RUNNING HEAD: Spinoza's Alternative to the Mutual Incomprehension

Partem Totius Naturae Esse: Spinoza's Alternative to the Mutual Incomprehension of Physicalism and Mentalism in Psychology[1]

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Abstract

Spinoza's account of human agency is presented as a solution to the fundamental dichotomy between physicalism and mentalism in psychology. It is argued that this dichotomy originates in the 17th century with the Cartesian and Hobbesian responses to the collapse of the Scholastic synthesis. Spinoza's view of nature as equally Mind and Body, and his understanding of efficient causality as grounded in a self-caused natural totality are described. Spinozism's relative lack of influence on contemporary scientific culture is attributed to his work having been marginalized during the 1st century after his death by political and religious authorities. Contemporary responses to the mentalist/physicalist dichotomy are discussed, as are trends in contemporary psychology that were foreshadowed by Spinoza's observations.

The unique problematic of the human sciences lies in the apparent contradiction between the ideal, common to all sciences, of providing rigorous accounts of the causes of the phenomena it studies and the *prima facie* evidence that human beings are agents, and thus, not wholly explicable in terms of external causality. This difficulty seems so intractable that many researchers feel forced either to limit their methods of inquiry to those of the physical sciences, thereby excluding agency from the human sciences (B. F. Skinner, 1953; Watson, 1924), or to eschew those scientific methods and limit themselves to noncausal "interpretations" of human behavior and experience (Dilthey 1883/1989; Gergen, 1997). At the root of both responses is the assumption that the apparent contradiction between the causal and phenomenological accounts is a natural fact about the structure of human knowledge. It is this assumption that I wish to call into question in this paper by showing that the contradiction is a human artifact and thus has a history. Like many problems in contemporary intellectual life, this one can be traced to the early modern attempt to find an alternative to the medieval Scholastic synthesis that was collapsing under the combined weight of new scientific discoveries and the breakup of the medieval Church, of which Scholasticism had been an integral part. The paradigm shift in science, or, more precisely, natural philosophy, is usually considered to have begun with Copernicus (1473–1543), though the full extent of the threat his system posed to Scholasticism only became apparent with the work of Galileo (1564 –1642). It was primarily in the 17th century that thinkers like Descartes (1596 –1650), Hobbes (1588– 1679), and, a generation later, Spinoza (1632– 1677) began to propose systematic alternatives to Scholastic natural philosophy. Of the three,

Descartes and Hobbes have had far more influence on subsequent philosophy and science than Spinoza has, and their systems are the ones that have given rise to the two dominant contemporary approaches to agency in the human sciences. It is to Descartes and his famous *Cogito* (I think therefore I am) that the ancestry of the mentalist/hermeneutic approach can be traced: a double irony, since hermeneutists are far from eager to assert a Cartesian connection, and Descartes, so eager for certainty, would have abhorred the implicit relativism of social construction. His main interests, in fact, were physics and mathematics. The works for which he is known today, the *Discourse on Method* (Descartes, 1637/1985) and *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Descartes, 1641/1985) were, as has been cogently argued by Stephen Gaukroger (1995), less descriptions of how he actually worked than post hoc justifications for his findings. Their purpose was to provide his mechanistic natural philosophy with an epistemological basis that would be logically impervious to the attacks of skeptics (cf., Curley, 1978) and sufficiently orthodox to protect it against the threat of being condemned, like Galileo's, by the Roman Inquisition. Cartesian dualism was intended to clearly differentiate mind from matter so that Descartes, and other natural philosophers, could pursue mechanically informed studies of the material world free from theological interference. The problem, however, is that the *Cogito* makes mind the only thing of which we can be sure, creating a de facto mentalism that makes it impossible, without appeal to supernatural powers, to get from that mind (or, in contemporary versions, language) to the body and to its material environment. His project was revolutionary, but Descartes, like all revolutionaries (including Copernicus who never questioned the Aristotelian assumption of circular

planetary orbits), was not able to free himself completely from the system he sought to overturn; and, in consequence, he inadvertently appropriated, and thus perpetuated, traditional Christianity's dualism and its glorification of spirit over matter.

Hobbes was more focused on politics than on physics; but he, no less than Descartes, saw mechanism as a natural philosophy capable both of replacing the sterile debates of contemporary Scholastics and as an alternative to the purely rhetorical sophistries of the Humanist tradition (Q. A. Skinner, 2002). Unlike his French contemporary, however, Hobbes was not concerned with accommodating his philosophy to any religious orthodoxy. He could and did display an encyclopedic knowledge of scripture, but, having witnessed the political chaos resulting from the conflicts of religious factions during the English Civil War, he was intent on creating a purely secular political philosophy that did not allow for appeals to any supernatural authority that might eclipse the absolute power of the sovereign.

