Towards *Hilaritas*
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A Study of the Mind-Body Union, the Passions and the Mastery of the Passions in Descartes and Spinoza

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Abstract

The study aims to explain the role of external causes in René Descartes’s (1594–1650) and Benedictus de Spinoza’s (1632–1677) accounts of the mastery of the passions. It consists in three parts: the mind-body union, the passions and their classification, and the mastery of the passions.

In the first part I argue that Descartes’s conception of the mind-body union consists in two elements: mind-body interaction and the experience of being one with the body. Spinoza rejects the first element because there cannot be psychophysical laws. He accepts the second element, but goes beyond Descartes, arguing that the mind and body are identical.

In the second part I discuss the classifications of the passions in the Passions of the Soul and the Ethics and compare them with the one Spinoza presents in the Short Treatise. I explain that hilaritas is an affect that expresses bodily equilibrium and makes it possible for the mind to be able think in a great many ways. Furthermore, I consider the principles of imagination that along with imitation and the striving to persevere provide a causal explanation for the necessary occurrence of the passions.

In the last part I argue that in Descartes the external conditions do not have a significant role in the mastery of the passions. For Spinoza, however, they are necessary. Commentators like Jonathan Bennett fail to see this. Hilaritas requires a diversity of sensual pleasures to occur. As Medea’s case shows, reason is not detached from Nature. Spinoza attempts to form a stronger human nature and to enable as many people as possible to think adequately. His recognition of the need for appropriate external conditions and a society in which ideas can be expressed freely allows him to present an ethics with a practical application, instead of another utopia or fiction.

Keywords: Mind-Body Union, Passions, Mastery of the Passions, Spinoza, Descartes

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We know that the theater was close to Spinoza’s heart. One way his teacher, Franciscus van den Enden, taught his students Latin was by having them read and perform plays written in Latin. K.O. Meinsma tells us that among these plays was Terence’s *Andria* and Van den Enden’s own *Philedonius*, in which Spinoza certainly participated in 1657. Bayle also reports that there was an attempt on Spinoza’s life one night as he was leaving the theatre. Our director of studies at Uppsala, Rysiek Sliwinski, made things as Spinoza would have enjoyed. He has provided many cheerful moments by making me a part of the circle which went to see several premiers played by Uppsala Stadsteater. They have been the source of my most joyful time in

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1 Cf. Meinsma when he writes of Van Den Enden’s way to teach that “[s]uivant la coutume des anciens humanists, il se préparrait à offrir à ceux qui prônaient la poésie dramatique de l’ancienne Rome une représentation d’un texte original. Aussi ses élèves étaient-ils tout occupés à étudier l’Andrienne de Térrence, un choix qui, dans la mesure où des enfants en seraient les acteurs [--] En outre il avait lui-même écrit une pièce allégorique où était peinte la vie de Don Juan...sans la statue du Commandeur. Elle était intitulée Phileldonius et Le coeur voluptueux” (Meinsma 1983, 185). He thinks that there is no reason to doubt that Spinoza performed in these too: “[i]l est evident que Baruch Spinoza, devenu le pensionnaire de Van den Enden, a assisté à ces représentations auxquelles ont participle certainement la pluspart des élèves et auxquelles, sans aucun doute, tous s’intéressaient” (Meinsma 1983, 188).

2 This is also told by Meinsma: “au cas où le renseignement fourni par Pierre Bayle serait exact, à savoir que l’attentat contre la vie de Spinoza aurait été commis un soir qu’il rentrait du théâtre” (Meinsma 1983, 188).
Sweden, likewise the warm hospitality and fine dinners provided so generously by Kathrin Glüer-Pagin and Peter Pagin.

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Abbreviations

Concerning many of my primary sources, I use abbreviations that are standardly applied in the Descartes and Spinoza scholarship. When I refer to Descartes’s works, I shorten the editions in question as follows:


I have also made an extensive use of the available CDRom of Descartes’ works when I refer to his original texts or correspondence: *Past Masters CDRom: Œuvres Complètes de René Descartes*. Edited by André Gombay, Connaught Descartes Project, 2002.

As regards Spinoza’s writings and editions, the following system of abbreviations is adopted:

OP = *Opera posthuma* (Spinoza’s works published shortly after his death 1677 including the Ethics, the Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect, and most of the letters, the first critical edition of the original texts was that of Gebhardt)
NS = *Nagelate Schriften* (the Dutch translation of the OP which appeared also in 1677)

More precisely to Spinoza’s Ethics, I refer as follows:

E = the Ethics
A = axiom
P = proposition
D = definition
Dem = demonstration of the proposition
Cor = corollary
S = scholium
L = lemma (cf. Spinoza’s physics after EIIP13)
Post = postulate

The roman numerals refer to the parts of the *Ethics* which are five, whereas an arabic numeral refers to the propositions. So, for example, the abbreviation EIVP42Dem means the demonstration of the proposition 42 in the part IV of the *Ethics*.

Some other Spinoza’s writings are shortened as:

TdIE = the *Treatise of the Emendation of the Intellect*
TTP = the *Theological-Political Treatise*
TP = the *Political Treatise*
Ep = Spinoza’s correspondence

I have used the following abbreviations also as regards some other works than those of Descartes and Spinoza:

At last, when they had come through many dangers and difficulties under the leadership of the famous Jason, they reached the swift-flowing waters of the muddy river Phasis. While they were entering the presence of King Aeetes, and were asking for the fleece of the ram which had carried Phrixus, while Aeetes was imposing his monstrous conditions, requiring them to perform prodigious tasks, the king’s daughter, Medea, was seized by an overwhelming passion of love and, though she long fought against it, her reason could not subdue her mad desire (Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Book VII).³

This study aims at an explanation of the role of external conditions in René Descartes’s (1594–1650) and Benedictus de Spinoza’s (1632–1677) accounts of the mastery of passions. Descartes writes to Brégny from Stockholm in 1649 that “I desire only peace and quiet, which are benefits that the most powerful kings on earth cannot give to those who are unable to acquire them for themselves (CSMK III 384; AT V 467).“ According to Descartes, the peace and quiet of the mind are independent of anything else but the right use of the free will. When he had finished a draft of the *Passions of the Soul* on March 1646, Descartes had sent it to Princess Elisabeth to have some further comments. What Elisabeth found most puzzling in that treatise was how to really exercise the remedies Descartes suggests for the control of the passions. For instance, she does not really understand how one could not desire “with ardor those things that necessarily tend to the conservation of man (such as health and the means to live), but that nevertheless do not depend on our free will?” (Shapiro’s translation 2007, 134; AT IV 405). We might think that even Descartes himself realized, at least to some extent, the importance of external conditions for his peace of mind. Obviously, he was not feeling well when, just before the quote above, he writes to Brégny that “I am not in my element here” (CSMK III 384; AT V 467). The coldness of Sweden had harmed Descartes’s disposition. He is anxious to meet a common friend, M. Salvius, but afraid that if they meet he would be so changed because he considered external causes to be such that they brought out his faults. He wants to go back, to regain his serenity, as he says “I swear to you that my desire to return to my solitude grows stronger with each passing day.”

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4 AT V 467: “je ne désire que la tranquillité et le repos, qui sont des biens que les plus puissants rois de la terre ne peuvent donner à ceux qui ne les savent pas prendre d’eux-mêmes.” Vicomte de Flécelles Brégny was a French Ambassador to Poland on a diplomatic mission in Stockholm when Descartes arrived there and they became friends (cf. CSMK III 385).

5 AT IV 405: “Et comment nous empêcher de désirer avec ardeur les choses qui tendent nécessairement à la conservation de l’homme (comme la santé et les moyens pour vivre), qui néanmoins ne dépendent point de son arbitre?”

6 AT V 467: “je n’en fais aucunes, et je n’entends parler de rien, de façon qu’il me semble que les pensées des hommes se gèlent ici pendant l’hiver aussi bien que les eaux [---] je ne suis pas ici en mon élément.”
day” (CSMK III 384; AT V 384). Descartes seems to have learned by experience the importance of the external conditions for peace of mind, although this knowledge did not really find a solid expression in his moral psychology.

According to Spinoza, external causes are necessary for our mastering the passions, being happy, and finally, living according to one’s essence. Spinoza’s life provides us an example. For instance, when he was excommunicated he is reported to have said “Very well, this does not force me to do anything which I would not have done of my own accord, had I not been afraid of a scandal”.

The congregation did not provide him the favorable settings to do what he enjoyed most, understanding nature. He expresses quite clearly, e.g., in Letter 21, his disagreement with Willem van Blijenbergh who had defended the authority of scripture. Spinoza says that although he has studied it for years, he does not understand it. For Spinoza, God speaks more clearly and effectively through the natural intellect than through revelations and sacred Scripture. Furthermore, he writes that even if the things he had thought he knew so far through his natural intellect proved to be false, he would be still happy. He writes that “I enjoy them and seek to pass my life, not in sorrow and sighing, but in peace, joy and cheerfulness” (CW I, 376).

Hilaritas, cheerfulness, is an exceptional affect in Spinoza’s philosophy. He defines it in an unusual way: a joy which relates chiefly to the body in such a way that all its parts are equally affected (cf. e.g., EIIIP11S). According to Spinoza, an individual is a complex body that is distinguished from others through a certain ratio of motion and rest (cf. GII/99f). Hilaritas is an important passion because when all parts of the body are equally affected by joy, the affect does not disturb this ratio. Through this rare affect of bodily equilibrium we can acquire a sense of our essence. Hilaritas is a passive affect because, being a joy in which all parts of the body are equally affected, it requires many different kinds of delights from external causes. I intend to give an idea of the importance of external conditions in Spinoza’s theory of passions and ethics, for example, in calling into attention hilaritas.

There are three parts to this thesis: the mind-body union, the passions and their classification, and the mastery of the passions in Descartes’s and Spinoza’s philosophy. In the first part, I shall argue that there is a sense in which Descartes and Spinoza are in agreement. Descartes’s conception of the union consists in two elements: mind-body interaction and a peculiar kind of experience of being one with the body. It is clear that Spinoza re-

7 AT V 467: “je vous jure que le désir que j’ai de retourner en mon désert, s’augmente tous les jours de plus en plus.”
8 Cf. e.g. A. Wolf 1963, xlviii.
9 GIV/127: “et si fructum, quem jam ex intellectu naturali cepi, vel semel falsum esse deprehenderem, me fortunatum redderet, quoniam fruor, et vitam non maerore et gemitu, sed tranquillitate, laetitia, et hilaritate transigere studeo.”
jected the first part of this conception, but it is not well understood why he rejected it. As for the second part of the conception, I think that Spinoza shares it with Descartes but goes far beyond him when he argues that in addition to our having this experience of unity, the mind and body are in fact numerically identical. In the first chapter, I explain Descartes’s position on the mind-body union. The second concerns Spinoza’s rejection of the mind-body interaction based on the fact that there cannot be psychophysical laws. In the third, I shall consider Spinoza’s theory of knowledge and of formal essences. My aim is to explain what he means by reason and intuition and how these two kinds of true knowledge differ from imagination. Furthermore, I shall explain how to understand Spinoza’s notion of formal essences as contained, as he says, in God’s attributes (EIIP8).

In the second part of the study I shall consider the classifications of the passions Descartes and Spinoza give us. In this respect, there are three of their writings whose role it is important to acknowledge: Descartes’s Passions of the Soul, Spinoza’s Short Treatise, and his Ethics. In this study, I emphasize the Passions and the Ethics. I shall, however, point out the affinities and differences between the Short Treatise and both the Passions and the Ethics. I shall argue that Spinoza was more under the influence of Descartes in the Short Treatise than he was in the Ethics, especially as far as the classification of passions is concerned. There is a considerable change in his theory of passions between the Short Treatise and the Ethics. It is the Spinoza of the Ethics who argues for the necessary role of external conditions in the mastery of passions. One reason to think that there is a major shift between the Short Treatise and the Ethics is that in the former the passions are defined as effects of kinds of perceptions whereas in the Ethics they are changes in our power of acting.

The first chapter of the second part concerns the classification Descartes provides in the Passions. I shall explain especially the sense in which wonder, love, hate, desire, joy and sadness are primitive passions and give a few examples of other passions derived from these. The two remaining chapters are about Spinoza’s theory of the affects. I shall clarify the sense in which Spinoza regards desire, joy and sadness as primitive and how all the rest, e.g. love and hate, are derivative passions. In the last chapter, I shall explain especially the relationship between the imagination and passive affects. I hope to make it clear how our affective life with all its vacillations is governed by certain mechanisms of imagination, such as the association of ideas. We also, Spinoza thinks, tend to imitate the affects of those we imagine to be similar to us. These principles in conjunction with the striving to persevere in being provide a causal explanation for the necessary occurrence of the passions.

In the third and last part of the study, I shall discuss the mastery of the passions. The first chapter concerns Descartes’s account of the control of passions. The discussions with Elisabeth made him concerned about the
challenge that the body poses to the control of passions. Until the turmoil of the body is calmed down, the will cannot really bring about thoughts which are not passions. Although Descartes takes into account the disposition of the body in trying to explain the will’s ability to master the passions, external conditions and interactions do not have a firm role in his moral psychology. Spinoza is more sensitive to these features of human life. In the second chapter, I shall take up Spinoza’s account of the mastery of the passions, arguing that reason requires the aid of external causes and imagination. The mastery of passions for Spinoza is a matter of the power of different affects. The strength of the passive affects is determined by the power of an external object compared to our power. The passions often can be very strong because there are external objects having outstanding qualities. For example, Medea could not constrain her passion for Jason, because, although she knew better, her rational desires were weaker than the passion generated by this famous leader of the Argonauts, the stunning and courageous Jason. I shall explain how, with the aid of imaginative means and the right kind of external causes, a person can become more aware of her essence and be able to live according to reason and rational desires. A central issue here is to emphasize how important it is for Spinoza to change and develop a body like Medea’s towards a state in which all of its parts are equally affected, steadily increasing her power of acting, and providing her an occasion to enjoy that rare feeling of hilaritas.

Spinoza attempts to form a stronger human nature and to enable as many people as possible to think adequately. His recognition of the need for appropriate external conditions and a society in which ideas can be expressed freely allows him to present an ethics with a practical application, instead of another utopia or fiction.
First Part: The Mind-Body Union
Chapter I: The Mind-Body Union in Descartes

I start by pointing out what Descartes says about the human soul to Princess Elisabeth on 21 May 1643. “All the knowledge we can have of its nature,” he writes, depends on two things: “The first is that it thinks, the second is that, being united to the body, it can act and be acted upon along with it” (CSMK III 218; AT III 664). On the one hand, the human soul thinks, and on the other, it can act on the body and be acted upon by it. It is not a rare thing to notice that the mind and the body can interact according to Descartes, and it keeps puzzling us how this interaction happens because, according to him, we have a clear and distinct thought of the mind as purely thinking and of the body as extended. This problem is called “the heterogeneity” problem: How can two things interact whose natures are so radically different?

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10 AT III 664: “y ayant deux choses en l’âme humaine, desquelles dépend toute la connaissance que nous pouvons avoir de sa nature, l’une desquelles est qu’elle pense, l’autre, qu’étant unie au corps, elle peut agir et pâtir avec lui.”
11 One of the commentators who has stressed the union as interaction is Henri Gouhier: “[d]ans la pensée de Descartes, on ne saurait trop le souligner, union ne signifie pas seulement co-existence mais interaction, ou plutôt une coexistence qui consiste en une interaction. La notion est essentiellement dynamique si l’on entend par là que le composé humain existe comme tel par le fait et dans le fait qu’âme et corps se modifient réciproquement” (Gouhier 1999/1962, 335).
12 Cf. Daniel Garber about the standard interpretation of Descartes’s account of the mind, the body and their relationship. He states that “[a] typical textbook account of the philosophy of mind in seventeenth century goes something like this. Descartes believed in two kinds of stuff, mental stuff and material stuff, substances distinct in nature that go together to constitute a single human being. But Descartes also took it for granted that these two substances were capable of genuine causal interaction, that minds can cause bodily events, and bodies can cause mental events [---] But, the story goes, Descartes went astray here and vastly underestimated the philosophical problems inherent in his position. Descartes, it is claimed, repressed, or even worse, simply ignored the central question his position raises: How is it even possible that an immaterial substance, like the mind, could conceivably act on extended substance like the human body? According to the standard account, later philosophers recognized the inherent unintelligibility of Descartes’s position and started one of the largest cottage industries in the history of philosophy, the attempt to provide satisfactory solutions to the mind-body problem, intelligible accounts of how mental and physical events are related to one another” (Garber 2001, 168).
13 R.C. Richardson uses first the notion of the heterogeneity problem in “The Scandal of Cartesian Interactionism” 1982. He writes that “[i]t is standard fare to object to dualism of a Cartesian stripe on the grounds that, because it would make mind and body utterly diverse in nature, it is unintelligible how mind could act on body or body on mind” (Richardson 1982, 20). Richardson relates this line of criticism to Gilbert Ryle and Bernard Williams but its
It is reasonable of Descartes’s contemporaries like Gassendi, Elisabeth and – especially important to our purposes – Spinoza to press Descartes on this point. Descartes’s ambition was to build a unified system of scientific knowledge.\footnote{For instance, the last of three famous dreams on the night of the 10 November 1619 tells us this. He dreams of two books on the table, one of them is a dictionary and the other one an anthology of poetry. The poem that captures his eye is one by Ausonius that starts by “what path shall I follow in life”. Descartes thinks that the path he should follow is to unmask the sciences and show their unity. Cf. Edwin Curley about this in the “Benedictus de Spinoza” in Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006, p720–756. 10 vols. He states that “[t]he dream as a whole he took to indicate that the path he should choose in life was to pursue the sciences and demonstrate their fundamental unity” (Curley 2006, 723).} His aim was to give an intelligible explanation of all things. He explains the changes in the physical world through certain set of laws, and the movements of bodies through what is called mechanistic philosophy or corpuscularianism.\footnote{According to Curley, Descartes’s explanatory program involved a commitment to what is sometimes called the mechanical philosophy and sometimes corpuscularianism. He explains the mechanical philosophy or corpuscularianism as follows: “[a]nother area where Beeckman influenced Descartes involved his program of explaining macroscopic physical phenomena in terms of the mechanical properties of the microscopic particles composing them. This program – generally called now ‘the corpuscularian hypothesis’ or ‘the mechanical philosophy’ – had connections with ancient atomism, but differed from atomism in important respects. It did not assume that the component particles were indivisible and (as Descartes was to develop it) did not assume the existence of a void. Moreover, whereas ancient atomism had regarded the size and shape of the atoms as the primary explanatory factors, the corpuscularians emphasized the particles’ speed and direction of motion” (Curley 2006, 722).} The changes in the physical world are explained through simple particles that move according to laws of motions and cause effects through impact. For instance, when Descartes explains refraction, he does it, as Curley says, “micromechanically, in terms of the tendencies to motion of the particles involved in the transmission of light rays and the laws of motion”.\footnote{Curley thinks that in the World Descartes sees “that understanding the concept of a natural power requires a full-fledged theory of the nature of bodies and the laws governing their motion” (Curley 2006, 732).} To explain refraction one needs to understand the nature of light, and that requires an understanding of a natural power. One cannot just refer to some power without explaining it. To explain a natural power means that we understand the nature of bodies and laws governing their movements.\footnote{Curley thinks that in the World Descartes sees “that understanding the concept of a natural power requires a full-fledged theory of the nature of bodies and the laws governing their motion” (Curley 2006, 732).} For instance, if we just appeal to the power of the magnet to explain magnetism we are, according to Descartes, falling into the kind of empty, merely verbal explanation the scholastics gave. What we need to do to have a good understanding of the phenomenon is to explain the power of the magnet by deducing it from the fundamental properties of bodies and their laws.
My aim is to understand how Descartes explains the mind-body union. I shall start with the different primitive notions Descartes presents to Princess Elisabeth and try to clarify the sense in which these notions are primitive and distinct from one another. The last of the notions is the union between the mind and the body. The union in Descartes consists in two elements: mind-body interaction and a peculiar kind of experience of being one with the body. Both of these aspects belong inherently to Descartes’s notion of the union and need to be explained. As far as the relationship between Descartes and Spinoza is concerned, it is clear that Spinoza rejected the first part of this conception, but I do not think it is well understood why he rejected it. I shall try to clarify it. As for the second part of the conception, Spinoza shares it with Descartes but goes far beyond Descartes when he argues that the mind and body are numerically identical.

A question I respond to in this chapter is whether Descartes can give as intelligible an explanation for the mind-body interaction as he does for body-body interaction. Furthermore, even if we accept mind-body interaction, a further problem occurs: can he claim that the mind and body as finite things have power to act? At this point there are affinities between Descartes and occasionalists, for example Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715) and Louis de la Forge (1632–1666). As far as the experience of being one with the body is concerned the comparison Descartes makes between the human mind and a pilot of the ship is an illuminating example to have a look at. He insists often that the mind is not in the body as the pilot is in the ship, and at the end of the chapter, I explain why he thinks this is so.

18 By occasionalism I mean a doctrine according to which many (if not all) apparent finite causes are not real causes, God being the true causal agent in those cases. Full-fledged occasionalists will then hold that no apparent finite causes are real causes, whereas semi-occasionalists will hold that there are large classes of apparent finite causes which are not real causes. The full-fledged occasionalism is a view we could attribute to Malebranche while de la Forge can be considered a representative of the semi-occasionalism. It is beyond the scope of my study to go into comparison between Descartes and the occasionalists. It is, however, important to acknowledge the problem whether finite things can be causally efficacious according to Descartes. For that purpose I shall later shortly refer to de la Forge. Cf. Steven Nadler who points out that to recognize the limitations in de la Forge’s occasionalism can be interesting “for the light it may shed on Descartes’s causal doctrines” (Nadler 1993, 72). Furthermore, de la Forge has a good understanding of Descartes’s conception of being one with the body, and I shall briefly return to him also as far as the differences between the pilot and the human mind are concerned. De la Forge’s treatise I shall have a short look at is Traité de l’Esprit de l’Homme, de ses facultez & camp; de son union avec le corps, suivant les principes de René Descartes 1666, translated by Desmond Clarke as the Treatise on the Human Mind 1997.

19 Cf. this metaphor e.g. the Discourse on the Method CSM II 141; AT XI 59, the Sixth Meditation CSM II 56; AT VII 81 and the response to Arnauld CSM II 160; AT VII 227. The latter concerns the idea of the soul using the body which Arnauld attributes to the Platonic account.
1 The Mind-Body Union as a Primitive Notion

1.1 The distinction between the notions

Descartes writes to Elisabeth that there are some primitive notions that provide us with all other cognitions: “First I consider that there are in us certain primitive notions which are as it were patterns on the basis of which we form all our other conceptions” (CSMK III 218; AT III 665). Descartes makes a distinction between four primitive notions. First, there are the most general ones, which include, for example, the notion of being and duration. Second, for the body alone we have the notion of extension, which includes the notions of shape and movement. Third, as regards the mind alone we have the notion of thinking, which consists in the perceptions of the intellect and the inclination of the will. Fourth and lastly, when it comes to the mind and body together, there is the notion of their union. An element of the notion of the union is that the substances interact: on the one hand, the soul moves the body through its force, and on the other, the body causes sensations and passions in the mind:

As regards the soul and the body together, we have only the notion of their union, on which depends our notion of the soul’s power to move the body, and the body’s power to act on the soul and cause its sensations and passions (CSMK III 218; AT III 665, italics mine). 21

Descartes’s idea of the primitive notions raises several questions: First, in which sense does Descartes regard these notions as primitive? Second, if we grant that they are in a certain sense primitive, how is their nature like? This is pivotal especially as regards the notion of the union. Note in the quotation above that Descartes explicitly mentions that the soul has power to move the body. He writes about “la force qu’a l’âme de mouvoir le corps”. If Descartes is to explain the mind-body interaction as intelligibly as he does physical causation, much depends on how he explains this force.

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20 AT III 665 : “Premièrement, je considère qu’il y a en nous certaines notions primitives, qui sont comme des originaux, sur le patron desquels nous formons toutes nos autres connaissances.”

21 AT III 665: “Et il n’y a que fort peu de telles notions; car, après les plus générales, de l’être, du nombre, de la durée etc., qui conviennent à tout ce que nous pouvons concevoir, nous n’avons, pour le corps en particulier, que la notion de l’extension, de laquelle suivent celles de la figure et du mouvement; et pour l’âme seule, nous n’avons que celle de la pensée, en laquelle sont comprises les perceptions de l’entendement et les inclinations de la volonté; enfin, pour l’âme et le corps ensemble, nous n’avons que celle de leur union, de laquelle dépend celle de la force qu’a l’âme de mouvoir le corps, et le corps d’agir sur l’âme, en causant ses sentiments et ses passions.”
The question concerning the sense in which notions are primitive is probably the easiest place to start. According to Descartes, each of the notions is to be conceived in its own manner:

The soul is conceived only by the pure intellect; body (i.e. extension, shapes and motions) can likewise be known by the intellect alone, but much better by the intellect aided by the imagination; and finally what belongs to the union of the soul and the body is known only obscurely by the intellect alone or even by the intellect aided by the imagination, but it is known very clearly by the senses (CSMK III 227; AT III 691f).22

All of the three notions are conceived clearly. The soul we know by pure intellect, the body is cognized by imagination or intellect aided by imagination. As regards their union, according to Descartes, we know it very clearly, très clairement, through the senses, but we do not know it distinctly. He explains further that metaphysics teaches us about the notion of the soul, while mathematics concerns the figures and shapes and aids us to form very distinct notions of the body. Lastly, life in general and ordinary discussions beyond meditations, mathematics and other studies occupying the imagination teach us clearly the union between the mind and the body. (AT III 292.)23 According to Descartes, in order to understand these notions and the way in which they are primitive, we need to see that each of them forms a domain of its own. Each of them applies to its own kinds of things and has to be distinguished from others.24

1.2 Known only through itself

More precisely, they are primitive in the sense that they cannot be explained through any other notions. Thus, to be a primitive notion for Descartes means to be understood through itself alone:

22 AT 691f: “l’âme ne se conçoit que par l’entendement pur; le corps, c’est-à-dire l’extension, les figures et les mouvements, se peuvent aussi connaître par l’entendement seul, mais beaucoup mieux par l’entendement aidé de l’imagination; et enfin, les choses qui appartiennent à l’union de l’âme et du corps, ne se connaissent qu’obscurément par l’entendement seul, ni même par l’entendement aidé de l’imagination; mais elles se connaissent très clairement par les sens.”

23 AT III 292: “Et les pensées métaphysiques, qui exercent l’entendement pur, servent à nous rendre la notion de l’âme familière; et l’étude des mathématiques, qui exerce principalement l’imagination en la considération des figures et des mouvements, nous accoutume à former des notions du corps bien distinctes; et enfin, c’est en usant seulement de la vie et des conversations ordinaires, et en s’abstenant de méditer et d’étudier aux choses qui exercent l’imagination, qu’on apprend à concevoir l’union de l’âme et du corps.”

24 Descartes even states that all the human science consists in distinguishing well these notions: “Je considère aussi que toute la science des hommes ne consiste qu’à bien distinguer ces notions, et à n’attribuer chacune d’elles qu’aux choses auxquelles elles appartiennent”(AT III 665).
For if we try to solve a problem by means of a notion that does not pertain to it, we cannot help going wrong. Similarly we go wrong if we try to explain one of these notions by another, for since they are primitive notions, each of them can be understood only through itself (CSMK III 218; AT III 666).  

Descartes warns us especially not to try to understand other notions through bodies and what belongs to the corporeal world. Because of the senses the notions belonging to the body, like extension, shape and movement, are much more familiar to us than others. Descartes explicitly states here that the force through which the soul moves the body is not to be conceived in the same manner as a body is moved by another body:

The main cause of our errors is that we commonly want to use these notions to explain matters to which they do not pertain. For instance, we try to use our imagination to conceive the nature of the soul, or we try to conceive the way in which the soul moves the body by conceiving the way in which one body is moved by another (CSMK III 218; AT III 666).

Each notion is to be understood through itself only and constitutes its proper domain, as Lilli Alanen stresses:

in characterizing his three notions as primitive, Descartes wants to emphasize that each of them can be known or understood only through itself and not by comparison to any other notion and, moreover, that each of them constitutes, in its proper domain, a presupposition for our knowledge of what belongs to that domain.

Now if each of the notions is to be understood through itself, we have good reasons to think that for Descartes the mind-body interaction is not to be understood through the notion of physical causation. Nevertheless, this is what many of Descartes’s commentators seem to do, like Pierre Gassendi:

[m]ust not every union occur by means of close contact? And, as I asked before, how can contact occur without a body? How can something corporeal take hold of something incorporeal so as to keep it joined to itself? And how can the incorporeal grasp the corporeal to keep it reciprocally bound to itself,

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25 AT 665f: “lorsque nous voulons expliquer quelque difficulté par le moyen d’une notion qui ne lui appartient pas, nous ne pouvons manquer de nous méprendre; comme aussi lorsque nous voulons expliquer une de ces notions par une autre; car, étant primitives, chacune d’elles ne peut être entendue que par elle-même.”

26 AT III 666: “la principale cause de nos erreurs est en ce que nous voulons ordinairement nous servir de ces notions, pour expliquer les choses à qui elles n’appartennent pas, comme lorsqu’on se veut servir de l’imagination pour concevoir la nature de l’âme, ou bien lorsqu’on veut concevoir la façon dont l’âme meut le corps, par celle dont un corps est mû par un autre corps.”

27 Alanen 2003, 63.
if it has nothing at all to enable it to grasp or be grasped? (CSM II 238f; AT VII 344).28

According to Gassendi, a thing can affect another one only if there is an intimate contact between them. Gassendi wonders, for example, how we can feel pain since we are homogeneous, simple, indivisible and immutable (AT VII 344).29 Moreover, Gassendi compares the relationship between the mind and body with a stone and air. He thinks that there is a much closer relationship between the latter two than between the former because they are both bodies.30 Gassendi does not think that Descartes gives a reasonable account of the interaction between the corporeal and the incorporeal:

In a word, the general difficulty still remains of how the corporeal can communicate with the incorporeal and of what relationship may be established between the two (CSM II 239; AT VII 345).31

When Descartes replies to Gassendi, he distinguishes the mind-body interaction from the body-body causation:

When you try to compare the intermingling of mind and body with the intermingling of two bodies, it is enough for me to reply that we should not set up any comparison between such things, because they are quite different in kind (CSM II 266; AT VII 390).32

Gassendi’s puzzle is understandable because their correspondence takes place before Descartes has introduced the primitive notions in the way he does to Elisabeth. In his response, though, Descartes points out that the mind-body interaction is quite different in kind – toto genere diversa – from the body-body relation. He does not, however, explain the difference between these two kinds of causation in referring to the primitive notions until Elisabeth presses him. She approaches him as follows:

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28 AT VII 344 : “Et nonne debet unio per contactum intimum fieri? Quomodo id vero, ut ante dicebam, sine corpore? Quomodo quod corporeum est, apprehendet quod incorporeum, ut sibi junctum teneat, aut quomodo incorporeum apprehendet corporeum, ut sibi devinctum reciprocroce habeat, si nihil prorsus in illo sit, neque quo apprehendatur, neque quo apprehendat?”
29 AT VII 344 : “Videlicet status doloris est quidam status praeter naturam; quomodo vero potest praeter naturam esse, afficie, quod, per naturam, uniusmodi, simplex, indivisible, intransmutableque est?”
30 AT VII 344 : “Capimusne quomodo lapis et aër ita compingantur, v. c. in pumice, ut germana inde fiat compositio? Et major tamen est proportio inter lapidem et aërem, qui ipse quoque corpus est, quam inter corpus et animam, mentemve plane incorpoream.”
31 AT VII 345: “Sed uno verbo, generalis semper difficultas manet, quomodo corporeum cum incorporeo communicare valeat, quam proportionem statuere alterius cum altero liceat.”
32 AT VII 390 : “Ita hic ubi mentis et corporis permisisonem cum permistione duorum corporum vis comparare, sufficit ut respondeam nullam inter talia institui debere comparationem, quia sunt toto genere diversa.”
So I ask you please to tell me how the soul of a human being (it being only a thinking substance) can determine the bodily spirits, in order to bring about voluntary actions. For it seems that all determination of movement happens through the impulsion of the thing moved, by the manner in which it is pushed by that which moves it, or else by the particular qualities and shape of the surface of the latter. Physical contact is required for the first two conditions, extension for the third. You entirely exclude the one [extension] from the notion you have of the soul, and the other [physical contact] appears to me incompatible with an immaterial thing (Shapiro’s translation 2007, 62).  

Elisabeth, like Gassendi, expects Descartes to explain the mind-body interaction in a manner similar to that in which he has explained causation in the physical world and which would be as intelligible. So far Descartes has mostly discussed physical causation, which involves impact and hence requires contact between cause and effect. Now there are two options to understand the scope of physical causation and the requirement of contact between cause and effect. The first is that bodies cannot ever act on any substance without having contact with it:

(O1): Bodies cannot either act on other substances, or be acted on by other substances, without there being contact between those substances.

The second is that contact is required only with bodies acting on other bodies:

(O2) Bodies cannot act on other bodies, or be acted on by them, unless there is contact between the bodies.

Based on the discussion above, it is clear that Descartes holds O2: Contact is required only when bodies cause effects in other bodies. In the case of the mind-body interaction, Descartes does not require contact between cause and effect because it is to be understood differently from body-body causation. He warns us explicitly in his letter to Elisabeth not to conceive the other notions in the way in which we conceive bodies. Because the senses have made notions that belong to bodies much more familiar than others (AT III 666), we are inclined to conceive the other notions in the way in which we conceive bodies. But this is, as Descartes writes, the main cause of our errors.

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33 AT III 661: “en vous priant de me dire comment l’âme de l’homme peut determiner les esprits du corps, pour faire les actions volontaires (n’étant qu’une substance pensante). Car il me semble que toute determination de mouvement se fait par la pulsion de la chose mue, à manière don’t elle est poussée par celle qui la meut, ou bien de la qualification et figure de la superficie de cette derniere. L’attouchement est requis aux deux premiere conditions, et l’extension à la troisième. Vous excluez entièrement celle-ci de la notion que vous avez de l’âme, et celui-là me paraît incompatible avec une chose immatérielle.”

34 AT III 666 : “Et d’autant que l’usage des sens nous a rendu les notions de l’extension, des figures et des mouvements, beaucoup plus familières que les autres.”

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According to Descartes, there is mind-body interaction, and it is different from physical causation. Richardson points out rightly that commentators have not usually thought that the mind and body can interact because according to them it must happen like body-body causation but as Richardson notes this is not a problem for Descartes:

The problem of how two such heterogeneous things as mind and body could interact is, as Descartes so clearly saw, no problem at all. The illusion of a problem has two sources: the presumption that psychophysical interaction must be similar in kind to physical interaction.

According to Richardson, the illusion that mind-body interaction is problematic in Descartes has two sources: mind-body interaction is similar to physical interaction and there are only mental or physical properties. I turn to the latter point later. Here we need to concede mind-body interaction in Descartes and its difference from bodily causation. A thing that still needs to be clarified is whether Descartes can explain it in as intelligible manner as he does physical interaction.

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35 Nevertheless, it is not an overstatement to claim that the dominating line of arguing has been to concentrate on the heterogeneity between the nature of the soul and the body and to regard Descartes’s account of the union as incomprehensible based on this. As an example we can take Daisie Radner. She states that “[h]ow can it be maintained that there is causal interaction between the mind and the body, given the fundamental Cartesian doctrines that mental substance and material substance differ in nature, and that the cause must be adequate to the effect?” (Radner 1971, 161). The usual kind of interpretation of Descartes that concentrates on the mind-body distinction is brought out by Susan James as follows: “[t]he view, for example, that Descartes made an absolute distinction between states of the body and states of the soul and allowed nothing to cross it, has long been a mainstay of the philosophy of mind” (James 1997, 17). Cf. James also a bit later where she continues that “[b]y treating the Meditations on First Philosophy as Descartes’s philosophical testament, scholars have created a one-sided interpretation of Cartesianism in which the division between body and soul is overemphasized and sometimes misunderstood” (James 1997, 106). John Cottingham is one of the scholars who brings out also the side of the mind that is not transparent: “[i]n the kind of awareness we have of the emotions and passions that arise from our human status, Descartes maintains [...] that far from transparency, a pervasive opacity obtains” (Cottingham 1998, 123). Quite strikingly he draws our attention to the fact that the human nature in Descartes is largely characterised by obscure thoughts which exceed us as pure intellects: “[a] proper understanding of our human nature involves recognition of the extent to which we are not just angelic minds inhabiting bodily mechanisms, but creatures whose deepest and strongest feelings are ‘obscure and confused’, because intimately tied up with structures and events which are concealed from us as ‘thinking beings’” (ibid.). Cf. also Alanen about the different standards by which to evaluate, on the one hand, the knowledge of the mind and, on the other the knowledge of the body (Alanen 1982, 64).

36 Richardson 1982, 36. Cf. also Alanen who does not regard the interaction between the mind and body as a problem but the conceivability of the union: “I take the real problem to be not the interaction but the conceivability of a substantial union between two entities that are known only through logically incompatible notions” (Alanen 2003, 75).
The soul moving the body through its force

2.1 What do we learn from the false notion of gravity?

The idea of the force of the soul appears in Descartes’s discussion of the Scholastics’ notion of heaviness. According to Descartes, the idea of heaviness is acquired through the notion we have of the force of the soul to move the body. Various qualities like heaviness are imagined to be real (AT III 667). Descartes thinks that in supposing heaviness to be really distinct from body we imagine that there is something in body like the force the soul has to move the body. The idea of heaviness as a force distinct from the body “was given us for the purpose of conceiving the manner in which the soul moves the body” (CSMK III 219; AT III 668). When we imagine heaviness being distinct from body we do not doubt that it moves body towards the center of the earth or that heaviness is joined to body. We think that heaviness is really distinct from bodies because we apply to it the notion of the soul’s force to move bodies. We err, however, in doing so because we apply the notion of the soul’s force to a domain which does not pertain to it. Heaviness, as Descartes shows in his physics, is nothing distinct from body.

Descartes shows with this example that, yes, we have a notion of the force of the soul to move the body but he does not come up with any explanation of how the soul moves the body. It seems that he does not even think that we need to give any explanation. Naturally, this is not something that Elisabeth is happy about because she expects to have an intelligible explanation for the force of the soul. She attributes this view of heaviness to the ignorance of the real causes:

this idea (unable to pretend to the same perfection and objective reality as that of God) can be feigned due to the ignorance of what truly moves these bodies toward the center (Shapiro’s translation 2007, 68, AT III 685).39

37 This seems to be a polemical point because not all of the Scholastics thought that the qualities are really distinct in the sense that Descartes thought them to be.
38 AT III 666–8: “en supposant que la pesanteur est une qualité réelle, dont nous n’avons point d’autre connaissance, sinon qu’elle a la force de mouvoir le corps, dans lequel elle est, vers le centre de la terre, nous n’avons pas de peine à concevoir comment elle meut ce corps, ni comment elle lui est jointe; et nous ne pensons point que cela se fasse par un attachement réel d’une superficie contre une autre, car nous expérimentons, en nous-mêmes, que nous et je crois avons une notion particulière pour concevoir cela; que nous usons mal de cette notion; en l’appliquant à la pesanteur, qui n’est rien de réellement distingué du corps, comme j’espère montrer en la Physique, mais qu’elle nous a été donnée pour concevoir la façon dont l’âme meut le corps.”
39 AT III 685: “cette idée (ne pouvant prétendre à la même perfection et réalité objective que celle de Dieu) peut être feinte par l’ignorance de ce qui véritablement meut ces corps vers le centre. Et puisque nulle cause matérielle ne se présentait aux sens, on l’aurait attribué à son
Elisabeth is pressing Descartes to explain in a sensible manner the mind-body interaction, and in this sense she can be regarded as Spinoza’s precursor. Descartes does not, however, seem able to explain it any further. He just sticks with the idea that it occurs.

There is, however, a way in which the analogy with heaviness can be helpful for us when attempting to explain how the soul moves the body. We could think that heaviness comes with some kind of cognition about the end towards which it moves the body, namely the center of the earth. It can move the body because of this idea of a goal. This gets some support from the Sixth Replies where Descartes again compares the mind with heaviness:

what makes it especially clear that my idea of gravity was taken largely from the idea I had of the mind is the fact that I thought that gravity carried bodies towards the center of the earth as if it had some knowledge of the center within itself. For this surely could not happen without knowledge, and there can be no knowledge except in a mind (CSM II 298; AT VII 442).

In order to understand Descartes’s account of human action, we need to see the role that intentions and goals play in his system. We act because we desire, will or are aversive towards certain things. When we can explain our actions through final causes, this does not, however, tell how the force of the mind acts on the body. It leaves this question completely open. It is true that I would probably not act at all if I had no idea of something as desirable or not, but an apprehension of my desires does not show whether my mind acts on the body or how it acts. An attempt to explain the force of the soul on the body through final causes does not help us here.

contraire, l’immatériel, ce que néanmoins je n’ai jamais pu concevoir que comme une négation de la matière, qui ne peut avoir aucune communication avec elle.”

40 He responds to Elisabeth that “je me suis servi ci-devant de la comparaison de la pesanteur et des autres qualités que nous imaginons communément être unies à quelques corps, ainsi que la pensée est unie au nôtre; et je ne me suis pas soucié que cette comparaison clochât en cela que ces qualités ne sont pas réelles, ainsi qu’on les imagine, à cause que j’ai cru queVotre Altesse était déjà entièrement persuadée que l’âme est une substance distincte du corps” (AT III 694).

41 Cf. Garber here who thinks that through this discussion of the Scholastic notion of heaviness Descartes tried to make his adversaries notice that “despite their claims of not being able to conceive how an incorporeal mind could act on an extended body, they really do have the notion in question” (Garber 2001, 176).

42 AT VII 442: “Sed ex eo præcipue appareat illam gravitatis ideam fuisse ex parte ab illa, quam habebam mentis, desumptam, quod putarem gravitatem deferre corpora versus centrum terræ, tanquam si aliquam ejus cognitionem in se contineret. Neque enim hoc profecto sine cognitione fieri, neque ulla cognitio nisi in mente esse potest.”

43 Alanen makes this point clearly. She states that “[q]ualities, understood as modes of the mind united to the body, have a proper use and function, but this use is not relevant to physics or natural sciences. It is worth stressing that Descartes, unlike some contemporary scientific reformers, does not claim that we can do without qualitative notions or intentional concepts”
2.2 The well structured body as a condition for the union with the soul

Another work where Descartes uses the notion of the force of the soul is the *Treatise on Man*. This is a useful text to look at because it shows that the mind cannot act in an arbitrary manner on the body: The soul can exercise its force and move the body only when the body is in an appropriate condition.

In the *Treatise on Man* Descartes refutes the Platonic and Aristotelian idea that there is a mental principle to animate the body. The human body is alive and can perform its functions without any presumption of a soul. Descartes rejects the idea of the vegetative and sensitive souls by comparing the human body with a clock or an automaton. Functions like digestion, respiration, sleeping, sensations follow from the arrangement of the organs of the bodily machine as the movements of a clock follow from its wheels and weights. The principle of life and movement is the heat of a fire that keeps burning in the heart. It sets in motion the blood and the animal spirits and causes the different vital functions. (AT XI 202; CSM I 108.)

For Descartes it is not the soul that makes the human body alive. When it comes to the principle of life, the human body resembles the animal body or a machine like a fountain, an organ or a clock. None of them needs a soul to function. This idea remains central throughout Descartes’s thinking. The way in which Descartes explains the human body in the *Treatise on Man* can be found also in the fifth part of the *Discourse on the Method* (cf. AT VI 46).

The description of the human body in article 17 of the *Passions of the Soul* agrees entirely with the description in the *Treatise on Man*. It is central to the *Passions* that the human body is able to perform many of its functions without any mental principle: the human body is kept in motion by the heat in the heart. This is explained well in the beginning of the *Passions*, in article four, where Descartes emphasizes that it is the heat in the heart that causes all the movements in inanimate bodies as well as the movements in the human body that do not belong to thought (AT XI 329).\(^4^4\)

The life and death of the human and animal body depend on the heat of the heart. The difference between the dead and the living body is not explained by the soul but by the fact that the heat in our heart ceases when the structure of our body disintegrates. When the human body is destroyed so much that the heat in the heart cannot be sustained, the soul cannot be united

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\(^4^4\) AT XI 329: “nous devons croire que toute la chaleur et tous les mouvements qui sont en nous, en tant qu’ils ne dépendent point de la pensee, n’appartiennent qu’au corps.” Having explained the composition of the human body and the circulation of the blood Descartes still stresses in article eight that the corporeal principle of the movements of the members is the heat in the heart: “encore que j’en aie déjà touché quelque chose en d’autres écrits, je ne laisserai pas de dire ici succinctement que, pendant que nous vivons, il y a une chaleur continue en notre cœur, qui est une espèce de feu que le sang des veines y entretient, et que ce feu est le principe corporel de tous les mouvements de nos membres” (AT XI 333).
to it any longer. Descartes argues that death is not due to the soul but to the destruction of the body by comparing the living human body and the corpse with a watch that still works and one that does not function any longer (AT XI 330).

The fact that the principle of movement and life is corporeal – the heat in our heart – is also crucial in Descartes’s explanation of the passions. He thinks that the first reason that prevents us from rightly explaining the passions is that we attribute the absence of heat and movement to the soul. Unlike his Platonic and Aristotelian predecessors, he does not assume any division in the soul. The soul is united to all parts of the body, and there is no vegetative and sensitive soul that informs the body and causes the different kinds of vital functions, appetites and passions. The soul is everywhere the human body, but it is not the soul that keeps the parts of the body together. The soul does not inform the human body in any way. Because of its structure, the human body makes it possible for a soul to join to it, and as long as the human body retains the required composition, the soul also remains joined to it. Descartes does not change this idea at any point in his thinking.

The human body, the animal body, and machines resemble one another because each of them can keep itself moving without any soul. The human body is not, however, completely like the other animal bodies, as Delphine Kolesnik-Antoine has shown. She thinks that the comparisons

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45 AT XI 330: “j’estime qu’elle est la première cause qui a empêché qu’on n’ait pu bien expliquer jusqu’ici les passions et les autres choses qui appartiennent à l’âme. Elle consiste en ce que, voyant que tous les corps morts sont privés de chaleur et ensuite de mouvement, on s’est imaginé que c’était l’absence de l’âme qui faisait cesser ces mouvements et cette chaleur.”

46 He writes for example in the Passions that “il n’y a en nous qu’une seule âme, et cette âme n’a en soi aucune diversité de parties: la même qui est sensitive est raisonnable, et tous ses appétits sont des volontés” (AT XI 364). Cf. also article 68 where Descartes refutes the division of the passions between the irascible and concupiscible by referring to the fact “je ne connais en l’âme aucune distinction de parties” (AT XI 379).

47 Cf. the article 30 of the Passions : “l’âme est véritablement jointe à tout le corps, et qu’on ne peut pas proprement dire qu’elle soit en quelqu’une de ses parties à l’exclusion des autres, à cause qu’il est un et en quelque façon indivisible, à raison de la disposition de ses organes qui se rapportent tellement tous l’un à l’autre que, lorsque quelqu’un d’eux est ôté, cela rend tout le corps défectueux. Et à cause qu’elle est d’une nature qui n’a aucun rapport à l’étendue ni aux dimensions ou autres propriétés de la matière dont le corps est composé, mais seulement à tout l’assemblage de ses organes. Comme il paraît de ce qu’on ne saurait aucunement concevoir la moitié ou le tiers d’une âme ni quelle étendue elle occupe, et qu’elle ne devient point plus petite de ce qu’on retranche quelque partie du corps, mais qu’elle s’en sépare entièrement lorsqu’on dissout l’assemblage de ses organes” (AT XI 351).

48 We can ask here that if the human body, as other animal bodies, keep themselves in motion with a bodily principle, why can the former be united with the soul whereas the latter cannot? Kolesnik-Antoine puts this as follows: “[l]e problème est ailleurs: si la “bonne disposition” des parties organiques du corps-machine le rend apte à recevoir une âme, alors il faut reconnaître, soit que les animaux possèdent ou pourraient eux aussi posséder une âme […] soit que le corps de l’homme seul possède quelques “dispositions secrètes” le rendant apte à
s’accompagnent de modalisations non négligeables: “il y en a de tout semblables”, il en existe “plusieurs” qui “se rapportent aux nôtres” (ce qui ne signifie pas que tel soit le cas de tous), et au total ils ne sont “pas fort différents” des nôtres. Bref, ils sont “à peu près”, mais “à peu près” seulement, en certains animaux comme en nous.49

For Descartes it depends on the body whether the soul unites to it and remains united to it. For this reason, there is a certain bodily organ through which the soul exercises its functions most properly. As argued in the Passions it is not the heart, neither is it the whole brain but a very small gland – the pineal gland – inside of the brain which is very sensitive to the smallest movements of the animal spirits, and the smallest movements of this gland can change the course of the animal spirits.50 This gland makes it possible for the soul to perform its functions immediately. Descartes regards it as the seat of the soul because, for example, it makes it possible for double impressions to appear as single (cf. AT XI 352f). We have some reason to believe that Descartes thought that there is a difference in this gland that distinguishes the human body from the animal.51

Although in the Treatise on Man Descartes concentrates on the functions that do not require any thought, that is not all he has in mind there. Recall how he outlines his project in the beginning:

First I must describe the body on its own; then the soul, again on its own; and finally I must show how these two natures would have to be joined and
The preface that Clerselier wrote to the 1664 edition of the Treatise on Man shows us how the different aspects in Descartes’s philosophy go together with what he writes in the Treatise on Man. Clerselier reminds the reader about Descartes’s intention in the Treatise on Man, arguing that the real distinction is already supposed there. He explains what Descartes means by the notion of substance and how the relationship between attributes and substances is to be understood. Furthermore, he discusses at length the nature of the soul, for example, comparing it to St. Augustine. Clerselier would not have discussed the nature of the soul in the preface of a book about the human body if he did not think that it was important for Descartes

52 AT XI 119f: “Ces hommes seront composés, comme nous, d’une Âme et d’un Corps. Et il faut que je vous décrive, premierement, le corps à part, puis après, l’âme aussi à part; et enfin, que je vous montre comment ces deux Natures doivent être jointes et unies, pour composer des hommes qui nous ressemblent.”

53 He states that “le dessein de Monsieur Descartes a esté décrire premierement le Corps à part, puis après l’Ame aussi à part, & enfin de montrer comment ces deux Natures doivent estre jointes & vnies, pour composer des hommes qui nous ressemblent, ainsi qu’il dit luy-mesme au commencement de ce Livre”.

54 “Je pretens maintenant prouver, comment vne chose préliminaire à son dessein, Que le Corps & l’Ame de l’homme sont veritablement deux choses ou deux substances réellement distinctes, & qu’ainsi il a eu raison des les considerer chacune à part.”

55 According to him, “[l]a substance, considerée en general, est vne chose en laquelle reside immediatement comme dans vu sujet, & par laquelle existe quelque proprieté, qualité, ou attribut, dont nous avons en nous vne réelle idée”. Nothing, le Neant, Clerselier reasons cannot have any real attribute, thus, if we conceive an attribute that exists in reality, through that attribute we come to know a substance that exists really: “car la lumiere naturelle nous apprend que le Neant ne peut avoir aucun attribut qui soit Réel. Si donc nous avons connoissance de quelque attribut réellement existant, par cet attribut nous venons à connoitre la substance en qui il reside”.

56 He explains that if there is no affinity between the attributes, one has to conclude necessarily that subjects on which the attributes rely are different in nature: “il y en a de tels qu’on n’y remarque entr’eux aucune affinité, aucune ressemblance, & mesme de la contrarieté, je dois necessairement conclure que les Substances qui en sont les sujets, & en qui ils resident, sont non seulement diverses, mais aussi differentes en nature”. From this Clerselier derives the fact that the soul and the body are distinct substances. He continues that “c’est ce que je remarque entre les Attributs qui appartiennent à l’Ame, & ceux qui appartiennent au Corps, qui sont tels, que l’on est obligé de reconnaître deux sortes de Substances”.

57 He thinks that Descartes’s notion of the soul comes from St. Augustine: “je me serviray de l’autorité de saint Augustine, lequel dans le 10. Chap. du 10. Livre de la Trinité, dont je mettray ici la version, semblé avoir fourny à M. Descartes toute la matiere de ses raisonnement touchant ce qui regarde nostre Ame”. Later in the preface Clerselier returns to St. Augustine and the claim the latter favors: know yourself. It is important for Clerselier to underscore that this means to know your soul, that is the thing “la plus intime, la plus proche, & la plus presente” for a human being. He stresses that “Qu’il se conoisse soy-mesme, c’est à son Ame bien prendre garde de ne rien admettre qui ne soit vray, & qui n’appartienne à ce qu’elle se reconnaît estré”.

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already in the *Treatise of Man*. Clerselier takes great pains to show that the nature of the soul is to understand and that nothing corporeal belongs to it.\(^{58}\) Clerselier spends the time he does explaining the nature of the soul because he knows that it is necessary to understand the nature of the soul in order to understand how it can be united with the body to form the human being, which it is the ultimate object of the *Treatise* to explain. Furthermore, Clerselier refers to the correspondence Descartes has with Elisabeth and points out especially the primitive notions. Notably, he stresses that the notions are primitive in the sense that each of them is to be understood only through itself.\(^{59}\)

Clerselier’s preface was published posthumously and obviously he adds to it what he has read from other writings of Descartes. Although we cannot say that Descartes thought exactly like this at the time when he wrote the *Treatise on Man*, I regard his preface as an attempt to write what Descartes did not write about. There is no reason for Clerselier to explain such things as the primitive notions, the distinction between the body and the soul, the meaning of the “know yourself” and the incorporeal nature of the soul if he did not regard them as central to understanding what Descartes writes in the *Treatise on Man*.

Descartes in the *Treatise on Man* regards the soul explicitly as something that moves the body. At this point the seat of the soul is not in the pineal gland but in the brain:

> when a rational soul is present in this machine it will have its principal seat in the brain, and reside there like the fountain-keeper who must be stationed at the tanks to which the fountain’s pipes return if he wants to produce, or prevent, or change their movements in some way (CSM I 101).\(^{60}\)

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\(^{58}\) For instance, he thinks that if somebody takes the soul to be air “elle s’imagine que l’air entend; cependant elle sçait fort bien qu’elle entend; mais qu’elle soit de l’air, & que l’air entende, elle ne le sçait point, elle le pense seulement & se l’imagine”. Clerselier thinks that the imagination makes the soul represent these various things, to imagine, for example, to be air or fire or a disposition or temperament of a body but the soul is nothing like that. Clerselier states that “il n’y rien qu’elle apperçoive plus clairement & plus vivement, ny qui luy soit plus present, sinon qu’elle est, qu’elle vit, qu’elle se ressouvient, qu’elle entend, & qu’elle veut: Car elle aperçoit toutes ces choses en elle-mesme & par elle-mesme, & ne se les imagine pas comme les ayant senties hors de soy par l’entremise des sens, ainsi que toutes les choses Corporelles se sont sentir”.

\(^{59}\) He states: “estant Primitives, chacune d’elles ne peut estre entendue que par elle-mesme”. He points out the different notions as Descartes by stating that they “sont comme les Originaux, sur le patron desquels nous formons toutes les autres connoissances que nous avons des choses. C’est sçavoir, la notion que nous avons de l’Ame, celle du Corps, & celle de l’union qui est entre l’Ame & le Corps”.

\(^{60}\) AT XI 131f: “enfin quand l’âme raisonnable sera en cette machine, elle y aura son siège principal dans le cerveau, et sera là comme le fontainier, qui doit être dans les regards où se vont rendre tous les tuyaux de ces machines, quand il veut exciter, ou empêcher, ou changer en quelque façon leurs mouvements.”
He describes the human body in terms of a machine like a fountain. When God joins the soul to this machine, it would be like a fountain keeper who can “exciter, ou empêcher, ou changer en quelque façon leurs mouvements”. It is not accurate to regard the *Treatise on Man* as a writing where Descartes explains only the human body. The idea of the soul’s force is there, and it is explicit.61 This does not bring us back to the Platonic model of the rational soul, which through its knowledge of the truth can govern the human being, its appetites, passions and actions. The force of the soul depends on the human body so that as long as the human body is well disposed and maintains its integrity, the soul can make it move.

The fact that in the *Treatise on Man* Descartes does not really get to the point he outlines in the beginning of the work, namely to explain the soul and the union of the soul and body, might lead one to think that what he states about them later is not consistent with the *Treatise on Man*. Thus, according to Catherine Wilson the interaction between the soul and the body does not constitute any problem to Descartes in the *Treatise on Man* and in the *Discourse on the Method*:

human capacities did not strike Descartes as presenting a particular problem about interaction. The human soul was originally conceived as a superaddition which made humans able to talk, entertain propositions, and prove theorems, which gave them a particular crisp and clear consciousness of their experiences.62

According to this account, it is only in the *Meditations* that Descartes gets into trouble with regard to the interaction because there he systematically argues for the real distinction, while stressing the substantial union the mind forms with the body. According to Wilson,

[the] theologically contextualised two-substance theory presented in the *Meditations* was inconsistent with Descartes’s pre-existing ideas about the

\[\text{61 Cf. Kolesnik-Antoine who states that “il ne suffit donc pas d’affirmer que l’Homme envisage uniquement le corps organique à l’exclusion de l’âme, pour légitimer le décret de renvoi concernant l’effort. Il faut encore préciser qu’il traite, aussi, de la possible terminaison psychologique des diverses forces organiques” (Kolesnik-Antoine 2003, 229). It is also quite understandable that Descartes does not stress the soul’s force more as he does in the *Treatise on Man*. If he had done it more than he does now, it would have confused his intention to convince the reader that there is no need for the soul or different kinds of the soul to make and to keep the human body as alive. Cf. Kolesnik-Antoine when she brings out this point as follows: “L’effort n’y est pas explicité parce qu’il ne constitue pas le sujet central du texte et, surtout, parce que le lecteur risquerait de le confondre avec ce que le mécanisme cherche précisément à éradiquer: l’assimilation de l’âme au principe de la vie et de tout mouvement. Un développement explicite eût été nuisible à la fois à l’ordre des raisons et à la persuasion du lecteur. Descartes joue avec une certaine culture commune, revisitée par le mécanisme (l’image du cavalier remplacée par celle du fontainier), et sur ce que sa propre philosophie inaugure: un effort moteur volontaire réservé à l’homme seul” (Kolesnik-Antoine 2003, 238).}
\[\text{62 Wilson 2000, 664.}\]
involvement of the brain in perception, memory, and cognition and his associated theory of human perfectibility as these are sketched in *L’Homme* and the *Discours de la Méthode*.63

We need not, however, assume such a difference between, on the one hand, the *Treatise on Man* and the *Discourse on the Method* and on the other the *Meditations*.64 We have reason to believe that Descartes wrote his first account of metaphysics around 1629. The idea that nothing corporeal can be conceived to belong to the mind and nothing mental to the body just confirms the thought presented above in the *Treatise on Man*: the body functions and is alive perfectly well without the mind. The latter is not a form that animates the body. As long as the body maintains its structure, the soul can exercise its force and make the body move. Although the favorable reading Clerselieir gives about Descartes’s intentions in his preface to the *Treatise on Man* would not convince everybody, I think we have no more reason to say that his account of the mind-body interaction is unproblematic in the *Treatise on Man* than we have to say that it is problematic in the *Meditations*. The fact that he does not write much on the passions in the *Treatise on Man* does not show that he thought there that the soul can somehow directly influence the body, the soul cannot exercise its force without the body being in good shape.

Now what does all this have to contribute to our initial enquiry, namely to understand the nature of the force through which the soul can move the body? I see some light here. This force depends on the condition of my body, and I cannot exercise it if there is something wrong in my body. For example, if I happen to have some problems in my spinal cord, it is difficult to swim, no matter how much I want. The conclusion is that we have a condition for mind-body causation but not an intelligible explanation how the mind moves the body.

63 Wilson 2000, 659.
64 Cf. e.g. J.-M. Beyssade and M. Beyssade who note that it is usually thought that Descartes as a scientist or methodologist precedes the one who does the metaphysics. According to them, however, “[l]a perspective s’inverse si l’on accorde que la démarche, au moins pour l’essentiel, fut bien dès 1629 celle des Méditations. [--] Bref, le métaphysicien devient presque le contemporain du philosophe de la méthode, et il précède le savant, l’auteur du Monde et des Essais. A défaut du manuscript perdu du 1629, les textes qui nous restent, si l’on accepte le témoignage de Descartes, ne prétent guère à équivoque” (J.-M. Beyssade and M. Beyssade 1979, 10). Furthermore, they refer to a discussion around the fourth part of *Discourse* where Descartes presents an abstract of his metaphysics. They write that “on lui reproche d’avoir affaibli, pour vouloir les abréger, ses premières raisons métaphysiques; il répond en se proposant d’ajouter, à une éventuelle traduction latine du Discours, le commencement de métaphysique écrit en latin “il y a environ huit ans”” (J.-M. Beyssade and M. Beyssade 1979, 11). Cf. also Alanen 2003, 44.
3 Can the mind and body be really causally efficacious in Descartes?

Although Descartes might be able to convince us that the heterogeneity of mind and body is not an obstacle to the soul’s having a power to move the body, Descartes’s occasionalist tendencies might still create a problem for mind-body interaction. Broadly speaking, there are two schools of thought about exactly what makes the interaction between mind and body problematic. Historically the dominant school – represented for example by Gassendi and Elisabeth – takes the problem to be the heterogeneous nature of the two substances. But recently other scholars, of whom Tad Schmaltz is the outstanding example, have argued that the real problem is whether, on Cartesian principles, any finite things can have any power to act. This would be a problem if we accepted the full-fledged occasionalist view that finite things have no causal power, that only God is the true cause of changes in the world, a view we could attribute to Malebranche. I do not think Descartes intended to be an occasionalist, though I agree that there are certainly occasionalist tendencies in his thought. For him, the will of God seems to be both a necessary and a sufficient condition for everything that happens. For instance, in the second argument for God’s existence in the Third Meditation, Descartes seems to say (or at least, imply) that no finite cause can adequately explain my present existence (not even my own existence at the preceding moment) because my existence at the present moment does not follow from my previous existence (or any other finite cause). This seems to entail that the only adequate cause of my existence would be one from whose existence or operation my existence followed. And that seems to entail that only an omnipotent agent can be a cause.

Among the thinkers commonly classed as occasionalists, however, there are differences of opinion about the extent to which finite things lack causal power. There are some who hold that while there are large classes of apparent finite causes, which are not real causes, there are also important classes of apparent finite causes that are real causes. Louis de la Forge is a representative of this kind of position, which I call ‘semi-occasionalism’. I think that he is the commentator whom we should turn to when we want to understand Descartes’s conception of the mind-body union. In his Treatise on the Human Mind, de la Forge explicitly states that he is attempting to write as Descartes would have done if he had finished the Treatise on Man. Whether or not he really succeeds in this attempt, I do think that he raises the central points as regards Descartes’s account of the union. One of these issues is that although he considers God as the universal cause of all motions, the mind and body are particular causes of these same motions. More precisely, bodies are particular causes, as God had decided to govern “according to the laws of

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motion which are so well explained in Book Two of Mr Descartes’s *Principles*” and minds are particular causes as God governs “according to the scope of the power which He chose to give to their wills”. According to de la Forge, and Descartes, too, God establishes the union but he is not required to cause the particular movements when the mind and body act on one another. Steven Nadler captures de la Forge’s position well as regards the body acting on the mind when he states that

> God institutes the mind-body union, and “the power that the body has to excite various thoughts in the soul [is] a necessary consequence of this union” (*Traité* 244). Deus ex machina? Yes. Occasionalism? No.66

I believe that Descartes intended to claim that mind and body are causally efficacious. Admittedly, however, it is difficult to see how they can have any power of their own because only an omnipotent agent can be an adequate cause of a finite thing. If they do not have any power, it is quite evident that it is difficult to give any good explanation for their interaction. Nor can de la Forge provide such an explanation. When attempting to do that, he searches for support from the distinction between univocal and equivocal causation where the former means that the effect resembles the cause whereas in the latter there is no such resemblance.67 The mind-body interaction must be an example of the equivocal causation because

> it is obvious that the mind cannot act on the body as a univocal cause by forcing it to produce some thought, and that the body likewise does not act on the mind by communicating some motion to it, because the mind cannot be moved nor can the body think. It must therefore be as an equivocal cause that the mind, by its thoughts, forces the body to move and that the body, by moving, produces an occasion for the mind to produce some thoughts.68

Nevertheless, the appeal to univocal and equivocal causation does not clarify things as we would hope. It amounts to nothing more than the claim that sometimes causation requires resemblance, sometimes not. So de la Forge’s explanation of mind-body interaction in Descartes is no more explanatory than the claim that opium causes sleep because it has a dormitive virtue.

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66 Nadler 1993, 68.
67 He states that “[o]r entre les causes, les unes sont univoques, quand l’effet ressemble à sa cause, & les autres equivoques, quand il ne luy ressemble pas [now among causes, some are univocal, when the effect resembles the cause, and others are equivocal when the effect does not resemble the cause]” (de la Forge 1666, 203).
68 Clarke’s translation 1997, 124; de la Forge 1666, 203f: “Il est manifeste que ce n’est pas en qualité de cause univoque que l’Esprit peut agir sur le Corps, en l’obligeant à produire quelque pensée, & que le Corps n’agit pas aussi sur l’Esprit en lui communicuant quelque mouvement, parce que l’Esprit ne peut pas estre meu, ny le Corps penser; ce doit donc estre comme cause équivoque que l’Esprit par sa pensée oblige le Corps à se mouvoir; & que le Corps en se mouvant donne occasion à l’Esprit de produire quelque pensée.”
4 Why is the human mind not a pilot in Descartes?

Above I mentioned that, according to Richardson, there are two sources for the misconceptions of the mind-body interaction in Descartes. The second concerns the fact that in Descartes all properties are either purely mental or purely physical:

> the conviction that psychophysical dualism must lead to a naïve attempt to attain an exhaustive segregation of properties into those that are attributable to the purely physical and those that are attributable to the purely mental.69

The segregation of properties into those that are attributable either to the purely physical or purely mental is problematic because it supposes that there are no properties which could include both the mental and physical. In Descartes there are, however, thoughts, although obscure ones, which are attributable to us in so far as we have experience of being one with the body. This experience of being one with the body belongs as essentially to Descartes’s conception of the union as the mind-body interaction does. Furthermore, as regards this experience Descartes and Spinoza are in a close agreement. Although the mind-body union is a union of two really distinct substances, we conceive mind and body as one thing:

> people who never philosophize and use only their senses have no doubt that the soul moves the body and that the body acts on the soul. They regard both of them as a single thing, that is to say, they conceive their union; because to conceive the union between two things is to conceive them as one single thing (CSMK III 227; AT III 692).70

Descartes’s account of the union amounts to something more than a mere interaction between mind and body because of this experience of the mind and body as one thing, and I think that Spinoza follows Descartes very closely in this respect, as we shall see in the next chapter.71 When Descartes wants to show the way in which the mind and body are related to one another, he stresses often that it is something different from the relationship

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69 Richardson 1982, 36.
70 AT III 692: “ceux qui ne philosophsent jamais, et qui ne se servent que de leurs sens, ne doutent point que l’âme ne mueve que le corps, et que le corps n’agisse sur l’âme; mais ils considèrent l’un et l’autre comme une seule chose, c’est-à-dire ils conçoivent leur union; car concevoir l’union qui est entre deux choses, c’est les concevoir comme une seule.”
71 Cf. also Curley who makes this point as follows: “what I really want to say is that, in some sense, I and my body are one. That is why I have the concern for it that I do and why I have the awareness of it that I have. [---] However hard it may be to express these intuitions, I take it that Descartes and Spinoza shared them, and that these intuitions were more important in the genesis of the Spinozistic position than any concerns about the intelligibility of interaction between distinct substances” (Curley 1988, 59).
between the pilot and his ship. For instance, he writes in the *Discourse on the Method* that he constitutes a real man as follows:

After that, I described the rational soul, and showed that, unlike the other things of which I had spoken, it cannot be derived in any way from the potentiality of matter, but must be specially created. And I showed how it is not sufficient for it to be lodged in the human body like a helmsman in his ship, except perhaps to move its limbs, but that it must be more closely joined and united with the body in order to have, besides this power of movement, feelings and appetites like ours and so constitute a real man (CSM I 141; AT VI 59).

What’s the difference between a pilot and the human mind? And how does this difference help us to understand the mind-body relationship in Descartes? In the *Sixth Meditation* he explains that

I who am nothing but a thinking thing, would not feel pain when the body was hurt, but would perceive the damage purely by the intellect just as a sailor perceives by sight if anything in his ship is broken. Similarly, when the body needed food or drink, I should have an explicit understanding of the fact, instead of having confused sensations of hunger and thirst. For these sensations of hunger, thirst, pain and so on are nothing but confused modes of thinking which arise from the union and, as it were, intermingling of the mind with the body (CSM II 56; AT VII 81).

We have an immediate feeling of the pleasurable and painful things that happen in our body. The pilot may be aware of damage in his ship, and may realize that the damage threatens his life, and as a result may feel fear but he does not sense the damage itself as painful. This is a way to describe what Descartes means when he claims that the mind is joined to the whole body in

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72 Cf. this metaphor e.g. in the *Discourse on the Method* CSM II 141; AT XI 59, the *Sixth Meditation* CSM II 56; AT VII 81 and in the response to Arnauld CSM II 160; AT VII 227. The latter concerns the idea of the soul using the body which Arnauld attributes to the Platonic account.

73 AT VI 59: “J’avais décrit, après cela, l’âme raisonnable, et fait voir qu’elle ne peut aucunement être tirée de la puissance de la matière, ainsi que les autres choses dont j’avais parlé, mais qu’elle doit expressément être créée; et comment il ne suffit pas qu’elle soit logée dans le corps humain, ainsi qu’un pilote en son navire, sinon peut-être pour mouvoir ses membres, mais qu’il est besoin qu’elle soit jointe et unie plus étroitement avec lui, pour avoir, outre cela, des sentiments et des appétits semblables aux nôtres, et ainsi composer un vrai homme.”

