an affirmative answer in 5p28.

Seeing why the idea of God cannot have any imaginative counterpart shows how other adequate ideas can be assisted by the imagination. Two features of the mind go together: the mind, the original inadequate idea, can contain adequate ideas; and the mind can enlist the imagination to make adequate ideas more powerful—not more adequate, but more able to cause more ideas and actions. Once we understand how the finite can contain the infinite, we will understand how the imagination can make adequate ideas more powerful, aiding in the transition from the presence of adequate ideas to an active mind and body.

The idea that the imagination can empower adequate ideas is paradoxical, exactly as paradoxical as adequate ideas being present in a finite mind. In the next chapter I will look at the more general paradox of passive pleasures, externally caused affects that increase an individual's power. Increasing the power of an adequate idea is an even more acute paradox. In my first chapter I argued that adequate ideas have no conatus; since they are perfect, their power cannot change. But when we look at adequate ideas as they are thought by individual minds, their power can change, and either increase or decrease because of the presence of imaginative ideas in the same mind. They are only caused by and cause other adequate ideas. Therefore, it seems to follow that they can't be affected by the minds that think them. The finite cannot affect the infinite. On the other hand, the impotence of our adequate idea of God at this stage in the argument shows that the mind that thinks an adequate idea makes a difference in how powerful the idea can be, because of coordi-

nate imaginations. We've seen how the confusions introduced by the imagination block the adequate idea of God from being as powerful as it could be. The idea of God is unique in that the imagination can only sow confusion, not support it. If, on the contrary, the imagination can, for other adequate ideas, make them more powerful, can be a help as well as a hindrance, then ethics becomes possible. Minds may have the adequate idea of the eternal and infinite essence of God in spite of their finitude. But human minds have other adequate ideas, the second kind of knowledge, *because of the mind's being a finite mode*. Proposition 47 of Part 2 proved the independence of adequate ideas from the imagination, making them into competitors. But progress in overcoming the interference of the imagination comes from enlisting the imagination in its own subjection. This is the cunning of imagination.

The second kind of knowledge is abstract and needs imaginative supplement to fulfill itself as knowledge. Fortunately, such imaginative assistance is available. Euclid's demonstrations and constructions use diagrams, and the equivalent in the *Ethics* is the prefaces, scholia, and appendixes, which interpret universal propositions through their application to human beings. Only the postulates in Parts 2 and 3—and 2ax2—are specifically about human beings. Otherwise, Spinoza's definitions and axioms are stated universally. The nongeometrical parts of the *Ethics*, those prefaces, scholia, and appendixes, draw implications for human beings and therefore for ethics. The geometric method shows us how to treat human passions and ideas like lines, planes, and bodies. The nongeometrical parts of the *Ethics* show us how to become practitioners rather than subjects of the geometric method.

To see how the imagination can both help and hinder the understanding, I want to look more closely at the use of diagrams in the model for the geometric method, Euclid's *Elements*. There may be times when the drawings mislead us into thinking that we've proved something when we haven't. People have long debated whether the diagram in the first proof, I.4, proving that "If two triangles have two sides equal to two sides respectively, and have the angles contained by the equal straight lines equal, then they also have the base equal to the base, the triangle equals the triangle, and the remaining angles equal the remaining angles respectively, namely those opposite the equal sides," doesn't give Euclid a premise he has no right to, that of superposition; even the first proposition, I.1, "To construct an equilateral triangle on a given finite straight line," might be guilty of the same, as it seems to assume the density of space in which two intersecting circles are drawn. Hence the appeal of Hilbert's program to eliminate them and make geometry a matter of pure understanding. But Euclid's diagrams make it possible to draw valid inferences that

one wouldn't otherwise see. The diagrams are not the product of "ideas," nor are they the subject of them. But they are an integral part of the argument of the *Elements*. The diagrams, like minds, and unlike theorems and ideas, are not true or false. Spinoza called minds confused rather than true or false. The same is the case of Euclidean diagrams, and for Spinoza's scholia.²⁵

The imagination, in Spinoza but not in Euclid, presents things as they affect a particular individual. Euclidean diagrams might serve a pedagogical purpose, but Spinoza's imaginative references to human beings in addition can motivate them to be guided by adequate ideas rather than their tempting passions. Drawing more inferences from adequate ideas makes those ideas more powerful than they are by themselves. Finally 5p26 states that "the more the Mind is capable of understanding things by the third kind of knowledge, the more it desires to understand them by this kind of knowledge." The proof of that proposition relies on nothing more than the definition of the emotions, so it could have been proved much earlier. But earlier we couldn't see adequate ideas as intrinsically motivating; the second kind of knowledge is not. I am unmoved by my knowledge of the true distance from the earth to the sun, or my ability to find fourth proportionals. As 2ax3 tells us, we can have ideas without any affective modification. Prior to 5p26, one reason the adequate idea of God offers so little power is that Spinoza's readers were not yet able to see how that knowledge will help them to persist, or to accomplish any of their purposes. Even if it's a *summum bonum*, it doesn't look like a *totum bonum*. And so long as the individual's purposes are dominated by the desire to survive as long as possible, to be as wealthy as possible, the mind is *right* to reject understanding as a means to extending the power of the conatus. The idea of the eternal and infinite nature of God has no power until the mind can see it as empowering. The imagination provides no counterpart to that adequate idea; instead we need the experience of the entire argument of the *Ethics* to translate the knowledge of God into the intellectual love of God.

My argument depends on a reflexivity, that the anomaly that every mind contained an adequate idea of the eternal and infinite essence of God was matched by the anomalous position of 2p47 itself in the argument of Part 2. Now we see that that reflexivity is not just a heuristic device on my part but an essential part of Spinoza's thinking. The purpose of the *Ethics* following 2p47 is to make that adequate idea of the eternal and infinite essence of God powerful in the minds that think it. The rest of the argument of the *Ethics* has to serve as the imaginative equivalent of that anomalous adequate idea, and so, from being subjects of the geometric method we become its practitioners.

CONCLUSION

We have seen, then, three dichotomies, and we can now correlate them. First, we wondered whether the idea of the eternal essence of God was an instance of the second or the third kind of knowledge. Second was the issue of whether people can make that idea of God powerful and effective through enlisting the help of the imagination or by learning to do without the imagination. And third, two quite different relations between understanding and imagination, the first, which I quoted above from chapter 2 of the *TTP*, states that they are contraries —

Those who have the most powerful imaginations are less able to grasp things by pure intellect. On the other hand, those who have more powerful intellects, and who cultivate them most, have a more moderate power of imagining, and have it more under their power. They rein in their imagination, as it were, lest it be confused with the intellect. (C 2:94, G 3:29)

— and that they increase in power together —

In proportion as a Body is more capable than others of doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once, so its Mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once. And in proportion as the actions of a body depend more on itself alone, and as other bodies concur with it less in acting, so its mind is more capable of understanding distinctly. (2p13s)

Here is how those three dichotomies are related. If this idea of God belongs to the second kind of knowledge, then it will occupy its rightful place in the mind only if the individual can figure out to make the imagination come to its aid, the possibility suggested by 2p13s. If the idea belongs to the third kind of knowledge, it will become a powerful idea only once we learn how to think without the imagination, as *TTP*, chapter 2, would direct. Unless the imagination is powerful enough to construct a difference between appearance and reality within the ideas of the imagination, the second kind of knowledge would be impossible. The human imagination invents the idea of reality as opposed to appearance. The second kind of knowledge is knowledge as opposed to imagination, while the third is simply knowledge. To put the point tenden-

tiously: people need a very powerful imagination to be able to have and act on ideas that don't need the imagination. As the *Ethics* progresses, the adequate idea of God moves from something the mind has in spite of its limitations to something the mind has because of those limitations, as people surprisingly learn that they are not limited by the imagination. This does not imply that the idea of God, from being the third kind of knowledge, becomes the second, but that the idea of God is no longer an alien presence in the mind, not because it's related to the imagination, but because it's related to the second kind of knowledge. Once again, this is the cunning of imagination.

I started with three problems, and it is useful to draw together what we've learned about them. First, the fact that the idea of the eternal and infinite essence of God, while known to everyone, is not evident to everyone, contradicts Spinoza's affirmations of the transparency of the mind to itself (2p12), a transparency that sits uneasily with the proposition that the mind is a confused idea of the body. Because the idea of God is not obviously accessible, it is not motivating either, as it should be. This idea of God must be very different from the idea of God equivalent to the intellectual love of God in Part 5. Second, this idea of God is present in all minds, not just minds that are sufficiently complex to have adequate ideas, or sufficiently purified of harmful passions. This aspect of the idea of the eternal and infinite essence of God contradicts the argument of Part 2 which shows that a flexible and complex body, and so a complex mind, are necessary for adequate ideas. And finally, this idea is called both adequate and confused, while in the rest of the *Ethics* only inadequate ideas are confused.

For the first point, "whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human Mind must be perceived by the human Mind . . . nothing can happen in that body which is not perceived by the Mind" (2p12). Michael LeBuffe puts the problem well: "All human minds are conscious of their strivings in some way and not necessarily veridically. In other words, striving affects consciousness, but it does not reproduce itself there."²⁶ That is, the body is not transparent to the mind, nor is the mind transparent to itself. This is what Louis Althusser beautifully calls "the opacity of the immediate."²⁷ This idea of God has none of the advantages of either the second or the third kind of knowledge: it cannot call on the imagination for help, which is how the second kind of knowledge makes the individual active, and it is not intrinsically motivating like the third. The issue is not self-consciousness but power. People are aware of ideas only as they can do something with them, draw out their implications, and the imagination prevents them from doing so with the

knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God. It is a perfect but impotent idea.

My second problem was that the knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God seemed present in all minds, while the second kind of knowledge, as developed in Part 2, seems confined to beings with complex bodies, and not even all of them. The deficiency of the idea of God comes from the fact that it doesn't develop through the complex mind's ability "to regard several things at the same time, and understand their differences, agreements, and opposition" (2p29s). The omnipresence of this idea of the eternal and infinite essence of God is just what makes it impotent: it doesn't develop in the right way for an adequate idea, and so has to be a dead end in the *Ethics* until the mind is ready to accept it as its own in Part 4. In Part 2, our knowledge of God comes too cheaply to be useful.

Finally, because this idea hasn't developed in the right way, the imagination interferes with its place in the mind. Thinking about this idea as an anomaly helps us to see how the imagination enhances the mind's ability to understand other adequate ideas. The second kind of knowledge is really the greater anomaly, a kind of adequate idea that is only thought by minds that are themselves inadequate ideas. We have to work through the relation between the first and the second kind of knowledge, without an explicit account of their relations, before we are ready for Spinoza to tell us explicitly what the relation is between the second and the third: "The Striving, or Desire, to know things by the third kind of knowledge cannot arise from the first kind of knowledge, but can indeed arise from the second" (5p28).

The knowledge of the eternal essence of God is an idea of the third kind of knowledge. However, whether it should be classified as the second or third kind of knowledge is left ambiguous in 2p47 because Spinoza is not ready fully to articulate their difference. Until Part 5, Spinoza operates with the distinction between adequate and inadequate ideas, not between the three kinds of knowledge. The reader is not yet ready to understand ideas without corresponding images, which is what the third kind of knowledge is. The reader is expected to follow the geometric method, but the third kind of knowledge cannot be expounded using the geometric method. It is only when the reader can recognize that geometry, and mathematics in general, is abstract and to that extent imperfect, that she can come to have ideas that are adequate yet concrete — adequate ideas that are fully motivating for the person who asserts them, and fully determinative of an object.

The geometric method then is, ethically, a necessary path to progress but

one that ends in a place where the geometric method cannot go. The third kind of knowledge is motivating and concrete. The second kind of knowledge leads to the third via self-knowledge. Like the intellectual love of God, self-knowledge is fully motivating, and, while knowledge of what is common rather than what is idiosyncratic about the individual, is also about the particular knower. Paul's knowledge of Paul's knowledge and power is different from Peter's knowledge of Paul's knowledge and power. This difference cannot be known or represented through the geometric method. The self is not a model of God, but self-knowledge is a model for knowledge of God. It is not an imaginative representation of the knowledge of God, as other models are. Human activity, power and action through having adequate ideas, is a model for *causa sui*, as actions can be explained through knowledge alone, and therefore knowledge is a complete cause of those actions. Human activity differs from God's in that while the individual is a complete cause of her actions, she is never a complete cause of her existence. But once someone has adequate self-knowledge, the knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God can play an appropriate role in her life.

CHAPTER 3

Spinoza's Will to Power: How Does the Conatus Become a Desire to Increase Power?

THE CONATUS: FROM MATHEMATICAL TO DYNAMICAL CONSISTENCY

It's not in anyone's power to always use reason and be at the highest peak of human freedom—but . . . nevertheless everyone always strives, so far as he can, to preserve his being. (*Political Treatise*, C 2:510–11, G 3:279)

People are very lucky, even though we live in a world without chance. *Ethics* 3 starts off with an essence that is nothing but the desire to preserve oneself. At least some individuals emerge from that primeval sea to realize, in Part 4, that power, virtue, and understanding are identical. A lucky few even reach the intellectual love of God of Part 5. The first step in this ascent is the desire to increase one's power. Spinoza does not regard that progress as requiring an argument, but takes it as a simple expansion of what it means to preserve oneself. I think he needs an argument, because that movement is accompanied by a narrowing of the conatus from all individuals to human beings. The drive for self-preservation may be universal, but the desire to increase power is not.

Questioning the movement from self-preservation to increasing power is also crucial because that inference is distinct from an inference that Spinoza does not draw: because individuals desire to persist, it does not follow that they desire to be active, to be an adequate cause of their ideas, emotions, and

actions. Thus the definition of adequate cause (3def1), and the identification of the mind's having adequate ideas with its being an adequate cause (3p1) do not appear again until the end of Part 3 when Spinoza abruptly introduces the active emotions. Nowhere in Part 3 is there any indication that the conatus leads to a desire to have adequate ideas or to be an adequate cause.¹

There is no natural desire to know. Inadequate ideas, including the mind itself, desire more power without desiring to be adequate ideas or adequate causes, because that latter desire is beyond the imagination. Without a powerful imagination, people could never be active, but desiring to increase power does not necessarily lead to desiring to be active, just as having better inadequate ideas, such as an accurate measurement of the size of the sun, or obedience to God and the sovereign, does not lead to having adequate ideas. I can get a true idea of the size of the sun, which corresponds to reality, without having any scientific understanding or the second kind of knowledge, about it. It is the cunning of imagination that people do not aim at becoming more rational or more adequate causes, but some people arrive at that happy destination without aiming at it.²

The fundamental exegetical problem of *Ethics* 3–5 is to see how people, whose emotions are treated as points, lines, and bodies, can become beings who live under the guidance of reason by first, under the direction of the imagination, embracing and then, under the guidance of reason, eventually abandoning the fictions of formal and final causes that until that point have driven them forward.

The cunning of the imagination lets the *Ethics* prepare the mind for an ascent that is as difficult as it is rare. We learn more about human uniqueness in Parts 3 and 4 from our unique pathologies, such as the desire for excess, ambition, and romantic love, than we would from a more straightforward march from the conatus to the desire to be an adequate cause and have adequate ideas. Only people “fight for slavery as they would for their survival, and will think it not shameful, but a most honorable achievement, to give their life and blood that one man may have a ground for boasting” (*TTP* Preface; C 2:60, G 3:7).

I want to know why people want to increase their power. The first precondition of such a desire is that increases in power are possible and imaginable. A desire to increase power depends on an imagination powerful enough to envisage oneself as an entity that can increase its power. In chapter 1 I derived the bi-conditional: to be finite is to have variable power, to have at least one predicate besides one's essence. Since Spinoza will identify increases and de-

creases in power with pleasure and pain (3da2), we could interpret this development of Part 3 over the first two parts as meaning that all individuals are capable of pleasure and pain, which sounds very distant from what we know about finite modes in Part 1 or minds and bodies in Part 2.

Even if we could prove from Parts 1 and 2 that all finite individuals experience pleasure and pain, what is still missing is desire, which is what the conatus adds. Unlike the move from self-preservation to the desire for more power, the desire of all individuals to preserve themselves has repeatedly been questioned by Spinoza's readers, and it will help to look at it before questioning its development into a desire for more power. But before that, I want to notice the strange way Part 3 starts. It begins with three definitions, and the third defines emotion, or affect: "By affect I understand affections of the Body by which the Body's power of acting is increased or diminished." The first two definitions, of adequate cause and of being active, lead to the active/passive distinction in 3p1-3, but adequate ideas and activity are absent from Part 3 until 3p1 finally reappears to prove 3p58. Now, 3p1 states an equivalence between having an adequate idea and being an adequate cause, but Spinoza cannot make good on that identity until late in Part 4.³ Before that, as we will see in chapter 5, *Ethics* 4 examines the pervasive phenomenon of having adequate ideas without being an adequate cause, contrary to 3p1. And before exploring akrasia, Spinoza devotes almost all of Part 3 to inadequate ideas and the passive affects that modify them. He never refers to Propositions 2 and 3 again, and the proof of 3p2—the denial of mind/body interaction—does not depend on anything from Part 3; it is a restatement of 2p7s. In sum, the beginning of Part 3 has nothing to do with the conatus, and the conatus will have nothing to do with the distinction in 3p1 and 3p3 between adequate and inadequate ideas, adequate and partial causes (3p9).

Propositions 1-3 are a dead end until taken up in the last two propositions of Part 3, and so the demonstrative sequence of Part 3 starts with 3p4, which is declared to be self-evident, asserting that "no thing can be destroyed except through an external cause," because "the definition of any thing affirms, and does not deny, the thing's essence." That proposition is all that Spinoza needs to prove 3p6, the formulation of the conatus: "Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being."⁴ The tendency each thing has to preserve itself is, initially, nothing but the negation of a negation: since nothing in a thing can tend to destroy it, the essence of each thing tends to preserve it.⁵ The conatus is initially very weak and minimal, nothing but a denial of Freud's death instinct in favor of an Id that doesn't recognize the law of

noncontradiction. The conatus tries to preserve the individual. Peter's conatus could try to preserve both his love and his hatred for his mother.⁶

Now 3p6 adds one thing to 3p4, exertion. In 3p4, things don't necessarily exert themselves to preserve themselves; they simply are not self-destructive; in 3p6 a thing "is opposed to everything which can take its existence away (by P5). Therefore, as far as it can, and it lies in itself [*quantum potest et in se est*], it strives to persevere in its being." The endeavor to persist appears first in 3p6 as an opposition to things that threaten the thing's existence. There is no desire for more power, for perfection, let alone to be active, as the conatus is defensive.⁷

There is no effort involved in a thing not destroying itself. But there is an effort in resisting external change. One way to articulate what's happening between 3p4 and 3p6 is by applying Kant's distinction between the mathematical and the dynamical. Mathematical consistency does not imply a dynamical force to resist external destruction. Just because something is finite and so confined by other things of the same kind does not mean that those greater things threaten it. A triangle's continuing existence is not threatened by being circumscribed, but that is just what happens to individual minds and bodies: because an individual is finite, its existence is threatened, and without an effort to maintain itself, it will be destroyed by those surrounding bodies.⁸ This movement, from avoiding self-destruction to endeavoring to persist, is the one Kant criticizes as a movement from the principle of contradiction, which is in his terms analytic, to the principle of sufficient reason, which is synthetic.⁹

Finite beings, because of their imaginations, are not satisfied with their lot. The imagination makes a pair of errors that propel it forward. First, it wrongly takes the conatus, the desire for self-preservation, to be the essence of the individual. The individual essence is in that sense vacuous: whatever the thing is, it will want to preserve. One's essence might be defined tautologically as whatever one strives to preserve. This is false: Peter's essence is unchanged when he gets tired of chocolate ice cream. This is an error specific to the imagination, which is blind to the triumphant propositions at the end of the *Ethics*, which identify the human essence with reason and being an adequate cause: "The more the Mind understands things by the second and third kind of knowledge, the less it is acted on by affects which are evil, and the less it fears death" (5p38); "The more perfection each thing has, the more it acts and the less it is acted on, and conversely, the more it acts, the more perfect it is" (5p40); as well as the earlier 4p20: "The more each one strives, and is

able, to seek his own advantage, i.e., to preserve his being, the more he is endowed with virtue.”

Besides taking whatever condition the individual happens to be in for its essence, the human imagination makes another, compensating error: it thinks that the individual can be other than it is. The imagination has, then, a very important, empowering yet false, idea—that of its own unrealized potential. This idea is false: each thing just is what it is.

We say, for example, that a [person is] blind . . . , by comparing his nature with that of others or with his own past nature, then we affirm that seeing pertains to his nature, and for that reason we say that he is deprived of it. But when we consider God's decree, and his nature, we can no more affirm of that man than of a Stone, that he is deprived of vision. (Letter 21 to Blijenbergh, C 1:377, G 4:128)

Long before the full-blown model of human nature in the preface to Part 4, the imagination constantly believes that it could better preserve itself if it had more power. Without this falsehood, people could never become more powerful, and eventually more rational. Here is the cunning of imagination: animals with simpler minds and bodies experience the world under a single modality, that of actuality. People imagine a second modality, that of possibility. The imagination expands its reach tremendously by conceiving of counterfactuals, including the basis of free will, the idea that someone could have acted differently. Possibilities are a happy error of the imagination. As Genevieve Lloyd puts it, “Imagination can be a source of delusion, but we delude ourselves also if we deny its role in knowledge.”¹⁰

These two errors of the imagination—identifying one's essence with whatever one is trying to preserve, and thinking that the world contains possibilities as well as actualities—will lead people, or some people, to become rational and become adequate causes of their actions: this is the cunning of imagination. Uniquely human ideas, such as final causes, an anthropomorphic God, superstition, free will, move us further away from the understanding that the *Ethics* presents. Yet they are a necessary stage in human progress. The imagination makes the conatus the powerful force that it is. When I describe the plot of the *Ethics* as centering on a reversal, here it is: the human imagination leads us farther away from our eventual goal, deflecting us in ways that don't affect simpler minds and bodies, so that we can eventually go farther than those less complex beings. Imagining possibilities is a first step toward

seeing everything as necessary. Trying to preserve one's essence, without a thought about whether it's worth preserving, is a first step toward having an essence that is eternal.

The demonstration of 3p7 states that "the striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing." But we immediately know that there's more to an individual than its essence, since pleasure and pain are changes in power which do not change the essence.¹¹ While it looks like that was built into the nature of finite modes in Part 1, Spinoza postulates it here, and he postulates it only for human beings, and only for the human *body*: "The human Body can be affected in many ways in which its power of acting is increased or diminished, and also in others which render its power of acting neither greater nor less" (3post1). Some increases or decreases in power are enough to change the essence. A thing's power can decrease until the thing is destroyed. Whether there is a maximum of power for each thing is a question, but the imagination cannot conceive one, and therefore desires indefinite increases in power.

Here is where complication sets in. If individuals can have things inside them that are not part of their essence, then they can contain things within that conflict with it. Passive pains are within the individual but contrary to the individual's essence, since pains are decreases in power. In chapter 2 I worried that the adequate idea of God is *in* but not *of* the individual mind and is therefore inert. Here the passive emotions are *in* but not *of* the individual, but still potent within it. Finite modes have permeable boundaries and so cannot be defined with any stability or permanence. "Passive states are related to the mind only insofar as the mind has something involving negation; that is, insofar as the mind is considered part of Nature, which *cannot* [*non potest*] be clearly and distinctly perceived through itself independently of other parts" (3p3s). External causes increase or decrease the power of the individual finite mode because the individual—an object of the imagination—does not have a distinct border between inner and outer. That finite modes have permeable boundaries means that the mind of a finite mode is a confused idea. The causes of passions are outside us; the passions themselves are inside us, but they are distinct from our essence.¹²

Spinoza offers no pathway from inadequate to adequate ideas, from passive to active emotions. Later in this chapter I will argue that the cunning of imagination leads us from inadequate to adequate ideas via people's social relations to each other. But it is worth pausing to deny one plausible route. We have a confused idea of external bodies, for example, because that idea

is partly caused by the external body and partly by our own minds. Why not separate those two causal contributions, eliminate the subjective and perspectival input, and isolate the external object as cause? We can eliminate what Locke will soon call the secondary qualities of how bodies affect us and be left with the primary qualities of the objects themselves. This suggestion forgets the permeable and unstable nature of the boundary between inner and outer for finite modes, and consequently mistakes the nature of the imagination.¹³ We don't perceive sense-data; there is no pure receptivity as there is in Kant. We perceive *signs*, whose meaning is partly caused by memories and associations, and therefore in the *TTP* Spinoza talks about a method for interpreting nature as well as Scripture: nature comprises a set of signs to be interpreted (C 2:171, G 3:98).

Realizing that the basic data for perception and the imagination are not sense-data but signs illuminates the puzzle I raised in my first chapter, what causes inadequate ideas. I said there that that question has no obvious answer: bodies can't cause ideas without violating the bar on idea/body causality; ideas in the mind can't cause inadequate ideas, since if the mind was an adequate cause of an idea, it would have to be an adequate idea; and, finally, ideas outside the mind can't cause an inadequate idea because ideas in one person's mind causing ideas in the mind of another is incoherent. Just as the conatus and the emotions are equally in the mind and the body, so too are signs. Signs, especially but not only linguistic signs, allow the ideas of one mind to be accessible to another. The imitation of emotions is possible only because emotions have bodily signs, and language allows ideas other than emotions to be transmitted as well. Language can extend the class of things to which we feel similar, but it can also narrow it, as in xenophobia and its allies. Chapter 2 of the *TTP* told us that the inadequate ideas of the prophets need an external sign, in contrast to adequate ideas that carry their own warrant and certainty inside them. The point here is that inadequate ideas *have* external signs, and therefore can be transmitted.

On the other hand, the fact that the data for the imagination are signs rather than sense-data accounts for what Althusser, in a phrase I quoted before, calls the opacity of the immediate. Individuals experience their own bodies and minds not as simple data open for inspection but as signs, whose relation to what they signify requires interpretation, not knowledge by acquaintance. Spinoza joins Socrates in thinking that a mind is a hard thing to know; the most apparently accessible of all things — Descartes's cogito — turns out to be the last thing one can know.

These three properties of individuals uncovered early in Part 3 — that individuals have an essence and in addition varying amounts of power, that within the individual are things, passions, distinct from its essence, and that all finite individuals have a permeable boundary between inside and outside — lead to an important conclusion. For Aristotle and the tradition that followed him, only substances have essences. Spinoza is maximally permissive and allows anything to have an essence. Because individuals have a conatus, they have an essence. To anticipate twentieth-century French philosophy, existence determines essence; that order is reversed only for God. God has an essence, but not a conatus. (Put another way, the ontological argument is only valid for God.) In the geometric method, essence is prior to existence (2p8). But the essence of an individual, its conatus, follows from its existence. Individuals don't have a conatus because they first have an essence they want to preserve; they have an essence because they have a conatus.

The identification of an individual's essence with its conatus sits uneasily with the fact that the conatus endeavors not only to preserve one's essence, but also tries to preserve the individual's power, and those two can be at odds, because one can draw on external power sources. I can draw on someone else's power: my social networking skills are a force multiplier, but get me no closer to adequate ideas. The crucial movement from self-preservation to desiring to increase power occurs because one's "actual essence," the conatus, not only tries to preserve itself, the individual's essence, but also wants to preserve things that are not its essence, specifically its power. Wanting to preserve power in addition to essence, it will wind up wanting to increase power. But just where and how Spinoza demonstrates that movement remains to be seen.

THE PARADOX OF PASSIVE PLEASURES

It should take some argument to show that within the desire to preserve oneself there lies a desire to increase one's power. It should take some argument because bodies, considered in abstraction from their minds, might endeavor to maintain themselves, but have no reason to desire more power.¹⁴ Bodies in abstraction from their minds may have a principle of inertia, but they don't *strive* to preserve their essence, and never try to increase their power. The conatus and inertia are quite different things.¹⁵ Bodies get it right. There are no degrees of reality and perfection. "By perfection in general I shall, as I have said, understand reality, i.e., the essence of each thing insofar as it exists and produces an effect, having no regard to its duration" (4Preface). Each thing

is what it is. Without natural kinds, which Spinoza denies, none is imperfect or incomplete.

Adequate ideas, on the other hand, don't have to try to preserve themselves. They do, or at least some of them do, try to increase their power: they try to control the passions, dominate the mind, become adequate causes. It is only minds, inadequate ideas, that both endeavor to preserve themselves and to increase their power.

An inadequate idea is the only thing in nature that is defectively incomplete. Only ideas can be inadequate. The body makes no distinction parallel to the adequate/inadequate distinction for ideas. Inadequacy is a strange defect. Truth is its own warrant: when one has an adequate idea, one necessarily knows that one has one. The trouble with error and inadequate ideas is that that reflexivity has no counterpart. Inadequate ideas don't recognize their own inadequacy, and so don't desire to overcome it. And yet it is only because of inadequate ideas that anything desires more power.

To make things more complicated, not all minds try to both preserve themselves and increase their power. Only human or similarly complex minds do so. Spinoza does not explain why the desire for more power is limited to complex minds and bodies. But we've already seen two answers. The mind has to be able to imagine possibilities, and not be merely responsive in order to have desires as well as pleasure and pain.

Compared to bodies and adequate ideas, only the imagination has to be cunning. Bodies never get ahead of themselves, or aspire to be something they are not. Adequate ideas correctly take the measure of their power and of the obstacles to being all they can be. The desire to increase one's power is the cunning of imagination.

The move from self-preservation to increasing power confronts the paradox that external causes can make individuals more powerful. Sévéric poses the paradox perfectly: "Pleasure is a passion that increases the power to act and to think, but, insofar as it is a passion, it negates this very power to act and to think."¹⁶ While 3p55cd2 will assert that "no man desires that there be predicated of him any power of acting, or (what is the same) virtue, which is peculiar to another's nature and alien to his own," when people think they become more powerful through wealth, fame, or status, they do just that, desiring to rely on an external and alien power of acting. The imagination can even regard external passions as properties of the self—my reputation, my money, my family, are part of me.¹⁷ Through the imagination, individuals rightly see external nature as infinitely more powerful than they are, and infer that they can

draw more power from alien natures than from their own. This is the paradox of passive pleasures, that something outside, to which one is therefore passive, can make someone more powerful.

The imaginative mind thinks that external things will increase its power. Rational minds know better: *their* power cannot be increased by external causes. But in another sense—here is the cunning of imagination—the imagination is right. The imaginative mind thinks that some external things are good; the rational mind has no conception of good.

THE CUNNING OF IMAGINATION AND THE PUSH FOR MORE POWER

Turn back now from the paradox of passive pleasures to my original problem of how Spinoza gets from a desire to maintain oneself to a desire to increase power. Hobbes had no trouble justifying that inference. A person “cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more” (*Leviathan*, chapter 11). Spinoza sees, though, that there is no universal currency that will give the individual power regardless of circumstances. To think as Hobbes does is a uniquely human error; only people think that there is such a single value. There is no universal currency because what power is needed to fend off external enemies varies with the sort of enemies faced: the Czech Republic does not need a navy to protect the seacoast of Bohemia.¹⁸

Hobbesian universal currency isn’t the only uniquely human error. People *imagine* final and formal causes, and these fictitious ideas push them onward, while they think they are being pulled. People’s awareness of the endeavor for self-preservation generates final causes. Earlier in the *Ethics* (1app) Spinoza had attributed teleological thinking to ignorance: people are aware of our actions and desires, but not of their causes, and so inadequate ideas are like conclusions without premises (2p28). A desire to maintain oneself might not necessarily make someone think in terms of purposes and ends—I doubt that rocks, raisins, and sardines posit final causes—but a desire to increase one’s power certainly does. Therefore the imagination, in moving from self-preservation to a desire for increased power, naturally produces the teleological thinking Spinoza hopes to purge, but without which we would never make progress. All desire and all conatus is blind because there are no final causes. The complex human imagination is doubly blind, because while having no purposes, it thinks that it does. Just as the human imagination seems to

move further away from rationality when it imagines possibilities in addition to actualities, it also seems to retreat by being deluded by thoughts of final causes, to which less complex animals are immune.

Within the argument of Part 3, the move from self-maintenance to the desire to increase power happens so fast that it is hard to pin down, although I will locate it in 3p11s and 3p12.¹⁹ Proposition 12 — “The Mind, as far as it can, strives to imagine those things that increase or aid [*augent vel iuvant*] the Body’s power of acting” — limits itself to the body’s power of activity. By contrast, there is a very long argument until Spinoza can assert the parallel to 3p12 for the mind itself in 3p54, where “the Mind strives to imagine only those things that posit its power of acting,” although its proof depends on nothing but 3p7.²⁰ It looks then that mind/body symmetry is violated in 3p12, and it takes most of the argument of Part 3 to restore their identity.

Accounting for the development from self-preservation to increasing power just got harder, since Spinoza’s thesis opens up a distinction between mind and body. For the mind to desire an increase in power of the body, it must think that increasing the power of the body will increase its own power; it must believe in body/mind causation, a belief apparently fortified by 3p11: “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 *conatus* is indifferently a feature of mind and body, but how the mind knows that increases in the body’s power rebound in — without causing — increases in its own power is a crucial detail in establishing the inference from self-maintenance to increasing power. The academic records of football players are not reassuring.

The *conatus* of a body is its endeavor to *preserve* its ratio of motion and rest while the mind’s *conatus* is the desire to *increase* its power.²¹ Even if mind and body are identical, these two efforts don’t seem the same. A body might become more powerful by being able to respond to more and more external threats, so Hobbesian accumulation, enabling it to buy weapons, buy allies, and buy people off, makes sense. But the clear intellectual parallel seems false. A mind is not more powerful if it can fend off efforts by ideas external to it. While the imagination first tries to think of things that increase the body’s power of acting, in the drive for increased power, and eventually in the desire to be an adequate cause, the body is along for the ride. The mind does all the work. This is the opposite of the ghost in the machine: it is the body’s activity, not the mind’s, that is epiphenomenal.

The desire for more power leads, we see, to an apparent lack of parallelism

between mind and body. Spinoza's argument isn't violating mind/body identity; it is the imagination that is guilty of that violation. Consider the way increases in power of mind and body are described in Part 4:

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. There are, therefore, many things outside us which are useful to us, and on that account to be sought.

Of these, we can think of none more excellent than those that agree entirely with our nature. For if, for example, two individuals of entirely the same nature are joined to one another, they compose an individual twice as powerful as each one. To man, then, there is nothing more useful than man. (4p18s)

The human Body is composed of a great many parts of different natures, which constantly require new and varied nourishment, so that the whole Body may be equally capable of all the things which can follow from its nature. (4p45s)

These are not at all parallel. Minds don't atrophy, as bodies do, without frequent replenishment and the replacement of their parts by fresh substitutes. And it isn't true that nothing is as useful to the human body as other human bodies. We could then solve the problem of how the desire for self-preservation becomes a desire for more power by saying that it doesn't. The body has and continues to have a desire to preserve itself; it is the mind that desires to increase its power. It is only for the body that Postulate 4 after 2p13 says that "the human Body, to be preserved, requires a great many other bodies, by which it is, as it were, continually regenerated." We have to do better than this fatal division between mind and body.²²

THE VERY BRIEF ARGUMENT

Two things occur together in Spinoza's argument: the conatus develops from the desire to preserve oneself into the desire to increase one's power, and the scope of the argument narrows from all individuals to human beings. What those two changes in the argument have to do with one another is not yet clear. What is it about the complexity of mind and body that people have over other animals that transforms their conatus into the more expansive kind?

Only people form a model of human nature (4Preface); other animals don't have aspirations. But nothing in the account of the conatus in 3p6–11, which applies to all individuals, has room for this uniquely human feature, which prepares the way for the further expansion of the conatus to the desire to increase power.

I locate Spinoza's argument for increasing power in 3p11 and 12 because there the *Ethics* moves from conatus and desire first to pleasure and pain, and then to the emotions love and hate. As the imagination connects passions to objects, it starts to imagine final causes. Its objective world is an animated world. At the beginning of Part 3 the emotions were desire, pleasure, and pain. But at the exact moment when the conatus becomes the desire for increased power, the emotions become desires, pleasures, and pains *with objects*. Desire, pleasure, and pain are like the simplest bodies of Part 2, never encountered by themselves but only as parts of the bodies we do encounter. The General Definition of the Affects reflects both these changes: "The Affect that is called a Passion of the mind is a confused idea, by which the Mind affirms of its Body, or of some part of it, a greater or lesser force of existing than before, which, when it is given, determines the Mind to think of this rather than that." Desire, while the first emotion defined in the definitions of the emotions at the end of Part 3, is not part of this general definition, only increase and decreases in power.²³ The shift elevates the individual past mere responsiveness of pleasure and pain into an imaginative world of objects with causal and then affective relations to the individual. As we will see in the next chapter, Jacob cares about whether he sleeps with Rachel or Leah.

The move from self-maintenance to increasing power comes from the interrelation between desire and pleasure.²⁴ The desire to persist is the individual essence, but when people aim at persisting, they can't aim at having that desire. No one can desire to desire to persist. People can, however, aim at the pleasure that is the experience of increasing power. People aim at pleasure. They do things for the sake of pleasure. They can even, reflexively, be pleased when they succeed in obtaining some pleasure. None of this holds for desire. No one can aim at it, or do things for its sake. Every desire includes a desire for pleasure, the pleasure of satisfying that desire. Pleasure is then not just a sign but a goal.²⁵ And so the conatus, the desire to persist, includes a desire for increased power.

But Part 3 quickly goes beyond this purely responsive sense of pleasure. People also feel pleasure when they successfully fulfill a desire. This paves the way for pleasures that are not the removal or avoidance of pain, the pleasures

taken in one's own activity. Originally pleasure is the result of an increase in power. People now aim at increasing power. That shift is enough to encourage the imagination to begin to form ideas of formal, final, and material causes. At first, these aren't abstract ideas at all. They are as concrete as the consciousness of the increase in power. The mind imagines itself as engaging in goal-directed action. We formulate a model of human nature, as an individual imagines a future state more powerful than its current actual essence.

When a mind imagines something that is not present, it has ideas that don't directly result from the interactions of our bodies with other bodies. Memory gets a purely mechanical and physical explanation (Postulate 5 after 2p13, 2p17), but imagining the future does not. Pleasure and pain stand out from other ways in which the body and mind are affected because they are never mere perceptions or registers of changes; when one experiences the increase in power, one wants more increases in pleasure, and when one experiences pain, the mind and body want to expel it. This is the difference between having an affect, an emotion, and simply being affected. The mind makes that advance when it aims at pleasure, rather than taking pleasure as the effect on the mind of an increase in power. If pleasure were nothing but the register of an increase in power, then someone could note that he or she was increasing in power without enjoying that observation at all. Pleasure would be an affect in that it reports our being affected, but could be without affect in the sense that there is no emotional engagement or attachment. So the definition of pleasure is only fulfilled in the desire for more power. We have the connection we've been looking for between self-maintenance and increasing power, and have found it in the uniquely human complex interrelation between desire and pleasure.

The trouble is that pleasure is an odd goal for action, not impossible like desiring to desire, but still paradoxical. Avoiding pain is too obvious a goal to need explanation, but seeking pleasure is not parallel.²⁶ Pleasure is the transition to greater power. The gambler might have as his or her end the thrill of the uncertain transition to more money rather than the money itself, but this doesn't seem like a model for human action in general. Most people want wealth, not the process of getting it.²⁷ Aiming at the transition to increased power seems to imply that the conatus is interested in learning things, not knowing them. Even worse, it seems to imply that learning, not knowing, is pleasant. Both propositions are false. I would like to know Urdu, but have no desire to learn it. Learning it would be laborious, and often frustrating and even humiliating, while being able to speak it would give me power, letting

me interact with more people, and enhancing my reputation and therefore my power. There seems to be an asymmetry between pleasure and pain here. I can see wanting to avoid pain as well as avoiding the lower amount of power that succeeds it, but aiming at pleasure, the process of increasing power, rather than the increased power itself, seems more suspect.

BOOTSTRAP EMPOWERMENT

This chapter started with the paradox of passive pleasures, that an individual could increase its power by drawing on external causes. Here we have the opposite paradox, that an individual could increase its power by drawing on its own resources by aiming at pleasure. The trouble with aiming at pleasure is that one constructs too easy a goal, so easy that 3p12 looks like a case in which wishing and thinking makes it so, what I will call bootstrap empowerment, like Cyrano's propelling himself to the moon by throwing up a magnet, being levitated to the magnet by the attraction to his iron breastplate, and then repeating the operation.²⁸ Desiring to increase power is a way to increase power. "The Mind, as far as it can, strives to imagine those things that increase or aid the Body's power of acting." Even if "as far as it can" (*quantum potest*) limits things, so that the imagination isn't simply free to extend as widely as it likes, still *thinking* "of those things that increase or assist the body's power of activity" should not by itself increase or assist the body's power of activity.²⁹ It seems as if 3p12 suggests that when I'm threatened by Larry the bully, I can increase my power in the face of his terrors by imagining a nonexistent friend Gary who will beat him up — 3p20: "He who imagines that what he hates is destroyed will rejoice" — and some of the theological absurdities Spinoza criticizes in the *TTP* come pretty close to such wishful thinking. Or I can congratulate myself for wishing that people in the Sahel weren't starving, but do nothing about it; such delicacy shows the moral dangers of imaginative bootstrap empowerment.³⁰

The *quantum potest* clause reminds us that it isn't so easy, while being bullied, to affirm the existence of a nonexistent friend. To have such a fantasy is better than giving up, I suppose, but, still, it isn't as useful as actually doing something to repel the bully. Imagining myself performing some difficult physical activity can, I've been told, prepare me for actually doing it, so the act of imagination does increase my power. But it's at least equally likely that imagining myself in some condition is a metonymic substitute for trying to achieve it: politicians often get people to fantasize being rich or dominant

over other people as a way of activating the pleasure of imagination and distracting people from more significant issues.³¹ See 3p26c1: “If we believe that someone . . . affects with pleasure a thing similar to ourselves, we shall be affected by love toward him.” Our power then by definition increases, but much less than, as in 4p18s, we learn that nothing is as useful to us as other people, and develop the implications of that thesis. Note the shift I italicize in 4p20: “The more each one strives, *and is able*, to seek his own advantage, i.e., to preserve his being, the more he is endowed with virtue.” But 3p12 lacks this qualification.

And yet Spinoza denies that easy bootstrap empowerment:

When a man himself thinks more highly of himself than is just, it is called Pride, and is a species of Madness, because the man dreams, with open eyes, that he can do all those things which he achieves only in his imagination, and which he therefore regards as real and triumphs in, so long as he cannot imagine those things which exclude the existence [of these achievements] and determine his power of acting. (3p26s)

When we say that the Mind, in considering itself, imagines its lack of power, we are saying nothing but that the Mind’s striving to imagine something that posits its power of acting is restrained, or that it is saddened. (3p55d)

Passive pleasures are increases in power caused by something outside ourselves. The imagination is not satisfied with this passivity, and desires to increase the mind’s power through its own resources. The desire for more power, and the bootstrap empowerment that the imagination thinks will achieve it, lies between purely passive increases in power and the active increases in power through adequate ideas. The move from self-preservation to increasing power is a crucial stage in the road to rationality, because the conatus is not merely protective and responsive but assertive. The individual now has desires that are not prompted by external threats.

The conatus insists on relying on the imagination. I don’t want to preserve what is common and so can be adequately known. What is common—adequate ideas or the infinite modes of extension—doesn’t need effort to be preserved. Practical reason seems impossible because who I am, a finite individual, and what I can know, what is common, are incommensurable. A finite

individual is, as finite, one thing among others. To know a finite individual is then to know something in abstraction from what surrounds it, and in abstraction from the causes of its existence. We imagine it in isolation. That act of the imagination is just what the *conatus* does. It conceives as distinct something that only exists as part of a wider network, and attempts to preserve itself in isolation, not withdrawing but drawing on external resources, but with a view of maintaining its own identity. Bootstrap empowerment is then not a minor distraction in the imagination's desire for more power but integral to it.

The imagination fails us here by being abstract. It thinks that nothing can be more concrete than an individual, but the individual does not exist except in relation to the other individuals that surround and threaten it. It is the abstract nature of the imagination that allows it to conceive of possibilities beyond what is actual, and that power of the imagination propels it forward to more power.

Earlier I questioned how the imaginative mind could know that increasing the power of the body increased its own power. In later chapters I will have to consider the converse question of whether the mind's increasing its power through increasing its stock of adequate ideas makes the body more active and powerful, and how increased understanding further meets the needs of the body. This is the question of whether the *summum bonum*—the only certain and true good, that of understanding—is a *totum bonum*, and always benefits the *conatus*, and it is a question that will occupy us repeatedly in the rest of this inquiry. Especially given how accidental the individual essence is—"Any thing can be the accidental cause of Joy, Sadness, or Desire" (3p15)—there is no reason to expect that having adequate ideas will always be useful in furthering the *conatus*.

When the *conatus* aims at increasing power, it aims blindly, aims at something it cannot know in advance. Thus 3p9 says, "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"—a pretty succinct statement of its blindness. It doesn't take much thought for something to want to preserve itself. It easily knows its object of desire, and doesn't have to answer the question of why it should want to preserve itself. But to want to increase power takes much more thought, more imagination and a body able to go forward toward the unknown, guided by the fictions of formal and final causes. No wonder Spinoza has to postulate unique features of the human body in 3post1 and 2, and rely on Postulate 2—"The human Body can undergo many changes, and nevertheless retain impressions,

or traces, of the objects, and consequently, the same images of things”—to prove 3p12, in apparent violation of both his claims for mind/body identity and his denials of human uniqueness.

That apparent asymmetry between mind and body brings up another asymmetry: it never takes effort to suffer pain, while some pleasures are the objects of endeavor. The asymmetry between pleasure and pain here shows the limits of bootstrap empowerment. My power can always be overcome by external powers, and reflecting on that fact causes pain. There is such a thing as bootstrap enfeeblement. This is a case in which, unfortunately, thinking makes it so.

When the mind thinks of its own impotence by that very fact it feels pain. (3p55)

Nobody thinks too meanly of himself insofar as he thinks this or that is beyond his capability. For whenever a man thinks something is beyond his capability, by this belief he is so conditioned that he really cannot do what he thinks he cannot do. (3da28exp; see too 4p53 and d)

But what Spinoza says about pain isn't true for pleasure. Pain concentrates the mind. It so dominates the mind with thoughts of its removal that the mind doesn't have room for anything else. "The greater the Sadness, the greater is the part of the man's power of acting to which it is necessarily opposed" (3p37d). There is only one kind of pleasure that similarly dominates the mind, the intellectual love of God. That example apart, pleasures do not dominate the mind as pain does. What pain, according to Spinoza, inevitably does, pleasure wrongly tries to do. I have some power, and reflecting on it increases my power. This is self-contentment (*acquiescentia in se ipso*). "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" (3p53). The mind, one would think, could always "consider itself" and so always feel pleasure and so could indefinitely increase its power of activity by thinking about it. The corollary pushes this form of empowerment further away from any gain in power through one's own efforts: "The more a man imagines he is praised by others, the more this pleasure is fostered."³² This makes bootstrap empowerment too easy.

I want to pause briefly over that sentence from 3p37d about how pain focuses the mind. Chapter 1 showed the reality of the finite. Within the finite,

though, error is a privation, and to that extent not real. And I said at that point that the reality of pain is a harder nut to crack. Pain is not an appearance of something else. Pain is the place where reality and intelligibility are at odds: unlike error, the unintelligibility of pain is what makes it real and not illusory.³³ As Wilde put it in *De Profundis*, pain “wears no mask.” Pain is not a sign of something else, and so has no meaning and is thus unintelligible. The only thing the mind and body can do is try to expel it.

It would be nice to argue that since it is within our power to make ourselves weaker, it is also within our power to increase our own powers. In that case, we wouldn't need adequate ideas. Inadequate ideas of pains are quite enough to reduce our power. And if all pleasure consisted in resisting or avoiding pains, this would be good enough for increasing power too. But the human conatus has greater ambitions, and greater possibilities for both development and error. That the imagination can engage in bootstrap enfeeblement does not mean that it can also engage in bootstrap empowerment. Only reason can do that, and of course rational bootstrap enfeeblement is impossible. Therefore, seeing how the movement from self-maintenance to the desire for more power depends on the interrelations between desire and pleasure creates the next problem, seeing why bootstrap empowerment is not as easy as those quotations about *acquiescentia in se ipso* in 3p53 and its corollary made it appear.

To make the problem more evidently acute, recall the place where I thought body/mind identity fell apart:

The human Body is composed of a great many parts of different natures, which constantly require new and varied nourishment, so that the whole Body may be equally capable of all the things which can follow from its nature. (4p45s)

A little while ago I noted that the mind does not require “new and varied nourishment” for its survival. But it does require such nourishment to increase its power. Bootstrap empowerment would be far too easy if reflection increased power; for that we need commerce with the external world. Dewey nicely called such reflection “the futile attempt to spin truth out of inner consciousness.”³⁴ (Reflection on adequate ideas, though—and this is the theme of the *TIE*—is self-empowering. Short of adequate ideas, observation and experiment are more empowering than reflection.)

IMAGINATION AND THE IMITATION OF EMOTIONS:
FROM FANTASY TO ACTION

The Mind, as far as it can, strives to imagine those things that
increase or aid the Body's power of acting. (3p12)

We strive to further the occurrence of whatever we imagine
will lead to Joy. (3p28)

Bootstrap empowerment is the first mechanism for the transformation of the desire for self-maintenance into a desire for more power. I want to note three large changes between 3p12 and 3p28, changes that show how Spinoza moves gradually from the conatus as a desire for increasing power to the conatus as a desire to be active, an internal cause of one's thoughts and actions. First, 3p28 no longer talks about the mind endeavoring, but instead it is *we* who endeavor. Along with that, second, is the substitution of pleasure for an increase in power of the body, since pleasure is both in the body and the mind. Third is the change from striving to think about what increases the body of the power to striving to act. In 3p28 we are much more active than the mind of 3p12. The mind of 3p12 can try to think about lots of things that increase the body's power which are outside our power to do anything about them, hence the appeal of wishful thinking, my imagining a strong friend to cut Larry the bully down to size, while 3p28 is narrower: of the things that increase our power, some of them are things we can bring about. We are still not active in the sense of 3p3, being an adequate cause. But we increase our power better by trying to increase *our power* rather than the power of our bodies.

The development between 3p12 and 3p28 does not supply premises for deriving 3p28, since that proposition relies on nothing beyond 3p12, plus its negative parallel in 3p13 with its corollary and scholium. The route from imagining what will increase our power in 3p12 to doing what increases it in 3p28 is via other people, pleasing them and being pleased by them, which makes our emotional life, and so pleasure and desire, much richer. Spinoza could prove 3p28 far earlier, but no one could act on 3p28 unless he first had the power to act on propositions that intervene between 3p13 and 3p28. These are propositions that concern the imitation of affects and other ways of expanding our emotional life in the face of the emotions of others. The conatus becomes a desire for more power when the imagination encounters, or constructs, a world of objects, and principal among those objects are other people. Earlier I

pointed to this difference between minds and bodies, that bodies, finite modes of extension, are parts of a greater whole, the face of the universe, while minds don't automatically form a greater whole. Minds become more powerful when they act to become part of a greater whole.

We learn how to *do* what we imagine will bring us pleasure by seeing what pleases others (3p16, 27), and especially by learning what we can do to please others (3p25, 3p27c3). We acquire self-knowledge through knowing others. Seeing ourselves through the medium of seeing how others affect us and we affect them gives us a more robust self to know than we could have through our bodies being affected by collisions with other bodies as described in Part 2. The mind is a confused idea, and self-knowledge is therefore not as reliable as one might like. I estimate my power through others' estimates of my power, not only because their estimates contribute to my power, but because I don't have a more authoritative internal guide available.³⁵

"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" (4p73). Seeing ourselves through others' eyes epitomizes the two sides of imagination, pointing people both toward and away from self-knowledge: "Though men, therefore, generally direct everything according to their own lust, nevertheless, more advantages than disadvantages follow from their forming a common society. So it is better to bear men's wrongs calmly, and apply one's zeal to those things that help to bring men together in harmony and friendship" (4app14).

Not just the imitation of affects but the whole series of complex emotional interrelations between self and other drive the empowering demonstrations of Part 3. Hence there is empowering truth in the mutual admiration of lovers reinforcing each other's power. A collective imagination is not as unreal as an individual fantasy.³⁶ The self that the imagination knows is a set of modes of being affected; we know that self better, while still through the imagination, by making explicit the connections between the self and how it affects and is affected.

We now have a second answer to my question of exactly how the more complex body and mind that sets people apart from other animals leads from self-preservation to increasing power. The first answer has been that a more complex imagination includes possibilities, up to the model of human nature, as well as what is actual. The second is that a more complex imagination makes possible richer relations among people than are open to other kinds of animals. When we perceive someone as similar to us, we are pained when they

are, and pleased when they are. Similarity is always a matter of perception. I increase my power by being surrounded by people who are increasing their power, and my conatus is now a desire to persist as part of a community of such people.

THE SOCIAL IMAGINATION

The imitation of affects begins the development of the emotions in Part 3, with the key first step the transformation of the relation between desire—the conatus—and pleasure. As the argument proceeds, people become unique as their emotions give access to an increasingly human external world. The more that the imagined external causes of our changes in power are other people, the more imaginative bootstrap empowerment actually works. An isolated individual trying to increase his or her power lives in a fantasy world, as when I imagine a friend to combat Larry the bully. But when an entire community imagines each of us increasing one another's power, it really does increase each individual's power. Bootstrap empowerment develops into bootstrap sociability, and from there eventually into bootstrap rationality and even bootstrap immortality.³⁷

As with every instance of the cunning of imagination, there is no guarantee that things will go smoothly. There can always be collective delusions, such as the superstitions mocked in the preface to the *TTP*. A tyrant flourishes because people believe in his power; tyrants really are powerful, until suddenly they aren't. "As easy, then, as it is to take men in with any superstition whatever, it's still just as difficult to make them persist in one and the same superstition. The common people always remain equally wretched, so they are never satisfied for long. What pleases them most is what is new, and has not yet deceived them" (*TTP* C 1:68, G 3:7).

A social whole based on such a common fantasy doesn't look like it increases the power of its members. Hobbes defines panic as a common fear, all the more intense because each person feels fear because the people around him feel fear, but no one has any idea of what they're afraid of. Climate change deniers don't empower one another when they reinforce one another's beliefs.

In fact, I think that such an example shows the truth of reciprocal self-empowerment (see too 3p30, 3p55s, 4p58s). People with such false beliefs feel impotent. They are bound not only by a shared error but a common enemy, hostile and anonymous strangers who control their lives. They increase their power by imagining a powerful opponent who can be countered if they join

together. Relative to their weak original position, climate change deniers do increase power as they band together. It doesn't look like an increase in power because their power is still small. As Deleuze puts it, "No one could ever say that it's good for her/him when something exceeds her/his power of being affected."³⁸ Their individual impotence consists in not being strong enough to be affected by certain powerful external causes. Banding together, each becomes more able to be affected, and so more powerful. An enemy that I believe would destroy me is then cut down to size. An individual denier would not gain power by switching sides. The party of truth doesn't need such a one, who would be a free rider. But to stand with confederates against scientific knowledge adds to the power of their party.

What we experience in society through the expansion of the human imagination becomes a model for the self-empowerment of rationality. Instead of pleasure that is the opposite of pain, this is pleasure that feeds upon itself, and so can't be excessive. The imagination approximates reason by unknowingly imitating it.³⁹ We turn to the other people's opinions and their comparative judgment of our power as a guide to our own assessment of power, because at this stage we aren't capable of sufficient self-knowledge to do without the judgments of others. We don't yet have a fully knowable self.

Spinoza does not draw a moralistic conclusion and tell us that we should turn attention from pleasure to a more methodically produced end of knowledge. He gives the imagination free rein to see what it can accomplish by way of increasing power, without regard for adequate ideas. It turns out that it can achieve quite a lot. Without exhibiting the full power of the imagination, Spinoza couldn't show the understanding what it's up against, let alone how to harness the power of the imagination to reason's own purposes. It is for that reason that Spinoza keeps passive and active emotions distinct throughout Part 3. Unless the conatus aims at something more than mere survival, the imagination would never grow as it does. The imagination unknowingly imitates reason: like reason it is unlimited, and like reason it finds the greatest site for increase in its intercourse with other people.

The strength of the imagination is most manifest in the social construction of a social world in which people can increase one another's power without adequate ideas. People join in society not guided by reason but by needs and fear. Therefore we share a nature with other people in spite of the fact that each of us is dominated by passion. People can have passive emotions that create community, not conflict. Those passions are the emotions of solidarity that come from the belief that people can be useful to each other. "For things which

bring it about that men live harmoniously, at the same time bring it about that they live according to the guidance of reason” (4p40d). People give up their rights, sign on to a common agreement, and form a state, through common passions of fear and insecurity. So these passions force us to live in harmony; even more strongly, that fear causes us to live by the guidance of reason.⁴⁰ Such passively sharing a nature is exactly what the imitation of affects is. Section 26 of the appendix to Part 4 tells us that

Apart from men we know no singular thing in nature whose Mind we can enjoy, and which we can join to ourselves in friendship, or some kind of association. And so whatever there is in nature apart from men, the principle of seeking our own advantage does not demand that we preserve it. Instead, it teaches us to preserve or destroy it according to its use, or to adapt it to our use in any way whatever.

In one crucial respect, this passage should be troubling. What makes people uniquely useful to one another, and what makes us want to preserve each other, is that we can enjoy, that is, increase our power because of, other *minds*. People come together to preserve their bodies and property, not to increase the power of their minds. But, through the cunning of imagination, the result of joining together is a union and increase in power of their minds. “Nothing is more advantageous to man than man” (4p18s) is true for minds, but not bodies. Other people’s bodies are not as useful to us as the bodies of plants and animals we use for food and shelter. That people have a different set of relations to each other than to the rest of nature in spite of his denials of human exceptionalism recurs in Part 4, where Spinoza first says that “hatred can never be good” (4p45), because it can never be good to want to destroy something, but then limits the claim: “Note that here and in what follows I understand by Hate only Hate toward men” (4p45s). That we should treat people differently from the rest of nature is Spinoza’s equivalent to the second formulation of Kant’s Categorical Imperative that we not treat other rational beings, but nothing else, as mere means. As Lloyd puts it, “Spinoza manages to combine a strong rejection of anthropocentric perception with an equally strong affirmation of man-centered morality.”⁴¹ We will have to see how Spinoza squares that circle.