His strategy was to adopt a physicalist natural philosophy, which he adapted from the Christianized Epicureanism of Pierre Gassendi (1592– 1655). Gassendi championed an atomist physics, which proved a useful basis from which Hobbes could develop his social contract view of the state and society. Unfortunately, it also encouraged a view of human beings as radically discrete beings motivated only by a form of self-interest so mutually destructive as to force people to form political states out of fear of their fellows. Thus, in his zeal to protect his polity from the dissentions of religious sectaries, he adopted a natural philosophy that was not able to reconcile selfish and social aspects of human

nature without replicating, in secular form, the Christian doctrine of original sin and redemption, with the sovereign state performing the salutary functions that religion assigns to the Messiah.

The Problem of Agency

Agency had not been an issue for Aristotelian or Medieval Scholastic natural philosophy because Aristotle had had a relatively complex concept of causality that included the notion of internal or final causes and allowed for teleological explanations of natural phenomena. However, by Galileo's time, the discussion of final causes had degenerated into a purely verbal exercise and had become a hindrance to the scientific investigation of the physical world. The new mechanistic natural philosophies that sought to replace Scholasticism were grounded wholly in efficient or external causality (Curley, 1978; Gaukroger, 1995). However, where Aristotle, who based his physics on biology, seemed unable to give an adequate account of the physical world, the new mechanists had difficulty explaining human agency in terms of their physics. Cartesian substance dualism attempted to resolve the issue by locating agency in a discrete mental substance, while accounting for the physical world in terms of efficient causation alone (*Meditations*, 4)[3]. Hobbes, who rejected dualism, produced an account of our phenomenological sense of agency by defining *desire* as the imperceptible physical beginnings of a possible action and *will* as the last desire in a sequence leading up to a realized action (*Leviathan, 6*). This solution was only partially

[3] References to passages from works by Aquinas, Descartes, and Hobbes rely on proximity to the author's name and a unique key word from the title, followed by a chapter and/or section number.

satisfactory, but, as will be seen below, it was to provide Spinoza with the germ of his more nuanced doctrine of *conatus* (a term that he seems to have adopted directly from Hobbes).

Spinoza, a generation younger than Descartes and Hobbes, was able to assess and to profit from both the insights and errors of his two great predecessors. His solution was to treat Mind and Body as aspects of a single substance (1p14)[4], thus avoiding both Cartesian mentalism and Hobbesian physicalism. Spinoza's political and religious doctrines, however, were considerably more radical than were those of either Descartes or Hobbes; and, in the century following his death, Spinoza's work was vigorously suppressed by the civil and clerical authorities. As a result, his philosophy, although it did have an impact on Hume (Baier, 1993; Jacob, 2006) and on Hegel (Balibar, 1998; Shmueli, 1970; Yovel, 1989), has had considerably less influence on contemporary philosophy of science than the work of his predecessors (DeCuzzani, 1991; Israel, 2001).

Contemporary versions of both the physicalist and the mentalist positions are, of course, far more sophisticated than the original Cartesian and Hobbesian formulations. In place of natural philosophy, we now have a reasonably sharp

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[4] All references to Spinoza are to the *Ethics*, which consistsof five Parts divided, as in a geometry text, into amultitude of different kinds of subsections. These include Definitions (d), Axioms (a), Postulates (Pos.), Lemmas (l), and Propositions (p), which have Corollaries (c), Scholia (s), and Demonstrations (Dem). In addition, there are introductions and appendices to some of the Parts. Citations in this paper will first list the Part number, followed by a letter designating what type of subpart is cited, followed by its number. Thus, *2p1* refers to the first proposition in Part II. Where more than one section is referenced, a comma should be read as "and." Thus, *2p1, 2* refers to Propositions One and Two in Part II. Corollaries and Scholia are associated with propositions as in *1p32c1* (Part II, Proposition 32 Corollary 1) or *2p40s1* (for a Scholium). References to the subdivisions of Introductions and Appendices will be transparent on their face. Direct quotations are from Curley's translation (1985), except for the final quotation from *4p35c1*, which, with its gender neutral renderings of Spinoza's *homini* and *homo*, is my own.

division between science and philosophy, with philosophy of science bridging the gap (Dear, 2006). Furthermore, since Hume, our notion of causality has become weaker, and many in the physicalist camp value the products of science instrumentally for their ability to predict results rather than as descriptions of actual causal relations (Danziger, 1997). In addition, for the inheritors of the mentalist model, the contemporary problem is less about the mind's interaction with matter than of language's capacity to refer to any nonlinguistic entities (Gergen, 1997). Attempts at compromise between the mentalist and physicalist— or Realist and Idealist— positions, such as the "middle ground" theories discussed by Barbara Held (2008), have only limited success because they are essentially compromises rather than efforts to resolve the contradictions inherent in the very dichotomy of physicalism and mentalism.