74 AT VII: “Docet etiam natura, per istos sensus doloris, famis, sitis etc., me non tantum adesse meo corpori ut nauta adest navigio, sed illi arctissime esse conjunctum et quasi permixtum, adeo ut unum quid cum illo componam. Alioqui enim, cum corpus læditur, ego, qui nihil aliiud sum quam res cogitans, non sentirem idcirco dolorem, sed turo intellectu læsionem istam perciperem, ut nauta visu percipit si quid in nave frangatur; et cum corpus cibo vel potu indiget, hoc ipsum expresse intelligerem, non confusos famis et sitis sensus haberef. Nam certe isti sensus sitis, famis, doloris etc., nihil aliiud sunt quam confusi quidam cogitandi modi ab unione et quasi permixtione mentis cum corpore exorti.”
the Passions of the Soul (CSM I 339; AT XI 351). The pilot does not become activated like the human mind when, for example, his vessel runs out of fuel. When the boat does not move any longer, he perceives it and he might become frustrated but he does not feel an immediate, action-motivating sensation, as the human mind does when its body is damaged. I think that this experience of the mind and body as one thing is common in Descartes and Spinoza: in both cases the mind aims at executing the actions to which the bodily states incline it.

The most obvious difference between the pilot and the human mind is that the relationship between the pilot and the ship is voluntary in a way that the relationship of the mind to the body is not. If the damage to the ship is not so great that he goes down with it, the pilot can leave it at the end of the voyage and pilot another ship. We have no choice about what body we are attached to. In the Fourth Set of Objections Arnauld argues that Descartes’s account of the soul resembles the Platonic one where the soul is something that uses the body. He writes that

> it seems, moreover, that the argument proves too much, and takes us back to the Platonic view (which M. Descartes nonetheless rejects) that nothing corporeal belongs to our essence, so that man is merely a rational soul and the body merely a vehicle for the soul – a view which gives rise to the definition of man as ‘a soul which makes use of a body’ (CSM I 143; AT VII 203).\(^75\)

Descartes has good reasons to reject Arnauld’s critique and to state that he has given the strongest arguments ever against it. He refutes Arnauld in referring to the Sixth Meditation as follows:

> [a]lso, I thought I was very careful to guard against anyone inferring from this that man was simply ‘a soul which makes use of a body’. For in the Sixth Meditation, where I dealt with the distinction between the mind and body, I also proved at the same time that the mind is substantially united with the body. And the arguments which I used to prove this are as strong as any I can remember ever having read (CSM II 160; AT VII 227f).\(^76\)

The soul is not only acting on the body but it feels automatically what happens in the body and that feeling makes us inclined to act accordingly. De la Forge understands this point in Descartes better than Arnauld does. He points out, firstly, that the union depends so little on our will that we can

\(^75\) AT VII 203 : “Accedit quod hoc argumentum nimis probare videtur, et nos in eam Platonicam opinionem deducere (quam tamen author refellit), nihil corporeum ad nostram essentiam pertinere, ita ut homo sit solus animus, corpus vero non nisi vehiculum animi; unde hominem definiunt animum utentem corpore.”

\(^76\) AT VII 227f : “Satisque diligenter cavere mihi visus sum, ne quis ideo putaret hominem esse solum animum utentem corpore. Nam in eadem sexta Meditatione, in qua egi de distinctione mentis a corpore, simul etiam probavi substantialiter illi esse unitam; ususque sum rationibus quibus non memini me ullas ad idem probandum fortiores alibi legisse.”
hardly say it contributes anything to it. He states explicitly that the will does not have anything to do in respect of “the subject to which the mind is joined nor in respect of the manner or duration of its union”. Furthermore, his statement could be given as a precise explication of the various ways in which the mind’s relation to the body differs from the pilot’s relation to his ship. In the following quote he enumerates several things the mind cannot do, all of which the pilot could easily do:

it is certain that the human mind does not choose its body, nor the movements, the time, or which of its thoughts should be joined to a body; nor can it leave the body, change it or associate another with it, nor change anything in the way bodies usually act on one another [---] Nor can the will avoid being moved by the thoughts which arise in the mind on the occasion of the body.77

Furthermore, if the soul is supposed to use the body, it does so quite differently from the way the pilot uses his ship. He needs a great amount of knowledge to conduct the ship. This is not the case when we want to move the body. We do not need any clear and distinct knowledge of our body to move our limbs. The only thing we need is just a volition to do so. De la Forge notices also this difference between the pilot and the human mind as follows:

it is not simply in willing to move the various parts of their vessel that they have the power to move it forward or change its direction, but by means of a distinct knowledge they have of the instruments they must use and the way they use them, whereas the human mind does not naturally have any knowledge of the means necessary to move its body and, even if it did have such knowledge, it would be useless because the will to move is alone sufficient for the effect.78

In the end, the reason why the human mind differs from the pilot is that we experience ourselves sometimes as being identical with the body. The pilot does not ever experience himself as being identical with his boat. Elisabeth

77 Clarke’s translation 1997, 129; de la Forge 1666, 214f: “il est certain que l’Esprit de l’Homme ne choisit, ny son Corps, ny les mouvements, ny le temps, ny celles de ses pensées qui doivent se joindre à un Corps, il ne peut pas non plus le quitter, ny changer, ny luy en associer un autre, ny aporter aucun changement à la maniere dont ils ont accoutumé d’agir l’un sur l’autre; ny s’empêcher d’apercevoir les objets qui agissent assez fort sur les Sens, pour en porter le contre-coup jusques à son siege, ny les apercevoir à une autre maniere; sa Volonté ne peut pas non plus s’empêcher d’estre émeuë par les pensées qui viennent dans l’Esprit à l’occasion du Corps.”

78 Clarke’s translation 1997, 133; de la Forge 1666, 223f: “ce n’est pas simplement en voulant mouvoir les diverses parties de son Vaisseau qu’il a la puissance de la faire avancer, & d’en changer la situation; mais c’est par une connaissance distincte qu’il a des instrumens dont il se doit servir, & par l’employ qu’il en fait; au lieu que l’Esprit de l’Homme n’a de sa nature aucune connaissance des moyens necessaires pour mouvoir son Corps; & quand mesme il l’auroit, elle luy seroit inute: La seule Volonté qu’il en a estant suffisante pour cet effet.”
points out to Descartes on 20 June 1643 that it is easy to conceive the soul as material or to attribute extension to the soul (AT III 685). 79 Descartes does not consider it problematic but encourages her to do so by responding that “I beg her to feel free to attribute this matter and extension to the soul because that is simply to conceive it united to the body” (CSMK III 228; AT III 694). 80 The affinity with Spinoza is extremely striking here: both these philosophers are committed to the idea that we sometimes experience ourselves being one with the body. For Spinoza this feeling of being one with the body – or of being a body – is an axiomatic truth. He asserts as a fourth axiom of Part II in the *Ethics* that “[w]e feel that a certain body [NS our body] 81 is affected in many ways”. 82 For Spinoza it is not, however, a question about an experienced identity between the mind and body for they are numerically identical modes. The issues which need to be clarified concern why Spinoza rejected the mind-body interaction and how he actually understood the identity between the mind and body.

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79 She writes that “[e]t j’avoue qu’il me serait plus facile de concéder la matière et l’extension à l’âme, que la capacité de mouvoir un corps et d’en être ému, à un être immatériel” (AT III 685).

80 AT III 694 : “Mais, puisque Votre Altesse remarque qu’il est plus facile d’attribuer de la matière et de l’extension à l’âme, que de lui attribuer la capacité de mouvoir un corps et d’en être mue, sans avoir de matière, je la supplie de vouloir librement attribuer cette matière et cette extension à l’âme; car cela n’est autre chose que la concevoir unie au corps.”

81 The abbreviation of NS means here, and later, *De Nagelate Schriften van B.D.S* that is a Dutch translation of Spinoza’s *Opera*. It is also a posthumous edition of 1677.

82 GII/86 : “Nos corpus quoddam multis modis affici sentimus.”
Chapter II: Spinoza’s Rejection of Mind-Body Interaction

Spinoza criticizes Descartes’s account of the mind-body union in the same spirit as Gassendi and Elisabeth have done. He writes in the Preface to the Part V of the Ethics:

What, I ask, does he understand by the union of Mind and Body? What clear and distinct concept, does he have of a thought so closely united to some little portion of quantity? Indeed, I wish he had explained this union by its proximate cause. But he had conceived the Mind to be so distinct from the Body that he could not assign any singular cause, either of this union or of the Mind itself. Instead, it was necessary for him to have recourse to the cause of the whole Universe, i.e., to God (EVPreface; G II/279f).83

Spinoza, like Elisabeth and Gassendi, is looking for a scientific explanation of mind-body interaction of the kind that Descartes offers of the changes in the physical world. He presses Descartes especially as regards the force of the soul over the body when he asks, “How many degrees of motion the Mind can give to that pineal gland, and how great a force is required to hold it in suspense”.84 But Spinoza’s criticism rests on a deeper understanding of what is required for a scientific explanation, an understanding which he and Descartes share. According to both of them, a scientific explanation requires laws of nature connecting the cause and the effect. We can attribute to both

83 GII/279: “Quid quaeso, per Mentis, et Corporis unionem intelligit? quem, inquam, clarum, et distinctum conceptum habet cogitationis arctissime unitae cuidam quantitatis portiunculae? Vellem sane, ut hanc unionem per proximam suam causam explicuisset. Sed ille Mentem a Corpore adeo distinctam conceperat, ut nec hujus unionis, nec ipsius Mentis ullam singularem causam assignare potuerit; sed necesse ipsi fuerit, ad causam totius Universi, hoc est, ad Deum recurrere.”
84 Here is the whole criticism: “I should like very much to know how many degrees of motion the Mind can give to that pineal gland, and how great a force is required to hold it in suspense. For I do not know whether this gland is driven about more slowly by the Mind than by the animal spirits, or more quickly; nor do I know whether the motions of the Passions which we have joined closely to firm judgements can be separated from them again by corporeal causes [Deinde pervelim scire, quot motus gradus potest glandulae isti pineali Mens tribuere, et quanta cum vi eandem suspensam tenere potest. Nam nescio, an haec glans tardius, vel celerius a Mente circumagatur, quam a spiritibus animalibus, et an motus Passionum, quos firmis judicis arcte junximus, non possint ab iisdem iterum a causis corporeis disjungi]” (EVPreface;GII/280,4–10).
of them the covering law model of scientific explanation that requires both laws and initial conditions, neither alone being sufficient. Descartes explains the movements in the physical world through a set of laws of nature. Spinoza follows Descartes exactly as far as the latter’s explanation of the physical world is concerned. It can be seen, for example, in the Preface to Part III of Spinoza’s exposition of Descartes’s Principles. Spinoza writes there that

what is more worthy of note, is that we shall hardly be able to assume anything from which the same effects could not be deduced, through perhaps with more difficulty, through the Laws of nature explained above. For since matter, with the aid of these Laws, successively takes on all the forms of which it is capable, if we consider those forms in order, we will be able, in the end, to arrive at [the form] of this world (CW I, 296; GI/228).85

Spinoza adopts thoroughly this aspect of Descartes’s philosophy but extends it much further: he applies it to all phenomena. He insists in the preface to the Part III of the Ethics that

Nature is always the same, and its virtue and power of acting are everywhere one and the same, that is, the laws and rules of Nature [---] are always and everywhere the same (EIIIIPreface).86

There is no phenomenon in Nature87 which cannot be explained through a set of laws (and antecedent conditions). Ideally, all phenomena should be explained that way. The idea that all things are to be explained by the universal laws comes out also in the Theological-Political Treatise, especially clearly when Spinoza refutes miracles. He insists that

Nothing, therefore, happens in nature which is contrary to its universal laws. Nor does anything happen which does not agree with those laws or does not follow from them. For whatever happens, happens by God's will and eternal decree, i.e., as we have now shown, whatever happens, happens according to laws and rules which involve eternal necessity and truth (CW II, Curley’s draft; GIII/83).88

85 GI/228: “Et, quod magis notatu dignum est, vix aliquid assumere poterimus, ex quo non idem effectus, quamquam fortasse operosius, per naturae Leges supra explicatas, deduci possint. Cum enim earum Legum ope materia formas omnes, quaram est capax, successive assumat, si formas istas ordine consideremus, tandem ad illam, quae est hujus mundi, poterimus devenire.”
86 GII/138: “natura semper eadem, et ubique una, eademque ejus virtus, et agendi potentia, hoc est, naturae leges, et regulae [---] sunt ubique, et semper eadem.”
87 I try to capitalize the term of ‘nature’ in Spinoza when it refers to the whole substance. Nature with a lower case n refers either to the essence of a thing or the substance as it is conceived under the attribute of extension. Some inconstancies might occur.
88 GIII/83: “Nihil igitur in natura contingit, quod ipsius legibus universalibus repugnet; at nec etiam aliquid, quod cum isidem non convenit, aut ex isidem non sequitur: nam quicquid fit, per Dei voluntatem et aeternum decretum fit, hoc est, ut jam ostendimus, quicquid fit, id secundum leges et regulas, quae aeternam necessitatem et veritatem involvunt, fit.”

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All things in Nature are governed by some set of laws, thus, there cannot be miracles. If people regard something as a miracle, it is a consequence of people’s opinion and results from the fact that they cannot really explain the natural cause that is at work by the knowledge they have that moment. Spinoza rejects miracles as follows:

From these conclusions – that nothing happens in nature which does not follow from its laws, that its laws extend to all things conceived by the Divine intellect itself, and finally, that nature maintains a fixed and immutable order – it clearly follows that the term “miracle” cannot be understood except in relation to men's opinions, and means nothing but a work whose natural cause we cannot explain by the example of another customary thing, or at least which cannot be so explained by the one who writes or relates the miracle (CW II, Curley’s draft; GIII/83f).89

Spinoza’s discussion of miracles provides us also with an explicit recognition of the role antecedent conditions play in scientific explanations. He points out that to increase the impression of something being a miracle in the biblical stories, the natural events happening at the time of the supposed miracle are left out or their role is underestimated. According to Spinoza, this comes out as follows, e.g. in the case where Moses was thought to raise the sea:

So we must believe that although the circumstances of miracles and their natural causes are not always or all fully described, nevertheless the miracles did not happen without them. This is established also by Exodus 14:27, where it is related only that it was simply by the command of Moses that the sea rose up again, and there is no mention of a wind. Nevertheless, in the Song [of Moses] it is said that it happened because God blew with his wind (i.e., with a very strong wind). So this circumstance is omitted in the story, and for this reason the miracle seems greater (CW II, Curley’s draft; GIII/90f).90

Often the reason why miracles seem to be violations of the laws of nature is that scripture does not always refer to the ‘circumstances and natural causes’ that would enable us to bring the apparently miraculous event under a natu-
r al law. Another example of this sort we find in chapter two of the *Theological-Political Treatise*. Spinoza tells us about Joshua who thought that the sun moves around the earth and that the earth is at rest. Joshua also thought that the sun was still one day and as a result there was more daylight. Besides the fact that Joshua did not know how the planets move, he left out a natural cause for the greater duration of the light. According to Spinoza, Joshua and others who hold similar beliefs “did not attend to the fact that a refraction greater than usual could arise from the great amount of ice which was then in that part of the air” (CW II, Curley’s draft ; GII/36).

According to Spinoza, we can have clear and distinct thoughts of passions with exactly the same scientific method that involves a set of laws and knowledge of circumstances. Descartes’s account of passions involves mind-body interaction but no psychophysical laws. Because the laws of Nature are always framed in ways that involve or presuppose the basic concepts of the attribute under which Nature is being conceived – and do not involve or presuppose the basic concepts of any other attribute – there can’t be a law of Nature which connects modes of one attribute with modes of another attribute. And since causal connections presuppose laws of Nature connecting the cause with the effect, this feature of laws excludes the possibility of psychophysical causation. Descartes himself has defined mind and body in terms of different attributes, which make the requisite conceptual connection impossible. Spinoza, therefore, rejects the mind-body interaction:

since there is no common measure between the will and motion, there is also no comparison between the power, or forces, of the mind and those of the body. Consequently, the forces of the body cannot in any way be determined by those of the mind (EVPreface).

The aim of this chapter is to understand Spinoza’s account of the mind-body union. Spinoza is in agreement with Descartes as far as the experience of being one with the body is concerned. However, he gives metaphysical reasons for it that Descartes would not have accepted. Instead of regarding the mind as a substance Spinoza considers it as a set of ideas that represents what happens in its object, the human body. Contrary to Descartes, the human mind never exists without the body any more than an idea can be without its object or content.

Spinoza’s account of the relationship between the mind and body amounts, however, to more than the fact that the human mind represents the

91 GIII/36: “nec ad id attendisse, quod ex nimia glacie, quae tum temporis in regione aeris erat”.
92 I shall explain later why why causal connections follow conceptual conditions and have to be internal to each attribute.
93 GII/280: “et sane, cum nulla detur ratio voluntatis ad motum, nulla etiam datur comparatio inter Mentis, et Corporis potentiam, seu vires; et consequenter hujus vires nequaquam viribus illius determinari possunt.”
human body: they are in fact identical. The sense in which the mind and body are identical is a difficult question but at the end of this chapter, I shall turn to it briefly and explain it in terms of Spinoza’s idea of God and his attributes. I shall start, however, by having a look at Spinoza’s definition of substance and the difference between Descartes and Spinoza in this respect: Although both of them think that substance is a thing that exists independently, Spinoza thinks that only a thing that can be conceived through itself can exist independently. This is the basis from which I will approach Spinoza’s account of the relationship between the mind and body.

1 The order of philosophizing

According to both Descartes and Spinoza, philosophy starts from God. Descartes thinks that all the knowledge we have is to be deduced from him.94 Scientific knowledge means knowledge of effects through their causes.95 If God is the first and the true cause of things, then perfect knowledge presupposes knowledge of God. Spinoza shares this view when he argues in EIIIP10S that the proper order of Philosophizing starts from the contemplation of the divine nature. There is, however, a difference between their account of God and substance. Spinoza thinks that we can acquire knowledge of the nature of God, but Descartes thinks we cannot know the nature of God: the way in which he causes things remains hidden from us because of our finite intellect.96

94 He states in the Principles, Part I, article 24 that “it is very clear that the best path to follow when we philosophize will be to start from the knowledge of God himself and try to deduce an explanation of the things created by him” [perspicuum est optimam philosophandi viam nos sequuturos, si ex ipsius Dei cognitione rerum ab eo creatarum explicationem deducere conemur]” (CSM I 201; AT VIIIa 14).
95 CSM I 201; AT VIIIa 14: “[t]his is the way to acquire the most perfect scientific knowledge, that is, knowledge of effects through their causes [ut ita scientiam perfectissimam, quae est effectuum per causas, acquiramus]”.
96 The distinction between God’s infinite and our finite intellect comes out, for example, in the first part of Principia. There he states in art 36, first of all, that it is nature of a created intellect to be finite. Secondly, he understands the nature of the finite intellect so that its scope does not extend to everything (ATVIIIa 18). According to Descartes, God’s knowledge is beyond our understanding. Because we cannot ever acquire God’s perspective we cannot claim that we know his plans. Therefore, Descartes thinks that we should consider God as an efficient cause of all things. This is an interesting way to formulate one’s point. We could think that Descartes is saying here that there are actually nothing but efficient causes. The fact that according to him the infinite intellect is beyond our understanding appears as a somewhat empty claim. Cf. Descartes when he states about God that “[w]e should, instead, consider him as the efficient cause of all things; and starting from the divine attributes which by God’s will we have some knowledge of, we shall see, with the aid of our God-given natural light, what conclusions should be drawn concerning those effects which are apparent to our senses [Sed ipsum ut causam efficientem rerum omnium considerantes, videbimus quidnam ex iis ejus attributis, quorum nos nonnullam notitiam voluit habere, circa illos ejus effectus qui sensibus
2 Substance in Descartes: the capacity of independent existence and of being a subject

Descartes defines substance in the *Principles* by stating that substance is a thing whose existence does not depend on any other thing. He does, of course, think God’s existence depends on himself (on his essence), but he does not make it part of the definition of substance. So he continues that it is only God whose existence does not depend on any other thing. In spite of this definition, he is willing to apply the term substance to created things in a different but related sense. Thus, Descartes regards created minds and bodies as substances as well because their existence does not depend on anything other than God. Spinoza criticizes Descartes for this relatively high independency that he grants to the mind and the body. For instance, in the preface to *Descartes’s Principles of Philosophy* Lodewijk Meyer states on behalf of Spinoza that

Descartes only supposes, and does not prove, that the human mind is a substance thinking absolutely. Although our author indeed admits that there is a thinking substance in nature, nevertheless he denies that it constitutes the essence of the human mind, but maintains that [--] just as the human body is not extension absolutely, but only extension determined in a certain way, according to the laws of extended nature, by motion and rest, so also the human mind or soul is not thought absolutely, but only thought determined in a certain way, according to the laws of thinking nature, by ideas (CW I 229f; GI/132).

*nostris apparent, lumen naturale, quod nobis indidit, concludendum esse ostendat*” (CSM I 202; ATVIII a 15f).

97 In the *Principles*, part I,51 Descartes defines substance as follows: “[b]y substance we can understand nothing other than a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence [per substantiam nihil aliud intelligere possimus, quam rem quae ita existit, ut nulla alia re indiget ad existendum]” (CSMI,208; ATVIIIA24). And he continues that “[t]here is only one substance which can be understood to depend on no other thing whatsoever, namely God [quidem substantia quæ nulla plane re indiget, unica tantum potest intelligi, nempe Deus]” (ibid.).

98 As he states “[i]n the case of all other substances, we perceive that they can exist only with help of God’s occurrence. Hence the term ‘substance’ does not apply univocally, as they say in the Schools, to God and to other things; that is, there is no distinctly intelligible meaning of the term which is common to God and his creatures” (CSM I 210; AT VIIIA 24).

99 He continues that “as for corporeal substance and mind (or created thinking substance), these can be understood to fall under this common concept: things that need only the concurrence of God in order to exist” (CSM I 210; AT VIIIA 25).

100 GI/132: “tantum supponit, non probat Cartesius, mentem humanam esse substantiam absolute cogitantem. Cum contra Author noster admittat quidem, in Rerum natura esse substantiam cogitatem; attamen neget illam constituere essentiam Mentis humanae; sed statuat, codem modo, quo Extensio nullis limitibus determinata est, Cogitationem etiam nullis limitibus determinari; adeoque, quemadmodum Corpus humanum non est absolute, sed tantum certo modo secundum leges naturae extensae per motum et quietem determinata extensio, sic etiam Mentem sive Animam humanam non esse absolute, sed tantum secundum leges naturae cogitantis per ideas certo modo determinatam cogitationem.”
There is, however, for Descartes another defining feature according to which the mind and the body are substances: they are subjects in which properties inhere. The idea of a substance as a subject comes out in the Second Set of Replies:

This term applies to every thing in which whatever we perceive immediately resides, as in a subject, or to every thing by means of which whatever we perceive exists. By ‘whatever we perceive’ is meant any property, quality or attribute of which we have a real idea. The only idea we have of a substance itself, in the strict sense, is that it is the thing in which whatever we perceive (or whatever has objective being in one of our ideas) exists, either formally or eminently. For we know by the natural light that a real attribute cannot belong to nothing (CSM II 114; AT VII 161).101

According to Descartes, we do not have immediate knowledge of created substances but we know them through their principal attribute. Because a real attribute cannot belong to nothing, there must be a thing in which it exists. We have a clear and distinct thought, on the one hand, of thinking and, on the other, of extension. Because these properties must exist in a thing, there is a thinking thing and an extended thing. But although thinking things exist in themselves, they are conceived through something else, the attribute they possess. And similarly, although extended things exist in themselves, they are conceived through something else, the attribute of extension. Descartes grants that something that is conceived through another thing can still be a substance. As we shall soon see, according to Spinoza, a thing that is conceived through another thing does not count as a substance. We could, however, ask if Descartes thinks substance is truly distinguished from its principal attribute. This is to ask if substance would be the principal attribute substantialized. This does not, however, seem to be the case as the above quotation shows.102 According to Descartes, there is a distinction between a substance and the principal attribute, but this distinction is not real, and hence the attributes could not exist independently. In Spinoza, however, there is no such distinction between substance and attributes. We confront the following problem in Descartes: he thinks that there are certain things in

101 AT VII 161: “Omnis res cui inest immediate, ut in subjecto, sive per quam existit aliquid quod percipimus, hoc est aliqua proprietatis, sive qualitates, sive attributum, cujus realis idea in nobis est, vocatur Substantia. Neque enim ipsius substantiae praecise sumptae aliam habemus ideam, quam quod sit res, in qua formaliter vel eminenter existit illud aliquid quod percipimus, sive quod est objective in aliqua ex nostris ideis, quia naturali lumine notum est, nullum esse posse nihilii reale attributum.”

102 Cf. Curley here. He writes that “[t]he distinction between substance and its principal attribute, then, is only a distinction of reason because the attribute cannot be conceived as existing by itself. But it’s no less a real distinction in the sense of that term in which “real” rules out “illusory”’. By referring to Descartes conversation with Burman Curley concludes that “[s]ubstance cannot, then, be said to be simply the principal attribute substantialized” (Curley 1966, 9).
which some properties inhere because they cannot inhere in nothing. He regards these things as substances although we cannot have an immediate knowledge of them. This puzzle is how something which is conceived through something else can really be considered a substance.

3 Spinoza’s substance: a thing that is conceived through itself

3.1 In *se esse* and *per se concipi*

Spinoza and Descartes think differently about what is intelligible when defining substance. For Descartes it is intelligible to identify substance as a thing which is conceived not through itself but through the properties which inhere in it. According to Spinoza, it is not intelligible to do this, because he does not think that a thing that is not conceived through itself can exist in itself. His definition of substance conjoins both characteristics:

> [by] substance I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, i.e., that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed (EID3, GII/45).\(^{103}\)

Spinoza treats the two clauses of the definition – to exist in itself, *in se esse*, and to be conceived through itself, *per se concipi* – as equivalent. The mind and body are thereby disqualified as substances. We see, for example, in the passage from Meyer’s *Preface* that the existence of the mind and body depend on other things, and this excludes their being conceived through themselves. Thus, they are not substances.

How can we justify the equivalence between independent existence and being conceived through itself? A central axiom in Spinoza’s system is that “[t]he knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of its cause” (EIA4).\(^{104}\) Now if something exists in itself, it is not caused through another thing.\(^{105}\) The knowledge of this thing depends on its cause, namely on itself because what exists in itself cannot be caused through another thing. Thus, what exists in itself must be conceived through itself. It is, then, con-

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\(^{103}\) GII/45: “Per substantiam intelligi id, quod in se est, et per se concipitur; hoc est id, cujus conceptus non indiget conceptu alterius rei, a quo formari debet.”

\(^{104}\) GII/46: “Effectus cognitio a cognitione causae dependet, et eandem involvit.”

\(^{105}\) About the equivalence between existing in itself and being a cause of itself cf. *TdIE* §92: “If the thing is in itself, or as is commonly said, is the cause of itself [Scilicet si res sit in se, sive, ut vulgo dicitur, causa sui]” (CW I, 38; GII/34).
tradicory to claim that something exists in itself but is conceived through another.\textsuperscript{106}

The central tenet in Spinoza’s metaphysics is that “[w]hatever is, is either in itself or in another” (EIA1).\textsuperscript{107} We have seen that the thing that is in itself is substance. Because according to Spinoza there is only one substance, namely God, all the rest is in God. If a thing that is in itself is conceived through itself, then a thing that is in another is conceived through the other thing. A thing that is in God and is conceived through God is a mode. In Spinoza’s system there are no other things than substance and modes. To understand how modes are in God, to understand the nature of their causal dependence on God, we need to understand how the attributes fit into Spinoza’s metaphysics.

3.2 Spinoza’s account of attributes

For Descartes attributes are a kind of property through which we conceive substances. If there are nothing but substance and modes in Spinoza, is there any role for the attributes? Attributes according to Spinoza express the essence of substance:

\begin{quote}
a being absolutely infinite, i.e. a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence (EID6).\textsuperscript{108}
\end{quote}

In expressing God’s essence, the attributes also express his power, for as IP34 tells us: “God’s power is his very essence”.\textsuperscript{109} I have already quoted the preface to the third part of the \textit{Ethics} where Spinoza explains that by the virtue and power of God he means the rules and laws of Nature according to which everything happens and can be explained.\textsuperscript{110} He identifies Nature’s

\textsuperscript{106} Cf. Curley who shows how Leibniz’s comments on Spinoza’s \textit{Opera Posthuma} lead us to think the equivalence between existing in itself and being conceived through itself (Curley 1969, 15). Furthermore, Michael Della Rocca stresses the co-extension between the conceptual, explanatory and causal terms in Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza: “Spinoza thus treats causal and conceptual relations as coextensive and since, as we saw earlier, he treats conceptual claims as equivalent explanatory claims, it follows that he treats causal claims as equivalent to explanatory claims” (Della Rocca 1996, 11). Cf. Della Rocca also in 2002, 12.

\textsuperscript{107} GII/46 : “Omnia, quae sunt, vel in se, vel in alio sunt.”

\textsuperscript{108} GII/45: “substantiam constantem infinitis attributis, quorum unumquodque æternam, & infinitam essentiam exprimit.”

\textsuperscript{109} GII/76: “Dei potentia est ipsa ipsius essentia.”

\textsuperscript{110} Spinoza identifies God with Nature. This emerges in the \textit{Preface} to Part IV where he first uses the expression God or Nature. He writes e.g. that “[f]or we have shown in the Appendix of Part I, that Nature does nothing on account of an end. That eternal and infinite being we call God, or Nature, acts from the same necessity from which he exists [Ostendimus enim in Primae Partis Appendicem Naturam propter finem non agere; æternum namque illud, ut infinitum Ens, quod Deum, seu Naturam appellamus, eadem, qua existit, necessitate agit. Ex qua enim naturae necessitate existi]” (GII/206).
virtue and power of acting with the laws of Nature.\footnote{Cf. Curley according to whom “Spinoza speaks of the laws of nature in the same logical language that he uses of God’s power or essence. Nothing happens in nature that does not follow from her universal laws” (Curley 1969, 48). When Curley explains the essence of substance through the idea of laws he refers, not only to the preface of the third part of the *Ethics*, but also to the third chapter of the *Theological–Political Treatise*. In the latter work Spinoza equates the guidance of God with things happening according to the laws of nature. He writes that “that the universal laws of nature, according to which all things happen and are determined, are nothing but the eternal decrees of God, which always involve eternal truth and necessity. Therefore, whether we say that all things happen according to the laws of nature, or whether we say that they are ordered according to the decree and guidance of God, we say the same thing [diximus enim supra, et in alio loco jam ostendimus, leges naturae universales, secundum quas omnia fiunt et determinantur, nihil esse nisi Dei aeterna decreta, quae semper aeternam veritatem et necessitatem involvunt. Sive igitur dicamus omnia secundum leges naturae fieri, sive ex Dei decreto et direcione ordinari, idem dicimus]” (GIII/46/8). This is the way in which Spinoza denies that there can be any miracles. Because everything happens according to the laws of nature there is an explanation for all things. Curley puts this as follows: “This is why it is impious to believe in miracles. To deny that things have a natural explanation is to deny the power of God. Belief in miracles, paradoxically, is atheism. Conversely, so far as we achieve an understanding of how Nature works according to eternal laws, we increase our knowledge of God” (Curley 1969, 49).} We have the following set of equivalences: God’s essence = God’s attributes = God’s power = the (fundamental) laws of Nature. We can make more precise the relationship between attributes and the laws of Nature. Spinoza says that attributes express the essence of substance. His use of the term “expression” is confusing but we can try to understand how it functions as follows. According to Spinoza, every idea, insofar as it is an idea, involves an element of affirmation (EIIIP49). The idea of extension, for example, involves a set of affirmations about extended objects. Those affirmations that are the fundamental laws of Nature under the attribute of extension explain – in the sense of articulate or express – the basic nature of extension. That is, they explain = articulate = express the basic nature of one of the attributes which in turn expresses = articulates = explains the infinite nature of God.

Furthermore, “each attribute of a substance must be conceived through itself” (EIP10).\footnote{GII/51: “Unumquodque unius substantiae attributum per se concipi debet.”} No attribute of substance can be conceived through any other attribute. What this entails is that the laws of Nature which articulate the nature of an attribute are the basic laws of Nature as it is conceived under that attribute – the axioms of the unified science that explain, in the case of extension, the behavior of extended objects. We conceive the attribute of substance as a thinking thing only through the concepts which define thinking, and the attribute of substance as an extended thing only through the concepts which define bodies. Because the knowledge of the effect depends on the knowledge of the cause, the causal connections follow the conceptual ones. It follows from the fact that because substance is conceived as thinking only through the concepts that define thinking, and as extended only through the concepts that define extension, that thinking things are caused only by
thinking things and extended things by extended ones. The conceptual condi-
tion entails the impossibility of interaction between attributes.

Although each of the attributes is to be conceived only through itself, 
these conceptions are about the same substance. Michael Della Rocca points 
out that each of the attributes is sufficient to pick out the essence of sub-
stance.\textsuperscript{113} He argues for this through what he calls “the conceptual or causal 
barrier between thought and extension”.\textsuperscript{114} Firstly, he shows that two or more 
substances cannot share the same attribute (cf. EIP5). If Spinoza allowed 
this, an attribute would be conceived through another. The reason Spinoza 
denies this is that each attribute is to be conceived distinctly.\textsuperscript{115} It follows that 
each of the attributes is sufficient for conceiving of substance.\textsuperscript{116} This means 
that each attribute expresses the essence of substance fully by itself. Sub-

\textsuperscript{113} Curley points out that the NS have the indefinite article here (cf. CW I, 408). Therefore, he 
translates EID6 so that each attribute “expresses an eternal and infinite essence”. This would 
suggest that the substance has several essences. The Latin has neither a definite nor an indi-
finite article. I do not have an definite view about this but what I regard problematic if we grant 
several essences for a substance is that it becomes harder to avoid a conclusion according to 
with there are several substances as well.

\textsuperscript{114} Cf. Della Rocca 1996, 9.

\textsuperscript{115} To understand Della Rocca’s argument it is important to point out that, according to 
Spinoza, things can be distinguished either through a difference in attributes of the substances 
or by a difference in their affections (EIP4). Evidently, substances cannot be distinguished 
through their affections. This is clear since substance is prior in nature to its affections. The 
case that is interesting to consider here is the one of two substances which share some of the 
attributes but differ in others. How can they be distinguished? In the example that Della 
Rocca sketches there are two substances c and d so that the former that has two attributes, 
thinking and extension and the latter has extension, it lacks thinking but has instead a different 
attribute z. How are these substances distinguished? We cannot conceive the substance c 
through extension because there is the substance d that has also the attribute of extension. Can 
we conceive, for example, the substance c only through the attribute of thinking? In that case, 
the substance as extended would be conceived through thinking. Cf. Della Rocca: “[t]o 
conceive of c, we must, therefore, have the concept of the attribute of thought, that attribute 
which c has and which differentiates c from d. We can conclude from this that we must, in 
or order to conceive of c as extended, conceive of it as “the substance with the attribute of 
extension and the attribute of thought.” In other words, the concept of a certain extended 
substance, that is, c, requires the concept of thought. Given that Spinoza’s notion of 
conceiving through, it follows that extended substance c is conceived through thought” (Della 
Rocca 2002, 17). Cf. Della Rocca also when he states that “what led to the violation of the 
conceptual barrier in the case of c was the fact that one could have the conception of one of 
c’s attributes taken independently of another of c’s attributes, without having the conception 
of c itself. That is, the violation consisted in the fact that one of c’s attributes (that is 
extension) was not, independently of another of c’s attributes (that is, thought), sufficient for 
conceiving of c” (Della Rocca 2002, 18). It seems right to stress as Della Rocca does that it is 
these cases that Spinoza attempts to eliminate when he claims that substances cannot share 

\textsuperscript{116} Cf. Della Rocca “[t]he fact that this conclusion violated the conceptual barrier suggests that 
an implication of the conceptual barrier is the following: (3) Each attribute of a substance, 
independently of any other attribute of that substance, is sufficient for conceiving of that 
substance” (Della Rocca 2002, 18). Della Rocca derives this from Spinoza’s definition of 
attribute (EID4) and of his definition of essence (EID2).
stance consists in an infinity of attributes, but this does not mean that it is the sum of all these attributes that is its essence. Essence can allow a variety of expressions, many different kinds of laws. The essence and power of God means that all things, no matter under which attributes they are conceived, are to be explained by some set of laws.

3.3 The existence of finite things

Meyer wrote of Spinoza that neither the human mind nor the human body exists absolutely but determined in a certain way. Unlike God, finite things are not a cause of themselves, “[t]he essence of man does not involve necessary existence, that is, from the order of Nature it can happen equally that this or that man does exist, or that he does not exist” (EIIA1).117 “The order of Nature” here refers to the essence of Nature, to the laws.118 The idea is that it is consistent with the laws of Nature for any given finite thing either to exist or not to exist, depending on what other finite things exist. The existence of finite things depends on external causes:

Every singular thing, or any thing which is finite and has a determinate existence, can neither exist nor be determined to produce an effect unless it is determined to exist and produce an effect by another cause, which is also finite and has a determinate existence; and again, this cause also can neither exist nor be determined to produce an effect unless it is determined to exist and produce an effect by another, which is also finite and has a determinate existence, and so on, to infinity (EIP28).119

Passions – *i.e.*, passive affects – have a central role in Spinoza’s philosophy because finite things could not exist without their help. According to

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117 GII/85: “Hominis essentia non involvit necessariam existentiam, hoc est, ex naturae ordine, tam fieri potest, ut hic, et ille homo existat, quam ut non existat.”

118 The fact that the order of Nature seems to refer to the essence of Nature or its laws comes out e.g. in *TdIE* § 40 where Spinoza writes about the power of mind. He says that “[t]he better the mind understands its own powers, the more easily it can direct itself and propose rules to itself; the better it understands the order of Nature, the more easily it can restrain itself from useless pursuits [quo autem melius suas vires intelligit, eo facilius potest seipsum dirigere, et regulas sibi proponere; et quo melius ordinem Naturae intelligit, eo facilius potest se ab inutilibus cohibere]” (CW I, 20; GII/16). So when the mind understands its powers, *i.e.* the rules and laws of thinking it understands also the order of Nature, the laws according to which it governs each thing.

119 GII/69: “Quodcumque singulare, sive quaevis res, quae finita est, et determinatam habet existentiam, non potest existere, nec ad operandum determinari, nisi ad existendum, et operandum determinetur ab alia causa, quae etiam finita est, et determinatam habet existentiam: Et rursus haec causa non potest etiam existere, neque ad operandum determinari, nisi ab alia, quae etiam finita est, et determinatam habet existentiam, determinetur ad existendum, et operandum, et sic in infinitum.”
Spinoza, God is the cause of all things.\textsuperscript{120} God does not, however, cause the finite things through his absolute nature:

what is finite and has a determinate existence could not have been produced by the absolute nature of an attribute of God (EIP28Dem).\textsuperscript{121}

A set of laws that expresses the attributes is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the existence of particular finite modes. Their existence requires also the existence of other, antecedent finite things, as a necessary but not sufficient condition. Only when we conjoin the laws with the antecedent conditions do we get an adequate cause, a set of conditions, which is both necessary and sufficient. In the next chapter, I shall address Spinoza’s account of formal essences, which we can grasp through intuition (cf. e.g. EII40S2). I shall argue that because they are contained in God’s attributes they are caused by God’s absolute nature and are eternal:

[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 (EIP21).\textsuperscript{122}]

\textsuperscript{120} EIP16; GII/60 : “From the necessity of divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes, (i.e., everything which can fall under an infinite intellect) [Ex necessitate divinae naturae, infinita infinitis modis (hoc est, omnia, quae sub intellectum infinitum cadere possunt) sequi debent.” There is a lot of discussion whether the relationship between substance and modes is to be understood as an inherence relationship or a causal one. This discussion is out of my study. Cf. e.g. Yitzhak Melamed (2005, 2006) about the inherence relationship. I raise a few questions as regards the inherence relationship. One of the issues concerns passions. If modes are to be explained through inherence, where would passions inhere because they are caused only partially by a thing? Melamed asks “[t]he question remains, do these properties inhere fully, or only partially, in their subject? If the latter, does this mean that externally caused properties inhere partly in their subject, and partly in their external cause?” (Melamed 2006, 52). To me it seems somewhat difficult to make sense of passions through the inherence relations because there is actually no subject in Spinoza in which passions and images could inhere. This is clearly different in Descartes according to whom the mind is a subject in which passions can inhere. Another difficulty is how passions can be predicated of a substance which is immutable. If e.g. sadness is thought to be predicated from God then we need to concede that God is sad. God does not, however, have passions according to Spinoza (cf. EVP17). Furthermore, it is difficult to understand how finite things can inhere in laws because their existence is not caused only by laws but also the infinite series of finite causes. The mode-substance relation understood as an inherence relation seems to be prima facie nonsense: modes are of the wrong logical type to inhere in substance in Spinoza’s system.

\textsuperscript{121} GII/69: “quod finitum est, et determinatam habet existentiam, ab absoluta natura alicujus Dei attributio produci non potuit; quicquid enim ex absoluta natura alicujus Dei attributio sequitur.” Cf. Curley who stresses that “[d]educing the finite solely from the infinite, in his philosophy, is in principle impossible” (Curley 1969, 74).

\textsuperscript{122} GII/65: “Omnia, quae ex absoluta natura alicujus attributi Dei sequuntur, semper, et finita existere debuerunt, sive per idem attributum aeterna, et infinita sunt.”
God’s attributes are sufficient conditions for the existence of formal essences, but not for the existence of finite things. External causes are a necessary condition for our existence. The acknowledgment of the necessary role of external causes is the basis for Spinoza’s account of passions and mastery of passions. Not only does our existence depend on external things but to a certain extent the mastery of passions and our happiness depend on them too.

4 The mind-body union

Although according to both Descartes and Spinoza, the mind and body are conceived independently from each other, Spinoza draws a different consequence: Only things which are conceptually connected can interact. For Descartes causal connections do not depend on conceptual relations. Della Rocca captures this precisely:

the fundamental reason in Spinoza for the claim that there is no psychophysical causal interaction is not the point that physical things and thinking things do not have enough in common, but rather the point, which we have already discussed, that causal relations must correspond to conceptual relations.

123 I shall compare formal essences with the non-existing singular things as Spinoza does in EIIP8. They are both, as he says, comprehended by God’s infinite intellect. I think that there are infinitely many infinite modes. According to EIP16 there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes from the necessity of divine nature. Naturally this does not say that there are infinitely many infinite modes but it does not deny it either. Because Spinoza thinks that there are only substance and modes, things which are contained in God’s attributes, like formal essences, must be modes, because they are not substances. Furthermore, they must be infinite modes because they are comprehended by God’s infinite intellect.

124 As regards the infinite modes God’s attributes are sufficient conditions but for finite modes they are necessary conditions. Together with other finite modes sufficient conditions are provided. Cf. Curley here: “the singular facts which exist at any given moment are determined by the previously existing singular and by certain general facts but neither the previously existing singular facts nor the general facts alone suffice to determine what facts now exist” (Curley 1969, 66).

125 Della Rocca 1996, 14. Cf. also Curley for the equivalence between in se esse and per se percipi in 1969, 15f and he concludes that “[t]hus the notion of something existing in itself, but conceived through something else – the usual, Cartesian notion of substance – is self-contradictory” (ibid.). The view which I argue for here is elaborated from these. The laws presuppose the attribute under which nature is conceived, and because attributes are conceived distinctly from one another, the laws do involve only the concepts of the attribute they express. Furthermore, causal connections involve laws – because everything is to be understood through the eternal and immutable laws of nature – and therefore, there cannot be psychophysical causal interaction because laws are explained only through the concepts of the attribute they express.
Thinking things and physical things are conceived and caused in separation, yet Spinoza regards the thinking and extended substance as identical. Because there is only one substance they are identical despite the conceptual and causal distinction. The identity between modes of thinking and those of extension follows from Spinoza’s account of God. I approach the question of modes by discussing the relationship between an idea and its object. The human mind, according to Spinoza, does not exist independently of the human body because the relationship between the mind and body is the relationship between an idea and its object. This issue is also settled by Spinoza’s account of God.

4.1 The dependence between ideas and things in God

According to Spinoza, in God there is an idea of everything he causes:

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\text{[i]n God there is necessarily an idea, both of his essence and of everything that necessarily follows from his essence (EIIP3).}\]

This idea must be unique because there is only one substance (EIIP4). Spinoza makes a distinction between \textit{Natura naturata} and \textit{Natura Naturans}. He defines the former as

\[GII/87: \text{In Deo datur necessario idea, tam ejus essentialiae, quam omnium, quae ex ipsius essentia necessario sequuntur.}\]
whatever follows from the necessity of God’s nature, or from any of God’s attributes, i.e., all the modes of God’s attributes insofar as they are considered as things which are in God, and can neither be nor be conceived without God (EIP29S).\textsuperscript{131}

The modes can be either infinite or finite, and the infinite can follow either immediately from the nature of the attributes or by mediation of some other infinite mode. Intellect is a mode for Spinoza, whether as finite and infinite: “[t]he actual intellect, whether finite or infinite, like will, desire, love, etc. must be referred to Natura naturata, not to Natura naturans” (EIP31).\textsuperscript{132} All acts of understanding and other modes of thinking, like willing or feeling, belong to the realm of natura naturata.\textsuperscript{133} Things that belong to God as natura naturata, are changing. On the contrary, natura naturans is unchangeable. He defines it as follows:

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 (EI29S).\textsuperscript{134}

It is quite natural to understand natura naturans through laws. The latter are not changing, nor are they ideas or modes of any other sort. They are principles that govern everything that exists. Furthermore, they are the only free causes there can be because they are not caused by anything else but themselves. Now, this unique idea of God’s essence and of everything that follows from it cannot belong to natura naturans because it is an idea of something.\textsuperscript{135} Natura naturans does not think in the sense of having ideas; it governs how those ideas are generated.

\textsuperscript{130} GII/88: “God’s idea, from which infinitely many things follow in infinitely many modes, must be unique [Id ea Dei, ex qua infinita infinitis modis sequuntur, unica tantum esse potest].”

\textsuperscript{131} GII/71: “Per naturatam autem intelligi id omne, quod ex necessitate Dei naturae, sive uniuscujusque Dei attributorum sequitur, hoc est, omnes Dei attributorum modos, quotenus considerantur, ut res, quae in Deo sunt, et quae sine Deo nec esse, nec concipi possunt.”

\textsuperscript{132} GII/71: “Intellectus actu, sive is finitus sit, sive infinitus, ut et voluntas, cupiditas, amor etc. ad Naturam naturatam, non vero ad naturantem referri debent.”

\textsuperscript{133} Cf. Curley: “though thought is an attribute of God, and he is a thinking thing (IIP1), he has neither intellect, nor will, desire nor love” (Curley 1985, 434).

\textsuperscript{134} GII/71: “per Naturam naturantem nobis intelligendum est id, quod in se est, et per se concipitur, sive talia substantiae attributa, quae aeternam, et infinitam essentiam exprimit, hoc est (per Coroll. 1. Prop. 14. et Coroll. 2. Prop. 17.), Deus, quatenus, ut causa libera, consideratur.”

\textsuperscript{135} Cf. EIP31 and also Melamed: “since God’s idea is identical with the infinite intellect, it seems that God’s idea is a mode. Indeed in EI21d, Spinoza explicitly says that God’s idea is the immediate infinite mode of Thought” (Melamed 2005, 160). Furthermore, cf. Melamed’s claim that God’s idea does not belong to Naturae Naturae: “God’s idea is not identical with God, not because unlike God it is only under Thought, but rather because it is a mode, and God is a substance. For Spinoza there cannot be a difference deeper than that” (Melamed
According to Spinoza, God causes by the same necessity with which he thinks. He criticizes the conventional view of creation, according to which God first conceives the world he intends to create, and then creates it by an act of will, which he could equally well not perform.\textsuperscript{136} There is a representation in God’s infinite intellect of his essence and of whatever follows from it. The relationship between thoughts and things that are in God is not such that one precedes the other. They are the same:

the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things (EIIP7).\textsuperscript{137}

This proposition addresses, on the one hand, the representationalist relation between ideas and things and, on the other, the identity between them.\textsuperscript{138} The discussion of this theorem, its demonstration, corollary and scholium involves the famous notion of parallelism.\textsuperscript{139} We should remember, however, that Spinoza himself did not use the notion of parallelism. Ideas do not correlate with their objects because there are different orders of things that correspond. They correlate because they are identical.\textsuperscript{140} If we focus too much

\textsuperscript{136} Cf. Spinoza when he says that “[b]y God’s power ordinary people understand God’s free will and his right over all things which are, things which on that account are commonly considered to be contingent. For they say that God has the power of destroying all things and reducing them to nothing. Further, they very often compare God’s power with the power of kings. [\ldots] no one will be able to perceive rightly the things I maintain unless he takes great care not to confuse God’s power with the human power or right of kings [Vulgus per Dei potentiam intelligit Dei liberam voluntatem, et jus in omnia, quae sunt, quaeque proprietae communiter, ut contingens, considerantur. Deum enim potestatem omnium destruendi habere dicunt, et in nihilum reducendi. Dei porro potentiam cum potentia Regum saepissime comparant [\ldots] Nam nemo ea, quae volo, percepere recte poterit, nisi magnopere caveat, ne Deil potentiam cum humana Regum potentia, vel jure confundat]” (EIIP3S; GII/87f).

\textsuperscript{137} GII/89 : “ordo, & connexio idearum ideum est, ac ordo, & connexio rerum.”

\textsuperscript{138} Cf. Macherey according to whom this is not, or at least, not only about the relationship between mind and body. He writes that: “ordre et connexion des choses” ne signifie certainement pas, en tout cas pas seulement, “ordre et connexion des corps”; en effet, les choses dont il s’agit ici sont toutes les choses, telles qu’elles avaient été designees dans les propositions precedentes a l’aide de l’expression “une infinité de choses selon une infinité de modes”” (Macherey 1997, 73).

\textsuperscript{139} Melamed thinks that Spinoza is in fact presenting two kinds of parallelism: in the proposition itself ideas-things parallelism and in the scholium the inter-attribute parallelism. The former is essentially representational parallelism whereas according to the latter the parallel items are identical. (cf. Melamed 2005, 116).

\textsuperscript{140} According to several commentators, it is not only correspondence but identity. Cf. e.g. Macherey 1997, 78. He also warns to use the notion of parallelism: “à la riguer, avec d’extrêmes précautions, appliquer la formule du “parallélisme”, cette formule étant de toute façon inappropriée pour rendre compte de la signification générale de la proposition à laquelle ce scolie est rattachée” (ibid.). According to Chantal Jaquet as well caution is needed when attributing parallelism to Spinoza: “[c]ette doctrine dont la paternité incombe, comme chacun sait, à Leibniz, est souvent présente comme l’expression de la pensée de l’auteur de l’Ethique, bien qu’elle soit importée rétrospectivement dans son système où, prise à la lettre,
on the idea of parallelism, the danger is that we think there are distinct chains of things that somehow correlate, but according to Spinoza, the orders are the same. The fact that the mind is an idea of the body and even that they are identical is not something that is characteristic only of their relationship but follows from Spinoza's account of substance and attributes in general.

The corollary of EIIP7 tells us the sense in which the order of ideas is the same as the order of things: “God’s [[--} power of thinking is equal to his actual power of acting (EIIP7Cor). The notion of æqualis is central here. The power of thinking does not precede the power of acting nor does the power of acting precede the power of thinking. There is always an expression in God’s power of thinking of what he causes, and also an object of his thinking. Spinoza explains further the relationship between God’s power of thinking and that of acting in terms of the notions of the formal and objective reality:

whatever follows formally from God’s infinite nature follows objectively in God from his idea in the same order and with the same connection (EIIP7Cor).
This illustrates Spinoza’s representationalism. There is an idea of whatever follows formally from God’s infinite nature, an idea that follows in God objectively. This means, again, that there is nothing in God’s power of acting of which there is no idea, and vice versa. This applies also to the mind-body relationship. Of everything that happens in the body’s power of acting there is an expression in the mind’s power of thinking.\(^{144}\)

Although there is always an expression in the power of thinking of what happens in the power of acting, this does not mean that there is a symmetry between these powers. For instance, Spinoza thinks that there is infinity of attributes. There is also an idea of things caused by other attributes that we can have knowledge of, extension and thinking. Although God’s power of thinking is equal to his power of acting, so that there is always an expression in God’s power of thinking of what he causes, there is a certain dissimilarity as well. The attribute of thinking is not symmetrical with other attributes because it has ideas of each attribute and of what follows from all attributes together. There is always an object that God is thinking of but in God’s thinking power there are far more expressions than in other attributes.\(^{145}\)

### 4.2 The mind-body relationship

There are two important things to notice about Spinoza’s account of the mind-body union. Firstly, the mind-body relationship, *i.e.* the relationship between a mode of thinking and a mode of extension, is to be understood as representational: It is about the union between an idea and its object. The example Spinoza considers in this context is a circle. He writes that the circle that exists in nature and the idea of the circle that is also in God are one and the same thing explained through different attributes.\(^{146}\) The reason Spinoza discusses the circle is to illustrate the point that the relationship of mind to body is that of idea to its object. On the one hand, there is an idea of a

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\(^{144}\) Cf. Jaquet who stresses the importance of the notion of æqualis and that of simul in Spinoza. She writes that “[l]orsque Spinoza veut expliquer que l’ordre des idées des affections dans l’esprit va de pair avec celui des affections du corps et constitue une seule et même chose, il recourt soit à l’adjectif æqualis, soit à l’adverbe simul, soit aux deux à la fois” (Jaquet 2004, 15).

\(^{145}\) This same point applies also Spinoza’s definitions of affects and the way in which he uses the term of simul there. Although an affect means a change in body’s power of acting and simultaneously, *simul*, an idea of this change, there can be dissimilarity between these powers. There can be affects which are explained, on the one hand, chiefly by body’s power of acting and, on the other, by the power of thinking. Cf. Jaquet “[l]’égalité entre la puissance de penser et la puissance d’agir n’exclut pas la prépondérance de l’aspect mental ou de l’aspect physique de l’affect” (Jaquet 2004, 123).

\(^{146}\) EIIP7S : “For example, a circle existing in Nature and the idea of the existing circle, which is also in God, are one and the same thing, which is explained through different attributes [Ex. gr. circulus in natura existens, et idea circuli existentis, quae etiam in Deo est, una, eademque est res, quae per diversa attributa explicatur]” (GII/90).
circle, that is a modification of thinking and, on the other hand, its object, the circle, a modification of extension.  

Secondly, mind and body are numerically identical, a single thing. The identity of modes is based on the identity of substances. Curley, for instance, expresses their relation in saying that

\[ \text{If there is really only one substance (EIP14), which has all possible attributes (IP10), then the extended substance and the thinking substance must be one and the same substance, which is now understood in one way, now in another, depending on the attribute in terms of which it is conceived (IIP7S). It follows, Spinoza thinks, that a mode of extension and the idea of that mode must be one and the same thing, expressed in two ways.}^{148} \]

Bennett, however, does not think that mind-body identity is related to the identity between attributes:

\[ \text{Mind-body identity is not entailed by the thesis that thought and extension are attributes of a single substance. Why should not a thinking and extended substance have details under one attribute which are not also details under the other?}^{149} \]

Bennett’s question is understandable. For example, Descartes’s view is that there is activity of the mind without the body. Nor does it seem necessary to think that there is an idea of everything that happens in the body. Furthermore, there is a dissimilarity between the attribute of thinking and other attributes so that in the former there are more expressions than in the others.  

This does not, however, apply to the relationship between the human mind and body in exactly same way. The human mind is a mode of thinking whose object is the mode of extension that is the human body. There is always an expression in the human mind of what happens in the human body, and vice versa, as we shall see, however, this does not inhibit Spinoza from relating certain affects chiefly to the body and others to the mind. His discussion of *hilaritas* and *titillatio* provides a striking example of this.

### 4.2.1 The being of the mind

The first thing to establish is that the mind is an idea for Spinoza. The being of mind is thinking. The second axiom of the second part in the *Ethics* de-

\[ ^{147} \text{Cf. Macherey who states that “[e]n interprétant de cette façon, sur l’exemple d’une figure géométrique, la relation entre l’idée et son idéat, Spinoza prépare la conception de l’union de l’âme et du corps qui sera explicitée tout à la fin de ce developpement, dans le scolie de la proposition 13: cette union est précisément du même type que celle qui associe nécessairement l’idée à son idéat” (Macherey 1997, 79).} \]

\[ ^{148} \text{Curley 1988, 62.} \]

\[ ^{149} \text{Bennett 1984, 142.} \]

\[ ^{150} \text{This is not, however, to say that this is Bennett’s reason to think that there can be details under one attribute without them occuring under another.} \]
clares that “man thinks” (EIIA2). Of all the modifications of thinking, the most basic is an idea. This we can see, for instance, in the third axiom of the Part II of the *Ethics* where Spinoza shows that all other modes of thinking, like love and desire, require ideas but there can be ideas without any other modes of thinking. The first thing that constitutes the being of mind is, then, nothing but an idea (EIIP11). For instance, Gueroult stresses the point that the mind is to be identified with an idea. He states that: “[l]’Ame étant conçue comme un mode de la Pensée, et l’idée comme l’essence d’un tel mode, l’Ame est identifiée à une idée”. The being of the mind is constituted by an idea or to produce ideas in different ways.

This sounds a bit like Descartes. For him the essential attribute of mind is thinking, of which different kinds of thoughts are modes. Their accounts of thinking are, however, different. Descartes does not identify the mind with an idea as Spinoza does. For instance, according to Gueroult

[c]ertes, Descartes, on l’a vu, avait fait de l’intelligence pure l’essence de l’Ame, de l’idée la condition de ses autres modes: sentiment, volonté, etc.; mais il n’avait pas ramené ces modes à de simples propriétés ou dépendances de l’idée, et encore moins avait-il identifié l’Ame avec une idée.

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151 GII/85: “homo cogitate.”
152 EIIA3: “[t]here 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 [modi cogitandi, ut amor, cupiditas, vel quicunque nomine affectûs animi insigniuntur, non dantur, nisi in eodem Individuo detur idea rei amatæ, desideratæ, &c. At idea dari potest, quamvis nullus alius detur cogitandi modus” (GII/85).
153 GII/94: “Primum, quod actuæ Mentis humanæ esse constituit, nihil aliud est, quam idea rei alicjuæ singularis actû existentis.” Cf. Macherey at this point who pays attention to the term of primum here. The same point as in EIIA3 comes out here, namely that idea is what other modes of thinking presuppose. He writes that “l’expression primum est [...] signifie ce rôle fondamental joué par la pensée dans la nature comme telle à la connaissance à laquelle renvoient en dernière instance tous les formes d’activité mentale, y compris les sentiments et les voilitons, ainsi que l’a déjà expliqué l’axiome 3” (Macherey 1997, 104).
154 Gueroult 1974, 118.
155 Besides Gueroult also Macherey stresses ideas as the being of the mind as follows: “[p]ar ce qui précède, il est établi que l’âme humaine baigne dans l’élément purement intellectuel de la pensée où ne se produisent que des idées, ce qui constitue proprement son “être” (Macherey 1997, 105).
156 Gueroult 1974, 118. Cf. Macherey’s and Gueroult’s comments about EIIA2. According the former “[c]et axiome se situe ainsi dans un contexte théorique complètement différent, voire opposé de celui dans lequel trouve place l’affirmation cartésienne du cogito. [...] En aucun cas l’homme ne doit donc être compris comme le détenteur exclusif d’une pensée qui lui appartiendrait en propre et dont il serait le sujet exclusif, ce qui amènerait à le considérer comme un monde à l’intérieur du monde, ainsi détaché de l’ordre commun de la nature” (Macherey 1997, 40f). Gueroult contrasts it with the Cartesian cogito as follows: “[a]utre vérité de fait, dépouillée des privilèges que Descartes conférait au Cogito rationalité pure, libre arbitre, indépendence et autosuffisance absolues, fondement premier d’évidence et de certitude” (Gueroult 1974, 31).
According to Spinoza, the mind is an idea, and it is an idea of something. When he states that “man thinks” he does not claim that the mind is a subject in the way it is in Descartes. It is not an intellectual substance independent of the body but is essentially related to it. The actual being of the mind “is nothing but the idea of a singular thing which actually exists” (EIIP11). This idea is of a thing that exists in time and duration but not of an infinite thing. An infinite thing exists necessarily. Spinoza thinks that it would be absurd if the idea that constitutes the actual being of our mind would be of a necessarily existing thing (EIIP11Dem). Spinoza rejects the view that the human mind is constituted by an idea of a thing that necessarily exists and whose existence is unaffected by external causes.

4.2.2 The object of the idea constituting the human mind
The mind-body union in Spinoza is a union between an idea and its object. The object of the idea that constitutes our mind is the human body:

[t]he object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body, or a certain mode of Extension which actually exists, and nothing else (EIIP13).

What does Spinoza mean by the notion of body here? Curley points out that NS have an indefinite article, which would refer to any body. But we should use a definite article, which refers to the human body. Although God consists in infinitely many attributes, we can have knowledge of only two of these, namely of the modifications of thinking and extension. Spinoza thinks that “[w]e feel that a certain body [or as it is stated in NS: our body] is affected in many ways.” Moreover, he thinks that the only singular things we can perceive or sense are thoughts and bodies. We do not know other attributes because we do not have ideas of other things than those that involve our body. Spinoza concludes the demonstration by stating that “the object

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157 GII/94: “Primum, quod actuale Mentis humanae esse constituit, nihil aliud est, quam idea rei alicujus singularis actu existentis.”
158 EIIP11Dem : “For an infinite thing (by IP21 and 22) must always exist necessarily. But (by A1) it is absurd” [Res namque infinita (per Prop. 21. et 22. p. 1.) debet semper necessario existere; atqui hoc (per Axiom. 1. hujus) est absurdum ]” (GII/94).
159 GII/96: “Objectum ideae, humanam Mentem constituentis, est Corpus, sive certus Extensionis modus actu existens, et nihil aliud.”
160 Curley states that “[t]he NS have the indefinite article here and throughout the demonstration, but most modern translators agree in supplying a definite article, and the reference to A4 in the demonstration seems to require this” (Curley 1985, 457).
161 GII/86 : “Nos corpus quoddam multis modis affici sentimus.”
162 EIIP5 : “We neither feel nor perceive any singular things [NS : or anything of Natura naturata], except bodies and modes of thinking [Nullas res singulars praeter corpora, et cogitandi modos, sentimus, nec percipimus” (GII/86).
163 There are ideas of the things which follow from other attributes but these ideas are not in our mind because our mind is an idea of the human body. This is a sense in which I mean that there is a dissimilarity between attribute of thinking and other attributes. Although there is
of our Mind is the existing Body and nothing else” (EIIP13Dem).\textsuperscript{164} This is the basis for Spinoza’s account of the human being, the human body and the mind-body union. In the corollary, he writes that “from this follows

that man consists of a Mind and a Body, and that the human Body exists, as we are aware of it (EIIP13Cor).\textsuperscript{165}

In the scholium we see that this is his account of the mind-body union:

[from these propositions we understand not only that the human Mind is united with the Body, but also what should be understood by the union of Mind and Body (EIIP13S).\textsuperscript{166}

The union of the mind and body in Spinoza means that the mind is united to the body as an idea of its object.\textsuperscript{167} The human mind does not exist independently from the human body, but as an idea occurs always together with its object, the human body. There is, therefore, always an expression in the human mind of what happens in the human body, and vice versa.

As an idea of the body the human mind is extremely complex because the human body is composed of many complex individuals: “[t]he human body is composed of a great many individuals of different natures, each of which is highly composite” (EIIPostI).\textsuperscript{168} The human body undergoes a lot of affections caused by external bodies. Traces occur in the soft part of the body when it sufficiently often undergoes an affection or several affections simultaneously. The mind represents these affections that involve both the nature of the human body and external body. The ideas become associated and connected according to the affections of the human body. These are imaginative and confused ideas (cf. EIIP18 and my discussion on Spinoza’ view of imagination in the next part). Furthermore, Spinoza thinks that the mind can represent bodily affections adequately. The understanding of bodily affections according to the order of intellect is the same in everybody. It requires understanding the laws that govern the affections in question and knowledge of the structure of the human body. Spinoza acknowledges that no one had always an expression in the power of thinking of certain object, there are by far more expressions in the attribute of thinking than in any other attribute.

\textsuperscript{164} GII/96 : “Ergo objectum nostrae Mentis est Corpus existens, et nihil aliud.”
\textsuperscript{165} GII/96 : “Hinc sequitur hominem Mente, et Corpore constare, et Corpus humanum, prout ipsum sentimus, existere.”
\textsuperscript{166} GII/96 : “Ex his non tantum intelligimus, Mentem humanam unitam esse Corpori, sed etiam, quid per Mentis, et Corporis unionem intelligendum sit.”
\textsuperscript{168} GII/102: “Corpus humanum componitur ex plurimis (diversae naturae) individuis, quorum unumquodque valde compositum est.” I understand these postulates independently from the proposition 13 in Part II of the \textit{Ethics}, and therefore, I refer to them without that proposition.
yet come to know the structure of the body well enough to determine all its functions (cf. EIIIP2S) but he is confident that we have some adequate knowledge of bodily affections (cf. EVP4 and the discussion of forming a clear and distinct idea of an affect in terms of a bodily affection at the end this study).

The human mind consists, then, of both inadequate and adequate ideas. Adequate thinking requires holding several thoughts simultaneously (cf.EIIP29S). This is why it is extremely important that the body is affected equally in all of its parts thereby increasing the power of acting because the mind as a representation of the body is then able to think in a great many ways at once. The human body creates the conditions necessary for us to have the power to think adequately. Spinoza defines an individual like the human body through an idea of a complex system in which the composing parts communicate their motions to one another in a fixed manner:

[w]hen 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 (GII/100).169

This means that each individual is defined through a certain ratio of movement and rest that is the nature of that individual. This notion of ratio occurs in several Lemmas after the definition of “individual”. The individual may undergo changes but as long as they do not alter its ratio, it keeps its nature. For example,

[i]f certain bodies composing an Individual are compelled to alter the motion they have from one direction to another, but so that they can continue their motions and communicate them to each other in the same ratio as before, the Individual will likewise retain its nature, without any change of form (GII/101).170

169 GII/99f: “Cum corpora aliquot ejusdem, aut diversae magnitudinis a reliquis ita coercentur, ut invicem incumbant, vel si eodem, aut diversis celeritatis gradibus moventur, ut motus suos invicem certa quadrat rationem communicent, illa corpora invicem unita dicemus, et omnia simul unum corpus, sive Individuum componere, quod a reliquis per hanc corporum unionem distinguitur.”

170 GII/101: “Si corpora quaedam, Individuum componentia, motum, quem versus unam partem habent, aliam versus flectere cogantur, at ita, ut motus suos continuare possint, atque invicem eadem, qua antea, ratione communicare, retinebit itidem Individuum suam naturam, absque ulla formae mutatione.”
Because an individual is defined through the notion of a ratio of movement and rest, it is possible that there are individuals in many different degrees. In the end the whole of Nature can be considered as one individual:

if we proceed in this way to infinity, we shall easily conceive that the whole of nature is one Individual, whose parts, i.e., all bodies vary in infinite ways, without any change of the whole Individual (GII/102).171

The human body is a complex individual because it consists in many composite bodies (cf. e.g. EIIPostI), and because of this it takes many different kinds of external causes to maintain the ratio of the body. The most optimal state for the human body, i.e. the ratio of motion and rest that defines it, occurs when all the parts of the body are equally affected by joy. There is nothing that could disturb or harm the ratio in that state in which it enjoys the most favorable being it can possibly have. This equilibrium caused by all its parts being equally affected expresses in the best possible way the nature of that individual. Spinoza’s definition of the individual in terms of ratio of motion and rest provides the basis for the understanding of his account of titillatio and hilaritas. The former is an affect of joy in which one or several parts of the body are affected more than the rest. This may turn into bodily instability that is a major threat to the ratio of the individual. Hilaritas, however, amounts to a joy in which all the parts of the body are equally affected and hence it cannot ever harm the ratio but is solely beneficial for it. It can be understood as an affective representation of that bodily equilibrium that manifests the nature of that individual.172

5 About the identity between the mind and the body

We have seen how a causal connection follows from a conceptual connection which leads Spinoza to reject mind-body interaction. It does not follow from this that the mind and body are not identical:

[b]efore we proceed further, we must recall here what we showed [NS: in the First Part], viz. that whatever can be perceived by an infinite intellect as constituting [an] essence of substance pertains to one substance only, and consequently that the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now

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171 GII/102: “Et si sic porro in infinitum pergamus, facile concipiemos, totam naturam unum esse Individuum, cujus partes, hoc est, omnia corpora infinitis modis variant, absque ulla totius Individui mutatione.”

172 Cf. for the definitions of titillatio and hilaritas EIIP11S and EIV42,43. I shall discuss more the way in which Spinoza relates them to the body later in the thesis.
under that. So also a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways (EIIP7S).\textsuperscript{173}

His claim is that the mode of extension and an idea of that mode are one and the same thing because thinking substance and extended substance are one and the same substance. I have argued that laws are framed so that they involve and presuppose the concepts of the attribute under which Nature is conceived. Finite modes necessarily require attributes, although to exist they need an infinite series of other finite things. The attributes understood as a set of laws govern the behavior of singular things, so what is said about them applies to a certain extent, and in an essential sense to the modes as well. The mind and body are expressed by different conceptions – a different set of laws – depending on the attribute under which each mode is conceived. It is, however, one and the same mode, which is expressed in these two ways. Although attributes are conceived distinctly, they are identical because they express the essence of God. A mode of extension and an idea of that mode, although they are to be conceived distinctly, are one and the same mode. It could not be otherwise because the attributes that govern its behavior express one and the same substance.

\textsuperscript{173} GII/90: “Hic, antequam ulterius pergamus, revocandum nobis in memoriam est id, quod supra ostendimus; nempe, quod quicquid ab infinito intellectu percipi potest, tanquam substantiae essentiam constituens, id omne ad unicum tantum substantiam pertinet, et consequenter quod substantia cogitans, et substantia extensa una, eademque est substantia, quae jam sub hoc, jam sub illo attributo comprehenditur. Sic etiam modus extensionis, et idea illius modi una, eademque est res, sed duobus modis expressa.”
Chapter III: Spinoza on Knowledge and Essences

A crucial turn in Spinoza’s philosophy is the distinction he makes between conceiving things under a species of eternity and in relation to a certain time and place.\footnote{There exist already a substantial body of studies of these concepts. Cf. e.g. Jaquet 1997, 2005; Matheron 1969; Bennett 1984; Moreau 1994; Lloyd 1994; Garrett 2006.} My aim is to understand how this distinction relates to the sense in which Spinoza uses reason and intuition and how they differ from imagi-
native thinking. I shall also consider Spinoza’s view of formal essences and clarify the role they play in his philosophy. Understanding essences is im-
portant also as regards the mastery of passions. We are less driven by exter-
nal objects when we feel our essence, our own power.