Sociability is a preparation for and a route to rationality, because it is the locus for successful bootstrap rationality. Increasing power together is a model for increasing the power of the passions by knowing them that is the subject

of Part 5. Both of these forms of non-zero-sum power relations are unique to people. Social relations, in which the increase in one person's power does not come at the expense of another's, prefigures the relation within a person between reason and passion, in which reason acting on the passions makes them more rather than less powerful as it makes them more rational.⁴²

By contrast, when I become more powerful through exploiting nature, say, in eating, I gain power because the lamb I eat becomes less powerful, and indeed no longer has a conatus. In bootstrap empowerment, the gain in power has no cost. Human exceptionalism consists in our ability to increase power without decreasing something else's power. An increase in power that is not at another's expense is only possible among human beings. That we can do so by the imagination without reason is indeed the cunning of imagination in bootstrap empowerment.

There is growth in Part 3, from 3p12 to 3p28 and from there to the ideas of acquiescence, pride, and humility in 3p53–55, and finally to the active emotions of 3p58 and 59. Pushing the argument along is a development in the imagination. In Part 2 the imagination is simply a passive way in which the mind perceives and conceives how mind and body are affected. "To retain the customary words, the affections of the human Body, whose ideas present external bodies as present to us, we shall call images of things, even if they do not reproduce the figures of things. And when the Mind regards bodies in this way, we shall say that it imagines" (2p17s). But already in 3p12 it takes on a broader meaning, as the affects shift from ways of being affected into emotions.⁴³ They are still passive in being rooted in inadequate rather than adequate ideas, but now active in being the result of an endeavor on the part of the individual, and partly caused by the individual's conatus.

The imagination creates a social world in which bootstrap empowerment can occur. An analogy to economics highlights both the way in which we profit from others' being different from us and from their sharing an essence with us, and the way sociability constructs ways of acting that don't depend on something else being acted upon. If we confine ourselves to farming and the extraction of natural resources, we increase our power at the expense of the vegetables we harvest and the animals we slaughter. But more abstract forms of wealth, based on credit, can increase wealth without creating losers. The more advanced an economy, the less it is based on extractive relations to nature. Credit, belief, is a paradigm of bootstrap empowerment. Our intercourse with other people, even in ways that fall short of reason, allows us to increase power without reducing something else's power, unlike our interactions with

the nonhuman world. Society makes our imagination richer and more disciplined.

The more powerful the community, the more bootstrap empowerment works, because we live in a world that we construct rather than one that we find. The more we take our emotions and their objects from the social, as opposed to natural, world, the less likely we are to run up against cold, indifferent reality, against the truth on which Spinoza insists, that the world is not designed with us in mind. The objectivity of the social world protects us against the objectivity of the natural world. This protection illustrates both the strength and weakness of the imagination, empowering people but making them powerful and secure enough that there is no need to transcend the socially constructed world in favor of nature, that is, God.

The development of an objective social world is enough for the imagination unknowingly to imitate and therefore prepare the way for the intellect. If our emotions were limited to affirmations of greater and lesser force of the body, registering changes in the body as a shadow registers shifting relations between a body and a source of light, we could never experience increases in power because of what others enjoy or what others think of us. Our emotional life is more social than somatic, and we become more powerful through this greater range of sources of increases in power.

I've stressed the difference between 3p12, in which the mind imagines what will increase the body of the power, and 3p28, where people endeavor to do what will increase their power. Proposition 28 is foreshadowed by 3p27c3, "as far as we can, we strive to free a thing we pity from its suffering." The first time that the *Ethics* moves from imagination to action is in the context of experiencing the pleasures and pains of other people. That someone else desires something gives me a reason to desire it. That someone else experiences pain accompanied by the idea of some external objects gives me reason to avoid that object, or to try to destroy it. The perception that there are similar subjects and then the imitation of emotions lets me move outside myself. I objectify pleasure and pain.

The intervention of our emotional connections to other people not only allows Spinoza to move from 3p12 to 3p28, from imagining whatever will increase our power to exerting ourselves in ways that we think will increase our power; those emotional connections also allow for the final step in Part 3, from simply trying to increase our power to increasing our power by becoming the adequate cause of our actions. We first move from a subjective to an intersubjective world, and are eventually, in a crucial reversal, able to withdraw from intersubjectivity and no longer be guided by the emotional responses of others

because we can finally do things that increase our power through knowledge. We learn how to be the cause of pleasure in ourselves by becoming the cause of pleasure in others. Reciprocal love (3p33) leads to self-love, and knowing other people leads to self-knowledge and a self-knowledge based on adequate ideas. While self-love might seem to follow immediately from the conatus, it does not emerge in Part 3 until after our loves for other people develop. The two sides of the imagination are on display here: progress in the imagination puts us in a position to have active emotions and adequate ideas, but also, the more successful the imagination is, the more that transition is unnecessary. The universal creed of the *TTP* is the best example; since the articles of faith are sufficient for piety, there is no reason to replace them by adequate ideas.

Only people agree and cooperate, and so increase one another's power. This is the cunning of imagination, since people can come together through need or a common enemy, as Spinoza accounts for the persistence of the Jewish people through the hatred of those who surround them. Regardless, though, of why people come together, becoming one mind and body increases the rationality of all, even though none aims at rationality.

But all is not completely rosy as we live through the imagination.

Everyone will have the greatest gladness from considering himself, when he considers something in himself which he denies concerning others.

But if he relates what he affirms of himself to the universal idea of man or animal, he will not be so greatly gladdened. And on the other hand, if he imagines that his own actions are weaker, compared to others' actions. (3p55s)⁴⁴

In this instance the imagination gets things exactly wrong. The imagination identifies the individual essence with what makes the individual unique. We should take pleasure in what is common, our rational nature, instead of what is unique, which can only be the passive emotions that drive us apart. We get pleasure from being admired, but all such increases in power put us at the mercy of our admirers. This is as far as the imagination can take us.⁴⁵

THE POWER OF IMAGINATION

All this points to the surprising power of the imagination, which in human beings extends far beyond sensation and memory. So long as we are protected by society from needing standards of truth beyond what others think, and

what others think others think, we can live happily in an imaginative world. The more successful the imagination is, not only in preserving the individual but increasing its power, the less the individual will feel the need for adequate ideas. Therefore the cunning of imagination does not lead to a simple plot of increasing power and rationality, but a complex plot, with its reversals and discoveries, which comes from both the power and weakness of imagination.

Even before he discusses the emotions, those two features of the imagination, leading us away from and toward rationality, are already highlighted in 2p13s:

In proportion as a Body is more capable than others of doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once, so its Mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once. And in proportion as the actions of a body depend more on itself alone, and as other bodies concur with it less in acting, so its mind is more capable of understanding distinctly.

Those two look like independent conditions, the body is more powerful as it is more responsive, that is, passive, and the body is as powerful as it is autonomous and active. If they aren't distinct criteria for the power of bodies, they certainly look distinct for minds. On the one hand, the power of an idea is the power of its external cause. "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" (4p5). On the other hand, the adequacy of an idea is measured by the causal contribution of the mind, not the power of the object, not how powerfully the object affects the mind but how powerful, that is how real, the object actually is.

These two measures of power point to two sides of the imagination, the one in which being affected and being active grow together, and the one in which activity takes over from passivity. Without teleology propelling things forward, a complex imagination is both a necessary condition for rationality and also a powerful impediment to that development. On the first side, imagination becomes more powerful and by becoming more powerful becomes self-sufficient, and on the second, the imagination must give way to the rigors of reason. Because, first, action and passion grow together, nothing is as useful to man as man, as the network of emotions allows us to benefit from each other as we share a nature which includes both adequate and inadequate ideas;

nothing is as useful to man because we need each other. Because, on the other side, the more active someone is, the less passive, nothing is as useful to man as a rational person with whom we share the same rational nature; we benefit each other as we pursue our own interests (4p36, 37).

The imagination is comfortable with the self-understanding in which the power to act and the power of being affected grow together. An individual increases power by increasingly interacting with others, learning through perception and the perceptions of others—the power to act and the power to be affected increase together. This meaning of power measures power relative to the power of comparable things, and so is a sense of power appropriate to finite things. Only the understanding can conceive of a nonrelative measure of power; only the understanding conceives of the identity of reality with perfection. The closest the imagination can come to a nonrelative idea of power—and it is pretty close—is its realization that in social relations, one person's power does not come at the expense of another's. Once again, social life is the imaginative equivalent of, and preparation for, the rational life.

The power of bodies has a single measure, its ability to move other bodies, benefit from exchange with them, and resist being moved (4p45s). It is the power to engage in its own characteristic motion without external impediment, Hobbes's definition of freedom. When Spinoza offers the axiom to Part 4—"There is no singular thing in nature than which there is not another more powerful and stronger. Whatever one is given, there is another more powerful by which the first can be destroyed"—he presents a relative and therefore imaginative sense of power, in which the power of one individual is measured by the power of competing individuals.

By contrast, the power to be active has no competitors, just as adequate ideas have neither a conatus nor contraries and active emotions cannot be excessive. The power to act due to adequate ideas is not a comparative or relative idea. Adequate ideas, recall, have no conatus. The imagination is caught between these two meanings of power, a comparative one suited to bodies and an absolute one suited to adequate ideas. It initially sides with bodies, but as the imagination expands, it behaves more and more like ideas and less like bodies and perception. The emotions can, like the body, follow the common order of nature, but they can also, even while remaining passive, follow the order of understanding as well (5p10).

Drawing security and increased power from external causes makes no one wiser, or more of an adequate cause. But it is, at least, disappointing that things don't even work out in the other direction; increased activity does not

necessarily lead to increased power, or even continued existence; being wise is no route to material prosperity. If that's the case, then filling the mind with adequate ideas, and thus being active, can lead to salvation, but it is not an *ethical* project but instead a rational alternative to ethics. This sets the problem for *Ethics* 4 and 5, which have to integrate reason with imagination, the highest good with the rest of life.

CHAPTER 4

False Pleasures and Romantic Love

Pleasure is the greatest imposter of all, by general account, and in connection with the pleasures of love, which seems to be the greatest of all, even perjury is pardoned by the gods. (Plato, *Philebus* 65c)

It happens, of course, when we wrongly fear some evil, that the fear disappears on our hearing news of the truth. But on the other hand, it also happens, when we fear an evil that is certain to come, that the fear vanishes on our hearing false news. (4p1s)

Those things that please when true will also please when false.
(Thomas Hobbes)¹

Pleasure is how the increase in power feels.² The possibility of false pleasures questions the equivalence between pleasure and the increase in power — “by pleasure [or joy] I understand the passive transition of the mind to a state of greater perfection” (*per laetitiam . . . intelligam passionem, qua mens ad maiorem perfectionem transit*) (3p11s)—the identity of what can anachronistically be called the subjective, pleasure, and the objective, an increase in power. As we’ll see, understanding this identity also involves understanding the identity asserted when Spinoza says that mind and body are one.³ Asking whether there can be false pleasures asks whether something can be a pleasure without at the same time increasing the individual’s power.

The scholium to 4p68 mentions a nice case of a false pleasure, in which Spi-

noza, unusually, condemns the emotion. Adam's fall is due to a false pleasure and pain. He mistakenly believes himself similar to other animals, and so has compassion for them.

The man having found a wife who agreed completely with his nature, he knew that there could be nothing in nature more useful to him than she was; but . . . after he believed the lower animals to be like himself, he immediately began to imitate their affects (see IIIP27) and to lose his freedom.

Imitating the animals' pleasures and pains, Adam felt sympathetic pleasure and pain himself, but those pleasures, as well as the pains, diminished his power. Adam's compassion can fairly be called a false pleasure because, according to Spinoza, the experience diminished his power, and he "began to lose his freedom." Pleasure and the increase in power are distinct. He had to leave paradise. After setting up the problem of false pleasures, I will look at a different biblical example in more detail.

The identity between pleasure and increasing power seems contrary to experience. I doubt that stones have a feeling of elation as they accelerate and so acquire more power. Only under certain circumstances am I aware of the pleasures of breathing, but in every case breathing increases my power over the alternative, and the drinks I take during a triathlon that are supposed to help me keep hydrated and keep my electrolytes in balance, and therefore increase my power, don't have a flavor I would ever seek out. Chewing on a bitter pill may increase my health, but to call it pleasant seems a *parti pris*. Ulysses tied to the mast, as Spinoza relates it in chapter 7 of the *Political Treatise*, is coerced at his own insistence so that he cannot experience the pleasures of the siren songs, but this pain rebounds to his benefit.

Equating pleasure and an increase in power is exactly as counterintuitive as the identity of mind and body. The imagination thinks that body and mind interact, causing changes in each other. Both identities seem contrary to daily experience. My plan is to use the puzzle about false pleasures to illuminate the identity of mind and body. The "union of mind and body" follows from 2p11, "The first thing that constitutes the actual being of a human Mind is nothing but the idea of a singular thing which actually exists," and that thing is "Body or a certain mode of Extension which actually exists, and nothing else" (2p13). No such proof is available for the identity of pleasure and the increase in power. And just as neither body nor mind is more fundamental than the other, so too with pleasure and the increase in power.

Another short example that seems to disrupt the identity of pleasure and the increase in power, before I turn to a more extended example. Spinoza's treatment of the emotions as if they were lines, planes, and bodies rarely uses evaluative language, but by saying that the person affected by pride has "too high an opinion of himself," Spinoza assumes that an emotion can be false. Yet that overestimation is a source of pleasure. The falsity of the belief does not, it seems, infect the pleasure, making it into a loss of power. In chapter 3 of the *TTP* he says that "the true happiness and blessedness of each person consists only in the enjoyment of the good, and not in a self-esteem founded on the fact that he alone enjoys the good, all others being excluded from it" (C 2:111, G 3:44). To draw a distinction between "true happiness" and enjoyment is to say that there are false pleasures.

One way to deny that there are false pleasures is to say that pleasure is not an idea, and so can't be true or false. The trouble is that the general definition of the emotions at the end of Part 3 says that pleasure is an idea: "The idea which constitutes the form of the affect affirms of the body something which really involves more or less of reality than before." Pleasure is an idea, the definition says, but pleasure also is a true idea, since the body in fact has more reality than before. (See too 4p64 and its corollary.) Is pleasure the sort of thing for which *esse* is *percipi*? Can the incorrigibility of pleasure be assimilated to the infallibility of knowledge?⁴

The question of false pleasures is not a minor anomaly in the *Ethics*. It exemplifies a more general problem. The mind is a confused idea of the body. The mind is the idea of a certain body; there is no idea which the mind could also have that would "[exclude] the existence of those things that it imagines to be present to it" (2p17s): "the Mind does not err from the fact that it imagines, but only insofar as it is considered to lack an idea that excludes the existence of those things that it imagines to be present to it." Therefore the mind as idea of the body cannot be false, and in that sense is necessarily true. But the mind does not have sufficient distance from its object to be able to agree, or fail to agree, with it; it is both the idea of the body and "one and the same thing" as the body (2p13).⁵ There is no room for error in the relation of mind and body, and so Spinoza never talks about the mind as a true or false idea of the body, only as the confused idea. The mind is too close for an appearance/reality distinction to be appropriate.⁶ (This lack of distance accounts for the claim in 2p12 that "whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human Mind must be perceived by the human Mind," from which we infer that there are no unconscious ideas.)

But while Spinoza demonstrates that the individual cannot have desires

that would negate the conatus (3p10), there is no parallel proof that there are no false pleasures. Looking at false pleasures allows us to attack this more general problem of the relation of mind and body in the *Ethics*. I suggested that the identity of pleasure and the increase in power is a truth known by reason but which the imagination would deny. We think, and our imagination affirms, that changes in the mind cause changes in the body, and vice versa, and that the connections among ideas is not matched by somatic connections. The identity of pleasure with the increase in power and the identity of mind and body stand and fall together.

The question of false pleasures arises because an emotion such as love has two distinct and independent-seeming components, pleasure and the idea of an external cause. The relation between those two components points to a reversal that occurs between Part 2 and Part 3. At 2ax3, Spinoza says that “there are no modes of thinking, such as love, desire, or whatever is designated by the word affects of the mind, unless there is in the same Individual the idea of the thing loved, desired, etc. But there can be an idea, even though there is no other mode of thinking.” Emotions, that is, are modifications of ideas. But in Part 3 it’s the other way around. Desire, pleasure, and pain are fundamental, and ideas are attached to them, and in Part 5 can be detached from them. Therefore in 5p2 Spinoza can assert that “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.” Here the emotion is the subject, and the idea of the external cause the modifier, the accident, as in Part 3. Desires, pleasures, and pains don’t look like the kinds of things that can be true or false, but since they are in the mind, they must either be or modify ideas, and so can be evaluated as true or false. Proposition 8 of Part 4 tells us that “knowledge of good and evil is nothing but an affect of Joy or Sadness, insofar as we are conscious of it.” So too 4p64d: “Knowledge of evil (by P8) is Sadness itself, insofar as we are conscious of it.”

JACOB, RACHEL, AND LEAH

Jacob’s story in Genesis 29 is a perfect example of someone mistaking the object of his love and so the cause of his pleasure.⁷ I choose this example because the generalizations Spinoza appeals to in order to condemn romantic love don’t apply to Jacob’s love for Rachel; there is no vacillation here, no jealousy, etc. Nor is Jacob’s love for Rachel subject to the condemnation Spinoza

offers at 4app19: “A purely sensual love, moreover, i.e., a lust to procreate that arises from external appearance, and absolutely, all love that has a cause other than freedom of mind, easily passes into hate — unless (which is worse) it is a species of madness. And then it is encouraged more by discord than by harmony.” Romantic love can serve as a synecdoche for any attachment to an object, rejecting pleasure unless it comes from the right source. This story seems to contradict several key propositions of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, and it explores a specifically human emotional response which has no explanation in the *Ethics*. From the moment he sees her at the well, Jacob loves Rachel (Gen. 29:18). Translated into Spinoza’s language, Jacob thinks that Rachel’s beauty makes his mind and body more receptive and powerful; that is what it means for love to be pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause. He feels an increase in vitality.⁸

Laban tricks Jacob into marrying and sleeping with Leah, thinking that she was Rachel (29:25). In marrying a woman who he thinks is Rachel, Jacob’s power increases further as he thinks he actually possesses the object of his love and cause of his increased power. As long as the deception lasts, his power increases; the *idea* of an external cause is the same whether he marries Rachel or marries Leah thinking that she is Rachel. Regardless of its cause, the pleasure is real. If we are interested in increasing power, if the “Mind, as far as it can, strives to imagine those things that increase or aid the Body’s power of acting” (3p12), then we should be indifferent to the cause of the increase in power. Illusions can bring as much joy as reality.⁹

In the morning, Jacob discovers Laban’s deception. To adapt Bentham’s maxim, Jacob went to bed with poetry, only to wake up and find it was push-pin. As Socrates puts it, “not possessing right judgment, you would not realize that you are enjoying yourself even when you do” (*Philebus* 21c). If his night with Leah was a pleasure, he should remember it with pleasure, even if the revelation of its true cause causes another, painful, emotion as well. If Jacob can’t continue to think of the joy he felt sleeping with Rachel, since he now knows he didn’t, he can simply continue having that joy by connecting it to Leah instead. Had Jacob realized, while lying with Leah, that he was lying with Leah and not Rachel, his pleasure would immediately dissipate. Once he realized that Rachel was not the cause of his pleasure, the pleasure itself disappeared. This shows that pleasure and the idea of the external cause are not independent. Affirming the idea of the external cause — and not the idea of the idea of an external cause — is a necessary condition for having the pleasure.¹⁰

Laban’s ruse is no different from many of the devices political rulers use to

increase obedience, and people voluntarily submit to the ruler's commands whenever doing so increases their power (see especially *TTP*, chapter 17). Clever rulers, like Laban, get their subjects to lead just and charitable lives without understanding what they're doing. Loyalty to one nation is as irrational as love for only one individual, yet both can increase one's power. In both cases, the increase in power caused by an external cause, Leah or the sovereign commanding obedience, can be mixed with pain since I feel that I am acting at the will of another, even though gaining power in the process. Jacob serves Laban, increasing the power of Laban as a sovereign. "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the older" (29:28). Jacob gets what he wants, too; it just turns out to be more expensive than he expected. Jacob was eventually rewarded, with both Leah and Rachel as wives, with twelve sons, and "grew exceedingly prosperous, and came to own large flocks, maidservants and menservants, camels and asses" (30:43). The virtue founded on adequate ideas is its own reward (5p42); the virtue of the good nonphilosopher represented by Jacob receives its appropriate reward as well. This is not the paradox of false pleasures but the more pervasive paradox that external causes can increase one's power.

With a little stretch, we can think of Leah as a placebo that gives Jacob pleasure because he thinks he's getting the real drug, Rachel. Jacob's awakening forces him to make a distinction, previously unnecessary, between Rachel as the *de dicto* and the *de re* external cause of his pleasure. Previously, Rachel was the object of his love. Then, under darkened circumstances, he experiences pleasure accompanied by the idea of someone he takes to be Rachel. The *de re* cause of pleasure is Leah, while Rachel is the *de dicto* object of his love. There is no possibility of error in the relation of the mind as the idea of the body because that relation is *de re*. My question of whether pleasure is the increase of power is the question of whether that proposition should be interpreted *de dicto* or *de re*. If the identity of pleasure and increasing power is *de re*, Jacob should accept any increase in power, regardless of its cause. The conatus should only care whether it continues in existence and increases in power. It has no reason to care about the sources of its power. If, instead, it's a *de dicto* relation, then the door is open for false pleasures. Only human beings can care about the cause of their changes in power. Less sophisticated individuals only have *de re* emotions.¹¹

In chapter 3 I showed how people constructed an objective world, a world of objects and not simply of pleasures and pains, in the first place by regarding other people as objects, loci of their own pleasures and pains. The story

of Jacob shows how this progress comes at a cost. A world of objects is more stable and intelligible than a chaos of pleasures and pains. People become more powerful as they engage with such an objective world. And yet Jacob discovers a new source of instability, and pain, within this objectivity. The objectivity of a world of other people is not the subject of adequate ideas. These objects of love and hate are more adequate than the signs of pleasure and pain they supplant, but as they fall short of truly adequate ideas that are about things equally in the part and the whole, they can lead to the ethical dead end of romantic love that can turn us away from the only object of love we should care about, God. To preview a development later in this chapter, less complex animals seek pleasure without caring about the source. People do care, and so form attachments to other particular people. In one of those reversals characteristic of the plot of the *Ethics*, these attachments are eventually overcome by the active emotion of generosity, which aims at doing good to— not receiving goods from— other people without discrimination. The senses in which dogs are indiscriminate in whom they take food from and in which the generous person does not discriminate for or against individuals or groups as the beneficiaries of generosity are widely different, and romantic love represents the stage that separates them. “The Mind avoids imagining those things that diminish or restrain its or the Body’s power” (3p13c); Jacob now must hate Leah, since his memory of his wedding night blocks, but does not totally destroy, his love for Rachel.

Jacob cares whether it is Rachel or Leah whom he loves. Jacob wrongly experiences something equivalent to commodity fetishism, thinking that only one object can cause his increase in power, or more precisely desiring that only one object cause his increase in power. In the preface to the *Theodicy*, Leibniz puts the point nicely: “Love is that mental state which makes us take pleasure in the perfections of the object of our love.” Otherwise Jacob not only wouldn’t feel anger toward Laban but wouldn’t experience pain at all, since his power would not decrease with the discovery that he was deceived. He should realize that love is pleasure accompanied by the *idea* of an external cause, instead of persisting in thinking that it is pleasure accompanied by an external cause. Romantic love, commodity fetishism, the exclusive attachment to another individual—these are the human emotional phenomena that the *Ethics* does not consider. I will try to account for them, and then explain why they are not of interest to Spinoza. Unless there are false pleasures, Jacob shouldn’t turn down any source of pleasure. He should want to increase his power and be indifferent as to its source. As long as the imagination increases our power,

we shouldn't want the reality instead of the image. The individual becomes an object of love, the individual as external cause of increasing power. People become self-consciously individuals when they regard others as individuals.

According to 3p12, as he thinks back on his first wedding night, Jacob should endeavor to continue to think of Leah as someone who increases his body's power of activity. His love for Rachel prevents him from thinking of Leah as the cause of his pleasure. His love for Rachel prevents him even from endeavoring to do so. Jacob is really stuck. He can't regard Leah with pleasure because of his love for Rachel, but he can't regard Rachel with pleasure either, because of his apparent pleasure of sleeping with Leah and not Rachel. And in the same way he has regarded Rachel as present until another more powerful idea interferes with his affirming his idea of Rachel as the cause of his pleasure. Finding that he had slept with Leah is just such an interference (2p17, 3p18d). He can't love Rachel while remembering Leah as a cause of pleasure. Therefore, to continue — or to reestablish — his love for Rachel he must regard Leah with an emotion that a wise man would avoid, something like hatred or contempt.

Jacob thinks his love is caused by Rachel, not the idea of Rachel. In this he must be wrong. Ideas, and modifications of ideas, can only be caused by other ideas, not extended beings. There is a contradiction between Spinoza's account of the emotions and what anyone experiencing an emotion will feel, a contradiction between what the understanding knows and what the imagination believes. To Spinoza, and to an outside observer, love is pleasure accompanied by the *idea* of an external cause. To Jacob, and everyone else in love, love is pleasure at the thought of its actual external cause. Reason tells us that an idea, and therefore an emotion, can only be caused by other ideas and emotions, while the imagination thinks that love, and other ideas and passions, are caused by external objects. Therefore Jacob cares whether his increase in pleasure has the cause he thinks it does. He's not satisfied with the idea of an external cause. Spinoza might deny that there are false pleasures, but Jacob thinks that he has experienced one. Jacob shows how the world looks when we think that we desire things because they are good, and shows us what a great distance there is between how the world looks to the imagination and to reason. For the human imagination, then, pleasure and its object, the two components of love, are inseparable. They are separable to less complex imaginations that are indifferent to the sources of pleasure, and eventually, in Part 5, the human mind becomes powerful enough to "separate the affects from the thought of an external cause, which we imagine confusedly" (5p20s). The cun-

ning of imagination displays itself here in a pattern that recurs in the *Ethics*, a progress toward the impersonal and objective, and then, here with the active emotions, and eventually with self-knowledge and the third kind of knowledge, a new form of individuality.

Love is joy accompanied by the idea of an external cause. Therefore love is always passive. We always think it is caused by something outside ourselves. Jacob, though, thinks that he is active in loving Rachel. He thinks she is good, and so thinks that his love follows an act of judgment on his part. We are slaves to the passions because we think that emotions are something we *do*, and so we become complicit in our own enslavement, and so Part 4 is titled “Of *Human Bondage, or the Strength of the Emotions.*” Bondage is uniquely human. If there can be false pleasures, that is because the body is not transparent to the mind, nor the mind to itself.

Jacob, by Spinoza’s account, has this complicated psychological experience because he is led by imagination rather than reason. Nothing in this story would make sense if adequate ideas were involved. No one can be deceived into having an adequate idea, while one can be pleased and have his or her powers increased through deception. Jacob’s desires are wholly temporal and bodily: “Leah had weak eyes; Rachel was shapely and beautiful. Jacob loved Rachel” (29:17–18). *Ethics 4* will argue that we call something good because it causes us pleasure, and that nothing pleases us because it is good. Only God is an object of love because it is lovable, as Jacob imagines Rachel to be. Therefore Spinoza does not follow Plato’s *Symposium* in seeing the experience of beauty as a route to wisdom and immortality (210a–212b). Still — and here the Bible and Spinoza come back together — without adequate ideas, Jacob is still a virtuous man, and his love for Rachel leads him to fourteen years of obedience and charity.

The reason the human imagination can have exclusive objects of love is because it makes many people, and not only moralists, think that things are pleasant because they are good. Our imagination makes us think in terms of final causes; Jacob therefore thinks that whether or not his power increases depends on whether he thinks it does; whether he feels pleasure depends on his getting what he wants, the bootstrap empowerment I talked about in the last chapter. He thinks there can be false pleasures and pains because pleasure and pain depend on his ideas about them, in the form of anticipations, expectations, and other emotions that depend on desire. Human beings naturally impute all kinds of good qualities to those whom they love, and bad qualities to those we hate. If I love Rachel, then I find her deep voice sexy and attrac-

tive. If I love Leah, I find her high-pitched voice girlish and lovable; Rachel's dark skin makes her beautiful to those who love her; Leah's white skin does the same. When we turn from love to hate, what was voluptuous becomes fat.¹²

In the last chapter, I argued that the conatus progresses from a desire for self-preservation into a desire for more power because of the interrelation between desire and pleasure, as pleasure becomes the object of desire as well as the result of a fulfilled desire. Just because something does not correspond to my expectations and so satisfy my desires, it doesn't follow that it doesn't increase my power anyway. Passive pleasures don't require my consent to increase my power. But the emotions that develop out of that interrelation between desire and pleasure are more exacting. Jacob is like someone who expects the pleasures of drinking a first growth Bordeaux and is given a great white Burgundy instead. What would otherwise be pleasant tastes terrible because it conflicts with one's expectations. Something that would otherwise be pleasurable is not because it is not the object of one's desires. For something to be pleasurable for more sophisticated imaginations, it has to satisfy two requirements—pleasure is both the fulfillment of desire and the increase in power. Jacob's story shows these two falling apart.

Jacob's story is more complicated still because it involves an additional temporal dimension, which adequate ideas and the pleasures and desires associated with them do not have.¹³ I reject the flavor of the Montrachet as soon as I taste it, since it tastes like and is in fact a lousy red Bordeaux. Is this not a false pain? But—here is the complication—Jacob does not experience the pain of frustrated desire on his wedding night, but only the morning after. The temporal and narrative dimension of the passions plays a role here because the interrelation between pleasure and desire gives rise to pleasures of expectation and pains of disappointment.

The errors of the imagination don't immediately disappear when we have an adequate idea. Knowing the true size of the sun doesn't block us from continuing to think of it as small. In the same way, knowing that final causes are an illusion doesn't stop them from being effective. We think that things are pleasant because they are good, and that we desire things because they are good. We are wrong about that: something is good because it increases our power, not the other way around. As long as Jacob thinks that he loves Rachel because of her goodness and beauty, instead of realizing that he imputes goodness and beauty to her because of the pleasure she gives him, he will persist in the illusion that the objects of love are not fungible. "Imaginations by which the Mind is deceived, whether they indicate the natural constitution of the

Body, or that its power of acting is increased or diminished: they are not contrary to the true, and do not disappear on its presence" (4p1s).

The possibility of false pleasures arises only for passive emotions; there are no false adequate ideas, and no false active pleasures. When an increase in pleasure is of the whole mind and body, then it is adequate, and therefore must be experienced as pleasant.¹⁴ So we could try to use the part/whole distinction to get at the idea of false pleasures. We could say that false pleasures are pleasures of a part of an individual, not the whole. This is the distinction Spinoza draws between titillation, or pleasure, and hilarity, or cheerfulness. "Pleasure and Pain are ascribed to a man when one part of him is affected more than the rest, whereas Cheerfulness and Melancholy are ascribed to him when all are equally affected" (3p11s).¹⁵ Cheerful pleasures are good for you; titillating pleasures may not be. Nothing that increases the power of the entire body and mind, maintaining the proportions of the parts, could be bad.

But it is easy to mistake a partial pleasure, which may decrease the overall power of mind and body, for a pleasure of the whole, especially since the mind is a confused idea, which makes it especially difficult to know as a whole. Apart from the most titillating bodily pleasures, we rarely realize that a pleasure only increases the power of part of the mind and body. When I run faster or learn more about the American Civil War, I feel that my entire mind and body become more enlivened and powerful, even if I've only strengthened a part. A false pleasure then is one that affects only a part of mind and body, but that, because the mind is a confused idea, it mistakes for an increase in power of the whole.

SELF-DESTRUCTIVE PLEASURES AND THE CONATUS

Pathological or self-destructive pleasures show us something further about the conatus.

Every individual strives to preserve itself. Even complex individuals, who owe their existence to being thrown together by external forces, once they exist, try to preserve their new existence. At the same time, the parts of the individual continue to preserve their own selves. There is no guarantee that the conatus of the parts will be harmonious with the conatus of the whole. While it is generally true that the conatus of the part and of the whole are harmonious, Spinoza only proves it for the rational individual who is better off living in society. Romantic love is a case where a part of the mind and body tries to become more powerful at the expense of the persistence of the whole.

To the extent that it succeeds, it does so by making the mind and body think that it is pleasure of the whole.

Jacob was then not mistaking the object of pleasure but the *subject*. Since he has only an inadequate idea of his own body and mind, he thought it was Jacob who was enjoying himself with Leah, while in fact it wasn't Jacob but only a part of his mind and body. Because of the intensity of the pleasure, he mistook the part for the whole.

Because we have only a confused idea of the body, we can easily mistake a part for the whole, and a pleasure of the part for a pleasure of the whole. Therefore Spinoza has the equipment needed for explaining how some pleasures are not good for us without abandoning the identification of pleasure and good. The part/whole distinction is enough to generate normative judgments about the emotions. We might judge that all of Jacob's troubles come from a love for an individual external thing imagined as a cause of pleasure, which tends by its nature to be excessive. But that answer is open to Spinoza's criticism of moralizing. In a sense, love is always a false pleasure, since the external cause whose idea accompanies the pleasure is never an adequate cause of pleasure; no external object can be an adequate cause of an idea. Love, as a passive emotion, modifies an inadequate idea. Love toward Rachel and Leah are both mistaken. Love toward Leah because Jacob thinks it's directed at Rachel. But love toward Rachel is mistaken because it elevates the external cause into the object of desire, and therefore lends itself to deceptions such as Laban's. Part 4 begins by showing that reason and imagination see the relation between pleasure and the good in opposite ways. We imagine that something gives pleasure because it is good, and so Jacob imagines that Rachel increases his power because of her goodness. In fact, according to reason, we call things good because they cause pleasure. When Leah caused pleasure, she was good, although Jacob doesn't think so. While Spinoza defines love as pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause, it is only the imagination and inadequate ideas that can have love. Adequate ideas know that they have no external causes. Apart from the intellectual love of God, where love is an equivocal term, all love is then pathological.

Unfortunately, then, the distinction between cheerfulness and titillation doesn't help to distinguish Jacob's feelings for Rachel from what he feels toward Leah. For that to work, Jacob's temporary pleasure at being with Leah would have to be titillation, his imagined and—after fourteen years—real pleasure with Rachel cheerfulness, or at least it would have to be that the pleasure Rachel causes involves more of the mind and body. Of course Spi-

noza sees all loves toward particular people as based on inadequate understanding, but that is not enough to account for the difference, felt at least by Jacob to be all-important, between his love for Rachel and whatever it is he feels toward Leah.

Once he knows that Leah is the cause, his remembered pleasure no longer has any force in continuing to increase his power. He can no longer remember loving Rachel the night before, since he now knows that he didn't. On his wedding night, Jacob felt pleasure accompanied by the idea of Rachel as an external cause. Jacob now knows that Leah was the cause of his pleasure; nevertheless, he doesn't love her, because he loves Rachel. Because he doesn't love Leah, she doesn't give him pleasure. The pleasure which he now remembers seems hollow. He loses power on being enlightened. "He who increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (4p18s, quoting Eccles. 1:18).¹⁶ There are now two conflicting aspects of his experience which come from the two interpretations of 3p18d—"So long as a man is affected by the image of a thing, he will regard the thing as present"—he loves Leah because she caused him pleasure; he doesn't love Leah because if he did, it would diminish his love for Rachel, and he resists such decrease (3p13). He cannot love both: the love for one drives out love for the other; the idea of one as the external cause of pleasure is incompatible with the idea of the other as external cause. Whether it is a false pleasure depends on whether Jacob's judgment at the moment has authority, or whether it can be corrected by a fuller understanding. The temporal dimension allows us to question the incorrigibility of pleasure and the necessary connection between pleasure and the increase in power.

The person who lives under the guidance of reason never feels remorse; does that mean that the rational person could never be duped by someone like Laban? I think the answer to that question will be yes, not because Spinoza's rational person is perfectly intelligent, so that he must be able to see through whatever Laban tries, but because the goals of the rational person do not admit deception concerning their means. The rational person would avoid exclusive attachments. It looks like we should go further and say that the rational person would be indifferent to the sources of pleasure.¹⁷ Nothing prevents Jacob from loving both Rachel and Leah, except for this feature of the human imagination that leads to commodity fetishism, and to loyalty. Thus Kant complains that in erotic love we treat a person as a thing, an immoral predicament that can only be remedied by marriage.¹⁸

In chapter 3, I worried about the lack of explicit argument accounting for the development of the conatus for self-preservation into a desire for more

power. Now the worry is that Spinoza nowhere shows how people can come to desire not only pleasure but pleasure from a specific source. In both cases, he doesn't show why or whether this development should be limited to human beings. He doesn't show how loyalty rather than promiscuity becomes a part of human nature. One place where he comes close is the account of envy in 3p32: "If we imagine that someone enjoys some thing that only one can possess, we shall strive to bring it about that he does not possess it." Without arguing for a narrowing of the emotions to human beings, the scholium just assumes that this and surrounding propositions are so limited:

Human nature is so constituted that men pity the unfortunate and envy the fortunate, and (by P32) [envy them] with greater hate the more they love the thing they imagine the other to possess. We see, then, that from the same property of human nature from which it follows that men are compassionate, it also follows that the same men are envious and ambitious.

Ethics 3 exhibits human nature in the first place in its pathologies, ways in which the imagination pushes us further away from rationality and freedom and toward imaginative forms of what Part 4 calls human bondage.

Jacob's predicament illustrates one feature, I think unnoticed by other commentators, of the development of human uniqueness in the *Ethics*. We find human uniqueness not in emotions that only people experience, but in emotions that only have people as their imagined external cause. There is no argument that we come to desire to have certain external objects be the causes of pleasure. It is not external causes in general that fix our attention; it is only other *people* who become nonfungible objects. Apart from desires caused by my relations to other people, such as to show my superiority, when it comes to food or drink or shelter, I don't care about the cause of my pleasures. Jacob not only wants his power to increase, he wants Rachel, and not Leah, to be the cause of the pleasure. Because his love for Rachel is connected to desires, and in this way to his actual essence, an equal or greater pleasure accompanied by the idea of Leah as cause, will not satisfy. But if, by watching other diners swoon, I am convinced that the strawberry bavarois will be more pleasurable than the bread pudding I will simply order my own strawberry bavarois—I don't need the other diners' dessert. I don't have the loyalty that Jacob has. Choosing the strawberry bavarois is not an act of betrayal.

It is only when I see other people as the cause, that is, when I love or hate

in a more proper sense, that I care about the cause as well as the pleasure, and care about the pleasure only insofar as it comes from a certain source. The imagination imitates reason by singling out people. We imagine that only certain people will do as a cause of our increase in pleasure. Through the understanding, we know that it is only people, and ultimately through our shared rationality, who can be truly useful to us. Fixing on other particular people, through the imagination, prepares the way for seeing other people in general as uniquely qualified causes not of increased power but of increased rationality. Romantic love is one of those features of the imagination that both leads the individual in wrong directions and makes, without aiming at it, living under the guidance of reason possible.

Jacob doesn't reason, as Spinoza thinks he should: because Leah caused me pleasure, I love her. Instead he thinks: because I love Rachel, I therefore don't love Leah, and it follows that she didn't give me the pleasure I thought I had. There is a dilemma. Jacob believes that there are false pleasures, since he thinks that love is pleasure accompanied by an external cause. Spinoza's correction, that love is pleasure accompanied by the *idea* of an external cause, seems to invite wishful thinking: not only should Jacob be indifferent to whether his increase in power is caused by Rachel or Leah; he should be indifferent to whether Rachel is real or not.¹⁹

Jacob could have responded in the other direction I just mentioned, under the guidance of reason: because Leah caused me pleasure, I love her. Jacob feels pleasure, and his power of action increases. Therefore Jacob loves Leah. To act otherwise is to be irrational and to direct one's conatus toward sunk costs rather than indefinite persistence in being. Either there is something wrong with Jacob for acting in an enfeebling way rather than as the conatus directs—hence my analogy to commodity fetishism—or there is something wrong with Spinoza's analysis.

If Jacob had never met Rachel, then marrying and sleeping with Leah could have been the pleasurable and power-increasing experience it seemed to be in the first place. After a blind date, Jacob would trace the pleasure back to Leah and therefore love her. Therefore there must be something about his prior love for Rachel that makes his discovery that he slept with Leah into a painful loss of power. He is not pained because he slept with Leah; he is pained because he slept with someone other than Rachel, thinking that she was Rachel.

Romantic love is a sophisticated sort of pleasure available only to a highly complex imagination. It challenges the identity of pleasure and the increase in power. It challenges Part 4's reduction of good to a name for what pleases.

Jacob loves Rachel. His experiences carry all the marks of love, and so pleasure—his willingness to sacrifice seven years of his life, his lack of interest in Leah, forsaking all others. Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah (29:30), and Leah was unloved (29:31). But, if anything, it is Leah who increases his power by giving him many children while Rachel was barren (Gen. 29:32–35). Rachel then represents the pleasure side of the identity, and Leah the increase in power, and Laban's daughters are not identical twins.

Spinoza talks about the irrationality of jealousy in 3p32 and notes in the scholium to 5p20 that “sickness of the mind and misfortunes take their origin especially from too much Love toward a thing which is liable to many variations and which we can never fully possess.”²⁰ Jealousy is easier to understand than its counterpart in Jacob's “too much Love” for Rachel that makes him unable to love Leah. Jealousy is the painful worry that someone else will become the object of the favors of the beloved, whom we want to, but can never completely, possess. Jacob faces no rivals in his love for Rachel, and unlike many lovers he has no doubts about her love for him. Therefore the usual reasons why we should avoid particular attachments do not hold in Jacob's case. Romantic love is a pleasure, not a pain, but it comes with the desire that there be an exclusive source of pleasure. What makes Jacob's love excessive and subject to considerable instability is simply the fact that a trick like Laban's works.²¹ Thus Spinoza tells us that “Joy is not directly evil, but good” (4p41), while “love and desire can be excessive” (4p44) and therefore bad. We have a tragic triad: pleasure is good; love for an individual usually bad; love is the principal form in which we experience pleasure. Jealousy seems to be a false pain, and Jacob's pleasure at lying with Leah a corresponding false pleasure. As Chantal Jacquet puts it: “Jealousy doesn't decrease the power to act, since the union of the loved one with another doesn't take away any of my perfection, but it constrains it by its sad nature.”²²

There is a lacuna in Spinoza's analysis. He explores the consequences of exclusive and excessive love, but never shows why people should fall prey to such an irrational and harmful emotion. Beings with less fertile imaginations don't fall for exclusive attachments. Once we understand the nature of God, we know that the idea of a chosen people is absurd, but Jacob's idea that Rachel is the sole source of his increasing power is an analogous mistake.²³ Thus 4app30: “Since things do not act in order to affect us with Joy, and their power of acting is not regulated by our advantage, and finally, since Joy is generally related particularly to one part of the body, most affects of Joy are excessive.” Only an individual who lives in a social world, someone for whom the

judgments of others are a source of pleasure and pain, could care about the sources of his pleasure.

DOES REASON RECOMMEND PROMISCUITY?

He that doth love, and love amisse,
This worlds delights before true Christian joy,
Hath made a Jewish choice. (George Herbert)²⁴

Like the idea of false pleasures, the idea of excessive pleasures questions the identity between pleasure and an increase in power. When Spinoza says that pleasures can be excessive, he doesn't mean that increases in power can be excessive. For finite beings surrounded, and threatened, by more powerful finite beings, the more power, the better: the increase in power has no optimal amount. Pleasure is the increase in power; increasing power is always desirable; therefore pleasure can never be excessive. The only way a pleasure could be excessive is if it destabilized the proportion of motion and rest among the parts of mind and body (4p43). Pleasures are excessive only if they are obsessive. And like false pleasures, excessive pleasures question the assertion that we are conscious of everything that happens in the mind and body. In a typical titillating pleasure, we are aware of the increase in power of part of our mind and body, but unaware that while the power of that part is being enhanced, the mind and body as a whole are, when the pleasure is excessive or bad, suffering a net reduction in power.

Our minds are given to excessive pleasures and pains. But it is only excessive pleasure that calls for Spinoza's censure. The situation with pain is different; excess has no meaning here. Pain by its nature causes the mind to focus exclusively on it and its removal:

Sadness diminishes or restrains a man's power of acting, diminishes or restrains the striving by which a man strives to persevere in his being; so it is contrary to this striving (by P5), and all a man affected by Sadness strives for is to remove Sadness. (3p37)

I offered two possible readings of Jacob's response. His reasoning could be either: (1) because Leah caused me pleasure, I love her, or (2) because I don't love Leah, she didn't give me the pleasure I thought I had. I argued that the first is not a likely human response, even though Spinoza's reasoning suggests

that it should be. People care about the sources of their pleasure. What is equivalent, people believe that they desire things because they are good. And if that's the case, that response is unique to human beings. Judging from my dog as a representative of the nonhuman world, he would certainly respond in the first way, and would not be capable of responding in the second. He is totally promiscuous in his loves, and is open to being pleased by anyone, increasing his power by being fed, petted, or played with. My dog on this account is closer to Spinoza's model of rationality than Jacob is. "Many things are observed in the lower Animals that far surpass human ingenuity" (3p2s). Idolatry and promiscuity seem to be exhaustive alternatives.²⁵

My dog isn't wiser than Jacob; he just isn't imaginative enough to respond in the second way. "If we imagine that someone enjoys some thing that only one can possess, we shall strive to bring it about that he does not possess it." Spinoza limits 3p32 to people, and the scholium comments on human nature: "For the most part human nature is so constituted that men pity the unfortunate and envy the fortunate," and people in society have uniquely destructive passions.²⁶ Just as Spinoza shows that only people feel pity, envy, compassion, and ambition, only people experience the pleasures and pains of exclusivity. While the focus on unique possession and unique objects of affection might be specifically human, it isn't shared by the rational person. Indeed, the more rational, the less someone might be fixed on a unique cause of pleasure. "It is not by accident that man's greatest good is common to all" (4p36s). The human comedy of *Ethics* 3 maps the specifically human but irrational emotional world.

The cunning of imagination is at work here where, once again, the complex human imagination both makes progress toward rationality and erects barriers against it. Dogs are promiscuous. They don't operate under the false and imaginative theory that things please because they are good. Rational people are promiscuous, capable of neither jealousy nor exclusive romantic attachments, because they know that good is simply what we call pleasures, and because they know that the one true and certain good consists in understanding. In between lies the peculiar human nature organized around an imagination that has the additional power of reflection which allows it to reverse the relation of pleasure and good and so come to prize particular objects, to love and hope to be loved in return. Similarly, my dog would never suffer from the imaginative delusion that mind and body are distinct. A purely rational individual knows that mind and body are identical, and has ideas that are necessarily true. In between lie the rest of human beings, who think that mind and

body act on each other, that ideas are true when they happen to agree with an external reality, and that we should desire things because they are good. The human ascent to rationality is dominated by a complex plot with reversals caused by the cunning of imagination.

According to Part 3, love leads us to the desire to possess the object we think causes our pleasure. In Part 4, seeing others as useful to us leads to friendship which lacks the demands for exclusivity. The first may be comic or tragic, but it is the latter that is ethically triumphant. Why not here? The imaginative mind aims at increasing power and doesn't care about being more active. The desire to possess the cause of love is a nascent and confused desire to become active; romantic love is a parody and perversion of friendship and ultimately of the intellectual love of God. Thinking that we want something because it is good, while an inadequate idea, is a first step toward living in an ethically objective world. We think that if we possess the thing that causes our pleasure, then that object becomes part of us, and that therefore we can cause our own pleasure, which is what it is to be active. If Jacob possesses Rachel, the cause of love will be within his power and therefore a part of him, making him active and the cause of his own increase in power.

The conatus is an episodic phenomenon. Individuals can change or lose their essence at any moment. An individual tries to persist in its present condition; the condition changes, and then the individual tries to preserve that new condition. People have memory, which gives some continuity to the conatus. We can define ourselves more expansively than as just what we are at any moment, and remember and anticipate other states that we regard as equally part of what the conatus should try to preserve or achieve. The introduction of objects that we take to be causes of our emotions makes the conatus even less episodic. We find a continuity not only of our own memories but of a stable external world of things that increase or decrease our power.

ROMANTIC LOVE AND WONDER

The closest Spinoza comes to identifying the phenomenon of exclusive love comes in his idea of devotion or veneration, which he defines as love combined with wonder (3p52s, 3da10). Jacob is devoted to Rachel because he imagines her as unique. Wonder keeps a man "so suspended in considering [its object] that he cannot think of other things" (3p52s). His experience with Leah makes it harder to maintain that devotion. In Spinoza's wonderful phrase, "so suspended in considering it that he cannot think of other things." As he says in

chapter 17 of the *TTP*, “nothing wins hearts more than the joy that arises from devotion, i.e., from love and wonder together” (C 2:316, G 3:216).

Wonder, veneration, and devotion might be praised by other philosophers—for Aristotle philosophy begins with wonder, for Descartes wonder is first among the primary passions, and useful because it awakens an otherwise inert soul. But Spinoza’s mind is always trying to preserve itself; it doesn’t need to be jump-started. We feel wonder toward a thing we regard as unique. Proposition 52 of Part 3 and its scholium are unique in that nothing at all follows from them in the rest of the *Ethics*. They are never used as premises for further deductions, never referred to again. The experience of wonder is a dead end.²⁷ “Wonder is an imagination of a thing in which the Mind remains fixed because this singular imagination has no connection with the others” (3da4); compare Descartes, *Passions* §70: “Wonder is a sudden surprise of the soul which brings it to consider with attention the objects that seem to it unusual and extraordinary.” The better the idea, the more it is connected to other ideas, just as the more reality something has, the more causal power. The more common a property, the more it can be known adequately. The trouble with romantic love is that it takes its object to be unique—and so an object of wonder—and therefore leads to intellectual paralysis rather than activity; romantic love is the emotional equivalent of the belief in miracles which the *TTP* refutes. Wonder is not an emotion but a privation, because it is something from which nothing follows. “Nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow” (1p36). Wonder suspends the operation of the conatus. Romantic love, or devotion toward any object other than God, is a parody of the intellectual love of God.

Wonder is the paradigm of an inadequate idea, because it is not connected to other ideas.²⁸ The denigration of wonder in the *Ethics* is of a piece with the denigration of miracles in the *TTP*.²⁹ Wonder is the paradigm of an inadequate idea because it is the very inadequacy that causes the emotion, which makes it maximally ripe to be dissolved by being known. There may be no surds in reality, but the imagination experiences them anyway, as miracles and objects of wonder. Wonder can’t be the idea of a state of the body not connected to other bodily states and parts, since there is no such thing. So it can only be an idea of a state of the body whose connection to the other is not known. Therefore it is an inadequate idea. It is also the paradigm of an idea that does not lead to action. There is nothing in the desire for the wonderful that leads to more power. On the contrary, the desire for novelty is both cause and effect of a lack of stability, and a lack of more empowering desires. Wonder is neither

painful nor pleasant, although it does decrease power. The denigration of wonder is of a piece with the denigration of romantic love. *Ethics 2* began with Spinoza telling us that there is nothing in the mind except ideas and their emotional modifications. *Ethics 3* argues that there are no emotions except those related to the conatus. Unlike romantic love, wonder is not related to the conatus, and *therefore* it not an emotion.

That all emotions must be related to the conatus looked fairly innocuous when Spinoza first began to develop the emotions out of the conatus in the beginning of Part 3, but now we see that that thesis has heavy consequences. Spinoza must deny that man by nature desires to know. There are no emotions specific to theoretical as opposed to practical reason.

There can be no emotions not connected to the conatus because any such emotions would have no connection to the individual experiencing them. Even when we are most passive in our emotions—being struck by Rachel's beauty and immediately falling in love—our minds and bodies, and our conatus, make a contribution. Just as in 2def3exp Spinoza stresses that ideas are conceptions rather than perceptions, so too the emotions, while passive, and things that the individual *does*. Just as there is nothing in us contrary to our essence (3p4), and even emotions that lead to self-defeating actions, let alone those that lead us away from a life of reason, are still expressions of the desire to maintain oneself.

GENEROSITY AND THE ACTIVE EMOTIONS

The active love Spinoza calls generosity is quite different from romantic love, and what Spinoza says here is I think even more troubling. Through reason we have *generositas*, “the Desire by which each one strives, solely from the dictate of reason, to aid other men and join them to him in friendship” (3p59s). In friendship I love the human, or rational, nature in the other person, a nature which I recognize as sharing. When someone else is my friend, I can be the adequate cause of my feeling of pleasure. The friendship is fully explicable by my nature, not the nature of the object as in lust. The more rational people are, the less individuality they have, and so the less they can be objects of exclusive devotion. The more rational people are, the less they think of their objects of love as exclusive, unique, and irreplaceable.

Since generosity is an emotional modification of an adequate idea, it is liable to the problem I just cited about wonder, that an emotion not tied to the conatus has no connection to the individual experiencing the emotion.

In contrast to passive love, generosity is not caused by external objects. My friend Martin does not cause the pleasure I experience when I do something for or with him. My adequate idea is the adequate cause of the friendship. But if that's the case, then Martin is in a certain sense accidental to it. I love the rational nature I find in every human being. I might actively love one person more than another if I think she is more rational than another, so that she has more of the rational nature to love. Generosity creates the obverse problem to romantic love. Romantic love is obsessive, generosity promiscuous. Therefore generous people are citizens of the world, not of a particular community, and pious without being religious. They might obey a particular sovereign, but their friendship knows no bounds. The rational person, too, is pious, but without loyalty to any particular religious institution, since the ceremonial law exists only to bind people together and not to obey God, which we do only through treating others with justice and charity.

Here the active emotions reproduce the problem about adequate ideas: how can an adequate idea, fully caused by other adequate ideas in the mind, be about anything other than self-knowledge? Here the question is how can generosity make someone desire to help one person rather than another, to join one person or group or people in friendship rather than another. Where Jacob was irrational in thinking that only Rachel could satisfy his desires, the generous person seems indifferent to whom he loves.³⁰

In the *De Anima* Aristotle contrasts sensation with thinking, and Spinoza could make an analogous distinction between passive and active love. "The sense loses sensation under the stimulus of a too violent sensible object; e.g., of sound immediately after loud sounds, and neither seeing nor smelling is possible just after strong colors and scents; but when mind thinks the highly intelligible, it is not less able to think of slighter things, but even more able" (III.4.429a30–b2).³¹ Excessive love, like excessive light, blinds us and distorts the proportion of motion and rest that is the essence of the body. Active love cannot be excessive, and the more we have the intellectual love of God, the more we are able to love other people.

There is nothing unique about human love; it's just a particularly vivid example commodity fetishism, caring about the source of pleasure and not simply the pleasure. But there is something unique about human friendship. People regard other people differently from the rest of nature, and rightly so. Jacob regards Rachel differently from how he thinks about other sources of pleasure, such as rich farmland or a large harvest. Jacob, acting from inadequate ideas of how his body is affected by external objects, imitates the ratio-

nal person in finding nothing as useful to man as man. Acting from inadequate ideas, he cannot fully appreciate the truth in that dictum, and so thinks he has to be selective, that is, ungenerous, in his friendship and love. "Flattery also gives rise to harmony, but by the foul crime of bondage, or by treachery" (4app21). Flattery is false friendship; Jacob has experienced a false pleasure.

But maybe Jacob's fixation on Rachel isn't so foolish after all. If he thinks there can be mutual love between himself and Rachel, but not with Leah, then he is right not to be promiscuous about the sources of pleasure. With enough foresight to imagine a stable relationship with Rachel, he can imagine the mutual bootstrap empowerment that comes with love. If you prefer Meursault to Saint Emilion, the wine will not prefer you in return, but people can, and do, just that. If Rachel loves Jacob because Jacob loves her, then Jacob is indirectly the cause of his own pleasure, that is, he causes his own increase in power. In this way, friendship becomes the imaginative simulacrum of rationality. Therefore, as Spinoza says, nothing is as useful to man as man.

The problems with making sense in Spinoza's terms of Jacob's predicament foreshadow a more general problem that will appear several times in the second half of this book. Because people care about the sources of pleasure, they can form societies in ways other animals cannot. At the same time, because people care about the sources of pleasure, they can form plural societies and be enemies to one another. If people were born free, they would be sociable, but not political in the narrow sense of feeling allegiance to one group of people over others. Animals with imagination alone are not sociable: there is nothing equivalent for wolves to "Man is a god to man." Individuals with reason alone would be sociable but not political. The rational person has no enemies. Citizens do.

CONCLUSION

Let me end this chapter by returning to where I started it, asking about the connection between pleasure and increase in power, and similarly between mind and body. Both seem true by definition, and therefore uninformative and counterintuitive, what could anachronistically be called analytic propositions. The mind can't be a false idea of the body, and so looks like it can't be a true idea either, although in another way it must be a necessarily true idea. Similarly, if pleasure by definition is an increase in power, there can be no false pleasures. This is unsatisfying because we want to be able to say that some minds have a better idea of what goes on in their bodies than others,

while the definition of mind as an idea of a certain body seems to leave no room for evaluation or criticism. There are no false pleasures if pleasure has only a quantitative measure, the amount of increase in power, making all pleasures homogeneous.

The problem with both pleasure and the increase in power comes from Spinoza's commitment to treat human emotions as one would treat lines, planes, and bodies. He means to look at the emotions without moralizing, and the geometric method is supposed to let him do that. But treating the emotions geometrically has more serious implications. To use the language of Plato's divided line, being is the subject of philosophy and geometry, while becoming is the subject of politics and religion, and the method of interpretation expounded in chapter 7 of the *TTP*. Emotions, and finite modes in general, which have causes running out indefinitely, live in the realm of becoming. Treating emotions as lines, planes, and bodies means treating a subject which is temporally and spatially located and bounded as comprising eternal truths. "How could a person with any understanding think that a fallible power is the same as an infallible one?" (*Republic* V.477e). A geometry of the emotions means taking a finite section of the infinite chain of causes that characterizes finite modes and making that finite section into the object of an adequate idea.

Applying the geometric mode to emotions and other finite modes runs afoul of Spinoza's own pronouncements: "All particular things are contingent and corruptible. For we can have no adequate knowledge of their duration" (2p31c), and even more emphatically in chapter 4 of the *TTP*: "We are completely ignorant of the order and connection of things itself, i.e., of how things are really ordered and connected. So for practical purposes it is better, indeed necessary, to consider things as possible" (C 2:126, G 3:58). If we followed that advice and treated as contingent the idea that pleasure is an increase in power, then false pleasures would not be a worry.

