

Spinoza's Eudaimonism

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March 2024

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Ph.D. Philosophy

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I examine Benedict de Spinoza's engagement with ancient Greek moral philosophy (in particular, his agreements and disagreements with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics). Through this comparative analysis, I argue for three central claims. Firstly, Spinoza is best understood as continuing the ancient ethical tradition of eudaimonism, which considers happiness (a) partly grounded in certain facts about (human) nature; (b) partly grounded in the beliefs/feelings of a subject; (c) structurally stable; and (d) exclusively intrinsically good. Secondly, Spinoza's unique contribution to this ethical tradition is his view that mind and body are ontologically and ethically equal by virtue of their non-reductive identity. Thirdly, this equality of mind and body crucially informs Spinoza's views (in contrast with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics) on core eudaimonistic themes, such as the roles of pleasure, virtue, reason, and activity in living a happy life. These views ultimately showcase Spinoza's novel synthesis of the unity (i.e., identity) and plurality (i.e., diverse expression) of being, both ontologically and ethically, insofar as Thought and Extension, mind and body, will and intellect, practical reason and theoretical reason, and pleasure and activity are revealed, in each ontological context, to be different (but strictly corresponding) aspects of one and the same thing.

Résumé

Dans cette thèse, j'examine l'engagement de Benedict de Spinoza avec la philosophie morale de la Grèce antique (en particulier ses accords et désaccords avec Aristote, Épicure et les stoïciens). À travers cette analyse comparative, je défends trois affirmations centrales. Premièrement, Spinoza est mieux compris comme continuant l'ancienne tradition éthique de l'eudémonisme, qui considère le bonheur (a) en partie fondé sur certains faits sur la nature (humaine) ; (b) en partie fondé sur les croyances/sentiments d'un sujet ; (c) structurellement stable ; et (d) exclusivement intrinsèquement bons. Deuxièmement, la contribution unique de Spinoza à cette tradition éthique réside dans sa vision selon laquelle l'esprit et le corps sont ontologiquement et éthiquement égaux en vertu de leur identité non réductrice. Troisièmement, cette égalité de l'esprit et du corps éclaire de manière cruciale les vues de Spinoza (contrairement à celles d'Aristote, d'Épicure et des stoïciens) sur des thèmes eudémonistes fondamentaux, tels que les rôles du plaisir, de la vertu, de la raison, et de l'activité dans une vie heureuse. Ces vues mettent finalement en valeur la nouvelle synthèse de Spinoza sur l'unité (c'est-à-dire l'identité) et la pluralité (c'est-à-dire l'expression diverse) de l'être, à la fois ontologiquement et éthiquement, dans la mesure où la Pensée et l'Extension, l'esprit et le corps, la volonté et l'intellect, la raison pratique et la raison théorique, le plaisir, et l'activité se révèlent, dans chaque contexte ontologique, comme des aspects différents (mais strictement correspondants) d'une seule et même chose.

Acknowledgments

A project such as this is in no way a solitary endeavour. It involves support from a wide range of people. Firstly, I must thank Carlos Fraenkel and Hasana Sharp for their consistent, kind, and passionate support at every stage. This project would have been far less ambitious, and much less interesting and rewarding, without them. I must also thank them for showing me what it means to be an excellent scholar, teacher, and supervisor.

Secondly, I must thank my various companions along the path of life. Thomas Coulbourne, Dallas Jokic, Ian Maclean-Evans, Thomas Minguy, Daniel Seggie, Isabelle Nord, and Fion Zhen, thank you for long, exciting, and hilarious chats as we traversed the confusing, troubling, and inspiring terrains of Spinoza's (not so humble) philosophy. To Emilie Duchesne, Sophie Osiecki, and Jennifer Shields, I offer my utmost love and gratitude to each of you for your love of learning, thoughtfulness, loyalty, and profound compassion. Projects like this are only possible when you are surrounded by people who nurture, not only your mind, but your heart and spirit. Much like Epicurus, in my most painful moments, I will always be able to find comfort and safety in the many joyful and inspiring memories you've brought to my life.

Finally, I very humbly thank my parents, James and Janet Smith. I am where I am and I have done what I have done here, precisely because of your profound and endless love, support, patience, and encouragement.

Thank you all for your causal role in my katastematic pleasure, active self-contentment, and persevering empowerment, both physically and intellectually (these things all being the same).

List of Abbreviations

Primary Literature

Plato:

All references to Plato's works are taken from *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson, Hackett, 1997.

Aristotle:

C: Categories

GA: Generation of Animals

GC: On Generation and Corruption

Meta: Metaphysics

NE: Nicomachean Ethics

OH: On the Heavens

OS: On the Soul

All references to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* are translated by Christopher Rowe, Oxford UP, 2002. All references to his *Metaphysics* are translated by C. D. C. Reeve, Hackett, 2016. All other references to Aristotle's works are taken from *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, edited by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols., Princeton UP, 1984.

Descartes:

MFP: Meditations on First Philosophy

PP: Principles of Philosophy

PS: The Passions of the Soul

All references to Descartes's works are taken from *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, translated by John Cottingham, et al., 3 vols., Cambridge UP, 1991. *Meditations on First Philosophy* and *Objections and Replies* are found in volume 2, Descartes's correspondence in volume 3, and all other sources in volume 1.

Epicureanism/Stoicism:

DL: Diogenes Laertius's Lives of Eminent Philosophers

DVB: Seneca's De Vita Beata

HB: Epictetus's Handbook

LH: Letter to Herodotus

LI: Letter to Idomeneus

LM: Letter to Menoeceus

LP: Letter to Pythocles

L&S: Long and Sedley's The Hellenistic Philosophers

OM: Cicero's On Moral Ends

ONG: Cicero's On the Nature of the Gods

All references to Epicurus's works are taken from *The Epicurus Reader*, edited by Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson, Hackett, 1994.

Hobbes:

EL = The Elements of the Law

L = Leviathan

All references to Hobbes's works are taken from *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, edited by Mark C. Rooks, IntelLex, 1992.

Leibniz:

DM: Discourse on Metaphysics

M: The Principles of Philosophy, or, the Monadology

PNG: Principles of Nature and Grace

References to Leibniz's "Happiness" are taken from *The Shorter Leibniz Texts: A Collection of New Translations*, translated by Lloyd Strickland, Continuum, 2006. References to Leibniz's *New Essays on Human Understanding* are translated by Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett, Cambridge UP, 1996. All other references to his works are taken from *G. W. Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*, translated by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber, Hackett, 1989.

Spinoza:

CM: Metaphysical Thoughts (Cogitata Metaphysica)

E: Ethics, Demonstrated in Geometrical Order (Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata)

App. = Appendix
 Ax. = Axiom
 C = Corollary
 Def. = Definition
 Def. Aff. = Definitions of the Affects/Emotions
 Expl. = Explication
 L = Lemma
 P = Proposition
 Post. = Postulate
 Pref. = Preface
 S = Scholium

Ep: The Letters (Epistolae)

G: Carl Gebhardt's Benedict de Spinoza: Opera

KV: Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being (Korte Verhandeling van God, de Mensch en des Zelfs Welstand)

TIE: Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect (Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione)

TP: Political Treatise (Tractatus Politicus)

TTP: Theological-Political Treatise (Tractatus Theologico-Politicus)

All references to Spinoza's works are taken (unless otherwise indicated) from *Spinoza: Complete Works*, edited by Michael L. Morgan, translated by Samuel Shirley, Hackett, 2002. When referring to a particular passage in a long section of text or making a point about translation, I will also cite the Dutch and Latin in *Benedict de Spinoza: Opera*, edited by Carl Gebhardt, 4 vols., Carl Winter, 1925.

Central Secondary Literature

Julia Annas:

Annas[a]: *The Morality of Happiness*

Annas[b]: "Aristotle on Pleasure and Goodness"

Annas[c]: "Epicurus on Pleasure and Happiness"

Annas[d]: *Intelligent Virtue*

Michael Della Rocca:

Della Rocca[a]: *Spinoza*

Della Rocca[b]: *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza*

Della Rocca[c]: “Rationalism, Idealism, Monism, and Beyond”

Della Rocca[d]: *The Parmenidean Ascent*

Don Garrett:

Garrett[a]: “Teleology in Spinoza and Early Modern Rationalism”

Garrett[b]: “Spinoza’s Ethical Theory”

Garrett[c]: “Spinoza’s Conatus Argument”

Garrett[d]: “Spinoza on the Essence of the Human Body and the Part of the Mind That Is Eternal”

Garrett[e]: “Spinoza’s Necessitarianism”

Martin Lin:

Lin[a]: “The Principle of Sufficient Reason in Spinoza.”

Lin[b]: “Spinoza’s Metaphysics of Desire”

Lin[c]: *Being and Reason: An Essay on Spinoza's Metaphysics*

Yitzhak Melamed:

Melamed[a]: *Spinoza’s Metaphysics: Substance and Thought*

Melamed[b]: “The Building Blocks of Spinoza’s Metaphysics: Substance, Attributes, and Modes”

Melamed[c]: “Spinoza’s Anti-Humanism: An Outline”

Jon Miller:

Miller[a]: *Spinoza and the Stoics*, 2015

Miller[b]: “Spinoza’s Axiology”

Miller[c]: *Spinoza and the Stoics*, dissertation, 2002

Miller[d]: “Spinoza on the Life According to Nature”

Miller[e]: “Stoics, Grotius, and Spinoza on Moral Deliberation.”

Miller[f]: “A Distinction Regarding Happiness in Ancient Philosophy.”

Steven Nadler:

Nadler[a]: *Think Least of Death: Spinoza on How to Live and How to Die*

Nadler[b]: “The Lives of Others: Spinoza on Benevolence as a Rational Virtue”

Nadler[c]: *Spinoza’s Ethics: An Introduction*

Nadler[d]: *Spinoza: A Life*

Nadler[e]: “Spinoza on Lying and Suicide.”

Nadler[f]: “The Intellectual Love of God”

Nadler[g]: “Spinoza’s Monism and the Reality of the Finite”

Susan James:

James[a]: “Spinoza the Stoic.”

James[b]: “Spinoza, the Body, and the Good Life”

James[c]: *Spinoza on Learning to Live Together*

John Rist:

Rist[a]: *Epicurus: An Introduction*

Rist[b]: Notes on Aristotle *De Anima* 3.5.”

Donald Rutherford:

Rutherford[a]: “The End of Ends? Aristotelian Themes in Early Modern Ethics”

Rutherford[b]: “*Patience sans Espérance*: Leibniz’s Critique of Stoicism”

Noa Shein:

Shein[a]: “The False Dichotomy between Objective and Subjective Interpretations of Spinoza’s Theory of Attributes.”

Shein[b]: “Not Wholly Finite: The Dual Aspect of Finite Modes in Spinoza.”

Christopher Shields

Shields[a]: *Aristotle*

Shields[b]: “Perfecting Pleasures: The Metaphysics of Pleasure in *Nicomachean Ethics* X.”

Shields[c]: “The Active Mind of *De Anima* iii 5.”

Sanem Soyarslan:

Soyarslan[a]: “From Ordinary Life to Blessedness: The Power of Intuitive Knowledge in Spinoza’s *Ethics*.”

Soyarslan[b]: “Spinoza’s Account of Blessedness Explored through an Aristotelian Lens.”

Soyarslan[c]: “The Distinction between Reason and Intuitive Knowledge in Spinoza’s *Ethics*.”

Soyarslan[d]: “Reply to Nadler: Spinoza’s Free Person and Wise Person Reconsidered.”

Catherine Wilson:

Wilson[a]: Catherine Wilson’s *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*

Wilson[b]: “Epicureanism in Early Modern Philosophy: Leibniz and His Contemporaries”

Wilson[c]: *How to Be an Epicurean: The Ancient Art of Living Well*

H.A. Wolfson:

Wolfson[a]: H.A. Wolfson’s *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the Latent Processes of His Reasoning*, vol. 1

Wolfson[b]: *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the Latent Processes of His Reasoning*, vol. 2

Wolfson[c]: “The Problem of the Souls of the Spheres from the Byzantine Commentaries on Aristotle Through the Arabs and St. Thomas to Kepler.”

Andrew Youpa:

Youpa[a]: Andrew Youpa’s “Rationalist Moral Philosophy”

Youpa[b]: *The Ethics of Joy: Spinoza on the Empowered Life*

Introduction

Originating in ancient Greece, the ethical tradition of eudaimonism conceives of happiness (*eudaimonia*) as the highest good, typically grounding accounts of happiness in non-ethical doctrines concerning the nature of God, reality, knowledge, and human psychology. In the early modern period, we find continued interest in the views of ancient eudaimonists, like Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics, concerning these themes. In light of this interest, we might ask how we should characterize the engagement of early modern thinkers with ancient Greek philosophy in general, and ancient eudaimonism in particular. Are certain thinkers advocates of a particular eudaimonistic account (e.g., Aristotelianism or Stoicism), eudaimonists with their own original contributions to this ethical tradition, or non-eudaimonists simply drawing on isolated (ethical and/or non-ethical) ideas from the ancients in developing their respective philosophies? In answering these questions, we can, in turn, establish a solid foundation for evaluating the appeal and applicability of both ancient and early modern accounts of ethics and happiness with respect to the conditions and issues of life in the present day.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the philosophy of an early modern thinker, Benedict de Spinoza, whom I think offers us a compelling starting-point for understanding early modern engagement with eudaimonism and the potential contemporary value of an eudaimonistic approach to ethics. In discussing Spinoza's engagement with ancient Greek eudaimonism in his mature philosophy, I shall defend three central claims.¹ Firstly, Spinoza, instead of merely affirming some ancient ideas (e.g., mechanism, the cognitive nature of emotions, psychotherapeutic techniques, and the importance of virtue) and rejecting others (e.g.,

¹ I will also make some comments in what follows about Spinoza's earlier views and how they relate to his engagement with particular eudaimonists.

hylomorphism, atomism, and a geocentric and strongly providential [i.e., purposeful] conception of the universe), ultimately continues the ancient ethical tradition of eudaimonism.² Secondly, Spinoza meaningfully contributes to this tradition by granting the body equal ontological and ethical status with the mind by virtue of their non-reductive identity, a position which is found nowhere in his predecessors. Thirdly, this equality of body and mind explains Spinoza's views on core eudaimonistic themes, such as the roles of pleasure, virtue, and activity in living a happy life. These views ultimately showcase Spinoza's novel synthesis of the unity (i.e., identity) and plurality (i.e., diverse expression) of being, both ontologically and ethically, insofar as Thought and Extension, mind and body, will and intellect, practical reason and theoretical reason, and pleasure and activity are revealed, in each ontological context, to be different (but strictly corresponding) aspects of one and the same thing. As we will see in what follows, Spinoza's distinctive position is grounded in four central doctrines: **Substance Monism** (there is only one substance, God or Nature), **Attributes Pluralism** (God/Nature possesses infinitely many attributes), **Inter-Attributes Parallelism** (these infinitely many attributes, most notably Thought and Extension, are non-reductively identical), and the **Conatus Doctrine** (all things within God/Nature possess an essential self-affirmative force which, by virtue of Inter-Attributes Parallelism, is necessarily expressed simultaneously through, at least, thinking and extended being).

To adequately situate and justify this analysis, however, we must first discuss (i) the general background of early modern engagement with ancient Greek philosophy, (ii) which ancient philosophers we will focus on to assist us in elucidating Spinoza's distinctive

² Examples of other scholars who read Spinoza as an eudaimonist are, e.g., Kisner (72-86); Lebuffe 194-208; Miller[a] (171-206); Nadler[a] (10-11); Wolfson[b] (233-260); Youpa[a].

contribution to eudaimonism, and (iii) why there is significant value in discussing his engagement with ancient (rather than merely medieval or early modern) philosophers.

Early Modern Engagement with Ancient Philosophy

Firstly, it is important to acknowledge certain methodological sensibilities shared among many early modern thinkers. We see in Spinoza and his contemporaries what Rutherford[a] describes as “the pretense of addressing each question *de novo*, as if it were a problem that an unprejudiced mind could frame and resolve through the disciplined use of reason alone” (195). Many early modern philosophers presented themselves as seekers of truth, and their systems as rationally justified, rather than justified by philosophical precedent or tradition. Such thinkers wished to move away from the commentary tradition of late antiquity and the medieval period, where much of philosophy was characterized by explicitly defending and expanding on interpretations of ancient philosophers, in particular Plato and Aristotle – usually with the intent of synthesizing their views with a certain religious tradition (194; see also, e.g., *PP* Preface, p. 180-3; *TTP* Preface, p. 391/G III 9).³ One primary reason for this shift was the Copernican revolution, and other scientific or intellectual developments, which significantly challenged the ancient and medieval picture of the universe, particularly geocentrism and the use of (substantial) forms in explaining natural phenomena. With such traditional ideas destabilized, many early modern thinkers sought to build new foundations for philosophy that did not rely on Platonic or

³ Insofar as medieval philosophers like Augustine (*The Happy Life; Confessions*), Thomas Aquinas (*Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*), Avicenna (Gutas Sect. 4), Averroes (*Averroes on Plato’s Republic; Averroes’ Middle Commentary*), and Maimonides (*Eight Chapters*) sought to synthesize the ethical views of Plato and/or Aristotle with Christianity, Islam, or Judaism respectively, we can consider them eudaimonists in general and Neo-Platonic or Neo-Aristotelian eudaimonists in particular. Alternatively, we can call them Christian, Muslim, or Jewish eudaimonists. In either case, these thinkers are evidence of the persistence and development of eudaimonism after antiquity.

Aristotelian authority, or the authority of the medieval philosophers who drew influence from them.

As Miller[a] notes, early modern philosophers were usually not interested in what we today understand as history of philosophy (19-20). While they were well-read in the (available) philosophical works of history, they did not read and analyze these works for the sake of understanding a philosopher's views, nor were they highly motivated to prove that their interpretation of a philosopher was correct or more plausible than someone's else interpretation. Historical texts were valuable primarily insofar as they were conducive to revealing truth. The ultimate result of these methodological sensibilities was that early modern philosophers rarely cited their sources, or explicitly acknowledged their indebtedness to other philosophers (including their contemporaries). Consequently, it is not always an easy task to decipher what an early modern philosopher's ancient, medieval, or contemporary influences were. As well, *prima facie* one might question whether, based on this shift away from traditional philosophical views and commitment to building philosophy anew, ancient philosophy had any meaningful influence on early modern philosophy.

Spinoza is a prime example of this methodological tendency. His *magnum opus*, the *Ethics*, which lays out the foundations of all the major areas of his philosophy from metaphysics to ethics, consists of axioms, definitions, and propositions deductively organized to demonstrate philosophical truths with the same level of rigour and certainty as the geometrical truths of Euclid's *Elements*. A Spinozistic truth is, in other words, intended to be just as certain as a geometrical truth like "the three interior angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles" (*E* IP17S; IIP49S). While the *Ethics* explicitly references a few philosophers, like Seneca (IVP20S), Descartes, and the Stoics in general (VPref.), these references are not necessary to the validity of

Spinoza's arguments, which are presented irrespective of whether these philosophers would agree with him or make similar claims. More often than not, these references are critical in nature (we will discuss some of these criticisms in 1.3). As a result, it is difficult to establish with *certainty* what role ancient influences might have had on Spinoza's thought, or to what degree he may have been concerned with particular ancient philosophies.

Early modern philosophers in general, however, did draw heavily on past philosophers, even if their goal was to present their ideas as original and independent of traditional ancient or medieval authority. In Hobbes we find negative engagement in the form of his rejection of happiness (Greek: *eudaimonia*; Latin: *felicitas*) as the highest good (*summum bonum*), the cornerstone of eudaimonism (*EL* I.7.6; *L* I.11). Positively, we find Epicurean influence in his materialist criticisms of supernatural phenomena and Aristotelian/Scholastic hylomorphism, his commitment to mechanistic science (Wilson[a] 33, 143, 185-8), his focus on the centrality of practical reason in human nature (Vardoulakis 236), and his social contract conception of justice (Wilson[a] 33, 190-4). Gassendi presents us with the most obvious example of Neo-Epicureanism (and eudaimonism), with his deliberate attempt to synthesize Epicureanism with Christianity, providing a "revised version of Epicurean atomism and hedonism" which usurps the influence of Aristotle (Osler 31ff.).

Rejecting the Aristotelian hylomorphic conception of individuals as combinations of matter (*hyle*) and form (*morphe*), Descartes, like Plato (see, e.g., the *Phaedo*), embraces a dualist account of the immortal soul and the mortal body as separate entities ("To Mersenne" 173; *PP* I.51-4; *MFP* Sixth Med.). Descartes's philosophy also shares with Stoicism a form of psychotherapy that considers us capable of significant control over our passions and a strongly providential conception of reality that grants us the capacity to achieve tranquility through

harmonizing ourselves with the divine will (Pereboom 599-608). Ethically, Descartes himself claims that he can “reconcile” Stoicism and Epicureanism by combining the Stoic view that the highest good consists in virtue with the Epicurean view that happiness consists in stable mental tranquility, the highest good and happiness being distinct, but closely related, ends in his view (“To Queen Charlotte” 325; see also “To Princess Elizabeth” 261-2; Youpa[a] 336-9).

Leibniz lauds Plato for (1) his defense of the immortality of the soul and criticism of mechanistic explanation without appeal to teleology in the *Phaedo* (“Two Sects” 283; cf. Leibniz’s prince example in *DM* ~19) and (2) his doctrine of recollection (contra the *tabula rasa* of Aristotle and Locke) in the *Meno* (~26; see also *New Essays* 48). We see in his metaphysics the use of Aristotelian substantial forms to explain how bodies can be substances (*DM* ~10-12) and the adoption of immaterial atomism as a response to Democritean and Epicurean material atomism (*M* ~3; Wilson[b] 101, 103). Both Leibniz and the Stoics understand the universe as strongly providentially-ordered and argue for the moral importance of deliberately and rationally aligning oneself with this order (Rutherford[a] 66; *DM* ~4). However, in general, Leibniz considers Stoicism and Epicureanism dangerous to piety (“Two Sects” 283). Firstly, he disagrees with the Stoics over the moral value of hope; where the Stoics condemn hope as a harmful passion that should be eradicated, Leibniz argues that it is necessary for happiness, because without hope that God’s goodness will bring us future happiness, we cannot truly be content in the present (Rutherford[a] 67-71; *PNG* ~18). Secondly, he takes issue with Epicurus’s rejection of providence and the morally harmful decadence that the Epicurean focus on pleasure (despite being contrary to Epicurus’s actual views) can promote (Wilson[b] 102-3; *New Essays* 462). Related to these concerns, Leibniz also criticizes Epicureanism for a conception of happiness that is restricted to a tranquil mortal life in the here and now (“Two Sects” 282).

This survey of early modern philosophers is, of course, brief and not exhaustive, but it is sufficient to show that grappling with ancient Greek philosophy was widespread among Spinoza's contemporaries.⁴ It is also well-documented that Spinoza was heavily influenced by Hobbes and Descartes, in particular.⁵ Considering the aforementioned discussion of their respective dialogues with ancient ideas, it would be reasonable to ask whether Spinoza's agreements and disagreements with them may be connected to these ancient ideas. According to Vardoulakis (Ch. 7), Spinoza seems to share with Hobbes materialist commitments to the criticism of supernatural phenomena and mechanistic explanation (*E* IApp.; IIP2, 7, 13S), a political conception of a social contract theory of justice (IVP37S2; *TTP* Ch. 16), and an ethical focus on the primacy of practical reason (*E* IIPref.; IVP19-20, 65; *TTP* Ch.17, p. 547/G III 215-6), all of which could be said to be Epicurean in spirit.⁶ Consequently, when engaging with Hobbes, Spinoza may also be engaging with Epicureanism, and in some respects may agree with Epicurus more than Hobbes. Concerning Descartes, both he and Spinoza endorse a psychotherapeutic approach to contending with harmful passions, which is strongly reminiscent of Stoic psychotherapy (Pereboom 592). Moreover, in *E* VPref., when criticizing Descartes for thinking that we can have absolute control over our passions, Spinoza also explicitly calls out the Stoics for the same view. Specifically, he takes issue with how both understand the relationship between one's faculty of assent and impressions/ideas.⁷ As well, Spinoza's contemporaries might be said to agree or disagree with him based on certain ideas he shares with ancient philosophies.

⁴ For further discussion, see *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy* (Ch.2-3); *Hellenistic and Early Modern Philosophy*; Larmore's "Descartes and Skepticism"; Rutherford[b]; Wilson[a]; Youpa[a].

⁵ See, e.g., Curley's *Behind the Geometrical Method*; Kambouchner's "Spinoza and Descartes"; Jaquet (Ch. 2); LeBuffe's "Spinoza and Hobbes"; Vardoulakis (Ch. 7).

⁶ In Ch. 4 we will discuss in detail how Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza understand the relationship between the practical and theoretical dimensions of reason, namely how Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza do not subordinate practical reason to theoretical reason.

⁷ I will discuss this passage in more detail in 1.3.

For example, Jaquelot, Fénélon, and Leibniz take issue with Spinozism and Epicureanism on similar grounds, and see Spinoza as reviving Epicureanism in some respects.⁸ Leibniz, in fact, sees Spinoza as reviving both Epicureanism and Stoicism (see “Two Sects”). He considers all three philosophies dangerous to piety, and much of what he considers impious in Spinoza is linked to ideas the latter seems to share with these Hellenistic philosophies (e.g., pantheism [*E* IP15], the rejection of providence [*IApp.*], the corporeality of the divine [*IP15S*; *IIP2*], and an ethical focus on a happy life in the here and now instead of in the afterlife [*VP34*, 41]).⁹

However, just because Spinoza’s contemporaries may have been meaningfully engaged with ancient philosophers, or may have viewed him through a partially ancient lens, does not, in isolation, mean that Spinoza considered himself similarly engaged. To adequately discuss Spinoza’s engagement with ancient Greek philosophy is therefore complicated. To do so, I will bring together (i) Spinoza’s explicit references to ancient philosophers, (ii) the views of his contemporaries on his engagement with Greek philosophy, (iii) the arguments of contemporary Spinoza scholarship, and (iv) conceptual analysis of the similarities and differences between Spinoza’s views and the views of particular ancient philosophers. I will cover (i)-(iii) in Ch. 1 and (iv) in Ch. 3-5. My conceptual analysis, while the most straightforward element of this thesis, nevertheless relies heavily on the other prior elements to establish a reasonable, and non-arbitrary, foundation. Spinoza, for example, may share many similarities with the Stoics, but, as

⁸ For discussion of Jaquelot and Fénélon, see Lagrée’s “Spinoza « Athée & Épicurien ».”

⁹ I will discuss Leibniz’s criticism of the apparent Epicurean and Stoic elements in Spinoza’s philosophy further in 1.2 and 1.3. It should also be noted that, to the extent that Leibniz is correct, these positions have their own distinctive character in Spinoza’s philosophical framework. Firstly, in certain qualified ways, we may say that Spinoza is and is not a pantheist or a providentialist (see 1.1 and 5.3). Secondly, while Spinoza is clear that God is essentially extended, he does not argue that God’s essence is *exclusively* extended or that God is a body as a determinate or bounded (i.e., finite) corporeal mass (see 5.3). Finally, concerning life after death, Spinoza argues that some dimension of the mind (and, as we will see in 5.3, arguably the body) is eternal, but this dimension lacks memory, imagination, and emotions, so it does not seem to be the case that an individual’s *personality* survives after death (see, e.g., Nadler[c] 259-72).

Long (14-5) and Miller[a] (8-11, 16-23) have rightly argued, agreement in itself does not entail influence or deliberate engagement, unless we have concrete reasons to think he reflected on such ancient views. I say a “reasonable” foundation, because, due to the aforementioned methodological considerations and the dearth of Spinoza’s references to other philosophers, there is simply insufficient evidence to say anything with *certainty*. On the other hand, while caution is required when discussing Spinoza’s engagement with *particular* ancient philosophies, Ch. 2 will show that we can be confident that Spinoza is actively engaged with ancient ethical philosophy *in general* through his commitment to eudaimonism.

Spinoza’s Engagement with Ancient Philosophy

In this thesis, I will focus specifically on Spinoza’s engagement with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics for four reasons. Firstly, as we saw above with Descartes, Gassendi, Hobbes, and Leibniz, there is strong (positive and negative) engagement with Aristotle, the Scholastics (i.e., medieval Christian philosophers who drew heavily on Aristotelian philosophy), Epicurus, and the Stoics amongst Spinoza’s contemporaries. It is also important to note that Spinoza was himself familiar with not only the Scholastics, but Maimonides (a medieval Jewish philosopher strongly and positively engaged with Aristotle), Justus Lipsius, and Hugo Grotius (both Renaissance philosophers heavily influenced by Stoic doctrines).^{10 11} Because there is strong engagement with ancient philosophers amongst medieval and early modern thinkers, we can

¹⁰ At the time of his death, Spinoza had Grotius’s *De Satisfactione* (Van Rooijen 147) and *De Imperio* (183), and Maimonides’s *Moreh Nebochim* or *Guide for the Perplexed* (132). As well, he had Lipsius’s editions of Tacitus’s *Opera* (122) and Seneca’s *Epistolae* (199).

¹¹ For discussion of the Scholastics, see, e.g., Clemenson’s “The Scholastic Background”; Costa’s “Spinoza and Scholastic Philosophy”; Stone’s “Aristotelianism and Scholasticism.” For discussion of Maimonides, see, e.g., Fraenkel’s “Maimonides’ God and Spinoza’s *Deus sive Natura*”; Nadler’s *Spinoza and Medieval Jewish Philosophy*; Garrett’s *Meaning in Spinoza’s Method* (Ch. 5). For discussion of Lipsius, see, e.g., Long (16-18); Lagrée’s “Justus Lipsius and Neostoicism.” For discussion of Grotius, see Miller[a] (105-7); Miller[e] (120-6). Wolfson[a] and [b] provides a comprehensive analysis of all Spinoza’s probable ancient, medieval, and contemporary influences.

better understand Spinoza's critical dialogue with these latter thinkers through examining his agreements and disagreements with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics.

Secondly, the Hellenistic philosophies of Epicureanism and Stoicism in the early modern period often served as a tool for critiquing the Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines of tradition, since the former were the contemporary rivals of the latter. An examination of Spinoza's engagement with ancient philosophy then requires exploration of how Hellenistic philosophy may or may not relate to his more revolutionary ideas (e.g., his materialism, pantheism, and denial of providence). However, Aristotle (and Plato) is valuable for exploring where Spinoza does not depart from tradition. Like Aristotle, he does not deny the existence of non-extended being or reduce the mind to some sort of corporeal entity, and he describes the contemplative or reflective life as the happiest life.

Thirdly, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics are particularly valuable in fleshing out why Spinoza's commitment to the ontological and ethical equality of mind and body is an original and meaningful contribution to the eudaimonistic tradition. As we will see in Ch. 5, Aristotle argues that matter is inherently passive and featureless, and thus relies on the active roles of God and forms as incorporeal and non-extended things to give determinate being to matter in order to constitute the universe. Epicurus and the Stoics are both materialists, in the sense that they consider all being corporeal, including the soul. For Epicurus, everything is made up of different kinds of indivisible bodies referred to as "atoms." The Stoics describe reality as a combination of the passive principle of matter (*hyle*) and the active principle of reason (*logos*) or God (*theos*), the latter of which is a finer kind of corporeal entity, namely a creative "breath" (*pneuma*) that pervades all matter. Ethically, however, all three are committed to some form of intellectualism, in the sense that mental goods (e.g., dispositions, activities, or pleasures) are superior to bodily

goods. Spinoza, in contrast, because he considers thinking/mental and extended/bodily being non-reductively identical, does not think that the two can truly be separated or one subordinated to the other, which makes for a very different conception of eudaimonistic happiness than the others. In the ontological and ethical realms, then, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics, as major historical figures of eudaimonism, argue for an inequality between mind and body that Spinoza rejects. It is through a comparative analysis of the complex and diverse ways in which Spinoza agrees and disagrees with these ancient thinkers on the nature of, and relationship between, mind and body that we obtain a clear sense of his distinctive identity as an eudaimonist – namely, as someone who hierarchically privileges neither the intellectual nor the material ontologically or ethically, but instead treats them as equally fundamental, constitutive, and valuable in the context of being and happiness.

Fourthly, one might wonder why I do not include Plato in this comparative analysis. I myself acknowledge above that Aristotle *and* Plato were at the heart of the commentary tradition, and Descartes and Leibniz, for example, were richly engaged with Platonic doctrines as responders to this tradition. Moreover, in conjunction with Renaissance figures like Grotius and Lipsius, Spinoza would have been familiar with Platonists like Leo Hebraeus (see Wolfson[a] and [b]). Finally, Spinoza's contemplative account of happiness can also be brought into fruitful dialogue with Plato's own contemplative conception of the happy life,¹² since both (Plato in the *Symposium* and Spinoza in Parts IV and V of the *Ethics*) describe an intellectual ascent from

¹² As we will see in 5.4, however, Spinoza does not consider the happiest life purely contemplative.

transient sensory love to eternal intellectual love – virtue and happiness being associated with the latter.¹³ There is then a ripe foundation for analysis.

I have chosen not to go down this road, however, because (i) it is not strictly necessary and (ii) Plato's texts offer unique difficulties. The primary goals of this thesis are to establish the eudaimonistic foundation of Spinoza's philosophy and, through comparative analysis with other eudaimonists, to reveal his unique contribution to this ethical tradition. Although I wish to be thorough in my comparative analyses in Ch. 3-5, my goal is not to offer a complete and comprehensive outline of Spinoza's engagement with every ancient eudaimonist.¹⁴ In fact, it should be noted that previous examinations of Spinoza's engagement with ancient philosophy (many of which we will discuss in Ch. 1) have tended to be much narrower in scope, focusing on only one or two ancient thinkers. Such analyses are valuable, but offer only a partial picture of Spinoza's engagement with ancient eudaimonism which does not truly get to the heart of his critical dialogue with this tradition. This thesis, in contrast, offers a comparatively broader, richer, and more precise foundation for future work on Spinoza's eudaimonism, so that a complete outline could one day be adequately produced. As a result, while work on Spinoza's critical dialogue with Plato (and later Platonists) is important, it is not required to accomplish my

¹³ For a comprehensive discussion of this intellectual and affective ascent in Spinoza, see Soyarslan[a]. For discussion of Spinoza's affinities with the Platonic contemplative ideal, see Soyarslan[b] (518-21). For discussion of how the themes of knowledge and love in Plato's *Symposium* and Spinoza's *Ethics* compare, see Nussbaum's *Upheavals of Thought* (Ch.10); Zovko's "Impassioned by Passion." For further discussion of Spinoza's engagement with Platonism, see, e.g., the collection of essays in Ayers's *Rationalism, Platonism and God*.

¹⁴ Other ancient eudaimonists that might be mentioned are Democritus, the Cynics, and the Pyrrhonian Sceptics. With respect to these philosophers, it should be noted that Spinoza speaks favourably of Democritus (at least on the subject of metaphysics) in *Ep* 56 (p. 905/ G IV 261-2), but is deeply critical of Scepticism (*E* IIP32-47; *Ep* 56, p. 904/G IV 260; see also Della Rocca[a] Ch. 3; Perler's "Spinoza on Skepticism") due to his commitment to the Principle of Sufficient Reason (*E* IAx.4; see also Della Rocca[a]; Garber "Superheroes"; Lin[a]).

goals. Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics, for the reasons given above, are sufficient, insofar as they allow me to get to the core of Spinoza's engagement with ancient eudaimonism.

The other major reason concerns the distinctive nature of Plato's philosophical texts. As Cooper notes, Plato "famously always presents his philosophical ideas in dialogues" through the medium of other characters (usually Socrates), but never as himself (*Pursuits* 67).¹⁵ He does not offer, like Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, or Spinoza, texts that explicitly and clearly outline his positive philosophical views. He instead presents critical dialogues between characters on various subjects, covering various positions on these subjects. This is not to say, of course, that Plato has no views or gives us no indication of what his views are (based on their prevalence and importance in many of his dialogues, Forms seem to be a distinctly Platonic doctrine) – just that a lot of interpretative work must be done to clearly demonstrate what those views are (considering Plato heavily critiques even the Theory of Forms in the *Parmenides*). All study of thinkers in the history of philosophy requires some interpretative debate, but the dialectical structure of Plato's texts leaves a comparatively greater scope for interpretation (with respect to both Plato's actual views and Spinoza's understanding of those views) than the texts of most philosophers, and certainly more than those of Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics. Because it is not necessary to discuss him, or to engage in an interpretative analysis of his views that would (when adequately done) constitute its own treatise, in order to accomplish the goals of this thesis,

¹⁵ In *Pursuits of Wisdom*, Cooper outlines the major figures of ancient Greek moral theory with respect to the theme of philosophy as a way of life. While he offers brief discussion of Plato throughout the book, and a chapter on Neo-Platonism, he opts not to include a full-blown outline of Plato's philosophy for much the same reasons I give concerning the difficulties presented by Plato's dialectical and detached approach to his texts. Furthermore, in his introduction to *Plato: Complete Works*, Cooper cautions the reader not to be too quick to think any speaker in any of Plato's dialogues is espousing some ultimate truth that Plato is committed to with the utmost certainty. He suggests that, even where Plato may incline towards certain views on reality, the soul, knowledge, or goodness, nevertheless Plato uses the dialogue form to encourage himself and his readers to maintain a critical stance to all philosophical positions presented to them – especially those discussed in his dialogues (xviii-xxv).

I have opted not to include discussion of Spinoza's engagement with Plato in subsequent chapters (although I will periodically mention throughout how Plato compares to Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics based on isolated, and traditionally accepted, interpretative points).

In sum, I have chosen to discuss Spinoza's critical dialogue with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics due to strong early modern engagement with their views and, more particularly, because they are useful in drawing out key dimensions of Spinoza's ethical framework as it relates to the eudaimonistic tradition.

Clarifications

However, there remain a few things to clarify before this comparative analysis can begin in subsequent chapters. Firstly, would it not be more productive to focus on Spinoza's engagement with more contemporaneous thinkers rather than with ancient philosophers? I have already mentioned how thinkers that Spinoza would have been familiar with, like Descartes, Gassendi, Grotius, Hebraeus, Hobbes, Maimonides, and the Scholastics, were actively engaged with ancient thought. Is it not more valuable to focus on Spinoza's engagement with these thinkers who share more of a social, political, and religious background with him? The ancient Greeks are influential on philosophy after antiquity, in both the medieval and early modern periods, but Spinoza and his contemporaries may not even be asking the same questions, or have the same concerns, as the ancient Greeks. For example, early modern thinkers are concerned with the nature of a monotheistic God who is supremely perfect and (particularly after Descartes) with how to understand the relationship between mind and body, personal identity, etc. As well, it is not even clear that many early modern philosophers mean the same thing by "happiness" as the Greeks meant by *eudaimonia*, some conceiving of the former primarily as a mere psychological state rather than an overall way of life (Rutherford[a] 197-8). In light of these

considerations, the use of many ancient ideas might then be directed towards different ends, with such ideas being abstracted from the tradition of ancient philosophy. If we wish to understand Spinoza's philosophy, and its place in the intellectual climate of the early modern period, would it not make more sense to focus on his immediate predecessors and contemporaries, who are concerned with the same issues as Spinoza? With this point in mind, one might object that any engagement he has with ancient philosophy is only meaningful when discussed in its proper context, and thinkers like the Scholastics, Maimonides, Hebraeus, Lipsius, Grotius, Hobbes, and Descartes might be more valuable in explaining Spinoza's use of ancient ideas than ancient philosophers themselves. Focusing on Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics (or even Plato) might therefore be a needless and counterproductive jump too far back in history.

In response to these concerns, I will first clarify that my focus on Spinoza's engagement with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics is not meant to deny or diminish the significant influence that other ancient, medieval, or early modern philosophers have had on his views. Secondly, I concede that there are many concerns that Spinoza has that are distinctive of his own time and which separate him from the Greeks. In fact, in Ch. 1 I argue that Spinoza cannot be understood as a Neo-Aristotelian, Neo-Epicurean, or Neo-Stoic (and his ontological and ethical views on matter also clearly distance him from Neo-Platonism) – that is to say, he cannot be understood as a mere disciple or innovator of a particular ancient philosophy, despite likely drawing on certain ancient ideas. Thirdly, I think much fruitful exploration can be (and has been) done concerning Spinoza's engagement with the abovementioned philosophers, in general and in their particular uses of ancient ideas (see footnotes 4, 5, and 11).

With all that said, however, I also think that there are certain areas where Spinoza shares distinctive and foundational common ground with the Greeks, namely in ethics. As both Cooper

(*Pursuits* 4) and Nadler[b] (41-2) note, many ancient, medieval, and seventeenth-century moral philosophers share a foundational focus on well-being and character which can be contrasted with the action-focused ethical paradigms that came to dominate in Kant's time and afterward. This focus on well-being, of course, manifested itself in different ways depending on the period. Many ancient philosophers (namely post-Socrates) were concerned with happiness as the best life overall. Many medieval (in particular, Christian) philosophers sought blessedness and salvation not merely in this life, but also the next. Finally, as mentioned above, many seventeenth-century philosophers were particularly concerned with happiness as psychological well-being. Spinoza, arguably, incorporates all three of these manifestations of well-being into his conception of happiness (although not in the way that these things were understood by his predecessors to some extent). The highest happiness is described as "blessedness" (*beatitudo*) and is linked to salvation and a state of contentment (*E* VP35S, 42).¹⁶ Moreover, as I will argue in 2.2, Spinoza also gives many indications, throughout his corpus, that (like the ancients) he is concerned with happiness as the best life overall (*TIE* ~1; *KV* II.XVIII; II.XXVI; *E* IVP18S; VP39S).

As I said above, I do not think Spinoza is a mere disciple or innovator of a particular ancient philosophy, and this includes ethics. However, if I am correct that Spinoza understands ethics and happiness in the same formal way as mainstream ancient Greek ethical philosophy (differing mainly in content, as all distinct eudaimonists do), then there is meaningful common ground on which to explore his engagement with ancient philosophers. This common ground

¹⁶ It should be noted that Spinoza's conception of blessedness and salvation is complicated. He argues that part of the mind is eternal and remains after the death of the body, which might be said to be representative of some sort of afterlife (*E* VP23). However, this part of the mind lacks sense-perception, memory, or emotions, so it is not clear that Spinoza endorses the same kind of personal immortality as his traditionally-minded predecessors and contemporaries (VP34; 41S; see also Nadler[c] 259-72).

explains why I am focused on his ethical relation to ancient philosophers rather than medieval and early modern philosophers who employ ancient ideas.¹⁷ While many philosophers after antiquity drew on ancient ideas in general and ethical ones in particular, it is not clear that they are all eudaimonists. The translation of *eudaimonia* as “happiness” can be misleading, because eudaimonistic happiness has very specific formal criteria to which not all moral philosophers are committed. Hobbes makes it explicit that he is not an eudaimonist by denying that there is a highest good, let alone that happiness is such a good. Descartes (contra Hobbes) is committed to the existence of a highest good, but because he considers it a distinct end from happiness, he may also be, in some respects, departing from the foundations of mainstream ancient moral theory.¹⁸ Consequently, in relation to his two most obvious and immediate contemporary influences, ethically Spinoza may have much more in common with the Greeks.

My goal, though, is not to argue that Spinoza is the only eudaimonist in the early modern period (as either a disciple/innovator of a particular ancient eudaimonism or an original thinker within this tradition). Rather, my point is that, for it to be fruitful to compare Spinoza to medieval and early modern philosophers who also employ ancient ideas, we need to be clear on whether they are eudaimonists or not, and in what sense Spinoza can and cannot be said to be an eudaimonist. For example, his critiques of teleology, accounts of human nature,¹⁹ and the

¹⁷ For discussion of how ancient philosophy differs from medieval, early modern, and contemporary philosophy in general, see Cooper (*Pursuits* Ch. 1); Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life* and *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* Cooper (*Pursuits* 15n22-3) and Hadot (*Philosophy* 271-2, 275) both describe Spinoza as uniquely faithful to the ancient tradition, in contrast to most medieval and early modern philosophers.

¹⁸ Shapiro argues that Descartes is better understood as a proponent of virtue ethics than an eudaimonist (445, 453-9). Rutherford[b] argues that Leibniz's conception of happiness as perpetual pleasure is not truly eudaimonistic (72). Youpa[a], in contrast, considers Descartes and Leibniz eudaimonists, although his reading is much less thorough in its defense than Shapiro or Rutherford's. Here I reserve judgment about whether Descartes or Leibniz is indeed a follower of the eudaimonistic tradition or not.

¹⁹ For realist readings of Spinoza's account of human nature, see, e.g., Martin's "The Framework of Essences"; Soyarslan[c] (31-5). For anti-realist readings, see, e.g., Hübner's "Spinoza on Being Human"; Sharp's *Spinoza and*

objectivity of good and bad all conflict with certain ancient philosophers, but do they conflict with eudaimonism itself?²⁰ Even the among the ancients not every philosophy was clearly or equally eudaimonistic. For example, the Cyrenaics are arguably not eudaimonists because they deny that happiness is the highest good and concern themselves with particular pleasures of the moment, rather than the best life overall (DL II.87-8).²¹ The Cynics are also noteworthy in this ancient context, because, unlike Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics, they do not rely on a complete philosophical system of metaphysical, physical, and epistemological theories to shape their ethical views. Whether the Cynics should be considered eudaimonists or not,²² it is nevertheless notable (as we will see in Ch. 2) that Spinoza shares with mainstream ancient moral theory a commitment to grounding his ethics in general, and his conception of happiness in particular, in an overall philosophical system.²³ Consequently, in order to adequately draw out the scope of Spinoza's apparent eudaimonism and how he synthesizes this ancient conception of happiness with medieval or early modern philosophical developments, we need to be clear about the boundaries of eudaimonism and how Spinoza's ethical views relate to those of other ancient

the Politics of Renaturalization (Ch. 3). For middle-ground positions between realism and anti-realism, see, e.g., Sangiacomo (Ch. 4); Stephenson's "Common Natures of Finite Modes."

²⁰ I will address the subject of teleology in 1.1, and human nature and the objectivity of good and bad in Ch. 2. Ultimately, I think Spinoza accepts enough teleology and ethical objectivity to be an eudaimonist and that qualified anti-realist and unqualified/qualified realist readings of his views on human nature are compatible with eudaimonism.

²¹ For discussion of the Cyrenaics, see, e.g., Annas[a] (227-35); Usher's *How to Say No*.

²² There is even some question in antiquity whether Cynicism should be considered a genuine philosophy or a mere "way of life" (DL VI.103).

²³ Cooper makes this point as well, although he considers Spinoza unique in this regard among his contemporaries, in the sense that the moral philosophies of other early modern philosophers can be adequately understood in isolation from their non-ethical (e.g., metaphysical or epistemological) views (*Pursuits* 15n22). I am less convinced that this is the case. For example, there are good reasons to think that Descartes's conceptions of virtue and happiness are not fully comprehensible and justified without appeal to his views on epistemology, free will, substance dualism, and the unity and interaction between mind and body qua substances (see, e.g., Shapiro's "Descartes's Ethics").

eudaimonists. Only then can we begin to adequately understand the overall nature of early modern eudaimonism, and compare Spinoza to his contemporaries in the most fruitful way.

Outline of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five main chapters. Ch. 1 outlines the primary and secondary literature on Spinoza's engagement with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics. The purpose of this survey of the literature is two-fold. Firstly, to establish a historical and scholarly foundation for thinking that Spinoza was in meaningful dialogue with Aristotelian, Epicurean, and Stoic ideas, in order to justify the conceptual analysis of the later chapters. Secondly, to illustrate why it is inaccurate to describe Spinoza as a Neo-Aristotelian, Neo-Epicurean, or Neo-Stoic, despite his engagement with these ancient philosophers.²⁴ I argue instead that it is more accurate to read Spinoza as an original contributor to the eudaimonistic ethical tradition in general, rather than a disciple or innovator of one ancient ethical philosophy in particular. Ch. 2 defends this eudaimonistic reading of Spinoza, on the grounds that he shares with the ancient Greeks a conception of happiness as (a) naturally universalizable; (b) partly, but not wholly, dependent on the beliefs/feelings of a subject; (c) structurally stable; and (d) exclusively intrinsically good. Moreover, I show how Spinoza's ethical philosophy is, in some respects, more strongly eudaimonistic than the ethical views of philosophers like Socrates and the Cynics, due to (e) the integral role his metaphysics, epistemology, and psychology play in his ethical account of the happy life. A version of sections 2.1-2.3 of this chapter is published as "Spinoza's Strong

²⁴ It should be noted that neither Spinoza himself nor his contemporaries would have considered him a Neo-Aristotelian. If anything, Spinoza's critics saw his philosophy as strong proof of the inevitable danger of departing from tradition. Many contemporary scholars, however, have felt the need to emphasize that Spinoza is not in complete opposition to Aristotelianism, in order to adequately flesh out the nuances of his philosophy.