The first part of this chapter concerns the distinction Spinoza makes in the \textit{Ethics} between the three kinds of knowledge – imagination, reason and in-
tuition. Spinoza wants us to have more and more adequate thoughts – ideas that can be understood clearly and distinctly through our nature alone. In imaginative thinking we are conscious of the ideas of our bodily affections but ignorant why we are undergoing such affections.\footnote{I shall discuss in the end of the next part more about imagination in the sense of how external objects leave traces and marks in our body so that our ideas get associated, and the human body becomes habituated in certain ways, to perceive things in some determinate manners and to have certain expectations.} Reason, however, tell us why there are such affections, and because we are able to form this knowledge the mind is less acted on. Intuition gives us knowledge of our essence. I shall explain how reason and intuition cause adequate knowledge and the extent to which they differ from one another.

The second part of this chapter explains what formal essences are in Spinoza. The third kind of knowledge – intuitive knowledge – is our con-
ceiving the formal essence of things through the formal essence of attributes (cf. EII40S2). Like non-existing singular things, formal essences are com-
prehended by God’s intellect. Because they are contained in God’s attrib-
utes, their nature is to be understood through God’s absolute nature. My aim is to make sense of this.
1 Spinoza about knowledge

1.1 To be externally or internally determined

According to Spinoza, our thinking can be determined either internally or externally. The latter way of thinking means that we perceive things according to the ways in which external bodies happen to affect us during the course of Nature:

I say expressly that the mind has, not an adequate, but only a confused [NS: and mutilated] knowledge, of itself, of its own body, and of external bodies, so long as it perceives things from the common order of Nature, that is, so long as it is determined externally, from fortuitous encounters with things, to regard this or that (EIIP29S).176

We have confused knowledge of things when our thoughts involve both the nature of the human body and the nature of external bodies without explaining their natures. When Spinoza discusses memory and imagination in EIIP18 – issues to which I turn in the next part of the study – he explains the connection of the ideas of bodily affections as follows:

the connection is only of those ideas which involve the nature of things outside the human body, but not of the ideas which explain the nature of the same things. For they are really (by P16) ideas of affections of the human body which involve both its nature and that of external bodies (EIIP18S).177

Confused thoughts are about how external objects affect our body without our understanding why. When we have clear and distinct ideas, we know why we have such affections. According to Spinoza, the mind has adequate knowledge

so long as it is determined internally, from the fact that it regards a number of things at once, to understand their agreements, differences, and oppositions. For so often as it is disposed internally, in this or another way, then it regards things clearly and distinctly (EIIP29S).178

176 GII/114: “Dico expresse, quod Mens nec sui ipsius, nec sui Corporis, nec corporum externorum adaequatam, sed confusam tantum, <et mutilatam> cognitionem habeat, quoties ex communi naturae ordine res percipit, hoc est, quoties externe, ex rerum nempe fortuito occursu, determinatur ad hoc, vel illud contemplandum.”
177 GII/107: “concatenationem esse illarum tantum idearum, quae naturam rerum, quae extra Corpus humanum sunt, involvunt; non autem idearum, quae earundem rerum naturam explicant. Sunt enim reversa (per Prop. 16. hujus) ideae affectionum Corporis humani, quae tam hujus, quam corporum externorum naturam involvunt.”
178 GII/114: “vel illud contemplandum, et non quoties intere, ex eo scilicet, quod res plures simul contemplatur, determinatur ad earundem convenientias, differentias, et oppugnantias intelligendum; quoties enim hoc, vel alio modo intere disponitur, tum res clare, et distincte contemplatur.”
The distinction Spinoza makes between our thinking being internally and externally determined can be understood through his definition of adequate and inadequate causes:

I call that cause adequate whose effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived through it. But I call it partial, or inadequate, if its effect cannot be understood through it alone (EIIID1).\(^{179}\)

When our thinking is externally determined, we do not have thoughts caused by our nature alone for these thoughts involve the nature of external objects without our understanding why they affect us in the way they do. We are the adequate cause of our thoughts when these thoughts are understood through our nature alone. This does not mean that they do not involve the nature of external bodies but that we understand why external bodies affect us in the way they do. We have this understanding because we have knowledge of the constitution of the human body and of the set of laws of motion governing the bodily affection in question. Clear and distinct thinking requires that the mind contemplates several things at once, and that we understand in what respects things agree, how they differ, and how they are opposed to one another. This is how reason functions when it provides us with knowledge based on the set of laws of nature.\(^{180}\) Besides the laws of nature, adequate knowledge of singular things requires knowledge of the structure or nature of singular things themselves. To have this kind of knowledge we need scientific experiments and observations. Note what Spinoza says in the *TdIE* § 103:

> Before we equip ourselves for knowledge of singular things, there will be time to treat those aids, all of which serve to help us know how to use our senses and to make, according to certain laws, and in order, the experiments that will suffice to determine the thing we are seeking, so that at last we may infer from them according to what laws of eternal things it was made, and its inmost nature may become known to us (CW I, 42; GII/37).\(^{181}\)

To know why an external object affects us in certain way we need experience.\(^{182}\) This experience involves sensory experience but it has to be exam-

\(^{179}\) GII/139: “Causam adaequatam appello eam, cujus effectus potest clare, et distincte per eandem percipi. Inadaequatam autem, seu partialem illam voco, cujus effectus per ipsam solam intelligi nequit.”

\(^{180}\) I shall explain reason more fully in the following section.

\(^{181}\) GII/37: “Antequam ad rerum singularium cognitionem accingamur, tempus erit, ut ea auxilia tradamus, quae omnia eo tendent, ut nostris sensibus sciamus uti, et experimenta certis legibus, et ordine facere, quae sufficient ad rem, quae inquiritur, determinandam, ut tandem ex iis concludamus, secundum quasnam rerum aeternarum leges facta sit, et intima ejus natura nobis innoscat.”

\(^{182}\) Cf. Curley about experience in the sense of observations and inferences in Spinoza’s account of reason in 1973, 48–50.
ined in a regulated way. There needs to be carefully organized experiments, observations and inferences made on their basis. We arrange the ideas according to the order of intellect:

the connection of ideas which happens according to the order of the intellect, by which the mind perceives things through their first causes, and which is the same in all men (EIIP18S).183

When we understand adequately the affections we undergo, we all have the same knowledge which is an essential part of Spinoza’s conception of reason. I say more about how reason operates in the next section.

1.2 Why do we err according to Spinoza?
In the *Ethics* Spinoza presents the distinction between different kinds of knowledge as follows. He thinks that we perceive many things and form universal notions

1. 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 (see P29C); for that reason I have been accustomed to call such perceptions knowledge from random experience;
2. from signs, e.g., from the fact that, having heard or read certain words, we recollect things, and form certain ideas of them, which are like them, and through which we imagine the things (P18S); these two ways of regarding things I shall henceforth call knowledge of the first kind, opinion or imagination.
3. Finally, from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things (see P38C, P39, P39C, and P40). This I shall call reason and the second kind of knowledge. (ibid. S2). (EIIP40S2).
4. In addition to these two kinds of knowledge, there is (as I shall show in what follows) another, third kind, which we shall call intuitive knowledge. And this kind of knowing 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. (EIIP40S2).184

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183 GII/107: “concatenatione idearum, quae fit secundum ordinem intellectus, quo res per primas suas causas Mens percipit, et qui in omnibus hominibus idem est.” Cf. Pascal Sévérac who stresses the fact that the adequate thinking is ordered in certain way. He writes that “[e]n somme, l’idée adéquate se présente elle-même comme idée plurielle, et même plus précisément comme idée d’une pluralité ordonnée: en tant que contemplation simultanée d’une multiplicité, l’idée adéquate est nécessairement l’idée de plusieurs choses; mais en tant qu’intellection, elle est l’idée distinct des rapports nécessaires entre ces choses” (Sévérac 2005, 212).

184 GII/122: “Ex omnibus supra dictis clare apparat, nos multa percipere, et notiones universales formare:
Spinoza’s theory of knowledge is complex and not very clear because he does not give many illustrative examples. Furthermore, his views about the different kinds of knowledge vary between different works. I have two aims as regards his theory in the *Ethics*: First, to make it clear how imagination understood in the sense of the ideas of bodily affections is inadequate thinking. Second, to explain the sense in which reason and intuition are adequate thinking and the way in which they differ from one another.

I understand imagination as ideas of bodily affections that Spinoza discusses mainly in EIIP17,18. These ideas are not false in themselves, *in se spectatas*:

I should like you to note that the imaginations of the Mind, considered in themselves contains no error, *or* that the Mind does not err from the fact that it imagines (EIIP17S). 185

There is, as Spinoza states, “nothing positive in ideas” that makes them false, and we cannot take anything away from them or add something new to make them true (EIIP31). Spinoza explains the error that imagination may involve through the lack of other ideas: “*[f]alsity consists in the privation of knowledge which inadequate, or mutilated and confused, ideas involve (EIIP35)” 186 An error may occur when we do not have other ideas that explain the ideas of our bodily affections. Spinoza illustrates the way in which imaginative ideas may be erroneous with two examples. The first concerns the idea of us being free. He says that “[m]en are deceived in that they think themselves free” (EIIP35S). 187 He thinks that in imagining this we are deceived. This image of freedom arises from

I. Ex singularibus, nobis per sensus mutilate, confuse, et sine ordine ad intellectum repraesentatatis (vide Coroll. Prop. 29. hujus); et ideo tales perceptiones cognitionem ab experientia vaga vocare consuevi.

II. Ex signis, ex. gr. ex eo, quod auditus, aut lectis verbis rerum recordemur, et earum quasdam ideas formemus similes iis, per quas res imaginamur (vide Schol. Prop. 18. hujus). Utrumque hunc res contemplandi modum cognitionem primi generis, opinionem, vel imaginacionem in posterum vocabo.

III. Denique ex eo, quod notiones communes, rerumque proprietatum ideas adaequatas habemus (vide Coroll. Prop. 38. et 39. cum ejus Coroll. et Prop. 40. hujus); atque hunc rationem, et secundi generis cognitionem vocabo.

[IV.] Praeter haec duo cognitionis genera datur, ut in sequentibus ostendam, aliud tertium, quod scientiam intuitivam vocabimus. Atque hoc cognoscendi genus procedit ab adaequata idea essentiae formalis quorundam Dei attributorum ad adaequatam cognitionem essentiae rerum.”

185 GII/106: “Mentis imaginationes in se spectatas, nihil erroris continere, sive Mentem ex eo, quod imaginatur, non errare [Nihil in ideis positivum est, propter quod falsae dicuntur]” (GII/116).

186 GII/116: “Falsitas consistit in cognitionis privatione, quam ideae inadaequatae, sive mutilatae, et confuse involvunt.”

187 GII/117: “falluntur homines, quod se liberos esse putant.”
an opinion which consists only in this, that they are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined. This, then, is their idea of freedom – that they do not know any cause of their actions (EII35S). 

The sense in which we err when we undergo certain desire or emotion is that we think to have them freely: we do not know that we are determined to feel so. For instance, an angry man who wants revenge acts so because of his bodily constitution:

so the infant believes he freely wants the milk; the angry child that he wants vengeance; and the timid, flight. So the drunk believes it is from a free decision of the mind that he speaks the things he later, when sober, wishes he had not said. So the madman, the chatterbox, the child, and a great many people of this kind believe they speak from a free decision of the mind, when really they cannot contain their impulse to speak (EIIIP2S).

What we regard as free decisions are appetites that vary according to the dispositions of the body. We err because we do not know that we have certain affects because of such dispositions. The first kind of knowledge is the cause of falsity (EIIP41) because it does not involve ideas of the causes of the affection. Reason never errs because it gives the knowledge of why we have such affections. When we have that knowledge, we do not cease to feel these different appetites and desires but we know why we have them. Knowledge takes away the error, not the desire or the image. Spinoza demonstrates this in his example of imagining the sun as very near:

when we look at the sun, we imagine it as about two hundred feet away from us, an error which does not consist simply in this imagining, but in the fact that while we imagine it in this way, we are ignorant of its true distance and of the cause of this imagining (EIIP35S).

The sun affects our body so that we perceive it to be near. We err when we do not have other ideas that explain the process according to which we perceive the sun as we do. When we understand the sensation through a scientific account of the causal process, which includes, for example, the knowledge of the optics and the physiology of human body, our scientific understanding does not change the way we imagine the sun though it does change

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188 GII/117: “quae opinio in hoc solo consistit, quod suarum actionum sint conscii, et ignari causarum, a quibus determinantur.”
189 GII/143: “Sic infans, se lac libere appetere credit, puer autem iratus vindictam velle, et timidus fugam. Ebrius deinde credit, se ex libero Mentis decreto ea loqui, quae postea sobrius vellet tacuisse: sic delirans, garrula, puer, et hujus farinace plurimi ex libero Mentis decreto credunt loqui; cum tamen loquendi impetum, quem habent, continere nequeant.”
190 GII/117: “Sic cum solem intuemur, eum ducentos circiter pedes a nobis distare imaginamus, qui error in hac sola imaginatione non consistit, sed in eo, quod dum ipsum sic imaginamus, veram ejus distantiam, et hujus imaginationis causam ignorantur.”
the judgments we make about its real distance. Spinoza gets back to this example in the very beginning of the part IV of the *Ethics*:

> [f]or example, when we look at the sun, we imagine it to be about two hundred feet away from us. In this we are deceived so long as we are ignorant of its true distance; but when its distance is known, the error is removed, not the imagination, that is, the idea of the sun, which explains its nature only so far as the body is affected by it (EIVP1S).\(^{191}\)

Our imaginings are ideas of bodily affections that represent some external objects as present to us. We have such ideas as long as the body is affected in a certain way even though we knew better:

> although we come to know the true distance, we shall nevertheless imagine is as near us. For as we said in IIP35S, we do not imagine the sun to be so near because we are ignorant of its true distance, but because the mind conceives the sun’s size insofar as the body is affected by the sun (EIVPIS).\(^{192}\)

The imaginings in themselves are not contrary to the truth. We have them because our body is affected in certain ways. Through the example of fear, Spinoza shows that the truth does not have a direct influence on the passions. It can happen that we feel fear when we wrongly expect some evil to occur, and then cease to feel fear when we learn that we were wrong to expect that evil. But it can also happen that we feel fear when we rightly expect some evil to occur, and then cease to feel fear when we are told (wrongly) that we were wrong to expect that evil.\(^{193}\) These examples show that what controls the affects is not the truth but that affects are controlled only by other affects (cf. EIVP7). Reason cannot master the passions alone but we need the aid of

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\(^{191}\) GII/211: “Ex. gr. cum solem intuemur, eundem ducentos circiter pedes a nobis distare imaginamur; in quo tamdui fallimur, quamdui veram ejus distantiam ignoramus; sed cognita ejusdem distantia tollitur quidem error, sed non imaginatio, hoc est, idea solis, quae ejusdem naturam eatient tantum explicit, quatenus Corpus ab eodem afficitur.”

\(^{192}\) GII/211: “adeoque, quamvis veram ejusdem distantiam noscamus, ipsum nihilominus prope nobis adesse imaginabimus. Nam ut in Schol. Prop. 35. p. 2. diximus, non ea de causa solem adeo propinquum imaginamur, quia ejus veram distantiam ignorantus, sed quia Mens eatient magnitudinem solis concipit, quatenus Corpus ab eodem afficitur.”

\(^{193}\) He writes that “[i]t 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 which is certain to come, that the fear vanishes on our hearing false news. So imaginations do not disappear through the presence of the true insofar as it is true, but because there occur others, stronger than them which exclude the present existence of the things we imagine [Fit quidem, cum falso aliqoud malum timemus, ut timor evanescaet, audito vero nuntio; sed contra etiam fit, cum malum, quod certe venturum est, timemus, ut timor etiam evanescaet, audito falso nuntio; atque adeo imaginationes non praesentia veri, quatenus verum, evanescent; sed quia aliae occurrunt, iis fortiores, quae rerum, quas imaginamur, praesentem existentiam secludunt]” (GII/212).
external causes and imagination. There is, however, no continuum between the imagination and the kinds of knowledge.

1.3 Reason and intuitive knowledge

Reason gives us the knowledge why certain bodily affections occur. It makes use of ideas Spinoza calls “common notions” – the ideas of properties in which all bodies agree. Spinoza thinks that these properties that exist in all bodies can only be conceived adequately (EIIP38). They are “[t]he foundations of our reasoning” (EIIP40S1). What are examples of these properties? Spinoza mentions the following properties:

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194 I shall discuss these issues more extensively in the last chapter of the thesis.
195 One of the commentators who think that there is, however, a continuum especially between imagination and reason is Cornelis de Deugd (1966). His work is pioneering because it is one of the first on imagination. But he thinks that reason is to be conceived together with imagination as follows: “[t]here will be advanced the distinction between the first and second kinds of knowledge on the one hand and the third on the other. The first two kinds will be grouped together on the basis of their relationship to sense experience (because, it will be argued, reason, the second kind, also has its roots in sense experience) and in that way be placed in opposition to the third kind” (De Deugd 1966, 23). Although reason requires, for example, scientific experiments, which are not possible without sensations, reason differs from imagination. Cf. Moreau when he stresses the distinction between adequate and inadequate thinking as follows: “Chacun de ces trois types de connaissance s’appuie donc sur l’imagination mais y opère avec un mode de production différent. Il n’y donc pas de continuité entre eux, et surtout entre les deux types qui constituent le premier genre et la connaissance par notions communes. C’est cela qui justifie intégralement les fortes formulations citées plus haut sur l’équivalence entre premier genre et registre du faux, et sur l’impossibilité pour le premier genre d’être l’origine des deux autres. Même si les différents types de connaissance ont un terreau commun – l’imagination –, il ne peut qu’y avoir une rupture entre les deux types du premier genre et le deuxième genre. Tous s’appuient sur un même donné imaginatif mais la connaissance proprement dite consiste dans la transformation de ce donné, par le processus de connexion qui relèvent d’au moins deux ordres différents. Tout tentative de diminuer ou d’effacer cette rupture efface la spécificité du spinozisme en minimisant la différence de l’adéquat et de l’inadéquat” (Moreau 1994, 255). As regards Deugd who considers the difference between the kinds of knowledge as more relative rather than absolute Moreau notes further that “[m]algré son intérêt dans la réévaluation de l’imagination le livre de C. Deugd [...] tend parfois aux mêmes confusions [d’écrire le deuxième genre de connaissance du premier], notamment lorsqu’il affirme que la distinction entre les genres de connaissance est relative et non pas absolue (p.188) ; en fait il ne peut y avoir de continuité entre des processus qui ont des causes résolument distinctes : la différence est bien absolue” (Moreau 1994, 261). The adequate and inadequate thinking constitute orders different and one cannot give a rise to another. Adequate thoughts follow only from other adequate thoughts.
196 The idea of common notions as foundations of our reasonings occurs as follows: “[w]ith this I have explained the cause of those notions which are called common, and which are the foundations of our reasoning [His causam notionum, quae Communes vocantur, quaeque ratiocinii nostri fundamenta sunt, explicui]” (GII/119).
they involve the concept of one and the same attribute (by D1), and in that they can move now more slowly, now more quickly, and absolutely, that now they move, now they are at rest (EIIL2).\(^{197}\)

All bodies share the same attribute of extension. It is common to each body and it is equally in the part and in the whole (EIIP38).\(^{198}\) According to Spinoza,

> from this follows that there are certain ideas, or notions, common to all men. For (by L2) all bodies agree in certain things, which (by P38) must be conceived adequately, or clearly and distinctly, by all (EIIP38Cor).\(^{199}\)

Because they are something that all bodies share and exist equally in the part and in the whole, common notions do not constitute the essence of the thing.\(^{200}\) We have seen that the power of Nature is expressed in universal laws, which are ‘fixed and eternal’ (to use the language of the TdIE in §§100–101) and govern all the changes that occur in singular, changeable things. Because common notions are defined through ideas that concern the attribute of extension, they seem to concern the most universal and fundamental laws of extension. This is how Margaret Wilson understands common notions. She writes that when Spinoza uses common notions he “seems to have in mind the productive power of material nature, as it operates according to eternal, necessary ‘laws’ of motion and rest”.\(^{201}\) It is not clear if a statement like “all bodies are in motion or at rest” is itself a law of physics. But Spinoza seems to think that it entails laws of physics. So in the miniphysics in Part II, the Cor. to L3 states a version of the principle of inertia, which Cartesian physics treats as a fundamental law of nature. It looks as if Spinoza is trying to show that laws that Descartes had treated as basic can actually be derived from more fundamental principles.

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\(^{197}\) GII/98: “In his enim omnia corpora conveniunt, quod unius, ejusdemque attributi conceptum involvunt (per Defin. 1. hujus). Deinde, quod jam tardius, jam celerius, et absolute jam moveri, jam quiescere possunt.”

\(^{198}\) EIIP38; GII/118: “[t]hose things which are common to all, and which are equally in the part and in the whole, can only be conceived adequately [Illa, quae omnibus communia, quaeque aeque in parte, ac in toto sunt, non possunt concipi, nisi adaequate].”

\(^{199}\) GII/119: “Hinc sequitur, dari quasdam ideas, sive notiones omnibus hominibus communes. Nam (per Lem. 2.) omnia corpora in quibusdam conveniunt, quae (per Prop. praeced.) ab omnibus debent adaequare, sive clare, et distincte percipier.”

\(^{200}\) Cf. EIIP37; GII/118: “[w]hat is common to all things (on this see L2, above) and is equally in the part and in the whole, does not constitute the essence of any singular thing [Id, quod omnibus commune (de his vide supra Lemma 2.), quodque aeque in parte, ac in toto est, nullius rei singularis essentiam constituit.]”

\(^{201}\) Wilson 1996, 115. Cf. also Curley according to whom “I take it that the laws of motion would be examples of common notions. Motion-and-rest is a universal property of bodies; our idea of motion, therefore, will be a common notion; and on Spinoza’s theory that every idea involves an element of affirmation, our common idea of motion will involve a series of affirmations about things which possess this property i.e. it will involve the laws of motion” (Curley 1973, 51).
Based on common notions we can understand the affects we undergo. The common notions themselves are too general to explain the motion of any particular body. But insofar as they entail specific laws, like the laws of geometrical optics, they may explain the affections those bodies undergo. Reason does not, however, explain the affections based only on the laws. It requires knowledge of the nature of the bodies which we try to understand. In order to acquire such knowledge we need sensory experience organized by experiments, observations and inferences based on observations.

Let us briefly return to the example of the sun. Curley points out that empirical knowledge is involved in it at least in two ways. First of all, knowledge that the sun is larger than it appears to be “presupposes our knowing the nature of vision, it presupposes our knowing something through our observation of nature”. Secondly, Curley notes that Spinoza had some sense of the true distance the sun has from the earth because he writes that one can come to know that the sun is more than six hundred diameters of the earth from us in ElIIp35S. According to Curley, this certainly suggests that Spinoza was familiar with the empirical methods used by astronomers to determine this distance. In order to explain an affection, like the sun appears to be closer than it is or smaller than it is, we need the specific laws in question but also detailed knowledge of the bodies to which the laws are supposed to apply. We can acquire such knowledge only through systematic experiments and observations. Experience in the sense of experiment and observation is, therefore, essential for adequate thinking.

Spinoza is careful to distinguish these common notions from universals and transcendentals. The latter are not rational notions but generated

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202 Curley 1973, 46. According to Curley, Spinoza adopts Descartes’s view of vision. He points out that Descartes explains various properties of light, like the law of reflection and Snell’s law of refraction. Descartes gives also a description of the structure of the eye. According to Curley’s presentation Descartes “explains how the light rays coming from the object are focused on the retina of the eye and the impulses received there transmitted through the optic nerve to the brain by animal spirits” (Curley 1973, 42). Curley says that it does not matter if this is a good explanation of vision or not “[t]he point is that this is surely the kind of story Spinoza has in mind when he speaks of our coming to know the nature of vision” (ibid.). Furthermore, Curley points out that the truth of a definition of a thing depends on experience if the definition is of a mode whose essence does not involve existence. It is independent of experience if it is a definition of a thing whose existence is not distinguished from the essence, like attributes (Cf. Curley 1973, 45 and Spinoza’s reply to Simon de Vries in Ep.10).

203 Curley 1973, 47.

204 Cf. Gueroult who notes that “les notions communes n’ont rien à voir avec les Transcendental, ni avec les Universaux. Les premières sont propres à la Raison et retiennent des choses perçues la réalité commune dont elles sont faites. Les autres sont propres à l’imagination et ne retiennent des choses perçues que le résidu confus des impressions qu’elles laissent sur mon Corps, c’est-à-dire proprement rien” (Gueroult 1974, 372). Cf. also Macherey when he states that “[i]l est donc indispensable d’en baliser le champ, en y isolant des sphères d’activité distinctes, où la puissance de penser qui est en l’âme s’exerce dans différentes conditions. C’est à cet effort de discrimination que procède le second scolie de la proposition 40, dont l’importance est stratégique pour l’étude de la connaissance rationnelle. Ce scolie départage en effet nettement des genres de connaissance correspondant aux
through the ideas of affections of the human body, and thus imaginative ones. Both transcendental and universal notions originate in the same way: the human body is incapable of imagining distinctly a great many images it undergoes, and therefore it forms abstractions of the ideas of images. By transcendental notions he means “terms like Being, Thing and something”. The transcendentals occur when images in the human body become completely confused, and so the mind imagines all the bodies without a distinction. There is no real object of these notions, and consequently they do not have a clear sense.

Universals are formed in the same way as transcendentals, through the many images the human body undergoes. The mind cannot imagine these bodies distinctly but it can imagine in what they agree, and as a result we get the ideas of, for instance, human being. Although the transcendentals do not have a clear meaning, they are still useful in understanding the nature of the human mind and its ability to form concepts.
not have any determinate object, the universals are about something. They show something in which external bodies agree, but only insofar as they affect the human body. There are differences between universals depending on what one has undergone:

[i]t should be noted that these notions are not formed by all [NS:men] in the same way, but vary from one to another, in accordance with what the body has more often been affected by, and what the Mind imagines or recollects more easily (EIIP40S1).

An example is a notion of man. Men will associate different ideas with that term. Some of us understand by it an animal of erect stature, others an animal that is capable of laughter, or a featherless biped or a rational animal, depending on what one has experienced. Universals, according to Spinoza, are modes of thinking.

Spinoza’s theory of knowledge does not, however, end in reason. The highest form of knowledge is the third kind of knowledge, which he calls intuitive knowledge. Intuition proceeds, as he says,

from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the [NS: formal] essence of things (EIIP40S2).

Unlike reason, it gives knowledge of the essence of things. We should note that according to Spinoza, “in God there is necessarily an idea that expresses the essence of this or that human body, under a species of eternity” (EVP22). The way in which essences can be known is “in one glance, uno intuitu”. The only example by which Spinoza illustrates his idea of intuition is a mathematical one:

given the numbers 1, 2, and 3, no one fails to see that the fourth proportional number is 6 – and we see this much more clearly because we infer the fourth number from the ratio which, in one glance, we see the first number to have to the second (EIIP40S1).

208 Cf. Macherey who write that “[d]ans le cas des termes transcendantaux, l’âme a perdu définitivement la capacité de faire le lien entre l’usage de ces termes et l’idée de quoi que ce soit considéré en particulier; alors que, dans le cas des notions universelles, cette incapacité n’est pas totale” (Macherey 1997, 309).
209 GII/121: “Sed notandum, has notiones non ab omnibus eodem modo formari; sed apud unumquamque variare pro ratione rei, a qua corpus affectum saepius fuit, quamque facilius Mens imaginatur, vel recordatur.”
210 GII/295: “In Deo tamen datur necessario idea, quae hujus, et illius Corporis humani essentiam sub aeternitatis specie exprimit.”
211 GII/122: “Ex. gr. datis numeris 1. 2. 3. nemo non videt, quartum numerum proportionalem esse 6. atque hoc multo clarius, quia ex ipsa ratione, quam primum ad secundum habere uno intuitu videmus, ipsum quartum concludimus.”
The example of this rule appears also in the *Short Treatise* where Spinoza’s discussion enables us to understand better the difference between reason and intuition. When someone uses reason, he does not believe in reports or experience but understands the proportionality in these numbers: “[r]eason tells him that because of the property of proportionality in these numbers, this is so, and could not have been, or happened, otherwise” (CW I, 98; GI/55). The one who proceeds from a clear and distinct concept does not need even reasoning. Spinoza continues that “who has the clearest knowledge of all, has no need either of report, or of experience, or of the art of reasoning, because through his penetration he immediately sees the proportionality in all the calculations” (CW I, 98; GI/55). I shall explain in the following section how this applies to conceiving the essence of a human body.

The first kind of knowledge – imaginative thinking – is exemplified by our being conscious of desires and appetites but ignorant of their causes. Spinoza’s theory of knowledge instructs us to know the causal processes which give rise to affections. This requires knowledge of the specific laws in question and of the structure of the human body. The fact that imaginative knowledge is inadequate knowledge explains why the passions, especially in the sense of emotions, may cause trouble. When we have imaginative knowledge of the passions, it means that we are just aware of our bodily affections, such as desire or anger. When we do not know why we have such an affection, it can easily become excessive.

This sense in which the passions may become excessive is well pointed out by Genevieve Lloyd. She writes that “[i]gnorance of the causes of our pleasures and pains breeds obsessions”. We have the idea of ourselves as self-sufficient beings, and we become obsessed by our desires and affects because we are not aware of the causal context we are necessarily a part of. Lloyd continues that we conceive ourselves and others as “particular segments of the world that are given distorted status as self-contained individuals”. On the one hand, we are aware of our bodily affections and on the other hand, we have the idea of others as independently existing subjects. Because we consider their actions in some sense ‘self-determined,’ our passionate responses to those others tend to become excessive. The very fact that we are torn by the passions shows that we have not yet really grasped what it is to be and exist. In Lloyd's words “[i]n failing to understand our loves and hates we fail to understand ourselves”.

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212 GI/52: “[d]eze dan die zech hem, dat door de eigenschap van de gelykmatifheid in deze getallen, het alzo en niet anders heeft konnen zyn en komen.”
213 GI/52: “[d]och een vierde, hebbende de alderklaarste kennisse, die heeft niet van doen noch horen zeggen, noch ondervinding, noch kunst van reden, dewyle hy door syne deurzig-tigheid terstond de gelykmatifheid, en alle de rekeningen ziet.”
214 Lloyd 1994, 29.
215 Lloyd 1994, 29.
216 Lloyd 1994, 29.
self-sufficient, independent substances, detached from the rest of nature. Although we are, as Lloyd points out, “under constant threat of succumbing to a false individuality”, to conceive ourselves and others as substances existing independently, Spinoza thinks that we still strive to preserve our being. We strive to know what we really are. By our nature, we attempt to understand the bodily affections we undergo and our essence. We are not, however, a cause of ourselves like God, so we cannot cause only effects which are understood through our nature. Furthermore, the connections that our body has with others are so complex and multifaceted that it is difficult to reach a complete understanding of them. Self-knowledge is often characterized by a certain opacity. Nevertheless, Spinoza’s belief is that we strive by our nature towards a more adequate understanding of ourselves and we attempt to construct societies which would enable us to achieve this better.

2 Formal essences in Spinoza

2.1 Formal essences contained in God's attributes

Let’s start the inquiry about formal essences by having a look at the comparison Spinoza makes between them and non-existing singular things:

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\text{[t]he idea of singular things, or of modes, that do not exist must be comprehended in God’s infinite idea in the same way as the formal essences of the singular things, or modes, are contained in God’s attributes (EIIP8).}^{220}
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Spinoza gives as an example a geometrical theorem: in a circle the rectangles formed from the segments of any two intersecting lines are equal in area to each other. This is so because of the nature of the circle:

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217 Lloyd 1994, 30.
218 Cf. also Lloyd when she states that “[t]he mind strives to understand its own interconnections with other ideas [-] it endeavors to become a more adequate idea of body” (Lloyd 1994, 27).
219 Cf. about the opacity of our self-knowledge Lloyd: “self-knowledge must share the inevitable confusion of bodily awareness. It can never be complete, for our bodies are part of nature and our minds cannot grasp all their interconnections. The mind has only fragmentary understanding of body and hence only an inadequate understanding of itself” (Lloyd 1994, 20).
Cf. Macherey as well: “ceci a pour conséquence que la connaissance attachée à ces idées, l’idée qu’est l’âme et l’idée de cette idée qui correspond aux figures de sa conscience de soi spontanée, se présente sous une forme relative et biaisée, donc partiellement et tendanciellement inadequate” (Macherey 1997, 95).
220 GII/90: “Ideae rerum singularium, sive modorum non existentium ita debent comprehendi in Dei infinita idea, ac rerum singularium, sive modorum essentiae formales in Dei attributis continentur.”
the circle is of such a nature that the rectangles formed from the segments of all the straight lines intersecting in it are equal to one another. So in a circle there are contained infinitely many rectangles which are equal to one another (EIIP8S).221

Because of the essence of the circle, the rectangles necessarily have this property. This gives us a model to understand the relationship between God and formal essences. The nature of the formal essences is to be understood to follow from and be caused by God’s nature. In EIIP8 Spinoza says that formal essences are contained in God’s attributes. If something is contained in God’s attributes, it is caused by God’s absolute nature. It is, therefore, an infinite mode. In contrast, we saw in the previous chapter that finite things exist insofar as God is modified by something that is finite and has a determinate existence (EI28Dem). Finite things exist because they are caused by the infinite series of external causes. The formal essences exist through the “internal necessity” that is derived from God. Moreau notes that we should not confuse internal necessity with a necessity that is proper to the necessary being:

une nécessité interne n’est pas ici toujours une nécessité propre. Lorsqu’il s’agit d’une chose éternelle autre que Dieu, c’est la nécessité divine à l’intérieur d’une essence modale.222

Only the essence of God involves necessary existence. In his case, the internal necessity is proper to him. As regards the formal essences, although they exist through internal necessity, that necessity is not only due to them but to God. Because God’s power is his essence, the formal essences contained in God’s attributes need also to be understood through the concept of power. God’s power is expressed by the universal and immutable laws, and the internal necessity that the formal essences have can be explained by the idea of laws as well. The way in which laws can express the formal essences can be put in conditional terms: if something that has such and such a constitution has been produced by external causes, then it will behave in such and such a way. It is natural to express this in conditional terms because the laws of nature are conditional in their logical structure. Furthermore, this fits well with the geometrical analogy Spinoza gives above because the geometrical theorem can easily be put into conditional form.223

221 GII/91: “Nempe circulus talis est naturae, ut omnium linearum rectarum, in eodem sese invicem secantium, rectangula sub segmentis sint inter se aequalia; quare in circulo infinita inter se aequalia rectangula continentur.”
222 Moreau 1994, 513.
223 Cf. Curley’s note to the EIIP8S. He reminds us that the geometrical example Spinoza uses there is a theorem 35, Book III of Euclid’s Elements. Curley expresses it in conditional terms by adding some letters which Spinoza does not use: “If AC and FG are any two lines intersecting at a point B in a circle, then the rectangle with base AB and height BC is equal in area to that with base BG and height BF” (CW I, 452).
I have referred to the EVP22 according to which there is in God an idea of the essence of this or that human body under a species of eternity. The idea of the essence of this or that human body amounts to a set of laws that governs the behavior of the human body with that particular kind of constitution. In other words, if there is a human body with such and such a constitution, then it will necessarily act in such and such way. In sum, I think that when we conceive the formal essence of a particular body, we conceive the bundle of laws that governs the behavior of a thing with such and such constitution.

This interpretation might shed some light also on what it means to conceive something sub specie aeternitatis. Because what we are understanding is the laws governing a body with that particular kind of constitution, we are considering the essence without relation to any time or place. According to the definition of eternity in the Ethics, eternity is a very special kind of existence:

By eternity I understand existence itself, insofar as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the definition alone of the eternal thing (EID8).  

Eternity is not to be defined through duration or time:

[for such existence, like the essence of a thing, is conceived as an eternal truth, and on that account cannot be explained by duration or time, even if the duration is conceived to be without beginning or end (EID8Exp).]

The fact that eternity is not to be defined or explained by duration or time seems to be uncontroversial. What, however, is the precise sense in which Spinoza uses the term of “eternity”? When we say that something is eternal, does it just mean that necessarily it exists, has always existed and will always exist? Bennett thinks that “Spinoza is tying ‘eternal’ to ‘logically necessarily existing’”. This is the reason why he thinks that eternity entails sempiternity, the latter meaning existence at all times. Eternity cannot be defined nor explained by duration or time but it does mean existing always. According to Bennett “if something is eternally the case, then it is always the case: eternity entails sempiternity”. For Bennett eternity seems to mean

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224 GII/46: “Per aeternitatem intelligo ipsum existentiam, quatenus ex sola rei aeternae definitione necessario sequi concipitur.”
225 GII/46: “Talis enim existentia, ut aeterna veritas, sicut rei essentia, concipitur, propertereaque per durationem, aut tempus explicari non potest, tametsi duratio principio, et fine carere concipiatur.”
226 Bennett 1984, 204.
227 Bennett 1984, 205.
necessary existence from which it follows that it means existing always.\textsuperscript{228} It involves temporal concepts because it is understood to mean existing \textit{always}.

But most commentators would not accept that eternity means necessary existence in the sense of existing always. Strictly speaking eternity is supposed to involve \textit{timelessness} which is best defined along the following lines: \( p \) is timelessly true if and only if \( p \) does not contain any temporal modifiers, and it would be inappropriate to use them in stating \( p \). Temporal modifiers include temporal adverbs like ‘today’, ‘yesterday’, ‘tomorrow’, ‘always’ and other expressions signifying a relation to time, such as the tensed verbs ‘existed’, ‘will exist’ and prepositional phrases like, ‘for 20 years’.\textsuperscript{229} One problem about interpreting Spinoza’s conception of eternity as timeless existence is that he sometimes does use temporal modifiers in connection with things he says are eternal. For example, he writes about infinite modes that

\begin{quote}
[all the things which follow from the absolute nature of any of God’s attributes have \textit{always} had to exist and be infinite, or are, through the same attribute, eternal and infinite (EVP21, \textit{italic} mine).]\textsuperscript{230}
\end{quote}

Eternity is not, however, to be defined through duration or time so sempiternity does not explain what it is to be eternal.\textsuperscript{231} Bennett would, however, think that sempiternity follows from eternity understood as necessary existence.\textsuperscript{232} We can concede this but I think the nature of eternity is not yet clear. The crucial thing is not to emphasize necessary existence but the \textit{identity} between essence and existence. Jaquet points out how Spinoza changes the Scholastic sense of eternity:

\begin{quote}
Spinoza opère une refonte totale des concepts d’éternité et de durée et rompt avec la tradition scolastique qui ne les distinguait pas rigoureusement. L’éternité cesse d’être une espèce de durée et conquiert un statut ontologique
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{228} Bennett 1984, 205. He continues that “[e]ternity is a species of duration, marked off by the differentia ‘necessary’ (or its equivalent ‘necessarily sempiternal’), and \textit{tempus} is also a species of duration”.


\textsuperscript{230} GII/65: “Omnia, quae ex absoluta natura alicujus attributi Dei sequuntur, semper, et infinita existere debuerunt, sive per idem attributum aeterna, et infinita sunt.”

\textsuperscript{231} Cf. e.g. Moreau who states that “[i]l est certain qu’on ne peut définir l’éternité par la durée ni par le temps: les affirmations de Spinoza sont formelles à cet égard. On ne peut donc considérer comme strictement equivalents éternité et sempiternité” (Moreau 1994, 506).

\textsuperscript{232} Cf. also Moreau here: “Spinoza admet bien qu’une loi éternelle est toujours vraie; simplement le “toujours” ne fait pas partie de la définition de l’éternité, il en est seulement une conséquence. […] on peut, d’une certaine façon, dire d’une chose éternelle qu’elle existe sempiternellement, à condition de préciser que ce n’est pas en cela que consiste son éternité. On légitime ainsi, mais sans la considérer comme l’essentiel, la conception courante: une chose éternelle existe pendant la totalité du temps, sans être soumise aux accidents du temps. Ce qui justifie une phrase comme: “la toute-puissance de Dieu a été en acte de toute éternité et demeurera pour l’éternité dans la même actualité’” (Moreau 1994, 507).
The identity between essence and existence can be understood in terms of the laws that govern the behavior of a thing with a particular kind of constitution. They determine behavior necessarily and explain how a thing acts if there is a thing with such a constitution. These bundles of laws are contained in God’s attributes as the ideas of the non-existing singular things Spinoza writes about in EIIP8. There is an idea in God both of the formal essence of this or that human body governing the behavior of the thing and a non-existing singular thing. Spinoza thinks that every idea involves an element of affirmation. The idea of the formal essence of a human body in the infinite intellect of God is an idea of that human body which consists in affirmations that it must act in such and such a way, given that it has such a constitution. The ideas of the rectangles formed from the segments of lines intersecting in a circle involve the affirmation that all such rectangles are equal to one another. The affirmation that this idea of the essence of a rectangle formed in a circle consists in, applies whether the rectangle exists or not, i.e. whether any lines are drawn in the circle or not.

Equally, there is an idea of this or that human body consisting in affirmations of the behavior of the body with such a constitution. That idea exists independently of the existence of the concrete individual; when he was born, it became instantiated; when he dies, it will cease to be instantiated. Spinoza regards it also as a definition of the thing, and the definition of a thing concerns its essence. He says in the TdIE that “[t]o be called perfect, a definition will have to explain the inmost essence of the thing, and to take care not to use certain propria in its place” (CW I, 39).234 In the Ethics he states as well:

the definition of any thing affirms, and does not deny, the thing’s essence, or it posits the thing’s essence, and does not take it away. So while we attend only to the thing itself, and not to external causes, we shall not be able to find anything in it which can destroy it (EIIP4Dem).235

The definition of a thing affirms its essence. It means that there is a set of laws that governs the behavior of the thing. It is not wrong to say that eternity means necessary existence or existence understood as omnitemporality. I do not think, however, that this is to explain the content of the formal essences and the way in which formal essences are eternal. When we under-

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233 Jaquet 2005, 147f.
234 GII/34: “Definitio ut dicatur perfecta, debetur intimam essentiam rei explicare, et cavere, ne ejus loco propria quaedam usurpemus.”
235 GII/145: “Haec Propositio per se patet; definitio enim cujuscunque rei ipsius rei essentiam affirmat, sed non negat; sive rei essentiam ponit, sed non tollit. Dum itaque ad rem ipsam tantum; non autem ad causas externas attendimus, nihil in eadem poterimus invenire, quod ipsam possit destruere.”
stand by formal essence a set of laws governing a thing with such a constitution we have a clearer view of what formal essences are. They are contained in God’s attributes but as such they are to be understood as the governing principles of a body that has a certain constitution. They are conditional in their logical structure, and hence do not entail the existence of a thing of the kind they define.

Reason gives us knowledge why a certain affection occurs based on knowledge of the laws governing the affection in question, the structure of the body, and antecedent circumstances. It is universal in the sense that all men would understand the affection in the same way if they had the knowledge described above. Reason does not, however, give knowledge of the essence of a thing because something that is universal does not form the essence of thing. We can, however, intuit the essence. Because formal essences are contained in God’s attributes, they need to be understood through the notion of laws as well. When we conceive the essence of thing, we do not conceive why certain bodily affection occurs. We intuit the bundle of laws that governs the behavior of that individual. Because an individual is defined through the ratio of motion and rest this means that we intuit the laws that define that ratio. Spinoza’ example of the Spanish poet illustrates this point:

I have heard stories, for example, of a Spanish poet who suffered an illness, though he recovered, he was left so oblivious to his past life that he did not believe the tales and tragedies he had written were his own (EIVP39S).236

Although the Spanish poet is not physically dead, Spinoza thinks that we can hardly regard him as the same man. He says that “[s]ometimes a man undergoes such changes that I should hardly have said he was the same man” (EIVP39S).237 The ratio of motion and rest that defined the Spanish poet had changed so considerably that he did not remember having written anything. According to Spinoza,

I understand the body to die when its parts are so disposed that they acquire a different proportion of motion and rest to one another (EIVP39S).238

The Spanish poet could have been regarded as a grown-up infant; if he had also forgotten his native language, he probably would have been.239 The

236 GII/240: “Fit namque aliquando, ut homo tales patiatur mutationes, ut non facile eundem illum esse dixerim, ut de quodam Hispano Poeta narrare audivi, qui morbo correptus fuerat, et quamvis ex eo convaluerit, mansit tamen praeteritae suae vitae tam oblivus, ut Fabulas, et Tragoedias, quas fecerat, suas non crediderit esse.”
237 GII/240: “Fit namque aliquando, ut homo tales patiatur mutationes, ut non facile eundem illum esse dixerim.”
238 GII/240: “hic notandum, quod Corpus tum mortem obire intelligam, quando ejus partes ita disponuntur, ut aliam motus, et quietis rationem ad invicem obtineant.”

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death of the human body means something more than just losing its vital biological functions:

[\text{f}]or I dare not deny that – even though the circulation of the blood is maintained, as well as the other [signs] on account of which the body is thought to be alive – the human body can nevertheless be changed into another nature entirely different from its own. For no reason compels me to maintain that the body does not die unless it is changed into a corpse (EIV39S).²⁴⁰

The constitution of a thing that laws govern, is to be understood through the idea of the ratio. In this sense the example of the Spanish poet illustrates the idea that essences in Spinoza are individual. Individuals differ from one another through the ratio of motion and rest. It is not logically impossible that there are individuals with the same ratio or almost with the same ratio but in any case each individual has a ratio. I understand the formal essences of singular things as laws that govern or define those ratios. Because there are individuals with different ratios there are different essences governing the behavior of those individuals: A thing has an individual essence – its own power according to which it acts.

Although both reason and intuition yield adequate knowledge, Spinoza esteems better the latter. He thinks it is worth noting how much the knowledge of singular things I have called intuitive, or knowledge of the third kind (see IIP40S2), can accomplish, and how much more power it has than the universal knowledge I have called knowledge of the second kind (EVP36S).²⁴¹

When we acquire some knowledge of affections, our mind is less acted on because the mind causes thoughts that can be understood through its nature alone. This is what reason can do, but Spinoza thinks that we can know our essence as well. Essences play an important role in the mastery of passions. As I shall discuss later, we need to habituate our imagination so that we constantly bear in mind the fact that we have own power to overcome negative passions, like hate and fear.

²³⁹ GII/240: “et sane pro infante adulto haberi potuisset, si vernaculae etiam linguae fuisset oblitus.”
²⁴⁰ GII/240: “Nam negare non audeo Corpus humanum, retenta sanguinis circulatione, et aliis, propter quae Corpus vivere existimatur, posse nihilominus in aliam naturam a sua prorsus diversam mutari. Nam nulla ratio me cogit, ut statuam Corpus non mori, nisi mutetur in cadaver.”
2.2 Formal essences are actual

According to Spinoza, to understand existence as it appears in the definition of eternity (EID8) means to understand “the very nature of existence”. He contrasts this kind of existence with existence in duration that he regards as existence conceived abstractly, as a species of quantity:

[b]y existence here I do not understand duration, that is, existence insofar as it is conceived abstractly, and as a certain species of quantity. For I am speaking of the very nature of existence, which is attributed to singular things because infinitely many things follow from the eternal necessity of God’s nature in infinitely many modes (see IP16). I am speaking, I say, of the very existence of singular things insofar as they are in God. For even if each one is determined by another singular thing to exist in a certain way, still the force by which each one perseveres in existing follows from the eternal necessity of God’s nature (EIIP45S).²⁴²

Spinoza’s view of abstraction strikes one as unusual. One often thinks of abstraction as a process that leaves something out: so when one forms an abstract idea of a triangle, one leaves out those particular features of the triangle that make it scalene, obtuse or rectangular. This is the way in which empiricists like Locke and Berkeley talk about abstraction. When we think of abstraction in these terms, conceiving something sub specie æternitatis seem like abstraction because we leave out the relation to particular times and places. But Spinoza has a different view. To the extent that a thing is conceived to exist in duration determined to exist by the external causes, we conceive the existence abstractly and as a certain species of quantity. Our conception of existence in duration is abstract in that we do not conceive our individual essence – the power which of which it consists – directly but through interactions with others. We leave out the principles that necessarily determine the behavior of that individual, and make it a particular thing. When we conceive existence in duration, our power appears as a quantity that changes and depends on others: sometimes it increases, sometimes it decreases; sometimes it is aided, sometimes hindered by external things. We do not intuit that we have our own power, an individual essence.²⁴³

²⁴² GII/127: “Hic per existentiam non intelligo durationem, hoc est, existentiam, quatenus abstracte concipitur, et tanquam quaedam quantitatis species. Nam loquor de ipsa natura existentiae [---] Loquor, inquam, de ipsa existentia rerum singularium, quatenus in Deo sunt. Nam, etsi unaquaque ab alia re singulari determinetur ad certo modo existendum, vis tamen, qua unaquaque in existendo perseverat, ex aeterna necessitate naturae Dei sequitur.”
²⁴³ Cf. e.g. Gideon Segal describes how intuition is related to our spatio-temporal existence. He writes that “[b]ut in another way, a person’s intuitive knowledge is attached to the present. For the object of intuitive knowledge is the existence of things following from God’s nature, conceived by an agent as an evolving reality that includes himself as actual dynamism, rather than as a concatenation of causes and effects abstracted from their actual being” (Segal 2004, 11).
Furthermore, individual essence is actual. According to Spinoza, there are two ways to conceive things as actual:

[w]e conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature. But the things we conceive in this second way as true, or real, we conceive under a species of eternity, and to that extent they involve the eternal and infinite essence of God (as we have shown in IIP45 and P45S). (EVP29S).

In Spinoza’s theory, the formal essences contained in God’s attributes are actual and real, a point which Deleuze makes clear:

[1]es essences de modes ne sont ni des possibilités logique, ni des structures mathématiques, ni des entités métaphysiques, mais des réalités physiques, des res physicae. Spinoza veut dire que l’essence, en tant qu’essence, a une existence. [--] Une essence de mode existe, elle est réelle et actuelle.

Formal essences cannot be understood as mere possibilities because they define the power of each thing whether or not the thing exists. Deleuze stresses that in Spinoza things do not tend towards existence because of their essence: “The essence is not a possibility; it does not lack anything, neither does it require something”. Deleuze calls formal essences “des réalités physiques”. They have a very concrete existence in God’s attributes because due to them each thing has an inherent power. According to Sévérac, existence can be conceived either as a fact of existing [le fait d’exister] or as an act of existing [l’acte d’exister]. The former means that existence as

244 GII/298f: “Res duobus modis a nobis ut actuales concipiuntur, vel quatenus easdem cum relatione ad certum tempus, et locum existere, vel quatenus ipsas in Deo contineri, et ex naturae divinae necessitate consequi concipimus. Quae autem hoc secundo modo ut verae, seu reales concipiuntur, eas sub aeternitatis specie concipimus, et earum ideae aeternam, et infinitam Dei essentiam involvunt.”

245 Deleuze 1968, 174.

246 He states that it is not that “le mode non-existant tende, en vertu de son essence, à passer à l’existence” (Deleuze 1968, 175).

247 He writes that “l’essence n’est pas une possibilité [...] le mode non-existant ne manque de rien et n’exige rien” (Deleuze 1968, 175).

248 For Sévérac it is, however, too much to regard essences as having their own reality, especially in the sense of physical reality, as if there were a world of essences: “[n]ous craignons qu’une telle insistance sur l’existence de l’essence, ou sur l’identification entre essence et réalité physique, ne fasse imaginer chez Spinoza un “monde” des essences, tout aussi réel (si ce n’est davantage), que celui des existences” (Sévérac 2005, 47). According to Severac, this brings us close to the idea of two worlds in Plato’s sense. According to him, Spinoza “ne veut pas conférer aux essences une existence propre et une durée propre (“durée” qui signifierait alors, au fond, éternité) – une telle existence des essences se distingue alors de l’existence des existences : d’où la conception dualiste, de type platonicien, d’un monde des essences qui existeraient dans l’éternité, et d’un monde des existences qui existeraient dans la durée” (ibid.).
duration, the existence of things, is determined by external causes: “comme déterminée par une autre chose singulière, et ce à l’infini – selon la logique de E,I,28”. The act of existing means that “existence et essence sont indiscernables”. This is exactly what Spinoza says about eternity. To conceive a thing as eternal is to identify its essence with existence, to understand the individual essence, the power in the sense of laws that govern the individual to act in some determinate way.

I do not see how this contradicts what Deleuze says. The formal essences do have a concrete existence in Spinoza’s system because they govern the behavior of a thing with such a constitution. They are conceptually prior to things conceived as existing in duration because a thing would not, and indeed, could not, act without there being any laws, just as bodies cannot move without there being laws of motion.

3 About the intellectual love of God

Spinoza thinks, not only that we can know that we are eternal, but also that we feel our eternity: “we feel and know by experience that we are eternal” (EVP23S). The exercise of our intellect amounts to a certain kind of feeling. Spinoza says that “the mind feels those things that it conceives in understanding no less than those it has in the memory” (EVP23S). The feeling he relates to eternity has to do with the feeling that characterizes demonstrations: “[f]or the eyes of the mind, by which it sees and observes things, are the demonstrations themselves” (EVP23S). We should ask here, as Moreau does: “comment l’âme sent-elle les démonstrations?” When we

249 Sévérac 2005, 44.
250 Sévérac 2005, 44.
251 Cf. e.g. Don Garrett who thinks that the existence of finite things consists: “in the attribute’s general capacity to accommodate – through the general laws of its nature – the actual existence of a singular thing of the given specific structure whenever and wherever the series of actual finite causes should actually mandate it” (Garrett 2005, 7). Garrett grants, however, that we can regard formal essences as unactualized possibilities too: “at-least-sometimes-unactualized possibility of the singular thing’s existence” (Garrett 2005, 3). I do not think the formal essences are to be understood as possibilities because they do not tend to existence in duration. Their logical structure as emphasized is conditional: if there is a thing with such a constitution, then it will act in such a way. The fact whether there is a thing with such a constitution is due to the external causes – not to the laws – but the fact that it acts in certain way is due to the laws. Therefore, I do not agree in regarding formal essences as possibilities or tendence towards existence.
252 GII/296: “At nihilominus sentimus, experimurque, nos aeternos esse.”
253 GII/296: “Nam Mens non minus res illas sentit, quas intelligendo concepit, quam quas in memoria habet.”
254 GII/296: “Mentis enim oculi, quibus res videt, observatqve, sunt ipsae demonstrationes.”
demonstrate something, we feel our power.\textsuperscript{256} It provides us a contrast to the life subject to and torn by external objects when we do not recognize our own power. When we experience our being eternal, we have a feeling of our causal power. In this way we have acquired a different view of ourselves compared to the one we have when we are subject to affections without understanding why. This feeling incites us to live further internally, to know better our power and to live according to this power.\textsuperscript{257}

Furthermore, we must recognize that demonstrations produce a kind of certainty. Jaquet argues along these lines when she points out that demonstrations are to be understood as a chain of adequate ideas where one idea is deduced from another, and the result is a feeling of certainty.\textsuperscript{258} Can we really regard certainty as a kind of feeling? According to Jaquet, we can because it shows the way in which we are affected by the truth.\textsuperscript{259} It is illuminating to recognize that the feeling which demonstrations give rise to is certainty:

Les démonstrations sont donc bel et bien susceptibles de produire un sentiment et une expérience que l’on peut identifier sous le nom de certitude.\textsuperscript{260}

Otherwise put: when we understand the set of laws that governs the behavior of our body, we have demonstrated our being and feel the certainty that necessarily rises from such an understanding. The wise man is able to acquire

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{256} Cf. Moreau “dans notre contact avec les choses théoriques, nous éprouvons notre puissance de démontrer, et par là, notre âme où cette puissance de démontrer est enracinée” (Moreau 1994, 548). According to Moreau, demonstrations show us a world different from the passive life and its limitations: “[c]’est au sein même du déchirement et de l’inconstance que nous sentons que nous sommes éternels, parce que les démonstrations, fussent-elles minimales, embryonnaires, nous donnent la forme d’un monde qui contraste violemment avec celui-là” (ibid.545). He relates this also to the development of the history of states in the sense that we have an aspiration towards better states: “[l]’expérience de qui considère l’histoire des États lui donne l’idée de l’éternité comme un aspiration, non comme un caractère des objets historiques, même les mieux construits” (Moreau 1994, 486). This aspiration towards the better is often comprehended inadequately, e.g. in the sense of personal immortality.

\textsuperscript{257} Cf. Moreau when he writes how the feeling of eternity conducts us towards blessedness: “[l]e sentiment de l’éternité s’éprouve. Il ne prouve rien. Seul l’ordre géométrique peut le faire. Mais l’expérience joue un autre rôle: si elle ne démontre pas, elle incite. Éprouvant que nous sommes éternels, c’est-à-dire que la nécessité que nous découvrons est un enjeu pour nous, elle nous fait aspirer à la vivre de l’intérieur. Elle nous engage ainsi à nous mettre en quête de cette éternité à la fois promise et donnée, c’est-à-dire à prendre le chemin qui nous conduira vers la connaissance et la béatitude” (ibid. 549).

\textsuperscript{258} Jaquet writes that “[u]ne démonstration est un enchaînement ordonné d’idée adéquates déduites les unes des autres qui produit effectivement en nous en sentiment: celui de la certitude” (Jaquet 1997, 102).

\textsuperscript{259} Jaquet 1997, 103: “La certitude est un sentiment, car elle exprime la manière dont nous sommes affectés par le vrai.”

\textsuperscript{260} Jaquet 1997, 103.
\end{footnotes}
the highest degree of certainty because at least most of his ideas are true.  

Again, this is something very different from our usual life where we seem to be thrown by external objects, not having a clear and distinct idea of the affections we undergo.

Understanding our essence is crucial to Spinoza’s philosophy. It produces the greatest joy we can have. Its cause is the mind as it is eternal because it considers the human body under a species of eternity. So the mind as an idea of the human body is eternal insofar as it does that. When the mind understands the essence of the human body, it experiences a joy that is accompanied by the idea of the mind as a cause. It includes also an idea of God as a cause because it understands that it is in God and caused by God. This understanding yields an increase of power of acting accompanied by the idea of oneself and God as a cause, thereby producing the greatest joy there can be:

From this kind of knowledge there arises the greatest satisfaction of mind there can be (by P27), that is (by Def.Aff.XXV), joy; this joy is accompanied by the idea of oneself, and consequently (by P30) it is also accompanied by the idea of God, as its cause (EVP32).

This is what Spinoza calls the intellectual love of God. It is an increase in our power of acting caused by our own mind. It is the love we feel towards our mind. In reality it is love we feel to God because we would not understand the eternity of our mind and the human body unless we understood the essence of God. Therefore, Spinoza writes that

[from the third kind of knowledge, there necessarily arises an intellectual love of God (EVP32Cor)].

When we are able to intuit our individual essence, we grasp our own power. So long as we live at the imaginative level we are subject to the power of passions and external objects acting upon us and we do not really grasp that we ourselves have a power. Sometimes there are bodies that act in our favor,

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261 Each of us can have many adequate ideas. The wise man is in the other end of the scale and possesses the highest amount of certainty. According to Jaquet it is even so that “[i]l [le sage] coïncide parfaitement avec ses idées de sorte que pour lui, être conscient de soi, des choses et de Dieu, c’est une seule et même chose” (Jaquet 1997, 104).

262 Spinoza thinks that if the mind understands something under a species of eternity, then it necessarily understands God because eternity is the very essence of God. Spinoza writes that “[i]nsofar 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 [Mens nostra, quatenus se, et Corpus sub aeternitatis specie cognoscit, eatus Deus cognitionem necessario habet, scitque se in Deo esse, et per Deum concipi]” (II/299).

263 GII/300: “Ex hoc cognitionis genere summa, quae dari potest, Mentis acquisescencia, hoc est (per 25. Affect. Defin.), Laetitia oritur, eaque concomitante idea sui (per Prop. 27. hujus), et consequenter (per Prop. 30. hujus) concomitante etiam idea Dei, tanquam causa.”

264 GII/300: “Ex tertio cognitionis genere oritur necessario Amor Dei intellectualis.”
sometimes others that act against us so that we conceive obscurely – or as Spinoza says abstractly – our own power. Through intuition we acquire a completely different idea of ourselves: we understand that we have our own essence. This understanding and feeling of our essence are crucial for our happiness and the mastery of passions.
Second Part: The Passions and Their Classification
Chapter I: Descartes about the Passions – Their Nature and Classification

The *Passions of the Soul* would not have been written without the dialogue Descartes had with Elisabeth about Seneca’s *On the Happy Life*. He suggests Elisabeth read this book “to ensure that [his] letters are not entirely empty and useless”, and furthermore to develop his own views in response to Elisabeth’s comments:

> if I see that you approve it (as I hope you will), and especially if you are so gracious as to share with me your observations on this book, then besides providing me with instruction, these observations will give me the opportunity to make my own more exact (CSMK III 256; AT IV 252f).

Elisabeth accepts Descartes’s suggestion to read Seneca, but she thinks that he is obscure and takes things for granted.266 Because she does not regard Seneca as very instructive, she asks Descartes to define the passions in a new way. One thing that comes out in Elisabeth’s critique is that passions are not only perturbations of the soul but sometimes give rise to reasonable actions. She asks Descartes to define the passions:

> I would also like to see you define the passions, in order to know them better. For those who call the passions perturbations of the mind would persuade me that the force of the passions consists only in overwhelming and subjecting reason to them, if experience did not show me that there are passions that do carry us to reasonable actions. But I assure myself that you will shed more light on this subject, when you explicate how the force of the passions ren-

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265 Descartes to Elisabeth on 4 August 1645: “afin que mes lettres ne soient pas entièrement vides et inutiles, je me propose de les remplir dorénavant des considérations que je tirerai de la lecture de quelque livre, à savoir de celui que Sénèque a écrit De vita beata, si ce n’est que vous aimiez mieux en choisir un autre, ou bien que ce dessein vous soit désagréable. Mais si je vois que vous l’approuviez (ainsi que je l’espère), et principalement aussi, s’il vous plaît m’obliger tant que de me faire part de vos remarques touchant le même livre, outre qu’elles serviront de beaucoup à m’instruire, elles me donneront occasion de rendre les miennes plus exactes, et je les cultiverai avec d’autant plus de soin, que je jugerai que cet entretien vous sera plus agréable” (AT IV 252f).

266 As she states “J’ai attribué l’obscurité, qui se trouve audit livre, comme en la plupart des anciens, à la façon de s’expliquer, toute différente de la notre, de ce que les mêmes choses, qui sont problématiques parmi nous, pouvaient passer pour hypothèses entre eux” (AT IV 279). Elisabeth thinks that Seneca attempts to make people believe him by “en surprenant l’imagination, plutôt que des disciples, en informant le jugement” (AT IV 279).
A month later Descartes presents a preliminary account of the passions. He thinks that it is easier to write about them to Elisabeth than to someone else because she has read his treatise about animals and knows how different impressions are formed in the brain. On 6 October 1645 Descartes defines passions both in a wide and a strict sense, as he also will do later in the Passions. He would have liked to give an account of all the particular passions but he was not ready yet. In the next letter, he repeats his difficulties in writing about the particular passions:

[These last few days I have been thinking about the number and order of all the passions, in order to examine their nature in detail. But I have not yet sufficiently digested my opinions on this topic to dare to tell them to Your Highness. I shall not fail to do so as soon as I can (CSMK III 227; AT IV 332).]

Descartes succeeds in finishing a preliminary version of the Passions on March 1646, which he sends to Elisabeth.

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267 AT IV 289f: “Je vous voudrais encore voir définir les passions, pour les bien connaître; car ceux qui les nomment perturbations de l’âme, me persuaderaient que leur force ne consiste qu’à éblouir et soumettre la raison, si l’expérience ne me montrait qu’il y en a qui nous portent aux actions raisonnables. Mais je m’assure que vous m’y donnerez plus de lumière, quand vous expliquerez comment la force des passions les rend d’autant plus utiles, lorsqu’elles sont sujettes à la raison”.

268 Descartes to Elisabeth on 3 November 1645: “J’ai pensé ces jours au nombre et à l’ordre de toutes ces passions, afin de pouvoir plus particulièrement examiner leur nature; mais je n’ai pas encore assez digéré mes opinions, touchant ce sujet, pour les oser écrire à Votre Altesse, et je ne manquerais de m’en acquitter de plus tôt qu’il me sera possible” (AT IV 332).

269 Jean-Marie and Michelle Beyssade indicate this when they write that “[u]ne première version manuscrite de ce qui deviendra Les Passions de l’âme avait été remise à Elisabeth (peut-être le 7 mars 1646: voir lettre à Chanut du 6 mars 1646, annonçant un voyage à Amsterdam pour le lendemain)” (J.-M. Beyssade and M. Beyssade 1989, 161). On 25 April 1646 Elisabeth responds to Descartes and she points out further things of the nature of passions and their right usage. She does not see, for instance, “comment on peut savoir les divers mouvements du sang, qui causent les cinq passions primitives, puisqu’elles ne sont jamais seules” (AT IV 404). Mostly Elisabeth’s contribution concerns the mastery of passions. She writes that “Mais je trouve encore moins de difficulté à entendre tout ce que vous dites des passions, qu’à pratiquer les remèdes que vous ordonnez contre leurs excès. Car comment prévoir tous les accidents qui peuvent survenir en la vie, qu’il est impossible de nombrer? Et comment nous empêcher de désirer avec ardeur les choses qui tendent nécessairement à la conservation de l’homme (comme la santé et les moyens pour vivre), qui n’éantmoins ne dépendent point de son arbitre? Pour la connaissance de la vérité, le désir en est si juste, qu’il est naturellement en tous les hommes; mais il faudrait avoir une connaissance infinie, pour savoir la juste valeur des biens et des maux qui ont coutume de nous émouvoir, puisqu’il y en a beaucoup plus qu’une seule personne ne saurait imaginer, et qu’il faudra, pour cela, parfaitement connaître toutes les choses qui sont au monde” (AT IV 405). Elisabeth constantly points out how we depend on certain external conditions which Descartes does not really take into account. Furthermore, as regards civil life she thinks that she believes rather in
1 Passions as they refer to the soul

Elisabeth brings out in the previous quotation that some people regard passions as perturbations of soul which means that the force of the passions consists in overwhelming and subjecting reason. It is not quite clear whether she thinks that reason is involved in the nature of the passions in which case we could substitute for “the perturbation of the soul” “the perturbation of reason”. It is clear that she thinks that sometimes passions perturb the soul in the sense that their force inhibits us from thinking rationally or using the will. But because the passions also lead to reasonable actions, she does not think that they are perturbations of reason.

The idea of the passions as perturbations of the soul in the sense of perturbations of reason is explicit in the Stoics. Passions occur because we use our reason wrongly. For instance, Cicero thinks that the passions are diseases of the soul, while wisdom is the healthy, natural state of the soul. He states that “wisdom is a sound condition of the soul”. On the contrary, the soul becomes unsound when it is disturbed by passions like distress, sadness or anger. According to Cicero, there is no better to way to describe a person when he is acting out of lust or revenge than to say that he is not in control of himself. To control oneself means that one is controlled by reason or, as Cicero states, by the mind:

Those then who are described as beside themselves are so described because they are not under the control of mind to which the empire of the soul has been assigned by nature.
The soul is by nature under the control of the mind. Cicero compares diseases of the soul with those of the body. He takes the diseases of the soul to be “both more dangerous and more numerous than those of the body.”\(^{274}\)

Distress is the worst of all since it “means decay, torture, agony, hideousness; it rends and corrodes the soul and brings it to absolute ruin”.\(^{275}\) The passions are modes of thinking that represent things falsely. Cicero stresses that “all disorders are, they think, due to judgment and belief”\(^{276}\) and that “we have come to see that, whatever evil there is in distress “it is not due to nature, but brought to a head by a judgment of the will and by mistaken belief”.\(^{277}\) Distress is caused by the will and mistaken beliefs. Passions occur because we are active in causing them in the sense of making a judgment. More precisely the judgment we make consists, according to Cicero, in the thought that we ought to feel and react in certain ways:

All distress is far remote from the wise man, because it is meaningless, because it is indulged in to no purpose, because it does not originate in nature but in an act of judgment, of belief, in a kind of call of grief when we have made up our minds that it is our duty to feel it.\(^{278}\)

He thinks that a passion is caused through a voluntary assent to a false belief and thus, is perversion of our reason – a pathology of reason.

I am doubtful Elisabeth thought like that, and as doubtful that this is what Descartes thought. In fact, I intend to argue that this is not what Descartes thought. I start with Descartes’s definition of the passions:

we may define them generally as those perceptions, sensations or emotions of the soul which we refer particularly to it, and which are caused, maintained and strengthened by some movement of the spirits (CSM I 339; AT XI 349).\(^{279}\)
According to Descartes, a judgment requires an act of will (cf. e.g. CSM I 204; AT VIII A 18). To understand the relationship between the passions and the will, we need to know in what sense Descartes uses the term ‘refer to’. He uses it in several places when he writes about the passions, for instance, when he defines them in a general sense (CSM I 337; AT XI 347). They include external sensations, (e.g. sense-perceptions), internal sensations, e.g. (hunger and pain) and those we would call emotions. Descartes uses the term ‘to refer’ to distinguish them from one another:

They differ from one another in so far as we refer some to external objects which strike our senses, others to our body or to certain of its parts, and still others to our soul (CSM I 337; AT XI 345).

The first passions Descartes discusses here are ordinary sense perceptions. Here the term ‘to refer’ means that we consider the sensation to be caused by an external object: “[t]he perceptions we refer to things outside us, namely to the objects of our senses, are caused by these objects, at least when our judgments are not false” (CSM I 337; AT XI 346). It is worth noticing that Descartes regards sense perceptions as caused by external objects, yet he holds us to be mistaken in so far as we also tend to locate in the external objects the sensation or sensory qualities that we feel. Internal sensations, like pain and hunger, are passions we refer to our body or to certain parts of it. This means that we feel these sensations as being in our body, not in the objects outside of us (CSM I 337; AT XI 346). The passions which Descartes really undertakes to study, which we would call emotions, are those that refer to the soul:

are those whose effects we feel as being in the soul itself, and for which we do not normally know any proximate cause to which we can refer them (CSM I 337; AT XI 347).

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280 According to him “toutes nos perceptions, tant celles qu’on rapporte aux objets qui sont hors de nous que celles qu’on rapporte aux diverses affections de notre corps, soient véritablement des passions au regard de notre âme lorsqu’on prend ce mot en sa plus générale signification” (AT XI 348). His main task in the Passions is to write about the passions in a more restricted sense “toutefois on a coutume de le restreindre à signifier seulement celles qui se rapportent à l’âme même. Et ce ne sont que ces dernières que j’ai entrepris ici d’expliquer sous le nom de passions de l’âme” (AT XI 348).

281 AT XI 345: “il y a entre elles cette différence que nous les rapportons les unes aux objets de dehors, qui frappent nos sens, les autres à notre corps ou quelques-unes de ses parties, et enfin les autres à notre âme.”