In chapter 3, I showed how the self-sufficiency of the imagination is both a blessing and a curse. It is a necessary condition for the development of reason, but the imagination's practical adequacy means that there is no incentive to get beyond it to reason and adequate ideas. So here for romantic love. It leads to the imaginative error of thinking that something is desirable, or pleasant, because it is good—Jacob thinks he loves Rachel because she is beautiful—instead of the adequate idea that we think something good because it is pleasant. But that adequate idea is available only to someone with a complex enough imagination to have, and correct, the wrong idea that something is pleasant because it is good. There are many places where the imagi-

nation imitates reason and leads the person toward the guidance of reason. I just mentioned friendship; the universal creed of the *TTP* and the model of human nature developed in *Ethics* 4 are further prime examples, as is the political organization bruted in *Ethics* 4 and developed in *TTP*, chapters 16–20. At other places, though, the imagination yields a parody and perversion of reason which leads us away from freedom. Fixing on a particular individual, other than God, as a source of pleasure is one of those places. In Augustine's terms, God is to be enjoyed, while everything else is to be used, and romantic love mistakes an object of utility for an object of enjoyment.³² That is why I've been identifying romantic love with commodity fetishism.

And yet the story of Adam's fall I appealed to at the beginning of this chapter shows that what I've been calling promiscuity—aiming at pleasure and not caring about its source—is not the whole story. In lines I quoted earlier, Spinoza enjoins us to have exactly that attitude toward everything but other people:

Apart from men we know no singular thing in nature whose Mind we can enjoy, and which we can join to ourselves in friendship, or some kind of association. And so whatever there is in nature apart from men, the principle of seeking our own advantage does not demand that we preserve it. Instead, it teaches us to preserve or destroy it according to its use, or to adapt it to our use in any way whatever. (4app26)

Adam's mistake shows something important about the active emotions, about which Spinoza has so little to say. The active emotions of 3p59 are divided into courage and generosity, the first being "the Desire by which each one strives, solely from the dictate of reason, to preserve his being," and the second "the Desire whereby every individual, according to the dictates of reason alone, endeavors to assist others and make friends of them." There is no active emotion connected to encounters with nonhuman nature, because nonhuman nature is there to be used, and so passive emotions are entirely appropriate. Because there are only active emotions toward oneself and toward other people, we need to worry about exclusive attachments to other people, while commodity fetishism toward the rest of nature is simply a mistake.

More deeply, the identity of mind and body is another place where the cunning of imagination leads away from rather than toward reason. The necessary tie between mind and body blocks the ultimate identity between the mind's intellectual love for God and God's love for us. One form of necessity blocks

another. The mind is the idea of a body, and it is an idea that prevents us from distancing ourselves from our ideas and holding them up for judgment. It is also an idea we are stuck with, at least until the last half of Part 5 where Spinoza is able to “pass to those things which pertain to the Mind’s duration without relation to the body” (5p20s). Just as we can’t stop thinking of the sun as nearby even when we know that it’s far away, we can’t help thinking about the mind as the confused idea of a body, even when we know that the mind can be filled with adequate ideas. Active emotions are never powerful enough to stop us from having passive emotions too.

The mind is the confused idea of a body which has permeable and uncertain boundaries. The ambiguous boundaries of the body prevent it from being the object of an adequate idea. It isn’t real and perfect enough to be known adequately. The body not only tries to protect itself from external forces but needs them as well. So isolating oneself, erecting firm boundaries, and thus becoming a suitable object for adequate ideas, is not an option.

A mind that cannot clearly distinguish inner from outer will also be unable to distinguish part from whole, and so is prone to mistaking a pleasure that increases the power of a part for one that increases the power of the whole, the mistake that creates false pleasures. Such a mind will give itself wholeheartedly and thus obsessively to things which distort the proportion of motion and rest of the parts of the body, and so threaten and weaken its essence. This sort of error tells equally against Jacob’s love for Rachel and for Leah, and shows again why romantic love is like the image of the sun as near that is not simply dissolved once we know better.

While Jacob’s romantic love for Rachel and for Leah are equally guilty of making the source of pleasure and not just its quantity a confused idea in the mind, his love for Leah involves a further error. There are no false pleasures; no mistakes about pleasure are possible. But there are false loves, because love is not, as Jacob thinks, pleasure accompanied by an external cause, but by the *idea* of an external cause. Spinoza’s definition of love corrects Jacob’s imaginative understanding of love. Romantic love, along with the other complex emotions it stands for, is an especially important factor in our emotional and cognitive development. Romantic love presents an imaginative experience at odds with the theory of mind inherent in the imagination. The imagination believes that bodies cause changes in the mind, that an emotion is caused by an external body. In the imagination’s theory of knowledge, the emotion and its cause are distinct, and therefore one of the remedies for the passions consists in separating the emotion from the thought of its cause (5p4). Romantic love,

though, while an experience of the imagination, contradicts that theory by insisting that an emotion and its cause are inseparable, and is instead consistent with the theory of knowledge allied with adequate ideas, in which “the Body cannot determine the Mind to thinking, and the Mind cannot determine the Body to motion, to rest or to anything else (if there is anything else)” (3p2). The cunning of imagination propels the human imagination forward into experiences that make no sense to the imagination.

Even here, the power of the human imagination imitates the power of reason, even as it can distract us from that power. The intellectual love of God is not just an especially great pleasure accompanied by the idea of God as an external cause. It makes no sense in this case to consider the pleasure and the idea as distinct; it isn’t possible to conceive the pleasure as distinct from the entire complex called the intellectual love of God.

The two elements of love, pleasure and the idea of an external cause, are not independent, because of the key reversal between Parts 2 and 3 that I noted early in this chapter: 2def3 makes ideas fundamental to the emotions—emotions are modifications of ideas—but Part 3 makes the conatus, the desire to persist, fundamental, and emotions attach ideas to that basic desire. Which is basic, the idea or the desire, is a productive ambiguity, allowing us to reflect on our passions, and eventually to master them. But that ambiguity has its dangers, and romantic love is one of them. The human imagination gets the relation between pleasure and the good backward, and romantic love embraces that mistake. Jacob will accept no substitutes for Rachel because he thinks she pleases him because she is good. If he were enlightened by the *Ethics*, he would know that he only finds Rachel beautiful because she pleases him, not the other way around. The argument of the *Ethics* destroys romantic love.

CONCLUSION TO THE FIRST PART

Chapter 1 showed what strange things both inadequate and adequate ideas are. Chapter 2 raised the question of the mind’s transparency, how everyone could have an adequate idea of God’s essence without that idea having any effects on the mind. In chapter 3 I questioned the equation of the conatus with the desire for increased power, and so the relation between desire and pleasure. Chapter 4 questioned the identity of pleasure with increases in power. Looking ahead, I will need to consider the relation between pleasure and the good. Like the equation of the conatus with the desire for increased power, and the equation of increased power with pleasure, the relation of pleasure and the

good seems straightforward, and Spinoza's explicit dicta leave no room for questioning in any of the three cases. What is good, the preface to Part 4 announces, is whatever we certainly know will "let us approach nearer to the model of human nature that we have set before us." That model of human nature is the standard by which we judge increases in power, and so pleasure. Things aren't pleasant or painful because they are good or bad; instead things are good or bad because they produce pleasure or pain.

Then 4p41 announces that "joy is not directly evil, but good; Sadness, on the other hand, is directly evil." It seems strange that Spinoza should have to prove such a thing, and indeed the proof is easy. "Joy (by IIP11 and P11S) is an affect by which the body's power of acting is increased or aided. Sadness, on the other hand, is an affect by which the body's power of acting is diminished or restrained. And so (by P38) joy is directly good. . . ." (Proposition 38 simply says that "whatever so disposes the human Body that it can be affected in a great many ways, or renders it capable of affecting external Bodies in a great many ways, is useful to man.") Once again, it is surprising that that proposition needs proof. How could pleasure not be good?

Pleasure is not necessarily good if the model of human nature relative to which the good is defined does not in fact increase one's power, that is, if the identity between pleasure and the increase in power falls apart, as it often does when pleasures increase some part of the body and so distort the whole. Not all increases in power are good for you. Proving that pleasure is good allows Spinoza to question the relation between the only certain and true good, what enhances the understanding, and the nominal good, what helps someone approach the model of human nature one has erected for oneself. While the desire for more power leads people, via the imagination, to all sorts of diverse and destructive desires, in fact increasing power leads to knowledge. That is what 4p38 establishes: "Whatever so disposes the human Body that it can be affected in a great many ways, or renders it capable of affecting external Bodies in a great many ways, is useful to man." And that means, crucially, that the first kind of knowledge does lead to the second. It leads to the second because a fertile imagination means that the body is more able to respond to and act on a variety of external bodies, and the more fertile the imagination, the more able the mind is to have, and act on, adequate ideas. This is the ultimate cunning of imagination.

By proving that pleasure is good, Spinoza has drawn a connection between the mind and body absent in the first three parts of the *Ethics*. In chapter 3, I wondered why the mind should think that what increases the power of the

body increases its own power too and so is desirable. The mind with adequate ideas knows that mind and body are identical, so the problem does not exist for such a mind. That is a mind that can prove 4p41. But the imagination, which knows effects without their causes, has to believe that mind and body are distinct and cause changes in each other. *Ethics* 3 begins by correcting this misunderstanding: “The Body cannot determine the Mind to thinking, and the Mind cannot determine the Body to motion, to rest or to anything else (if there is anything else)” (3p2). That proposition earns a long scholium, but does not figure in further demonstrations. Its function instead is to block false inferences.

In the second half of this book I will invite the reader to worry with me about the relation between what we certainly know to be good for us, namely understanding, the *summum bonum*, and other goods, those that the individual needs to further its conatus, the *totum bonum*. Proposition 38 of Part 4 proves that what perfects the body, what makes it more able to be affected and to affect other things, is also good for the mind. It remains to be seen whether the converse is also true, whether adequate ideas are good for the body, and for furthering the desire of each individual to persist as what it is. That isn’t obviously true, since adequate ideas aren’t useful for confronting external things that can only be known inadequately, but also because, while the body is perfected as it is both able to act and be acted upon, the mind is perfected only as it acts, not as it is acted upon. Getting straight the relation between adequate ideas and being an adequate cause, asserted in the two propositions that surround 3p2, will occupy us for the rest of the book.

Second Part

The real drama of the *Ethics* begins in Part 4. The *Ethics* becomes normative and practical as Spinoza begins to put adequate and inadequate ideas, active and passive emotions, the infinite and the finite into a single world, instead of treating them as existing in parallel universes, as he does in the first three parts of the *Ethics*.

The drama of the *Ethics* comes from juxtaposing two things we already know from its first three parts. On the one hand, adequate ideas are better, more perfect and so more real, than inadequate ideas. On the other hand, there is no impetus that leads from inadequate ideas to adequate ones, no desire to know, and no mechanism for moving from inadequate to adequate ideas. Hence the cunning of imagination that I illustrated in chapter 3 as the human imagination blindly engenders increasingly complex relations between the human mind and body and the external world, and leads to a rationality it doesn't aim at and cannot imagine.

The first three parts of the *Ethics* show us that the world and God are indifferent to human needs and aspirations, while "man" appears in the titles of Parts 4 and 5. Ethics will have to be an understanding of how people can live well in such an indifferent world. Part 2 can show that adequate ideas are better than inadequate ideas, but it doesn't follow that they are better for me. The free man never lies (4p72), but I might be better off lying to protect the political prisoner in the attic. Knowing God and the world does not lead im-

mediately to self-knowledge, let alone self-transformation. Because adequate ideas are better than inadequate ones, and because inadequate ideas do not aspire to become adequate, there is a hierarchy in nature between adequate and inadequate ideas, between reason and imagination, but there is no corresponding hierarchy in each of us. What is good and what is good for someone aren't necessarily the same, not if people are part of nature. The task of ethics will be to align the internal workings of my mind and body with the structure of the world so that reason will rule over the passions.

The relation between the finite and the infinite in Part 1 became, as we saw, the more specific relation between adequate and inadequate ideas in Part 2. We can now be more specific still. The issue for Parts 4 and 5 is this: when a finite mind contains an adequate idea, is it the properties of the mind which govern, or the properties of the adequate idea? The final two parts of the *Ethics* are a drama because this question does not have a determinate and general answer, but instead sets the problem for ethics, for the human bondage of Part 4 and the freedom of Part 5.

Chapter 3 distinguished two ways to measure power, and that distinction reappears here. On the one side, as long as people are part of nature, the power of an idea is measured not by its truth or its adequacy but by the power of its cause. Since the mind is an inadequate idea, it is subject to being modified by passions caused by external forces more powerful than it can be. Therefore, *akrasia*—knowing the better, yet choosing the worse—is always possible, and indeed probable. The presence of adequate ideas in the mind does not guarantee that those ideas can become adequate causes, despite the assertion of 3p1 that adequate ideas and adequate causes are identical. This is human bondage.

On the other hand, adequate ideas can be more powerful than those external forces, as the infinite is more powerful than anything finite. The problem for ethics is how adequate ideas can become masters of the minds that think them. Ethics and human freedom are possible only if the mind's adequate ideas are not alien presences in the mind—Socrates's image of the body as a prison—but an integral part of the mind.

My question of who is in charge does not have a determinate answer, not because it is a matter of free choice, or because it is contingent, but because the answer is not decided by the nature of the individual itself, but by both the nature of the individual and the circumstances which surround it. Thus 5p10 asserts that “so long as we are not torn by affects contrary to our nature, we have the power of ordering and connecting the affections of the Body according to the order of the intellect” but whether or not we are so torn is not

something we have power over. To 5p10 we should juxtapose these lines from chapter 3 of the *TTP*: “But the means which lead to living securely and preserving the body are chiefly placed in external things, and for that reason they are called gifts of fortune, because they depend for the most part on the governance of external causes of which we are ignorant. So in this matter, the wise man and the fool are almost equally happy or unhappy” (C 2:114, G 3:47).

The question of who is in charge does not have a single predetermined answer because of the paradoxical and hybrid nature of the second kind of knowledge, one of Spinoza’s three original ideas. The second kind of knowledge, as I’ve been arguing, consists in ideas that are adequate but thought by a mind that is itself a confused idea. Its cause of existence is the finite mode that thinks it. The cause of its essence is either other infinite modes, or, for the immediate infinite mode, the attribute it modifies. Because of its essence, an adequate idea cannot be removed from the mind. It is in that sense invulnerable to attacks from passive emotions. But because of its existence and its finite cause, any adequate idea can always be overcome by a passion or inadequate idea that has a more powerful cause. Asking who is in charge is then asking whether the cause of the essence or the existence of adequate ideas has more power. That will be the focus of the first half of chapter 5.

Not only have finite and infinite modes, inadequate and adequate ideas, passive and active emotions, developed along parallel and nonintersecting tracks in the first three parts of the *Ethics*. So too 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 (if there is anything else)” (3p2). While mind and body never interact, we can arrange “affections of the Body according to the order of the intellect” (5p10). That is, the order of the intellect and the common order of nature (2p29c, 2p49s, 4p4c), associated with the body, *do* interact. This is the affinity between thought and the infinite modes, extension and the finite modes discussed in chapter 1. When the passive emotions are sufficiently powerful, adequate ideas are related to other ideas by the common order of nature rather than the order of the intellect: that is *akrasia*. When we are able to “arrange and associate affections of the body according to the order of the intellect,” then body as well as mind can be an adequate cause. In human bondage, the finite constrains the infinite. In human freedom, the infinite acts on the finite and the finite becomes infinite.

Akrasia is the first place in the *Ethics* where we see the finite and the infinite interacting, instead of running on parallel tracks. It is also the low point of the *Ethics*, human bondage. Prior to its appearance, people lived in a world of

imagination and passive emotions, but were still able to increase their power and live together. Akrasia says that people can have adequate ideas without being able to climb out of the self-contained and self-sufficient world of imagination and passion. As in *Ethics* 3, so here in Part 4, the cunning of imagination leads people forward to increased power and increased rationality through social and political life. The conflict between inadequate and adequate ideas in akrasia allows us to consider, in the second half of chapter 5, that just as only someone with adequate ideas can be truly akratic, only someone with adequate ideas can subordinate their ideas to the inadequate but powerful commands of the sovereign that resolve the conflicts between people. Philosophers make the best citizens.

Conflicts among Emotions, among Ideas, and among People

Akrasia, knowing the better yet choosing the worse, is part of the human condition. The lemon milkshake at Alamo Drafthouse, made with Prosecco, violates all the principles of my diet, yet it tastes too good to turn down. Socrates converted akrasia into a philosophical problem by denying its existence: someone who really knows something, he claims, can't be overcome by temptation. Akrasia becomes a philosophical problem by combining the familiar phenomenon with a normative expectation that knowledge, not emotion, should lead to action, since the higher should rule the lower.¹

Spinoza cannot share that problem. He never calls it by its Greek or Latin name, and never mentions Plato or Aristotle in connection with it, but only Ovid and Ecclesiastes.² Spinoza agrees with the premise of Socrates's argument against akrasia that good and pleasure are two names for the same thing (e.g., *Protagoras* 355b–c), but interprets it in the opposite direction so that pleasure defines what we call good (4Preface and 4p41). Ideas and emotions are not located in separate parts of the soul. The mind is a complex idea, and everything in the mind is either an idea or a modification of an idea (2ax3). There are better and worse ideas, more and less adequate and perfect ideas, but there are no distinct faculties.

Instead of a struggle between reason and emotion, Spinoza articulates a very complicated interrelation between reason and imagination, sometimes a struggle, and sometimes a cooperative relation. That interrelation provides the theme that lets me articulate three successively deeper problems of akrasia for Spinoza.

For purposes of action, true or adequate ideas are just like other ideas. "An

emotion cannot be checked or destroyed except by a contrary emotion which is stronger than the emotion which is to be checked” (4p7). “Knowledge of good and evil is nothing other than the emotion of pleasure or pain insofar as we are conscious of it” (4p8). The phenomenon of *akrasia* is in front of us all the time:

Nothing is less in men’s power than to hold their tongues or control their appetites. (3p2s)

We are often compelled, though we see the better course, to pursue the worse. (4Preface)

The emotion whereby a man is so disposed as to refrain from what he wants to do or to choose to do what he does not want is called timidity [*timor*]. (3p39s)

Knowledge of good and evil, insofar as this knowledge has reference to the future, can be more readily checked by desire of things that are attractive in the present. (4p62)³

It is easy to explain why while knowing the better we can still do the worse: we are determined to act by our most powerful idea, not the best idea. Therefore, when Spinoza cites Ovid—actually Ovid’s *Medea*—saying that “I see the better course and approve it, but I pursue the worse course” (4p17s), the scholium illustrates the last of a series of three propositions proving the lack of inherent power in true ideas:

Desire which arises from a true knowledge of good and evil can be extinguished or restrained [*coereri*] by many other Desires which arise from affects by which we are tormented. (4p15)

Desire that arises from the true knowledge of good and evil insofar as this knowledge has regard to the future can be the more easily restrained or extinguished by desire of things that are attractive in the present. (4p16)

Desire that arises from the true knowledge of good and evil insofar as this knowledge has regard to contingent things can be even more easily restrained by desire for things which are present. (4p17)

There is no mystery or anomaly here. These three propositions succeed 4p14: “No affect can be restrained by the true knowledge of good and evil insofar as it is true, but only insofar as it is considered as an affect.”⁴ But *akrasia* does present problems for Spinoza’s analysis.

First, *akrasia* seems to indicate that Spinoza cannot make good on his promise to treat the emotions as points, lines, and bodies. If the psychology of emotions was a department of the dynamics of bodies, then the presence of conflicting desires in someone’s mind should result in a further, compound, desire, not the victory of one and the obliteration of the other.

In the second section, I turn to a second, harder, problem of *akrasia*, one specific to adequate ideas. Adequate ideas, completely caused by other adequate ideas, should be unaffected by anything outside themselves, and in particular by desires and ideas of the imagination. And yet the imagination seems to impede their power. The crucial problem here is how adequate and inadequate ideas—infinite and finite modes of thought—can interact, even though mind and body cannot (3p2).

In the third section, I look at what I regard as the deepest problem of *akrasia*, an adequate idea being unable, because of the power of passive affects in the same mind, to lead, not to action, but to further adequate ideas. In the fourth section I show the significance of my problems for the *Ethics* as a whole, and then move on to interpersonal conflict of ideas and emotions. Then I turn in the fifth section briefly to some special features of *akrasia* with regard to the third kind of knowledge, the intuitive knowledge of God. I’ll end by summing up where we are and how much further we need to go.

The three problems of *akrasia* I will explicate all turn on the power of the finite to affect the infinite. Instead of restricting the problem of *akrasia* to 4p17, I see the heart of the problem in the apparent falsity of 3p1: “Our mind is in some instances active and in other instances passive. Insofar as it has adequate ideas, it is necessarily active, and insofar as it has inadequate ideas, it is necessarily passive.” It would make life much too easy if, just because we have an adequate idea, we were therefore adequate causes of our actions. Freedom would come too cheap.

EMOTIONAL CONFLICT AND PHYSICAL COLLISIONS

My first problem is not why knowledge should be overcome by more powerful emotions—that is no mystery—but why, in a conflict of emotions, we act on the stronger and not some combination of them, in the way distinct movements result in a further motion that is the effect of both conflicting motions

as causes.⁵ The presence of conflicting emotions should produce in us a new, composite emotion that would then be the basis for action. Axiom 1 of Part 5 seems to dictate this operation: “If two contrary actions are instigated in the same subject a change must necessarily take place in both or in the one of them until they cease to be contrary” (5p7d makes clear that “actions” here includes emotions). Sometimes this happens. When I chose to eat fat instead of following a regimen I know is good for me, I also feel regret or guilt. Or maybe I’ll compromise and only eat half as much fat, or follow the fat with something healthy: a double cheeseburger accompanied by a “Lite” beer. The virtuous person can bear calmly those misfortunes we cannot escape: that calm is a composite of the painful experience of misfortune and the idea that this loss is unavoidable (4app32). But these are exceptions. Generally, one emotion simply disappears at the approach of the other. In the most important example, we should weigh the advantages and disadvantages of obeying the law and the rulers, but then to obey wholeheartedly, with no residue of the desires that point the other way.

Two more ways in which emotions seem to violate the laws of motion occur, one in 4p15, two propositions before the mention of Ovid and the other in that scholium itself. In the words I already quoted, “a Desire which arises from a true knowledge of good and evil can be extinguished or restrained [*restingui vel coerceri*] by many other Desires.” And the same language occurs in the next proposition: 4p16 too speaks of a desire being “restrained or extinguished” (*coerceri vel restingui*). Restraint could follow the laws of motion, with one motion being held back by a contrary motion, but the odd word here is *extinguished*. One desire can obliterate another; one force never erases another.

The peculiarity of conflict and contrariety for ideas and emotions shows that my first problem of *akrasia* goes very deep in Spinoza’s system. Colliding forces are external to the body but competing desires are within the mind. Experience seems constantly to refute 3p5: “Things are of a contrary nature, i.e., cannot be in the same subject, insofar as one can destroy the other.” The mind has two contradictory ideas of our distance to the sun. We can’t affirm both, but one idea does not destroy the other; when we learn how far away the sun really is, we don’t start seeing it that way. The two contradictory ideas coexist in the mind. We certainly don’t compound them to get a compromise idea of distance. We see the sun as near and learn that it is far away. Once we know that it is far, we don’t see it as both far and near, or as pretty far but not very far.⁶ Instead we remove the contradiction by declaring that the one idea is of the real distance and the other of the apparent distance.

The predicament for emotions is even worse than for ideas because, as I showed in chapter 4, the appearance/reality distinction doesn't apply to the emotions. Knowing that obsessive love is bad for me, I continue to love Lisa. Once I know that the sun is far away, I can no longer affirm that it is near. But knowing that animal fats are bad for me, I continue to find them attractive.

It ought to work the other way around. I have no stake in the size of the sun. It costs me nothing to continue to believe that it's small. But I have every reason to get the passions right. The *conatus*, and so my continued existence, depends on it. But I am more passive to the passions than to ideas. I am not able to stabilize the appearance/reality distinction for the passions.

The second emotional violation of the laws of motion occurs in that scholium concerning *akrasia*. There Spinoza says that "the true knowledge of good and evil causes commotions [*commotiones*] in the mind and often yields to lust of every kind." The second part of that sentence concerns *akrasia*, but the first is odder. The true knowledge of good and evil is not marked as empowering but as disturbing. Presumably such commotion is painful, and therefore the true knowledge of good and evil can cause a loss of power, as the quotation from Ecclesiastes says: "He who increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."⁷

I now have enough material to solve this first problem of *akrasia*, where the geometric method seems to lose contact with the phenomena. The human mind has resources to allow diverse ideas to coexist within the mind without colliding, while bodies do not. People have the enormous power of thinking of an idea without acting on it; this power makes *akrasia* possible, and it also makes possible the liberty of thought and discussion combined with obedience that Spinoza advocates in the *TTP*. The human mind is powerful enough to include powers to hold contradictory ideas, and emotions, without collision or combination. Those resources let the human mind form hypotheses, suspend belief, interpret texts and understand their meaning while prescinding from judgments about their truth, tolerate those with whom we disagree, exhibit in axiomatic form the principles of Descartes's philosophy without endorsing them, and do all sorts of things that sever an automatic connection between idea and action. While he says that we cannot separate an idea from its affirmation (2p49) in his denial of free will, we do make that separation when we have an idea without acting on it. Less complex animals don't feign hypotheses.

If the human mind is cognitively powerful enough to draw a distinction between appearance and reality, it is emotionally powerful enough to tell itself that it should act on some emotions rather than others. Axiom 3 of Part 2

states that “modes of thinking such as love, desire, or whatever emotions are designated by name, do not occur unless there is in the same individual the idea of the thing loved, desired, etc. But the idea can be without any other mode of thinking.” There are, that is, no emotions that are not modifications of ideas. But it is a human achievement to have ideas without affect, especially ideas about people and their emotions. It is much easier to “bemoan, ridicule, despise, or abuse” human nature than to treat the emotions as though they were lines, planes, and bodies (3Preface). If “objectivity” means being dispassionate, it takes a mind as sophisticated as the human mind to achieve it.

HOW CAN PASSIVE EMOTIONS AFFECT ADEQUATE IDEAS?

The scholium to 4p17, in which Spinoza quotes Ovid’s “I see the better course and approve it, but I pursue the worse course,” as well as Ecclesiastes’s “He who increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow,” limits akrasia to the imagination, the ideas, true and false, of the first kind of knowledge. “The knowledge of good and evil stirs up conflict [*commotiones*] in the mind, and often yields to every kind of passion.” Only the first kind of knowledge concerns “good and evil insofar as this knowledge has reference to the future” (4p16) or the “contingent” (4p17), and when it’s a question of inadequate ideas, truth has no privileges. But adequate ideas are different. Akrasia is more disturbing for the second kind of knowledge.

How can an adequate idea, fully caused by another adequate idea, be affected by anything at all? An adequate idea could never be destroyed by an inadequate idea, because when we have an adequate idea, we cannot doubt it (2p43). In akrasia, though, the power of adequate ideas is somehow effaced. I have an adequate idea of God, which is often overcome by the fear of death, a fear that should have been destroyed by the adequate idea of God. I have an adequate idea that “hate can never be good” (4p45), but that idea is frequently overcome by what I take to be well-justified and satisfying hatred.

Akrasia is important because the practical project of the *Ethics* is precisely its opposite. The goal of the *Ethics* is to make the power of an idea dependent on its truth and adequacy, to align the power of ideas with their adequacy, that is, their internal power. Such alignment is a rare ethical achievement. The only cure for akrasia is for the power of ideas to be proportionate to their adequacy.⁸ That occurs when we have the power of “ordering and connecting the affections of the Body according to the order of the intellect” (5p10). The

five remedies in 5p20s are ways of uniting, as much as possible, the two dimensions of ideas, their power and their truth. “Insofar as the mind conceives things in accordance with the dictates of reason, it is equally affected whether the idea be of the future, in the past, or the present” (4p62); in such a mind adequate ideas are adequate causes. “The free man never acts deceitfully, but always with good faith” (4p72); here too we can see the distance between an adequate idea of always being honest and that idea being an adequate and complete cause of action, and how to close that distance, nicely illustrated in the scholium:

Suppose someone now asks: what if a man could save himself from the present danger of death by treachery: would not the principle of preserving his own being recommend, without qualification, that he be treacherous? The reply to this is the same. If reason would recommend without qualification, that men make agreements, join forces, and have common rights only by deception — then really they have no common rights. This is absurd.

Adequate ideas become adequate causes when the individual recognizes those ideas as universal, and for that reason not capable of being overridden by one’s own individuality, that is, one’s passions.

Akrasia for inadequate ideas is no surprise, because any inadequate idea can be extinguished. Adequate ideas cannot, because no idea could intercede between the idea and its affirmation. But their power to lead to *action* can at least be temporarily silenced.⁹ We could put the problem tendentiously this way: the mind is an idea of a certain body. The ideas in the mind are ideas of parts of that body. But adequate ideas are not ideas of any particular thing. Therefore they are *in* the mind or part of the mind in a different way from inadequate ideas. The more adequate ideas are an alien presence in a mind, the more unlikely is any practical efficacy of adequate ideas. And so, much of Part 4 consists in the precepts of reason, without further analysis of how effective these can be.¹⁰

If Spinoza thought in terms of design, he could say that akrasia is the unintended consequence of the need for imagination and understanding to cooperate; the cooperation of the imagination and understanding is the feature, and akrasia the bug. Akrasia is undesirable because we have an idea that we can’t act on, although we would like to. Like the first problem, the second problem of akrasia is a consequence of the complexity of the human mind,

its power to have ideas without affirming them. In *Ethics* 2, to think an idea is to assert it. In Part 3 we learn that the human mind is complex enough to think an idea without asserting it. In Part 2 the mind is a complex idea of a body, an idea that contains as parts ideas of parts of that body. The conatus in Part 3 creates a much more unified individual, one whose parts not only happen to be thrown together but one which endeavors to keep itself together. The mind doesn't have the power to expel ideas that conflict with other ideas but it does have the resources to remain a unity in spite of the presence of conflicting ideas.

Before going on to the hardest problem of *akrasia*, I can summarize the argument up to this point. In Plato and Aristotle, *akrasia* was a problem because knowledge *should be* stronger than passions, knowledge of what is good should be more powerful than the allures of pleasure. Here the problem lies in the other direction. If emotions can be treated as lines, planes, and bodies, then there is no reason to expect knowledge, adequate ideas, to be more powerful than inadequate ideas and passive emotions, which have causes in an external nature that is always more powerful than any individual. The surprise, opposite of *akrasia* to Plato and Aristotle, is that adequate ideas could *ever* overcome externally caused ideas and emotions.

But the geometric method, instead of showing why we are condemned to being overcome by passion, offers the way out. Adequate ideas that are powerful and effective only occur if reason and imagination cooperate, the cooperation modeled by the geometric method. When reason harnesses the imagination, inadequate ideas and passive emotions can help adequate ideas become practically effective. In geometry, that coordination comes easy, but in ethics, the mind has a big job to do. Adequate ideas are powerful if we can move from being the subject of the geometric method to being its practitioners. That is how adequate ideas can become adequate causes.

COGNITIVE AKRASIA

At this point, we know three things about adequate ideas that are not easily reconciled: (1) since they are caused by other adequate ideas, they cannot be destroyed; (2) the interference of inadequate ideas can make them practically ineffective; (3) the assistance of inadequate ideas can make them practically efficacious and powerful. Spinoza has to explain how, in the presence of inadequate ideas in the same mind, adequate ideas do not have the causal power they otherwise could have; without that account, he won't be able to show how adequate ideas can ever be practically potent.

This is the third and I think the hardest problem of *akrasia*. To have an idea of something is to be able to draw implications from that idea. But more powerful affects can prevent even a true or adequate idea from drawing appropriate consequences. *Akrasia* not only applies to knowing the better yet doing the worse, but knowing the better yet *thinking* the worse. Why knowledge does not always cause action is hard enough to explain; why knowledge doesn't cause *more knowledge* is a greater puzzle. Not successfully causing actions is more understandable because it is only as an active emotion that an adequate idea can be practical, and as an emotion it must enter into competition with other emotions, and so can be defeated. But that other things going on in the mind can prevent an adequate idea from drawing all valid inferences from itself is harder to explain. If inadequate ideas are like "conclusions without premises" (2p28), in this deepest problem of *akrasia*, adequate ideas are like premises without conclusions.

The paradox of cognitive *akrasia* is grounded in the ultimate paradox that the mind, which is a confused idea, can contain adequate ideas. That is, that adequate ideas can be contained in minds that are themselves inadequate ideas. The puzzle is about what containment could mean in this context. We've already run up against this problem in seeing that for an adequate idea to be part of a mind, it must be so in a nonstandard meaning of part, since parts are supposed to be elements that can substituted for, as the body is constantly replenished and its parts replaced. Each person's adequate idea of a given object is the same as everyone else's. No one can have a different adequate idea of the fourth proportional. Whatever an idea implies, the mind containing the idea should be able to infer it. Logical and causal consequences differ in the human mind, but not in the divine intellect (2p7c). Causal consequences are a proper subset of logical consequences.¹¹ Two people can possess the same adequate idea and infer different things from it. What else they can infer depends on their imaginations, both on the interference of the imagination and on its aid, both on distracting and on fortifying emotions. Euclid's diagrams are the paradigm of the imagination helping reason draw implications from adequate ideas that finite minds might not otherwise be able to draw.

Practical *akrasia* occurs when there are two conflicting desires, and we can't act on both. Cognitive *akrasia* is a deeper problem because the interference is not as clearly confrontational. When reason fails to lead to action, we are conscious of the conflict, and are pained, reduced in power, by it. In practical *akrasia*, the mind is aware of two ideas, conscious that the adequate idea is, because it is adequate, better than the inadequate idea, and yet unable to do what the better idea indicates, and conscious of that failure as well. In the

deeper problem, however, that adequate ideas do not always cause the further adequate ideas that they imply, there is failure, the lack of completeness or perfection, but not necessarily any awareness that the mind's adequate ideas are being frustrated. People do not feel pain at the gap between what they know and what they could know. No pain means no decrease in power. There is no experience of conflict in cognitive akrasia. But it is clearly a weakness, a lack of power. It is a conflict between what is and what could be, between an actual essence and perfection or reality. But there is no painful loss of power, only a smaller amount of power than possible if the adequate idea were as powerful as it could be, a painless counterfactual.

One explanation for cognitive akrasia and its solution comes in the third remedy listed in 5p20s: "In the matter of time, in respect of which the affections that are related to things we understand are superior to those which are related to things that we conceived in a confused or fragmentary way." This derives from 5p7: "Emotions which arise or originate from reason are, if we take account of time, more powerful than those that are related to particular things we regard as absent." Formal logical relations of implication—and the causality of God—do not take place in time. But Spinoza's ideas are actions of affirmation and inference, and they are actions done by a mind, a thinker. They do take place in time. They can be interrupted. One logical connection might have to be reaffirmed repeatedly until the thinker is ready to draw further connections. The dilemma of cognitive akrasia with which this section began here is the problem of how (1) adequate ideas are as such not in time, but (2) adequate ideas are assertions and therefore do occur in time. This is the problem of how adequate ideas can be thought be a mind that is an inadequate idea.

For example, I have the adequate idea expressed in 2p7 that the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things. I know that the body and mind are causally independent. However, I persist in imagining that the mind can cause the body to act. My mind cannot draw the consequence from my adequate ideas that there is no free will. I have the adequate idea that all my actions, ideas, and emotions are caused. But as long as I am ignorant of the causes of particular actions, I will think that I have a free will, although I know better. My adequate idea that there is no free will is general. If I had an adequate idea of the causes of each action, it would destroy my beliefs in the freedom of the will for particular actions.¹² Again, my imagination confuses existence with duration, and so my conatus strives to live as long as possible, rather than as well as possible. Reading the *Ethics*, I can even know that there are certain adequate ideas which I cannot myself know, such as the

knowledge of attributes other than thought and extension, if there are any. They are adequate ideas but cannot be adequate ideas in my mind, because ideas of my imagination prevent the causes of these ideas from being reasons for me. Hence the ominous quotation from Ecclesiastes: understanding the *Ethics* can show us knowledge we cannot have.

The gap between implication and inference looks like another place where Spinoza must admit unrealized possibilities, which seem necessary to understand how something can be imperfect and so not live up to its essence, where unrealized possibilities threaten the thesis that everything is necessarily exactly what it is. The implications from adequate ideas that the mind does not draw are not like the infinite number of equal rectangles that are contained in a given circle, which do not exist unless they are drawn (2p8s). The idea of a triangle does not become more powerful by generating as many triangles as possible, but by generating the forty-seven propositions of the first book of the *Elements*. From a given adequate idea, a mind can generate an infinite set of further adequate ideas by simply reflecting and knowing that one knows that first adequate idea, ad infinitum, but this wouldn't make the mind more active. The mind has to use the geometric method to generate distinct adequate ideas in order to become an adequate cause of its actions.

CONFLICTING EMOTIONS AND CONFLICTING PEOPLE

Cognitive akrasia presents the paradox that adequate ideas in finite minds do not lead to all the further adequate ideas that logically follow from them. Politics is designed to solve an analogous problem, and so turning from conflicting emotions to conflicting people can help. In the state of nature, each individual has a right to everything, but that right is purely notional. By banding together and erecting a sovereign, people come to have a more limited but more secure set of rights. In a larger context, people have more limited powers.¹³

Akrasia represents one sort of conflict, that between emotions or ideas within an individual. There is another kind of conflict which gets far more attention in Part 4. Insofar as people are guided by reason, they agree. When people are in conflict, it is because they are led by their passions. But Spinoza does not affirm the converse, that whenever people are led by passions, they will conflict. The purpose of politics and religion is precisely to find forms of imagination and emotion that allow people to agree without adequate ideas but from their passions; this is the cunning of imagination at its most power-

ful. Through the cunning of imagination, specifically human forms of conflict, and the need to overcome them, promote a rationality that people don't aim at. Through the cunning of imagination, these conflicts lead to adequate ideas. At the same time, these conflicts lead to a solution, the ruler defining what counts as just, that makes adequate ideas unnecessary, and maybe impossible.

I impute to Spinoza, as I did in chapter 3, an answer which he never gives to a fundamental question of the *Ethics*, how inadequate ideas lead to adequate ones, or at least how finite minds can contain adequate ideas, the finite containing the infinite. On his behalf I claim that the development of rationality is not an individual but a collective process. It is only because an individual becoming rational depends on the collective power of the state that the conatus can lead to more power and to rationality and autonomy without a telos drawing the individual forward. What one needs for adequate ideas is not a process of induction or abstraction, but rather freedom from violent passions, which not only prevent one from thinking clearly, but also prevent the development of a more complex imagination, and, correspondingly, a more responsive body. We've already seen the beginning of this argument in chapter 3, as imaginative bootstrap empowerment makes little sense for the isolated individual but actually works for collective imaginings. Susan James makes my point:

Seen from the perspective of knowledge of the second kind, imagining becomes part of the subject matter of philosophy, and many commentators have treated it in this fashion. In doing so, however, they have tended to overlook an issue by which Spinoza is deeply preoccupied: the question of how a community where people mainly think and live on the basis of imagination can make reasoning a part of its way of life, and reap the benefits of the second kind of knowledge. Unusually among seventeenth-century philosophers, Spinoza not only explores the kinds of self-discipline and education that allow selected individuals to acquire adequate ideas; he also treats reasoning as a collective undertaking that depends on social as well as cognitive conditions, and can in principle transform not just the way we think but the way we live. . . . The transition from knowledge of the first to the second kind is in part a social one.¹⁴

Consider how the argument of Part 4 proceeds. Between the discussion of akrasia and the final propositions that show us the life of the free man guided

by reason, Spinoza does three things. First, he establishes the nature of the only certain and true good, that of understanding (4p27). Third, he departs from the treatment of the emotions in Part 3 and now looks at them with an evaluative eye. In between—second—lies a set of propositions about conflict. The argument progresses from “We know nothing to be certainly good except what really leads to understanding” (4p27) to “Insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, they are most useful to man” (4p37d), through an examination of conflict and agreement, and through moving from the conflict of emotions *within* an individual, including *akrasia*, to conflicts *between* individuals. The cunning of imagination impels the mind from a reflexive concern with developing the understanding itself, via conflict, to the empowering pleasures of community.

From the start I’ve noted the paradox of passive pleasures, of external forces increasing our internal power to persist. The passage of 4p29–34 has a difficulty in the opposite direction, that of proving the existence of contrariety and specifically of how people can be contrary to one another. The puzzles and paradoxes about contrariety show how far the relations of ideas is from anything recognizable as logic. If two things agree in nature, they are good for each other. If they differ, they are indifferent, and cannot cause good or effects on each other (4p29).

No individual thing whose nature is quite different from ours can either assist or check our power to act, and nothing whatever can be either good or evil for us unless it has something in common with us. (4p29)

No thing can be evil for us through what it possesses in common with our nature, but insofar as it is evil for us, it is contrary to us. (4p30)

Insofar as a thing is in agreement with our nature, to that extent it is necessarily good. (4p31)

Things either agree or differ; therefore no thing can be bad to another. How can Spinoza resist that implication?

Propositions 4p29–31 are completely general. They talk about “us,” but nothing in them limits them to people. The next three propositions, 4p32–34, narrow attention specifically to human beings. Proposition 32 states that “insofar as men are subject to passive emotions, to that extent they cannot be said to agree in nature.” This he takes to be self-evident. Then 4p33 affirms

the converse, “Men can differ in nature insofar as they are assailed by passive emotions.” But being different in nature up to here has meant that they cannot harm each other, that they are indifferent. The shift from the undifferentiated “us” to “men” is far from innocent. People can conflict like nothing else. Thus just before he shows that nothing is as useful to man as man (4p35c1, c2s), he shows in these three propositions that nothing can be as harmful to man as man. And since 4p33 shows that a single man assailed by emotions is variable and inconstant, nothing in nature can harm itself as man can. People have self-defeating passions far beyond that of moths seeking flames.

It is harder for people to be indifferent toward each other than it is for animals. People care about what other people think about them. Animals don't. There is no pride in a pride of lions. Rousseau distinguishes between the passion of sex and its peculiar human modification into love. A pair of male animals might both desire the same female, but, he says, as soon as another is available, the conflict ends. One does as well as another. Humans, because of emotions of envy, pride, and ambition, single out particular individuals as the objects of love. Recall Jacob's disavowal of the pleasure of mistakenly sleeping with Leah.

When people conflict, their individual perspectives become part of a larger whole. When this wine tastes sweet to me and sour to you, there is no conflict. When we call the wine good or bad, and want everyone to agree with our own assessments, then we construct a common world and greater whole for our emotions. Conflict then refutes, for human beings, the solipsism of the imagination in which minds, unlike the finite modes of extension, aren't automatically part of a greater whole — it takes the human imagination for the finite modes of thought to imagine that they are part of a greater whole. When we give up our judgment of right and wrong in favor of the ruler's judgment, we aren't just giving up a present pleasure for the sake of a promised greater pleasure in the future; we are giving up our opinion of what we think is *good* to the ruler's determination of justice. Just as the sun still looks near to me, I still think I should seek retaliation for an injury, or turn the other cheek. Laws have an authority within the realm of the imagination parallel to the authority of the real distance to the sun. Human obedience takes a sophisticated imagination.

When two motions conflict, there is a resultant motion. When two ideas or emotions conflict in a mind, they try to obliterate each other. But two people in conflict fit neither picture. Two animals can conflict when they both desire the same object. People add a complication, because each thinks it will increase its power by having others agree with it. Therefore we aren't satisfied

with just letting a contradiction between our tastes stand. We want others to agree with us. Spinoza does not think, with Plato or Marx, that contradictions drive forward either the individual or history as a whole. Getting others to agree with my taste produces common notions of what, say, a good Zinfandel should taste like, or what a good presidential candidate should look like, but no matter how widely shared, these are not adequate ideas. The route from sociability to rationality is more indirect than that.¹⁵

An account that finds the origin of society in the division of labor in satisfying needs postulates a *diversity* of human talents. One carpenter doesn't need another; a carpenter needs a lumberjack to supply materials, and an architect to buy them. "It is when every man is most devoted to seeking his own advantage that men are of most advantage to one another" (4p35c2). That diversity leads to society, but not yet a political society. Societies become political states when their *conflicts* require a sovereign to define justice, and therefore the boundaries of what is mine, and so the self, for us. Other animals can fight over scarce goods, but they are not forced by that fact to invent private property. People have complex enough imaginations that they make a distinction, within the realm of appearance, between appearance and reality, that we call the difference between pleasure and the good. The definition of conflicting emotions in 4def5, a definition which never appears in any demonstration, applies only to human beings: "In what follows by conflicting emotions I shall understand those that draw a man [*hominem*] in different directions, although they belong to the same genus, such as dissipation and avarice, which are species of love, and contrary not by nature, but indirectly." By that definition, I can both love and hate Audrey, vacillate between hope and fear when I think about my boss. My dog can feel a conflict between obeying me and the temptation of rolling around in a deer carcass, but that is not the conflict 4def5 refers to.

People are in a unique position to harm one another because we are uniquely vulnerable. That vulnerability comes from the power of the imagination to think that there are objectively good things, and therefore to be harmed when others disagree with them, and not just when they take one's food. The vulnerability comes from the power of the imagination to desire not only pleasure but, as we saw in chapter 4, love, pleasure from a specific source. The second scholium to 4p37 says that "by sovereign natural right every man judges what is good and what is good. . . . Therefore, in order that men may live in harmony and help one another, it is necessary for them to give up their natural right and to create a feeling of mutual confidence that they will refrain from any action that may be harmful to another." We leave it to the sovereign to

define good and bad, to define wrongdoing, justice, and property. All humans think that they define these things for themselves, creating a kind of conflict distinct from the more universal struggle for scarce resources. Since people want others to live as they do, and think as they do, they necessarily think that what gives them pleasure is good, and so is good and should be pleasant for everyone else. Only people have imaginations complicated enough to make this mistake, and so only people need to live in a political society. “Whatever is conducive to man’s social organization, or causes men to live in harmony, is advantageous, while those things that introduce discord into the state, are bad” (4p40).

Agreement and harmony among people comes from the ruler specifying justice through defining property. As Spinoza puts it in chapter 19 of the *TTP*: “If someone quarrels with me and wants to take my tunic, it’s pious to give him my cloak also. . . . But when one judges that this is harmful to the preservation of the Republic, it is, on the contrary, pious to call him to judgment, even if he’s to be condemned to death” (C 2:337, G 3:232). These definitions declared by the sovereign are not adequate ideas that replace each individual’s inadequate ideas of good and bad. They are ideas of the imagination about which people can agree. At 4p35 it says that “only insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, must they always agree in nature.” But short of that, we can agree, not always and not necessarily, by living under a common sovereign. Proposition 34 said that “insofar as men are assailed by emotions that are passive, they can be contrary to another.” They can be, but the politics and religion hinted at in the scholia to 4p37 and developed in the *TTP* show how people, while still assailed by emotions that are passive, are able to live together, and make true the maxim that nothing is as useful to man as man.

“Nothing is as useful to man as man” has an easy instrumental meaning. I need food, shelter, clothes, in addition to the means of defending myself. I can’t provide all of them myself, and so I need other people to help me satisfy my necessary needs. It isn’t other people that are useful to me; it is what they provide. This is the beginning of the city as Socrates tells it in *Republic II*. Spinoza means something much more demanding, that people are more *directly* useful to each other than anything else — collective bootstrap empowerment.

There are, for human beings, three kinds of conflict: physical, personal, and interpersonal. To these three correspond three senses of unity and individuality, developed in Parts 2, 3, and 4 respectively. In Part 2, where we learn about physical conflicts, an individual body is formed “when a number of bodies . . . form close contact with one another through the pressure of other bodies upon them, or if they are moving at the same or different rates of speed

so as to preserve an unvarying relation of movement among themselves” (definition after 2p13). Part 3 instead sees the conatus as the individual essence; the desire to persist is the locus for conflicting emotions and ideas, leading, early in Part 4, to *akrasia*. Finally, 4p37s2 shows how people can form an intentional unity, uniting with each other to form a political community to end conflicts between individuals.

The conclusion I draw from these three kinds of conflict and so three kinds of unity and individuality is that to be a knower, one has to be a citizen. It is useful for a mind to be part of a greater whole, but this is a different kind of utility than that which makes it useful for bodies to be part of a greater whole. Being solitary is an option for minds, but not for bodies. It’s a bad option, leaving the individual only with appearances, and no way to single some of them out as reality, and similarly leaving one only with pleasures, with no way to call some of them good. Without being part of a community, people couldn’t make these specifically human errors, but, through the cunning of imagination, these are errors that lead to truth, to adequate ideas. Finding reality within appearance is a prelude to finding realities distinct from appearances, and finding goods among our pleasures is a prelude to defining good independent of pleasure.

As we saw in chapter 3, bootstrap empowerment becomes possible through membership in a community. We back into rationality through sociability: that is the principal reversal and discovery in the plot of the *Ethics*. The first scholium to 4p37, where Spinoza develops the social aspect of being under the guidance of reason, stresses that reciprocal bootstrap empowerment by contrasting our relations to other people to people’s relations to other animals, where we become powerful at the expense of a loss of power to the other animals. Of course people *can* exploit others, making themselves more powerful by weakening others, but it is a dictate of reason that we do not treat other people as we should treat other animals. That is the truth of 4p37—“The good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men; and this Desire is greater as his knowledge of God is greater”—developed in the scholium. (Note that this is the first place that Spinoza refers back to the knowledge of God asserted in 2p47.)

It is clear that the law against killing animals is based more on empty superstition and unmanly compassion than sound reason. The rational principle of seeking our own advantage teaches us the necessity of joining with men but not with the lower animals, or with things whose nature is different from human nature. We have the same right against

them that they have against us. Indeed, because the right of each one is defined by his virtue, or power, men have a far greater right against the lower animals than they have against men. Nor do I deny that the lower animals have sensation. But I do deny that we are therefore not permitted to consider our own advantage, use them at our pleasure, and treat them as it most convenient for us. (4p37s1)

But while the conditions for developing adequate ideas are social, no society has a stock of adequate ideas that the citizen can draw on. The universal creed of the *TTP* is not a set of rational truths but of useful beliefs, and Spinoza finds no intrinsic rationality in the laws of a state, but only calculations of self-interest of the sovereign. Subjects, that is, can live under the guidance of reason by following laws that do not themselves embody rationality.

It is for this reason that Spinoza is untroubled by the consequences of maintaining that the ruler's might makes right, and denying any further standard for justice. If politics, and religion, aimed at truth instead of piety and good works, then the good person could only be at home in a good state. It is just because philosophy is distinct from politics and theology that human relations can encourage the growth of adequate ideas without aiming at them. Thus "the free man who lives among ignorant people tries as far as he can to avoid receiving favors from them" (4p7o), but that same free man does not withdraw from a state ruled by an ignorant sovereign.

The seven articles in the universal creed of chapter 14 in the *TTP* are things people must believe in order to be members of a community. They are ideas of the imagination, connected to obedience and pious action. Once they are accepted, then further ideas of the imagination, which would otherwise cause conflict among people, are now a harmless diversity of ideas.

Everyone is permitted to accommodate [Scripture] to his own opinions, if he sees that in that way he can obey God more wholeheartedly in matters of justice and loving-kindness. (C 2:264, G 3:173)

Everyone now is bound to accommodate [the universal creed] to his own opinions, so that he can accept it without any mental conflict and without any hesitation. (C 2:270, G 3:179)

Religion and the state make it possible for people, without adequate ideas, to live together by transforming conflicting ideas into diverse ones.

I've moved beyond *akrasia*, as Spinoza does. Part 4 is called "Of Human Bondage, or the Strength of the Emotions," but its latter propositions show how the imagination overcomes its limitations. The individual does not yet have power over the passions—that has to wait until Part 5—but Spinoza shows how people can live "under the guidance of reason" without having adequate ideas or being an adequate cause—the description of the person guided by reason in Part 4 is neither of a slave nor of the free person of Part 5. When Spinoza talks about the free man in Part 4, he describes that person from the outside, in terms of how he acts; missing is an account of what goes on in his mind, and specifically the freedom that is constituted by the power of the intellect over the passions.

Spinoza notes the progress in Part 4 in the scholium to 4p66. The proposition itself reads: "Under the guidance of reason we seek a greater future good in preference to a lesser present good, and a lesser present evil in preference to a greater future evil." The scholium invites the reader to compare that proposition to

what we have demonstrated in this Part up to proposition 18 with reference to the strength of the emotions. We shall readily see the difference between the man who is guided only by emotion or belief and the man who is guided by reason. The former, whether he will or not, performs actions of which he is completely ignorant. The latter does no one's will but his own, and does only what he knows to be of greatest importance to life, which he therefore desires above all. So I call the former a slave and the latter a free man.

In the early part of Part 4 *akrasia* is not a problem but an accurate description of individuals where the "strength of the emotions" is proportional to that of their external causes. *Akrasia* is only something to be explained when people who are "guided by reason" are still vulnerable to the power of passions that force them to seek a lesser but more vivid present good over a greater but more remote good. Therefore, after a brief look, for completeness' sake, at the third kind of knowledge, I will conclude the discussion of *akrasia* by asking how to measure the power of ideas, a problem I've already introduced in chapter 3 and will have to consider yet again, in further depth, in chapter 7.

AKRASIA AND THE THIRD KIND OF KNOWLEDGE

The third kind of knowledge does not involve, as the second does, the imagination, and therefore is not vulnerable to the imagination either. Therefore our account of the mechanism of akrasia does not apply here.

“This love toward God is bound to hold chief place in the mind” (5p16). If the love toward God is bound to hold chief place in the mind, then it is not only an adequate idea but an adequate cause. To know God is to love God, that is, to know that God causes us to increase our power and in particular our powers of activity through understanding. “From the third kind of knowledge there necessarily follows an intellectual love of God” (5p32c). My heart is not stirred by my understanding of the real distance to the sun; my knowledge of starvation in Africa doesn’t seem to motivate me to do much about it. But no one can know God without loving Him.

The reversal in the plot of the *Ethics* appears here. When an inadequate idea is modified by a passive emotion, the idea is immediately motivating. The second kind of knowledge makes progress, overcomes that reactivity, but at the cost of being abstract and not directly motivating. The third kind of knowledge is necessarily motivating. As Yovel says: “As for the idea’s power to motivate, it is strong in the first kind of knowledge (imagination), weaker in the second kind (reason), and most powerful in the third, intuitive, kind of knowledge, where it produces *amor dei intellectualis*.”¹⁶

Ideas of the third kind of knowledge immediately put themselves into action. Because the second kind of knowledge is abstract, its ideas lack the power to say exactly what is to be done. They therefore need the cooperation of the imagination in order to do anything. When that cooperation isn’t there, we have akrasia. The third kind of knowledge doesn’t need the cooperation of the imagination. That’s a lucky thing, since it won’t get it. Desires born of the third kind of knowledge do not have contrary affects; they are not about the future, and are not contingent (4p15–17). Ideas of the third kind of knowledge are both cognitively and motivationally self-sufficient.

The third kind of knowledge requires a simple, undivided mind without conflicts. The desire connected with the third kind of knowledge is also simple: it aims only to increase knowledge of that kind. The two deficiencies of the second kind of knowledge, that it is not necessarily motivational and that it doesn’t point to a determinate action, are both overcome here. The desire of the second kind of knowledge can never be so pure that people want nothing but more of the second kind of knowledge. Ideas of the second kind of knowl-

edge desire to act, that is, to have effects on things other than its own mind. It then puts itself in a position where it must struggle against external and possibly more powerful forces. The desire of the third kind of knowledge has no contrary and so nothing interferes with it and it interferes with nothing. And so in 5p36s Spinoza says that the third kind of knowledge is “much more powerful than the universal cognition I have called the cognition of the second kind.” That superiority of power is its power “to affect our Mind.”

THE TRUTH AND POWER OF IDEAS

The purpose of the *Ethics* is to align truth with power. The quotation from Ovid comes at a crucial moment in the argument. Until then, the truth and power of ideas are independent variables; not even the desire to increase power and the desire to increase perfection are necessarily identical. They are identified only a few propositions later, when understanding becomes the focus of virtue and power: “Whatever we endeavor according to reason is nothing else but to understand, and the mind, insofar as it exercises reason, judges nothing else to be to its advantage except what conduces to understanding” (4p26). In that sense, avoiding akrasia is the purpose of the *Ethics*. Akrasia is commonplace for imaginative cognition, problematic for *ratio*, and impossible for intuitive knowledge and love of God. The more adequate ideas and in particular the intuitive knowledge of God dominate the mind, the less threatening akrasia will be, and the more our better ideas will be more powerful.

The existence of akrasia shows the development of the finite modes of Part 1 into the finite bodies and minds of Part 2 and then into the passive affects of Part 3. Akrasia for Spinoza has metaphysical as well as ethical significance. A finite individual is not only surrounded by more powerful beings that can overpower it (4p4); Part 3 showed that finite individuals are penetrated by external objects. The mind is a confused idea of the body because the body does not have precise and impermeable boundaries. Therefore the individual contains passions, which are externally caused. Internal to the individual are things that do not follow from its nature. In akrasia, the individual acts in a way that is caused by something other than its nature. Moreover, because it contains passions that are contrary to its nature, it is prevented from acting according to its own nature. That is, the individual contains things that are internal to the individual but external to the individual’s essence, and for that reason does not contain everything that its essence would dictate. The individual is both incomplete and full of extraneous matter, not identical to its essence.

In akrasia, the individual acts in a way that is caused by something other than its nature and therefore does not act in a way that is caused by its nature.¹⁷

A brief note before finishing this chapter. I just said that the individual is both incomplete and full of extraneous matter. The same is the case for inadequate ideas. Inadequate ideas are incomplete; they don't contain everything they need to be complete and adequate. So Spinoza calls them conclusions without premises. But "equally" inadequate ideas are confused because they contain things that wouldn't belong to a corresponding adequate idea. Common ideas of God rightly impute omnipotence to Him, but then associate omnipotence with the power to perform miracles. There will therefore be two ways in which inadequate ideas can become adequate, through completion and through purgation.