Eudaimonism” in the *Journal of Modern Philosophy*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2023, pp. 1-21, doi: <http://doi.org/10.32881/jomp.247> (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

Ch. 3-5 comprise my conceptual analysis. In these chapters, I outline Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza’s respective views on three central themes: pleasure, virtue, and the body. I have chosen these themes for three reasons. Firstly, they are significant objects of debate in the eudaimonistic tradition.²⁵ To truly understand Spinoza’s place in this tradition, we need to see how his views on such subjects compare with his fellow eudaimonists. Secondly, these themes are useful in adequately laying out each philosopher’s conception of happiness. Since Epicurus considers happiness to be a certain kind of pleasure (i.e., katastematic pleasure), through elucidating his views on pleasure we also arrive at his conception of the happy life. Similarly, while they differ in certain crucial respects, Aristotle and the Stoics nevertheless consider virtue constitutive of happiness, and thus a discussion of their views on virtue reveals their respective accounts of the happy life. Ch. 3 and 4 together will reveal Spinoza’s own rich conception of happiness as active (non-transitional) pleasure and virtue qua adequate causality. Thirdly, the ways in which Spinoza links together pleasure, virtue, and the body ontologically and ethically clearly illustrate his distinctive synthesis of the unity (i.e., non-reductive identity) and plurality (i.e., diverse expression) of being.

In Ch. 3, I show that Spinoza is in strong agreement with Aristotle and Epicurus on the theme of pleasure. Firstly, Spinoza, Aristotle, and Epicurus are (contra the Stoics) committed to two central claims: (i) pleasure holds a necessary connection to healthy being and (ii) pleasure is by nature good. Secondly, Spinoza’s account of pleasure shares the most in common with

²⁵ Other important themes in the eudaimonistic tradition are mind, wisdom, the internal (psychological) dimension of being *eudaimon*, and the role of education and socio-political conditions in promoting or frustrating *eudaimonia*. These themes will be, to some degree, discussed in Ch. 3-5.

Epicurus's, because both outline a dual account of pleasure based on positive (i.e., health-oriented) changes in one's state of being and healthy states of being per se, and consider happiness to be constituted by a certain kind of pleasure (namely, one that expresses a healthy state of being per se). A version of sections 2.2-2.4 of this chapter is forthcoming in *Ergo* as "Healthy and Happy Natural Being: Spinoza and Epicurus Contra the Stoics." In Ch. 4, I argue that (1) Spinoza agrees with Aristotle and the Stoics, (contra Epicurus) that virtue constitutes happiness, (2) Spinoza, Epicurus, and the Stoics agree (contra Aristotle) that theoretical reason is neither distinct from, nor superordinate over practical reason, and (3) Spinoza's account of virtue shares the most in common with Aristotle's, because both consider happiness to be constituted by virtuous activities specifically (rather than mere dispositions) and allow for levels and degrees of virtue and happiness. Finally, in Ch. 5, I show that Spinoza's views on the body reveal his distinct contribution to the eudaimonistic tradition, namely his commitment to the ontological and ethical equality of body and mind – a view that is not found in his fellow eudaimonists, most (if not all) of whom defend some sort of inequality between corporeal and intellectual being. A version of this section is published in *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review/Revue Canadienne De Philosophie* as "Spinoza's Early Modern Eudaimonism: Corporeal and Intellectual Flourishing," pp. 1-26, doi: <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0012217323000409> (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). Finally, in the Conclusion, I discuss how the results of this dissertation can assist us in tracing the history and development of eudaimonism and its potential applicability and appeal in our world today – particularly the applicability and appeal of Spinozistic eudaimonism.

Chapter 1: Survey of the Literature

Introduction

There is rich literature, from both the early modern and contemporary periods, discussing Spinoza's engagement with Aristotelianism, Epicureanism, and Stoicism. Many early modern commentators, such as Pierre Bayle, François Fénelon, Isaac Jaquelot, G.W. Leibniz, and Giambattista Vico, describe Spinoza's philosophy, in some sense, as a renewal of Epicureanism and/or Stoicism. In current scholarship, Dimitris Vardoulakis argues for a Neo-Epicurean reading of Spinoza's ethical and political theory, Dirk Pereboom and Susan James argue for Neo-Stoic interpretations of his metaphysics, psychology, and ethics, and Edwin Curley, Jean-Marie Guyau, and Genevieve Lloyd describe Spinoza's philosophy as a synthesis of Epicureanism and Stoicism. On the other hand, Firmin DeBrabander, A. A. Long, and Jon Miller push against Epicurean and/or Stoic readings of Spinoza, pointing out important areas where he places himself in strong opposition to them. As well, scholars like John Carriero, Don Garrett, Heidi Ravven, Sanem Soyarslan, and H.A. Wolfson explore the nuanced ways in which Spinoza agrees with, improves on, and departs from core Aristotelian principles.

In this chapter I survey the primary and secondary literature on Spinoza for the sake of making two arguments: (1) Spinoza is meaningfully engaged (positively and negatively) with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics philosophically and (2) his nuanced agreements and disagreements with all three philosophers show that Spinoza cannot be rightfully described as a Neo-Aristotelian, Neo-Epicurean, or Neo-Stoic. I find that the abovementioned scholars are right that Spinoza was in dialogue with ancient philosophers, but it would be an oversimplification to consider him a mere disciple or innovator of a particular ancient philosophy. As we will see, he agrees with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics in certain respects, but he is also in significant

disagreement with each of them in other respects. Ultimately, I argue that Spinoza is a contributor to the ancient ethical tradition of eudaimonism. In Ch. 2 I will outline what eudaimonism consists in, and how Spinoza, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics are all committed to five formal features of this tradition. Subsequent chapters will examine the positions of, and dialogue between, these eudaimonists concerning certain core themes, namely pleasure, virtue, and the body, in order to uncover Spinoza's unique contribution to eudaimonism (i.e., attributing equal ontological and ethical status to mind and body). The purpose of this chapter is to set a historical, scholarly, and conceptual foundation for such analyses.

1.1 Aristotle

In his library, Spinoza had a two-volume collection of Aristotle's works, which gives us concrete evidence of his primary textual knowledge of this ancient philosopher (Van Rooijen 127). He explicitly refers to Aristotle in his correspondence with Hugo Boxel. The character of this reference, however, is negative. Spinoza defiantly asserts that "[t]he authority of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates carries little weight with me," describing the Aristotelian and medieval notion of substantial forms as an "occult" quality and "nonsense" (*Ep* 56, p. 905; see also *TTP* Preface, p. 71/G III 9). Such a sentiment would not have been surprising at the time, since, as we have seen with Hobbes, Gassendi, Descartes, and Leibniz in the Introduction, Aristotle was a core target of seventeenth-century philosophers. In this context, Spinoza is specifically denouncing these three philosophers for encouraging belief in ghosts (Boxel having previously referenced these great philosophers as support for his own belief in ghosts [*Ep* 55, p. 902]), Socrates with his famous guiding spirit (*daemon*) in the *Apology*, and Plato and Aristotle for constructing metaphysical frameworks that allow for unintelligible, supernatural phenomena. We also see Aristotle implicitly criticized in the realm of substance (*C* 5; *Meta Z*), since Spinoza

denies that there can be multiple substances (*E* IP14) and that individuals (such as humans) are substances (IP8; IIP10).

Wolfson and Ravven, however, both argue that Spinoza retains something notably Aristotelian in his conception of substance.²⁶ According to Wolfson[a], Spinoza takes the Aristotelian notions of matter and form and gives them a more precise meaning and closer relationship as the attributes of Extension and Thought, respectively (222-4, 232-5). Similarly, Ravven describes Extension as “a modernization of Aristotle’s matter” and Thought as “a modernization of Aristotle’s form” (11). For Aristotle, reality consists of two eternal substances, God qua pure form/thought and prime matter, the universe being formed out of prime matter’s interaction with God through final causation (*Meta* Z, Λ).²⁷ Spinoza brings these two eternal substances together in God, by arguing that (1) God qua substance is both thinking and extended and (2) Extension qua matter and Thought qua form are not distinct substances, but rather inseparable attributes of God as the only substance (*E* IP15S; IIP1-2, 7). Based on Wolfson’s reading, we might say that Spinoza has taken Aristotelian hylomorphism and both extended and reduced its application. He *extends* its application in the sense that it is no longer only individuals who are understood as combinations of matter-form or Extension-Thought, but God also. However, hylomorphism is also in some sense *reduced* because the only true substance is God. A further innovation that Spinoza brings to this Aristotelian notion is the idea of matter/Extension as inherently active, rather than inherently passive (Wolfson[a] 237; Ravven 13-4). Because, for Spinoza, Extension is part of God’s essence and God’s essence is God’s

²⁶ Melamed[b] points out that, more fundamentally, Spinoza shares with Aristotle (and Descartes) the notion of a substance as an independent being, particularly in a predicative sense (85-90).

²⁷ Aristotle’s analysis of substance in *Metaphysics* Z brings in several nuances concerning matter, form, and the compound of the two. For some discussion of these nuances, see 5.1.

power (IP34), God is just as physically active as it is intellectually active.²⁸ Ravven argues that the true improvement on Aristotle here is Spinoza's focus on *activity* instead of thought as ontologically primary in a divine and human context, with Thought/form and Extension/matter functioning as coextensive expressions of the same underlying activity of being (8, 13-4).²⁹ Consequently, Spinoza's conception of substance may indicate a revision of hylomorphism rather than an outright rejection of matter and form as legitimate metaphysical principles.³⁰

Another area of rich metaphysical engagement between Spinoza and Aristotle is in the realm of teleology. Spinoza is (in)famous for denying that the universe as a whole is purposefully and morally ordered by God, namely because its supreme perfection rules out God needing to achieve anything – in particular some independent standard of goodness. There is apparently no cosmic plan to maximize the good as an end, nor should the universe as a whole (or the beings within it) be considered intrinsically good or bad (*E* IP33S2, App.; IVPref.). For Aristotle, one of the primary four causes is final or teleological causation, which refers to an end or outcome in explaining why a given effect came about (*Physics* II.3; *Meta* A.3.983a25-32). For example, the final cause or ultimate end of human beings is virtuous rational activity (*NE* I.7). Spinoza, however, explicitly asserts that “all final causes are but figments of the human imagination” (*E* IApp.) and human final causes are really efficient causes in the form of human appetites (IVPref.). It would seem then that all teleology is illusory for Spinoza and any attempt to appeal to it on philosophical (or scientific) grounds is erroneous.

²⁸ Here I refer to God as “it,” and avoid the traditional masculine pronouns, in light of the impersonal nature of Spinoza's conception of God, as evidenced by passages like *E* IP10, IApp., and VP17.

²⁹ This point will be important when we discuss Spinoza's views on the ontological and ethical role of the body in 5.4.

³⁰ Although it should be noted that, contra Aristotle, Spinoza denies any causal interaction between Thought and Extension as the constituents of substance, which would seem to be a clear departure from a hylomorphic dynamic (*E* IP10; IIP6).

Rutherford[b], for example, sees teleology as a core point where Spinoza departs from Aristotle metaphysically and ethically (212-20). However, he acknowledges that Spinoza makes use of a lot of teleological language when referring to human psychology and discussing the highest good in Parts III-V of the *Ethics*. Rutherford's explanation is that Spinoza embraces teleology in a purely phenomenological sense. Parts I-II rule out the existence of teleology on metaphysical grounds due to the deterministic structure of the universe, where everything is strictly brought about by prior causes rather than for the sake of particular ends, but human beings psychologically cannot escape teleological thinking. As a result, teleological thinking functions as a useful "fiction" that enables one to reflect on how to live well, and in particular how to achieve adequate (contemplative) knowledge of God. This sort of anti-teleological reading not only distances Spinoza from Aristotle, but also from the eudaimonistic tradition in general. If humans are not truly end-directed, then the eudaimonistic commitment to pursuing happiness as the ultimate ethical end cannot be legitimate in Spinoza's framework (except on purely phenomenological grounds).

Garrett[a], in contrast, argues that Aristotle and Spinoza share much in common concerning teleology. Firstly, he argues that Spinoza's arguments against teleology in *E IApp.* only refute the existence of purposeful divine teleology on the macrocosmic level of the universe as a whole; they do not rule out teleological explanations on the microcosmic level of individuals (327-30). Secondly, Garrett[a] argues that the Conatus Doctrine, which states that each thing essentially strives or tends towards the preservation of its existence (IIIP6-7), is teleological, because Spinoza says that whatever follows from the nature of a given thing (living or non-living), considered in itself, will be for the sake of self-preservation as an end or outcome. In the

context of human beings, this conatus manifests itself in a complex psychology aimed at consciously pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain (*E* IIP28; Garrett[a] 324-6, 334-6).³¹

With these considerations in mind, Garrett[a] claims that Aristotle and Spinoza both argue for (1) “unthoughtful” teleology, (2) non-purposive divine teleology, and (3) non-human teleology. Concerning (1), while Aristotle grants that thought plays an obvious teleological role in human behaviour, he also thinks that there are many instances of teleology in nature, such as the development of teeth for the sake of chewing or the leaves of plants for shade, that do not involve any sort of thinking as a direct causal factor, although God as a (contemplative) thinking being is the ultimate (i.e., first) indirect cause of all things in the universe (*Physics* II.8). Similarly, for Spinoza the striving for self-preservation as an end can be understood through the attribute of Thought or the attribute of Extension, there being no causal interaction between these attributes and their subsequent modes (*E* IIP6-7; IIP2). The teleological striving of bodies qua extended modes is explained with no appeal to minds qua thinking modes (339-41). Concerning (2), they both deny that the universe is purposefully designed by God. Aristotle’s God simply contemplates itself, with no intentions towards the universe (*Meta* Λ.9), and we saw above that Spinoza’s God, in its supreme perfection, is devoid of goals (*E* IApp.; Garrett[a] 341-4). Concerning (3), Aristotle grants various forms of teleology as change to inanimate beings, plants, and non-human animals (*Physics* II.8), and for Spinoza the teleological dimension of the conatus applies to all beings with varying degrees of complexity (*E* IIP13S; IIP6-7; Garrett[a] 344-5). Despite his vehement rejection of purposeful divine teleology then, in Garrett’s view Spinoza largely agrees with Aristotle on the nature of teleology in the universe. This sort of reading is

³¹ For further defence of a teleological reading of Spinoza’s philosophy, that ties in nicely with Garrett’s analysis, see Sangiacomo’s “Aristotle, Heereboord and the Polemical Target of Spinoza’s Critique of Final Causes” and “Teleology and Agreement in Nature.”

also compatible with eudaimonism, because it grants that humans could genuinely pursue something like happiness as the ultimate ethical end.

On the subjects of Spinoza's conception of teleology in general, and how Spinoza and Aristotle's views compare in particular, I side with Garrett. In *E IApp*. Spinoza posits that "men act always with an end in view, to wit, the advantage that they seek." On Rutherford's reading, this is a merely psychological claim, with no metaphysical truth. Spinoza does in fact employ this claim in what follows in a psychological context, in order to explain how humans come to erroneously believe that the universe as a whole is purposefully ordered by God for some ultimate end. However, his basic argument is that humans take the teleological behaviour that we observe in ourselves and (out of ignorance) mistakenly attribute that same behaviour to other beings, the universe as a whole, and divine being(s). The point does not seem to be that we mistakenly attribute teleology to ourselves *and* everything else, but rather that we erroneously apply *a truth about ourselves* to everything else.

But let's assume that we can only interpret this claim in phenomenological terms, and that it says nothing definitive about the metaphysical truth of human teleological behaviour. If Rutherford is right, the perception of human teleology shares the same problem as the perception of human free will, due to the deterministic nature of reality. With the perception of free will, we are "conscious of [our] volitions and desires [qua effects]," but ignorant of "the causes that determined them" (*IApp./G II 78*). Spinoza speaks just as strongly when denying free will to God and individuals as he does in denying teleology to God (*IP32; IIP48*). In fact, the Appendix mentions human freedom and human teleology in conjunction with each other. We might then think that both indicate how ignorance, or inadequate knowledge, leads us to think in ways that do not reflect metaphysical truth. However, whereas Spinoza is explicit that there is ignorance

and falsity involved in the perception of free will (IIP35S), he makes no such explicit claim about human teleology. Moreover, he relies heavily on end-directed explanations in Parts III-V. Rutherford argues that these explanations are simply useful fictions, but Spinoza does not consider the perception of free will to be a useful fiction. On the contrary, he goes to great lengths to reconceptualize freedom in deterministic terms and to steer people away from thinking they have free will (IDef.7; IIP35S; IVDef. 8, P67-73). If these two perceptions are problematic in the same way, why is one useful and not the other?

Admittedly, Spinoza seems to reconceptualize final causation as appetite in IVPref., but in light of what Garrett says about the Conatus Doctrine, we need not read this claim as a rejection of all teleology, but more a rejection of *extrinsic* teleology as a separate end that explains human behaviour or the causal chain of the universe as a whole. Appetite qua conatus, conversely, can be understood as *intrinsically* teleological, in that self-preservation or self-affirmation serves as an internal end for the universe as a whole and all beings within it, this end being manifested in different ways depending on the nature of the being in question. Garrett[a] also argues that there is a sense in which Spinoza accepts providence or divine teleology, since God “produces the greatest possible reality and perfection” as an absolutely infinite substance (343; see also *E* IP16, 17S, 33S2).

In line with this claim, it should be noted that Spinoza’s goal is typically to correct people’s understanding of things like God (*E* IDef.6, P14-36), substance (IDef.3, P1-14), freedom (IDef.7; *Ep* 56), and immortality (*E* VP33-42), not to deny their existence altogether. The closest he apparently gets to outright rejection is with providence. However, in his earlier work the *Short Treatise*, Spinoza describes providence as “the striving which we find in the

whole of nature and in individual things to maintain and preserve their existence” (I.V).³² Here we see explicit evidence of Spinoza thinking of self-perservative striving, or self-affirmative activity, in teleological terms. Of course, Spinoza does not describe the universe in terms of “providence” in the *Ethics*, but considering he retains the importance of striving as a form of explanation, we might speculate that he forgoes using the word so as not to mislead his traditionally-minded readers (or because he recognizes that *they* would be unlikely to consider his picture of reality truly providential).³³

However, Garrett[a] notes that, strictly-speaking, we might not refer to God as “striving” or possessing an appetite qua conatus (343), since God qua eternal being cannot truly strive to preserve its being because its being cannot be promoted or hindered in any way (*E* VP17). In fact, by virtue of Spinoza’s Substance Monism (IP14), there is nothing outside God qua substance to serve as a help or a hindrance, in any case. In light of this point, we might argue that in the context of the *Ethics* striving only applies to what is “in” or follows from the essence of God/Nature and is capable of changes in its degree of perfection (namely, finite modes as they exist in the causal chain of Nature), not God’s immutable essence itself. While Spinoza attributes “striving” to the “whole of Nature” in the *Short Treatise*, he may only be referring to the universe as an infinite composite totality of finite modes qua mediate infinite mode (more on this in 5.4), and not God qua [indivisible] substance in itself. In the *Ethics*, Spinoza does not explicitly refer to God qua substance as striving; only individuals qua finite modes (and, perhaps,

³² In the *TTP*, Spinoza equates God’s providence in general (Ch. 6), and its choices, direction, help, and decrees in particular, with the universal, eternal, and immutable order of natural laws (Ch. 3, p. 417/G III 45-6). The self-perservative striving referenced in the *KV* represents one of these core natural laws (*TTP* Ch. 4, p. 426/G III 58; Ch. 16, p. 527/G III 189; *TP* 2.2-6/G III 276-8).

³³ It is also important to note that some of Spinoza’s views (e.g., on the relationship between mind and body and the value of passions) undergo significant changes between the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics*. His views on the legitimacy/illegitimacy of providence may then be one of these changes. For discussion of how these texts differ, see, e.g., Sangiacomo (Ch. 1-2, 4-5); Jaquet’s *Affects, Actions and Passions in Spinoza* (Ch. 3).

the infinite composite totality of them [IIP13Lem.7]) are described as striving. In any case, it might be more helpful to describe divine teleology in terms of eternal and unrestricted self-preservative or self-affirmative *activity*. In other words, the internal end of all beings is to affirm their existence by expressing their being as fully as possible. Human teleology involves striving, because humans are finite beings capable of varying degrees of limited self-affirmation, while divine teleology may not involve striving because God is absolutely unrestricted in its self-affirmation and eternally expresses itself in infinitely many ways (more on this below). In light of these points, Garrett's reading seems far more plausible than Rutherford's, and thus we can say that Spinoza agrees with Aristotle in certain respects on the matter of teleology. Strictly-speaking, though, an eudaimonistic reading of Spinoza only requires the legitimacy of *human* teleology. In Epicurus, we do not find appeal to divine teleological explanations for phenomena, only explanations concerning humans seeking happiness as their highest good, so there is precedent within this ancient tradition for a non-teleological eudaimonism with respect to the universe as a whole and providence (L&S 13).

However, there are a few potential differences between Aristotle and Spinoza on this matter that Garrett does not address. Firstly, for Aristotle, while there is unthoughtful teleology, and the universe is not purposefully designed, nevertheless the universe is considered intrinsically good by virtue of God's own (albeit non-moral) goodness and its extrinsic teleological influence as an object of desire on everything else (*Meta* Λ.7, 10). Such a view, if only weakly, is indicative of traditional providentialism. In contrast, Spinoza's statement in *E* IVPref. that "'good' and 'bad' . . . indicate nothing positive in things considered in themselves" might lead us to think that God and the universe as a whole are not intrinsically good in his ethical framework. If this reading is correct, then Spinoza's conception of teleology is not

entirely in line with Aristotle's. On the other hand, Fraenkel argues that Spinoza does consider God intrinsically good ("Maimonides' God" 196-7), in light of passages in earlier works where Spinoza describes God as "supremely good" (*CM* 1.1) and the "greatest good" (*KV* I.VII) and equates perfection with goodness (*KV* I.IV).³⁴ On this reading, Aristotle and Spinoza remain in strong agreement on the subject of teleology. On either reading, however, they cannot be said to be in *full* agreement, by virtue of how they understand God's causal relationship to the universe. For Aristotle, God (as pure self-reflective thinking) and the universe (as a combination of matter and form) are separate entities and God only indirectly causes the structure and order of the universe as a final cause qua object of desire. For Spinoza, the universe either is God (as reality qua substance itself) or is contained within God (as an infinite mode) – in either case, they are not separate entities. Moreover, Spinoza's God has a more direct causal and teleological role insofar as the self-affirmative activity of individuals and the universe as a whole, as modes, are instantiations of God's absolute self-affirmative activity as the only substance (*IP* 14-15; *IIP* 6). In other words, divine teleology is wholly intrinsic for Spinoza, while for Aristotle it is ultimately extrinsic with respect to the universe. Despite their similar conceptions of teleology,

³⁴ One might push against this reading by noting that, even in these texts, Spinoza argues that "[a] thing is not said to be either good or bad when considered in isolation [i.e., in itself], but only in relation to another thing" (*CM* 1.6) and "good and evil are only relations . . . we never say that something is good except with reference to something else . . ." (*KV* I.X). When Spinoza says that God is good, he means that God has a beneficial relationship to other beings (in this case, modes). God is good, and always so, because it causes and sustains one's existence, and promotes increases in one's power. God is the supreme good, because there is nothing more beneficial to one's well-being than God. However, God is not intrinsically good in an absolute and non-relational sense, without appeal to its effect on other beings. Explicit support for this claim can also be found in *CM* 1.6: "the question is raised as to whether God could be called good before he created things; and it seems to follow from our definition that God did not possess any such attribute because we say that a thing considered in itself alone cannot be called either good or bad. Many will think this absurd, but why I do not know." Moreover, nothing can be good or bad *for* God, because its immutable nature precludes changes in God's absolute power (*E* VP17). God is, in a sense, truly good, but only for other beings and never in itself. To establish agreement between Aristotle and Spinoza on God's goodness then, one would need to establish that Aristotle is also committed to a relational conception of goodness. Because, as we will see shortly, other differences between Aristotle and Spinoza concerning teleology can be established, I reserve judgment on this matter.

then, Aristotle and Spinoza still to some degree differ crucially concerning their views on the end-directedness of things.

This point now brings us from metaphysics into an exploration of Spinoza's engagement with Aristotelian ethics. Wolfson and Carriero both draw parallels between the ethical dimension of Spinoza's works and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Wolfson[b] picks out the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* and *Ethics* in particular. He argues that, in the *TIE*, Spinoza follows Aristotle in searching for the highest good as happiness, with both dismissing wealth, pleasure, or honour per se as constituents of this good (236; *TIE* ~1-5; *NE* I.4). In the *Ethics*, IVP19-28 follow the same general outline as Aristotle's text (233-40). Both argue that we all aim at the good as an end (*E* IVDef. 7, P19; *NE* I.1.1094a1-3), there is an ultimate good for humans, this end is identified with happiness as living well and doing well, and this human good is pleasurable and useful (*E* IVP18S-21; *NE* I.1.1094a18 ff.). They also share the view that happiness consists in a virtuous life of rational, contemplative activity (*E* IVP26-8; *NE* X.7). Similarly, Carriero argues that the *NE* and *Ethics* share two distinguishable ethical projects, one practical and the other theoretical. The middle books of the *NE* and Parts III-IV of the *Ethics* concern individual and other-directed virtues that enable one to flourish in the world personally and socially, while *NE* X and *Ethics* Parts IV-V shift focus to divine contemplation of eternal truths. Carriero notes that commentators tend to prefer the practical project of both texts over the theoretical and divine project, the latter being considered more troublesome in terms of applicability or coherence (20-2).

However, despite these apparent similarities, Spinoza notably departs from Aristotle in certain crucial respects. Wolfson[b] acknowledges that Spinoza's starting point for establishing the good is different. Aristotle derives the highest good from examining what the distinctive

human function is (that which distinguishes humans from other living things in kind), namely, the capacity for reason (*NE* I.7.1097b23-1098a21). Spinoza, conversely, grounds his conception of the good in what one's "function is as a mere being" in nature, namely the essential striving (i.e., *conatus*) to preserve one's existence that applies to all beings (Wolfson[b] 236; *E* IIP6-7). While Spinoza narrows his ethical focus to human beings, the functional difference between humans and other (living and non-living) beings is a matter of degree rather than kind for him (IIP13S). I think Wolfson is right about these crucial differences, but it is also important to note that both derive the good from naturalistic considerations and understand rationality as a fundamental and ethically important feature of humanity (points we will discuss further in Ch. 2 and 4).

A far more interesting and distinctive difference between Aristotle and Spinoza ethically is brought to light by Ravven, which connects well with Wolfson's observations. She argues that Spinoza, contra Aristotle, does not separate theoretical and practical reason (28). For Aristotle, the practical dimension of reason (*phronesis*) is concerned with good/bad desire and action, while the theoretical dimension (*sophia*) is concerned with understanding eternal truths irrespective of practical and moral considerations (*NE* VI.3-7, 12-3), although both are, in themselves, sufficient constituents of happiness (X.7-8). Recall that Ravven claims activity takes ontological priority over thought (or form) for Spinoza, so the mental and physical are ontologically equal expressions of the same underlying subject of activity. This unified foundation of activity is represented in the human realm through the *conatus* as essential self-affirmative desire, which brings together mind and body (IIP7S), will and intellect (IIP49), and knowledge and emotion (IIIDef.3, P9S; IVP8, 14) as inseparable expressions of existential activity (Ravven 20-1). In other words, there is no aspect of reason or knowledge that is purely

theoretical for Spinoza, as there is for Aristotle. All reason is affective and practical, because it represents the essential underlying desire to affirm one's existence and increase their causal power, in this case in mental terms. Contra Carriero, Spinoza's discussion of the contemplation of eternal truths in Parts IV and V should not be understood as a shift in focus from the practical to the theoretical. On the contrary, this contemplation should be understood as both practical and theoretical in nature.³⁵ Consequently, Spinoza's ethical conception of reason is more akin to that of Socrates, Plato, and the Stoics than Aristotle, because the former do not consider the practical and theoretical to be separable in the realm of reason.

As a final point of potential ethical disagreement, we return to Rutherford. Rutherford[b] argues that good and bad, like teleology and free will, do not actually exist in the universe for Spinoza (212, 214). *E IApp.* makes it clear that God does not act for moral ends and *IVPref.* makes it clear that things in the universe are neither intrinsically good nor bad, which seems to mean that goodness and badness are not objective, natural properties. If this is the case, Spinoza and Aristotle are starting from different metaethical foundations, and thus Spinoza is not truly an eudaimonist. Rutherford[b], however, thinks that Spinoza considers good and bad, like teleology, useful psychological fictions (212-20). Human beings cannot escape moral thinking, due to our ignorance and intellectual limitations, but such erroneous beliefs can be utilized, with recognition of their metaphysical falsity, to improve one's life. Rutherford claims that, in a purely phenomenological sense, Spinoza shares with Aristotle an eudaimonistic commitment to virtue, practical and theoretical reasoning, and the pursuit of the highest good as contemplation of

³⁵ Soyarslan[b] similarly argues against an Aristotelian reading of Spinoza's contemplative ideal, on the grounds that (1) Spinoza's Substance Monism entails a closer relationship between humans and the divine, (2) the rational is restricted to eternal truths, and (3) the mind is not divided into practical vs. theoretical parts because Spinoza considers will and intellect one and the same *qua* idea. She argues instead that Spinoza's conception of contemplation has greater affinity with Plato, due to (2) and (3).

eternal truths. I have already given my reasons above for rejecting Rutherford's reading of Spinoza on teleology. I also deny that Spinoza considers good and bad metaphysically illusory. On the contrary, I think that he does indeed, in some sense, understand them as objective, natural properties. Because this issue is far larger than a comparison of Aristotle and Spinoza, however, I will defend my metaethical reading of Spinoza in 2.3, where I show that his conception of good and bad is compatible with the naturalistic objectivity (and weak subjectivity) of eudaimonism.

Overall, Spinoza is richly engaged with Aristotle on the relationship between matter and thought, the nature of substance, teleology, practical vs. theoretical reason, and the foundation of the good.

1.2 Epicurus

Some of the core sources of antiquity on ancient Epicureanism, which were available during the seventeenth century, come from Diogenes Laertius, Cicero, and Lucretius (Wilson[b] 2, 13). Book X of Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* provides a description of Epicurus's life and philosophical views. More importantly, it also preserves three philosophical letters written by Epicurus himself, *Letter to Herodotus* (on physics), *Letter to Pythocles* (on meteorology), and *Letter to Menoeceus* (on ethics), as well as a list of central philosophical quotes from Epicurus entitled *Sovran Maxims* or *Principal Doctrines*. Cicero, in *On the Nature of the Gods*, *Tusculan Disputations*, and *On Moral Ends*, systematically outlines and critiques Epicureanism on metaphysical and ethical grounds. Lucretius, a Roman Epicurean, reportedly presents the core metaphysical and ethical themes of Epicurus's lost work *On Nature* in his own epic poem *On the Nature of Things*. These sources shape much of early modern understanding of ancient Epicureanism.

Admittedly, Spinoza's library, at least at the time of his death, did not contain these ancient Epicurean texts. This fact, however, does not mean that he never read the abovementioned texts, or that he had no familiarity with or interest in Epicureanism. Nadler[d] notes that Spinoza's studies with Franciscus Van den Enden would have brought him into contact with the extant classics of Greece and Rome (109). These studies would likely have enabled him to read Diogenes Laertius, Cicero, and Lucretius, and thus to critically engage with Epicureanism. In fact, while Spinoza did not have *On the Nature of the Gods*, *Tusculan Disputations*, or *On Moral Ends* in his library, he did have a collection of Cicero's letters, indicating familiarity with and interest in the latter's works (Rooijen 194). Moreover, we find explicit reference to Epicurus and Lucretius in Spinoza's correspondence with Hugo Boxel. In the same letter in which Spinoza criticizes Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates, he praises Epicurus and Lucretius: "The authority of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates carries little weight with me. I should have been surprised if you had produced Epicurus, Democritus, or Lucretius or one of the Atomists or defenders of the atoms" (*Ep* 56, p. 905). Recall that the main topic of this correspondence is ghosts, and that Boxel appeals to the authority of ancient philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates to support their existence. Spinoza, in reply, shows contempt for their metaphysical views. Arguably, he mentions Epicurus, Democritus, and Lucretius because he considers atomism a far superior theory of reality and less prone to the absurdities of belief in a pre-ordained universe or unintelligible supernatural phenomena, like ghosts (which, as we will see in Ch. 2 and 3, has important ethical implications for both in removing mental disturbance and promoting peace of mind). Epicurus and Lucretius are well-known critics of providential and supernatural thinking, who sought to offer natural explanations for phenomena (*LH*~76-7, 81; *LP*~84-116; L&S 13D-I). Spinoza is also a critic of providential and supernatural explanations

and committed to naturalistic scientific explanations, as we see in this letter and elsewhere (*E* IApp.; *TTP* Ch. 6; *Ep* 54).³⁶ More generally, Spinoza's praise for these Epicurean philosophers is noteworthy, because he rarely speaks favourably of any ancient or contemporary thinkers. The fact that he does so here seems to indicate that Spinoza himself recognizes an affinity between his own views and Epicureanism.

However, we should be cautious. This passage concerns only metaphysics, not ethics. A shared commitment to naturalism and rejection of the supernatural does not entail that Spinoza and Epicurus agree on the nature of ethics (e.g., if the end of ethics is happiness or if happiness consists in pleasure). As well, Spinoza's Substance Monism (*E* IP14) precludes him from being an atomist both numerically and qualitatively, since atomism posits the existence of an infinite *number* of atoms (i.e., substances) of various *kinds*, respectively (*LH*~39-42). Even in the realm of atomism, Spinoza shares a closer affinity with Democritus than Epicurus and Lucretius. Epicurean atomism is indeterministic (*LM*~133-4; *L&S* 11H, 20B-F), while Democritean atomism is deterministic (*Testimonia*" 73-5).³⁷ As a strong determinist himself (*E* IP33), and because determinism plays an integral role in his ethics, Spinoza is in greater metaphysical agreement with Democritus (*IVApp*.32; *VP*6). In fact, it is Democritus for whom Spinoza shows the most respect, because he goes on to condemn those who "burned all [Democritus's] books" out of envy for his "high reputation" (*Ep* 56, p. 905/G II 262). On this passage alone, then, we cannot classify Spinoza as an Epicurean or Neo-Epicurean. All we can say is that, in terms of

³⁶ As we saw in the prior section on Aristotle, however, Spinoza and the Epicureans do not reject all forms of teleology – their main concern is to abolish belief in providence as purposeful divine teleology, while nevertheless granting that humans genuinely act for the sake of ends. With that said, contra Epicurus, Spinoza shares with Aristotle a commitment to non-purposeful divine teleology insofar as God is the ultimate cause of all things.

³⁷ For comparison of the philosophical views of Democritus and Epicurus, the former of whom heavily influenced Epicurus metaphysically, epistemologically, and ethically, see, e.g., Bailey's *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus*.

anti-providentialism and naturalism, he acknowledges a greater affinity with Epicureanism than most other ancient Greek philosophies.

Historically, though, Spinozism and Epicureanism were often linked together. Both were considered by many early modern thinkers atheistic philosophies on similar grounds (Israel 512, 555, 618, 629, 666-7, 672).³⁸ Some of the core features of apparent atheism that Epicurus/Lucretius and Spinoza were understood to share were (1) the rejection of creation (*LH*~38-9; *E* IP19, 14), providence (L&S 13D-I; *E* IApp.), divine concern for humanity (*LH*~76-7, 81; *E* IApp.; VP17), and the immortality of the soul/mind (*LH*~65-6; L&S 14F-H; *E* VP21) and (2) a commitment to universal materialistic and mechanistic accounts of natural phenomena (L&S 4-15; *E* IApp.; IIP2, 7, 13). The *Ethics*, because it argues for all the above in one way or another, was considered a particularly heretical Epicurean text (Wilson[b] 98).

A notable critic of Epicureanism and Spinozism was Leibniz.³⁹ Leibniz connects Spinozism with Epicureanism and Stoicism, considering all three philosophies a threat to piety (we will cover the Stoic dimension in the next section). Metaphysically, he takes issue with Spinozism and Epicureanism for ascribing inherent motion to matter qua extension (“On Body and Force” 250-2; Israel 414)⁴⁰ and for describing the essence of divinity in material or extended terms. This latter point, in Leibniz’s view, entails that “there cannot be an all-powerful and all-knowing God, for how could a body act on everything without being affected by everything and without being destroyed? (“Two Sects” 281-2). Beyond thinking that (apparent) materialists like

³⁸ See also Lagrée’s “Spinoza « Athée & Épicurien ».”

³⁹ For discussion of other critics, like Jaquelot (544-8) and Fénelon (548-53), see, e.g., Lagrée’s “Spinoza « Athée & Épicurien ».”

⁴⁰ Leibniz argues that extension is insufficient to constitute the nature of bodies and their motion. In addition to extension, a body must also contain “motive force” as an entelechy or substantial form (“On Body and Force” 250-2; *DM* ~10, 12, 17-8).

Epicurus and Spinoza have misunderstood the nature of matter, Leibniz is also concerned that their conception of matter is incompatible with the existence of a supremely perfect God, insofar as he is considered corporeal.⁴¹ Moreover, he is troubled by their rejection of providence and conception of happiness as a tranquil life in the here and now, with no appeal to the joys of an afterlife (“Two Sects” 282). Leibniz acknowledges that Epicurus and Spinoza (the latter of whom he had actually met) were both men of virtuous character, and thus these philosophies were not developed by corrupt souls seeking to do evil, but he fears that their views nevertheless corrupt the souls of others who follow them (*New Essays* 462). The denial of providence (i.e., a universe deliberately designed for the sake of the good) robs God of all benevolence and moral praiseworthiness (*DM* ~2), which in turn promotes viciousness in people who simply follow “their brutish passions” with no true sense of morality or divine punishment/reward in this life or the next (*New Essays* 462). With these considerations in mind, it seems likely Leibniz would say that a truly tranquil life in the here and now would not in fact be viable for those following either philosophy. For Leibniz, then, Epicureanism and Spinozism promote social degradation, amorality, impiety, and suffering for the exact same reasons, namely they undermine the supreme perfection of God, the goodness of life, and the worthiness of moral conduct. In other words, Spinoza’s criticisms of tradition were heavily linked, by his contemporaries, to his apparent metaphysical and ethical agreements with Epicurus, a connection which (considering his correspondence) Spinoza seems to have (to some degree) acknowledged himself.

Contemporary scholarship also has much to say about Spinoza’s engagement with Epicureanism. Like Leibniz, some scholars have argued that Spinoza combines Epicurean and

⁴¹ I say “apparent” because, as we will see in 5.2 and 5.4, the materialism of Epicurus and Spinoza must be qualified.

Stoic ideas.⁴² Strauss claims that the foundation of Spinoza's conception of blessedness (*beatitudo*) synthesizes the Stoic pursuit of self-preservation with the Epicurean pursuit of pleasure, blessedness itself being "the eternal enjoyment of enduring and supreme joy" or the peace of mind that comes from scientific understanding (210-1). Curley more precisely locates this synthesis in the *conatus* (*Behind* 114-5). Spinoza agrees with the Stoics that the primary desire of living things is to preserve themselves, and he agrees with the Epicureans that the primary object of desire is pleasure. The *conatus*, in other words, strives for both self-preservation and pleasure qua increase in power of activity, power of activity being the expression of self-preservation in the midst of opposing external forces. Moving into the affective realm, Lloyd asserts that "Spinoza's treatment of the emotions can be seen as ingeniously bringing together ancient Stoic repudiation of the passions as involving erroneous beliefs, and the apparently opposed Epicurean treatment of pleasure as the highest good [i.e., happiness]" (80). Finally, Guyau argues that Spinoza combines an Epicurean "ethics of happiness [*morale du bonheur*]" with a Stoic "ethics of intelligence [*morale de l'intelligence*]" (36). He reads Epicurus and Spinoza as utilitarians on the grounds that they conceive of the good as that which is useful, primarily in bringing about happiness as a form of pleasure.⁴³ The Stoic dimension comes in through virtue as the rational self-preservative striving of the *conatus* to understand, which also ultimately constitutes happiness (34-36). In Guyau's view, Spinoza

⁴² Here I will mention what scholars say about the Stoic dimension in relation to the Epicurean dimension, because the Epicurean dimension cannot be abstracted from it without impeding clarity, but I will not discuss Spinoza's relation to Stoicism in detail until the next section.

⁴³ Annas[a] rejects a utilitarian reading of Epicureanism, partly because Epicureanism is agent-relative and utilitarianism is agent-neutral. In other words, the former is grounded in personal happiness while the latter is grounded in collective happiness (448). Both frameworks are concerned with personal and collective happiness, but their foundations are the inverse of each other. Kisner rejects a utilitarian reading of Spinoza for the same reason, and points out that the agent-relativity of eudaimonism in general is one of its core differences from utilitarianism (84).

considers happiness to consist in both pleasure *and* virtue qua reason, and thus he synthesizes Epicurean happiness and Stoic happiness.⁴⁴

A common theme among these scholars is how Spinoza, in some sense, retains the Epicurean conception of happiness as pleasure. However, there are potential issues with such a reading. Miller[b] argues that while the highest good, that is knowledge of God (157-8; *E* IVP28), is pleasurable, for Spinoza (contra Epicurus) we do not pursue this good *because it is pleasurable* (Miller [b] 156n16); rather we pursue the highest good because it represents the perfection of our intellectual nature (159, 162-6; *E* IVP27, 36S, App.4). Spinoza, in other words, should not be understood as a hedonist in Miller's view.⁴⁵

Lebuffe, contra Miller, argues that Spinoza is both a psychological and ethical hedonist. His primary evidence for the psychological reading comes from *E* IIP39S: "By 'good' [*bonum*] I understand here every kind of pleasure [*Laetitiae*] . . . and especially whatever satisfies a longing . . . By 'bad' [*malum*] I understand every kind of pain [*Tristitiae*], and especially that which frustrates a longing" (G II 170). According to Lebuffe, this account of value is meant to apply to all humans as "an invariant fact of human psychology" (154), meaning it holds true regardless of one's conscious beliefs about value and cannot be revised (153, 155-9).⁴⁶ Here Spinoza seems to indicate that, by nature, humans necessarily seek out pleasure as that which is good and avoid pain as that which is bad. Ethically, Lebuffe (197-201) takes Spinoza to be a

⁴⁴ In the Introduction I mentioned that Descartes brings together Epicureanism and Stoicism through his treatment of pleasure and virtue as closely related ends. Spinoza, who was greatly influenced by Descartes, may then be drawing on Cartesian ethics here – the crucial difference being that Spinoza does not distinguish happiness from the highest good.

⁴⁵ Miller[b] is specifically concerned with refuting a hedonistic reading of *E* IVP45S, where Spinoza claims the wise person moderately pursues and enjoys the various bodily pleasures of life (156).

⁴⁶ Lebuffe contrasts this account with a providential account of value, where people judge the value of something based on its relation to God's purposes for the world. In this case, Spinoza goes to great lengths to refute such an account, despite its acknowledged commonality (145-53, 159; *E* 1App.; IVPref.).

hedonist because the highest good, knowledge of God, is strictly associated with the highest kind of pleasure, self-contentment (*acquiescentia in se ipso*), and the virtuous person pursues this pleasure solely for its own sake. Knowledge of God represents the greatest perfection of the intellectual dimension of the conatus. Pleasure, by definition, is that which increases the perfection of the conatus (*E* IIIP11, Def. Aff. 2), and from this premise Spinoza argues pleasure is in itself good (IVP41). More specifically, self-contentment (pleasure from the understanding of one's own power of activity qua conatus) is declared to be the highest good, that is the ultimate end for which we do anything (IVP52S). Spinoza goes on to make the connection between knowledge of God and self-contentment explicit in IVApp.4: "blessedness [i.e., the highest good] is nothing other than that self-contentment which arises from the intuitive knowledge of God." Lebuffe claims that this passage may indicate that self-contentment qua blessedness is "an affective component" of knowledge of God, rather than strictly equivalent to it, since it "arises" from this knowledge (199). In any case, Spinoza indicates that the highest good is a kind of pleasure that is intimately connected with knowledge of God as the intellectual perfection of the conatus, and (contra Miller[b]) we do indeed pursue this good because it is pleasurable. Lebuffe does not explicitly argue for an Epicurean reading of Spinoza, but if we accept his description of Spinoza as a hedonist, then they share more in common than Miller[b] acknowledges.⁴⁷

Spinoza's conception of pleasure as an increase in power of activity, however, does pose a potential difficulty for reading pleasure as the highest good in the same way as Epicurus. The highest good, for Epicurus, is a stable end in itself, and the kind of pleasure he associates with

⁴⁷ Whether we read Spinoza as a hedonist or not, I argue in 5.4 that the highest good is not solely intellectual, as Miller[a] characterizes it. On the contrary, Spinoza's metaphysics entails that the highest good will consist in intellectual *and* corporeal perfection qua self-affirmative power.

this good, katastematic pleasure, represents the absence of desire (*LM*~131-2; *DL* X.136). He makes it clear that pleasure which involves the process of satisfying desire, kinetic pleasure, does not constitute the highest good. As a process of obtaining an object of desire, kinetic pleasure is a means, not an end. Spinoza explicitly defines pleasure as a “*transition* from a state of less perfection to a state of greater perfection [emphasis mine]” (*E* IIIDef. Aff.2). In other words, pleasure is constituted by a process of moving towards a greater degree of power of activity. As a transition, Spinoza seems to understand pleasure as a means rather than an end, the end being here a certain state of perfection. Blessedness, in contrast, is said to be “perfection itself,” not a transition in degree of perfection (*VP*33S). And yet, as we see in the discussion of Lebuffe above, Spinoza seems to equate blessedness with pleasure in the form of self-contentment. Ignoring for the moment concerns about the coherence of his ethical account of the highest good (we will discuss this subject in 3.4), Spinoza seems to connect the highest good with pleasure as a process, contra Epicurus. In fact, if Spinoza genuinely thinks that (1) blessedness consists in self-contentment qua pleasure and (2) all pleasures are processes, then he may not understand the highest good in the same way as Epicurus (or ancient eudaimonists more generally),⁴⁸ because pleasures qua processes cannot function as stable ends.⁴⁹

In Ch. 2 I will explain why Spinoza’s conception of the highest good follows the same formal structure as the eudaimonistic tradition in general, but on the subject of pleasure there is a potential solution to this problem. Bove observes that Spinoza shares with Epicurus a dual account of pleasure, in the sense that they both posit the existence of pleasures of motion and of

⁴⁸ Spinoza’s conception of happiness would then be more akin to Hobbes’s, the latter of whom denies that there is a highest good (*EL* I.7.6) and understands happiness to consist in “continual” satisfaction of desire (*L* I.6)

⁴⁹ See, for example, *NE* VI.12-3, X.3. Contra Aristotle, though, Epicurus thinks restorative pleasures are, in themselves, genuine (kinetic) pleasures.

rest (480). A pleasure of motion is represented in Epicurus's kinetic pleasure and Spinoza's conception of pleasure as a transition in degree of perfection. Pleasure of rest is represented in Epicurus's katastematic pleasure and in Spinoza's conception of blessedness if we consider it a *non-transitional* pleasure. The possibility that blessedness is a non-transitional pleasure has been noted by several of scholars (e.g., Della Rocca[a] 157; Carlisle (131, 141-2); Garrett[b] 283-4; Miller[a] (192); Youpa[b] 119-22), and Spinoza himself seems to acknowledge that blessedness qua pleasure departs from his formal definition of pleasure (*E* VP36S). If we accept this reading of Spinoza's account of pleasure, there appears to be strong agreement between him and Epicurus on the nature of pleasure and the highest good. In 3.4 I will evaluate this reading, and defend it, although I will also point out (in 3.4 and 5.4) important aspects of Spinoza's conception of pleasure where he notably departs from Epicurus in particular and previous eudaimonists in general.

Lastly, Vardoulakis sees Spinoza's ethics and politics as distinctly Neo-Epicurean. He argues that Spinoza's Neo-Epicureanism is constituted by three interconnected themes that characterize his materialism: monism, authority, and utility. Under the theme of monism, he argues both are committed to the closed totality of being (i.e., nothing exists outside it), the denial of divine teleological creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), and the inseparability of mind and body (27-9; *LH* ~38-44, 76-7; *E* Ip14-5; IApp.; IIP7; IVP20S; *TTP* Ch. 4). Concerning authority, Spinoza (*TTP* Preface; Ch. 15) is argued to share with Epicurus and Lucretius (1.80-100) a critique of religious and political authority (Vardoulakis 4, 25-7, 59-60). Finally, while Aristotle (*NE* VI), Epicurus, and Spinoza ascribe ethical value to practical reasoning, Epicurus (*LH* ~37; *LM* ~132) and Spinoza (*E* IIPref.; IIIDef.1; IVP19-20, 65; *TTP* Ch. 16, p. 528-9/G III

190-2; Ch.17, p. 547/G III 215-6) depart from Aristotle by considering practical reason primary and superordinate over theoretical reason (Vardoulakis 5-6, 36, 52-3, 248).