282 AT XI 346 “Celles que nous rapportons à des choses qui sont hors de nous, à savoir, aux objets de nos sens, sont causées, au moins lorsque notre opinion n’est point fausse, par ces objets qui, excitant quelques mouvements dans les organes des sens extérieurs.”

283 AT XI 346f: “que nous sentons comme dans nos membres, et non pas comme dans les objets qui sont hors de nous.”

284 AT XI 347: “Les perceptions qu’on rapporte seulement à l’âme sont celles dont on sent les effets comme en l’âme même, et desquelles on ne connaît communément aucune cause prochaine à laquelle on les puisse rapporter.”
We regard the soul as a proximate cause of the passions because we do not know any better. We believe that they are caused by the soul but, in fact, they are caused by bodily states. The difference here between the passions in the sense of emotions and in the sense of external sensations is that we falsely think that the soul is the proximate cause of emotions, although we are right in taking them to be in the soul. Concerning the latter, we do not err when we take sensations to be caused by external objects, although we err in thinking that they are also properties of external objects. Cicero thought that the passions were essentially misconceived judgments, that we are active in causing them – i.e., they depend on us – and so when we correct the judgments, we also correct the passions. According to Descartes, the will does not cause the passions, but they have an effect on the will:

For it must be observed that the principal effect of all the human passions is that they move and dispose the soul to want the things for which they prepare the body (CSM I 343; AT XI 359).

Descartes thinks that the passions incline the will to make a judgment but by definition, they do not involve an act of the will. They occur in us but are not caused by us and our will, and thus, they do not change simply because we change our judgment. The fact that they are caused by the body puts some conditions on their mastery. The body needs to be calmed down before the will can influence the passions by raising thoughts other than the ones the passions incline us to consent to.

2 How does Descartes distinguish different passions?

Descartes thinks that the best way to describe the passions is to call them “emotions of the soul”. This is because they agitate and disturb the soul more strongly than any other of its thoughts (CSM I 339; AT XI 350). Their

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285 Cf. already the letter to Elisabeth on 6 October 1645 Descartes stresses that passions are not caused by the will. He defines them generally as follows. “on peut généralement nommer passions toutes les pensées qui sont ainsi excitées en l’âme sans le concours de sa volonté, et par conséquent, sans aucune action qui vienne d’elle, par les seules impressions qui sont dans le cerveau, car tout ce qui n’est point action est passion” (AT IV 310).

286 Cf. Alquié “[d]ans le cas de la qualité sensible ou de la douleur, nous jugeons à tort que ce que nous percevons est dans l’objet, ou dans notre corps, alors que sensation ou douleur sont en notre âme. Mais nous avons raison de penser que la cause de notre perceptions est dans l’objet […] au contraire, sentant l’effet comme en l’âme meme, nous jugeons avec vérité que l’état en question est un état de l’âme. Mais nous avons tort de penser que sa cause est également dans l’âme. Cette cause, comme pour les états precedents est dans le corps” (Alquié 1989, 972).

287 AT XI 359: “Car il est besoin de remarquer que le principal effet de toutes les passions dans les hommes est qu’elles incitent et disposent leur âme à vouloir les choses auxquelles elles préparent leur corps.”
proximate cause is the movement of the animal spirits, which distinguishes passions from volitions. The movement of the animal spirits is, in the order of causes, the last and most proximate cause of the passions but it is insufficient to distinguish particular passions from one another. When Descartes makes a distinction between different passions, he does so through their first causes. He makes a threefold distinction between first causes. Passions can be caused, firstly, “by the action of the soul when it sets itself to conceive some object or other”. Secondly, they can be caused by “the mere temperament of the body or by impressions which happen to be present in the brain, as when we feel sad or joyful without being able to say why” (CSM I 349; AT XI 371f). Thirdly, external objects may cause passions. Descartes thinks that in the other two cases the passions can be caused by external objects. To make a distinction between particular passions we need to examine the different ways external objects may move us:

it appears that all such passions may also be excited by objects which stimulate the senses, and that these objects are their principal and most common causes. From this follows that, in order to discover all the passions, it suffices to consider all the effects of these objects (CSM I 349; AT XI 372).

Descartes says that he studies the passions as a natural philosopher. Furthermore, the passions are caused by the body which distinguishes them from volitions. Nevertheless, he uses the function of the passions to distinguish different particular passions from one another. The reason why the passions can be distinguished from one another only through the effects they

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288 Cf. how Descartes writes about volitions: “afin de les distinguer de nos volontés, qu’on peut nommer des émotions de l’âme qui se rapportent à elle, mais qui sont causées par elle-même” (CSM I 339; AT XI 350). Volitions not only refer to the soul but they are caused by it.

289 He writes about the movement of animal spirits that “cela ne suffit pas pour les pouvoir distinguer les unes des autres; il est besoin de rechercher leurs sources, et d’examiner leurs premières causes” (AT XI 371).

290 AT XI 371f: “encore qu’elles puissent quelquefois être causées par l’action de l’âme qui se détermine à concevoir tels ou tels objets; et aussi par le seul tempérament du corps ou par les impressions qui se rencontrent fortuitement dans le cerveau, comme il arrive lorsqu’on se sent triste ou joyeux sans en pouvoir dire aucun sujet” (AT XI 371f).

291 Cf. AT XI 372 “il paraît néanmoins, par ce qui a été dit, que toutes les mêmes peuvent aussi être excitées par les objets qui meuvent les sens, et que ces objets sont leurs causes plus ordinaires et principales; d’où il suit que, pour les trouver toutes, il suffit de considérer tous les effets de ces objets.” The formulation is even stronger in the following article 52 where he stresses that it is only through examining the ways in which external objects move us that we can make a distinction between different passions: “C’est pourquoi, afin de les dénombrer, il faut seulement examiner par ordre en combien de diverses façons qui nous importent nos sens peuvent être mus par leurs objets. Et je ferai ici le dénombrement de toutes les principales passions selon l’ordre qu’elles peuvent ainsi être trouvées” (AT XI 372).

292 Cf. a prefatory letter to the Passions where he writes that “my intention was to explain the passions only as a natural philosopher, and not as a rhetorician or even as a moral philosopher [mon dessein n’a pas été d’expliquer les passions en orateur, ni même en philosophe moral, mais seulement en physicien]” (CSM I 327; AT XI 326).
have on us is because their function consists solely “in this, that they dispose
our soul to want the things which nature deems useful for us, and to persist
in this volition” (CSM I 349; AT XI 372).\(^{293}\) Furthermore, most of the pas-
sions have an influence on our actions. They make us pursue the things that
seem good and avoid the ones that are harmful.\(^{294}\) However, not all the pas-
sions have this influence on our actions because some of the passions do not
concern something that is good or harmful to us. Descartes thinks that there
are three kinds of effects that external objects can have on us: they can be (or
appear to be) good to us, harmful to us, or they can be (or appear to be) gen-
erally important to us:

\[\text{the objects which stimulate the senses do not excite different passions in us}
\text{because of differences in the objects, but only because of the various ways in}
\text{which they may harm or benefit us, or in general have importance for us}
\text{(CSM I 349; AT XI 372).}\(^{295}\)

Actually, the last way is the most important. Descartes thinks that wonder
that is defined through an effect of an external object having a general im-
portance to us, is a passion although it is not directly related to whether an
external object is good or bad for us. An object can have a general impor-
tance for us by reducing our ignorance or keeping us aware of something
that surpasses our finite nature.

3 The six primitive passions

Descartes thinks that there are six primitive passions as follows:

the number of those which are simple and primitive is not very large. Indeed,
in reviewing all those I have enumerated, we can easily see that there are only
six of this kind – namely, wonder, love, hatred, desire, joy and sadness. All

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293 AT XI 372: “l’usage de toutes les passions consiste en cela seul qu’elles disposent l’âme à
vouloir les choses que la nature dicte nous être utiles, et à persister en cette volonté.” In this
respect desire is crucial. Passions make us act especially through desires they arouse.
294 Cf. e.g. AT XI 372: “comme aussi la même agitation des esprits, qui a coutume de les
caurer, dispose le corps aux mouvements qui servent à l’exécution de ces choses.” This is one
thing which makes a difference between wonder and other passions. Wonder does not have
such an effect on action. The bodily movements of which it consists do not involve the
movement of blood that causes in us a thought of something being good or bad for us. Instead,
the bodily movements involved in wonder inhibit us from acting, making us stop so that we
are aware only of the thing we wonder at.
295 AT XI 372: “Je remarque outre cela que les objets qui meuvent les sens n’excitent pas en
nous diverses passions à raison de toutes les diversités qui sont en eux, mais seulement à
raison des diverses façons qu’ils nous peuvent nuire ou profiter, ou bien en général être
importants.”
the others are either composed from some of these six or they are species of them (CSM I 353 ; AT XI 380).296

Our emotional life can be explained through wonder, love, hatred, desire, joy and sadness, in this order. I shall explain how he understood their nature and the differences between them.

3.1 Wonder and some of its species

Wonder is the first of the primitive passions for Descartes. By its nature, wonder and its species are different from every other passion. Descartes defines it as

a sudden surprise of the soul which brings it to consider with attention the objects that seem to it unusual and extraordinaire (CSM I 353; AT XI 380).297

Wonder does not inform us that an object is good or bad but it makes us aware that something is unusual or extraordinary. Concerning the corporeal movements accompanying it, Descartes stresses that wonder does not include any changes in the heart or the blood as do the other passions. This is because its object is not good or evil “but only knowledge of the thing that we wonder at” (CSM I 353; AT XI 380).298 The most obvious effects external objects can have on us are that of being good or harmful. Wonder does not fit in this category because it does not inform us whether the object is good or bad. Its object is the knowledge of the thing. The objects that wonder brings to our attention can have general importance to us, in some cases, even a major importance.299 Wonder has the following two bodily causes:

296 AT XI 380: “Mais le nombre de celles qui sont simples et primitives n’est pas fort grand. Car, en faisant une revue sur toutes celles que j’ai dénombrées, on peut aisément remarquer qu’il n’y en a que six qui soient telles; à savoir: l’admiration, l’amour, la haine, le désir, la joie et la tristesse; et que toutes les autres sont composées de quelques-unes de ces six, ou bien en sont des espèces.”

297 AT XI 380: “L’admiration est une subite surprise de l’âme, qui fait qu’elle se porte à considérer avec attention les objets qui lui semblent rares et extraordinaires.”

298 AT XI 381: “cette passion a cela de particulier qu’on ne remarque point qu’elle soit accompagnée d’aucun changement qui arrive dans le cœur et dans le sang, ainsi que les autres passions. Dont la raison est que, n’ayant pas le bien ni le mal pour objet, mais seulement la connaissance de la chose qu’on admire, elle n’a point de rapport avec le cœur et le sang, desquels dépend tout le bien du corps, mais seulement avec le cerveau, où sont les organes des sens qui servent à cette connaissance.”

299 Cf. on the other hand Alquié who thinks that Descartes makes an exception to his principle of classification when regarding wonder as a primitive passion. He states that “[s]’il n’est pas fondée sur l’utilité, et repose sur une appréciation, non utilitaire, mais intellectuelle” (Alquié 1989, 999). In Alquié’s view Descartes classifies the passions according to whether something is useful or harmful to us. Alquié states that “[n]ous n’allons donc pas étudier les objets tels qu’ils sont, mais considérer ce en quoi ils nous sont utiles ou nuisibles” (Alquié 1989, 999). Wonder and its species are not, however, something which are good or harmful to
first, an impression in the brain, which represents the object as something unusual and consequently worthy of special consideration; and secondly, a movement of the spirits, which the impression disposes both to flow with great force to the place in the brain where it is located so as to strengthen and preserve it there, and also to pass into the muscles which serve to keep the sense organs fixed in the same orientation so that they will continue to maintain the impression in the way in which they formed it (CSM I 353; AT XI 380f).\textsuperscript{300}

Descartes considers wonder to have a general importance for us because it informs us of something new. Bodily states contribute to the fact that we become aware of the new object. This is evident in Descartes’s discussion of astonishment, a species of wonder. When we are astonished, the spirits in the brain do not go to the muscles or follow the usual traces in the brain. As a result, all the spirits are directed to the new impression and one is not aware of anything but the new object. Even the form of the body illustrates this. It becomes “immobile as a statue” (CSM I 354; AT XI 383).\textsuperscript{301} Astonishment is an excess of wonder that cannot but be bad because we do not gather any more detailed knowledge of the object (CSM I 354; AT XI 383).\textsuperscript{302}

Descartes writes that wonder draws our attention to things that are unusual or extraordinary, that is, are either something we have been ignorant of or are completely different from things we know. We wonder

only at what appears to us unusual and extraordinary; and something can appear so only because we have been ignorant of it, or perhaps because it dif-

\textsuperscript{300} AT XI 380f: "elle est causée premièrement par l’impression qu’on a dans le cerveau, qui représente l’objet comme rare et par conséquent digne d’être fort considéré; puis ensuite par le mouvement des esprits, qui sont disposés par cette impression à tendre avec grande force vers l’endroit du cerveau où elle est, pour l’y fortifier et conserver; comme aussi ils sont disposés par elle à passer de là dans les muscles qui servent à retenir les organes des sens en la même situation qu’ils sont, afin qu’elle soit encore entretenue par eux, si c’est par eux qu’elle a été formée."

\textsuperscript{301} AT XI 383: “ce qui fait que tout le corps demeure immobile comme une statue.”

\textsuperscript{302} AT XI 383: “qu’on ne peut apercevoir de l’objet que la première face qui s’est présentée, ni par conséquent en acquérir une plus particulière connaissance. C’est cela qu’on appelle communément être étonné; et l’étonnement est un excès d’admiration qui ne peut jamais être que mauvais.”
fers from things we have known (this difference being what makes us call it ‘extraordinary’) (CSM I 354f; AT XI 384).

Because of the sudden surprise of the soul, we pay attention to something that we have not encountered before, and we want to acquire more knowledge of it. In this case wonder ceases when our knowledge increases.

Concerning objects that exceed us and our finite nature, the case is different. They may differ from everything else in being infinite, in which case, we cannot ever know them completely. When wonder makes us aware of something like that it gets the sense of admiration, and in this case it never ceases. Objects of this kind are God and free will. At the end of the Third Meditation Descartes discusses wonder in regards to God. It is now related to something totally different from us that has no imperfection. Descartes finishes the Meditation by considering God, who is perfect, and this perfection is the object of wonder and adoration:

I should like to pause here and spend some time in the contemplation of God; to reflect on his attributes, and to gaze with wonder and adoration on the beauty of this immense light (CSM II 36; AT VII 52).

Wonder may be harmful because it may make us think of something that does not merit our attention. Therefore, Descartes thinks that “after acquiring such knowledge we must attempt to free ourselves from this inclination as

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303 AT XI 384: “Car nous n’admirons que ce qui nous paraît rare et extraordinaire; et rien ne nous peut paraître tel que parce que nous l’avons ignoré, ou même aussi parce qu’il est différent des choses que nous avons sues; car c’est cette différence qui fait qu’on le nomme extraordinaire.”

304 Cf. Laurence Renaul who writes that “lorsque l’admiration se fonde seulement sur la nouveauté et l’ignorance, elle doit disparaître à mesure que le savoir vrai se développe” (Renault 2000, 175).

305 This is the sense in which Descartes uses wonder in his scientifical writings, for instance in the Meteorology. He writes that “[n]ous avons naturellement plus d’admiration pour les choses qui sont au-dessus de nous, que pour celles qui sont à pareille hauteur ou au-dessous. [...] Ce qui me fait espérer que, si j’explique ici leur nature, en telle sorte qu’on n’aït plus occasion d’admirer rien de ce qui s’y voit ou qui en descend, on croira facilement qu’il est possible, en même façon, de trouver les causes de tout ce qu’il y a de plus admirable dessus la terre.” (AT VI 231). Alquié stresses wonder’s intellectual function. He states that “l’admiration n’est pas fondée sur l’utile, et repose sur une appréciation, non utilitaire, mais intellectual [...] L’admiration, comme de dira l’article suivant, sert donc à l’acquisition des sciences, et Descartes rejoint en ceci l’idée antique selon laquelle l’étonnement amena les hommes à la philosophie” (Alquié 1989, 999). Descartes states it explicitly that it is good to be disposed to wonder because “it makes us disposed to acquire scientific knowledge” (CSM I 355 ; AT XI 385).

306 Cf. Renault “[d]ans ce cas, l’admiration ne cesse pas avec la connaissance [...] on peut continuer à admirer ce qu’on connaît déjà, pour peu qu’il agisse de quelque chose dont la nature présente un caractère exceptionnel” (Renault 2000, 175).

307 AT VII 52 : “placet hic aliquandiu in ipsius Dei contemplatione immorari; ejus attributa apud me expedere, et immensi hujus luminis pulchritudinem, quantum caligantis ingenii mei acies ferre poterit, intueri, admirari, adorare.”
much as possible” (CSM I 355; AT XI 385). In regards to God and free will we cannot ever wonder too much.

We must use wonder in the right way. This comes out also in regards to esteem and scorn that are species of wonder and the first particular passions. Esteem and scorn are species of wonder where we attach a value to the object we wonder at. Esteem is “[t]he soul’s inclination to represent to itself the value of the object of its esteem” (CSM I 383; AT XI 443). Scorn, on the other hand, is “the soul’s inclination to consider the baseness or insignificance of the object of its contempt” (CSM I 383; AT XI 444).

Esteem and scorn are especially powerful when the self is the object whose greatness or lowness we wonder:

[i]n general, these two passions may relate to all sorts of objects. But they are chiefly noteworthy when we refer them to ourselves, i.e. when it is our own merit for which we have esteem or contempt (CSM I 383; AT XI 444f). We need to learn to use wonder in the right way as regards to our self-esteem:

I see only one thing in us which could give us good reason for esteeming ourselves, namely, the exercise of our free will and the control we have over our volitions (CSM I 384; AT XI 445).

Descartes makes a distinction between different kinds of esteem and scorn related to the self, some of which are virtues, others vices. The self-esteem that is virtue include true generosity [la vraie générosité] but pride

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308 AT XI 385: “encore qu’il soit bon d’être né avec quelque inclination à cette passion, parce que cela nous dispose à l’acquisition des sciences, nous devons toutefois tâcher par après de nous délivrer le plus qu’il est possible.”
309 Cf. Renault according to which “[l]e bon usage ce cette passion se résume à fortifier notre attention à l’égard des choses qui méritent vraiment d’être considérées parce qu’elles sont vraiment exceptionnelles, et à éviter d’attacher trop de considération à celles qui n’en valent pas la peine” (Renault 2000, 175).
310 Descartes begins the third part of the Passions by writing that “[a]près avoir expliqué les six passions primitives, qui sont comme les genres dont toutes les autres sont des espèces, je remarquerai ici succintement ce qu’il y a de particulier en chacune de ces autres [...] Les deux premières sont l’estime et le mépris” (AT XI 443). He writes “ces deux passions ne sont que des espèces d’admiration” (AT XI 444). 
311 AT XI 443f: “Et l’estime, en tant qu’elle est une passion, est une inclination qu’a l’âme à se représenter la valeur de la chose estimée.”
312 AT XI 444: “la passion du mépris est une inclination qu’a l’âme à considérer la bassesse ou petitesse de ce qu’elle méprise.”
313 AT XI 444f: “Or, ces deux passions se peuvent généralement rapporter à toutes sortes d’objets; mais elles sont principalement remarquables, quand nous les rapportons à nous-mêmes, c’est-à-dire quand c’est notre propre mérite que nous estimons ou méprisons.”
314 AT XI 445: “Je ne remarque en nous qu’une seule chose qui nous puisse donner juste raison de nous estimer, à savoir l’usage de notre libre arbitre, et l’empire que nous avons sur nos volontés.”
[l’orgueil] is always vicious. Descartes distinguishes humbleness or virtuous humility [l’humilité vertueuse] from servility [la bassesse] or vicious humility [l’humilité vicieuse].

Self-esteem cannot legitimately be based on beauty, money, power, intelligence or other similar things but only on free will. Self-esteem that is based on free will and the determination to use it well gives rise to true generosity that is pivotal to Descartes because it is the main way to master the passions.

To acquire this highest virtue we have to learn to wonder at the right thing in us, the freedom of the will and its right usage. The fact that generosity has such a privileged place in Descartes shows us that wonder, despite the fact that it does not inform us of about the good or bad of an object, is central to Descartes. The importance Descartes gives to it in his classification marks a major difference between Descartes and Spinoza. In the Short Treatise Spinoza begins the classification of passions with wonder [verwondering]: “[l]et us take Wonder first” (CW I, 99). Wonder does not, however, play such a central role for Spinoza as it does for Descartes. It is simply a sign of ignorance: “there is no wonder in him who draws true conclusions” (CW I, 100). For instance, Spinoza does not think that there is a difference between a peasant and a philosopher when they wonder at something that is contrary to their inductive reasoning. Wonder has no function for Spinoza other than to indicate imperfection in those who do not use their intellect correctly.

Alquié points out that it is because of their different views of God that Descartes and Spinoza understand wonder differently. For Spinoza wonder does not have any function because he thinks that we can know God’s essence. There is nothing that really exceeds our capacity to know, and therefore there is nothing to wonder at. For the same reason, wonder does not

315 Cf. e.g. the article of 160 of the Passions where Descartes explains the different movements of spirits concerning vices and virtues related to our self-esteem. In the Short Treatise Spinoza discusses esteem, disdain and other passions in an order similar to Descartes’s in the Passions. He writes that “[n]ow we shall speak of Esteem and Disdain, of Legitimate Self-esteem and Humility, of Pride and Self-depreciation [Nu vervolgens dan zullen wy spreek van de Achting en Versmading, van de Edelmoedigheid en Nedrigheid, van Verwaantheid en van de strafbare Needrigheid]” (GI/68).

316 GI/56: “laat dan de Verwondering de eerste zyn.”

317 GI/57: “maar nooyt en is verwondering in die geene die waare besluyten maakt.”

318 As regards the peasant Spinoza writes that he "deluded himself into thinking that, outside his fields, there were no others. But one day he missed one of his cows, and had to go far away in search of her. He was astonished that outside his own small farm there were so very many others” (CW I, 100). Furthermore, he thinks that “[m]any philosophers must also be like that. They have deluded themselves into thinking that beyond this plot of ground, or little globe, on which they are, there is nothing more (because they have seen nothing else)” (ibid.).

319 Alquié writes “Descartes voulait seulement détourner l’admiration de la nature matérielle, que la science peut expliquer, et où tout se réduit à des déplacements dans l’espace, et diriger cette admiration vers Dieu. Spinoza, soucieux de comprendre et de rationaliser Dieu lui-même, s’efforce de constituer une philosophie où l’admiration et l’étonnement n’auront plus aucune place” (Alquié 1981, 287).
relate to admiration in the sense of keeping us aware of something which is truly valuable to us. If there is something that appears to be beyond us and to be admired, this means for Spinoza that we do not know its natural causes. His discussion of miracles tells that belief in astonishing events is based either on ignorance of the natural laws in question or the lack of knowledge of the circumstances and antecedent natural conditions. In the *Ethics*, Spinoza does not regard wonder as an affect at all because it does not amount to a change in our power of acting. It is just a new idea, not yet associated with other ideas.320

3.2 Time as an additional principle to distinguish passions

All the rest of the passions concern the ways in which external objects can be good or bad to us.321 There is a difference between, on the one hand, love and hate and on the other, desire, joy and sadness. The latter group is ordered in reference to time. It is not quite clear how they are related to love and hate.322 Descartes is clear that love and desire are different passions. He relates desire to time but love is atemporal. Desire, joy and sadness are related to time in that they concern good or evil that is either present or something we either want to have or avoid having:

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320 Cf. what Spinoza writes about wonder in the *Ethics*: “the imagination of a new thing, considered among itself, is of the same nature as the other, and for this reason I do not number wonder among the affects. Nor do I see why I should, since this distraction of the Mind does not arise from any positive cause which distracts the Mind from other things but only from the fact that there is no cause determining the Mind to pass from regarding one thing to thinking of others” [GII/191f: “Rei itaque novae imaginatio in se considerata ejusdem naturae est, ac reliquae, et hac de causa ego Admiracionem inter affectus non numero, nec causam video, cur id facerem, quandoquidem haec Mentis distractio ex nulla causa positiva, quae Mentem ab alis distrahat, oritur; sed tantum ex eo, quod causa, cur Mens ex unius rei contemplatione ad alia cogitandum determinatur, deficit”] (EIIdDef.OfAff. IV). The fact that the status of wonder changes between the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics* is one indication that the theory of passions Spinoza outlines in the former work is not exactly the same in the latter. In the *Short Treatise* Spinoza regards it still as a passion because he defines passions there through cognitions. In the *Ethics* there is a shift in the emphasis: it is not cognition which is prior to everything else but the power of acting, and this difference has a crucial impact on his theory of the affects.

321 Cf. AT XI 374: “lorsqu'une chose nous est représentée comme bonne à notre égard, c'est-à-dire comme nous étant convenable, cela nous fait avoir pour elle de l’amour; et lorsqu’elle nous est représentée comme mauvaise ou nuisible, cela nous excite à la haine.”

322 I think that love and hate are atemporal. Cf. Kambouchner who states that “parmi toutes les relations affectives qui définissent nos passions, celle de l’amour (et sans doute aussi bien celle de la haine) constitue chez Descartes la plus absolue et intemporelle” (Kambouchner 1995, 301). They are atemporal because the assent of the will is not temporal, cf. Beyssade according to whom “[l]e consentement et la dissidence qui les constituent sont en eux-mêmes intemporaux” (Beyssade 2001, 328).
the same consideration of good and evil is the origin of all the other passions. But in order to put them in order I shall take time into account (CSM I 350; AT XI 374).323

Desire is a passion that makes us strive to acquire things that appear good to us or to keep the harmful ones away. Because desire is a passion that concerns the future, it precedes joy and sadness: “Seeing that they lead us to look much more to the future than to the present or past, I begin with desire” (CSM I 350; AT XI 375).324 Jean-Marie Beyssade thinks that “[t]es six passions primitives s’ordonnent elles-mêmes, comme les lignes, les surfaces et les volumes du géomètre, selon trois principes”.325 The three principles are, first, if an object is new or extraordinary to us, second, if it is good or bad to us and third is its relation to time and our really having it. Beyssade thinks that Descartes puts the passions into order in almost a geometrical manner. In the end, the passions are the different ways in which external objects can influence the mind-body union. Primitive passions indicate the most basic relationships we can have with the external world.

3.3 To join oneself willingly to an object

Let us now turn back to love and hate. They are defined through an act of will as follows. Love is

an emotion of the soul caused by a movement of the spirits, which impels the soul to join itself willingly to objects that appear to be agreeable to it (CSM I 356; AT XI 387).326

The essence of love is to “join itself willingly” to an object. What does Descartes mean by this? He distinguishes love from desire as follows:

in using the word ‘willingly’ I am not speaking of desire, which is a completely separate passion relating to the future. I mean rather the assent by

323 AT XI 374: “De la même considération du bien et du mal naissent toutes les autres passions. Mais afin de les mettre par ordre, je distingue les temps.”
324 AT XI 374f: “considérant qu’elles nous portent bien plus à regarder l’avenir que le présent ou le passé, je commence par le désir.”
325 Beyssade 2001, 327. In Renault’s account as well there are in the end three criteria according to which passions are classified. The first one is “la primauté du simple”. Renault thinks that wonder is the simplest passion since “dans l’admiration l’importance d’un objet repose uniquement sur la surprise que nous éprouvons en le percevant” (Renault 2000, 165). As the second one she regards “une évaluation de la convenance de l’objet à notre égard” (Renault 2000, 165). The internal distinction between them is made whether they relate to time or not. Renault writes that “[c]es cinq passions se distinguent comme les effets de cette convenance ou disconvenance de l’objet, suivant qu’elle est ou non rapportée au temps, et quand elle l’est, suivant qu’elle est rapportée à l’avenir ou au présent” (Renault 2000, 166).
326 AT XI 387: “L’amour est une émotion de l’âme causée par le mouvement des esprits, qui l’incite à se joindre de volonté aux objets qui paraissent lui être convenables.”
Descartes’s definition of love strikes one as original. The essence of love is to give assent to an idea in which we represent ourselves joined with another and constituting a whole with it. In love the interests of the whole go before the interests of the parts of the whole. Because Descartes thinks that there is nothing else but this representation of oneself as joined to another and creating a whole, there are many kinds of love depending on what we think we are joined to. They are distinguished by the esteem we give to the other in comparison to ourselves. If we esteem the other less than ourselves we have a simple affection for the thing that can be, for example, something in nature or an animal. Friendship is about esteeming the other as highly as oneself, and when we esteem the other more than ourselves this love is devotion.

Descartes thinks that we can see the difference between these loves in their effects. Although love is about representing oneself as joined to another, to preserve the better part we are ready to abandon the lesser. As regards the simple affection, we always prefer ourselves to the object we have an affection for. In devotion we prefer the interests of the other to our own interests, as for example, in our love for our country or for people we esteem highly.

Just as in these cases there is no difference in regards to the essence of love, neither is there between benevolent and concupiscent love. Both concern thinking ourselves joined with another so that we form a whole. Here too there is a difference in the effects of love. In benevolent love we represent ourselves as joined with things we regard as beneficial to the one we love – i.e., we love what benefits her. In concupiscent love, we relate to the

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327 AT XI 387: “par le mot de volonté, je n’entends pas ici parler du désir, qui est une passion à part et se rapporte à l’avenir; mais du consentement par lequel on se considère dès à présent comme joint avec ce qu’on aime, en sorte qu’on imagine un tout duquel on pense être seulement une partie, et que la chose aimée en est une autre.”

328 Cf. article 83 where Descartes writes that “[o]n peut, ce me semble, avec meilleure raison, distinguer l’amour par l’estime qu’on fait de ce qu’on aime, comparaison de soi-même” (AT XI 389f).

329 AT XI 390: “la différence qui est entre ces trois sortes d’amour paraît principalement par leurs effets; car, d’autant qu’en toutes on se considère comme joint et uni à la chose aimée, on est toujours prêt d’abandonner la moindre partie du tout qu’on compose avec elle pour conserver l’autre.”

330 Cf. Descartes’s letter to Chanut on 1 February 1647 where he describes how we can love, for example, a flower, a bird and a building but this kind of love cannot ever yield the perfection in which we put our life in risk to preserve these kinds of things. They are not, as he writes “des parties plus nobles du tout qu’elles composent avec nous, que nos ongles et nos cheveux sont de notre corps; et ce serait une extravagance de mettre tout le corps au hasard pour la conservation des cheveux” (AT IV 612).
object loved in a different manner, for we desire it for ourselves. Both of these things are common effects of love (cf. CSM I 356; AT XI 388).

In many cases, there is love as regarding the possession of objects, rather than love for the objects themselves. For example, the love an ambitious man has for glory, an avaricious for money, a drunkard for wine and a brutish man for a woman are, as far as the essence of love is concerned, the same as the love the good father has for his children. Descartes writes that they differ in that

the men in the first four examples have love only for the possession of the objects to which their passion is related, and not for the objects themselves: for these objects they have merely desire mingled with other particular passions. Whereas the love of a good father for his children is so pure that he desires to have nothing from them, and he wants neither to possess them otherwise than he does, nor to be joined to them more closely than he already is (CSM I 357; AT XI 389).331

A greedy man does not love the money itself but he loves to have it. He thinks of himself as united with the riches. Another example concerns the “first love” we have, that is, loving to possess a thing – nutrition.332 Matheron describes how the foetus does not love blood or other vital juice itself but loves to have them:

lorsque Descartes [--] associe à la digestion le premier amour du foetus – celui qu’il éprouvait pour l’aliment qui entrait dans son coeur – il ne s’agit pas vraiment, en réalité, d’un amour pour l’aliment lui-même, mais d’un amour pour la possession de cet aliment, qui anticipe sur cette possession.333

The first love we experience as united with the body is love to possess nutrition. Without this love, we could not survive. It is important early in our life to love in regards to possessing a thing, but later loves for things themselves become more significant.

Love is an extremely important passion, according to Descartes. When we form a whole with the object itself, we participate in the good that the object can provide us. For example, the father enjoys and shares in the being and the presence of his children, the good they can give, and in this sense, they are something the father truly cherishes. Although the father does not really

331 AT XI 389: “les quatre premiers n’ont de l’amour que pour la possession des objets auxquels se rapporte leur passion, et n’en ont point pour les objets mêmes, pour lesquels ils ont seulement du désir mêlé avec d’autres passions particulières. Au lieu que l’amour qu’un bon père a pour ses enfants est si pure qu’il ne désire rien avoir d’eux, et ne veut point les posséder autrement qu’il fait, ni être joint à eux plus étroitement qu’il est déjà.”

332 Cf. Descartes’s letter to Chanut on 1 February 1647 where he tells us how the first love before birth is caused only by suitable nourishment (CSMK III 308; AT IV 606). I shall refer to this also in the chapter of Descartes’s mastery in the next part.

333 Matheron 1988, 436.
need the children, his life is much more joyful when he has them in his life. Through love we take a part in the good that the others have. Matheron writes about our loving the thing itself:

nous ne demandons rien d’autre à la personne aimée que d’être elle-même et d’être heureuse, puisque c’est précisement cela qui nous réjouit. Car lorsque nous aimons, indépendamment de tous les avantages que peut ou non nous procurer par ailleurs l’être aimé, nous participons idéalement à sa puissance.\textsuperscript{334}

Descartes’s discussion of love and friendship represents a unique turn in his thinking. His philosophy concentrates on the individual: each individual mind is a substance, our essence is thinking, and the most important thing we have is free will and the resolution to use it well. His discussions of love show us another side of his philosophy. We understand what the important role connection with others play. The individual mind enhances its happiness, flourishes when united with another.

In a letter to Chanut on 1 February 1647 Descartes further elaborates on the nature of love and friendship and shows what an important role care plays in his account. Love is representing a whole with another thing, which means to

transfer the care one previously took of oneself to the preservation of this whole. One keeps for oneself only a part of one’s care, a part which is great or little in proportion to whether one thinks oneself a larger or smaller part of the whole to which one has given one’s affection (CSMK III 311; AT IV 611f).\textsuperscript{335}

Those for whom we have a lesser esteem do not require that we are ready to sacrifice ourselves. Concerning, however, the ones we esteem as much as ourselves and have friendship with, we need to take care of their interests and even put them above our own. Notice the strong tone in his words when referring to Virgil he writes about friendship:

But when two human beings love each other, charity requires that each of the two should value his friend above himself; and so their friendship is not perfect unless each is ready to say in favor of the other: ‘It is I who did the deed, I am here, turn your swords against me’ (CSMK III 311; AT IV 612).\textsuperscript{336}

\textsuperscript{334} Matheron 1988, 440.
\textsuperscript{335} AT IV 611f: “Car la nature de l’amour est de faire qu’on se considère avec l’objet aimé comme un tout dont on n’est qu’une partie, et qu’on transfère tellement les soins qu’on a coutume d’avoir pour soi-même à la conservation de ce tout, qu’on n’en retienne pour soi en particulier qu’une partie aussi grande ou aussi petite qu’on croit être une grande ou petite partie du tout auquel on a donné son affection.”
\textsuperscript{336} AT IV 612: “Mais quand deux hommes s’ent’aiment, la charité veut que chacun d’eux estime son ami plus que soi-même; c’est pourquoi leur amitié n’est point parfaite, s’ils ne sont prêts de dire, en faveur l’un de l’autre: Meme adsum qui feci, in me convertite ferrum, etc.”
Descartes considers the other so important that friendship is not perfect if both are not ready to die for each other. Even more so regarding things that we esteem above ourselves, like our country and sovereign. In these cases one “should be no more afraid to go to certain death for their service than one is afraid to draw a little blood from one’s arm to improve the health of the rest of the body” (CSMK III 311; AT 612). Descartes’s idea of love as representing a whole with another indicates the importance he places on our being united with something else and for the joy that results from this union. The most important love and union with another is with God. Chanut is undecided about whether the affection he has for God can be regarded as love. He writes that he knows through reason that he should love God, but whether what his reason tells him can be called love is not clear.

Mais toutes les mesures et les raisons de l'affection me semblent si courtes, que je ne peux comprendre quasi que cette action de notre âme vers un objet infini de toutes parts se puisse appeler autrement qu'un étonnement et une confusion très respectueuse. (AT X 611).

According to Chanut, no philosopher has been able to show that one has to love God. Descartes thinks, however, that his definition of love would also explain love for God philosophically:

I know no other definition of love save that it is a passion which makes us join ourselves willingly to some object, no matter whether the object is equal to or greater or less than us. So it seems to me that if I am to speak philosophically, I must say that it is possible to love God (CSMK III 310; AT IV 611).

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337 AT IV 612: “Tout de même, quand un particulier se joint de volonté à son prince, ou à son pays, si son amour est parfaite, il ne se doit estimer que comme une fort petite partie du tout qu’il compose avec eux, et ainsi ne craindre pas plus d’aller à une mort assurée pour leur service, qu’on craint de tirer un peu de sang de son bras, pour faire que le reste du corps se porte mieux.”

338 Cf. Chanut to Descartes on 1 December 1646: “Mais il y a une difficulté qui me travaille quelquefois, et que je vous découvrirai d’autant plus volontiers, que la charité, en ce rencontre, vous convierait de me dire, pour soulager ma peine, ce que vous ne donneriez pas à une simple curiosité. Je sens bien, quand j’écoute la raison, qu’il faut aimer Dieu; je parle en ceci dans les termes d’une recherche purement morale, sans le secours de la vérité chrétienne et de la grâce de Dieu qui l’accompagne.” (AT X 611.)

339 AT X 611: “Je ne sais si je me trompe, et je vous supplie de m’en désabuser, si ma remarque est fausse; mais il me semble qu’aucun des philosophes n’a osé dire que les hommes dussent aimer Dieu, et que cette familiarité de la créature envers lui est un principe de la religion.”

340 AT IV 611: “Je ne sais point d’autre définition de l’amour, sinon qu’elle est une passion qui nous fait joindre de volonté à quelque objet, sans distinguer si cet objet est égal, ou plus grand, ou moindre que nous, il me semble que, pour parler leur langue, je dois dire qu’on peut aimer Dieu.”
Thus, no matter with what we think to form a whole, whether we esteem him as higher than ourselves or disdain him as of lesser value, this is love. Descartes does not think that we can know the nature of God but he thinks that when we think of love towards God, union with him, “the idea of such a union by itself is sufficient to produce heat around the heart and cause a violent passion” (CSMK III 310; AT IV 610).\footnote{AT IV 610: “Car, encore que nous ne puissions rien imaginer de ce qui est en Dieu, lequel est l’objet de notre amour, nous pouvons imaginer notre amour même, qui consiste en ce que nous voulons nous unir à quelque objet, c’est-à-dire, au regard de Dieu, nous considérer comme une très petite partie de toute l’immensité des choses qu’il a créées; parce que, selon que les objets sont divers, on se peut unir avec eux, ou les joindre à soi en diverses façons; et la seule idée de cette union suffit pour exciter de la chaleur autour du cœur, et causer une très violente passion.”} The union with God is the most beneficial of all things we can think of. It causes us to accept both the good and evil we encounter because they come from the divine decree: one “accepts them with joy, without any fear of evils, and his love makes him perfectly happy” (CSMK III 310; AT IV 609).\footnote{AT IV 609: “Mais, s’il ne refuse point les maux ou les afflictions, parce qu’elles lui viennent de la providence divine, il refuse encore moins tous les biens ou plaisirs licites dont il peut jouir en cette vie, parce qu’ils en viennent aussi; et les recevant avec joie, sans avoir aucune crainte des maux, son amour le rend parfaitement heureux.”}

Love as joining oneself with another and participating in the good the other can contribute to us shows the importance Descartes holds for our being united with others. Hate, on the contrary, is a passion where we separate ourselves from others:

an emotion caused by the spirits, which impels the soul to want to be separated from objects which are presented to it as harmful (CMS I 356; AT XI 387).\footnote{AT XI 387: “la haine est une émotion causée par les esprits, qui incite l’âme à vouloir être séparée des objets qui se présentent à elle comme nuisibles.”}

Although hate is useful in regards to harm that might render our body defective Descartes does not value it highly for it is better to be united with another. What I have just written concerns love and hate as passions, which means they are caused by the movements of the body. Descartes distinguishes these from love and hate as intellectual emotions, caused by the mind. The mind judges something good and as a result joins itself with it, constituting a whole with that thing. Therefore, there are not only passions – thoughts whose proximate cause is the body – but also emotions caused by the judgments of the mind:

these emotions are caused by the spirits not only in order to distinguish love and hatred (which are passions and depend on the body) from judgments which also bring the soul to join itself willingly to things it deems [good and
to separate from the ones it considers bad], but also to distinguish them from the emotions which these judgments produce in the soul.344

His idea of the real distinction between the mind and body plays a role here. He thinks that these intellectual emotions can occur without the body (cf. e.g. AT IV 602).345 The mind can have emotions by itself, and it can also have passions caused by the body.

3.4 Desire, joy, sadness

Like love and hate, desire, joy and sadness also represent a thing as good or harmful to us. In these passions, however, we do not represent ourselves as constituting a whole with another thing. Descartes defines the passion of desire as follows. It is an agitation of the soul caused by the spirits, which disposes the soul to wish, in the future, for things it represents to itself as agreeable. Thus we desire not only the presence of goods which are absent but also the preservation of those which are present (CSM I 358 ; AT XI 392).346

Descartes thinks that the passions almost never occur alone.347 Already the considerations about concupiscent love showed that desire follows very eas-

344 AT XI 387: “Je dis que ces émotions sont causées par les esprits, afin de distinguer l’amour et la haine, qui sont des passions et dépendent du corps, tant des jugements qui portent aussi l’âme à se joindre de volonté avec les choses qu’elle estime bonnes et à se séparer de celles qu’elle estime mauvaises, que des émotions que ces seuls jugements excitent en l’âme.” We should note that there occurs a translation error in CSM here. It says that “to join itself willingly to things it deems bad” where it should be, naturally, to join to things it deems good and to separate from the ones it considers bad.

345 Later in the chapter about the mastery of passions in Descartes I shall get back to the idea of intellectual love. I discuss it in relation to sensual love and the difficulty of understanding the nature of love that Chanut is puzzled by.

346 AT XI 392: “La passion du désir est une agitation de l’âme causée par les esprits qui la dispose à vouloir pour l’avenir les choses qu’elle se représente être convenables. Ainsi on ne désire pas seulement la présence du bien absent, mais aussi la conservation du présent, et de plus l’absence du mal, tant de celui qu’on a déjà que de celui qu’on croit pouvoir recevoir au temps à venir.” The definition Spinoza gives for desire in the Short Treatise resembles the one in the Passions. Spinoza writes there that “as for desire – whether it consists (as some maintain) in an appetite or inclination to get what one lacks, or (as others contend), to preserve the things we already enjoy – certainly it cannot be found to have occurred in anyone except for something which has seemed good [de Begeere: het zy datze bestaat of alleen, zo eenige willen, in de lust of trek van ’t geene men ontbreekt te bekomen, of, zo andere willen, in de dingen te behouden die wy nu alreeds genieten, ’t is zeeker datse in niemand en kan gevonden worden gekomen te zyn, als onder de gedaante van goet]” (CW I, 101; GI/58). It is a notable thing that in the Short Treatise Spinoza does discuss desire [begeeret], joy [blydschap] and sadness [droefheid] only after wonder, love and hate, i.e., the order is the same as in the Passions. The fact that these three passions are the primary passions in the Ethics is a sign of a change in Spinoza’s theory of affects.

347 Cf. e.g. a letter to Elisabeth May 1646, AT IV 408. 

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ily from love. Desire has a special importance in Descartes’s theory because the other passions do not make us act without the desires they give rise to.\textsuperscript{348} Referring to love, hate, joy and sadness, he writes that “these passions cannot lead us to perform any action except by means of the desire they produce” (CSM I 379; AT XI 436).\textsuperscript{349} For this reason, we need to be careful with desires: “here lies the chief utility of morality” (CSM I 379; AT XI 436).\textsuperscript{350}

We have already seen with respect to wonder that we should learn to use it right. Descartes thinks as well that we should learn to desire right things. Desires are always good when they are guided by true knowledge \textit{[une vraie connaissance]}. We know that nothing else really depends on us but the will, and therefore, we cannot ever commit a mistake when we desire things that are related to our will. Although our desires may be too strong, if we desire things depending on our free of will, we cannot fail to desire too much. The mistake we make is “rather that we desire too little” (CSM I 379; AT XI 437).\textsuperscript{351} To avoid this, Descartes recommends that we should free our mind of all other desires and “to consider with attention, the goodness of that which is to be desired” (CSM I 379 ; AT XI 437).\textsuperscript{352}

Through joy the mind feels that something pleasant belongs to it or to the mind-body union. Descartes defines it as

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a pleasant emotion which the soul has when it enjoys a good which impressions in the brain present to it as its own (CSM I 360 ; AT XI 396).\textsuperscript{353}
\end{quote}

The soul enjoys whatever good it possesses \textit{[la jouissance du bien]} through joy. If it did not feel joy, it would not make any difference to it whether it had the good or not.\textsuperscript{354} Because of sadness the soul feels that something harmful belongs to it. Descartes defines it as

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\textsuperscript{348} Cf. \textit{e.g.} Descartes’s account of the romantic love which is a species of desire. Descartes describes how we consider ourselves at a certain age and season as defective, “as forming only one half of a whole, whose other half must be a person of the opposite sex. In this way nature represents, in a confused manner, the acquisition of this other half as the greatest of all goods imaginable” (CSM I 360 ; AT XI 395). Desire is, then, the activating principle to search for something that appears good to us
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\textsuperscript{349} AT XI 436: “ces passions ne nous peuvent porter à aucune action que par l’entremise du désir qu’elles excitant.”
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{350} AT XI 436: “c’est en cela que consiste la principale utilité de la morale.”
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\textsuperscript{351} AT XI 437: “la faute qu’on a coutume de commettre en ceci n’est jamais qu’on désire trop, c’est seulement qu’on désire trop peu.”
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\textsuperscript{352} AT XI 437: “le souverain remède contre cela est de se délivrer l’esprit autant qu’il se peut de toutes sortes d’autres désirs moins utiles, puis de tâcher de connaître bien clairement et de considérer avec attention la bonté de ce qui est à désirer.”
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\textsuperscript{353} AT XI 396: “La joie est une agréable émotion de l’âme, en laquelle consiste la jouissance qu’elle a du bien que les impressions du cerveau lui représentent comme sien.”
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{354} AT XI 396f: “car en effet l’âme ne reçoit aucun autre fruit de tous les biens qu’elle possède; et pendant qu’elle n’en a aucune joie, on peut dire qu’elle n’en jouit pas plus que si elle ne les possédait point.”
\end{quote}
an unpleasant listlessness which affects the soul when it suffers discomfort from an evil or deficiency which impressions in the brain represent to it as its own (CSM I 361; AT XI 397f).

How are joy and sadness caused? There are impressions in the brain that represent the good or the bad belonging to us. Alquié thinks that being glad or sad means that the soul makes a judgment that something good or harmful belongs to it. When rejoicing or being sad, the soul has a thought of something pleasant or harmful belonging to it. This thought, a passion of the soul, has the effect of inclining the will to make a judgment that we have something agreeable or harmful, but simply being glad or sad does not mean it. Often we do not understand why we feel glad or sad:

This happens when the good or evil forms its impression in the brain without the intervention of the soul, sometimes because it affects only the body and sometimes because, even though it affects the soul, the soul does not consider it as good or evil but views it under some other form whose impression is joined in the brain with that of the good or evil (CSM I 361; AT XI 398).

Descartes thinks that there are intellectual joys and sadnesses, just as there is intellectual love. When he defines joy as a passion he asks his reader to be careful “not to confuse this joy, which is a passion, with the purely intellectual joy that arises in the soul through an action of the soul alone” (CSM I 360f; AT XI 397). In intellectual joy or sadness there is nothing obscure. They are caused by the action of the soul, so the soul understands very well the good or bad belonging to us when it makes such a judgment. For instance, when Descartes defines intellectual joy, he thinks that we can regard it as “a pleasant emotion which the soul arouses in itself whenever it enjoys a good which its understanding represents to it as its own” (CSM I 361; AT XI 397).
There cannot be anything obscure in intellectual joy and sadness because their cause is obvious:

For we see from the definitions that joy results from the belief that we possess some good, and sadness from the belief that we have some evil or deficiency (CSM I 361; AT XI 398).

Because of our union with the body, (and as long as we are united with the body), intellectual emotions are, however, usually followed by the passions (CSM I 361; AT XI 397f). There is such a connection between the mind and body that when the soul thinks, for example, of something good belonging to us, the corresponding bodily states occur. He writes that even when the soul thinks of something unimaginary

the imagination cannot fail immediately to form some impression in the brain, from which there ensues the movement of the spirits which produces the passion of joy (CSM I 361; AT XI 398).

Sadness and joy are important passions especially in regards to the condition of our body. The function of the passions is to contribute actions that preserve the body. Through sadness and joy we know if something harmful or beneficial belongs to the mind-body union:

it is only through a feeling of a pain that the soul is immediately advised about things that harm the body: this feeling produces in the soul first the passions of sadness, then hatred of what causes the pain, and finally the desire to get rid of it. Similarly the soul is immediately advised about things useful to the body only through some sort of titillation, which first produces joy within it, then gives rise to love of what we believe to be its cause, and

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359 AT XI 397: “qu’on peut dire être une agréable émotion excitée en elle par elle-même, par elle-même, en laquelle consiste la jouissance qu’elle a du bien que son entendement lui représente comme sien.”
360 AT XI 398: “Or, lorsque la joie ou la tristesse intellectuelle excite ainsi celle qui est une passion, leur cause est assez évidente; et on voit de leurs définitions que la joie vient de l’opinion qu’on a de posséder quelque bien, et la tristesse, de l’opinion qu’on a d’avoir quelque mal ou quelque défaut.”
361 AT XI 397: “Il est vrai que pendant que l’âme est jointe au corps, cette joie intellectuelle ne peut guère manquer d’être accompagnée de celle qui est une passion; car, siost que notre entendement s’aperçoit que nous possédons quelque bien, encore que ce bien puisse être si différent de tout ce qui appartient au corps qu’il ne soit point du tout imaginaire, l’imagination ne laisse pas de faire incontinent quelque impression dans le cerveau, de laquelle suit le mouvement des esprits qui excite la passion de la joie.” It is not, however, that intellectual emotions are always followed by passions, cf. Descartes’s letter to Chanut on 1 September 1647 (AT IV 603).
362 Cf. e.g. the article of 137 of the Passions where Descartes writes that “en sorte que leur usage naturel est d’inciter l’âme à consentir et contribuer aux actions qui peuvent servir à conserver le corps ou à le rendre en quelque façon plus parfait” (AT XI 430).
363 AT XI 430: “Et en ce sens la tristesse et la joie sont les deux premières qui sont employées.”
finally brings about the desire to acquire something that can enable us to con-
tinue in this joy, or else to have a similar joy again later on (CSM I 376; AT
XI 430).\textsuperscript{364}

Where there is something either beneficial or whether there is something
harmful in us, the series of passions end in desire: either to get rid of what is
harmful or to acquire what is useful. Sadness and joy indicate to us if there is
something wrong in the body or if something useful happens to it. In regards
to the condition of the body, sadness and hatred have a primary role over the
other passions: “it is more important to reject things which are harmful and
potentially destructive than to acquire those which add some perfection
which we can subsist without” (CSM I 376; AT XI 430).\textsuperscript{365}

The body is, however, only one part of the union. With respect to the
mind, different passions are useful. Here again we see how highly Descartes
thinks of love. When the things we love are truly good, this love cannot be
too great because “by joining real goods to us it makes us to that extent more
perfect” (CSM I 377; AT XI 432).\textsuperscript{366} The opposite is true of hate. Evil is a
privation, according to him, so there cannot be anything real without some
good. In hate we separate from the harmful but, as Descartes writes, it
likewise takes us away from the good to which it is joined, and the privation
of this good, being represented to our soul as a fault belonging to it, arouses
sadness in it (CSM I 378; AT XI 433).\textsuperscript{367}

Although the mind is an independent thing, we often see how important it is
for him that the mind is joined with other things and rejoices the presence
and the good others can give. For this reason, love is highly important for the
mind. Descartes does, however, take into account to which objects the mind
joins itself. For if our love is not justified, we join ourselves to objects that
make us less perfect (CSM I 379; AT XI 435). We could say that it is very

\textsuperscript{364} AT XI 430: “Car l’âme n’est immédiatement avertie des choses qui nuisent au corps que
par le sentiment qu’elle a de la douleur, lequel produit en elle premièrement la passion de la
tristesse, puis ensuite la haine de ce qui cause cette douleur, et en troisième lieu le désir de
s’en délivrer. Comme aussi l’âme n’est immédiatement avertie des choses utiles au corps que
par quelque sorte de chatouillement qui, excitant en elle de la joie, fait ensuite naître l’amour
de ce qu’on croit en être la cause, et enfin le désir d’acquérir ce qui peut faire qu’on continue
en cette joie ou bien qu’on jouisse encore après d’une semblable.”
\textsuperscript{365} AT XI 430: “ce qui fait voir qu’elles sont toutes cinq très utiles au regard du corps, et
même que la tristesse est en quelque façon première et plus nécessaire que la joie, et la haine
que l’amour, à cause qu’il importe davantage de repousser les choses qui nuisent et peuvent
détruire que d’acquérir celles qui ajoutent quelque perfection sans laquelle on peut subsister.”
\textsuperscript{366} AT XI 433: “Je dis que cette amour est extrêmement bonne, parce que, joignant à nous de
vrais biens, elle nous perfectionne d’autant.”
\textsuperscript{367} AT XI 433: “la haine qui nous éloigne de quelque mal nous éloigne par même moyen du
bien auquel il est joint, et la privation de ce bien, étant représentée à notre âme comme un
defaut qui lui appartient, excite en elle la tristesse.”
important for us to join with others but we should take care to whom we join ourselves.

3.5 Some species of desire

Descartes thinks that we can explain all other passions through these six primitive ones. According to him, they “are either composed from some of these six or [ou bien] they are species of them” (CSM I 353 ; AT XI 380). Desire has a central role because it is the primitive passion from which most of the other passions are derived. The other passions can be divided into two categories. First, there are derivatives of desire whose outcome does not depend on us, like hope [l’espérance], fear [la crainte],369 confidence [la sécurité], despair [le désespoir] and jealousy [la jalousie].370 Second, there are derivatives of desire whose outcome depends on us. These can be divided further as follows: “[b]ut when we think of it as dependent on us we may have some difficulty in deciding upon the means or putting them into effect (CMS I 351 ; AT XI 376).371 The passion of irresolution [l’irrésolution] concerns the means. We can deliberate and hesitate between different actions so much that we commit to none of them. Courage [le courage] and the passions related to it, like boldness [la hardiesse], emulation [l’émulation], cowardness [la lâcheté] and terror [la peur ou l’épouvante] are characterized in regards to the execution of the task.

Spinoza gives in the Short Treatise a strikingly similar division of these kind of passions. According to him, passions like hope [hoope], fear [vreeze], confidence [verzekerheid], despair [wanhoop], vacillation [wankelmoedigheid], strength of character [moed], tenacity [stoutheid], emulation [volghyver], cowardice [flaauwmoedigheid], consternation [vervaartheid] and jealousy [belgzugt] follow from two kinds of perceptions. On the one hand, the object of a passion can be perceived as contingent or necessary. On the other hand, it can depend on the one who perceives the thing and must either “do something to further the thing’s happening, or that he must do something to prevent it” (CW I, 112f).372 As in the Passions, Spinoza thinks in the Short Treatise that hope, fear, confidence and despair result from the former kind of perceptions. We have hope when there is a thing in

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368 AT XI 380: “toutes les autres sont composées de quelques-unes de ces six, ou bien en sont des espèces.”
369 CSM translates ‘la crainte’ as anxiety whereas Voss uses ‘apprehension’. Descartes uses also ‘la peur’ in the article 174 synonymously with l’épouvante, terror. I would translate ‘la peur’ as ‘to be frightened’ and ‘la crainte’ as fear.
370 AT XI 375f: “Et nous pouvons ainsi espérer et craindre, encore que l’événement de ce que nous attendons ne dépende aucunement de nous.”
371 AT XI 376: “mais quand il nous est représenté comme en dépendant, il peut y avoir de la difficulté en l’élection des moyens ou en l’exécution.”
372 GI/70: “of dat hy iets moet doen om te bevorderen dat de zake komt, of om de zelve te beletten.”
the future which we consider good and possible. If we think that the thing in the future is possible and evil, we feel fear. Confidence arises when we conceive a thing as good and necessary to come about. We feel despair when we consider a thing as evil and necessarily happening in the future. Spinoza regards confidence as a species of joy. He writes that confidence “is a kind of joy which is not, as hope is, mixed with sadness” (CW I, 113).373 Despair he considers “as nothing but a certain kind of sadness” (CW I, 113).374

Vacillation and strength of character are examples of passions that concern the person’s abilities to acquire or avoid something. The former passion occurs when a person cannot decide how to make something happen (CW I, 113).375 If the person is able to make something happen, he shows strength of character and is brave if the thing is difficult:

if it [the soul] decides in a manly way to bring the thing about, and this can be done, then this is called Strength of Character. And if the thing is difficult to bring about, it is called Tenacity, or Bravery (CW I, 113).376

Although Spinoza does not directly relate these passions to primitive passions in the Short Treatise in the way Descartes does the distinction between the categories is noticeably similar. Both discuss, on the one hand, hope, apprehension, jealousy, confidence and despair together since they are related to a future outcome regardless of our efforts. On the other hand, irresolution, courage, boldness, emulation, cowardice and terror are defined through being able to contribute to the outcome.

Let us consider more closely Descartes’s classification of a few derivative passions of desire: jealousy, irresolution and courage. He does not have a high opinion of jealousy and irresolution. Jealousy is a species of desire that arises when we fear that we will lose something we consider good.377 It arises because, on the one hand, one is uncertain of oneself, and on the other, has a high esteem of the thing one desires.378 Descartes does not find much use for this passion in life. For him everyday life requires being resolute and confident but this is not how jealousy functions. In his view, a jealous person is characterized by suspicions and mistrust instead of firmness. He thinks that

373 GI/71: “het welk een seekere blydschap is, niet vermengt met droefheid, gelyk in de Hoope.”
374 GI/71: “de welke niet anders is als een zekere slach von droefheid.”
375 GI/71: “als men iet moet doe nom de zake voort te brengen, en wy daar af geen besluyt en maaken, zo krygt de ziel een gestalte die wy Wankelmoedigheid noemen.”
376 GI/71: “maar als zy tot het voortbrengen van de zaake mannelyk besluyt, en die voortbrengelyk is, als dan word het Moed genoemd; en die zaake beswarlyk om voort te brengen zynde, zo word het Kloekmoedigheid genoemd of Dapperheid.”
377 AT XI 457: “La jalousie est une espèce de crainte qui se rapporte au désir qu’on a de se conserver la possession de quelque bien.”
378 AT XI 457: “elle ne vient pas tant de la force des raisons qui font juger qu’on le peut perdre que de la grande estime qu’on en fait.”
we cannot call someone jealous who has real reasons to be afraid of losing something.\footnote{Cf. article 167 where Descartes states that “qu’on examine jusqu’aux moindres sujets de soupçon, et qu’on les prend pour des raisons fort considérables” (AT XI 457) and article 169 according to which “cette passion ne se rapporte qu’aux soupçons et aux défiances, car ce n’est pas proprement être jaloux que de tâcher d’éviter quelque mal lorsqu’on a juste sujet de le craindre” (AT XI 459). Jealousy turns to be a sign of character which is not firm in Descartes. In the \textit{Short Treatise} Spinoza notes that it is related to desire to have a thing exclusively. He defines it as an anxiety when somebody has been allowed to “preserve exclusively something that has already been acquired [Eyndelyk de Belgzugt of Jalousie is een sorge die men heeft, om iets dat nu verkregen is alleen te mogen genieten en behouden]” (CW I, 113; GI/72). In the \textit{Ethics}, he continues to understand jealousy through desire to have the object exclusively. It is a kind of vacillation of the mind (EIIIP35S). We vacillate because our striving is restrained when we imagine the object we love to be united with another one. The same object both increases our power of acting and decreases it because of the third object who we envy, because his power of acting is increased by the object whom we would like have exclusively.}

There are, however, a few cases where he thinks that jealousy can be useful for us. If we have something really valuable that we need to preserve, we are right to protect it by all means, and jealousy helps us to attain this aim.\footnote{AT XI 458: “Et parce qu’on doit avoir plus de soin de conserver les biens qui sont fort grands que ceux qui sont moindres, cette passion peut être juste et honnête en quelques occasions.”} For instance, a captain who has a great fortress should jealously protect it so that it is safe from surprise attacks. Likewise, an honorable woman should be jealous of her honor and defend it from all sorts of gossip.\footnote{AT XI 458: “Ainsi, par exemple, un capitaine qui garde une place de grande importance a droit d’en être jaloux, c’est-à-dire de se défier de tous les moyens par lesquels elle pourrait être surprise; et une honnête femme n’est pas blâmée d’être jalouse de son honneur, c’est-à-dire de ne se garder pas seulement de mal faire, mais aussi d’éviter jusqu’aux moindres sujets de médisance.”} Is not the person who is jealous of his partner acting in the same way? He has something that is great and that he wants to keep. Descartes makes a distinction here. The way in which a husband has his wife is not the same as the captain has the fortress or a woman her honor. The captain and the woman really have those goods. The husband does not really have his wife: “what he loves is not strictly her: it is only the good he imagines to consist in his having sole possession of her” (CSM I 390; AT XI 458f).\footnote{AT XI 458f: “Mais ce n’est pas proprement elle qu’il aime, c’est seulement le bien qu’il imagine consister à en avoir seul la possession.”} His love is not the right sort and he has a low opinion of himself or her.\footnote{AT XI 458f: “on méprise un homme qui est jaloux de sa femme, parce que c’est un témoignage qu’il ne l’aime pas de la bonne sorte, et qu’il a mauvaise opinion de soi ou d’elle. Je dis qu’il ne l’aime pas de la bonne sorte; car, s’il avait une vraie amour pour elle, il n’aurait aucune inclination à s’en défier.”}

If jealousy is a passion Descartes does not think it has much use because it does not promote firmness. For similar reasons he has trouble with irresolution: “[k]eeping the soul balanced, as it were, between several actions open to it, irresolution causes it not to perform any of them” (CSM I 390; AT XI 458). He does not think jealousy helps us to attain this aim. If we have something really valuable that we need to preserve, we are right to protect it by all means, and jealousy helps us to attain this aim.
Its advantage is that it gives the soul “time to make a choice before committing itself”. It is, however, bad when it makes us deliberate longer than we need for acting. Descartes thinks that the best thing that aids us in life is to acquire certain firm and determinate judgments that help us to overcome the passions and irresoluteness. He encourages us to become accustomed to form certain and determinate judgments regarding everything that comes before us, and to believe that we always do our duty when we do what we judge to be best, even though our judgment may perhaps be a very bad one (CSM I 391; AT XI 469).

For Descartes it is important that we attempt to live in a determinate way. We need to acquire determinate judgments of good and evil and follow them firmly. He thinks that we can be content with ourselves even if the outcome has not been the best as long as we have followed what we have judged to be the best.

Lastly, courage and its derivative passions concern the execution of an action. Descartes defines courage as a certain heat or agitation which disposes the soul to apply itself energetically to accomplish the tasks it wants to perform, whatever their nature may be (CSM I 391; AT XI 460).

It has two species: boldness and emulation. Boldness is a species of courage in regards to the object: it disposes the soul to carry out things that are most dangerous. Emulation is a kind of courage defined through its causes: “heat which disposes the soul to undertake tasks in which it hopes to be able to accomplish them energetically, no matter what they may be” (CSM I 391; AT XI 460).

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384 AT XI 459: “L’irrésolution est aussi une espèce de crainte qui, retenant l’âme comme en balance entre plusieurs actions qu’elle peut faire, est cause qu’elle n’en exécute aucune.”
385 AT XI 459: “et ainsi qu’elle a du temps pour choisir avant que de se déterminer.”
386 AT XI 459: “lorsqu’elle dure plus qu’il ne faut, et qu’elle fait employer à délibérer le temps qui est requis pour agir, elle est fort mauvaise.”
387 Cf. e.g. AT XI 368. I shall discuss more these “proper weapons” of the will at the end of the study.
388 AT XI 460: “le remède contre cet excès est de s’accoutumer à former des jugements certains et déterminés touchant toutes les choses qui se présentent, et à croire qu’on s’acquitte toujours de son devoir lorsqu’on fait ce qu’on juge être le meilleur, encore que peut-être on juge très mal.”
389 As Alquié points out Descartes wants to avoid irresolution: “[n]ous trouvons ici l’aboutissement d’une réflexion qui a occupé Descartes durant sa vie. Il déteste l’irrésolution, et veut y soustraire la conduite, il est avide de certitude, et rejette par le doute ce qui n’est pas certain” (Alquié 1989, 1079).
390 AT XI 460: “Le courage, lorsque c’est une passion et non point une habitude ou inclination naturelle, est une certaine chaleur ou agitation qui dispose l’âme à se porter puissamment à l’exécution des choses qu’elle veut faire, de quelque nature qu’elles soient.”
391 Descartes writes that “we may regard courage as a genus which divides into as many species as it has different objects, and into as many others as it has causes: boldness is a species of courage in the first sense, and emulation in the second” (CSM I 391; AT XI 460f).
to succeed because it sees others succeed in them” (CSM I 391; AT XI 461). 392

How does Descartes explain that people can overcome fear and be brave? There is, on the one hand, the desire to do so and, on the other, fear and in some cases even desperation. When Descartes discusses boldness, he makes a distinction between the object and the end of boldness. 393 On the one hand, we can be afraid of not succeeding in an arduous task but, on the other hand, we can think that through attempting to accomplish the task we will succeed in something else. We might think that it provides, for instance, an example for others. To commit a difficult action we need to focus more on thoughts that are related to desire and hope, rather than to fear and sadness. 394

Descartes does not think that there is a distinction between irascible and concupiscible passions. We can think of courage and its derivatives as passions that resemble irascible ones. They signify something we want to have but which is, by its nature, difficult or arduous. Kambouchner notes that the relationship between desire and its derivative passions is much more complex than the relationship between joy and sadness and their derivatives. 395 Desire can be seen as a passion towards a thing that is considered good in an absolute sense. Courage, boldness or timidity indicate our feelings what it requires to obtain such a thing requires. According to Kambouchner

les choses auxquelles l’âme est incitée dans ces passions [--] se définissent toutes dans une sorte de second degré par rapport à une première motion de désir ou de volonté qui concerne l’acquisition d’un certain bien. 396

392 AT XI 461: “Et cette dernière [l’émulation] n’est autre chose qu’une chaleur qui dispose l’âme à entreprendre des choses qu’elle espère lui pouvoir réussir parce qu’elle les voit réussir à d’autres.”
393 AT XI 461: “il est besoin néanmoins qu’on espère ou même qu’on soit assuré que la fin qu’on se propose réussira, pour s’opposer avec vigueur aux difficultés qu’on rencontre. Mais cette fin est différente de cet objet. Car on ne saurait être assuré et désespéré d’une même chose en même temps.” Descartes’s example concerns the Decii who threw themselves to the enemies. The object of their action was the difficulty of preserving their lives of which they felt desperate because they were certain to die. However, they were very hopeful concerning the end of the action, for example to motivate their soldiers or to gain glory after their death.
394 When Descartes writes of emulation he says that the external cause is the example we see coming from others, the internal cause is the right bodily movements we need to have to be courageous. AT XI 461: “et ainsi c’est une espèce de courage duquel la cause externe est l’exemple. Je dis la cause externe, parce qu’il doit outre cela yen avoir toujours une interne, qui consiste en ce qu’on a le corps tellement disposé que le désir et l’espérance ont plus de force à faire aller quantité de sang vers le cœur que la crainte ou le désespoir à l’empêcher.”
395 He writes that “ces passions (ou du moins certaines d’entre elles: le courage, la lâcheté, l’irrésolution) se rapportent à la passion “mère” du désir de manière beaucoup plus complexe que ne font l’envie, la pitié, etc., à la joie ou à la tristesse” (Kambouchner 1995, 304).
396 Kambouchner 1995, 305.
3.6 Some species of joy and sadness

The primary passions of joy and sadness are also important as passions that provide a ground for others. Descartes classifies the passions deriving from joy and sadness according to the following principles: Firstly, good or bad can be seen as belonging to others and which they either deserve or do not deserve: the passions of mockery [la moquerie], envy [l’envie] and pity [la pitié]. Secondly, the good or bad can be caused by ourselves or by others. If the good is caused by ourselves, we feel self-satisfaction [la satisfaction de soi-même]. If we have done something bad, this gives rise to repentance [le repentir]. Close to repentance is remorse [le remords], which, for Descartes, presupposes doubt as it is related to an action that a person does even though he is irresolute.397

Favour [la faveur] and gratitude [la reconnaissance] are felt when the good is done by others. In the former, the good is done for those we care about and in the latter for ourselves.398 Evil that we cause to others arouses indignation [l’indignation], whereas when evil is done to us, we become angry [la colère]. If we refer to the opinion of others concerning the good or bad in us, this arouses vainglory [la gloire] in the case of the good or shame [la honte] in the case of bad. Lastly, Descartes considers the temporal aspects of good or bad: hence, disgust [le dégoût], regret [le regret] and cheerfulness [l’allegresse].399

Self-satisfaction is the most special kind of joy there is: “the sweetest of all joys, because its cause depends only on ourselves” (CSM I 396 ; AT XI 471).400 This is so if the cause in ourselves is just. Descartes has, however, a

397 Cf. also Kambouchner who summarises the ways in which passions are derived from joy and sadness as follows: “En effet, cette affection qui nous procure de la joie quand nous la trouvons bonne, ou de la tristesse quand nous la trouvons mauvaise, peut survenir soit à nous-mêmes, soit à d’autres hommes, et peut être imputée (lorsque sa cause est un sujet déterminé) soit à nous-mêmes, soit à autrui. Et donc, selon la relation (d’estime ou de mépris, d’amour ou de haine) que nous avons aux sujets à qui ou à ceux du fait de qui telle affection arrive, ou selon la relation que nous contracterons avec eux du fait qu’elle arrive, notre sentiment sera différemment modulé, ou nuancé, ou composé. La distribution des sentiments ou passions excités par tel ou tel cas est du reste ici très claire” (Kambouchner 1995, 301f).

398 Favor and gratitude seems, though, species of love rather than species of joy. By their essence they are about affirming an idea about us to be united to a thing that appears to us good. In favor, the object has done good for somebody else than us whereas in the case of gratitude, somebody has done something good to us.