Part 4 concludes with a surprising reference to the active emotions of 3p59s. Without saying so, Spinoza has been interweaving the finite and the infinite, with akrasia as the first interaction between finite and infinite, between inadequate and adequate ideas, shown finally in the development of politics out of primitive desires for safety and the satisfaction of needs as the empowering interaction. But Spinoza tells us that this has been his subject only at the end: "These and similar things which we have shown concerning the true freedom of man are related to Strength of Character [strength of mind], i.e., by 3p59, to Tenacity [courage] and Nobility." The rest of that final scholium returns to akrasia and the power of the free person to overcome bondage to the passions, emphasizing that the free person is not immune to harmful passions, but has the power to overcome them:

The strong-minded man has this foremost in his mind, that everything follows from the necessity of the divine nature, and therefore whatever he thinks of as injurious or bad, and also whatever seems impious, horrible, unjust, and base arises from his conceiving things in a disturbed, fragmented, and confused way. For this reason his prime endeavor is to conceive things as they are in themselves and to remove obstacles to true knowledge, such as hatred, anger, envy, derision, pride, and similar emotions. . . . And so he endeavors, as far as he can, to do well and to be glad. (4p73s)

CHAPTER 6

Hilarity and the Goods of Mind and Body

THE SIMPLE STORY

In the introduction I said that the *Ethics* contains three original and fundamental ideas, infinite modes, the second kind of knowledge, and the active emotions, and I noted there that one frustrating feature of the *Ethics* is that Spinoza devotes so little attention to any of them. The argument of this book has moved from an initial concentration on the infinite modes, through the peculiarities of a form of knowledge that is both adequate and uniquely human, until we can see the role of the active emotions. The last two parts of the *Ethics*, and the second half of my book, focus on the relation between passive and active emotions that makes ethics possible. Only in the last two parts of the *Ethics* do finite and infinite, inadequate and adequate ideas, interact. Akrasia, the subject of chapter 5, was the first place for such interaction. In this chapter, I will show how once Spinoza starts to bring finite and infinite together, the identity of body and mind start to fall apart. This is not the geometric method as a series of inferences that a computer could carry out but the confrontation with and overcoming of one difficulty after another as the argument moves from God to human freedom.

Here is a simple story about the relation between passive and active emotions. After presenting it, I will point to an anomaly that doesn't fit the story, and then try to figure out what the necessarily more complex picture should look like as I try to bring Spinoza's three original ideas together.

The active emotions of 3p58 and 59 modify adequate ideas of the second

kind of knowledge. (There is a single active emotion that modifies the third kind of knowledge; that is the intellectual love of God.) The second kind of knowledge comprises ideas about properties that are equally in the part and the whole (2p38). Therefore the active emotions increase the power of one's entire body and mind while leaving unchanged the ratios among the parts that constitute the individual's essence. All adequate ideas affect the body in the same way, by increasing its power, and all adequate ideas affect every individual in the same way. The variability among the passions (3p56, 57) does not hold for active emotions. The pleasures and desires that are active emotions are not the opposites of pains, and these emotions cannot be excessive (4p61). Therefore, too, all adequate ideas have the same corporeal correlate, increase in the power to persist.

By contrast, passive affects modify inadequate ideas. Inadequate ideas are incomplete, and so passive emotions will strengthen or weaken some part of the mind and body, and their incompleteness means that they may not increase or decrease the power of the mind and body as a whole. As they strengthen or weaken some part of the mind and body, they distort the whole, changing the balance and harmony among the parts. Some increases in a part of the individual don't change the balance that is the individual's essence, so there is some flexibility in the individual's essence. If this weren't the case, then every pleasure would change the essence of the individual. Pleasure, he says, is usually related to one part of the body. "The affects by which we are daily torn are generally related to a part of the Body which is affected more than the others. Generally, then, the affects are excessive, and occupy the Mind in the consideration of only one object so much that it cannot think of others" (4p44s). It is because these pleasures only strengthen a part of the body that the conatus can and often does go wrong; people constantly do things that are self-destructive, even though everything we desire is tied to the conatus. "We desire to preserve our being without regard to our health as a whole" (4p60s).

Unfortunately, we can't be content with that simple story that identifies passive emotions with experiences that affect only a part of the mind and body, and the active emotions with encounters that engage the entire mind and body, just as we couldn't, in chapter 1, identify finite modes with bodies and infinite modes with ideas. The pleasures and pains Spinoza calls hilarity and melancholy in 4p45s are counterexamples to the correlation of passive and partial emotions, active and whole emotions. The counterexamples are, respectively, increases and decreases of power that affect all the parts of the mind and body equally. Hilarity or cheerfulness (*hilaritas*) and melan-

choly were distinguished from titillation (Curley translates it as pleasure) and anguish (or pain) back at 3p11s: “Pleasure and Pain are ascribed to a man when one part of him is affected more than the rest, whereas Cheerfulness and Melancholy are ascribed to him when all are equally affected.” But all instances of melancholy, and at least those examples of hilarity which Spinoza offers at 4p45s, are passive, based on inadequate ideas. Inadequate ideas are incomplete, but these are affects of the whole. Melancholy, a passive pain that affects the whole, is unproblematic because there is no cause for surprise if an external force weakens the individual as a whole. So too an active pleasure that affects the whole. The hilarious pleasures of 4p45cs are the puzzle.

The greater the Joy with which we are affected, the greater the perfection to which we pass, i.e., the more we must participate in the divine nature. To use things, therefore, and take pleasure in them . . . this is the part of the wise man.

It is the part of the wise man, I say, to refresh and restore himself in moderation with pleasant food and drink, with scents, with the beauty of green plants, with decoration, music, sports, the theater, and other things of this kind, which anyone can use without injury to another.

This chapter is an attempt to figure out what to do with this anomaly, a passive pleasure enjoyed by the wise man, that increases the power of the whole body. Hilarious pleasures threaten the identity of mind and body, make ambiguous the meanings of part and whole, and question the meanings of acting and being acted upon, action and passion. We could save the simple story by dismissing hilarious pleasures — after all, they occupy only a single proposition and scholium — but I think instead that taking them seriously makes the *Ethics* more rewarding as it becomes more difficult. Hilarious pleasures let us see more about the active emotions than Spinoza’s own brief mentions afford by themselves.¹

Hilarious pleasures threaten to dissolve the unity of mind and body. The scholium continues:

For the human Body is composed of a great many parts of different natures, which constantly require new and varied nourishment, so that the whole Body may be equally capable of all the things which can follow from its nature, and hence, so that the Mind also may be equally capable of understanding many things.

Whatever the relation of body and mind presupposed here, it isn't clear that the mind has "parts of different natures, which constantly require new and varied nourishment." Noticing where hilarious pleasures come in the argument of Part 4 shows that we should take them seriously. Proposition 37 had proved that "the good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men." This crucial proposition marks the difference I've noted in earlier chapters between human society and other relations among finite modes. It is only for human intercourse that one person's increase in power does not come at the expense of another's; it is only for human commerce that individuals' powers can grow together, instead of someone increasing power by acting on, and so decreasing, the power of another. From then on, everything should be smooth sailing, compared to the diversity and conflict that came with the cunning of imagination leading people blindly in all sorts of directions. The more rational people are, the more sociable. The more sociable people are, the more rational. The *Ethics* progresses from saying that "to man, then, there is nothing more useful than man" (4p18s) to the narrower proposition that "insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, they are most useful to man" (4p37d).

But that harmonious relation looks only true for the goods of the mind, which are used to prove 4p37: "The good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men." The scholia to 4p37 qualify the rosy picture that the more rational we are, the more we can just get along, showing that living together requires a ruler. People can't be sociable without being political. Societies need sovereigns not just because the goods of the body, unlike those of the mind, are often scarce, but because people's imaginations contain abstract ideas, such as the model of human nature in the preface to Part 4, that cause them to believe that they desire something because it is good. As we saw in the last chapter, people, unlike other individuals, want other people to think and desire as they do. People's imaginative relations to each other are complicated because each wants everyone to want the same things that they do, but also wants to be the sole possessor of such things. Because people distinguish pleasure from good, and, thinking through final causes, invert the relation between pleasure and the good, they need a sovereign to legislate the meanings of evaluative terms:

In the state of nature there is no one who by common consent is Master of anything, nor is there anything in Nature which can be said to be this man's and not that man's. Instead, all things belong to all. So in

the state of nature, there cannot be conceived any will to give to each his own, or to take away from someone what is his. I.e., in the state of nature nothing is done which can be called just or unjust.

But in the civil state, of course, where it is decided by common consent what belongs to this man, and what to that [things are done which can be called just or unjust]. (4p37s2)

That is the context in which Spinoza turns to the goods of the body and overturns my simple story. Whatever “so disposes the human Body that it can be affected in a great many ways, or renders it capable of affecting external Bodies in a great many ways, is useful to man” (4p38), but one individual has no reason to desire those bodily advantages for everyone else. If someone else’s body “bring[s] about the preservation of the proportion of motion and rest the human Body’s parts have to one another” (4p39), that person’s success does not help me, as someone’s growth in rationality does. These two propositions about what is good for the body, which follow immediately on 4p37, cast doubt on it.

The pair, 4p38 and 39, complicate the relation of body and mind in another way. Whatever “so disposes the human Body that it can be affected in a great many ways, or renders it capable of affecting external Bodies in a great many ways, is useful to man” (4p38); Spinoza proves this by showing that such disposition makes the mind “more capable of apprehension.” This good of the body derives, then, from the good of the mind. In contrast, since “preserv[ing] the proportion of motion and rest the human Body’s parts have to one another” (4p39) is just what it means to preserve the body’s essence and so fulfill the *conatus*, its proof does not rely on reference to the good of the mind. The difference between the two propositions brings us back to chapter 3: it seems that the good of the body described in 4p38 refers to increasing power while the body’s good in 4p39 concerns self-preservation. Increasing power is advantageous to the body because it is useful to the mind; self-preservation is simply useful to the body.

The hilarious pleasures in 4p45s increase the power of the body; adequate ideas perfect the mind. Body and mind seem to have different ideal states. The reason for this difference between the goods of the mind and of the body comes from differences in the finite modes I’ve stressed from the beginning. All bodies are part of a single world, a single extended space. Every body is threatened by the bodies that limit and surround it. Minds, though, are not by nature part of a greater whole. They *become* part of a greater whole when

people construct a society, as developed in the scholia to 4p37, to become, “as it were, one mind and body.” Society, a union of minds, is the condition under which one person can increase power without costing someone else his or her power. It seems to follow that it is only for the goods of the mind, and not those of the body, for which people can be sociable.

The argument leading up to his examples of hilarious pleasures in 4p45s forces more precision about the relations between body and mind. Propositions 38 and 39 showed what the goods of the body are, and they are a description of hilarious pleasures, which increase the power of the whole and do not distort the proportion of motion and rest, as titillating pleasures do. However, Spinoza doesn’t call the advantageous (*utile*) conditions of the body hilarious pleasures—he doesn’t even call them pleasures. Hilarious pleasures are only explicitly introduced in 4p42; 4p41 says that pleasures—and the demonstration shows that he is referring to pleasures of the body—are good, and 4p42 then that hilarious pleasures cannot be excessive. He then argues, by contrast, that titillating pleasures (4p43) and love and desire (4p44) can be excessive. The examples of innocent hilarious pleasures in 4p45s are a note to a proposition which reads, “Hate can never be good.” Spinoza does not have to prove 4p41 for the pleasures of the mind; of course increasing power of the mind is good.

The plot of the *Ethics* often advances through a recurrent formal pattern. First, it seems that everything is either *causa sui* (1def1) or finite (1def2). But infinite modes broke that simple dichotomy. Now, all changes in individuals come either from within, in which case we are active and increase our power, or are assaults from external causes, which diminish our power. But there are passive pleasures, which have external causes but which increase our power, and these too break a simple dichotomy. The internally caused pleasures increase the power of the whole individual, while passive pleasures increase the power of some part. That dichotomy too yields to a more complex story, because there are some passive pleasures—the hilarious or cheerful passions—that do increase the power of the whole. The two reasons passive pleasures cause conflict—that their external causes are scarce and that people impose their tastes on others, seem indifferent to whether those pleasures affect the part or the whole. But we will see that that is not the case.

BODY AND SOUL

While 4p61 will tell us that desires that arising from reason cannot be excessive, 4p42 says that “cheerfulness [or hilarious pleasure] cannot be excessive,

but is always good.” Yet nowhere does Spinoza say anything about the relations between those two sorts of emotions which share this unusual and critical property. Asking about those relations is equivalent to my questions about the relation between the goods of the mind and body, here between the active emotions and hilarious passive pleasures.

A brief analogy might help. In *Republic IX* Socrates offers two quite distinct candidates for the title of pure and real pleasures, the innocent pleasures of the senses, especially smell, the least cognitive of the senses, and the pleasures of philosophy. Socrates never brings these two into confrontation with each other. Neither one is a pleasure that comes from contrast to pain, the sort of pleasure which might mislead someone into feeling a false pleasure of relief from pain instead of a true pleasure. “When [the pleasures of smell] cease they leave behind no pain” (584b). But otherwise the pleasures of philosophy and of smells don’t look very similar.² Like Socrates, Spinoza never draws a connection between the two. But the wise man pictured by each enjoys both.

The scholium to 4p45 does draw a connection between hilarious corporeal pleasures and the mind, but the link is a troubling one, since it seems to posit the body causing effects in the mind, which violates mind/body identity even further. “The human Body is composed of a great many parts of different natures, which constantly require new and varied nourishment, so that [ut] the whole Body may be equally capable of all the things which can follow from its nature, and consequently, so that [consequenter ut] the Mind also may be equally capable of understanding many things.” Not only does it look like Spinoza is here violating the ban on interattribute causation, but the analogy, as opposed to the causal claim, fails. The mind doesn’t continually need fresh and varied nourishment, at least for its preservation.

There is a third similarity between active emotions and hilarious joys. (1) Neither can be excessive, (2) neither is an opposite of pain, and now, (3) in neither case can one go wrong. Adequate ideas are infallible. Those ideas of the imagination fail all too often. But hilarious pleasures are so passive that they can only be enjoyed; they can’t steer us wrong. There are no errors such as Jacob makes with Leah and Rachel, the example I used to question whether the most passive and immediate of emotions and ideas were the most incorrigible and so reliable. The things that cause these innocent pleasures either increase our power or they leave us indifferent. They cannot harm us or mislead. In all other passions, what pleases one person might pain another. In Kant’s term, they are disinterested—we don’t care about the existence of the “perfumes, . . . dress, music, sporting activities, and theaters that please us” (*Critique of Judgment*, §6, 5:211).³ Therefore they can’t be the objects of desire.

Therefore Spinoza offers these two divergent presentations of pure pleasures that can't go wrong, one of the mind, the other of the body.⁴

Briefly recalling the paradox of bootstrap empowerment of chapter 3 helps to show how strange these hilarious pleasures are. Everyone, Spinoza says, wants more power. There can, I argue in chapter 3, be marginal increases in power from fantasizing those increases: compared to being paralyzed by fear, maybe picturing an imaginary friend coming to my rescue is less enfeebling. False hope can be preferable to no hope. But such benefits are small, and it would be a mistake to plan on increasing one's power through such imaginative devices. The beauty of blossoming plants might refresh and invigorate the body, but there are limits to how much more powerful one can get through such pleasures. One attraction of these pleasures is that they are free, like the fantasies of bootstrap empowerment, free from effort and free from desire. By contrast, the most secure and vital increases in power involve effort and engagement with knowledge and with other people. Someone who is in a position to increase her understanding should do so: "We know nothing to be certainly good or evil, except what really leads to understanding or what can prevent us from understanding" (4p27). Devoting oneself to music would not be as beneficial. It is for this reason that Spinoza says that hilarious pleasures cannot be excessive, but that the wise man will "refresh and invigorate himself in moderation." No such counsel of moderation is appropriate for the pursuit of knowledge.

As Spinoza develops the implications of adequate ideas in Parts 4 and 5, his readers have to try to understand the perfection of the mind that does not have obvious somatic correlates, leading ultimately to the immortality of the intellect. The passive hilarious emotions pose the opposite problem. What happens to the mind when the body experiences passive pleasures of the whole?

There are two active emotions in 3p59, one toward oneself and the other toward other people. There are, again, no active emotions toward nonhuman nature. Instead Part 4 tells us that we should, unlike Adam, use nonhuman nature in any way we like, while we should treat other people with justice and piety. Proposition 37 of Part 4 gave us the crucial result that human interaction uniquely involves one individual's increasing power not at another's expense. As I mentioned before, that feature of human uniqueness, that individuals can increase their power not at another's expense, seems limited to human minds, not human bodies. When it comes to bodies, it looks like there is no reason not to treat other people like the rest of nature, there to be used.

Hilarious pleasures fit neither Spinoza's account of how people should

treat one another, nor how they should act toward the rest of nature. The examples Spinoza gives, having to do with “pleasant food and drink, with scents, with the beauty of green plants, with decoration, music, sports, the theater, and other things of this kind,” are pleasures that only human beings enjoy. Dogs and penguins make lousy audiences for the theater. There is no evidence that dogs smell for anything but informational purposes.⁵ The human body is supposed to be no different from that of other animals except in its complexity (2p13), but the human body stands out in taking pleasure in things that do not, except for moderate food and drink, satisfy needs. What is there about the human body that allows it to take pleasure in things whose tie to the conatus is, at least, attenuated?

Adequate ideas have no connection to the individual conatus. Only some individuals — only wise individuals — enjoy these hilarious joys, but otherwise, like adequate ideas, they don’t look connected to the individual essence or conatus either. There is no reason to think that anyone who refreshes himself with good food and drink will also have active emotions and adequate ideas. These hilarious pleasures are so passive that the person affected doesn’t do anything but enjoy them. There is no exertion on his part. These are free joys. These are pleasures that are not the fulfillment of desires, in particular the desire to maintain oneself. To that extent, the conatus is not involved in these pleasures, which is why they look like wonder — wonder, which Spinoza denies is an emotion just because it isn’t connected to the conatus. They aren’t good because we desire them; they are good because we enjoy them. Because they seem to violate Spinoza’s claims that all emotions are modifications of ideas, and modifications or determinations of the conatus, one might think that they are an embarrassment that should be suppressed. Instead he celebrates them.

Both the innocent pleasures he mentions in 4p45s and the active emotions of 3p58–59 satisfy Spinoza’s criterion for hilarity, but in quite different ways, just as *Republic IX* presents both the innocent pleasures of smell and the joys of philosophy. Both kinds of pleasures are nonrivalrous and nonpositional goods. Yet both are uniquely human. Both are pure pleasures, with no mixture of pain, unlike most human pleasures, which have more complexity, as the vacillation of hope and fear that motivates the *TTP* illustrates. While we hear at the very end of the *Ethics* that the intellectual love of God and the life of the wise person are “as difficult as they are rare” (5p42s), the end of 4p45s says that enjoyment of these pleasures “agrees best both with our principles and with common practice. So therefore of all ways of life, this is best and to

be commended in every way.” Hilarity then resembles the salvation available to all in the *TTP* without regard to intellectual accomplishments. In seeming to be a second-best, the most the imagination can achieve, hilarious pleasures still fall short of the best possible way of life for the understanding. The final sentence of the scholium closes off the possibility of asking the questions I want to raise: “Nor is it necessary for me to treat these matters more clearly or more fully.”

PART AND WHOLE

I want to return to my original simple story, now motivated by trying to make sense of hilarious pleasures. Part and whole are fundamental concepts in Spinoza’s thought. The anomaly of hilarity and melancholy forces a distinction between five different meanings of part and whole. Each is a different way in which hilarious pleasures differ from other passive emotions. They aren’t active, because they don’t modify an adequate idea, but they don’t have the properties that make other passive emotions passive.

First, a partial idea is an idea or affect that involves only a part of the body. Titillation and anguish are explicitly defined in terms of this sense of partiality (3p11s), while hilarity modifies the whole body, increasing its power, yet still is a passion.

Second, a partial idea or affect has a cause which is itself partial: that is, it is directed to an exclusive object and therefore an object known by the imagination, and not a property shared by all objects and so known by the second kind of knowledge.

I like Michael LeBuffe’s formulation here:

Although it is true for Spinoza that all and only inadequate ideas are confused, the terms nevertheless characterize different aspects of ideas of imagination. Spinoza takes an idea to be inadequate if at least one of its causes is outside the mind. . . . Confusion, however, characterizes the mind’s awareness of the objects of such ideas. The mind is aware of the objects of its inadequate ideas in a way that is somehow fragmentary or distorted.⁶

The hilarious pleasures of 4p45s, while passive, are not partial in this way either. True, they have only a partial cause in the occasion for the pleasure — music is not a common property equally in the part and whole of everything — but unlike other passive pleasures, there is no attachment to the object.

Neither smelling the roses nor enjoying one's understanding of the world involves the attachment to external objects characteristic of passive pleasures.⁷ Both lack the quality that makes passive pleasures potentially unstable and harmful (4p44s).

I can put the point more strongly. Emotions that affect a part of the body or mind have objects; hilarity and melancholy, affecting the whole, do not, but only occasions.⁸ In this, too, they are like the active emotions, which are not accompanied by the idea of an external cause. Only inadequate ideas generate emotions accompanied by the idea of an external cause. That is what makes them inadequate. Hilarity and melancholy are oddities because without external objects, they are still passive.

Third, an incomplete idea is an idea for which the mind knows only a partial cause; a partial idea is an inadequate idea. The first kind of knowledge represents things "in a way which is mutilated, confused, and without order for the intellect" (2p40s2). But in the case of hilarious pleasures, nothing prevents one's experience from being whole, clear, and intellectually orderly, while still being passive and modifying an inadequate idea. Unlike all other passive pleasures, there is nothing to be gained by understanding these passions and so making them more powerful by being known more adequately. In Kantian language, there is no concept of which the form of beauty is an instance; these experiences are not instances of some concept. The partiality of these passions is uniquely *not* an invitation to make them whole. They cannot be known because there is no whole of which they are parts. The enterprise of making inadequate ideas whole does not apply to hilarious pleasures. *They are perfect as incomplete*. In this they resemble bodies, which, though finite, are not for that reason incomplete. All other passive emotions can be understood and so made active (5p2–4).

Because the ethical project of human freedom in Part 5 rests on the ability to convert passive emotions into active ones and adequate ideas, the fact that these pleasures are immune to such understanding shows that they shouldn't be dismissed as a curiosity or mistake on Spinoza's part. Unlike all other passions, these joys would not be improved by being understood. And yet they are fully intelligible—otherwise they couldn't increase our power. Where Kant sees beauty as intuition without a concept, for Spinoza these are pleasures without desire. They are the exception to the principle that all passions are tied to the conatus; there are no islands of emotion separate from the conatus—except for these. (Hence again the similarity to wonder.) It is because they aren't connected to the conatus that they can't become active emotions.

Fourth, these gratuitous increases in power of the body in 4p45s can be

found anywhere, and are therefore exempt from all the charges of partiality. Like all inadequate ideas, they are confused ideas of how we are affected by things, rather than accurate assessments of how things really are, but in these cases the confusion is innocent, because no one would take them for anything else. That is the reason that they are unique among passive affects in that there is no reason to make them complete and adequate, and no means of doing so. They are appearances, but not appearances of some reality.

Finally, there is a fifth sense of partiality. The passive, partial emotions have species. Each is, in Part 3, differentiated first by its objects, the idea of an external cause, and then by more elaborate connections to other passions and their objects. Like the active emotions, hilarity and melancholy have no kinds. Putting these ideas together, when one part of the body or mind is affected, we necessarily imagine an external cause of that effect, since we know that the body or mind is itself only a partial cause. When the entire body or mind is either affected or does something, we don't imagine such an external cause. In the case of active emotions, we don't imagine an external cause because the emotion is fully caused by an adequate idea. But we have to see why hilarity and melancholy don't make us imagine an external cause, since they are passive affects.

One would expect these five senses of partiality to go together, as in the simple story I started with. In particular, it makes sense that if someone is affected equally in all parts, then he or she is experiencing an active emotion, because that is precisely an affect of an idea of something that is equally in all parts, the object of the second kind of knowledge. If someone is only affected in some parts and not others, then he or she is affected by something that exists only in some parts, and therefore by an emotion that accompanies an inadequate idea.

The real scandal of hilarious pleasures comes from the fact that while all the parts of a person are equally affected by these joys, and while adequate ideas are ideas of "those things which are common to all, and which are equally in the part and in the whole" (2p38), hilarity and adequate ideas are as distinct as the pleasures of smell differ from those of understanding in the *Republic*, distinct as goods of the body and of the mind. Adequate ideas are of the whole in all five senses I just distinguished, while hilarious joys force a nonalignment of the varieties of partiality and integrity. One can, then, in hilarity be affected passively by something that affects all *one's* parts equally, without the idea of that effect being something that is common to all things and equally in all parts of everything in *natura naturata*. Something that affects all parts equally

should be a prime candidate for the second kind of knowledge, but these pleasures are very far from objects of knowledge, even from being knowable.

Note a similarity between the second kind of knowledge and these pleasures. The second kind of knowledge is perfect; its ideas are adequate and lack nothing. Hilarious joys are perfect too, and no one can make something better out of them. But the second kind of knowledge is still inferior to the third, in spite of being perfect. And hilarious pleasures, because they are without cognitive content, are inferior to active emotions that fully engage both body and mind.

In any passive emotion, we are affected by external causes. For things outside us to affect all our parts equally seems too fortuitous to be possible. What, other than something exactly like us, that is, another human being, and more accurately, another rational human being, could be such a perfect match that it increases the power of each of my parts equally? Those different kinds of partiality are useful here in showing how hilarity can be a pleasure of the whole body without agreeing with our nature, and with our minds, the way other people do. Other people through agreement strengthen the mind. The more complex the imagination, the more that people can be like-minded. By contrast, the simpler the bodies, the more they can share a nature with other bodies. Smelling the roses et al. fit neither of those models. They are experiences that fit the imagination. The analogy to Kant continues: hilarious pleasures are like Kant's idea of the free play of the faculties, except that here the experience takes place solely within the imagination.

If these oddities of hilarious pleasures weren't enough, there is an additional complication. Spinoza never proves their existence. The scholium to 3p11 simply posits them: "it should be noted [NS: here] that Pleasure and Pain are ascribed to a man when one part of him is affected more than the rest, whereas Cheerfulness [*hilaritas*] and Melancholy are ascribed to him when all are equally affected." He relies on and cites 3p11s when he starts to discuss hilarity in 4p42, with never a worry that there might be no such thing. If there weren't, my simple story would be vindicated. No wonder he says (4p44s), "Cheerfulness, which I have said is good, is more easily conceived than observed."

There is one further problem with hilarious pleasures accompanying inadequate ideas to mention before I move to a resolution. Because these are pleasures of the body, increasing power and preserving the ratio of parts without increasing knowledge, that is, having hilarious pleasures, seems more plausible the lower an individual lies on the *scala naturae*, the simpler its body.

Just as, the simpler the body, the more likely it is to find another body that fits it well enough to increase its power while preserving its proportion of motion and rest, here — and the problem is more acute — hilarious pleasures require more than a match with external bodies. A stone increases its power to act as it falls and gains kinetic energy since the faster it falls, the more it can smash into other things, and the more it can withstand other things smashing into it. My cat descending increases those powers she shares with a stone, but not her feline powers — her perceptions don't become more acute, and she doesn't increase her power to preserve herself as she gains energy and momentum. The emotions Puff feels on the way down show how her conatus and the body's actual essence are distorted by fear. The power of a stone might increase in descent with no change in its internal constitution, but the more complex the body and mind, the narrower the possibilities for the whole body being affected and so for hilarity. Smelling the roses increases the conatus of a person and, proportionately, its parts. The more complex the being, which means the more the being is characterized by knowledge and the desire for it, the more paradoxical hilarious pleasures become, because they lie between increasingly distant properties of the mind and the body. Yet these are bodily pleasures characteristic of the wise person.⁹

Body and mind are severed again if the more complex the mind, the more it can have active emotions, while the simpler the body, the more it can passively increase its power without changing the proportion of motion and rest among its parts. But since smelling the roses is uniquely human, something is wrong here. I think what is wrong is taking Spinoza at his word that these pleasures are pleasures of the body independent of mind. They are instead pleasures of the imagination possible when the understanding is sufficiently powerful.

THE ACTIVE MIND AND THE ACTIVE LIFE

The existence of hilarious passive pleasures lets us articulate a problem about adequate ideas and active emotions, two of Spinoza's three original ideas. The "Definitions of the Affects" at the end of Part 3, which explicitly confines itself to passive emotions, says that hilarious joys belong chiefly to the body, while 3p11s said that they are of the mind as well. By contrast adequate ideas and active emotions belong chiefly to the mind. But if they do, by 3p11s and 2p7, they must have somatic counterparts. Earlier I said that all adequate ideas and therefore all active emotions have the same bodily correlates, nothing but the increase in power of the whole body. All hilarious pleasures too have the same

bodily effect, namely increasing the power of the whole. In that case, unlike the all-too-human attitude of caring about the object and cause of pleasure, we should be indifferent to whether hilarious joy is caused by moonlight or roses, since the effect is the same. But hilarious pleasures raise another question: If all adequate ideas have the same bodily correlate, what is the mental correlate of these hilarious pleasures that increase the power of the body? They are available only to the wise person, but Spinoza gives no indication that they lead to further wisdom or freedom.

Seeing how the activities of adequate ideas engage the body opens up a whole series of problems that will occupy my final two chapters, but at least here we can see in what way whole and partial pleasures and pains do indeed relate chiefly to the body. Smelling the roses, while something that the wise man does, will not make anyone wiser. If they did make people wiser, then they would be instrumental. None of the properties of hilarious pleasures that I've noted could survive such subordination. These are refreshing and healthy pleasures just because they are without profit. I am ignorant of the causes of sweet music and the smell of flowers, and I have no desire to understand their causal provenance. A neurological explanation of why these things please would not increase the pleasure they occasion as the adequate idea of other emotions is supposed to. They are disinterested joys; there is no content to be known. This is very different from the idea Aristotle expresses at the beginning of the *Metaphysics* that pleasure in the senses prepares the mind for understanding, and so is evidence that all men by nature desire to know, and from the delight in imitation that comes from the pleasure of learning in *Poetics* 4. The two kinds of pleasure, of mind and body, stay distinct. But they have something else in common: neither will make anyone rich. Both can therefore look useless to most people, and both are corrupted by trying to show how they lead to further good consequences. Gratuitous pleasures not only don't come from desire; they don't lead to further desires or actions. They don't tell us something about the world that we can use further to increase our power. They are unworldly. Their impracticality doesn't explain why they are characteristic of the wise person, but it does explain why no one who is not rational, including other animals, can enjoy them. Only the wise person has a powerful enough intellect to be able to attend to impractical pleasures. Only such an intellect has corresponding to it an imagination rich enough to contain impractical pleasures.

I want to follow out the connection between the active emotions of 3p58 and 59 and the hilarious pleasures of 4p45cs, on the one hand the emotions

attached to adequate ideas, the second kind of knowledge, and on the other these others experienced by the wise person. The generous person “strives, solely from the dictate of reason, to aid other men and join them to him in friendship” (3p59s). The generous person does not discriminate and act charitably toward some people and not others, as Jacob reserved his love for Rachel. Similarly, the gratuitous increases in power of the body in 4p45s can be found anywhere. People have to happen upon them and not seek them out. Because these hilarious pleasures are not objects of pursuit, they are therefore likewise exempt from the charges of partiality. Like all other inadequate ideas, they are confused ideas of how we are affected by things, rather than accurate assessments of how things really are. But in these cases the confusion is innocent, because no one would take them for anything else. At least according to Spinoza, these pleasures are exempt from the typical human failing of thinking that because something pleases them, it must be because it is good, and therefore good for everyone. People don’t try to impose their taste for floral smells on everyone else. (This is the difference between Spinoza’s hilarious pleasures and Kant’s judgments of beauty.) That is the reason, as I mentioned above, that they are unique among passive affects in that there is no reason to make them complete and adequate, and no means of doing so. Hilarity is observed only with difficulty because there can be no rules for its generation.

These hilarious pleasures, like understanding, cannot be excessive. Therefore we don’t have to worry that either hilarity or understanding will increase power so much that the individual changes his essence, like the horse increasing his power by changing into a man in 4Preface. Titillation can be excessive because it distorts the proportion of motion and rest. If hilarity cannot be excessive, then it cannot lead to regret over loss, fear of loss, or obsession. It is for this reason that hilarity is more easily conceived than observed (4p45s). I’ve worried all along about hilarious pleasures being oddly situated between mind and body. The simplest bodies are most in harmony with the external world; the most rational minds are most in harmony with the world. That an external cause could be so suited to an individual that it can increase the power of the whole body, and that that external cause is available only to the wise person, seems too fortuitous to be possible. Spinoza agrees.

Many of our adequate ideas of the second kind of knowledge come from an effort of the conatus to convert imperfect inadequate ideas into perfect and adequate ones, the conversion whose account, frustratingly, is missing from the *Ethics*, and which, I will argue, is limited to knowledge of our emotions and self-knowledge. The second kind of knowledge is a form of adequate

ideas that emerge through contrast to inadequate ideas. These are not the adequate ideas that God thinks, which don't contain that contrast. The "hence" of 4p45s — "the human Body is composed of a great many parts of different natures, which constantly require new and varied nourishment, so that [ut] the whole Body may be equally capable of all the things which can follow from its nature, and hence, so that [consequenter ut] the Mind also may be equally capable of understanding many things" — seems to be a claim that these pleasures are especially apt to be the subject of such a conversion. Their purity and simplicity implies that there is nothing there to think about, no mixture of pleasure and pain, fear and hope, to overcome. Hilarious pleasures are not good candidates for conversion into active emotions. Their purity makes them unknowable. They are in principle and permanently unknowable. Nothing in these pleasures creates further desires and so leads to action. The more adequate an idea, the more it is connected to other ideas. The purer a pleasure, the less it has to do with other affects. Hence my analogy to Plato's pure pleasures of smells. Their lack of connection to the conatus makes it surprising that they are good for body, and maybe mind. If they are only experienced by the wise, they are only experienced by people whose conatus isn't confined to worrying about survival. The importance of these hilarious pleasures, paradoxically, is that they are a dead end. There is a nice reflexivity here: these pleasures are not connected to the conatus, and the scholium that discusses them is not connected to the rest of the *Ethics*.

I have already alluded to the words at the close of 4p45s: This way of life "is best, and to be commended in every way. Nor is it necessary for me to treat these matters more clearly or more fully." Spinoza makes good on his word here: nothing follows from 4p45s, although one would think that he has an ethical obligation to his readers to elaborate on the best way of life. The scholium is never employed in a demonstration of any further proposition. For the development of the *Ethics*, hilarity is a dead end, because there is nothing more to be said. The experience of hilarity seems to violate yet another canonical thesis: "nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow" (1p36). By contrast, the parallel proposition for the mind, that "we know nothing to be certainly good or evil, except what really leads to understanding or what can prevent us from understanding" (4p27) is extremely fertile: it is the basis for the account of "the power of the intellect, or human freedom" which occupies the rest of Part 4 and becomes the title of Part 5. Its ultimate expression is the final proposition of the *Ethics*: "Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself." Hilarious pleasures are a stubborn anomaly.

Before going on, I need to point to another oddity in the argument leading up to the account of hilarious pleasures. In 4p39 the good of the body consists in things that preserve the proportion of motion and rest among its parts. That doesn't really tell us anything new, or direct us to any particular goods. Its demonstration draws together things we already knew about the body, its needs and what satisfies them. By contrast, the good of minds established in 4p27—"We know nothing to be certainly good or evil, except what really leads to understanding or what can prevent us from understanding"—is something new, only provable through the propositions that build toward it starting with 4p19, which starts the unfolding of the "principle that everyone necessarily wants what he judges to be good." The good of the body, and with it, hilarious pleasures, play a much smaller role in the further development of the *Ethics* than the good of the mind. But that one should prefer goods of the mind to goods of the body, in spite of mind/body identity, is something Spinoza has to prove, and hilarious pleasures play a part in that proof.

Hilarious pleasures point to yet another difference between mind and body, or more precisely between the goods of mind and body. The things that satisfy 4p38-39 do not form a natural kind, as the corresponding goods of the mind do. We can't identify a class of objects that increase the power of the body: "There are as many species of Joy, Sadness, and Desire, and consequently of each affect composed of these (like vacillation of mind) or derived from them (like Love, Hate, Hope, Fear, etc.), as there are species of objects by which we are affected" (3p56); "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" (3p57). Neither of those propositions is true for the active emotions or adequate ideas. The hilarious pleasures of 4p45s don't form a natural kind either. As passive, they are unpredictable. The wise person takes his pleasures where he finds them.

Before Spinoza started to bring inadequate and adequate ideas into contact with each other in Part 4, he claimed in 2p39c that "the Mind is more capable of perceiving more things adequately in proportion as its body has more things in common with other bodies." It is plausible to think that the complex body of a human being can be affected by external things, maintain its equilibrium, and increase its power, to the extent that it "has many things in common with other bodies." But, as I said earlier, this statement is odd because, unlike minds, bodies can't help having everything in common with other bodies. A given human body is made up of carbon and other elements, which are also the elements of other bodies. And 2p39c seems to imply that the simpler

the body, the more it has in common with other bodies, and so the minds of simple bodies are more perceptive than those of more complex bodies.¹⁰

Hilarious pleasures can help us reject that unappealing implication. They are only perceived by wise people, who have the most complex minds and bodies. Less complex minds and bodies are indifferent to the charms of smelling the roses. Back in chapter 3 I noted that one of the consequences of a more complex mind and body is that the imagination, for both better and worse, can conceive of possibilities beyond the actual things in front of it. There is something parallel here. The less complex a body and mind, the greater the variety of features of the world that are indifferent and imperceptible to them. Parallel to imagined possibilities, only the complex and wise mind can perceive things that are of no use to the individual. Like imagined possibilities, disinterested pleasures are a luxury inconceivable to less complex individuals. The pleasures described in 4p38, which dispose the body so it can be affected in more ways and act in more ways, might lead to enhanced understanding, but the innocent pleasures of 4p45s do not. As a dead end, hilarious pleasures stand for all the pleasures of 4p38–39 because in a less direct way, they too are a dead end. They don't pick out a set of emotions or actions, as the good of the mind does in 4p23–28. Apart from increasing the power of the mind, they are a dead end; after 4p42, we never hear from them again. Hilarious pleasures resemble Descartes's and Aristotle's wonder in not being directed to any practical end, and in being available only to the most complex minds, but unlike their wonder, they don't lead anywhere.

I've drawn attention to hilarious pleasures because they make more complex the relation between mind and body, and we can now draw a radical conclusion. The good of the intellect is identified in 4p25 and 27 as its own end. We don't understand for the sake of anything else. But the goods of the body in 4p38–39 have no identity of their own because they are not good in themselves but only insofar as they lead to the good of the understanding. Mind and body may be identical, but the goods of the body are instrumental to the goods of the mind. In Part 5 human freedom and immortality are properties of the mind alone.

Neither hilarity nor the "desire that arises from reason" can be excessive (4p42, 4p61), but for very different reasons. Hilarious pleasures cannot be excessive because in them the body's power of acting increases while the proportion among its parts stays the same, and therefore it is always good, and therefore never excessive. Their partiality, in being modifications of inadequate ideas, does not prevent them from increasing the power of the whole.

And yet, as we saw, in exemplifying the pleasures of hilarity, Spinoza says that the wise man will “refresh and restore himself *in moderation* with pleasant food and drink.” The pleasures of knowledge also have no excess, but in this case because there is no standard by which they could be called moderate: the more, the better. For hilarious pleasures, the wise man is not tempted to excess, not tempted to obsess over the pleasing smell of perfumes. Excess comes from stimulating one part of the body at the expense of the rest. Only the wise man can have disinterested pleasures, without worrying about what it profits him; only he can afford to be fully passive. These innocent pleasures may increase one’s power, but they aren’t enjoyed *because* they increase power. They lead not to but from wisdom. In contrast to some of Socrates’s arguments in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, this experience of beauty isn’t a short-cut to wisdom or even, as Kant has it, a symbol of morality. While with its active emotions and adequate ideas the mind, achieving its own good, is maximally active, the body, with hilarious pleasures as its good, is maximally passive. That the good, or even a good, for the body is fully passive again draws a wedge between body and mind. Trying to enjoy music in order to increase one’s power would be a case of bootstrap empowerment, and would be excessive.

This difference between innocent pleasures, which the wise person enjoys in moderation, and the pleasures of reason, which have no excess, reflects Spinoza’s remark in the *TTP* that powerful imagination and powerful intellect cannot coexist in the same mind. To the extent that having a powerful imagination is a power of the body, as 4p38–39 suggest, the goods of body and mind again fall apart. They are only joined in the figure of the wise person, whose modesty of imagination comes from its being under control of reason. Even in these gratuitous pleasures, where reason seems uninvolved, the imagination is under control of reason.

Hilarious pleasures can teach the mind that moderation is not inimical to the desire for increased power and the desire for perfection. Moderation isn’t settling for something short of the best; but these pleasures can remind the mind that striving for perfection does not neglect moderate pleasures of the body. The body is a prison from which reason should flee, as in the *Phaedo*, only if the body can affect the mind. The trouble is that only the wise person can have these moderate and noninstrumental pleasures, and only such a person can conceive of them. At the end of this chapter we will turn to another set of nonintellectual pleasures characteristic of the wise man, and these pleasures of society and friendship are not the dead end that smelling the roses is.

I’ve been exploring two odd features of hilarious pleasures: that they, like

Descartes's wonder, appear to have no connection to the conatus, but, unlike wonder, they have no cognitive content and so, unlike the rest of the passive emotions, cannot be perfected into adequate ideas and active emotions. To these two anomalies, I can here add a third odd feature of hilarity. The list of examples Spinoza gives contain both natural and man-made sources of pleasure: "pleasant food and drink, with scents, with the beauty of green plants, with decoration, music, sports, the theater, and other things of this kind." Strikingly missing is human beauty. There is no connection between these disinterested pleasures of the whole body and the erotic. Unlike Spinoza's examples, the pleasures caused by human beauty are not the privilege of the wise, and they are not something that can be enjoyed with moderation. The appetite for human beauty is insatiable. Hilarious pleasures are even more innocent than one might have thought.

INCREASING POWER AND INCREASING ACTIVITY

We must, it seems, distinguish two stages of reason or freedom: increasing our power of action by striving to experience a maximum of joyful passive affections; and thence passing on to a final stage in which our power of action has so increased that it becomes capable of producing affections that are themselves active. The link between these two stages remains, to be sure, mysterious. (Gilles Deleuze)¹¹

The mysterious connection Deleuze talks about is the hole in Spinoza's argument I've stressed throughout, that he offers no pathway from inadequate to adequate ideas. Deleuze's two stages are the increase in power and the increase in activity, becoming more of an adequate cause. Smelling the roses increases the *power* of the individual, since it is a pleasure, while active emotions and adequate ideas increase the individual's *activity*, making her more of an adequate cause. Earlier I mentioned the puzzles about what happens to a body when the mind thinks adequate ideas and how active emotions can lead to particular actions, two difficult relations of the finite and the infinite, and the related quandary is what it would mean for a body to be active. A mind is active, unproblematically, when it is determined to act by an adequate idea. A body is active when the associated mind is active. Adequate ideas make minds active because there is nothing outside the mind causing its thoughts or its actions. But the body can never be causally isolated in a corresponding way. Not only is the body never causally isolated, but its activities are actions in a larger

world outside itself, unlike the activity of the mind, which consists in adequate ideas generating further adequate ideas within the mind.¹²

The serious moral nature of *Ethics* 4 comes from the fact that increasing power and increasing activity are not identical. We've known that they are distinct since the beginning of chapter 3 with its paradox of passive pleasures, which increase one's power without at all increasing the extent to which one is an adequate cause. The cunning of imagination, and its blindness, come from the fact that while power is an idea accessible to the imagination, activity and being an adequate cause is not. Power and freedom, which is a function of activity, seem to operate along different dimensions for Spinoza, since something can become more powerful without increasing its understanding and hence its freedom, and an individual can become more rational and free without accumulating resources that would make him more powerful in interacting with the rest of nature. Having adequate ideas will not make you rich, although it will usually make you satisfied with whatever wealth you have. Imagination and understanding look incommensurable. The imagination can appreciate the hilarious pleasures of smelling the roses, and is not troubled by their lack of cognitive and conative content. But only an imagination that lies within a mind guided by its adequate ideas.

In hilarious pleasures, the power of the body increases effortlessly, that is, without connection to the conatus. In chapter 1 I argued that adequate ideas have no conatus. They share then a lack of connection to the conatus that is the actual essence of the individual. I want now to use that similarity to turn to the ethical side of the *Ethics*. The problem of ethics is how the infinite, in the form of adequate ideas, can not only be thought by a finite mind, but can have power over that mind. That adequate ideas can ever be adequate causes must be doubted because the mind's inadequate ideas have power which comes from the power of their external causes, and those external causes can always be more powerful than the mind and body of any finite individual (4p4). On the other hand, adequate ideas as infinite are more powerful than anything finite, if only they can engage with the finite. My final two chapters will concentrate on this dilemma, but we can make some progress by this attention to hilarious pleasures.

Both hilarious pleasures and adequate ideas affect and empower the body as a whole. How adequate ideas can affect and empower the whole individual is Spinoza's deepest ethical problem. If we can learn something about how that latter process happens by looking at hilarity, this focus on hilarity will be worth it, since we need all the help we can get in understanding how adequate ideas can be adequate causes.

Whatever the relation between smelling the roses and understanding, they are not the somatic and mental correlates of each other. The only hint Spinoza gives about the mental correlate of hilarious pleasures is that wise people engage in them. (It was my emendation that *only* wise people can appreciate them.) When the mind is engaged in rigorously making connections among adequate ideas, the body isn't off enjoying sweet music. In chapter 3 I rejected the attractive hypothesis that the conatus of bodies tried to preserve themselves, while the conatus of the mind tried to increase power, but that possibility continues to haunt Spinoza's argument, like the rejected hypothesis from chapter 1 that the modes of extension are finite while those of thought are infinite. And so the scholium after 4p39, which was the second in a pair of propositions about the good of the body, seems to underline the lack of parallelism between mind and body by questioning whether continued personal identity is a matter of corporeal continuity, or that of memory: "A man of advanced years believes their nature to be so different . . . that he could not be persuaded that he was ever an infant, if he did not make this conjecture concerning himself from the example of others." It is only because of bodily, not mental, continuity, reasoning by observing other people, that the "man of advanced years" believes that he was once an infant.

"The human Body, to be preserved, requires a great many other bodies, by which it is, as it were, continually regenerated" (Postulate 4 after 2p13). As I argued in chapter 1, that postulate has no obvious equivalent for the mind. Ideas don't atrophy or need to be replaced as body parts do. Nor does the mind grow through feeding on external objects. Nor, more critically, do we acquire adequate ideas through a richer imaginative experience. Instead, the equivalent to Postulate 4 for minds would be that the human mind needs for its preservation a great many other human minds, the social imaginary I argued for in chapter 3.

To act from adequate ideas and with active emotions is necessarily to act to preserve oneself while maintaining the proportion of motion and rest among one's parts. The examples of innocent pleasures show that the converse is not necessarily true. It is possible to maintain the proportion of motion and rest among one's parts while being acted upon and acting from inadequate ideas. The paradox of passive pleasures that has occupied us starting in chapter 3 is much more acute for hilarious pleasures. In 4p37 the goods of the intellect are identified with the goods of society, but hilarious pleasures are not social at all. Their being a dead end in the *Ethics* turns out to be an advantage. Unlike other goods of the body, they don't lead to conflict, unless someone tries to impose his tastes on others, but they stand apart from the identification of the

good life with the common life. The crucial assertion that nothing is as useful to man as man (4p18s) has no relevance to these pleasures.

Compared to other emotions, then, hilarious joys are in the colloquial sense as passive as possible, because of their lack of connection to desire. They are not connected to pain either. Many pleasures are only relative and come about because of release from pain—but not these, and not the active emotions. Earlier I said that these pleasures were moderate while the pleasures of understanding could not be excessive. Now we can amplify that contrast by saying that where understanding is its own end (4p26d), the pleasures we take in as a spectator are disinterested, two very different contraries to being instrumental, recalling the two kinds of pure pleasure in *Republic IX*. Understanding is its own end, but the goods of the body never are. That is why, as I argued before, 4p26 has concrete content, but the goods of the body in 4p38–39 do not form a natural kind. Gratuitous pleasures come close to being their own end since they aren't good for anything else. Spinoza can offer a list of them, but like 4p38–39 and unlike 4p26, these examples don't fall under a concept. Just before asserting that “what we strive for from reason is nothing but understanding” (4p26), Spinoza claims that “no one strives to preserve his being for the sake of anything else” (4p25); neither understanding nor smelling the roses can be done for the sake of some other thing. Desire rooted in adequate ideas is then not tied to the individual's conatus, since the highest good is not the good of any particular individual. This is the dark side of 4p37: “the good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men” because no one desires it for oneself as a unique individual distinct from others. The dead end here is the death of individuality that accompanies the growth of rationality. Hilarious pleasures of the body mitigate that absorption of the rational mind of the individual into rationality itself.

In chapter 3 I offered an account of why Spinoza does not show how inadequate ideas lead to adequate ones, nor of how people come to have adequate ideas. My story showed how the cunning of imagination led people to rationality through sociability. Hilarious pleasures show why Spinoza cannot give an account of how or whether inadequate ideas lead to adequate ones. If any emotion could lead to someone's acquiring adequate ideas, it would be these. They affect the entire body, and so don't distort it as most passions do. They are characteristic of wise people, but they don't lead to wisdom. People living together become rational in a way that people appreciating music and theater do not. To advocate an aesthetic education of mankind would be to short-circuit the necessary connection between rationality and sociability. *Nothing* is as useful to man as man.

HILARIOUS PLEASURES ARE
INACCESSIBLE TO REASON

I want to recall two unique features of hilarious pleasures. They are not capable of conversion into adequate ideas, or active emotions. There is nothing to know. And second, they are joys not connected to the conatus, although they enhance the power of the whole body. Their anomalous nature means that they don't fit Spinoza's account in Part 5 of the power of the intellect over the passions. These are passions over which the intellect has no power. It's worth seeing that thesis through by briefly looking at the specific means Spinoza does offer for making passive emotions into adequate ideas. The scholium to 5p20 summarizes Spinoza's account of remedies for the emotions and "the power of the Mind over the affects" (*mentis in affectus potentiam*) under five headings.

The power of the Mind over the affects consists:

- I. In the knowledge itself of the affects (see P4S);
- II. In the fact that it separates the affects from the thought of an external cause, which we imagine confusedly (see P2 and P4S);
- III. In the time by which the affections related to things we understand surpass those related to things we conceive confusedly, or in a mutilated way (see P7);
- IV. In the multiplicity of causes by which affections related to common properties or to God are encouraged (see P9 and P11);
- V. Finally, in the order by which the Mind can order its affects and connect them to one another.

The first remedy is "the knowledge itself of the affects." For this power of the mind, Spinoza refers back to 5p4s. If we read that scholium with hilarious passions in mind, it looks false. "Everyone has the power to understand clearly and distinctly whatever follows from an idea which is adequate in us (by IIP4o); hence, each of us has—in part, at least, if not absolutely—the power to understand himself and his affects." It isn't a lack of power that prevents hilarious pleasures from being known. There just isn't anything to know. If the principle of sufficient reason states that everything is knowable and explicable, hilarious pleasures violate it. Like the pure pleasures of smell in Plato, they don't admit of generalization or definition. There is no discernible or predictable pattern of hilarious joys. Spinoza's examples don't add up

to a concept. There is no science of beauty or aesthetics. That “different men can be affected differently by one and the same object; and one and the same man can be affected differently at different times by one and the same object” (3p51) does not prevent Spinoza from constructing a science of the passions in Part 3, but the unpredictable occasions for hilarious pleasures prevents him from saying anything more than the scholium to 4p45. Once again, “Cheerfulness, which I have said is good, is more easily conceived than observed” (4p44s).

The second remedy in 5p20s consists in “separat[ing] the affects from the thought of an external cause, which we imagine confusedly.” But we have no attachment to the ideas of the external causes of innocent pleasures, since they are not attached to desire. Hilarious passions are already detached from the thought of their external cause, and so the second remedy is not necessary for hilarious joys. The example of hilarity shows that the detachment Spinoza is speaking about here is not an intellectual operation but an emotional one. So too for the third and fourth remedies. The wider the occasions for a passive emotion, the more it can be separated from its circumstances and so known by itself. Nothing like that could occur for hilarity. Nor is there any multiplicity of “causes by which affections related to common properties or to God are encouraged.”

The last power of the mind is “the order by which the Mind can order its affects and connect them to one another.” Adequate ideas are connected to one another by a rational order, not the common order of nature. The practical problem with adequate ideas is, since they are about everything, they aren’t about anything in particular, and so seem practically useless. Hilarious pleasures, too, since they increase the power of the whole body and all its parts, are not connected to any particular part of the body. They can be connected to all of them. Hilarious emotions, because they increase the power of each part, can be associated with any other emotion. While nothing follows from 4p45s in the rest of the *Ethics*, we can now see that in a sense hilarious passions themselves are not a dead end like wonder. They enhance the pleasure of all other passions. Sévérac puts it well:

If these joys [of 4p45s] lead us to persevere in passivity, and not at all to desire activity, this is because these are, one could say, the structure of *admiratio*. Admiration is not an affect: neither joy, nor sadness, nor determination of the essence to do something (desire). But it isn’t nothing: it is an image of the body, and an imagination of the mind, that is a certain passion by which the power to act is neutralized.¹³

For this last remedy of the passions Spinoza refers back to 5p10. That proposition itself states that “so long as we are not torn by affects *contrary to our nature*, we have the power of ordering and connecting the affections of the Body according to the order of the intellect.” Hilarious emotions, even while passive, cannot be contrary to our nature. Since they are equally in the part and the whole of the body, although not the whole of nature, they are affections of the body which are easily arranged according to the order of the intellect. The scholium supplies us with further connections between hilarious pleasures and the power of the mind. Hilarious pleasures leave the mind clear enough that it can form adequate ideas, which is why the wise man engages in them. The ambitious person, as such, would take no pleasure in them. While it is always dangerous to infer from someone’s tastes to that person’s moral character, Spinoza does just that. Only the wise man can have disinterested pleasures; others will be deaf to these experiences because there is nothing in it for them. Only the wise man, that is, can afford to be fully passive.

As we’ve seen, hilarity mimics active emotions in several ways. There is a further emotion that we haven’t yet considered which closes the gap between them, that emotion that supplies the connection between increasing power and increasing activity. It is self-esteem (*acquiescentia in se ipso*), defined as “Joy born of the fact that a man considers himself and his own power of acting” (*Acquiescentia in se ipso est laetitia orta ex eo, quod homo se ipsum suamque agendi potentiam contemplatur*) (3da25). Unlike hilarity, it is an emotion of the whole mind and body, not just of the body. It is an emotion that can be either passive or active (see 5p4s). It is passive especially when “the more he imagines himself to be praised by others, the greater the Joy with which he imagines himself to affect others” (3p53c). Unlike hilarity, too, self-contentment can be a destructive pleasure: “Everyone will have the greatest gladness from considering himself, when he considers something in himself which he denies concerning others. . . . But if he relates what he affirms of himself to the universal idea of man or animal, he will not be so greatly gladdened” (3p55c, see 3da26exp). Here the imagination and reason are at odds. Unlike hilarity, self-contentment does modify an idea, that of oneself and one’s activity. The passive emotion which modifies an idea can be converted, by being known, into an active one. When we are really active and act from active emotions, we will feel self-contentment, while the self-contentment one feels by thinking oneself superior to others leads away from, not toward, adequate ideas and activity.

Passive self-contentment, then, is not an innocent pleasure, and so does not count as hilarity. It satisfies Spinoza’s definition of hilarity, as a pleasure

of the whole, and its contrary, humility, is parallel to melancholy, but it tends, except when active and rational, to excess, not moderation. It does not distort the ratio of motion and rest, as do partial pleasures, but is harmful nonetheless. Self-contentment based on an adequate idea of oneself and one's actions, however, is the self-knowledge that constitutes the climax of the *Ethics*, as I will show in my final chapter.

Hilarity and self-contentment are brought together by Genevieve Lloyd in a passage worth quoting at length:

Hilaritas is the reflective joy a thriving human being is able to take in having in this sense "a life" — in being a unified whole in which a wide range of pleasures come together, without any having the "stubborn fixity" that inhibits others. So, in the case of human beings, *hilaritas* (cheerfulness) complements and completes *gaudium* (gladness). . . . The capacity for *hilaritas* depends on a certain physiological complexity. That complexity allows the comparisons between different experiences which yields his version of the common notion of reason. So *hilaritas* is a pleasure of reason; but it has its basis in complexity of bodily structure.¹⁴

Lloyd nicely resolves the question of where to locate hilarious pleasures, whether in the body or body and mind. They are a pleasure that can attach to all other pleasures, as self-contentment can attach to all actions. They are both emotions suitable for the wise person. They will help keep the life of reason from being a life of reason rather than emotion, or even rather than passion.

Adequate ideas make it easier to resist the destructive passions that are always possible, since man is always a part of nature. But these innocent pleasures also make it easier to resist passions, not by being themselves more powerful passions — they are not — but by giving the mind the easily available experience of the result of the remedies of 5p20s; the remedies themselves, as I showed, are not necessary, because they are already built into hilarious pleasures. If I can be nonobsessive about these passions, I will have a better chance of resisting others (see too 5p11 and 13).

The *Ethics* contains repeated moments when the power or activity of the body or of the mind temporarily outruns the other, until finally at the end of Part 5 the immortality of the mind has no somatic counterpart at all. While the mind and the body are the same individual, first conceived under the attribute of thought and then of extension, the *Ethics* shows us virtues of the mind not

associated with the body, and virtues of the body not directly connected to perfections of the mind, adequate ideas and active emotions on the one hand and hilarious pleasures on the other. By being both passive and an increase in power equally in the parts and the whole, hilarious passions improve the condition of the body without being the correlate of adequate ideas. Unlike the pleasures of understanding, Spinoza's examples show passive hilarity to be fleeting, shorter in duration than much more partial pleasures.