In the sections that follow, I will argue that Spinoza's approach to the difficulties and opportunities posed by the collapse of Medieval Scholasticism avoids the very contradictions that form the historical roots of this dichotomy. His philosophy may seem inaccessible to 21st century sensibilities, but this is largely because the conventional concepts through which we try to interpret him are, in fact, the unanalyzed products of traditions originating in the very Mentalist, Physicalist, and Scholastic approaches he sought to correct. Like anyone else, Spinoza becomes more accessible with familiarity, and the value of acquiring that familiarity is evidenced in the remarkable extent to which his insights and observations anticipated the findings of contemporary neuroscience (Ravven, 2003) and those of a variety of psychologists and philosophers of

science (discussed below). To understand Spinoza, I would argue, is to understand, focus, and enrich a paradigm shift that has already begun.

Spinoza's *Ethics*

Spinoza's theory of agency is an integral part of his overall philosophy and cannot be understood without a grasp of his ontology, epistemology, and psychology—all of which are radically different from conventional Idealist (Cartesian) and Realist (Hobbesian) worldviews. The key feature of this philosophy is Spinoza's sense that particular things are only intelligible as parts of a greater whole. He holds that all activity— behavior, growth and decay, motion and rest, thought and feeling—is determined by external or efficient causes that situate the apparent agent within a network of causes that constitutes the entirety of nature (1p28, dem). The only possibility of personal agency, then, rests on the individual's participation in the self-determining whole and in her capacity to form and act upon adequate—which is to say,true—ideas of the whole and her place in it (5p3c).

Ontology

Spinoza calls Part 1 of the *Ethics*, "On God," a title that has led to some confusion since he rejects absolutely the notion of a transcendent creator (1p6, 14, 18). His focus in this part of the book is on ultimate causality, particularly with respect to his opposition—shared with Hobbes and Descartes—to teleology. He argues that natural things and events can only be explained in terms of external causes, themselves natural things or events (1a3, p28). "All final causes,"

he tells us, "are nothing but human fictions" (1apdx2); they are projections of the human experience of desire, misunderstood when humans do not realize that the desires that seem to motivate us have external causes of their own (1appdx1). The external causes of one thing, however, are themselves the products of multiple chains of other causes (1p28dem) stretching out indefinitely and, as noted above, determining each particular thing within a web of causes that ultimately extends to encompass the totality of nature. The totality of nature, however, includes all there is and can have no external cause; it, and it alone, therefore, is undetermined. Thus, nature is, in Spinoza's terms, self-caused—*causa sui* (1di, 6, p16c2, p17), and it is this that he calls God.

This deification of nature based on its self causation, however, is something that needs to be understood in historical context. The term, *causa sui*, here applied to nature, is one that would be familiar to his readers as a Scholastic definition of God (e.g., Aquinas, 1270; *Summa*, I, q.2, a.3). The Christian Scholastics, of course, saw God as nature's creator, but Spinoza, though he rejects the idea of a transcendent creator, realizes that the parallel between his definition of *totus naturae* and the Scholastic formulation suits his rhetorical purposes. It allows him to avoid formal atheism by calling nature divine without attributing to it the anthropocentric Judeo-Christian notion of providence (1p18, 25c); and it makes his philosophy more comprehensible to Scholastically trained readers by emphasizing the fundamental Aristotelian notion that ultimate reality is *causa sui*. This identification of the totality of nature with God, *Deus sive natura*, has led many, including both Albert Einstein (1954) and the German Romantics—who redirected attention to Spinoza in the latter part of the 18th century (De-

Cuzzani, 1991; Goetschel, 2004)—to see him as a mystic. Such interpretations, however, seem not to take into consideration the scholastic background against which Spinoza wrote, nor his rejection of any kind of transcendence, nor the fact that, for him, the individual's communication with the totality is guided by reason (4p24, 28).

Spinoza's rejection of transcendence, clearly the most radical of his departures from the assumptions of his contemporaries, is the move that most anticipated subsequent developments in the philosophy of science and the only one of his positions that has become conventional. In contrast, his monist assertion that thought and extension are attributes of the single, and unique, substance (1p10s, 14c1, 2) seems almost incomprehensible to contemporary readers accustomed to the sharp alternatives of Descartes's substance dualism and Hobbes's reductive physicalism.

The Spinozan position hinges on the meaning of his term "attribute," which is especially difficult to grasp. Spinoza, himself, appears to have trouble putting his conception of attributes into a single statement and seems to have come at it in several different ways. His most basic definition of the term is in 1d4: "By attribute I mean what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence." This formulation differentiates "attribute" from the scholastic notion of "accidents," which are conceived of as quite distinct from the substance in which they adhere; in addition, it establishes a constitutive role for the perceiving intellect in the existence of attributes. The nature of that role is clarified, somewhat, in a subsequent assertion that one attribute can be conceived of without reference to any other (1p10s). Thus, it is possible to have a conception

of thought without thinking of extension, and vice versa, but, though distinct in the mind, each attribute refers to the same actual thing. The notion seems to be that, though we might say different things, depending on whether we are speaking of Mind or Body, the thing about which we speak in both cases is the same. Though seemingly paradoxical, this interpretation is consistent with Spinoza's assertion, in Part 3, that Mind and Body do not interact causally (3p2), a position intended to stress Spinoza's distance from the mind/body interaction problem inherent in Cartesian substance dualism. No interaction would be necessary, or even possible, if Mind and Body were essentially the same thing.