399 Cf. e.g. article 67 about these passions. This is not the sense of cheerfulness by which Spinoza might have been influenced by Descartes. Cheerfulness here means a joy of a past evil. I shall discuss in the next part that in the Latin version of the Passions, there is another sense where it just refers to the good shape of the body. Because Spinoza read the Passions in Latin it might have had an impact on his concept of cheerfulness.

400 AT XI 471: “La satisfaction qu’ont toujours ceux qui suivent constamment la vertu est une habitude en leur âme, qui se nomme tranquillité et repos de conscience. Mais celle qu’on acquiert de nouveau lorsqu’on a frôlément fait quelque action qu’on pense bonne est une passion, à savoir, une espèce de joie, laquelle je crois être la plus douce de toutes, parce que sa cause ne dépend que de nous-mêmes.”
long discussion in article 190 of the *Passions* about self-satisfaction based on things that are not really great and can be even vicious. He applies this to people who go regularly to church and perform other religious duties just to show how perfect they are. In this case, self-satisfaction does not serve anything but vanity and arrogance.\footnote{Descartes describes them as follows: “Ce qu’on peut particulièrement remarquer en ceux qui, croyant être dévots, sont seulement bigots et superstitieux; c’est-à-dire qui, sous ombre qu’ils vont souvent à l’église, qu’ils récitent force prières, qu’ils portent les cheveux courts, qu’ils jeûnent, qu’ils donnent l’aumône, pensent être entièrement parfaits, et s’imaginent qu’ils sont si grands amis de Dieu qu’ils ne sauraient rien faire qui lui déplaise, et que tout ce que leur dicte leur passion est un bon zèle, bien qu’elle leur dicte quelquefois les plus grands crimes qui puissent être commis par des hommes, comme de trahir des villes, de tuer des princes, d’exterminer des peuples entiers, pour cela seul qu’ils ne suivent pas leurs opinions” (AT XI 472).}

Repentance is a passion that is the opposite of self-satisfaction. It as a kind of sadness “which results from our believing that we have done some evil deed; and it is very bitter because its cause lies in ourselves alone” (CSM I 396 ; AT XI 472).\footnote{AT XI 472: “Le repentir est directement contraire à la satisfaction de soi-même, et c’est une espèce de tristesse qui vient de ce qu’on croit avoir fait quelque mauvaise action; et elle est très amère, parce que sa cause ne vient que de nous.”} There is, however, a sense in which this passion can be very useful. When we know for certain that what we did was bad, repentance can help us to do better next time.\footnote{AT XI 472: “Ce qui n’empêche pas néanmoins qu’elle ne soit fort utile lorsqu’il est vrai que l’action dont nous nous repentons est mauvaise et que nous en avons une connaissance certaine, parce qu’elle nous incite à mieux faire une autre fois.”} In most cases, however, Descartes thinks that repentance is just a matter of irresolution. People repent the action they did because they fear having done a bad thing although they are not sure. Descartes thinks that they would have felt repentance also in the opposite case. Repentance is a bad passion because it manifests what Descartes does not think very highly of, being undecided concerning what one thinks of as good and evil in life.\footnote{It is characteristic of what Descartes regards as weak minds. It occurs throughout Descartes’s writing of passions and mastery of passions in the sense that they have not made firm and determinate judgements of good and bad, and for this reason are carried along with their current passions. With respect to repentance Descartes writes that “Mais il arrive souvent que les esprits faibles se repentent des choses qu’ils ont faites sans savoir assurément qu’elles soient mauvaises; ils se le persuadent seulement à cause qu’ils le craignent; et s’ils avaient fait le contraire, ils s’en repentiraient en même façon”(AT XI 473).}

A passion which is close to repentance is remorse. It is a kind of sadness “which results from our doubting that something we are doing, or have done, is good. It necessarily presupposes doubt” (CSM I 392; AT XI 464).\footnote{AT XI 464: “Le remords de conscience est une espèce de tristesse qui vient du doute qu’on a qu’une chose qu’on fait ou qu’on a faite n’est pas bonne, et il présuppose nécessairement le doute.”} Remorse can be good if it encourages us to act better. Descartes does not, however, consider either remorse or repentance very useful, and for the same reasons. They signify that we have not acquired firm and determinate judg-
ments how to conduct our life. He gives the same advice regarding how to correct both remorse and repentence. He says of repentance: “This is an imperfection deserving of pity, and the remedies against this fault are the same as those which serve to dispel irresolution” (CSM I 396f; AT XI 473).\footnote{AT XI 473: “ce qui est en eux une imperfection digne de pitié. Et les remèdes contre ce défaut sont les mêmes qui servent à ôter l’irrésolution.”} He states the same thing regarding remorse: “we may prevent it by the same means as those by which we can free ourselves from irresolution” (CSM I 393; AT XI 464).\footnote{AT XI 464: “Mais, parce qu’elle présuppose le mal, le meilleur serait qu’on n’eût jamais sujet de la sentir; et on la peut prévenir par les mêmes moyens par lesquels on se peut exempter de l’irrésolution.”} Irresolution, remorse and repentance are bad passions, signs of a weak mind because the person suffering them has not acquired determinate judgments of the good and bad in life. Descartes’s advice for life and the mastery of the passions is that one should in all cases try to follow in a resolute manner what one has judged to be the best.

Descartes bases his classification of the passions on the various ways in which external objects can have effects on the mind-body union. Basically, he thinks that external objects appear to us either as new and extraordinary or as good and harmful. In the first case, we wonder or have admiration for things that surpass our nature. In the second case, we represent ourselves as joined to and constituting a whole with things that appear good, or we desire them. If we have them, we feel joy in the case the thing is good, sadness if it is harmful. In all cases, the passions are defined through their effects, \textit{i.e.}, the ways in which an external object affects the mind-body union. Descartes does not base his classification on certain objective good outside of us. We cannot say, however, that these passions constitute our nature. They occur because external objects have certain effects on us. Yet our nature, free will, is beyond these affections. Although passions incline our will to give consent to what they prepare the body for, the passions and the interactions we have do not constitute the nature of will and therefore, not our nature.
Chapter II: What are the Affects Primarily in the *Ethics*

According to Spinoza, there are three primary affects: desire, joy and sadness. In this chapter, I shall explain in what way they are primary and briefly compare the definition of the passions he gives in the *Short Treatise* with the one he presents in the *Ethics*. My aim is to show that his view of the passions changes. For example, the idea of our nature as affective does not emerge in the *Short Treatise* as it does in the *Ethics*. This has an impact on his account of the mastery of the passions and our being able to change them through cognitions.

According to Matheron, the theories of the passions in the 17th century are similar because they concern the same passions. They differ in the passions they emphasize.\(^{408}\) Furthermore, Matheron thinks that it does not make much difference whom we compare Spinoza with:

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\text{[l]}\text{e rapprochement de la liste spinoziste des passions et de la liste cartésienne n’est donc ni plus ni moins significatif que n’importe quel autre. La comparaison avec Hobbes aboutit au même résultat.}^{409}
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Significantly different considerations arise, however, depending on whether we compare Spinoza with Descartes or Hobbes. Comparing Spinoza with Descartes is indispensable because Descartes’s account of the mind-body union and the passions provides a starting point for Spinoza’s philosophical psychology. For example, the order in which Spinoza studies the passions in the *Short Treatise* is strikingly similar to that of the *Passions*, although he

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\(^{408}\) He writes that “[t]ous les philosophes de la vie morale, en effet, travaillent à cette époque sur un matériel identique: chez tous, à quelques variantes près, la liste des passions est la même, et l’originalité ne peut consister pour eux que dans la façon dont ils en combinent les éléments. Mais cette combinaison elle-même a des règles; la plupart des auteurs, en particulier, s’accordent pour considérer comme primitifs trois couples de sentiments fondamentaux: amour et haine, désir et aversion, joie et tristesse (ou plaisir et douleur), dont tous les autres seraient plus ou moins dérivés. La question qui se pose, dès lors, et qui determine les grands clivages, est de savoir auquel de ces trois couples revient la priorité” (Matheron 1988, 83).

\(^{409}\) Matheron 1988, 83.
gives different meanings to many of the passions. But when we compare Spinoza with Hobbes, we see something different. The prominence Spinoza grants to desire in the *Ethics* is an important thing he shares with Hobbes. There is, however, a distinctive difference between Spinoza’s desire and what Hobbes calls ‘endeavor’, as I shall briefly point out.

### 1 Definition of affects

Spinoza defines affects as follows in the *Ethics*:

> By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections (IIID3).

There are two things I call attention to in this definition. First, the affects are changes in our power of acting: either it is increased or decreased, or it is aided or restrained. Second, the affects are said to be affections of the body and at the same time the ideas of these affections.

To understand the first point it is helpful to look at the *Short Treatise*. In the *Short Treatise* Spinoza regards passions as effects of perceptions. Neither in the *Ethics* nor in the *Short Treatise* does he think that the human being is a substance.

According to the *Short Treatise*, the modes the human being consists in are perceptions. He recognizes three distinct kinds of perception: opinion, belief and clear knowledge. The first kind, opinion, is “subject to error, and has no place in anything of which we are certain, but only where guessing and speculating are spoken of” (CW I, 98). The second and third kinds of perception do not err. Belief is formed through reason: “[w]e call the second belief, because the things we grasp only through reason, we do not see, but know only through a conviction in the intellect that it must be so and not otherwise”

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410 Cf. e.g. Ramond who notes about the relationship between the *Passions*, the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics* that in the *Short Treatise* “on y voit les Passions de l’Âme de Descartes ; parfois l’Éthique future s’y devine” (Ramond 1988, 15).

411 GII/139: “Per Affectum intelligo Corporis affectiones, quibus ipsius Corporis agendi potentia augetur, vel minuitur, juvatur, vel coercetur, et simul harum affectionum ideas.”

412 He writes in the beginning of the second part of the *Short Treatise* whose title is On Man and What Pertains to Him so that “I do not at all think that man, insofar as he consists of a mind, soul, or body, is a substance [ik zegge van eenige wyzen, omdat ik geenzins versta dat de mensch, voor zo veel hy uit geest, ziele, of lichaam bestaat, een selfstandigheid is]” (CW I, 93; GI/51f).

413 He writes that “let us begin with those which are first known to us, viz. certain perceptions, or the consciousness, of the knowledge of ourselves and of those things that are outside us [eenige begrippen, of het medegeweten, van de kennisse onses zelfs en van die dingen die buyten ons zyn]” (CW I, 97; GI/54).

414 GI/55: “waan dan noemen wy die omdat ze de dooling onderwurpen is, en nooyt plaats heeft in iets daar wy zeker van zyn, maar wel daar van gissen en meynen gesproken word.”
Clear knowledge is completely different from the others: it “comes not from being convinced by reasons, but from being aware of and enjoying the thing itself. This goes far beyond the others” (CW I, 99). These are the modes in which the human being consists. When he turns to the effects [uytwerkingen] of these modes, then he comes to the passions:

[This said, let us come now to their effects. From the first, we say, come all the passions which are contrary to good reason; from the second, the good Desires; and from the third, true and genuine Love, with all that comes of that (CW I, 99).

In the Short Treatise Spinoza thinks that emotional states are caused by knowledge:

So we maintain that knowledge is the proximate cause of all the ‘Passions’ of the soul. For we consider it quite impossible that if someone neither perceives nor knows in any of the preceding ways, he should be able to be moved to Love, or Desire, or any other modes of will (CW I, 99).

One terminological point to notice is that Spinoza uses the term ‘lijding’ in the Short Treatise to refer to emotional states generally, not only to the passions. He does not make the distinction between passive and active affects in the Short Treatise as he does in the Ethics. In the Short Treatise, the passions and other emotional states derive from the different ways of cognizing things. Those passions that are the effects of opinion are subject to error. Good desires follow reason and true love is the consequence of clear knowledge. In the Short Treatise, it is cognition that is prior to the affective state. As a consequence, the passions change when the cognitions change. This comes out, for example, in Spinoza’s account of the love of God in the Short Treatise. He thinks that it is able to replace our love for singular and corruptible things:

415 GI/55: “geoorf dan noemen wy de tweede, omdat die dingen, die wy alleen door de rede vatten, van ons niet en worden gezien, maar <zyn> alleen aan ons bekend door overtuyginge in’t verstand, dat het zoo en niet anders moet zyn.”

416 GI/55: “maar klaare kennisse noemen wy dat ‘t welk niet en is door overtuyging van reden, maar door een gevoelen en genieten van de zaake zelve, en gaat de andere verre te boven.”

417 GI/55f: “[d]it dan voor af, zo laat ons nu komen tot haare uytwerkingen. Waar van wy dit segen: dat namelijk uyt de eerste hervoorkomt alle de Lydinge (passien), die daar streydig zyn tegen de geode reden; uyt de tweede de goede Begeerten; en uyt de derde de waare en oprechte Liefde met alle haar uytpruytzels.”

418 GI/ 56: “[a]lzo dat wy dan de naaste oorzaak van alle de Lydingen in de ziele, de Kennisse stellen. Want wy t’eenemaal onmogelyk acthen, dat, zo iemand op de voorgaande gronden <en> wysen noch begrypt noch kent, hy tot Liefde, ofte Begeerte of eenige andere wyzen van wille zoude konnen bewogen worden.”

419 Curley points out this difference in using the scare-quotes around the term of passion in the passage. He notes that “[l]ijding may translate passio in section 3 but perhaps renders affectus in section 4” (CW I, 99).
we find that God alone has being, and all other things have no being, but are modes. And since modes cannot be understood properly without the being on which they immediately depend, and we have already shown that when we who love something come to know something better than what we love, we always fall on it at once, and leave the first thing, it follows incontrovertibly that when we come to know God, who has all perfection in himself alone, we must love him (CW I, 107).

A striking thing in this passage is that when we come to know something better than what we love “we always fall on it at once and leave the first thing [de eerste verlaten]”. The knowledge of something better immediately causes love in us, the love for the first thing ceases, and so we leave it. The love caused by opinion vanishes when we know God. Furthermore, he thinks that if we use the intellect correctly we do not have any passions:

when we prove that the first and principal cause of all these ‘passions’ is knowledge, then it will be clearly evident that when we use our intellect and reason properly, we can never fall into one of those we are to reject (CW I, 118).

The main difference between the Ethics and the Short Treatise derives from the fact that in the latter Spinoza regards the human being as consisting of modes that are perceptions. The passions are effects of these perceptions. This changes in the Ethics where the essence of the thing is defined through the effort to persevere in being, and affects express this striving. It is clear also in the Theological-Political Treatise and in the Political Treatise that perseverance in being is prior to everything else. Knowledge does not any

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420 GI/64: “God alleen maar wesen heeft, en alle andere dingen geen wezens, maar wyzen zyn. Ende aangzien de wysen niet recht konnen verstaan worden, zonder het wezen, van ‘t welke zy onmiddelyk afhangen; en wy nu al vooren getoond hebben, dat als wy iets beminnende, een beter zaak, als die wy dan beminnen, komen te kennen, wy altyd terstond op de zelve vallen, en de eerste verlaten; zo volgt onwidersprekelyk, dat, als wy God komen te kennen, die alle volmaaktheid in hem alleen heeft, wy hem noodzaakelyk moeten beminnen.”

421 GI/77: “en zo wanneer wy zullen betoomen, dat de eerste en voornaamste oorzaak aller deser tochten is de Kennisse, zo zal klarlyk blyken, dat wy ons verstand en reeden wel gebruikende, nooyt in een van deze die van ons te verwerpen zyn, zullen konnen komen te vallen.” This seems again as a pretty clear case that Spinoza cannot mean by lijding only passions but also active emotional states.

422 Cf. Alquié here: “[d]ans le Court Traité, les sentiments ne sont pas expliqués à partir de l’effort qui constitue notre essence individuelle, mais à partir des degrés de notre connaissance” (Alquié 1981, 286).

423 In the political treatises we see how Spinoza thought that our interactions and institutions are based on desire and affects. Cf. Moreau “La place de la politique dans l’Ethique” in Spinoza. État et religion. Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2005. He writes that “s’il existe un point commun entre les deux théories politiques, celle du Traité théologico-politique et celle du Traité politique, il réside dans le caractère nodal de la théorie des passions. Dans le Traité théologico-politique, sous le langage du contrat apparaît presque immédiatement, dès le chapitre XVI, le langage des passions. Le droit naturel n’est pas autre chose que le droit passionnel. Dans le Traité politique, il est encore plus manifeste que le système des passions
longer have the impact on passions in the way as it did in the *Short Treatise*. The change of passions is a much more complicated process when passions are understood through the power of acting. Reason requires the aid of external causes and imagination in the mastery of passions. For instance, to have the power to exercise reason we necessarily need external causes and right kinds of passions, especially *hilaritas*.424

The second thing to clarify is the sense in which Spinoza uses the expression of ‘at the same time’ [*et simul*]. Obviously, this must mean that there is an idea in the mind of each change in the body’s power of acting. An affect is in general a change in the power of acting, and because the mind and the body are one and the same thing that change is necessarily expressed both in the attribute of thought and in the attribute of extension. Furthermore, this follows what we said about God. His power of acting is equal to his power of thinking, and since finite things are modes of God, their power of thinking is equal to their power of acting. Therefore, there cannot be an affect that does not have an expression both in the mind and body, as in God there cannot be an idea without there being an object of that idea.

We have, however, seen what it is different with God: that there are more expressions under the attribute of thinking than other attributes because there is an idea of everything that follows from God’s power of acting. There exists also a difference between the power of thinking of the human mind and the power of acting of the human body. This cannot, however, involve an expression in the mind but not in the body, or vice versa. Because the human mind is an idea of the human body, there is always an expression in both. Despite this, there are variations in the ways Spinoza writes of affects in terms of the power of acting. Although affects as changes in the power of...
acting mean a change both in the body’s power of acting and that of the mind, Spinoza explains some affects by referring to the body’s power of acting rather than to the mind, while he relates other affects to the mind.

For our purpose, the most important of these affects are: cheerfulness, pleasure, melancholy and pain. Spinoza defines them in EIIIP11 by referring them to the mind and body at once: “[t]he affect of joy which is related to the mind and body at once I call pleasure or cheerfulness, and that of sadness, pain or melancholy.” At the end of the part III of the Ethics, where he gives the separate definitions of the affects, he says, however, that he is omitting the definitions of cheerfulness, pleasure, melancholy, and pain […] because they are chiefly related to the body, and are only species of joy and sadness (EIIIDefinitions of the AffectsIII).

Although they concern the mind and body at once, they are related chiefly to the body. Certainly, they have expressions in the mind, but they are explained through the constitution of the human body. I shall discuss especially hilaritas and titillatio. They are related to the body in an important way: they are either about an instability or equilibrium of the body, and, therefore, they are central to an individual’s ability to maintain the ratio and think adequately. Because the mind is a representation of the body, the way in which the body is affected gets its expression in the mind’s power of thinking. So if all parts of the body are equally affected, then the mind is able to think of many things at once, whereas if one or several parts are affected more than the rest, it is difficult for the mind to think a great many things simultaneously.

There are also affects that are chiefly related to the mind. For instance, there is a joy, self-esteem, that arises when the mind considers its power of acting: “[w]hen 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” (EIIIP53).

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425 GII/149: “Porro affectum Laetitiae, ad Mentem, et Corpus simul relatum, Titillationem, vel Hilaritatem voco; Tristitiae autem Dolorem, vel Melancholiam.”
426 GII/191: “Caeterum definitiones Hilaritatis, Titillationis, Melancholie, et Doloris omissit, quia ad Corpus potissimum referuntur, et non nisi Laetitiae, aut Tristitiae sunt Species.”
427 Cf. Jaquet who points out that “[q]uoique l’esprit en ait nécessairement l’idée, ces quatre affects sont indéniablement des affects du corps, car ils concernent des modifications qui touchent à la structure de mouvement et de repos qui le définit, et expriment un rapport d’équilibre ou de déséquilibre entre ses parties, selon qu’elles sont affectées à égalité ou non. Ils se constituent donc au niveau de l’étendue, trouvent leur principe dans cet attribut et traduisent les variations de la puissance d’agir du corps” (Jaquet 2004, 125f).
428 GII/181 : “Cum Mens se ipsam, suamque agendi potentiam contemplatur, laetatur, et eo magis, quo se, suamque agendi potentiam distinctius imaginatur.” This kind of joy is self-esteem. Spinoza writes later that “joy arising from considering ourselves, is called self-love or
God, which concerns understanding our essence, the human body, under a species of eternity, its cause being the mind as eternal. The affects that are related chiefly to the mind, have expressions in the body, too, but they are mainly related to the mind. The way in which Spinoza uses the term ‘simul’ does not, hence, mean that he relates all affects equally to the body and to the mind, although there are always expressions in both. According to Jaquet

[...]a locution et simul peut donc revêtir au moins trios significations différentes : premièrentement, elle peut renvoyer au corps et à l’esprit à la fois, et à parité ; deuxièusement, elle peut renvoyer principalement au corps ; troisièment, elle peut renvoyer principalement à l’esprit.430

It is quite natural to think that some of the affects relate more to the body and others more to the mind, and Spinoza’s theory of affects acknowledges this. However, his reasons for relating certain affects to the body go deeper than this.431 The affects like titillatio and hilaritas show the importance of material and external conditions in Spinoza’s aim to write an ethics and political theory with a practical application. There are some other affects that he relates chiefly to the body as well but that are not important to his ethical aims. For instance, he does not consider it very important to study the extrinsic features of affects:

[as] for the external affections of the body, which are observed in the affect - such as trembling, paleness, sobbing, laughter, and that like – I have neglected them, because they are related to the body only, without any relation to the mind (EIIIP59S).432

They are related to the body but in an insignificant way unlike hilaritas and titillatio that concern the equilibrium of an individual and has an impact on whether we can think adequately and follow our rational desires.

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self-esteem [Laetitia autem, quae ex contemplatione nostri oritur, Philautia, vel Acquiescentia in se ipso vocatur]” (GII182f).
429 Cf. what Jaquet says about the intellectual love of God. She writes that “les affects mentaux ne font pas totalement abstraction du corps. Les actions, comme l’amour intellectuel de Dieu ou la vraie satisfaction de l’âme, ont beau exclure la référence à l’existence actuelle présente du corps, elles n’implique pas moins un rapport à lui, car l’esprit reste une idée qui exprime l’essence du corps sous l’aspect de l’éternité” (Jaquet 2004, 129).
431 Jaquet writes that “Spinoza met tour à tour l’accent sur ce qui se passe dans le corps ou sur ce qui se passe dans l’esprit et introduit parfois une dissymétrie qui ne peut pas être exprimée par l’idée de parallèle. Cette alternance du discours répond au souci d’exhiber uniquement ce qui est essentiel pour maîtriser les affects et parvenir à la beatitude” (Jaquet 2004, 135f).
432 GII/189: “Caeterum Corporis affectiones externas, quae in affectibus observantur, ut sunt tremor, livor, singultus, risus etc. neglecti, quia ad solum Corpus absque ulla ad Mentem relatione referuntur.”
2 The primary affects and especially desire

Spinoza thinks that there are three primary affects:

By Joy, therefore, I shall understand in what follows that passion by which the Mind passes to a greater perfection. And by Sadness, that passion by which it passes to a lesser perfection. [---] Next, I have explained in P9S what Desire is, and apart from these three I do not acknowledge any other primary affect. For I shall show in what follows that the rest arise from these three (EIIIP11S).

Spinoza explains our affective life through desire and various changes in the power of acting by which he means the affects of joy and sadness. I shall start with desire because it is prior to all other affects.

2.1 Desire as prior to everything else

According to Spinoza:

desire is man’s very essence, insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something (EIIIGen.Def.ofAffectsI).

Earlier I suggested that we can understand by the formal essence of a thing the set of laws that governs the behavior of that thing. When Spinoza discusses desire, he introduces the notion of actual essence. It is derived from his idea that “[e]ach thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being” (EIIIP6). He adds that “[t]he striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing” (EIIIP7). So if we interpret the formal essence as the set of laws that govern the behavior of an individual in question, the actual essence is striving to persevere one’s being. I think that this being is set by the laws.

This striving can be described differently whether it is related to the mind or the mind and body together: “[w]hen this striving is related only to the Mind, it is called Will; but when it is related to the Mind and Body together, it is called Appetite” (EIIIP9S).

There is no difference between volition

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433 GII/149: “Per Laetitiam itaque in sequentibus intelligam passionem, qua Mens ad majorem perfectionem transit. Per Tristitiam autem passionem, qua ipsa ad minorem transit perfectionem. [---] Quid deinde Cupiditas sit, in Scholio Propositionis 9. hujus Partis explicui, et praeter hos tres nullum alium agnosco affectum primarium: nam reliquos ex his tribus oriri in sequ. ostendam.”
434 GII/190: “Cupiditas est ipsa hominis essentia, quatenus ex data quacunque ejus affectione determinata concipitur ad aliquid agendum.”
435 GII/146: “Unaquaque res, quantum in se est, in suo esse perseverare conatur.”
436 GII/146: “Conatus, quo unaquaque res in suo esse perseverare conatur, nihil est praeter ipsius rei actualem essentiam.”
437 GII/147: “Hic conatus, cum ad Mentem solam refertur, Voluntas appellatur; sed cum ad Mentem, et Corpus simul refertur, vocatur Appetitus.”
and appetite or between desire and appetite. We are conscious of our appetites, which is what desire is about: “desire is generally related to men insofar as they are conscious of their appetites. So desire can be defined as appetite together with consciousness of the appetite” (EIIIP9S). According to Spinoza, desire – the striving to persevere in being – is prior to the will, which Descartes regarded as most fundamental in us, and reason. There is nothing beyond our desire to persevere in being. We strive to persevere in our being insofar as we use either our reason or our imagination. It is not, therefore, reason that defines human nature but the desire to persevere in being:

nature is not constrained by the laws of human reason, which aim only at man's true advantage and preservation, but [is governed] by infinite other [laws], which are related to the eternal order of the whole of nature, of which man is only a small part (CW II, Curley’s draft, 160).

Striving to persevere in being is the actual essence of each thing and nothing else. To strive according to reason is only one way to strive. One cannot demand that those who do not strive according to reason do so because that would be contrary to the way they are determined to strive in nature. It would be as absurd as to say that “a cat is bound to live according to the laws of a lion's nature” (CW II, Curley’s draft, 160). Infinitely many things, in infinitely many ways, follow from God’s essence (cf.EIP16), so when something seems to us ridiculous, absurd, or evil, [it] is because we know things only in part, and for the most part are ignorant of the order and coherence of the whole of nature, and because we wish everything to be directed according to the usage of our reason, even though what reason dictates to be evil is not evil in relation to the order and laws of nature as a whole, but only in relation to the laws of our nature (CW II, Curley’s draft, 160).

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438 GII/148: “Deinde inter appetitum, et cupiditatem nulla est differentia, nisi quod cupiditas ad homines plerumque referatur, quatenus sui appetitus sunt consci, et propterea sic definiri potest, nempe, Cupiditas est appetitus cum ejusdem conscientia.”
439 Cf. EIIIP9Dem where he states that “[t]he essence of the mind is constituted by adequate and by inadequate ideas (as we have shown in P3). So (by P7) it strives to persevere in its being both insofar as it has inadequate and insofar as it has adequate ideas [Mentis essentia ex ideis adaequatis, et inadaequatis constituitur (ut in Prop. 3. hujus ostendimus), adeoque (per Prop. 7. hujus) tam quatenus has, quam quatenus illas habet, in suo esse perseverare conatur]” (GII147).
440 Cf. the book sixteen in the Theological-Political Treatise. GIII190f: “nam natura non legibus humanae rationis, quae non nisi hominum verum utile et conservationem intundunt, intercluditur, sed infinitis aliis quae totius naturae, cujus homo particula est, aeternum ordinem respiciunt.”
441 GIII 190: “et propterea non magis ex legibus sanae mentis vivere tenentur quam felis ex legibus naturae leoninae.”
442 GIII 191: “Quicquid ergo nobis in natura ridiculum, absurdum, aut malum videtur, id inde venit quod res tantum ex parte novimus, totiusque naturae ordinem et cohaerentiam maxima
There is nothing that precedes the desire to persevere in being. This is a considerable change in Spinoza’s view between the Short Treatise and the Ethics. In the former work, the human being is defined in terms of cognitions. Reason is primary because if we use our intellect correctly, we do not have passions. In the Ethics this is no longer the case: the affect, the power, is prior to the cognition, reason. Although we have clear knowledge, we would not act according to reason if the power of the passions is stronger. Furthermore, we do not desire a thing because we understand it to be good: Desire is prior to our conceptions of something as good or bad. For this reason, it is the most primary affect there can be.

2.2 The desire to preserve one’s essence

The central role Spinoza gives to desire distinguishes him from Descartes but brings him close to Hobbes and his notion of endeavor. There is, however, an important sense in which Spinoza differs from Hobbes. For the latter, desire concerns us especially as biological beings. According to Spinoza, we do not strive simply to keep ourselves alive, but to preserve our being. Hobbes thinks that endeavor is the motions that push us into the action. He writes in Leviathan:

> [t]hese small beginnings of motion, within the body of man, before they appear walking, speaking, striking, and other visible actions, are commonly called ENDEAVOUR.

Hobbes calls endeavor as ‘appetite’ or ‘desire’ when “it is toward something that causes it”. Appetite means desire for food or drink, whereas desire is more general. Endeavor is called ‘aversion’ when it turns us away from something. There is only a modal distinction between desire and love, and between hate and aversion:

> desire and love are the same thing, save that by desire, we always signify the absence of the object; by love, most commonly the presence of the same. So

ex parte ignoramus, et quod omnia ex usu nostrae rationis dirigis dirigi volumus; cum tamen id quod ratio malum esse dictat non malum sit respectu ordinis et legum universae naturae, sed tantum solius nostrae naturae legum respectu.”

Cf. Macherey still about the desire as our essence, inherent power: “[c]e désir exprime la présence, au plus profond de chaque individu, d’une impulsion essentielle en vue de persévérer dans son être qui, prise ainsi à sa source, ne se rapporte qu’à soi-même, indépendamment de la référence à quoi que ce soit d’extérieur [---] le désir [---] a suffisamment de force en lui même pour enclencher et soutenir tous les mouvements dont l’âme est animée, sans avoir besoin d’emprunter à d’autres sources des motivations” (Macherey 1998, 128f).


also by aversion we signify the absence, and by hate, the presence of the object.446

Desire is essential for both Hobbes and Spinoza but in a different way. Hobbes understands endeavor in a biological sense. He thinks that an animal is moved by two kinds of motions: vital motions and animal motions. Vital motions are those that keep the physical organism alive:

begun in generation and continued without interruption through their whole life; such as are the course of the blood, and the pulse, the breathing, the concoction, nutrition, excretion, &c; to which motions there needs no help of Imagination.447

Animal motions are ones that cause sense perceptions and voluntary motions. They presuppose imagination, since we move or speak based on what we have in the senses:

That sense, is motion in the organs and interior parts of man’s body, caused by the action of the things we see, hear, &c; and that fancy is but the relics of the same motion, remaining after sense.448

Matheron thinks that Hobbes’s endeavor is self-preservation in a biological sense: “d’autoconservation [--] l’homme ne cherche jamais qu’une chose: vivre le plus longtemps possible”449. Spinoza does not think that desire is a power that concerns only our preservation as biological beings. According to Matheron:

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446 Curley’s edition 1994, 28. Cf. Matheron who thinks that that there is no difference between desire and love in Hobbes. He writes that “si l’amour et la joie doivent se distinguer du désir, ce ne peut être que modelament, non réelemant. L’amour n’est plus, comme dans la conception classique, une appréhension du Bien antérieure à tout désir. [--] Ils ne peuvent donc se définir, dans le meilleur des cas, que comme le désir lui-même modifié d’une certaine façon. Mais si la modification en question intervient déjà dans la définition du désir, toute distinction, même modale, s’évanouit” (Matheron 1988, 87).


449 Matheron 1988, 86ff. We might, however, express some hesitations for the idea that desire in Hobbes is simply to live as long as possible. For example, self-preservation, glory and power are crucial for him but he acknowledges that among men it is not always the same kind of desire which governs us. One can in certain situations prefer death to life, e.g. if one becomes scorned by others. Cf. Curley who points out about Hobbes that “while it may be by a necessity of nature that we all strive for self-preservation, there is no necessity that that striving will always dominate all other desires” (Curley 1994, xviii). Furthermore, Curley stresses the importance of desire for power in Hobbes: “Among the great diversity of passions which animate different men, Hobbes puts “in the first place, “not the desire for self-preservation, or desire for eminence, but “a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death.”” (xi, 2)” (Curley 1994, xix).
Matheron points out that we strive to live according to our individual essence. Formal essences involve a set of laws that govern the behavior of an individual. For example, in the case of the Spanish poet there is a law that enables him to write but after his sickness, he was unable to do so any longer. There was a natural cause that prevented the laws expressing his essence from functioning. He lost his being.

For the sake of our being, it is of the utmost importance that we take care of our bodily constitution, not only because of our physical health, but also to sustain the certain ratio of movement and rest that defines our being. In order to do that, all parts of the body have to be equally affected in a favorable way. In other words, we need – *hilaritas*.

# 3 Joy and sadness as changes of perfection

Besides desire, Spinoza thinks there are two other primitive passions: joy and sadness. He defines them through the notion of perfection. Joy is a

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\text{man’s passage from a lesser to a greater perfection (EIIIDef.of aff.II)}^{451}
\]

and sadness a

\[
\text{man’s passage from a greater to a lesser perfection (EIIIDef.of aff.III.).}^{452}
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We notice that none of the definitions of the primitive affects includes a reference to an external object. They are, then, not defined through some basic effects that external objects can have on us as they were in Descartes. They are prior to other affects in a different sense: they are either about our essence or they express changes in our power of acting. They precede any judgment about whether an external object is good or harmful to us. For example, desire is not something that rises originally from an external object. We desire by our nature, and certain objects then happen to become objects of our desire.\(^{453}\) Desire is a force that is not primarily directed to any specific

\(^{450}\) Matheron 1988, 88f.

\(^{451}\) GII/190: “Laetitia est hominis transitio a minore ad majorem perfectionem.”

\(^{452}\) GII/190: “Tristitia est hominis transitio a majore ad minorem perfectionem.”

\(^{453}\) This is why Spinoza thinks that we do not desire a thing because we judge it good but we judge it good because we desire it (EIIIP9s). This idea occurs in Hobbes too: “these words of good, evil, and contemptible are ever used with relation to the person that useth them, there
point but only toward preserving our being. Macherey notes that “[l]e désir, en tant qu’il constitue l’essence de l’homme, n’est pas a priori fixé sur des buts spécifiques qui l’orienteraient dans telle direction plutôt que dans telle autre”. Likewise, joy and sadness are not defined by something external to us but by the notion of our perfection.

3.1 The notion of perfection as a mode of thinking

Joy and sadness are changes in our perfection. They involve essentially a change from one state to another that is better or worse. Joy is not about having the perfection, neither is sadness about possessing a privation or something that is less perfect. Affects are a kind of transition. It does not make much sense to say e.g. about sadness that it is having a privation, because in that cases it would be nothing although clearly it is something. So Spinoza regards it as a change from a greater perfection to a lesser one.

What does Spinoza understand by the notion of perfection? It is not a change of essence: “a horse is destroyed as much if it is changed into a man as if it is changed into an insect” (EIVPreface). A change of perfection means a change in one’s power of acting:

being nothing simply and absolutely so, nor any common rule of good and evil to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves, but from the person of the man (where there is no commonwealth), or (in a commonwealth) from the person that representeth it, or from an arbitrator or judge whom men disagreeing shall by consent set up, and make his sentence the rule thereof” (Curley’s edition 1994, 28f).

Macherey 1998, 104. He continues that “[l]e désir pousse l’homme à agir, et ceci en fonction de l’intérêt vital de conservation qui est enraciné au plus profond de son être et qui constitue son essence, mais non à faire quoi que ce soit en particulier, en vertu d’intentions ou de motivations délibérées, c’est-à-dire de préférences qui conféraient à ses actions une orientation exclusive en les fixant sur des objectifs ou des buts déterminés” (Macherey 1998, 104).

Cf Spinoza when he says that “no one can deny that sadness consists in a passage to a lesser perfection, not in the lesser perfection itself, since a man cannot be saddened insofar as he participates in some perfection. Nor can we say that sadness consists in the privation of a greater perfection. For a privation is nothing, whereas the affect of sadness is an act, which can therefore be no other act than that of passing to a lesser perfection, that is, an act by which man’s power of acting is diminished or restrained [quod clarius appareat ex Tristitiae affectu, qui huic est contrarius. Nam quod Tristitia in transitione ad minorem perfectionem consistit, non autem in ipsa minore perfectione, nemo negare potest, quandoquidem homo eatenus contristari nequit, quatenus aliquus perfectionis est particeps. Nec dicere possumus, quod Tristitia in privatione majoris perfectionis consistat; nam privatio nihil est; Tristitiae autem affectus actus est, qui properterea nullus alias esse potest, quam actus transeundi ad minorem perfectionem, hoc est, actus quo hominis agendi potentia minuitur, vel coercetur]” (EIIIDef.aff.IIIExp;GII/191).

GII/208: “Nam apprime notandum est, cum dico, aliquem a minore ad majorem perfectionem transire, et contra, me non intelligere, quod ex una essentia, seu forma in aliam mutatur. Equus namque ex gr. tam destructur, si in hominem, quam si in insectum mutetur.”

GII/209: “sed quod ejus agendi potentiam, quatenus haece per ipsius naturam intelligitur, augeri, vel minui concipimus.” Cf. also Macherey who notes in this respect that the change in one’s power of acting does not mean that we surpass the conditions that determine us. He states that “Spinoza prend ainsi implicitement position contre une éthique du surhomme, qui
finally, 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
(EIVPreface).458

The way in which people usually use the notions of perfection and imperfection
is in the sense of modes of thinking. They do not mean something perfect or imperfect in nature. He explains in the Preface to the Part IV of the Ethics
that they are formed like universals, through ideas of our bodily affections. They are imaginative ideas, expressing the power of acting of the respective human body. People believe, however, that they are notions which express something absolute in nature:

[t]hey regard these universal ideas as models of things, and believe that Nature (which they think does nothing except for the sake of some end) looks to them, and sets them before itself as models (EIVPreface).

We are used to thinking of all things in nature under one genus, the notion of being, and to comparing one with another. We consider a thing more perfect than another if it has more reality or being than the other. Other things are called imperfect because they “do not affect our mind as much as those we call perfect” (EIVPreface).460 Perfection or imperfection, as well as good and evil, are, however, nothing but modes of thinking, like music is good for the melancholic, bad for one who is mourning, and neither good nor bad for the deaf (EIVPreface).461

3.2 Spinoza’s idea of a stronger human nature

Spinoza wants to keep these notions, but he gives new meanings to them. We desire to form an idea of a better man and to use it as a model:

spéculerait par delà le bien et le mal en ne tenant aucun compte des conditions qui définissent nécessairement la nature humaine: c’est à l’intérieur du cadre fixé par ces conditions que le projet de changer la vie peut à la rigueur recevoir un sens, la perfection, pour une forme naturelle quelle qu’elle soit étant d’accomplir sa nature, c’est-à-dire d’aller jusqu’au bout des dispositions qui constituent sa puissance d’être et d’agir, et strictement rien de plus” (Macherey 1997, 211).

458 GII/209: “Denique per perfectionem in genere realitatem, uti dixi, intelligam, hoc est, rei cujuscunque essentiam, quatenus certo modo existit, et operatur.”
459 GII/206: “quas rerum veluti exemplaria habent, et quas naturam (quam nihil nisi alicujus finis causa agere existimant) intueri credunt, sibique exemplaria proponere.” These notions are imaginative but people regard them to mean something real in nature. Cf. Macherey here “au lieu de s’incarner dans une idée particulière, établie par convention, le contenu de cette notion soit identifié à une idée universelle considérée comme ayant valeur en soi” (Macherey 1997, 207).
460 GII/208: “etc. eatenus ipsa imperfecta appellamus, quia nostram Mentem non aequo afficiunt, ac illa, quae perfecta vocamus.”
461 GII/208: “Ex. gr. Musica bona est Melancholico, mala lugenti; surdo autem neque bona, neque mala.”
[f]or because we desire to form an idea of man, as a model of human nature which we may look to, it will be useful to us to retain these same words with the meaning I have indicated (EIVPreface).\(^{462}\)

This is not the first time that Spinoza has pointed out that we conceive an idea of human nature that is somehow better than we are. It occurs in \textit{TdIE} § 13 as well:

man conceives a human nature much stronger and more enduring than his own, and at the same time sees that nothing prevents his acquiring such a nature, he is spurred to seek means that will lead him to such a perfection (CW I, 10).\(^{463}\)

So the better conception of human nature we have (according to \textit{TdIE}) or desire to have is stronger and more enduring than that we are at the moment. Why does he think that we conceive or desire to form such a nature? One way to understand this is that because we have an individual essence, we naturally also have an idea of our nature that is determined by itself, and is better and stronger than the one determined by external causes.\(^{464}\) In these passages Spinoza writes, however, of a new idea of human nature. So it does not apply only to an individual but to all human beings. This new idea of human nature provides the criterion for Spinoza’s account of perfection and imperfection and good and bad:

In what follows, therefore, I shall understand by good what we know certainly is a means by which we may approach nearer and nearer to the model of human nature that we set before ourselves. By evil, what we certainly know prevents us from becoming like that model. Next, we shall say that men are more perfect or imperfect, insofar as they approach more or less near to this model (EIVPreface).\(^{465}\)

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\(^{462}\) GII/208: “Nam quia ideam hominis tanquam naturae humanae exemplar, quod intueamur, formare cupimus, nobis ex usu erit, haec eadem vocabula eo, quo dixi, sensu retinere.”

\(^{463}\) GII/8: “homo concipiat naturam aliquam humanam sua multo firmiorem, et simul nihil obstare videat, quominus talam naturam acquirat, incitatur ad media quaerendum, quae ipsum ad talam ducant perfectionem.”

\(^{464}\) It seems that Matheron had this in mind when he notes that “nous tendons toujours à connaître et à actualiser au maximum notre essence singulière, mais cet effort revêt des modalités diverses selon que les idées qui nous affectent sont claires ou confuses” (Matheron 1988, 93). I do not, however, think that we strive to actualize our essence but we strive to live according to our essence.

\(^{465}\) GII/208: “Per bonum itaque in seqq. intelligam id, quod certo scimus medium esse, ut ad exemplar humanae naturae, quod nobis proponimus, magis magisque accedamus. Per malum autem id, quod certo scimus impedire, quominus idem exemplar referamus. Deinde homines perfectiores, aut imperfectiores dicemus, quatenus ad hoc idem exemplar magis, aut minus accedunt.”
Spinoza notes the same thing also in *TDE* § 13: “[w]hatever can be a means to his attaining it is called a true good” (CW I, 10). There he provides us, however, with means by which we can attain this human nature that is stronger than the one we have at present. There are five things to take into account in this respect. We have to first understand nature and second to form a society that facilitates attaining such a better human nature. The third point concerns moral instruction and the education of children for the purpose of attaining health. Fourth, he stresses that medicine needs to be worked out, and the same aim concerns, fifth, mechanics. This is a project that Spinoza extends to the whole of human kind: “the highest good is to arrive – together with other individuals if possible – at the enjoyment of such a nature” (CW I, 10). Spinoza is aiming at making human nature that is stronger and more enduring than it is. He is not, however, building any utopia because his project has material and corporeal conditions. For becoming stronger and enduring we necessarily need to make the best use of the external causes and organize the society in a favorable way.

Spinoza thinks that we should keep the terms ‘perfection’ and ‘imperfection’ but he defines them in a new way and gives us means for attaining them. What truly gives us joy are those things that bring us closer to the model, whereas sadness is what averts us from it. Joy and sadness are changes of our perfection, whether we understand perfection inadequately or adequately. They are primary affects because a change in the power of acting is prior to the thing that causes it.

### 3.3 About *hilaritas*

I now turn to an exceptional joy in Spinoza’s theory of affects, *hilaritas*. Although it is a passive joy, it has a role to play both as regards our essence and as regards our reason because of its unique nature. As an affect, it has an expression both in the mind and body, but Spinoza relates it chiefly to the body. It has, however, a great importance for the mind: Because of its very special nature, it enhances the mind’s power to think. By granting such importance to an affect that he relates chiefly to the body, he makes bodily

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466 GII/8: “Et omne illud, quod potest esse medium, ut eo perveniat, vocatur verum bonum.”
467 GII/8f: “de Natura intelligere, quantum sufficit, ad talem naturam acquiriendum; deinde formare talem societatem, qualis est desideranda, ut quamplurimi quam facilem, et secure eo perveniant. Porro, danda est opera Morali Philosophiae, ut et Doctrinae de puerorum Educatione; et, quia Valetudo non parvum est medium ad hunc finem assequendum, conscinanda est integra Medicina; et quia arte multa, quae difficilia sunt, facilia redduntur, multumque temporis, et commoditatis in vita ea lucrari possimus, ideo Mechanica nullo modo est contemnenda.”
468 GII/8: “summum autem bonum est eo pervenire, ut ille cum aliis individuis, si fieri potest, tali natura fruatur.”
circumstances important for reason and the rational desires. He defines *hilaritas* in an unusual way:

> [c]heerfulness (see its Def. in IIP11S) is a Joy which, insofar as it is related to the Body, consists in this, that all parts of the Body are equally affected (EIVP42Dem).

It is rare to define a passion through the idea that all parts of the body are equally affected. *Hilaritas* does not occur often in the *Ethics*. It is much more important than the frequency of references to it would suggest, because he defines useful/harmful and good/evil in a way that is related to *hilaritas*. I shall discuss this more at the end of the thesis, here I attempt to make clear the sense in which Spinoza uses *hilaritas* and *titillatio*.

It is notable that *hilaritas* does not occur in the *Short Treatise*. This might not be that surprising if our argument is right that the theory of the passions Spinoza outlines in the *Short Treatise* is more intellectualist, in contrast to the *Ethics*, where desire and the power to preserve in one’s being are conceptually prior to reason and cognitions. *Hilaritas* does not, then, have a role to play in the *Short Treatise*, because it is chiefly related to the body. The fact that it occurs in the *Ethics*, and with such a prominent meaning, gives us further evidence to think that there is a change in Spinoza’s theory of passions between the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics*.

Spinoza’s silence about *hilaritas* in the *Short Treatise* seems, thus, understandable. Where could he have got this idea? An obvious candidate is Descartes’s *Passions* because it plays such an important role in the way in which Spinoza develops his theory of the passions and Descartes does discuss cheerfulness in the *Passions*. Spinoza read its Latin translation. In most cases the term in French is *l’allégresse*, which is translated into Latin as *hilaritas*. According to Descartes, it is a kind of joy, a relief when we think of a past evil. He points out that “a past evil gives rise to cheerfulness, which is a kind of joy” (CSM I 352; AT XI 378). Also at the end of the *Passions* he writes

> what I call ‘cheerfulness’ is a kind of joy which has this peculiarity: its sweetness is increased by the recollection of the evils we have suffered, about which we feel relieved in the same way as when we feel ourselves lightened

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469 GII/241: “Hilaritas (vide ejus Defin. in Schol. Prop. 11. p. 3.) est Laetitia, quae, quatenus ad Corpus refertur, in hoc consistit, quod Corporis omnes partes pariter sint affectae.”

470 We know it because there is only a Latin version of the *Passions* in his library. I have used the following edition of the Latin translation: Passiones Animae, Ristampa anastatica dell’edizione 1650. Lecce: ConteEditore, 1997 (PA).

471 AT XI 378: “du mal passé vient l’allégresse, qui est une espèce de joie”. The Latin goes “ex malo pr terito Hilaritas qu est species L titi ” (PA, 32).
of some heavy burden which we have carried on our shoulders for a long time (CSM I 402; AT XI 485).\textsuperscript{472}

This is not, however, the sense in which Spinoza uses \textit{hilaritas} which does not have the meaning of having become free from an evil. Furthermore, there is a different affect in the \textit{Ethics} that has this sense, \textit{gaudium}, gladness.\textsuperscript{473} Based on these examples, we cannot say anything about an affinity between Descartes and Spinoza regarding \textit{hilaritas}. We do, however, find another sense for \textit{hilaritas} in the \textit{Passions} where it is said to be caused solely by impressions in the brain:

when we are in good health and things are calmer than usual, we feel in ourselves a cheerfulness which results not from any operation of the understanding but solely from impressions formed in the brain by the movement of the spirits (CSM I 361; AT XI 398f).\textsuperscript{474}

This is a case, where instead of \textit{l’allégresse}, Descartes uses \textit{la gaîté}, but the notable thing is that it is translated into Latin as \textit{hilaritas}. Naturally, we cannot say for sure, but there is no reason to doubt that Spinoza was influenced by the use of \textit{hilaritas} to render \textit{la gaîté} in article 94 of the \textit{Passions}. I think, moreover, that we have reason to think that he was so influenced because Descartes explicitly regards it as a passion that is related to the body: Cheerfulness “results not from any operation of the understanding but solely from impressions formed in the brain by the movement of the spirits”. So both for Descartes and Spinoza, \textit{hilaritas} is a passion that relates to the body.\textsuperscript{475}

The exact sense in which Spinoza uses it remains, however, uniquely his, although there is a certain affinity between Descartes and Spinoza in this respect too. Descartes gives as causes for cheerfulness good health and things being calm. Health and calmness can be understood as involved in

\textsuperscript{472} AT XI 485: “ce que je nomme allégresse est une espèce de joie en laquelle il y a cela de particulier, que sa douceur est augmentée par la souvenance des maux qu’on a soufferts et desquels on se sent allégé en même façon que si on se sentait déchargé de quelque pesant fardeau qu’on eût longtemps porté sur ses épaules.” In Latin: “qu  mihi dicitur Hilaritas, species est L titi , qu  id habet speciale quod ejus dulcedo augetur recordatione malorum pr  teritorum, & quibus homines se ita sublevatos sentiunt ac si grave aliquod onus quod diu bajulessent ex suis humeris remotum sentirent” (PA 96).

\textsuperscript{473} Cf. EIIIDef.ofAffXVI; GII/195: “Gladness is a joy, accompanied by the idea of a past thing which has turned out better than we had hoped [Gaudium est Laetitia, concomitante idea rei praeteritae, quae praeter Spem evenit]”.

\textsuperscript{474} AT XI 398f: “Ainsi, lorsqu’on est en pleine santé et que le temps est plus serein que de coutume, on sent en soi une gaîté qui ne vient d’aucune fonction de l’entendement, mais seulement des impressions que le mouvement des esprits fait dans le cerveau.” In Latin: “Sic cum plenâ fruimus sanitate, & cum cælum solito serenisus est, in nobis sentimus aliquam hilaritatem quæ à nulla intellectus functione provenit, sed solummodo ab impressionibus quas motus spirituum in cerebro excitat” (PA 44).

\textsuperscript{475} For Descartes \textit{hilaritas} is a passion which relates only to the body. Obviously, according to Spinoza, this is not the case. Although he relates it chiefly to the body, it has an extremely central role for reason by making the body affected in the right way.
Spinoza’s idea of all the parts of the body being equally affected when we experience *hilaritas*. Certainly if all parts of the body are equally affected, the person is healthy and serene provided these affections are beneficial. This gets some support from Spinoza when he points out about joy that

since joy is generally (by P44S) related to one part of the body, for the most part we desire to preserve our being without regard to our health as a whole (EIVP60S; GII/256).\(^{476}\)

More precisely, the joy that occurs when one part of the body is affected more than others is called pleasure, *titillatio*, according to Spinoza:

Pleasure is a joy which, insofar as it is related to the body, consists in this, that one (or several) of its parts are affected more than the others (see its Def. in IIP11S) (EIVP43Dem; GII/242).\(^{477}\)

*Titillatio* and *hilaritas* relate chiefly to the body in the sense as parts or all parts of the body being equally affected by joy. They have consequence as regards the health of the body, but it is not in this sense that Spinoza uses them. Descartes’s use of them is, however, directly related to the health of the body. In article of 94 of the *Passions*, where *hilaritas* occurs in a sense that might have been influenced Spinoza, Descartes also uses the term *titillation*. He refers it to a sensation of the body functioning well:

[Indeed, titillation of the senses is followed so closely by joy, and pain by sadness, that most people make no distinction between the two (CSM I 361; AT XI 399 ).\(^{478}\)]

Furthermore, he says that “the soul is immediately advised about things useful to the body only through some sort of titillation” (CSM I 376; AT XI 430).\(^{479}\) *Titillation* in Descartes clearly has the function of informing us whether the body is doing well. In the clearest sense this occurs in the *Treatise of Man* where he describes how nerves function, and asks us to think

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\(^{476}\) GII/256: “Cum itaque Laetitia plerumque (per Schol. Prop. 44. hujus) ad unam Corporis partem referatur, cupimus ergo plerumque nostrum esse conservare, nulla habita ratione integrae nostrae valetudinis.”

\(^{477}\) GII/242: “Titillatio est Laetitia, quae, quatenus ad Corpus refertur, in hoc consistit, quod una, vel aliquot ejus partes praecupitre afficiuntur (vide ejus Defin. in Schol. Prop. 11. p. 3.).”

\(^{478}\) AT XI 399: “Ainsi le chatouillement des sens est suivi de si près par la joie, et la douleur par la tristesse, que la plupart des hommes ne les distinguent point.” In Latin: “Sic titillationem sensuum adoe prope insequitur L titia, & dolorem Tristitia, ut plerique homines ea non distinguant” (PA 44).

\(^{479}\) AT XI 430: “Comme aussi l’âme n’est immédiatement avertie des choses utiles au corps que par quelque sorte de chatouillement qui, excitant en elle de la joie.” In Latin: “prout etiam anima non immediate edocetur de rebus corpori utilibus, aliter quam specie quadam titillationis” (PA 63).
how the fibers may be pulled with such force that they get separated from
the part of the body to which they are joined, and as a result we have a sen-
sation of pain. In the opposite case we feel *titillation*:

[now suppose the fibers are pulled with a force almost as great as the one
just mentioned, but without their being broken or separated from the parts to
which they are attached. Then they will cause a movement in the brain which,
testifying to the good condition of the other parts of the body, will give the
soul occasion to feel a certain bodily pleasure which we call ‘titillation’
(CSM I 103; AT XI 144).]

Above he refers to the “good condition of the other parts of the body”. *Titil-
lation* in Descartes refers to a sensation that manifests that all parts of the
body are relating well to one another. It indicates the health of the body. In
article 94 he says that it occurs in relation to objects that could harm the
body if it did not have enough strength or was not in a healthy condition:

[This forms an impression in the brain which, being ordained by nature to
bear witness to the body’s healthy condition and strength, represents this to
the soul as a good which belongs to it in so far as it is united with the body;
and so this impression produces joy in the soul (CSM I 362; AT XI 399).]

Descartes uses *titillation* in a positive sense indicating the good physical
condition of the body when the parts are relating well to one another. *Titilla-
tion* is followed by joy that I regard as *hilaritas* according to this article. In
Descartes, then, *titillation* is already a sign of the good proportion between
the bodily parts. In Spinoza *titillatio*, pleasure, does not have this function.
He uses it in the sense that one (or several) parts of the body are affected
more strongly than the rest, instead of all parts being equally affected. It can
be very useful and necessary for us, for example, for the bodies of children
that are growing and some of their parts require stronger affections than oth-
ers. *Titillatio*, according to Spinoza, may become excessive in a way that
*hilaritas* can never be. It may turn into an obsession, making the mind think
of only one object and inhibiting the exercise of reason. We do not find this
sense of *titillatio* in Descartes.

480 AT XI 144: “Et s’ils sont tirés par une force presque aussi grande que la précédente, sans
que toutefois ils se rompent, ni se séparent aucunement des parties auxquelles ils sont
attachés: ils causeront un mouvement dans le cerveau, qui, rendant témoignage de la bonne
constitution des autres membres donnera occasion à l’âme de sentir une certaine volupté
corporelle, qu’on nomme chatouillement, et qui, comme vous voyez, étant fort proche de la
douleur en sa cause, lui est toute contraire en son effet.”

481 AT XI 399: “Ce qui fait une impression dans le cerveau, laquelle étant instituée de la
nature pour témoigner cette bonne disposition et cette force, la représente à l’âme comme un
bien qui lui appartient, en tant qu’elle est unie avec le corps, et ainsi excite en elle la joie.” In
Latin: “quod efficit in cerebo impressionem, quod cum institutat sit à Natura ad contestandum
hanc bonam dispositionem & robur, em anim exibet ut bonum quod ad ipsam pertinet
quatemus cum corpore junta est, & ita in ea excitat li tiiam” (PA 45).
The way in which Descartes discusses hilaritas and titillatio gives, however, an impression that it might have caused Spinoza to define hilaritas as a species of joy that can be distinguished from other species of that affect by that special feature it has when we conceive it under the attribute of extension, namely, that when we experience hilaritas, all parts of the body are affected equally. Crucial differences, however, remain. Spinoza relates hilaritas and titillatio to the body, as Descartes does, but they also relate to the mind and one’s essence. These terms have, therefore, a wider meaning in Spinoza as they have in Descartes. Defining hilaritas in the sense that all parts of the body are equally affected, Spinoza relates it to the ratio of the movement and rest of an individual.482 The example of the Spanish poet shows that the ratio of the movement and rest does not refer to us only as bodily organisms but expresses the individual essence. Hilaritas is, therefore, important not only for keeping us alive but for keeping us living according to our essence. It is a feeling of the special kind of bodily state of equilibrium, and through this sense of bodily harmony we have a feeling of ourselves, our essence.

Another thing that is crucial to acknowledge, is that although hilaritas is an affect that is related to the body, it is related to the body in such a way that is crucial for reason. When the joy we experience is of the kind that involves all parts of the body being equally affected, then it also involves, when it is conceived under the attribute of thought, a heightened ability of the mind to think. Because hilaritas maintains the ratio of movement and rest, the mind is able to think of many things at the same time. Hilaritas provides us with the bodily conditions for the exercise of reason because reason requires our being able to think of a great many things simultaneously. The sense of hilaritas has considerably changed from Descartes for whom it is only a bodily passion and relates only to the bodily health. For Spinoza, it is important for living according to our essence and using reason. Because it is defined through that special bodily state, it makes reason and our ability to follow rational desires depending on bodily conditions and imagination as I shall explain at the end of the thesis.

482 Cf. EIVP43Dem. I shall discuss in the last chapter of the thesis more about the sense in which hilaritas is related to the ratio of movement and rest and is good according to Spinoza. We should acknowledge here that there is a considerably difference between Descartes and Spinoza in that for the former it is not related to the self or essence in any way but to the health of the human body. For Spinoza it is an affect of the particular bodily state, manifesting its equilibrium but as such giving a feeling of the integrity of an individual, her very being.
Chapter III: The Imagination and the Affects in Spinoza

According to Spinoza, we are affective by our nature. This means that we inevitably experience the primary affects – desire, joy and sadness. They are not primary affects only in the sense that they are fundamental to the definition of all the other affects but because there is nothing prior to them. To use Macherey’s words, desire, joy and sadness are primary affects in a structural sense. They do not precede the other affects in a chronological or genetic sense. We can say that the primary affects are prior to the derivative affects in a logical sense because the derivative affects are ‘composed of,’ or can be defined in terms of, the primary affects. Spinoza does, in fact, say this toward the end of Part III, when he writes:

I think I have explained and shown through their first causes the main affects and oscillations of mind which arise from the composition of the three primitive affects, viz. Desire, Joy, and Sadness (EIIIP59S).

But if this is all we say, we will not have captured fully the sense in which these primary affects are prior to the derivative ones. They are prior also in the sense that desire, joy, and sadness are prior to the idea of a cause we assign to them. This is the way I understand his saying that

it is clear that we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it (EIIIP9S).

Desire, joy and sadness are primary because in each affect we cause or undergo there is something that expresses our essence in the case of desire, and a change in our power of acting in the case of joy and sadness. We always desire certain objects. Macherey points out that “on ne désire jamais

484 GII/189: “Atque his puto me praecepius affectus, animique fluctuationes, quae ex compositione trium primitivorum affectuum, nempe Cupiditatis, Laetitiae, et Tristitiae orientur, explicuisse, perque primas suas causas ostendisse.”
485 GII/148: “Constat itaque ex his omnibus, nihil nos conari, velle, appetere, neque cupere, quia id bonum esse judicamus; sed contra nos propterea, aliquid bonum esse, judicare, quia id conamur, volumus, appetimus, atque cupimus.”
simplement dans l’absolu, mais on désire toujours des choses, et telles choses de préférence à d’autres.” 486 Spinoza explains affects through the various ways in which we consider external objects as causes of our desires and changes in our power of acting. To understand how this happens we need to understand Spinoza’s view of imagination.

A human being is not a dominion within a dominion as Spinoza says in the *Preface* of the Part III of the *Ethics*.487 We are necessarily part of Nature and subject to the passions that are not determined by reason but by their own causes. In the *Political Treatise* Spinoza tells that he investigates the passions “with the same freedom of spirit” as mathematical subjects:

I took great pains not to laugh at human actions, or mourn them, or curse them, but only to understand them. So I have contemplated human affects, like love, hate, anger, envy, love of esteem, compassion, and the other emotions, not as vices of human nature, but as properties which pertain to it in the same way heat, cold, storms, thunder, etc., pertain to the nature of the air. Even though these things are inconvenient, they are still necessary and have definite causes through which we strive to understand their nature (CWII, Curley’s draft; GIII/274f).488

In this chapter, I shall explain those principles of imagination that govern the occurrence of passions. To moderate the power of passions we need to know how these principles work because reason cannot change the way in which the passions occur. This is contrary to Descartes according to whom the will is separate from the rest of Nature. In the *Preface* of the Part III of the *Ethics* Spinoza criticizes his predecessors further in saying that “they believe that man disturbs, rather than follows, the order of Nature, that he has absolute power over his actions, and that he is determined only by himself”.489 Reason cannot change the way in which the affects occur, but it can understand adequately their nature. The idea that the passions have their own determinate

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487 He starts by Part III of the *Ethics* writing that “[m]ost those who have written about the affects, and men’s way of living, seem to treat, not of natural things, which follow the common laws of Nature, but of things which are outside Nature. Indeed they seem to conceive man in Nature as a dominion within a dominion [Plerique, qui de Affectibus, et hominum vivendi ratione scripsersunt, videntur, non de rebus naturalibus, quae communes naturae leges sequuntur, sed de rebus, quae extra naturam sunt, agere. Imo hominem in natura, veluti imperium in imperio, concipere videntur]” (EIIIPreface; GII/137).
488 GII/247: “inquirerem, sedulo curavi humanas actiones non ridere, non lugere, neque detestari, sed intelligere: atque adeo humanos affectus, ut sunt amor, odium, ira, invidia, gloria, misericordia, et reliquae animi commotiones, non ut humanae naturae vitia, sed ut proprietates contemplatus sum, quae ad ipsam ita pertinent ut ad naturam aeris aestus, frigus, tempestas, tonitru, et alia hujusmodi; quae tametsi incommoda sunt, necessaria tamen sunt, certasque habent causas per quas eorum naturam intelligere conamur.”
489 GII/137: “Nam hominem naturae ordinem magis perturbare, quam sequi, ipsumque in suas actiones absolutam habere potentiam, nec aliunde, quam a se ipso determinari, credunt.”
causes appears also in the Preface of the Part III of the Ethics. We see how the passions too are subject to the laws of Nature:

nothing happens in Nature which can be attributed to any defect in it, for Nature is always the same, and its virtue and power of acting are everywhere one and the same, that is, the laws and rules of Nature, according to which all things happen, and change from one to another; are always and everywhere the same. So the way of understanding the nature of anything, of whatever kind, must also be the same, namely through the universal laws and rules of Nature. The affects, therefore, of hate, anger, envy etc., considered in themselves, follow with the same necessity and force of nature as the other singular things. And therefore they acknowledge certain causes, through which they are understood, and have certain properties, as worthy of our knowledge as the properties of any other thing (EIIIPreface).

One question concerns what the laws according to which different affects arise are like. We get some clarification from the fourth chapter of the Theological-Political Treatise. There Spinoza defines the word ‘law’ in an absolute meaning as follows:

The word law, taken absolutely, means that according to which each individual, or all or some members of the same species, act in one and the same certain and determinate manner. This depends either on a necessity of nature or on a decision of men. A law which depends on a necessity of nature is one which follows necessarily from the very nature or definition of a thing. One which depends on a decision of men, and which is more properly called a rule of right, is one which men prescribe for themselves and others, for the sake of living more safely and conveniently, or for some other reasons (CW II, Curley’s draft; GIII/57,1).

Then he proceeds to give two examples of laws that follow from the necessity of the nature of a thing:

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490 This is partly quoted already in the previous part when I discussed attributes in Spinoza. To insist that affects too acknowledge laws I cite here the whole paragraph. GII/138: “Nihil in natura fit, quod ipsius vitio possit tribui; est namque natura semper eadem, et ubique una, eademque ejus virtus, et agendi potentia, hoc est, naturae leges, et regulae, secundum quas omnia fiunt, et ex unis formis in alias mutantur, sunt ubique, et semper eadem, atque adeo una, eademque etiam debet esse ratio rerum qualitatemcunque naturam intelligendi, nempe per leges, et regulas naturae universales. Affectus itaque odii, irae, invidiae etc. in se considerati ex eadem naturae necessitate, et virtute consequuntur, ac reliqua singularia; ac proinde certas causas agnoscent, per quas intelliguntur, certasque proprietatem habent, cognitione nostra aequae dignas, ac proprietates cujuscunque alterius rei.”

491 GIII57 : “Legis nomen absolute sumptum significat id, secundum quod unumquodque individuum, vel omnia vel aliquot ejusdem speciei una, eademque certa ac determinata ratione agunt; ea vero vel a necessitate naturae, vel ab hominum placito dependet: Lex, quae a necessitate naturae dependet, illa est, quae ex ipsa rei natura sive definitione necessario sequitur; ab hominum placito autem, et quae magis proprie jus appellatur, est ea, quam homines ad tutius, et commodius vivendum, vel ob alias causas, sibi et alii praescribunt.”
For example, that all bodies, when they strike against other lesser bodies, lose as much of their motion as they communicate to the other bodies is a universal law of all bodies, which follows from a necessity of nature. Similarly, that a man, when he recalls one thing, immediately recalls another like it, or one which he had perceived together with it, is a law which necessarily follows from human nature (CW Vol. II, Curley’s draft; GIII/57f,2).  

There are, on the one hand, laws that govern the bodies and follow from the necessity of the nature of bodies. On the other hand, there are laws that follow necessarily from human nature. Here I am interested in laws of the latter kind: if we encounter a thing that resembles another one or has occurred together with another one, we think of that which it resembles or that which was perceived at the same time. It is according to these principles of association that certain external objects necessarily come to be causes of our affects. We also, Spinoza thinks, tend to imitate the affects of those we imagine to be similar to us. These principles in conjunction with the striving to persevere in being provide a causal explanation for the necessary occurrence of the passions.

1 What is it to imagine?

1.1 About traces and images

According to Spinoza, the human body undergoes countless affections when interacting with other bodies. These affections exist even when the external objects that once caused them are gone, and this is what forms the basis for his account of imagination. The central concepts in Spinoza’s explanation

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492 GIII/57f: “Ex. gr. quod omnia corpora, ubi in alia minora impingunt, tantum de suo motu amittunt, quantum aliis communicant, lex est universalis omnium corporum, quae ex necessitate naturae sequitur. Sic etiam, quod homo, cum unius rei recordetur, statim recordetur alterius similis, vel quam simul cum ipsa perceperat, lex est, quae ex natura humana necessario sequitur.”

493 One of the first studies of Spinoza’s imagination is by Cornelis de Deugd 1966. He did not need to justify his decision to study it: “to those acquainted with the main trends in Spinozistic scholarship it must seem scarcely necessary to present a justification of the present work. Devoting a separate study of some length to Spinoza’s conception of imagination is long overdue” (de Deugd, 1966, 3). He thinks that the importance of imagination in Spinoza’s system is one of the least acknowledged in the history of philosophy: “these are the views I think are greatly exaggerated and therefore untenable. It seems that there are very few things in the history of philosophy that have been so thoroughly underrated as the significance of Spinoza’s conception of imagination in the totality of his system” (de Deugd 1966, 8). After de Deugd, Spinoza’s account of imagination has become an object of a growing interest. Of the several French studies we can refer, for example, to Gueroult 1974; Matheron 1988; Moreau 1994; Bove 1996; Henri Laux 2002; Lorenzo Vinciguerra 2005. The English commentaries are not that extensive but there are, however, some, e.g.: Amihud Gilead 1994;
of imagination are traces [vestigia] and images [imagines]. He thinks that the human body is composed of a great many individuals that are different in nature, and each of which is highly composite. Some of these individuals are hard, others fluid and still others are soft. These individuals, and consequently, the human body, can be affected in a great many ways. As a result, we are endlessly marked by encounters with external objects, and in turn we modify external objects. In fact, our body and the external bodies as they exist in time and duration can be understood as constellations of these traces.

Spinoza thinks that changes occur in the soft parts of our body when we encounter external bodies:

[when a fluid part of the human Body is determined by an external body so that it frequently thrusts against a soft part [of the human Body], it changes its surface and, as it were, impresses on [the soft part] certain traces of the external body striking against [the fluid part] (EIIPostV).

A trace is formed when the soft part is struck repeatedly by the fluid parts whose movements are determined by an external body. A trace is not, however, the same thing as an image. An idea of a trace involves the nature of...

Genevieve Lloyd & Moira Gatens 1999; Julie R. Klein 2003; Piet Steenbakkers 2004. I agree with Steenbakkers when he writes that “because Spinoza labels imagination or opinion as the lowest kind of cognition and the sole source of inadequate ideas, commentators have inferred that he despised it and was interested almost exclusively in the higher levels of cognition. In view of the importance Spinoza attaches to the imagination, however, this interpretation is hardly tenable” (Steenbakkers 2004, 175).

494 EIIPost1; GII/102: “The human Body is composed of a great many individuals of different natures, each of which is highly composite [Corpus humanum componitur ex plurimis (diversæ natureæ) individuis, quorum unumquodque valde compositum est].”

495 EIIPostII; GII/102: “Some of the individuals of which the human Body is composed are fluid, some soft, and others, finally are hard [Individuorum, ex quibus Corpus humanum componitur, quaedam fluida, quaedam mollia, & quaedam denique dura sunt].”

496 EIIPostIII; GII/102: “The individuals composing the human Body, and consequently, the human Body itself, are affected by external bodies in very many ways [Individua, Corpus humanum componentia, & consequentur ipsum humanum Corpus à corporibus externis plurimis modis afficitur].”