In this section, we see primary and secondary evidence for Spinoza's engagement with Epicureanism. His metaphysics shares with Epicureanism a functional (and, in the context of early modern Europe, potentially socially destructive) critique of traditional views of God, providence, the supernatural, and political/religious authority. His ontological and ethical conceptions of pleasure also have parallels with the Epicurean notion of pleasures of motion vs. pleasures of rest and Epicurus's assertion that happiness is specifically a pleasure of rest. On the other hand, Spinoza's Substance Monism rules out atomism and his strong determinism is opposed to an indeterministic account of the universe. As well, we find little explicit evidence that Spinoza was ever specifically concerned with Epicurean ethics. These latter points indicate that Spinoza is not a disciple of Epicureanism, despite his notable agreements with Epicurus in certain respects. However, Epicurean ethics is still relevant if we read Spinoza as an eudaimonist. As we will see in the next chapter, both Epicurus and Spinoza's respective accounts of happiness draw heavily on their metaphysical views, meaning their agreements and disagreements in this domain are intimately tied to their ethical views. While Spinoza is not a Neo-Epicurean, Epicureanism is nevertheless useful in drawing out the distinctive character of his eudaimonism, namely in terms of what each has to say about the therapeutic power of anti-providentialism and both the value of and relationship between bodily and mental pleasures in living happily.

1.3 The Stoics

Spinoza possessed Roman Stoic sources in his library. He had Seneca's *Tragedies* (Van Rooijen 192) and two editions of his letters (180]), as well as Epictetus's *Handbook* (172).

Miller[a] notes that his inventory included texts from Grotius, Lipsius, Tacitus, Francisco de Quevedo, and Guillaume du Vair, all of whom drew influence from Stoicism (21). Outside the context of Spinoza's library, there were several other available sources on Stoic logic, physics, and ethics, most notably Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (VII), Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods*, *On Fate*, *On Moral Ends*, and *Tusculan Disputations*, and Epictetus's *Discourses* (17-8). As mentioned in the Epicurus section, Spinoza's studies with Van den Enden, at the very least, would likely have brought him into contact with Diogenes Laertius (and thus classical Greek Stoicism) and Cicero's major works, and we know he was exposed to Epictetus, considering he owned the *Handbook*.

The *Handbook* is particularly noteworthy in this context, because the *Ethics* contains a passage which seems to prove that Spinoza not only owned Epictetus's text, but also read and drew influence from it. In IVApp.32, he asserts that:

[H]uman power is very limited and is infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes, and so we do not have absolute power to adapt to our purposes things external to us. However, we shall patiently bear whatever happens to us that is contrary to what is required by consideration of our advantage, if we are conscious that we have done our duty and that our power was not extensive enough for us to have avoided the said things, and that we are part of the whole of Nature whose order we follow . . . For insofar as we understand, we can desire nothing but that which must be, nor in an absolute sense, can we find contentment in anything but truth . . . in so far as we understand these matters . . . [we are] in harmony with the order of the whole of Nature.

Three key points to draw from this passage are: (1) a distinction between what is and is not in our power, (2) a recommendation to let go of concern for negative outcomes that are outside of

our power, and (3) an assertion of the importance of aligning our desires with the course of Nature for the sake of peace of mind. We find similar sentiments in Epictetus. He states that “[s]ome things are within our power, while others are not” (*HB*~1.1), that suffering follows from grounding our concerns in what is not in our power (~2, 14), and that one will be content and live well only if they “wish” for everything to happen “just as it does” according to the natural order of things (~8) and focus their attention on what is in their power (~1, 14). These passages suggest that Spinoza and Epictetus share similar views concerning how we should understand and approach our place in the world, namely by nurturing what is up to us and embracing the causal order of Nature. Moreover, considering the presence of the *Handbook* in his library, it is a reasonable inference that what Spinoza says in IVApp.32 is (at least partly) drawn from Epictetus (with important differences, as we will see).⁵⁰ Here, then, there is notable evidence for positive engagement with Stoicism.

However, Spinoza’s explicit references to Stoic philosophy are typically more critical than positive.⁵¹ In the *TIE* he briefly refers to the Stoics’ confused perception of the soul and its immortality and materiality (~74). More substantially, he criticizes them in *E* VPref.:

I have already demonstrated that we do not have absolute command over [the emotions].⁵² Now the Stoics thought that the emotions depend absolutely on our will, and that we can have absolute command over them. However, with experience crying out

⁵⁰ Long describes this passage as “transparently and profoundly Stoic” (14).

⁵¹ Spinoza explicitly refers to Seneca in the *TTP* and the *Ethics*. In the *TTP*, he references the Roman Stoic’s claim from *The Trojan Women* that violent rule is not long-lasting (Ch. 5, p. 438/G III 74; Ch. 16, p. 530/G III 194). In the *Ethics*, he refers to Seneca’s suicide as an example of choosing a lesser evil (IVP20S).

⁵² See *E* IVAx., IVP2-4.

against them they were obliged against their principles to admit that no little practice and zeal are required in order to check and control emotions.

In Part V, namely P1-20, Spinoza explains how we can check and control harmful emotions and foster healthy ones (in particular, love of God), but he denies that we can wholly remove or control our emotions, due to the intimate relationship between the mind and body and our natural passivity to infinitely many external forces (IIP7S; IIIDef.3, P11; IVAx., P2-4). He claims that the Stoics, in contrast, think we *can* completely control our emotions through the exercise of our will.⁵³

Long argues Spinoza's criticism here is a misunderstanding of Stoicism. Spinoza, according to Long, seems to conflate "the Stoic thesis that passions are judgments . . . with freedom of the will" (n14). An important bit of context here is that Spinoza extends this criticism concerning the emotions to Descartes. He considers both the Stoics and Descartes guilty of attributing to the will absolute power over the emotions as judgments.⁵⁴ Descartes describes the will as undetermined by prior causes (*PP* I.39-44). It is less clear, though, that this is the case for the Stoics. While one's will, or faculty for assenting to impressions, is considered distinct from impressions themselves (L&S 39A-B; 41A-C), the determinism of the Stoics would seem to indicate that this evaluative faculty is just as determined as any other natural phenomena (55J-N; 62C, D, F). We might say, then, that Spinoza's real target is Descartes, and that he erroneously

⁵³ We will discuss Spinoza and the Stoics' respective views on emotions in 3.3 and 3.4.

⁵⁴ For discussion of Descartes's relation to the Stoics on emotions, see, e.g., Pereboom's "Stoic Psychotherapy."

reads the Cartesian conception of will into Stoicism. As well, this conflation may indicate that there are significant gaps in Spinoza's understanding of Stoicism.⁵⁵

However, I think that Long is oversimplifying the criticism. There may very well be a metaphysical misunderstanding on Spinoza's part, but his criticism is nevertheless valid on epistemological and psychological grounds. His main criticism concerns the degree of control over the passions that we can, in principle, have. The Stoics do indeed argue that we can in principle completely control our emotions. Moreover, their position is grounded in the epistemological separation of the faculty of assent and impressions. On the latter point, Spinoza denies the separation between will and impressions *qua* ideas, because he thinks that the essence of any given impression or idea expresses assent (IIP49). Even if Stoic assent is strictly determined (something Spinoza would agree with [IIP48]), he is still picking up on a major epistemological difference between them. On the former point, Spinoza is validly criticizing the Stoics for a view of human psychology that is false in the context of his own philosophical system. Thus, Spinoza shows that he has explicit and valid concerns with Stoicism.⁵⁶

In the context of Spinoza's philosophy as a whole, however, Leibniz claims that Spinoza brings together Epicurean and Stoic ideas. On the Stoic side, he notably describes Spinoza as part of "[t]he sect of New Stoics" ("Two Sects" 282).⁵⁷ He sees Spinoza as a major revivor and innovator of the Stoic tradition. His description of Spinoza's apparent Stoic features is

⁵⁵ Miller[a] reads the abovementioned passage from *TIE* ~74, in its vagueness and blending together of various Stoic ideas, as an indication that Spinoza may not have been well-versed in Stoic physics (136). This may be the case. Alternatively, since Spinoza is primarily concerned with epistemological methodology in the *TIE*, he may only be guilty of a lack of precision.

⁵⁶ Miller[a] thinks that these few explicit references to the Stoics are not strong evidence of Spinoza's serious engagement with them (9). However, considering that Spinoza rarely mentions any philosophers, I would argue that any explicit reference should be considered important. He only explicitly mentions Descartes once in the *Ethics*, but we do not question his serious engagement with Cartesian philosophy in this text.

⁵⁷ Other early modern critics who note Spinoza's connection to Stoicism are Bayle, Buddeus, and Vico (Miller[a] 1).

complicated, however. Many of the features he lists are certainly Spinozistic, but most of them are not truly Stoic. He rightly describes both as being committed to pantheism, in the sense that “God is the soul of the world” or the world itself as an active being (282; see DL VII.134, 138-9; *E* IP14-5). Ethically, he criticizes Spinoza and the Stoics for a conception of happiness that promotes an immanent life of “simple patience” in the wake of misfortunes, with no reliance on hope for a rewarding afterlife (“Two Sects” 282; *PN*~18; *HB*~1-2, 5, 8, 11, 14; *E* IVApp.32; VP34S, 41).⁵⁸ And like Epicureanism, Leibniz considers Stoicism a threat to piety, meaning he links Spinoza to the (in his mind) most impious philosophies of the ancient Greeks (“Two Sects” 283).

On the other hand, he says that the New Stoics are committed to God “as the cause of matter itself,” a “blind necessity” in the universe devoid of “rational choice” on the part of God, and the denial of “justice or benevolence with respect to God” (282). These are not clearly Stoic positions, although they are endorsed by Spinoza (*E* IP32, App.; IIP2; IVPref.). The Stoic God is inseparably joined with eternal matter, and immanently shapes it (as a corporeal being itself), but is not strictly identical with this matter and does not bring it into existence (DL VII.134). The Stoics are determinists, but they are also providentialists who argue that God wisely and deliberately structures the cosmos for the sake of the good, in particular the good of rational beings (VII.147; L&S 54H, N; I&G II-23.132). If we choose to be generous to Leibniz in this case though, we might say that these features represent (dangerous) innovations on Stoicism, which is why Spinoza is a *New* Stoic, and not simply a Stoic, from Leibniz’s perspective.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ For discussion of this point, see Rutherford[a].

⁵⁹ Leibniz’s concern here is arguably not a proper comparative analysis, but rather to point out the harmful influence of Epicureanism and Stoicism on philosophy and society in his time.

As we saw in the previous section, several contemporary scholars share Leibniz's view that Spinoza combines Epicurean and Stoic ideas. Strauss (210), Curley (*Behind* 114-5), and Guyau (34-6) all identify the fundamental desire for self-preservation as a decidedly Stoic position in Spinoza's conception of happiness, and claim that Spinoza synthesizes this idea with the Epicurean commitment to pleasure as the highest good. Curley more precisely identifies this desire with the *conatus*, the foundation of Spinoza's ethics (*Behind* 119-24). Guyau primarily identifies it with Spinoza's conception of virtue, namely the rational self-preservative striving of the *conatus*. In his view, Spinoza synthesizes a Stoic "ethics of intelligence" with an Epicurean "ethics of happiness" qua pleasure (36). Lloyd links Spinoza's conception of emotions to the Stoics, on the grounds that they share a "repudiation of the passions" due to the irrational nature of the judgments involved in them (80).

Returning to Spinoza's relationship to Stoicism in isolation from other Greek philosophies, the contemporary literature notes several metaphysical, epistemological, psychological, and ethical connections between them. DeBrabander (9-12), James[a] (302-3), Long (10-2), and Miller[a] (29, 31-2) note that both philosophies are committed to pantheism and consider God as the universe itself to be essentially mental and physical (DLVII.134, 148; I&G II-57; *E* IP14; IIP1-2). Due to this equation between God and the universe, Spinoza and the Stoics can also be considered determinists and panpsychists (James[a] 303, 305; Long 10, 12; Miller[a] 3). Everything is strictly and immanently determined by God (L&S 55L; DL VII.136-9; *E* IP18, 29, 33), meaning all phenomena cannot be otherwise, and since God is mental in nature and constitutes the universe, all existing things possess mental features, albeit to varying degrees (DL VII.138-9; *E* IP13S).

Where these two philosophies notably depart from each other concerning reality is in the description of the universe as finite vs. infinite, the nature of the deterministic order of the universe, and the ontological relationship between the mental and the physical. Firstly, Long (12-3) points out that, while the Stoics consider the universe qua God finite, Spinoza argues that the universe qua God is absolutely infinite (*E* IDef.6, P8, 11, 14-5). Secondly, as we saw above, Spinoza strongly denies the existence of a strongly providential order (IApp.), whereas the Stoics are staunch defenders of such an order (DL VII.147; L&S 54H, N; I&G II-23.132-3). Long (15), Miller[a] (53-7), and Pereboom (615) consider this to be a significant difference between them, while James[a] downplays its significance in light of other similarities (306). Lastly, the Stoics consider the universe wholly corporeal, with the mental and material representing different kinds of bodies. Moreover, the mental (as God) immanently shapes the material, the latter of which is considered absolutely causally passive (DL VII.134; L&S 55E). According to Miller[a] (32-6), Spinoza, in contrast, argues that the universe qua God possesses infinitely many essential features (i.e., attributes) that go beyond the mental and physical, the mental is irreducible to the physical, the mental has no causal power over the physical, and the physical in itself has causal power with no direct reliance on the mental (*E* IDef.6, P10-11; IIP1-2, 6; IIP2).

In the realm of the mind, Miller[a] notes (64-6, 73) that Spinoza and the Stoics agree that there are no purely passive mental states (the mind, for both, being contained within God as an active intellectual being). Every mental state is, at least partly, shaped by the constitution of the subject – it is not possible for any mental state to be wholly formed from, or wholly imposed on the mind by, external factors (L&S 39B2; DL VII.51; *E* IDef.3; IIP16, 26). Relatedly, James[a] (297-8, 301) argues that Spinoza and the Stoics understand and categorize emotions in much the same way. Both say that emotions involve value judgments (DL VII.111; L&S 65X2; *TD*

IV.vi.11; *E* IVP8) and draw a distinction between irrational emotions (passions) and rational emotions, with pleasure, pain, pursuit, and avoidance as the primary passions and pleasure, pursuit, and avoidance as the primary rational emotions, a central difference between these two kinds of emotions being the accuracy of their respective judgments (*DL* VII.111-6; *TD* IV.vi.11-14; *E* IIP56Proof, 58-9; IV14-7, App.3).⁶⁰ Key epistemological differences between them are the origin/content of mental states and the nature of judgments. Miller[a] argues that Spinoza and the Stoics disagree over the causal influence that external things can have over mental states (62-3, 67-70). The Stoics think that most mental states qua impressions involve the direct influence of external things on the mind (*L&S* 53P2, 65Y). For Spinoza, in contrast, all mental states qua ideas are wholly constituted by one's mind itself as the composite idea of a particular existing body, and all sensory perceptions of external things are mediated by perception of how external things affected one's body – one never strictly perceives an external thing in itself, in isolation from the idea of one's body (*E* IIDef.3, P13, 16).⁶¹ Concerning the formation of judgment, Miller[a] (67-8, 85-8) and Pereboom (593, 609-11) argue that the Stoics draw a distinction between an impression and the evaluation of that impression, while Spinoza denies such a distinction. For the Stoics, a judgment is formed when one evaluates the propositional content of a certain impression through a mental act of assent, dissent, or suspension of judgment (*L&S* 53A, S; 65Y; *I&G* II-95.9b). Spinoza, conversely, argues that the evaluative act is not separate from the impression qua idea – any given idea is essentially active, expresses judgment,

⁶⁰ The Stoics use different terms for their classifications of primary emotions, particularly in distinguishing passions from rational emotions. Here I am simply pointing out the basic affective taxonomy James[a] argues they share.

⁶¹ Della Rocca[b] provides an alternative reading, where some (namely, passive) ideas are partly constituted by external things (namely other ideas), while other (namely, adequate ideas) are wholly constituted by the mind (Ch. 3 and 5). Miller[a] acknowledges this alternative reading, but argues that it also entails a significant (albeit weaker) difference between Spinoza and the Stoics concerning mental states, because Spinoza considers adequate ideas more important than passive ideas epistemologically (71-2n46). For my part, I agree with Della Rocca's reading, because it better captures the causal framework of the attribute of Thought and how that framework informs Spinoza's epistemology.

and is jointly constituted by propositional content and evaluative appraisal (*E* IIDef.3, IIP49).

Pereboom notes that this denial marks a crucial area in which Spinoza and the Stoics disagree on the subject of passions as value judgments (610-11).⁶²

Psychologically, Miller[a] compares the Stoic concept of *oikeiosis* to Spinoza's concept of the *conatus* (103-4, 107-8). *Oikeiosis* ("appropriateness" or "familiarization") refers to a natural sense of connection to something, which one is disposed to pursue as an appropriate end. According to the Stoics, the first appropriate bond that Nature forms in us is a bond with our own being, which disposes us towards self-preservation as our primary end (DL VII.85). Similarly, Spinoza describes the *conatus* as a natural and essential striving to preserve one's existence (*E* IIP6-7). As we discussed above, several scholars note that Spinoza and the Stoics both consider the primary desire to be self-preservation. What Miller[a] adds to this discussion is a precise account of what this self-preservative desire entails in the Stoic context, and how it agrees with and differs from Spinoza's conception of the *conatus*. While both are instilled in humans by God qua Nature, *oikeiosis* is a byproduct of a purposeful God/Nature and the *conatus* is the byproduct of a non-purposeful God/Nature (110-5). Another crucial difference is that *oikeiosis* is a disposition that is not always actualized (109-10); the Stoics argue that we can and should develop further irreducible appropriate ends (e.g., for the well-being of loved ones, fellow citizens, the human race, etc.) that self-preservation becomes secondary or subordinate to, the ultimate, overarching appropriate end being to live according to nature qua reason – that is, the rationality of both the universe in general and human nature in particular (119-20; DL VII.87-9; L&S 57G; *OM* III.21-2, 62-71). For Spinoza, in contrast, the self-preservative desire of the *conatus* is always actualized insofar as the being in question exists and there can and should be

⁶² We will discuss how Spinoza and the Stoics compare on the subject of passions in 3.3 and 3.4

no desires or ends independent of the conatus.⁶³ Like the Stoics, Spinoza agrees that our ultimate end is reason, but for him reason is understood as an expression of the mental striving of the conatus (Miller[a] 109-10, 116-8, 137; *E* IVP19-22-5). Psychology and ethics, therefore, begin with self-preservation for both Spinoza and the Stoics, but Spinoza differs from them in denying that we ever can or should transcend the initial natural bond with our own being.⁶⁴

Finally, in the ethical domain, Miller[a] argues that there is strong agreement between Spinoza and the Stoics in the form and content of their respective conceptions of happiness. In terms of form, the Stoics say that happiness is (F1) the highest good, (F2) the ultimate end, (F3) the goal of ethics, and (F4) a stable state of being. As well, Stoic happiness (F5) involves a universal (i.e., objective) set of necessary and sufficient conditions for its realization and (F6) does not consist in a transient feeling (176, 184-5). It is the highest good and ultimate end because it is a good that is pursued solely for its own sake, while all other things of value are pursued for its sake, as well. As the highest good and ultimate end, happiness is the primary objective of ethics. As a “good flow of life” as a whole, happiness represents a stable state of being, namely “living in accordance with virtue” or nature, which in itself objectively represents the necessary and sufficient condition for happiness (L&S 63A; DL VII.88-9). Lastly, while rational emotions follow from living virtuously and happily, such feelings do not in themselves constitute virtue and happiness (VII.101; *DVB* 15.2).

Content-wise, the Stoics think (C1) a single virtue is necessary but insufficient for happiness, (C2) the virtues are jointly necessary and sufficient, (C3) a long life is neither

⁶³ This is not to say that Spinoza rejects concern for others, only that this other-concern is and should never be wholly divorced from appeal to one’s own well-being. See *E* IVP18S, 35-7; Miller[a] (118-9); Nadler[b]

⁶⁴ This point has interesting implications for how Spinoza and the Stoics understand suicide. See, e.g., Maclean-Evans’s *Spinoza and Self-Destruction*; Miller[c] (Ch. 1); Nadler[e].

necessary nor sufficient, (C4) pleasure is neither necessary nor sufficient, and (C5) external goods are neither necessary nor sufficient for happiness (Miller[a] 176, 186-7, 192). They argue that the virtues are mutually inclusive and inseparable, which is why a single virtue is insufficient to constitute happiness (L&S 61C-D, F). The Stoics make it clear, however, that happiness consists in virtue (that is the total collection of virtues) alone (DL VII.89, 101-2; *OM* III.10-12, 29), with external goods being neither necessary nor sufficient (DL VII.102-4).⁶⁵ Happiness is also not subject to considerations of time – one moment of virtue is equal in value to a lifetime of virtue (L&S 63I). Finally, while there is rational pleasure qua emotion, this emotion is a consequent, not a constituent, of virtue and happiness (DL VII.101; *DVB* 15.2).

According to Miller, Spinoza's views align with those of the Stoics in many (albeit not all) ways. In the *TIE* (~13-4), *TTP* (Ch. 4, p. 427-8/G III 59-61) and the *Ethics* (IVP18S, 28) he connects happiness with the highest good (Miller[a] 193-5).⁶⁶ That happiness is the goal of ethics is also shown in the *TIE* and the *Ethics*. In the former, its epistemological inquiries are explicitly driven by the desire to perfect the intellect for the sake of happiness (~1-18) and in the latter its ethical inquiries in Parts IV and V build towards and conclude with an account of happiness qua blessedness in VP42 (Miller[a]171-2, 189-91). While Spinoza seems to describe the greatest happiness, blessedness, as both a feeling (*TTP* Ch.VI, p. 449/III 88; IVApp.4) and a state of perfection qua virtue (*E* IVP18S; VP33S), Miller[a] is inclined to consider the latter Spinoza's ultimate view (191-3), because Spinoza seems to deny that a state of perfection itself could be an

⁶⁵ Excluding the Stoic Aristo (DL VII.160), however, mainstream Stoicism concedes that external goods can have value, but only insofar as they promote the expression of *prior* virtue and happiness as natural things to pursue for a human being (VII.104-9; *OM* III.20-2).

⁶⁶ Miller[a] does not discuss whether Spinozistic happiness is also the ultimate end, but *TIE* ~1-14, *TTP* Ch. 4, p. 428/G III 60), and *E* IVP18S indicate that happiness is the ultimate goal of our actions, since it is exclusively intrinsically valuable and there is nothing more valuable than this state of being.

emotion (*E* IIIDef. Aff.3Expl.).⁶⁷ Happiness is thus a stable state because it consists in perfection and virtue, and pertains to living and doing well in one's life as a whole (IVP21), with Parts IV and V outlining necessary and sufficient conditions for the attainment of this ultimate state of being (Miller[a] 176-7, 181-2).

Moving onto content, Spinoza considers virtue necessary and sufficient for happiness (*E* IVP18S; VP42). DeBrabander (36, 39), James[a] (292-301), Long (13-4), and Miller[a] (195-6, 202-3) all mention this as a major point of ethical agreement between Spinoza and the Stoics, and, moreover, point out that both philosophies understand virtue and happiness as living according to nature – particularly one's rational nature (*E* IVP18S; DL VII.87-8).⁶⁸ Concerning whether one virtue or all the virtues are necessary/sufficient, Miller[a] argues that Spinoza is committed to both claims (196-7). One virtue is necessary/sufficient because all virtue is reducible to the self-perservative striving of the conatus (IVP18S), but Spinoza nevertheless talks about different expressions of this virtuous striving in the forms of courage/tenacity, nobility (IIIP59S), and freedom (*TP* Ch.2.7).⁶⁹ Miller does not explicitly say that Spinoza considers longevity and pleasure, like the Stoics, neither necessary nor sufficient, but his silence on these two subjects is arguably telling. Spinoza explicitly says that one is not “more perfect on the grounds that [they have] continued in existence over a greater period of time” (*E* IVPref.). Since happiness consists in perfection, and perfection cannot be evaluated by appeal to temporal considerations, a long life is therefore neither necessary nor sufficient for happiness. As for

⁶⁷ We will discuss this point further in 3.4. I think, contra Miller[a], that blessedness is a feeling qua affection. In fact, I will argue that Spinoza is inclined to consider it both a state and a feeling, although I agree with Miller that blessedness may not be (terminologically) an *emotion* or *affect*.

⁶⁸ For rich discussion of how both philosophies understand living according to nature, see Miller[d].

⁶⁹ This marks a point of disagreement between Spinoza and the Stoics, since the latter consider a single virtue necessary but insufficient, although this difference may either be trivial (since they agree on the importance of virtue as a whole) or an indication of a more fundamental difference (e.g., the greater role of self-preservation in Spinoza's framework).

pleasure, we saw above that Miller considers feelings in general to be neither necessary nor sufficient, so we can reasonably infer that pleasure as a particular feeling has the same status on his reading, for the reasons given above. Lastly, Spinoza both agrees with, and departs from, the Stoics with his views on external goods. According to Miller[a], in the mental realm Spinoza and the Stoics agree that external goods are neither necessary nor sufficient, because virtue qua reason is both necessary and sufficient for happiness. With that said, both will acknowledge that external goods can contribute to virtue and happiness, either by making the pursuit easier or functioning as expressions of rational behaviour (197-9; *OM* III.31; *E* IVP45C2S). In the bodily realm, Spinoza argues that external goods do play a necessary role in happiness, namely in promoting the flourishing of the body. However, Miller[a] argues that all possible goods of the body are external goods, meaning there is no “true” bodily good that constitutes happiness (199-202). As a result, Spinoza still ultimately agrees with the Stoics, because both understand virtue or happiness as an essentially intellectual good, with bodily and external goods being neither necessary nor sufficient for the flourishing of the mind.

Other scholars, however, argue that Spinoza’s views on the body and external goods place him in considerable disagreement with the Stoics on the nature of happiness. James[b] and Kisner both argue that the body, like the mind, has its own true good in constituting happiness, by virtue of (Inter-Attributes) Parallelism (IIP7S) and the Conatus Doctrine (IIIP7), which together entail that one’s happiness qua perfection is understood in intellectual and physical terms. Kisner identifies this bodily good with brain activity (78-9). James[b] identifies it with the ability to physically act in parallel to one’s knowledge (152-4). DeBrabander argues that for Spinoza, contra the Stoics, virtue is both essentially intellectual and physical in nature and requires beneficial engagement with the world, personally and socially (36-45). Armstrong (11-

8), James[b] (147-59), and Kisner (81) also argue that virtue and happiness are not, in themselves, wholly internal and intellectual, as they are for the Stoics; they necessarily involve (internal) bodily and external dimensions, because virtue and happiness for Spinoza are a matter of acting *and being acted on* in fruitful ways (*E* IVP18S; IVP38Proof; IVP45C2S; VP39). As we will see in 5.4, I side with these scholars against Miller. I think that bodily activity is a core constituent of Spinozistic virtue and happiness, and that external goods play an integral role in bodily and mental flourishing. Miller's mistakes are (1) not taking Inter-Attributes Parallelism seriously enough and (2) failing to acknowledge that Spinoza thinks external things can promote and frustrate one's degree of virtue and happiness in ways that the Stoics adamantly deny.

Of the three ancient philosophies discussed in this chapter, Spinoza's connection to Stoicism is the most obvious. As we have seen, both his contemporaries and modern scholars note an extraordinary number of similarities between them in virtually every major area of philosophy. Even where there are differences, those differences are nevertheless meaningfully grounded in rich points of agreement (e.g., the cognitive nature of emotions and the importance of the deterministic structure of the universe). Some scholars, like James[a] and Pereboom (592), conclude from this evidence that Spinoza is a Neo-Stoic, that he is improving on the principles of ancient Stoicism rather than departing from them. Others, like Long (9-10; 14-6) and Miller[a] (8-11, 16-23, 207-10), argue that the evidence from Spinoza's texts and references is too sparse to conclude that he is engaged with the Stoics more than any other ancient, medieval, or early modern philosophy, let alone that he should be considered a Neo-Stoic. It is possible, they say, that both simply start from similar foundations (namely, a commitment to intelligibility, monism, determinism, materialism, etc.), which logically leads them to similar philosophical conclusions. In other words, Spinoza may not be a monist or determinist because he read the Stoics. Rather,

he may have come to these conclusions on his own, or through the tapestry of his acquaintance with ancient, medieval, and early modern philosophies, and consciously or unconsciously ended up quite close to Stoicism.

My own view, based on the evidence of this section and the chapter as a whole, is that Spinoza is meaningfully engaged with Stoicism but he is not a Neo-Stoic. He disagrees with them as often as he agrees, and not all those agreements can plausibly be seen as mere improvements on Stoic ideas. In particular, Spinoza shares notably non-Stoic affinities with Aristotle in positing immaterial phenomena and non-purposeful teleology. He also shares notable affinities with Epicurus on the importance of recognizing the non-purposeful nature of the universe and the dual nature and intrinsic goodness of pleasure. These agreements with other, opposing, ancient philosophies indicate that Spinoza is doing far more than merely improving on Stoicism.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we saw rich historical and scholarly evidence for thinking that Spinoza is meaningfully engaged, both positively and negatively, with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics. He is in dialogue with Aristotle concerning the nature of substance, matter and thought, teleology, practical reason and theoretical reason, and the good. Spinoza seems to have notable affinities, conceptually and historically, with Epicurus in terms of their rejection of providence and supernatural explanations of natural phenomena, perceived atheism, and similar accounts of pleasure. Spinoza and the Stoics share several things in common, such as determinism, pantheism, panpsychism, and a cognitive, dual-aspect account of emotions, but Spinoza also notably distances himself from them regarding his views on judgment, passions, and providence. While Spinoza agrees with each ancient philosophy in some respects, he also crucially disagrees

with each of them in other respects, and some of these agreements are distinctive (e.g., Aristotle posits the existence of immaterial phenomena contra Epicurus and the Stoics, and Epicurus is an indeterminist and anti-providentialist while the Stoics are determinists and strong providentialists). In light of these considerations, it is inaccurate to describe Spinoza's mature philosophy as Neo-Aristotelian, Neo-Epicurean, or Neo-Stoic.⁷⁰ He adopts some of their ideas, rejects others, and revises still others in the construction of his own distinct philosophical system.

Spinoza's engagement with ancient philosophy, however, motivates us to ask whether he is following in the same overall tradition as these ancient philosophers, namely eudaimonism. If so, then his evaluation and use of ancient ideas can fundamentally be seen as him drawing out and adding to what is useful in past eudaimonistic philosophies, while rejecting and revising the problematic elements of these philosophies – all for the sake of offering a true account of how to live the happiest life possible.⁷¹ It is to the subject of Spinoza's potential eudaimonism that we will now turn in the next chapter.

⁷⁰ For this project I am focused on Spinoza's *mature* philosophy as it is laid out primarily in the *Ethics*. However, Spinoza's engagement with the ancients might be characterized differently with respect to his earlier works, insofar as we think that his views may have changed and evolved overtime. For example, the Spinoza of the *TIE*, in the potential absence of the doctrine of (Inter-Attributes or Ideas-Things) Parallelism and/or the Conatus Doctrine, may be legitimately Neo-Aristotelian or Neo-Stoic in his ethical and/or non-ethical views, in light of his intellectualist conception of the supreme good as adequate knowledge of God and true goods like sensual pleasure, wealth, and honour as merely instrumentally valuable. In 5.4, I will discuss reasons for and against reading Spinoza as an ontological and/or ethical intellectualist with respect to his mature philosophy. For valuable discussions of Spinoza's philosophical development, see, e.g., Jaquet's *Affects, Actions and Passions in Spinoza* (Ch. 3); Sangiacomo's *Spinoza on Reason, Passions & the Supreme Good*.

⁷¹ As I said in the Introduction, my intent here is not to argue that Spinoza is *only* engaged with ancient Greek philosophers. There is clear evidence (and rich scholarship showing) that Spinoza was engaged with various medieval and early modern philosophers, notably the Scholastics, Maimonides, Hebraeus, Lipsius, Hobbes, and Descartes. They no doubt also play a significant role in the distinctiveness of Spinoza's philosophy. My argument in Ch. 2, however, will be that Spinoza shares the same ultimate philosophical goal as the ancients, namely a happy life as a structural whole. This is a goal that is not shared by all medieval or early modern philosophers (at least, not in the formal way meant by the ancients). I am specifically focusing on Spinoza's engagement with ancient philosophers in order to uncover his distinct conception of happiness within this ethical tradition. His non-ancient influences almost certainly play an important role in Spinoza's improvement on ancient ideas and the distinctive contribution he makes to eudaimonism (i.e., elevating the ontological and ethical status of the body), but such an

Chapter 2: Spinoza's Strong Eudaimonism

Introduction

In this chapter, I elucidate the core features of eudaimonism, and explain how Spinoza's philosophy follows in this ancient ethical tradition. Several scholars link Spinoza to eudaimonism.⁷² Rutherford[a], Kisner (Ch. 4), and Miller[a], in particular, offer robust and compelling discussions of this topic, all of which go beyond merely pointing out Spinoza's ethical commitment to happiness (*felicitas*) or blessedness (*beatitudo*) as virtue (*E* IVP18S; App.4; VP42/G II 222; 267; 307) and his description of adequate knowledge of God qua virtue as the "highest good" – *summum bonum* (IVP28/G II 228).

Rutherford does not read Spinoza as a true eudaimonist. As discussed in Ch. 1, Rutherford[a]'s position is that Spinoza departs from Aristotle (and by extension eudaimonism) by considering good and bad metaphysically illusory, and thus not truly objective and natural properties (212-20). Nevertheless, Spinoza retains eudaimonistic concepts like happiness as the highest good as useful fictions, because our ignorance and intellectual limitations make it impossible psychologically to escape moral thinking. Although we cannot escape such thinking, even with adequate understanding of good and bad as illusory, we can nevertheless use this feature of our psychology to improve our lives, namely to increase our adequate knowledge. On Rutherford's reading, Spinoza is phenomenologically, but not metaethically, an eudaimonist. In a similar metaethical vein, Jarrett argues that good and bad are mere mental constructs that enable one to approximate the abstracted model of a perfectly rational human who is devoid of ethical

analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis and better informed by a clearer and fuller account of Spinoza's eudaimonism.

⁷² See, e.g., Kisner (Ch.4); Lebuffe (Ch. 11); Miller[a] (171-206); Nadler[a] (10-11), Rutherford[a] (212-20); Wolfson[b] (233-60); Youpa[a] (339-47).

thinking. The closer we get to this model, the more capable we are of transcending ethics, and thus the less we need to appeal to good and bad in our thinking (57-84). In Rutherford[a] and Jarrett, then, we see an unqualified moral anti-realism in Spinoza that would undermine a true eudaimonistic reading of his philosophy.⁷³

Miller[a] and Kisner, in contrast, argue that Spinoza is foundationally an eudaimonist. Firstly, Miller[b], contra Rutherford and Jarrett, reads Spinoza as a moral realist and relativist based on the naturalistic foundation of the conatus and the perfection of its intellectual power.⁷⁴ Secondly, as we saw in the previous chapter, Miller[a] argues that Spinoza and the Stoics largely agree in how they understand the form and content of happiness. Miller[a] is specifically concerned with Spinoza's conceptual relationship with Stoicism. However, in Miller[f], he argues that all canonical ancient Greek ethical philosophers share the same formal conception of happiness, differing only in their views on its content (604-10). Since Miller takes Spinoza to agree with the Stoics concerning the form of happiness, he also in effect considers Spinoza's conception of happiness to be in structural agreement with other ancient eudaimonists. Kisner is notable because he reads Spinoza as both an eudaimonist and a *qualified* moral anti-realist or "irrealist." On the eudaimonistic front, Kisner argues that Spinoza's conception of happiness as

⁷³ For an overview of moral anti-realist and realist readings of Spinoza in the literature, see the Introduction to Kisner and Youpa's *Essays on Spinoza's Ethical Theory* (5-7). In what follows, by "unqualified moral anti-realism" I mean the general position that moral properties are absolutely non-natural or subject-dependent, in the sense that moral properties either have no necessary connection to nature whatsoever or are wholly dependent on a subject's beliefs or feelings. By "qualified moral anti-realism" I mean the position that moral properties may be partly natural or may partly derive their existence from something outside of a subject (i.e., some aspects of reality). By "moral realism" I mean the position that moral properties are natural or subject independent. For more diverse discussion of the moral realist vs. anti-realist debate, and how it relates to Spinoza, see Colin Marshall's "Moral Realism in Spinoza's *Ethics*." Marshall relies on specific contemporary approaches to the debate (Paradigms, Literal Truth, and Defining Features). My analysis follows the Defining Features approach, which I take to be the most relevant to Spinoza's ethical framework considered in itself, irrespective of contemporary debate. Although our analyses differ, we both conclude that there are moral realist *and* moral anti-realist features to be found in Spinoza.

⁷⁴ We will discuss Miller's realist reading in more detail in 2.3.

the highest good in the *TIE* and the *Ethics* largely fits with the formal criteria of the ancients, since both texts describe happiness as that which is pursued solely for its own sake and for the sake of which all other things are pursued (Ch. 4).⁷⁵ Metaethically, he considers Spinoza a moral anti-realist qua subjectivist (Kisner Ch. 5), because the latter (1) denies that things are good or bad per se (*E* IVPref.) and (2) argues that good and bad are necessarily dependent on a subject's desires (IIIP9S; IVApp.4). Kisner's anti-realist reading is "qualified," however, because he acknowledges that good and bad are also necessarily dependent on naturalistic considerations, namely which desires are truly the subject's desires (i.e., active desires instead of passive desires) and how things in the world objectively satisfy or frustrate these desires, based on the subject's essential nature (91-3, 103n35). In other words, on Kisner's reading, Spinoza considers good and bad natural, but necessarily subjective, properties.

In general, I side with Miller and Kisner in that I consider Spinoza a genuine eudaimonist and deny that he is an unqualified moral anti-realist. More specifically, I agree with Miller's criteria for the form of happiness and the naturalistic considerations that he brings to light with his moral realist reading (see footnote 80 below).⁷⁶ Concerning Kisner, I agree that we find in Spinoza a consistent commitment to the ancient conception of happiness as the highest good from the *TIE* to the *Ethics*, and I also agree that there is a necessary affective dimension to Spinoza's conception of good and bad.

However, my own position and analysis differ from Miller and Kisner's in certain crucial ways. Metaethically, I think that Spinoza does not cleanly fit into the contemporary categories of

⁷⁵ We will discuss the *TIE* in detail in 2.2.1.

⁷⁶ As I said in 1.2 and 1.3, however, I disagree with Miller on certain points concerning Spinoza's conception of the *content* of happiness (namely, that happiness is not constituted by pleasure and/or anything bodily), but we will discuss these disagreements in other chapters (namely 3.4 and 5.4).

moral realism and anti-realism, unless we think that he takes an unqualified position where good and bad are either wholly subject-*independent* like the laws of physics (realism) or (like Rutherford and Jarrett) exclusively subject-*dependent* (anti-realism). As we will see in this chapter, neither position is truly representative of Spinoza's views. Miller and Kisner convincingly argue, respectively, for naturalistic and affective dimensions in Spinoza's conception of ethical properties, thereby placing him in a qualified metaethical position. However, both dimensions are equally prominent, because one's nature qua conatus is essentially a special kind of existential force and desire. As a result, it is misleading to classify Spinoza as a qualified realist or qualified anti-realist (*E* IIP6-7, Def. Aff.1). In a sense he is both, depending on which dimension we choose to emphasize or which position is given the burden of proof.⁷⁷

One issue with Kisner's analysis is that he does not make it clear how Spinoza's apparent anti-realism as subjectivism (or affective considerations) are compatible with eudaimonism. As I will show through particular ancient philosophers in what follows, eudaimonism also combines objective (naturalistic) and subjective (affective) considerations, so Spinoza's ethical framework is not foundationally incompatible with this ancient tradition. I also add to this discussion the acknowledgment that eudaimonists differ in their philosophical scope. Some are committed to eudaimonism in a *weak* sense, by which I mean that they do not ground their respective ethical conceptions of happiness on complete theories of metaphysics, epistemology, or psychology. Others, however, are committed to eudaimonism in a *strong* sense, in that their conceptions of happiness are built on overall philosophical systems that extend far beyond ethics, while

⁷⁷ For further discussion of my metaethical reading of Spinoza, and critique of the abovementioned metaethical readings, see "Spinoza's Metaethical Synthesis of Nature and Affect."

nevertheless being directed at the promotion of a happy life.⁷⁸ In what follows I will show that Spinoza's ethical philosophy is similarly grounded in such an overarching philosophical system.

My analysis in this chapter consists of three sections.⁷⁹ In 2.1 I explain eudaimonism by outlining what it means for happiness to be the highest objective good through its (a) naturalistic universality; (b) necessary (but insufficient) appeal to the beliefs/feelings of a subject; (c) structural stability; and (d) exclusively intrinsic value as a good.⁸⁰ I will also distinguish between weak eudaimonists and strong eudaimonists, the latter of whom are committed to the additional claim that happiness is (e) grounded in the intimate relationship between both ethical and non-ethical doctrines. In 2.2, I show Spinoza's consistent commitment to (a), (c), and (d) from the *TIE* to the *Ethics*, and (e) how his non-ethical doctrines play a necessary role in the general moral philosophy that he presents in both the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics*. Finally, in 2.3, I analyze certain subjective and relativistic features of Spinoza's ethical framework that seem to undermine an eudaimonistic reading and support an unqualified moral anti-realist reading. I

⁷⁸ This distinction between weak and strong eudaimonism does not, in itself, entail that Spinoza is an eudaimonist, because he could coherently be an unqualified moral anti-realist who grounds his ethical framework in non-ethical doctrines. However, it is valuable in showing that Spinoza is not only committed to eudaimonism, but also that he shares with certain other eudaimonists a robust and sophisticated understanding of the relationship between happiness and the various disciplines of philosophy as a whole. I thank an anonymous reviewer for encouraging me to clarify this.

⁷⁹ A version of sections 2.1-2.3 of this chapter is published as "Spinoza's Strong Eudaimonism" in the *Journal of Modern Philosophy*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2023, pp. 1-21, doi: <http://doi.org/10.32881/jomp.247> (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

⁸⁰ According to Miller[f]'s formal criteria for eudaimonism, happiness is (F1) the highest good, (F2) the ultimate end, (F3) the goal of ethics, (F4) a stable state of being, (F5) realized by a universal set of necessary and sufficient conditions, and (F6) not constituted by a transient feeling (604-10)). With respect to my own formal eudaimonistic criteria, (F1)-(F3) can be linked to (d), (F4) to (b) and (c), and (F5) to (a)-(d). With his criteria, Miller seeks to emphasize the stability, objective intrinsic value, and overarching ethical status of eudaimonistic happiness. With my own criteria I seek to emphasize not only these features, but also to stress that eudaimonistic happiness combines both objective (naturalistically-grounded) and subjective (affectively-grounded) considerations. I omit something akin to (F6) from my criteria to avoid creating the false impression that *no* kind of feeling can constitute happiness within this tradition. As we will see in 3.2, while Epicurus will agree that happiness does not consist in a *transient* feeling, it does nevertheless consist in some sort of (stable) feeling, namely katastematic pleasure (Miller[f] acknowledges this point too; see 607-8).

explain how these features only commit Spinoza to (b), thereby showing how his conception of happiness shares with eudaimonistic happiness both objective and subjective dimensions.

Ultimately, I argue that Spinoza is not merely an eudaimonist, but a *strong* eudaimonist, since his conception of happiness as the highest good is necessarily reliant on metaphysical, epistemological, and psychological doctrines that form an overall philosophical system aimed at the ethical pursuit of a happy life as a whole.

2.1 Ancient Eudaimonism

2.1.1 The General Features of Ancient Happiness

At the heart of ancient ethics is the concern with how one ought to live their life, promote their well-being, and cultivate the correct kind of moral character (Annas[a] 27-31; Cooper *Pursuits* 3-8). This foundation leads to inquiries about the nature of the good and which things are good in life, in particular the relevance of (and relationship between) virtue (*arete*) and happiness (*eudaimonia*) as goods. In Plato's *Euthydemus*, Socrates claims that "we all wish to be happy [*eudaimon*]" (282a), and in the *Symposium* concludes that happiness is the ultimate end of one who desires "good things" and successfully comes to possess them (204e-205a). Similarly, Aristotle identifies the "chief good" (*NE* 1094d22) or "the topmost of all achievable goods" with "happiness" (1095a19-20). For Plato and Aristotle, and later eudaimonists (e.g., the Stoics and Epicureans), the ultimate motivation of human beings is to be happy.⁸¹ Happiness is thus the highest good, that is the ultimate standard by which things derive their value. The goodness and badness of things are measured by their relationship to the promotion and frustration of happiness, respectively.

⁸¹ For comprehensive discussion of these ancient Greek philosophies, see Annas's *The Morality of Happiness*; Cooper's *Pursuits of Wisdom*; Long and Sedley's *The Hellenistic Philosophers*; Price's *Virtue and Reason in Plato and Aristotle*.

It is important to note, however, that by “happiness” the Greeks mean a condition of living that is *objective* and pertains to the overall structure of one’s life (Annas[a] 45-6; Shields[a] 311-2). This conception of happiness is contrasted with a strongly subjective or momentary understanding of the happy life. On a strongly subjective account, my happiness is either not strictly universalizable or entirely dependent on my beliefs/feelings. In the first instance, there is no necessary feature that my life must share with the lives of other people in order to be classified as happy, and any similarities are incidental. In the second instance, I am happy simply because I believe or feel that I am happy, meaning my beliefs/feelings are a necessary and sufficient condition for happiness. Because my beliefs/feelings are what constitute my happiness, under this conception I can never be mistaken about being happy. On the momentary account, happiness is conceptualized in terms of a specific period of time. During this period (e.g., a morning, a day, a week, etc.) I may be happy, while during another period of time I may be unhappy. Under this conception, happiness is a transient or intermittent condition, in the sense that it can appear and/or disappear throughout one’s life.⁸²

An eudaimonistic conception of happiness, on the other hand, is objective in the sense of being naturalistically grounded and universalizable, and thus not based merely on a subject’s beliefs/feelings. *Eudaimonia* is fundamentally about personal well-being, but is grounded in what it means for individuals to live a happy life based on certain shared natural features.⁸³

⁸² In this context, the subjective and momentary conceptions of happiness reflect two ways in which people tend to intuitively think or talk about happiness in everyday life, rather than rigorously defended positions on the nature of happiness. With that said, it should be noted that in contemporary positive psychology a distinction is drawn between feeling happy in a given moment and contentment with one’s life as a whole. Because the focus of this thesis is ancient and early modern eudaimonism, I will not discuss to what extent positive psychology’s approach to happiness is compatible or incompatible with eudaimonism (particularly a form of contemporary eudaimonism). What this chapter, and this thesis overall, will do, however, is offer a precise foundation for evaluating which contemporary approaches to happiness, scientific or otherwise, fit within the eudaimonistic tradition. For discussion of happiness within the context of positive psychology, see, e.g., Martin Seligman’s *Flourish*.

⁸³ For a comprehensive analysis of this naturalistic standard, see Annas[a] (Ch. 3-9).

Aristotle appeals to the distinctive function (*ergon*) of human nature, which he takes to be reason, arguing that a core component of happiness is the virtuous and successful realization of activities that follow from this natural rational function (*NE* I.7.1097b25-198a16). For the Stoics, happiness consists in living in agreement/accordance with nature (*DL* VII.87-8), which in the case of humans pertains to the virtuous application of reason (*VII.88*; *L&S* 63D). Epicurus grounds the *eudaimon* life in the pleasure of the unimpeded functioning of one's natural state of being, which is to say a body that enjoys homeostasis and a mind that enjoys tranquility (*LM* ~129). For each there is (a) some natural feature that is considered universal, and subsequently sets the standard for what does and does not constitute a happy life.⁸⁴ How such a life is achieved or expressed may vary according to individual circumstances, because individuals might differ in how they perfect reason, restore/maintain their health, etc., but the success of the endeavor is ultimately judged by appeal to the relevant foundational and universal natural feature(s) posited by each eudaimonistic account.