The way hilarious pleasures challenge the universal intelligibility of a Spinozan principle of sufficient reason is another variation on a theme that appears throughout my argument. It's slightly misleading to claim that Spinoza is committed to Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason. Everything is intelligible, but the more reality something has the more intelligible it is. Therefore for Spinoza a principle of sufficient reason has a normative sense: it is as true to say that everything *should* be intelligible as that it is intelligible. The principle of sufficient reason is constantly challenged in the *Ethics*. In chapter 1 that challenge comes from the existence of finite modes, which Spinoza says cannot be deduced from God. In chapter 2, it is error that is unintelligible, for there I ask how one can avoid inferring that since I am a mode of God, and my error is a mode of me, it follows that error is a mode of God. In chapter 3 universal intelligibility has to confront the way some passions are self-destructive. In chapter 4 the challenge comes from the obstinate way in which Jacob, and people in general, not only want pleasure but pleasure from a specific source. In chapter 5, it's akrasia; like error, its presence doesn't easily fit into a universe that is organized as a hierarchy of increasing intelligibility and reality. In chapter 6, it is aesthetic experiences, which are not predictable and not obviously explicable. A causal account seems pointless for them. Unintelligible pleasures are a more severe challenge to sufficient reason than unintelligible pains. (In chapter 8 it is contingency, which is unintelligible, but a necessary fiction for people to be able to act.)

HILARITY AND FRIENDSHIP

Proposition 45 to Part 4 interrupts a series of propositions which outline how the rational life is a life of engagement with others, because hilarious pleasures have nothing to do with other people. And so I noted earlier that human beauty does not figure among Spinoza's examples. In contrast to these pleasures, we only take pleasure in our own activity (*acquiescentia in se ipso*) through becoming part of a greater whole, and in particular through friend-

ship. It is for this reason that Spinoza does not object to the self-contentment that derives from other people's praise. Hilarity is a simulacrum of adequate ideas in precisely the same way as agreement is a simulacrum of reason among human beings in society. Agreement is empowerment of all parts, with or without reason. But it in turn provides the circumstances in which reason can develop.¹⁵ We see this most vividly in the escape from the state of nature, in which through inadequate ideas and passive emotions people join together in a society, which in turn provides a forum for the development of rationality. Hilarity is an increase in power of a particular individual and so a particular whole. Adequate ideas know things that are equally in the part and the whole, not only in some particular part and whole. Hilarious pleasures are then an antidote to adequate ideas. When we take pleasure in our own activity in self-contentment, it is not pleasure in what sets us apart from other people; a life guided by reason is fulfilled through a loss of individuality. Hilarious pleasures represent a nondestructive form of individuality or idiosyncrasy. The pleasures I get from listening to Messiaen are not for everybody.

The pleasures one can take in the natural world via these hilarious pleasures are analogous to the attitude we should take toward other people, in spite of the fact that he tells us that nonhuman nature is there to be used (4p68s), and that there are no virtues for nonhuman nature in 3p59s. The pleasures of nature are pleasures that do not come from the satisfaction of desires. We accept the beauties of nature as they are, as we should accept other people. We don't judge roses in a competition, not if we are to have the joys Spinoza speaks about. Similarly, we only frustrate ourselves if we try to make people rational according to our own lights. That is a passive ambition that can have nothing to do with friendliness.

There are no active emotions for nonhuman nature. In our dealings with nonhuman nature, we don't need adequate ideas. The imagination is sufficient for negotiating our way among nonhuman objects, because the imagination is perfectly suited for instrumental calculations. But the imagination is inept in the face of the two things for which instrumental calculations are inappropriate — oneself and other people. There one needs adequate ideas, and so active emotions.

I used non-Spinozan language to say that the things that increase the power of our bodies do not form a natural kind. Now I can draw a connection between that claim and the sufficiency of the imagination. Each person has to calculate for him or herself what will preserve and increase the power of the body. In the case of hilarious pleasures, each person has to be open to what-

ever refreshes his or her body. In both cases, following the example of others is of limited, but significant, value. There are no adequate ideas that can capture the objects that affect us in this way. That is what I meant by saying that the things that benefit the body do not form a natural kind. When Spinoza says in the *TTP* that for practical purposes we are better off regarding things as contingent, he is pointing to the sufficiency of the imagination, when it comes to calculating which external causes will serve us best. I will argue in the final chapter that while there can be sciences of medicine and logic, there is no method for ethics.

Of course we *can* treat other people, or even ourselves, mechanically and instrumentally. That would be as wrong as Adam's refusal to deal with non-human animals as emotionally similar to him, and for the same reason—both ways of acting fail to make us as powerful as we could be. I said earlier that it is through our social relations that people can overcome the limitations of inadequate idea and know things adequately. We can now see that there is a necessary connection. It isn't just that we can understand ourselves better by understanding other people. When Spinoza says that nothing is as useful to man as man he isn't making a comparative judgment saying people are more useful to each other than other things measured by a single standard. *Only* people are useful to each other in the project of becoming not merely more powerful but more active. We live under the guidance of reason in the first instance when we live under the guidance of a ruler, who may himself not embody rationality. The transition from the first to the second kind of knowledge is through obedience.

Recall 4p38: Whatever “so disposes the human Body that it can be affected in a great many ways, or renders it capable of affecting external Bodies in a great many ways, is useful to man.” The good condition of the body, that is, is good for the mind. Missing is an assertion about the other direction. Is what is good for the mind good for the body? Does living under the guidance of reason put the body into better shape? Will being wise, if not make you rich, make you healthy? I suggest on Spinoza's behalf that the answer comes from the connection he draws in 4p40: not only is the good condition of society good for the mind, but the more rational individual will be the better citizen. That proposition about social goods would otherwise be an irrelevant interruption of a series of propositions about the goods of body and mind. Our scholium to 4p45 supplies the first reversal of direction that shows that what is good for the mind is good for the body: the wise person, enjoying innocent pleasures, has access to a bodily good not available to others.

The question of whether the mind's good, understanding itself, is also good for the body will become, in my final chapter, the question of the relation between the highest good, that of understanding, and the goods of a complete life, the *totum bonum*. Without such a relation between the good of the mind and that of the body, the best the wise person can do is a studied indifference to the demands of the body. The point of the scholium on innocent hilarious pleasures is to deny such indifference. If Part 4 had ended with 4p45s, it would be fair to say that these pleasures evade the question of the relation between goods of the mind and those of the body. It is a good thing that these pleasures are not the only bodily pleasures of the wise person, and good that Spinoza points them out and then never refers to them again. The rest of Part 4 shows what life under the guidance of reason looks like; that there are innocent hilarious pleasures prepares the way for more robust goods of the body that follow from those of the mind. The next proposition, 4p46, begins filling in that picture of how the person guided by reason acts, in addition to thinking: "He who lives according to the guidance of reason strives, as far as he can, to repay the other's Hate, Anger, and Disdain toward him, with Love, or Nobility." The most asocial of pleasures introduces a new dimension to the connection between sociability and rationality.

The Strength of the Emotions and the Power of the Intellect

Part 4 of the *Ethics* is titled “Of Human Bondage, or the Strength of the Emotions” (*de servitute humana seu de affectuum viribus*), and Part 5, “Of the Power of the Intellect, or On Human Freedom” (*de potentia intellectus seu de libertate humana*). This chapter asks whether the strength of the emotions and the power of the intellect have a common measure. This sounds abstract, but the *Ethics* turns on an affirmative answer. The issue is whether adequate ideas, which are infinite, that is, self-limiting and therefore not limited by anything else—an inference we’ll have to explore—can encounter inadequate ideas and passive emotions in a common world, being enslaved by them and in turn mastering them. *Akrasia* has already shown us one form of commensurability between finite and infinite as inadequate ideas can overpower adequate ideas. This is human bondage. Part 4 ends on a happier note, showing how adequate ideas can overcome the power of external causes, in spite of the fact that people are always threatened by external forces more powerful than what we can muster internally. There is drama in the *Ethics* because both bondage and freedom are live possibilities for the individual human being, still within a world that is wholly determinate and necessary.

One reason that finding a common measure between inadequate and adequate ideas, between passive and active emotions, is so difficult is that, from Part 1 on, finite and infinite modes are parts of two distinct causal series: only finite modes cause other finite modes and only infinite modes cause other infinite modes. The ontological importance of human freedom consists in the fact that it is only in human knowledge of and power over the passions that

finite and infinite modes, inadequate and adequate ideas, come into contact with each other.

To build a case that adequate ideas can be more powerful than violent passions, Spinoza has two needles to thread. First, he has to show that people can be the adequate cause of their actions without being the adequate cause of their existence, without being *causae sui*. Second, as if that wasn't hard enough, he has to show both that adequate ideas and inadequate ideas and passive emotions live in a common world. Adequate ideas cannot be destroyed by inadequate ideas—someone who has an adequate idea cannot doubt it—and so finite and infinite are incommensurable. *Akrasia* shows that the finite can affect the infinite, but Spinoza needs a distinct argument to prove that the infinite, adequate idea, can affect the finite, passive emotions and the mind that contains them.

HOW TO MEASURE POWER, FINITE AND INFINITE

To every action to which we are determined from an affect which is a passion, we can be determined by reason, without that affect. (4p59)

Proposition 59 of Part 4 contains one of the most remarkable turns in Spinoza's argument. It asserts something that seems false on its face, that anything that we can do through passion can be done through reason alone, that the internal power of knowledge is more powerful than external forces, although external forces can always be more powerful than any individual. Knowledge is not necessarily the slave of the passions. There are no external forces so great, he says, that they can compel us to do something we couldn't do by ourselves through knowledge.

Proposition 59 not only runs counter to many propositions from early in Part 4, but it flies in the face of obvious counterexamples. Iago through hatred destroys Othello, and Achilles out of grief for the dead Patroclus defeats the Trojan army and desecrates the body of Hector in a way that no one could do from reason alone. No one acting through adequate ideas could be as rich as Rockefeller, or could kill as many people as Stalin. I believe, and my imagination affirms, that love, anger, and hate can impel me to do things that I couldn't do through reason alone.

Leibniz puts the point nicely:

The more a wicked man sets himself above the promptings of conscience and of honor, the more does he exceed the good man in

strength, so that if he comes to grips with the good man he must, according to the course of nature, ruin him. If, moreover, they are both engaged in the business of finance, the wicked man must, according to the same course of nature, grow richer than the good man, just as a fierce fire consumes more wood than a fire of straw.¹

Inadequate ideas can determine us to drink ourselves into a stupor, or acquire as much wealth as possible. There are things that I can do only by valuing present goods above greater future ones, like taking steroids that, although they shorten my life, will make me a stronger football player. Closer to Spinoza's home, my inadequate idea of a model of human nature, an unrealized possibility, causes me to aspire to increase my power, even though reason knows that there are no possibilities, only necessity.

Not only does 4p59 seem contradicted by examples that could obviously be multiplied indefinitely, but the opening of Part 4 seems to make human bondage inevitable and insuperable. Immediately after we are told that "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" (4p4), we learn that "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" (4p5). Consider too 4p15d, which asserts a different commensurability:

Desires which arise from affects by which we are torn are also greater as these affects are more violent. And so their force and growth (by P5) must be defined by the power of external causes, which, if it were compared with ours, would indefinitely surpass our power (by P3). Hence, Desires which arise from such affects can be more violent than that which arises from a true knowledge of good and evil.²

If "the force by which a man perseveres in existing is limited, and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes" (4p3), the happy declaration of 4p59 comes as a surprise. A small worm in a large and threatening environment has little reason to think that adequate ideas can ever be more powerful than passive emotions.

The only reason the situation isn't hopeless is because Spinoza does not yet tell us how the force of an active emotion is defined, or how to compare it with the power of a passive emotion. We know how to measure one passive affect

against another: we weigh the power of their respective external causes. But when an emotion is active, we aren't yet in a position to know how to compare its power to that of a passive emotion.

According to 4p59d, emotions are passive,

insofar as the man's power of acting is not increased to the point where he conceives himself and his actions adequately. So if a man affected with Joy were led to such a great perfection that if he conceived himself and his actions adequately, he would be capable—indeed more capable—of the same actions to which he is now determined from affects which are passions.

What we think of as the strength of the passive emotions—its drawing on external forces more powerful than the individual, and becoming more powerful as a result—turns out to be a weakness and privation. That is how 4p59 is a turning point in the *Ethics*. (An analogous argumentative move, taking something that looks like a sign of power and turning it into evidence of weakness occurs in the *TTP*. Superstitious people regard miracles as the best proof of God's power, but if miracles did exist, they would be evidence not of God's power but of its weakness, God's inability to bring about desired effects by universal means. In both cases, what the imagination regards as power, reason knows to be weakness.) Drawing power from external sources has been a wise response to the fact that every individual is surrounded by forces more powerful than it is. We now learn that there's an even better strategy, relying on internal power alone. Spinoza is going to pull off this conversion of the strength of the emotions into a weakness in a striking way. Adequate and inadequate ideas, the infinite and the finite, will have a common measure just because adequate ideas have their own noncomparative measure of power. It takes the argument between the discouraging beginning of 4p3 and 4p4 until 4p59 to allow the intellect to get the imagination to play on its own ground.

The *Ethics* offers some precedent for this reversal. Traditionally, truth is defined as the adequation of idea and object. *Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus* is Aquinas's formula, which he attributes to Isaac Israeli. The truth of an idea then has an external standard, how the idea measures up to the object. Spinoza instead defines an adequate idea as "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" (2def4). Adequate ideas are adequate without being adequate to something else.³ Adequate ideas have a nonrelative

and intrinsic meaning, and Spinoza will here discover a nonrelative and intrinsic measure of the power of ideas. In chapter 3 I distinguished an external and relative measure of power from an internal and noncompetitive measure, in order to distinguish a Spinozan desire for more power from the similar-sounding Hobbesian one. Here the individual is able to move from a life governed by the relative measure of power, and by the imagination, to a rational life in which one is powerful without having power over something else. It is by having that sense of power that adequate ideas can then have power over the passions.

Adequate ideas have an intrinsic measure: "The more perfection each thing has, the more it acts and the less it is acted on; and conversely, the more it acts, the more perfect it is" (5p40). Asking for a common standard between the intrinsic measure of adequate ideas and the relative and external measure of inadequate ideas and passive emotions demands that adequate ideas engage the world through their power over the passions. Being self-limited does not prevent an idea from limiting something else.

The power of reason over the emotions comes from Spinoza's finally being able to exploit something that we knew from the beginning, that finite modes are partial modifications of infinite modes. Even if every finite mode is only caused by an indefinite sequence of other finite modes—inadequate ideas are caused by inadequate ideas—every finite mode is a part of some infinite mode. The infinite mode must be more powerful than any partial expression of it. And so 4p59 would have been easy to prove earlier in Part 4, but that proof would have been practically useless until this point in the argument, although I will have to show in what sense it is now practical.

Adding the fact that finite modes are parts of or modify infinite modes complicates the incommensurability between adequate and inadequate ideas. Neither imagination nor reason can perceive the correlation between inadequate and adequate ideas. Adequate and inadequate ideas have different domains. The second kind of knowledge cannot know individual essences and the modifications of the conatus that constitute the passions. Therefore reason cannot identify which infinite mode or adequate idea a given passion is a part of.

Spinoza is happy to assert things that are paradoxical in the sense that they upset common opinion. But he usually notes when he is doing so. Not only does he not trumpet his triumph here, but as far as the geometric method is concerned, it is a dead end, just like the hilarious pleasures of 4p45 that I discussed in the last chapter. Neither 4p59 nor its scholium is ever used as

a premise for further deductions. (4p59 is cited in the scholium to 5p4, but Spinoza calls that a digression.) Even if nothing follows from 4p59 demonstratively, all the happy conclusions of the *Ethics* follow practically, and dramatically.

I single out 4p59 too because it is the first place where reason and emotion are opposed, a necessary first step toward the rule of reason over the passions in Part 5. Axiom 3 in Part 2 had insisted that passions are all modifications of ideas, so that a hierarchy of reason vs. passion seemed impossible. But the success of the *Ethics* as ethics depends on opposing reason to emotion, an opposition Spinoza denied in Parts 2 and 3 but develops in Part 4. The part's final definition (4def8) asserts that virtue and power are identical, and both are identical with "man's very essence." Then 4p23d is able to tell us that "insofar as a man is determined to act from the fact that he has inadequate ideas, he is acted on (by IIIP1), i.e. (by IID1 and D2), he does something which cannot be perceived through his essence alone, i.e. (by D8), which does not follow from his virtue. But insofar as he is determined to do something from the fact that he understands, he acts." If the person led by inadequate ideas is not virtuous, he or she is therefore less powerful. Thus 4p23d made good on the rest of 4d8: "By virtue and power I understand the same thing, i.e. (by IIIP7), virtue, insofar as it is related to man, is the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as he has the power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone."

Spinoza there silently amends the human essence of Part 3, where the conatus is indifferent to whether its desires come from adequate or inadequate ideas: "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" (3p9). The human essence is now narrowed to the power to bring about that which can be understood solely through the laws of one's own nature, moving from increasing power to increasing activity. The conatus defines the human essence as desire. Now that essence is identified with the understanding. That narrower idea of the human essence is at work at the beginning of the first proof of 4p59d: "Acting from reason is nothing but doing those things which follow from the necessity of our nature, considered in itself alone (by IIIP3 and D2)." By citing those Propositions 3 and 9 from the beginning of Part 3 Spinoza denies that there is any narrowing going on, and suppresses the fact that as their titles indicate, Parts 4 and 5 are limited to human beings.

When we are empowered by external forces, and so have strong passions,

we are actually weak, although we imagine ourselves strong. If the person with inadequate ideas is in this sense not virtuous, he is also, according to 4p13, not powerful. The last chapter distinguished between becoming more powerful and becoming more active, as did chapter 3; here Spinoza redefines being powerful in terms of being active. This reversal is one of the many silent narrowings in the argument of the *Ethics*, sometimes from all of nature to human beings, and sometimes from people to people living under the guidance of reason. By the more expansive earlier definition, the individual is trivially always identical with its essence. As we become more rational, we come closer to being identical with our essence in this narrower sense, as we are powerful enough to expel those passive emotions that are inside us but not part of our essence. Our essence is not just whatever we're trying to preserve at any given moment; the human essence now starts to have substantive content.

Spinoza's failure to trumpet 4p59 as a turning point of the *Ethics* is of a piece with his never explicitly explaining how finite minds can have adequate ideas in the first place, and how the second kind of knowledge develops out of the first, if it does. We saw in chapter 2 how 2p38–40 show that there are adequate ideas, but not that we can have them. In 2p47 he tells us that we all have an adequate idea of God's eternal and infinite essence, but he cannot build on that idea and that proposition never figures in any subsequent demonstration. Spinoza never flirts with innate ideas—we are born ignorant (*TTP* C 2:283, G 3:190), with bodies that are not capable of much. There is nothing for an idea to be innate *to*, since the mind is nothing but a confused idea.⁴ Part 4's Proposition 59 is up against significant obstacles.

FINITE AND INFINITE IDEAS AND THEIR DOMAINS

So far I've shown why 4p59 is an ethical crux of Spinoza's overall argument. Its importance is matched by its implausibility. Spinoza offers two proofs for 4p59, and follows the second with a scholium. The second proof and its scholium both make things much too easy for 4p59 to do its job, which may be a reason Spinoza doesn't employ 4p59 to prove later propositions. Here is that second proof:

Any action is called evil insofar as it arises from the fact that we have been affected with Hate or with some evil affect (see P45C1). But no action, considered in itself, is good or evil (as we have shown in the Preface of this Part); instead, one and the same action is now good,

now evil. Therefore, to the same action which is now evil, or which arises from some evil affect, we can (by P19) be led by reason.

The scholium uses the example of “striking a blow.” Spinoza makes things too simple by narrowing an action to a description that has no element of motive or purpose, no indication of the emotion that causes it. Instead of striking a blow, what if the action was slitting the throats of twelve people? Slitting the throats of twelve innocent people? The throats of twelve innocent people, not in wartime and not under a command of the sovereign, but because of animus against people of an inferior race? Can we say of these that there is “the same action” first done by an evil affect and then by knowledge? What of my initial examples of Iago, Achilles, Rockefeller, and Stalin? I don’t even know what it means to strike a blow, or slit a throat, guided by reason alone.

Moreover, 4p59 has a converse which we know to be false. There are things that we can do through reason alone which cannot be done by passive emotions. There are adequate ideas, especially that of the eternal essence of God, that cannot be known through the imagination. If there are things that we can do through reason which are impossible otherwise, parity suggests that there are things that we can only do without reason at all. This would allow for the imagination and understanding to live in the peaceful coexistence that is the goal of the *TTP*. So long as man is part of nature, no one can live by reason alone; we will always need the imagination to negotiate the external nature that confronts us. The ambitions of reason in the later propositions threaten the noninterference of reason and pious and sociable forms of imagination.

There are things that we can do through reason alone which cannot be done by passive emotions because reason has a greater reach than does imagination. We can only know and love God through reason, not imagination, and so too can only love our enemies, wish for others the good the virtuous person aims at for himself (4p37). The imagination thinks its reach exceeds that of reason, since one’s imagination is not constrained by truth and the actual, and can think all sorts of unrealized possibilities—recall my imaginary friend who will defend me against a bully in chapter 3. But the imagination is wrong. Proposition 59 of Part 4 and its successors at the beginning of Part 5 tell us that there is nothing that the imagination perceives that cannot also be known by reason, that the domain of imagination is a proper subset of that of reason. This is Spinoza’s version of the principle of sufficient reason, that nothing is unintelligible and everything is knowable. The domain of reason includes the domain of the imagination. But imagination and reason know different things. The imagination knows “individual objects presented to us through the senses

in a fragmentary and confused manner,” while the second kind of knowledge apprehends “common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things” (2p40s2).

Spinoza’s solution is formally elegant (although whether it can handle my counterexamples remains to be seen). Something is finite when it can be limited by something else of the same kind (1def2). For something to be finite, we learn early in Part 3, is for it to be threatened by the things that dynamically limit it. When something is self-limiting it cannot be limited by something outside itself. Neither the truth nor the significance of that thesis is self-evident. Each adequate idea is a good that cannot be lost. Adequate ideas may not be powerful relative to the rest of the world, or even relative to one’s own passions—that’s the argument we have to supply here—but adequate ideas are islands of invulnerability that can accumulate and connect to each other, becoming more powerful (5p9).

If Spinoza had simply asserted that adequate ideas, as infinite, are more powerful than finite inadequate ideas and passive emotions, such a claim would have little ethical value. Adequate ideas cannot be doubted or disproved, but their invulnerability comes at the cost of irrelevance. At the start of this chapter I said that one needle Spinoza needs to thread is the predicament that adequate ideas are both incommensurable with inadequate ideas—no inadequate idea can contradict or remove an adequate idea—and commensurable—inadequate ideas can make adequate ideas ineffective. The definition of the finite says that any finite thing can be limited by other finite things of the same kind. Now we see how certain finite things, namely inadequate ideas and the passive emotions that modify them, can also be limited by infinite things, specifically infinite modes of the same attribute of thought. The adequate idea that hatred is never good is limited by my hatred for Peter, limited in the sense that I cannot affirm it.

It seems that 4p59 commits the fallacy of thinking that one can reach the infinite by indefinitely increasing the finite, since it says that as our inadequate ideas become more powerful, they increasingly approximate adequate ideas, making the difference between inadequate and adequate ideas a matter of degree. Consider this part of its proof:

Finally, insofar as Joy is good, it agrees with reason (for it consists in this, that a man’s power of acting is increased or aided), and is not a passion except insofar as the man’s power of acting is not increased to the point where he conceives himself and his actions adequately. So if a man affected with Joy were led to such a great perfection that he

conceived himself and his actions adequately, he would be capable—indeed more capable—of the same actions to which he is now determined from affects which are passions.

This can be true only if there is a route to the infinite other than endless increase. The imagination can't help but conceive the infinite as the indefinite, making the finite the positive and the infinite the privative term. But reason knows that it's the other way around, that indefinite increase never leads to the infinite.

The part of the proof of 4p59 I just quoted says that every emotion has a maximal limit: a pleasure reaches its maximum when the individual "conceives himself and his actions adequately." The maximum power does not overcome the limitation of being bounded by something outside itself. On the contrary, it is a limitation that allows the conatus to do something the imagination could not conceive, to escape from finitude altogether by becoming active and an adequate cause of its actions. The conatus then acts as an infinite mode, which must be more powerful than any finite mode. Our adequate ideas are, finally, not inert alien presences but powers in the mind. Again in the greatest possible contrast to Hobbes, Spinoza does not see the limitless acquisition of power, and the restless desire for acquisition, as permanent features of the human condition. There is no such thing as an individual too big to fail, that is, so great along some dimension that, while finite, it cannot be surpassed. We can only become infinite by becoming self-limiting, not by trying to become unlimited.

Proposition 59 is true only if, when inadequate ideas become adequate, it's all gain and no loss. Whatever an inadequate idea has that its corresponding adequate idea does not have, is something the inadequate idea can give up without cost, that is, without losing power. When the inadequate idea becomes adequate the only things it gives up are things which reduce its power. That is exactly what the proof affirms. It is as if Spinoza is saying that within every confused idea there is a kernel of clarity, within each inadequate idea lies an adequate idea. Inadequate ideas then are not partial fragments of adequate ideas; they are adequate ideas to which are added some surplusage that obscure the adequate idea. The extraneous images present in an inadequate idea cannot add to the corresponding adequate idea. Examples such as Iago and Achilles indicate the opposite, that someone could give up a lot of power by being guided by reason. In the teeth of such examples, Spinoza has to show that the excess of passion is a weakness, not a power.

I just said that 4p59 is true only if, when inadequate ideas become adequate, it's all gain and no loss. Activity that comes from one's nature alone, which has an adequate internal cause, is not action as opposed to passion. (Recall that in chapter 1 I showed that adequate ideas have no contraries.) Unlike the intercourse of finite modes with each other, where the increase in the power of one is at the expense of another, no one suffers when one person acts from an adequate internal cause. Passions lose nothing when they become more rational.

Iago and Achilles appear to lose power by becoming rational but the lost power is power to do something that will weaken them. "But Sadness is evil insofar as it decreases or restrains this power of acting (by P41). Therefore, from this affect we cannot be determined to any action which we could not do if we were led by reason" (4p59d). To show that the powerful passions that impel Iago and Achilles don't result in acts that couldn't be done by reason, Spinoza shows that the actions caused by those passions decrease Iago's and Achilles's power, and therefore would never be chosen. Whether this argument rests on an equivocation between the essence that Part 3 identifies with the conatus and the essence that Part 4 identifies with the intellect is something I will have to consider below.

This mode of proof will have two consequences for the rest of the *Ethics*. First, the person acting from adequate ideas will be moral in the ordinary sense of justice and piety, being a cheerful neighbor and an obedient citizen. And second, when reason acts on the passions, the passions are not defeated and weakened but empowered as they become more rational, although the emotions might not believe this and so can exert themselves to avoid being known and so transformed. Relieved of their inadequate ideas and violent emotions, Iago and Achilles become more rational and happier, although neither would find it easy to give up their passionate obsessions. The question is, Is this too good to be true?

I want to avoid the easy interpretation of 4p59 that says that the things someone does from a strong passion aren't things that the person guided by reason would do. Through fear, Stalin was able to order the murder of millions, but no rational person could do that. Therefore he did something by passion that couldn't be done by reason. But, on this interpretation, 4p59 isn't invalidated, because it wasn't only something that couldn't be done by reason but that *wouldn't* be done by reason. The *Ethics* would then degenerate into moralizing.

A remark a few propositions later helps focus the problem. "By a Desire

arising from reason, we directly follow the good, and indirectly flee the evil” (4p63c). While Spinoza does not derive this from 4p59, it clearly follows its spirit. Especially along with its scholium, this proposition is an identity.

This Corollary may be illustrated by the example of the sick and the healthy. The sick man, from timidity regarding death, eats what he is repelled by, whereas the healthy man enjoys his food, and in this way enjoys life better than if he feared death, and directly desired to avoid it. Similarly, a judge who condemns a guilty man to death—not from Hate or Anger, etc., but only from a Love of the general welfare—is guided only by reason. (4p63c)

This is an identity because *only* the rational person directly pursues the good, just as only the rational person enjoyed the aesthetic pleasures of 4p45. If instead one lives by the passions, then shunning evil will be direct. Such a person has no identity or agency, since his life is only reactive. In Spinoza’s example, the healthy person is more powerful than the sick one. Pursuing the good directly makes one more powerful. This corollary and scholium make 4p59 more plausible, since pursuing the good directly is, all things being equal, a more powerful, and satisfying, act than directly shunning evil.

But we aren’t home free. The claim I’m making on Spinoza’s behalf, that only the rational person directly pursues the good, looks false. The rest of us, not guided by reason, pursue the good directly all the time. Led by passion, I don’t only eat because I’m hungry. I eat beyond what I need because I enjoy the taste of good food. I don’t pursue glory because I’m afraid of being ignored or neglected; I like the sensation of being applauded. In general, all the desires Spinoza calls immoderate at the end of the definitions of the emotions that follow Part 3, look like direct pursuit of the good, not based on, and so limited by, actual needs. Excessive pleasures, far from leading to active emotions, are a barrier to our enjoying the pleasures that cannot be excessive. Therefore, in spite of Spinoza’s examples in 4p63cs, it isn’t only people guided by reason who pursue the good directly.

Another feature of 4p63c needs attention. Maybe it’s not false but trivial. It simply restates 4p25—“No one strives to preserve his being for the sake of anything else”—narrowed to the goods desired by the person guided by reason. If such a person desires nothing but to understand, then of course he aims at a good that can only be sought directly. Other goods can be pursued either directly or indirectly. So I can return my neighbor’s cloak either out of

justice or because of fear that the sovereign will punish me. I cannot, though, try to understand because of fear of the sovereign. We can't have adequate ideas through listening to a prophet. Nor can fear of the sovereign cause me to try to have a body that can be affected by and affect as many external things as possible. The issue for interpreting 4p63c is whether it extends to goods other than those, the goods of understanding, that can only be pursued directly. And that is exactly the issue of whether everything we do through passive emotions we can also do, and do better, with reason. If only the rational person could pursue the good directly, we would have the needed connection between rationality and power. So 4p59d1 needs 4p63cs to make it true.

ADEQUATE IDEAS, PLEASURE AND PAIN

Part 4's Proposition 59 is a surprise, and as I've drawn out its consequences, it looks more and more improbable. As we understand this crucial proposition, we see the movement of the plot of the *Ethics*, and see how it makes increasing demands on the reader as we are transformed from subjects of the geometric method to its practitioners, and learn to transcend the geometric method to grasp truths that, as far as the imagination is concerned, are unintelligible and so look false. Although Spinoza says that 4p59 holds regardless of whether the passive emotion in question is a pain or a pleasure, the two cases are different, and he rightly treats them differently in the proof.

First, he argues that when we are determined to some action by a painful emotion, we can be determined thereto by reason without that emotion. Any pain detracts from our power, so we can do better unencumbered by the pain. The argument seems cogent, although we still have to reinterpret apparent counterexamples like Iago. I can grant that acting on anger will reduce my power to act, but it still could at the same time enable me to do things that I couldn't do through reason. That is, 4p59 looks wrong because a passive emotion has a pair of distinct effects. It causes us to perform some action, and it results in our power to act increasing or decreasing. The proof seems to equivocate between the two, arguing that since a pain diminishes our power to act, therefore whatever we do because of the passion, we could do through reason, that is, without our power being diminished. *Reculer pour mieux sauter* says that short-term pains and losses of power can make us more powerful.⁵

Pleasures are a little more complicated. There are two possibilities. "Joy is bad [only] insofar as it prevents man from being capable of acting." To the degree that it hinders our powers, if we remove it, we are more capable of acting,

and the case is the same as with pain. “Finally, insofar as Joy is good, it agrees with reason,” so we already see that whatever we do from a good pleasure, we could do from reason alone.

But that sentence in the proof concludes with a remark that makes the rest of his argument moot: “Finally, insofar as Joy is good, it agrees with reason (for it consists in this, that a man’s power of acting is increased or aided), and is not a passion except insofar as the man’s power of acting is not increased to the point where he conceives himself and his actions adequately.” If a pleasant emotion increases someone’s power of activity sufficiently, then, Spinoza says, he will adequately know himself and his actions. This sounds like an act of supreme good fortune, that something external to us can be so powerful that it not only increases our power—that is something all pleasures do—but increases our activity and the adequacy of our self-knowledge. In the last chapter I worried about the good fortune of finding some external object being in such perfect harmony with our bodies that it can increase the power of the whole without distorting the proportion among the parts. Here our luck looks even greater. Our internal power of acting increases through the actions of powers outside ourselves!

For example, through the praise of others, I can become more powerful. When some people laud my accomplishments, others, unless they have a specific reason to dissent, will join in the praise (3p16). When I fail, my failures are excused as bad luck, and when I am fortunate, the outcome is attributed to my shrewdness and foresight. My fame leads me into positions of greater security of power. In this way external powers can make me more powerful.

But that example tells against the possibility that external sources can lead to greater self-knowledge or to being an adequate cause. As chapter 13 of the *TTP* says, “Nobody can be wise on command” (C 1:260, G 3:170). If my power of activity increases as I get wealthier and more popular, it would never increase to a point at which I adequately conceive myself and my actions. That one cannot be wise on command points to another reason that no account of how inadequate ideas lead to adequate ideas is possible. The mind cannot cross the finite/infinite barrier. No combination of inadequate ideas can cause an adequate idea.

Treating pleasure and pain separately in the proof of 4p49 is significant because the path from passion to action is different in the two cases, and then in the two kinds of pleasure. If we know that every passion modifies an inadequate and therefore partial idea, and that therefore to every passion corresponds some complete and adequate idea, we still have no idea how to find

those correlatives. I doubt, for example, that each of the seven elements of the universal creed corresponds to an adequate idea about God, or even about God's relations to us. We try to expel pains, not understand them. There is no reason to think that understanding them would help us to expel them. Pleasures, in contrast, can be the subject of cultivation. We actively seek them out and so aren't just gratefully responsive to some external stimuli. The interrelation between pleasure and desire that I argued in chapter 3 impels the conatus from a desire for self-preservation to a desire for more power is an interrelation that only holds between desire and pleasure, not desire and pain.

One more clear and important difference between pleasures and pain as they figure in 4p59: A passive pleasure and its active development are recognizably the same pleasure, first passive and then active. My passive lust for Joan is replaced by the active emotion of generosity. There is no such evident continuity for pains. My anger at Heather may also be transformed into generosity, but that isn't obviously the same emotion. The wrath of Achilles realizes that it will be destroyed in the transformation, and so has ways of resisting the conversion. At the beginning of the chapter I noted that although every inadequate idea is a partial modification of an infinite mode, an adequate idea, neither imagination nor reason has a way of tracing the connection. If I knew that my anger at Heather was really a partial manifestation of my love for all humanity, ethics would be very easy.

This difference between pleasure and pain has consequences for the final ascent to immortality at the end of the *Ethics*. The natural question to ask about the part of the mind that survives the destruction of the body is whether that mind has anything in common with the mind that is the idea of the body. The more that latter mind is constituted by pleasures, especially by active pleasures, the more apparent continuity between the mind of the individual and the immortal mind. The more we think of the transformation from passive to active emotions along the lines of the transformation of Jacob's hatred for Laban into generosity, the more the immortal mind appears discontinuous with the mind that exerts itself to survive in the conatus, so that personal identity is not part of what survives "the duration of the body."⁶ The life under the guidance of reason and that wisdom that constitutes the intellectual love of God appear not to solve the problems of ethics but to change the subject.

However, just a few propositions before the declaration of 4p59, in 4p52 Spinoza offers a better example, an emotion that can be either passive or active, and this example makes 4p59 much more plausible. He had defined "*acquiescentia in se ipso*" in 3da25 as "a Joy born of the fact that a man con-

siders himself and his own power of acting.” This *acquiescentia*, 4p52 tells us, “can arise from reason.” But in the scholium, he also says that this *acquiescentia* “is increasingly fostered and strengthened by praise, and on the other hand is increasingly disturbed by blame,” that is, by passive emotions. We have at least one emotion whose active and passive forms are clearly forms of the same emotion (see too 3p30, with its scholium).⁷ It is an emotion central to the *Ethics*, a paradigm of the cunning of imagination, its power and its danger, since in Part 4 Spinoza will also warn us against flatterers.⁸

The perplexity of 4p59 deepens. A sentence in the demonstration of 4p59 seems to indicate that the difference between passive emotions and reason, and so between inadequate and adequate ideas, is a difference in degree: Pleasure “is not a passion except insofar as the man’s power of acting is not increased to the point where he conceives himself and his actions adequately.” The discontinuity I just noted between my anger at Heather and its transformation into generosity calls into question the possibility of advancing by degrees. And limiting the difference in degree to pleasures doesn’t fully solve the problem. There is enough discontinuity between my love for Joan and generosity to make me doubt that passive emotions gradually become more powerful and rational until they are active emotions.

When Spinoza characterizes inadequate ideas as confused and fragmentary, he suggests that there are degrees of inadequacy, and maybe that the difference between inadequate and adequate ideas is also a matter of degree. Against this is the fact that inadequate ideas are caused by inadequate ideas and adequate ideas by adequate ideas. No idea is caused mostly, or slightly, by adequate ideas. Again, against the idea of continuity between passions and adequate ideas, the imagination thinks that the truth of an idea must be guaranteed by an external sign. This theory of truth cannot gradually lead to adequate ideas, in which ideas and ideata are identical, and truth is its own warrant. By implying that the difference between adequate ideas and passions is one of degree, 4p59 presupposes commensurability and does so through the commensurability of power. Thus Deleuze identifies the problem of passive pleasures becoming adequate ideas this way:

This joy is still a passion, since it has an external cause; we still remain separated from our power of acting, possessing it only in a formal sense. This power of acting is nonetheless increased proportionally; we “approach” the point of conversion, the point of transmutation that will establish our dominion, that will make us worthy of action, of active joys.⁹

The crux is the point of conversion and transformation: is it the climax of a gradual ascent or a quantum leap?

We can escape from the dilemma of continuity, which is the dilemma of incommensurability, by noting that Spinoza limits the account from inadequate ideas in general to the passive emotions. I've been arguing that this "ascent" from inadequate to adequate ideas can only be affective, and must be social. The collective imaginings of chapter 3 can lead to being guided by reason, and eventually to being rational. Thus at the beginning of Part 5, as in 4p59, Spinoza does not show that anything known through the imagination can also be known by adequate ideas, but only that anything done through the passive *emotions* can be done through adequate ideas; his demonstration limits the relation of imagination to reason to the emotions. And, as I will argue in my final chapter, there can be such an ascent from imagination to reason only for self-knowledge. If there are only two virtues or kinds of active emotions, toward oneself and toward other people, so here there are only two cases in which inadequate ideas become adequate, namely passive emotions about oneself and about other people. This has the unwelcome implication that there is no route from inadequate to adequate ideas for knowledge of nature.

Proposition 59 suggests that the difference between inadequate and adequate ideas is a difference in degree. In both interhuman relations and the relation of reason to one's own passions, and only in these cases, seeing the difference between inadequate and adequate ideas as a difference in degree is plausible. Society progresses from being people useful to one another in the satisfaction of needs to rational people increasing one another's rationality, and the mind's control over the passions is similarly gradual. These are the only cases where increased power means increased activity and adequacy.

But the image of discontinuity and the quantum leap from passion to reason still has appeal. As I argued before, adequate ideas cannot be parts of the minds that think them, not if mental parts follow the conception of parts of bodies as things that can be substituted for without changing the essence of the whole (2p13). To the extent that a mind is made of inadequate ideas, it has little unity. The desire of an individual to persist is nothing but the desire of each and all its parts to persist, which is why pleasures can be excessive and distorting. Each passion has its own *conatus*. Adequate ideas are an alien presence in the mind until—suddenly—the entire mind becomes an adequate cause because of the presence of those ideas. Adequate ideas are never part of the mind. They are either something in but not of the mind, or they take over and become the organizing principle of the mind.

The demonstration of 4p59, with its claim that we gradually become more

and more active, can be defended, I think, in the following way. In any passion, the mind itself is a partial cause. Therefore, we are never fully passive.¹⁰ This in spite of the fact that the power of a passive emotion is simply derivative from the power of the external cause. Because we are never fully passive, we can't make the opposite case to 4p59 and say: Whatever is partially caused by an external object can be completely caused by that object, as in conceptions of objectivity where the goal is to remove the contribution of the knower so that the true idea fully represents the object. The partial contribution of the mind is ineliminable while the partial contribution of the external cause can be replaced by an adequate idea.

In chapter 3 I argued that inadequate ideas are inherently confused because it is impossible to separate out the causal contribution of an external body from that of one's own mind and body. But 4p59 and 5p1–20 argue for just such a separation, although only on one side. In chapter 3 finite and infinite, inadequate and adequate ideas, were incommensurable; starting in chapter 5 I've been arguing that the ethical project of the *Ethics* is to make them commensurable. A common measure of power is the current form of that project. We learn how adequate ideas can have power over the passions as we learn how the passions can become adequate ideas. The contribution of the external body is eliminable. In my final chapter, I will argue that the contribution of the internal body, one's own body, is eliminable too as part of the mind becomes immortal.

"There is nothing positive in ideas on account of which they are called false" (2p33); the notion that an idea is true because it lets the object speak without interference from the knower—the theory of knowledge associated with the imagination—is impossible because the knower is always a partial cause of an inadequate idea. The external cause of an inadequate idea, and so of a passive emotion, is always eliminable, leaving the internal cause, if it is powerful enough, to be the complete cause. And so the demonstration shows that pains can only detract from one's power, and they are therefore eliminable, and that when pleasures are excessive they too diminish power and are therefore eliminable, leaving pleasures that are not excessive, which are identical to reason. As we saw in the last chapter, nonexcessive pleasures increase the power of the individual as whole, not just in part, and so does reason. Therefore the elimination of the external cause is always a gain, not a loss, in power as well as in adequacy. Whatever the mind is doing as a partial cause, it can do by itself as a complete cause.

Axiom 1 after Lemma 3 after 2p13 tells us that "All modes by which a body

is affected by another body follow both from the nature of the body affected and at the same time from the nature of the affecting body, so that one and the same body may be moved differently according to differences in the bodies moving it. And conversely, different bodies may be moved differently by one and the same body.” And 4p59 asserts that for all such modes, the causal contribution of the affecting body can be replaced by further causal power of the body affected. Just as there is nothing positive in ideas whereby they can be said to be false, so there is nothing that we get from external causes that we cannot ourselves supply.

The truth of both the gradual emergence of activity out of passive emotions, and their radical discontinuity, follows from the way the mind both gradually and suddenly moves from having adequate ideas to being an adequate cause. Like light being thought both a wave and a particle, thinking of the transition from passivity to activity as gradual and as abrupt comes from using the imagination to try to grasp something that isn't temporal at all.

INCREASING POWER AND INCREASING ACTIVITY

Nothing we learn about the conatus and about pleasure up until here has asserted any connection between increasing power and increasing activity and being an adequate cause. Of course if we limit ourselves to thinking about increasing the power to think and to have adequate ideas, then becoming more active is the only way to become more powerful. But the conatus in Part 3 knew nothing of such a narrowing. Up until this point the *Ethics* has blithely forwarded the paradox that one's power to persist can be increased through the operation of external forces. That is exactly what passive pleasures are. The power of the imagination is the power to draw on external powers to increase one's own internal power to persist. It is only here that what seems true only for the understanding itself—that it is only through being more of an internal cause that we become more powerful—Spinoza can argue is true more generally. The power of externally caused passions now becomes dispensable.

If Spinoza can prove that the best way to increase power is by being an adequate cause, instead of, as it seemed up to here, that all finite modes should empower themselves by drawing on external forces, then not only will understanding be its own good, but living under the guidance of reason will be the best life, not only a life of the intellect but of the whole mind and body. I just argued that we are never completely passive in our emotions. Add to that the fact that all emotions are modifications of ideas. All feeling, that is, involves

thinking. For thinking, the maximum of power is activity, and all actions, even striking a blow, are equally acts of the mind, and so of ideas, and of the body; activity of both mind and body come from adequate ideas. If there were passions that didn't modify ideas, then they might be a distinct source of power, as I benefit from sunlight. But all passive emotions modify inadequate ideas, and all inadequate ideas have an adequate counterpart.

We are always passive to external causes, although we benefit from their effects. We now learn that they only have the power to affect us because we are not strong enough to be active. The scholium to 4p59 ends: "It is evident, therefore, that every Desire that arises from an affect which is a passion would be of no use if men could be guided by reason." The power of passive emotions comes, now, not from the power of their external cause, but from the weakness of the individual's reason. The imagination endorses 4p5 and not only sees the power of a passive emotion coming from the power of its external cause, but conceives the emotion itself through the idea of its external cause. Reason, instead, explains a passive emotion not by its external cause but by the inability of the individual itself to be the complete cause of the emotion. The imagination thinks that it is powerful because we can imagine all kinds of things that we can't know. I only have an idea of an imaginary friend who will stop the bully because I'm not strong enough to stand up to him by myself. My wide-ranging imagination doesn't exhibit the power of the imagination but of the weakness of the reason.

Proposition 59 of Part 4 was introduced by the statement at the end of 4p58s that "as far as desires are concerned, they, of course, are good or evil insofar as they arise from good or evil affects. But all of them, really, insofar as they are generated in us from affects which are passions, are blind (as may easily be inferred from what we said in P44S), and would be of no use if men could easily be led to live according to the dictate of reason alone." Reason, that is, in the right circumstances, would be more powerful than passive emotions because the latter don't know what they want. But in fact people can only with difficulty, not readily, "live according to the dictate of reason." Yet 4p59 maintains that the mind is always more powerful than a causal complex confusedly including both the mind and an external cause. Adding an external cause is not really a process of addition, but of subtraction, since an external cause can only combine with the mind as a partial, and inadequate and passive, cause. No matter how powerful, an external cause can will always be a partial cause.

Then 4p59 leads easily to the remark in 4p61d:

Desire . . . is the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as it is conceived to be determined to doing those things that are conceived adequately through man's essence alone (by IIID2).

That line, delivered almost casually, critically narrows the conatus: where it had been a desire to persist in whatever condition one finds itself, here it is a desire to fulfill the human essence of being rational. While there is no reason to think that someone acting from adequate ideas can be as rich as Rockefeller, or as physically magnificent as LeBron James, there is another sense in which we all desire to be determined by reason alone, but not because reason serves whatever ends we happen to have. It doesn't. And not because we all desire to know. We don't. In spite of appearances, we all desire to be determined by reason because everything wants to be identical with its essence, and the only way to do that is by being active. In this way the *Ethics* can be prescriptive without violating Spinoza's insistence on treating the human being as a part of nature with no laws of its own. Whatever desires we may happen to have, we do desire to be identical with our essence, and therefore not affected by external forces in the form of passions. We remain part of nature; our bodies never stop needing food to replenish its parts, and we need other people to supply many of our needs. But we don't have to stay part of nature as subject to passive emotions. I may not be able to stop getting cut off in traffic, but I can stop being angry. Being finite does not prevent us from being rational.

When Spinoza talks about inadequate ideas as incomplete, he implies that something must be added to an inadequate idea to make it adequate; when he calls inadequate ideas confused, he suggests that they have something excessive that has to be purged for the rationality of adequate ideas to become apparent. These two characterizations of inadequate ideas point in different practical directions for removing the inadequacy of an inadequate idea, the perfective (additive) and therapeutic (purgative) models. The common idea of God has to be purged of extraneous anthropomorphism. The inadequate idea of the fourth proportional is missing a connection to adequate ideas, in other words, a proof; it is a conclusion without premises.

In a similar way, finite individuals fail to be identical with their essences, and this in two parallel ways. I might fall short of the rationality that, in Part 4, I identify as my essence. Or I might, because of passions caused by external powers, contain things that are not part of my essence, and are even contrary to it. My desire to be identical to my essence can lead to aspiring to a model or purging nonessentials.

Earlier I questioned the transition from passive emotions to adequate ideas because even if to every inadequate idea there corresponds its completion in an adequate idea, neither imagination nor reason is equipped to identify that correspondence. Here the same problem recurs in a more general form. Just as the person with adequate ideas does not have personal identity that sets her apart from others guided by reason, so the rational person is not obviously continuous, apart from memory, which is corporeal, with earlier versions of the self. The person guided by reason doesn't take on a new identity as she loses what is idiosyncratic; she has no identity at all; her essence does not differ from that of any other rational person. No wonder the passions fight back.

As 4p61 says, this desire to become active and so identical with our essence cannot be excessive. This is another facet of the paradox of the infinite. We can keep increasing an infinite magnitude without changing its cardinality. Therefore this desire, comprising our active emotions, is never out of place or inappropriate. By that fact alone it is more powerful. It can always be present, and the more often a desire is present, the more powerful it is (see 5p8–9). There is no innate desire to know or be an adequate cause, but that is where the cunning of imagination has led us. Instead pleasure is good (4p41). Not only as 4p59 says, “to every action to which we are determined from an affect which is a passion, we can be determined by reason, without that affect,” but it is *better* to be so determined, better because more powerful. Possessing infinite power does not let us rise above external nature, which always threatens every individual because finite individuals do not cause their own existence. But reason does have some resources in the battle against external causes.

The asymmetries I noted earlier between pleasure and pain come into play again here. All pains have contrary pleasures: there is no decrease in power that doesn't have a corresponding increase. But the converse is not true. When we are active, we have pleasures that have no corresponding pain. Pleasure and pain are correlative only when we are passive. Because for any passive pleasure, there is a corresponding passive pain, whenever our power is increased by an external cause, it can also be diminished by an external cause. But there are no pains that correspond to our active pleasures and increases in power of which we are the adequate cause—there are no painful active emotions (3p58)—and so these are gains that cannot be lost. They are permanent and irreversible increases in power.¹¹

This is the advantage that being an adequate cause has over external causes. As long as we are a part of nature, there will always be external causes more powerful than anything any individual can muster by itself, and so we are

always threatened and always vulnerable. We can be no match for external nature. The advantage that an adequate internal cause has over an immeasurably more powerful external nature is that its gains in power cannot be lost.

An analogy might help here. In *On Liberty* Mill calls the thesis that truth will always triumph over error a “pleasant falsehood”: “The idea that truth always triumphs over persecution is one of those pleasant falsehoods, which most experience refutes. History is teeming with instances of truth put down by persecution. If not put down forever, it may be set back for centuries.” So here, adequate ideas do not by themselves have an advantage over inadequate ones or passive emotions (recall 4p14 and 15 cited above). But, Mill continues, truth has one advantage over error: once discovered it can never be lost.

The real advantage which truth has, consists in this, that when an opinion is true, it may be extinguished once, twice, or many times, but in the course of ages there will generally be found persons to rediscover it, until some one of its reappearances falls on a time when from favourable circumstances it escapes persecution until it has made such head as to withstand all subsequent attempts to suppress it.¹²

Contrast this to the fickleness of superstition in the preface to the *TTP*, where, once one foolish idea is shown to be false, people don’t rethink their methods and standards but simply jump to the next inadequate idea. “They hear no advice so foolish, so absurd, or groundless, that they do not follow it” (C 2:66, G 3:5). Truths are more stable than fictions.

The power of reason is then amplified in several of the early propositions of Part 5, when Spinoza changes the subject from human bondage to the power of the intellect, and offers resources for the understanding in its fight against the passions. Thus 5p8: “The more an affect arises from a number of causes concurring together, the greater it is”; and 5p11: “As an image is related to more things, the more frequent it is, or the more often it flourishes, and the more it engages the Mind.” Most relevant of all to 4p59 is 5p12: “The images of things are more easily joined to images related to things we understand clearly and distinctly than to other images.”¹³ This is an exact statement of the geometric method, associating images related by the order of ideas. Even though man is always a part of nature, each person can harness infinite powers and make those powers more powerful than any external cause.

SELF-LIMITING AND MODERATE PASSIONS

Once Spinoza has shown that the understanding is self-empowering and able to grow more powerful by itself (4p23–27), the power of the intellect can now, finally, invade the domain of the imagination. That is exactly what 4p59 claims, that anything that can be done through an external cause can also be done, and done more effectively, by the individual mind and body alone.

Spinoza's project is to spread the power of reason from what only reason can do to what reason can do in competition with the passions. Just because reason is powerful enough to be self-reinforcing and self-empowering does not imply that it is powerful enough to overcome the limitations of the finite mind that thinks its adequate ideas. That is what Spinoza now has to prove. Extending the power of reason is not simple because adequate ideas will not make you rich, or help you when pursued by a bear.

“Desire that arises from reason cannot be excessive” (4p61): what could be a greater contrast to “Love and desire can be excessive” (4p44)? When we become active, we have ideas, desires and pleasures that cannot be excessive. Even better, when we are active, our adequate self-knowledge moderates our other desires and loves. Only with adequate self-knowledge do we have a non-relative standard for moderation, which comes from something that cannot be excessive. Relative to the infinite, the finite is not infinitesimal but moderate. Adequate self-knowledge opens us up to a world of goods that cannot be excessive both in the sense that they are self-limiting—that's what Spinoza's positive infinite is—and in the sense that any further increase is all to the good. Adequate self-knowledge doesn't just make us better knowers, but more effective practical agents, because of its effect on the rest of our desires, on our other emotions that remain passive, but are now guided by reason.

Even moderate passive pleasures increase a power of some part of the body and mind, not the whole, but moderate ones do so in a way that doesn't distort the proportion of motion and rest of the whole. For this to be possible, bodies and minds have to be complex enough to allow, and even encourage, such increases in power that do not threaten the equilibrium of the whole. Instead, by increasing a power of the part, they increase the power of the whole. That's what moderation means.

“By a Desire arising from reason, we directly follow the good, and indirectly flee the evil” (4p63c). This proposition applies to the purgation of passive emotions. While the person in pain has to devote all his attention to getting rid of the pain (3p37d), the person guided by reason does not directly

try to get rid of passive emotions; that would be directly to shun evil. It is instead by directly pursuing the good that the passive emotions moderate or dissolve. When I devote myself to understanding, then I am to that extent not interested in indefinite accumulation of external goods, and therefore no longer have the passive emotions associated with such accumulation. Devoted to understanding, I pursue a good accessible to everyone, and which I want everyone to enjoy, and therefore no longer have the ambition to be superior to others. Earlier I worried that the goods that each of us wanted everyone to enjoy were limited to the goods of the mind. Now Spinoza shows us a more expansive interpretation.

Proposition 59 of Part 4 finally becomes plausible. The more a part and its pleasures approach the whole, the nearer the individual is to increasing the power of the whole as a whole, not just as the sum of the powers of its parts. As the pleasure attaches to a part that is a greater proportion of the whole, the increase in power approaches the increase in power of the whole. The transition from passive to active emotions can be gradual. Adequate ideas are equally true in the part and the whole; as a passive pleasure involves a greater and greater proportion of the whole mind and body, it approaches an adequate idea. In this way, we back into being an adequate cause, and therefore having adequate ideas. Pleasures and increases in power can approximate the whole, as a backdoor way of approaching the infinite. The key idea here is that an idea becomes infinite by becoming the right kind of whole, not by getting ever bigger.

Nothing in the key sentence in the proof—“So if a man affected with Joy were led to such a great perfection that he conceived himself and his actions adequately, he would be capable—indeed more capable—of the same actions to which he is now determined from affects which are passions”—says that for the action to have an internal cause, the external cause must be weak, or strong for that matter. Its magnitude is, as far as the power of the internal cause is concerned, negligible. But when there is an adequate internal cause, the consequence is that the external cause is moderate. That moderation has no external measure, says nothing about the power of the external cause. Moderation is the correlative of an active internal cause.

We now have solved the question of how the body can be active. Recall that 3p1–3 defined an adequate cause in terms of having an adequate idea and then said that the body too can be an adequate cause. We finally see how that can be without mind/body causation. When an excessive passion becomes moderate, the passion can think that it is being weakened rather than strengthened, and

so still resist being known. Passions, each of which has its own conatus and desire to maintain itself, have to be cunning when they think reason is trying to dissolve them, engaging in evasive strategies and disguising themselves to resist being known. When the mind is an adequate cause, passions see themselves as strengthened by being moderated.

And so Jacob could read the *Ethics* and realize that his love for Rachel inhibited his intellectual growth and so his ability to become an adequate cause, but resist being schooled if that means giving up, or even moderating, that love. Passive emotions think that excess is empowering because they have no measure of power other than an external one. Self-knowledge makes these passions obedient. The body is an adequate cause when it is able, through moderation, to maintain itself and increase its power.

That Mind is most acted on, of which inadequate ideas constitute the greatest part, so that it is distinguished more by what it undergoes than by what it does. On the other hand, that Mind acts most, of which adequate ideas constitute the greatest part, so that though it may have as many inadequate ideas as the other, it is still distinguished more by those which are attributed to human virtue than by those which betray man's lack of power. (5p20s)

The passions will be more powerful when directed by reason than when impelled by their own force. This is the truth of 4p59s. The person directed by hunger will eat as much as possible. Someone's appetite for food will be more satisfied, even though the person eats less, when that appetite is one desire among many. To have moderate passions is not to be compelled to eat less than one wants. Instead, when moderate, the passions can be part of a single human being. It is only through adequate ideas and being an adequate cause that a person becomes an agent rather than a concatenation of its parts. Having a rational desire that cannot be excessive allows us to moderate our ineliminably passive desires. The fact that Iago and Achilles can do things through their excessive passions that someone with moderate passions of the same kind could not do now becomes uninteresting, rather than a refutation. They resemble someone who cannot stop eating. I could not weigh three hundred pounds through eating moderately and under the guidance of reason, and if Achilles's and Iago's achievements are similar, this points to weakness, not power. The absolute, nonrelative, ideas of excess and moderation makes the *Ethics* ethical. My initial questions about how to measure power turn out not to be abstract

after all. It is the act of measurement, performed by the person moderating his or her passions, that makes adequate ideas powerful.

Another way to put the surprise of 4p59, we now see, is that people can accomplish as much through a moderate emotion as they can through excessive emotions. The surplus that makes an emotion excessive does not add to the power of the individual beyond what the moderate passion does, exactly as surplusage does not add to the truth of an adequate idea. What Kant says of the good will is analogous:

Even if it should happen that, owing to special disfavour of fortune, or the niggardly provision of a step-motherly nature, [the good] will should wholly lack power to accomplish its purpose, if with its greatest efforts it should yet achieve nothing, and there should remain only the good will (not, to be sure, a mere wish, but the summoning of all means in our power), then, like a jewel, it would still shine by its own light, as a thing which has its whole value in itself. Its usefulness or fruitfulness can neither add to nor take away anything from this value. It would be, as it were, only the setting to enable us to handle it the more conveniently in common commerce, or to attract to it the attention of those who are not yet connoisseurs, but not to recommend it to true connoisseurs, or to determine its value.¹⁴

In the same way, passionate excess “can neither add to nor take away anything from” the power of an adequate idea.