497 Cf. EIIPostIII and EIIPostVI; GII/103: “The human Body can move and dispose external bodies in a great many ways” [Corpus humanum potest corpora externa plurimis modis movere, plurimisque modis disponere].”

498 GII/102: “cum Corpori humani pars fluida à corpore externo determinatur, ut in aliam mollem sape impingat, ejus planum mutat, & veluti quaedam corporis externi impellentis vestigia eadem imprimit vestigia eadem imprimit.”

499 Cf. e.g. Lorenzo Vinciguerra when he writes that “[u]n lecteur instruit du parcours de l’Éthique n’est pas sans savoir que la notion de vestigium sert à définir génétiquement le concept d’image, qui va bientôt faire son apparition. […] Il ne s’agit évidemment pas de nier le lien entre imago et vestigium, mais juste de reconnaître qu’au moment précis où Spinoza introduit la notion de trace, il n’est nullement question d’image ou de représentation” (Vinciguerra 2005, 123).
an external body\textsuperscript{500} but it does not represent it as present. Representing something as present requires images of things:

The affections of the human Body whose ideas represent external bodies as present to us, we shall call images of things, even if they do not reproduce the [NS :external] figures of things. And when the Mind regards bodies in this way, we shall say that it imagines) (EIIP17S).\textsuperscript{501}

According to Spinoza, we imagine when we represent a thing as present to us. Although the figures of the thing are not reproduced, as Spinoza expresses it, we undergo the same bodily modification as we would have if it were there. Because of spontaneous movements of the fluid parts, our body becomes affected in the same way it was when the external object was present, and this makes us think again of the object as present:

While external bodies so determine the fluid parts of the human body that they often thrust against the softer parts, they change (by Post.5) their surfaces with the result (see A2” after L3) that they are reflected from it in another way than they used to be before, and still later, when the fluid parts, by their spontaneous motion, encounter those new surfaces, they are reflected in the same way as when they were driven against those surfaces by the external bodies. Consequently, while, thus reflected they continue to move, they will affect the human Body with the same mode, concerning which the Mind (by P12) will think again, i.e. (by P17), the Mind will again regard the external body as present; this will happen as often as the fluid parts of the human body encounter the same surfaces by their spontaneous motion (EIIP17Dem).\textsuperscript{502}

The fluid parts may take that course of movement because our body is affected by a new object that may resemble the one that once caused the affection. As a result we think of it again as present. These considerations about the notion of ‘trace’ and that of ‘image’ make us think more about what a

\textsuperscript{500} Spinoza says that “[t]he idea of any mode in which the human Body is affected by external bodies must involve the nature of the human Body and at the same time the nature of the external body [idea cujuscunque modi, quo Corpus humanum a corporibus externi afficitur, involvere debet naturam Corporis humani, et simul naturam corporis externi]” (EIIP16; GII/103).

\textsuperscript{501} GII/106 : “Corporis humani affectiones, quorum ideæ corpora, externa velut nobis presentia repræsentant, rerum imagines vocabimus, tametsi rerum figures non referunt. Et cum Mens hae ratione contemplatur corpora, eandem imaginari dicemus.”

\textsuperscript{502} GII/105 : “Dum corpora externa Corporis humani partes fluidas ita determinant, ut in molliores saepe impingant, earum plana (per Post. 5.) mutant, unde fit (vide Axiom. 2. post Coroll. Lem. 3.) ut inde alio modo reflectantur, quam antea solebant, et ut etiam postea, iisdem novis planis spontaneo suo motu occurringdo, eodem modo reflectantur, ac cum a corporibus externis versus illa plana impulsae sunt, et consequenter, ut Corpus humanum, dum sic reflexae moveri pergunt, eodem modo afficiant, de quo Mens (per Prop. 12. hujus) iterum cogitat, hoc est (per Prop. 17. hujus), Mens iterum corpus externum, ut praesens, contemplabitur; et hoc toties, quoties Corporis humani partes fluidae spontaneo suo motu iisdem planis occurrent.”
human body is for Spinoza. In the third postulate, Spinoza asserts that the individuals composing the human body are affected in a great many ways, and consequenter, so is the human body. The human body appears as a union of countless traces.\textsuperscript{503} We cannot say that this particular trace is more basic than another, so the human body is a union of the traces, joined together through the inherent power to persevere in being.\textsuperscript{504} It is the constellation of the traces that is primary to the constituents and from which images emerge. We cannot imagine without a trace but having a trace does not necessarily mean that we are able to imagine.\textsuperscript{505} Vinciguerra stresses that “[u]ne nature complexe a besoin non d’une seule mais de plusieurs traces, en relation entre elles pour se déterminer et se donner à contempler sous l’aspect d’images”.\textsuperscript{506} Traces are necessarily united to one another, and so are the images.\textsuperscript{507} A thing is imagined as present because it occurs among other images. Something makes us think of a thing, and that leads us to think of another thing. A thing becomes meaningful to us within the cluster of images.

\textsuperscript{503} I think that Vinciguerra puts this well when he writes that “[l]a traçabilité du corps, en effet, dans laquelle les images se situent, n’est pas en soi une réalité seconde par rapport à la formation des corps, puisqu’en vérité elle y prend part depuis toujours. Les traces sont contemporaines de la formation du corps, qui n’existe jamais que comme affecté, mémoire active, et donc comme tracé et traçage” (Vinciguerra 2005, 189).

\textsuperscript{504} This comes out also in Bove when he regards the human body as a kind of habituation. He states that “[i]l est vrai qu’un corps, c’est déjà, dans son rapport particulier au monde, une “manière d’être”, une habitude” (Bove, 1996, 29).

\textsuperscript{505} I agree with Vinciguerra when he points out that “[a]ssurément les idées des images sont en tout point des idées de traces, elles ne peuvent signifier les corps extérieurs comme présents qu’en vertu de celles-ci. Mais les idées des traces ne sont pas tout à fait des idées d’images. Une trace est nécessaire, mais pas suffisante à faire une image” (Vinciguerra 2005, 178).

\textsuperscript{506} Vinciguerra 2005, 178f.

\textsuperscript{507} Vinciguerra writes that “[l’]essence de l’image donc est plutôt ce qui permet à une image de se joindre à d’autres images, [---] Pour que donc l’image puisse devenir l’image de quelque chose, il est nécessaire que les images singulières se conjuguent au pluriel par une mise en chaîne” (Vinciguerra 2005, 194).
1.2 The human body as a habituation

The human body can be understood as a product of habituation of various affections that become joined and whose connection makes things meaningful to us.\(^{508}\) As a representation of the body, the mind remembers things as they are have affected the body:

\[
\text{If the human Body has once been affected by two or more bodies at the same time, then when the Mind subsequently imagines one of them, it will immediately recollect the others also (EIIP18).}^{509}
\]

Based on the affections the human body undergoes, it turns into certain kind of body, regarding some things good, others harmful, having certain inclinations and expectations. Spinoza gives us some illustrative examples of these. In the second part of the *Ethics* he discusses a soldier and a farmer, and how they perceive traces of a horse in the sand. When they see these traces each passes from one thought to another according to the order of the ideas of their bodily affections:

\[
\text{In this way each of us will pass from one thought to another, as each one’s association had ordered the images of things in the body. For example, a soldier, having seen traces of horse in the sand, will immediately pass from that to the thought of war, etc. But a Farmer will pass from the thought of a horse to the thought of a plow, and then to that of a field. etc. And so each one, according as he has been accustomed to join and connect the images of things in this or that way, will pass from one thought to another (EIIP18S).}^{510}
\]

The body of a soldier and a farmer can be considered as two different kinds of result of habituation [*consuetudo*].\(^{511}\) Because of the affections they have undergone and their ideas which have been associated to one another, they have become the individuals they are and conceive things according to these affections. Because of habituation we have certain expectations concerning the future. Spinoza gives the example of a child who usually sees Peter in the morning, Paul at noon and Simon in the evening. He imagines the course of the day so that he relates Peter to the morning, Paul to noon and Simon to the evening:

\[\text{508 The term of ‘habituation’ might not strike very natural. I use it in the sense of ‘being habituated’ by affections the human body undergoes.}^{509}\ \text{GII/106 : “si Corpus humanum a duobus, vel pluribus corporibus simul affectum fuerit semel, ubi Mens postea eorum aliquod imaginabitur, statim & aliorum recordabitur.”}^{510}\ \text{GII/107: “sic unusquisque ex unâ in aliam cogitationem incidet, prout rerum imagines uniuscujusque consuetudo in corpore ordinavit. Nam miles ex.gr.visis in arena equi vestigiis stationem belli, &c. incidet. At Rusticus ex cogitatione equi in cogitationem aratri, agri, &c. incidet, & sic unusquisque, prout rerum imagines consuevit hoc, vel alio modo jungere, & concatenare, ex unâ in hanc, vel in aliam incidet cogitationem.”}^{511}\ \text{Cf. Laurent Bove who thinks that “[i]l faut donc reconnaître au Corps une puissance de composition ou de combinaison, et cette puissance est celle de l’Habitude” (Bove, 1996, 23).}^{166}\]
Let us suppose, then, a child who saw Peter for the first time yesterday, in the morning, but saw Paul at noon, and Simon in the evening, and today again saw Peter in the morning. It is clear from P18 that as soon as he sees the morning light, he will immediately imagine the sun taking the same course through the sky as he saw on the preceding day, or he will imagine the whole day, and Peter together with the morning, Paul at noon, and Simon in the evening. That is, he will imagine the existence of Paul and of Simon with a relation to future time. On the other hand, if he sees Simon in the evening, he will relate Paul and Peter to the time past, by imagining them together with past time. And he will do this more uniformly, the more often he has seen them in this same order (EIIP44S). 512

Repetition plays a crucial role here. The more we are exposed to some affection, the stronger it directs our perception of things and expectations. However, even if repetition strengthens the connection between the occurrence of two ideas, it is not the reason why associations really occur. They would not occur if there were not an internal principle that joins them together. Our desire, the perseverance in being, is what joins affections together, creates associations, makes things meaningful to us. This inherent force works for our perseverance from the beginning. 513 We strive to maintain the certain ratio of motion and rest that defines us as individuals. Habituation can be understood to occur because we strive to maintain our essence.

Imagination is characterized by fluctuations. It might well happen that instead of Simon, the child meets James in the evening. As a result, he is imagining now James and now Simon together with the evening but not both at once because he was not affected by them simultaneously:

If it should happen at some time that on some other evening he sees James instead of Simon, then on the following morning he will imagine now Simon, now James, together with the evening time, but not both at once. For it is supposed that he has seen one or the other of them in the evening, but not

512 GII/125: “ponamus itaque puerum, qui heri prima vice hora matutina viderit Petrum, meridiana autem Paulum, et vespertina Simeonem, atque hodie iterum matutina hora Petrum, Ex Propositione 18 hujus patet, quod simulac matutinam lucem vidit, illico solem eamdem cæli, quam die precedenti, viderit, partem percurrentem, sive diem integrum, et simul cum tempore matutino Petrum, cum meridiano autem Paulum, et cum vespertino Simeonem imaginabitur, hoc est, Pauli et Simeonis existentiam cum relatione ad futurem tempus imaginabitur; et contra, si hora vespertina Simeonem videat, Paulum et Petrum ad tempus præteritum referet, eosdem scilicet simul cum tempore præterito imaginando; atque haec eo constantius, quo saepius eos eodem hoc ordine viderit.”

513 Cf. Bove when he write that “[l]’Habitude, devons-nous encore une fois le rappeler, n’étant pas ici, malgré l’apparence, le comportement acquis dans la répétition d’une même expérience (par laquelle se contractent en nous des habitudes), mais l’aptitude (ou la puissance spontanée) du Corps à lier, dès première expérience, deux ou plusieurs affections, qu’elles soient simultanées ou successives” (Bove 1996, 24f). Cf. Bove also when he states that “qu’est-ce que l’Habitude sinon l’activité même de cette aptitude à être affecté qui définit la nature d’un corps – ou encore le dynamisme du rapport de mouvement et de repos subsumant des parties qui le composent? La puissance de l’Habitude à lier les affections, c’est la puissance même du Corps correlative de son essence singulièr” (Bove 1996, 31).
both at once. His imagination, therefore, will vacillate and he will imagine
now this one, now that one, with the future evening time, i.e., he will regard
neither of them as certainly future, but both of them as contingently future
(EIIP44S). 514

We may associate different ideas to a thing. In some sense the thing may be
agreeable to us whereas some other features of it we associate with aversive
ideas, and so the mind vacillates between those ideas. This vacillation char-
acterizes our affective life, a point I shall turn to more closely later.

2 How does imagination generate passive affects?

There is an intimate relationship between imagination and passive affects. 515
I shall begin by discussing how imagination is related to our desiring na-
ture. 516 We need to understand how the striving to persevere in being ex-
presses itself in the imagination. The main principles of imagination concern
the association of ideas of things that have occurred simultaneously or re-
semble one another. Spinoza thinks that this is a law that follows necessarily
from human nature and thus governs everybody. The clusters of traces and
images the human body is constituted by make us automatically related af-
fectively to external objects, even to those we are not so far affected by. Spi-
noza explains the latter feature especially through his notion of ‘imitation of
the affects’ which I shall also have a look.

2.1 The striving to imagine what increases one’s power of acting

One expression in our imagination of our striving to persevere in being is
that we strive to imagine – to think as present – those objects that increase

514 GII/126: “quod si aliquando contingat, ut alia quadam vespera loco Simeonis Jacobum
videat, tum sequenti manu cum tempore vespertino jam Simeonem, jam Jacobum, non vero
ambos simul imaginabitur. Nam alterutrum tantum, non autem ambos simul temporo
vespertino vidisse supponitur. Fluctuabitur itaque ejus imaginatio et cum futuro tempore
vespertino jam hunc jam illum imaginabitur, hoc est, neutrum certo, sed utrumque
contingenter futurum contemplabittur.”

515 Cf. e.g. Steenbakkers who states that “[t]he emphasis on inadequate ideas in the formation
of the passions accounts for the pivotal part played by imagination in the theory of affective
life” (Steenbakkers 2004, 191). Furthermore, he notes that “[i]maginari and its cognates
imaginatio and imago (and also, occasionally, imaginarius) have more than 300 occurences
(232 in part 3, 74 in part 4)” (ibid. 188).

516 Several philosophers have emphasized that the imagination and the generation of affects is
a rule-governed phenomenon in Spinoza. For instance, Wolfson brings out that “[n]ow this act
of the mind in imagining causes of pleasure and pain and preserving them and destroying
them is not an arbitrary act. It follows certain rules and is ultimately determined by actually
existing external causes” (Wolfson 1934, 213). Allison notes as well that “[t]hese emotions,
like everything else in nature, do not arise capriciously, but in accordance with universal and
necessary laws” (Allison 1987, 138).
our power of acting. This is the basis for Spinoza’s definitions of love and hate. On the one hand,

[t]he Mind, as far as it can, strives to imagine those things that increase or aid the Body’s power of acting (EIIIP12).517

On the other hand,

[w]hen the Mind imagines those things that diminish or restrain the Body’s power of acting, it strives, as far as it can, to recollect things that exclude their existence (EIIIP13).518

We are inherently determined to think as present of objects that enhance our power of acting. Depending on the affections we undergo, the traces and images in our body, certain objects have happened to become such that they affect us by increasing our power of acting whereas others decrease it. The ideas of external objects as causes of changes in our power of acting is the way Spinoza understands love and hate. According to him love is

nothing but Joy with the accompanying idea of an external cause (EIIIP13S)519

and Hate

is nothing but Sadness with the accompanying idea of an external cause (EIIIP13S).520

Love and hate are changes in our power of acting: a joy and sadness as caused by an external object. For Spinoza an external cause of an increase of our power of acting is what constitutes the essence of love. For Descartes the essence of love is joining oneself willingly to an object that appears good, and in such a manner that one represents a whole with it. Spinoza does not, however, think that the idea of joining oneself willingly to an object constitutes the essence of love. When he defines the affects at the end of the Part III of the Ethics, he says that “those authors who define love as a will of the lover to join himself to the thing loved expresses a property of love, not its essence” (EIIIDef.ofAffVIExp).521 For Descartes the aspect of being joined to others is important because otherwise we would be deprived of the good

517 GII/150: “mens, quantum potest, ea imaginari conatur, quæ Corporis agendi potentiam augent, vel juvant.”
518 GII/150: “Cum Mens ea imaginatur, quae Corporis agendi potentiam minuunt, vel coercent, conatur, quantum potest, rerum recordari, quae horum existentiam secludunt.”
519 GII/151: “laetitia concomitante idea causæ externæ.”
520 GII/151: “tristitia concomitante idea causæ externæ.”
521 GII/192: “illa vero Auctorum, qui definiunt Amorem esse voluntatem amantis se jungendi rei amatae, non Amoris essentiam, sed ejus proprietatem exprimt.”
others may bring us. For Spinoza, it is not important to emphasize the idea of love as being joined to others because we necessarily interact with others since we belong to one substance.

It is important for Spinoza to emphasize that love is something that brings us joy and increases our power of acting. When he distinguishes the property of love from its essence, he makes the following remark about the will. It does not mean “a consent, or a deliberation of the mind, or free decision” (ibid.). Furthermore, “[n]or do I understand a desire of joining oneself to the thing loved when it is absent or continuing in its presence when it is present” (ibid.). He makes a delightful comment on this, “[f]or love can be conceived without either of these desires” (ibid.). What is love essentially, then, for Spinoza? It is an increase or strengthening of one’s power of acting; one’s striving to persevere in being is enhanced. The essence of love is an increase of power. Spinoza concludes his explication of love as follows:

Rather, by will I understand a satisfaction in the lover on account of the presence of the thing loved, by which the lover’s joy is strengthened or at least encouraged (ibid.).

In the Ethics love has an extremely important metaphysical role in that it reminds us of our essence. For the sake of our essence we need to relate to others through love because love concerns what is most important to us, our own power. If we relate to others through hate, we relate to ourselves through something we lack, and diverge from our essence. I shall later stress how Spinoza insists in training the imagination to overcome hate by love or nobility.

The discussions of love bring out again a difference between the Short Treatise and the Ethics. According to the former work, the importance of love is not related to our essence: We do not have our own essence, at least in the sense of power. Therefore, it is essential to love that we enjoy something. We cannot exist without love. Spinoza regards our nature as weak:

it is necessary that we not be free of it, because, given the weakness of our nature, we could not exist if we did not enjoy something to which we were united, and by which we were strengthened (CW I, 105).
Love is to exist by enjoying the other: “[l]ove, then, is nothing but enjoying a thing and being united with it (CW I, 105).” The question in the Short Treatise is to what objects to unite with. There are three kinds of objects:

Some objects are corruptible in themselves; others, through their cause, are not corruptible; but there is a third [object] which, solely through its own power and capacity, is eternal and incorruptible. The corruptible, then, are all the singular things, which have not existed from all time, or have had a beginning. The next are all those modes which we have said are the cause of the singular modes. But the third is God, or what we take to be one and the same thing, the Truth (CW I, 105).

And then he poses the question:

Which of these three kinds of object should we choose, and which reject?

An essential feature of Spinoza’s account of love in the Short Treatise is that when we love a thing we become like it. This is different from the Ethics where we need to love, not to exist through another but to be what we are by our essence. In the Short Treatise Spinoza says quite clearly that we should not love corruptible things:

certainly loving them, and uniting ourselves with them [the corruptible], does not strengthen our nature at all. For they are weak, and one cripple cannot support the other. And not only do they not help us, but they are even harmful to us (CW I, 105).

Love for corruptible things leads to misery because it is difficult to become free from them since one has become one with them. According to the Ethics, we need to relate through love to everybody, even to our enemies. This marks a clear difference between the Short Treatise and the Ethics. In the Ethics love by its essence is about feeling one’s power to be increased by

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527 GI/62: “[d]e Liefde, die niet anders is, als een zaak te genieten en daar mede vereenigt te worden.”
528 GI/62f: “[s]ommige voorwerpen dan zyn in haar zelven vergankelyk; andere wel niet vergankelyk door haar oorzaak. Doch een derde isser alleen door syn eigen kracht en mogentheid eeuwig en onvergankelyk. De vergankelyke dan zyn alle de byzondere dingen, die niet van alle tyd geweest zyn, of begin genoomen hebben. De andere dat zyn alle die wyzen die wy gezeid hebben oorzaak te zyn van de bezondere wyzen. Maar de derde is God, off ‘t welk wy voor een en ‘t zelfde noemen de Waarheid.”
529 GI/63: “[w]elke dan, van deze drie’erly voorwerpen hebben wy te verkiezen of te verwerpen?”
530 GI/63: “[h]et is zeker dat, wy door ‘t beminnen en vereenigen met de zelve, geenzins in onse natuur versterkt en worden, aangezien zy zelve swak zyn, en d’eene kreupele d’ander niet kan draagen; en niet alleen dat ze ons niet en vorderen, maar zyn ook zelfs ons schadelyk.”
531 Spinoza writes even more strongly: “[h]e who unites with corruptible things is always miserable. For because they are outside his power and subject to many accidents, it is impossible that, when they are acted on, he would be able to be freed of them” (CW I, 106).
the other. One can love an enemy when love is not understood as being united to something: it is to think differently from what the ideas of bodily affections incline us to think about when somebody harms us. If somebody decreases our power of acting we strive to remove the harmful thing: “one who hates strives to remove and destroy the thing he hates” (EIIIP13S).532 One who hates strives from a decrease of power, from a lack. According to the Ethics, one should always, also when one is inclined to hate, be prepared to have positive thoughts, to have an inclination to love because it reminds of one’s power, what one is.

The affinity between the Short Treatise and the Ethics is that in both works Spinoza argues that love for God strengthens us in the truest sense. We cannot ever destroy ourselves because God is immutable and eternal, and knowledge does not ever decrease our power. We have an idea of ourselves that causes adequate thoughts, and this produces an internal joy. Furthermore, the more others there are who desire knowledge the stronger is our desire. This similarity between the two works does not, however, diminish the fact that, according to the Ethics, we must be habituated to love because it reminds us of our own power.533

These considerations of love and hate make us clarify the sense in which love and hate are derivative affects while desire, joy and sadness are primary ones. For instance, Harry Wolfson and Henry Allison think that joy, sadness and desire are primary affects because they are caused by present external objects. Love and hate, however, are secondary affects because they refer to objects that are not present. Wolfson writes that

[a]n emotion is primary, [Spinoza] seems to say, when the pleasure and pain which we experience are caused by an external object which is present and as a result of which we either desire that object, that is to say, “we endeavour absolutely to make it exist”, or we do not desire that object, that is to say, “we endeavour to destroy or remove it from us”. These are the primary emotions of pleasure, pain, and desire. But sometimes we experience pleasure and

532 GII/151: “qui odit, rem, quam odio habet, amovere, et destruere conatur.”
533 Jaquet calls attention the fact that in the Short Treatise Spinoza stills endorses mind-body interaction (cf. GI/97) as a result of which one can properly speak about love for body in the Short Treatise because they appear as separate things. In the Ethics, however, where the mind and body are considered as one single thing there cannot really be a love for body because the body is not external to the body. In Jaquet’s words one cannot “proprement parler d’amour du corps, mais seulement un affect lié à la contemplation d’une cause intérieure. C’est pourquoi les concepts d’amour-propre ou de satisfaction de soi prennent le relais de celui d’amour du corps” (Jaquet 2005, 49). The essence of the body is, naturally, stressed in the Ethics, and the love which arises from knowing the essence turns into the love for God. Jaquet puts this as follows: the mind “s’efforce de faire en sorte que toutes les affections du corps se rapportent à l’idée de Dieu et viennent ainsi alimenter l’amour de Dieu. Il ne s’agit donc pas de se détacher du corps mais de le rattacher sans cesse à Dieu. Bien ordonnées et bien comprises les affections du corps conduisent à l’amour de Dieu. Ainsi paradoxalement la disparition du concept d’amour du corps dans l’Éthique est le signe d’un vrai amour du corps, s’il est encore permis d’employer ces termes” (Jaquet 2005, 51).
pain caused by things which are not present but which are imagined by the mind as being present. Similarly the mind in its imagination desires the preservation of the imaginary presence of things which cause us pleasure and the exclusion of the imaginary presence of those things which cause us pain. These constitute the derivative emotions of pleasure, pain, and desire.534

Allison follows Wolfson in thinking that he thinks that love and hate refer to preceding objects that once caused our joy or sadness and are no longer present:

[a] crucial point to keep in mind is that pleasure, pain, and desire […] relate directly to present objects, which cause the affections in the body to which the respective emotions in the mind correspond. The derivative emotions all turn out to be species or combinations of pleasure, pain and desire, which are directed in various ways either to objects that do not at present exist and affect the body or to objects that are not themselves directly the cause of its affections.535

I do not think, however, that desire, joy and sadness are primary affects in the sense that they refer to the objects that are present or directly cause the affects. They are primary affects because they are inherent to our nature. To each of our desires, joys and sadesses there is joined an idea of an external object. Love and hate are joy and sadness thought of in a certain way. Macherey argues against the chronological interpretation where desire, joy and sadness are primary that they occur earlier or refer to affects where the external object is present. He writes that in the chronological view, the primitive affects “ils se présentent d’abord isolément, avant d’être ensuite réorientés ou remodelés dans le cadre de formations plus complexes élaborées à partir d’elles à une étape ultérieure de ce processus”536. This is more or less what Wolfson and Allison are claiming. In their view, the primary affects are understood in terms of an original affect to which later affects refer through the complex combination of ideas of various other objects.

I do not think, however, that the so-called “primordial affects” that refer to the objects that were present are any less love or hate than the affects that are caused by objects which in various combinations of ideas remind of the object. Neither are the latter affects any less joy or sadness. The question is not whether there is “an original object” present, but that each affect is constituted either by desire or by a change of power of acting (or a combination of these), which, based on our imagination, is thought to be caused by certain external objects. I agree with Macherey when he continues that

534 Wolfson 1934, 212.
535 Allison 1987, 137.
Although Wolfson and Allison think that passions arise according to certain rules and principles, they have not studied the way in which imagination produces the passive affects. When we understand how imagination functions, we see how external objects become causes of our desires and of changes in our power of acting. In each affective state an idea of an external object is interwoven with our desire or change in our power of acting without our needing to suppose that desire, joy and sadness is a primordial state where we were once directly affected by something that was present and to which our later affects somehow refer to.

2.2 Affirming one’s power of acting

Something else that follows from our nature is that we affirm with joy ourselves and those we love. Spinoza writes that that

we strive to affirm whatever we imagine to affect with Joy ourselves or what we love. On the other hand, we strive to deny whatever we imagine to affect with Sadness ourselves or what we love (EIIIP25).

By our nature, we strive to imagine as present those things that increase our power of acting. We feel the joys and sadnesses of things we love. For these reasons we strive to affirm whatever affects with joy ourselves and those we love (cf. EIIIP19,21,25Dem).

As regards those we hate we do the contrary:

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538 GII/159: “Id omne de nobis, deque re amata affirmare conamur, quod nos, vel rem amatam Laetitia afficere, imaginamur; et contra id omne negare, quod nos, vel rem amatam Tristitia afficere, imaginamur.”
539 Cf. EIIIP25Dem where Spinoza writes that “[w]hatever we imagine to affect what we love with joy and sadness, affects us with joy and sadness (by P21). But the mind (by P12) strives as far as it can to imagine those things which affect us with Joy, i.e. (by IIP17 and P17C), to regard them as present; and on the other hand (by 13) it strives to exclude the existence of those things which affect us with Sadness. Therefore, we strive to affirm all that concerning ourselves and the object of our Love [Quod rem amatam Laetitia, vel Tristitia afficere imaginamur, id nos Laetitia, vel Tristitia afficit (per Prop. 21. hujus). At Mens (per Prop. 12. hujus) ea, quae nos Laetitia afficiunt, quantum potest, conatur imaginari, hoc est (per Prop. 17. p. 2. et ejus Coroll.), ut praesentia contemplari; et contra (per Prop. 13. hujus), quae nos Tristitia afficiunt, eorum existentiam secludere; ergo id omne de nobis, deque re amata affirmare conamur” (GII/159).
We strive to affirm, concerning what we hate, whatever we imagine to affect it with Sadness, and on the other hand to deny whatever we imagine to affect it with Joy (EIIIP26).  

This is a way in which we relate affectively not only to ourselves but to others. There are many powerful passions that arise from our affirming our power of acting and that of those we love. This is the basis, for example, of pride [superbia], overestimation [existimatio] and scorn [despectus]. They all result from affirmations that lead us to have partial views about ourselves and things we love and hate. For instance, pride is for Spinoza “Joy born of the fact that a man thinks more highly of himself than is just” (EIIIP26S). We feel overestimation with regard to one we love: Spinoza defines it as “Joy born of the fact that a man thinks more highly of another than is just” (EIIIP26S). Scorn results from the opposite imagination: we strive to imagine only the weaknesses of those things we hate. Scorn, therefore, is joy “from thinking less highly of another than is just [quod de alio minus iusto sentit]” (EIIIP26S).

We do not only strive to imagine ourselves with joy but also those things we love because their affects increase or decrease our power of acting. We feel the affects that the ones we love undergo:

[h]e who imagines what he loves to be affected with Joy or Sadness will also be affected with Joy or Sadness; and each of those affects will be greater or lesser in the lover as they are greater or lesser in the thing loved (EIIIP21).

This happens because we strive to imagine those things that increase our power of acting. Whatever posits the existence of things that increase the power of acting of the thing we love strengthens thereby also our power of

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540 GII/159: “Id omne de re, quam odio habemus, affirmare conamur, quod ipsam Tristitia afficere imaginamur, et id contra negare, quod ipsam Laetitia afficere imaginamur.”
541 GII/159: “Est igitur Superbia Laetitia ex eo orta, quod homo de se plus justo sentit.”
542 GII/160: “Laetitia, quae ex eo oritur, quod homo de alio plus justo sentit, Existimatio vocatur.”
543 GII/160: “Despectus, quae ex eo oritur, quod de alio minus justo sentit.” The discussion concerning pride, overestimation and scorn illustrates how imagination and the passions are partial ways of perceiving. We do not think of the faults in ourselves and those we love, and we deny the strengths in the things we hate. Spinoza regards this as a kind of madness. He writes that it “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 [et species Delirii est, quia homo oculis apertis somniat, se omnia illa posse, quae sola imaginione assequitur, quaeque proptersea, veluti realla, contemplatur, isque exultat, quamdiu ea imaginari non potest, quae horum existentiam secludunt, et ipsius agendi potentiam determinan]” (EIIIP26S).
544 GII/156: “Qui id, quod amat, Laetitia, vel Tristitia affectum imaginatur, Laetitia etiam, vel Tristitia afficietur; et eterque hic affectus major, aut minor erit in amante, prout eterque major, aut minor est in re amata.”
acting (EIIIP21Dem). Because of the striving to persevere in being, we relate automatically and necessarily to others in a certain affective way.

The idea that affects spread necessarily to others occurs in various ways in Spinoza. We are modifications of one substance, and hence, we are necessarily affected by one another. We adopt each other’s affects; we regard the same things as good or harmful, have similar expectations like Spinoza describes, for example, the ancient Hebrews in the *Theological-Political Treatise*. Most clearly Spinoza expresses the social aspect of the affects by his idea of imitation of affects. There are still other ways in which this necessary social aspect appers in Spinoza’s account of affects. For instance, we strive to please others for this reason:

we shall strive to do also whatever we imagine men to look on with Joy, and on the other hand, we shall be averse to doing what we imagine men are averse to (EIIIP29).

The passions that arise from this principle affect our social life deeply. They are ambition [*ambitio*], praise [*laus*], blame [*vituperium*] and also other passions related to esteem, like love of esteem [*gloria*], shame [*pudor*], self-esteem [*acquiescentia in se ipso*] and repentance [*poenitentia*].

Furthermore, we strive to act so that we will be praised by others and avoid being blamed. Praise is “Joy with which we imagine the action of another by which he has striven to please us” (EIII29S). Blame, on the other hand, is “the Sadness with which we are averse to his action” (EIIIP29S). Praise and blame are powerful because we imagine ourselves as a cause, and, moreover, as a free cause. As a result we experience love of esteem or shame (EIIIP30S). If there is no such direct connection with the opinions of others, we feel self-esteem [*acquiescentia in se*] and repentance [*penitentia*] in the case of joy and sadness that has an idea of an internal cause.

545 EIIIP21Dem; GII/156: “The images of things (which we have demonstrated in P19) which posit the existence of a thing loved aid the striving by which the mind strives to imagine the thing loves [rerum imagines (ut in Prop. 19. hujus demonstravimus), quae rei amatae existentiam ponunt, Mentis conatum, quo ipsam rem amatam imaginari conatur, juvunt].”
546 GII/162: “Nos id omne etiam agere conabimur, quod homines cum Laetitia aspicere imaginamur, et contra id agere aversabimur, quod homines aversari imaginamur.”
547 GII/163: “Deinde Laetitiam, qua alterius actionem, qua nos conatus est delectari, imaginamur, Laudem voco.”
548 GII/163: “Tristitiam vero, qua contra ejusdem actionem aversamur, Vituperium voco.”
549 He writes that “[j]oy accompanied by the idea of an internal cause, we shall call love of esteem, and the sadness contrary to it, shame – I mean when the joy or sadness arises from the fact that the man believes that he is praised or blamed [nempe Laetitiam, concomitante idea causae internae, Gloriae, et Tristitiam huic contrariam Pudorem appellabimus. Intellige, quando Laetitia, vel Tristitia ex eo oritur, quod homo, se laudari, vel vituperari credit].”
550 EIIIP30S: “Otherwise, I shall call joy accompanied by the idea of an internal cause, self-esteem, and sadness contrary to it, repentance [alias Laetitiam, concomitante idea causae internae, Acquiescentiam in se ipso, Tristitiam vero eidem contrariam Poenitentiam vocabo (GII/163)].”
Spinoza points out how these passions are also formed through the opinions of others. For example, they are determined by education, common customs and religion:

it is no wonder Sadness follows absolutely all those acts which from custom are called wrong, and Joy, those which are called right. For from what has been said above we easily understand that this depends chiefly on education. Parents – by blaming the former acts, and often scolding their children on account of them, and on the other hand, by recommending and praising the latter acts – have brought it about that emotions of Sadness were joined to the one kind of act, and those of Joy to the other (EIIIDef. of Affects, XXVIIExp). 551

Spinoza is well aware of how culture and education influence affects, like self-esteem. In various ways, affects are determined socially or necessarily extended to others, because we strive to imagine things that increase our power of acting. This also concerns those who have not directly affected us but affect someone else, a basis for Spinoza’s account on favor [favor] and indignation [indignatio]. 552

2.3 The laws of human nature

An important way in which Spinoza thinks that certain things become causes of our affects happens through the principle of association. He regards it as a law of human nature. There are basically two ways in which this association can happen. Firstly, human nature is such that it connects ideas of things that

551 GII/197: “Sed hic præterea notandum venit, mirum non esse, quod omnes omnino actus, qui ex consuetudine pravi vocantur, sequatur Tristitia, et illos, qui recti dicuntur, Laetitia. Nam hoc ab educatione potissimum pendere, facile ex supra dictis intelligimus. Parentes nimirum, illos exprobrando, liberisque propert eosdem saepe objurgando, hos contra suadendo, et laudando, effecerunt, ut Tristitiae commotiones illis, Laetitiae vero his jungerentur.” The affects of which we regard ourselves as a cause are very strong. Their strength diminished if we relate them to other causes. Spinoza writes that “[l]ove or Hate – say, of Peter – is destroyed if the sadness the Hate involves, or the Joy the Love involves, is attached to the idea of another cause, and each is diminished to the extent that we imagine that Peter was not its only cause [Amor, et Odium, ex. gr. erga Petrum desstruitur, si Tristitia, quam hoc, et Laetitia, quam ille involvit, ideae alterius causae jungatur; et eatenus uterque diminuitur, quatenus imaginamur Petrum non solum fuisse alterutrius causam (GII/176)]” (EIIIP48). Pride, self-esteem or repentance, for example, are especially vigorous since we do not acknowledge but a cause to a deed, namely ourselves, and besides, we imagine this to be a free cause. Spinoza states that “[b]ecause men believe themselves free, these affects [self-esteem and repentence] are very violent (see P49) [hi affectus vehementissimi sunt, quia homines se liberos esse credunt (GII/179)]” (EIIIP51S).

552 Cf. EIIIP22S: “love toward him who has done good to another we shall call favor, and hatred toward him who had done evil to another we shall call indignation [Amorem erga illum, qui alteri bene fecit, Favorem, et contra Odium erga illum, qui alteri male fecit, Indignationem appellabimus” (GII/157)].
have occurred simultaneously. Secondly, it makes a connection between ideas of things that resemble one another to some extent.

The basis of the first is EIIP18, the proposition we have already looked at with respect to the habituation of the human body. Another instance is language. The thought of a word is joined with a thought of a thing. He writes about the word ‘pomum’ as follows:

for example, from the thought of the word *pomum* a Roman will immediately pass to the thought of the fruit [viz. an apple], which has no similarity to that articulate sound and nothing in common except that the body of the same man has often been affected by these two [NS: at the same time], that is, that the man often heard the word *pomum* while he saw the fruit (EIIP18S).\(^{553}\)

This is followed by what Spinoza says of a soldier and a peasant already discussed. They are examples of habituation, as Spinoza states explicitely:

in this way each of us will pass from one thought to another, as each one’s association [habituation] has ordered the images of things in the body (EIIP18S).\(^{554}\)

This same principle that governs images applies also to affects:

If the Mind has once been affected by two affects at once, then afterwards, when it is affected by one of them, it will also be affected by the other (EIIP14).\(^{555}\)

This shows that the case he has in mind is where one of the affects changes the power of acting whereas the other one does not:

Suppose the mind is affected by two affects at once, one of which neither increases nor diminishes its power of acting, while the other either increases it or diminishes it (see Post.1). From P14 it is clear that when the mind is afterwards affected with the former affect as by its true cause, which (by hypothesis) through itself neither increases nor diminishes its power of thinking, it will immediately be affected with the latter also, which increases or

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\(^{553}\) GI/107: “ex. gr. ex cogitatione vocis pomi homo Romanus statim in cogitationem fructus incidet, qui nullam cum articulato illo sono habet similitudinem, nec aliquid commune, nisi quod ejusdem hominis Corpus ab his duobus affectum saepe fuit, hoc est, quod ipse homo saepe vocem pomum audivit, dum ipsum fructum videret.”

\(^{554}\) GI/107: “et sic unusquisque ex una in aliam cogitationem incidet, prout rerum imagines uniuscujusque consuetudo in corpore ordinavit.” Curley translates ‘consuetudo’ by ‘association’ whereas I would prefer ‘habituation’ because it refers as a term also to how the body is disposed, not only to the connection between ideas.

\(^{555}\) GI/151: “Si Mens duobus affectibus simul affecta semel fuit, ubi postea eorum alterutro afficietur, afficietur etiam altero.”
diminishes its power of thinking, that is (by P11S), with joy, or sadness (EIIIP15Dem).\footnote{GII/151: “Si Corpus humanum a duobus corporibus simul affectum semel fuit, ubi Mens postea eorum alterutrum imaginatur, statim et alterius recordabitur (per Prop. 18. p. 2.). At Mentis imaginationes magis nostri Corporis affectus, quam corporum externorum naturam indicant (per Coroll. 2. Prop. 16. p. 2.): ergo si Corpus, et consequenter Mens (vid. Defin. 3. hujus) duobus affectibus semel affecta fuit, ubi postea eorum alterutro afficietur, afficietur etiam altero.”}

Spinoza thinks that things often become causes of our affects accidentally: “From this alone – that we have regarded a thing with an affect of joy and sadness, of which it is not itself the efficient cause, we can love it or hate it” (EIIIP15Cor).\footnote{GII/152: “Ex eo solo, quod rem aliquam affectu Laetitiae, vel Tristitiae, cujus ipsa non est causa efficiens, contemplati sumus, eandem amare, vel odio habere possumus.”}

Furthermore, an object may become a cause of our affects if it resembles another object that caused some affect in us:

From the mere fact that we imagine a thing to have some likeness to an object that usually affects the Mind with Joy or Sadness, we love it or hate it, even though that in which the thing is like the object is not the efficient cause of these affects (EIIIP16).\footnote{GII/152f: “Ex eo solo, quod rem aliquam alicuius habere imaginamur simile objecto, quod Mentem Laetitiae, vel Tristitia afficiere solet quamvis id, in quo res objecto est similis, non sit horum affectuum efficiens causa, eam tamen amabimus, vel odio habebimus.”}

Here again he stresses that an object may become a cause of an affect because of an accidental feature. The resemblance does not need to be based on the thing that is an efficient cause of the affect but the affect occurs if there is a resemblance between the objects in some aspect. This is the basis Spinoza gives for sympathy [sympathia] and antipathy [antipathia]. We feel sympathy or antipathy towards certain things because they resemble – often in irrelevant ways – the things that increase or decrease our power of acting (EIIIP15S). Macherey points out that the reasons we feel sympathy or antipathy have to do with sometimes quite insignificant circumstances where an object is associated with another that has affected us with joy or aversion.\footnote{Macherey 1998, 156f. He concludes his interpretation of Spinoza’s view of sympathy and antipathy as follows: “Il faut comprendre que la sympathie et l’antipathie s’expliquent par les circonstances les plus banales, pour autant que ces sentiments, qui n’ont absolument rien d’extraordinaire, se développent en l’absence d’une explication et d’une détermination rationnelles, puisqu’ils relevent seulement du hasard des occasions et des rencontres.”}

A conclusion is that there does not need to be any real reason in the objects of our love and hate. They might remined us of other objects, which causes the affects. We might have perceived them together with other objects that have increased or decreased our power of acting or that there is
some resemblance between. Our affective life is often formed accidentally as Macherey points this out:

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\text{[e]n clair cela signifie que n’importe qui peut désirer n’importe quoi et être rendu joyeux ou triste par n’importe quoi, n’y ayant rien dans quoi que ce soit en particulier qui le rende universellement ou absolument désirable ou en fasse une cause en soi de joie ou de tristesse, à moins que l’imagination, par les voies obscures qui lui sont propres, ne l’ait rendu tel en apparence et ainsi offert comme objet aux affects.} \text{560}
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We can love, hate or desire a thing because imagination has made it a cause of our affect. This means that basically whatever thing can become a cause of our affects and as a result of which we vacillate.

3 Imitation of affects

The main reason for the social nature of affects is what Spinoza calls imitation of affects [\textit{affectuum imitatio}]. It is based on the fact that we automatically adopt a bodily affection of another, and even of another whom we have not been affected by:

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\text{[i]f we imagine a thing like us toward which we have had no affect, to be affected with some affect, we are thereby affected with a like affect (EIIIP27).} \text{561}
\]

The notion of “imitation of the affects” occurs in the scholium as follows:

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\text{This imitation of the affects, when it is related to Sadness is called Pity (on which, see P22S); but related to Desire it is called Emulation, which, therefore, is nothing but \textit{Desire for a thing which is generated in us from the fact that we imagine others like us to have the same Desire} (EIIIP27S).} \text{562}
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The affects that involve imitation are pity and emulation especially. The mechanism is that we adopt the bodily affection of another person towards whom we are not so far affected but whom we imagine to be like us. There is similarity involved when we imitate someone else’s affects. The imitation itself happens in an automatic and mechanistic manner without any reflection. One example concerns children:

\text{560} Macherey 1998, 132.
\text{561} GII/160: “Ex eo, quod rem nobis similem, et quam nullo affectu prosecuti sumus, aliquo affectu affici imaginamur, eo ipso simili affectu afficimur.”
\text{562} GII/160: “Haec affectuum imitatio, quando ad Tristitiam refertur, vocatur Commiseratio (de qua vide Schol. p. 22. hujus); sed ad Cupiditatem relata Aemulatio, quae proinde nihil aliod est, quam aliqujs rei Cupiditas, quae in nobis ingeneratur ex eo, quod alios nobis similis etadem Cupiditatem habere imaginamur.”
we find from experience that children, because their bodies are continually, as it were, in a state of equilibrium, laugh and cry simply because they see others laugh and cry. Moreover, whatever they see others do, they immediately desire to imitate it (EIIIP32S). 563

Imitation does not, however, apply only to children. The main reason we are attached to one another by the affects is that we continue to imitate affects. We constantly, for example, adopt the other’s desires or feel sad when someone else is sad. We do not need to be aware of the content of these affects but we feel them because we undergo the same the bodily affection as the other. 564

563 GII/165: “si ipsam experientiam consulere velimus, ipsum haec omnia docere experiemur; praesertim si ad priores nostrae aetatis annos attenderimus. Nam pueros, quia eorum corpus continuo veluti in acquirilio est, ex hoc solo ridere, vel flere experimur, quod alios ridere, vel flere vident; et quicquid praeterea vident alios facere, id imitari statim cupiunt, et omnia denique sibi cupiunt, quibus alios delectari imaginatur.” Macherey stresses that when we imitate the affects of somebody who is similar to us, the idea we have of the bodily affection does not only include the existence of the external body but also its affects. He writes that “nous avons l’idée d’une affection de notre corps qui enveloppe non seulement l’existence du corps extérieur par lequel il est affecté, mais aussi celle des affections de ce corps, dont notre corps est lui-même affecté” (Macherey 1998, 216f). Macherey also think that the example of children is important when illustrating how imitation occurs. According to him “[i]l s’agit d’un processus purement mécanique, dont une illustration exemplaire est donnée par le comportement des enfants […] imiter les affects d’autrui, c’est donc, sans former à ce sujet de projet délibéré, se sentir soi-même affecté par les affects d’autrui” (Macherey 1998, 219). Notably, Spinoza writes about the bodies of children that they are “in a state of equilibrium”. We should read this more as expressing a search of an equilibrium since children’s bodies are not in their final shape. This shows even more clearly that when we imitate somebody we do it by having the same bodily affection as them. Especially clear this is in children, whose bodies are developing and, thus, easily exposed to others’ affects. Macherey says “c’est ainsi que nous sommes amenés à ressentir ces affections comme si elles se produisent en nous, par un simple transfert d’images de choses, transfert qui s’opère sans même que nous en prenions conscience” (Macherey 1998, 217). It is not, however, as if the affects occur in our body but they really do.

564 Cf. e.g. Matheron who refutes the account in which imitation is based on altruism, or on comparison. Neither does he think that we produce feelings analogous to the one we imitate. He states that “il ne s’agit pas […] d’un altruisme spontané qui découlerait de l’attrait exercé par le semblable sur le semblable: Spinoza exécute ces fadeurs. Encore moins s’agit-il d’une comparaison à laquelle nous nous livrerions: si nous avons pitié des malheureux, ce n’est nullement, comme pensait Hobbes, parce que nous imaginons qu’un destin analogue pourrait bien nous advenir. Il serait même inexact de prétendre que l’imagination des sentiments d’autrui produit en nous des sentiments analogues” (Matheron 1988, 154). It seems to me that Matheron stresses justly that “imaginer les sentiments d’un être semblable à nous, c’est, ipso facto, les éprouver. […] lorsque nous imaginons les sentiments d’un être quelconque, des mouvements correspondants, comme c’est le cas pour n’importe quelle image, se dessinent ou s’esquissent dans notre corps” (Matheron 1988, 154).
4 Vacillation of the affects

Our emotions often vacillate, a phenomenon Spinoza’s account of affects can explain well. He defines the vacillation of the mind \([\text{animi fluctuatio}]\) as follows:

This constitution of the Mind which arises from two contrary affects is called vacillation of mind, which is therefore related to the affect as doubt is to the imagination (see IIP44S); nor do vacillation of mind and doubt differ from one another except in degree (EIIIP17S).\(^{565}\)

There are several reasons why our affective life fluctuates. One of them is that affects often arise accidentally. For example, an object may be an efficient cause of one affect but an accidental cause of another and contrary affect that might occur because of associations.

Spinoza’s discussion of hope and fear is also closely related to vacillation. The imaginings we have about the past or future are as strong as those that are about the present because an image is a bodily affection:

the image of a thing, considered only in itself, is the same, whether it is related to time past or future, or to the present, i.e. (by IIP16C2), the constitution of the Body, \(\text{or affect}\), is the same, whether the image is of a thing past or future, or of a present thing (EIIIP18Dem).\(^{566}\)

As long as our body is affected in a certain way we represent an object as present to us, and, thus, affects concerning a future or past object can be just as strong as present ones. It is not until the affection is replaced by another affect that we imagine something else.\(^{567}\) The ideas of objects that belong to the future or past are, however, trickier than the ideas of present objects because we can imagine many other things that might prevent a thing from occurring.\(^{568}\) Doubt characterizes hope and fear.\(^{569}\) Especially those who have


\(^{566}\) GII/154: “Quare rei imago, in se sola considerata, eadem est, sive ad tempus futurum, vel praeteritum, sive ad praeesens referatur, hoc est (per Coroll. 2. Prop. 16. p. 2.), Corporis constitutio, seu affectus idem est, sive imago sit rei praeteritae, vel futurae, sive praeesentis; atque adeo affectus Laetitiae et Tristitiae idem est, sive imago sit rei praeteritae, aut futurae, sive praeesentis.”

\(^{567}\) In EIIIP13Dem Spinoza states what he has already said earlier in relation to imagination. He writes that “the Mind will continue to imagine this thing until it imagines something else that excludes the thing’s present existence (by IIP17), i.e. (as we have just shown), the power of both of Mind and of Body is diminished or restrained until the Mind imagines something else that excludes the existence of this thing” (EIIIP13Dem).

\(^{568}\) This is a difference, as I shall point out, at the end of the thesis, between passions and rational affects. The latter are based on common notions which are always present, and therefore, they are stronger than passions when time is taken into account. It might well happen
experienced a lot are more doubtful than others because many other images concerning the thing arise:

because it generally happens that those who have experienced many things vacillate so long as they regard a thing as future or past, and most often doubt the thing’s outcome (see IIP44S), the affects that arise from similar images of things are not so constant, but are generally disturbed by the images of other things, until men become more certain of the thing’s outcome (EIIIP18S1).570

Hope [spes] and fear [metus] are inconstant joy and sadness because we vacillate between different ideas, some of which support the outcome of a thing and others not, with the result that our joy and sadness are not stable.

The most fundamental reason for the vacillation of our affective life is the imitation of affects. The reason why we imitate lies in the striving to persevere in being.571 Our desire becomes stronger when we participate in desire that the other one is having. Sometimes we love a thing simply because we imagine others to love it. The more of those who love, hate or desire the same thing we do, the stronger the affect we feel:

[i]f we imagine that someone loves, desires or hates something we ourselves love, desire, or hate, we shall thereby love, desire or hate it with greater constancy (EIIIP31).572

We do not, however, always love and hate what others do, neither do others love and hate what we do. Because of imitation, we are affectively united with them too. At this point we vacillate:

that there occur affections which replace the previous ones and decrease the power of a passion. This cannot ever happen in rational affects.

569 In fact to doubt means for Spinoza to vacillate. We have two contrary ideas and we fluctuate between them.

570 GII/154f: “Verumenimvero, quia plerumque fit, ut ii, qui plura sunt experti, fluctuent, quamdiu rem, ut futuram, vel praeteritam contemplantur, deque rei eventu ut plurimum dubitent (vid. Schol. Prop. 44. p. 2.), hinc fit, ut affectus, qui ex similibus rerum imaginibus orintur, non sint adeo constantes, sed ut plerumque aliarum rerum imaginibus perturbentur, donec homines de rei eventu certiores fiant.”

571 Cf. e.g. Moreau who states that the imitation of affects “permet de comprendre que chacun fasse effort pour qu’autrui aime ou déteste la même chose que lui, tout simplement parce que c’est vital pour renforcer ses propres affects” (Moreau 2005, 50f). Furthermore, Moreau brings out how this effort shows itself also, for example, in religions. He stresses that “[c]e désir est un véritable effort [–] nous tendons de toutes nos forces à ce qu’autrui nous imite. Ainsi s’explique cet effort perpétuel par lequel les théologiens essaient de convertir autrui à leurs représentations, leur religion, leurs cultes, etc”. It is not, however, only theologians who do that but as Moreau continues “nous savons aussi que cela ne vaut pas simplement pour les théologiens, mais pour toute personne qui désire le pouvoir, l’argent, tel ou tel bien” (Moreau 2005, 51).

572 GII/164 : “Si aliquem imaginamur amare, vel cupere, vel odio habere aliquid, quod ipsi amamus, cupidus, vel odio habemus, eo ipso rem constantius amabimus.”
But if we imagine that he is averse to what we love, or the opposite, then we shall undergo vacillation of mind (EIIIP31).573

Now we strive to regain our power by whatever means. In the end we try by force make others love and hate what we do. Because everybody strives like this, the result is quite destructive for the common whole:

and so we see that each of us, by his nature, wants the others to live according to his temperament; when all alike want this, they are alike an obstacle to one another, and when all wish to be praised, or loved, by all, they hate one another (EIIIP31S).574

There are, then, certain disadvantages in the imitation of passive affects because it leads to conflicts and violence.575 We try to change others so that they have the same values we do. According to Matheron, there are basically two ways to do that, namely “[n]ous n’avons donc, pour les diffuser, d’autre ressource que la séduction ou la terreur; c-est-à-dire, subtile ou brute, la violence”.576 According to Spinoza, the striving that everybody loves and hates what one does is really ambition.577 A way to understand ambition is that one solely pleases the other to increase one’s power.578 So we can try with a certain sort of kindness to be in accordance with people to keep our power of acting increasing. We do not, however, always strive to agree with one another in a nice way. Our interests do not necessarily meet. Neither do we give up our interest or desire because it is our nature.579 Matheron de-

573 GII/164 : “Si autem id, quod amamus, eum aversari imaginamur, vel contra, tum animi fluctuationem patiemur.”
574 GII/164 : “atque adeo videmus, unumquemque ex natura appetere, ut reliqui ex ipsius ingenio vivant, quod dum omnes pariter appetunt, pariter sibi impedimento, et dum omnes ab omnibus laudari, seu amari volunt, odio invicem sunt.”
575 Cf. Moreau who states that “[i]l ne faut donc pas commettre l’erreur de croire que cette situation d’imitation des affects rend les hommes plus sociables. Elle les dispose effectivement aux relations interhumaines, mais celles-ci risquent beaucoup plus d’être négatives que positives. L’imitation des affects n’est pas a priori un avantage pour la constitution de la société. Ce serait bien plutôt une raison pour laquelle la société serait essentiellement un lieu de guerre, de rivalité théologique, de lutte amoureuse, de conflit pour le pouvoir” (Moreau 2005, 52).
577 Cf. EIII1S ; GII/164: “This striving to bring about that everyone should approve his love and hate is really ambition (see P29s) [Hic conatus efficiendi, ut unusquisque probet id, quod ipse amat, vel odio habet, revera est Ambitio] (vid. Schol. Prop. 29. hujus).”
578 EIII2S; GII/162: “This striving to do something (and also to omit something solely to please men is called ambition” [Hic conatus aliquid agendi, et etiam omittendi, ea sola de causa, ut hominibus placeamus, vocatur Ambitio].”
579 Why could not we love the same thing? One thing that Matheron points out is that there is no providential finality in Spinoza’s world, neither in the state of nature or in the political organized society. External causes can not ever be organized so that we would desire the same things: “dans l’état de nature, nulle finalité providentielle ne vient organiser les causes extérieures pour harmoniser les désirs humains. Même dans les sociétés politiques bien organisées, l’uniformité axiologique n’est réalisée que très imparfaitement, et seulement pour
scribes how ambition that may first appear as kindness takes gradually another form:

l’ambition, dès lors, devient appétit de puissance; de l’ambition de gloire, nous passons à l’ambition de domination, et, dans l’état civil, de domination politique, chaque moi veut être le tyran de tous les autres.\(^{580}\)

There is an interesting outcome of Spinoza’s discussion of the vacillation of affects. On the one hand, if we succeed in making others love what we do, we get more rivals, who contend for the same good that can only seldom be shared.\(^{581}\) On the other hand, we need this rivalry. This is very clear in sensual love [\textit{amor præterea meretricius}]. To end this chapter, let’s consider for a moment some lines about sensual love from Ovid’s \textit{Amores} which Spinoza quotes:

Love by another man’s leave is too cold-blooded

Lovers need a co-existence of hope and fear (EIIIP31Cor).\(^{582}\)
This verse is from *Amores*’ book II, Elegy XIX which is titled as “Make Her Hard to Get”.\(^{583}\) There a lover addresses his mistress’s husband, describing what gives power to his love. Spinoza refers to these verses of Ovid also in the Appendix to Part IV where he states that sensual love, as “a species of madness” is “encouraged more by discord than by harmony” (EIVAppendix, Chapter XIX).\(^{584}\) In the poem the lover says that the husband should guard his wife better, lock the doors early in the evening, start asking who knocks on the window in secret, why dogs bark in the silence of night. This is what the lover likes, the reason why love becomes stronger. He says:

> Whatever occurs, indulgence only hurts me –
> 
> what follows me, I flee: what flees, I follow.\(^{585}\)

Love vanishes if it is easily allowed. If the husband does not guard the wife, if the wife does not ever cheat the lover, does not come up with excuses and lies, makes him hurt sometimes, his love does not last. When she makes the lover suffer, she governs him for a long time. The lover asks the husband:

> Will I never be stopped from coming, unhappy man?
> 
> Will my nights always be vengeance-free?
> 
> Will I never be scared? Will I never have nights of sighs?
> 
> Will you never give me a reason for wishing you dead?
> 
> What use to me is an easy, pandering husband?\(^{586}\)

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\(^{583}\) Cf. Curley’s nice discussion of this citation and of sensual love in the appendix to the fourth part, XIX (CW I, 512,591). As he notes much depends how the term of ‘*sinit*’ is understood. Either love can be seen as something that is left by another or allowed by. If love is allowed it easily loses its strength. The reference Spinoza makes in the appendix seems indeed to show that, according to him, sensual love when it is regarded in itself is encouraged by discord, rather than harmony. Love that is never harmed shades away, the passion or the revival of the passion requires a kind of uncertainty and rivalry.

\(^{584}\) GII/271: “*species deliri sit, atque tum magis discordia, quam concordia fovetur.*”

\(^{585}\) Ovid’s *Amores* Book II, Elegy XIX : “nocet indulgentia nobis; quod sequitur, fugio; quod fugit, ipse sequor”. Quotes from Ovid’s *Amores* are taken from A.S. Kline’s online translation 2001. The Latin is from Guy Lee’s edition of *Amores* 1968.

\(^{586}\) Ovid’s *Amores* Book II, Elegy XIX :

> Scilicet infelix numquam prohibebor adire?
> 
>nox mihi sub nullo vindice semper erit?
> 
>nil metuam? per nulla traham suspiria somnos?
> 
>nil facies cur te iure perisse velim?
> 
>quid mihi cum facili, quid cum lenone marito?
To raise passion the husband needs to make the lover’s life hard. Otherwise the husband ruins the lover’s delight. It is the duty of the husband to make the wife difficult to get. He asks “[w]hy not find someone who enjoys such forbearance”. An allowing and easy husband does not make love powerful. There might be someone else who likes such a husband but not the lover. So he declares “[i]f you enjoy having me for a rival, deny!” Sensual love requires others, it requires rivalry. This goes well with what Spinoza says in EIII30 that the more we imagine people to love what we love the stronger is our love. Therefore, the lover wants the husband to be a good guard of his wife. Although there are others who desire the same thing, this is what keeps passion alive, gives the force to love. One vacillates between hope and fear, feels sometimes miserable but strong in love. If there is no rivalry, no others who love the same thing, no arduous things to overcome, it would be, as the poet puts it, “too cold-blooded” for love. It is a central feature in Spinoza’s understanding of the passions that we want others to love and hate what we want in order to strengthen our power. Quite clearly he felt affinity with the Ovidian thought that love might vanish if it is too easily allowed.

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587 Ovid’s *Amores* Book II, Elegy XIX: “quin alium quem tanta iuvat patientia, quaeris?”
588 Ovid’s *Amores* Book II, Elegy XIX: “me tibi rivalem si iuvat esse, veta!”
Third Part: The Power of Mind
Chapter I: Descartes’s Control of the Passions

Nevertheless, keeping myself as I do, one foot in one country and the other in another one, I find my condition very happy, as it is free (AT V 198). Descartes has mixed feelings about living between two countries. He writes the above letter from Paris, describing how France is at war; he has hopes for peace but since he cannot be sure of this, he prefers to return to the country where there is already peace, Holland. He writes, however, that he is very happy because his condition is free. I shall discuss in this chapter in what sense Descartes thinks he is free and why this makes him happy.

Descartes elaborates his view of the mastery of the passions during his discussions with Elisabeth. She draws his attention especially to the influence of the body on our ability to control our passions. She says that her body is

of a temperament subject to obstructions and resting in an air which contributes strongly to this. In people who cannot exercise much, it does not take a long oppression of the heart by sadness to obstruct the spleen and infect the

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589 This is how Descartes writes to Elisabeth in Paris June or July 1648: “Cependant, me tenant comme je fais, un pied en un pays, et l’autre en un autre, je trouve ma condition très heureuse, en ce qu’elle est libre”, translation mine. This letter does not really occur in the CSM edition. A part of it is there but included in another letter which Descartes writes to Elisabeth June 1645.

590 Descartes describes the political situation in France and Holland to Elisabeth as follows: “Le Parlement, joint avec les autres Cours souveraines, s’assemble maintenant tous les jours, pour délibérer touchant quelques ordres qu’ils prétendent devoir être mis au maniement des finances, et cela se fait à présent avec la permission de la Reine, en sorte qu’il y a de l’apparence que l’affaire tirera en longueur; mais il est malaisé de juger ce qui en réussira. On dit qu’ils se proposent de trouver de l’argent suffisamment pour continuer la guerre, et entretenir de grandes armées, sans pour cela fouler le peuple; s’ils prennent ce biais, je me persuade que ce sera le moyen de venir enfin à une paix générale. Mais, en attendant que cela soit, j’eusse bien fait de me tenir au pays où la paix est déjà; et si ces orages ne se dissipent bientôt, je me propose de retourner vers Egmond dans six semaines ou deux mois, et de m’y arrêter jusqu’à ce que le ciel de France soit plus serein” (AT V 198). He finds himself happy although thinks as well that the situation was so that it could not be anticipated. He states to Elisabeth “Je me suis rencontré ici en une conjoncture d’affaires, que toute la prudence humaine n’eût su prévoir” (AT V 198).
Elisabeth thinks that she has difficulties controlling her passions because her body becomes disturbed easily and for a long time. Descartes agrees with this. He thinks that people want to be happy but do not know how because they are troubled by their bodily condition: “often a bodily indisposition prevents their will from being free” (CSMK III 262f; AT IV 282). Descartes’s idea of the mastery of the passions includes doing something to this bodily condition to calm the turmoil of the body so that afterwards the mind can consider the subject matter from different points of view. This can happen in various ways. Sometimes Descartes recommends that Elisabeth free her mind from sad thoughts by thinking of neutral or generally joyful things like nature. Sometimes he encourages her to distract herself with studies because she likes them so much, although he is afraid that she might end up tiring her mind by tiring her body. He is, however, happy to assist Elisabeth in this.

The main part of Descartes’s ideas about the mastery of the passions concerns, however, the exercise of the mind that we can perform when the bodily turmoil is calmed. The passions incline the will to give its consent to what they prepare the body for. As long as the animal spirits strongly move our body we can hardly raise any thoughts other than those movements of the animal spirits cause in our soul. The remedy for the passions Descartes proposes consists in our ability to think differently of the things that the passions make us think. Many of the examples Descartes gives involve an advice to think of the positive side of what has happened, and to withdraw from thinking of the evil:

by striving to consider all the benefits that can be derived from the thing which has been regarded as a great misfortune one the previous day, while turning one’s attention away from the evils which this thing had been imagined to contain. For no events are so disastrous, or so absolutely bad in the judgment of ordinary people, that they cannot be considered in some favorable light by a person of intelligence (CSMK III 253; AT IV 237).
We should, however, acquire the habit of thinking of things from various points of view. Otherwise even if we succeed in overcoming a passion we might not be prepared for the following one. Referring to the Scholastics, he writes that however clear and evident reasons may have been that convinced us of some truth in the past, we can later be turned away from believing it by some false appearances unless we have so imprinted it on our mind by long and frequent meditation that it has become a settled disposition with us. In this sense scholastics are right when they say that virtues are habits; for in fact our failings are rarely due to lack of theoretical knowledge of what we should do, but to lack of practical knowledge – that is, lack of a firm habit of belief (CSMK III 267; AT IV 295f).595

Descartes thinks that he has succeeded in achieving this goal. He tells Elizabeth how he inherited a dry cough and a pale color from his mother that stayed with him until he was in his twenties. He thinks that his inclination to consider things in a positive light made this indisposition vanish almost completely. Furthermore, Descartes thinks that his dreams show how positive his mind is. When we are asleep, we cannot prevent bodily indisposition from causing bad dreams. Descartes says, however, that he never has such dreams because he is accustomed to have positive thoughts.596

According to Descartes, this ability to exercise the mind is the most valuable thing we have: “[t]his is an asset which she should value more highly than an empire” (CSMK III 253; AT IV 237).597 It is “less distressing to lose one’s life than to lose the use of one’s reason” (CSMK III 263; AT IV 237):

595 AT IV 295f: “Au reste, j’ai dit ci-dessus qu’outre la connaissance de la vérité, l’habitude est aussi requise, pour être toujours disposé à bien juger. Car, d’autant que nous ne pouvons être continuellement attentifs à même chose, quelques claires et évidentes qu’aient été les raisons qui nous ont persuadé ci-devant quelque vérité, nous pouvons, par après, être détournés de la croire par de fausses apparaences, si ce n’est que, par une longue et fréquente méditation, nous l’ayons tellement imprimée en notre esprit, qu’elle soit tournée en habitude. Et en ce sens on a raison, dans l’École, de dire que les vertus sont des habitudes; car, en effet, on ne manque guère, faute d’avoir, en théorie, la connaissance de ce qu’on doit faire, mais seulement faute de l’avoir en pratique, c’est-à-dire faute d’avoir une ferme habitude de la croire.”

596 He writes that “[t]outefois l’expérience fait voir que, si on a eu souvent quelque pensée, pendant qu’on a eu l’esprit en liberté, elle revient encore après, quelque indisposition qu’aît le corps; ainsi je puis dire que mes songes ne me représentent jamais rien de fâcheux, et sans doute qu’on a grand avantage de s’être dès longtemps accoutumé à n’avoir point de tristes pensées” (AT IV 282).

597 AT IV 237: “c’est un bien qu’elle doit estimer plus qu’un empire.”
Descartes tells Elisabeth that “ordinarily the best minds are those in which passions are most violent and act most strongly on their bodies” (CSMK III 253; AT IV 236). In the previous letter Elisabeth had written how she is going through so many misfortunes that she has not got the time to recover before the next one hits her, and Descartes writes to encourage her. When her bodily turmoil is calmed down the next day, she can start to exercise her mind and think about the positive side of what has happened. The good in all the miseries she has been exposed to is that they have given her occasion to use and strengthen the power of her mind:

Your Highness may draw this general consolation from the disfavors of fortune: that they have perhaps contributed greatly towards making her cultivate her mind to the extent that she has (CSMK III 253; AT IV 237).

Those who are wealthy and have experienced little of adversities of fortune have few occasions to develop their mind:

Great prosperity is often so dazzling and intoxicating that it possesses those who enjoys it, rather than being possessed by them, and although that does not happen to persons with minds of the quality of yours, prosperity always provides fewer opportunities for mental exercise than misfortune (CSMK III 253; AT IV 237).

The only thing good in an unqualified way for Descartes is accurate reasoning (CSMK III 253; AT IV 237). Here, however, there is a problem. It seems quite reasonable to ask whether those who have often been exposed to great misfortunes have simply become worn out rather than strong – contrary to what Descartes assumes. His account of mental exercise as the means to master one’s passions seems to rely too much on the individual, in the end on one’s will. Because we have the passions we do as a result of interactions,
we need to take into account external causes and interactions in the mastery of the passions. It is at this point that Spinoza diverges most from Descartes.

1 The connection between thoughts and bodily modifications

1.1 Why is love obscure?

Descartes acknowledges also the fact that some objects cause emotions in us without our really understanding how this happens. He explains this by a connection between thoughts and bodily modifications. This idea appears in various places in Descartes’s writings, for instance in a letter to Elisabeth May 1646, in letters to Chanut on 1 February 1647 and on 6 June 1647, and in the Passions, article 44.\(^{604}\) I shall concentrate on the letter to Chanut because he uses vivid examples, helping us to understand the connection between the mental and the bodily and the association between the passions and external objects.

When Chanut writes to Descartes on 1 December 1646, he is intrigued by some puzzles about love.\(^{605}\) He has read about this powerful passion, he has experienced it, and he regards it as the sweetest passion he has known. But he realizes that he does not really understand what love is: he has so many different kinds of appetite, so many inclinations that have no apparent reason, so many different objects that give him such great pleasure, that

\[
\text{en sorte que je me résous à aimer ce que je penserai le mériter, sans m'informer plus avant [--]jet ainsi, bien que je vous avoue que je ne connais nullement la nature de l'amour, je n'y suis pas insensible, principalement à votre égard. Et c'est ce qui me fait plus de difficulté, de sentir en moi un si grand effort, et ne connaître point ce qui m'emporte si violemment. Je connais bien ce qui cause en moi cette affection, j'en sens les effets, je la conserve comme le plus doux sentiment de mon âme: et avec tout cela, je ne sais en vérité ce que c'est (ATX 610f).}
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There are a number of points here, but I focus on two: the nature of love and the fact that sometimes we love someone without understanding why. Des-

\(^{604}\) Cf. Alanen who calls this connection “institution of nature” and points out that it can be based on either natural or habitual association (Alanen 2003, 197).