In trying to make sense of Spinoza's notion of Mind, it is important to note that, in the early parts of the *Ethics*, he speaks metaphysically about Mind as an aspect of nature as a whole, rather than, as in the later parts of the book, metapsychologically, about human minds and human nature. At the very beginning of Part 2, "On Mind," he says that thought and extensions are attributes of God/nature: "God is a thinking thing" (2p1), "God is an extended thing" (2p2). These assertions, particularly the former, seem to involve a contradiction. The idea that God thinks suggests personification, which would be inconsistent with Spinoza's rejection of the Mosaic creator and his use of the term God to refer to the *sui generis* totality of nature. It is difficult, however, to imagine what else he could mean by saying that nature, itself, thinks.

One clue to how his notion of Mind might be applied to *totus naturae* can be found in propositions where Spinoza says that Mind is an idea, the idea of the Body (2p11, 12, 13, c); his dictum that "the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (2p7) is another. Edwin Curley

recasts the argument of 2p7 in the language of mid-20th century analytic philosophy in *Spinoza's Metaphysics: An Essay in Interpretation* (Curley, 1969). Curley, arguably the most authoritative English translator of the *Ethics* (Spinoza, 1677/ 1985), sees Spinoza's "Ideas" as comparable to propositions or facts and Mind itself as something like information. Thus, for anything seen through the aspect of Body or Extension—a stone wall bordering a specific New England field at some specific point in time—there is also, by virtue of the attribute of Mind or Thought, the *fact* of this wall existing at this place and time. For Spinoza, this fact is every bit as much a part of Nature as the physical wall. Furthermore, because the universe exists as a network of interdependent causes or "determinate correlations" (Goldenbaum, 2004), that network, too, must make sense: and the sense it makes is what Spinoza calls Reason or Mind, with a capital "M."

Jonathan Bennett (1984), an excellent commentator on the logical inconsistencies in Spinoza's thought, gives a different, though complimentary, interpretation of 2p7. He observes that Spinoza's philosophical (as opposed to his psychological) discussion of mind is somewhat cursory. He suggests that Spinoza believes that Mind has to be an attribute of nature for human minds to be natural phenomena, but, knowing little more than this, assumes that the unknown natural laws that explain Mind are the same as the known laws that explain Matter. For Bennett, Spinoza's belief that the order of ideas is the same as the order of things is the result of his confusing causal with explanatory rationalism, which leads him to think that logical necessity is the same thing as causation. The identification of logic with causation was, in fact, not uncommon among 17th-century natural philosophers. Hobbes, for example, speaks of nature's rational

order (*Leviathan*, Intro.), and Descartes, in his ontological argument, makes the same assumption when he cites the clarity and distinctness of his idea of God as proof of God's existence (*Meditations* 3.51). At the extreme, which seems to be Spinoza's position, this identity would imply that reason is the very structure of reality—the Mind of God.

Bennett's idea, that Spinoza's understanding of human minds requires the existence of Mind as an aspect of nature itself, is consistent with the latter's account of the relationship of parts to the whole, according to which particular things are "modes" of the totality (1d5). The English word *mode* is what most translators of Spinoza use for his Latin *modus*, a word that, in more literary texts is usually given as "way" or "manner." Particular things, then, are specific ways in which the totality exists. This formulation complements the conception of particular things as wholly determined by a web of interdependent efficient causes, conveying the sense that particular things are not only determined by the totality but also dependent on it for their very existence. This relationship between the determined parts and the *sui generis* whole is, as will be shown below, at the heart of Spinoza's understanding of human agency.

According to Spinoza's metapsychological theory, particular minds are, like the metaphysical Mind of God/nature, composed of ideas (2p15): primarily, the idea of the particular body in question (2p11), and secondarily, ideas of the external bodies with which it comes in contact (2p17). This formulation has, for Spinoza, the advantage of undercutting the Cartesian mental subject: both by locating particular minds as parts of the sense-that-the-universe-ismaking- of-itself (2p9), and, in his notion of such minds as the ideas of particular bodies,

making it impossible to imagine mind without the body of which it is the idea. It is a somewhat awkward formula for at least two reasons. First, Spinoza's conception of ideas as modes or ways in which the mind acts makes the distinction between ideas and the minds that think them a question of perspective. (Spinoza alludes to this problem by noting, in 2p17s, the difference between his use of the word and the conventional notion of an image in the mind.) What is more troublesome, however, is this definition's suggestion of a mental aspect to all bodies, even simple physical particles. This difficulty is not one that Spinoza addresses directly, but the mental aspect of, say, grains of sand is better thought of as the ideas they embody—their conformity with, and participation in, the laws of nature that govern their behavior rather than as anything analogous to human or even animal mentation. What Spinoza does explain, however, is that the human mind is composed of many ideas (2p15), just as human bodies are made up of smaller units, themselves bodies, moving in unison (2d7). In addition, he tells us, as the variety of things a mind can perceive increases, "the more its body can be disposed in a great many ways" (2p14), and, that in the case of humans, the mind perceives the ideas that compose it (2p22, 23).