Lust and dissipation offer such intense pleasures that the mind, and body, are not even aware of their distorting effects. The last definitions of the emotions appended to Part 3 list five “immoderate” emotions: ambition, dissipation, drunkenness, avarice, and lust. Spinoza then comments that

Moreover, these five affects (as I pointed out in P56S) have no opposites. For Courtesy is a species of Ambition (see P29S), and I have already pointed out also that Moderation, Sobriety, and Chastity indicate the power of the Mind, and not a passion. . . . Therefore, nothing can be opposed to these affects except Nobility and Tenacity [*generositas* and *animositas*, the two active emotions of 3p59s].

The person guided by reason will still have passive emotions, as long as that person still has a body, but these passions will take their place in a unified

body and mind. Seeing the truth of 4p59 now leads to a further important conclusion. As I've stressed since my second chapter, it is one thing to say that adequate ideas are more powerful than inadequate ideas, and quite another to say that the individual knower can have the relevant adequate ideas, and that they will be more powerful than inadequate ideas within the individual mind. If 4p59 is right, if "to every action to which we are determined from an affect which is a passion, we can be determined by reason, without that affect," it follows that there can be nothing in any mind that would bar that mind from having adequate ideas. It is for this reason that Spinoza's account of the presence of adequate ideas in finite minds is not limited to human minds, or some human minds: nothing in any mind can prevent that mind from having adequate ideas. Inadequate ideas, no matter how powerful, cannot prevent a mind from thinking adequate ideas. Although the *Ethics* ends by reminding us that good things are as difficult as they are rare, the rarity of people who can live a blessed life comes from its difficulty, and not from some property of some set of elite individuals. Eternal truths are universal accessible, although not present in all, and powerful enough to be adequate causes in still fewer. Adequate ideas can coexist with false ideas, as in the case of the size of the sun. There is nothing in a false idea that gives it power, since falsity is privation.

I want to point to one more consequence of my finding that an inadequate idea or a passive emotion does not add something to an adequate idea, and so exceeds it, but in fact subtracts from it. When the mind takes an inadequate idea or passion and makes it an adequate idea, it completes the inadequate idea. The imagination might think that the process of becoming an adequate idea subtracts something from the inadequate idea, locating its rational core and discarding those facets of the idea or passion that make it excessive. But excess, we now know, occurs only because of the weakness of the mind, not its power. So when a passion is known, it becomes complete and so no longer a passion. "An affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it" (5p3).

And so Part 4 ends with an expansion of the 4p59 which I've take to be a crux:

But human power is very limited and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes. So we do not have an absolute power to adapt things outside us to our use. Nevertheless, we shall bear calmly those things which happen to us contrary to what the principle of our advantage demands, if we are conscious that we have done our duty, that the power

we have could not have extended itself to the point where we could have avoided those things, and that we are a part of the whole of nature, whose order we follow. If we understand this clearly and distinctly, that part of us which is defined by understanding, i.e., the better part of us, will be entirely satisfied with this, and will strive to persevere in that satisfaction. For insofar as we understand, we can want nothing except what is necessary, nor absolutely be satisfied with anything except what is true. Hence, insofar as we understand these things rightly, the striving of the better part of us agrees with the order of the whole of nature.

THE POWERS OF IMPERFECTION

We are taught by 4p59 something we couldn't have known before: external causes can increase our power only because we lack sufficient internal power. The puzzle Wartofsky raises can be dissolved: "How can passions increase our power of acting? Obviously, they cannot, on Spinoza's theory, yet the affect joy and its derivatives plainly *are*, by definition, increases in our powers of acting. Here Spinoza is ingenious, though I think not successful."¹⁵ Now that 4p59 has taught us that while we can become more powerful through external causes, they don't empower us to do anything we couldn't do, and do better, by reason alone, we can put passive pleasures in their place, and not try to avoid them.

We have to know that pleasure is good (4p41) before we can learn that passive pleasures are good only because of our own imperfections. If we were born free, we would form no ideas of good and evil (4p68). We only form ideas of good and evil, *including adequate ideas of good*, because we must draw power from external sources, and that because we aren't strong enough to rely on our own resources alone.

An adequate idea of good—"By good I understand that which we certainly know to be useful to us" (4def1)—is an adequate idea that only a finite mind can have. God has no idea of the good. It is an adequate idea we can have because we are finite, rather than an adequate idea, such as the idea of God, that we have in spite of being finite. That there is such a thing as an adequate idea of good shows that having adequate ideas and being active do not remove us from the world of external causes, and of needing external resources to maintain and increase our power. It is possible to be free without being born free. Finally we will learn that we can become infinite, and so immortal.

Even more surprising, our fallen state offers advantages. The cunning of imagination leads from a powerful imagination to a powerful understand-

ing. As long as we aren't born free, being moved by great passions makes us aware of our powers and internal capacities for action. One cannot *do* things through the passions that one can't do through reason alone, but one can come to *know* our powers through the passions in a way that those powers would be unknown to us by reason alone. The meanderings of the geometric method through the catalog of emotions in Part 3 would be pointless—nothing in Parts 4 and 5 depends on them—if not for the fact that we can learn about our power by exploring our weaknesses. We have knowledge of our internal powers because we fix our emotions on objects, resulting in excessive, obsessive, and jealous loves; we construct the false objectivity that says that we desire things because they are good. Most of all we become aware of our own internal power through knowing other people, trying to please them, and trying to be pleased by them. External causes not only strengthen us but strengthen our reason. Our practical lives require a powerful imagination as well as a powerful intellect. The advantages of becoming rational via a long detour through the imagination is expressed succinctly in 3p44: "Hate completely conquered by Love passes into Love, and the Love is therefore greater than if Hate had not preceded it." (The scholium warns against interpreting this fact as implying that we should therefore hate, the better to love later. The imagination can't be manipulated in this way.)

The final sentence of 4p59s returns to the proposition, giving it a much more powerful reading. It says that "every Desire that arises from an affect which is a passion would be of no use if men could be guided by reason." What is a surprise here, to be developed further in the early propositions of Part 5, is that reason is not only more powerful than the passion with which the proposition compares it, but more powerful than all other passive emotions too. Adequate ideas protect us against pains, since pains come from inadequate understanding. More powerfully and paradoxically, adequate ideas protect us against passive pleasures too. We have passive pleasures only because of a deficiency in internal power, that is, in knowledge. If one is active, one's power can no longer be increased from outside. That is how activity forms a limit to increasing power. This isn't a maximum as the imagination would conceive it. No matter how rational I am, I still benefit from intercourse with external nature, and especially with other human beings. There are still increases in power; it's just that the abstract quantitative measures no longer work for the infinite.¹⁶

When an action is determined by a passive emotion, passion and action are connected by the common order of nature. Proposition 59 means that any

action that is the result of the common order of nature can also be the result of the order of the intellect. But we can infer something still stronger. Whatever we do through passion we can do through reason, and *do it better*. The mind with passions ordered rationally is more powerful than a mind with passions that follow the common order of nature. “So long as we are not torn by affects contrary to our nature, we have the power of ordering and connecting the affections of the Body according to the order of the intellect” (5p10); “Greater force is required for restraining Affects ordered and connected according to the order of the intellect than for restraining those which are uncertain and random” (5p10s).

Through the emotions, both bodies and ideas can be ordered according to either principle, either through the common order of nature, that naturally associated with bodies, or the order of the intellect, associated with ideas. While the mind and body do not interact, each has a characteristic ordering in which both mind and body can participate. “The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things” (2p7), but both ideas and things can be connected by either the common order of nature or the order of the intellect. Ideas, that is, can be arranged by the common order of nature. Those ideas are called inadequate ideas. For that reason, I said in the first chapter that one cannot derive inadequate ideas from the attribute of thought through which they are conceived. And — the good news — the affections of bodies can be connected through a rational ordering. Then they are active emotions. So 4p59 shows us that the common order of nature is a defective order.¹⁷

But that conclusion has to be qualified. While Spinoza proves that anything done through a passive emotion can be done through reason, he doesn't show the cognitive equivalent to that proposition about the emotions. That is, he doesn't prove that everything *known* through the imagination can be known through adequate ideas. He is right not to do so. People need knowledge of contingency. The passive emotions might be overcome, but not the imagination. The Bible, not reason, teaches that all men can be saved. Chapter 4 of the *TTP*, recall, said that “we are completely ignorant of the order and connection of things itself, i.e., of how things are really ordered and connected. So for practical purposes it is better, indeed necessary, to consider things as possible” (*TTP* C 2:126, G 3:58). Part 4's Proposition 59 shows that passive emotions are in principle dispensable; ideas of the imagination are not. With sufficiently powerful adequate ideas, we no longer need passive pleasures, but we never stop needing inadequate ideas about the external world, just as we never stop needing nourishment from the external world.

The overall argument of the *Ethics* shows how some fortunate souls can develop a conatus that transforms the desire for self-maintenance and increasing power into a desire to be active, and so to act on the basis of adequate ideas. Here in 4p59, and soon in 5p4, we see movement in the opposite direction: acting from adequate ideas is not only more active but more powerful than acting from inadequate ideas, no matter how powerful their external cause. Since someone who seeks more power has no reason to try to be active, it is these propositions that supply necessary motivation for living under the guidance of reason. The path from the desire for more power to the desire for knowledge is through the desire to be an adequate cause.

The triumph of 4p59 may contradict, or transcend, the bondage depicted in the early propositions of Part 4, but it is foreshadowed in the preface which Part 4 begins with the claim that we create a model of human nature, without saying who “we” is, without saying whether everyone imagines the same model, and without saying that it is only people who form a model of their species. The model of human nature is an idea of the imagination, while nature really creates only individuals, not species. We don’t hear about the model again, but Spinoza can maintain that there is no unique human nature, that people do not form a kingdom within a kingdom, while he progressively narrows the scope of the *Ethics* from all minds and bodies to human beings and eventually to people who live under the guidance of reason. He can thread this needle because, although there is nothing exceptional about human beings, there is something exceptional about human society. People, and people alone, can have relations to one another that do not depend on one individual’s increase in power coming at the expense of another’s power. From measuring power as our ability to compete with one another, power becomes the ability to become autonomous by living in a society with other autonomous human beings.

The model of human nature is a perfect example of the human imaginative idea that we want something because it is good. It is also a perfect example of the cunning of imagination, because this model propels us forward to something unknown to the imagination. Just like obeying a sovereign, aspiring to a model of human nature is incipient rationality, implicating a meaning of power that is beyond the imagination’s grasp.

At this point I can draw an implication that Spinoza does not state. There are two exceptions to the general maxim that actions and passions are contraries, in which one individual’s gain of power is at the expense of another’s loss, since the total power of nature is constant. The first is human society.

It can be institutionalized and imagined through a social contract, in which each is defended by the power of the whole, increasing the power of each individual without loss. More positively, human interactions increase power through joint activity, even through self-interested commercial exchange. Just as in any body, what causes a society to come into being has nothing to do with its essence, its desire to maintain itself. Obedience is a training ground for rationality because the sovereign becomes an agent distinct from the people who are its parts. The ruler's rationality is manifest not in his wisdom, but in his relation to the people. If they are empowered by the sovereign, he is and they become rational. The development of adequate ideas is a social process.

The second exception to the general maxim about the relation between action and being acted upon is knowledge of the passions, the subject of Part 5 and my final chapter, where power over the passions does not weaken them but makes them more powerful by being more rational, just as 4p59 tells us. Passive emotions may think that they are weakened by being subjected to reason, just as people living by imagination might think that living in a society is a burden rather than a form of empowerment. Ethical development depends on the passions in the one case, and individual subjects in the other, coming to realize that what feel like constraints are actually liberating. Putting the two together, living under the guidance of reason is open only to people living in society.

If Part 4 begins with the model of human nature in the preface, it ends with an appendix which stresses sociability as the route to rationality. Obedience to a sovereign teaches us to control our passions, even though the sovereign's commands, no matter how rational, can only be felt as passive emotions, which can empower even when they feel like constraints. Thus the appendix tells us:

It is impossible for man not to be a part of nature and not to follow the common order of nature. But if he lives among such individuals as agree with his nature, his power of acting will thereby be aided and encouraged. On the other hand, if he is among such as do not agree at all with his nature, he will hardly be able to accommodate himself to them without greatly changing himself. (§7)

Nothing can agree more with the nature of any thing than other individuals of the same species. And so (by VII) nothing is more useful to man in preserving his being and enjoying a rational life than a man who

is guided by reason. Again, because, among singular things, we know nothing more excellent than a man who is guided by reason, we can show best how much our skill and understanding are worth by educating men so that at last they live according to the command of their own reason. (§8)

The difference between human relations, where one person's activity not only does not come at the expense of someone else losing power, but where our increase in power enhances the power of others, and our relation to everything else is highlighted in §26:

Apart from men we know no singular thing in nature whose Mind we can enjoy, and which we can join to ourselves in friendship, or some kind of association. And so whatever there is in nature apart from men, the principle of seeking our own advantage does not demand that we preserve it. Instead, it teaches us to preserve or destroy it according to its use, or to adapt it to our use in any way whatever.

In both cases, human sociability and power over the passions, human action has cosmic significance, since these two kinds of human action alone allow the entire power of *natura naturata* to increase, as the world becomes more rational and intelligible.

CHAPTER 8

Ethics and the Ethics: How Does Reason Become Practical?

Most people do not know themselves. (*TTP* Preface, C 2:66, G 3:5)

HOW ARE ETHICS AND PRACTICAL REASON POSSIBLE?

It's no wonder if those who have been to the upper world refuse to take an interest in everyday affairs, if their souls are constantly eager to spend their time in that upper region. (Plato, *Republic* VII.517c–d)

If our reason is only an instrument in the service of the passions, it is still impotent, and our hedonistic calculus is vain; if it can govern us effectively, that will only be in the name of its own needs.

(Alexandre Matheron)¹

Chapter 7 focused on a triumphant assertion, that “to every action to which we are determined from an affect which is a passion, we can be determined by reason, without that affect” (4p59). Part 5 continues in that triumphant vein. Proposition 4 of Part 5 states that there “is no affection of the Body of which we cannot form a clear and distinct concept.” Put that together with the previous proposition—“An affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it”—and it follows that all passive emotions can be known adequately, and therefore no longer be passive emotions. Back up one more proposition—“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”—and we can conclude that knowledge truly conquers all, that all passive emotions dissolve on being known.

But I don't think we can be fully satisfied yet. The scholium to 3p3, which Spinoza cites in the proof of 5p3, seems to contradict these optimistic claims: “Passions are not related to the Mind except insofar as it has something which involves a negation, or insofar as it is considered as a part of nature which cannot [*non potest*] be perceived clearly and distinctly through itself, without the others.”² The optimistic version assumes that there are no inherently inadequate ideas or inherently passive emotions: every idea that can be thought inadequately can also be thought adequately, and every emotion that we can experience passively we can also feel actively. It assumes that the passions, and inadequate ideas, know inadequately the same things that the intellect knows adequately. That crucial presupposition is at odds with the account of the three kinds of knowledge in 2p40s2. In the first kind of knowledge, or “opinion or imagination,” “we perceive many things and form universal notions . . . from singular things” and from signs. The second kind of knowledge leads to those perceptions and universal notions from “adequate ideas of the properties of things”; the third, or intuitive knowledge, “proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the [NS: formal] essence of things.” These kinds of knowledge do not sound like different ideas of the same things.³

We've already seen several ways the *Ethics* does what it can to make ethics impossible. Spinoza demotes to superstitions the ideas of free will and final causes on which ethics might seem to depend. Worse still, “conveniences and inconveniences happen indiscriminately to the pious and the impious alike” (1app). If that's the case, then wisdom, the achievement of the highest good, is no help in achieving the other necessary goods of life. Virtue is its own reward (5p42); the worry is that it is good for nothing else. “Portraits, triumphs, and other incentives to virtue are signs of bondage, not freedom. Rewards for virtue are decreed for slaves, not free men” (*Political Treatise*, C 2:600, G 3:356).

In 4p28 Spinoza told us that “Knowledge of God is the Mind's greatest good; its greatest virtue is to know God.” He doesn't tell us what the body's highest good is. What, then, is the relation between the only certain good and the other things desirable and necessary for life? If knowledge doesn't make you rich or even help when pursued by a bear, do we have to temper its cul-

tivation to make sure we also have the arts of security and prosperity? This is the problem I designate, in shorthand, as the relation between the *summum bonum* and the *totum bonum*. Unless we can sort that out, the possibility of ethics as a guide to life is once again in doubt.⁴

I want to approach the possibility of ethics by concentrating on the more specific doubtful possibility of practical reason. Reason cannot tell us what to do; for that we have to rely on imagination, which takes over most of the functions traditionally ascribed to practical reason, leaving reason theoretical and abstract.⁵

The true knowledge we have of good and evil is only abstract, or universal, and the judgment we make concerning the order of things and the connection of causes, so that we may be able to determine what in the present is good or evil for us, is imaginary, rather than real. (4p62s)

Chapter 4 of the *TTP* is even more emphatic:

We are completely ignorant of the order and connection of things itself, i.e., of how things are really ordered and connected. So for practical purposes it is better, indeed necessary, to consider things as possible. (C 2:126, G 3:58)⁶

In chapter 7 I showed the ascent from inadequate ideas to adequate ones is all gain, no loss: the excesses of passive emotions, which seem to lead people to do things they couldn't do through reason alone, turn out not to be empowering but impoverishing. But other things are lost when inadequate ideas become adequate. Ideas become more rational, more connected by the order of the intellect rather than the common order of nature, but in that progress one loses the perspective inherent in inadequacy. Adequate ideas are impersonal; they are abstract because the nature of an adequate idea has nothing to do with the mind that thinks it. If adequate ideas have nothing to do with the mind that thinks them, then they can't be about the good for the individual.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND METHOD

Spinoza makes the possibility of practical reason even more unlikely because there is no room for practical reason given other forms of knowledge that Spinoza does outline. There is a method of interpretation in the *TTP*, and the pref-

ace to Part 5 indicates that there are methods of logic and medicine. A method can be stated apart from its particular operations. *But there is no method for self-knowledge.*⁷

The geometric method (*Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata*) stops at self-knowledge, just where we need practical knowledge. That we have crossed the boundaries of the geometric method is signaled by the fact that Part 5, and only Part 5, has no definitions, and Part 5, and only Part 5, does not end with an appendix that treats the same subject discursively rather than geometrically.⁸ The *Ethics* begins with a demonstration, according to the geometric method, of the nature and necessary existence of God, a being inaccessible to the imagination and therefore to the cooperation of imagination and reason central to the geometric method. The *Ethics* ends as it comes up against the opposite limit of the geometric method, that of self-knowledge. While a geometric method that treats the emotions as one would lines, planes, and bodies is consistent with logic and medicine, it is unclear whether self-knowledge is similarly amenable to geometric demonstration. There is no method, because self-knowledge is not formal and not something to be practiced by experts.⁹

Logic and medicine are practical sciences, normative and prescriptive. They each have models, of a sound mind and body, and know how to move a given individual closer to the model. Both are abstract since they treat the mind and body separately, while reason knows that mind and body are identical. There is no suggestion that since mind and body are identical, therefore medicine and logic are identical. Both logic and medicine treat mind and body as contingent, reorganizing them to be true to their essence in right thinking and corporeal health. The individual, healing herself, has no advantage over other knowers for the practice of logic and medicine.

Spinoza's three methods, the method of interpretation in the *TTP* and the methods of logic and medicine in the preface to Part 5, are all rational methods for understanding the irrational. Inadequate ideas do not become adequate when subjected to these methods: the Bible does not, properly interpreted, become a work of philosophy. But *Ethics* 5 promises to do what those methods do not, to convert the inadequate ideas, or passions, into adequate ideas by being known.

According to the three methods, the appearances apprehended by the imagination are not necessarily appearances of a corresponding reality. *Natura naturata* overall is the appearance of *natura naturans*, but the correspondence is global, not necessarily local. I earlier doubted that each of the seven articles

of faith in the *TTP* corresponds to a distinct adequate idea of divine nature. There is, though, one place where appearances *are* appearances of corresponding realities. That is the passive emotions, each of which is a fragment of an adequate idea. Therefore, self-knowledge will be the one place where practical reason is possible. Showing that that is the case will not be easy.

Logic and medicine, like politics and religion, are rational means for dealing with contingency and the individual. The knowledge of logic and medicine allows action on an object which is passive, just as mechanical arts manipulate external nature. Although body and mind become stronger and more powerful, logic and medicine don't make mind and body any closer to being adequate causes. Logic and medicine do what the imagination wants, increasing the power of mind and body. They are external sources of an increase in power. Logic, he says, "perfects the intellect," but this perfected intellect is really a perfected imagination, just as the rational creed of the *TTP* constitutes a perfected imagination.¹⁰

Just because it is formal, logic is useful on inadequate ideas and only on them. In this it again resembles the method of interpretation in the *TTP*, which separates meaning from truth. Logic shows that all ideas, even the most confused, have formal relations to each other. There is no logic for adequate ideas; there is only knowledge itself.¹¹ Spinoza's geometric method is not logic; hence my maxim that the purpose of the *Ethics* is to transform people from being the subject of the geometric method to being its practitioners. Self-knowledge is knowledge of mind and body together, knowledge of oneself as an adequate cause.

THE GEOMETRIC METHOD VS. SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Practical reason develops in three stages. First, Spinoza cedes the domain of practice to the imagination. For the purposes of action, we have to regard everything as contingent. Although reason knows it's false, we have to act as though we made free decisions and changed the world. There's no room for practical reason, because all thinking about particulars has to be imaginative.

Second, he provides *methods*, that is, adequate ideas for organizing our inadequate ideas. While previously the Bible was a weapon for enslaving the superstitious, it is now a work of imagination that leads to actions of justice and piety. Medicine and logic purge body and mind of harmful passions, ordering the passions by the order of the intellect and so letting people lead happy and moral lives. This second approach makes reason practical while observing

the unbridgeable difference between finite and infinite, between passions and adequate ideas. The order and connection of both ideas and things is now the order of the intellect, although the things and ideas ordered are bodies and inadequate ideas.

A lesser mind would be satisfied with these methods as the way the infinite, in the form of adequate ideas, can intervene in the world of the finite and the imagination. The *TTP* shows that the method of interpretation is enough for a just and pious life, and logic and medicine rescue us from all the bad effects of the passions. The reason Spinoza needs to go further than these methods, and further than the geometric method can take us, was present already at the start of Part 3. Its first three propositions show that having adequate ideas is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for an individual to be active. The only way to be an adequate cause is through adequate ideas. But Propositions 1–3 are incomplete. Proposition 2 shows that an active mind cannot cause a body to be active, so we don't yet know how bodies can be adequate causes. Part 4 will tell us what the certain and unconditional good of understanding is, but whether there is an absolute good for the body is unknown. In addition, we don't know at that point if it's possible to specify sufficient conditions for an idea being an adequate cause. Part 5 finally shows that the sufficient condition for being an adequate cause is the adequate idea's control over the passions. When we are active and free, adequate ideas dominate the mind. And as I will show later, at that point, the mind, specifically the understanding, finally becomes an agent.¹² The individual as the character in the drama of the *Ethics* is introduced in Part 3, but it is only here in Part 5 that, as an adequate cause, it is an agent.

The geometric method comes up against its limit in self-knowledge. As with the cunning of imagination, Spinoza's argument advances through a double reversal as reason finally becomes practical. The geometric method is thinking without a thinking subject par excellence. Euclid's mind is as irrelevant to the *Elements* as the minds of the prophets are relevant to prophecy and its interpretation in the *TTP*, where the utterances of the prophets have to be contextualized. Geometry lets us overcome the self as an individual knower with her point of view. For knowledge to be practical, Spinoza needs a new relation between mind and what it thinks, neither the personal and perspectival relation of the imagination nor the impersonal and abstract relation of the understanding. The imagination's picture of personal identity will have to be replaced by one appropriate to the understanding. The imagination thinks that what is essential is what is unique. It is right to think that way, because the conatus preserves itself by setting itself off from surrounding individuals.

For whenever anyone imagines his own actions, he is affected with Joy (by P53), and with a greater Joy, the more his actions express perfection, and the more distinctly he imagines them, i.e. (by IIP40S1), 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.

But if he relates what he affirms of himself to the universal idea of man or animal, he will not be so greatly gladdened. (3p55s)¹³

By contrast, the essence that is the identity of virtue, power, activity, and understanding in 4p24 is not idiosyncratic and is not the essence of any individual. “Acting absolutely from virtue is nothing else in us but acting, living, and preserving our being (these three signify the same thing) by the guidance of reason, from the foundation of seeking one’s own advantage.” The reorientation toward understanding and away from imagination means that I see my power defined in terms of my activities, and not relative to competing powers. The rational activity that is the object of self-knowledge is not the essence of the individual—it is something better. Insofar as someone is active, he or she doesn’t need an essence or conatus because it takes no effort to preserve adequate ideas.¹⁴

Note the double reversal. The imagination, as we saw, regards its essence as what is unique. Reason denies such a comparative judgment, and shifts to an absolute judgment of power as activity of which the individual is the adequate cause. With the absolute judgment, there is now a new and rational meaning for individuality, being the complete cause of one’s actions. The self becomes an agent.

This double reversal constitutes the plot of the *Ethics*. Our ideas have to become impersonal—inadequate ideas become adequate—and then those adequate ideas have to become personal in a new sense. As I’ve stressed, Spinoza offers no general account for the first development; *Ethics* 5 explains the second stage, but only in the case of knowledge of the passions. The first kind of knowledge is self-knowledge because there is nothing else that the first kind of knowledge can know but how the individual is affected. In adequate self-knowledge, the self is not a privileged object. When someone becomes a practitioner rather than the subject of the geometric method, the self finally becomes an agent acting on its own passions. Paradoxically, one becomes an agent as one loses one’s personal identity and loses concern for one’s uniqueness.

This double reversal away from the personal and back again makes sense only because self-knowledge is inherently not abstract but conative and emotional. “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” (5p2). In the last chapter I noted that passive emotions were separable modifications of ideas, but that active emotions are not separable from the adequate ideas they modify; one cannot have an adequate idea of oneself and one’s activity without having the virtues of magnanimity and generosity. Now 5p2 teaches us to separate an emotion from the idea it modifies, and leads us to ideas and emotions that are inseparable. Self-knowledge is reflection on one’s activity, and self-knowledge is therefore exempt from the characterization of the second kind of knowledge as abstract, just because its accompanying emotions are inseparable.¹⁵

KNOWLEDGE AND THE IDEA OF THE GOOD:
PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICS

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the *Ethics* does a lot that makes practical reason look impossible. It also shows ways in which the very complexity of the human imagination creates barriers, in Parts 3 and 4, to the possibility of ethics. The human imagination, unlike less powerful imaginations, conceives that things are desired because they are good rather than the other way around. The understanding in Part 4 corrects this uniquely human inadequate idea, teaching instead that good is simply the name we give to our objects of desire.

Getting the relation between pleasure and good backward is no innocent error. Once people make that mistake, they compound it by thinking that if something is good, everyone else should desire it too.

In the state of nature there is no one who by common consent is Master of anything, nor is there anything in Nature which can be said to be this man’s and not that man’s. Instead, all things belong to all. So in the state of nature, there cannot be conceived any will to give to each his own, or to take away from someone what is his. I.e., in the state of nature nothing is done which can be called just or unjust.

But in the civil state, of course, where it is decided by common consent what belongs to this man, and what to that [, things are done which can be called just or unjust]. (4p37s2)

Like religion, political agreement on definitions of good and bad is the imagination healing itself, not becoming more rational but making rationality unnecessary. The understanding knows that good is nothing but a name people give to what they find pleasant, but to live together people also need the imaginative definition of good imposed by the ruler. We can practically overcome aspects of the imagination that prevent us from becoming more powerful, aspects that send us in the wrong directions, e.g., superstition and romantic love, and aspects that drive us apart, e.g., envy and ambition, in two ways — through adequate ideas and through political agreement. Both are impersonal, but for different reasons. To figure out how reason can be practical, we have to figure out the relation between these two ideas of goodness, that defined by the sovereign and that defined by the understanding.

The simplest connection between the two is to have philosophers rule. But Spinoza's rational person is not a platonic guardian. Instead the rational person becomes, in the scholia to 4p37, the good citizen. Deleuze says that "what is unique about Spinoza is that he, the most philosophic of philosophers . . . teaches the philosopher how to become a nonphilosopher."¹⁶ He teaches the philosopher to be a citizen rather than a ruler. Socrates's philosopher-kings have no private property; Spinoza's equivalent is the loss of individuality pre-figured in adequate ideas, which do not belong to the person thinking them in the way that inadequate ideas are indexed to their thinker. But the elimination of privacy in orienting one's life to the pursuit of adequate ideas raises in its most acute form the relation of the *summum bonum* to the *totum bonum*, the relation between the good of understanding to the goods of life, both survival and living together. Elhanan Yakira puts the point precisely:

The problem of reconciling the inevitability of the point of view of temporal existence with a concept of rationality allegedly thought *sub specie aeternitatis* is undoubtedly one of the more difficult questions posed by the Spinozistic philosophical enterprise. More concretely, this question can be formulated as a question about the meaningfulness and relevance of the point of view of eternity to human life and happiness.¹⁷

The self-knowledge that Spinoza talks about in Parts 4 and 5 could have been expounded earlier, in Part 3; all the premises he needs are present early in Part 3. The reason for its delayed appearance is that self-knowledge is not useful as long as the self isn't worth knowing. In another of those propositions that could have been proved much earlier than when it is presented, 3p53 de-

clares that “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.” Self-knowledge is knowledge of oneself as a knower and therefore as active. This proposition is then recapitulated in 3da25: Self-esteem is a “Joy born of the fact that a man considers himself and his own power of acting.”¹⁸ “Self-esteem (*acquiescentia in se ipso*) is really the highest good we can hope for” (4p52s). While understanding is the only certain good, self-contentment is the highest good. While understanding is good of the mind only, self-contentment is pleasure in one’s own “self and power of activity.” This active emotion lets us connect the good of understanding to a happy and free life. The individual’s self-contentment is fortified by one’s relations to others (4p52s); that is how a well-regulated state is the context for bootstrap self-empowerment and for the individual to be an adequate cause. The life guided by reason is a social and a political life.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE AS TRANSFORMATIVE KNOWLEDGE

All acts whether of imagination or reason, apart from reason acting on one’s own passions, leave their objects intact. The sun is not affected by my seeing it. When I read Euclid and learn how to find the fourth proportional, the magnitudes I calculate stay still and unaffected so I can calculate them; the geometric method couldn’t work if thinking about an object transformed it. Self-knowledge is the one exception. It does not leave intact the object known, but instead increases its power. Because it is the only form of transformative knowledge, self-knowledge is the only form of practical knowledge.¹⁹

Self-knowledge is transformative because in knowing one’s own passions the common order of nature (2p29c) can be known adequately and so transformed into the order of the intellect (5p10).²⁰ And so Part 5 begins with this theorem: “The affections of the body, or images of things are ordered and connected in the body,” which he says follows from 2p7. Part 5 turns on both bodies and ideas being capable of being arranged both according to the common order of nature and according to the order of the intellect. This is the commensurability of the finite and the infinite. When we have inadequate ideas, our thoughts and the parts of our bodies are arranged according to the common order of nature. With adequate ideas, our ideas and our *bodies* instead follow the order of the intellect, substituting internal for external necessity. From my first chapter, I have argued that being finite comes naturally to

bodies, while being infinite is the natural condition of ideas, the condition that follows from the nature of the attribute they modify. Bodies, left to themselves, follow the common order of nature. Ideas, considered apart from their relation to the minds that think them, arrange themselves in the order of the intellect.

This is, I think, Spinoza's answer to the question of how the intellect can be practical. The trouble, which we ran into in a slightly different form in chapter 7, is that there are many emotional experiences that seem to falsify Spinoza's claim that "an affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it" (5p3). Jacob knows all there is to know about why Laban makes him angry, and he stays angry. At its least plausible, 5p18s tells us that insofar as we understand God to be the cause of (our) pain, we rejoice; the pain is no longer mine and so is no longer pain. We cling to our passive emotions because we cling to our personal perspective: that clinging is just what the conatus is.

The perspectival character of inadequate ideas prevents the imaginative mind from knowing itself adequately. The eye cannot see itself; it cannot see the activity of seeing. Reflecting on inadequate ideas is like seeing my eye in a mirror, which anyone else can do as well as I can; thus the methods of logic and medicine. Reflecting on one's own activity is a completely different matter. The mind knows itself, inadequately, as the idea of a body, but it cannot know itself as a knower except through adequate ideas, and that means abandoning the perspective essential to the mind as a finite idea. *So knowing oneself means becoming a different kind of being.* My essence is now myself as an adequate cause, as in 4def8: "By virtue and power I understand the same thing, i.e. (by IIIP7), virtue, insofar as it is related to man, is the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as he has the power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone."

TWO CONCEPTIONS OF ADEQUATE IDEAS

I started this chapter by listing some reasons why it looks like reason cannot be practical. Here is another. Spinoza presents two different pictures of adequate ideas. Starting with their introduction in Part 2, adequate ideas are said to be knowable by themselves. They are prior to inadequate ideas, which individuals form only because their minds are confused ideas of their bodies. Their nature as adequate ideas has nothing to do with the minds that think them. And they are therefore practically impotent, what I've called an alien presence.

But, at the beginning of Part 5, adequate ideas are the completions of inadequate ideas, a dynamic form of the commensurability of finite and infinite we haven't seen before. Only those adequate ideas that complete passive emotions have practical power. For practical and ethical purposes, inadequate ideas are then prior to adequate ones. These are adequate ideas as thought by finite minds. These are the adequate ideas which are adequate causes. Knowledge of the passions is what we've been looking for — practical adequate ideas. They are adequate ideas with emotionality necessarily attached, and in that sense necessarily tied to the minds that think them. Paul's adequate ideas of Peter's emotions — knowing them as lines, planes, and bodies — don't complete these emotions. In self-knowledge, the infinite acts on the finite to make it infinite too.

Those two different pictures of the relation between adequate and inadequate ideas are matched by the two different adequate ideas of the good I mentioned, the purgative one that reverses the imagination's idea that we desire things because they are good, and the direct one that identifies the good as what benefits the understanding. The intellect purges the imaginative idea that something is pleasant because it is good by proving that pleasure itself is good (4p41). But things that are good because they aid the intellect aren't good because they are pleasant; their connection to the good is direct: guided by reason, we pursue the good directly. The relation between the two conceptions of adequate ideas is matched by the relation between the *totum bonum*, the right understanding of the pleasures connected with the conatus, and the *summum bonum*, the knowledge of the good of rationality. The *TIE* opens by promising an intimate connection between the two:

Those things men ordinarily strive for, not only provide no remedy to preserve our being, but in fact hinder that preservation, often cause the destruction of those who possess them and always cause the destruction of those who are possessed by them. (*TIE* §7; C 1:9, G 2:7)

The *TIE* assures us that devotion to the good of understanding is not only its own end, but also will be useful in achieving the end of the conatus, self-preservation. The long scholium to 2p49 ends Part 2 with a similar promise, claiming that the pursuit of adequate ideas does have practical value, in the most ordinary sense of the practical. Spinoza there lists four “practical advantages that accrue from knowledge of this doctrine,” four ways in which the *summum bonum* is a *totum bonum*. “This doctrine” is good inasmuch as

1. it teaches that we act only from God's command, that we share in the divine nature, and that we do this the more the more perfect our actions are, and the more and more we understand God. [This doctrine gives] great tranquility of mind [and] has the further advantage of teaching us wherein our greatest happiness lies. . . .
2. it teaches us how we must bear ourselves concerning matters of fortune, . . . [seeing that] all things follow from God's eternal decree with the same necessity as from the essence of a triangle it follows that its three angles are equal to two right angles. . . .
3. it teaches us to hate no one, to disesteem no one, to mock no one, to be angry at no one, to envy no one; and also insofar as it teaches that each of us should be content with his own things, and should be helpful to his neighbor. . . .
4. This doctrine also contributes, to no small extent, to the common society insofar as it teaches how citizens are to be governed and led, not so that they may be slaves, but that they may do freely the things that are best.

Therefore, while "we know nothing to be certainly good or evil, except what really leads to understanding or what can prevent us from understanding" (4p27), Spinoza also affirms that "those things are good which bring about the preservation of the proportion of motion and rest the human Body's parts have to one another; on the other hand, those things are evil which bring it about that the parts of the human Body have a different proportion of motion and rest to one another" (4p39), without an explicit connection between those two. There is a certain measure of good not only for the mind, as in 4p27, but also for the body. That 4p39 is specifically about the body is noted in the scholium, where reserves for Part 5 an explanation of "to what extent these things can hinder or be of service to the mind." As things other than the understanding itself can be of service to the mind, so the rational mind can be of service to the rest of life.

We discovered in chapter 3 that human relations were unique in that one person's power can increase without being at the expense of another's. The relation between reason and the passions is another place where that happens: as we saw in chapter 7, when an emotion ceases to be passive, it becomes more powerful. The two places where the thing acting empowers the thing acted upon, self-knowledge and human social relations, are the loci of the two virtues or active emotions, courage and generosity.

THE PARADOXES OF REFLECTION

Both kinds of adequate ideas, the impersonal ones that have nothing to do with the minds that think them, and those that complete the passions, seem to threaten mind/body identity as inadequate ideas do not. Neither kind of adequate idea fits the idea of a part, an idea suitable for bodies and inadequate ideas. A part of the body is a smaller body that can be exchanged for another while the ratio of motion and rest among the parts stays the same (e.g., Lemma 4 after 2p13). There are no parts that must be present for the body to remain what it is. If what is true for the body is true for the mind, then the mind is made up of smaller ideas that can be swapped in and out without changing the ratio of motion and rest that constitutes the essence of the mind. Each part of the body that can be substituted for another has a corresponding idea which also can come and go as part of the mind. And so Letter 32 (to Oldenburg): “Concerning whole and parts, I consider things as parts of some whole to the extent that the nature of the one adapts itself to that of the other so that they all agree with one another as far as possible” (C 2:18, G 4:120a).

Since adequate ideas are, once we have them, permanent presences in the mind, an adequate idea doesn't fit the definition of a part. Because they aren't parts of the mind, adequate ideas are either an alien presence, in the mind but not part of it, or they are the essence of the entire mind, as an adequate cause. “The more the Mind understands things by the second and third kind of knowledge, the less it is acted on by affects which are evil, and the less it fears death” (5p38). Inadequate ideas correspond to particular parts of the body, and so when we get a new inadequate idea, some part of the body changes. But to an adequate idea corresponds the activity of the body as a whole. Self-knowledge is not one idea among others.

Transformative knowledge raises questions that the three methods for ordering inadequate ideas and bodies don't have to face. Its object doesn't sit still to be known. That's the power of transformation but ethically it is also a danger. I hate Deborah. I have an adequate idea that destroys the hatred or converts it into love. What is that adequate idea an adequate idea of? To answer either hate or love seem insufficient. It's far more plausible to see conversion or competition at work in knowing a passive pleasure: my love for Eduardo becomes a manifestation of my generosity toward all people. But passive pains seem different. Knowledge of pain can either follow its object and decrease power — as the line Spinoza quotes from Ecclesiastes says, knowledge can increase pain; knowledge of pain can increase pain, as it increases awareness of

it—or knowing one’s pain can mitigate the pain, leading to its acceptance. As Matheron put it, “Insofar as an idea is *true* knowledge, it is not knowledge of evil; insofar as it is knowledge of *evil*, it is necessarily inadequate.” What we need for reason to be practical is an adequate idea of an inadequate idea that makes that inadequate idea adequate without losing its identity.²¹

The scholium to Proposition 18 of Part 5 tells us that insofar as we see God as the cause of pain, we rejoice. If I am in pain because of the loss of a loved one, my pain is not mitigated if someone explains to me that God caused the loss. My pain is now compounded with anger at God and even more at the person who thought that that idea would be consoling. A logic that corrected my inadequate idea is not in place here.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE AS KNOWLEDGE OF THE PASSIONS

Reason is practical for Spinoza when it controls the passions. That’s it. Human freedom, being an adequate cause, is not concerned with power over the external world but over one’s own passions. Recall: there are active emotions concerning oneself and other people, not the rest of the external world. Having effects on the rest of the world can safely be delegated to the imagination, and religion and politics are designed to help the person guided by imagination to act just as the person guided by reason would act. This apparent indifference to one’s effects on the world is one reason Spinoza, unlike, say, Aristotle and Kant, does not distinguish theoretical from practical reason. So he says in the preface to Part 5: “Here, then, as I have said, I shall treat only of the power of the Mind, of reason, and shall show, above all, how great its dominion over the affects is, and what kind of dominion it has for restraining and moderating them.” The only advantage that wisdom gives is its power over the passions.

In a curious way, then the *conatus*, and so the emotions, complete inadequate ideas. The emotions add something to the inadequate ideas they modify that makes it possible for those inadequate ideas to become adequate ideas. Without an innate desire to know, the cunning of imagination enlists the passions to lead to the power of the intellect over the passions, that is, to lead to human freedom.

It is because practical reason is limited to the power of the intellect over the emotions, and because freedom therefore consists in freedom from being enslaved by the emotions, that Spinoza can be indifferent to decrees of the ruler that might override the ethical precept to repay hate with love with a

definition of justice that requires retaliation. And so in the lines from chapter 19 of the *TTP* I quoted before: “If someone quarrels with me and wants to take my tunic, it’s pious to give him my cloak also. . . . But when one judges that this is harmful to the preservation of the Republic, it is, on the contrary, pious to call him to judgment, even if he’s to be condemned to death” (C 2:337, G 3:232). Even being ordered to do things contrary to how one would act on one’s own does not infringe on the freedom from bondage to the emotions. My imagination is *mine* in a way that my understanding is not, and for that reason that my intellect has no authority against a more powerful imagination of the ruler. But for the same reason, the ruler has no authority over reason. It is only in this way that philosophy, theology, and politics can happily coexist.

That coexistence has a price. I have stressed throughout that Spinoza never offers a pathway from imagination to reason. He presents such a pathway only in the specific case of adequate ideas transforming the passions into adequate ideas and active emotions, not the more general case of adequate ideas either correcting and completing inadequate ideas or developing out of inadequate ideas. The “true method” for interpreting the Bible settles its meaning by putting aside questions of its truth. We can have a quite definite understanding of the Bible so long as we don’t make judgments about its truth. Reading Euclid, he tells us, is a completely different activity. It is obviously true and intelligible, and so interpretation is beside the point; we understand it instead. The method of interpretation is the correct attitude to have toward inadequate ideas. The Bible can never be either understood or rewritten to embody an adequate idea. No one following Spinoza’s method could ever discover that Maimonides is right after all in calling Moses a great philosopher. No one looking for meaning can ever find truth. The price of the harmony between philosophy and politics and religion is that adequate and inadequate ideas have different objects, and that therefore the difference between them cannot be a difference in degree.

While the power of reason is limited to power over the passions, not power over the external world, Spinoza is no stoic, taking refuge in certain knowledge of the passions and the understanding as the only certain good, letting everything else become matters of indifference. Reason impels us as much to live with others as to master the passions. Being guided by reason means leading a cheerful, active, social life.

The Desire by which a man who lives according to the guidance of reason is bound to join others to himself in friendship, I call Being Hon-

orable, and I call that honorable which men who live according to the guidance of reason praise; on the other hand, what is contrary to the formation of friendship, I call dishonorable [*turpe*]. (4p37s1)²²

The free man is not an isolated individual. “Man, I say, 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.” Becoming more rational and becoming more social go together (4p18s).²³ Spinoza and Socrates are one in making self-knowledge the center of the ethical life; they also share a commitment to reason that does not attract them to science as the embodiment of rationality, nor to a retreat from the world.²⁴

Imagination and reason cooperate in our social relations. While nothing is more excellent and useful to man than man, a pig better satisfies my need to eat than another person, and sheep are a better bet for clothing than my fellows. That greatest good which is common to all can only be a good of the mind, since I cannot wish what is good for my body to be good for everyone else: they might get there first. Saying that nothing is as useful to man as man understates things. Sheep are more useful to me, providing wool and food. Rather than being instrumental, intercourse with other people is constitutive of the increase of power and rationality. Combining with someone of the same nature is self-knowledge, since in the act of combination, I master my passions as I combine with someone else. Because rationality and sociability are identified, praise and honor are not distractions from the pleasure one takes in knowing oneself to be an adequate cause. Again like Socrates, we know ourselves through knowing others and being known by other people.²⁵

Self-knowledge solves the problem of practical reason because self-knowledge is uniquely both adequate and practical. Self-knowledge is self-confirming and therefore empowering. Reflecting on one's self-knowledge, one knows oneself better and becomes more powerful. Second, as self-confirming, self-knowledge isn't true through a correspondence with an external reality. Adequacy, from being a sign of truth, becomes the cause of truth. Self-knowledge overcomes the imaginative theory of knowledge as accurate pictorial representation. Instead knowledge is an activity whose internal formal properties make it true. That is how it can be activity without corresponding passivity. Self-knowledge and society are the two places where activity does not depend on something else being passive. The emotions are not weakened but strengthened when adequately known.

But the thesis that self-knowledge is uniquely both adequate and practical immediately runs into trouble, the recurring trouble that adequate and inadequate ideas must have different objects. It looks like there is an inconsistent triad:

What is common to all things and is equally in the part and in the whole, does not constitute the essence of any singular thing. (2p37)

The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing. (3p7)

An affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it. (5p3)

From the first two it follows that the conatus cannot be the object of an adequate idea, which makes self-knowledge impossible. Yet by 5p3 it can be known adequately. In Part 4 the human essence changed from the conatus to the “the power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone” (4def8). I worry that in that narrowing Spinoza isn’t just changing the subject. Likewise here, where the passive emotion, when known, seems both to preserve its identity and to become something else altogether. When someone knows oneself, what exactly is the object of that knowledge?

The drama of the *Ethics* has changed the subject. The mind that was the confused idea of a body does not have enough reality to be known adequately, and the same for the conatus that is the essence of every individual. Passions and inadequate ideas become knowable as adequate ideas make them powerful and real enough to be known. More concretely and radically, one’s own emotions are the only “essence of any one particular thing” that can be known by adequate ideas. And so 4p36s: “The greatest good of those who seek virtue is . . . common to all men, and can be possessed equally by all men insofar as they are of the same nature.” This greatest good, and therefore the human essence, is found in rationality itself, in the order of the intellect as opposed to the common order of nature. As common to all. Spinoza has squared a circle. The human essence has no individuality, but self-knowledge can only be knowledge of one’s own passions, not of human passions in general, which *Ethics* 3 can expound.

It is announced at 4p52d that “while a man considers himself, he perceives nothing clearly and distinctly, or adequately, except those things which fol-

low from his power of acting (by IIID₂), i.e. (by IIIP₃), which follow from his power of understanding.” When we consider anything else, we cannot perceive things that follow from our power of acting and understanding, and therefore cannot perceive anything outside ourselves adequately. I cannot have knowledge of someone else’s adequate ideas. Therefore the only adequate knowledge of particulars is reflexive knowledge.

MORAL PROGRESS AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF

I’ve argued that there are two kinds of adequate ideas, those of what is common, and those involved in self-knowledge. I’ve also shown that the drama of the *Ethics* centers on a reversal, as ethical progress proceeds from the imagination’s ideas indexed to who is thinking them, first to the impersonality of adequate ideas, and then to the new sense of personality of self-knowledge. Putting those together, there are four stages of ideas, the first two for inadequate ideas and the third and fourth for adequate ideas; the first and the fourth are kinds of self-knowledge, while the second and third are not. First, the mind is the confused idea of a certain body. Their union is too intimate for the mind to be a true or false idea. Next, all other inadequate ideas can be true or false. In this second stage of the first kind of knowledge, ideas represent their objects, and therefore this kind of knowledge is abstract. Spinoza calls this knowledge “from signs” (2p4os2), and humans further develop the imagination through language into conceiving such abstractions as the model of human nature.

In the third stage, we encounter the second kind of knowledge. Like the second kind of inadequate ideas, the second kind of knowledge is also abstract. There is no error possible here—all adequate ideas are true—but there is still a distance between knowledge and the known. Anyone can have any adequate idea, since there is no place where they are not available. But, it seems, for the same reason the presence of these adequate ideas does not affect the identity, the conatus, of the knower. These adequate ideas are therefore impractical.

Finally we come to self-knowledge, and from it to the third kind of knowledge. Like the second kind of knowledge, it is necessarily true. But, as with the first stage of inadequate ideas, there is no distinction between the knower and the known. For the mind to be practical rather than abstract, the perspectival nature of the imagination, where what things are is defined by how they affect the individual, has to be replaced by a new kind of relation between the

knower and the known, adequate ideas that let us take things personally. Self-knowledge is not simply a case of knowing that happens to have one's own passions as an object. Eugene Marshall notes the uniqueness of self-knowledge: "The only adequate knowledge of finite things that Spinoza seems to allow is self-knowledge, because the mind is the idea of this body, as opposed to any other body. Indeed, it is the uniqueness of this relation that makes my mind the one associated with my body as opposed to another."²⁶

The third kind of knowledge reintegrates knower and known in two ways, by the active emotions that accompany self-knowledge, and by integrating the idea of God with its affect, the intellectual love of God. The first of my four stages, the mind as a confused idea of the body, shows that self-knowledge is unique among inadequate ideas; the last stage shows that it is unique among adequate ideas.

Calling the third kind of knowledge intuitive and identifying it as a form of knowledge shared by God and human beings makes it sound mystical, in spite of the fact that 2p40s2 defines it as a kind of inference. Now we don't have to resort to a mystical reading. The third kind of knowledge, and my fourth stage here, can be both intuitive and inferential because it is self-knowledge, and the self is finally transparent to itself after an arduous passage from the opacity of mind to those who don't know themselves.

Insofar as our Mind knows itself and the Body under a species of eternity, it necessarily has knowledge of God, and knows that it is in God and is conceived through God. (5p30)

The Mind's intellectual Love of God is the very Love of God by which God loves himself, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he can be explained by the human Mind's essence, considered under a species of eternity; i.e., the Mind's intellectual Love of God is part of the infinite Love by which God loves himself. (5p36)

The union of knowledge and the known occurs with, and is identical to, the union of the knower with God. I can know how to get rich without wanting to, but I can't know that having adequate ideas is the true good without desiring to acquire them. The self-knowledge of the first half of Part 5 is the third kind of knowledge of the second half. That crucial identification is explicit in 5p15: "He who understands himself and his affects clearly and distinctly loves God, and does so the more, the more he understands himself and his affects."

God knows itself. God is *causa sui*. I cannot be a *causa sui*. I can be the next best thing, the adequate cause of my ideas and actions, even if not of my own existence. This is Spinoza's *imitatio Dei*. God's knowledge is self-knowledge. In imitating God, it seems like I have two choices, *de dicto* and *de re*. I can, like God, know myself, and so human self-knowledge is the closest we can come to divine self-knowledge. Or, like God, I can know God. I can approximate God's self-knowledge either by imitating God's activity—self-knowledge—or trying to have the same object of knowledge as God—knowing God. These are alternative descriptions, not different activities.

The third kind of knowledge, then, is available only to someone with self-knowledge. It is for that reason that Spinoza, after defining the three kinds of knowledge in 2p4os2, does not use the difference between the second and third kind of knowledge until this late in the *Ethics*. The centrality of self-knowledge also deepens the truth of 4p63c: "By a Desire arising from reason, we directly follow the good, and indirectly flee the evil." The person guided by reason does not directly try to get rid of passive emotions; that would be directly to shun evil. It is instead by directly pursuing the good that the passive emotions dissolve. When I devote myself to understanding, then I am to that extent not interested in indefinite accumulation of external goods, and therefore no longer have the passive emotions associated with such accumulation. When I am devoted to understanding, I pursue a good which is accessible to everyone, and which I want everyone to enjoy, and therefore no longer have the ambition to be superior to others. Intellectual and moral progress are joined, relating the *summum bonum* to the *totum bonum*.

Reason has to know each passion, converting it into an adequate idea. But that's an endless task. Reason can never totally occupy the territory of the imagination, so long as the mind is the idea of a body. If Freud said that where Id was, there Ego shall be, Spinoza will not affirm the parallel, that where imagination was, there reason will be. Knowing the passions might be endless, but it isn't futile. "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" (5p2). This does not imply that I should direct my efforts consciously to understanding each passion. Instead I try to lead a rational life in the midst of passions. The more rational I am, the more I understand these passions, and the more they cease to be passions. I "directly" aim at understanding and living rationally, and shun the evil of passive emotions indirectly.

The argument of the *Ethics*, which I've summarized as the cunning of imagi-

nation, reaches the happy ending of Part 5 where passive emotions are knowable and so converted into adequate ideas and active emotions. It's tempting then to downplay the periodic appearances of a kind of intellect that doesn't depend on completing inadequate ideas, my first kind of adequate ideas, from the assertion that everyone has an adequate idea of the divine essence (2p47) to the declaration in 4p26 that "what we strive for from reason is nothing but understanding; nor does the Mind, insofar as it uses reason, judge anything else useful to itself except what leads to understanding." But the relation between those two kinds of adequate ideas is precisely the relation between the *summum bonum* and the *totum bonum*. Spinoza can assert nothing for the body parallel to 4p26. The good of the body has no such specification. Instead we get 4p38 and 39, which tell us, unhelpfully, that "whatever so disposes the human Body that it can be affected in a great many ways, or renders it capable of affecting external Bodies in a great many ways, is useful to man," and "those things are good which bring about the preservation of the proportion of motion and rest the human Body's parts have to one another." While true, they don't pick out any specific actions of the body because what is good for one person's body, under those criteria, may not be good for another body. No such variation exists for the mind. Understanding as the human essence gives the essence determinate content, while the conatus tries to preserve whatever condition we find ourselves in. As I showed, 4p38–39 give no adequate idea of what is good for the body. But there is an adequate idea of what is good for the passions, namely to be known adequately. My first kind of adequate ideas, as abstract, can be stated apart from any particular application or embodiment. But self-knowledge, which determines the good of the body, what is best to do in some particular circumstances, is not a formula but an activity, the activity of knowing one's passions.

Spinoza's story of the possibility of ethics and of ethical development is complicated, as it should be, because of the ambivalence of the imagination. The cunning of imagination now appears in the form of adequate ideas of inadequate ideas, our passions, as a kind of good distinct from understanding itself. Consider the relation between 5p6 and its scholium. "Insofar as the Mind understands all things as necessary, it has a greater power over the affects, or is less acted on by them." The more powerful the intellect, the weaker the imagination. But the scholium turns back to show the effects of reason on the imagination and therefore on practice:

The more this knowledge that things are necessary is concerned with singular things, which we imagine more distinctly and vividly, the

greater is this power of the Mind over the affects, as experience itself also testifies. For we see that Sadness over some good which has perished is lessened as soon as the man who has lost it realizes that this good could not, in any way, have been kept. Similarly, we see that no one pities infants because of their inability to speak, to walk, or to reason, or because they live so many years, as it were, unconscious of themselves.

The imagination is not destroyed but made more distinct and vivid. Understanding increases one's power regardless of circumstances. In addition and surprisingly, it increases the power of the imagination. The more a passion is known, the less it is a passion and the more powerful it becomes.

Knowing that I will die is still painful, since it is contrary to my conatus, but the pain is mitigated when I know that I can't do anything about it. My true idea of good and evil teaches that all things are ruled by necessity, and that knowledge increases my power over the passions, even though that power falls short of the absolute dominion that my other true idea of good, that of the understanding itself, has.

HOW THE ETHICS BECOMES ETHICAL

Spinoza has no interest in the difference between theoretical and practical reason. Instead, he finds within his third original idea, that of active emotions, courage (*animositas*) directed at self-preservation "according to the dictates of reason alone" and nobility (*generositas*), "the Desire by which each one strives, solely from the dictate of reason, to aid other men and join them to him in friendship" (3p59s). There are two crucial implications of this identification of the active emotions with two sorts of virtues.

First, as I've already argued, there is no third virtue or active emotion whereby an individual, according to the dictates of reason alone, tries to do anything toward the rest of external nature. This is the ultimate truth in the idea that philosophy won't make you rich. (There is also no active emotion toward God. That lacuna will be filled by the intellectual love of God.)

Second, self-perfection and our rational relations to other people are two aspects of the same power and rationality. Nobility can extend the reach of the highest good beyond the individual. There is no conflict between egoism and altruism—"The good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men; and this Desire is greater as his knowledge of God is greater" (4p37)—but the connection is even stronger: we best help others

by becoming rational and perfecting ourselves, and we best acquire adequate ideas through social intercourse.

The good which man wants for himself and loves, he will love more constantly if he sees that others love it (by IIIP31). So (by IIIP31C), he will strive to have the others love the same thing. And because this good is common to all (by P36), and all can enjoy it, he will therefore (by the same reason) strive that all may enjoy it. And this striving will be the greater, the more he enjoys this good. (4p37d2)

For things which bring it about that men live harmoniously, at the same time bring it about that they live according to the guidance of reason. (4p4od)

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. (4p73)

In fact, Part 4, once it turns from human bondage to what reason prescribes (4p18s), shows how courage and nobility are interrelated, not distinct virtues. And so Part 4 ends: “These and similar things which we have shown concerning the true freedom of man are related to Strength of Character, i.e. (by IIIP59S), to Tenacity and Nobility” (4p73s). We realize that we need other people just as we need help from external nature. But, through the cunning of imagination, people give us more than we ask for. We turn to other people just as we turn to the rest of nature to increase our power, but socializing leads to our being active as well as powerful. It is because we discover that we can have these unique relations to other people that we can become ethical beings, and the *Ethics* becomes an ethical book.²⁷ Being guided by reason won’t make you rich, but it will make you more sociable and agreeable. To the extent that our security and prosperity depend on other people rather than nonhuman nature, being guided by reason does make you more moral and more successful.

I started this chapter with the paradox that adequate ideas are impersonal and nonperspectival, and therefore seem to lead away from rather than toward practical action. The predicament seems repeated here. Adequate ideas have no conatus; nothing can destroy them and so they don’t need to exert themselves to persist. Therefore adequate ideas have no need for ethics or rules of conduct, just as they have no need for logic. “If men were born free, they

would form no concept of good and evil so long as they remained free” (4p68). Yet ethics consists in living under the guidance of reason. Adequate ideas have no conatus, but they do exert themselves to be a force in our lives, mastering and perfecting the passions. Adequate ideas have no conatus, but we have a conatus to progress from the second to the third kind of knowledge.