This naturalistic standard also rules out appealing solely to beliefs or feelings. A foundational premise of eudaimonism is that we can be, and often are, mistaken about what will make us happy. Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics partly conduct their analyses of happiness to correct (from their respective naturalistic perspectives) common, erroneous conceptions of living happily. Aristotle critiques the common associations of sensual pleasure, wealth, or honour per se with happiness (*NE* I.4-5), Epicurus addresses different kinds of desire and pleasure that we fail to distinguish in our attempts to live pleasantly (*LM* ~127-32), and the Stoics criticize the

⁸⁴ It should be noted that Epicureanism, contra Aristotelianism and Stoicism, does not rely on an essentialist conception of species in general or human nature in particular (*L&S* 13E, I-J; 20J-L). As well, because Epicurus grounds his ethics in pleasure and pain as they relate to natural functioning, his view of happiness is less reliant on a feature that is distinctly human, while nonetheless remaining naturalistically-grounded.

traditional view that external things have any direct and necessary role in achieving/hindering *eudaimonia* (*HB* 1.1-4; *DL* VII.102, 104). However, eudaimonism does not consider beliefs or feelings irrelevant. Aristotelian virtue is about thinking, desiring, and experiencing pleasure and pain according to what is true to human nature and its flourishing (*NE* I.6). The Stoics argue that our ethical judgments, and the truth/falsity of them, play an essential role in our emotional reactions and achievement of happiness (*HB* 1.1; *LP* VII.111; *TD* IV.vii.14) and consider rational emotional pleasure (i.e., joy) to be a necessary consequent of the happy life (*DVB* 15.2). Epicurus considers pleasure, and its absence in the form of pain, the fundamental standard by which we judge things to be truly good and bad in promoting a happy life (*LM* ~128-9). Beliefs or feelings are therefore (b) a *necessary* condition for eudaimonistic happiness (i.e., I cannot be happy if I do not believe/feel I am happy), but they are not a *sufficient* condition because our beliefs can be false and we can misunderstand what our feelings truly represent (i.e., just because I believe/feel I am happy does not entail that I am indeed happy).⁸⁵

Finally, this naturalistic account of happiness culminates in a concern for the overall structure of one's life. Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics understand the happiness of life, not in terms of transient or intermittent periods of time, but rather (c) as a stable condition of living in harmony with one's nature.⁸⁶ One's happiness or lack thereof, in other words, is decided by the way in which one approaches and organizes their life overall. Focusing on one's life overall, however, does not entail living a full life from childhood to old age. Aristotle, in some sense, adds this condition to his conception of happiness (*NE* I.71098a19-21),⁸⁷ but in general

⁸⁵ Eudaimonism can be understood as a type of virtue ethics, with its foundational focus on character (i.e., correct thinking, feeling, and acting). For discussion of how ancient and modern virtue ethics differ, see Annas[a] (Ch. 2 and 22.3).

⁸⁶ There are, however, many crucial differences between them concerning the *content* of their respective views, as we will see in Ch. 3-5.

⁸⁷ We will discuss Aristotle's nuanced account of happiness in detail in 4.1.

eudaimonists are less concerned with the *quantity* of a life than its *structural quality*, that is, am I living my life overall (for as long as circumstances permit) in ways harmonious with the sustainable flourishing of my nature? This conception of happiness is thus objective and structurally stable, rather than merely (i.e., strongly) subjective or transient/intermittent, thereby committing eudaimonists to (a), (b), and (c) as formal features of a happy life.⁸⁸

2.1.2 Happiness as the Ultimate Good

From this foundation of objectivity and stability, we can now discuss what makes happiness the highest good. According to Aristotle, the highest good is that which (1) “we wish for because of itself” (*NE* I.2.1094A18-9), (2) we wish “for the other things we wish for because of [this good]” (1094a19), (3) “we do not choose everything because of something else” other than this good (1094a20), (4) “is complete . . . [or] always desirable in itself and never because of something else” (1097a34-1097b1), and (5) is “self-sufficient” in that it “makes life desirable and lacking in nothing” (1097b14-5). In relation to (1), we seek out and value a happy life for its own sake. All other things, like bodily pleasure, wealth, social status, and family, we can be said to desire and value because they promote happiness (2), with there being no alternative ultimate end that these things derive value from (3). In agreement with (4), happiness is arguably never understood to be a means to anything (i.e., instrumentally good); it is on the contrary always an end (i.e., exclusively intrinsically good). In contrast, bodily pleasure and social status might be considered valuable in themselves, but they can also be means towards happiness. Finally, a happy life is a self-sufficient good (5), because the structure of such a life is in itself fulfilling, and thus not lacking in anything necessary or meaningful.

⁸⁸ For a full discussion of this structural feature of eudaimonism, in general and in the context of specific eudaimonists, see Annas[a].

Later eudaimonists follow in Aristotle's footsteps. The Stoics (according to Stobaeus) declare happiness to be "the end, for the sake of which everything is done, but which is not itself done for the sake of anything" (L&S 63A). Similarly, the Epicureans are said by Cicero to focus on "the final and ultimate good" as "the end to which everything is the means, but is not itself the means to anything" (L&S 21A1) and Epicurus himself states that "if [happiness] is present we have everything and if it is absent we do everything in order to have it" (*LM* ~122). With the Stoics we see explicit reference to (2) and (4), which imply at least (1) and (3), and with the Epicureans we see explicit reference to (2), (4), and (5), which imply (1) and (3). In sum, happiness is understood to be the highest objective good because it is a stable natural condition of living that is (d) exclusively intrinsically valuable and which all other goods serve as a means to (including goods that may also have intrinsic value).

2.1.3 A Difference in Scope

From this foundation, we can further distinguish between what we might call *weak* eudaimonism versus *strong* eudaimonism. Weak eudaimonism is any ethical view that is merely concerned with the achievement and maintenance of happiness as the highest good. Strong eudaimonism, conversely, is any ethical view that relies on an overall philosophical system that appeals to more than ethical doctrines (e.g., metaphysical, physical, epistemological, or psychological doctrines) in its conception of happiness. This distinction is not one that is explicitly made by ancient eudaimonists, but it captures certain approaches in some ethical philosophies compared to others.

Examples of weak eudaimonists are Socrates and the Cynics. Socrates, according to Plato, is philosophically committed to discovering truths about the good of the human soul, and its subsequent flourishing through virtue (*Apology* 29d-30b, 36c-e, 38a). His analyses, however,

do not move beyond the ethical dimension to offer complete answers about the cosmos or the natural world (19b-c, 29a-c; *Phaedo* 96a-100a). Socratic ethics is arguably a weak eudaimonism because its focus on happiness is not necessarily connected to other complete philosophical theories that, together with ethics, form a cohesive philosophical system. Similarly, the Cynics “do away with the subjects of Logic and Physics and devote their whole attention to Ethics” (DL VI.103), in terms of living according to virtue as the ultimate end of the happy life (VI.104; see also Usher 163–165). Like Socratic philosophy, Cynic philosophy is mainly ethical, with no reliance on other complete philosophical areas of inquiry.⁸⁹

In contrast, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics are strong eudaimonists. They offer complete theories in metaphysics, physics, epistemology, and psychology that crucially inform their respective accounts of the happy life. In Plato happiness is closely linked to his metaphysical theory of Forms through knowledge of the Form of the Good or Beauty (*Timaeus* 90b-d; *Republic* V-VII; *Symposium* 204a-205a, 210e-211e) and his tripartite conception of the soul (*Republic* IV), in particular the importance of having a rationally balanced (just) soul (IX). Aristotle considers reflecting on scientific (i.e., eternal) truths the highest happiness (*NE* X.7-8), and his account of *eudaimonia* crucially draws on his theory of the rational and irrational aspects of the human soul (I.7, 13; see also *On the Soul*). Epicurus links philosophical study to happiness

⁸⁹ It should be clarified, however, that weak eudaimonists like Socrates and the Cynics only lack non-ethical theories. They still arguably adhere to the naturalistic feature of eudaimonism because their respective ethical theories are meaningfully grounded in certain assumptions about reality, but they do not concern themselves with fully developing philosophical theories about such things. Socrates seems to consider the soul a distinct entity from the body (*Apology* 30a-b), and the Cynics are concerned with living a simple life according to what they take to be our basic natural needs (DL VI.104). However, Socrates (excluding his role as a representative of Plato’s own views) is unwilling to offer a complete theory of the soul (and its place in reality) and the Cynics show little interest in fully explaining reality in general or human nature in particular. With all that said, this distinction between weak and strong eudaimonism may indicate that (a) is not strictly necessary for an eudaimonistic account of happiness, although it is certainly common. I will say more about the strict necessity of (a), (b), (c), and (d) as formal features in the Conclusion.

(*LM* ~122) and asserts that the only “goal” of understanding nature is “freedom from disturbance” (*LP* ~85). From this foundation, he establishes “sense-perceptions and feelings” (*LH* ~38) as the epistemological criteria of truth in metaphysical (namely, atomistic and non-providential) and ethical (namely, hedonistic) analyses (~63-6; *LM* ~128; *LH* ~76-7, 81; *PD* ~I). Stoicism relies on its deterministic metaphysics and epistemological analyses of the mechanisms of emotion in order to combat suffering and cultivate happiness. Emotions involve ethical judgments about impressions, and passions are harmful emotions that involve erroneous judgments concerning these impressions, in particular ascribing eudaimonistic value to impressions concerning things outside one’s control (*DL* VII.110-1; *TD* IV.vii.11,14; *HB* 1.1-4). Virtue, and in turn happiness, involves making rational value judgments, which embrace the providential necessity of all natural phenomena and ascribe eudaimonistic value only to what is in one’s control, that is to say, one’s faculty of reasoning in itself (*L&S* 63D; *DL* VII.88, 138). Each of these four ethical philosophies relies on an overall philosophical system that appeals to more than ethical doctrines in its conception of happiness.⁹⁰ Consequently, while all eudaimonists are formally committed to (a), (b), (c), and (d) as features of happiness, strong eudaimonists are also committed to the claim that happiness is (e) necessarily and intimately connected to other philosophical areas of knowledge.

⁹⁰ As an anonymous reviewer rightly points out, it does not necessarily follow from the dependence of ethical truths on non-ethical truths that one would need to have philosophical knowledge of any or all these non-ethical truths to be happy. The extent to which the happy person requires knowledge of non-ethical doctrines or theories varies among strong eudaimonists. As we will see in 2.2 and 4.4, Spinoza’s account of happiness requires at least some understanding qua adequate knowledge of his other non-ethical philosophical doctrines (in particular, those concerning the nature of God, determinism, and the conatus as an essential self-affirmative force), although it does not seem to be the case that he requires one to have understanding of *every* doctrine (e.g., the eternity of the mind) in order to live well (*E* VP41). My thanks to Sanem Soyarslan for bringing this fact to my attention. With that said, the more non-ethical doctrines that one understands the happier they will be for Spinoza.

2.2 Spinozism as Strong Eudaimonism

2.2.1 The Beginnings of Spinoza's Philosophy

Happiness is a consistent and important theme in Spinoza's corpus. The *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, probably his earliest extant work, begins with a discussion of his search for the "supreme good" (*summum bonum*) and the "true good" (*verum bonum*; see G II 8). The "supreme good" or "highest good" is described as that which is "good in itself and the ultimate end to which everything is directed" (~5). It is intrinsically good and the fundamental source of all value, because all our endeavours are for its sake. Spinoza identifies this good with the "highest happiness" (~2), and describes it as a "permanent good" (~6) that constitutes a life of "continuous and supreme joy to all eternity" (~1). The supreme good is therefore also a stable good. Once obtained, one enjoys consistent and optimal happiness that cannot be interrupted or truly taken away. A "true good," in turn, is whatever serves as a genuine "means" towards achieving this supreme good (~13).

In his search, Spinoza laments the "hollowness and futility" (~1) of goods like sensual pleasure, wealth, and honour, which are traditional candidates for the highest good (~3, 5). He argues that these apparent goods often lead to suffering and self-destruction. Sensual pleasure, wealth, and honour are ultimately transient goods, because we cannot be confident that we can keep them in our possession, which causes us despair when we lose access to such things, which is frequently the case. This transience also promotes obsession with the acquisition of these traditional goods, to the neglect of other (potentially more valuable) goods, and self-destructive excess (~4-10). Spinoza concludes, then, that sensual pleasure, wealth, and honour do not in themselves constitute the supreme good.

Although we do not receive an argument for it in the *TIE*, Spinoza nonetheless gives us a description of what he considers the supreme good to be. This conception of the good is grounded in an ideal conception of human nature (~12-3), the supreme good being equated with “the highest human perfection” (~16) in general and “knowledge of the union which the mind has with the whole of Nature” in particular (~13). The ultimate end upon which all other things in life are valued and pursued, and the ultimate expression of human nature, in other words, is rational understanding of one’s place qua mind in the natural world. A true good is anything that is conducive to promoting one’s progress towards this natural and rational ideal. According to Spinoza, while sensual pleasure, wealth, and honour per se are unsuitable as constituents of the supreme good, insofar as they serve as means to acquiring understanding of one’s union with Nature, they can be considered genuine goods (~11). These traditional goods are therefore valuable, but their value is derived from their role in promoting rationality.

Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect (Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione) begins with this discussion of the supreme good as rational understanding in order to motivate its overall project: *emending the intellect* (G II 3). Following his discussion of the supreme good, Spinoza outlines what he takes to be the necessary means to obtain knowledge of the mind’s union with Nature. These means are knowledge of Nature, education, medicine, mechanics, and any other science deemed conducive to this end, as well as a society that promotes the acquisition of such knowledge (~14-5). Happiness is then achieved through natural, scientific understanding. A healthy mind is the core theme of the *TIE*, because a mind riddled with erroneous beliefs and the emotional disturbances that follow from these beliefs (as seen above in the discussion of traditional goods) is in no position to obtain proper knowledge of Nature, and thus happiness. The mind is unhealthy, in other words, when it reasons poorly. In light of this,

Spinoza asserts that “our first consideration must be to devise a method of emending the intellect and of purifying it . . . so that it may succeed in understanding things without error and as well as possible” (~16). We must first improve the mind’s reasoning so that it is free of false beliefs and effectively disposed towards truth. In order to promote the mind’s health in this way, we must be able to distinguish between truth and falsity, and understand epistemic strategies that reliably lead to grasping truth. The purpose of this treatise is therefore epistemological and therapeutic: by understanding the nature of truth/falsity and knowledge/ignorance we are able to free the mind of the disturbances of false beliefs and successfully acquire true beliefs that promote its health and happiness through intellectual activity. For our purposes, we need not delve into the precise details of Spinoza’s epistemological analysis in this text.⁹¹ What matters is that Spinoza has an epistemological project that is fundamentally motivated by an ethical concern with obtaining happiness as the supreme good.

This conception of the supreme good largely agrees with the account of eudaimonism outlined in 2.1. Spinoza’s discussion of discovering the supreme good in order to protect himself from suffering and promote happiness shows a fundamental ethical concern with well-being. The description of happiness as “a continuous and supreme joy to all eternity” moreover tells us that he is concerned with a condition of well-being that is (c) stable, and not transient or intermittent (*TIE* ~1). Spinoza’s critique of the value of the traditional goods of sensual pleasure, wealth, and honour, coupled with his assertion that he is looking for *true* goods that will lead to the supreme good, implies that this condition is also not merely subjective, because one’s ethical beliefs can be mistaken, and thus these beliefs are *insufficient* to guarantee that one is indeed happy. With

⁹¹ For discussion of the *TIE*’s epistemological framework, see, e.g., Aaron Garrett’s *Meaning in Spinoza’s Method* (Ch. 3); Sangiacomo’s *Spinoza on Reason, Passions, & the Supreme Good* (Ch. 1).

that said, there is (b) a *necessary* subjective component here, since the mind cannot enjoy the supreme good if it does not also know that it possesses this good.

Spinoza claims that we tend to think of at least one of these traditional goods as the supreme good, but when we attend to the consequences of pursuing these things for their own sake, we discover that they usually bring suffering of some kind. He concludes that such things are good as means to happiness, but none of them constitute the ultimate good itself. What we believe and feel to be good is not necessarily good, or good in quite the way we thought it was, because there is a standard by which things can be said to be truly or falsely good. Admittedly, Spinoza seems to appeal to an ideal of human nature that he concedes is based on a confused and abstracted conception of what it is to be human (~12-3). According to Kisner, Spinoza is departing from the ancients here, because where the latter denies that we can base the highest good on a genuine naturalistic foundation, the ancients in contrast thought they could indeed derive this good from understanding nature as it is (75). Spinoza's account of the highest good in the *TIE* may then weaken his eudaimonism to some degree. With that said this ideal is still based on a real natural feature that is common and distinctive among humans, namely the capacity for reason. Furthermore, the rational understanding that Spinoza links to happiness is scientific knowledge of Nature. A human being may not be able to become the perfectly rational being embodied by the ideal, but this ideal does serve as an objective standard by virtue of its appeal to the natural and universal capacity of human beings to understand themselves and Nature. Spinoza's conception of happiness here is therefore at least roughly (a) derived from naturalistic and universal considerations that are not strongly subjective. And as we will see in what follows, Spinoza's ethical commitment to naturalistic considerations (and in turn eudaimonism) grows stronger and more solid in the *Ethics*, a text that presents his mature moral philosophy.

The *TIE*'s ethical framework also (d) meets all of Aristotle's criteria for the highest good. Spinoza is explicit that his supreme good is pursued for its own sake (1) and that everything else of value, that is whatever is considered a true good (e.g., sensual pleasure, wealth, or honour), is valued for the sake of obtaining this ultimate end qua happiness (2) (3). Because of its stability and foundation as the source of all value, we can also say that Spinoza's supreme good is complete (4) and self-sufficient (5), because it is never a means to anything else and represents a fulfilling life as human perfection itself. We can also, despite the limited epistemological focus of this treatise, see Spinoza leaning towards (e) a strong eudaimonism, with his comments about human nature and the importance of understanding truth and falsity for the sake of scientifically understanding the natural world in various unified ways. He does not provide us with a complete philosophical system here, but indicates his intent to do so elsewhere. Moreover, given Spinoza's ethical motivation for his epistemological project and his conception of happiness, we can reasonably say that this incipient philosophical system overall will also be aimed at happiness.

2.2.2 Spinoza's Philosophy as a Whole

In his later works, the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics*, Spinoza indeed focuses on happiness as the highest good in relation to his philosophy as a whole. Both texts elucidate Spinoza's main metaphysical, epistemological, psychological, and ethical views, and indicate from their title the ethical focus of their philosophical content. Spinoza argues that God is the ultimate and immanent cause of everything (*KV* I.II; *E* IP15, 17), God is synonymous with Nature (*KV* I.X, App. 1PIVC; *E* I29S; IVPref.), experiential ideas can be false while ideas derived from reasoning or immediate rational conception are always true (*KV* II.I-2; *E* IIP40-44), experiential ideas give rise to harmful passions and rational ideas good emotions (*KV* II.I-IV; *E* IIIP1, IVApp.2-3), and

optimal happiness, as the highest good, consists in intellectual love of God qua Nature (*KV* II.XVIII-XIX; *E* VP42Proof).

The title of the *Short Treatise* describes one of its main themes as the “well-being” or “prosperity” (*Welstand*) of “man” (*Mensch*; *G* I 1). In an alternative manuscript version of this treatise, we find said commitment emphasized with the title *Ethica or Moral Science* (Morgan 34). The title indicates that the guiding theme of this work on Spinoza’s overall philosophy is ethics or moral philosophy, and the content of the text shows that this moral science is concerned with well-being. We can also see, namely from those points outlined above, that this science of well-being is concerned with happiness, and that Spinoza’s metaphysics, epistemology, and psychology play integral roles in explaining the nature and achievement of happiness, which in turn commits him to (a) and (e) as formal features. Since happiness consists in intellectual knowledge and love of God, metaphysical understanding of God as both the cause of everything and (in some sense) synonymous with Nature becomes crucial,⁹² which links back to the ethical importance of natural knowledge posited in the *TIE*. Spinoza’s epistemology tells us that this understanding of God qua Nature is associated with reasoned and immediately conceivable ideas, in particular the latter as the highest and most precise form of knowledge (*KV* II.II), and not experiential ideas per se, because the latter do not offer clear and distinct apprehension of truth. Psychologically, we are shown that there is an essential connection between one’s beliefs qua ideas and their emotional states, which leads to a discussion of the harmfulness of passions (which arise from experiential ideas) and the ethical importance of rational ideas as the source of good emotions that promote the achievement of intellectual love of God, an “eternal,” and thus (c) stable, condition of supreme happiness (II.XVIII). This supreme happiness, as “the

⁹² See Spinoza’s distinction between *natura naturans* (*KV* I.VIII) and *natura naturata* (I.IX). See also *E* IP29S.

knowledge and love of God” is, in turn, described as “the highest good,” in the sense that once we are “united” with God in this way “we are compelled to stop [our pursuit] and rest here,” since “outside of [knowing God], there is nothing that can give us any happiness” (II.XXVI). Intellectual love of God qua happiness, in other words, functions as (d) the ultimate ethical end and an exclusively intrinsic good.

The *Ethics* retains the eudaimonistic aims of the *TIE* and *KV*.⁹³ Like the *KV*, the main title of this treatise, *Ethics*, conveys the guiding ethical focus of Spinoza’s presentation of his overall philosophy. He begins by metaphysically establishing God as the only substance and everything else (including human beings) as modes of substance. Epistemologically, the experiential ideas mentioned previously are identified with the first kind of knowledge (*cognitio*) and are classified as “inadequate” (IIP11C) by virtue of representing things in a “fragmentary [*mutilate*] and confused manner” (IIP40S2/G II 122), while reasoned and immediately conceivable ideas are classified as “adequate” and identified as the *second kind of knowledge* (reason) and the *third kind of knowledge* (intuition) respectively, both of which express certainty (IIP36).⁹⁴

Ontologically and psychologically, Spinoza argues that all existing things possess a *conatus*, that is an essential striving and force to express and preserve their existence (IIIP6-7), which in human beings amounts to the expression of (i) the body’s causal power to maintain the

⁹³ I do not wish to imply, however, that the *TIE*, *KV*, and *Ethics* offer precisely the same philosophical views. Spinoza’s metaphysical (e.g., on the relationship between the mind and body) and ethical (e.g., on the value of passions) views arguably undergo significant changes. For discussion of how these texts differ, see, e.g., Jaquet’s *Affects, Actions and Passions in Spinoza* (Ch. 3); Sangiacomo (Ch. 1-2, 4-5). Here I am merely emphasizing core ideas that these texts share in an eudaimonistic context, formally. Concerning matters of content, see Ch. 1, footnote 70.

⁹⁴ While there is a growing trend in the literature to translate *cognitio* more generally as “cognition” I will retain the traditional translation of “knowledge” in order to emphasize that, while the first kind of *cognitio* is the only source of error and falsity (IIP41), it nevertheless grasps truth in its content (albeit only partially) and is thus not inherently false (IIP17S, 32-3, 35).

ratio of motion and rest amongst its constituent parts through physical activities (IVP38-9) and (ii) the mind's causal power to maintain its existence through intellectual activities (IIIP9; IVP26).⁹⁵ This conatus can be strengthened or weakened, meaning the body or mind can have more-or-less causal power to express its existence (IIIP57). Insofar as the conatus has causal power (i.e., it is the sufficient cause of self-directed or world-directed effects) it is considered an adequate cause or active, and insofar as it lacks causal power (i.e., it is only a partial cause of effects) the conatus is considered an inadequate cause or passive (IIIDef. 1-2). The mind is active when it possesses adequate ideas and passive when it possesses inadequate ideas (IIIP1). Emotions, which indicate the strengthening (pleasant emotions) or weakening (painful emotions) of the conatus, involve ethical judgments (IIIDef.3; IVP8). Inadequate ideas reflect vague judgments that can be true or false, which are linked to passive emotions (passions) that, either in themselves or circumstantially, lead to the strengthening or weakening of the conatus's activity.⁹⁶ Adequate ideas, conversely, reflect certainly true judgments, and are associated with active emotions that always promote the well-being of the conatus.

The conatus itself serves as (a) the naturalistic foundation of Spinoza's ethical framework.⁹⁷ That which is good (i.e., useful) is what promotes the (physical and intellectual) activity of the conatus, while that which is bad (i.e., harmful) is what undermines its activity or

⁹⁵ For discussion of what Spinoza means by the verb "to express" (*exprimere*), see, e.g., Deleuze's *Expressionism in Philosophy*; Lin[b] (29ff.).

⁹⁶ Here marks a notable difference between the *KV* and the *Ethics*, because in the latter Spinoza grants that certain passions (namely pleasures) are in themselves beneficial (i.e., good) insofar as they strengthen the conatus (IVP41).

⁹⁷ As mentioned in footnote 19 of the Introduction, there is debate over whether Spinoza is committed to a realist or anti-realist conception of human nature. I argue that either interpretation is compatible with an eudaimonistic reading, because, as we saw in 2.1.1 with Socrates, the Cynics, and Epicurus, eudaimonism has not historically required a complete or essentialist account of human nature. Eudaimonism (potentially) only requires a clear naturalistic foundation, which the conatus provides. At the very least, Spinoza is not, on these grounds, less of an eudaimonist than Socrates, the Cynics, and Epicurus.

increases its passivity (IVP8Proof). Pleasure, because it represents the promotion of the conatus's activity, is in itself good. Pain, because it represents the frustration of this activity, is in itself bad (IVP41). Spinoza identifies virtue with the conatus qua adequate cause (IVDef. 8, P18S), on the grounds that, because the conatus is one's essence or nature, there is no coherent foundation for virtue other than this self-affirmative striving (IVP22). In line with this reasoning, virtue is intrinsically good. Spinoza says that virtue "should be sought for its own sake" and "there is nothing preferable to it or more to our advantage, for the sake of which it should be sought" (IVP18S). Virtue, in this context, is intrinsically valuable because the fundamental importance or usefulness of the conatus's self-affirmative activity is not derived from some other independent end – nothing is more important or useful to the conatus (as an active being) than itself. As a result, virtue is not simply an end in itself, it also cannot (and should not) ever be a means (i.e., instrumentally valuable) to some other end. Spinoza, in turn, asserts that "happiness [*felicitatem*] consists in a man's being able to preserve his own being," that is virtue (IVP18S/G II 222; see also IIP49S). In other words, to be happy is to be virtuous qua adequate cause. Since virtue is the ultimate ethical end, and is equated with happiness, happiness is the ultimate end.

Blessedness (*beatitudo*), the highest happiness (*summa felicitas*), (IVApp.4/(G II 267), is said to consist in the intellectual love of God through adequate intuitive knowledge (VP42), with Spinoza arguing that said knowledge constitutes the "highest virtue" and the "highest good" of the mind (IVP28). There is, in other words, no higher expression of intellectual activity and nothing more valuable to one's natural, self-affirmative striving than knowing God qua Nature, the ultimate immanent cause of all being. Other potential goods, like food, fragrances, fashion, athletics, art, etc. are ultimately pursued for the sake of promoting one's natural physical and intellectual activity, because they enable one's body to express "all of the functions that follow

from its . . . nature” and one’s mind “to be equally capable of simultaneously understanding many things [namely, as modes of God/Nature]” (IVP45S). Other goods, therefore, derive their value from the well-being of the conatus, in particular their capacity to promote its adequate causality in the form of intuitive knowledge. Finally, Spinoza argues that blessedness represents an eternal condition of the mind (namely, through intuitively understanding its own essence, and the essence of the body, as eternal things and truths that follow from God’s eternal nature [VP31, P37Proof]). By virtue of this eternal feature, Spinoza asserts that “[t]here is nothing . . . which is contrary to this intellectual love, or which can destroy it” (VP37). Blessedness qua highest good, consequently, represents a stable condition. This point is further reinforced by Spinoza’s emphasis on happiness in terms of being “able to pass the whole of one’s life with a healthy [i.e., active] mind” (VP39S). Blessedness is then neither intermittent (because the mind is able to consistently express its understanding) nor impermanent (because of the nature of adequate intuitive knowledge and the eternal aspect of the mind); rather, it pertains to (c) the structure of one’s life as a whole.

We also find that Spinoza’s ethical framework shares with certain eudaimonisms a concern for tranquility. Epicurus, for example, asserts that a core component of happiness is “freedom of the soul from [psychological] disturbance [*ataraxia*]” (*LM* ~128). Miller[a] notes that we find a similar emphasis on a lack of psychological disturbance in Spinoza (176). In his political work, the *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza claims that “true happiness [is] solely place[d] in virtue and peace of mind [*tranquillitate animi*]” (Ch. 6, p. 449/G III 88), and in the *Ethics* we find intellectual love of God qua happiness similarly linked to “complete tranquility of mind [*animum omnimode quietum*]” (IIP49S/G II 135) and “contentment of spirit [*animi acquiescentia*]” (VP36S, 42S/G II 303, 308). This concern with freedom from disturbance

connects well with our abovementioned discussion of the therapeutic epistemological project of the *TIE*. By correcting erroneous beliefs, particularly about the ways in which things are and are not of value in acquiring intuitive knowledge of God/Nature, one removes emotional disturbance and achieves stable pleasure. In other words, a healthy (that is rational) mind enjoys tranquility. That Spinoza still has this therapeutic goal in mind in the *Ethics* can be seen in IIPref., where he clarifies that his metaphysical and epistemological arguments are fundamentally focused “only [on] those things that can lead us as it were by the hand to the knowledge of the human mind and its utmost blessedness.”⁹⁸ For Spinoza, optimal happiness consists in intuitive knowledge of God, whose acquisition relies on metaphysical understanding of God qua substance and epistemological understanding of adequate knowledge vs. inadequate knowledge, as well as several interconnected ontological, psychological, and ethical arguments concerning the conatus.

Three key areas of misunderstanding that Spinoza seeks to correct our beliefs about, for the therapeutic purpose of promoting happiness, are God, providence, and free will. He criticizes conceptions of God that treat it as transcendent and separate from the world (IP14-15, 18), capable of indeterminate willing and pleasant/painful emotions (IP32-3), or providentially inclined to create the best possible world (IApp.; IVPref.). Since Spinoza identifies happiness with adequate knowledge of God, such erroneous beliefs are opposed to this understanding, and thus also contrary to happiness. In line with these points, it is crucial that we understand that all our actions and the events we experience in our lives are not contingent and are not aimed at some ultimate cosmic moral goal, nor do we please or displease God by our actions (IP16, 29; VP17). We do not have an indeterminate will, meaning there are always strict reasons internal to our nature or externally derived from other beings that necessarily lead us to choose and act one

⁹⁸ For discussion of the therapeutic value of the *Ethics* itself as a text, see Carlisle (Ch. 2); Aaron Garrett (Ch. 6-7).

way rather than another (IIP48; IIIDef.1-3). It is through adequate knowledge of this deterministic causal framework that we remove harmful passions (e.g., suffering from thinking we or other beings could have acted otherwise) and enhance our knowledge of God/Nature and ourselves as modes of God, thereby promoting our happiness (IVApp.32; VP1-10, 20s, 24).

Ultimately, both the *KV* and the *Ethics* adhere to (d) all five of Aristotle's eudaimonistic criteria. Intellectual love of God is identified as the highest good precisely because it is valued in itself (1) as the highest expression of understanding, and more fundamentally the virtue of the conatus qua adequate cause. It is also never pursued for the sake of some other thing (3) (4), on the contrary, all other things are valued because they promote the conatus (2), and once we have this intellectual love we are not lacking (in kind)⁹⁹ anything meaningful that we need to continue to pursue (5). Furthermore, this conception of happiness as the highest good is also (e) necessarily related to an overall system of metaphysics, epistemology, psychology, and ethics. Without appealing to Spinoza's arguments about God qua substance, determinism, inadequate vs. adequate causality, and the nature of the conatus, blessedness is incomprehensible. Consequently, there is a consistent commitment to a strong eudaimonistic conception of happiness from Spinoza's *TIE* to the *Ethics*.

2.3: Potential Problems

Thus far we have focused on how Spinoza is committed to (a), (c), (d), and (e) as key features of eudaimonism. However, an adequate discussion of Spinoza's ethical philosophy must include acknowledgment of certain subjective and relativistic claims that he makes, which may support an unqualified anti-realist reading and undermine the objectivity necessary for an

⁹⁹ I say "in kind," because Spinoza grants that we can and should strive to increase the *amount* of intuitive knowledge we possess, even though there is no greater *kind* of intellectual activity that we could enjoy (*E* VP30S, 38-40).

eudaimonistic reading. Firstly, we are consistently told in the *TIE*, *KV*, and *Ethics* that good and bad/evil are not intrinsic properties of things: “[A]ll the things which were the source and object of my anxiety held nothing of good and evil in themselves save insofar as the mind was influenced by them” (*TIE* ~1); “[G]ood and evil are only relations . . . [they] are neither things nor actions [per se] . . . [they] do not exist [per se] in Nature” (*KV* I.X); “‘good’ and ‘bad’ . . . indicate nothing positive in things considered in themselves . . . [they] are nothing but modes of thinking, or notions we which we form from comparing things . . .” (*E* IVPref.). More precisely, good and bad are defined in terms of usefulness to the subject. Good is described as “that which we certainly know to be useful to us” (IVDef. 1) and bad as “that which we certainly know to be an obstacle to our attainment of some good” (IVDef.2). Simply put, what is beneficial is good and what is harmful is bad. Related to these points, Spinoza claims that (i) “we do not endeavor, will, seek after, or desire because we judge a thing to be good. On the contrary, we judge a thing to be good because we endeavor, will, seek after and desire it” (IIIP9S) and (ii) “one and the same thing can at the same time be good and bad, and also indifferent . . . [f]or example, music is good for one who is melancholy, bad for one in mourning, and neither good nor bad for the deaf” (IVPref.). Since good and bad are apparently not intrinsic properties of things, but instead relational properties concerning usefulness/harm to the conatus, their source is seemingly found in the *subject* qua conatus (i), namely in the desires of the subject *relative* to their current circumstances (ii).

A piece of music, according to Spinoza, has no ethical value without appeal to its affective (appetitive) relationship to a subject, meaning ethical categories have a necessary subjective component. In light of IIIP9S, it would seem that the sound of music is indifferent to the (wholly) deaf person because they experience no desire to pursue or avoid it. Conversely,

music will only be good to the melancholy person if they desire it as something useful (pleasant) and bad to the mourner if they desire to avoid it as something harmful (painful). This example indicates to us not only that the ethical value of some object is necessarily dependent on a subject's desires, but also that it can differ in value because subjects can experience different desires concerning the same object. Spinoza tells us that (1) *distinct subjects* "can be affected in different ways by one and *the same object*" and (2) *one subject* "can be affected by one and *the same object* in *different ways* at different times [emphasis mine]" (IIP51). Distinct subjects can differ in their overall natural constitutions or specific states in a given moment, meaning that a given object may be pleasurable, painful, or ineffective to their respective conatuses, which will in turn shape their individual desires and evaluations concerning that object. The mourner and the deaf person differ in their overall natural constitutions, the former being able to be pleasantly or painfully affected by the sound of music and the latter being entirely unaffected by it. The melancholy person and the mourner differ in specific states in a given moment, the former finding pleasure in the music and the latter pain in it. However, we could also consider melancholy, mourning, and deafness differing states of one subject. In this case, at one period of time, this subject is melancholy, desires to hear music as a form of pleasure, and subsequently considers it good. At another time they may be mournful, and seek to escape the pain music causes them, which leads the subject to consider music bad. At still another time they may no longer have the ability to hear, in which case the subject might have no affective and ethical relationship to musical sounds at all. As a result, we have not only subjective considerations here (by virtue of individual desire and pleasure/pain), but also *relativistic* considerations because the ethical value of something can differ between both distinct subjects and the particular states of one subject at different times, meaning that there may be nothing that can have universal or fixed

ethical value with respect to goodness, badness, or indifference. Moreover, it is not clear that a subject in any given moment could ever be mistaken about their ethical classification of something if the value of that thing is determined by the subject's affective states (in which case, the subjective component might also be a sufficient condition). If good and bad cannot be universalized in Spinoza's ethical system, such properties are not intrinsic to Nature, and ethical value is not fixed, then it would seem that this system lacks the necessary naturalism, universality, and stability to be eudaimonistic.

These subjective and relativistic points are inescapable, but they are not insurmountable problems to the eudaimonistic reading. An important feature of Spinoza's ethical definitions is the qualification that good is what "we *certainly* [*certo*] know to be useful" and bad what "we *certainly* [*certo*] know to be an obstacle [all emphasis mine]" (IVDef.1-2/G II 209). This point about certainty indicates that ethical judgments are not restricted to inadequate knowledge, which pertains to judgments that may be true or false, but also adequate knowledge, judgments whose truth we can clearly and distinctly grasp (IIP41-2). Spinoza, in fact, draws a distinction between mere "knowledge of good and evil," which consists in any perception of the conatus being strengthened or weakened, and "true knowledge of good and evil," which specifically consists in the mind's adequate understanding of changes to its physical/intellectual power (IVP8,14-7, 35Proof). He also argues that "[w]e know nothing to be certainly good or evil except what is conducive to understanding or what can hinder understanding [respectively]" (IVP27). Finally, when describing the conatus, and the desires that follow from it, Spinoza asserts that everyone "should seek [their] own advantage (I mean [their] *real* [*revera*] advantage), [and] should aim at whatever *really* [*revera*] leads [someone] towards greater perfection [i.e., a stronger conatus; emphasis mine]" (IVP18S/G II 222). These references to certainty and what is

really or truly conducive to the conatus in general (and understanding in particular as an expression of the conatus) indicate that one can make accurate or erroneous judgments about what is good or bad for them, and can come to know with certainty the truth/falsity of such appraisals. Mere knowledge of good and evil is then related to judgments that may be true or false, whereas true knowledge of good and evil (as adequate knowledge alone) is necessarily true (IVP35Proof).

Establishing this point assists us in reconciling Spinoza's eudaimonism with the necessary subjectivity in his description of ethical value. While Spinoza argues that ethical value is *partly* based on the desires of the subject, he is not arguing for mere (strong) subjectivity, in the sense that every desire is equally valid ethically or desire in itself is both a necessary *and sufficient* condition in ethical evaluation. One cannot be mistaken about what is good/bad for their well-being in relation to active desires, but that is because these desires follow from adequate (i.e., well-justified) ethical knowledge of what is certainly good/bad for the subject's self-preservation and self-empowerment. With passive desires, however, one can be mistaken, because these desires follow from inadequate (i.e., deficiently justified) knowledge. Inadequate knowledge involves a confused and fragmentary experiential idea of something, that may or may not be true in the way that one thinks it is. Inadequate ethical knowledge is therefore vague understanding of what is good/bad for one's well-being, which leads to vague desires that may or may not track what is truly beneficial to the conatus. For example, I may passively desire to avoid cobblers because I remember being severely beaten by a cobbler. I observe that being beaten weakened my conatus's activity (i.e., caused me pain), which is bad, and the cobbler was the cause of this effect. As a result, I form the judgment that all cobblers are bad (because I have no experience of other cobblers who were friendly) with an accompanying desire to avoid them.

It would seem that cobblers are now bad for me because I desire to avoid them, but in fact, this is not the case. The cobbler who previously harmed me may be bad, however, other cobblers might be kind and helpful, so this desire does not accurately track what is ultimately good for my conatus (i.e., this desire is not sufficient to genuinely indicate that all cobblers are bad). If this desire was connected to adequate understanding that told me all cobblers were hostile, then my desire would correspond with the genuine good of my nature, but since my desire is connected to inadequate knowledge it is ethically unreliable.

More fundamentally, the difference between passive and active desires resides in their causal relation to the conatus. Passive desires are desires that only partially follow from the subject, because they also involve external influences, the latter of which have no necessary harmony with one's nature or guarantee of providing accurate information about the value of things to one's overall physical and intellectual empowerment (IVApp. 30). Active desires, however, follow solely from the self-affirmative striving of the conatus, and thus solely represent what is in harmony with one's nature, thereby providing accurate information about what is of ultimate value to one's empowerment. It is this epistemological and ethical difference between desires that arguably drives Spinoza's therapeutic project to remove harmful inadequate ideas (passive desires) and acquire or increase adequate knowledge (active desires).¹⁰⁰ Passive desires consequently can be false, and are inferior to active desires, the latter of which reliably track what is truly beneficial to the subject because they follow solely from the subject per se. The subject's desires play (b) a necessary role in ethical value, but these desires do not represent a sufficient condition because they are not equal epistemologically or ethically (by virtue of their

¹⁰⁰ In this thesis, I leave open the question of the extent to which Spinoza thinks no, some, or all adequate knowledge is in some sense innate. Sangiacomo's *Spinoza on Reason, Passions, & the Supreme Good* offers a valuable overview of the most plausible readings on this subject.

differing relations to the conatus). Therefore, the subjective component of Spinoza's ethical framework is compatible with the objectivity necessary for eudaimonism, because this component is not strongly subjective.

The relativism in Spinoza's framework is also compatible with eudaimonistic objectivity, because it admits of universality. Miller[b] argues for an important distinction between *circumstantial* relativism and *non-circumstantial* relativism. Some "good x" is circumstantially relative when it is "valuable iff x is valuable to [some subject] S, given S's actual or possible circumstances," while x is non-circumstantially-relative "iff x is valuable for some subject S, irrespective of S's actual or possible circumstances" (157). In both cases x is relatively valuable because its goodness is related to some relevant aspect of S. Without appealing to its relationship to S qua subject, x qua object could not be ethically classified in this context. The abovementioned example of music fits into the category of being circumstantially relatively valuable. Its value is relative to a subject, and that subject's circumstances in a given moment (e.g., their current emotional or mental/physical state). The question is whether every relativistic good in Spinoza's ethical framework is merely circumstantially valuable, or whether there is any ethical object that can be relatively valuable to a subject irrespective of their circumstances, and potentially universalizable to all (or a certain group of) subjects. Miller argues that there is one clear relatively valuable good that is both non-circumstantial and universalizable: adequate knowledge of God (161-2). Insofar as all humans are capable of possessing at least some adequate knowledge through the mental aspect of the conatus, they can be said to have access to a stable, active (rather than unstable and passive) good in rationally grasping God qua substance and any given mode of God (particularly oneself). Spinoza declares adequate divine knowledge to be "the mind's highest good" and "the mind's highest virtue" (IVP28), going on to argue that

it is “a good that is common to all men and can be possessed by all men in so far as they are of the same [thinking] nature” (IVP36).¹⁰¹ This is because adequate knowledge of God’s (namely, thinking and extended) essence is common to all human minds in their knowledge of themselves and other beings qua mental and bodily modes (IIP47). Adequate knowledge of God is *relatively* valuable because of its beneficial relationship to the intellectual power of the conatus, but is not circumstantially relatively valuable because it is *always* valuable to a subject with a mind and is valuable to *every* subject with a mind (and if we read Spinoza as a panpsychist [IIP13S; see also 5.4], potentially all things qua thinking beings). Alternatively, we might say (contra Miller) that intellectual love of God is a *non-relativistic* good in Spinoza’s ethics, because it is always self-reflexively valuable as an aspect of one’s nature per se, rather than a circumstantial or external object of value.¹⁰² In either case, this relativistic dimension does not undermine the eudaimonistic objectivity of Spinoza’s framework, because intellectual love of God represents either a non-circumstantial, *universal relativistic* good, or a *non-relativistic universal* good, that determines the value of subsequent circumstantial, relativistic goods.¹⁰³

Finally, we must also further clarify how Spinoza’s ethical system is objective in the naturalistic sense. Spinoza describes virtue (and by extension happiness) in terms of “act[ing] from the laws of one’s own nature” through the conatus (IVP18S). The virtuous and happy life, in other words, is the life spent expressing or preserving one’s natural existence through physical and intellectual activity. Good is based on what is in agreement with one’s nature (virtue), and

¹⁰¹ There is debate over whether happiness qua highest good is purely mental or also bodily in nature. I will discuss this debate in 5.4.

¹⁰² For further discussion of this point, see Youpa[b] (79n15, 82-112).

¹⁰³ Considering Aristotle rejects the Platonic notion of an absolute definition of goodness which applies to all things in the same sense, and arguably embraces a certain kind of relativism based on species and means, we could also say that there is already precedent for relativism in the eudaimonistic tradition (*NE* I.7–8; II.9; X.8–9). As a result, moral relativism and eudaimonism are not necessarily incompatible.

thus (pleasurably) promotes physical/intellectual empowerment, and bad is based on what (painfully) frustrates physical/intellectual empowerment (IVP8Proof, 19, 31). Spinoza may deny that good/bad are intrinsic properties of natural beings, but they are nonetheless *natural* properties, all of which admit of certainty and some of which admit of universal and fixed value. Similar to the *TIE*, Spinoza presents us with an ethical model of humanity in the form of the free human (*homo liber*) who acts only from adequate knowledge in particular and adequate causality in general (IVP67-73/ G II 261-65), good being that which is in harmony with this model and bad that which conflicts with it (IVPref./G III 208). This model is naturalistic because it is ultimately derived from the conatus, which provides the foundation for what optimal virtue and happiness will look like in this ethical framework.¹⁰⁴ The conatus consequently serves as an objective standard that harmonizes Spinoza's naturalism, subjectivity, and relativity in a way compatible with, and representative of, strong eudaimonism (but contra unqualified moral anti-realism), through its central role in Spinoza's commitment to (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e) as formal features of happiness.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that Spinoza's moral philosophy belongs to the eudaimonistic tradition. I began by describing eudaimonism as an ethical paradigm that considers happiness in form to be (a) naturally universalizable; (b) partly, but not wholly,

¹⁰⁴ Spinoza's use of an ethical model and his conception of the free human are contentious topics in the literature. Firstly, some scholars argue that the free human is Spinoza's ethical model (e.g., Nadler[a] 47-54), while others deny this claim (e.g., Kisner 166-77). Secondly, Spinoza's model is understood by some scholars to be naturalistic (e.g., Youpa[b] 47-50), with others considering it to be a non-naturalistic mental construct (e.g., Jarrett 58-84). Thirdly, some scholars consider the free human to be devoid of passions (e.g., Kisner 165-7), while others argue that the free human is subject to passions but is the adequate cause of all their actions (e.g., Nadler[a] 47-54; Youpa[b] 133-40). I take the position that (1) the free human is Spinoza's ethical model, (2) this model is naturalistic, and (3) the free human is subject to passions while nonetheless acting only from active emotions (i.e., adequate knowledge).

dependent on the beliefs/feelings of a subject; (c) structurally stable; and (d) exclusively intrinsically good. I also drew a distinction between weak eudaimonism and strong eudaimonism, the latter (e) representing a conception of happiness that is reliant on an overall philosophical system that appeals to more than ethical doctrines.

We see a consistent thematic commitment to (a), (c), and (d), from the *TIE* to the *Ethics*, through Spinoza's conception of happiness (i.e., intellectual love of God/Nature) as the ultimate end of all ethical considerations and a stable (namely eternal), naturally universalizable good. This eudaimonistic conception of happiness also relies heavily on interconnected metaphysical (concerning God/Nature qua substance), epistemological (concerning inadequate vs. adequate knowledge), and psychological (concerning the conatus and its relation to emotions) doctrines that shape its ethical doctrines (concerning good/bad and virtue), thus making it (e) strongly eudaimonistic. While there are certain subjective and relativistic features in Spinoza's ethical philosophy, based on the crucial role of desire in ethical evaluations and the flexible value of many objects in promoting or hindering happiness, these features do not ultimately make Spinoza an unqualified moral anti-realist or undermine a reading of him as an eudaimonist. On the contrary, through the conatus as an essential self-affirmative striving and force, Spinoza provides a naturalistic and universalizable ethical foundation that renders the (active) desires of the subject (b) necessary, but insufficient, for happiness.

With this eudaimonistic foundation established, we will now in the remaining chapters move into a more precise conceptual analysis of Spinoza's engagement with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics concerning the nature and role of pleasure, virtue, and the body in living a happy life. In Ch. 3-4 we will see the strong affinities Spinoza shares with each of his fellow eudaimonists, and Ch. 5 will reveal how Spinoza's views on the body make a distinctive

contribution to the eudaimonistic tradition. Together, these chapters showcase Spinoza's ontological and ethical synthesis of the unity (non-reductive identity) and plurality (diverse expression) of being.

Chapter 3: Pleasure¹⁰⁵

Introduction

In this chapter we will explore Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza's respective accounts of pleasure. For a modern reader, the connection between pleasure and happiness is fairly intuitive. In fact, most people, whether they are from the ancient Greek, early modern, or modern period, would say that a happy life is necessarily pleasant in some way. What the abovementioned philosophers offer, though, is a rich and nuanced discussion of precisely what kinds of pleasure there are and what roles, both positive and negative, such pleasures play in one's well-being, with happiness in this case (as we saw in Ch. 2) being understood as a naturalistic, partly subjective, structurally stable, and exclusively intrinsically valuable state of being.