Epistemology

The idea-of-the-body definition of mind has profound epistemological consequences for Spinoza, leading him to a quite restricted notion of the mind's ability to depend on empirical knowledge. Spinoza argues that "whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human Mind, must be

perceived by the human Mind" (2p12); that the mind is aware of external bodies only through their interaction with the body of which it is the idea (2p16); and, in the corollaries to 2p16, that a mind's knowledge of the external world is more knowledge of the condition of its particular body than of the external bodies with which it interacts. Further along in Part 2, Spinoza divides knowledge into three kinds: empirical, knowledge from reasoning, and knowledge from direct intellectual intuition (2p40s2). Only the last two can tell us about the totality of nature itself, and, in the form of universal natural laws, give us knowledge that is true at all times and places and, thus, what Spinoza considers "adequate" (2p38). Empirical knowledge, which is necessarily perspectival knowledge of particular things, can never be adequate because adequacy requires an understanding, not only of the object in question's essence, but the whole of the web of its proximate causes. A thing's essence—in Curley's reading, the scientific laws governing its behavior (Curley, 1969; see also Garrett, 2002)—is, in principle, knowable; the totality of its proximate causes is not.

In addition to the adequacy of knowledge itself, Spinoza also addresses the question of the cognitive process whereby that knowledge is acquired. Like Descartes and Hobbes, he understands the physiology of perception as a process whereby the body's sense organs are directly affected by contact with external objects, and the physical effects of those contacts are transmitted, sorted, and combined mechanically through a complex system of nerves (2pos5; *Passions of the soul*, Descartes, 1985, 1.12–15; *Leviathan*, Hobbes, 1997, 1). Hobbes, holding that only bodies exist, takes the question no further. Descartes, however, proceeds to separate cognition into a purely physical perceptual process, and an

act of judgment, whereby the will, an aspect of his mental substance, affirms or negates the products of the Body's perceptions (*Principles of philosophy*, Descartes, 1985, 1.32–35). Spinoza, as I have noted above, says nothing directly about Hobbes anywhere in the *Ethics* (Spinoza, 1985), but he explicitly rejects the Cartesian position, asserting that what Descartes takes to be a voluntary act of judgment is, in fact, an inseparable part of the cognitive act itself. There is, he says, no distinction between forming and assenting to a thought (2p49, 5Preface), because the will is not separate from the mind (2p49c), which, itself, is only an attribute of the same "mode" as the body. It is, of course, possible to change one's mind in the sense of forming an idea that contradicts an earlier one. Such changes, however, are not acts of the will; they reflect variations in the conditions prevailing at the time each of the opposing thoughts are formed. Primarily, those variations would be differences in the kind of knowledge represented by each of the contending ideas (2p33, 35,41, 42) or would reflect changes in the extent to which the thinker was in the grip of, or free from, distorting passions with their attendant inadequate ideas (3p11s).

Psychology

The passions are the subject of Part 3, "On the Origin and Nature of the Affects." The theory of affects is crucial to Spinoza's account of agency because affects are phenomena that encompass both mind and body. Mind cannot cause the Body to act, nor Body cause the Mind to think (3p2), so human activity, both mental and physical, can only be motivated by the unitary mental/physical force of affective experience.

Spinoza's accounts of cognition and causality are both essential to his affect theory. His first move, at the beginning of Part 3, is to merge the cognitive notion of adequacy, introduced in Part 2, with his ideas about causality from Part 1, into a definition of "adequate cause," "[one] whose effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived through it" (3d1). This definition is then used, as part of his definition of affects, to distinguish passions from affects that are active. Affects themselves are defined as "affections of the Body by which the Body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections" (3d3). Here, the archaic term "affection" is best read as meaning change or perturbation (Lewis, 1890/1918 p. 19). Thus, an affect is a change in the body's ability to act combined with the idea of that change. Broadly, those caused by a person's nature alone are active; those produced by external causes are passions (3d2).

This formulation is somewhat problematic because it suggests that the mind's role in the affective experience is to register the body's changes, which would seem to give priority to the body. This implication, however, is offset in the next passage where Spinoza asserts that the mind, itself, is capable of action—though only when and if it has adequate ideas (3p1). Spinoza makes no attempt to reconcile these two, and throughout most of Part 3, he focuses primarily on the mental aspects of affects, which, consistent consistent with 1p10s, can be conceived of independently, despite being attributes of the same substance as the physical dimension (1p10dem).