When Spinoza says that we learn more in the presence of other people than we would if isolated, it’s not because parts of the natural world are not directly accessible to one person and have to be learned about through someone else’s knowledge of nature, but because dealing with other people can lead to rationality in a way that dealing with nature does not. We reason differently toward other people than toward anything else because we recognize ourselves as part of a species. Seeing ourselves as a species, while it has roots in the imagination, is fully possible only through adequate ideas (4p35–37), and seeing ourselves as a species is empowering. This is what I meant earlier by saying that Spinoza could affirm Marx’s dictum that man is a species being. Adam fell because his power of imitating affects extended beyond humanity to other animals (4p68s). Compassion for animals when known adequately becomes the desire to profit from their use, a perfect example of my concern that it is hard to see how a painful emotion, when known adequately, has any continuity with the emotion that replaces it.

One part of the general question of how reason can be practical is the question of how the *Ethics* can be practical, the conflict between the universality of Spinoza’s demonstrations about adequate ideas and his insistence that most people do not live under the guidance of reason, that most people don’t act according to their nature. Proposition 10 of Part 5 is a crux: “So long as we are not torn by affects contrary to our nature, we have the power of ordering and connecting the affections of the Body according to the order of the intellect.” The first part of the sentence could mean that the promise of the *Ethics* is only rarely redeemed, but that isn’t helpful. I propose to do better. Just before he introduces the active emotions in 3p58, Spinoza shows that emotions differ from one another for two reasons, because of their objects (3p56) and because of their subjects (3p57). What happens to the two sources of variability of emotions when it comes to the active emotions? We still have individual essences, but now those essences are the sole cause of the emotion, with no contribution by an external cause. So active emotions no longer have objects to differentiate them. Each active emotion modifies the entirety of an individual’s idea of itself as a complete cause. Thus the proof of 3p58 begins: “When the Mind conceives itself and its power of acting, it rejoices (3p55).”

Each person feels pleasure at its own sufficiency as a cause, that is, at its own activity. But Part 4 goes on to prove that people agree in nature to the extent that they have active emotions, and adequate ideas: “Only insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, must they always agree in nature” (4p35), and “the good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men” (4p37). Both the subjects and objects of active emotions become unified. That our individual essences still are individual and so differ from each other stops being true once the desire to understand is recognized as fundamental to the conatus.

My power of reasoning, which I now identify with the essence I want to preserve and perfect, is enhanced by operating in a rational world, and once I’ve denied final causes and divine providence, my only chance for a rational world is in other people, as we increase one another’s power and activity. The imagination, starting early in Part 3, has always wanted to increase its power through bootstrap reflection. *Acquiescentia in se ipso* shows that we actually can increase our power through reflection and bootstrap empowerment, when we are acting from adequate ideas. Between the imagination’s futile attempts at bootstrap empowerment and the self-reinforcing power of reflection on adequate ideas lies society, in which people increase one another’s power. The imagination drives us together, and through empowering each other, we come to behave rationally toward each other. The social world, unlike the natural world, is on the road to becoming a rational world. As it progresses, we are on the road to becoming immortal.²⁸ Becoming immortal is the ultimate paradox of the *Ethics*, since immortality is a predicate that almost by definition must apply always to a subject if it applies at all. The *Ethics* moves from bootstrap empowerment through bootstrap sociability finally to bootstrap immortality.

The cunning of imagination is the movement of the individual toward a rationality that is neither given nor imagined. The imagination aims at more power. In the first instance it aims at more power by doing something reason cannot, drawing on the power of external bodies and minds. But then it tries to increase its power by drawing on its own internal resources, which only reason can do. Reason can prove that imaginative bootstrap empowerment is impossible, but the imagination goes ahead and tries, and sometimes succeeds. That desire for more power is not a desire for more rationality. It is not a desire to be able to rely more and more on its own resources. Inadequate ideas, that is, don’t try to become adequate ideas. The imagination has limits: it cannot imagine reason. It can only imagine immortality as indefinite existence.

One of the final oddities of Spinoza’s system is how all that is reversed once

the mind can affirm and act on adequate ideas. Adequate ideas do have the internal resources to increase their own power. Bootstrap empowerment is exactly what adequate ideas do through reflection. They become more powerful by mastering the passions, drawing energy from the passions they convert into further adequate ideas. And while inadequate ideas don't try to become adequate, the second kind of knowledge leads to a desire for the third. Unlike inadequate ideas, adequate ideas have good reason to be self-satisfied. Adequate ideas give the mind self-contentment. But that satisfaction isn't static. It includes a desire to be fully what it already is, united with God. Every idea, like everything else, is in God. But not every idea can assert as a practical truth that it is in God. That is the achievement of the third kind of knowledge. The geometric method, as the presentation of impersonal truths, does not look like it contains an impulse for self-transcendence. But when people become practitioners of the geometric method, that practice does contain such an impulse. The second kind of knowledge leads to the desire for the third. Self-knowledge leads to the intellectual love of God.

Notes

Most of the time, the problems around which I organize the book lie at a somewhat oblique angle to the concerns that exercise most commentators on the *Ethics*, especially those in the United States. My notes are designed to show some continuity between my project and those of others. My study of Spinoza has taken, so far, about a dozen years. Some of the things that may have influenced me the most might not appear in the notes because they weren't on my mind when I was writing that particular chapter. If I don't refer to your own exemplary piece on Spinoza, you can be confident that it was incorporated so deeply into my thinking that I couldn't refer to it in connection to any particular passage. As I was writing the book, I found greater inspiration in contemporary French readers of the *Ethics* than in my compatriots, so I have also placed myself in relation to them in the notes. I translated passages from French as I was reading, without thinking that they should be polished enough to appear in the notes. The result is probably somewhere between French and English, but should be enough to lead the reader to consult the French originals.

INTRODUCTION

1. *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. Hereafter *TTP*.
2. *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 103.
3. References to the *Ethics* are with the usual convention: 2p14 means proposition 14 of Part 2; 2p14d means the demonstration of 2p14; 2p14c would refer to a corollary of 2p14, if there were such a thing, and 2p14s to a scholium, if there were such a thing; 3da7 refers to the seventh definition of the affects at the end of Part 3, and 3gda to the general definition of the affects. References to Spinoza's other works simply give the volume and page number in Edwin Curley's translation, *The Collected Works of Spinoza* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985, 2016), followed by the volume and page in Carl Gebhardt's edition of Spinoza's *Opera* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1925). Curley uses a slightly dif-

ferent system of referring to the propositions of the *Ethics*, a system that seems to me less physically attractive. I have retained it when quoting his translations of the *Ethics*, but not otherwise. This should not, I think, cause any confusion. Quotations from Spinoza throughout are from Curley's translation, very rarely silently emended. Since I wrote the book over years before Curley was complete, there may be cases where my citation is taken from another translation. I've tried to change those, but probably not fully successfully. Curley translates *laetitia et tristitia* as joy and sadness; I prefer the more traditional pleasure and pain. Outside direct quotations I follow my own preferences. For other cases where I use one term speaking *in propria persona* and another in quoting Curley's *Spinoza*, I try to supply the Latin original to avoid confusion. Curley sometimes considers too the contemporary Dutch translation which Spinoza at least partly oversaw. Those references he designates as NS, for *De Nagelate Schriften*. All translations from secondary sources are my own unless otherwise indicated.

4. Translated by Donald J. Zeyl. *Plato, Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).

5. Definition 7 of Part 2 defines individual things as "things that are finite and have a determinate existence." But that is one of those definitions that is never used in any of Spinoza's demonstrations. That definition is odd because it seems simply to make into a definition a term already used. Proposition 28 of Part 1 states that "any individual thing, i.e., anything whatever which is finite and has a determinate existence, cannot exist or be determined to act unless it is determined to exist and to act by another cause which is also finite and has a determinate existence." Part 2 discusses the human mind and body, but not the human individual.

6. *On the Origin of Species by Charles Darwin: A Facsimile of the First Edition*, ed. Ernst Mayr (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 459.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST PART

1. In the same way, Part 5 ends abruptly without an appendix that all the other parts have. Part 2 ends not with an appendix but an extended scholium which is a note not on the proposition to which it is attached but on the entire part. Instead of an appendix, Part 3 ends with a set of definitions of the emotions, and then a general definition of the emotions (that is less general than it pretends). Only the first part of the *Ethics* is not introduced by a preface, and only the last is not rounded off by an appendix or an equivalent.

2. *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* (Treatise on the Improvement of the Understanding).

CHAPTER ONE

1. *Animadversiones ad Joh. George Wachteri librum de recondita Hebraeorum philosophia*, in P. Wiener, ed., *Leibniz: Selections*, trans. G. M. Duncan (New York: Scribner's, 1951), 497.

2. The third kind of knowledge comprises adequate ideas that do grasp individual essences. But the third kind of knowledge plays no role in the *Ethics* until the second half of Part 5.

3. “Immediate infinite modes” is a term of art commonly used by Spinoza’s readers to designate those modes pointed to in 1p21: “All the things which follow from the absolute nature of any of God’s attributes have always had to exist and be infinite, or are, through the same attribute, eternal and infinite.” Gilles Deleuze stresses the importance of Spinoza’s innovative second kind of knowledge in chapter 5 of *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 116: “This new status of the second kind plays a decisive role throughout the *Ethics*; it is the most substantial modification in comparison with the previous works.” Christopher Martin, “The Framework of Essences in Spinoza’s *Ethics*,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 16 (2008): 500: “Unlike finite modes, infinite modes lack a precursor in Descartes.” Yitzhak Y. Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics: Substance and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 113: “Within Spinoza’s system, the concept of an infinite mode has some remarkable characteristics. It is probably the *only* Spinozist concept that has no equivalent among his predecessors or contemporaries; Descartes never used this notion, and I am not aware of any medieval philosopher, either Jewish or Christian, who made use of it. . . . In the *Ethics*, the infinite modes are located at a juncture that is crucial for understanding some of the most important doctrines of the book, such as the flow of the modes from the essence of substance, necessitarianism, the part-whole relation, and the nature of infinity.” I reject Melamed’s claim that the infinite mode is Spinoza’s only concept without precedent. The second kind of knowledge, adequate knowledge unique to finite beings and not shared by God, and the active emotions, are also creations of Spinoza.

4. Karolina Hübner, “Spinoza’s Parallelism Doctrine and Metaphysical Sympathy,” in Eric Schliesser, ed., *Sympathy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 12: “Why should a thing’s infinite degree of reality require an infinity of *non-essential* properties? And if we wish to use this principle to justify the existence of *finite* modes specifically, we face an additional complication. For according to Spinoza finite things are essentially negations or limitations of substantial reality under a certain attribute (1def2). Again, why should an infinite degree of a thing’s reality require the prediction of such limitations?”

5. E. M. Curley, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics: An Essay in Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 18: “Spinoza’s modes are, *prima facie*, of the wrong logical type to be related to substance in the same way Descartes’ modes are related to substance, for they are particular *things* (E1p25c), *Not qualities*. And it is difficult to know what it would mean to say that particular things inhere in substance. When qualities are said to inhere in substance, they may be viewed as a way of saying that they are predicated of it. What it would mean to say that one thing is predicated of another is a mystery that needs solving.” Whether *modus* should be read as a technical term or not is debatable, and Curley canvasses the debate in a note to his translation of the *Ethics*, 1:424n43.

6. This proof has another problem, namely counting and applying number to things that are not abstract and so can’t be counted, since number is, according to Spinoza, an abstract idea. I will return to that problem later in the chapter.

7. Harold H. Joachim, *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza* (New York: Russell & Russell, [1901] 1964), 100. See too p. 96: “Our actual mind, with its emotions, volitions, desires is *qua* *passional unreal*. Its reality is a part of the ‘*infinita idea Dei*,’ but in the completeness

of that ‘idea’ all passion vanishes.” Michael Della Rocca, “Rationalism Run Amok: Representation and the Reality of Emotions in Spinoza,” in Charlie Huenemann, ed., *Interpreting Spinoza: Critical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 48–49: “It is precisely because a passive affect is passive, it cannot be in God, i.e., cannot be made intelligible through God. But . . . a passive affect cannot be fully in or fully intelligible in terms of anything that is not God. And it seems that passive affects are not fully in anything. For Spinoza, nobody and nothing is such that a passive affect is fully in it. And because . . . for something to be intelligible it must be in something, it follows that passive affects are not fully intelligible.” See Letter 18 from Blijenbergh (C 1:356, G 4:82): “Either there is no evil in the Soul’s motion or will or else . . . God himself does the evil immediately.” Bayle objected to Spinoza in just this way. John Carriero, “On the Relationship between Mode and Substance in Spinoza’s Metaphysics,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 33 (1995): 262, frames Bayle’s objection this way: “Bayle argues that it follows from Spinoza’s ontology that God be subject of contradictory properties. For example, George does not like broccoli, so God, the ultimate subject underlying George, does not like broccoli, but Michael likes broccoli, so God, the ultimate subject underlying Michael, likes broccoli; hence God both does and does not like broccoli.”

8. Elhanan Yakira, *Spinoza and the Case for Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 211: “Precisely because adequacy is the original being of ideas, or their essence, the inner necessity of true ideas is not altogether the same as the exteriority of the necessity of inadequate ideas. I would even go farther and suggest that the necessities of truth and error are *radically* distinguishable.” Leibniz, *Monadology*, 42: “Created beings owe their perfections to the influence of God, but owe their imperfections to their own nature, which is incapable of being without limits. For it is in this that they differ from God.”

9. F. W. J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 71–72. Curley, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 74: “Deducing the finite *solely* from the infinite . . . is in principle impossible. Even an infinite intellect could not do it.” Yitzhak Y. Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics: Substance and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 35: “Finite modes are just parts of certain infinite totalities that Spinoza calls ‘infinite modes.’ These infinite modes, as opposed to the substance and attributes, are divisible.”

10. Richard Mason, “Concrete Logic,” in Olli Koistinen and John Biro, eds., *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 79: “God or nature as substance—*natura naturans*—is infinite and indivisible. God or nature as modes—*natura naturata*—will be considered as infinite but constituted of finite parts.”

11. I use the impersonal pronoun here not only to make God gender-neutral, but also to emphasize God’s impersonal nature. My use of “it” is probably as jarring as *Deus sive natura* was to his original readers.

12. Pierre Macherey, *Hegel or Spinoza*, Susan M. Ruddick, trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 145. Note that in the *Cogitata Metaphysica* Spinoza denies that God has modes, on the ground that modes alter their subject: “That there is in God no composition from different modes is sufficiently demonstrated from the fact that

there are no modes in God. For modes arise from the alteration of substance” (C 1:324, G 1:258).

13. Proposition 31 of Part 1 says that intellect is a “a certain mode of thinking, which mode differs from the others, such as desire, love, etc., and so (by D5) must be conceived through absolute thought”; from this we could conclude that Part 1 assumes that thought is one of God’s attributes. The trouble is that desire, love, etc., are not divine attributes. So I rest with the claim that in Part 1 we don’t know what any of God’s attributes are, only that they are infinite. So too 2p1 and 2p2 assert that “thought is an attribute of God” and that “extension is an attribute of God.” Both are supposed to follow from 1p25c, which states that “particular things are nothing but affections of the attributes of God.”

14. In addition to Hegel’s cunning of reason, Spinoza’s cunning of imagination has precedent in Maimonides’s discussion of a “divine ruse.” See, e.g., *Guide* III.12.

15. As we will see in the last two chapters, there is a candidate for a violation of the universal reach of reason, and that is pain. If pain is erased on being known, it is unintelligible. Of course that is no problem if pain is also unreal. Miracles are unintelligible, but that’s because they don’t exist. Pain seems a lot more stubborn than that, and we will have to look more closely.

16. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 82. Martial Gueroult, *Spinoza* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968 and 1974), 2:11: “Metaphysics, which Descartes circumscribes to a search for the foundations of physics is here circumscribed to the search for the foundations of ethics.”

17. Eugene Marshall, *The Spiritual Automaton: Spinoza’s Science of the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 162: “The common notions, which Spinoza describes as ideas of the common properties of things, are best understood as infinite modes.”

18. Letter 35 to Hudde: God “is simple and not composed of parts. For in respect of their nature and our knowledge of them component parts would have to be prior to that which they compose” (C 1:389, G 4:149).

19. Tad Schmaltz, “Spinoza’s Mediate Infinite Mode,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 35 (1997): 206n35: “To my knowledge Spinoza did not speak of modes of modes. Yet it seems that he could not deny that modes of particular bodies are modes of modes given his own claim that the bodies themselves are modes of extended substance (see 2def1).” Parallel to the fact that anything can have modes is the fact that anything, and not only substance, can have an essence. John Carriero, “On the Relationship between Mode and Substance in Spinoza’s Metaphysics,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 33 (1995): 247: “Accidents are beings which exist in subjects; substances are beings which can serve as subjects of accidents but which do not themselves exist in other subjects. The subject of an accident is either itself an accident, as surface is the subject of color, or a substance, as an animal is the subject of mortal. Since there is no infinite regress of accidents and subjects, all accidents ultimately inhere in substance, as color, for example, ultimately inheres in body.”

20. Richard Mason, “Concrete Logic,” in Olli Koistinen and John Biro, eds., *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 79: “God or nature as sub-

stance—*natura naturans*—is infinite and indivisible. God or nature as modes—*natura naturata*—will be considered as infinite but constituted of finite parts.”

21. See Eric Schliesser, “Spinoza’s Conatus as an Essence-Preserving, Attribute-Neutral Immanent Cause: Toward a New Interpretation of Attributes and Modes,” in Keith Allen and Tom Stoneham, eds., *Causation and Modern Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 75: We should ask “why, for Spinoza, given the homogeneous nature of substance, that is, ‘all matter is everywhere the same’ (1p15s), there should be any ‘individual’ entities at all. For insofar as it ‘is substance, it is neither separated nor divided’ (1p15s, see also Letter 12 . . .). To conceive matter in such fashion involves the intellect. It turns out that for Spinoza, only insofar as we conceive imaginatively, are ‘parts distinguished’ (1p15s). To distinguish parts within substance involves no (Spinozistic) *real* distinction.”

22. Amelie Rorty, “Spinoza and the Pathos of Idolatrous Love and the Hilarity of True Love,” in Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, eds., *The Philosophy of (Erotic) Love* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1991), 352–71; reprinted in Moira Gatens, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Benedict Spinoza* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 65–86, at 76: “Like every idea, common ideas are relational, determined by their interconnection in the system of ideas. But since common ideas are universally instantiated, the ideas which determine them are identical to them. The grounds or conditions for common ideas are therefore represented within them; and since they are bearers of their own determination, they are self-evident.”

23. Whether there are many infinite modes might seem an inconsequential piece of arcana, but it will return at the end of the *Ethics* where we have to wonder about individual immortality: if adequate ideas have no principle of individuation, then neither will the parts of the mind constituted by adequate ideas, which will be shown to be immortal.

24. For the pervasiveness of infinite modes, see Thaddeus S. Robinson, “Identifying Spinoza’s Immediate Infinite Mode of Extension,” *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review* 53 (2014): 330.

25. Letter 64 to Schuller (C 2:439, G 4:278) purports to explain immediate and mediate infinite modes of thought and extension, but gives examples of just three, leaving out the mediate infinite modes of thought. The immediate infinite mode of thought is “the absolutely infinite understanding,” that of extension, “motion and rest.” The mediate infinite mode of extension is the total face of the universe (*facies totius universi*). See Gueroult, *Spinoza*, 1:315: “What is the mediate infinite mode of Thought? Nothing in the *Ethics* teaches us anything in this regard, and we have to resort to interpretation.” Pierre Macherey, *Hegel or Spinoza*, trans. Susan M. Ruddick (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 149: “Although he gives examples of the infinite immediate mode in relation to two attributes, thought and extension, Spinoza gives only one of the infinite mediate mode, the *facies totius universi*, which expressly concerns extension.” James Lennox, “The Causality of Finite Modes in Spinoza’s *Ethics*,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 6 (1976): 496: “*Facies totius universi* is infinite in view of the fact that it emanates from God’s nature, but if viewed in abstraction from God as its cause by the imagination, the unity of the whole escapes us; all we see are a series of finite individuals interacting with each other.” See too the brief discussion in Jean-Marie Beyssade, “Sur le mode in-

fini médiat dans l'attribut de la pensée," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 184 (1994): 23–36. Beyssade argues that the intellectual love of God of 5p36 constitutes the mediate infinite mode of Thought. That would limit the mediate infinite mode to the third kind of knowledge, while I think the adequate ideas of the second kind of knowledge qualify as well.

26. My argument here is anticipated in Alexandre Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), 544–45: "Passivity is understood more easily from extension and activity from thought: if not in itself, at least for us. Why, in fact, is our mind separate from other ideas of other singular things existing in act? Because it has for its object our body, to the extent to which it is a mode of extension separate from others with which it mutually concurs. All our passions are explicated by thought alone, but under the condition that we don't forget that thought is thought of extension. Inversely, why is our body such that it tends to give to its affections a logical organization, non-contradictory, and, by itself, self-regulating? Why does it have, is, a conatus? Because it has an individual essence, that is to say because it is intelligible."

27. So in chapter 5 of the *TTP* (C 2:143, G 3:73): "Everyone, I say, would lack both the strength and the time, if he alone had to plow, to sow, to reap, to grind, to cook, to weave, to sew, and to do the many other things necessary to support life—not to mention now the arts and sciences which are also supremely necessary for the perfection of human nature and for its blessedness." Letter 32 (to Oldenburg): "All bodies are surrounded by others, and are determined by one another to existing and producing an effect in a fixed and determinate way, the same ratio of motion to rest always being preserved in all of them at once, [that is, in the whole universe]. From this it follows that every body, insofar as it exists modified in a definite way, must be considered as a part of the whole universe, must agree with its whole and must cohere with the remaining bodies" (C 2:19, G 4:172a–173a).

28. Yakira, *Spinoza and the Case for Philosophy*, 123: "The soul does not enjoy an identity of its own independent of its relation to the body."

29. Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 186: "Sensible ideas arouse our passions because they are ideas of things which either do or can occupy the same spatial field as we do, and are therefore capable of affecting us for good or ill. Given that our passions are *designed* [!] to ensure that we attend to our well-being as embodied creatures, their objects are the sorts of things about which it makes sense to feel emotions such as fear or envy. Intelligible ideas, by contrast, lack spatial location in relation to us; although a particular imperfect triangle can be in front of me or to the left, an idea of a perfect triangle cannot. And something to which I have no spatial relation cannot affect my body, and thus cannot directly arouse my passions. Even the idea of extension—*itself spatial*—is not spatially related to us" (italics mine).

30. See too chapter 13 of the *TTP* (C 2:260–61, G 3:170): "Invisible things, and those which are the objects only of the mind, can't be seen by any other eyes than by demonstrations. Someone who doesn't have demonstrations doesn't see anything at all in these things. If they repeat something they've heard about them, it no more touches or shows

their mind than do the words of a Parrot or an automaton, which speaks without a mind or without meaning.”

31. Melamed’s claim (in *Spinoza’s Metaphysics: Substance and Thought*) that the mediate infinite modes form a series, with each modifying a prior infinite mode, rests on the idea that if there were two distinct modes both modifying an infinite mode, then they would both have to modify all of the mode, and would then be contrary to each other. Thinking of adequate ideas as infinite modes helps. Every adequate idea has a universal scope. None contradicts or conflicts with any other. The attributes and immediate infinite modes are such that there are multiple truths about them. This is not because, as with finite modes, each adequate idea only modifies a part of the immediate infinite mode of thought. Each modifies the whole, and all necessary truths imply each other. Therefore, as I argued earlier, it is not clear how to individuate them.

32. Don Garrett, “Spinoza’s Theory of *Scientia Intuitiva*,” in T. Sorell et al., eds., *Scientia in Early Modern Philosophy*, Studies in History and Philosophy of Science (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 105: “Since God’s power for existing is infinite and cannot encounter any external obstacle, it is perhaps improper to characterize God as having a *conatus* or ‘striving’ for existence at all.” I maintain the same for adequate ideas. Valtteri Viljanen, *Spinoza’s Geometry of Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 102: “God’s power cannot encounter any opposition already for the simple fact that nothing but God exists, but . . . finite things do not find themselves in such happy conditions: temporal reality is a field of constant contest, and consequently things in it do not get to exist and to operate in a hindrance-free, ‘frictionless’ world. . . . I submit Spinoza’s notion of power to imply that if any thing, *whether finite or infinite*, encounters opposition, it strives against that opposite to cause effects determined by its own essence alone—the claim ‘if opposed, will resist’ has an impossible antecedent only with regard to God” (italics in original). I deny that infinite things can encounter opposition, not because, as with God, there is nothing outside them, but because there is nothing finite or infinite, that can oppose them. Opposition is only possible with finite things.

33. Yakira, *Spinoza and the Case for Philosophy*, 61n5. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 68: “There is but a single case in which ‘explain’ and ‘imply’ are dissociated. It is the case of the inadequate idea. The inadequate idea implies our power of comprehending, but it is not explained by it; it involves the nature of an external thing, but does not explain it (*Ethics* 2p18s). This is because the inadequate idea always has to do with a mixture of things, and only retains the effect of one body on another; it lacks a ‘comprehension’ that would be concerned with causes.” The difficulty of locating a cause for inadequate ideas is expressed in passing by Marshall (*The Spiritual Automaton*, 53), while he is arguing for a different thesis: “As innate ideas have been presented, their relevant characteristic is their being wholly caused by the mind itself and not caused from the outside. What makes an idea innate, essentially, is its originating in and being explained by the nature of the mind itself. As opposed to this understanding, R. J. Delahunty claims that we cannot attribute a doctrine of innate ideas to Spinoza because no ideas are caused by external *bodies* (*Spinoza* [Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985], 24). This is the case for Spinoza because of his doctrine of parallelism, according to which there is no causal

interaction across attributes; in other words, bodily events cannot cause mental events and vice versa. Because of this explanatory barrier, Delahunty seems to reason, the distinction between innate idea and adventitious idea is inapplicable. Delahunty says, ‘since all ideas are modifications of the attribute of thought, and since no interaction between thoughts and extension is possible . . . no idea can be caused by the workings of bodies; hence it follows that no idea can be “derived” from experience; hence all ideas are innate.’”

34. Elhanan Yakira, “Y a-t-il un sujet spinoziste?” in Pierre-François Moreau, ed., *Architecture de la Raison: Mélanges offerts à Alexandre Matheron* (Fontenay/St. Cloud: ENS Éditions, 1996), 308: “Spinoza, as we know, founds his theory of individuality on an analysis of what is an individual *body*: a constant ratio of motion and rest is the *principium individuationis*, that is what makes a body a body or an ‘individual.’ What is remarkable in this theory, formulated in the second part of the *Ethics* (devoted to the soul!), is that Spinoza has chosen to construct his concept of individuality (and it is clear that it is the individual human he has in mind) starting from ‘its physics.’ . . . Spinoza considers as essential, among all that it is traditionally understood in the notion of the *individual*, the idea of *discernibility*: an individual is what can be recognized, or identified, as distinct from what it is not. The notion of discernibility implies a look from outside: and individuality, as Spinoza conceives it, is basically relational and external: it is thought by means of relations between a thing and what is ‘outside’ it.”

35. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.6.987b14–18.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Diane Steinberg, “Spinoza’s Theory of the Eternity of the Mind,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 11 (1981): 67.

2. See too chapter 4 of the *TTP*: “Everyone, by the natural light, clearly understands God’s power and eternal divinity, from which he can know and deduce what he ought to pursue and what he ought to flee” (C 2:137, G 3:68).

3. For an argument connecting consciousness with power, and, presumably, therefore unconscious ideas with inert ones, see Don Garrett, “Representation and Consciousness in Spinoza’s Naturalistic Theory of the Imagination,” in Charlie Huenemann, ed., *Interpreting Spinoza: Critical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 4–25. Eric Schliesser, “Spinoza on the Politics of Philosophical Understanding,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 121 (2011): 503: “Regardless of the origin of adequate ideas in some minds, it is by no means obvious that adequate ideas are ever ‘active’ in ordinary folk.”

4. These aspects of 2p47 are recognized by Margaret D. Wilson, in her “Objects, Ideas, and ‘Minds’: Comments on Spinoza’s Theory of Mind,” in Richard Kennington, ed., *The Philosophy of Baruch Spinoza* (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1980), 118–19: “Contrary to what E V, P 39 may seem to suggest, Spinoza’s principles in fact commit him to the view that every ‘mind’ whatsoever possesses distinct or adequate ideas. . . . God has adequate ideas of what is common to all insofar as he constitutes the ‘mind’ of any mode. All ‘minds,’ and not just human minds, must contain adequate or clear and distinct ideas. . . . It is an apparent logical consequence of Spinoza’s system that every ‘mind’ has ‘ideas

by which it perceives itself. . . . By this reasoning, then, every ‘mind’ must not merely ‘involve knowledge of’ the eternal and infinite essence of God. Rather, by Spinoza’s principles, every ‘mind’ of every body must, like the human mind be said to *have* adequate, or clear and distinct, knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God. . . . Apparently this awkward result was not intended by Spinoza; it is, however, dictated by the logic of his system.” She offers no evidence for the claim that this result “was not intended by Spinoza.” But then I don’t understand her distinction between his intentions and what is “dictated by the logic of his system.”

5. Because human bodies are capable (*apta*) of many things, there is no doubt that they can have a nature of such a kind (*quin eius naturae possint esse*) that they are related to minds that have a great knowledge of themselves and of God (5p39s).

6. Yitzhak Y. Melamed, “The Metaphysics of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*,” in Yitzhak Y. Melamed and Michael A. Rosenthal, eds., *Spinoza’s Theological-Political Treatise: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 132: “The immediate result of this epistemological revolution which makes the knowledge of any thing dependent upon our having a prior knowledge of God’s essence (the ultimate cause of all things), is the trivialization of the knowledge of God’s essence by making the knowledge of God’s essence something one *cannot fail to have*—‘God’s infinite essence and his eternity are known to all—if one is to know anything at all.’”

7. Michael Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 183n29: “In 2p29s . . . and in many other passages, Spinoza asserts that the human mind has some adequate ideas. Given the strictures of Spinoza’s account of adequacy . . . it seems difficult if not impossible for the human mind to have adequate ideas. In order for a certain idea that the human mind has to be adequate, the human mind must include all the ideas that are the causal antecedents of this idea. How could the human mind, in any particular case, have all these ideas?”

8. Moreau speaks of a “positive finitude,” “*une finitude positive*,” which captures the empowering function of the imagination. Pierre-François Moreau, “Métaphysique de la gloire,” *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger*, 1994: 62. Della Rocca (*Representation*, 183) denies that any finite individual can ever have adequate ideas. He has good reasons, which any successful defense of Spinoza must overcome.

9. The issue of whether people have adequate ideas because of or in spite of their being finite minds is distinct from two other issues: whether adequate and inadequate ideas differ in degree or in kind, and whether adequate and inadequate ideas are better and worse ideas of the same thing or whether they have different objects. One can, and I will, give reasons pro and contra on each of these options.

10. The difference between the “in spite of” and the “because” reading is the difference between taking the geometric method theoretically or practically, that is, through the individual making the propositions true. The difference between these interpretations is the focus of my next chapter.

11. Michael LeBuffe, *From Bondage to Freedom: Spinoza on Human Excellence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 53: “Although it is true for Spinoza that all and only inadequate ideas are confused, the terms nevertheless characterize different aspects of

ideas of imagination. Spinoza takes an idea to be inadequate if at least one of its causes is outside the mind. . . . Confusion, however, characterizes the mind's awareness of the objects of such ideas. The mind is aware of the objects of its inadequate ideas in a way that is somehow fragmentary or distorted."

Like 2p47, the scholium is anomalous, but not uniquely so. That anomaly recurs in Part 5 where people are conscious of the eternity of the mind but confuse it with duration (5p34s) and, even worse, in 5p36s, where he says that we already know from Part 1, by the second kind of knowledge, that everything depends on God, but "nevertheless, that demonstration, though legitimate and put beyond all chance of doubt, still does not affect our Mind [*non ita tamen mentem nostram afficit*] as much as when this is inferred from the very essence of any singular thing which we say depends on God."

12. 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 no likeness to changeable things, we need fear no confusion concerning its idea, provided that we have a standard of truth" (*TIE* §29; C 1:34, G 2:9).

13. See chapter 13 of the *TTP*: "Invisible things, and those which are the objects only of the mind, can't be seen by any other eyes than by demonstrations" (C 2:260, G 3:170). See too 5p23s: "We feel and experience that we are eternal. For the mind senses those things that it conceives by its understanding just as much as those which it has in its memory. Logical proofs are the eyes of the mind, whereby it sees and observes things." Letter 56, to Boxel: "To your question, whether I have as clear an idea of God as I do of a triangle, I answer 'yes.' But if you ask whether I have as clear an image of God as I do of a triangle, I'll answer 'no.' For we can't imagine God, but we can indeed understand him" (C 2:423, G: 4:261). Descartes said that the geometric method he was replacing "is so closely tied to the examination of figures that it cannot exercise the intellect without greatly tiring the imagination." *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1:119.

14. See Alexandre Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), 64: "To be conscious of something, or to perceive it, is to *have an idea of this thing*. But the mind, which is an idea, can only 'have' other ideas if they are contained in it." Genevieve Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1996), 48–49: "There are two vantage points from which Spinoza invites us now to consider minds and bodies. On the one hand, we have thought and extension, united as attributes of the same substance expressed in an infinite totality of modes—the 'order and connection of thought' matching the 'order and connection of things.' On the other, we have the relations between idea and object, which hold across these different attributes. . . . The unity of ideas and their objects arises from the unfolding of God's necessary being under different attributes; and it holds across the whole network of finite modes. It does not depend on anything peculiar to the human mind's operations in knowledge. It is not a matter of an already existing object coming to have 'intentional' existence in the knowing mind. Individual minds and bodies alike are caught up in a prior unity of 'substance extended' and 'substance thinking,' although of course minds and bodies—as finite modes under irreducibly different attributes—remain distinct."

15. One could avoid this conclusion by saying that even though Peter and Paul refer to their ideas by the same name, the two ideas are not really ideas of the same thing. But this multiplication of entities creates its own problems. If the object of an (inadequate) idea is so tightly defined by the idea itself, then ideas would be infallible and incorrigible. The competing ideas of Paul's body are not incorrigible. Both Paul and Peter can learn more and improve their ideas of Paul's body. There is a single thing, Paul's body, to which correspond an indefinite set of inadequate ideas, one for each mind that has an idea of his body. Yitzhak Y. Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 145: "We should note another crucial difference between the two doctrines of parallelism. The idea-things parallelism is a *representational* parallelism (i.e., the idea of a thing X not only *corresponds to* X but is also an idea *about* X, or an idea that represents X). This is not *necessarily* the case with the inter-attributes parallelism. The idea that corresponds to Napoleon's body is indeed an idea *about* Napoleon's body, but the mode of the third (and unknown) attribute that corresponds to Napoleon's body is not *about* Napoleon's body, nor is Napoleon's body *about* this mode of the third attribute. This is so because representation is an essential feature of modes of thought, and only modes of thought. Thus, unlike the representational nature of ideas-things parallelism, the inter-attributes parallelism is merely a bare, or 'blind,' parallelism." His note refers to Martial Gueroult, *Spinoza* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968 and 1974), 2:176, and Della Rocca, *Representation*, 19, as anticipating the distinction.

16. Filippo Mignini, "The Potency of Reason and the Power of Fortune," in Yirmiyahu Yovel, ed., *Spinoza on Knowledge and the Human Mind* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 227: "Adequate knowledge seems possible on two conditions: that of a suspension of the causal series and its effects, or, concomitant and yet independent of it, that of a kind of autonomy of mind. But, in order for it to be able to act 'from its own laws' (*ex sui legibus*), the mind must be constituted by God not insofar as he is conceived of as an infinite series of finite causes, but simply as infinite. However, if the mind were constituted in this fashion, it would have always known adequately and been absolute, which is absurd. In what manner, then, can one conceive of the mind as autonomous in relation to external causes?"

17. I add the qualifier to make room for the way in which people associating together become, as it were (*quasi*), one body and mind. "To man, then, there is nothing more useful than man. Man, I say, can wish for nothing more helpful to the preservation of his being than that all should agree in all things that the Minds and Bodies of all would compose, as it were [*quasi*] 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" (4p18s). The *TTP* adds another complication. What he calls the Hebrew people were one in mind and body not only through voluntary agreement as the covenant with God constituted them as one people, but also because external hatred bound them together.

18. Elhanan Yakira, *Spinoza and the Case for Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 258n26: "The use of 'essence' (*essentia*), [opens] a complex exegetical interrogation in itself. . . . The essence of the body is sometimes conceived as its

conatus, and on other occasions as the idea of the body or its soul. In EVp42s, the use of the notion of ‘essence’ gives Spinoza the means to emphasize the necessity (or eternity) through which one has to conceive one’s own being.”

19. My distinction is parallel to that drawn by Gilles Deleuze between “epistemological” and “ontological” parallelism (*Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* [San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988], 88–89).

20. Yitzhak Y. Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics: Substance and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 139: “The celebrated Spinozistic doctrine commonly termed ‘the doctrine of parallelism’ is in fact a confusion of two separate and independent doctrines of parallelism. Against the standard interpretation, which takes Spinoza’s parallelism to be a doctrine about the isomorphism among God’s attributes, I argue that Spinoza had not one but two independent doctrines of parallelism: The one stipulates an isomorphism between the order of *ideas* in the attribute of thought, on the one hand, and the order of *things* (*res*) in the substance, on the other. The other doctrine claims an isomorphism among the order of *modes* in the infinitely many attributes.”

21. *Short Treatise* (C 1:124, G 1:81): “It is never we who affirm or deny something of a thing; it is the thing itself that affirms or denies something of itself in us.” Yakira, *Spinoza and the Case for Philosophy*, 117: “Spinoza often speaks of the relation of ideas and their objects as a relation of *ideas* and their *ideata*. Although coextensive, the idea-object and idea-*ideatum* imply more than just terminological difference. An *ideated* object seems to be less susceptible to being thought as radically other than its idea or as external to it, than just ‘object.’ . . . Spinoza posits the idea-*ideatum* unity as primordial. This means that it has to be thought in itself, without presupposing anything like a thinking subject or pre-given entity such as an intellect, personhood, or consciousness.”

22. Yakira, *Spinoza and the Case for Philosophy*, 212: “The exterior origin of the necessity of inadequate ideas seems to suggest the exteriority of mechanical causes and, consequently, of paradigmatically ‘scientific’ explanations. Error, in other words, has to be scientifically, or even ‘medically’ explained. Truth, or adequate ideas, is not explicable in this way. It is not necessary to understand ‘explicability’ in exclusively causal terms, and, in fact, Spinoza seems to distinguish, parallel to the distinction between two necessities, two forms of explanatory strategies: scientific, causal, or mechanical; and ideational, according to reasons, or rather to the inner meaning or intelligibility of the matter in question.”

23. In chapter 1 of the *TTP*, Spinoza says of the Jews prior to the Decalogue: “These people knew nothing of God but his name, and wanted to speak to him to become certain of his existence” (C 2:81, G 3:18). That there are no false ideas of God, that God cannot be known partially and inadequately, is of a piece with the later thesis that “no one can hate God” (5p18).

24. “In proportion as a body is more capable than others of doing many things at once, or being acted upon in many ways at once, so its mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once. And in proportion as the actions of a body depend more on itself alone, and as other bodies concur with it less in acting, so its mind is more capable of understanding distinctly” (2p31). “Because human bodies are capable [*apta*] of many things, there is no doubt that they can have a nature of such a kind [*quin eius naturae pos-*

sint esse] that they are related to minds that have a great knowledge of themselves and of God” (5p39s).

25. For an examination of how diagrams work in Euclid, see David Reed, *Figures of Thought: Mathematics and Mathematical Texts* (London: Routledge, 1995).

26. Michel LeBuffe, “Why Spinoza Tells People to Preserve Their Being,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 86 (2004): 128.

27. Louis Althusser, “Du ‘Capital’ à la philosophie de Marx,” in *Lire le Capital* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), 8.

CHAPTER THREE

1. I find no evidence for Michael LeBuffe’s assumption that “striving for mind concerns the possession of adequate ideas”: “The Anatomy of the Passions,” in Olli Koistinen, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza’s Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 197. Nor for H. M. Ravven’s statement in “Notes on Spinoza’s Critique of Aristotle’s Ethics: From Teleology to Process Theory,” *Philosophy and Theology* 4 (1989): 20: “Spinoza identifies the particular conatus for self-persistence with the impetus toward self-caused activity.” On my side is Valtteri Viljanen, *Spinoza’s Geometry of Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 171: “‘Striving’ and ‘activity’ have no necessary conceptual linkage with ‘rationality’ and ‘truth.’”

2. Precedent for the cunning of imagination can be found in Maimonides’s “divine ruse” in *Guide* III.32. Between Spinoza and Hegel’s cunning of reason lies Vico’s “providence.” Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 210: “Vico insisted that ‘natural law’ was based neither on social instincts nor on deliberate reasoning or necessities (or norms) but on the very immanent, regular, ‘ideal,’ process through which civilization emerges time and again as man’s acquired nature. This is Vico’s version of a *List der Vernunft*, of how private vices transform into public benefits. He calls it ‘providence,’ a term standing also for immanent dynamics accounting for the regular transformation of one phase into another.”

3. Michael LeBuffe, “Why Spinoza Tells People to Preserve Their Being,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 86 (2004): 124: “The relationship between the terms for ideas and the terms for causes in the *Ethics* is most difficult to understand. Although . . . Spinoza associates them, adequate ideas and adequate causes are surely not simply universally equivalent for him. IIIp1d suggests that, even insofar as we are concerned with ideas exclusively, we should not take adequate ideas to be equivalent to adequate causes. Rather, the possession of an adequate idea makes a mind an adequate cause of any effects that ‘follow from’ (*sequitur*) that idea, and the mind is only the adequate cause of those effects that follow from ideas adequate in it.” While LeBuffe is right about 3p1d, 3p1 itself seems to say that having adequate ideas is sufficient for being active: “Our mind is in some instances active and in other instances passive; insofar as it has adequate ideas, it is necessarily active, and insofar as it has inadequate ideas, it is necessarily passive.”

4. Jonathan Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, [1930] 1984): 234, notes that this is the only proposition “demonstrated without help from previously

declared doctrine.” There are other propositions that Spinoza calls self-evident, but he supplies proofs for those. For analyses of 3p4, see Michael Della Rocca, “Spinoza’s Metaphysical Psychology,” in Don Garrett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 200–208, and Don Garrett, “Spinoza’s Conatus Argument,” in Olli Koistinen and John Biro, eds., *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 127–28.

5. This idea is prefigured in the explanation to 2d5, in which “a thing’s efficient cause necessarily posits, but does not annul, the existence of the thing.” The derivation of 3p6 has often been questioned. For a review of the literature, see Viljanen, *Spinoza’s Geometry of Power*, 83–104. Alexandre Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), 11: “From the fact that a thing *cannot* destroy itself, does it follow, positively, that it makes an effort to conserve itself? . . . Yes, but under one condition: it is necessary that the thing in question *acts*. If its nature is to produce certain effects, it is certain that these effects are in accord with its nature, and therefore, tend to preserve it.” Pierre Macherey, *Introduction à l’Éthique de Spinoza: La troisième partie: La via affective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995), 75, points out that 3p4 is so general that it includes both God and finite modes. (This is possible because Spinoza has separated the ideas of substance and essence from each other.)

6. Matheron thinks the thesis that everything tries to increase its power unproblematic. *Individu et communauté*, 9: “Each thing, insofar as it can, tries to persevere in its own being.’ This is the unique point of departure for the entire theory of the passions, for all of politics, and all of morality for Spinoza. But this point of departure itself follows from the first two books of the *Ethics*. Why does each thing, by nature, produce the effects that tend to conserve it? This can be deduced from the metaphysics of book I. Why does this productive activity encounter obstacles that make it appear as an *effort*? This is indicated, implicitly it is true, in the first thirteen propositions of book II. Why is this effort exerted with more or less *power*? This is explained in the axioms, definitions, and lemmas that follow proposition thirteen of book II. How is this power manifest for human beings? This is what propositions 14–49 of book II show.” On the movement from tending to persist, to exerting oneself to persist, see Richard Manning, “Spinoza’s Physical Theory,” in Edward N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2012 Edition), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/spinoza-physics/>.

7. Viljanen, *Spinoza’s Geometry of Power*, 32: “Actual finite existence has its peculiar character: in it, limitations are not mere determinations but *oppositions* and *agreements* that take place between *striving* entities.” That that movement is fallacious is argued in Martin Lin, “Spinoza’s Metaphysics of Desire, The Demonstration of IIIp6,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 86 (2004): 21–55. The most careful examination of that inference I know is Della Rocca’s “Spinoza’s Metaphysical Psychology,” 192–266. Jonathan Bennett, *Learning from Six Philosophers: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, [1930] 2001), 222, says that the argument is “irreparably faulty,” not the only argument in the *Ethics* that Bennett would paint with that brush. E. M. Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method: A Reading of Spinoza’s Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 113: “Spinoza is rather casual about proving the *conatus* doctrine.

One reason for that may be that he found versions of it widely accepted by previous philosophers.” Henry E. Allison, *Benedict de Spinoza: An Introduction* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 133–34, says that the argument for 3p6 “has been criticized from a number of different perspectives; but the simplest way of characterizing the problem is that it seems to involve an illicit slide from the claim that things (by their very nature or definition) are necessarily opposed to whatever can destroy them to the claim that things necessarily act in self-maintaining ways. Spinoza, so it would seem, is entitled only to the former.” See too Macherey, *Introduction à l’Ethique de Spinoza: La troisième partie: La via affective*, 170–71.

8. Leibniz makes the same objection. “I admit that each and every thing remains in its state until there is a reason for change; this is a principle of metaphysical necessity. But it is one thing to retain a state until something changes it, which even something intrinsically indifferent to both states does, and quite another thing, much more significant, for a thing not to be indifferent, but to have a force and, as it were, an inclination to retain its state, and so resist changing” (Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, ed. and trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989], 172). Following on Leibniz, D. Garber says: “From the simple tendency to remain in a given state, one cannot infer that there exists a force, a tendency, or conatus *opposing* that change and keeping a body in the same state” (Daniel Garber, “Descartes and Spinoza on Persistence and Conatus,” *Studia Spinozana* 10 [1994]: 48). Also, Elhanan Yakira, *Spinoza and the Case for Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 172: “The notion of conatus refers directly to that of determination, from which it removes all internal negativity: to the extent that a thing is determined as such (*quantum in se est*) through its immanent relation to substance, of which it is an affection, it opposes itself *tendentially* to all that limits its reality, by threatening to destroy it.”

9. *Prolegomena*, Preamble, section 3.

10. Genevieve Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1996), 157.

11. Manning, “Spinoza’s Physical Theory,” 5:3: “The noting of the individual essence of a body conceived as a power to maintain itself is of dubious intelligibility. Spinoza clearly believes that an individual’s power to persevere can increase or diminish. But if this power is to constitute the thing’s essence and identity, such changes in degree cannot alter the identity of the power. But what then constitutes the individuality and identity of a power?”

12. William Sacksteder, “Spinoza on Part and Whole: The Worm’s Eye View,” *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 7 (1977): 139–59, reprinted in Robert W. Shahan and J. I. Biro, eds., *Spinoza: New Perspectives* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 156: “Strictly speaking, anything over which another has autonomy is ‘inside’ it, being a factor accordant with its nature. It is therefore a part to that extent in some whole. With like precision, another on which anything is dependent is ‘outside’ it, being an opposed or differing nature, and therefore another whole discordant with it.” Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 86: “A first preoccupation concerns the transgressive quality of the passions, which cross two boundaries — that between soul and body, and that between the body and the physi-

cal space around it. The philosophers discussed here are all typical in believing that the passions turn up on both sides of the first division, however that is delineated, and they regard emotion as simultaneously a kind of thinking and a physical event. Once they are in the body, however, passions pass from one person to another, and the expression of feeling provokes in other people emotions over which they often have little control. The experience of passion is a kind of involuntary thinking that goes on in and between the bodies of individuals, binding them together or forcing them apart, drawing them to respond enviously or compassionately, haughtily or subserviently, to creatures they recognize as like themselves.”

13. C. D. C. Reeve, *Love's Confusions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 60: “Initially a matter of what can be inside my skin envelope, containment soon becomes a matter of what can be inside my self. But the self is indefinitely enrichable—as it is impoverishable—by culture and experience: contempt doesn’t directly attack my body, but it does attack me. How I can be harmed is in part a matter of who I am. Who I am is in part socially determined. So what can be in my body—or what can go into it—can come to be partly determined by who I am.” Spinoza’s dispute with Boyle turns on the impossibility of achieving knowledge of nature in this way.

14. James, *Passion and Action*, 155. “The *conatus* of a body consists . . . in its disposition to persevere in its being by maintaining a certain proportion of motion and rest. Correspondingly, we might construe the mind’s *conatus* as consisting in the disposition to maintain its power by avoiding sadness. In fact, however, Spinoza speaks of the mind’s *conatus* as a striving not just to maintain but to increase its power. . . . As Spinoza’s contemporaries would have agreed, the body has a certain power to maintain itself. But the mind’s creative ability to reflect on its own thoughts gives it more than this. It enables it to increase its power of self-preservation.” James’s observation is itself a reason to deny the identification of the *conatus* with inertia. Spinoza’s argument from self-maintenance to increasing power does not rely on that “creative ability.” The problem is to maintain James’s insight without interpreting it as a difference between mind and body.

15. Matheron, *Individu et communauté*, 28: The *conatus* of simple bodies “is merely the universal law of inertia. Certainly it will be quite otherwise in the case of complex individuals: as a general rule, to persevere *in one’s being* is not the same thing as persevering *in one’s state*; but, precisely, the being of simple bodies reduces to its state. Now the elementary *conatus* is necessarily conflictual: the corpuscle, to continue its movement in a straight line, has to push against nearby corpuscles that would prevent its motion, and they, in their turn, push back.” *Ibid.*, 82–83: Proposition 9 of Part 3 seems to imply that “when we are sad, we try to stay sad.” And 83n28: “To reproach Spinoza . . . we would have to, further, confound the current sense of the word ‘inertia’ with its specifically mechanical meaning.” Eric Schliesser, “Spinoza on the Politics of Philosophical Understanding,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 121 (2011): 513: “Cartesian ‘inertial’ motion is a consequence of the state-preserving power inherent in each thing, while Spinoza offers no such consequence relation in his lemma.” To that sentence is appended this footnote: “When Spinoza does state his *conatus* doctrine later at 3p6–7 it is traced back to Spinoza’s understanding of the expression doctrine (1p25c), God’s power (1p34), what it means to

be an essence (1p36), and a determinate nature (1p29). Motion is strikingly absent in motivating or explaining the *conatus* doctrine." Also absent is any reference at all to Part 2. Spinoza does not give inertia as an example of *conatus* in the *Ethics*.

For reductions of the *conatus* to inertia, see Lee Rice, "Spinoza, Bennett, and Teleology," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23 (1985): 249: "The mental *conatus* is a law of psychodynamic inertia." John Carriero, "Conatus and Perfection in Spinoza," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 35 (2011): 69–70: "In *Ethics* 3p6 Spinoza introduces his *conatus* principle: 'Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being.' As frequently has been observed, this principle recalls seventeenth-century statements of the conservation of motion. There is an obvious similarity, for example, between Spinoza's formulation of 3p6, *unaquaeque res, quantum in se est, in suo esse perseverare conatur* (each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being) and (the first part of) Descartes' first law of motion in *Principles*, II.37, *unaquaeque res, quantum in se est, semper in eodem statu perseveret* (each thing, as far as it can by its own power, always perseveres in the same state). And Spinoza gives a thing's continuing in motion as an example of *conatus*." Footnote: "See, for example, *Cogita Metaphysica* I, ch. 6. See also Letter 58." For an argument against the reduction of the *conatus* to inertia, see Valtteri Viljanen, *Spinoza's Geometry of Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 111.

16. Pascal Sévéric, "Passivité et désir d'activité chez Spinoza," in Fabienne Brugère and Pierre-François Moreau, eds., *Spinoza et les affects* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), 45. Paul Hoffman, "Three Dualist Theories of the Passions," *Philosophical Topics* 19 (1991): 153–200: "It is very hard to see how something acting on our mind, and thus causing inadequate ideas could thereby increase our power of acting. Spinoza identifies our power of acting with our power of understanding, that is our power of having adequate ideas. How could our being caused to have certain inadequate ideas increase our power of having adequate ideas, since adequate ideas follow only from other adequate ideas?" Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 27: "The nature of the passions . . . is to fill our capacity for being affected while separating us from our power of acting, keeping us separated from that power." *Ibid.*, 50: "Even though our power of acting has increased materially, we will remain passive, separated from our power, so long as we are not formally in control of it. That is why, from the standpoint of the affects, the basic distinction between *two sorts of passions*, sad passions and joyful passions, prepares for a very different distinction, between *passions and actions*." Matthew J. Kisner, "Spinoza's Virtuous Passions," *Review of Metaphysics* 61 (2008): 761: "It is not clear . . . how a passion can be pleasurable, in other words, contribute to one's power consistently with Spinoza's philosophy: when we are passive, we are directed by external forces, which would not seem to constitute an increase in our power of activity. The problem has led some commentators [Hoffman, Wartofsky, LeBuffe] to conclude that Spinoza was mistaken to allow for passive pleasures and that perhaps he didn't really think such a thing is possible."

17. Macherey, *Introduction à l'Éthique*, 83n1: "The expression 'endeavors to persist in its own being as far as it can and as far as it is in itself' (*quantum potest et in se est in suo esse perseverare*), which appears at the end of the demonstration of proposition 6, can be

interpreted in the sense of an affirmation of a power to be completely determined from the nature of the thing which ‘pushes’ with all its internal energy.” But this is truly the crux. When I endeavor to persist, why should I care whether I’m doing do by my own nature or with all the external help I can get? That is why people pray for divine assistance, and why some theologians think that self-reliance is a sin. Spinoza will eventually prove that it is best to increase power through my own resources, but he isn’t yet in a position to affirm that.

18. Moira Gatens, “Spinoza’s Disturbing Thesis: Power, Norms and Fiction in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*,” *History of Political Thought* 30 (2009): 456: “Power, for Spinoza, is differentiated not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. As he explains in a letter, the powers of individuals ‘differ from one another not only in degree, but also essentially. For though a mouse depends on God as much as an angel does, and sadness as much as joy, a mouse cannot on that account be a kind of angel, nor sadness a kind of joy.’ (Letter 23 to Blijenbergh, in Edwin Curley, trans., *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, volume 1, p. 389.) Whilst each modal existent has the capacity to express itself within the range of its determinate quantity or degree of power, each mode’s essence also involves a definite quality of power.”

19. Viljanen, *Spinoza’s Geometry*, 129: “3p12 and 3p13 can be counted among the basic building blocks of Spinoza’s psychology and ethics, and hence it is important for any interpretation of the conatus principle to show how they are derived from 3p6.”

20. Carriero, “Conatus and Perfection,” 71: Proposition 12 of Part 3 and 3p13 “raise a couple of interesting questions. How does the mind’s tendency to imagine those things that increase or aid the body’s power square with the connection between (merely?) persevering in being and imagining what increases the body’s power of acting? . . . Does Spinoza’s claim that the mind imagines those things that enhance the body’s power of acting, indicate that mind behaves in a fundamentally different way from body, suggesting a breach of ‘parallelism’? Or is this claim perhaps consistent with parallelism, but at the cost of attributing to at least some corporeal systems a tendency toward improvement that is, on its face, hard to square with Spinoza’s basic mechanistic (and naturalistic) outlook?”

21. J. Thomas Cook, “Self-Knowledge as Self-Preservation?” in Marjorie Grene and Debra Nails, eds., *Spinoza and the Sciences* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1986), 194: “It is not immediately apparent how the body’s endeavor to maintain its homeostatic integrity as a complex physical organism can be equated with the mind’s endeavor to form and become ideas of that which all extended things have in common. And yet, according to Spinoza, the body’s endeavor to persevere and the mind’s endeavor to understand are one and the same endeavor, viewed under two attributes, extension and thought, respectively. Questions abound here. Why should my mind’s attainment of the idea of that which all extended things have in common contribute to—indeed, *be*, an increase in my body’s power for self-preservation? As my mind is attaining, and thus becoming adequate ideas, just what is going on in my body?”

22. Michael LeBuffe, “Necessity and the Commands of Reason in the Ethics,” in Matthew J. Kisner and Andrew Youpa, eds., *Essays on Spinoza’s Ethical Theory* (Oxford:

Oxford University Press, 2014), 212n20: “It may be argued that if we both wish to know, my pursuit of knowledge will help yours and vice versa. If we emphasize the common properties of our bodies, the case is more difficult to make. Insofar as we need nutrition, it is not clear that my nourishment will somehow be yours. On the contrary, barring arguments about cooperation and industry, it seems more likely that our common properties will bring us to compete for suitable foods.” Once again, the unity of mind and body is threatened because the conflicts over scarce resources for the body has no parallel for the mind.

23. LeBuffe, “Necessity,” 137: “In the *Ethics*, every detailed description of a type of desire includes in the account the anticipation of either *laetitia* or *tristitia*. . . . Many of Spinoza’s definitions of varieties of desire include some form of *laetitia* or *tristitia* in the definition.” Martin Lin, “Spinoza’s Account of Akrasia,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 44 (2006): 399n11: “In a number of passages, Spinoza includes desire in his list of primitive or primary passions. This suggests that desire is a passion distinct from and on a pair with joy and sadness. But in yet other passages, Spinoza indicates that every instance of joy or sadness includes desire as a constituent.” On the other hand, 4app3 identifies the active emotions with desires: “Our active emotions, that is, those desires that are defined by man’s power, that is, by reason, are always good; the other desires can be either good or bad.”

24. Marshall locates the transition from the conatus to the desire for greater power in this interrelation between pleasure and desire. Eugene Marshall, *The Spiritual Automaton: Spinoza’s Science of the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 149: “According to the conatus doctrine, each thing strives to maintain or increase its power of acting. For example, ‘the mind, as far as it can, strives to imagine those things that increase or aid the body’s power of acting’ (3p12). This move is not without some justification. In the first formulation, the conatus is our striving to persevere in our being. In the second, the conatus strives to maintain or increase our power of acting. First, Spinoza equates our power of acting with our ability to persevere, which is a plausible equation. Second, Spinoza slides from a striving for the mere perseverance or maintenance of power to the striving or an increase in power. This slide is justified, given the rest of Spinoza’s psychology, for the following reason: the human conatus is just appetite, or desire, and the mind’s desires are for that which brings joy or pleasure, which in turn are things that increase our power. At least in the case of human beings, then, we manifest our striving to persevere in a striving to increase our power. Therefore this slide from perseverance to increase in power is reasonable.”