Concerning the subject of pleasure, we will focus on two central questions for these eudaimonists: (1) what relationship, if any, does pleasure have to healthy states of being and (2) what role does pleasure play in happiness? With (1), the question is whether pleasures have a necessary connection to the health of the body or mind, and if they do, how do we explain the fact that certain pleasures can be harmful to our well-being? With (2), there is debate about whether pleasure is a means to, constituent of, or consequent of, happiness. Moreover, since there are different kinds of pleasure, what ethical status does each kind of pleasure hold?¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ A version of sections 2.2-2.4 of this chapter is forthcoming in *Ergo* as "Healthy and Happy Natural Being: Spinoza and Epicurus Contra the Stoics."

¹⁰⁶ While much can be said about bodily and mental pleasures for all four of these philosophers, I will largely reserve discussion of them for Ch. 5, because each eudaimonist's conception of these pleasures is heavily grounded in their more basic ontological views on the nature of and relationship between the mind and body.

Ultimately, all four eudaimonists agree that pleasure is a necessary aspect of a happy life. However, I will argue for two claims concerning Spinoza's engagement with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics on the subject of pleasure. Firstly, Spinoza agrees with Aristotle and Epicurus that pleasure holds a necessary connection to healthy being and pleasure is by nature good. On the other hand, Spinoza is in strong disagreement with the Stoics on this subject, because the latter deny both claims. Secondly, Spinoza's position on pleasure shares the most in common with Epicurus's, because both (i) outline a dual account of pleasure that distinguishes between health-oriented changes in one's state of being and healthy states of being per se and (ii) consider happiness to be constituted by a certain kind of pleasure (namely, one that expresses a healthy state of being per se). As we will see in what follows, their commitment to (i) places them in opposition to Aristotle (who denies that processes can constitute genuine pleasures) and their commitment to (ii) places them in opposition to Aristotle and the Stoics (both of whom deny that any sort of pleasure in itself constitutes happiness).

3.1 Aristotle

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle provides two central descriptions of pleasure. In Book VII.12, he describes pleasure as "an activity of a natural disposition" which is "unimpeded" (1153a13-5; see also VII.13.1153b10-6). Book X.4, conversely, describes it as that which "completes an activity" as a "sort of supervenient end" (1174b32-4). The first description associates pleasure with an actualized activity, while the second associates it with something which accompanies or follows from an actualized activity. Aristotle also asserts that there are two main kinds of pleasure: sensory and thinking (X.5.1176a2-3). Sensory pleasures pertain to

the body (e.g., seeing, tasting, etc.) and thinking pleasures the mind (e.g., deliberating and reflecting).¹⁰⁷

From this foundation, a multitude of interpretative difficulties arise. Most importantly, what is the relationship between VII and X's respective descriptions of pleasure? Are they fundamentally the same account of pleasure, but described in different words? Is one account (e.g., Book X's) meant to be a more refined description? Or do they in fact represent two similar, but ultimately different (and potentially incompatible), accounts of pleasure? What adds further confusion to this matter is that in Book X Aristotle says that, while we may be tempted to equate pleasure and activity because of the close relationship between them, it would be "strange" and unlikely for pleasure and activity to be "the same thing" (5.1175b31-7). Here Aristotle seems to be contradicting the Book VII account of pleasure. Answering this question heavily depends on how we understand the structure of the *NE* and Aristotle's motivations. Is this text meant to be a unified account of Aristotelian ethics, does the order of some of the Books presented (in this case VII and X) matter, and is Aristotle even concerned with providing a formal definition of pleasure in the first place?¹⁰⁸ Because Aristotle is not the main subject of this thesis,¹⁰⁹ I make no pretense in this chapter of providing a definitive account of his conception of pleasure.¹¹⁰ Instead, I will simply provide what I find to be a reasonable account in order to flesh out certain meaningful points of agreement and disagreement between Aristotle and Spinoza. The core points I wish to

¹⁰⁷ Strictly-speaking, both kinds of pleasure follow from the soul, bodily pleasures from the non-rational aspect and mental pleasures from the rational aspect. We will discuss Aristotle's account of the soul in 5.1.

¹⁰⁸ Another issue is that the *NE* is not Aristotle's only ethical treatise. He also wrote the *Eudemian Ethics*, which shares certain books with the *NE*, but lacks the *NE* X's account of pleasure as a supervenient end. Consequently, it is debatable whether both texts have the same basic account of pleasure.

¹⁰⁹ It should be noted that, since (as mentioned in the Introduction) Spinoza was not heavily concerned with doing history of philosophy, he might not have been attentive to some of these potential interpretative difficulties.

¹¹⁰ For discussion of the various interpretative debates concerning Aristotle's conception of pleasure, see, e.g., Aufderheide (Ch. 3-4); Bostock's "Pleasure and Activity"; Broadie (Ch.6); Gosling and Taylor (Ch. 11-7); Owen's "Aristotelian Pleasures"; Pakaluk (Ch. 10); Shields[b].

draw our attention to, namely that both connect pleasure to health, activity, and happiness and disagree over whether any pleasure is truly a change in state, remain uncontroversial on most interpretations of Aristotle, and (as we will see below) are likely the points which would have been of most interest to Spinoza ethically.

To further flesh out these two descriptions of pleasure, and their relationship to each other, we will discuss three important, interrelated distinctions that seem to be at work in the *NE*: (1) the source of pleasure vs. the experience of pleasure, (2) what is pleasant by nature vs. what is pleasant to a particular individual, and (3) true pleasure vs. apparent pleasure.

One well-known explanation of the relationship between VII and X's respective accounts, proposed for example by Owen (136-8, 151) and Aufderheide (200-2), is to say that in VII Aristotle is concerned with the *source of* (i.e., what produces) *pleasant experiences*, while in X he is concerned with the nature of *pleasant experience itself*.¹¹¹ The core piece of evidence for this reading is Aristotle's rejection of pleasure as a process (*kinesis*), something he argues for in both VII and X. However, the arguments seem to have different focal points. In VII, he refers to "*things that are pleasant*," (12.1153a3, 7) and the "*pleasures deriving from them* [emphasis mine]" (1153a8). Aristotle argues that pleasure is not, by nature, linked to the process of being restored to a healthy state of being, because there are things that we "take pleasure in" (1153a3), like reflective activity, which in themselves are not associated with pain or appetite (e.g., sickness, hunger, exhaustion, etc.) – pain and appetite being indicative of a "depletion of [one's] natural state" (1152b35-1153a3). Instead, reflective pleasure arises when one is able to engage in reflective *activity* because their nature is unimpeded in its functioning, which is why the activity

¹¹¹ One notable difference between Owen and Aufderheide's respective readings is that Aufderheide claims that pleasure is referred to as a source *and* an experience in both VII and X. However, one referent dominates over the other in each Book (201-2). For a dissenting view of the source/experience reading, see, e.g., Pakaluk (302-6).

in question is actualized and enjoyed. When Aristotle says that pleasure is an activity in VII, what he means is that the source of pleasant experiences is activities that follow from one's nature when it is in a healthy state. Pleasant experiences, however, do not *arise from* restorative processes. In X, Aristotle takes a different tactic. He argues that in "being pleased" one does not say that the feeling is quick vs. slow or partially there vs. partially not, as we would in the case of a process of coming to be or actualizing some potentiality (3.1173a31-1173b5). While, as a process, I can achieve my *goal* of experiencing pleasure quickly, slowly, or partially, the experience of pleasure itself is not quick, slow, or partial – I am either actually experiencing pleasure at that moment or I am not. Being pleased is more accurately understood as "something whole and complete," that is something *actualized* rather than something in the process of *being actualized* (4.1174b8). Consequently, when Aristotle describes pleasure as that which supervenes on an activity in X, he means that the experience of being pleased supervenes on an activity. On this reading VII and X are different descriptions of pleasure, but compatible because they are describing two different aspects of being a "pleasure." The source of a pleasant experience is an activity that follows from a healthy nature which is unimpeded in its functioning. The pleasant experience itself, on the other hand, accompanies or follows from such an activity.¹¹²

Aristotle draws a second important distinction between what is "pleasant by nature" (VII.5.1148b15; 14.1154b20) and what is pleasant to a particular individual based on their current state of being (5.1148b17-9; 12.1152b27-1153a6). Something is naturally pleasant if it follows from one's nature as a human being when that nature is healthy, and thus unimpeded in its functioning. Sight (as a bodily activity) and reflection (as a mental activity) are pleasant by

¹¹² There is debate in the scholarship over whether this supervenience should be understood as final or formal causation. For discussion of this debate, see, e.g., Gosling and Taylor (Ch. 13). For the reasons outlined above, I will take no position on this matter.

nature, because they are natural human activities that are pleasant when one is in a healthy state, which allows for such activities to be actualized or successfully performed. More precisely, the pleasantness of an activity depends on how well or poorly the perceptual or intellectual faculty in question is functioning and the quality of the object of that faculty, for example, differences in the beauty of shapes in the case of sight or differences in the importance/priority of truths in the case of reflection (X.4.1174b15-32).

Something is pleasant to a particular individual, conversely, when the individual must be in a certain state in order to experience that pleasure. Aristotle notes that “the same things delight some while giving pain to others,” depending on their current state of being (1176a11). A prime example of something that is pleasant to a particular individual is incidental pleasure. Incidental pleasures are “the processes [responsible for] restoring one to [their] natural state” (VII.12.1152b34-5). They pertain to deficiencies in one’s nature (e.g., hunger, exhaustion, sickness, etc.) and the subsequent enjoyment one experiences in the process of removing these deficiencies, and thus restoring themselves to a healthy state. What makes these restorative pleasures *incidental*, however, is that, for Aristotle, they are not truly pleasures; rather, they “only appear so” to an individual when they are in a deficient state (1152b33). What is actually pleasant as a source is not the restorative process, but rather “the activity of the part [of one’s nature] that remains healthy” (14.1154b19-20). In other words, in the case of restorative pleasures, I am aware of a positive change in my state of being in conjunction with a pleasant feeling, the latter of which I mistakenly attribute to the change in state as the source. In reality, the pleasant experience is only possible due to a part of my nature that is healthy and actualized, namely an unimpeded activity. Without this unimpeded activity, I would be incapable of

experiencing enjoyment in such a deficient state.¹¹³ In 3.2 and 3.4, we will see that Aristotle's denial of restorative pleasures places him in opposition to Epicurus and Spinoza, both of whom argue for the genuine existence of such pleasures. This disagreement between them will have important implications for how each understands the relationship between pleasure and health.

Aristotle's discussion of incidental pleasures leads into his third major distinction between "what appears so" to an individual and that which "is so" – what I will refer to as a distinction between "apparent pleasure" and "true pleasure" (X.5.1176a17). What *appears pleasant* to an individual can be linked to that which is *pleasant to a particular individual*, while that which is *truly pleasant* can be linked to that which is *pleasant by nature*. For one who possesses virtue or excellence (*arete*) what is apparently pleasant and what is truly pleasant are synonymous.¹¹⁴ According to Aristotle "excellence . . . is the measure for each sort of thing" (1176a18-9), and those pleasures which "appear so to [the virtuous person] will be pleasures, and the things he delights in will be pleasant" (1176a19-20). In other words, what appears pleasant to a virtuous person based on their current state of being is truly pleasant because it is pleasant by nature – that is, it is associated with healthy activities proper to human nature. Conversely, one "whose nature is corrupted" (1176a22-4) by virtue of "brutish" (VII.5.1148b15-21) or vicious dispositions (1104b22-3) enjoys things which "should be declared not to be pleasant" (X.5.1176a23).¹¹⁵ In this case, what appears pleasant to the brutish or vicious person based on

¹¹³ There is debate over what this unimpeded activity is, e.g., perceptual activity (Bostock 269-71) or the activity of the nutritive faculty of the soul (Aufderheide 123-5).

¹¹⁴ We will discuss Aristotle's precise conceptions of virtue and vice in 4.1. At this juncture, what matters is simply how virtue and vice relate to pleasure.

¹¹⁵ Examples of brutish dispositions, according to Aristotle, are infanticide, cannibalism, pulling out one's hair, chewing one's nails, deviant sexual activity, etc. (NE VII.5.1148b20-9). Aristotle considers such dispositions to be "something outside the limits of badness of character [i.e., ethics]," particularly those which result from being born with a defective nature. The reasoning seems to be that such behaviours are to some extent involuntary and irremediable.

their current state of being is not truly or naturally pleasant, because such activities are pleasant “in a sense that is secondary or many times removed” from human nature (1176a29). In some way or to some degree, brutish and vicious pleasures deviate from, and impede, the healthy actualization of one’s nature as a human being. They are not truly *human* pleasures. Aristotle, however, identifies virtuous pleasure as “human pleasure in the primary sense” (1176a28). There is then an intimate connection between pleasure and healthy natural functioning. It should be noted, however, that Aristotle is not denying that brutish or vicious activities are genuinely experienced as pleasant, as he is with restorative processes. Annas[b] says that Aristotle “is not denying claims about how people *feel*, merely rejecting *feeling* as the measuring rod for all pleasures [emphasis mine]” (297). The standard by which a pleasure is judged to be a true (human) pleasure is instead based on the *source* of a pleasant experience, in this case an activity, and not the experience itself. Those activities in harmony with the actualization of human nature are truly pleasant, while those which are incongruous with human nature are apparently pleasant because they merely *approximate* the activities of a human being in the sense that they come close to, but do not truly capture, the proper activities of human nature. For Aristotle, then, there is a necessary connection between true, natural human pleasures and healthy states of being. Later, in 3.2 and 3.4, we will see how this basic position (contra the Stoics) is also endorsed by Epicurus and Spinoza in their respective accounts of pleasure (albeit with certain crucial differences).

Aristotle’s ethical views on pleasure are similarly nuanced. He acknowledges that “some pleasures are bad . . . without qualification,” namely those that follow from vice or brutishness (VII.13.1153b8-14; see also X.5.1175b25-9). Such pleasures are bad, as discussed above, because they represent activities that deviate from human nature and impede its healthy

functioning. For example, with the vice of self-indulgence, one enjoys objects of bodily pleasure in an excessive manner which is harmful to the health of their body, and in turn their mind, the latter of which is neglected and prioritized over the body in this instance (III.11.1118b24-1119a6). The pleasures of a self-indulgent person are not the pleasures of a healthy human being. Moreover, in the context of what the happy life consists in, Aristotle is clear that it is not the life of bodily pleasure per se. He declares such a life to be “utterly slavish” and best suited to “grazing cattle” (I.5.1095b20-1). We will discuss Aristotle’s conception of the human soul and his views on the relationship between the mind and body in 5.1, as well as in 5.4 how Spinoza crucially disagrees with him by granting the mind and body equal ontological and ethical status. At this juncture, however, it is sufficient to say that Aristotle does not consider the life of mere bodily pleasure a distinctively human life, since all animals enjoy pleasures of this sort. Humans are not only bodily creatures, but more importantly *intellectual* creatures – a point that Spinoza and the Stoics will also emphasize. As we will see in Ch. 4, reason plays a central constitutive role in virtue and happiness for Aristotle, the Stoics, and Spinoza (with certain crucial differences). The key point for Aristotle here, though, is that bodily pleasure alone is insufficient to constitute a happy human life.

Despite these negative points, Aristotle’s ethical conception of pleasure is positive overall. He clarifies that the fact that “some pleasures are bad is not a reason why the chief good is not a certain kind of pleasure . . .” (1153b8-9), and because pleasure in essence is the “contrary” to pain, which is something we naturally avoid as bad in itself, it must “[n]ecessarily, then, be a good” (1153b1-5). As discussed in 2.1.1, Aristotle (as an eudaimonist) grounds his ethics, in this case his conception of the good, in naturalistic considerations (d). Any pleasure that is natural will therefore in some sense be good. In fact, pleasure is a crucial component in

virtue and happiness. Aristotle asserts that “no one would call a person just if he failed to delight in acting justly, nor open-handed if he failed to delight in open-handed actions; and similarly in other cases [of virtue]” (I.9.1099a18-20). Virtue requires not only thinking and acting correctly, but also *feeling* correctly – that is to say, taking pleasure in being virtuous. What differentiates a self-controlled person from a virtuous person is that the former chooses to follow their rational deliberations in order to perform morally correct actions, but experiences inappropriate desires that prevent them from truly taking pleasure in acting morally (VII.2.1145b8-21). The virtuous person, conversely, chooses to follow their rational deliberations in order to perform morally correct actions, and takes pleasure in doing so for its own sake. Similarly, because virtue (as we will see in 4.1) is a crucial component of happiness, Aristotle describes happiness as “what is best, and finest, and *pleasantest* [emphasis mine]” (I.9.1099a25; see also VII.13.1154a1-8). Pleasure is then both good and necessary in living virtuously and happily. Furthermore, because Aristotle associates true pleasures with virtuous activities and apparent pleasures with brutish and vicious activities, there is a significant sense in which pleasure is good by nature. While there are bad pleasures, there are no bad pleasures which are truly natural human pleasures. Bad pleasures are instead mere approximations of human pleasure insofar as they are contrary to human nature. Consequently, we might say true human pleasures are in themselves good for Aristotle. Epicurus and Spinoza, contra the Stoics, are even more strongly and straightforwardly committed to this claim than Aristotle as we will see shortly, because they do not distinguish between true vs. apparent pleasures.

This brings us to Aristotle’s final core point about pleasure: its positive and negative effects. The pleasant experience that supervenes on an activity “contributes to increasing” that activity, making one’s performance of it “more discriminating and precise” (X.5.1175a30-3),

resulting in the activity being “longer-lasting and better” (1175b14-5). Pleasure, in other words, enhances the effectiveness of an activity and perpetuates its performance, which in turn leads to an even greater experience of pleasure. As mentioned above, the quality of a pleasant experience relies on the quality of both the faculty and the object that gives rise to it. The better functioning the faculty is, the better the pleasures that will follow from its characteristic activities. What Aristotle indicates here is that a pleasant experience can improve the functioning of the faculty that it follows from, and in turn lead to the production of better pleasures which represent activities that more effectively realize or express human nature. For example, insofar as we experience pleasure from sight or reflection, our visual and reflective activities become more precise. We can pick out the beautiful features of a sunset in more detail or grasp more scientific truths in number and kind. The enhancement of such activities, in turn, better expresses the perceptual and intellectual powers of human nature, thereby allowing one to reach or increase their excellence. This is the positive effect of pleasant experience, but there is also a negative effect. The pleasure I derive from one activity interferes with me realizing other activities, because the pleasures associated with those other activities are less intense than the pleasure linked to my current activity (1175b2-12). Ethically, this means brutish/vicious pleasures will interfere with the realization of virtuous activities, while virtuous pleasures will prevent the realization of brutish/vicious activities. It is then crucial for living happily that I take pleasure in virtuous activities. Doing so allows me to flourish effectively as a human being and discourages me from activities and pleasures which impede my natural functioning. In 3.4 and 4.4, we will see that Spinoza, in certain crucial respects, agrees with Aristotle that there is an intimate and scalar connection between pleasure, activity, goodness, and happiness.

3.2 Epicurus

Epicurus posits two kinds of pleasure: kinetic (*kata kinesis*) and katastematic (*katastatetikos*). Kinetic pleasure is linked to “motion and activity” (DL X.136) and described as that which “produces agreeable sensations in us” through the “removal” of desire (OM I.37). Katastematic pleasure, conversely, is associated with a “state of rest,” which consists in “peace of mind and freedom from pain” (DL X.136) or “lack of pain in the body [*aponia*] and disturbance in the soul [*ataraxia*]” (M §131).

Kinetic pleasure represents a modification in one’s state of being which is connected to the satisfaction of desire. The nature of this kind of pleasure is multifaceted though, because Epicurus distinguishes between three kinds of desire: natural and *necessary*, natural and *unnecessary*, and *non-natural* and unnecessary (PD XXIX). Natural and necessary desires, when satisfied, promote “the health of the body and the freedom of the soul from disturbance” (LM §129; see also PD XXIXn20). While a necessary desire remains unfulfilled however, one experiences either pain in the body from things like hunger, thirst, and exhaustion (OM I.37; PD XXIXn20), or disturbance in the soul from things like ignorance, anxiety, and fear (PD X-XII; LM ~122-7; LH §76-83). Here suffering indicates an impediment to one’s natural functioning, pain representing (to some degree) an unhealthy body and disturbance an unhealthy mind.¹¹⁶ Necessary kinetic pleasure is produced through the process of removing pain or disturbance, thereby restoring the body or mind to a healthy state. Eating and drinking are often pleasant because of the nourishment they provide the body (PD ~XXIXn20), while learning can be pleasurable in this context (~X-XIII, XVIII; VS ~27) insofar as it removes certain troubling beliefs based in ignorance or misunderstanding (e.g., of the gods [LM §123-4; LH §81], natural

¹¹⁶ I will use “suffering” as a general term for bodily pain or mental disturbance.

phenomena [*LH* ~78-80; *LP* ~84ff.; *PD* ~X-XIII], or death [*LM* §124-7]).¹¹⁷ Here Epicurus places himself in opposition to Aristotle, the latter of whom denies that any process (even a restorative one) could, in itself, constitute pleasure. Spinoza will also place himself in opposition to Aristotle on this point.

Unnecessary desires, on the other hand, “do not lead to a feeling of pain if not fulfilled” (*PD* §XXX), but rather “provide variations of pleasure” (XXIXn20). The kinetic pleasures that follow from such desires only diversify the expression of healthy being – they do not in themselves contribute to it as a means or a constituent. Natural, unnecessary desires represent preferences for certain objects that can satisfy a natural desire or activities that diversely express general states of prior bodily or mental health (XVIII). Steak, for example, can be an object of natural, unnecessary kinetic pleasure because, while it nourishes my body, I do not have to consume steak specifically to be healthy – there are countless other foods that will have the same, if not a greater, nutritional effect on my body. Steak simply provides the natural pleasure of nourishment with a preferential qualitative feel. Similarly, the pleasurable activity of reading Aristophanes’ *The Clouds* is not necessary for my physical or mental well-being, but when I enjoy this activity, I am expressing the healthy states of my eyes (which allows me to physically read) and my mind (which allows me to intellectually engage with the text). Non-natural, unnecessary desires, on the other hand, pertain to objects which are conventionally pleasant, like wealth, marriage, and social approval (*PD* §XVIIIIn20, XXIX; Rist[a] 119). Such things are not direct or inherent pleasures of my bodily or mental nature and they are not at all necessary for my bodily or mental health. At best, the pleasures of wealth, marriage, and social approval only

¹¹⁷ Not all pleasurable instances of learning may be associated with necessary kinetic pleasures, however. If an instance of learning is pleasurable, but does not remove disturbance, it will be a natural, but unnecessary kinetic pleasure. I discuss this sort of pleasure in the next paragraph.

indirectly and contingently express unimpeded natural functioning, based on whatever physical and mental interactions I have with the world.

Katastematic pleasure is the state of freedom from suffering that kinetic pleasures either produce or express. When my hunger or thirst is quenched, I experience a pleasant state of satiety. Similarly, when my mind is untroubled by ignorance or fears, I enjoy peace of mind. In both cases, my pleasure is derived from the absence of suffering, whether it be pain in the body or disturbance in the mind. This freedom from suffering entails that my body or mind is healthy, and thus unimpeded in its functioning. Necessary kinetic pleasures, as restorative processes, produce katastematic pleasure. The joys I get from nourishing my body and mind, in other words, bring about homeostasis and peace of mind, respectively. The kinetic pleasures that follow from unnecessary desires (natural or non-natural), in turn, are diverse expressions of bodily or mental katastematic pleasure.¹¹⁸

Epicurus consequently has two accounts of pleasure, the first as a change in state and the second as a state of unimpeded functioning. In 3.4 we will see that Spinoza also seems to posit two accounts of pleasure, one transitional and the other non-transitional. Epicurus's dual account of pleasure, however, presents a potential problem. Cicero questions how these two kinds of pleasure are reducible to the same underlying essence, and denies that freedom from pain is rightly called "pleasure" (*OM* 2.8-20). Similarly, Annas[c] argues that "[i]t takes theory . . . to sustain the distinction between these [two] kinds of pleasure, and to connect the condition of having one's needs pleasantly satisfied with the notions of the *natural* state and the condition of

¹¹⁸ Rist[a] argues that even necessary kinetic pleasures are only realizable through an unimpeded aspect of one's nature (e.g., a well-functioning stomach), meaning that, while such pleasures produce katastematic pleasure, they are more fundamentally expressions of a prior katastematic state like their unnecessary counterparts (109-10, 170-2).

functioning unimpededly” (9). In other words, we need substantial justification for how kinetic pleasure and katastematic pleasure both ontologically represent the same fundamental thing. Cooper’s solution to this problem is to say that the *experience* of pleasure is uniform, but there are two kinds of *sources* which can produce this experience, namely a change in state and a state of unimpeded functioning per se (*Pursuits* 232). While I agree with Cooper that kinetic and katastematic pleasures have a shared essence, I am hesitant to say that they consist in the same experience. Cicero makes a valid point that *quenching one’s thirst* and *not being thirsty* constitute different experiences – they do not *feel* the same, whether we regard either experience as pleasurable (*OM* 2.17). Moreover, unlike Aristotle, there is little evidence to suggest that Epicurus ever draws a distinction, explicitly or implicitly, between pleasure as a source and pleasure as an experience. The source and experience of kinetic pleasure is simply a modification, and the source and experience of katastematic pleasure is simply unimpeded functioning. As a result, these two kinds of pleasures represent distinct sources and experiences. How then could they share the same essence?

Unfortunately, because most of Epicurus’s written works have not survived, we cannot be sure of his reasoning. It is also possible, based on Cicero’s criticisms, that the Epicureans were never able to give a clear explanation. What I offer here is a tentative, but by no means definitive, explanation. Based on Epicurus’s accounts of kinetic and katastematic pleasures, the essence of pleasure seems to be the promotion of healthy being. Kinetic pleasure represents a health-oriented modification, either through the removal of an impediment to functioning (i.e., suffering) or the diverse expression of health physically or mentally. Katastematic pleasure is, in itself, a state of bodily or mental health. Epicurus cannot restrict himself to understanding pleasures as solely kinetic or katastematic, because to do so would be to miss significant aspects

of the nature of pleasure as healthy being, which involves restorative processes, natural unimpeded functioning per se, and diverse ways of being physically and intellectually unimpeded in the expression of one's nature. We will see that Spinoza faces a similar problem with his own dual account of pleasure, and my solution to that problem will fundamentally be the same as it is here: the two kinds of pleasure are ultimately grounded in healthy being. At this juncture, though, what matters is that Epicurus's accounts of both kinetic and katastematic pleasure commit him to the necessary connection between pleasure and health.

Ethically, Epicurus declares pleasure "our first innate good . . . our starting point for every choice and avoidance," and the "goal of living blessedly" (*LM* ~128), because it is the first thing that we naturally seek prior to acquiring any beliefs or employing reason (*DL* X.137). As well, as we have seen, Epicurus intimately connects pleasure with healthy being. The natural standard of goodness then, and that which happiness consists in, is pleasure. However, pleasures are not equal in ethical value, nor is happiness as the highest good constituted by every sort of pleasure. Human happiness is specifically identified with "the health of the body and the freedom of the soul from disturbance" (*LM* ~128). The happy life is therefore the life of bodily and mental *katastematic* pleasure, rather than kinetic pleasure.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, Epicurus clarifies that, while "every pleasure is a good thing" (*LM* ~129) and "[n]o pleasure is a bad thing in itself" (*PD* ~VIII), nevertheless "not every [pleasure] is to be chosen" (*LM* ~129); in fact, "certain pleasures bring troubles many times greater than [those] pleasures" considered in themselves (*PD* ~VIII). Any given pleasure, by its very nature, is good, because of its necessary connection

¹¹⁹ Epicurus draws a distinction between divine happiness and human happiness (*DL* X.121). Both kinds of happiness are constituted by katastematic pleasure, but divine happiness is permanent and seemingly devoid of necessary kinetic pleasures as restorative processes because the gods are indestructible and impervious to any effects. Human happiness, conversely, must be constantly maintained through such kinetic pleasures, because human beings are mortal, and thus subject to external forces and destruction (*LM* ~123; *PD* ~I). In 4.2 and 5.2, we will discuss how Epicurus's conception of the gods and human happiness compares with his fellow eudaimonists.

(as a means, constituent, or consequent) to the health of one's state of being. However, some pleasures will be more valuable than others in their relationship to promoting natural functioning and happiness, and some pleasures can lead to suffering when inappropriately valued and cultivated.

Unnecessary kinetic pleasures become harmful, for Epicurus, if they are prioritized over necessary kinetic pleasures and katastematic pleasures. People often pursue praise, fame, or wealth (as unnecessary, non-natural pleasures) to the detriment of their health, physically and psychologically. Similarly, with preferential (i.e., natural, but unnecessary) desires for things like steak and wine, I can enjoy them excessively, thereby neglecting other things (e.g., water, fruit, exercise, education, etc.) that are also important for nourishing my body and mind. Furthermore, such things are not always accessible or easily attainable, which can distress and distract the mind (~XXVI). Unnecessary pleasures (natural and non-natural) are good per se because they (directly or indirectly) express prior states of healthy being in terms of necessary kinetic pleasures (i.e., restorative processes) or katastematic pleasures (i.e., states of unimpeded functioning). However, unnecessary pleasures derive their existence and value from necessary kinetic pleasures and katastematic pleasures. Preferential and conventional things cease to be enjoyable if they impede restorative processes or states of bodily and/or mental functioning. If I enjoy steak excessively (as a preference), or prioritize wealth over everything else, then I deprive my body and mind of important forms of nourishment, cause myself distress when I cannot eat steak or maintain/increase my wealth, and ultimately create conditions where I can no longer enjoy either kind of pleasure because I am sickly in body and mind. While Epicurus thinks that we often pursue unnecessary kinetic pleasures from "groundless opinion" (PD ~XXX) and we do not need these things at all to be happy, nevertheless a wise Epicurean can, strictly-speaking,

enjoy “times of extravagance” with respect to preferences and conventional goods like praise, fame, and wealth, because they understand these things as mere variations on prior states of health and happiness, and thus would not pursue these pleasures excessively or prioritize them over other (necessary kinetic and katastematic) pleasures more directly and intimately connected to their well-being (*LM* ~131). Consequently, unnecessary pleasures become harmful and bad only insofar as they are self-defeating through undermining their own health-oriented nature as pleasures. As well, although good per se, these kinetic pleasures are the least valuable pleasures (non-natural pleasures being the lowest in value), because they only diversify the expression of healthy being – they neither produce, nor constitute, nor increase this state of being in themselves.

Necessary kinetic pleasures, conversely, are always good because they produce healthy states of being. Since happiness consists in the unimpeded natural functioning of the body and mind, necessary kinetic pleasures are the most valuable kinetic pleasures. Furthermore, it seems that necessary kinetic pleasures can never be harmful. While Epicurus explicitly says that unnecessary desires can “produce harm” (*PD* ~XXVI) and associates them with “groundless [i.e., erroneous] opinions” (~XXX; see also ~XXIX), he also asserts that one “who has learned the limits of life knows that it is easy to provide that which removes the feeling of pain . . . and makes one’s whole life perfect. So there is no need for things which involve struggle” (~XXI). Because meeting our basic natural needs is easy, and what matters most is freedom from suffering, necessary kinetic pleasures only enhance the quality of one’s life rather than degrade it. Moreover, while the pursuit of unnecessary pleasures is associated with *opinion*, the pursuit of necessary pleasures is associated with *knowledge*. The most valuable kind of pleasure, however, is katastematic pleasure. Katastematic pleasure consists in healthy being itself and thus

constitutes happiness as the highest good. Everything else derives its value from promoting katastematic pleasure. Necessary kinetic pleasures (i.e., restorative processes) are valuable insofar as they produce katastematic pleasures (i.e., healthy states), and unnecessary pleasures are valuable insofar as they express restorative processes or katastematic pleasures in distinctive ways. While Spinoza does not categorize pleasures in the same way as Epicurus, as we will see in 3.4, he will nevertheless also say that pleasures can only be bad insofar as they undermine their own health-oriented (namely, conatus-promoting) nature as pleasures.

In terms of durability, Epicurean happiness seems to be largely resistant to bodily pains and misfortunes. In his *Letter to Idomeneus*, Epicurus describes himself as experiencing “a blessedly happy day” remembering past conversations with friends, despite being on his deathbed with severe gastro-intestinal issues, and more generally the wise Epicurean physically tortured on the rack is said to remain happy (DL X.118). In the case of Epicurus, his happiness seems to be constituted by at least mental katastematic pleasure, namely the peace of mind he enjoys while recollecting. This avenue of recollection would also be available to the wise person being tortured, who can remember better times to combat their present bodily suffering. Concerning pain, Epicurus argues that slight/intense pain is short-lived (because one either recovers from it or death ends its effects) and chronic pain can be endured through the cultivation of various other pleasures (*PD* ~IV; *OM* I.49). Physical torture and gastro-intestinal issues, as examples of intense or chronic pain, can thus be combatted through mental pleasure, through either understanding that such pain will not last much longer or offsetting such pain through pleasurable thoughts concerning friends and other objects of value (e.g., one’s scientific knowledge, past achievements, past pleasures, etc.). Mental katastematic pleasure, in other words, seems to be necessary and sufficient for happiness, because one’s mind can function

without impediment, despite (at least some) disruptions to physical functioning. Rist[a], however, argues that bodily katastematic pleasure would be present in the abovementioned scenarios as well, since many parts of the atomic structure of one's body would remain unaffected by pain (110-1; 171-2). For example, Epicurus's heart, lungs, eyes, arms, and legs are still unimpeded in their functioning, despite the impediments to his gastro-intestinal system. Similarly, the wise person will have some parts of their body in any given moment that are not being afflicted by torture. In both cases, some parts of the body enjoy freedom from suffering, even if the body as a whole does not. With that said, in order to appreciate and take comfort in such a thought, one still needs a functioning mind that enjoys some degree of unimpeded functioning and tranquility.¹²⁰ Even on Rist[a]'s reading, then, the mind still plays a more dominant role in happiness than the body.¹²¹

One final consideration on this topic is that Epicurus, like Aristotle (see 4.1), uses both being *eudaimon* (happy) and being *makarios* (blessed) when describing the highest good. We might think that being *makarios* refers to living an optimally happy life, while being *eudaimon* refers to happiness in a more basic and general sense. In this case, the blessed life refers to a life of freedom from bodily pain and mental disturbance (*LM* ~128), that is complete freedom from suffering as impediment to natural functioning, while the merely happy life refers to only freedom from mental disturbance (~127). On this reading, Epicurus on his deathbed and the wise Epicurean on the rack are happy, because they possess peace of mind, but are not blessed, because they are not free of suffering altogether. Caizzi (325-6), however, argues against

¹²⁰ Rist[a] applies the same reasoning to the mind, where it may be, to varying degrees, both impeded and unimpeded in its functioning, and thus more or less capable of thinking and enjoying peace of mind (171).

¹²¹ We will discuss the role of the body in natural functioning, pleasure, and happiness further in 5.2, when we explore Epicurus's views on the nature of and the relationship between the mind and body.

considering being *makarios* distinct from being *eudaimon*, since the divine connotations of being *makarios* are also linked to being *eudaimon* (LM ~135), and Epicurus seems to use the terms interchangeably in passages like ~122. Even if Epicurus does not explicitly talk about degrees of katastematic pleasure, or a distinction between mere happiness and optimal happiness, nevertheless these do seem to be options available to him in his ethical framework. In any case, Epicurean happiness is resistant to destruction insofar as one enjoys mental katastematic pleasure, which is possible even in the face of severe bodily pain. In Ch. 4 and 5, we will explore what Aristotle, the Stoics, and Spinoza have to say about the durability of happiness, particularly its potential for degrees. Both Aristotle and Spinoza will argue that there are degrees of happiness, while the Stoics will vehemently deny this claim. If we adopt Rist[a]’s reading, or consider being *makarios* and being *eudaimon* distinct, then Epicurus’s conception of happiness will be more in line with the former than the latter.

In sum, Epicurus’s ethical conception of pleasure is structured around healthy functioning as happiness. The closer a pleasure is to healthy functioning the better it is – katastematic pleasures being the greatest goods because they constitute happiness itself. Consequently, while Epicurus acknowledges a hierarchy among pleasures and that certain (unnecessary) pleasures can be harmful and bad when their nature and value is misunderstood, and they are enjoyed in excessive, self-defeating ways, nevertheless he considers all kinds of pleasure good by nature. We will find a similar ethical account of pleasure in Spinoza, who argues that pleasure is good per se, there is a hierarchy among pleasures based on their relationship to one’s natural well-being (i.e., the *conatus*), certain (passive) pleasures can be self-defeating, harmful, and bad when enjoyed excessively, and happiness is constituted only by a particular kind of pleasure (namely, a state of healthy being per se through adequate knowledge).

3.3 The Stoics

The Stoics talk about pleasure in two ways: (1) as a sensation and (2) as an emotion. Pleasant sensation is a form of presentation or impression (*phantasia*). An impression is an “imprinting” (DL VII.50) or “affection in the soul” (L&S 39B1). It represents how a subject was affected in a certain way in a given moment.¹²² Some impressions are internal, in which case they pertain to affections the mind produces in itself, and others are external, in which case they pertain to affections received through the senses (DL VII.51). Pleasure as a sensation then is more precisely an external impression, which represents how something in the world positively affected one’s soul through one of their senses (e.g., the sensation of a gentle, cooling breeze on one’s skin). It should be noted, however, that impressions, in themselves, do not involve appraisal of their content, nor do they have motivational power for humans as rational animals.¹²³ Something more is needed in terms of activity on the part of the mind to constitute a judgment or a motivation (i.e., an “impulse” [*horme*]) to act (L&S 53A5, Q, S; 65X2; DL VII.51, 86), namely assenting to a certain “sayable” or proposition (*lekton*) concerning that impression (L&S 41; 62K). Simply experiencing a pleasant sensation does not in itself entail any sort of judgment, such as “The pleasure of a gentle breeze is a good [or bad] thing for my well-being.” Similarly, the sensation alone will not motivate me to do anything, such as pursuing or avoiding gentle breezes. It is only if my mind actively assents to a proposition concerning this sensation qua impression that I can be said to have made a judgment about, or to have an impulse to

¹²² For a fuller discussion of impressions, see, e.g., L&S 39 and its accompanying commentary.

¹²³ I specify “rational animals” here, because the Stoics indicate that, in non-rational animals, impulse follows directly from impression (L&S 53A, O-Q, S-T). Non-rational animals, in other words, are motivated to act from their perceptions alone, without rational appraisal of what is/is not the case or what they should/should not do (although their impulses, in themselves, may also contain a certain kind of assent [see 53O]). As well, humans, prior to developing the faculty of reason, may function like a non-rational animal (39E).

pursue/avoid, gentle breezes. Sensual pleasure is therefore a mere impression that I may or may not form judgments about or act on.

Pleasure as an affect or emotion, on the other hand, is comparatively more robust. Firstly, emotions are impulses, so they motivate action (L&S 65A1, X2). Love, anger, and grief are not mere feelings – they influence my actions positively or negatively. Secondly, and more notably, the Stoics claim that emotions involve judgments. Chrysippus considers “emotions to [just] be judgments” themselves (DL VII.111), while Zeno and other Stoics consider emotions to be “the results of the [soul’s] judgements” (L&S 65K1). In either case, whether emotions are constituted by or follow from judgments, the Stoics can be said to have a cognitive view of emotions (a position that we will also find Spinoza endorsing, although he rejects the distinction between impressions and emotions). Those feelings which influence my actions do not do so blindly or devoid of reason. On the contrary, a necessary component of any emotional state is some sort of assertion that *x* is *y* – that is, assenting to a certain proposition concerning an impression. For example, Epictetus says that “[i]t isn’t the things themselves that disturb people, but the judgments that they form about them . . . Death, for instance, is nothing terrible . . . it is in *the judgment that death is terrible* that the terror lies [emphasis mine]” (HB 5). Death can leave various impressions on me (most notably, the threat of removing me or a loved one from life), but it will only have an emotional impact on me once I have made a judgment about it. This cognitive view of emotion can be contrasted with the traditional Platonic-Aristotelian conception of emotion and reason as distinct aspects of the soul (the former non-rational and the latter rational) which can be in harmony or conflict with each other (*Republic* 4.439c-443e; *NE* I.12.1102a26-1103a4). For the Stoics, the soul is wholly rational (L&S 61B9; 65G, I4), and this

rational capacity is simply used well or poorly (61B10-1; 65T-V).¹²⁴ We will discuss Aristotle and the Stoics' respective accounts of the soul, and how their views on God, matter, and the universe inform this disagreement between them, further in 5.1 and 5.3.

According to the Stoics, there are two kinds of emotions, passions (*pathe*) and good (namely, rational) emotions (*eupatheia*). Emotions are not associated with just any judgments, but specifically *ethical* judgments. A passion is described as an “unnatural movement” (DL VII.110) or “disorder” in the soul (TD IV.vi.11) and an “impulse which is excessive and disobedient to the dictates of reason” (L&S 65A1) by virtue of “erroneous judgement” (61B11; see also 65J). Passions, in other words, involve irrational, poorly-reasoned, or mistaken judgments which lead to behaviours that are contrary to one's natural well-being.¹²⁵ The Stoics outline four primary passions: **desire** (Greek: *epithumia*; Latin: *libido*), **fear** (Greek: *phobos*; Latin: *metus*), **pleasure** (Greek: *hedone*; Latin: *laetitia*), and **distress** (Greek: *lupe*; Latin: *aegritudo*).¹²⁶ Desire involves the *irrational* judgment that something is worth pursuing because it is good, while fear involves the irrational judgment that something is worth avoiding because it is bad. Pleasure involves the irrational judgment that one possesses something that is good, while distress involves the irrational judgment that one possesses something that is bad (DL VII.110; L&S 65B; TD IV.vi.11; IV.vii.14-5.). Good emotions, in contrast, are “equable and wise” (TD IV.vi.12). They are balanced emotional states involving well-reasoned judgments which lead to behaviours that are harmonious with one's natural well-being. The primary good emotions are

¹²⁴ The Stoic Posidonius, however, seems to endorse this Platonic-Aristotelian conception of the soul (L&S 65I, P) and link emotions to the non-rational part(s) of the soul (65K2-3). My concern, however, is with mainstream Stoicism, so I will not discuss heterodox Stoics like Posidonius.

¹²⁵ Here I draw a distinction between “non-rational” and “irrational.” “Non-rational” refers to something that is not itself a part of the rational faculty. Conversely, something is “irrational” if it is part of the rational faculty but manifests reason in a deficient manner.

¹²⁶ Cicero provides the Latin equivalents to these Greek terms for the primary passions and good emotions (TD IV.vi.11-3)

wish (Greek: *boulesis*; Latin: *voluntas*), **caution** (Greek: *eulabeia*; Latin: *cautio*), and **joy** (Greek: *chara*; Latin: *gaudium*). Wish involves the *rational* judgment that something is worth pursuing because it is good, while caution involves the rational judgment that something is worth avoiding because it is bad. Finally, joy involves the rational judgment that one possesses something good. For the Stoics, there is no rational counterpart to distress, a point which will become clearer once we delve into the ethical dimension of emotions (DL VII.116; TD IV.vi.12-4). At this juncture, however, what matters is that emotional pleasure (in contrast to sensual pleasure) has motivational power and involves cognition in the form of ethical judgments concerning present goods. While pleasure (*hedone*) is specifically referred to as a passion, nevertheless, unlike distress, it has a rational counterpart in the form of joy (*chara*). These two emotions are fundamentally species of an underlying genus of emotional enjoyment, the former being irrational and the latter rational. Emotional pleasure (taken in the general sense) then has both healthy/natural and unhealthy/unnatural forms for the Stoics. As well, we might also say that pleasure as a sensation is predominantly bodily in nature (through its foundation in the senses) and pleasure as an emotion predominantly mental in nature (through its association with ethical judgments), although the Stoics are not mind-body dualists like Plato (or Descartes).¹²⁷ We will find a similar taxonomy of emotions in Spinoza.

Let us now move to the ethical roles of sensual and emotional pleasure in living a happy life. As we will discuss in 4.3, for the Stoics happiness consists in virtue as living in agreement with one's rational nature as a human being and the providential order of the universe (DL VII.87-9, 139-40; L&S 61B8; 63D), the rational faculty being that which is completely within one's control (*HB* 1). The ethical value of sensual or emotional pleasures will then ultimately be

¹²⁷ We will discuss the Stoic account of the relationship between the mental and the bodily in 5.3.

based on their relation to reason. Sensual pleasure falls under the category of a preferred moral indifferent. Something is morally indifferent if it is outside my *complete* control (*HB* 1.2-4) and my happiness or unhappiness does not require the presence or absence of this thing (DL VII.104). Another core feature of morally indifferent things is that they can be used in both beneficial (good) and harmful (bad) ways, and thus their value is not fixed. Sensual pleasure is argued to possess this feature, because “some pleasures are disgraceful” and thus harmful and bad (DL VII.103). As a result, the Stoics do not think that pleasant sensation holds a necessary connection to bodily or mental health, which is the first indication of their opposition to Aristotle and Epicurus on the subject of pleasure. It is also important to note here that even things we have *some* control over are still morally indifferent, because their presence or absence is still partly based on external forces, and thus partly outside our control. The body in general and sensual pleasure in particular are classic examples of moral indifferents (*HB* 1; DL VII.102). While I obviously have some control over the states of my body, namely my health and any sensual pleasures I experience, I do not have complete control over these things. Despite my best efforts and against my will, external forces can make me sick or deprive me of the opportunity to enjoy some or any pleasant sensations. Because this sort of pleasure is outside my control, the Stoics deny that it is a necessary means to or a constituent of virtue and happiness. In other words, my rationality does not depend on or consist in enjoying pleasant sensations (e.g., a gentle breeze, the scent of flowers, or the taste of fine steak and wine). With that said, the Stoics will concede that sensual pleasure is a “preferred” indifferent (DL VII.102-3, 105-9; *OM* III.20-2, 51-61). It is natural for a human being to pursue pleasant sensations, and they should when circumstances permit, but whether one succeeds in this endeavour or not makes no difference to their virtue and happiness. Sensual pleasure is, at best, a potential (but wholly unnecessary) tool for practicing

and developing virtuous conduct or expressing the achievement of a virtuous character and a happy life.

Emotional pleasure, conversely, can be good or bad through its relation to virtue and happiness. Passions in general are classified as “disorders” of the soul (*TD* IV.vi.11) and “vicious” because they represent “uncontrolled reason” through “bad and erroneous judgement” (L&S 61B11). Since virtue/happiness consists in correct reasoning, and passions involve poorly-reasoned ethical judgments, the latter are contrary to reason. A healthy and happy mind is one which uses its rational faculty well. Passions, on the other hand, represent a mind which is unhealthy and unhappy because it is not judging the ethical value of things correctly, and these judgments lead to excessive and irrational behaviour. At the core of passions is ignorance “of things that are good and bad and neutral” (L&S 61H5), which often leads one to erroneously consider those things outside their power (i.e., outside the realm of the mind) necessary for achieving and maintaining happiness and removing or avoiding unhappiness (*HB* 1, 2, 41). Such judgments cause unhappiness because they promote concern for (and often obsession over) transient and uncontrollable things which distract one from properly caring for their soul in general and their rational faculty in particular. Emotional pleasure as a passion (what we might refer to as “passionate pleasure”) is therefore dangerous and bad in the sense that I am taking pleasure in an external thing as a good which is not in fact good (or bad) at all. Epictetus specifically warns about sensual pleasure as an object of passion which we can easily be “overcome” by when we consider it important for happiness (*HB* 34). In such a case, we may be motivated to prioritize pleasant sensations over correct reasoning, when in reality (for the Stoics) only the presence or absence of the latter has any true impact on our happiness (i.e., our mental well-being). At this juncture, we can see that the Stoics also deny that emotional pleasure holds a

necessary connection to healthy being, since passionate pleasures are by nature disorders of the soul and represent a dysfunctional mind. In the context of both sensation and emotion, then, the Stoics are opposed to Aristotle and Epicurus.

Good emotions, in contrast to passions, are *good* because they involve correct reasoning, namely correct ethical judgments. For the Stoics this primarily means judging virtue (i.e., rationality) to be the only good, vice (i.e., deficient reasoning) to be the only bad, and everything else to be morally indifferent (L&S 60G; 61N1; DL VII.94-102; *OM* III.10-14). Wish is the pursuit of virtue, joy the enjoyment of virtue, and caution the avoidance of vice. It is important to clarify, though, that good emotions do not *constitute* virtue and happiness, but are rather *consequents* of them through the latter's connection to rational ethical judgments (*DVB* 15.2). For our purposes, the noteworthy thing here is that pleasure (taken in the general sense) is good insofar as it follows wholly from reason in the form of joy, reason qua virtue being good per se and the only true source of goodness. While Aristotle will not say that virtue is the only good, he will nevertheless agree with the Stoics that pleasure is a consequent of happiness, rather than a constituent of it, because the true constituent of happiness is reason (see 4.1 and 4.3). Recall, however, that the Stoics consider some moral indifferents preferred as something natural for a human being to pursue or enjoy, while others are dispreferred as something natural for a human being to avoid. While the virtuous person will understand that things outside the mind do not affect their virtue and happiness, nevertheless they will pursue and enjoy preferred indifferents and avoid dispreferred indifferents in a secondary sense as particular expressions of virtue, because virtue involves "act[ing] with good reason in the selection of what is natural" (DL VII.88; see also *TD* IV.vi.12-4).¹²⁸ Pleasant sensations do not, in themselves, make one virtuous

¹²⁸ For fuller discussion of this point, and the good emotions in general, see Cooper's "The Emotional Life."

and happy (or vicious and unhappy). But because they are natural objects of pursuit and enjoyment for human beings, the virtuous person will wish for and enjoy them, with the understanding that it is only **wish** as virtuous striving for **joy** (i.e., virtuous enjoyment of what is natural), and not the outcome or the sensation itself, which truly matters ethically.