The notion of activity, both "the body's power of action" and the activity of minds conceiving adequate ideas, is central to Spinoza's theory of affects and to

his understanding of agency. The metaphysical implications of action, which for Spinoza are profound, are given in 3p6-7 where he first says that "each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being," and then he explains that "the striving (*conatus*) by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing." This conception, which imputes an effort to remain in existence to every particular thing in the universe, seems, on first reading, anthropomorphic or, at the very least, vitalist: a misreading that contributes to the erroneous conception of Spinoza as a pantheist and mystic. It would not have been interpreted that way by 17th-century readers. They would have recognized the Latin phrase Curley translates, "as far as it can by its own power" (*quantum in se est*), as the formula used by natural philosophers, including Descartes and Newton, to refer to the phenomenon of momentum: the one form of motion attributable not to external (efficient) causes, but to the moving body itself (Cohen, 1964). In a biological entity, this essential motion can also take the form of internal dynamic equilibrium (Ravven, 1989). The definition of affects in terms of such a fundamental phenomenon is, essentially, another example of the strategy, noted above in connection with his attributingMindto nature as awhole,of providing a strictly natural context for human psychological phenomena. Its drawback is not vitalism or mysticism, but rather, a tendency toward reductive mechanism, though even this is offset by the homeostatic implications of Spinoza's holism, according to which a mode's inertial striving to persevere in being is a manifestation of the self-causation of the whole (3p6dem).

Human affects, then, are changes in the organism's physical and mental

power of action. Much of Part 3 is a detailed taxonomy: discussing 47 separate affects, not all of which would be considered affects by modern psychologists (Frijda, 1999). Of these, only three basic ones— desire, joy, and sadness—are crucial to his theory of agency. Desire, it should be noted, is one of the psychological manifestations of the en-deavor-to-persevere-in-being defined in 3p6, and thus, is a particularly important term. The most basic psychological form of this endeavor, or conatus, is *appetite*, of which *desire* is the conscious form and *will* is the term to be used when speaking of it only in relation to the mind (3p9s), and is, thus, the very essence of human nature. *Joy*, in turn, is defined as an affection or alteration that increases the mind/body's ability to act and *sorrow* as one that decreases that ability. Because the ability to act is the essence of the totality of nature, *joy* and *sorrow* are also defined as the affects by which the mind passes to greater or lesser perfection (3p11s). The rest of the affects in his taxonomy are defined as combinations of one of these three with various thoughts. *Love* and *hate*, for example, combine *joy* or *sorrow* with the idea of their external causes (3p13s); *hope* and *fear* are *joy* and *sorrow* combined with ideas about the future (3p18s2).

In the cases that Spinoza treats throughout most of Part 3, the causes of such changes in the ability to act are external to the person experiencing the emotion: particular things, or events that, qua particular thing (which is to say a thing not understood by the individual's mind as part of the totality and thus not integrated into that person's conatus), cannot be conceived of adequately. Such emotions are, in Spinoza's terms, passions, and a person whose behavior is motivated by such affective states is said to be in the grip of passion. Unless we

can integrate and internalize such extrinsic sources of motivation, we cannot be conceived of as the adequate cause of any effects resulting from our behavior and are thus not agents. Examples of how such passive emotions depend on external causes are not hard to find. Obviously, the distress—the decrease in physical and mental energy—we experience at the loss of a promotion, romantic attachment, or physical health is externally caused. Therefore, too, the pleasure we take at receiving the raise, or falling in love, depends on the actions of the employer who gives the raise and the lover who "feels that way, too." Even the enjoyment of good health, with its attendant energy for physical and mental activity, is dependent on the absence of pathogens unfamiliar to our immune systems and subject to loss or exposure to more effective disease agents. It is, in fact, quite difficult to think of any affective state that is not dependent on external causes; and his reference in 3p1 to the mind's capacity for independent action notwithstanding, throughout most of Part 3 Spinoza writes as if affects and passions were simply two terms for the same thing. "By *Joy*, therefore," he says, "I shall understand in what follows that *passion by which the Mind passes to a greater perfection*" (3p11s, emphasis in original). It is not until the second to last proposition in this part (3p58) that he says, "Apart from the Joy and Desire that are passions, there are other affects of Joy and Desire that are related to us in so far as we act."

Agency

The way that human beings can internalize and integrate such emotions, and thus the possibility of affects that are not passions—that is to say of human

agency and ethical behavior— is the subject of the last two sections of the *Ethics:* Part 4, "On Human Bondage, or the Power of the Affects," and Part 5, "On the Power of the Intellect, or on Human Freedom." A person can be an agent, an adequate cause of an affect, only if that affect can be explained solely in terms of that individual's nature, which is to say the essential striving to persevere in being, or *conatus*, which in humans takes the form of appetite or desire (3p9s). However, desire for what? The taxonomy of affects in Part 3 makes it clear that most of what people desire is external to them; so desires for food, love, respect, promotion, and the like, are all, at least *prima facie*, passions. The problem for Part 4, then, is to discover a desirable good that is not external, and thus, does not leave the satisfaction of a desire for it to the mercy of chance. Only one fits this criterion, and that is the desire for understanding, for knowledge of ourselves, and of the world we inhabit (4p26), which, for Spinoza, means knowledge of God/ nature.