25. Michael Della Rocca, *Spinoza* (London: Routledge, 2008), 169: “There seem . . . to be two radically different kinds of motivated action: first, action in response to present pain, action taken to stop an ongoing decrease in power of acting; and second, action taken in the absence of any relevant pain to avert future pain. The first kind of action seems very easy to explain on Spinozistic terms. The second kind seems rather different and thus threatens to spoil a unified account of motivated action and threatens Spinoza’s naturalism.” Harold H. Joachim, *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza* (New York: Russell & Russell, [1901] 1964), 205: “Desire (*cupiditas*), though itself a primitive form of emotion,

is yet determined as regards its content by preceding pleasure or pain. Man's awareness of his actual pitch of vitality as the determinate ground of action, is always the consequence of a transition that reveals itself to his emotional consciousness as some kind of pleasure or pain. Desire is not a kind of pleasure or pain—it cannot be reduced to them: but it involves pleasure or pain as its condition, it is coloured and modified according to the pleasures or pains which have conditioned it, and its intensity varies with the intensity of the pleasures or pains, loves or hates, which have given it birth.”

26. Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, §13 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 38–39: “Benefiting and hurting others are ways of exercising one’s power over them—that is all one wants in such cases! We *hurt* those to whom we need to make our power perceptible, for pain is a much more sensitive means to that end than pleasure: pain always asks for the cause, while pleasure is inclined to stop with itself and not look back.”

27. This oddity is reflected at the end of the *Ethics* in talking about the intellectual love of God. There Spinoza distinguishes pleasure from blessedness (*beatitudo*), as at 5p33s: “If pleasure, then, consists in the passage to a greater perfection, blessedness must surely consist in the fact that the mind is endowed with perfection itself.” See too 5p36s. LeBuffe, in “The Anatomy of the Passions,” speaking the voice of reason, sees confusion here. “Desire seems to be presented incoherently, both as striving itself and also as a change in striving” (202). “Desire must be both striving and especially the consciousness of striving, and also a change in a person’s power of acting. . . . ‘Striving’ is ambiguous in Spinoza: it might be identified either with a person’s power or with the form of a person’s body. The problem of desire is clearer and so more difficult when striving is taken to be identical with a person’s power. If striving just is power, then the problem of desire is that Spinoza takes desire to be a change in power and also power itself” (206).

28. Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics*, 85: “The mind can either passively undergo the power of an ‘external’ determining cause or wrest from it, as it were, the status of determining cause. The challenge may initially seem like an exercise in self-deception, comparable to the fantasy of the flying stone. If we do think of ourselves as having the power to change the course of events are we not deceiving ourselves? But what Spinoza is now talking of is a state which arises, not from ignorance of causes, but precisely from understanding them.”

29. What I’m calling bootstrap empowerment could also be called self-organization, or epigenesis. For a survey of the theme of self-organization, of the mind, of life, and of society, in the years following Spinoza, see Jonathan Sheehan and Dror Wahrman, *Invisible Hands: Self-Organization and the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

While his conception of the problem is radically different from mine, Jarrett sees the problem with 3p12. Charles Jarrett, “Teleology and Spinoza’s Doctrine of Final Causes,” in Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Desire and Affect: Spinoza as Psychologist* (New York: Little Room Press, 1999), 12. “Spinoza is . . . perfectly clear on other occasions [than 3p12d] that it is not the fact that something is so, but rather a belief that it is so, that is relevant to the explanation of desires and psychological states generally. This is especially clear from 3p29, where Spinoza did not say that we will be saddened when what we love is destroyed; he

said instead that we will be saddened when we believe or imagine this. And in 3p28, he did not say that we endeavor to bring about what in fact will lead to joy; he said instead that we endeavor to bring about what we *believe* (*imaginamur*) will lead to joy. So too, in 4p19, Spinoza maintained that each one necessarily wants (*appetit*) or is averse to what he *judges* to be good or evil.”

30. Susan James, “Why Should We Read Spinoza?” *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 78 (2016): 118: “In addition to being drawn to people with whom we already have things in common, we try to make other individuals into the kind of people to whom we can be drawn. This goal can be achieved by various means, including force, coercive threats and offers, flattery or persuasion, but Spinoza is particularly interested in the fact that our efforts to empower ourselves by these routes are often tinged in fantasy. We tend to project our desires onto others, representing them to ourselves as people who already share our *ingenium* or temperament and are already as we want them to be. Shortcircuiting the difficulties of generating a co-operative ethos, we behave as though our own affects are already shared, and view other people through the lens of our own yearnings and aspirations.”

31. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, §10: “The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values; the *ressentiment* of beings denied the true reaction, that of the deed, who recover their losses only through an imaginary revenge. Whereas all noble morality grows out of a triumphant yes-saying to oneself; from the outset slave morality says ‘no’ to an ‘outside,’ to a ‘different,’ to a ‘non-self’: and *this* ‘no’ is its creative deed.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality: A Polemic*, translated, with introduction and notes by Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 19.

32. Compare Hobbes, *Leviathan*: “Joy, arising from imagination of a mans own power and ability, is that excitation of the mind which is called glorying, which if grounded upon the experience of his own former actions, is the same with confidence: but if grounded on the flattery of others, or only supposed by himself, for delight in the consequences of it, is called Vain-glory; which name is properly given, because a well grounded *Confidence* begeteth attempt; whereas the supposing of power does not, and is therefore rightly called *Vaine*” (Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: or, The Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civil* [New York: Collier Books, 1962], 41). See too Hobbes, *Elements of Law*, chapter 9: “Glory, or internal gloriation or triumph of the mind, is that passion which proceedeth from the imagination or conception of our own power, above the power of him that contendeth with us.” Compare too Descartes, *Passions of the Soul*, §153, where generosity is “a person’s self-esteem as high as it can legitimately be.”

33. “Privation is nothing, whereas the emotion of pain is an actuality” (*nam privatio nihil est. tristitiae autem affectus actus est*) (3da3xp).

34. John Dewey, *Essays in Experimental Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1953), 196.

35. Susan James, *Passion and Action*, 148: “Our mimetic traits are . . . puzzling. It is not immediately obvious how our disposition to feel sad at others’ sadness helps us to persevere in our being, since sadness is a reduction in power.”

36. I owe much on this point to Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 2002). My analysis differs from theirs in that I emphasize the importance of the imagination, and the collective imagination, in the *Ethics* and in ethical life as well as in the *TTP* and in religious and political life. My thesis is well-captured in the following sentence from their book: “It is in civil society only that human freedom—here understood in terms of an increase in one’s power to act rather than be acted upon—is possible. Human freedom, in other words, necessarily is a collective endeavor” (194).

37. See Susan James, “Creating Rational Understanding: Spinoza as a Social Epistemologist,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplement* 85 (2011): 181–99. E.g., 182: “The transition from knowledge of the first to the second kind is in part a social one”; and 192: “The question now is how far this exercise can help to create an imaginatively grounded social ethos that is hospitable to the development of the second kind of knowledge.” Moira Gatens, “Spinoza’s Disturbing Thesis,” 463: “From his earliest writings, Spinoza linked the achievement of our highest good with the collective human endeavor to form the kind of state that would allow ‘as many as possible’ to perfect the intellect and to attain the good.”

38. Deleuze, *Lectures*, <https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/14>, p. 10.

39. Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l’expression*, 27: “The common notions function as laws of the imagination to free us from the imagination itself. Their necessity, their presence, their frequency, lets them fit into the movement of the imagination, and to change their direction to their profit. It is not an exaggeration to speak here of a *free harmony* of the imagination with reason.”

40. Something similar occurs in the *TTP*. In chapter 16 people join in a society “whether by force or voluntarily.” In chapter 20, it is by the “urging of reason itself that [one] decided without reservation to transfer to the supreme power his right of living according to his own judgment.”

41. Genevieve Lloyd, “Spinoza’s Environmental Ethics,” *Inquiry* 24 (1980): 295.

42. Genevieve Lloyd, “Dominance and Difference: A Spinozistic Alternative to the Distinction between ‘Sex’ and ‘Gender,’” in Moira Gatens, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Benedict Spinoza* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 34. “What makes human beings distinctive is not their possession of a rational soul, utterly different in kind from other parts of nature, but rather affinities and commonalities that allow them to collaborate with one another and thus strengthen their individual powers.”

43. In Latin, this is the difference between *affectio* and *affectus*. Deleuze has helpfully made much of this distinction. See, in English, Gilles Deleuze, *Expressions in Philosophy: Spinoza* (New York: Zone Books, 1990), and *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988). See especially *Practical Philosophy*, 49: “It has been remarked that as a general rule the affection (*affectio*) is said directly of the body, while the affect (*affectus*) refers to the mind. But the real difference does not reside there. It is between the body’s affection and idea, which involves the nature of the external body, and the affect, which involves an increase or decrease of the power of acting, for the body and the mind alike. The *affectio* refers to a state of the affected body and implies the presence of

the affecting body, whereas the *affectus* refers to the passage from one state to another, taking into account the correlative variation of the affecting bodies. Hence there is a difference in nature between the *image affections* or *ideas* and the *feeling affects*, although the feeling affects may be presented as a particular type of ideas or affections.”

44. See too chapter 3 of the *TTP* (C 2:111, G 3:44): “The true happiness and blessedness of each person consists only in the enjoyment of the good, and not in a self-esteem founded on the fact that he alone enjoys the good, all others being excluded from it. For whoever views himself as more blessed because things are well with him, but not with others, does not know true happiness and blessedness. The joy he derives from that comparison comes from envy and a bad heart—if it isn’t mere childishness.”

45. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 107: “The civil or social state resembles the state of reason, and yet it only resembles it, prepares for it, or takes its place (4p35s, 54s, 73, *TTP*, chapter 16). For, in the state of reason, the composition of men is realized according to a combination of intrinsic relations, and determined by common notions and the active feelings that follow from them (in particular, freedom, firmness, generosity, *pietas* and *religio* of the second kind). In the civil state, the composition of men or the formation of the whole is realized according to an extrinsic order determined by passive feelings of hope and fear. . . . In the state of reason, law is an external truth, that is, a natural guide for the full development of the power of each individual. In the civil state, law restrains or limits the individual’s power, commands and prohibits, all the more since the power of the whole surpasses that of the individual.”

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Hobbes, *Man and Citizen*: Thomas Hobbes’s *De Homine*, translated by Charles T. Wood, T. S. K. Scott-Craig, and Bernard Gert, and the translation of *De Cive* attributed to Thomas Hobbes, edited with an introduction by Bernard Gert (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), 51.

2. Michael LeBuffe, *From Bondage to Freedom: Spinoza on Human Excellence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 112: “How is it that I strive for perseverance in being and I also strive to promote the occurrence of what is conducive to a certain kind of feeling?” Elhanan Yakira, *Spinoza and the Case for Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 163: “The soul [Yakira’s word for what is usually translated as mind] is what it feels like to be a body. Better still, it is what it thinks like to be a body, or, in fact, the soul is what it means to be a body.”

3. It is important to remember that the subjective/objective distinction is anachronistic as applied to Spinoza. Both pleasure and the increase in power apply to both mind and body. *Laetitia* is translated both by pleasure and joy.

4. Matthew J. Kisner, *Spinoza on Human Freedom: Reason, Autonomy and the Good Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 105: “Since desires are the causal powers of our ideas, our desires are bound up with representational content, which is subject to cognitive evaluation. This suggests that Spinoza is entitled to judge desires as literally true or false. In what sense, then, might the desire to worship God be false? Presumably, this desire is bound up with the ideas that Spinoza targets in 1app, that God acts

with intentions and creates humans for the sake of his glory. Since the desire to worship God is merely the causal power of these ideas, which are false, the desire is, in a sense, false as well." Olli Koistinen, "Desire and Good in Spinoza," in Matthew J. Kisner and Andrew Youpa, eds., *Essays on Spinoza's Ethical Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 221: "The miser builds his judgment on what could be called a false desire, a desire that is not in line with the desire that constitutes his real self." Pierre Macherey, *Introduction à l'Éthique de Spinoza: La troisième partie: La via affective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995), 334: "The joy which the mind feels is perfectly real, but the bases on which it rests, and which support the consciousness which the mind has of itself, are supposed, and thus imaginary."

5. Alexandre Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), 64: "To be conscious of something, or to perceive it, is to *have an idea of* this thing. But the mind, which is an idea, can only 'have' other ideas if they are contained in it. An idea is then conscious only to the extent that it is internally differentiated." The mind can be the idea of the body without having an idea of the body. Those two are distinct. The mind can be the idea of the body without being a true or false idea. Stuart Hampshire, "Truth and Correspondence in Spinoza," in Yirmiyahu Yovel, ed., *Spinoza on Knowledge and the Human Mind* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 4: "Of the relation between idea and its ideatum I have used the phrases 'refers to' and 'has as its object.' It is a peculiar kind of reference, because it is a reference which cannot fail, any more than a shadow can fail to follow the object of which it is a shadow. Idea and ideatum are always distinguishable, but always inseparable, being two aspects of the same thing, whether that thing is the eternal substance, God or Nature, or a finite and transient mode of that substance, a person." Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 55: "When we encounter a body that agrees with ours, we experience an affect or feeling of joy-passion, although we do not yet adequately know what it has in common with us. Sadness, which arises from our encounter with a body that does not agree with ours, never induces us to form a common notion; but joy-passion, as an increase of the power of acting and of comprehending, does bring this about; it is an occasional cause of the common notion."

Justin Steinberg, in his "Imitation, Representation, and Humanity in Spinoza's *Ethics*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 51 (2012): 383–407, worries about whether the imitation of affects follows so immediately on the perception of similarity that this perception is incorrigible. He shows that that perception can be false, as when Adam wrongly feels the emotions expressed by animals.

6. *De Anima* 3.6.430a26–28: "The thinking of indivisible objects of thought occurs among things concerning which there can be no falsehood; where truth and falsehood are possible there is implied a compounding of thoughts into a fresh unity." Richard McKeon, "Causation and the Geometric Method in the Philosophy of Spinoza (II)," *Philosophical Review* 39, no. 3 (1930): 276: "A simple idea . . . one which has no relations with any other idea, is necessarily true. Aristotle would have said that a simple idea is neither true nor false, but in the context of their systems the consequences of the two statements are the same: a simple idea cannot be investigated; questions of truth or falsity are im-

proper to it.” Alexandre Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), 68: “The mind is the idea of an actually existing body. But it doesn’t have the idea of the actually existing body: God has this idea; and he has it only to the extent that he also has the ideas of the external causes that make our body exist, and then the causes of these causes, etc., to infinity. The mind, as such, does not know the body.”

7. Syliane Malinowski-Charles, *Affects et conscience chez Spinoza: L’automatisme dans le progrès éthique* (Zurich: Georg Olms Verlag, 2004), 116–17: “One can make a mistake in saying that *this* thing is good, if one attaches the affect of joy to a thing which isn’t its real cause, or instead is right if the affect is really caused by it. But the error only resides in the attribution of a cause of the sentiment, and not in the sentiment. The mind’s relation to its own emotions is necessarily correct, which, again, confers on self-consciousness the status of an excellent starting point for true understanding, and in the search for ‘salvation.’”

8. One could also use as an example Paris’s love for Helen. According to Herodotus, he actually fell in love with a simulacrum of Helen, while the real Helen was off in Egypt. Was he wrong not only in the object of his love, but in the fact that he was in love at all?

9. Amber Danielle Carpenter, “Hedonistic Persons: The Good Man Argument in Plato’s *Philebus*,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 14 (2006): 21: “The very foolish man, totally out of touch with reality may be among the best at promoting pleasure — if he has completely lost touch with the world, he might never experience the pain of realizing that his wild fantasies were vain.” I quote this in part for its footnote: “Further, he would be an endless source of amusement for anyone who does not think pleasures need be moralized, and thus a positive good on an impersonal pleasure-maximizing scheme.” Finally, in *Rhetoric* II.4 Aristotle says that pain is perceptible but vice is not. If vice decreases power, as Spinoza would maintain, we seem to have another example of a non-identity between pain and the decrease in power.

10. In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant discusses a situation analogous to Jacob’s sleeping with Leah rather than Rachel. We find a bird song beautiful; should we discover that it is the human imitation of a bird song, we would, he says, immediately find it insipid. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 126 (Ak. 5:143): “We may well confuse our sympathy with the merriment of a beloved little creature with the beauty of his song, which, when it is exactly imitated by a human being (as is sometimes done with the notes of the nightingale) strikes our ear as utterly tasteless.”

11. Justin Steinberg, “Imitation, Representation, and Humanity in Spinoza’s *Ethics*,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 51 (2012): 390: “Imagine that, unbeknownst to Paul, Peter has an identical twin brother, Harry. Paul perceives Harry in the marketplace and mutters to himself, ‘Ah, there is Peter.’ How are we to construe the representational states of Paul’s mind? . . . On the one hand, Paul has a *de re* idea of his own bodily state. He also has a *de re* idea of Harry, since his idea implicates its external cause (2p16). However, because this bodily state has historically been associated with Peter’s presence, Paul takes (*de dicto*) this state to be about Peter. Paul represents Harry, but he does so in a Peterly way, if you will. Non-veridical representations and misjudgments, like this one, abound

due to wayward associations of the mind.” C. D. C. Reeve, *Love’s Confusions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 47: “A child can’t feed himself. What he needs isn’t simply food, but *to be fed*—to part of a drama, a game. Mommy doesn’t so much present him with an object of thought or attention, as coax him into playing a role in a drama involving food—a drama that interests him because of need. Then, as he matures, he gets involved in more and more of the drama, more and more of the game. Until finally—if all goes well—he becomes a player in the game of life.”

12. *Republic* V.474d: “To the erotically inclined man all boys in the bloom of youth pique the interest of a lover of boys and arouse him and all seem worthy of his care and pleasure. Or isn’t that the way you people behave to fine and beautiful boys? You praise a snub-nosed one as cute, a hook-nosed one you say is regal, one in between is well-proportioned, dark ones look manly, and pale ones are children of the gods.”

13. There is always a temporal dimension to pleasure and pain since they are transitions from one state to another, a transition that takes place in time. That is why the intellectual love of God, at least on God’s part, is not an affect.

14. Hilarious passive emotions are an anomaly that have to be treated separately in chapter 6.

15. There is some resemblance between Spinoza’s distinction between pleasures that affect the whole and only a part and Socrates’s distinction between the pleasures of the rational and the irrational man in *Republic* IX. “In contrast to the pleasure of the rational man, the pleasure of others is neither true at all nor pure, but in a way shadow-painted” (583b3–5).

16. There are analogies here to Bernard Williams’s question of whether reflection can result in a loss of knowledge. Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

17. See *Symposium* 210b: “He is established as a lover of all beautiful bodies and relaxes this excessive preoccupation with one, thinking less of it and believing it to be a small matter.”

18. Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, ed. Peter Heath and J. B. Schneewind, trans. Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 155: “The sexual impulse . . . in and by itself . . . is nothing but more than appetite. But, so considered, there is in this inclination a degradation of man; for as soon as anyone becomes an object of another’s appetite, all motives of mutual relationship fall away, as object of the other’s appetite, that person is in fact a thing, whereby the other’s appetite is sated. . . . This is the reason why we are ashamed of possessing such an impulse, and why all strict moralists, and those who wish to be taken for saints, have sought to repress and dispense with it. . . . Since the sexual impulse is not an inclination that one human has for another, qua human, but an inclination for their sex, it is therefore a principle of the debasement of humanity.”

19. The indifference to the existence of the object is reminiscent of Kant’s account of beauty. A parallel issue arises there: Can we have the same experience of beauty in enjoying a successful forgery as with the original? Kant’s account of beauty will surface again in chapter 6.

20. The anxieties generated by love seem a central feature of the human condition. See 4app30: “Since those things are good which assist the parts of the body to perform their function, and pleasure consists in this, that a man’s power is assisted or increased insofar as he is composed of mind and body, all those things that bring pleasure are good. On the other hand, since things do not act with the object of affecting us with pleasure, and their power of acting is not adjusted to suit our needs, and, lastly, since pleasure is usually related to one part of the body in particular, the emotions of pleasure (unless one exercises reason and care), and consequently the desires that are generated from them, can be excessive.” See too, in the scholium to 5p20, the remark that the intellectual love of God “is tainted by none of the faults that are in common love.” Matthew J. Kisner, *Spinoza on Human Freedom: Reason, Autonomy and the Good Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 123: “Presumably fully rational people would not experience joy and sorrow at possessing or not possessing the thing [loved]. In this way, Spinoza indicates that a fully rational person would experience joy at the thing itself, without regard to his particular relation to it, such as whether he owns it.”

21. See 4p44s: “We sometimes see that men are so affected by one object that, although it is not present, they still believe they have it with them. When this happens to a man who is not asleep, we say that he is mad or insane. Nor are they thought to be less mad who burn with Love, and dream, both night and day, only of a lover or a courtesan.” Spinoza’s claim that love leads to excess and to fluctuating emotions is a general truth. I use this story to ask how to account for some details that complicate Spinoza’s story. Here is an instance of romantic love that does not suffer from its usual bad consequences. Jacob’s emotions toward Rachel do not fluctuate in the fourteen years he waits to marry her, and are not subject to the usual dangers and instabilities of love. One can find emotional stability without adequate ideas, in the emotions of confidence and despair. See 3da14 and 15. For more on love and its pathologies, see Amelie Rorty, “Spinoza and the Pathos of Idolatrous Love and the Hilarity of True Love,” in Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, eds., *The Philosophy of (Erotic) Love* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1991), 352–71; reprinted in Moira Gatens, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Benedict Spinoza* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 65–86. See, for example, 69: “Any love that focuses on a particular individual is idolatrous; and because idolatrous love is fetishistic and partial, it inevitably brings ambivalence and frustration.” I use the example of Jacob to stipulate that in this particular case there is no ambivalence. I want to ask whether his exclusive and idolatrous love has something wrong with it even if there is no ambivalence and frustration.

22. Chantal Jacquet, *L’unité du corps et de l’esprit* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004), 108.

23. Alexandre Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), 449: “The more God is personalized, the more the devotion it inspires is subject to jealousy; we only love it if it loves us in return, and if it loves us more than all others.” Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 150 (Ak. 5:266): “The agreeable, as an incentive for the desires, is of the same kind throughout. . . . Hence in judging of its influence on the mind it is only a matter of the mass of the agreeable sensation; and thus this cannot be

made intelligible except by quantity. The beautiful, by contrast, requires the presentation of a certain quality of the object.”

24. George Herbert, “Self-Condensation.”

25. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, para. 67: “Love of one is a barbarism; for it is exercised at the expense of all else.”

26. Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Religion*, in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. and trans. Allan W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 229 (italics mine): “It is not the instigation of nature that arouses what should properly be called the *passions*, which wreak such great devastation in his originally good predisposition. His needs are limited, and his state of mind in providing for them is moderate and tranquil. He is poor (or considers himself so) only to the extent that he is anxious that other human beings will consider him poor and despise him for it. Envy, addition to power, avarice, and the malignant inclinations associated with these, assail his nature, *which on its own is understanding*, as soon as he is among human beings.” Kant, “Conjectural Beginnings of Human History,” in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, ed. Pauline Kleingeld (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 112: “Reason has this peculiarity that, aided by the imagination, it can create artificial desires which are not only unsupported by natural instinct but actually contrary to it. These desires, in the beginning called concupiscence, gradually generate a whole host of unnecessary and indeed unnatural inclinations called luxuriousness.”

27. Appendix 1: “He who seeks the true causes of miracles and is eager to understand the works of Nature as a scholar, and not just to gape at them like a fool, is universally considered an impious heretic and denounced by those to whom the common people bow down as interpreters of Nature and the gods. For these people know that the dispelling of ignorance would entail the disappearance of that astonishment, which is the one and only support for their argument and for safeguarding their authority.” Or, as he puts it in the *Short Treatise*, “there is no wonder in him who draws true conclusions” (C 1:100, G 1:57). Genevieve Lloyd, “The Philosophical History of Wonder,” *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 34 (2012): 306: “Because transition to greater or lesser ‘power of acting’ is essential to what Spinoza calls ‘affects,’ wonder—involving, as it does, a hiatus in activity—cannot itself be treated as an affect. What had been, for Descartes, a ‘primary’ passion is, for Spinoza, no passion at all.”

28. Consider this sentence from the preface to the *TTP*: “The more extravagantly they wonder at these mysteries, the more they show that they don’t so much believe Scripture as give lip service to it” (C 2:71, G 3:18). As wonder is the paradigmatic emotion that modifies an inadequate idea, so miracles are the paradigmatic object of inadequate ideas.

29. Michael A. Rosenthal, “Miracles, Wonder, and the State in Spinoza’s *Theological-Political Treatise*,” in Yitzhak Y. Melamed and Michael A. Rosenthal, eds., *Spinoza’s Theological-Political Treatise: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 231–49. See too the polemics against wonder and “foolish wonder” in the appendix to *Ethics* 1.

30. Daniel Garber, “Dr. Fischelson’s Dilemma: Spinoza on Freedom and Sociability,”

in Yirmiyahu Yovel and Gideon Segal, eds., *Spinoza on Reason and the “Free Man”* (New York: Little Room Press, 2004), 186: “Because all the behavior of the perfectly rational individual derives from his own nature, he only acts, and cannot be acted upon. He is, in a sense, causally isolated from the rest of the world: he can act on other things, but other things cannot act on him. In particular, he cannot be harmed by things external to him. . . . But if the perfectly free man cannot be harmed from the outside, he cannot, it would seem, be helped either; a passion is a passion, whether harmful or helpful.”

31. *De Anima*, W. S. Hett, trans., in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935).

32. *De Doctrina Christiana*, I.iii–I.iv: “To enjoy something is to cling to it with love for its own sake. To use something, however, is to employ it in obtaining that which you love, provided that it is worthy of love.”

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Aristotle, *De Anima* III.11.434a13–15: “According to nature the higher is always predominant and effective.”

2. Spinoza’s indictment of the traditional problem of *akrasia*, with its normative expectations, is explicit at the beginning of the *Political Treatise*: “Philosophers conceive the affects by which we’re torn as vices, which men fall into by their own fault. . . . They conceive men not as they are, but as they want them to be. That’s why for the most part they’ve written Satire instead of Ethics, and why they’ve never conceived a Politics which could be put to any practical application. . . . In all the sciences which have a practical application, Theory is believed to be out of harmony with Practice. But this is especially true in Politics. No men are thought less suitable to guide Public Affairs than Theorists, or Philosophers” (C 2:503–4, G 3:273).

3. See too *Political Treatise* (509) where experience “teaches us all too well, that it’s no more in our power to have a sound Mind than a sound Body.” And 510: “The more we consider a man to be free, the less can we say that he can fail to use reason and to choose evils in preference to goods.” Chapter 21 of the *Short Treatise* inquires “how it is that sometimes, though we see that a thing is good or bad, we nevertheless find no power in ourselves to do the good or omit the bad, while at other times we do,” and thinks the explanation is easy (C 1:138, G 1:99). See too chapter 16 of the *TTP*: “It’s far from true that everyone can always easily be led just by the guidance of reason. Everyone is drawn by his own pleasure. Most of the time the mind is so filled with greed, love of esteem, envy, anger, etc., that there’s no room for reason” (C 2:286, G 3:191). See, finally, Letter 78, to Oldenburg.

Herman de Dijn, “Ethics as Medicine for the Mind (5p1–20),” in Michael Hampe, Ursula Renz, and Robert Schnepf, eds., *Spinoza’s Ethics: A Collective Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 266: “How can that section of the ethics concerned with human *impotence* or *bondage* (*De servitute humana*) simultaneously devote three-quarters of its propositions to *recta vivendi ratio*? The reason is that the *recta ratio* is not capable of automatically controlling the emotions. . . . The *impotentia* and *inconstantia* even of rational beings has

to do with the fact that their rationality is an abstract rationality of *praecepta, dictamina, regulae* (4p18s).”

4. Jacques-Henri Gagnon, “Spinoza et le problème de l’akrasia: un aspect négligé de l’ordo geometricus,” *Philosophiques* 29 (2002): 59–60, places akrasia in the overall argument of Part 4: “All of the first propositions of E4 serve to ground the demonstration of the cause of akrasia which has a triple formulation in 4p15, 16, and 17. After showing in 4p1 that false ideas can’t be removed in the presence of the truth, propositions 2–4 show that man is necessarily part of nature and therefore always subject to the affects. The cause of the power of the affects, and the consequences of this cause for man are developed in propositions 5–7. The important proposition 8 identifies the knowledge of good and bad with the consciousness of the affect of joy and sadness, which let him posit the cause of akrasia starting from the notion of desire which was defined in the preceding part as the very essence of man, that is, appetite with the consciousness of appetite (3p9, 3p9s, 3da1). . . . Propositions 9–13 analyze the modalities of the power of the affects according as the image of the thing which affects us is imagined in terms of its duration, or as necessary, possible, or contingent. Proposition 14 demonstrates that it is only insofar as the knowledge of good and bad is considered as an affect that it can oppose an affect. This proposition, which will not be used in the rest of the demonstrative equipment of the *Ethics*, even if the propositions from which it is demonstrated will be (3gda, 4p1, 4p7, and 4p8), is important from the point of view of the problematic of akrasia, since the latter is framed in terms of a true knowledge of good and bad, that is, an adequate knowledge.”

5. Spinoza does not present any rules about the composition of motions in the “physics” after 2p13s. But my claims do not depend on any specific doctrine about composition of motions—I’m not asserting that there are vector products—but ordinary ideas about collision.

6. *Leviathan* 18 (94): “For all men are by nature provided of notable multiplying glasses (that is their Passions and Selfe-love,) through which, every little payment appeareth a great grievance; but are destitute of those prospective glasses, (namely Morall and Civill Science,) to see a farre off the miseries that hang over them, and cannot without such payments be avoided.”

7. *TIE* §10: “Though I perceive these things [NS: this evil] clearly in my mind, I still could not, on that account, put aside all greed, desire for sensual pleasure and love of esteem” (C 1:10, G 2:7). The experience of reading the *Ethics* as itself an experience of akrasia is noted by Jacques-Henri Gagnon in his “Spinoza et le problème de l’akrasia: un aspect négligé de l’ordo geometricus,” *Philosophiques* 29 (2002): 60: “If spinozist philosophy gives the reader knowledge of the sovereign good, but without furnishing him at the same time the necessary tools for attaining it, it wouldn’t be a cause for joy, but on the contrary for sadness, because it is his own inability to attain the sovereign good which would be most present in the mind of the reader. . . . It would be a book of the unhappy consciousness of servitude, that is of impotence, instead of a liberating text.”

8. Compare Locke’s project of making the strength of a belief proportional to the evidence for it.

9. Yovel's analysis is useful here. Yirmiyahu Yovel, "Incomplete Rationality in Spinoza's *Ethics*: Three Basic Forms," in Yirmiyahu Yovel and Gideon Segal, eds., *Spinoza on Reason and the "Free Man"* (New York: Little Room Press, 2004), 15–17: "In Spinoza there is a form of *impotent rationality* on the one hand, and a form of *potent and effective semi-rationality* on the other. . . . By incomplete reason I do not mean simply error or mere passion. I mean a form of mind that has risen above *imagination simpliciter* although it cannot count as fully rational. It is a form of *unfulfilled rationality*, lacking in some essential respect, either (1) because it is still in the process of emerging; or (2) because, although already awakened and even possessing adequate rational ideas, it is powerless to follow their guidance; or (3) because it does not possess adequate ideas but only imitates their effects externally."

10. That is why both *akrasia* and the model of living under the guidance of reason occur in Part 4, "Of Human Bondage, or the Strength of the Emotions," while Part 5 is titled "Of the Power of the Intellect, or On Human Freedom." See also de Dijn, "Ethics as Medicine for the Mind," 266, quoted at n. 3 above.

11. Elhanan Yakira, "Is the Rational Man Free?" in *Spinoza on Reason and the "Free Man"*, 73: "Spinoza tries to formulate an epistemology, and not a formal logic (which he abhors), where the concept of a subject does not have a constitutive role. We do not have to presuppose someone who performs the act of thinking (as Descartes and most of us do), in order to understand what thinking is." While I think overall that Yakira's remark is true and very important, in cognitive *akrasia* the subject does have a constitutive role.

12. An analogy to the *TTP* can help. I have an adequate idea that there are no miracles. This idea does not explain why, for example, it appears that the sun stood still until Joshua could complete his battle. I know *that* there is an explanation for the apparent miraculous violation of the laws of nature, but don't know what the explanation is. So I could continue to marvel and call it providential.

13. *Political Treatise* (C 2:513, G 3:281): "As long as human natural right is determined by each person's power, and belongs to that person, there's no human natural right. It consists more in opinion than in fact, since there's no way to maintain it."

14. Susan James, "Creating Rational Understanding: Spinoza as a Social Epistemologist," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplement* 85 (2011): 182.

15. Hilarious pleasures, as I will show in the next chapter, stand out because they don't cause conflict, but can be merely diverse. Because we are indifferent to the existence of the objects that cause hilarious pleasures, there is no desire to possess them. But because there is no conflict, hilarious pleasures also don't lead to community. Ethically, they are a dead end.

16. Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Desire and Affect: Spinoza as Psychologist* (New York: Little Room Press, 1999), 53.

17. Marx Wartofsky, "Action and Passion: Spinoza's Construction of a Scientific Psychology," in Marjorie Grene, ed., *Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Anchor, 1973), 338: "The dependency on other bodies, in a strange and dialectical sense, is the very condition of a body's activity, since its power to act is its power to affect other bodies; as, in turn, the power to act of these other bodies is their power to act on this

(my) body. The fundamental mode of the existence of human bodies, as individuals, as is therefore a relational mode, or one of interaction.”

CHAPTER SIX

1. Moira Gatens, “Spinoza on Goodness and Beauty and the Prophet and the Artist,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 23 (2015): 10. “Sensual and cognitive pleasures—such as perfume and theatre—should not be shunned. The wise understand that such pleasures are necessary to the flourishing of a healthy body and mind. This is not, of course, to deny that ultimately all passions are bad in the sense that the mind is passive in relation to them. But the hard path to freedom—that is, the struggle to approach nearer and nearer to the *exemplar* of human nature presented in the Preface to *Ethics* Part 4—is rife with perils and obstacles. Experiences of beauty-ugliness, good-bad, and joy-sadness, might be understood as signposts that provide vital information that may protect, sustain, and strengthen a traveler on this path. They may not be pertinent to natural philosophy, or science, but understanding the causes and vicissitudes of our passions is vital to practical philosophy, which includes religion and art.”

2. See too *Philebus* 51b3–5 for the pleasures of “so-called pure colors and shapes and most smells and some tones,” juxtaposed with the pleasures of study and learning (51e7–52a2).

3. This disinterested love anticipates the intellectual love of God, since “he who loves God cannot endeavor that God should love him in return.” Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* analyzes the idea of beauty into four moments, and it is only the first two that apply to Spinoza. First, the beautiful is the object of disinterested liking. Second, it is an object without a concept. The third moment is that the object presents itself as purposive without a purpose, and the fourth that it commands necessary liking. Note too the similarities between his examples and Kant’s examples of “free beauty”: “flowers, many birds, many seashells, designs à la grecque, the foliage on borders and wallpaper” (*Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 114 [Ak. 5:229]).

4. Edmund Burke puts the contrast nicely: “We know by experience, that, for the enjoyment of pleasure, no great efforts of power are at all necessary; nay, we know, that such efforts would go a great way towards destroying our satisfaction: for pleasure must be stolen, and not forced upon us; pleasure follows the will; and therefore we are generally affected with it by many things of a force greatly inferior to our own. But pain is always inflicted by a power in some way superior, because we never submit to pain willingly.” Edmund Burke, *On the Sublime and Beautiful*, Part 2, §5.

5. One possible exception is bird song. I have to leave it aside because I have no idea what to do about it. See Charles Hartshorne, *Born to Sing: An Interpretation and World Survey of Bird Song* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).

6. Michael LeBuffe, *From Bondage to Freedom: Spinoza on Human Excellence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 53.

7. Lloyd points to a different affinity with Kant, which leads to another sense of human uniqueness. Genevieve Lloyd, “Rationalizing the Passions: Spinoza on Reason

and the Passions,” in Stephen Gaukroger, *The Soft Underbelly of Reason: The Passions in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1998): 42: “Although there is equine gladness, there is no equine *hilaritas*. *Hilaritas* is a higher-order joy in a different way: a pleasure of reflection. It demands something more than just being the idea of a body engaged in unimpeded activity [which is gladness, *gaudium*], a mind functioning well in the here and now. This is a joy which involves a special relationship to time. It is a joy related to that capacity of consciousness which Kant later talked of as the ‘unity of apperception.’ It demands that the fragments of consciousness stand together in a whole not confined to the present.”

8. Laurent Bove, “*Hilaritas and Acquiescentia in se ipso*,” in Yirmiyahu Yovel and Gideon Segal, eds., *Spinoza on Reason and the “Free Man”* (New York: Little Room Press, 2004), 216–17: “External causes are thus only occasional causes in the fortunate manifestation of *hilaritas*, but the force of this manifestation is in itself an activity, that of *cupiditas*, which at a certain level of perfection of being will be able, by itself alone, to produce clear and distinct ideas—and thus transform *hilaritas* to *beatitudo*.”

9. Hilarity is then bound up with the elision Spinoza makes between the conatus as an effort to preserve oneself and the conatus as a desire to increase power that was the subject of chapter 3. Stephen Gaukroger, *The Soft Underbelly of Reason: The Passions in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1998): 40: “Thriving and striving are inseparable for Spinoza, and where we have a well-functioning, striving and thriving mind, there we have *hilaritas*. This is an emotion of which, Spinoza says, we cannot have too much.”

10. This line of argument leads to Bove’s claim that hilarity is most clearly found in irrational children.

11. Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l’expression* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1968), 262. He continues: “But the existence of the first stage is not, at least, in doubt. A man who is to become reasonable, strong and free, begins by in all chance encounters and the concatenation of sad passions, organizing good encounters, combining the ratios and proportions [of his own body] with ratios that combine directly with it, uniting with what agrees in nature with him, and forming a reasonable association between men; all this in such a way as to be affected with joy. The description of the reasonable and free man in Part Four of the *Ethics* identifies the striving of reason with this art of organizing encounters, of forming a *totality* of compatible relations.”

12. Pascal Sévérac, “Le Venir actif du corps affectif,” *Astériorion* 3 (2005): 71: “Consequently, to the extent that the simultaneous apprehension by the mind of a plurality of things is the necessary condition for an adequate perception, that is, for mental activity, one can infer from that that the aptitude of the body to act or be acted upon simultaneously in many ways is the necessary condition for properly corporeal activity.”

13. Pascal Sévérac, “Passivité et désir d’activité chez Spinoza,” in Fabienne Brugère and Pierre-François Moreau, eds., *Spinoza et les affects* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), 47. The interrelation between imagination and reason is ignored in James C. Morrison, “Why Spinoza Had No Aesthetics,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 47 (1989): 359–65.

14. Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics* (London: Routledge 1996), 92.
15. For more on agreement, see my “Can’t We All Just Get Along? Spinoza on the Rational and the Reasonable,” *Political Theory* 38, no. 6 (December 2010): 838–58.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Gottfried Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*, ed. Austin Farrer (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1985), article 205, p. 256.

2. See too 3p37d: “The greater the Sadness, the greater the power of acting with which the man will strive to remove the Sadness, i.e. (by P9S), the greater the desire, or appetite, with which he will strive to remove the Sadness.”

3. Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 84: “The true idea, related to our power of knowing, at the same time discovers its own inner content, which is not its representative content.”

4. Harold H. Joachim, *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza* (New York: Russell & Russell, [1901] 1964), 177: “The progress from ‘imagination’ to ‘science’ is not the shifting of ideas within an unchanging subject. ‘We’ do not remain the same, and merely exchange one set of ideas for another. The ‘we’ of science is very different from the ‘we’ of imaginative experience.” Henry E. Allison, *Benedict de Spinoza: An Introduction* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 114: “Spinoza’s conception of the mind as idea of the body does not allow him to distinguish, in the manner of Descartes, between innate and adventitious ideas—that is, between those that come from the mind and those that come from experience. To him, all ideas are equally innate, since they are all modifications of the attribute of thought, and none is ‘caused’ by anything in the realm of extension. Correlatively, all are equally adventitious, since each must have its physical correlate.”

5. I like the French version of the maxim—“to draw back in order to make a better jump”—because it is purely mechanical, while the Nietzschean “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger” might involve a psychology that Spinoza would not accept.

6. Hence the appeal of Syliane Malinowski-Charles’s proposal in *Affects et conscience chez Spinoza: L’automatisme dans le progrès éthique* (Zurich: Georg Olms Verlag, 2004), 16: “The idea of progress supposes two main steps: 1) the passage from a sad passive affect to a passive joyous affect; then 2) the passage of this passive joyous affect into an active joyous affect.”

7. Julie E. Cooper, *Secular Powers: Humility in Modern Political Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 92: “What does *acquiescentia in se ipso* mean? This is both a question of translation and a question about Spinoza’s presentation of the affect. *Acquiescentia in se ipso* proves difficult to translate, for it is of modern provenance, a neologism coined by Henry Desmarte, the Latin translator of Descartes’s *Les Passions de l’Ame*, to render ‘*satisfaction de soy-meme*.’ . . . In the *Ethics*, *acquiescentia in se ipso* has both positive and negative connotations.” See too Steven Nadler, *Spinoza’s Ethics: An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 233–34; and Laurent Bove, *La Stratégie du Conatus: Affirmation et Résistance chez Spinoza* (Paris: Vrin, 1996), 77–125.

8. See section 5 of the *TIE*: “Honor has this great disadvantage: to pursue it, we must

direct our lives according to other men's powers of understanding—fleeing what they commonly flee and seeking what they commonly seek" (C 1:8, G 2:6).

9. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 28.

10. Recall the remark after the definition of idea, 2def3: "I say concept rather than perception, because the word perception seems to indicate that the Mind is acted on by the object. But concept seems to express an action of the Mind." The definition of ideas is supposed to apply to inadequate ideas, so they are never fully passive.

11. In the last chapter I explored the anomaly of hilarious pleasures, which seem to contradict everything I said in this paragraph.

12. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, chapter 2. Contrast Spinoza: "Insofar as we understand, we can want nothing except what is necessary, nor absolutely be satisfied with anything except what is true. Hence, insofar as we understand these things rightly, the striving of the better part of us agrees with the order of the whole of nature" (4app32).

13. Proposition 12 of Part 5 relies on nothing past Part 2 for its proof; 5p11 relies on 5p8 which relies on nothing but 5ax2. The power of the intellect then could have been demonstrated without the intervention of Parts 2 and 3. But in that case our knowledge of the power of the intellect could not be practical.

14. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and trans. Allen W. Wood (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 10 (Ak. 4:394).

15. Marx Wartofsky, "Action and Passion: Spinoza's Construction of a Scientific Psychology," in Marjorie Grene, ed., *Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Anchor, 1973), 347.

16. Therefore the caution Spinoza issues in 5p31s: "It should be noted that although we are already certain that the Mind is eternal, insofar as it conceives things under a species of eternity, nevertheless, for an easier explanation and better understanding of the things we wish to show, we shall consider it as if it were now beginning to be, and were now beginning to understand things under a species of eternity."

17. Alexandre Matheron, "Remarks on the Immortality of the Soul in Spinoza," in Michael Hampe, Ursula Renz, and Robert Schnepf, eds., *Spinoza's Ethics: A Collective Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 297: "Exterior causes do not restrict themselves to allowing our affections a duration, but also alter their content. On the one hand, through mutilation: they prevent our essence from giving itself all the affections it would give itself if it could only actualize itself alone; even those which they allow are altered and cut off (cf. esp. 4p59dem1). On the other hand, through distortion: under their influence our affections follow mostly in an order which is for us disorder, because it does not follow from the laws of nature alone. This is the ransom we pay for their cooperation in the maintenance of our own existence." Matheron's paper is one of the few pieces I have found that take the problems of 4p59 seriously.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Alexandre Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), 525.

2. Matthew J. Kisner, "Spinoza's Virtuous Passions," *Review of Metaphysics* 61 (2008):

764n13: “We can attain adequate knowledge of only general things, universal properties, the infinite nature of substance and its connection to modes. We will always have inadequate knowledge of empirical particular things.” Michael LeBuffe, *From Bondage to Freedom: Spinoza on Human Excellence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 90: “Ideas of imagination . . . involve ignorance just because of their causal histories. This association between confusion and inadequacy makes it difficult to see how ideas of imagination could come to be somehow made unconfused unless they could also come to be made adequate, that is, caused in a different fashion. This is precisely what Spinoza seems to regard as possible at 5p3 and urges us to undertake at 5p4s. However, given Spinoza’s account of inadequacy, it seems that, once the first condition obtains, that is, once we have an idea that is partially caused and so does not include knowledge of its causes, that idea could not come to be caused in a different fashion.”

3. The matter is not straightforward, though, since immediately after presenting the three kinds of knowledge in 2p40s2 Spinoza gives the example of the fourth proportional, which seems to be the same idea known in three different ways. How the third treatment of the example, in which for the simplest numbers, “no one fails to see the fourth proportional,” is an example of deriving an essence of something from the formal essence of a divine attribute is a question that I don’t have to answer here, and for which I do not have an answer.

4. Elhanan Yakira, *Spinoza and the Case for Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 191: “The question that arises on reading the final part of the *Ethics*. . . : the immanent normativity of health, happiness, or self-interest does not make sense *sub specie aeternitatis*. The eudaimonic or medical points of view are decisively the individual’s point of view. . . . From the point of view of ‘nature,’ health or sickness makes no sense, and the well-being of this or that individual organism makes no difference. But the ‘intellectual love of God,’ as Spinoza explicitly puts it in proposition 36 of EV, is God’s—or nature’s—love, by which he loves himself. It is than as objective as a thing can ever be, and it does make a difference *sub specie aeternitatis*.” Michael LeBuffe, *From Bondage to Freedom: Spinoza on Human Excellence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 114: “Depending on how one understands perseverance in being, there may be circumstances in which a mind’s attempt to increase its power of perseverance interferes with perseverance itself.”

5. As far as I know, there is just one place where Spinoza distinguishes theory from practice, and that is in chapter 17 of the *TTP*: “In the last Chapter we considered the right the supreme ‘powers’ have to do everything, and the natural right each person has transferred to them. Though the view expressed there agrees in no small measure with practice, and a practice could be established which approached more and more closely the condition we described, it will never happen that this view does not remain, in many respects, merely theoretical” (C 2:296, G 3:201). That quotation by itself is hardly a distinction between theoretical and practical reason. Spinoza doesn’t have to draw such a distinction—there is only one reason, comprising adequate ideas and their connections according to the order of the intellect—but he does have to show how reason can be practical if the *Ethics* is to be, as he claims, a work of practical value.

6. Donald Rutherford, “Spinoza’s Conception of Law: Metaphysics and Ethics,” in Yitzhak Y. Melamed and Michael A. Rosenthal, eds., *Spinoza’s Theological-Political Treatise: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 147: “Knowing that the world is governed by universal necessary laws does not tell us how we should act in particular situations. Such laws give no direction to our efforts to intervene in the world, and they leave us ignorant of ‘the actual coordination and connectedness of things.’ [C2:126, G 3:58]” Matthew J. Kisner, *Spinoza on Human Freedom: Reason, Autonomy and the Good Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 126: “Reason’s guidance cannot be put into practice without assistance from the imagination, because reason does not take account of space and time, which are essential features of practical situations. For instance, while reason guides me to act for the good of others, I cannot determine what specific course of action will benefit others without attending to their position in space and time, which requires representing them in the imagination. Consequently, applying reason’s guidance, as Spinoza’s ethics demands, requires us to attend to necessarily partial representations of our own interests. This argument entails that there is a significant difference, for Spinoza, between reason and rational deliberation, that is, between our general and impartial adequate ideas and the deliberative process by which we use these ideas to determine our actions.”

7. Similarly, what he calls method in the *TIE* is not a method in this sense at all: “Method is nothing but reflexive knowledge, or the idea of an idea” (§38; C 1:19, G 2:16). “Truth needs no sign. . . . It follows that true method does not consist in seeking a sign of truth after acquiring ideas; the true method is the path whereby truth itself, or the objective essences of things, or ideas (all these mean the same) is to be sought in proper order” (§36; C 1:18, G 2:15).

8. Part 2 ends not with an appendix but with a long scholium which has the same function as the appendixes to the other parts.

9. Pierre Macherey, *Hegel or Spinoza*, Susan M. Ruddick, trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 39: The difference between philosophy and mathematics “is essentially that between a science of the finite and a science of the infinite. It is clear that in these two cases the word *science* designates completely different realities: on one hand an abstract knowledge that always finds its object in exteriority; on the other a concrete knowledge that is itself its own content and is thus made absolute.” See too 55–56: Spinoza “does not have an (analytic) procedure *more philosophico* that is distinct from the (synthetic) procedure *more geometrico*, an order of investigation distinct from an order of exposition, a *ratio cognoescendi* distinct from a *ratio essendi*. Between ideas, as between other things, there is one single and unique connection, which goes from causes to effects because it is necessary in itself. . . . *more geometrico* is the means Spinoza needed to escape the juridical conception of knowledge, which for Descartes still subordinates the exercise of thought to the coordinates of an artifice.

“Synthetically determined, the process of knowledge no longer views things such as they are for me: it grasps them such as they are in themselves. It is thus completely liberated from the finalist illusion, which proceeds by a projection from me; it relies on a strictly causal necessity, and this is the form of its objectivity. It is altogether significant,

from this point of view, that book I of the *Ethics* achieves this through the statement of the principle of causality presented thus: ‘nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow.’”

Yakira, *Spinoza and the Case for Philosophy*, 147: “The kind of knowledge a physician has of Peter’s body is a third person’s knowledge, and is radically different from the knowledge, perception, or sensation Peter has of his own body. From the point of view of the theory of knowledge, that our body ‘exists as we sense it’ (2p13c) means, first, that in a very peculiar sense we can be said to have an adequate knowledge—in fact, the only adequate knowledge—of our body. It also means that the idea of Peter that Paul has can never become a fully adequate knowledge of Peter’s body. In other terms, there is a clear priority—from the point of view of rational epistemology—of the first-person perspective on one’s self and one’s own body over the third-person, allegedly objective, or scientific (e.g., medical) point of view of the same ‘self’ or body.”

10. Karolina Hübner, “On the Significance of Formal Causes in Spinoza’s Metaphysics,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 97 (2015): 203: “Like many other 17th-century thinkers, Spinoza views logic as a normative, therapeutic ‘art’ akin to medicine. Logic trains memory and imagination. Logic so understood belongs to the ‘first’ kind of knowledge, ‘the only cause of falsity’ in our ideas (2p41). Presumably then logical relations of ideas are far from being capable of reproducing the actual causal structure of nature.”

11. Elhanan Yakira, “Is the Rational Man Free?” in Yirmiyahu Yovel and Gideon Segal, eds., *Spinoza on Reason and the “Free Man”* (New York: Little Room Press, 2004), 74: “Rational knowledge does not consist in the knowledge of general truths, but . . . it is fundamentally a form of self-knowledge. We know the world through our body and not vice versa.”

12. Yakira, *Spinoza and the Case for Philosophy*, 82: Spinoza “is not a theorist of the ‘subject’ as substrate, as substance, or as the condition or source of agency. His demystification of the subject, as ontological as it is, is also as radical as that of the anti-subject philosophers.”

13. Chapter 3 of the *TTP*, quoted above in my chapter 3: “The true happiness and blessedness of each person consists only in the enjoyment of the good, and not in a self-esteem founded on the fact that he alone enjoys the good, all others being excluded from it. For whoever views himself as more blessed because things are well with him, but not with others, does not know true happiness and blessedness. The joy he derives from that comparison comes from envy and a bad heart—if it isn’t mere childishness” (C 2:111, G 3:44).

14. J. Thomas Cook, “Self-Knowledge as Self-Preservation?” in Marjorie Grene and Debra Nails, eds., *Spinoza and the Sciences* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1986), 206: “When Spinoza recommends that one know oneself as the essence which one is, is he not really recommending that one become something different from that which one was? The question has no simple answers, for Spinoza has no simple account of the self. Indeed, he has no account of the self *per se* at all.”

15. In the *TIE* (C 1:13, G 2:12) Spinoza gives self-knowledge as an example of what is the fourth and in the *Ethics* the third kind of knowledge. Yakira, *Spinoza and the*

Case for Philosophy, 215: The common notions “are the effective foundations of rational knowledge, which is ultimately a task of rendering explicit the underlying common pre-suppositions of actual experience. But also ‘involved’ in what appears on the surface, and in a more fundamental way, is the immediately and strictly first-person perception of oneself. This is what Spinoza means by saying that the soul is the idea of the body. This involvement of a particular body’s nature in actual experience is the foundation for, or source of, rationality and adequacy that do not belong to science *simpliciter* but to *scientia intuitiva*. Only thus can we make sense of phrases such as ‘ideas insofar as they are in God,’ or bold and apparently paradoxical statements such as ‘The human mind has an adequate knowledge of God’s eternal and infinite essence’ (EIIp47).”

16. Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 130.

17. Yakira, *Spinoza and the Case for Philosophy*, 235.

18. See Laurent Bove, “Hilaritas and *Acquiescentia in se ipso*,” in Yirmiyahu Yovel and Gideon Segal, eds., *Spinoza on Reason and the “Free Man”* (New York: Little Room Press, 2004), 209–26; and Donald Rutherford, “Salvation as a State of Mind: The Place of *Acquiescentia* in Spinoza’s Ethics,” *British Journal of the History of Philosophy* 7 (1999): 447–73, esp. 456: “Since self-esteem is the necessary correlate of understanding, and understanding is sought for its own sake and not for the sake of anything else, self-esteem, too, must be a joy that is sufficient in itself and not pursued as a means to anything else.”

19. Yakira, *Spinoza and the Case for Philosophy*, 99–100: “One can acquire understanding of the metaphysically non-accidental nature of being as such and, more significantly, . . . in one privileged case — self-knowledge — this understanding can become concrete and, indeed, redemptory.”

20. Martial Gueroult says that 5p1 and 5p6s “establish that the order of things conforms to that of ideas (no less than that of ideas to that of things), [and so] man can connect things according to the order of ideas, and so reverse the imaginative point of view to raise [the mind] to that of God or have all its ideas be adequate” (*Spinoza* [Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968 and 1974], 2:78n56).

21. Alexandre Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), 523. See too 528–29: “Insofar as our ideas are adequate, we cannot even think about evil. Evil is by definition what creates obstacles to our desire to understand, but how can we comprehend what is opposed to the progress of our knowledge? All obstacles, to the exact degree to which they are clearly conceived, cease being an obstacle and become a means: . . . If we have a clear and distinct idea of it, the idea of evil disappears from us in an instant.” Lilli Alanen, “Spinoza on the Human Mind,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 25 (2011): 12n13: “The adequate idea replaces the inadequate one, and with it transforms the earlier passive affect into an active one. But this leaves us with a mystery concerning the identity of the idea of the original affect, which seemed to be contingent on its confusion as a state of mind. Rather than being transformed into activity, the passive affect has ceased to be.” Tad Schmaltz, “Spinoza’s Mediate Infinite Mode,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 35 (1997): 228–29: “Spinoza himself stressed in Part II of the *Ethics* that ideas of ideas have the same properties as their objects, rather

than the other way around. But in his discussion of Proposition 3 from Part V, he took the ideas of ideas doctrine to entail that in at least some cases ideas have the properties of second-order ideas of them. The Proposition itself states that a passion (i.e. a confused idea of a passively received bodily affect) ceases to be a passion when we form a clear and distinct idea of it. In the Demonstration he argued that that Proposition follows from the fact that the clear and distinct idea of the passion is merely ‘distinguished by reason’ from the passion itself. The conclusion here that the passion becomes as clear and distinct as its idea may seem puzzling, given that Spinoza had appealed to the ideas of ideas doctrine earlier in the *Ethics* in support of the conclusion that ideas of confused ideas are themselves confused. But though the argument in 5p3 is far from unproblematic, I think that its conclusion is understandable, given that Spinoza was firmly committed to the tenet that ideas are clear and distinct to the extent that they derive from an activity of the mind.” (Footnotes omitted.)

22. See too 4p7od: “A free man strives to join other men to him in friendship.” And 4p71d: “Only free men are very useful to one another, are joined to one another by the greatest necessity of friendship.”

23. Pierre-François Moreau, “Affects et politique: une difficulté du spinozisme,” in Fabienne Brugère and Pierre-François Moreau, eds., *Spinoza et les affects* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), 61: “4p35s, to our surprise, gives as a fact the sociability of all men (and not only of rational men). This sociability is envisaged here no longer under the aspect of desires and individual tendencies, but under their needs and their benefits. In other words, one has replaced the logic of passions with a logic of interests.”

24. Eric Schliesser, “Spinoza’s Conatus as an Essence-Preserving, Attribute-Neutral Immanent Cause: Toward a New Interpretation of Attributes and Modes,” in Keith Allen and Tom Stoneham, eds., *Causation and Modern Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 86n70: “For all of Spinoza’s understanding of and participation in contemporary natural philosophy, Spinoza’s project is not aimed at knowledge of nature in the sense (however different) of Descartes and Bacon. (Spinozistic knowledge is really a form of self-knowledge, even though the eternal self is then dissolved.)” The parallel claim about Socrates is of course controversial. The autobiography in the *Phaedo* is one piece of evidence, but this is not the place to develop the thesis further.

25. My conclusion here, that nothing is as useful to people as other people is confined to their utility to each person’s mind and not body, is distinct from the conclusion I drew in the last chapter that through sociability, people are useful to each other’s bodies as well as minds.

26. Eugene Marshall, *The Spiritual Automaton: Spinoza’s Science of the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 49–50.

27. See Michael Rosenthal, “Two Collective Action Problems in Spinoza’s Social Contract Theory,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 15 (1998): 389–409.

28. Alexandre Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), 571: “We cannot become truly eternal: without fully knowing it, we are already always eternal. . . . In discovering that we are eternal, we are engaged in a new form of existence that procures for us a new form of happiness.”

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