\(^{605}\) Chanut writes to Descartes that “au sujet de l’amour, il faut, Monsieur, que je vous confesse franchement mon ignorance: après en avoir lu mille belles choses dans les Anciens, j’en suis demeuré, comme autrefois de la lumière, que je sentais bien être très agréable et très nécessaire, mais que je ne connaissais point du tout. J’éprouve, comme les autres hommes, les joies et les douceurs de cette passion; mais, à vrai dire, je ne la connais pas bien, et ne pourrait déterminer précisément quel est ce mouvement de l’âme” (ATX 610f).
Cartes addresses the problem of the nature of love by making a distinction between love that is purely intellectual or rational and love as a passion. As noted above, intellectual emotions are caused by the soul itself. In intellectual love the soul judges something as good and joins itself willingly to it so that it represents a whole that it constitutes together with the good thing.\footnote{Intellectual emotions differ from passions in that they are caused by the soul itself whereas passions are caused by the movement of animal spirits. The former are understood as judgments or following such judgments but passions are not judgments but passions of the soul which incline the soul make a judgment, the will to give consent to what the body is prepared for. Cf. discussion of intellectual emotions, love, joy and sadness in the second part of the thesis.} In intellectual emotions, nothing is obscure to us because they are caused by the soul.\footnote{He writes about the intellectual joy, sadness and desire here as follows: “[c]n suite de quoi, s’il est présent, “c’est-à-dire, si elle le possède, ou qu’elle en soit possédée, ou enfin qu’elle soit jointe à lui non seulement par sa volonté, mais aussi réellement et de fait, en la façon qu’il lui convient d’être jointe, le mouvement de sa volonté, qui accompagne la connaissance qu’elle a que ce lui est un bien, est sa joie; et s’il est absent, le mouvement de sa volonté qui accompagne la connaissance qu’elle a d’en être privée, est sa tristesse; mais celui qui accompagne la connaissance qu’elle a qu’il lui serait bon de l’acquérir, est son désir” (AT IV 601f). He thinks that these movements of the will following the soul’s judgments are perfectly clear. He continues that “[c]t il n’y a rien en tous ces mouvements de sa volonté qui lui fût obscur, ni dont elle n’eût une très parfaite connaissance, pourvu qu’elle fît réflexion sur ses pensées” (AT IV 602). Cf. Alalen according to whom “[b]ecause intellectual emotions are generated by the mind itself, they contain nothing that is confused or obscure; they could also occur in a disembodied mind, an angel, for instance” (Alalen 2003, 195).}

Chanut asks about love, however, as a passion caused by the movement of the animal spirits. We cannot distinctly conceive what happens in the body when we are undergoing a passion. For example, in love the thoughts of the mysterious heat around the heart and a great abundance of blood in the lungs that makes us open the arms as if to embrace (CSMK III 306f; AT IV 603) remain obscure. According to Descartes, the thought by which the soul perceives what happens in the body is distinct from the thought that the soul itself eventually causes. For example, Descartes says Chanut:

just as in thirst the sensation of the dryness of the throat is a confused thought which disposes the soul to desire to drink, but it is not identical with that desire, so in love a mysterious heat is felt around the heart, and a great abundance of blood in the lungs, which makes us open our arms as if to embrace something, and this inclines the soul to join to itself willingly the object presented to it (CSMK III 307; AT IV 603).\footnote{AT IV 603: “Car, comme en la soif le sentiment qu’on a de la sécheresse du gosier, est une pensée confuse qui dispose au désir de boire, mais qui n’est pas ce désir même; ainsi en l’amour on sent je ne sais quelle chaleur autour du cœur, et une grande abondance de sang dans le poumon, qui fait qu’on ouvre même les bras comme pour embrasser quelque chose, et cela rend l’âme encline à joindre à soi de volonté l’objet qui se présente. Mais la pensée par laquelle l’âme sent cette chaleur, est différente de celle qui la joint à cet objet.”}
Intellectual emotions are often followed by the passions but not necessarily.⁶⁰⁹ The reason why love as a passion is obscure is that it involves these bodily sensations that we cannot understand in a clear and distinct way. Why does sensual love always involve these thoughts of various bodily movements? Descartes explains this by referring to the connection between thoughts and bodily constituents:

[the soul’s natural capacity for union with a body brings with it the possibility of an association between each of its thoughts and certain motions or conditions of this body so that when the same conditions recur in the body, they induce the soul to have the same thought; and conversely when the same

⁶⁰⁹ Descartes writes about love that “la pensée par laquelle l’âme sent cette chaleur, est différente de celle qui la joint à cet objet” (AT IV 603). The difference can be seen, for example there that sometimes we have a passion of love but the action of the will does not follow because do not perceive anything good in the object or in the opposite case that we perceive the good but do not feel the passion because our body is not disposed in the required way. Descartes states “même il arrive quelquefois que ce sentiment d’amour se trouve en nous, sans que notre volonté se porte à rien aimer, à cause que nous ne rencontrons point d’objet que nous pensions en être digne. Il peut arriver aussi, au contraire, que nous complissions un bien qui mérite beaucoup, et que nous nous joignions à lui de volonté, sans avoir, pour cela, aucune passion, à cause que le corps n’y est pas disposé” (CSMK III 307; AT IV 603). Usually these two thoughts occur, however, together. When we perceive a good we sense the passion, and when we have the passion we perceive many good things in the object, although the object is not necessarily worth of them. Descartes continues that “pour l’ordinaire, ces deux amours se trouvent ensemble; car il y a une telle liaison entre l’une et l’autre que, lorsque l’âme juge qu’un objet est digne d’elle, cela dispose incontinent le cœur aux mouvements qui excitent la passion d’amour, et lorsque le cœur se trouve ainsi disposé par d’autres causes, cela fait que l’âme imagine des qualités aimables en des objets, où elle ne verrait que des défauts en un autre temps” (AT IV 603). Cf. also Alanen who insists this aspect as follows: “[b]ecause no thoughts ever come singly to a Cartesian mind, and because the institution of nature has joined each thought to some bodily movement, all intellectual emotions are immediately followed by cerebral movements, which, according to mechanical laws, cause other thoughts and emotions” (Alanen 2003, 197). Both in the case of an intellectual and passive love, no matter what the reasons were why it arose, it can be said that when we love we add value to things around us. André Gombay points out about the will that it is a faculty which shows our values. According to Gombay “[d]écider, juger, aimer sont des actes de la volonté parce qu’ils amènent l’individu à trouver de la valeur dans le monde : décider, c’est voir du bien dans une ligne de conduite ; juger, c’est trouver du vrai dans une idée ; aimer, trouver du mérite, de la beauté, à une personne” (Gombay 1988, 455). Based on our loves and choices people get divided either into those whom we love or are in accordance with our loves and those who disagree with our loves. Gombay writes that “[i]ls nous unissent au monde, mais aussi nous en séparent. Ils nous unissent à ce que nous croyons, à celui ou celle que nous aimons. Ils nous séparent de ceux qui nous regardent et qui nous jugent : car quand ces actes sont mal placés, quand nos croyances sont mauvaises ou nos amours mal fondés, nous tombons dans une condition où les autres peuvent nous voir tels que nous ne nous voyons pas nous-même” (Gombay 1988, 455). Our loves show what the things are we value. At the same time we expose ourselves also to the others and their judgements whether they approve what we love and believe in. Others may not see the values we attribute to the things or they may see that they were not well based. In any case through our loves we express what is important for us and enter into a dialogue with others.
thought recurs, it disposes the body to return to the same condition (CSMK III 307; AT IV 604). Nature connects our thoughts with certain bodily conditions. As regards love, Descartes thinks that the first thing we fell in love with even before birth was suitable nourishment:

[b]efore birth, love was caused only by suitable nourishment which, entering in abundance into the liver, heart and lungs, produced an increase of heat: this is the reason why similar heat still always accompanies love, even though it comes from other very different reasons (CSMK III 308; AT IV 606).

Suitable nourishment causes in us a feeling of heat, and this heat is joined to our later loves. We do not distinctly conceive these bodily states related to our loves. They occur together with other thoughts we might have about the object that confuses us and makes it unclear why we actually love the object.

1.2 Why did Descartes have a crush on cross-eyed people?
The nature of love is also inexplicable in the sense that we can fall in love with somebody without really knowing his or her merits. Why do we have the sensation of warmth with people who are not well known to us? Descartes thinks that our passions become associated with ideas of external objects. A resemblance between two objects one of which has previously caused a certain passion may cause an association between the passion and our idea of other objects. Descartes has a personal example of this, his inclination to fall in love with people who are cross-eyed. He thinks that the association occurred because in his childhood he was in love with a girl who was cross-eyed:

for instance, when I was a child I loved a little girl of my own age who had a slight squint. The impression made by sight in my brain when I looked at her cross-eyes became so closely connected to the simultaneous impression which aroused in me the passion of love that for a long time afterwards when I saw persons with a squint I felt a special inclination to love them simply because they had that defect (CSMK III 322; AT V 57).

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610 AT IV 604: “notre âme est de telle nature qu’elle a pu être unie à un corps, elle a aussi cette propriété que chacune de ses pensées se peut tellement associer avec quelques mouvements ou autres dispositions de ce corps, que, lorsque les mêmes dispositions se trouvent une autre fois en lui, elles induisent l’âme à la même pensée; et réciproquement, lorsque la même pensée revient, elle prépare le corps à recevoir la même disposition.”

611 AT IV 606: “d’autant que l’amour n’était causée, avant la naissance, que par un aliment convenable qui, entrant abondamment dans le foie, dans le cœur et dans le poumon, y excitait plus de chaleur que de coutume, de là vient que maintenant cette chaleur accompagne toujours l’amour, encore qu’elle vienne d’autres causes fort différentes.”

612 AT V 57: “Par exemple, lorsque j’étais enfant, j’aimais une fille de mon âge, qui était un peu louche; au moyen de quoi, l’impression qui se faisait par la vue en mon cerveau, quand je
He kept falling in love with people who were cross-eyed because of the association between the passion of love and the thought of being cross-eyed. The cross-eyed girl he was once in love with affected Descartes’s body, especially his brain. Descartes thinks that changes in the brain happen as follows:

The objects which strike our senses move parts of our brain by means of the nerves, and there make as it were folds, which undo themselves when the object ceases to operate; but afterwards the place where they were made has a tendency to be folded again in the same manner by another object resembling even incompletely the original object (CSMK III 322; AT V 57).613

The new trace remains in Descartes’s brain and has a tendency to become activated by other objects that resemble the one that caused the trace – cross-eyed people. Because of this bodily trace, Descartes kept having a crush on people who were cross-eyed.614

In the Passions there are other examples of the association between passions and ideas of external objects. In these cases we also see the role of the brain and the changes external objects can cause in it. We can have strange feelings because our body has been affected strongly early on in our life, or because the body of our mother has been affected while we were in the womb.615 Our body is a part of our mother’s body and adopts its affections.

regardais ses yeux égarés, se joignait tellement à celle qui s’y faisait aussi pour émouvoir en moi la passion de l’amour, que longtemps après, en voyant des personnes louches, je me sentais plus enclin à les aimer qu’à en aimer d’autres, pour cela seul qu’elles avaient ce défaut.”

613 AT IV 57: “Car les objets qui touchent nos sens meuvent par l’entremise des nerfs quelques parties de notre cerveau, et y font comme certains plis, qui se défont lorsque l’objet cesse d’agir; mais la partie où ils ont été faits demeure par après disposée à être pliée derechef en la même façon par un autre objet qui ressemble en quelque chose au précédent, encore qu’il ne lui ressemble pas en tout.”

614 Cf. Susan James who stresses the role of the brain as regards traumas or odd feelings we might have. As she states, Descartes does not explain these things by referring to unconsciousnes but to a cerebral fold which a thing has imprinted our brain and can become activated later, for example through another thing that somehow resembles the previous. If, for example, a cat has terrified us it is it is because of this trace in our brain that we are later scared of cats. She states that “all that remains is a cerebral fold, like that in a piece of paper, which ensures that any motions of the nerves caused by cats give rise to the movement of the pineal gland that produces terror in the soul” (James 1997, 99). A corporeal memory plays an important role for Descartes in his account of passions. James brings this out as follows: “[m]uch of the weight of memory and experience in explaining our passions is here translated entirely into physical shapes and motions capable of carrying information about the past passions by which our personalities have been shaped. When Descartes infers from someone’s behaviour that they must once have been frightened by a cat, he is not attempting to recover lost memories or speculating about the contents of the unconscious. Rather, he is postulating the existence of an event whose only remaining trace is in the body” (James, 1997, 99).

615 Cf. Descartes when he writes that “ou bien qu’ils ont compati au sentiment de leur mère qui en a été offensée étant grosse. Car il est certain qu’il y a du rapport entre tous les
The examples Descartes gives are aversion to roses and to cats both of which he thinks we can have if our mother was upset by them while pregnant. Furthermore, it can happen that when we were small children, the smell of roses or a cat can have affected us so that there are traces of them in our brain without our remembering them.\footnote{Cf. Alanen who points out about the function of the insitution of nature that it “explains why certain kinds of movements in the body are joined to certain kinds of thoughts” (Alanen 2003, 199).}

the smell of roses may have caused severe headache in a child when he was still in the cradle, or a cat may have terrified him without anyone noticing and without any memory of it remaining afterwards; and yet the idea of the aversion he then felt for the roses and for the cat will remain imprinted on his brain till the end of his life (CSM I 376; AT XI 429).\footnote{He explains further that “Et l’odeur des roses peut avoir causé un grand mal de tête à un enfant lorsqu’il était encore au berceau ou bien un chat le peut avoir fort épouvanté, sans que personne y ait pris garde [...] l’idée de l’aversion qu’il avait alors pour ces roses ou pour ce chat demeure imprimée en son cerveau jusqu’à la fin de sa vie” (AT XI 429).}

Ideas may also become associated due to simultaneity. The clearest example of this concerns language, where the associations are created by habituation. The idea of habit occurs in the Passions when Descartes explains how the soul cannot move the body if nature or habit has not made the required connection.\footnote{He writes that “[t]outefois ce n’est pas toujours la volonté d’exiter en nous quelque mouvement ou quelque autre effet qui peut faire que nous l’excitons; mais cela change selon que la nature ou l’habitude ont diversement joint chaque mouvement de la glande à chaque pensée” (AT XI 361). As an example what he regards as a connection made by nature he gives the dilation of pupils. He states that “si on pense seulement à élargir la prunelle, on a beau en avoir la volonté, on ne l’élargit point pour cela, d’autant que la nature n’a pas joint le mouvement de la glande qui sert à pousser les esprits vers le nerf optique en la façon qui est requise pour élargir ou étrécir la prunelle avec la volonté de l’élargir ou étrécir, mais bien avec celle de regarder des objets éloignés ou proches” (AT XI 361).}

We have language because the meanings of words are associated with the movements of our tongue and lips:

when we speak, we think only of the meaning of what we want to say, and this makes us move our tongue and lips much more readily and effectively than if we thought of moving them in all the ways required for uttering the same words. For habits [l’habitude] acquired in learning to speak have made us join the action of the soul (which, by means of the gland, can move the tongue and lips) with the meaning of the words which follow upon these movements, rather than with the movements themselves (CSM I 344f; AT XI 362f).\footnote{AT XI 362: “lorsqu’en parlant nous ne penson qu’au sens de ce que nous voulons dire, cela fait que nous remuons la langue et les lèvres beaucoup plus promptement et beaucoup mieux que si nous pensions à les remuer en toutes les façons qui sont requises pour proférer les mêmes paroles. D’autant que l’habitude que nous avons acquise en apprenant à parler a fait que nous avons joint l’action de l’âme, qui, par l’entremise de la glande, peut mouvoir la mouvements de la mère et ceux de l’enfant qui est en son ventre, en sorte que ce qui est contraire à l’un nuit à l’autre” (CSM I 376; AT XI 429).}
We are habituated so that the action of the soul that causes the movement of tongue and lips by means of the gland, is joined with the meanings words have. If two things have occurred sufficiently often together, the idea of one thing automatically calls into the mind the idea of the other thing. The association of ideas based on simultaneity comes out tellingly also in de la Forge’s reading of Descartes in the Remarques. Because this work is a commentary on the Treatise on Man, ideas need to be understood in a corporeal sense. De la Forge’s example reminds us of behaviorism. The example is a dog who by showing him a slice of bread is taught to jump when it hears “jump for the King of France”. Through repetitions that have occurred sufficiently often, the idea of bread becomes connected with saying “jump for the King of France”. These two things become associated so that the dog jumps when he hears “jump for the king of France” because he has the idea of the bread:

Si donc par exemple ie veux stiler vn chien à sauter pour le Roy de France, ie lui monstreray d’abord vn morceau de pain, en lui disant saute pour le Roy de France, ce qui fera que l’idée de ce son portera les Esprits vers le meme endroit où l’idée du saut du chien & le pain que ie lui monstre les conduisent [--] apres auoir plusieurs fois repeté cette action, ce chemin deuiendra tellement battu, que apres la seule facilite fera que l’idée du son toute seule, sans celle du pain, lui fera faire le saut (de la Forge 1664, 386).

Our thoughts are connected with bodily modifications, but Descartes thinks that we can break these old connections. This is one of the main points in his account of the mastery of the passions:

[e]ach volition is naturally joined to some movement of the gland, but through effort [industrie] or habit [l’habitude] we may join it to others (CSM I 344; AT IX 361).620

Some of the examples Descartes gives suggest that these changes can happen fairly easily. For example, we might come to dislike a dish if there is something very dirty in it:

when we unexpectedly come upon something very foul in a dish we are eating with relish, our surprise may so change the disposition of our brain that we cannot afterwards look upon any such food without repulsion, whereas previously we ate it with pleasure (CSM I 348; AT IX 369).621

__langue et les lèvres, avec la signification des paroles qui suivent de ces mouvements plutôt qu’avec les mouvements mêmes."

620 AT XI 360: “Que chaque volonté est naturellement jointe à quelque mouvement de la glande; mais que, par industrie ou par habitude, on la peut joindre à d’autres.”

621 AT XI 369: “Ainsi, lorsqu’on rencontre inopinément quelque chose de fort sale en une viande qu’on mange avec appétit, la surprise de cette rencontre peut tellement changer la disposition du cerveau qu’on ne pourra plus voir par après de telle viande qu’avec horreur, au lieu qu’on la mangeait auparavant avec plaisir.”
When he writes about training dogs, he says: “Setters are commonly trained so that the sight of a partridge makes them stop, and the noise they hear afterwards, when someone fires at the bird, makes them run towards it” (CSM I 348; AT XI 370). Because no big effort is needed to train dogs, it can happen even more easily in humans:

For since we are able, with little effort, to change the movements of the brain in animals devoid of reason, it is evident that we can do so still more effectively in the case of men (CSM I 348; AT XI 370).

The story of his love for cross-eyed people illustrates this. His loves ended quickly when he understood that they were caused by people’s resemblance to the girl he had loved as a child:

At that time I did not know that was the reason for my love; and indeed as soon as I reflected on it and recognized that it was a defect, I was no longer affected by it (CSMK III 322; AT V 57).

Recognizing that the cause of his love was not at the same time a reason for it, helped him to overcome an irrational love. In this case, understanding the cause of the passion seems to have changed the passion quite easily. But Descartes does not think that understanding always has as direct an influence on the passions as it does in this case.

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622 AT XI 370: “on dresse ordinairement les chiens couchants en telle sorte que la vue d’une perdrix fait qu’ils s’arrêtent, et que le bruit qu’ils oient après, lorsqu’on tire sur elle, fait qu’ils y accourent.”

623 AT XI 370: “puisqu’on peut, avec un peu d’industrie, changer les mouvements du cerveau dans les animaux dépourvus de raison, il est évident qu’on le peut encore mieux dans les homes.”

624 AT V 57: “depuis que j’y ai fait réflexion, et que j’ai reconnu que c’était un défaut, je n’en ai plus été ému.” Descartes does not think that we have to change these connections necessarily. Here again we see how important Descartes thinks it is to be joined with others. Even in the case there is a kind of secret thing which draws people together he thinks it is good to follow, provided that we see also some merits in the object. If these inclinations are based on the mind he thinks even that they should be followed. He continues in writing that “Et bien que ce soit plus ordinairement une perfection qu’un défaut, qui nous attire ainsi à l’amour; toutefois, à cause que ce peut être quelquefois un défaut, comme en l’exemple que j’ai apporté, un homme sage ne se doit pas laisser entièrement aller à cette passion, avant que d’avoir considéré le mérite de la personne pour laquelle nous nous sentons émus. Mais, à cause que nous ne pouvons pas aimer également tous ceux en qui nous remarquons des mérites égaux, je crois que nous sommes seulement obligés de les estimer également; et que, le principal bien de la vie étant d’avoir de l’amitié pour quelques-uns, nous avons raison de préférer ceux à qui nos inclinations secrètes nous joignent, pourvu que nous remarquions aussi en eux du mérite. Outre que, lorsque ces inclinations secrètes ont leur cause en l’esprit, et non dans le corps, je crois qu’elles doivent toujours être suivies; et la marque principale qui les fait connaître, est que celles qui viennent de l’esprit sont réciproques, ce qui n’arrive pas souvent aux autres” (AT V 57f).
2 What is it to master passions according to Descartes?

2.1 The turmoil in the body

Descartes’s theory of the mastery of the passions is, in some respects, a very elaborate and refined theory that recognizes the challenges emotions expose us to and the efforts needed overcome these challenges. One such challenge that Descartes’s theory of the emotions makes us confront and therefore requires us to solve is the fact that emotions often involve strong bodily states over which the mind does not know how to exercise its power. The influence of the body on our ability to control the passions comes out repeatedly in Elisabeth’s writing. The following citation is one of the most pertinent and moving way in which Elisabeth describes the influence the passions have on her. She says that she has not ever known how to put into practice the remedy of separating what upsets her from the affair itself. For as she says

[t]here is something surprising in misfortunes, even those that have been foreseen, of which I am mistress only after a certain time, my body becomes so strongly disordered that several months are necessary for me to restore it, and those months hardly pass without some new subject of trouble (Shapiro’s translation 2007, 93, AT V 234).625

Much of Elisabeth’s trouble is that passions have made her body so fragile that she cannot be in charge of herself. Descartes is very sensitive to the effects of such bodily disturbances. He writes about them tellingly at the end of the Passions, where he notes how the different bodily motions that the objects of our passions produce automatically arise different passions through the imagination without any action by the soul:

the objects of the passions produce movements in the blood which follow so rapidly from the mere impressions formed in the brain and the disposition of the organs, without any help at all from the soul, that no amount of human wisdom is capable of counteracting these movements when we are not adequately prepared to do so. Thus many people cannot keep from laughing when they are tickled, even though they get no pleasure from it. For the impression of joy and surprise, which previously made them laugh for the same reason, is awakened in their imagination and causes their lungs to be swollen suddenly and involuntarily by blood sent to them from the heart. So too, those who are strongly inclined by nature to emotions of joy, pity, fear and anger, cannot prevent themselves from fainting, weeping, or trembling, or

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625 AT V 234 : “Il y a quelque chose de surprenant dans les malheurs, quoique prévus, dont je ne suis maîtresse qu’après un certain temps, auquel mon corps se désordonne si fort, qu’il me faut plusieurs mois pour le remettre, qui ne se passent guère sans quelque nouveau sujet de trouble.”
from having their blood all in turmoil just as if they had a fever, when their imagination is strongly affected by the object of one of these passions (CSM I 403; AT XI 486f).626

Because the causation of these emotions does not require any activity of the soul, human wisdom cannot control it unless we are adequately prepared to counteract the effects of these disturbances. The turmoil of the body poses a problem to the mind because it causes the passions that incline the will to give its consent to what the body is prepared for. Often we find ourselves in the middle of a battle because we might well have different thoughts about what or how we should feel. Descartes explains what he means by mental conflict in article of 47 of the Passions. There he rejects Plato’s idea that mental conflict is a conflict between different, opposing parts of the soul. The conflict we experience occurs in Descartes’s account between the passions caused by the body and other thoughts caused by the soul itself. It manifests itself through the fact that the animal spirits so easily take the course they are used to take, even if we sometimes are able to change them through our efforts:

the will, lacking the power to produce the passions directly (as I have already said), is compelled to make an effort to consider a series of different things, and if one of them happens to have the power to change for a moment the course of the spirits, the next one may happen to lack this power, whereupon the spirits will immediately revert to the same course because no change has occurred in the state of the nerves, heart and blood. This makes the soul feel itself impelled, almost at one and the same time, to desire and not to desire one and the same thing (CSM I 346; AT XI 366).627

According to Descartes, the struggle we have with the passions is the following: The powerful agitation in our body causes a passion in the mind that inclines the will to accept what the body is prepared for. However, the mind

626 AT XI 486: “ces mouvements excités dans le sang par les objets des passions suivent d’abord si promptement des seules impressions qui se font dans le cerveau et de la disposition des organes, encore que l’âme n’y contribue en aucune façon, qu’il n’y a point de sagesse humaine qui soit capable de leur résister lorsqu’on n’y est pas assez préparé. Ainsi plusieurs ne sauraient s’abstenir de rire étant chatouillés, encore qu’ils n’y prennent point de plaisir. Car l’impression de la joie et de la surprise, qui les a fait rire autrefois pour le même sujet, étant réveillée en leur fantaisie, fait que leur poumon est subitement enflé malgré eux par le sang que le cœur lui envoie. Ainsi ceux qui sont fort portés de leur naturel aux émotions de la joie ou de la pitié, ou de la peur, ou de la colère, ne peuvent s’empêcher de pâmir, ou de pleurer, ou de trembler, ou d’avoir le sang tout ému en même façon que s’ils avaient la fièvre, lorsque leur fantaisie est fortement touchée par l’objet de quelqu’une de ces passions.”

627 AT XI 366: “s’il arrive que l’une ait la force de changer pour un moment le cours des esprits, il peut arriver que cette qui suit ne l’a pas et qu’ils le reprennent aussitôt après, à cause que la disposition qui a précédé dans les nerfs, dans le cœur et dans le sang n’est pas changée, ce qui fait que l’âme se sent poussée presque en même temps à désirer et ne désirer pas une même chose; et c’est de là qu’on a pris occasion d’imaginer en elle deux puissances qui se combattent.”
often has other ideas, contrary to those that passions present to us. What are we to do? The first thing to do is somehow to calm down the bodily indisposition. Consider what he says at the end of the Passions:

[w]hen we feel our blood agitated in this way, we should take heed, and recollect that everything presented to the imagination tends to mislead the soul and make the reasons for pursuing the object of its passion appear much stronger than they are, and the reasons for not pursuing this object much weaker. When the passion urges us to pursue ends whose attainment involves some delay, we must refrain from making any immediate judgment about them, and distract ourselves by other thoughts until time and repose have completely calmed the disturbance in our blood (CSM I 403; AT XI 487).628

The goal is to ensure that we are in charge. We may or may not want to act in the way the passion inclines us to, but in either case we would like to be sure. Therefore, we should do nothing concerning the passion in question and just wait until the movement of the blood that causes it disappears or becomes weaker. Elisabeth said that she did not know how to separate what upsets her from the incident itself “until the passion has already played its role” (AT IV 234). Descartes has some ideas how to calm the body. One can think of neutral things, such as the many nice things nature presents us with:

she should be like people who convince themselves they are thinking of nothing because they are observing the greenness of a wood, the colors of a flower, the flight of a bird, or something else requiring no attention. This is not a waste of time but a good use of it; for one can, in the process, content oneself with the hope that in this way one will recover perfect health, which is the foundation of all the other goods of this life (CSMK III 250; AT IV 220).629

One can do something one really likes, such as Elisabeth enjoying her studies. It is important as well to keep the body itself in good shape. This is why Descartes recommended to Elisabeth the waters of Spa (CSMK III 250; AT IV 220). Even a good night’s sleep may do the trick.

This is an important part of Descartes’s theory of the mastery of the passions. We do not want to be passive, to be under the command of the pas-

628 AT XI 487: “lorsqu’on se sent le sang ainsi ému, on doit être averti et se souvenir que tout ce qui se présente à l’imagination tend à tromper l’âme et à lui faire paraître les raisons qui servent à persuader l’objet de sa passion beaucoup plus fortes qu’elles ne sont, et celles qui servent à la dissuader, beaucoup plus faibles. Et lorsque la passion ne persuade que des choses dont l’exécution souffre quelque délai, il faut s’abstenir d’en porter sur l’heure aucun jugement, et se divertir par d’autres pensées jusqu’à ce que le temps et le repos aient entièrement apaisé l’émotion qui est dans le sang.”
629 AT IV 220: “ne s’occuper qu’à imiter ceux qui, en regardant la verdure d’un bois, les couleurs d’une fleur, le vol d’un oiseau, et telles choses qui ne requièrent aucune attention, se persuadent qu’ils ne pensent à rien. Ce qui n’est pas perdre le temps, mais le bien employer; car on peut, cependant, se satisfaire par l’espérance que, par ce moyen, on recouvrera une parfaite santé, laquelle est le fondement de tous les autres biens qu’on peut avoir en cette vie.”
sessions. No matter what it is that the passion makes us think of, we would prefer that we ourselves somehow determine what we do. It is, hence, important to calm the body. As long as the body is agitated, we are too much governed by the passions it generates. But though an important part of Descartes’s story of the mastery of the passions, this is not the whole of it.

2.2 Exercising the free will

What Descartes’s account of the mastery of the passions amounts to is that we can think of what the passion presents us in ways other than what we think of it through the passion. According to Descartes “the will is by its nature so free that it can never be constrained” (CSM I 343; AT XI 359). The will needs, however, to take into account the natural connection between our thoughts and our bodily dispositions: “[o]ur passions, too, cannot be directly aroused or suppressed by the action of our will” (CSM I 345; AT XI 362). We can do this, however,

indirectly through the representation of things which are usually joined with the passions we wish to have and opposed to the passions we wish to reject (CSM I 345; AT XI 362f).

We can control the passion by considering these different representations of the object connected to the passion. For instance, if we wish to become courageous and to win a battle, we can think that “we shall gain glory and joy if we conquer, whereas we can expect nothing but regret and shame if we flee” (CSM I 345; AT XI 363). When the turmoil in the blood is calmed down, we can turn to different thoughts of what bothered us and restore peace of mind. Descartes asks Elisabeth to think of two people, one who has every reason to be happy but who has sad thoughts and the other who has trouble in life but makes the effort to think of joyful things. Descartes thinks that the first person drives himself to unhappiness because he entertains all these sad thoughts which are followed by bodily movements that can be very unhealthy:

Consider on the one hand a person who had every reason to be happy but who saw continually enacted before him tragedies full of disastrous events, and who spent all his time in the consideration of sad and pitiful objects. Let

\[\text{[630 AT XI 359: “Mais la volonté est tellement libre de sa nature, qu’elle ne peut jamais être contrainte.”]}
\[\text{[631 AT XI 362: “Nos passions ne peuvent pas aussi directement être excitées ni ôtées par l’action de notre volonté.”]}
\[\text{[632 AT XI 362: “mais elles peuvent l’être indirectement par la représentation des choses qui ont coutume d’être jointes avec les passions que nous voulons avoir, et qui sont contraires.”]}
\[\text{[633 AT XI 363: “qu’on aura de la gloire et de la joie d’avoir vaincu, au lieu qu’on ne peut attendre que du regret et de la honte d’avoir fui.”]}

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us suppose that he knew they were imaginary fables, so that though they
drew tears from his eyes and moved his imagination, they did not touch his
intellect at all. I think that this by itself would be enough gradually to con-
strict his heart and make his sigh in such a way that the circulation of his
blood would be delayed and slowed down. The grosser parts of his blood,
sticking together, could easily block the spleen, by getting caught and stop-
ning in its pores; while the more rarefied parts, being continually agitated,
could affect his lungs and cause a cough which in time could be very danger-
ous (CSMK III 250; AT IV 219).

The intimate connection between sad thoughts and bodily movements can
cause the otherwise happy person to become sick when he has these severe
thoughts. The person who thinks of good things can experience the opposite
effect and with positive thoughts he can change his bodily condition towards
the better because happy thoughts are followed by bodily movements that
enhance health:

[O]n the other hand, there might be a person who had countless genuine rea-
sons for distress but who took such pains to direct his imagination that he
never thought of them except when compelled by some practical necessity,
and who spent the rest of his time in the consideration of objects which could
furnish contentment and joy. This would greatly help him by enabling him to
make more sober judgments about the things which mattered, because he
would look on them without passion. Moreover I do not doubt that this by it-
self would be capable of restoring him to health, even if his spleen and lungs
were already in a poor condition because of the bad condition of the blood
caused by sadness (CSMK III 250; AT IV 219f).

Strong souls are those who can cause these other thoughts. Weak souls are
carried away by their passions. According to Descartes, they

634 AT IV 219: “qu’une personne, qui aurait d’ailleurs toute sorte de sujet d’être contente,
mais qui verrait continuellement représenter devant soi des tragédies dont tous les actes
 fussent funestes, et qui ne s’occuperait qu’à considérer des objets de tristesse et de pitié,
qu’elle sût être feints et fabuleux, en sorte qu’ils ne fissent que tirer des larmes de ses yeux, et
émouvoir son imagination, sans toucher son entendement, je crois, dis-je, que cela seul
suffirait pour accoutumer son cœur à se resserrer et à jeter des soupirs; ensuite de quoi la
circulation du sang tant retardée et ralentie, les plus grossières parties de ce sang, s’attachant
les unes aux autres, pourraient facilement lui opiler la rate, en s’embarrassant et s’arrêtant
dans ses pores; et les plus subtiles, retenant leur agitation, lui pourraient alterer le poumon,
causer une toux, qui à la longue serait fort à craindre.”

635 AT XI 219f: “au contraire, une personne qui aurait une infinité de véritables sujets de
déplaisir, mais qui s’étudierait avec tant de soin à en détourner son imagination, qu’elle ne
pensât jamais à eux, que lorsque la nécessité des affaires l’y obligerait, et qu’elle employât
tout le reste de son temps à ne considérer que des objets qui lui pussent apporter du
contentement et de la joie, outre que cela lui serait grandement utile, pour juger plus
sainement des choses qui lui importeraient, parce qu’elle les regarderait sans passion, je ne
doute point que cela seul ne fût capable de la remettre en santé, bien que sa rate et ses
poumons fussent déjà fort mal disposés par le mauvais tempérament du sang que cause la
tristesse.”
can never test the strength of their will because they never equip it to fight with its proper weapons, giving it instead only the weapons, which some passions provide for resisting other passions (CSM I 347; AT XI 367).\(^{636}\)

Descartes mentions here the proper weapons by which we fight against bad passions: “firm and determinate judgments bearing upon the knowledge of good and evil” (CMS I 347; AT IX 367).\(^{637}\) They are thoughts about good and evil we have acquired in the course of our life. These thoughts might once have been passions, but they are not so any longer:

[often these judgments are false and based on passions by which the will has previously allowed itself to be conquered or led astray; but because the will continues follow them when the passion which caused them is absent, they may be considered its proper weapons (CSM I 347; AT XI 368).\(^{638}\)]

Descartes thinks, however, that there is a clear difference between thoughts being based on truth rather than on opinion. In the former, there is no reason for regret, ever.\(^{639}\) Both the ability to raise thoughts that are opposite to our passions and firm and determinate judgments require extensive experience and constant effort. The prize is that we master the passion:

I have included among these remedies the forethought and diligence through which we can correct our natural faults by striving to separate within ourselves the movements of the blood and spirits from the thoughts to which they are usually joined (CSM I 403; AT XI 486).\(^{640}\)

A permanent change to our ability requires that we are able to modify our imagination, because it is often responsible for the rapidity with which we experience the passions and act on them. We need not only to imprint the guidelines of life in the imagination; we also need to transform our imagina-

\(^{636}\) AT XI 367: “Mais il y en a qui ne peuvent éprouver leur force, parce qu’ils ne font jamais combattre leur volonté avec ses propres armes, mais seulement avec celles que lui fournissent quelques passions pour résister à quelques autres.”

\(^{637}\) AT XI 367: “Ce que je nomme ses propres armes sont des jugements fermes et déterminés touchant la connaissance du bien et du mal.”

\(^{638}\) AT XI 368: “Et, bien que souvent ces jugements soient faux, et même fondés sur quelques passions par lesquelles la volonté s’est auparavant laissé vaincre ou séduire, toutefois, à cause qu’elle continue de les suivre lorsque la passion qui les a causés est absente, on les peut considérer comme ses propres armes.”

\(^{639}\) AT XI 368: “Mais il y a pourtant grande différence entre les résolutions qui procèdent de quelque fausse opinion et celles qui ne sont appuyées que sur la connaissance de la vérité; d’autant que si on suit ces dernières, on est assuré de n’en avoir jamais de regret ni de repentir; au lieu qu’en en a toujours d’avoir suivi les premières lorsqu’on en découvre l’erreur.”

\(^{640}\) AT XI 486: “j’ai mis entre ces remèdes la préméditation et l’industrie par laquelle on peut corriger les défauts de son naturel, en s’exerçant à séparer en soi les mouvements du sang et des esprits d’avec les pensées auxquelles ils ont coutume d’être joints.”
tion so that it is more disposed to reflection each time we are acted on by the passions.

What we must really strive for, Descartes thinks, is to transform our nature so that we naturally think of things from various points of view. We need to have that habit. Once we do, we can become masters of our passions and ourselves. In this way, we can prevent the animal spirits from affecting us as they did previously. We are prepared even for a sudden attack:

[for example, when we are unexpectedly attacked by an enemy, the situation allows no time for deliberation; and yet, I think, those who are accustomed [accoutumés] to reflecting upon their actions can always do something in this situation (CSM I 403f; AT XI 487, italic mine).]^{641}

The most important thing we have, according to Descartes – our most precious defense against being mastered by passions, and a way towards happiness and peace of the mind – is this mental training, the ability to consider a thing represented by a passion through several different perspectives. The mastery of passions can assist us by developing a nature that is habituated to think in various ways of what our passions represent. However, Descartes presents this as a task for the individual to complete by himself but there are good reasons to doubt whether this is possible.

3 About Descartes’s account on virtue

3.1 The free will – our noblest possession

For Descartes the ability to have thoughts not determined by the passions and to resolve to act according to what we think best, is what constitutes virtue. In a letter to Queen Christina on 20 November 1647, Descartes explains that a virtuous person is the one who uses her mind to find the best ways to conduct her life and is constant in acting in accordance with her judgment about what is best:

I do not see that it is possible to dispose it better than by a firm and constant resolution to carry out to the letter all the things which one judges to be best, and to employ all the powers of one’s mind in finding out what these are. This by itself constitutes all the virtues; this alone really deserves praise and glory; this alone, finally, produces the greatest and most solid contentment in

^{641} AT XI 487: “Comme lorsqu’on est inopinément attaqué par quelque ennemi, l’occasion ne permet pas qu’on emploie aucun temps à délibérer. Mais ce qu’il me semble que ceux qui sont accoutumés à faire réflexion sur leurs actions peuvent toujours.”
life. So I conclude that it is this which constitutes the supreme good. (CSMK III 325; AT V 83).  

In the *Passions*, Descartes grants a special importance to the highest virtue: generosity, which causes the right kind of self-esteem. He defines it as the knowledge of our power to dispose our volitions as we will, and a resolution to act according to our judgment of what is best:

> [T]rue generosity, which causes a person’s self-esteem to be as great as it may legitimately be, has two components. The first consists in his knowing that nothing truly belongs to him but this freedom to dispose his volitions, and that he ought to be praised or blamed for no other reason than his using this freedom well or badly. The second consists in his feeling within himself a firm and constant resolution to use it well – that is never lack the will to undertake and carry out whatever he judges to be best. (CSM I 384, AT XI 445f).

I have argued that the will is free in the sense that it can generate thoughts not determined by the passions. This is also apparent in Descartes’s discussion of generosity. We do not acquire the free dispositions of our will directly, and Descartes acknowledges the influence of good birth and upbringing:

> There is [--] no virtue so dependent on good birth as the virtue which causes us to esteem ourselves in accordance with our true value, and it is easy to believe that the souls which God puts into our bodies are not all equally noble and strong [--] It is certain, however, that a good upbringing is a great help in correcting defects of birth (CSM I 388; AT XI 453).

When Descartes writes about generosity, he states explicitly that it can be fostered through mental exercise. We can think of all the good consequences

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642 AT V 83: “Et je ne vois point qu’il soit possible d’en disposer mieux, que si l’on a toujours une ferme et constante résolution de faire exactement toutes les choses que l’on jugera être les meilleures, et d’employer toutes les forces de son esprit à les bien connaître. C’est en cela seul que consistent toutes les vertus; c’est cela seul qui, à proprement parler, mérite de la louange et de la gloire; enfin c’est de cela seul que résulte toujours le plus grand et le plus solide contentement de la vie. Ainsi j’estime que c’est en cela que consiste le souverain bien.”

643 AT XI 445f: “Ainsi je crois que la vraie générosité, qui fait qu’un homme s’estime au plus haut point qu’il se peut légitiment estimer, consiste seulement partie en ce qu’il connaît qu’il n’y a rien qui véritablement lui appartienne que cette libre disposition de ses volontés, ni pourquoi il doive être loué ou blâmé sinon pour ce qu’il en use bien ou mal, et partie en ce qu’il sent en soi-même une ferme et constante résolution d’en bien user, c’est-à-dire de ne manquer jamais de volonté pour entreprendre et exécuter toutes les choses qu’il jugera être les meilleures.”

644 AT XI 453: “Ainsi, encore qu’il n’y ait point de vertu à laquelle il semble que la bonne naissance contribue tant qu’à celle qui fait qu’on ne s’estime que selon sa juste valeur, et qu’il soit aise à croire que toutes les âmes que Dieu met en nos corps ne sont pas également nobles et fortes [--] il est certain néanmoins que la bonne institution sert beaucoup pour corriger les défauts de la naissance.”
that occur when we follow the maxims we have decided on, and of the evils that occur when we follow our passions:

if we occupy ourselves frequently in considering the nature of free will and the many advantages which proceed from a firm resolution to make good use of it – while also considering, on the other hand, the many vain and useless cares which trouble ambitious people – we may arouse the passion of generosity in ourselves and then acquire the virtue (CSM I 388; AT XI 454).  

Free will shows itself through our ability to consider things from different points of view, not just from the point of view of what the passions present to us. Lisa Shapiro points out that the recognition of one’s free will comes principally with a critical reflection on what we find ourselves taking for granted. For it is precisely with this reflection, which essentially involves turning our thoughts away from those to which we are predisposed, that we exercise our freedom.  

The free disposition of the will is the most important thing we can have, according to Descartes. In several places, he compares us to God in our ability to generate thoughts freely. This is what renders us happy and is Descartes’s answer to the question of how we can acquire peace of mind and inner satisfaction. He writes to Christina:

[n]ow free will is in itself the noblest thing we can have, since it makes us in a way equal to God and seems to exempt us from being his subjects; and so its correct use is the greatest of all the goods we possess; indeed there is nothing that is more our own or that matters more to us. From all this it follows that nothing but free will can produce our greatest happiness. Moreover, the peace of mind and inner satisfaction felt by those who know they always do their best to discover what is good and to acquire it is, we see, a pleasure incomparably sweeter, more lasting and more solid than all those which come from elsewhere (CSMK III 326; AT V 85).  

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645 AT XI 453f: “si on s’occupe souvent à considérer ce que c’est que le libre arbitre, et combien sont grands les avantages qui viennent de ce qu’on a une ferme résolution d’en bien user, comme aussi, d’autre côté, combien sont vains et inutiles tous les soins qui travaillent les ambitieux, on peut exciter en soi la passion et ensuite acquérir la vertu de générosité.”

646 Shapiro 1999, 258.

647 AT V 85: “que le libre arbitre est de soi la chose la plus noble qui puisse être en nous, d’autant qu’il nous rend en quelque façon pareils à Dieu et semble nous exempter de lui être sujets, et que, par conséquent, son bon usage est le plus grand de tous nos biens, il est aussi celui qui est le plus proprement nôtre et qui nous importe le plus, d’où il suit que ce n’est que de lui que nos plus grands contentements peuvent procéder. Aussi voit-on, par exemple, que le repos d’esprit et la satisfaction intérieure que sentent en eux-mêmes ceux qui savent qu’ils ne manquent jamais à faire leur mieux, tant pour connaître le bien que pour l’acquérir, est un plaisir sans comparaison plus doux, plus durable et plus solide que tous ceux qui viennent d’ailleurs.” Cf. also the Passions where he states that “[c]ar il n’y a que les seules actions qui dépendent de ce libre arbitre pour lesquelles nous puissions avec raison être loués ou blâmés,
According to Descartes, we can be praised or blamed only as regards the exercise of our will. He thinks that the exercise of the will does not depend on anything else. It exempts us, as he says, from being God’s subject.

3.2 Generosity as the right kind of self-esteem

Generosity causes the right sort of self-esteem: we esteem ourselves only because of our free disposition of the volitions and our resolution to carry out what we have judged to be best. External goods are secondary to this true esteem of ourselves. Descartes describes the relationship a generous person can have with external goods like wealth, intelligence or beauty, as follows:

all these things seem to them to be very unimportant, by contrast with the virtuous will for which alone they esteem themselves, and which they suppose also to be present, or at least capable of being present, in every other person (CSM I 384; AT XI 447).648

Vanity is also a kind of self-esteem, but it is not based on our freedom to control our volitions but on something else. It is, therefore, always a vice.649 Both vanity and generosity consist in our having a good opinion of ourselves. The difference is that “this opinion is unjustified in the one case and justified in the other” (CSM I 386; AT XI 451).

The passion of generosity is produced by the movements of three passions: wonder, joy and love (CSM I 387; AT XI 451).650 Descartes distinguishes two elements present in wonder: the sudden surprise of the soul and the movement of the spirits in the brain. The element of surprise in vanity is stronger than in generosity, while the flow of spirits in the brain is steadier in generosity than in vanity.651
Descartes relates vice to ignorance. Those who do not know what the noblest thing is are strongly surprised when they perceive something as good or bad in themselves. However, those who know that the disposition of their volitions is the most important thing are not that strongly moved by wonder. The bodily movements causing wonder are “firm, constant and always very similar to each other” (CSM I 387; AT XI 452). Furthermore, because we understand the freedom of our will by exercising it, we experience a wonder in each of those instances:

[i]t may be said, however, that these causes are so marvelous (namely, the power to make use of our free will, which causes us to value ourselves, and the infirmities of the subject who has this power, which cause us not to esteem ourselves too highly) that each time we consider them afresh they are a source of new wonder (CSM I 387; AT XI 452f).

True generosity, the right kind of self-esteem, is the final stage in Descartes’s account of the mastery of passions. When we learn to exercise our mind, to consider things from various points of view, and not just to go along with our passions, we acquire a self-esteem that empowers us to overcome other passions. Because we realize that the most valuable thing is this free disposition of our volitions, we are not possessed by external objects and can control our desires, jealousy and envy. Generosity is about the correct recognition of oneself and the mental power one has. As this is the most important thing, the generous person does not esteem what depends on others. Descartes writes that the generous have mastery over anger, because they have very little esteem for everything that depends on others, and so they never give their enemies any advantage by acknowledging that they are injured by them (CSM I 385; AT XI 448). 

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652 According to Descartes “[d]ont la raison est que le vice vient ordinairement de l’ignorance, et que ce sont ceux qui se connaissent le moins qui sont les plus sujets à s’enorgueillir et à s’humilier plus qu’ils ne doivent, à cause que tout ce qui leur arrive de nouveau les surprend et fait que, se l’attribuant à eux-mêmes, ils s’admiren et, qu’ils s’estiment ou se méprisent selon qu’ils jugent que ce qui leur arrêté est à leur avantage ou n’y est pas. Mais, parce que souvent après une chose qui les a enorgueillis en survient une autre qui les humili, le mouvement de leurs passions est variable” (AT XI 452).

653 AT XI 452: “il n’y a rien en la générosité qui ne soit compatible avec l’humilité vertueuse, ni rien ailleurs qui les puisse changer, ce qui fait que leurs mouvements sont fermes, constants et toujours fort semblables à eux-mêmes.”

654 AT XI 452f: “Toutefois on peut dire que ces causes sont si merveilleuses (à savoir, la puissance d’user de son libre arbitre, qui fait qu’on se prise soi-même, et les infirmités du sujet en qui est cette puissance, qui font qu’on ne s’estime pas trop) qu’à toutes les fois qu’on se les représente de nouveau elles donnent toujours une nouvelle admiration.”

655 AT XI 448: “enfin de la colère, à cause que n’estimant que fort peu toutes les choses qui dépendent d’autrui, jamais ils ne donnent tant d’avantage à leurs ennemis que de reconnaître qu’ils en sont offensés.”

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It is something that we can acquire by ourselves, and its existence and force are independent of other people.

3.3 The social aspect of Descartes’s account of the mastery of the passions

We have seen that fortune plays a role in Descartes’s idea of the mastery of passions: without experience we cannot actually acquire a mind that is strong and habituated to considering things from various points of view. However, experience might tell us something different. If someone is constantly exposed to misfortunes, bad people and negative experiences, she might not become stronger through these struggles; they might just wear her down. Although she might have the ability to use her mind, could she use it if there was nothing that strengthens it? This is shown in Elisabeth’s letters. She does not think that virtue is completely independent of fortune or external goods and cannot help doubting “that one can arrive at the beatitude [--) without the assistance of what does not depend absolutely upon the will”. Referring to the passions, she writes that there are

\[\text{diseases that destroy altogether the power of reasoning and by consequence that of enjoying a satisfaction of reason. There are others that diminish the force of reason and prevent one from following the maxims that good sense would have forged and that make the most moderate man subject to be carried away by his passions and less capable of disentangling himself from the accidents of the fortune requiring a prompt resolution (Shapiro’s translation 2007, 100).}^{656}\]

No matter how much she tries to think that her happiness depends only on the freedom of her will, she cannot think of what happens to her under any other notion than that of evil. Descartes thinks that all the evil that happens to Elisabeth provides her with occasions to exercise her mind. No doubt it is true that experience improves us. Descartes, however, seems to think that the individual is always able, through the control over his will, to overcome whatever fortune brings him. But it is difficult to believe that the individual always has this power. We act and are acted upon by others. This determines the force of our passions and our ability to use our reason. A great deal of the mastery of the passions happens due to other passions. We share the passions of others, and our passions and reactions influence them. We are embedded

\[\text{656 AT IV 269 : “je ne saurais encore me désembarrasser du doute, si on peut arriver à la bêtitude dont vous parlez, sans l’assistance de ce qui ne dépend pas absolument de la volonté, puisqu’il y a des maladies qui ôtent tout-à-fait le pouvoir de raisonner, et par conséquent celui de jouir d’une satisfaction raisonnable, d’autres qui diminuent la force, et empêchent de suivre les maximes que le bon sens aura forgées, et qui rendent l’homme le plus modéré, sujet à se laisser emporter de ses passions, et moins capable à se démêler des accidents de la fortune, qui requièrent une résolution prompte.”}\]
in a social context, including its emotional structure that modifies and largely determines our being. Elisabeth’s life, for example, was characterized by the start of the Thirty Years’ War, the short reign of her father, the escape to Holland, the various events that happened to her brothers and her move to a Lutheran convent in Herford at the end of her life. She got a good education because she knew a great deal of mathematics, several languages and also political theory. She was a friend of and correspondent with several intellectuals of the period. Shapiro shows that Elisabeth was corresponding with, and quite likely tutored by, Costantijn Huygens at the Hague, and also had a short exchange with Nicolas Malebranche.

The things that happened to Elisabeth and the people she was close to determined what we will call her affective life, her ability to master her passions and become happy. Descartes’s discussions of love and friendship wonderfully bring out how much he appreciated being joined to others: all the good and the joy we can get from them. Descartes thinks, however, that the will enjoys sovereignty in that it is independent from the rest of nature. Its exercise does not depend on external conditions. We also see this idea in his account of the internal emotions that he considers crucial as regards the mastery of passions. They are emotions caused by the soul itself, and very important for Descartes: “our well-being depends principally on internal emotions” (CSM I 381; AT XI 440). Examples could include the joy a husband might secretly feel when outwardly mourning his wife’s death or other passions we feel when reading a book or watching a play. We have some pleasure from the passions we are undergoing at present, and this pleasure helps us to tolerate the discomfort inherent in those passions.

On the one hand, it is certainly true that this ability to enjoy one’s emotions reduces the distress that a passion may cause. On the other hand, it makes Descartes’s account of the mastery of the passions even more individualistic by emphasizing the independent position of one’s soul. To a certain extent the exercise of our will and reason necessarily depend on external causes, and we cannot detach our being from them in the way Descartes assumes. It is true that each individual has some power of her own, but we cannot escape some measure of dependence on others. What is missing in

657 Cf. Shapiro’s biographic notes of Elisabeth’s life in Shapiro 2007, 7–16.
659 Descartes writes about the husband mourning his wife as follows: “lorsqu’un mari pleure sa femme morte, laquelle (ainsi qu’il arrive quelquefois) il serait fâché de voir ressuscitée, [---] nonobstant qu’il sente cependant une joie secrète dans le plus intérieur de son âme, l’émotion de laquelle a tant de pouvoir que la tristesse et les larmes qui l’accompagnent ne peuvent rien diminuer de sa force. Et lorsque nous lisons des aventures étranges dans un livre, ou que nous les voyons représenter sur un théâtre, cela excite quelquefois en nous la tristesse, quelquefois la joie, ou l’amour, ou la haine, et généralement toutes les passions, selon la diversité des objets qui s’offrent à notre imagination; mais avec cela nous avons du plaisir de les sentir exciter en nous, et ce plaisir est une joie intellectuelle qui peut aussi bien naître de la tristesse que de toutes les autres passions” (AT XI 441).
Descartes’s account of the mastery of the passions is some recognition of the extent to which our abilities to moderate our passions and use our reason depend on external conditions, interactions with others, and on the nature of the society we are living in. Spinoza is more sensitive than Descartes to these facts of our lives.
Chapter II: Reason and Imagination in Spinoza’s Account of the Mastery of Passions

Spinoza’s views on the mastery of the passions pose a difficult challenge: On the one hand, he clearly thinks that we can master our passions through understanding. In EVP4S he writes that “each of us has the power to understand himself and his affects, and consequently, the power to bring it about that he is less acted on by them”. 660 On the other hand, it is equally clear that reason does not have the power to control the affects. This comes out especially in the contrasting titles Spinoza chooses for Parts IV and V of the Ethics: “Of Human Bondage, or the Powers of the Affects,” “On the Power of the Intellect, or Human Freedom”. But it also appears in Spinoza’s quote from Ovid’s Medea: “I see and approve the better, but follow the worse,” a verse he cites in IVP17S, and also alludes to in the Preface to Part IV. If we have, in principle, the power to control our passions, we do not always exercise that power. Perhaps we don’t even exercise it often. But what does it take for us to do this? What conditions must be satisfied for us to move from bondage to freedom? Is there a way to explain how reason can have the power to succeed but usually fail, in mastering the passions? I think there is. Spinoza himself continues the proposition by pointing out this very challenge:

I do not say these things in order to infer that it is better to be ignorant than to know, or that there is no difference between the fool and the man who understands when it comes to moderating the affects. My reason, rather, is that it is necessary to come to know both our nature’s power and its lack of power, so that we can determine what reason can do in moderating the affects, and what it cannot do (EIVP17S;GII,221,19–25). 661

I shall argue that reason cannot do the mastery of passions alone in Spinoza but it needs external causes and the imagination. An aim of the aid of external causes is hilaritas: to acquire an affect of a bodily state in which all parts

660 GII/283: “unumquemque potestatem habere se, suosque affectus, si non absolute, ex parte saltem clare, et distincte intelligendi, et consequenter efficiendi, ut ab iisdem minus patiatur.”
661 GII/221: “Atque haec non eum in finem dico, ut inde concludam, praestabilius esse ignorare, quam scire, vel quod stulto intelligens in moderandis affectibus nihil interstit; sed ideo quia necesse est, nostrae naturae tam impotentiam, quam potentiam noscere, ut determinare possimus, quid ratio in moderandis affectibus possit, et quid non possit.”
of the body are equally affected. This bodily state is a necessary condition for adequate thinking because otherwise the mind is not able to think of many things at once. Furthermore, as a feeling of bodily equilibrium it gives us a sense of our own power, our essence. Those individuals who are able to acquire the feeling of hilaritas are stable and able to act according to their rational desires, and therefore, less prone to be shaken and driven by external causes.

At the end of this chapter, I shall discuss the remedies Spinoza thinks reason has against the passions. I shall argue that reason and its remedies have a true force in Spinoza because they already presuppose the work at the imaginative level. A person who has been able to organize her imagination and to understand her affects adequately is a master of her affects. This can be rare to achieve but it is the aim of Spinoza’s ethics. She is in the state of joy, as now a human being can rejoice. This individual understands her body, lives according to her essence and enjoys what the external causes have to provide.

Spinoza aims to build, as he says in TdIE, a stronger and more enduring human nature and to make it possible for human beings to exercise reason and live according to rational desires. Because external conditions and well-organized society are necessary for this aim, he attempts to write an ethics or political theory with a practical implication, not another utopia or a fiction.

1 What does reason demand from us?

1.1 Dictates of reason

Spinoza thinks that reason does not demand from us anything that is contrary to nature but demands only that we seek what is really useful for us. In the EIVP18S, he gives a summary statement of the dictates of reason, based on his understanding of virtue. Virtue is acting according to the laws of one’s nature alone:

By virtue and power I understand the same thing, that is (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 (EIVD8, my emphasis).

This is the first time we encounter Spinoza discussing the essence of a thing through the concept of laws. It is not, however, surprising given what we

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662 GII/210: “Per virtutem, et potentiam idem intelligo, hoc est (per Prop. 7. p. 3.) virtus, quatenus ad hominem refertur, est ipsa hominis essentia, seu natura, quatenus potestatem habet, quaedam efficiendi, quae per solas ipsius naturae leges possunt intelligi.”
have said about essences above. Formal essences are contained in God’s attributes, and because God’s attributes are understood to be expressed by laws, so are the formal essences. Here we see that Spinoza equates the very essence of man with power and explains it in terms of bringing about certain things “which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone”. Virtue

is nothing but acting from the laws of one’s own nature, and no one strives to preserve his being (by IIIIP7) except from the laws of his own nature (EIVP18S).663

This account of virtue is the first dictate of reason Spinoza gives:

the foundation of virtue is this very striving to preserve one’s own being; happiness consists in a man’s being able to preserve his being (EIVP18S).664

Being happy consists in having the ability to preserve one’s being. Virtue is striving to act according to the laws of one’s own nature and happiness is being able to do so.

According to the second dictate of reason, there is nothing more fundamental than virtue, which we should seek for its own sake:

we ought to want virtue for its own sake; there is not anything preferable to it, or more useful to us, for the sake of which we ought to want it (EIVP18S).665

It follows from Spinoza’s view of essence that to act virtuously is not to act for the sake of something else, such as a reward or personal immortality. One who strives to live according to her individual essence, according to the laws which define her nature, is virtuous. Spinoza stresses that he aims to prove the contrary to those who think that seeking self-interest is not virtuous.666 The idea of individual essences provides the basis also for the third dictate of reason, the condemnation of killing oneself: “those who kill themselves are weak-minded and completely conquered by external causes con-

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663 GII/222: “virtus (per Defin. 8. hujus) nihil aliud est, quam ex legibus propriae naturae agere, et nemo suum esse (per Prop. 7. p. 3.) conservare conetur, nisi ex propriae suae naturae legibus.”

664 GII/222: “virtutis fundamentum esse ipsum conatum proprium esse conservandi, et felicitatem in eo consistere, quod homo suum esse conservare potest.”

665 GII/222: “virtutem propter se esse appetendum, nec quicquam, quod ipsa praestabilius, aut quod utilius nobis sit, dari, cujus causa debetur appeti.”

666 Cf. late in EIVP18S where he writes that “I have done this to win, if possible, the attention of those who believe that this principle – that everyone is bound to seek his own advantage – is the foundation, not virtue and morality, but of immorality [GII/223: quod ea de causa feci, ut, si fieri posset, eorum attentionem mihi conciliarem, qui credunt, hoc principium, quod scilicet unusquisque suum utile quaerere tenetur, impietatis, non autem virtutis et pietatis, esse fundamentum].”
trary to their nature (EIVP18S). Because we have an individual essence, our own power, we cannot act against ourselves by our essence. Another way to put this is (as Spinoza says in EIIIP4Dem) the definition of the thing posits the thing; it does not take it away. An individual essence, a set of laws according to which a thing brings about things, is a causal power: “So while we attend only to the thing itself, and not to external causes, we shall not be able to find anything in it which can destroy it” (EIIIP4Dem). When someone kills herself, the action may appear to be free, but it is really a case of her power being surpassed by that of external causes. This is one reason why external causes and the arrangement of them in the right way stand in the center of Spinoza’s account of the mastery of the passions and have an impact on our happiness.

1.2 Joining with others

According to Spinoza, “insofar as a thing agrees with our nature, it is necessarily good” (E IVP31) because it enhances our preservation in being. Furthermore, “insofar as men are torn by affects which are passions, they can be contrary to one another” (EIVP34). For instance, if two persons love the same thing, they are not contrary as regards their passion, love. In fact, they agree because both love something. The reason they are contrary to one another when they are acted upon by love is that one possesses a good that cannot be shared and the other does not: “these two are not troublesome to one another insofar as they agree in nature, that is, insofar as each loves the same thing, but insofar as they disagree with one another” (EIVP34S). The reason the passions often bring us into disagreement is that the goods we seek from passion cannot be shared.

We necessarily agree in nature as far as reason is concerned: “[o]nly insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, must they always agree in nature”. When we act through reason, we cause effects that can be clearly and distinctly understood through our nature. Spinoza thinks that reason belongs to human nature and, therefore, that we necessarily agree when we act according to reason. When we unite ourselves with others, we become more powerful:

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667 GII/222: “eos, qui se interficiunt, animo esse impotentes, eosque a causis externis, suae naturae repugnantibus, prorsus vinci.”
668 GII/145: “Dum itaque ad rem ipsam tantum; non autem ad causas externas attendimus, nihil in eadem poterimus invenire, quod ipsam possit destruere.”
669 GII/229: “Quatenus res aliqua cum nostra natura convenit, eatenus necessario bona est.”
670 GII/231: “Quatenus homines affectibus, qui passiones sunt, conflictantur, possunt invicem esse contrarii.”
671 GII/232: “Nam hi duo non sunt invicem molesti, quatenus natura conveniunt, hoc est, quatenus uterque idem amat, sed quatenus ab invicem discrepant.”
672 GII/232: “Quatenus homines ex ductu rationis vivunt, eatenus tantum natura semper necessario conveniunt.”
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 (EIVP18S).673

The ideal case is uniting ourselves with others so that we become one mind and body:

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; 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 (EIVP18S).674

Obviously, this is an ideal because we do not live only according to reason, but it shows very clearly how important it is for the sake both of our minds and bodies to join with others. It is the strongest state we could acquire. In the Appendix to Part IV of the Ethics Spinoza presents what he considers the right way of living. There too he stresses how important it is to join with others:

[i]t is especially useful to men to form associations, to bind themselves by those bonds most apt to make one people of them, and absolutely, to do those things which serve to strengthen friendships (EIVAppendix).675

To borrow Matheron’s words, it is impossible for a man to be saved alone.676 We are not substances but we belong to one substance. Our existence is due to many external causes. Therefore, the others are not useful for us only insofar as they are rational but also insofar as we are passive. We simply cannot persevere alone, we need others for both our mental and our bodily well-being. At the same time Spinoza stresses that we have to use the greatest caution and diligence in joining with others. For the most part, people are not driven by reason and positive affects. When they are moved by envy or other

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673 GII/222: “ex. gr. ejusdem prorsus naturae individua invicem junguntur, individuum componunt singulo duplo potentius. Homini igitur nihil homine utilius.”
674 GII/223: “Hominis igitur nihil homine utile; nihil, inquam, homines praestantissimae ad suum esse conservandum, optare possunt, quam quod omnes in omnibus ita conveniant, ut omnium Mentes et Corpora unam quasi Mentem, unumque Corpus componant, et omnes simul, quantum possunt, suum esse conservare conentur, omnesque simul omnium commune utile sibi quærant.”
675 GII/269: “Hominibus apprime utile est, consuetudines jungere, sesqueae iis vinculis astringere, quibus aptius de se omnibus unum efficient, et absolute ea agere, quæ firmandis amicitis inserviunt.” Cf. also TTP: “if we also reflect that the life of men without mutual assistance must necessarily be most wretched and must lack the cultivation of reason [-] it will become quite clear to us that, in order to achieve a secure and good life, men had necessarily to unite in one body” (TTP, 181).
676 With an admirable accuracy Matheron makes this point. “Pratiquement, par conséquent, nous ne parviendrons jamais à développer en nous la Raison”, he writes, “l’individu ne peut jamais se sauver seul” (Matheron 1988, 282).
affects of hate, they are to be feared. Therefore Spinoza advises us when joining to others that

skill and alertness are required for this. For men vary – there being few who live according to the rule of reason – yet generally they are envious, and more inclined to vengeance than to compassion. So it requires a singular power of mind to bear with each one according to his understanding, and to restrain oneself from imitating their affects (EIVAppendix).677

We want people to be rational but this is seldom the case. Often the destructive passions, like envy, ambition, anger and the desire for vengeance, disrupt good projects. People who suffer such passions are mind breakers rather than mind builders:

those who know to find fault with men, to castigate vices rather than teach virtues, and to break men’s minds rather than strengthen them – they are burdensome both to themselves and others. That is why many have preferred to live among the lower animals rather than among men.678

What we must do is try not to imitate their affects. Despite the fact that human life is so rarely conducted by reason, Spinoza argues for living in a community rather than in solitude:

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 which help to bring men together in harmony and friendship (EIVAppendix).679

When relating to others, especially because the interactions are often influenced by negative passions, it is important to feel one’s own power. A significant part in Spinoza’s account of the mastery of passions concerns modifying the imagination so that we feel the power we have by our essence, even – or especially – in the interactions which incline us to hate or fear.

677 EII/269: “Sed ad haec ars, et vigilantia requiritur. Sunt enim homines varii (nam rari sunt, qui ex rationis praescripto vivunt), et tamen plerumque invidi, et magis ad vindictam, quam ad Misericordiam proclives. Unumquemque igitur ex ipsius ingenio ferre, et sese continere, ne corum affectus imitetur, singularis animi potentiae opus est.”

678 EIVAppendix; GII/269f: “At qui contra homines carpere, et vitia potius exprobrare, quam virtutes docere, et hominum animos non firmare, sed frangere norunt, ii et sibi, et reliquis molesti sunt; unde multi prae nimia scilicet animi impatientia, falsoque religionis studio, inter bruta potius, quam inter homines vivere maualuunt.”

679 GII/270: “Quamvis igitur homines omnia plerumque ex sua libidine moderentur, ex eorum tamen communi societate multo plura commoda, quam damna sequuntur. Quare satius est eorum injurias acquo animo ferre, et studium iis adhibere, quae concordiae, et amicitiae concilianda inserviunt.”
2 The power of reason vs. the power of the passions

2.1 Necessarily subject to passions

Reason cannot master the passions alone in Spinoza’s theory. We cannot act just according to reason because that requires that we cause only effects that can be understood through our nature alone. Because we are modes, not a substance, it cannot happen 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 (EIVP4).\(^{680}\)

We are, then, necessarily subject to the passions (cf. EIVP4Cor). It is not up to reason to produce the passions which are useful for us. By mastering the external conditions we can make it so that beneficial passions occur. The passive joys and desires are inherently good according to Spinoza because the human body cannot exist without other bodies. To grow and be preserved, it needs to be acted upon: “[t]he human body, to be preserved, requires a great many other bodies, by which it is, as it were, continually regenerated” (EIIPost.IV).\(^{681}\) The *Theological-Political Treatise* also speaks strongly in support of the idea that in many respects human life depends on external causes. This is especially true as regards the preservation of the body and our security. In the third chapter of TTP Spinoza says that

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 course of external causes of which we are ignorant. So in this matter, the wise man and the fool are almost equally happy or unhappy. (CW II, Curley’s draft; GIII/47,13).\(^{682}\)

We can, however, use our prudence so that external causes will be favorable for security and well-being: “human guidance and vigilance can do much to help us to live securely and to avoid injuries from other men and also from

\(^{680}\) GII/212: “Fieri non potest, ut homo non sit Naturae pars, et ut nullas possit pati mutationes, nisi, quae per solam suam naturam possint intelligi, quarumque adaequata sit causa.”

\(^{681}\) GII/102: “Corpus humanum indiget, ut conservetur, plurimis aliis corporibus, a quibus continuo quasi regeneratur.”

\(^{682}\) GIII/47: “At media, quae ad secure vivendum, et corpus conservandum inserviunt, in rebus externis praecipue sita sunt; atque ideo dona fortunae vocantur, quia nimiram maxime a directione causarum externarum, quam ignoramus, pendent: ita ut hac in re stultus fere aeque felix et infelix, ac prudens sit.”
the beasts” (CW II, Curley’s draft; GIII/47,13). The best way to do this is to form a social order that will protect us with its laws:

To this end reason and experience teach no more certain means than to form a social order with definite laws, to occupy a definite area of the world, and to reduce the powers of all, as it were, into one body, the body of the social order. But to form and preserve a social order requires no mean intelligence and vigilance. So the social order which for the most part is founded and directed by prudent and vigilant men will be more secure, more stable, and less vulnerable to fortune (CW II, Curley’s draft; GIII/47,14).

By laws, Spinoza does not mean here those that follow from the necessity of Nature. He means laws in the sense of *jus*, laws that follow from the decision of men in the sense of rules of right. We have seen how he thought that we should unite through reason to form one mind and body together. Now he defends the idea of one body understood as a social order and argues for the distribution of labor and security by means of the social order. Without giving and taking help from others, we would not have the skill, power or time to do all that is needed for our preservation:

A social order is very useful, and even most necessary, not only for living securely from enemies, but also for making many things efficiently. For if men were not willing to give mutual assistance to one another, they would lack both skill and time to support and preserve themselves as far as possible. Not all men are equally capable of all things, nor would each one be able to provide those things which, alone, he most needs. Everyone, I say, would lack both powers and 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 to support life, not to mention now the arts and sciences which are also supremely necessary for the perfection of human nature and its blessedness (CW II, Curley’s draft; GIII/73,18f).