In the Stoic ethical framework then only joy as rational emotional (mental) pleasure is good. As a result, the Stoics strongly reject the claim that pleasure is by nature good. Firstly, pleasant sensation (i.e., bodily pleasure) is neither a necessary means to, nor a constituent of, virtue/happiness as reason, but only a potential tool for developing or expressing it. Secondly, emotional pleasure in general is not inherently good, because some emotional pleasures, namely passionate pleasures as irrational impulses, are harmful to virtue and happiness, and are thus bad.

In the next section, we will see that, while Spinoza agrees with the Stoics that emotional pleasure is cognitive and passions are a common source of harm, nevertheless he agrees with Aristotle and Epicurus on pleasure's necessary connection to health and goodness, partly because he thinks the cognitive dimension of passion captures ethical truth to some degree and passionate pleasures can be genuine goods in promoting the health and happiness of the mind *and* the body.

3.4 Spinoza

Spinoza describes pleasure (*laetitia*) as an emotion (*E* IIIDef.3; P11S), which consists in a “transition from a state of less perfection to a state of greater perfection” (*E* IIIDef.Aff.2/G II 191).¹²⁹ In this description we find two central concepts that require explanation in order to fully elucidate the nature of pleasure: perfection and emotion.

¹²⁹ Curley translates *laetitia* as “joy,” arguing that this English term “is more suggestive of the overall sense of well-being that . . . Spinoza has in mind” (“Glossary” 642). He applies the term “pleasure” to a subspecies of *laetitia*: *titillatio*. As Curley’s translation is (rightly) the dominant translation in the English literature, joy is the usual term

Perfection (*pefectionem*) is the degree of reality or “essence of anything whatsoever in as far as it exists and acts in a definite manner . . .” (IVPref./G II 209). The essence of a thing is its conatus, which is an internal striving and force that expresses and preserves the existence of one’s particular mind and body through their degree of causal power or “power of activity” (IIIPost.1; P7, 11).¹³⁰ The body expresses this internal self-preservative force through physical activities (IVP38-9), while the mind expresses this force through intellectual activities (IIP14; IIIP9; IVP26). I say “degree” because Spinoza indicates that the conatus, or one’s physical and intellectual power of activity, can be strengthened or weakened (IIIPost.1, P11, 57). As a result, one can have more-or-less perfection, reality, or power of activity (these three being equivalent).

Connected to this point, Spinoza defines an affect or emotion (*affectum*) as an affection “of the body by which the body’s power of activity is increased or diminished, assisted or checked, together with the ideas of these affections” (IIIDef.3/G II 139).¹³¹ Emotions, in other words, are positive or negative changes in perfection. Pleasure is specifically a *positive* change in perfection, because it is an increase in one’s power to express and preserve their essential way of being. Spinoza identifies pleasure as one of three primary emotions (IIIP11), the other two being **desire**, which is the conatus itself insofar as one is conscious of their self-preservative striving

for this emotion. However, Wolfson[b] points out that *laetitia* is one of many Latin translations of the Greek term *hedone* (206), which we saw above with Cicero’s Latin translations of the Greek terms for the passions. Consequently, the translation of “pleasure” is not without precedent. For my own part, while Curley’s reasoning has merit, I find that “pleasure” more accurately connotes the *primary* nature of this emotion than “joy,” the latter of which has more robust emotional connotations. With that said, I advise the reader to focus more on what Spinoza *means* by the terms he uses, and less on the connotations that we may or may not attach to them. Spinoza himself says his intention is merely to use terms that closely approximate what he has in mind, not to strictly follow the common meanings of terms (*E* IIIDef.Aff.20Expl.). Whether we call it “pleasure” or “joy,” what matters is that there is a fundamental emotion of enjoyment which constitutes the promotion of one’s natural power.

¹³⁰ At this juncture we will not discuss Spinoza’s position on the relationship between mind and body. This will be the subject of 5.4.

¹³¹ I will not discuss here how we might draw a conceptual distinction between affect and emotion, or how Spinoza’s conception of *affectus* might differ from our contemporary understanding of emotion. My concern here is with what pleasure is as an *affectus* and how this description compares with the abovementioned ancient Greek conceptions of pleasure (particularly, the Stoic account of affect/emotion).

and determined to act by this internal force (IIIDef.Aff.1), and **pain**, which is a decrease in power of activity (IIIDef.Aff.3). All other emotions are derived from one or more of these three emotions. Notable subspecies of pleasure (which we will discuss shortly) are self-contentment, titillation, cheerfulness, and intellectual love of God.

This conception of pleasure as an increase in self-affirmative power is our first indication of strong agreement between Spinoza and Epicurus on the nature of pleasure. Firstly, because health for Spinoza is grounded in the conatus as an essential self-preservative force, and pleasure is by nature that which promotes this force, pleasure (contra the Stoics) holds a necessary connection to healthy being. Secondly, like Epicurus (and contra Aristotle), Spinoza posits the existence of pleasures that are constituted by positive changes in one's state of being, in this case increases in one's physical and intellectual power.

Returning to the subject of emotions, Spinoza divides emotions in general, and pleasures in particular, into two categories, passions and active emotions, which are distinguished from each other causally and cognitively. Causally, Spinoza draws a distinction between being an inadequate cause (passive) and being an adequate cause (active). One is an inadequate cause, and thus passive, insofar as their nature (i.e., conatus) is a partial, and insufficient, explanation for an effect. In this case, the effect is brought about through a combination of one's own causal power through their natural constitution and the causal power of one or more external things that interacted with them. Conversely, one is an adequate cause, and thus active, insofar as their nature is the total or sufficient explanation for an effect (IIIDef.1-2). Within this causal framework one can be either an inadequate or adequate cause of their emotions as effects. Passions are emotions that one is the partial cause of, meaning the change in power of activity involves external sources (IIIDef.3, P56; IVApp.2). In the case of pleasure, the increase in power

is the result of both one's own nature and one or more external things which positively impact the former's degree of expression and self-preservation. For example, steak and fine wine are passive pleasures insofar as they promote the well-being of the conatus through the nutrients they provide the body for its natural functioning. I am part of the explanation of the pleasure insofar as the natural constitution of my body makes use of the nutrients from the steak and wine, but the pleasure is passive because my body did not provide the nutritional benefit on its own – it needed the steak and wine as external things to help it bring about this positive emotion. Active emotions, in contrast, are emotions of which one is the adequate or sufficient cause (IIIDef.3, P58-9; IVApp.2).¹³² An active pleasure is an increase in power that the conatus brings about through its own causal power alone. A prime example of this kind of pleasure is rational self-contentment. Self-contentment (*acquiescentia in se ipso*) in general is “pleasure arising from [one's] contemplation of [themselves] and [their] power of activity” (IIIDef.Aff. 25/G II 196; see also IIIP30S) and *rational* self-contentment is pleasure from true understanding of one's current degree of power (IVP52).¹³³ This latter pleasure is active because one's intellectual nature is the cause of this increase in power through self-understanding of the current scope of one's physical and intellectual abilities.

This point about self-understanding brings us to the cognitive dimension of emotions. Cognitively, Spinoza draws a distinction between inadequate and adequate knowledge, which maps onto the abovementioned distinction between inadequate and adequate causality. The mind is an inadequate cause when it has inadequate knowledge (IIIP1), which consists in ideas that

¹³² Desire also has active forms. Spinoza argues that pain, however, is inherently passive (*E* IIIP58-9), because the conatus, by virtue of its self-affirmative nature, cannot in itself bring about decreases in one's power (IIIP6, 12-3). Consequently, one's nature can never truly be the adequate cause of any instance of pain.

¹³³ *Acquiescentia* also has passive forms (e.g., pride [IIIP30S; Def.Aff.28]). For comprehensive discussion of the different forms of *acquiescentia*, see Carlisle (Ch. 6).

represent truths in a “fragmentary [*mutilate*] and confused [*confuse*] manner” through sensory experience (IIP40S2/G II 122). This confused knowledge arises from haphazard interactions with external things, meaning such ideas are partly formed through external causes rather than through the intellectual abilities of one’s mind alone (IIP29S). The mind is an adequate cause, on the other hand, when it has adequate knowledge. Adequate knowledge consists in ideas which express certainty of the truth in their content because they are rationally ordered by the mind itself rather than mere experience, meaning that one’s knowledge in this case is caused by their own intellectual power alone (IIP29S, 37-40S2, 42-4; IIP1; VP10, 14). Within this epistemological framework, Spinoza outlines three kinds of knowledge: opinion/imagination (the first kind), reason (the second kind), and intuition (the third kind). Opinion pertains to inadequate knowledge (i.e., mere experiential knowledge), while reason is associated with adequate knowledge of general truths and intuition adequate knowledge of essences (IIP40S2).¹³⁴

Passions, since they represent inadequate causality, are linked to inadequate ideas in the mental realm. Active emotions, conversely, are linked to adequate ideas because they represent the adequate causality of the mind (IIP1, 3). Opinion, in other words, leads to passions, while reason and intuition lead to active emotions.

Emotions are not associated with just any knowledge, however, but more specifically “knowledge of good and evil” which consists in ideas (i.e., judgments [IIP49]) concerning how one has been affected with pleasure or pain (IVP8). There is some debate about the relationship between emotions and these ethical judgments. For example, Steinberg argues for a biconditional relationship between them where emotions *constitute* ethical judgments (“Affect” 78-83), while

¹³⁴ For discussion of these three kinds of knowledge, particularly the similarities and differences between reason and intuition, see, e.g., Aaron Garrett (Ch. 1-3, 7); Primus’s “*Scientia Intuitiva*”; Sharp’s “*Nemo non videt*”; Soyarslan[c].

Youpa[b] argues that ethical judgments are necessary *consequents* of emotions (20-7). In any case, whether one is the constituent or consequent of the other, Spinoza makes it clear that there is a necessary connection between emotions and judgments of good and bad, which makes his account of emotions in some sense cognitive.¹³⁵ ¹³⁶ Pleasure is associated with the (inadequate or adequate) judgment that something is good because it increases one's power, while pain is associated with the judgment that something is bad because it decreases one's power. Desire, in turn, is associated with the judgment that something is good and worth pursuing as a source of pleasure or the judgment that something is bad and worth avoiding as a source of pain (IIP28; IVP19). For the purposes of this chapter, though, the crucial takeaway is that cognitively pleasure holds a necessary connection to inadequate (as a passion) or adequate (as an active emotion) ethical judgments concerning goodness as increases in power. This conception of emotions shares much in common with the Stoic picture. Both Spinoza and the Stoics consider emotions cognitive, specifically associate them with ethical judgments, and distinguish between passions and rational emotions based on the accuracy of these judgments. As well, they describe the primary emotions as pursuit, avoidance, enjoyment, and suffering. Spinoza's core disagreements with the Stoics concerning emotions, however, can be found in what he says about passions epistemically and ethically, a subject which we will now discuss in the context of pleasure qua emotion.

Ethically, Spinoza argues that “[p]leasure is not in itself [*directe*] bad, but good. On the other hand, pain is in itself bad” (IVP41/G II 241). As we saw in 2.2.2, the ethical foundation for

¹³⁵ For scholars who attribute a cognitive account of emotions to Spinoza, see, e.g., Miller[a] (5); Nussbaum (*Upheavals of Thought* 501); Steinberg (“Affect” 68, 83-5); Youpa[b] (Ch. 1-2).

¹³⁶ For my part, I tend towards Steinberg's constituent reading, since in *E* IVP8Proof Spinoza says that the relationship between emotion and knowledge of good and evil is the same as the relationship between mind and body, the latter of which are conceptually distinct, but ontologically identical (IIP7S, 21S).

goodness and badness is the conatus (IVP8Proof). What promotes the well-being of the conatus is good, while that which impedes its well-being is bad. Pleasure, by nature, is an increase in the conatus's power of activity, and is thus intrinsically good. Pain, conversely, because it is a decrease in power of activity, is intrinsically bad.

With that said, like Epicurus, Spinoza acknowledges that not all pleasures are of equal ethical value. In general, he argues that passions “can be either good or evil” (IVApp.3). Passions involve changes in one's power that are partly brought about by external forces. While my nature qua conatus is necessarily directed towards my well-being, external things do not exist for my sake. Such things can be beneficial (a source of pleasure) or harmful (a source of pain) to me, depending on the current constitution of my body/mind, the current constitution of the affecting object, and the current situation we are both in (IIIP51; IVApp.30). A mushroom, for example, does not exist to nourish my body – it is a distinct being with its own conatus. The mushroom may be of some nutritional benefit to me, and thus capable of increasing my power (at the detriment to its own self-preservation), but it may also be poisonous, and thus capable of decreasing my power. Because the mushroom is a distinct, self-preserving being in its own right, there is no requirement for it to be beneficial to me overall – it can be both empowering and disempowering in complex ways. Consequently, just because I derive passive pleasure from a mushroom does not mean that it is not also capable of causing me pain (e.g., being both nutritious and poisonous to varying degrees).

Moreover, passive pleasures can be harmful, if they are excessive. Titillation (*titillatio*) is a localized form of pleasure which represents an increase in the power of a certain part of the body, while the rest of one's body remains unaltered (IVP43/G II 242). Titillation can be excessive, according to Spinoza, if it empowers a part of the body to such an extent that the rest

of the body is disempowered, and thus the overall well-being of one's conatus is impeded. In particular, this pleasure can be harmful when one obsessively focuses on constantly deriving pleasure from (i.e., empowering) one part of the body, and neglects the other parts of the body. In itself, titillation qua pleasure is good, because it empowers the body to some degree. However, titillation can become bad when it leads to pain, and thus undermines its empowering nature as a pleasure. For example, I can experience titillation from exercise. In this case, I am making my muscles and heart stronger, which is a good thing. However, if I focus my attention excessively on the pleasures of exercise and neglect the pleasures associated with my brain, teeth, senses, nutrition, etc., then I bring a great degree of pain to my body as a whole by making it sick and weak. Moreover, I can even frustrate the flourishing of my muscles or heart with this excessive pleasure if I exercise to the point of tearing one of my muscles or putting too much stress on my heart. In other words, exercise can become an excessive and bad pleasure insofar as it departs from its nature as a pleasure.¹³⁷ Passive pleasures are thus good per se, but can be associated with badness insofar as they are partly constituted by external forces and undermine themselves as pleasures (i.e., increases in power) by promoting pain (i.e., decreases in power). Here Spinoza explains the badness of pleasures in much the same way as Epicurus: all pleasures are good by nature through their connection to healthy being, but certain pleasures can be enjoyed in ways that are self-defeating through eliminating the pleasure in question and producing pain.

Cognitively, passions can also be good or bad because they involve inadequate ethical knowledge qua ideas. A passive pleasure or pain gives me valuable (and to some degree *true*)

¹³⁷ Similarly, pain can be good insofar as it promotes pleasure and undermines its own nature as a decrease in power (*E* IVP43). Exercise, for example, often involves some pain insofar as it strains one's muscles and limits one's movement temporarily. However, this pain can ultimately promote pleasure when it encourages one to stop exercising at a certain point (so as to avoid tearing a muscle) and when the strain put on one's muscles leads to those muscles becoming stronger, and in turn one's body as a whole becoming more capable.

information about how something increased or decreased my power, but this knowledge is partial. It only reveals how this thing affected my body/mind in this circumstance. It does not reveal the nature of the thing per se, or all the potential ways in which it might be a source of pleasure or pain (IIP25; IVApp. 2). From the pleasure I derive from eating a mushroom, I have the idea qua judgment of this mushroom as something good. This idea is true because the mushroom genuinely promoted my well-being through its nutritional effect. However, the idea does not give me ethical certainty about the goodness of other mushrooms, many of which might be poisonous (even those of the same kind as the one I ate). This idea can be good insofar as it leads me to pursue other mushrooms which provide me with nutrition, but it can be bad if it leads me to falsely judge that all mushrooms are good for my well-being. Similarly, the digestive pleasure I derive from eating gives me the idea that eating and filling my stomach is good. However, this idea only tells me that in this instance eating was empowering – it does not tell me if eating is always good, the only good, or the greatest good concerning my well-being. Such information is good insofar as it motivates me to regularly provide my body with nutrition. However, if I erroneously conclude from this idea that digestive pleasure is always good, the only good, or the greatest good, I will eat when I should not be eating (e.g., if I am satiated or sick) or I will neglect other goods which are necessary to my physical and intellectual empowerment. The cognitive issue with passions, in other words, is that they provide *limited* ethical information about the goodness and badness of things, which can be dangerous if one fails to understand these limitations. Passive pleasure therefore can be good or bad for complex causal and cognitive reasons. More precisely, while intrinsically good and representing truth to some degree, such pleasure can nevertheless be bad insofar as its nature as an increase in power is undermined and its scope for empowerment is misunderstood. These features also indicate

where Spinoza significantly disagrees with the Stoics on the subject of emotions. The Stoics consider passions inherently false and bad because they represent states of mental sickness, whereas Spinoza argues that passions simply represent truth in a deficient (and often misleading) manner, but can be good insofar as they directly promote one's overall empowerment (which is most reliably accomplished when one understands these passions). At the center of this disagreement is a more fundamental disagreement concerning the relationship between mind and body, which we will explore in 5.3 and 5.4.

Active pleasures, on the other hand, are always good. Because they follow from the causal power of one's nature or *conatus* alone, and the *conatus* as an internal self-preservative force cannot in itself bring about harm to the subject, active emotions can only bring about increases in power – never decreases (IIIDef.3, P4, 6; IVApp. 3). Active pleasures, in other words, can never be excessive and harm the overall well-being of one's body and mind. Why this is the case becomes clearer when we recall what it means to be an adequate cause in the mental realm, namely having adequate knowledge. Active pleasures follow from one's intellectual power in the form of knowledge that represents truth with certainty. More precisely, active emotions are connected to adequate ethical knowledge, that is certainty concerning what is good and bad for one's physical and intellectual self-empowerment. Active pleasure is always good then because one is motivated to enjoy the object of pleasure by virtue of truly grasping how that object is (and is not) beneficial in promoting power of activity. One does not overestimate or underestimate the ethical value of active pleasures – their scope of benefit and relation to other goods is always certain to the subject.

Here we see some common ground between Spinoza and the Stoics concerning pleasure as an emotion, since both (1) endorse a cognitive view of emotions that links pleasures

specifically to ethical judgments concerning goodness, (2) distinguish passionate pleasures from rational pleasures epistemically, and (3) argue that rational emotions, in contrast to passions, are always good. However, more fundamentally we see Spinoza's commitment (in agreement with Aristotle and Epicurus) to the claim that pleasure is good by nature – a claim that the Stoics vehemently deny due to their distinction between sensual and emotional pleasures, negative views on the epistemic and ethical nature of passions, and ethical commitment to virtue qua reason as the only good.

Returning to Spinoza's account of active pleasures, the central examples he gives of this kind of pleasure are cheerfulness, rational self-contentment, intuitive self-contentment, and intellectual love of God.¹³⁸ Cheerfulness (*hilaritas*) consists in an increase to the power of the body as a whole (IVP42/G II 241). While Spinoza does not explicitly refer to cheerfulness as an active emotion, he does claim that it is always good. It is not strictly impossible for external forces to fortuitously align to promote one's overall power, but it is much more likely for this global pleasure to occur if it arises from adequate ethical knowledge of how to collectively and harmoniously nurture the various parts of the body (IVP59-61).¹³⁹ Rational self-contentment is pleasure derived from adequate knowledge of one's own power through reason (IVP52), while intuitive self-contentment is pleasure derived from adequate knowledge of one's own power through intuition (VP27). Finally, intellectual love of God (*amor dei intellectualis*) is love

¹³⁸ Spinoza refers to intuitive self-contentment as *mentis acquiescentia* (literally, "acquiescence of mind") in *E* VP27 (G II 297) and *animi acquiescentia* (literally "acquiescence of soul" or "acquiescence of mind") in VP36S (G II 303) and VP42S (G II 308). We know that Spinoza is referring to the same basic feeling throughout these different uses of *acquiescentia* because he consistently cites IIIDef.Aff.25, the definition of *acquiescentia in se ipse* ("acquiescence in oneself" or "self-contentment"), for each passage. For further discussion, see Carlisle (Ch. 6).

¹³⁹ Cheerfulness seems to require external resources, which might make us question how one could be a genuine adequate cause of such a global pleasure. For a comprehensive discussion of how interactions with the world could be compatible with genuine (rather than merely approximate) adequate causality, see Sangiacomo (Ch. 4 and 5).

derived from adequate intuitive knowledge of God as the cause of our intellectual power to understand things adequately. In other words, intuition allows us to understand how our mind and its intellectual power follows from and is an expression of God's essence and power as thinking being (VP32/G II 300). Intuitive self-contentment and intellectual love of God are, in fact, coextensive, because they are both connected to intuitive knowledge. Through self-contentment, I take pleasure in my intellectual power to understand things intuitively, and through intellectual love of God I recognize that God is the ultimate immanent cause of my intellectual power since my power (as a finite mode) is really just a particular instantiation of God's infinite intellectual power (VP36S). Because God's power and my own are not ontologically distinct, intuition really involves just one pleasure with two conceptually distinguishable aspects – one concerning myself (self-contentment) and the other God (intellectual love of God).

Spinoza also establishes a hierarchy between these kinds of adequate knowledge and active pleasure. He argues that intuition as understanding of essences is epistemically and ethically superior to reason as understanding of general properties (VP36S), declaring intuition the "highest virtue" (VP25) and "highest good" of the mind (IVP28). Similarly, Spinoza says that the "highest possible contentment of mind" follows from intuition, making intuitive self-contentment superior to rational self-contentment (VP27). Intellectual love of God, in turn, is also the highest form of love, being the most stable through its eternal and indestructible nature (VP33-34C, 37) and the most effective in combatting harmful emotions through its adequate nature causally and cognitively (VP42). Finally, blessedness as the highest happiness is associated with intuition as the highest virtue, intuitive self-contentment, and intellectual love of God (IVApp.4; VP36S, 42).

This conception of blessedness, however, presents us with a potential problem. On the one hand, Spinoza says that “[b]lessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself” (VP42), and thus it “consist[s] in . . . perfection itself” (VP33S). On the other hand, he says that “blessedness is nothing other than that self-contentment that arises from the intuitive knowledge of God” (IVApp.4), “blessedness or freedom consists, namely, in the constant and eternal love towards God [i.e., intellectual love of God]” and “spiritual contentment [i.e., self-contentment]” (VP36S), and “blessedness consists in love towards God (Pr.36, V and Sch.), a love that arises from the third kind of knowledge (Cor. Pr.32, V) . . .” (VP42Proof). Blessedness, in other words, seems to be constituted by intuition as intellectual perfection, power, or virtue (these three being equivalent) and active pleasure as an increase in perfection or power. The issue is that blessedness cannot coherently be both *perfection itself* and an *increase in perfection*. As Miller[a] notes (192), Spinoza denies this state of affairs: “[P]leasure is not perfection. If a man were to be born with the perfection to which he passes, he would be in possession of it without the emotion [*affectu*] of pleasure” (IIIDef.Aff.3Expl./G II 191). As mentioned in 1.2, a potential solution to this problem is to say that Spinoza has a different kind of pleasure in mind when describing blessedness. This position is endorsed by Bove (480), Carlisle (131, 141-2), Della Rocca[a] (157), Garrett[b] 283-4, Miller[a] (192), Youpa[b] (119-22), and apparently Spinoza himself: “For in so far as [intellectual love of God] is related to God, it is (Pr. 35, V) pleasure (*if we may still use this term*) accompanied by the idea of himself, and this is also the case in so far as it is related to the [human] mind [as intuitive self-contentment] (Pr. 27, V) [emphasis mine]” (VP36S). Spinoza seems to acknowledge that intellectual love of God and intuitive self-contentment are special kinds of pleasure that are shared by God as thinking being and an individual human mind as a particular expression of God’s intellectual power. It is made clear in

the *Ethics* however that God is absolutely infinite (IDef.6, P8, 11) and immutable (IP20C2), and, as a result, is incapable of passive or active increases or decreases in power (VP17). If God experiences any sort of pleasure, it cannot be one constituted by a change in power. The pleasure associated with blessedness that both God and an individual mind share must then be non-transitional, which explains Spinoza's comment "if we may still use this term [of 'pleasure']". Bove (480) and Carlisle (Ch. 6) describe this intuitive pleasure as a pleasure of "rest" or "stillness" (i.e., *quies*), in contrast to pleasures of agitation in particular (through passions) or movement (through passion or reason) in general. Such adjectives are indicative of the non-transitional and ultimate nature of blessedness qua pleasure.¹⁴⁰ If this reading is correct, then Spinoza has a dual account of pleasure which is quite similar to Epicurus's, in that both draw a distinction between pleasures as health-oriented changes in state and pleasures as states of healthy being per se, and equate happiness with the latter kind of pleasure.

Miller[a], however, argues that this non-transitional pleasure, despite what the abovementioned passages may indicate, is not a constituent of blessedness, but rather a *consequent* of it, citing Aquinas and Seneca as precedent for this sort of view (192-3).¹⁴¹ If this reading is correct, then Spinoza is more in line with Aristotle and the Stoics in his conception of pleasure than Epicurus, Aristotle and the Stoics both arguing that pleasure is a consequent, not a

¹⁴⁰ Schrijvers argues that blessedness is still transitional in nature, otherwise it would not have affective importance. He argues that the transition consists in the acquisition of intuitive ideas (77-8). However, he does not explain how this can be reconciled with the fact that God is supposed to share in this kind of pleasure (as self-love or intuitive self-contentment) with us, since God qua infinite and eternal cannot experience transitions in perfection or knowledge. It seems to me that Schrijvers is conflating the non-transitional nature of blessedness per se with either the (prior) active pleasure we experience in the process of achieving some degree of blessedness when we acquire intuitive knowledge or the subsequent capacity of blessedness to produce further transitional and non-transitional pleasures through the acquisition of further adequate knowledge (*E* VP31C, 42Proof).

¹⁴¹ Lebuffe entertains the possibility of the opposite conclusion, that intuitive knowledge as virtue is not the constituent of blessedness, but rather blessedness as pleasure is the affective consequent of such knowledge (199). I think this reading is also wrong, but since it conceives of blessedness qua the highest happiness as a kind of pleasure, Lebuffe's reading does not conflict with my overall intentions in this chapter.

constituent, of happiness. Miller[a] makes this argument to illustrate Spinoza's agreement with the Stoics, specifically. While I will not contradict his reading of Aquinas or Seneca (as we saw above in 3.3, in the case of the latter he is right), nevertheless I think that Miller is letting his Stoic comparison unjustifiably influence his reading of Spinoza in this context. I say "unjustifiably" because, unlike Aquinas and Seneca, Miller[a] provides no explicit evidence of Spinoza referring to this special pleasure as a consequent of blessedness, and I do not think such evidence exists. On the contrary, Miller[a] himself provides more than enough evidence from the *Ethics* (namely, IVApp.4; IVP18S; VP33S) that Spinoza considers both virtue *and* intellectual love of God/intuitive self-contentment constituents of blessedness, in addition to the following passage from the *TTP*: "[Philosophers] place true happiness solely in virtue and peace of mind [*tranquillitate animi*]" (Ch. 6, p. 449/G III 88; see also *E* VP42Proof). Blessedness is thus a pleasure, albeit one which is non-transitional and coextensive (if not identical) with virtue.¹⁴² Consequently, Spinoza's dual account of pleasure has more in common with Epicurus than Aristotle and the Stoics, although in the next chapter we will see that Spinoza's account of *virtue* has more in common with the latter than the former (particularly Aristotle).

Although there is strong evidence for understanding blessedness as a non-transitional pleasure, nevertheless is Spinoza's conception of blessedness coherent? Carlisle describes intuitive self-contentment as "the affective, experiential character of . . . virtue and blessedness," namely what it *feels* like to be virtuous and blessed (113). Della Rocca[a] claims that the non-transitional nature of intuitive self-contentment is "a harmless broadening of Spinoza's account" of pleasure (157). Garret[b] argues that we should distinguish between emotion (*affectus*) in the

¹⁴² Margaret Wilson takes the position that intuitive knowledge of God qua virtue and intuitive self-contentment qua active pleasure are "one and the same," with which I am inclined to agree (128).

narrow sense and emotion in the *broad* sense. In the narrow sense, we have the emotion of *literal* pleasure/joy (*laetitia*) as an increase in power. In the broad sense, however, we have the emotion of blessedness as a “kind of eternal analogue of joy” and an “eternal analogue of love” (283-4). Finally, Garrett[b] (284) and Youpa[b] (120-2) argue that intuitive knowledge involves two kinds of pleasure, one that follows from our *durational* existence in time in the infinite causal chain of Nature and the other that follows from our *eternal* existence insofar as our bodily/mental essence follows from God’s essence. The durational pleasure is a normal transitional pleasure, while the eternal pleasure is blessedness as a special non-transitional pleasure.

For my part, I am not convinced that this conception of blessedness is obviously a harmless broadening of Spinoza’s overall account of pleasure. On the contrary, I think there is a potential problem that arises from explicit comments that Spinoza makes about pleasure. The core problem lies in IIIDef.Aff.3Expl., where he explicitly denies that pleasure qua emotion can be perfection itself. Miller[a] is right to draw our attention to this passage when making sense of happiness. Here Spinoza seems to be ruling out the very thing he claims in Part V when describing blessedness as two forms of pleasure. On the other hand, contra Miller[a], Spinoza also seems to acknowledge that he is departing from his original definition of pleasure, but does not explicitly reconcile this move with his assertion in the abovementioned Explication. Excluding this passage, we might also question more generally how Spinoza could posit the existence of two kinds of pleasure, one transitional and the other non-transitional. What reason

do we have to describe both as the same underlying thing?¹⁴³ As we saw above, Epicurus runs into the same basic problem with his distinction between kinetic and katastematic pleasure.

Since the purpose of this thesis is not to evaluate the validity and coherence of Spinoza's system, I will not attempt to definitively resolve this tension (if it even can be satisfactorily resolved). However, I will make a few concluding remarks to flesh out Spinoza's conception of blessedness qua pleasure further. Firstly, at the very least, we see sufficient evidence that Spinoza is inclined to say (coherently or not) that (1) there are two kinds of pleasure: transitional and non-transitional and (2) the non-transitional kind is a constituent of blessedness as the highest good.

Secondly, IIIDef.Aff.3Expl. says that there cannot be a non-transitional pleasure which is an *emotion* (*affectus*), that is a pleasure which represents how one is affected by an internal or external cause with respect to a change in degree of power – it does *not*, however, say that *every conceivable instance of pleasure must be transitional or an emotion*. Blessedness could still be coherently referred to as a pleasure then, but in this instance, it would represent a particular kind of *affection* (*affectio*), mode, or feature that God and individuals possess by virtue of the expression of their power (at least in the context of intuition). In other words, in line with Carlisle's remarks, blessedness would indeed be the non-transitional affective (i.e., feeling or experiential) dimension of self-affirmative power. Emotions are a subspecies of affection, namely affections that represent changes in power. Ultimately, any instance of pleasure will be an affection, but on this potential reading (for individuals) some pleasures will be affections qua expressions of *changes* in self-affirmative power while others will be affections qua expressions

¹⁴³ Considering intelligibility is an important component of his philosophy, by virtue of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, Spinoza cannot simply posit two kinds of pleasure as a brute fact, which he seems to have done in the latter half of *Ethics* Part V (IAx.3, P11Proof2).

of self-affirmative power *per se*.¹⁴⁴ We find a similar precedent for this sort of move in Spinoza's descriptions of wonder and nobility. Wonder is a common feeling that he denies is an emotion because it is an isolated thought lacking a "positive cause" to determine the mind, and thus alter the latter's degree of power. Nevertheless, he grants that wonder can lead to emotions like devotion or consternation (IIIDef.Aff.4Expl., 10, 42). Concerning nobility, Youpa[b] (161-2) points out that Spinoza identifies nobility with a certain kind of love (*E* IVP46). This is significant for our purposes because love is formally defined as a species of pleasure, while nobility is defined as a species of active desire. In equating these two emotions, Spinoza is introducing a new kind of love that departs from his previous definitions. Both wonder and nobility therefore illustrate Spinoza's willingness to acknowledge the existence of certain affections qua feelings that do not cleanly fit into his formal taxonomy of emotions.

Thirdly, we can potentially explain how both transitional pleasure and blessedness are the same kind of thing by describing pleasure fundamentally as an attribute-neutral affection of natural power. Pleasure is attribute-neutral because it is expressed through both Thought and Extension simultaneously (IIP7S; more on this point in 5.4), and is an affection that expresses the power of an individual's nature in two different ways, transitionally and non-transitionally. This solution is largely the same as the one that I offer in 3.2 concerning Epicurus's own dual account of pleasure. Both make it unclear how health-oriented changes in one's natural state of being and healthy natural states of being *per se* can both be classified as pleasure. In both cases, I argue that the confusion can be resolved by appeal to the fact that both kinds of pleasure are

¹⁴⁴ As a result, terminologically I disagree with Garrett[b] that blessedness is best described as an analogue form of emotion, pleasure/joy, or love. Describing pleasure as a particular kind of affection instead allows us to retain terminological and conceptual coherence in Spinoza's system, since we are here only expanding on the kinds of affections that can follow from God's nature.

characterized by the promotion of one's natural well-being, health being equated with unimpeded natural functioning in Epicurus and natural power in Spinoza. Consequently, Spinoza's account of blessedness qua pleasure is arguably lacking in important details, but it is not necessarily incoherent. In any case, pleasure (in its passive, active, transitional, and non-transitional forms) is intrinsically good in Spinoza's philosophical system due to its intimate relationship to the promotion of one's natural well-being as intellectual and physical power – the highest happiness itself being a kind of pleasure which represents the highest expression of this power.

This rich account of pleasure, in sum, reveals Spinoza's strong agreement with Epicurus in two central ways. Firstly, this account shows Spinoza's shared commitments with Epicurus and Aristotle (contra the Stoics) to the necessary connection between pleasure, healthy being, and goodness. Secondly, both Spinoza and Epicurus (i) endorse a dual account of pleasure, distinguishing (contra Aristotle) pleasure as a health-oriented change in state from pleasure as a healthy state of being *per se*, and (ii) consider happiness to be constituted by a certain kind of pleasure which represents healthy being itself.

Conclusion

In this chapter we explored Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza's respective accounts of the nature of pleasure and its ethical role in happiness. Aristotle associates true pleasure with unimpeded virtuous activities that fully actualize one's nature as a human being and constitute happiness. Epicurus grounds kinetic and katastematic pleasures in freedom from suffering as unimpeded natural functioning, and identifies happiness with katastematic pleasure. The Stoics draw a distinction between sensual pleasure and emotional pleasure, and a further distinction between passionate emotional pleasure and rational emotional pleasure (i.e., joy). For

them, health and happiness are primarily linked to rational emotional pleasure, sensual pleasure serving as an unnecessary tool and passionate pleasure representing mental sickness. Finally, Spinoza conceives of pleasure as an attribute-neutral affection which expresses either a positive transition in one's degree of power (i.e., an emotion) or one's current degree of power per se (namely, intuitive self-contentment and intellectual love of God). Blessedness, as the highest happiness, is constituted by the latter, non-transitional, form of pleasure.

In general, this chapter has revealed strong agreement between Spinoza, Aristotle, and Epicurus concerning pleasure, by virtue of their shared commitment to two claims: (1) pleasure has a necessary connection to healthy natural being and (2) pleasure is by nature good in the context of happiness. These views on pleasure place them in strong opposition to the Stoics, who reject both claims, because they consider joy the only kind of pleasure which has a necessary connection to health and goodness. Spinoza however has the closest kinship to Epicurus on the subject of pleasure, because both present a dual account of pleasure as health-oriented changes in in state and healthy states of being per se and identify pleasure qua healthy being per se with happiness. In contrast, Aristotle denies that any changes in state constitute pleasure, and both Aristotle and the Stoics deny that pleasure is a constituent of happiness – instead, they consider it a consequent of happiness qua virtue.

However, two things should be noted. Firstly, in his conception of pleasure, Spinoza establishes a necessary connection between pleasure and activity that is not found in Epicurus, but is found in Aristotle. Whereas Epicurus only directly links activity to natural and unnecessary kinetic pleasure, because he associates the general health-oriented nature of pleasure with mere unimpeded natural functioning, Spinoza and Aristotle in contrast associate the health-oriented nature of pleasure specifically with the promotion of natural activities. Secondly and

relatedly, as we will see in the next chapter, Spinoza has the closest kinship with Aristotle (contra Epicurus and the Stoics) on the subject of virtue, because both consider the happy life to be constituted by virtuous activities and to admit of levels and degrees. Consequently, Ch. 3 and 4 show how Spinoza brings together Epicurean and Aristotelian elements in his account of happiness, since he considers blessedness qua pleasure and virtuous activity qua adequate causality coextensive (if not identical) constituents of the happy life.

Chapter 4: Virtue

Introduction

In this chapter, we will explore Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza's respective accounts of virtue. Before we get into the content of this comparative analysis, however, it is important to note three things that a modern reader may fail to appreciate or find odd and/or problematic. Firstly, the concept of virtue for the ancient Greeks and Spinoza is not restricted to moral considerations. The Greek term for virtue, *arete*, can also be translated as "excellence," which may better capture its scope of meaning. Today, we primarily think of virtue in relation to moral characteristics, such as being courageous, just, and compassionate.¹⁴⁵ While there is a moral dimension to the concept of *arete* for the Greeks, *arete* is not exclusively moral. A knife, or my eyes, can be said to be virtuous or excellent insofar as they are in good condition and function well. We do not often ascribe moral qualities to inanimate objects like knives or organs such as eyes, but we can coherently describe a knife or eye as *excellent* insofar as the former is sharp, undented, and cuts smoothly and the latter is undamaged and enables me to see the world clearly and distinctly. Similarly, Spinoza's description of virtue (*virtus*) as "power" is not obviously moral and we can apply it to the non-moral examples of the knife and eye, insofar as a knife has the power to cut and eyes have the power to represent the world to me visually. With that said, as we will see in what follows, although their respective conceptions of virtue allow for non-moral dimensions, nevertheless Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza all consider moral conduct a central aspect of their eudaimonistic project.

¹⁴⁵ Shields[a] points out that "virtue" in English carries a similar semantic scope by virtue of not being restricted to a moral sense, for example, the sentence "It was one of her great virtues as a general practitioner that her diagnostic technique was quick and flawless" (322-3).

Secondly, eudaimonists derive their respective accounts of virtue from naturalistic considerations. Today we normally do not think that we can or should base virtue, in any meaningful way, on facts about human nature.¹⁴⁶ The abovementioned philosophers, in contrast, think that a proper account of happiness or virtue must rely on certain crucial aspects of human nature (from an essentialist or non-essentialist perspective).¹⁴⁷ Thirdly, eudaimonism draws a necessary connection between virtue (in the moral sense) and happiness. Although, in the present day, we might consider it ideal to be morally virtuous and happy, we nevertheless tend to think that someone could, strictly-speaking, be virtuous and yet fail to be happy, and similarly someone could be happy but not virtuous. Moreover, we might not consider the idea of pursuing virtue for the sake of personal happiness particularly moral, because such motivations seem quite egotistical and neglectful of the well-being of others.¹⁴⁸ Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza, however, go to great lengths to show how central moral conduct is to living the happy life, which (as we saw in Ch. 2 and 3) is not a life of indiscriminate enjoyment of pleasure(s), but instead requires careful discernment of the differing values of things in relation to one's well-being – something all four consider a central feature of virtue.

With these considerations in mind, the debates between eudaimonists on the subject of virtue can be organized around two central questions: (1) what role does virtue play in happiness

¹⁴⁶ One notable exception may be Nussbaum's capabilities approach to distributive justice, which is to a significant extent grounded in considerations concerning human nature and flourishing (see, e.g., *Frontiers of Justice and Women and Human Development*).

¹⁴⁷ For discussion of the naturalistic foundation of happiness, and the reasons why I do not consider essentialism about human nature necessary for eudaimonism, see 2.1.

¹⁴⁸ In the context of contemporary moral philosophy, eudaimonism falls under the category of virtue ethics, an ethical paradigm that focuses on moral character rather than results (consequentialism) or rules/duties (deontology). Aristotle, in particular, has been greatly influential to contemporary virtue ethicists, although not all kinds of virtue ethics are eudaimonistic (i.e., treat happiness as the foundation of moral consideration concerning character). For a helpful overview of virtue ethics, see Hursthouse and Pettigrove's "Virtue Ethics." For discussion of how ancient Greek eudaimonism differs from contemporary virtue ethics, as well as consequentialism and deontology, see Annas[a] (Ch. 2 and 22.3).

and (2) are the theoretical and practical dimensions of reason, as virtues, distinct? Concerning (1), we can ask whether virtuous dispositions or virtuous activities (these aspects of virtue being distinguishable) are means to or constituents of happiness. Concerning (2), there is debate about whether theoretical reason (i.e., knowledge for its own sake) is independent of or coextensive with practical reason (i.e., knowledge for the sake of promoting well-being), and if one is superordinate over the other.¹⁴⁹

Ultimately, we will see in this chapter that all four eudaimonists consider virtue *qua* wisdom necessary for happiness. More specifically, I will argue for three claims concerning Spinoza's engagement with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics on the subject of virtue. Firstly, Spinoza agrees with Aristotle and the Stoics, contra Epicurus, that virtue as reason *constitutes* happiness. Secondly, Spinoza, Epicurus, and the Stoics agree, contra Aristotle, that theoretical reason is neither distinct from, nor superordinate over, practical reason; on the contrary, all three see theory as *subordinate* to practice. Thirdly, Spinoza's position on virtue shares the most in common with Aristotle's, because both consider happiness to be constituted by virtuous activities, rather than mere dispositions, and allow for levels and degrees of virtue and happiness.

4.1 Aristotle

Aristotle describes virtue as a disposition of the soul that is intrinsically good and fine (*kalos*), and in turn leads something to perform the characteristic function (*ergon*) of its nature well (*NE* II.4.1105a29-3; 6.1106a15-24; III.7.1115b12-4). The characteristic function of human nature, according to Aristotle, is reason.¹⁵⁰ Consequently, human virtue is a disposition that leads one to use their rational capabilities in a good, fine, and excellent manner (I.7.1098a8-16). In

¹⁴⁹ For further, and more comprehensive, discussion of virtue in the ancient context, see Annas[a] (Ch. 2).

¹⁵⁰ We will discuss Aristotle's conception of the human soul, and its various faculties, in more detail in 5.1.

order to flesh out what this kind of excellence entails, Aristotle divides human virtue into two categories: virtue of character and intellectual virtue (I.13.1103a6-8; II.5.1106a10-2).¹⁵¹

Virtue of character pertains to the sensitive and appetitive faculties of the non-rational aspect of the soul insofar as they obey the rational aspect of the soul, and thus allow the latter to excellently fulfill its function. More precisely, this kind of virtue is a disposition towards the mean, or that which is “intermediate,” in one’s affections and actions, and away from the extremes of excess and deficiency which constitute vice (I.13.1102b29-1103a4; II.3.1104b4-1105a17; 6.1106b16-1107a6). In other words, I possess a virtuous character when I desire to perform and take pleasure in actions for their own sake which are appropriate to my rational nature as a human being and the particulars of my current situation, which makes such actions balanced, fine, and good. Conversely, I am vicious in character insofar as I desire and take pleasure in actions that are excessive or deficient, and thus inappropriate to my nature and current situation, such actions being ignoble and bad.

Two examples of character virtues are moderation and open-handedness, with self-indulgence and insensibility being vices relative to moderation and wastefulness and avariciousness being vices relative to open-handedness. Moderation, self-indulgence, and insensibility concern bodily pleasures, specifically touch and taste (III.10.1118a26). The self-indulgent person is excessively disposed towards bodily pleasures. They “enjoy some things one shouldn’t (being ones they should hate)” and concerning those pleasures “one should enjoy, they enjoy them more than one should” (II.1118b25-7), acting (in Aristotle’s estimation) more like

¹⁵¹ Rowe translates *arete* as “excellence,” and the two kinds of *arete* as “excellences of character” and “intellectual excellences” (NE I.13.1103a6-8). However, in order to maintain terminological consistency with the other translations of Greek texts used in this dissertation (which translate *arete* as “virtue”), I will mostly use “virtue” rather than “excellence” in this context.

an animal than a human being (10.1118b1-5). In other words, the self-indulgent take pleasure in either the wrong objects or the right objects in the wrong ways. The insensible person, conversely, is deficiently disposed towards bodily pleasures. In this case, they “enjoy [pleasures in general] less than one should” (12.1119a6-7), placing them in conflict not only with human nature, but more fundamentally animal nature (1119a7-11). Finally, the moderate person is appropriately disposed towards bodily pleasures, because they desire such things in a manner which is neither excessive nor deficient, but intermediate between these two states. They desire those whings which “conduce to health or fitness” and experience bodily pleasure “in the way one should” as a human being (1119a16-8). Open-handedness, wastefulness, and avariciousness concern giving and taking money. The wasteful person has an indiscriminate “appetite for giving” their money away for things (often self-indulgent pleasures) or to people (e.g., the vicious) who may not be worth the expenditure (IV.1.1121b3-11), resulting in the depletion of their resources and the potential for avariciousness (11121a31-1121b3). The avaricious person, in turn, is “deficien[t] in giving and excess[ive] in taking” money (1121b19). As a result, wastefulness involves an *excess* in giving money and a *deficiency* in taking or keeping money, and avariciousness involves *spending little* money on anything and an *aversion* to giving away money. The open-handed person, however, is understood to “give and spend on what one should and as much as one should” (1120b28-9). They have a proper, balanced relationship to wealth, in both its use and acquisition. Moderation and open-handedness, therefore, are virtues of character because they are associated with the excellence of the non-rational aspect of the soul insofar as

the latter is brought into harmony with the rational aspect of the soul through balanced affections and actions relative to human nature and the individual's circumstances.¹⁵²

Intellectual virtue concerns the dispositions of the rational aspect of the soul. The intellectual virtues are directed at, not feeling or acting properly, but *thinking* excellently. According to Aristotle, the function of the rational aspect of the soul is truth (*NE* VI.1.1139b12), which can be divided into two parts, the calculative and the scientific. The calculative part concerns contingent truths, those things which “can be otherwise,” while the scientific part concerns eternal truths, those things which “cannot be otherwise” (VI.1.1139a6-9). The virtues associated with the calculative part are technical expertise (*techne*) and practical wisdom (*phronesis*). The virtue of the scientific part is theoretical wisdom (*sophia*).¹⁵³ For our purposes, we will focus on practical wisdom and theoretical wisdom, since Aristotle considers these two intellectual virtues central to living a happy life.¹⁵⁴

Practical wisdom concerns excellent deliberation. More specifically, the practically wise person deliberates well about “action in the sphere of what is good and bad for human beings” (5.1140b6-7), and thus what is ultimately conducive to “the good [human] life in general” (1140a29). In other words, this intellectual virtue disposes one towards excellent deliberations about how to act in ways that truly promote happiness. According to Aristotle, virtue of character

¹⁵² Aristotle also discusses states between virtue and vice, namely self-control and lack of self-control (*NE* VII.1-10). The self-controlled person has unhealthy desires, but follows reason in their actions. The person lacking in self-control, conversely, knows what they should do, but nevertheless acts on their unhealthy desires. This taxonomy of morally-relevant states, as we will see, serves as a point of great disagreement between Aristotle and the Stoics, the latter of whom deny that there are intermediate states between virtue and vice. For the Stoics, I am either virtuous or vicious – there is no in between and there are no gradations of virtue/vice.

¹⁵³ Rowe translates *phronesis* as “wisdom” and *sophia* as “intellectual accomplishment.” I prefer to translate *phronesis* as “practical wisdom” and *sophia* as “theoretical wisdom,” because I think these terms better capture the distinction and relationship between these two kinds of intellectual virtue as excellent rational dispositions. As a result, I will use “practical wisdom” and “theoretical wisdom” throughout this chapter, and the dissertation as a whole, when referring to Aristotle’s discussion of *phronesis* and *sophia*.