It is not that Spinoza thinks such knowledge is, itself, an adequate defense against passion (4p14). Mind, after all, cannot cause the body to act (3p2). Reason can incorporate our understanding of particular things into our understanding of the totality of nature, but it is the desire for such reasoned knowledge, the "intellectual love of God" (5p32c), that allows us to turn passions into actions (5p3). This desire is, itself, an affect that, strengthened by practice, can become strong enough to break the grip of passion (4p7, 5p25, 26).

The knowledge of *Deus sive natura*, Spinoza says, is the "Mind's greatest good" (4p28), and the quest for it is, by its very nature, the exercise of reason, the essential activity both of the Mind (2p1) and of individual minds (3p1). It is

comparable to the essential inertial movement of bodies, for it is in the comprehension of adequate ideas, the products of reason, and direct intellectual intuition that the mind is active rather than determined by external forces (3d1, 4p23,59). Adequate ideas entail understanding particular things in the context of universals: laws of nature, true at all times and in all places (1p25c, 2p37, 5p14) and thus, as aspects of the very structure of the universe. The act of thinking an adequate idea is, thus, active participation in the self-causality of *totus naturae*. As a mode of the whole, every particular thing is both *causa sui*—in its essence—and determined by its particular proximate causes (1p28dem). In general, the activity of a particular thing as complex as a human being is influenced by a vast number of proximate causes, but reasoning about the totality of nature is uniquely free of such causation; when reasoning, we are determined only by our nature as modes or ways in which the self-caused totality exists.

Agency for Spinoza is not defined as the ability to do something other than what one has done. One of the ways his God/nature differs from any conventional Western notion of God is that Spinoza's "nature" is so mechanically determined that it cannot be other than what it is; its free causation is a simple freedom from external determinants (1p20c, 32c1, 33). Similarly, human freedom cannot involve making ourselves or the universe other than what we, and it, are. One aspect of what we are—of human nature—is the potential for being affected by other particular things that can cause increases and decreases in our ability to persevere in being. However, the effort to understand our potential for being changed is a free exercise of our essential desire for adequate ideas. We share in the perspective of the totality of nature, and, in so doing, we actively participate

in its freedom to be what it truly is—and what we truly are as well.

It is important to note that the *conatus* at the heart of Spinoza's *Ethics* is essentially a principle of self-interest (4p20) and is, at least superficially superficially, similar to that proposed by the Anglo- Saxon tradition, beginning with Hobbes and extending through Adam Smith to the present. It is likely, in fact, that Hobbs's formulation provided Spinoza with his starting point for the development of his theory. However, Spinoza's model differs from Hobbes's atomistic physicalism in which self-interest drives people into a social contract out of fear of the war of "each against all" (*Leviathan,* 13) and is, thus, morally neutral. In contrast, Spinoza, with his idea that humans, like all particular things, are modes of the totality of nature, sees self-interest as less discrete. The mind's greatest good, knowledge of God/nature, is the same for everyone (4p26, 35). The particular things most useful to us in our endeavor to perfect our minds—to increase our powers to persevere in being—are other people who are also trying to live according to the dictates of reason (4p35c1, 2). Thus, unlike Hobbes whose social contract involves the surrender of natural rights and freedoms (*Leviathan,* 17), Spinoza holds that "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). Thus, for Spinoza, the ethical life is a matter of striving for rationality and agency within the totality of nature and in and with the community of other rational agents.

Conclusion

Spinoza's monistic nonreductive naturalism is, arguably, the most

intellectually successful of the bids to replace Scholastic natural philosophy in the 17th century. Moreover, his view of human nature, including human agency, as natural, embodied, and social, is more accurate and more useful to psychologists than either the Cartesian or the Hobbesian accounts. Spinoza's views, however, were too radical for the authorities of his time and were suppressed for a century, leaving the views of his two contemporaries to exercise a profound effect on the development of modern natural philosophy and, eventually, science. As a result, the intellectual paradigms available to early generations of psychologists required a choice between a reductive materialism that could not account for the agentic aspects of psychological phenomena, and a transcendental idealism that lacked rigor. At the extremes, these two tendencies have produced the physicalist eliminative "Neurophilosophy" of Patricia Churchland (1982), and the neo-idealist cultural reductionism of Kenneth Gergen (1997). As dissatisfaction with this state of affairs has grown, psychologists, neuroscientists and philosophers of psychology have tried, with varying degrees of success, to resolve a variety of problems caused by the dichotomy. Philosophers of psychology have sought to reconcile the two conflicting metapsychological traditions, whereas less philosophically oriented psychologists and neuroscientists have been developing methods that are more sophisticated and explanatory models to account for specific phenomena, often without reference to metapsychological traditions.

The theoreticians' efforts to reconcile the two approaches have, I think, been less successful than those of colleagues working on discrete research projects. Gunther Stent's (2005) Epistemic Dualism, for example, is an attempt to establish a middle way, by proposing to understand a Kantian vision of human

mind as the product of evolution. He argues that the "beastly and the divine" [157] in human nature can be understood in terms of the kind of complementarity proposed by Niles Bohr to account for the contradictions between the wave and particle models of light. However, although he observes that consciousness has survival value, he does not say what there is about the natural world that might cause it to produce such an adaptation. Furthermore, by basing his model on Kant, who ignored the part of Hume's wake up call that was influenced by Spinoza, Stent misses the opportunity for rooting ethical behavior in emotion. He also replicates the medieval conflict between the "beastly" and the "divine" and preserves the Scholastic tendency to see mind purely in terms of cognitive categories.