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684 GIII/47,14: “Ad quod nullum certius medium ratio, et experientia docuit, quam societatem certis legibus formare, certamque mundi plagam occupare, et omnium vires ad unum quasi corpus, neme societatis, redigere: Verum enimvero ad societatem formandum, et conservandum ingenium, et vigilantia non mediocris requiritur; et idcirco illa societas securior erit, et magis constans, minusque fortunae obnoxia, quae maxime ab hominibus prudentibus et vigilantibus fundatur, et dirigitur.”
685 GIII/73,18f: “Societas non tantum ad secure ab hostibus vivendum, sed etiam ad multarum rerum compendium faciendum, perutilis est, et maxime etiam necessaria; nam, nisi homines invicem operam mutuam dare velint, ipsis et ars, et tempus deficeret ad se, quod ejus fieri potest, sustentandum, et conservandum. Non enim omnes ad omnia aequi apti sunt, nec unusquisque potis esset ad ea comparandum, quibus solus maxime indiget. Vires, et tempus, inquam, unicuique deficerent, si solus deberet arare, seminare, metere, molere, coquere, texere, suere, et alia plurimia, ad vitam sustentandum efficere, ut jam taceam artes, et scientias, quae etiam ad perfectionem humanae naturae, ejusque beatitudinem sunt summe necessaria.”
External causes and interactions are essential not only for our health and material well-being, but also for our pursuit of the arts and sciences that we can take to include philosophy. It is completely impossible and not desirable to live without others and the passive affects they cause in us. Having introduced the dictates of reason, he writes that

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 (EIVP18S).686

According to Spinoza, we are necessarily passive. This has the inevitable consequence that reason cannot make certain passions occur or suppress others. The occurrence of our passions can be changed – and they often need to be changed – through the right way to use external causes and imaginative means. The Political Treatise speaks also strongly on behalf of external causes in the mastery of the passions. First of all, Spinoza makes a distinction between himself and other philosophers:

Philosophers conceive the affects which trouble us as vices, into which men fall by their own fault; for that reason they usually laugh at them, weep for them, censure them, or (if they want to seem particularly holy) curse them. In this way they think they perform a godly act and believe they attain the pinnacle of wisdom when they have learned how to praise in many ways a human nature which exists nowhere, and how to assail in words the human nature which really exists (CW II, Curley’s draft; GIII/273).687

The idea of human nature defined, for example, by reason or will understood separate from the rest of Nature is an idea that Spinoza rejects. Such a human nature does not exist. As he says it means to “conceive men not as they are, but as they wish them to be” (CW II, Curley’s draft; GIII/273).688 Such a view is an account of the mastery of the passions that does not have a real power to affect us, to change our passions, to aid us to evolve towards the stronger and more empowering human nature that he had firmly resolved is his goal. And so he continues:

That’s why for the most part they have written Satire instead of Ethics, and why they have never conceived a Politics which can be put to any practical application. The Politics they have conceived would be considered a Chi-
Spinoza himself makes an ethics that can be put to practical application. This requires arguing for the necessary role of external conditions and the passions they arouse in his theory of mastery of the passions. The role of practical application is important in all sciences but especially in politics:

In all the sciences which have a practical application, Theory is believed to be out of harmony with Practice, but this is most true of Politics; no men are thought less suitable to rule a State than Theorists, or Philosophers (CW II, Curley’s draft; GIII/273).

So when he says that Theorists or Philosophers are not suitable to rule a state he means to reject those who think that reason or will understood as independent from nature could somehow govern us or give some specific principles according to which live. Spinoza thinks that politicians have written better on political affairs than philosophers because the former have experience as their teacher. Experience shows us what is useful for the society:

the common laws and public affairs have been established and handled by men who were very sharp-witted (whether they were clever or merely cunning). So it is hardly credible that we can conceive something potentially useful for Society as a whole which accident, or chance, has not suggested, and which men keenly attentive to their common affairs and looking after their own security have not seen (CW II, Curley’s draft; GIII/274).

This is the basis for Spinoza’s account of the mastery of passions, ethics and political matters. He begins his investigations of these issues by studying how human beings really behave. Referring to the Ethics, he sums up what he thinks the central features of human nature are:

that men are necessarily subject to affects [E IVP4C]; that they are so constituted that they pity those who are in distress, and envy those who are well off [E IIIP32S], that they are more inclined to vengeance than to mercy [E IVApp13]; and moreover, that each one wants the others to live according to

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689 GIII/273: “unde factum est ut plerumque pro ethica satyram scripsissent, et ut nunquam politicam conceperint quae possit ad usum revocari; sed quae pro chimera habetur, vel quae in Utopia, vel in illo poetarum aureo saeculo, ubi scilicet minime necesse erat, institutum poterat.”

690 GIII/273: “Cum igitur omnium scientiarum quae usum habent, tum maxime politices theoria ab ipsius praxi discrepare creditur, et regendae reipublicae nulli minus idonei aestimantur quam theoretici seu philosophi.”

691 GIII/274: “jura autem communia et negotia publica a viris acutissimis, sive astutis sive callidis, instituta et tractata sunt; adeoque vix credibile est nos aliquid quod communi societati ex usu esse queat posse concipere, quod occasio seu casus non obtulerit, quodque homines communibus negotiis intenti, suaeque securitati consulentes, non viderint.”
his mentality, so that they approve what he approves, and spurn what he spurns [E IIIP31C] (CW II, Curley’s draft; GIII/275).692

The result is that men are in constant struggle, aim to suppress one another and rejoice more when they can surpass others than when they can do what they themselves had wanted. He notes that even though religion teaches us to love our neighbours this thought occurs “at the point of death, when illness has conquered even the affects and a man lies inactive, or in houses of worship, where men conduct no business”. This is no use at the market place or in court although Spinoza thinks it would be most useful there (CW II, Curley’s draft; GIII/275).693 Reason can do many things for the passions but it cannot master them alone:

those who are persuaded that the masses, or people who are separated into parties by public affairs, can be induced to live only according to the prescription of reason are dreaming of the golden age of the Poets, or of a myth (CW II, Curley’s draft; GIII/275).694

Although Spinoza refers here to the masses, it applies to everybody. The wise as well, being a part of nature, needs to know how to make the best use of the external causes and imagination. Although one would strive to persevere in being according to reason, she does not have the power to do so if the external causes and passions are not well arranged. So if one thinks of the mastery of the passions solely in terms of reason and wonders how it can influence on the passions, this is a sign that something has gone wrong. One needs to take into account the role of external causes and passions. Otherwise one still dreams, is captured by a myth of omnipotent reason, the idea of which Spinoza in part rejects, and in part changes.

2.2 Why is hilaritas good?

A further illustration why we need necessarily suitable external causes and imaginative means besides reason to master the passions can be found in the case of Medea. She can be regarded as an individual who wanted to strive according to reason. Nevertheless, she did not have the power to do so. I shall soon have a look at her case in the way it occurs in Ovid. His version of

692 GIII/275 : “hominem necessario affectibus esse obnoxios; et ita constitutos esse ut eorum quibus male est misereantur, et quibus bene est invidieant, et ut ad vindicatum magis quam ad misericordiam sint proni; et praetera unumquemque appetere ut reliqui ex ipsius ingenio vivant, et ut probent quod ipse probat, et quod ipse repudiat repudiunt.”

693 GIII/275: “Valet quidem in articulo mortis, quando scilicet morbus ipsos affectus vicit, et homo segnis jacet; vel in templis, ubi homines nullum exercent commercium; at minime in foro vel in aula, ubi maxime necesse esset.”

694 GIII/275 : “ita ut qui sibi persuadent posse multitudinem, vel qui publicis negotiis distrahuntur, induci ut ex solo rationis praescripto vivant, saeculum poetarum aureum seu fabulam somnient.”
Medea is especially significant for Spinoza because the context in which she expresses her plight fits strikingly the way in which Spinoza understands passions. It illustrates how passions get their force, why they often surpass rational affects and desires, and why she would have necessarily needed the aid of the right arrangement of external causes and imaginative means. Her body was not in a stable state; she did not enjoy *hilaritas* and could not follow her rational desires. For Spinoza the mastery of passions is essentially matter of the power of affects:

> An affect cannot be restrained or taken away except by an affect opposite to, and stronger than, the affect to be restrained (EIVP7).695

This entails that it is not because of its truth value that cognition changes the affects. For reason to be able to overcome the passions, it needs to be stronger than the passions, but it often happens that the power of a passive affect is stronger than that of reason. The strength of the passive affect is defined by the power of the external object compared with our own power.696 The power of external objects may exceed our power: “[t]he force by which a man perseveres in existing is limited, and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes” (EIVP3).697 The only axiom in the fourth part stresses the point that the power of an external object can easily surpass our power:

> [t]here 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 (EIVA1).698

The reason we are torn by the passions is that the power of an external body is stronger than our own power, and for this reason we undergo a powerful affect that feels overpowering, forces us to use our power for its profit. Although Medea could see the better, her understanding did not lead her to act in accordance with her knowledge because the power of the passion she was

695 GII/214: “Affectus nec coerceri, nec tolli potest, nisi per affectum contrarium, et fortiorem affectu coercendo.”

696 In EIVP5Dem he says that “[t]he essence of a passion cannot be explained through our essence alone (by IIID1 and D2), i.e. (by IIIP7), the power of a passion cannot be defined by the power by which we strive to persevere in our being; but (as has been shown in IIP16) it must necessarily be defined by the power of an external cause compared with our own [Passionis essentia non potest per solam nostram essentiam explicari (per Defin. 1. et 2. p. 3.), hoc est (per Prop. 7. p. 3.), passionis potentia definiri nequit potentia, qua in nostro esse perseverare conamur; sed (ut Prop. 16. p. 2. ostensum est) definiri necessario debet potentia causae externae cum nostra comparata]” (GII/214).

697 GII/212 : “Vis, qua homo in existendo perseverat, limitata est, et a potentia causarum externarum infinite superatur.”

undergoing was far stronger than any affect based on reason or anything else:

[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 (EIVP15).699

There can be objects that have such outstanding qualities that they greatly exceed our power, and, therefore, we undergo a strong passion that inhibits us from thinking of something else. This is why Spinoza writes that “[t]he force of any passion, or affect can surpass the other actions, or power of a man, so that the affect stubbornly clings to the man” (EIVP6).700 The most harmful thing for a man is that which inhibits him from being affected in a great many ways:

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 more it renders the body capable of being affected in a great many ways, or of affecting other bodies, the more useful it is; on the other hand, what renders the body less capable of these things is harmful (EIVP38).701

When a part of the body is strongly affected, and capable of only a certain kind of affection, the mind, as an idea of the body, is unable to think of several things at once. This hinders the individual from exercising reason because adequate thinking requires that the mind considers a number of things at once in order to understand their agreements, differences and oppositions (cf. EIIP29S and above First Part, Ch. 3). In the demonstration Spinoza makes the connection between the body’s being affected in a great many ways and the mind’s capacity for thinking:

The more the body is rendered capable of these things, the more the mind is rendered capable of perceiving (byIIP14) (EIVP38Dem).702

The role of external causes and imaginative means is essentially to render the body such that it would be capable of affecting and being affected in a

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699 GII/220 : “Cupiditas, quae ex vera boni, et mali cognitione oritur, multis aliis Cupiditatisibus, quae ex affectibus, quibus conflictamur, oriuntur, restingu, vel coerceri potest.”

700 GII214: “Vis alicujus passionis, seu affectus reliquas hominis actiones, seu potentiam superare potest, ita ut affectus pertinaciter homini adhaeret.”

701 GII/239: “Id, quod Corpus humanum ita disponit, ut pluribus modis possit affici, vel quod idem aptum reddit ad Corpora externa pluribus modis afficiendum, homini est utile; et eo utilius, quo Corpus ab eo aptius redditur, ut pluribus modis afficiatur, aliaque corpora afficiat, et contra id noxium est, quod Corpus ad haec minus aptum reddir.”

702 GII/239 : “Quo Corpus ad haec aptius redditur, eo Mens aptior ad percipiendum redditur (per Prop. 14. p. 2.).”
great many ways. It is not in the power of reason to do that. Furthermore, the idea of the ratio of the individual plays a crucial role in the body and mind being affected in a great many ways. To maintain the ratio and to feel the bodily equilibrium that manifests the ratio would not be possible without training one’s imagination to feel one’s power and essence. In Spinoza’s system maintaining the ratio enjoys the utmost importance in his conception of good and evil:

[t]hose 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 (EIVP39).703

Things that maintain the ratio are good because when the individual is able to preserve its ratio, it can affect and be affected in a great many ways:

things which bring about that the parts of the human body preserve the same proportion of motion and rest to one another, preserve the human body’s form. Hence, they bring it about that the human body can be affected in many ways, and that it can affect external bodies in many ways (EIVP39Dem).704

When all parts of the body are equally affected by joy, the individual is able to maintain its ratio, and as a result many things follow from its nature. The mind’s capacity to think is enhanced, and one can exercise reason. This is the sense in which hilaritas is good and titillatio bad. Hilaritas creates the necessary preconditions for reason because it affects equally all parts of the body by joy so that the ratio is preserved. Then, the individual is able to affect and be affected in a great many ways, which means also that the mind can think of a great many things at once, and this is what reason requires. Because hilaritas strengthens the ratio, it is always good and cannot ever be excessive. Titillatio, however, when it affects parts of the body more strongly than others can put the ratio at risk. If it is very strong, it forces the mind to think of only one object. It may become excessive in the sense Spinoza means, it turns to be an obsession:

[g]enerally, then, the affects are excessive, and occupy the mind in the consideration of only one object so much that it cannot think of others. [--] When this happens to a man who is not asleep, we say that he is mad or insane. Nor

703 GII/239 : “Quae efficiunt, ut motus, et quietis ratio, quam Corporis humani partes ad invicum habent, conservetur, bona sunt; et ea contra mala, quae efficiunt, ut Corporis humani partes alien ad invicem motus, et quietis habeant rationem.”
704 GII/240: “Ergo quae efficiunt, ut motus, et quietis ratio, quam Corporis humani Partes ad invicum habent, conservetur, cadem humili Corporis formam conservant, et consequenter efficiunt (per Post. 3. et 6. p. 2.), ut Corpus humanum multis modis affici, et ut idem corpora externa multis modis afficere possit; adeoque (per Prop. praec.).”
are they thought to be less mad who burn with love, and dream, both night and day, only of a lover or a courtesan (EIIP44S).\textsuperscript{705}

Medea’s case illustrates how \textit{titillatio} can become so excessive that it threatens the ratio of the individual. The verse Spinoza quotes from Medea in EIVP17S – \textit{video meliora, proboque, deteriora sequor} – occurs exactly in this way in Ovid’s \textit{Metamorphoses} VII. To see the significance of this reference for Spinoza, it is important to understand the context in which it appears. The passage Spinoza quotes comes from the beginning of book VII.\textsuperscript{706} It occurs right in the opening scene in which Medea first encounters the dazzling Jason, the famous leader of the Argonauts, celebrated for his beauty and courage. Medea is well-known as a Colchian witch, a daughter of the king who had imposed extreme terms on Jason to win the Golden Fleece. She finds herself with an overwhelming passion for the stunning Jason. In deliberating about what to do, Medea reflects on her feelings for Jason, the fear she feels if he does not succeed in the tasks her father required him to go through, the passion she feels for this outstanding foreigner whom she still does not really know. She says to herself

\begin{quote}
I wonder if this, or something like this, is what people indeed call love? Or why would the tasks my father demands of Jason seem so hard? They are more than hard! Why am I afraid of his death, when I have scarcely seen him? What is the cause of all this fear? Quench, if you can, unhappy girl, these flames that you feel in your virgin heart! If I could, I would be wiser! But a strange power draws me to him against my will. Love urges on thing: reason another. I see, and I [approve] the better: I follow the worse. Why do you burn for a stranger, royal virgin, and dream of marriage in an alien land? This earth can also give you what you can love. Whether he lives or dies, is in the hands of the gods. Let him live! I can pray for this even if I may not love him: what is Jason guilty of? Who, but the heartless, would not be touched by Jason’s youth, and birth, and courage? Who, though the other qualities were absent, could not be stirred by his beauty?\textsuperscript{707}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{705} GII/243 : “ac proinde affectus ut plurimum excessum habent, et Mentem in sola unius objecti contemplatione ita detinet, ut de alis cogitare nequeat [---] quod quando hominii non dormienti accidit, eundem delirare dicimus, vel insanire; nec minus insanire creduntur, qui Amore ardent, quique noctes, atque dies solam amasiam, vel meretricem somniant.”

\textsuperscript{706} Readers of Spinoza who are not familiar with that context might imagine that the verse Ovid puts to the mouth of Medea refers to a later scene where she is thought to debate whether or not to give into her desire for vengeance on Jason by killing their children and Jason’s new wife. This is what \textit{e.g.} Seneca’s tragedy of Medea is focused on. Nevertheless, the verse Spinoza quotes in EIVP17S does not refer to this scene, and therefore, I do not think that Spinoza had Seneca in mind when he refers to “that verse of the Poet” (GII/221). So the situation Spinoza is inviting us to think of is one in which somebody finds herself in a strong love or desire, unable to think of or do anything else but what serves this passion. It is not so much of vacillation between different affects, like the love a mother feels for her children or a desire for vengeance on her husband. A much stronger external body compared to Medea’s power, like the exceptional and outstanding Jason, keeps her in his grip to the very end.

\textsuperscript{707} Ovid’s \textit{Metamorphoses} Book VII, 1–73:

\[ \ldots \text{mirumque, nisi hoc est,} \]
Medea’s overpowering love for Jason can be understood as an example of *titillatio* par excellence. She could not think of anything else but him and a life together with him. There are objects that have exceptional qualities that give them a power greatly exceeding our power. This is what Jason did to Medea. Through his superb features he affected some parts of her body far more strongly than the others. As a result she experienced a strong *titillatio* that did not let her act freely. The evil in *titillatio* arises from the way in which it can be excessive: it may turn into an obsession. The passion that Jason arouses in Medea functions in this manner. It is so strong that it makes her use her power for his profit. She sees that Jason cannot overcome the challenges without her magic. There is her chance. The strong passion makes her think that if she helps Jason, he will have to marry her. He will feel indebted to her, and his nobility would not permit him to go off without her, to marry someone else, leaving her to suffer the penalties her father would inflict on her for helping him:

Shall someone unknown be saved by my powers, and unhurt because of me, without me, set his sails to the wind, and be husband to another, leaving Medea to be punished? If he could do that, if he could set another woman above me, let him die, the ungrateful man! But his look, his nobility of spirit, and his graceful form, do not make me fear deceit or forgetfulness of my kindness. And he will give me his word beforehand, and I will gather the gods to witness our pledge. Why fear when it is certain? Prepare yourself, and dispel all delay: Jason will be forever in your debt, take you to himself in sacred marriage.\(^{708}\)

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All quotes from *Metamorphoses* in this chapter are taken from online edition by Hugo Magnus. Gotha (Germany). Friedr. Andr. Perthes. 1892. I have used the translation by A.S. Kline 2000. In this passage, however, I have modified his translation of the phrase Spinoza quotes, *video meliora, proboque*. Kline renders this “I see and desire the better,” which seems inexact.\(^{708}\) Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* Book VII, 1–73:
Jason is a stranger for Medea. She sees his beauty and believes in his courage and the nobility of his spirit, but she does not really know him. Nevertheless, the passion these superb qualities arouse is too powerful; it dominates Medea’s mind. She understands that if she follows this passion, she will be turning her back on much that is an essential part of her being. So she asks: “Carried by the winds, shall I leave my native country, my sister, my brother, my father, and my gods?” So strong is this passion for the beautiful and brave hero that she dismisses her origins and, in a way, herself. She conceives in a negative light everything that has made her what she is:

Well then, my father is barbarous, and my country is savage, and my brother is still a child: my sister’s prayers are for me, and the greatest god is within! I will not be leaving greatness behind, but pursuing greatness: honour as a savior of these Achaean people, familiarity with a better land and with cities whose fame is flourishing even here, the culture and arts of those places, and the man, the son of Aeson, for whom I would barter those things that the wide world owns, joined to whom I will be called fortunate, dear to the gods, and my head will be crowned by the stars.

It is characteristic of titillatio that it forces the individual to think only of the object of her pleasure, to imagine only things that would fulfill the fantasies this pleasure generates and to believe in a happy ending. Medea dreamt that her “head will be crowned by the stars”. This strong affect forces her to
transfer her power to Jason, to use her knowledge of witchcraft and herbs to help him so that he could avoid death. Ovid pictures the turning point as follows:

It chanced that Aeson’s son was more than usually handsome that day: you could forgive her for loving him. She gazed at him, and fixed her eyes on him as if she had never looked at him before, and in her infatuation, seeing his face, could not believe him mortal, nor could she turn away. So that when, indeed, the stranger grasped her right hand, and began to speak, and in a submissive voice asked for her help, promising marriage, she replied in a flood of tears. ‘I see what I am doing: it is not ignorance of the truth that ensnares me, but love. Your salvation is in my gift, but being saved, remember your promise!’

So she is determined to give Jason the magical herbs and juice to facilitate his tasks, to defeat the bulls, the wild earth-born warriors and the unsleeping dragon. The passion that Jason arouses in her heart is too strong. It makes her subject to him, dreaming of an everlasting happiness with him, and, it causes a desire to trust him. But we who know how sadly Medea’s story ends, know that it is only fantasies that *titillatio* creates. Medea is transferring her power for the sake of someone else, making herself unstable and weak. Calamities necessarily follow. She thinks Jason’s chest and arms will save her. “Holding what I love,” she says, “clinging to Jason’s breast, I shall be carried over the wide seas: in his arms, I will fear nothing”.

But what she trusts in is what will destroy her. She is dreaming of what she thinks will increase her power of acting and getting more and more caught up in a vicious circle, which drives her to her tragic end. The passion caused by Jason put the ratio that defined Medea at a risk; she is giving her power to someone else, and is about to lose herself. We can understand *titillatio* as pleasure that may use the power of the individual, because the external body is more powerful than our own. It can create dreams and make one believe in promises.

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711 Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* Book VII, 1-73:

> casu solito formosior Aesone natus
> illa luce fuit: posses ignoscere amanti.
> Spectat et in vultu veluti tum denique viso
> lumina fixa tenet nec se mortalia demens
> ora videre putat, nec se declinat ab illo.

> Ut vero coepitque loqui dextramque prehendit
> hospes et auxilium submissa voce rogavit
> promisitque torum, lacrimis ait illa profusis:
> “Quid faciam, video (non ignorantia veri
decipiet, sed amor): servabere munere nostro;
servatus promissa dato.”

712 Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* Book VII, 1–73: “Nempe tenens, quod amo, gremioque in Iasonis haerens per freta longa ferar: nihil illum amplexa verebor.”
that cannot be met and inhibit one from preserving one’s own being. Matheron points this out well:

la titillatio mobilize alors à son profit exclusif les capacités nouvelles que son achèvement a fait éclore: nous employons toutes nos ressources, négligeant les autres activités auxquelles il serait temps des passer, à la faire indéfiniment réapparaître. A partir de là, tout est bloqué.713

Titillatio is, therefore, not bad and hilaritas good because the former is stronger or more passionate than the latter. Medea’s love for Jason, or sensual love in general, is not bad because of its intensity or vivid and immediate feeling of being alive and enjoying life. It can be bad, as it turned out to be in Medea’s case, if it affects parts of the body more strongly than others so that it becomes obsessive and threatens the ratio, the very being of the individual. Matheron affirms this:

L’excès ne vient donc pas de l’intensité de la jouissance prise en valeur absolue, ni non plus de sa fréquence, mais du caractère obsessionnel qu’elle revêt pour notre imagination.714

Hilaritas cannot ever put the ratio of the body at risk because it is an affect involving equilibrium in the body. Hilaritas increases or aids the body’s power of acting:

all of its parts maintain the same proportion of motion and rest to one another. And so (by 39), Cheerfulness is always good, and cannot be excessive (EIVP42Dem.).715

What, then, is hilaritas like as an affect? As a species of joy (cf. EIII Gen.Def.ofAffIII) it must be a passage from a lesser to a greater perfection. Spinoza does not describe the way in which hilaritas is felt. Because it is intimately related to the idea of maintaining a certain ratio of motion and rest, we can say that the change in perfection that happens is related to the body’s turning from a state of instability to one of equilibrium. It is a feeling of that particular bodily state where all its parts are equally affected. According to Bove, it presupposes a particular affect that is “intrinsically tied to the

713 Matheron 1977, 441.
714 Matheron 1977, 441. Matheron points this out as regards the sexual love as follows: “comparable, dans son “espèce de délire”, à l’huivarus” qui se prive de tout pour accumuler de quoi satisfaire ce dont il s’abstient toujours, le “libidinosus” est l’obsédé sexuel qui, même et surtout si les circonstances l’obligent à la continence, ne peut plus penser qu’à une seule chose” (Matheron 1977, 442). It is good to note the role of external circumstances which Matheron raises as regards whether sexual love turns to be obsessive or not. It is not obsessive by nature but only if the external conditions have not, one way or other, been favorable for it.
715 GII/241: “quod Corporis agendi potentia augetur, vel juvatur, ita ut omnes ejus partes eandem ad invicem motus, et quietis rationem obtineant; atque adeo (per Prop. 39. hujus) Hilaritas semper est bona, nec excessum habere potest.”
state of equilibrium of our body and of our whole being”.\textsuperscript{716} He regards it as a certain kind of tranquility, and furthermore, he regards it as an “equilibrated affect of self”.\textsuperscript{717}

\textit{Hilaritas} can be understood as an affect that expresses our self and essence in the way that Medea’s excessive joy did not because her body was so much disturbed. The affect of self or essence arises, however, in a unique way that is important to acknowledge: \textit{Hilaritas} is defined as a joy in which all parts of the body are equally affected. It is a feeling of this very particular kind of bodily equilibrium, and strictly speaking it is a passive affect because nobody can make all parts of the body equally affected by his own power alone – to achieve it one necessarily needs a variety of external causes.

3 Imagination and the mastery of the passions

3.1 The maxims of life

The imaginative means play a crucial role in Spinoza especially as aids to feel our power or essence. We need to train our imagination so that we are at all times aware of our power. In particularly, we have to prepare for those situations where our power is naturally reduced, for example, if we feel hate or fear. These emotions may deceive us into thinking of our lack of power, something we are not. Spinoza does not mention it explicitly, but I think it would apply also to cases like Medea’s when one is overwhelmingly in love with or desires somebody. If one were constantly reminded of one’s power, one would not lose oneself to another in the way Medea did.

The imaginative means that help us remember our power in the difficult situations Spinoza calls ‘maxims of life’. In Part V of the \textit{Ethics} he tells us what we can do as long we do not have perfect knowledge of the affects. In EV1Os he presents what he calls “a correct principle of living, or sure maxims of life”.\textsuperscript{718} These maxims are principles we should imprint in our memory through effort and repetition so that they are ready when we need them. He writes that we should

\textsuperscript{716} Cf. Bove 2004, 212.
\textsuperscript{717} Bove 2004, 212.
\textsuperscript{718} He writes there that “[t]he best thing, then, that we can do, so long as we do not have perfect knowledge of our affects, is to conceive a correct principle of living, or sure maxims of life [Optimum igitur, quod efficiere possimus, quamduo nostrorum affectuum perfectam cognitionem non habemus, est rectam vivendi rationem, seu certa vitae dogmata concipere]” (GII/287).
commit them to memory, and apply them constantly to the particular cases frequently encountered in life. In this way our imagination will be extensively affected by them, and we shall always have them ready (EVP10S).\textsuperscript{719}

They can be divided into three kinds although in the first one there are two principles that function independently too. First, we need to learn how to overcome hate by love or nobility. Second, we have to learn to be brave, strengthen our character and be focused. Third, we should shift our attention from our misfortunes and weaknesses to the things that are good. The individual essence is the basis for all of these maxims in that the aim of these principles is to make us aware of our own power and habituate us to using it.

3.1.1 To overcome hate by love or nobility

Spinoza thinks that we can train ourselves to be less inclined to hate, to conquer hate by love or nobility and not to repay hate by hate in return, as follows:

in order that we may always have this rule of reason ready when it is needed, we ought to think about and meditate frequently on the common wrongs of men, and how they may be warded off best by nobility (EVP10S).\textsuperscript{720}

We need to train ourselves through thinking often of the common wrongs of men and how to respond to them, not through hate but through nobility. The aim is to habituate ourselves so that the image of wrongdoing is joined with the image of nobility: “if we join the image of a wrong to the imagination of this maxim, it will always be ready for us (by IIP18) when a wrong is done to us” (EIVP10S).\textsuperscript{721} It is not to our advantage to strive through hate because it is contrary to our essence that it makes us strive from lack of power. We need to condition our imagination not to lead us to hate.

Hate can also be conquered by thinking of the good that follows from common society and keeping well in mind the true principle of living, which is striving from our essence:

\[1]f we have ready also the principle of our own true advantage, and also of the good which follows from mutual friendship and common society, and keep in mind, moreover, that the highest satisfaction of mind stems from the

\textsuperscript{719} GII/287: “eaque memoriae mandare, et rebus particularibus, in vita frequenter obviis, continuo applicare, ut sic nostra imaginatio late iisdem afficiatur, et nobis in promptu sint semper.”

\textsuperscript{720} GII/287f: “Ut autem hoc rationis praescriptum semper in promptu habeamus, ubi usus erit, cogitandae, et saepi meditandae sunt communes hominum injuriae, et quomodo, et qua via Generositate optime propulsentur.”

\textsuperscript{721} GII/288: “sic enim imaginem injuriae imaginationi hujus dogmatis jungemus, et nobis (per Prop. 18. p. 2.) in promptu semper erit, ubi nobis injuria afferetur.”

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right principles of living (by IVP52), and that men, like other things, act from the necessity of nature (EVP10S).\textsuperscript{722}

Here we have two principles that function in their own right: to keep in mind our own true advantage that enjoins us to cultivate mutual friendship and common society, and to keep in mind that the highest satisfaction of mind comes from living according to right principles, and that men, like everything else, act from the necessity of nature, and so are not to be blamed for their actions. These principles work as remedies against many other passions, not only hate. In EVP10S Spinoza regards them especially as means against hate in writing that “the wrong or the hate usually arising from it” that occupy our imagination will easily be overcome. In the case of anger that arises from the greatest wrongs perhaps only some vacillations will remain. If we are used to train our imagination it can be, however, conquered: “it will be overcome in far less time than if we had not considered these things beforehand in this way” (EVP10S).\textsuperscript{723}

Imagination cannot be easily changed, and so we need to reflect often the wrongs of men and join the image of these wrongs to the image of nobility. Through repetition we are to habituate ourselves to respond to hate by nobility.

\textbf{3.1.2 Being brave}

As it is important for Spinoza to overcome hate, so it is important to overcome fear. Fear also leads us to focus on what we cannot do and thereby diminishes our power of acting. He advises us to strengthen ourselves by thinking of common dangers and the ways they can be overcome:

[t]o put aside fear, we must think in the same way of tenacity: that is, we must recount and frequently imagine the common dangers of life, and how they can be best avoided and overcome by presence of mind and strength of character (EVP10S).\textsuperscript{724}

Fear is bad because it makes us think what we are not or are not able to do. We are, however, something because we have our own power. We need to cultivate and train our imagination so that it does not lead us to think of our powerlessness. This happens through thinking frequently of the common

\textsuperscript{722} GII/288 : “Quod si etiam in promptu habuerimus rationem nostri veri utilis, ac etiam boni, quod ex mutua amicitia, et communi societate sequitur, et praeterea quod ex recta vivendi ratione summa animi acquiescentia oriatur (per Prop. 52. p. 4.), et quod homines, ut reliqua, ex naturae necessitate agant.”

\textsuperscript{723} GII/288 : “superabitur tamen, quamvis non sine animi fluctuatione, longe minore temporis spatio, quam si haec non ita praemeditata habuissetus, ut patet ex Propositione 6. 7. et 8. hujus Partis.”

\textsuperscript{724} GII/288 : “De Animositate ad Metum deponendum codem modo cogitandum est; enumeranda scilicet sunt, et saepe imaginanda communia vitae pericula, et quomodo animi praesentia, et fortitudine optime vitari, et superari possunt.”
dangers of life and joining their image to an image of strength of character and presence of mind so that we become less disposed to fear. It is important to increase the presence of mind, focus and strength of character. All these features are important for reminding us that we have an individual essence, and they enhance our attempts to become happy.

3.1.3 Attending to what is good
The third maxim continues the same line of thinking. We need to be, in general, habituated so that we are inclined to feel our power. This means that we always ought to think of what is good in things:

it should be noted that in ordering our thoughts and images, we must always (by IV63C and III59) attend to those things which are good in each thing so that in this way we are always determined to acting from an affect of joy (EVP10S).725

This concerns, for example, the misfortunes we encounter in life. Instead of accusing others and complaining about how bad things are, we should think, for instance, about how to acquire what we want. Those who concentrate on the negative wear themselves out:

it is common to everyone whose luck is bad and whose mind is weak. For the poor man, when he is also greedy, will not stop talking about the misuse of money and the vices of the rich. In doing this he only distresses himself, and shows others that he cannot bear calmly either his own poverty, or the wealth of others (EVP10S).726

For instance, if somebody wants esteem but does not have it, he should not bemoan its emptiness or men’s inconstancy but think of its correct use, the end and the means by which it can be acquired (EVP10S). Through effort and repetitions we can modify our imagination so that it comes into accordance with our essence: to join an image of hate with an image of love and nobility; an image of danger with an image of presence of mind and strength of character; ordering images so that we think of the positive and increase our power. Spinoza concludes the proposition by saying that “he who will observe these [rules] carefully – for they are not difficult – and practice them, will soon be able to direct most of his actions according to the com-

726 GII/288f : “sed omnibus commune est, quibus fortuna est adversa, et qui animo impotentes sunt. Nam pauper etiam avarus de abusu pecuniae, et divitum vitii non cessat loqui; quo nihil alius efficit, quam se afflictare, et aliis ostendere, se non tantum paupertatem suam, sed etiam aliorum divitas iniquo animo ferre.”
mand of reason” (EP10S). The command of reason is to live according to the laws of one’s nature. The aim of these maxims is to habituate ourselves to doing just that.

3.2 How to cause hilaritas?
External conditions must be favorable for us to acquire hilaritas. According to Bove

[i]t is Spinoza’s ethico-political project to alter external circumstance in such a way that the greatest possible number of people should be able to experience it [hilaritas], for this is the road to freedom.728

To acquire the harmonious bodily state, we need several kinds of external causes because our body is so complex. What can we do to bring it about that all parts of our body are equally affected? This is where we see the role and importance of the various pleasures in Spinoza’s account of mastery of the passions, reason and happiness. For all parts of the body to be equally affected, it is essential for us to have many different pleasures and delights and to engage in sports, entertainments, and the arts in right measures. As far as I know, the only text where Spinoza discusses the body and mind being equally capable of all things that follow from their nature is the one where he addresses the role of sensual pleasures. Gracefully he writes:

[i]t is the part of a 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. 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 things which can follow from its nature, and hence, so that the mind also may be equally capable of understanding many things at once (EIVP45SCor.1;GII/244f).729

There are many diverse parts in the body, so to make the body equally capable of all things that follow from its nature, we need to be involved in many different kinds of joyful activities. When the whole body is equally capable

727 GII/289 : “Atque haec qui diligenter observabit (neque enim difficilia sunt), et exercerbit, nae ille brevi temporis spatio actiones suas ex rationis imperio plerumque dirigere poterit.”
728 Bove 2004, 211.
729 GII/244f : “Viri, inquam, sapientis est, moderato, et suavi cibo, et potu se reficere, et recreare, ut et odoribus, plantarum virentium amoenitate, ornatu, musica, ludis exercitatoriiis, theatris, et aliis hujusmodi, quibus unusquisque absqueullo alterius damno uti potest. Corpus namque humanum ex plurimis diversae naturae partibus componitur, quae continuo novo alimento indigent, et vario, ut totum Corpus ad omnia, quae ex ipsius natura sequi possunt, aeque aptum, sit, et consequenter ut Mens etiam aeque apta sit ad plura simul intelligendum.”
of all things that follow from its nature, then the mind is equally capable of understanding many things simultaneously. There are, therefore, certain corporeal conditions for *hilaritas*. It is a feeling of a special kind of bodily well-being. It is a diversity of pleasures the human body needs to be harmoniously affected. As much as it needs nice food and drink, it would be greatly deprived without charming fragrances, beautiful clothes, pleasant things to live around, the enchantments of art and music, sports and other kinds of bodily activities: providing us a crown of the pleasures of the human life in the form of the most crystallized feeling of joy, lightness and well-being resulting from this very unique bodily presence.730

Any of these delights, if they are exercised alone or to an excess, can lead to *titillatio*, instead of *hilaritas*. Therefore, we need to be cautious about how we exercise them and to be conscious of the different needs that the human body has. If some parts are more strongly affected than the rest, this can be harmful for the ratio of movement and rest, and, as a consequence, for the perseverance of our being.

Although *hilaritas* requires these external causes, it is a very special kind of an affect. For Bove it is essentially an affect of self. He writes that, although the intervention of external causes is necessary for *hilaritas*, the character of this affect cannot be reduced to these external conditions: “it still supposes an essential balance the very essence of which expresses itself in a particular proportion of motion-and-rest”.731 Although it is in the first place a passive affect, it may turn into an active one when one joins this idea of self to God. Bove describes *hilaritas* as a powerful joy of “a fundamental confidence which as soon as it can accompany itself with the idea of God as a cause in the second as in the third type of knowledge, will become an active affect, blessedness”.732 *Hilaritas* is not yet an active affect but is still passive, caused by the interplay of a multitude of nice external causes. It may, however, turn into an active affect. It is a feeling of a certain kind of state in the body, a sensation of bodily harmony, through which one can sense the presence of one’s essence. It could be called an affective representation of the essence; but I regard it primarily as a feeling of bodily equilibrium. To arouse it requires different kinds of favorable external causes, and it gives us a feeling of our essence, of that rare bodily state in which all of its parts are equally affected by joy. According to Matheron, this bodily state involved in *hilaritas* could make us think of Yoga, so that the body governs itself:

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730 This importance of sensual pleasures for tuning our affectivity can be sensed so well in Matheron’s words when he writes that “cultivons tous les plaisirs en les modérant les uns par les autres; nourriture agréable, parfums, plantes verdoyantes, beaux vêtements, musique, gymnastique, spectacles, rien de tout cela n’est à dédaigner” (Matheron 1988, 524).
731 Bove 2004, 213.
maîtrise parfaite du corps, qui ferait songer au Yoga si elle ne s’en distinguait sur un point fondamental: ce n’est pas l’âme qui maîtrisera le corps en lui imposant une norme transcendante, c’est le corps qui se maîtrisera lui-même en s’imposant à lui-même. 733

The body masters itself through its own laws, and the mind, as the idea of the body, represents this optimal state of the human body. Through this unique state of bodily equilibrium, it feels intensively being itself. The mind as a representation of the body can now think of several objects at once, and hence, it is ready for reason. 734

733 Cf. Matheron also when he continues that “chacun de nos gestes, chacune de nos attitudes en sera l’expression adéquate. Parallèlement, l’idée complète de cette essence se détachera et se maintiendra au premier plan dans notre esprit. Alors, notre puissance d’agir et notre joie de la contempler atteindront leur point culminant : joie de fonctionner à plein rendement, joie de nous construire et de nous reconstruire nous-mêmes en permanence, joie de nous actualiser pleinement” (Matheron 1988, 585f).

734 Cf. e.g. Bove according to which “cheerfulness – which is always good and without excess – is the passive affect par excellence that agrees adequately with reason. Through this affect, reason can begin to express itself” (Bove 2004, 214). A full account of Spinoza’s imagination requires to study his views of societies as he explains them in the Theological-Political Treatise and the Political Treatise. For instance, in the former he shows how the security, wealth and bodily well-being depend on external causes. Spinoza examines how the ancient Hebrews were able to organise themselves so that for certain period of time they were prosper. We should be aware of the fact that Spinoza uses the notion of ingenium both when he writes about a single human being (cf. e.g. GII/236) and nations. As regards the latter Spinoza writes in the Theological-Political Treatise for example that “[b]ut the fact is that after Moses knew the temperament and the stubborn heart of his nation, he saw clearly that they could not finish what they had begun without the greatest miracles and the special external aid of God [Sed res est, postquam Moses novit ingenium, et animum suae nationis contumacem,clare vidit, eos non sine maximis miraculis, et singulari Dei auxilio externo, res inceptas pericere posse; imo eos necessario sine tali auxilio perituros; adeoque ut constaret, Deum eos conservatos velle, hoc Dei singulare auxilium externum petit.]” (GIII/53/41). The fact that Spinoza refers to a human being as well as to a nation by the term of ingenium gives us a reason to think that he regarded both of them as habituated in certain way, e.g. to be inclined to certain kinds of passions and expectations. In Spinoza’s account of imagination there is, then, essentially a collective aspect. Cf. Bove “on y apprend [l’étude de l’Etat hébreu] que l’essence singulière d’un Etat enveloppe nécessairement l’imagination, qu’elle est elle-même puissance d’imagination et auto-organisation de la multitude, et qu’elle s’affirme ainsi comme la force productive da la modalité sociale et historique” (Bove 1996, 238f). Cf. Moreau and how he stresses e.g. the laws of society as expressing the ingenium of its people (Moreau 1994, 62f). Matheron provides us with a very illuminating study of how the ancient Hebrews were favorably organised with the aid of Moses’s understanding of the imagination which characterized his people. He insists that it is exactly through imagination that Moses affected the people: “Moïse – et c’est là qu’est le mystère – n’eût à aucun moment une connaissance claire de ce mécanisme psycho-social. Simplement, par une chance inouïe, deux choses se présenteront à son imagination: il perçut, d’une part, le genre de vie qui convenait le mieux aux Hébreux, mais sans comprendre comment ni pourquoi ce genre de vie les rendrait nécessairement heureux; il perçut, d’autre part, ce qu’il fallait leur faire espérer pour les amener à se soumettre, mais sans comprendre comment ni pourquoi la réalisation de ces espérances découlerait nécessairement de leur soumission” (Matheron 1971, 26). The suitable arrangements of external causes and interactions with others is necessary for our body to be able to be affected in a great many ways. It provides us with the conditions and the basis for rational and creative activities. So whether we are able to exercise our reason and act on
4 The power of the mind

4.1 What does the power of the mind over the passions consist in?

It is of utmost importance to understand that reason cannot exercise its power without external and imaginative means. When external conditions are arranged in such a way that the body is harmoniously affected, the mind is able to exercise its power, to form adequate ideas. In EVP20S Spinoza writes what the power of the mind over the affects consists in:

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 (see P10, and in addition, P12, P13, and P14) (EVP20S).\textsuperscript{735}

All these remedies are related to the mind’s power to form adequate ideas. The mind has no power of its own other than the power to form adequate ideas. These remedies of reason do have real power when they are joined with suitable external causes, and the imagination and passions they arouse.

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rational desires depends on the social conditions and the way in which the state is organised. Cf. Matheron according to whom “[s]ous l’influence de la Raison, nous désirons connaître et faire connaître. Pour connaître, nous avons besoin d’un champ perceptif à la fois équilibré et riche, qui requiert lui-même un développement harmonieux de toutes les aptitudes de notre corps. Pour diffuser nos connaissances, nous avons besoin d’un climat de paix sociale. Or cela dépend, en partie au moins, du concours des causes extérieures” (Matheron 1988, 517). I intend to continue the discussion of the relationship between society and rational affects and desires in another study. Especially, I think that it is worthwhile to study more how the notion of ingenium occurs in Spinoza’s writings. It is an extensive question in itself so in attempting to keep the focus on the original issue about the relationship between Descartes and Spinoza it went beyond the scope of this study.

\textsuperscript{735} GII/293 : “Mentis in affectus potentiam consistere:
I°. In ipsa affectuum cognitione (vide Schol. Prop. 4. hujus).
II°. In eo, quod affectus a cogitatione causae externae, quam confuse imaginamur, separat (vide Prop. 2. cum eodem Schol. Prop. 4. hujus).
III°. In tempore, quo affectiones, quae ad res, quas intelligimus, referuntur, illas superant, quae ad res referuntur, quas confuse, seu mutilate concipimus (vide Prop. 7. hujus).
IV°. In multitudine causarum, a quibus affectiones, quae ad rerum communes proprietates, vel ad Deum referuntur, foveantur (vide Prop. 9. et 11. hujus).
Failure to understand the necessary relationship between the passions and reason in Spinoza has led many commentators, most notably Bennett, to question these remedies and their force. Bennett writes about certain techniques which according to him Spinoza’s therapy consists in, and he thinks that they fail. He writes about certain techniques which according to him Spinoza’s therapy consists in, and he thinks that they fail.736 Comparing his reading of Spinoza’s remedy of passions with the one Stuart Hampshire presents, Bennett writes that

I have found only a scatter of truths, none completely under control and no two properly related to one another.737

He would understand the sense in which the remedies are under control, related to one another and have true force if his account of Spinoza’s mastery of the passions acknowledged the necessary role of the imagination and external causes. Furthermore, it would require understanding that forming an adequate idea of an affect means to understand it as a bodily affection, as we form a clear and distinct idea of the sun.

4.1.1 To form a clear and distinct idea of an affect

The adequate knowledge Spinoza thinks we can have of the passive affects concerns these affects as bodily affections. We acquire an understanding that is the same in all men, about what happens in the human body when there is such and such emotional state. The foundation of reason, as we have learned, is the common notions. The more specific laws derived from them govern the behavior of all bodies. The passive affects by definition involve ideas of bodily affections. Therefore, Spinoza thinks that

there is no affection of the Body of which we cannot form a clear and distinct concept (EV4).738

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736 For instance, he thinks that we cannot possibly have adequate ideas of passions which Spinoza insists on: “really it is non-sense, for no one could possibly acquire an adequate idea of an event after it has occurred. If x now exists and is a passion in me, then its cause y was outside my body; so I(y) was outside of my mind, and thus I(x) is inadequate in my mind. And that’s that! I can no more make I(x) adequate by bringing it about that I(y) was inside my mind than I can become royal by altering who my parents were” (Bennett 1984, 336). To come to such a conclusion shows that something must have gone wrong. The way in which this line of arguing goes wrong, I think, lies in the fact that one does not attempt to understand the bodily affection in question but to have an adequate idea of the sequence of the external conditions that is indeed impossible. If we try to understand adequately a passion as a bodily affection, this attempt does not depend on when we do it. It can be done at the moment it happens or afterwards, even before! To understand a desire or anger, for example, does not differ from understanding why the sun seems to be so close. Their understanding requires experience, but once we have it, we know them and how they are alike now and in the future.737 Bennett 1984, 347.

738 GII/282: “Nulla est Corporis affectio, cujus aliquem clarum, et distinctum non possumus formare conceptum.”
Since all affects, considered under the attribute of extension, are affections of the body, we can have as adequate an idea of our affects as we can of any other bodily affection. Earlier we looked at Spinoza’s example of the sun and its appearing to be very close to us. The acquisition of an adequate thought about the bodily affection caused by the sun requires knowledge of the laws of motion, like of geometrical optics, of the structure of the eye and the optic nerves that cause us to perceive the sun in the way we do. In the same way, Spinoza thinks that we can acquire knowledge of passive affects. When we know the laws that govern the phenomenon in question and have conducted a sufficient number of experiments and inferences based on observations, we are able to say why a certain emotion occurs.

Spinoza does not give very clear examples of how to explain passive affects based on the laws of motion and experimental studies. But he clearly thinks that adequate understanding of passive affects requires both of these, just as the explanations of sense-perceptions do. In the second part of the Ethics, we get an idea how he thought that the laws governing the passive affects could function. In EIIIP17S he explains how there occur traces in the soft parts of the human body as a result of interactions with external bodies. These traces are reflected in the same manner by the spontaneous movement of the fluid parts of the body as they were when they were caused by the external objects. The movements of these bodily parts are to be explained by some set of the laws of motion, although Spinoza does not give any more specific examples of them. The explanation of these traces presupposes studies of physiology and the brain, which were not well-advanced in Spinoza’s time. In EIIIP2S he says that nobody has yet explained what the body can do from the laws of its own nature. The knowledge that would be comparable to that of geometrical optics as regards the perception of the sun, would be one that explained the chemical processes and brain systems responsible for emotional arousal. Spinoza does not claim such a knowledge of the laws that govern the physiology of affects. But clearly he thinks that there are such laws. In the demonstration of EVP4 he refers explicitly to the common notions:

\[\text{those things which are common to all can only be conceived adequately (by IIP38), and so (byIIP12 and L2[II/98]) there is no affection of the body of which we cannot form some clear and distinct concept (EVP4Dem).}\]

To have a clear and distinct thought of a bodily affection means to explain it through some set of the laws of motion derived from common notions. We need to have knowledge of the structure of affection, as we understand the structure of the retina when we explain a visual perception. This requires

experimental knowledge. The idea that understanding affects requires understanding them as bodily affections is explicit in the scholium:

> [f]rom this it follows that there is no affect of which we cannot form some clear and distinct concept. For an affect is an idea of an affection of the Body (by Gen. Def. Aff.), which therefore (by P4) must involve some clear and distinct concept (EVP4Cor.).\(^740\)

Furthermore: “[a]n affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it” (EVP3).\(^741\) Concerning the inadequate idea of the sun, we cease to have false beliefs about its size and distance when we embed sense perception into a system of adequate ideas that explains why we have the perception of the sun we do. We still have the sense perception but we know the true distance.

In the same way when we understand a passive affect, like desire or anger, we know which parts in the brain are activated and the chemical messengers that govern aggression. Nowadays we can provide a fairly detailed explanation of what happens in the brain in these cases. Thus, we have a clear and distinct idea of the affect as a bodily affection. At the same time we still feel desire or anger. They do not affect us, however, in the same way as before. Before one was ignorant of the causes of affects and thought to have them freely. Now one knows why it occurs and becomes more active. A greater part of the mind is constituted by adequate ideas than by inadequate:

> [t]he more an affect is known to us, then, the more it is in our power, and the less the Mind is acted on by it (EVP3Cor).\(^742\)

When the mind uses its own power, \textit{i.e.}, forms adequate ideas, and understands what happens when a passion occurs, it masters the situation better than when it was only acted upon by the passion. In general, the mind is less acted on by it because it uses its own power. Furthermore, this knowledge has important consequences. For instance, if we are in pain and are able to know more about our ache, we certainly can bear the pain at least with more ease than before. It may be that with knowledge of that bodily affection, it is possible to cure or at least diminish that pain.

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\(^{741}\) GIII/282 : “Affectus, qui passio est, desinit esse passio, simulatque ejus claram, et distinctam formamus ideam.”

\(^{742}\) GIII/282 : “Affectus igitur eo magis in nostra potestate est, et Mens ab eo minus patitur, quo nobis est notior.”
Spinoza does not give any example of what it is to form a clear and distinct idea of those passive affects that we call nowadays emotions. He does, however, give an example of what it is to have an adequate idea of our desire. In EVP4S he refers to the constitution of human nature that he had given in the third part of the Ethics: each of us wants that others should live according to his own temperament, a fact that produces many conflicts. One relates to others through impulses and tries to make them like or dislike the same things as oneself does. At the same time, one is scared, however, that others would really love the same things as he does because they are rarely something that can be shared: “while they rejoice to sing the praises of the thing they love, they fear to be believed” (EIVP37S1).\footnote{743 GII/236: “hinc fit, ut qui amant, mente sibi non constent, et dum laudes rei, quam amant, narrare gaudent, timeant credi.”}

If desire is understood adequately and a human being strives from reason, she wants others to aim at understanding as she does. In this case the appetite to make others love what oneself does is called morality.\footnote{744 Referring to the human constitution he presents in EIIP31S that each wants to live according to his temperament Spinoza writes that “in a man who is not led by reason this appetite is the passion called ambition, which does not differ much from pride. On the other hand, in a man who lives according to the dictate of reason it is the action, or virtue, called morality [qui quidem appetitus in homine, qui ratione non ducitur, passio est, quae Ambitio vocatur, nec multum a Superbia discrepat; et contra in homine, qui ex rationis dictamine vivit, actio, seu virtus est, quae Pietas appellatur]” (EVP4S; GII/283).} According to Spinoza, we can act or be acted on by the same desire: “the appetite by which a man is said to act, and that by which he is said to be acted on, are one and the same” (EVP4S).\footnote{745 GII/283: “Nam apprime notandum est, unum, eundemque esse appetitum, per quem homo tam agere, quam pati dicitur.”}

Desire, to make others love what we love, is the same in both cases, but because our understanding of it differs, it also affects us and our behavior differently.

4.1.2 To separate the affect from a confused thoughts of an external cause

The second remedy Spinoza gives is to separate the affect from the idea of an external cause that we imagine confusedly. It is not clear what this means. How can we ever separate the affect from the idea of the external cause? Bennett thinks that it can be understood as a technique by which we replace the unpleasant thoughts caused by the external thing with thinking about something nice and joyful:

I am to destroy the unpleasantness and upset involved in my hatred for W by arranging that when a bout of it comes over me I stop thinking about W and flood my mind with thoughts of a Chardin pastel or a Mozart quartet or Ven- rona or my father – something that fills me with pleasure.\footnote{746 Bennett 1984, 335.}
This sounds like what Descartes recommends to calm down the bodily turmoil. Bennett says too that “[t]his would probably succeed, not in abolishing my hostile disposition but in calming the feelings that go with it”. 747 Spinoza’s remedy is not, however, about habituating oneself to different thoughts. If we train ourselves to have pleasant thoughts instead of upsetting ones, we are still relying on imagination and the power of external objects to cause some good affects in us. This is a part of Spinoza’s mastery of passions, but it is not something reason does. Here we consider only the power of mind to cause adequate ideas, and to replace unpleasant thoughts with some nice ones does not amount to that.

We should separate the affect from the thought of an external cause which we imagine confusedly. The idea of a finite thing we imagine as a cause of our affects is always a confused thought. External objects can become causes of our affects because of the principles of association. An object causes in us some affect because we have related it at some point to another object or it resembles something else that has caused an affect in us. Although we have a clear and distinct understanding of these mechanisms, we do not ever understand these associations clearly and distinctly because we are finite minds. I do not think that adequate knowledge of affects means understanding those associations at all. The knowledge that reason can provide of the affects – which is the same in each human being (sic!) – does not concern them.

To separate the affect from the idea of an external cause means to separate it from the confused idea of the external cause. We acquire an adequate idea of the external body and the interaction between the human and the external body based on the laws and the knowledge of the nature of bodies in question. When we separate the affect from the idea of an external cause, we separate it from the idea of the external object as imagined, based on the associations. No longer do we think of the affection as a result of haphazard circumstances – no matter how sensible we could render them – but we have really an adequate understanding of why we are undergoing such an affect based on the knowledge we have of the laws that governs bodies with such a nature.

Furthermore, Spinoza recommends that we join the clear and distinct idea of an affect to true ideas:

We must, therefore, take special care to know each affect clearly and distinctly (as far as this is possible), so that in this way the Mind may be determined from an affect to thinking those things which it perceives clearly and distinctly, and with which it is fully satisfied, and so that the affect itself may

747 Bennett 1984, 335.
be separated from the thought of an external cause and joined to true thoughts (EVP4S).\footnote{GII/283: “Huic igitur rei praecipue danda est opera, ut unumquamque affectum, quantum fieri potest, clare, et distincte cognoscamus, ut sic Mens ex affectu ad illa cogitandum determinetur, quae clare, et distincte percipiit, et in quibus plane acquiscit; atque adeo, ut ipse affectus a cogitatione causae externae separetur, et veris jungatur cognitionibus.”}

So when we understand an affect adequately it is truly so, period. There is no dispute any longer about why such an affect occurs; This is something everybody would concede. When we understand passions in a psychological sense, according to associations and habituation, we acquire an understanding that differs from man to man. An adequate knowledge of the passions amounts, however, to an understanding that is the very same in each human being. There are no differences between people as far as the order of the intellect is concerned. Although different objects are causes of our loves and hates, we can still understand the affect itself in the same way.

Spinoza gives an impression that when we are able to separate the affect from the idea of an external cause, the affect caused by the external cause and the vacillations related to it are destroyed.\footnote{He says that “[i]f 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 [Si animi commotiones, seu affectus a causae externae cogitatione amoveamus, et alis jungamus cognitionibus, tum Amor, seu Odium erga causam externam, ut et animi fluctuationes, quae ex his affectibus oriuntur, destruentur]” (EVP2;GII/281). We should, however, notice that this is put in a conditional form. Indeed if the affect is separated from the idea of the external cause, then the affect and vacillations are destroyed. We cannot, however, ever separate the affect completely from the idea of an external cause. Therefore, the way in which Spinoza expresses it as a remedy for passions in EVP20S is not exactly in this form. It tells us to separate the affect from the idea of an external cause which it imagines confusedly. The idea of an external cause is still joined to the affect but adequately, in the same way as the idea of the sun is related to our image when we understand it right.} This is not quite accurate. As the example of the sun tells us, we still imagine the sun in the way we do now, even after we acquire an adequate idea of it. Despite the fact that one understands loves and hates scientifically one continues to love and hate. But now one knows that there are certain determinate why one undergoes such an affect. For this reason we are not so much acted on by passions and having the false belief that they occur freely.

4.1.3 Time related to rational affects

Forming adequate ideas is something that Spinoza thinks very highly of:

we can devise no other remedy for the affects which depends on a true knowledge of them. For the mind has no other power than that of thinking and forming adequate ideas (EVP20S).\footnote{GII/283f: “Atque hoc (ut eo, unde digressus sum, revertar) affectuum remedio, quod scilicet in eorum vera cognitione consistit, nullum praestantius aliud, quod a nostra potestate...}
Affects that arise from our forming adequate ideas are more powerful than passions. This is so when we take time into account. It is the third remedy Spinoza thinks that the mind has against passions:

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\text{[a]ffects that arise from, or are aroused by, reason are, if we take account of time, more powerful than those that are related to singular things which we regard as absent (EVP7).} \]

Why does Spinoza think that time has such an influence that it makes rational affects and desires stronger than passions? As we saw above, the mind does not err because it imagines a thing to be present; it errs because it does not have another idea that excludes the existence of those things it imagines to be present (EIIP17S). The passions are not weaker because they are nothing (or inhere in nothing). They are weaker because there can occur other affects which suppress them. The affects that are caused by things that are not present can be excluded by other affects. This becomes more probable as time passes.

It does not, however, apply to the affects and desires that arise from reason. They exist always. The affects of reason arise from common notions that concern all the bodies and are equally the part and the whole. There cannot ever be an affection that excludes the existence of affects which arise from understanding things based on common notions. Each bodily affection we ever undergo, reminds us of them. Therefore, if we take into account the time, rational affects and desires are more powerful than the passions caused by external objects.

**4.1.4 The multiplicity of causes related to common notions**

It is not only time that makes the affects and desires related to reason more powerful than passions. There are simply more chances for rational affects to arise. This is so because each of the bodily affections we undergo involves certain sets of laws which we may try to understand. There are, then, many more causes for us to feel active joys than the passive ones. This is what Spinoza recommends as the fourth remedy for the passions: to encourage the affects related to common notions and God. There is a multiplicity of causes to produce affects related to common notions because all our bodily affections are governed by them. So the affects we relate to common notions are more frequent than any other affect. Spinoza tells about images that

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751 GII/285: “Affectus, qui ex ratione oriuntur, vel excitantur, si ratio temporis habeatur, potentiores sunt iis, qui ad res singulares referuntur, quas ut absentes contemplamur.”

752 This is Della Rocca’s view: “[t]he fundamental point is that precisely because a passive affect is passive, it cannot be in God, i.e. it cannot be made intelligible through God. But, as we saw, a passive affect cannot be fully in or fully intelligible in terms of anything that is not God. And so it seems that passive affects are not fully in anything” (Della Rocca 2008, 48f).
This idea applies also to common notions because there cannot be a thing which does not remind us of common notions. We can use our power to attempt to produce affects from the common notions we conceive in our bodily affections. This is a way to be better prepared for the future passions because when the mind uses its power in understanding in general the affections it undergoes, it is ready and habituated to understand the troublesome passions when they occur.

4.1.5 To order and connect affects according to the intellect

The fifth and final remedy provides one with the ultimate way to protect oneself from the passions in the future. It calls for us to order and connect all ideas of bodily affections according to the order of intellect. This remedy is the final step in Spinoza’s science of the passions. When we know how the different passions are caused, we can make a consistent theory of the passions:

[the Mind can bring it about that all the Body’s affections, or images of things, are related to the idea of God (EVP14).]754

This is the best way to be prepared for future passions. When we know how all passions occur in the human body, it is more difficult for passions to have power over us:

By this power of rightly ordering and connecting the affections of the Body, we can bring it about that we are not easily affected with evil affects. For (by P7) a 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 (EVP10S).755

As long as we have not really exercised our power and studied how different passions occur, the power of the external objects does not need to be very strong to disturb us. It is much more difficult to shake us when we have knowledge of the passions, and especially if we have been able to make a consistent theory of knowledge of affects. Then we know, to a certain extent,

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753 GII/289: “Quo imago aliqua ad plures res refertur, eo frequentior est, seu saepius viget, et Mentem magis occupat.”
754 GII/290: “Mens efficere potest, ut omnes Corporis affectiones, seu rerum imagines ad Dei ideam referantur.”
755 GII/287: “Hac potestate recte ordinandi, et concatenandi Corporis affectiones efficere possimus, ut non facile malis affectibus afficiamur. Nam (per Prop. 7. hujus) major vis requiritur ad Affectus, secundum ordinem ad intellectum ordinatos, et concatenatos coercendum, quam incertos, et vagos.”
beforehand, what there is to expect and what to do when certain passion occurs.

Bennett, as we saw above, does not believe these remedies are connected to one another.\textsuperscript{756} I do think, however, that they are joined. None of them can be understood without the mind forming an adequate idea of a passion in the sense of understanding it as a bodily affection. Spinoza aims to make a science of the human body when it undergoes the passions. For that purpose all the remedies are internally connected. We cannot order and connect affects to one another if we have not been able to understand them adequately, to separate the affect from the confused idea of the external cause, to realize the role of time and the possibility of acquiring rational affects from all the bodily affections we undergo. Based on this knowledge we can have of the bodily affections, the mind is able to predict what happens when it has certain passions and to protect itself from future passions. Bennett fails to see the connection between these remedies because he does not think that forming an adequate idea of a passion requires understanding it as a bodily affection.

The person that makes the best use of external causes, has the imagination that reminds her of her power and exercises the force of her mind – forms adequate ideas of her passions – is really a master of herself. The result is not a utopian of ethics but an account that has a real impact on us. Being able to connect the passions to one another, there is hardly a chance for an external cause to disturb her peaceful and joyful living. Or if there is something that perturbs it, it does so just for a while, and she is able to recover from it soon. Such a state is rare to acquire, but when it is acquired, it is the most powerful and enduring state a human being can possibly attain.

4.2 To increase the strength of rational affects and desires

Spinoza does not mean, however, that this state is only for an isolated human being to attain. He wants that as many as possible are able to use their reason:

\begin{quote}
\textit{it is part of my happiness to take pains that many others may understand as I understand, so that their intellect and desire agree entirely with my intellect and desire (CW I, 11; GII/8).}\textsuperscript{757}
\end{quote}

If we were able to form a society in which everybody strives to think adequately, we would be naturally very strong. Understanding is what preserves our being in the best possible ways. This joy is an active affect that Spinoza calls love of God. The more we are able to acquire clear and distinct con-

\textsuperscript{756} Cf. Bennett 1984, 347 and the discussion above.

\textsuperscript{757} GII/8: “talem scilicet naturam acquirere, et, ut multi mecum eam acquirant, conari, hoc est, de mea felicitate etiam est operam dare, ut alii multi idem, atque ego intelligent, ut eorum intellectus, et cupiditas prorsus cum meo intellectu, et cupiditate convenient.”
cepts of our affects, the more we rejoice. It is our mind that causes this joy but because we understand that our mind is part of God or Nature, we consider God as cause of this joy, and henceforth this joy is called love of God. Spinoza thinks that this love engages the mind most because it concerns all the bodily affections we undergo. It strengthens us truly, it never fails us.

We have seen that we love things more when there are others who love what we do. Therefore, there need to be others who think as Spinoza does. Otherwise human nature does not really become stronger. We need others to desire and love the things we love:

\[ \text{The good which man wants for himself and loves, he will love more constantly if he sees that others love it (by IIIP31). So (by IIIP31C), he will strive to have the others love the same thing (IVP37Alt.dem).}^{758} \]

The consequence as regards external goods is that because they often cannot be shared, they make us vacillate and cause both hope and fear. Understanding is, however, common to all men (cf. EIVP36Dem). Our bodies are governed by the laws of motion, and our minds, which are nothing but ideas of the human body, must understand things in the same way when we think adequately. We cannot be saddened by others who desire to know. Love for God is beyond envy and jealousy. Spinoza thinks that we necessarily imitate others because our striving; our loves and hates become more stable when there are more people who love and hate what we do. This applies to our desire to understand and love God as well. The more there are people who desire to know, the steadier is one’s love of knowledge, for God.

There is no monopoly on knowledge. When we imitate the bodily affections related to the rational affects and desires, we are not rivals but good for one another. Spinoza points out that “the more men we imagine to enjoy it, the more it must be encouraged” (EVP20).^{759} Given that we belong to one substance and interact necessarily with one another, it is hard to see how the rational desires and joys could even emerge in the first place if there were no others who desire to know. No piece of work in the sciences or the arts could have been produced in total isolation.

Spinoza aims to build a stronger and more enduring human nature. An important part of this project is to organise well the external causes and to build a society that is tolerant and allows freedom of speech. In such external conditions the exercise of reason is possible. This is his way to write an ethics and political theory that has a practical application, instead of creating another utopia or fiction. His project is essentially a collective one. He wants

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758 GII/236: “Bonum, quod homo sibi appetit, et amat, constantius amabit, si viderit, alios idem amare (per Prop. 31. p. 3.); atque adeo (per Coroll. ejusdem Prop.) conabitur, ut reliqui idem ament.”

759 GII/292: “sed eo magis fovetur, quo plures homines eodem Amoris vinculo cum Deo junctos imaginamur.”
to enable as many as possible to use reason. The more there were people who understand, the more powerful, consistent, inherently active human nature would be, better prepared for the passions and less dependent on fortune. It would be a big step forward.
Conclusion

Medea’s words were frequently quoted in the early modern period. We find them in Descartes too, in his letter to Mersenne on May 1637. Descartes, however, understands them in a different light than Spinoza. According to Descartes, error occurs when we affirm something that we conceive confusedly. Descartes’s explanation of error relies on the distinction he makes between the intellect and the will. He writes to Mersenne that “if the intellect never represented anything to the will as good without its actually being so, the will could never go wrong in its choice” (CSMK III 56; AT I 366).\(^{760}\) Because the human intellect is not infinite, however, it often represents things to us in a way that is neither clear nor distinct. In this context Descartes refers to Medea’s words as follows: “but the intellect often represents different things to the will at the same time; and that is why they say ‘I see and praise the better, but follow the worse’, which applies only to weak minds” (CSMK III 56; AT I 366).\(^{761}\) For Descartes Medea is weak-minded in the sense that she gives the consent of her will to thoughts she perceives confusedly. She has the power not to give the consent because, according to Descartes, the will cannot be constrained. As we have seen, if she had at least waited until the turmoil of her body had calmed down, she would have been able to raise thoughts contrary to the passions and follow the judgments according to which she had decided to conduct her life.

Medea’s case shows us the difference between Descartes’s and Spinoza’s accounts of the mastery of the passions. According to Spinoza, Medea did not act according to her better knowledge because the passion she was undergoing was by far stronger than the power of her rational desires. For her not to have such passion would have required suitable external conditions and the training of her imagination, which could have inhibited her becoming absorbed by such a vicious circle. As I have attempted to describe above, she can be understood be affected by a strong *titillatio* because of the gorgeous and courageous Jason. She was so strongly affected by him that she helped him out of dangers by magical herbs she knew so well, insisted on fleeing with and marrying a man she did not really know, and leaving the

\(^{760}\) AT I 366 : “si jamais l’entendement ne représentait rien à la volonté comme bien, qui ne le fut, elle ne pourrait manquer en son élection.”

\(^{761}\) AT I 366 : “[m]ais il lui représente souvent diverses choses en même temps; d’où vient le mot video meliora proboque, qui n’est que pour les esprits faibles.”
country of her father; things which made her as the person she was. She was trusting him, imagining herself as happy forever with him. Her passion put the ratio that defined her being under a considerable risk. Because of the passion, she transferred her power to another. She became subject to him and diverged from herself.

The end of the story shows where *titillatio* can lead one. Mastered by her passion, Medea inflicts a painful death on her rival, Jason’s new bride Glauce, by sending her as a wedding gift a golden crown and a white robe which burst into flames when Glauce wore them. Then she bathes her sword in the blood of their sons and forces Jason to witness this. She had a wonderful gift, the knowledge of witchcraft and the secrets of herbs, but she transferred it to Jason, and when he went for another, she started to use it to destroy. *Titillatio* promised her a head crowned by stars, but in fact, it made her lose her head. Medea was a famous sorceress of Colchis but having lost herself to the stunning stranger she could no longer use the power of magic she was such a master of to preserve her own being. She flees to Athens whose king Aegeus had provided her a sanctuary and with whom she remarries. There she makes the king offer his son, Theseus, a mortal drink mixed with the poison of aconite dripped from the teeth of Cerberus. But the king conceives the deception. And what happens to Medea? Her power, the witchcraft, saves her from physical death but there is no longer place for her being. Medea vanishes in a mist by her magic spells.

Medea’s body was far from *hilaritas*. This special affect of bodily equilibrium is a signal of the importance of external conditions in Spinoza because by making all parts of the body equally affected by joy, *hilaritas* requires favorable external causes of many different sorts. In a way, Spinoza’s philosophy urges us to develop our body. The body that Medea had was an infantile body, strong in passions, high in excitement and impulsive. Such a body is useful for those who are growing, yet harmful for rational activities, social peace, and happiness. We need to develop the body, make it so that it is capable of being affected in many ways. Then, the mind can think of many things at once and be rational:

[i]n this life, then, we strive especially that the infant’s Body may change (as much as its nature allows and assists) into another, capable of a great many things and related to a Mind very much conscious of itself, of God, and of things (EVP39S).\(^\text{762}\)

\(^{762}\) GII/305: “In hac vita igitur apprime conamur, ut Corpus infantiae in aliud, quantum ejus natura patitur, eique conductit, mutetur, quod ad plurima aptum sit, quodque ad Mentem referatur, quae sui, et Dei, et rerum plurimum sit conscia”. We need to develop the body to be affected in many ways so that we are not troubled by the excessive and obsessive passions. Spinoza says in the demonstration that “[h]e who has a Body capable of doing a great many things is least troubled by evil affects (by IVP30), i.e. (by IVP30), by affects contrary to our nature [Qui Corpus ad plurima agendum aptum habet, is minime affectibus, qui mali sunt, conflictatur (per Prop. 38. p. 4.), hoc est (per Prop. 30. p. 4.), affectibus, qui
Hilaritas is a crucial affect in this process: it is an affect which maintains the ratio of an individual and, brings about many things that follow from the individual’s nature, and the mind is able to perceive many things at once, which is what reason requires. This joy of bodily equilibrium is rarely acquired: “[c]heerfulness, which I have said is good, is more easily conceived than observed” (EIVP44S). The way towards such an exceptional condition requires that we master external causes, be involved in right measures in sensual and aesthetic pleasures, and sports – have a nice living. All this provides the necessary conditions for creative and rational life, resisting our passions becoming excessive and detrimental and for us being able to feel our essence.

naturae nostrae sunt contrarii” (EVP39Dem). Cf. Moreau when he comments on the demonstration: “l’excellence des âmes (quelles qu’elles soient) étant proportionnelle à celle des corps dont elles constituent les idées, c’est la différence entre les corps qui permet de penser la différence entre les âmes, d’abord sur le plan de la connaissance, ensuite sur celui de la conduite, enfin sur celui de ce que l’on pourrait appeler la proportion d’éternité” (Moreau 2006, 69).

763 GII/243: “Hilaritas, quam bonam esse dixi, concipitur facilius, quam observatur.”
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