¹⁵⁴ Technical expertise concerns the excellent use of rational calculation in producing things (*NE* VI.4).

and practical wisdom are intimately connected – you cannot truly have the one disposition without the other. He claims that virtue of character “makes the goal correct, while [practical] wisdom makes what leads to [this goal] correct (12.1144a8-9).

Firstly, virtue of character sets the goal through one’s disposition towards the mean, that which is fine and good. If one has inappropriate, vicious, or bad desires that dispose them towards excess or deficiency, then their deliberations will lead to the wrong actions because the motivation behind those deliberations is skewed. A distinction can be drawn here between mere cleverness and genuine practical wisdom. Cleverness simply entails deliberating well, regardless of what the goal of action is. A clever person can be moral or immoral, depending on what they are disposed to do. Practical wisdom, on the other hand, entails cleverness that is specifically directed at good, balanced actions relative to one’s nature and circumstances (VI.2.1139a21-6; 12.1144a24-36). Consequently, I can only be practically wise, and not merely clever, if I also possess virtue of character. Secondly, it is important to note that Aristotle describes virtue of character as “a disposition issuing in decisions, depending on intermediacy of the kind relative to us, this being determined by *rational prescription and in the way in which the [practically] wise person would determine it* [emphasis mine]” (II.6.1106b36-1107a2). What Aristotle means here is that one cannot find the mean between excess and deficiency in their actions without proper, rational deliberation. In this context, he draws a distinction between “natural” virtue and virtue “in the primary sense,” or true virtue (13.1144b2-28; see also X.9.1179b29-31). Natural virtue is the general desire to act in intermediate and virtuous (e.g., moderate and open-handed) ways, and to avoid excessive (e.g., self-indulgent and wasteful) or deficient (e.g., insensate and avaricious) actions that are representative of vice. If I possess natural virtue, then I have the right motivations or goals. However, if I fail to deliberate effectively, or at all, about how to realize a

particular intermediate action in a particular situation, then I will not be truly virtuous in the context of my character. What it means to enjoy the right/wrong kinds or amounts of bodily pleasure, or to use and spend money well/poorly, will not be precisely the same in every situation or for every person due to the complexities of life. What matters here, however, is not whether external factors allow me to ultimately realize the desired action, but instead that *I am able to correctly figure out what the intermediate and virtuous action is* that I should perform in this instance, relative to my natural constitution. True virtue of character is therefore only present in conjunction with practical wisdom.

For the purposes of this analysis, we need not concern ourselves with precisely how one *becomes* virtuous in character or practically wise.¹⁵⁵ What matters in this context is the mutual inclusivity of virtue of character and practical wisdom. To manifest excellent rationality in the sphere of action (i.e., practical wisdom), one must have natural virtue, which entails desiring to pursue the mean, and to avoid excess and deficiency, in every situation. On the other hand, to possess a truly excellent character, one must have the cleverness to deliberate well about what the intermediate action will be relative to each situation.

Theoretical wisdom, in contrast to virtue of character and practical wisdom, moves outside the practical concerns of day-to-day life and action (i.e., the health and use of the sensitive and appetitive aspects of the soul). According to Aristotle, this intellectual virtue consists in “systematic knowledge” and “intelligence” (7.1141b3-4). Systematic knowledge (*episteme*) pertains to necessary and eternal truths that are explicable through induction¹⁵⁶ and

¹⁵⁵ For some indications of how Aristotle seems to think this would be accomplished, see, e.g., *NE* II.2, 4, 9 and VI.8.1142a14-8.

¹⁵⁶ An argument which entails reasoning from particular premises of perception to a universal premise (*Posterior Analytics* I.1.71a5-9, 18.81a38-81b9).

deduction¹⁵⁷ (3.139b22-36), while intelligence (*nous*) pertains to the understanding of the “starting-points” or principles (*archai*) of knowledge (6.1140b31-1141a9).¹⁵⁸ The theoretically wise person, in other words, manifests intellectual excellence through scientific understanding of and reflection on the universe (e.g., God, prime matter, the celestial bodies, and the substantial forms of various species).¹⁵⁹ This kind of wisdom or intellectual virtue is considered superior to practical wisdom (12.1143b34), because the former is associated with the “better of the two rational parts” (VI.13.1145a8) and “the most precise of the kinds of knowledge,” such knowledge being concerned with “the highest of objects” (VI.7.1141a17-20; see also X.7-8). Theoretical wisdom follows from the part of the rational aspect of the soul which grasps permanent and eternal truths, in contrast to practical wisdom which follows from the rational part that grasps transient and contingent truths. Since eternal truths are more fundamental and stable than contingent truths, knowledge of the former is superior to the latter, thereby rendering the scientific part and its potential for theoretical excellence superior to the calculative part and its potential for practical excellence. In fact, Aristotle compares the relationship between practical and theoretical wisdom to the relationship between medical expertise and health. Medical expertise is subordinate to health, because the former serves the purpose of bringing about the latter, but not vice versa. Similarly, practical wisdom (partly) functions for the sake of bringing about conditions ripe for theoretical wisdom (13.1145a7-11). Theoretical wisdom, on the other hand, does not function to bring about practical wisdom, because the former does not directly or primarily involve knowledge of how to bring about happiness as the highest good (7.1141b3-8;

¹⁵⁷ An argument which entails reasoning to a conclusion from a universal premise and a particular premise (*Prior Analytics* I.4.26b29-32).

¹⁵⁸ Intelligence grasps both contingent and eternal truths, but is linked to theoretical wisdom through its understanding of eternal truths only (*NE* 12.1143a36-1143b6).

¹⁵⁹ For Aristotle’s treatment of these topics, see, for e.g., *Metaphysics*, *Physics*, *On the Heavens*, and *On the Soul*.

12.1143b19-21).¹⁶⁰ With that said, Aristotle clarifies that practical wisdom (unlike medical expertise), as a virtue, is nevertheless intrinsically valuable, albeit not exclusively intrinsically valuable since it also has instrumental value in promoting theoretical wisdom. As well, although theoretical wisdom does not directly instruct one in *achieving* happiness, Aristotle considers it *constitutive* of happiness (12.1144a1-7). Here Aristotle places himself in unique opposition to the other three eudaimonists, who deny that the theoretical dimension of virtue and reason can be separated from, or is superior to, the practical dimension. As we will see, Epicurus takes this position because pleasure, rather than reason, constitutes happiness for him, while the Stoics and Spinoza take this position because they consider emotion cognitive, and thus inseparable from reason, and emphasize the therapeutical power of metaphysical knowledge of nature in removing harmful passions and promoting rational emotions (although their accounts of nature differ in many crucial respects, as 5.3 and 5.4 will show).

With this outline of virtue of character, practical wisdom, and theoretical wisdom in mind, we can now discuss the role that virtue plays in the happy life. In general, Aristotle considers virtue central to the happy human life. Happiness is described as a complete life of virtuous rational activity, since the characteristic function, or defining feature, of human nature is reason and happiness relies on this function being performed excellently (I.7.1098a8-21).

¹⁶⁰ Although theoretical wisdom is not in its *content* directly or primarily about *producing* the human good, it may nevertheless play an additional and necessary role in realizing happiness by providing one with foundational theoretical knowledge of the nature, namely the characteristic functions and excellences, of souls (see *NE* I.7; *On the Soul*) – most importantly the nature of the human soul and its characteristic form of flourishing. It is likely that we require, through education, some prior theoretical knowledge and wisdom, in order to develop and realize character virtues and practical wisdom, which in turn places one in the position to self-sufficiently acquire greater theoretical wisdom through a greater degree of scientific understanding. Thank you to Carlos Fraenkel for pointing out to me this potential nuance in Aristotle's ethical account.

However, it is important to note that Aristotle associates happiness with *activity* and a *complete (i.e. sufficiently long) life*, rather than mere virtue as a disposition of excellence. He clarifies that, much like one can be the strongest person in the Olympic games but not win if they fail to compete, so too one can be virtuous in disposition but accomplish nothing fine and good if they are asleep in particular or “inactive” in general (8.1098b32-1099a6). For example, a happy person is not merely *inclined* to make use of pleasant objects (moderation) or money (open-handedness) in appropriate ways, but they *actually* make use of them appropriately, and thus perform moderate or open-handed activities. Similarly, a happy person is not merely inclined to deliberate effectively about how to act (practical wisdom) or to reflect on scientific truths (theoretical wisdom) - they actually deliberate in this manner or reflect on the relevant truths, thereby performing practically or theoretically wise activities, respectively. What makes a human life truly happy, in other words, is not merely being rationally disposed, but actually being able to do rational things in life. Spinoza, as we will see, argues along similar lines that happiness is constituted by the activities of one’s nature, rather than merely possessing a good character (contra the Stoics) or merely experiencing certain kinds of pleasures (contra Epicurus). However, his position is distinctive because he does not consider virtuous dispositions and virtuous activities distinct, and (as we saw in 3.4) Spinoza says that blessedness is constituted by *both* non-transitional pleasure qua intellectual love of God and virtue qua intuitive knowledge of God (these two being coextensive, if not identical, and merely conceptually distinct).

Aristotle also argues that it is not enough to perform virtuous rational activities for “a single day, or a short time” (7.1098a18-21). One must have been able to live a sufficiently long life constituted by these activities in order to truly be classified as happy. Admittedly, those who are virtuous can face many misfortunes and make the best of their circumstances, meaning it is

considerably better to face unavoidable misfortune as a virtuous person than a non-virtuous (particularly vicious) person (10.1100b19-1101a8). However, Aristotle thinks that virtue does not make one's happiness impervious to great misfortune. In 1101a6-8, he asserts that the virtuous person who suffers great misfortune will be neither "miserable," because they will never be inclined to do bad, ignoble, or vicious things, nor "blessed" (*makarios*). It is not clear what his ultimate position is on this matter, but depending on whether we consider being "blessed" synonymous with or distinct from being "happy" (a question that we saw in 3.2 applies to Epicurus, as well), there are two main possibilities. On the one hand, if being blessed and happy are synonymous, then certain misfortunes in the latter years of my life (e.g., losing all of my loved ones or being imprisoned and severely tortured with no chance for escape and relief from the pain) can be so great that, despite being virtuous and not miserable, my happiness is nevertheless destroyed (1101a11-13; VII.13.1153b19-22). The crucial detail here is that such misfortunes occur in the *latter years* of my life, leaving me with little to no time to recover my happiness by regularly performing a multitude of virtuous activities. In these scenarios, I am still virtuous, but unable to substantially continue to realize my excellent dispositions because I lack significant time and/or opportunity. According to Aristotle, "no one would call the person who lived [a life of inactivity or great misfortune] happy" (I.5.1095b32-1096a3). On the other hand, if being *makarios* and being *eudaimon* are distinct, we might consider being *eudaimon* to mean that one has *basic happiness* while being *makarios* means one has complete or *optimal happiness*. In this case, great misfortune diminishes my happiness – I cannot be blessed or perfectly happy if terrible things have happened to me (at least late in life) – but my virtue guarantees that I am still happy to some degree. It is also plausible that Aristotle grants both possibilities (irrespective of terminological considerations); in some extreme instances, my happiness can be entirely

eradicated if my virtues are largely repressed, and in other instances misfortune can only impede my happiness, but not destroy it, so long as I continue to be able to consistently act in virtuous ways. In any case, Aristotle is adamant that a sufficiently long life of unimpeded virtuous activity is necessary to live a life that is truly (if not optimally) happy.

This distinction between virtue as a mere disposition and virtue as an actualized activity, and the requirement for a complete life, are also intimately connected to Aristotle's assertion that external things are necessary for a happy life. He argues that "it is impossible, or not easy, to perform fine actions if one is without resources," such as nourishment for bodily health, a good upbringing, education, family, friends, wealth, and social status (I.8.1099a32-3; see also VII.1153b17-22). Firstly, to become virtuous and happy, I must have a healthy body. With an unhealthy body, I may not be able to physically perform practically excellent activities like moderation and open-handedness, and my mind may not be able to engage in excellent deliberative and reflective activities, either at all or at least without some degree of impediment (X.8.1178b33-1179a1). Secondly, I cannot develop natural or true virtue of character if I am raised and educated in a state with poorly conceived laws or by bad parents that are not motivated by what is fine and good (9.1179b29-1180a5). Furthermore, I cannot develop theoretical wisdom with no training in the sciences (VI.3.1139b25-6). Thirdly, I cannot act on moderate, open-handed, or just dispositions if I have little to no access to objects of bodily pleasure, money, or people. Remember, for Aristotle happiness is about being able to *act* in one's life, not just being in the right psychological (namely, appetitive) state. I cannot perform a virtuous activity if the object of that virtue is absent, meaning I will consistently need a variety of external things in life that are relevant to each of the virtues (X.7.1177a28-32; 8.1178a29-1179b4). Finally, we all need good, true friends with whom we can mutually support, reinforce,

and share in each other's virtue and happiness.¹⁶¹ Bad friends (i.e., people who are not truly friends) undermine each other's virtuous endeavours, and having no friends leaves the social dimension of our nature as human beings greatly wanting (VIII.1.1155a1-33; 1156b7-14).¹⁶² These points also tie into the requirement of a complete life, because the loss of many of the abovementioned resources, particularly later in life, can seriously diminish, if not destroy, one's happiness. It is important to clarify, however, that Aristotle is not saying that we need *every* conceivable external good, rather we need "moderate resources" which are sufficient for the development of virtuous dispositions and the actualization of virtuous activities, relative to practical or theoretical considerations (X.8.1179a1-9).

In sum, external things play a substantial role in Aristotle's conception of the happy life, because they are to some degree necessary in the realization of the virtuous activities that constitute such a life. We will see in Ch. 5 that Epicurus and Spinoza agree with Aristotle that external things are to some degree necessary for happiness, a position that places these three in strong opposition to the Stoics, the latter of whom deny eudaimonistic value to anything outside the rational faculty of the mind. I say "to some degree," because Aristotle thinks that the amount or kinds of external things needed for happiness will differ depending on what *kind* of happiness we are talking about (Epicurus and Spinoza also have complex views on which external things are required for happiness and what direct impact external things, in general, can/cannot have on this state of being).

¹⁶¹ In the case of reflection, although we can, strictly-speaking, enjoy this activity without friends, which is part of the superiority of the theoretically happy life, nevertheless reflective activities and pleasures are greater when shared with true friends (X.7.1177a33-1177b1).

¹⁶² For Aristotle's rich discussion of friendship, in particular the hierarchy between different kinds of friendship (the useful, the pleasant, and the good), see *NE* VIII and IX.

Aristotle, in fact, draws a distinction between *practical* happiness and *theoretical* happiness, both of which are constituted by a certain kind of virtuous rational activity.¹⁶³ The practically happy life is associated with virtue of character and practical wisdom (X.8. 1178a9-23). The dominant form of virtuous rational activity here is practical wisdom, the rational (calculative) faculty of the soul concerned with actions and the day-to-day moral concerns of life. Virtue of character, while an excellence of the non-rational aspect of the soul, is nevertheless *rational* insofar as one's affections and actions are in harmony with, and directed by, the rational aspect of the soul in general and practical wisdom in particular (I.13.1102b13-1103a4). Practical happiness, in other words, represents the moral dimension of being rational. Aristotle, however, considers this sort of life the "second happiest" life that a human being can enjoy (X.8.1178a9). Practical happiness is constituted by one core part of the rational aspect of the soul, but it is not constituted by the *highest* part of the soul. Recall that theoretical wisdom, the excellence of the scientific part, is superior to practical wisdom, the excellence of the calculative part, because the former deals with eternal truths which are fundamental and permanent, while the latter deals with contingent truths which are secondary and transient. Aristotle also argues that the reflective activities which follow from theoretical wisdom require fewer external goods than the moral activities of character and practical wisdom. One needs objects of bodily pleasure to perform moderate activities, money to perform open-handed activities, and people to perform just activities, as well as nutritional and educational resources to promote bodily health and the development of the mind. Reflective activities also require bodily health and a good education, but the theoretically wise person does not really require anything else to reflect on eternal truths – their own mind is largely sufficient to realize these activities

¹⁶³ For further discussion of Aristotle's dual account of happiness, see, e.g., Cooper (*Pursuits of Wisdom* Ch. 3); Dahl (66-91); Shields[a] (340-5).

and can perform them more easily than any other (deliberative or practical) activities (7.1177a12-1177b26; 8.1178b33-1179a1). As well, theoretical wisdom represents the most divine aspect of the human soul. According to Aristotle, the only activities that the gods, as the highest and happiest beings, partake in are reflective activities.¹⁶⁴ The more a human being is able to perform reflective activities the more they approximate divinity and live a life that is more than merely human (7.1177b25-1178a3; 8.1178b22-8). Theoretical wisdom, consequently, represents the purest and highest form of reason, due to the epistemic superiority of its object, its maximum self-sufficiency relative to other virtues, and the fact that it is closely associated with divine activity.¹⁶⁵ In light of these considerations, Aristotle says that the “happiest” life resides in the activities of theoretical wisdom, making the theoretically happy life superior to the practically happy life (8.1178a8). Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza, as we will see, disagree with this theory-dominated account of happiness. All three, because they do not consider the theoretical distinct from, or superordinate over, the practical, deny that there is a purely theoretical form of happiness.

Returning to Aristotle’s dual account, what is the relationship between these two kinds of happiness? Can I enjoy them independently of each other, or does the one kind of happiness require the other? Because these two kinds of happiness are characterized by a particular rational virtue, answering such questions requires us to return to the relationship between practical

¹⁶⁴ The gods do not possess a non-rational faculty or a calculative faculty, and are thus incapable of moral conduct, deliberation, practical wisdom, and ultimately practical happiness. These absences, however, do not represent a deficiency on the part of the gods, because the happiness of a living being is grounded in its nature, in particular its core faculties. Humans possess nutritive, appetitive/sensitive, deliberative, and reflective faculties, which is why morality and both kinds of reason are ethically relevant to them as ends. Of the faculties just listed, the gods possess only reflection, so only reflective reason is relevant to their flourishing. As well, unlike humans, gods don’t require any external goods due to the simplicity, actuality, and eternality of their rational nature. Divine happiness is permanent, indestructible, and wholly unalterable (*NE* X.8.1178b9-23; see also *Meta* Λ 6-9).

¹⁶⁵ For discussion of how human and divine contemplation compare (namely, whether they are identical in nature or not), see Reece’s “Aristotle on Divine and Human Contemplation.”

wisdom and theoretical wisdom. Aristotle gives some indication that these two kinds of wisdom can, strictly-speaking, be possessed independently of each other through his real-life examples of Pericles, Anaxagoras, and Thales. Pericles, as a political leader of Athens, is described as an exemplar of practical wisdom, but Aristotle does not associate the virtues of this figure with any sort of knowledge in the theoretical domain (VI.5.1140b7-10). Pericles is virtuous in character, but not a philosopher. Conversely, he describes the Presocratic philosophers Anaxagoras and Thales as exemplars of theoretical wisdom. However, Aristotle clarifies that while these men “know things that are exceptional, wonderful, difficult, [and] even superhuman,” their special knowledge is nevertheless “useless, because what they inquire into are not the goods that are human” and we do not consider them experts on how to live well (7.1141b4-9). Anaxagoras and Thales are wise theoretical experts because they delved into eternal truths about nature, but they are not necessarily wise *practical* experts who know precisely how to do what is fine and good in day-to-day life.¹⁶⁶ These examples imply that practical happiness and theoretical happiness can largely be enjoyed independently of each other, because their respective constituent forms of wisdom can be realized independently.

However, as discussed above, Aristotle thinks external goods (in particular, bodily health and education) are crucial for the realization of both practical and theoretical wisdom, and that practical wisdom has value in facilitating the conditions necessary for theoretical wisdom. We might say then that, while one can, strictly-speaking, be theoretically wise without being practically wise, practical wisdom nevertheless allows one to achieve and enjoy theoretical

¹⁶⁶ This is not to say that Aristotle considers Anaxagoras or Thales devoid of all practical or moral sense, just that the kind of wisdom that they are famous for is not directly or primarily about practical affairs. As I discuss in what follows, it may be the case that the possession of theoretical wisdom is to some extent impossible without character virtue and practical wisdom, but there does seem to be some independence between the two that is noteworthy when compared to Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza as fellow eudaimonists.

wisdom more easily and stably, and to a greater extent than would be possible if one was ignorant of practical matters. Although Aristotle praises theoretical wisdom as the greatest virtue and reflection as the greatest activity, he also reminds us that, as humans (rather than gods), we are beings subject to bodily (namely, nutritive, sensitive, and appetitive) and moral concerns (X.8.1178a9-3; 1178b9-19; 1178b33-1179a1). Since Aristotle's ethical conception of happiness is naturalistic, a truly happy human life cannot neglect any aspect of the human soul.

Furthermore, because happiness for Aristotle is about realizing the activities of our rational function, and the rational aspect of the soul has two central parts in the form of the calculative and the scientific, the happiest life in terms of the greatest realization of virtuous rationality would then arguably be a life of practical wisdom *and* theoretical wisdom. In line with this reasoning, if we consider being blessed and being happy to be distinct states, we might say that a blessed (*makarios*) life will be one that is both practically and theoretically happy, while a merely happy (*eudaimon*) life would be a life of only practical wisdom or only theoretical wisdom. In any case, the practically and theoretically happy lives are not mutually exclusive, and there is good reason to think that Aristotle requires us to cultivate both kinds of rational virtue as far as circumstances allow.

In conclusion, Aristotle presents us with a rich, multifaceted account of virtue as the constituent of happiness, distinguishing between its non-rational/rational, deliberative/reflective and practical/theoretical dimensions. In what follows we will see that Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza agree with Aristotle that virtue as reason is necessary for happiness, the Stoics and Spinoza more specifically that virtue constitutes happiness, and Spinoza in particular that happiness is constituted by virtuous activities. However, all three (contra Aristotle) deny that the theoretical is distinct from, or superordinate over, the practical, which is why we do not find a

practical-theoretical distinction between reason, virtue, and happiness in their respective ethical frameworks (although Spinoza will also offer a dual account of virtue and happiness based on differences in our intellectual abilities).

4.2 Epicurus

Epicurus argues that there is an intimate connection between virtue and pleasure. As we saw in the previous chapter, Epicurus equates human happiness with a katastematically pleasant life.¹⁶⁷ With this ethical foundation in mind, he argues that (1) “[i]t is impossible to live pleasantly *without living prudently, honourably, and justly*” and (2) it is “impossible to live prudently, honourably, or justly *without living pleasantly* [emphasis mine]” (*PD* ~*V*). (1) states that virtue is necessary for happiness.¹⁶⁸ It is only through virtuous dispositions, such as prudence, honour, and justice, that I can truly live a good and pleasant life. Those who are foolish, dishonest, and spiteful (i.e., vicious) in character only bring to themselves profound bodily (e.g., sickness) or mental (e.g., fear and anxiety) suffering. Any pleasures they experience are short-lived, intermittent, and outweighed by pain. A life devoid of virtue is then by no means pleasant overall (*OM* I.50-2, 57-62). (2), on the other hand, states that pleasure is necessary for virtue. Virtues are chosen “on account of pleasure and not for their own sake” (*DL* X.138),

¹⁶⁷ As discussed in 3.1, Epicurus draws a distinction between human happiness and divine happiness (*DL* X.121). Both kinds of happiness are constituted by katastematic pleasure, but divine happiness involves neverending freedom from suffering, whereas human happiness must be constantly maintained through necessary kinetic pleasures and will eventually end when one dies.

¹⁶⁸ It is not clear whether this statement applies to the gods, since they enjoy a life of permanent katastematic pleasure. Arguably, they have no need of practical wisdom, moderation, courage, or justice, because their pleasures do not fluctuate and they cannot be harmed or destroyed through physical or psychological pain. We will discuss the nature of each of these virtues in the Epicurean framework shortly. If this reading of the Epicurean gods is correct, then Epicurus agrees with Aristotle that divine happiness is devoid of practical and moral considerations. However, contra Aristotle, Epicurus does not seem to consider the gods and divine happiness intellectual or reflective in nature. The perfection and happiness of the Epicurean gods arguably lie not in any sort of activity, but instead in the complete absence of suffering or concern whatsoever. We will discuss the Epicurean gods further in 5.2.

because “who would deem them praiseworthy or desirable if they did not result in pleasure?” (OM I.42). Virtue is not an intrinsic good for Epicurus; it is instead an instrumental good that serves the purpose of producing and maintaining pleasure, more specifically katastematic pleasure as freedom from bodily pain and mental disturbance. This freedom from suffering is, for Epicurus, the only exclusively intrinsic good and constituent of happiness, and thus the ultimate standard of value (LM §128-9; OM I.29, 54). The value of virtue is therefore justified by appeal to pleasure. Here Epicurus places himself in strong opposition to Aristotle, and, as we will see shortly, the Stoics and Spinoza. These three consider virtue (particularly reason) intrinsically valuable, because it represents the realization of one’s (namely, intellectual) nature, and they do not think virtue is or should be subordinate to pleasure, although they will agree with Epicurus that pleasure is necessarily connected to virtue – virtuous people are by no means devoid of significant joy in life.

According to Epicurus, the primary virtue, which all other virtues are subordinate to, is prudence or practical wisdom (*phronesis*).¹⁶⁹ Practical wisdom involves “sober calculation which searches out the reasons for every choice and avoidance and drives out the opinions which are the source of the greatest turmoil for [people’s] souls” (~132). It represents excellent practical reasoning concerning how to achieve katastematic pleasure. Despite the practical orientation of Epicurus’s conception of virtue, he also considers scientific knowledge important. I cannot live a truly pleasant life, that is be stably free of bodily pain or mental disturbance, if I lack scientific knowledge of nature (LH ~ 81-3; LP ~85; LM ~133; PD ~X-XIII; OM I.63-4). In particular, Epicurus is concerned with correcting erroneous beliefs about the gods, death, and pleasures.

¹⁶⁹ Inwood and Gerson translate *phronesis* as “prudence,” but in order to maintain terminological consistency, I will use “practical wisdom” when referring to this Greek term.

There is no cosmic plan devised by the gods which we are praised for adhering to or punished for deviating from, nor can the gods be pleased nor displeased by our actions (they live in a permanent state of perfect blessedness, entirely unaffected by anything), meaning we need not be fearful or anxious about the opinions and actions of these divine beings (*LH* ~76-7; *LM* ~123-4; *PD* ~1). Similarly, because death as non-existence involves no pleasure and pain, it can provide no benefit or harm to our lives, and is thus not a worthy object of fear or general concern (*LH* ~81; *LM* ~124-7; *PD* ~2). Finally, through understanding (1) that, by nature, we fundamentally desire pleasure qua freedom from suffering above all else, (2) the three kinds of desire, and (3) the distinction between kinetic and katastematic pleasures, we can properly direct ourselves in life and truly live happily (*LM* ~127-32; *PD* ~XXI, XXV-VI, XXIX-XXX). Such knowledge allows me to recognize that my attention at all times should primarily be focused on cultivating natural and necessary kinetic pleasures, for the sake of producing katastematic pleasures (i.e., those things which constitute happiness), and that unnecessary kinetic pleasures (e.g., eating a particular kind of food, accumulating wealth, or winning some sort of socially-constructed award) play no role in producing, constituting, or increasing happiness – at best, these latter pleasures can only diversify my experience of happiness. It is important to note, however, that scientific knowledge for Epicurus, while important, is nevertheless only instrumentally valuable. The value of such knowledge is derived, not from itself, but from its role in producing freedom from suffering, in particular “freedom from [mental] disturbance” (*LP* ~85; see also *LM* ~132). Epicurus even goes so far as to say that if being ignorant of natural phenomena and our desires/pleasures did not cause fear, anxiety, anger, or self-destructive behaviour “then we would have no need for natural science” (*PD* ~XI). Whether it is, in principle, a possible or counterfactual scenario to be ignorant of nature and live a stably pleasant life, the fact remains

that theory is subordinate to practice in Epicurus's ethical framework. Scientific knowledge is directed by, and appeals to the ends of, practical wisdom.

Here we see a major difference between Aristotle and Epicurus concerning the value of, and the relationship between, the practical and theoretical dimensions of reason. For Aristotle, theoretical wisdom (i.e., scientific understanding) is the most valuable dimension of reason and serves as the ultimate end that practical wisdom (i.e., proper moral deliberation) aims at because he considers virtuous rational activity the constituent of happiness, while Epicurus argues that practical wisdom is the most valuable dimension of reason and rules over theoretical wisdom because he considers katastematic pleasure the constituent of happiness, with the value of virtue qua reason being its merely instrumental role in promoting this state of unimpeded natural functioning. The Stoics and Spinoza, as we will see, agree with Epicurus (contra Aristotle) that the practical dimension of reason is not subordinate to the theoretical and has therapeutic value in correcting harmful beliefs, but they will nevertheless agree with Aristotle (contra Epicurus) that reason (in the general sense) *constitutes* happiness.

At this juncture, now that we have established practical wisdom as the primary virtue, let us discuss the other core virtues that are derived from, and directed by, this rational virtue, namely moderation, courage, and justice. Moderation's role in promoting a happy life is quite straightforward. It is directly concerned with promoting pleasure in healthy ways, so as to produce and maintain katastematic pleasures through the proper cultivation of necessary kinetic pleasures and to minimize pain and disturbance through avoiding the inappropriate pursuit and use of unnecessary pleasures (*OM* ~47-8). An immoderate person, in this case, is one who fails to understand the different kinds of pleasures or the hierarchical relationship between them. Such a person prioritizes *unnecessary* kinetic pleasures over *necessary* kinetic pleasures and

katastematic pleasures, leading to a life of significant pain (e.g., through sickness) and disturbance (e.g., through pursuing things that are not easily attained or kept).

The pleasure-oriented nature of courage and justice, however, is far less obvious. As virtues, one will take pleasure in performing courageous or just actions, but it seems odd to say that the goal of courage or justice is, in itself, pleasure. Courage seems to require putting oneself in situations with a high risk of suffering and death for some noble cause, which seems to be the furthest from the promotion of pleasure. However, it all comes back to why one would risk suffering and death in the first place. What is the noble cause or goal driving courage? According to Torquatus (Cicero's spokesperson for Epicureanism), the goal of courageous actions is to "live without trouble or fear, and to free our mind and body as much as possible from distress" (*OM* I.49). I will take up arms against an invader (of my home or country), or stand my ground to protect myself, my friends, or my community, and thus face potential (even severe) suffering and death for the sake of promoting a secure environment that allows me to stably achieve and maintain homeostasis and peace of mind, that is a *katastematically* happy life. A courageous person, as someone who is fundamentally practically wise, knows that death is irrelevant to one's well-being, and that slight/intense pain is short-lived (because one either recovers from it or death ends its effects) and chronic pain can be endured through the cultivation of various pleasures (*LM* ~124-6; *PD* ~IV; *OM* I.49). Cowardice may allow me to escape suffering, and to enjoy kinetic and *katastematic* pleasures, in the short-term, but if I refuse to confront major long-term threats to my well-being, I cannot guarantee that I will always be safe and healthy, and this uncertainty will itself cause great suffering. It is worth facing suffering, or the risk of it, in the short-term, for "greater [kinetic and *katastematic*] pleasure follows for a long while if we [courageously] endure the[se] pains" (*LM* ~129).

Justice, broadly speaking, seems to involve proper relations with others, where their interests are not wholly sacrificed for the sake of my personal interests. If being just, in the Epicurean context, is directed at achieving and preserving a pleasant life for myself, how does this position not involve disregarding and sacrificing the interests of others? Here, too, the answer is security. Epicurus describes justice as “a pledge of reciprocal usefulness, [i.e.,] neither to harm one another nor be harmed” (*PD* ~XXXI; see also ~XXXII-III, XXXVI-III). We engage in mutually respectful relations with each other in order for each of us to protect ourselves from suffering. In acting justly, one is able to “acquire the greatest confidence from [the threats posed by] their neighbours,” and subsequently live “most pleasantly with the surest guarantee” (~XL). By mutually agreeing not to contribute to the suffering of others, and in fact to help one another, each person is able to enjoy stable freedom from suffering in their daily life, because everyone has the good will of those around them.¹⁷⁰ Those who act dishonestly, violently, and unjustly towards others only bring themselves suffering (this reasoning applies to cowardice and courage, as well [*OM* I.49-50]). On the one hand, if they are caught, they inspire retribution, and thus great harm to themselves. On the other hand, even if no one ever discovers their misdeeds, no unjust person can have true peace of mind, because they can never know with certainty that they will not eventually be caught, particularly if they continue to act unjustly and harm others (*LM* ~XVII, XXXIV-V; *OM* I.51-3). Consequently, even courage and justice, although not traditionally focused on pleasure as an end, can be said to ultimately be for the sake of a pleasant life because they promote stable freedom from bodily pain and mental disturbance.

¹⁷⁰ Epicurus also considers friendship a particularly important external good. As “a partnership in the enjoyment of life’s pleasures” (*DL* X.120), friendship offers a more intimate kind of stable support and security, as well as a priceless opportunity to share in the various kinetic and katastematic pleasures of life with others (*OM* I.69). For discussion of the Epicurean conception of friendship, see *OM* II.78-85; Cooper (*Pursuits of Wisdom* 264-70); Rist[a] (127-39).

In sum, although Epicurus agrees with Aristotle that virtue is necessary for human happiness, nevertheless he denies that virtue is intrinsically valuable and a constituent of happiness.¹⁷¹ Instead, Epicurus considers virtue a necessary, but mere *means* to producing a happy life, because he argues that katastematic pleasure is the only exclusively intrinsic good according to nature, and thus the only constituent of happiness. As a result, all virtues (including courage and justice) are valued for the sake of freedom from bodily pain and mental disturbance. In the next two sections, we will see that Epicurus also places himself in opposition to the Stoics and Spinoza in this regard, both of whom agree with Aristotle concerning the intrinsic value and constitutive role of virtue in happiness (although this chapter and 3.4 show that Spinoza thinks that happiness is constituted by both virtue and a certain form of pleasure).

4.3 The Stoics

For the Stoics, virtue is “a harmonious disposition” (DL VII.89) which, according to Zeno, consists of “life in agreement with nature” (87). In general, virtue is being disposed towards living a natural life. Chrysippus, Seneca, and Diogenes the Stoic, however, provide us with a bit more detail about what such a life entails. Chrysippus asserts that, since “our individual natures [as human beings] are parts of the nature of the whole universe,” virtue is more precisely life “in accordance with our own human nature as well as that of the universe” (87-8).¹⁷² The virtuous life therefore has two dimensions: living in agreement with nature in

¹⁷¹ Divine happiness is a different story. As we will see in 5.3, the Epicurean gods exist in a state of neverending freedom from bodily and mental suffering, so they potentially do not possess or require virtue for the sake of promoting their well-being. Similarly, the Aristotelian God, as an immaterial being of pure contemplative activity, does not possess or require practical wisdom or moral virtue (NE X.8.1178b8-1178b23), although it does possess theoretical wisdom in some sense (that may or may not share common-ground with the celestial bodies or humans; see 5.1).

¹⁷² Cleanthes simply associates virtue with living according to the nature of the universe as a whole (DL VII.88). Long and Sedley argue, however, that Cleanthes and Chrysippus differ only in emphasis. There is no substantial disagreement between them on this matter (400).

general and living in agreement with our particular nature as human beings. The “peculiar good” of human nature, according to Seneca, is “perfect reason” (L&S 63D) or, according to Diogenes the Stoic, “right reason in the selection of what is natural” (DL VII.88). To live according to nature, in particular human nature, is fundamentally then about living rationally, a point that Aristotle and Spinoza strongly agree with the Stoics on.

As indicated by Diogenes the Stoic in the abovementioned passage, the content of reason qua virtue concerns correct judgments about nature, and the value of those things within it. For the Stoics nature is “ordered by reason and providence” (DL VII.138), with God (*theos*) as the rational (active) principle (*logos*) “inherent” in the universe (134), that acts as “artificer of this orderly arrangement” (137). God, in other words, is identified with the universe as the fundamental internal cause that rationally orders nature according to an ultimate end.¹⁷³ This end, in general, is absolute rational perfection, with humans specifically existing “to contemplate and imitate the world, being by no means perfect, but a tiny constituent of that which is perfect” (L&S 54H1). Part of the rationality of virtue is recognizing this providential order. In living according to nature, we adhere to human nature in particular and nature more generally. What links both natures is that they are fundamentally brought into being and structured (essentially and relationally) by reason (i.e., God). When rational qua virtuous, my rationality is a manifestation of the overall rationality of nature, and so we are in perfect harmony. Because I qua human exist to be rational and to rationally reflect on nature, my virtue also places me consciously and intentionally in harmony with providence, because I recognize my role as a part and manifestation of divine rationality. Connected to this understanding is the recognition that

¹⁷³ We will discuss the Stoic view of God and the universe in more detail in 5.3, when we explore how the Stoics understand the relationship between mind and body, or soul and matter.

the structure of nature is not merely providential, but also deterministic. Cicero describes this Stoic view as “nothing has happened which was not going to be, and likewise nothing is going to be of which nature does not contain causes working to bring that very thing about” (55L2). The natural world consists of fixed causes which make all past, present, and future phenomena strictly necessary.¹⁷⁴ All events are aimed at realizing rational perfection, and the ways in which they accomplish this goal could not be otherwise. My virtuous contemplation of nature involves then, not only its providential structure, but also the determined causal order that realizes it.

The other part of making rational judgments concerns the eudaimonistic value of those things within nature, namely what is good, morally indifferent but naturally preferable, and morally indifferent but naturally undesirable. In this context, Epictetus draws a distinction between what “is in our power” and what is “not in our power” (*HB* 1.1). What is in our power concerns happiness, while what is not in our power has nothing to do with happiness (1.2-4). As a stable condition, happiness must reside in what is reliable, and what is reliable are those things in our complete control. Included in the category of what is in our control are “opinion, impulse, desire, [and] aversion” (1.1), with desire and aversion qua emotion linked to judgment (DL VII.111; *TD* IV.vii.14) that realizes impulse as a disposition to act (L&S 65X2). In other words, those things pertaining to our mind and its faculty of reasoning are within our complete control (and thus, at least, outside the causal power of external forces). They should be our true focus in achieving and maintaining happiness. Here the Stoics are taking the eudaimonistic criterion of (c) stability (which we discussed in 2.1.1) quite seriously. In the Stoic view, for happiness to be a

¹⁷⁴ For further discussion of Stoic determinism, and its relationship to freedom and moral responsibility, see L&S 55 and 62. Cleanthes’s *Hymn to Zeus* (54I3), for example, points to a freedom of will to choose wickedness that may or may not conflict with a deterministic account of the universe (my thanks to Carlos Fraenkel for bringing this point to my attention). Miller[a] provides a compelling discussion of two distinct readings of Stoic freedom to assent, and how they relate to Spinoza’s conception of freedom (88-98).

truly stable condition of natural living it cannot rely on things which are subject to fluctuation and outside of one's nature as a human being. What is up to me, and truly capable of stability in my nature, is my mind's capacity to use reason. My body, while part of my nature, is nevertheless always to some degree subject to the external and fluctuating forces of providence, and thus it cannot supply me with the stability necessary for a happy life as a whole. Only the mind, and its faculty of reasoning, can possess this stability in an unqualified way. Aristotle, Epicurus, and Spinoza also take the stability of happiness seriously, but (as we will discuss in Ch. 5), because they think that the health and functioning of the mind is (in some sense) intimately connected to the health and functioning of the body, they deny that the mind has sufficient independence from the body and external forces to possess the strong degree of stability attributed to it by the Stoics. It is because of reason's natural role and potential for great stability that the Stoics claim that virtue "is in itself sufficient to ensure well-being" (DL VII.127) and "it is in virtue [alone] that happiness consists" (89). When I am disposed to use reason effectively, and thus make accurate judgments, I am virtuous and happy. If, however, I am disposed to reason poorly, and make erroneous judgments (L&S 61B11), then I make myself vicious and unhappy by disrupting the health of my mind (DL VII.115; *TD* IV.vi.11). Part of reasoning properly, in this context, is recognizing the intrinsic goodness of reason qua virtue and the intrinsic badness of deficient reasoning qua vice, and more specifically that virtue is the only good and vice is the only bad, since my rational faculty is the only thing truly within my control, and the only thing which is truly capable of being stable in my nature (DL VII.101; *TD* IV.xv.35; *OM* III.10-11). Virtue is thus the sole good in living happily, and only its absence as vice constitutes unhappiness.

The Stoics list prudence, wisdom, or practical wisdom (*phronesis*), courage (*andreia*), justice (*dikaiosune*), and moderation (*sophrosune*) as the primary virtues (DL VII.92-3, 100; L&S 61C1, H6). Virtue in general is described as “expertise (*techne*) concerned with the whole of life” (61G) and the primary virtues in particular are described as forms of scientific knowledge (*episteme*), with each virtue covering a distinct domain of “theory and practice” (61D1-2; see also 61H; DL VII.126).¹⁷⁵ Practical wisdom concerns appropriate action in relation to knowledge of what is good, evil, and morally neutral or indifferent in nature. Moderation consists in knowledge of what is worth pursuing and avoiding. Justice is knowledge of appropriate distribution among individuals. Finally, courage is rooted in knowledge of what should and should not be feared or endured (L&S 61D2-5, H1-4; DL VII.126). In general, there is debate among the Stoics whether the primary virtues are simply different forms of one underlying virtuous disposition, or whether they constitute distinct dispositions. Aristo and Cleanthes take the former position, while Chrysippus adopts the latter. Zeno (the originator of Stoicism), interestingly enough, describes each of the primary virtues in terms of prudential knowledge, while nevertheless considering them distinct dispositions (L&S 61B-C). In any case, all the Stoics agree that the virtues (whether identical or distinct) are ultimately mutually inclusive. One cannot be practically wise without also being moderate, just, and courageous, and vice versa, with different scenarios requiring different virtuous actions, which is decided by the virtuous person’s overall scientific knowledge of what is good, bad, and morally indifferent (61D-F; DL VII.125-6). With this account of virtue, we see that the Stoics (contra Aristotle and in agreement with Epicurus) do not separate theory from practice. For them virtue involves metaphysical and ethical knowledge of nature, which has therapeutic value in eradicating

¹⁷⁵ For discussion of the Stoic conceptions of *techne* and *episteme* in particular, and epistemology in general, see L&S 39-42.

harmful passions, promoting rational emotions, and motivating appropriate actions. As we will see, Spinoza conceives of virtue in much the same way, although his conception of nature and the value of passions differs from the Stoics in many crucial respects (see 3.4 and 5.4).

Everything other than virtue and vice falls into the category of that which is outside our complete control, and is thus considered morally indifferent. Those things which are outside my control and indifferent “do not contribute either to happiness or misery . . . [meaning] it is possible to be happy [or unhappy] without having these [things]” (DL VII.104). The absence of such things does not entail that I am unhappy, and the presence of them does not entail that I am happy. As we saw in 3.3 with the example of sensual pleasure, moral indifferents are neither necessary nor sufficient to constitute happiness or unhappiness. Other common examples of indifferents (i.e., things outside our complete control) are life, death, bodily health, bodily disease, sensual pain, wealth, poverty, social status, and ignominy (DL VII.102; *HB* 1.1). This list comprises the kinds of things traditionally thought to be connected to a happy or unhappy life. Typically, we think that a happy life will involve a healthy body, an abundance of sensual pleasures, wealth, and a good reputation and/or position in society. Conversely, an unhappy life is usually linked to a diseased body, an abundance of sensual pains, poverty, or a bad reputation and/or social position. What the virtuous person recognizes, however, is that believing these things to have any power over happiness or unhappiness is precisely the problem. When one poorly reasons about the value of those things outside their power, they are “hindered, miserable, and distressed” (*HB* 1.3). One is rendered unhappy, not because of (1) the absence of health, pleasure, wealth, or social prestige, or (2) the presence of disease, pain, poverty, or social disgrace, but rather because of their erroneous judgment (following from ignorance or vice) that

any of these things has eudaimonistic value. As outlined above, happiness and unhappiness solely reside in how one's faculty of reasoning is employed.

However, the Stoics nonetheless draw a distinction between "preferred" and dispreferred indifferents. A preferred indifferent is that which is directly "in accordance with nature, or brings about something that is," while a dispreferred indifferent is that which is contrary to nature (*OM* III.20). In other words, some things are naturally worth pursuing as a human being, while others are not. These two classes of indifferents pertain to what the Stoics call *kathekon*, which is variously translated as "proper functions" (L&S 365), "befitting acts" (DL VII.108),¹⁷⁶ or "appropriate actions" (*OM* III.20).¹⁷⁷ Proper functions pertain to actions that are in harmony with, and ultimately dictated by, the providential and rational order of nature, which includes what it is natural for each being to pursue and avoid (III.21-2, 51-61; DL VII.107-9). It is important to note, however, that proper functions *follow from or express* virtue and happiness as living in agreement with nature, they *do not in themselves constitute* virtue and happiness.¹⁷⁸ Being virtuous involves being disposed towards realizing proper functions as aspects of the natural order in relation to human beings, but failing to realize any proper function does not thereby frustrate or eliminate one's virtue (*OM* III.22). Why? Because only my judgments are in my control; everything else is entirely up to providence. Reason (particularly practical wisdom and moderation) dictates that, as a human being, I should pursue preferred indifferents and avoid dispreferred indifferents, but whether I succeed in doing so or not does not affect the quality of my reasoning or my possession of virtue (in particular, practical wisdom and moderation).

¹⁷⁶ As translated by R.D. Hicks.

¹⁷⁷ As translated by Raphael Woolf.

¹⁷⁸ Cicero also notes that it is through engagement with proper functions that one can come to realize the ultimate goodness of virtue and subsequently realize this disposition (*OM* III.20-1).

Things like life, bodily health, sensual pleasure, and wealth are then considered preferred indifferents, because, while their presence or absence does not dictate one's virtue and happiness, it is part of being human to be disposed towards possessing such things. Similarly, death, bodily disease, sensual pain, and poverty are things that we qua human are naturally disposed towards avoiding, even though they have no power to frustrate or rob us of virtue and happiness (DL VII.102-3, 106).¹⁷⁹

In fact, it is because the Stoics consider virtue qua rational disposition the only good and sole constituent of a happy life that their conception of happiness is uniquely durable. Where Aristotelian and more conventional conceptions of happiness can be frustrated or destroyed by a dearth or loss of external resources, Stoic happiness is invulnerable to such scenarios because the Stoics consider external things morally indifferent, and subsequently deny that they have any direct impact on happiness or unhappiness as means or constituents. A Stoic can maintain their happiness in the face of poverty, illness, and the loss of all their loved ones, so long as they are of virtuous character. Most notably though, the Stoics are famous for claiming that the virtuous person on the rack not only remains happy, but equally as happy on the rack as they are off it (III.42-5). Where Aristotle will argue that severe physical torture either diminishes or destroys the happiness of a virtuous person (*NE* VII.13.1153b19-22), the Stoics argue that such torture is wholly irrelevant. Physical torture is merely an instance of sensual pain, which is a dispreferred indifferent: something that a human being should naturally avoid, but something that is

¹⁷⁹ Here the concept of *oikeiosis*, which is a natural and evolving bond with certain objects as ends (e.g., self-preservation, the well-being of others, and virtue), plays an important role in the Stoic psychological and ethical framework. For discussion of *oikeiosis*, see L&S 57; DL VII.87-9; *OM* III.21-2, 62-71. For discussion of how *oikeiosis*, particularly the disposition towards self-preservation, relates to Spinoza's psychology and conception of the *conatus*, see 1.3 and Miller[a] (Ch.3).

nevertheless meaningless to their possession of virtue and happiness.¹⁸⁰ An important thing to note here is that the Stoics also deny (contra Aristotle) that (a) there is an intermediate state (e.g., self-control or natural virtue) between virtue and vice and (b) virtue and vice admit of degrees: “just as a stick must be either straight or crooked, so a man must be either just or unjust” (DL VII.127). A stick cannot be in a state that is neither straight nor crooked, nor can it be more-or-less straight or crooked. Similarly, one is either entirely virtuous qua rational or they are entirely vicious qua irrational - they cannot be between rationality and irrationality or be more-or-less rational or irrational. Because virtue constitutes happiness, this also means that happiness does not admit of degrees. I cannot be more-or-less happy – I either enjoy absolute happiness or I entirely lack happiness and suffer (even if I fail to appreciate my unhappiness). Virtue and vice thus have clear, fixed, and exclusive boundaries in relation to the human soul, which is purely rational and unified in nature for the Stoics, in contrast to the rational and non-rational aspects, and heterogeneous nature, that Aristotle attributes to the soul. It is arguably this difference in their respective conceptions of the soul that explains why the Stoics and Aristotle disagree over the existence of moral progress, the malleability of virtue, and the relationship between theory and practice.¹⁸¹ There is, however, some debate among the Stoics concerning the indestructability of virtue. Chrysippus thinks that, strictly-speaking, virtue can be taken away through intoxication or melancholy, that is some sort of external factor which impedes rational functioning.¹⁸² Cleanthes, in contrast, argues that the moral certainty provided by scientific

¹⁸⁰ External things, like torture, can make the achievement of virtue easier or harder, depending on the attitude one adopts towards them, but strictly-speaking they are not necessary to the achievement or frustration of virtue – rather, one’s moral attitudes or judgments are the deciding factor in this matter.