Martin, Sugarman, and Thompson's *Psychology and the question of agency* (Martin, Sugarman, & Thompson, 2003) is a more historically sophisticated attempt at mediation, basing itself on the Hobbesian compatabilism that served as Spinoza's starting point. Their model, however, rather than resolving the duality of natural as opposed to linguistic kinds, adds a third term, agentic kind. This strategy is the very opposite of Spinoza's insistence on seeing human nature as an integral part of nature as a whole. Spinoza's approach, however, assumes that physical causality is grounded in an uncaused totality. This is something that vulgar physicalism, of the sort that Martin and colleagues oppose, does not recognize. Were these materialists correct, psychology would certainly need something like Martin et al.'s third, agentic, kind. However, a Spinozan solution would obviate the need for such a move by unifying the physical, the linguistic, and the agentic in a more satisfactory notion

of nature.

Though work on metapsychological theory has been hampered by the basic conceptions of positivism and social construction, a considerable number of more narrowly focused research projects have, often without any reference to metapsychological questions, arrived at very Spinoza-like conclusions. One who is explicitly aware of the larger traditions and advantages of a Spinozist perspective is Antonio Damasio, who, in his *Looking for Spinoza: joy, sorrow, and the feeling brain* (Damasio, 2003), argues that, "the foundational images in the stream of mind are images of some kind of body event" (p. 179). A similar emphasis on the connection between emotion and bodily events is evident in the research and popular writings of Joseph Ledoux (2002). Another view of emotion, one that implicitly resonates with Spinoza's emphasis on an intrinsic desire for knowledge, is advanced by Jaak Panksepp (1998), who argues for an endogenous, open-ended "seeking system" as a basic aspect of the mind/brain. In addition, the recently discovered "mirror neurons" (Kohler, Keysers, Umilta`, Fogassi, Gallese, & Rizzolatti, 2002) provides a remarkable verification of Spinoza's conception of sympathy.

In psychology proper, Panksepp's Spinozalike theory was anticipated over half a century ago by the work of Edgar Chase Tolman (1958). More recently, Andrew Ortony and his colleagues (Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988), as well as Richard Lazarus (1991), were relatively early proponents of recognizing the reciprocal relationship between emotion and cognition; and Daniel Goleman's popular book (Goleman, 1995) has made the notion of emotional intelligence famous—without including Spinoza's name in his index. In clinical psychology,

Joseph Weiss (1993) proposed and attempted to validate a model of therapy based on the assumption that patients are always trying to get better, a notion that resonates with Spinoza's conception of *conatus* as striving for greater perfection. In addition, there is the work of Caroline Zahn-Waxler and Marion Radke- Yarrow (Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990) on the pro-social behavior of infants and very young children, which produced findings consistent with Spinoza's ethically significant assertion that recognizing the value of other people is a part of human nature. Even more influential in developmental psychology has been work based on the theories of Lev Vygotsky (cf. Wertsch, 1988), which, while they may not have been based on Spinoza's work, certainly resonate with it.

Writing on consciousness and motivation, Ralph Ellis (2005) focuses on the part/whole relationship with a very Spinoza-like emphasis on the self-organizing, or dynamic/homeostatic, qualities of organisms. He argues that determinism and agency can be reconciled "if the motivation to raise my hand can be framed as an endogenous, active process rather than a passive response to input" (p. 74). William Casebeer's (2003) work on natural ethics picks up, again implicitly, on several Spinozan themes: the impossibility of separating an individual's selfinterest from that of her fellows, the merged cognitive and emotional quality of human motivation, and the conviction that judgment is an integral aspect of cognition rather than a separate faculty. Casebeer's theory, like that of Stent (2005), is evolutionary and, while much conventional evolutionary psychology is atomist and gene centered, some in this subdiscipline are beginning to propose group selection theories. David Sloan Wilson (Wilson, 2002; Wilson & Kniffin, 1999), as well as Lynn O'Connor and her colleagues (O'Connor, Berry,

Weiss, Schweitzer, & Sevier, 2000) share Casebeer's rejection of evolutionary models that fail to reference human functions that are less proximal (and less psychological) than biological reproduction.

These, among other instances of Spinoza-like theories and findings, suggest that, as our discipline matures, psychologists are discovering the limitations of the traditional physicalist and mentalist models, and, implicitly or explicitly, are proposing very Spinoza-like alternatives to the conventional accounts. Such alternatives promise to resolve psychology's longstanding conflict between ontology and phenomenology by broadening our notion of nature, allowing us, like Spinoza, to see Mind and Body as attributes of the universe itself: to realize that human beings are integral parts of the totality of nature, and subject to its laws (4apdx32).

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