¹⁸¹ We will discuss their agreements and disagreements over the soul further in Ch. 5.

¹⁸² Long and Sedley speculate that Chrysippus only considers this impediment temporary; once achieved, virtue can never be permanently lost (385). In the case of intoxication, it is plausible to consider the impediment to rational functioning temporary, because one will ultimately return to a sober state. Melancholy is more

knowledge renders virtue indestructible (VII.127). For Chrysippus, then, happiness as virtue can be lost (at least temporarily), while for Cleanthes it is entirely invulnerable to circumstance. In either case, Stoic happiness has far greater durability than Aristotelian happiness, because there is little to nothing that can actually impede the former.

We do, however, see some agreement between the Stoics and Epicurus on the subject of the durability of happiness. Both think the wise person on the rack can remain happy due to mental, rather than bodily, considerations, which requires scientific understanding of nature. As well, both think there is a clear boundary upon which one's happiness cannot be increased, since Epicurus argues that freedom from bodily pain and mental disturbance represents peak happiness, and kinetic pleasures can only maintain (if they are necessary) or diversely express (if they are unnecessary) this state of being – such pleasures cannot increase it. On the other hand, they disagree over what constitutes happiness, and, in a certain respect, there may be room for degrees of katastematic pleasure in Epicurus's ethical framework. Firstly, for the Stoics happiness consists in reason, and appropriate pleasures (sensual or emotional) are merely necessary consequents of this state. In contrast, for Epicurus, katastematic pleasure constitutes happiness, and reason is merely a necessary means to such pleasure. Secondly, as we saw in 3.2, it may be possible to enjoy more-or-less happiness qua katastematic pleasure, if Epicurus (1) treats being happy (i.e., simply enjoying peace of mind) and being blessed (i.e., enjoying homeostasis *and* peace of mind) as distinct states and/or (2) thinks that parts of the mind or the body can be unimpeded in their functioning while other parts are impeded. If (1) and/or (2) are

complicated though, depending on whether it is understood as a temporary ailment or a full-blown mental illness that cannot be easily or completely eradicated. If the latter, Chrysippus may ultimately concede that virtue and happiness are not truly indestructible. Chrysippus's position may also imply that bodily states have a direct impact on mental well-being in a manner that conflicts with the status of the body as a genuine moral indifferent or the rational faculty as something truly within our complete control.

rejected, then Epicurus is much closer to the Stoics in his conception of happiness, because they will agree that happiness admits of absolutely no degrees, but at the very least Epicurus's framework leaves open a possibility for degrees of happiness that the Stoic framework does not, arguably because of their different conceptions of nature (one being hylomorphic and the other atomic – we will discuss this difference in Ch. 5). Ultimately, though, both agree (contra Aristotle) that a key feature of the durability of happiness lies in the mind's imperviousness to bodily misfortune. Spinoza, for his part, will side more with Aristotle than the Stoics and Epicurus on this subject, because (by virtue of Inter-Attributes Parallelism) he thinks the mind is no stronger or more durable than the body (see 5.4) and, as we will see in the next sections, one's virtue and happiness can be substantially increased and decreased.

In sum, for the Stoics virtue constitutes happiness through a healthy mind that makes correct judgments about the providential order of nature and the value of those things within that order. In their account of virtue, the Stoics place themselves in general agreement with Aristotle on the constitutive role of virtue qua reason in happiness and Epicurus in denying that theory is subordinate to practice and ascribing a central role to the mind in the durability of happiness. However, there is significant disagreement between Aristotle and the Stoics concerning the sense in which virtue constitutes happiness, the former equating happiness with virtuous *activities* and the latter only virtuous *dispositions*. Spinoza, whom we will turn to now, also considers virtue the constituent of happiness, although his views in this regard will be shown to be closer to those of Aristotle than the Stoics, because he attributes constitutive eudaimonistic value to intellectual activities and subsequently thinks that virtue and happiness admit of degrees.

4.4 Spinoza

Spinoza defines virtue (*virtus*) as “power [*potentiam*] . . . that is (Pr.7, III) . . . man’s very essence, or nature, in so far as he has power to bring about that which can be understood solely through the laws of his own nature” (*E* IVDef.8/G II 210). The references to IIP7 and “essence” tells us that by “nature” Spinoza means the conatus. He explicitly confirms this later, with his assertion that “the basis of virtue is th[is] very conatus to preserve one’s own being” (IVP18S). In 3.4 we discussed the conatus as an essential self-preservative striving and force that expresses one’s physical and intellectual power of activity. The first dimension of Spinozistic virtue, then, is being self-preserving or self-affirming.

By “power” (*potentia*) Spinoza fundamentally means *causal power*, bringing about or producing effects. The definition of virtue, however, qualifies that such effects must come “solely” from own’s nature qua conatus. This passage recalls Spinoza’s earlier description of being “active”: “when from our nature there follows in us or externally to us something which can be clearly and distinctly understood through our nature alone” (IIIDef.2). Virtue requires not simply playing a causal role in the production of an effect, whether within one’s own state of being or in the outside world, but rather being the *sufficient* cause or explanation of an effect. To be a sufficient cause is to be an adequate cause, while to be an inadequate cause (i.e., passive) is to play only a partial causal role in the production of an effect (IIIDef.1-2). To be virtuous is thus, in general, to be active and an adequate cause of internal or external effects, and to lack virtue in general is to be an inadequate cause of effects.

Two prime examples of effects that one can be the adequate or inadequate cause of are knowledge and emotions. In the realm of knowledge Spinoza draws a distinction between adequate and inadequate knowledge. The mind is an adequate cause, and active, when it has

adequate knowledge. Adequate knowledge is constituted by ideas that are rationally ordered (VP10) by the mind so as to reveal the necessary truth, or certainty, of their content, meaning the mind is responsible for its own understanding (IIP29S, 40, 44; IIP1). Examples of things we can know adequately (in Spinoza's philosophical framework) are: all that exists is contained within and caused by God or Nature qua substance (IP15, 18; IVPref.), God's eternal and infinite perfection entails that it is free of pleasure and pain (VP17), all events in Nature are determined (IP29, 33; IVApp.32), and Nature is not providential (IApp.; IVPref.). Inadequate knowledge, conversely, represents the inadequate causality of the mind. With inadequate knowledge I possess "confused" and "fragmentary" ideas (IIP1; VP3) that are constituted by the circumstantial and haphazard ways in which I have interacted with things in the world through the senses or secondhand sources (e.g., books or the opinions of others), meaning such ideas follow partly from the causal power of external things rather than from the intellectual resources of my mind alone (IIP29C-S; 40). Examples of inadequate, and false, ideas are: Nature is providential (IApp.; IVPref.), there are contingent, indeterminate events in Nature (IP29; VP6S), and we can please or displease God through our actions (IApp.; VP17). In the realm of emotions, as we saw in 3.4, Spinoza distinguishes between passive emotions (passions) and active emotions. Passions represent beneficial or harmful changes in my degree of power that are partly brought about by one or more external things (which involves inadequate ethical knowledge), making me an inadequate cause. Active emotions, on the other hand, represent exclusively beneficial changes in power (namely, desires and pleasures) that my nature brings about through its own power (namely, adequate ethical knowledge) without external assistance, making me an

adequate cause.¹⁸³ Virtue consequently expresses adequate causality through adequate knowledge as intellectual power and active emotions as stably self-empowering effects.

At this juncture, it is important to note that virtue for Spinoza is not a mere disposition, or potential, to act or produce effects. On the one hand, the conatus is that through which one “endeavours [*conatur*] to persist in [their] own being” and “to act [*agere*]” (IIIP7Proof/G II 146), with desire (the emotion that determines one to act) representing both the mental and bodily dimensions of this existential striving, and will representing the mental dimension of the conatus (IIIP9S). These details indicate that one is essentially disposed towards preserving their own existence through activities. As we discussed in 1.3, this point has important parallels with the Stoic concept of *oikeiosis*, specifically their assertion that our first impulse is towards self-preservation. Spinoza also talks about the conatus in terms of one’s power of activity (*agendi potentia*) or causal power to produce effects, which *prima facie* seems to mean one’s potential or capacity to produce effects and preserve their existence (IIIPost.1/G II 139). We know, however, that there are an infinite number of external forces that can impede this self-preservative disposition and capacity to act from being actualized in various circumstances and to varying degrees (IVP3-4).

On the other hand, Spinoza also describes the conatus as a “force of existence [*existendi vim*]” in the General Definition of Emotions (G II 203), which seems to imply that it is active (see also IIP45S; IVPref.; IVP3-4Proof, 7Proof, 26Proof). In fact, this makes sense when we consider what the source of the conatus is: God. An individual is a finite mode of God qua absolutely infinite substance, and their conatus “express[es] in a definite and determinate way the

¹⁸³ We will discuss what adequate causality might entail in the bodily realm in 5.4.

power of God whereby [it] is and acts” (IIP6Proof).¹⁸⁴ My power qua finite mode is a particular instantiation, or aspect, of God’s infinite self-affirmative power. Now, Spinoza is adamant that there is nothing potential about God’s power. He asserts that “from God’s supreme power or infinite nature an infinity of things [follows] in infinite ways, that is [absolutely] everything” that is logically possible, and “God’s omnipotence has from eternity been actual and will remain for eternity in the same actuality” (IP17S; see also IP31S). In this passage, Spinoza is explicitly criticizing those who claim that God only does some of what it is actually capable of, thus leaving much of its potential unrealized. On the contrary, Spinoza argues that a supremely (namely, ontologically/conceptually independent, infinite, and eternal) being would fully and always express its nature, because there is absolutely no intelligible limitation that can be placed on such a being to explain partial action. God’s power is therefore wholly actual, and insofar as we qua modes are expressions of this power, our power is actual and not potential (IP11Proofs 3 and 4, 16Proof, 36). The difference between God and an individual qua finite mode is that God produces infinitely many effects (through infinite and finite modes) and cannot be constrained in its causal power and existence, while an individual can (directly) produce only a finite number of effects and its causal power and existence can be constrained or promoted.¹⁸⁵ As Kisner puts it, power for Spinoza is not “like the power in a battery,” which can be “contained but untapped;”

¹⁸⁴ Here we will not delve into the subtle distinction that Spinoza may draw between *res singulares* as “individual things” (Shirley’s translation) or “singular things” (Curley’s translation [“Glossary” 697]) and *individua* as “individuals.” Shirley’s translation obscures the use of these two terms, but it is important to be aware that they are not necessarily identical. For discussion of *res singulares* vs. *individua*, see, e.g., Melamed[a] (72-9). At the very least, both terms refer to finite modes as subjects of causal power.

¹⁸⁵ Garrett[c] (364-68, 371) and Youpa[b] (128-33) argue that, because an individual qua finite mode is a particular instantiation of God’s self-affirmative power, there is a sense in which an individual, through the conatus as a self-affirmative force, can be said to conserve their own existence as an adequate cause, insofar as effects follow from their essence alone. In other words, through the conatus, each existing finite mode expresses, to some degree, God’s ontological, conceptual, and causal independence. A finite mode cannot bring themselves into existence, but they can, to some degree, *maintain* their existence through their own power, unless or until they are overwhelmed by contrary external forces.

instead, “every thing at every moment expresses its power as much as possible; we do not have the power to do anything, except what we actually do” (19-20). Therefore, when Spinoza refers to virtue as the power of the conatus, he does not simply mean that one is disposed towards affirming their existence and is capable of producing a certain number of effects, he means that one is *actually or successfully* affirming their existence and producing a certain number of effects. This point adds further support to Miller[a]’s argument (109-10, 119-20) that a crucial difference between Spinoza and the Stoics is that the self-preservative disposition of *oikeiosis* may or may not (and, in fact, should not) be actualized in every circumstance (e.g., the well-being of others and being in harmony with the providential order should take precedence over one’s own interests), whereas the conatus as self-preservative striving is always actualized and serves as the foundation of all ethical considerations (*DL* VII.87-9; L&S 57G; *OM* III.21-2, 62-71; *E* IVP18S, 20). One is virtuous insofar as they are acting as an adequate cause, not merely inclined to be or capable of acting as an adequate cause. That Spinoza conceives of virtue in this way can be seen in IVP18, where he claims that virtue “is nothing other than to *act* [*agere*] from the laws of one’s own nature [emphasis mine]” (G II 222). Consequently, when Spinoza refers to virtue he has in mind virtuous *activities*, not simply virtuous dispositions. This detail places Spinoza in stronger agreement with Aristotle than the Stoics, because the former also gives great ethical weight to virtuous activities, rather than mere dispositions.

With these considerations about power in mind, let us now examine what concrete virtues Spinoza considers important in his ethical framework. He claims that through virtue as adequate knowledge, or intellectual activity, one manifests “strength of mind” or “strength of character”

(*Fortitudinem*),¹⁸⁶ which consists of the primary virtues of courage or tenacity (*Animositatem*) and nobility (*Generositatem*).¹⁸⁷ Tenacity is active desire directed at truly promoting one's own well-being, and involves secondary virtues like self-control or moderation (*Temperantia*), sobriety (*Sobrietas*), and resourcefulness in danger (*animi in periculis praesentia*).¹⁸⁸ This desire represents self-oriented virtue. Nobility, conversely, is active desire directed at promoting the well-being of others through bonds of friendship, and involves secondary virtues like courtesy (*Modestia* [or *humanitas*]), mercy (*Clementia*), and honour (*Gloriam*).¹⁸⁹ This desire represents other-directed virtue (IIP59S/G II 188; see also IIP56S; IIIDef.Aff.38Expl., 30, 43; IVP58, 73S; IVApp.15). In terms of the relationship between these two primary virtues, Kisner (206) argues that nobility is ultimately a form of tenacity, while Youpa[b] argues tenacity and nobility are equally important and primary (178). In this outline, we can see that Spinoza has in mind much the same cardinal virtues as his ancient counterparts. He is explicit about the importance of moderation in bodily and emotional contexts, *animositas* and its dimension of proper behaviour in relation to danger refers to courage in the traditional sense, nobility is characterized by friendship and just and honourable conduct towards others, and because both tenacity and nobility are connected to adequate knowledge, they are both representative of wisdom.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Shirley translates *fortitudo* as "strength of mind," while Curley translates it as "strength of character" ("Glossary" 657).

¹⁸⁷ Shirley translates *animositas* as "courage," while Curley translates it as "tenacity" ("Glossary" 658). Here I favour Curley's translation of "tenacity," because I think it more robustly captures what Spinoza has in mind with this active emotion than the narrower, danger and risk-oriented, connotations of "courage."

¹⁸⁸ Kisner includes piety (*pietas*) and religion (*religio*) as forms of tenacity (201-2; see also *E* IVP37S1; VP41). Nadler[a] links *pietas* to nobility (Ch. 8).

¹⁸⁹ For comprehensive discussion of tenacity and/or nobility, see, e.g., Kisner (Ch. 7); Nadler[a] (Ch. 6, 8); Sharp's "Generosity as Freedom"; Youpa[b] (Ch. 9-10).

¹⁹⁰ In the literature there is debate about whether Spinoza or the ancient eudaimonists should be read as egoists, and if so how to reconcile their focus on personal happiness with moral concern for others. For proponents of the egoistic reading of Spinoza, see, e.g., Della Rocca[a] (Ch. 4-5); Kisner (Ch. 7); Nadler[a] (Ch. 2, 8); Youpa[b] (181). For criticism of this reading, see, e.g., Hübner (141-2); Sangiacomo (166n14). For criticism of eudaimonism as a form of egoism, see Annas[a] (Ch. 10-4). In any case, I do not think the eudaimonistic reading of Spinoza hinges on

Now that we have a general outline of how Spinoza's views on virtue should be characterized, we will examine virtue's relationship to happiness. Virtue and happiness are, for Spinoza, necessarily and intimately connected. He asserts that "virtue should be sought for its own sake, and there is nothing preferable to it or more to our advantage, for the sake of which it should be sought" (IVP18S). Virtue is then exclusively intrinsically valuable and the greatest possible good. It is not a means to anything else, it derives its value entirely from itself, and there is nothing more beneficial than it. Virtue qua adequate causality constitutes the general power of the conatus per se and adequate knowledge constitutes the mental dimension of this essential self-affirmative force, with nothing being more beneficial to the well-being of the conatus in general than its own self-affirming power and nothing more beneficial to the well-being of the mind in particular than its own intellectual power to know and acquire further knowledge. Like Aristotle and the Stoics, contra Epicurus, Spinoza considers virtue (particularly reason) intrinsically valuable due to naturalistic considerations (although, as 5.4 will show, Spinoza significantly differs from both in how he understands the relationship between one's mental and bodily nature). More generally, as we saw in 2.1.2, eudaimonistic happiness is characterized as exclusively intrinsically valuable and the greatest good. In ascribing such features to virtue, Spinoza is ultimately equating virtue with happiness: "virtue is the very conatus to preserve one's own being, and . . . happiness consists in a man's being able to preserve his own being" (IVP18S; see also IIP49S.1; IIP7Proof; VP42). To be happy is to live according to one's self-

the egoistic reading, even if the ancient eudaimonists are egoists. I consider the reasons I give for Spinoza's commitment to eudaimonism in Ch. 2 (i.e., Spinozistic happiness is a naturalistic, partly subjective, structurally stable, and exclusively intrinsically valuable good) sufficient to establish such a reading. Non-egoistic considerations concerning his conception of the individual and the collective could arguably be seen as another distinctive contribution to the eudaimonistic tradition based on naturalistic considerations, with this naturalistic foundation (in conjunction with the other core features discussed) keeping Spinoza meaningfully within this tradition.

affirmative nature through being the adequate cause of one's actions and emotions, such actions and emotions most notably following from adequate knowledge. Not only does Spinoza agree with Aristotle and the Stoics about the intrinsic value of virtue, then, but he also agrees with them (contra Epicurus) that happiness is constituted by virtue. Moreover, because Spinoza characterizes virtue in terms of intellectual *activities*, rather than mere dispositions, he places himself in the strongest agreement with Aristotle. Both argue that happiness lies, not merely in possessing a rational character, but more strongly in being able to successfully express one's intellectual nature through various activities.

It should be noted, however, that Spinoza distinguishes between two kinds of adequate knowledge: reason (*ratio*) and intuition (*scientia intuitiva*). Reason concerns adequate knowledge of general truths about God or Nature¹⁹¹ and intuition concerns adequate knowledge of the essences of beings insofar as they follow from God's nature (IIP40S2/G II 122), with intuition being considered superior due to the immediacy of its methodology and/or the particularity of its content (VP36S).^{192 193} Does this difference within the realm of adequate knowledge have an impact on Spinoza's conception of virtue and happiness? I argue yes. Spinoza (1) describes intuitive knowledge as "the highest [*Summus*] conatus of the mind and its highest [*summaque*] virtue" because it represents the greatest expression of intellectual power through adequate knowledge of how essences follow from God's nature (VP25/G II 296) and (2) equates intuition with blessedness as "the highest happiness [*summa felicitas*]" (IVApp.4/ G II

¹⁹¹ Examples of reason are knowledge that bodies in general share the features of Extension, motion and rest, and a fixed proportion amongst their constituent parts (IIDef.1; IIP13L2, 4-7; IIP37-9), while minds in general share the features of Thought, the constituent idea of a particular thing that actually exists, and ideas which are both prior to any other mode of thinking and inherently volitional (IIDef.3; IIAx.3; IIP1, 5, 11, 13, 49).

¹⁹² Examples of intuition are (a) knowledge of the particular ratio of motion and rest amongst corporeal parts that constitutes a particular body (IIP13Lemma1-Lemma7S) and (b) knowledge of the idea of an actually existing body that constitutes a human mind (IIP13).

¹⁹³ For discussion of the methodology and content of reason and intuition respectively, see, e.g., Soyarslan[c].

267); see also VP42Proof). If there is a *highest (summa)* form of virtue and a highest form of happiness, then there must be *lower* forms of virtue and happiness. The ethical supremacy of intuition follows from its epistemic supremacy as the greatest expression of adequate knowledge. But intuition is not the only kind of adequate knowledge, and Spinoza equates virtue in general with adequate knowledge in the mental realm, not intuition specifically. These details indicate that Spinoza considers reason sufficient to constitute virtue and happiness, since it is also an expression of the mind's adequate causal power (IVP24). If I am right in reading Spinoza this way, he then allows for two kinds and levels of virtue and happiness: rational and intuitive. Rational virtue is inferior to intuitive virtue, and rational happiness inferior to intuitive happiness (i.e., blessedness), due to the epistemic and causal inferiority of reason with respect to intuition, but both are genuine expressions of the self-sufficient power and well-being of the conatus. Consequently, Spinoza also agrees with Aristotle that there are two kinds and levels of happiness, the nature and hierarchy between them being grounded in epistemic considerations.¹⁹⁴

These two kinds of happiness, however, (contra Aristotle) do not constitute a distinction between the practical and theoretical domains of knowledge and virtue. For Spinoza, the individual is essentially unified in body and mind, will and intellect, and reason and emotion. In IIP7S, Spinoza argues that mind and body are two strictly corresponding aspects of the same underlying thing, and are thus identical and equal (a point we will discuss further in 5.4). As

¹⁹⁴ As we saw in 3.4, the affective dimension of intuitive happiness is intuitive self-contentment and intellectual love of God. What would the affective dimension of rational happiness be? Like its intuitive counterpart, Spinoza thinks that reason has its own forms of self-contentment (IVP52) and love towards God (VP15-20). Both affections are active pleasures, although it is not clear if they can have non-transitional forms insofar as they accompany reason. If reason is only linked to transitional pleasures, rational happiness may lack the stability (c) to be eudaimonistic. With that said, it is not incoherent to think that reason involves non-transitional pleasure like blessedness, since reason is still, in itself, an (albeit lesser) expression of intellectual power which can include a non-transitional affective dimension. For discussion of how self-contentment corresponds with the three kinds of knowledge, see Carlisle (Ch. 6). For discussion of the differences between rational love of God (*amor dei*) and intellectual love of God (*amor dei intellectualis*), see Nadler[f].

Ravven argues (see 1.1), and as we saw above with the discussion of the *conatus qua* power, the true ontological foundation here is the self-affirmative activity of being, which constitutes both God and individuals as modes of God (8, 13-4). In the mental realm, Spinoza argues that will as volitions and intellect as ideas are not distinct faculties, but are instead “one and the same,” with all volitions being constituted by ideas and all ideas being inherently volitional (IIP49; see also IP32; IIAx.3; IIP48). In other words, all ideas (to varying degrees) express mental activity as inadequate or adequate knowledge, which strictly corresponds with some sort of bodily activity, thus promoting one’s self-affirmative nature. There are no thoughts in the mind then which are wholly passive or detached from one’s overall well-being. Since one’s essence *qua conatus* is self-affirmative striving, with will *qua* idea representing the mental dimension of this striving and desire representing both the mental and bodily dimensions, knowledge and emotion are inseparable, as well. As we saw in 3.4, ethical knowledge is either constituted by or a consequent of emotions, namely, desire, pleasure, and pain. Contra Plato and Aristotle, and in line with the Stoics, Spinoza does not consider emotion and reason (taken in the general, non-Spinozistic, sense) distinct aspects of one’s nature. There can be then no (inadequate or adequate) ethical knowledge without emotion or emotion without ethical knowledge – emotion is cognitive and ethical knowledge is affective (IVP8, 14).

It is not just direct knowledge of pleasure (good) and pain (evil) that is ethically relevant, but also metaphysical, epistemological, and psychological knowledge. In the *TIE*, Spinoza discusses the importance of scientific knowledge of Nature, education, medicine, and mechanics to the intellectual well-being and perfection of the mind, with any science that does not contribute to this end being dismissed (~13-6). Similarly, in IIPref. of the *Ethics* he declares that his metaphysical inquiries into God and human beings and epistemological inquiries into divine

and human knowledge, in Parts I-II, are for the sake of blessedness (see also IIP49S.1/G II 135-6). His psychological inquiries into the nature of the conatus and emotions in Part III serve as the foundation for the ethical framework he outlines in Parts IV-V. In Part IV, Spinoza outlines the complex ways in which inadequate ideas qua passions determine one's behaviour in good and bad ways, and in Part V how reason (*ratio*) can weaken or eliminate harmful passions to promote active emotions and one's overall well-being. At the heart of these inquiries is the notion that the mind's well-being is impeded insofar as it lacks knowledge through inadequate ideas, leading to passions like fear, hatred, melancholy, and excessive love that cause pain (and thus impede the conatus) through mistaken beliefs concerning things like the emotions of God (IP16, 29; IApp.; VP17), the contingency of events (IP29; IVApp.32; VP6), free will (IP32; IIP48; VP5), and the intrinsic goodness or badness of various external objects (IVPref.; IVP42-5; IVApp.19; VP10, 20S). Reason has therapeutic power to correct these beliefs, leading to stable intellectual and physical self-empowerment through certainty of natural truths and active emotions that determine one's activities. Furthermore, Soyarslan[b] (517-8; see also Soyarslan[a] 250-7) argues that intuition holds the same therapeutic power for Spinoza, but is more effective than reason due to its epistemic superiority in revealing our direct being in God through the conatus (IIP47S; IVApp.4; VP38, 42). There is no legitimate ground in Spinoza's philosophy for considering the theoretical and practical distinct (except conceptually), because the practical considerations of self-affirmative power/pleasure are equally expressed through mind and body, there are no modes of the mind devoid of volition, and both reason and intuition cover the theoretical dimension of understanding and the practical dimension of self-empowerment

through affective determination qua active pleasure. Rational virtue/happiness and intuitive virtue/happiness are thus both practical and theoretical in nature.¹⁹⁵

Here we see that Spinoza agrees with Epicurus and the Stoics, contra Aristotle, that theoretical knowledge cannot be divorced from, or considered superior to, the practical knowledge which is associated with emotions and actions that promote well-being. For all three, I do not and should not learn about the nature and structure of the universe, and those beings within it, simply for the sake of knowing, with no appeal to how this knowledge relates to my life and happiness. On the contrary, I cultivate knowledge of nature because of the power it has to therapeutically remove suffering (e.g., anger and fear) that is caused by ignorance or false beliefs concerning things like divinity and death, and to promote healthy desires, actions, and pleasures based on scientific understanding of the nature of things (including myself). Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza agree with Aristotle that we can take joy in scientific understanding, and the Stoics and Spinoza more specifically agree with Aristotle that scientific understanding is a constituent of happiness, but the former deny that such knowledge can be divorced from, or treated as more important than, the practical considerations of life. Life does not merely revolve

¹⁹⁵ While reason and intuition have both practical and theoretical dimensions, this is not to say that they have *equal value* theoretically or practically. Because intuition involves immediate grasping of particular truths concerning essences (most notably, one's own essence), such knowledge arguably offers more precise theoretical understanding of things and greater affective determination qua active pleasure than reason with respect to promoting one's self-affirmative power, making intuitive knowledge more ethically valuable than rational knowledge. In other words, the person who enjoys intuitive happiness has greater intellectual power and pleasure, is less determined by passions, and is able to acquire more internal (i.e., self-affirmative power in general and rational/intuitive adequate knowledge in particular) and external (i.e., reliable empowering relationships to other things) goods than the person who merely enjoys rational happiness (*E* IVApp.4; VP25, 27 36S, 38-40, 42). With that said, it may be the case that intuition, on its own, does not involve adequate knowledge of good and evil in its content or offer ethical prescriptions – such things may be restricted to the domain of reason (Soyarslan[d] 70-3). I leave these finer points concerning the ethical relationship between reason and intuition for detailed discussion elsewhere. For the purposes of this comparative analysis of Spinoza and his fellow eudaimonists on the subject of virtue and happiness, it is sufficient to establish that Spinoza shares with Aristotle a dual account of happiness on epistemic grounds but rejects the separation of or a subordinate relationship between theoretical reason and practical reason.

around facilitating contemplation of scientific truths (even for philosophers); rather, such contemplation is intimately connected to, and directly influences, one's emotions and actions, and is valued because of this relationship to one's nature. In other words, Aristotle is the only eudaimonist here who argues that theoretical knowledge is, to any degree, truly independent of and superior to practical knowledge, because, contra the Stoics and Spinoza, he considers reason and emotion distinct and, contra Epicurus, he considers reason the core constituent of happiness.

However, Spinoza agrees with Aristotle that there are degrees of virtue and happiness. Recall that we talked about how one's self-affirmative power can be increased and decreased through pleasure and pain, respectively. These changes in power are possible because, as individuals, we are necessarily finite (IIDef.7), meaning we are always subject to limitations by other beings of the same (thinking or extended) nature (IDef.2). This finitude has important consequences for the conatus. Because we are finite "[t]he force [*vis*] whereby [an individual] persists in existing is limited, and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes" (IVP3/G II 212). As a finite being, I am always subject to external causation, and therefore can never be an absolute adequate cause like God qua substance, who exists and acts independently of any external forces (IP17).¹⁹⁶ My existence is dependent on an infinite causal chain of other beings (finite and infinite), most notably my family line qua finite modes, natural laws concerning mind and body qua infinite modes, and ultimately God qua substance (IDef.5, IP14-18, 21-8; IIIPref.). Moreover, Spinoza argues that my body necessarily relies on many different kinds of external things to maintain its existence and act in a variety of ways, and my mind would have very little intellectual power if I did not engage with things in the outside world (IVP18, 45S;

¹⁹⁶ In fact, there are no forces external to God, since everything else that exists is a mode of God (*E* IP15).

IVApp.27).¹⁹⁷ For me to exist and play a causal role in many effects requires a plethora of external causes, which can promote and hinder my existence and scope of activity in complex ways. As a result, I am qua finite being necessarily an inadequate cause, and thus passive.

However, I am not purely passive, because through existing my conatus grants me some degree of self-affirmative causal power. Consequently, I exist on a spectrum between absolute passivity (the absence of power or nothingness) and absolute activity (the complete, unrestricted power of God qua Being). According to Spinoza, however, I can change my position on this spectrum.¹⁹⁸ He states that “the more [*pluribus*] the mind has inadequate ideas, the *more* it is subject to passive states . . . on the other hand, it is the more [*plura*] active in proportion as it has a greater number of adequate ideas” (IIP1C/G II 141; see also VP40). I become more active, and less passive, insofar as I acquire adequate knowledge, and thus become more of an adequate cause and more able to successfully affirm my existence.¹⁹⁹ At the very least, I start off with adequate knowledge of the essence of God as thinking and extended being, which in turn allows me to derive further adequate knowledge through common notions concerning mind and body, and ultimately reach intuitive knowledge of the essences of various modes (including myself) that follow from God’s nature (IIP37-40, 45-7; VP22-4, 28-30).²⁰⁰ I am thus both passive and active to different degrees, and these degrees are not fixed. Since virtue and happiness are constituted by adequate causality, and my degree of adequate causality can change, I can

¹⁹⁷ We will discuss these points further in 5.4. In 5.4, we will discuss (1) how the mind is just as subject to external forces as the body, and thus does not have an ontological advantage over the latter in this regard and (2) the necessary and direct impact that external things have on one’s degree of physical and intellectual virtue and happiness for Spinoza.

¹⁹⁸ I use “can” here in a sense that is compatible with Spinoza’s necessitarian conception of the causal order of the universe, and which does not imply indeterminate acts of will distinct from ideas.

¹⁹⁹ We will discuss the nature of the activity of the body, and its power to make itself more active, in 5.4.

²⁰⁰ For discussion of what we can know adequately, or in what sense we can have adequate knowledge, see, e.g., Aaron Garrett (Ch. 1-3 and 7); Kisner (Ch. 1); Marshall’s “Man is a God to Man”; Sangiacomo (Ch. 4-5).

therefore be more-or-less virtuous and happy. Spinoza confirms this when he asserts that “the more [one] is conscious of [oneself] and God” through intuitive ideas “the more perfect [i.e., active] and blessed [one] is” (VP31S; see also VP40). I can increase my blessedness, and thus make myself happier, insofar as I acquire intuitive knowledge and increase my intellectual power. For Spinoza, happiness is then dual and scalar in nature. There are two different kinds and levels of happiness qua self-affirmative power, namely rational happiness and intuitive happiness, and each kind of happiness in itself can be enjoyed to varying degrees.

Here we see notable agreement between Spinoza and Aristotle (contra the Stoics and possibly Epicurus), because both acknowledge hierarchical levels and degrees of happiness which are based on distinctions concerning our intellectual nature and the superiority of certain intellectual activities over others. Soyarslan[b], however, notes that Spinoza restricts wisdom as true understanding to eternal truths (any awareness of contingency coming from the imagination qua experiential knowledge), whereas Aristotle posits a practical dimension of wisdom qua understanding that deals with contingent truths (507-9).²⁰¹ As a result, for Spinoza, there is no kind of happiness that is directly constituted by knowledge of contingency.²⁰² Furthermore, because he thinks reason and intuition are both theoretical and practical in nature, eternal truths

²⁰¹ Soyarslan[b] uses this, and two other points, to argue against an Aristotelian contemplative reading of Spinoza. Firstly, his substance monism entails a closer relationship between humans and the divine (505-7). Secondly, as we discussed above, the mind is not divided into practical and theoretical parts (510-2). By virtue of these three points, Soyarslan argues that Spinoza’s ethical framework is instead closer to a Platonic contemplative ideal (517-21). While there is truth to the latter claim, as we will see in 5.4, Spinoza considers bodily activity equally constitutive of happiness as contemplative activity, meaning this highest good is not purely intellectual as it is for Plato (or Aristotle and the Stoics).

²⁰² This is not to say however that the imagination in general, and durational and/or contingent thinking in particular, has no positive place or value in Spinoza’s ethical framework; see, e.g., Kisner (Ch. 9); Steinberg’s “Following a *Recta Ratio Vivendi*.” Most notably, Spinoza’s “right way of living” (IV App./G II 266) or “right method of living” (VP10S/G II 287), in Latin *recta ratio vivendi*, is grounded in the dictates of reason as universal ethical prescriptions, with these prescriptions being applied to particular (durational) situations through imaginative knowledge (although imagination may not interact directly with intuition; see *E* IIP40S2, 47; VP36S; Ep 12/G II Soyarslan[d] 70-2). I thank Hasana Sharp and Sanem Soyarslan for encouraging me to clarify this point.

have direct value in shaping emotion and action, and there is also no true kind of happiness that is purely theoretical, either.

In this section, we have seen that Spinoza agrees and disagrees with his fellow eudaimonists in three central ways concerning virtue. Firstly, all four consider virtue as reason necessary for living a happy life. If one does not possess rational characteristics, they will be unable to naturally and stably flourish in life. Secondly, Spinoza agrees with Aristotle and the Stoics that happiness is, in fact, *constituted* by virtue. This view places them in strong opposition to Epicurus, the latter of whom considers virtue only a necessary means to happiness – not a constituent of it. Finally, Spinoza notably agrees with Aristotle (contra Epicurus and the Stoics) that happiness is constituted by virtuous activities and admits of degrees and two kinds/levels, while nevertheless siding with Epicurus and the Stoics (contra Aristotle) in denying the independence and superiority of theoretical knowledge in relation to practical knowledge.

Conclusion

In this chapter we examined Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza's respective views on virtue. Aristotle outlines two accounts of happiness as virtuous rational activity: theoretical happiness, which is constituted by activities of theoretical wisdom, and practical happiness, which is constituted by activities of practical wisdom and character virtue. Epicurus considers virtue merely a necessary means to happiness as a katastematically pleasant life. The Stoics place happiness in virtuous dispositions, with all else being morally indifferent (albeit with some things being naturally preferable or undesirable). Finally, Spinoza conceives of virtue and happiness as self-affirmative power, which is expressed through adequate causality in general and adequate knowledge in particular.

All four eudaimonists consider virtue, in particular being wise (i.e., rational), courageous, moderate, and just, necessary for living a happy human life. Where they crucially differ is on the role of virtue in happiness and the relationship between the theoretical and practical dimensions of virtue. Spinoza sides with Aristotle and the Stoics (contra Epicurus) in arguing that happiness is constituted by virtue, and more specifically with Aristotle (contra the Stoics) that virtuous activities constitute happiness and one can be more-or-less virtuous and happy with respect to their (namely, intellectual) activities. However, Spinoza agrees with Epicurus and the Stoics (contra Aristotle) that theoretical understanding is inseparable from, and subordinate to, practical understanding, since theory has therapeutic power to remove harmful beliefs and emotions and to promote healthy emotions and actions. Ultimately, taking into consideration this chapter and Ch. 3, we see both Aristotelian and Epicurean dimensions to Spinoza's conception of happiness, insofar as he considers virtuous activity (i.e., adequate self-affirmative causal power) and non-transitional pleasure (i.e., active love of God/self-contentment) coextensive (if not identical) constituents of the happy life.

In the next chapter, we will discuss each eudaimonist's views on the body and its relationship to the mind. This analysis will further flesh out Spinoza's conception of virtue (as something equally intellectual and corporeal in nature), serve as a foundational factor in explaining many of the agreements and disagreements between Spinoza and his fellow eudaimonists discussed in this chapter and Ch. 3, and ultimately reveal that Spinoza's distinctive contribution to the eudaimonistic tradition is the ontological and ethical identity and equality he attributes to body and mind through the foundation of self-affirmative power.

Chapter 5: Body

Introduction:

In this chapter we will explore Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza's respective accounts of the body. Historically, the ontological and ethical relationship between corporeal being and intellectual being in general, and body and mind in particular, has been a major object of debate among philosophers. Ontologically, we might say that intellectual and corporeal being are (1) distinct, (2) identical, or (3) that one is in some sense dependent on the other. Ethically, there is concern with establishing whether corporeal (e.g., bodily health, external things, and passions) or intellectual (e.g., mental health, knowledge, and rational emotions) things (i) constitute happiness, (ii) function as necessary means to happiness, or (iii) play no necessary or direct role in happiness.²⁰³

Ontologically, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics argue for some sort of inequality and hierarchy between corporeal being and intellectual being, namely that one is in some sense dependent on the other for its being and existence. Ethically, all three agree that intellectual goods are superior to corporeal goods, making the mind more valuable than the body in promoting a happy life, thereby committing each of them to some form of ethical intellectualism. In the previous two chapters, we saw Spinoza's strong agreement with at least one of these three ancient eudaimonists in opposition to the others. Ch. 3 discussed the affinities between Epicurus and Spinoza, contra Aristotle and the Stoics, concerning the dual nature of pleasure and its constitutive role in happiness. Ch. 4 revealed Aristotle and Spinoza's shared view that happiness, contra Epicurus and the Stoics, is partly constituted by virtuous rational activities and admits of

²⁰³ This list of ontological and ethical concerns is by no means exhaustive, but is simply meant to capture certain key debates which will arise between Spinoza and his fellow eudaimonists.

degrees and two different kinds/levels. On the subject of corporeal being and intellectual being, as we will see in what follows, Spinoza also shares common-ground with his fellow eudaimonists in certain respects. Ontologically, he agrees with Aristotle that intellectual being is a fundamental constituent of reality and divinity and irreducible to corporeal being, and he agrees with Epicurus and the Stoics that corporeal being is a fundamental constituent of reality and divinity and irreducible to intellectual being. Ethically, he shares with all three the view that happiness is mental in nature, Aristotle and Epicurus the view that bodily goods (contra the Stoics) play a direct and necessary role in happiness, and Epicurus the view that happiness is both bodily and mental in nature.

However, my purpose in this chapter will be to argue that Spinoza has certain crucial ontological and ethical disagreements with his fellow eudaimonists concerning the body, because in his mature philosophy he does not endorse reductive ontological materialism/idealism or reductive ethical intellectualism.²⁰⁴ On the contrary, Spinoza (through the combination of his Substance Monism, Attributes Pluralism, Inter-Attributes Parallelism, and Conatus Doctrine) provides a unique contribution to the eudaimonistic tradition with his view that body and mind are ontologically and ethically equal, meaning that neither kind of being is dependent on, or less valuable than, the other. Reality and happiness are thus, for Spinoza, equally corporeal and intellectual in nature.

²⁰⁴ While I deny that Spinoza is an ethical intellectualist in his mature philosophy, I leave open the possibility that he embraced ethical intellectualism in earlier works like the *TIE* and *KV*. For discussion of Spinoza's philosophical development with respect to ethical intellectualism, see, e.g., Sangiacomo's *Reason, Passions, & the Supreme Good*.

5.1: Aristotle

Aristotle's conception of reality in general, and mind and body in particular, is grounded in his account of what he calls "substance" (*ousia*). In the primary sense, he describes a substance as (1) "that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject" (*C* 5.2a14; see also *Meta* Δ.8.1017b23-4), (2) "a this something, [which] is also separable" (*Meta* Δ.8.1017b24-5; see also *C* 5.3b10-2), and (3) that without which "it would be impossible for any of the other things [in reality] to exist" (*C* 5.2b5-6).²⁰⁵ A substance is an ultimate subject, like this individual table, this individual rock, or this individual human being (let's call the latter Hypasia). While I can attribute a variety of things as properties, such as a genus (animal), species (human being), or height (tall) to Hypasia, Hypasia is not herself a property. Instead, she is exclusively a thing that possesses certain (essential and nonessential/accidental) properties. Furthermore, if there were no individuals like Hypasia to possess the property of being an animal, being a human being, or being tall, then these properties could not exist in the world. Anything that is not exclusively a subject must be a property of a subject, and thus ontologically dependent on a subject.²⁰⁶ The subject, however, insofar as they are exclusively a subject, does not depend on anything else for their existence, which makes them "separable." As an exclusive subject of predication, then, a substance is ontologically independent or self-subsisting and a fundamental constituent of reality. Epicurus and Spinoza, as we will see in 5.2 and 5.4 respectively, also subscribe to this basic

²⁰⁵ For discussion of the relationship between the (seemingly early) *Categories* account of substance and the (seemingly later and more sophisticated) *Metaphysics* account of substance, see, e.g., Cohen's "Substances"; Loux's "Aristotle: Metaphysics"; Shields[a] (Ch. 4 and 6).

²⁰⁶ I say "exclusively a subject," because Aristotle grants that there can be things which are both subjects of predication and predicates, namely genera and species. In fact, he refers to them as "secondary substances" because, while they are dependent on individuals to exist, genera and species (as essential properties) are not "in" anything (*C* 5.2a15-9; 2b8-3a20).

account of substance, although they will differ from Aristotle in their views on what kinds of things fall into the category of substance.

Aristotle outlines three kinds of substance: (a) perceptible, mortal substance, (b) perceptible, eternal substance, and (c) imperceptible, eternal substance, with (a) and (b) covered by natural science and (c) metaphysics or first philosophy (*Meta* Λ.1.1069a29-33; 6.1071b2-4).

Imperceptible, eternal substance is immaterial, which makes it changeless and purely actual, and the ultimate source of all other substantial and non-substantial (but determinate) being. God is described as an imperceptible substance,²⁰⁷ namely an eternally self-subsisting being of pure intellectual activity. This being is, in turn, argued to be responsible (as an unmoved mover) for the intrinsically good structure and order of the universe, namely the five elements of aether, fire, water, air, and earth, the celestial bodies of the superlunary realm, and the various mortal individuals of the sublunary realm, through final causation as an object of desire (Λ.6-7, 10).²⁰⁸ According to Aristotle, God's characteristic activity is "active understanding of active understanding," meaning God primarily or simply reflects on itself as thinking being (*Meta* Λ.9.1074b33-4).²⁰⁹ The Aristotelian God is neither a creator nor a purposeful craftsman. It is not a creator because the universe is partly constituted by prime matter, the eternal, featureless, and purely potential substratum upon which all perceptible things come to be and which persists

²⁰⁷ Aristotle indicates that there may be multiple gods that are unmoved movers (*Meta* Λ 8.1073a33-1074a16), although he also speaks of a "primary" unmoved mover, so these beings (if they exist) do not seem to be equal in cosmological and divine status (1074a32-8). Since Aristotle also refers to the celestial bodies (which are not unmoved movers) as gods, he is in any case not straightforwardly presenting himself as a monotheist (*NE* VI.7.1141b1-3; *OH* II.1, 3, 12.292b31-2; *Physics* II.4.196a34; *Meta* Λ 8.1074a30, 39-1074b10). For simplicity's sake, since my discussion of cosmological and theological details is for the sake of contextualizing Aristotle's views on the body, I will simply focus on God as the primary unmoved mover. For discussion of Aristotle's theology and cosmology, see, e.g., Broadie's "Heavenly Bodies"; Loux (177-81); Reece's "Aristotle on Divine"; Menn's "Aristotle's Theology."

²⁰⁸ For Aristotle's rich discussion of cosmology, see *Physics*, *On the Heavens*, and *Metaphysics* Λ.

²⁰⁹ For discussion of how God may be understood to contemplate essences and universals, see, e.g., Loux (179-80).

through all changes within the universe (*Physics* I.8.192a31; *Meta* Z.3.1029a7-26; H.1.1042a27-8; A.2, 3.35-6).²¹⁰ God does not bring prime matter into being; instead, it only shapes prime matter into the abovementioned things that exist in the universe.²¹¹ However, in contrast to Plato's description of God in the *Timaeus* as a craftsman who purposefully shapes matter according to a plan (27dff), Aristotle's God does not shape matter intentionally. As a being of absolute perfection and goodness, God serves as an object of desire in the sense that prime matter is compelled to approximate God's nature in various ways through the actualization of various kinds of beings (that prime matter has the ultimate potential to hold the existence of). The celestial bodies approximate God through eternal circular motion (*Physics* VIII.7-9; *OH* II.3, 5, 8-9; *Meta* A.6.1071b10-1; 7.1071a18-23) and (possibly) contemplative activity (*Meta* A.7.1072a18-36),²¹² mortal beings in general through the eternal perpetuation of their species (*OS* II.415a23-415b8; *GA* II.1.731b24-732a1), and human beings in particular through the eternal perpetuation of their species, realization of basic intellectual activity, and reflection on eternal truths (*NE* X.7-8; see also *OH* II.12.29a19-292b24). God, as a purely actual, intellectual qua reflective, and immaterial substance, is thus the ultimate kind of being and the ultimate (albeit unintentional) source of all other substances and those things which are ontologically dependent on them. All four eudaimonists consider divine being to represent the ultimate kind of being, but Epicurus (as we will see in the next section) separates himself from Aristotle, the Stoics, and Spinoza in denying that the universe is dependent on or created by divine being.

²¹⁰ It is important to note that Aristotle is committed to a plenum, meaning there is no empty space qua extended being that is devoid of matter (*Physics* IV).

²¹¹ It is not clear if Aristotle thinks of prime matter as a genuine entity, since he considers the universe eternal (meaning there was no point in time where prime matter existed per se, free of God's influence as an unmoved mover) and prime matter is by nature devoid of any intrinsic properties that would render it a determinate being. For discussion of this topic, see, e.g., Lewis (178-80).

²¹² For discussion of whether the celestial bodies reflect, and if so, how this compares with human reflection, see, e.g., Reece's "Aristotle on Divine."

Both eternal and mortal perceptible substances, in contrast to God, are partly material in nature. More precisely they are constituted by a combination of matter (*hyle*) and form (*morphe*), a position which is often referred to as “hylomorphism” (*Physics* I.7; *Meta* Z.7-9; H.1.1042a25-30). Matter is the basic stuff out of which perceptible substances are made. Prime matter, as mentioned above, is featureless and in a state of pure potentiality, which makes it inherently passive. For matter to become determinate beings like the five elements, celestial bodies, and mortal individuals, it requires something which is in a state of actuality, and thus active, to shape it into such things. Form is this active something. It is the essence of a being which is imposed on matter to bring that being into existence as a particular kind of thing (H.6.1045a23-4; 1045b17-8; Z.7.1032b1-2).²¹³ It is also important to note that by “form” Aristotle does not mean Platonic Forms, self-subsisting beings that exist outside of matter but are in some way imitated by the latter (*Republic* V-VII; *Symposium* 204a-205a; 210e-211e). Aristotelian forms always manifest themselves in and through matter (Z 8.1033b27-1034a8).²¹⁴ Ultimately, matter functions as the passive principle (that which is on acted on) and form the active principle (that which acts on something else) in the constitution of perceptible substances. The celestial bodies are perceptible substances which are eternal. They are eternal because they are constituted by *aether* as a kind of enformed matter (*OH* I.2-3). Mortal perceptible substances, in contrast, are constituted by complex kinds of enformed matter which arise from air, fire, water, and earth, such kinds being necessary to support certain forms (*GC* II.3, 8; *Physics* II.1; *OH* I.3; *Meta* Z.8-

²¹³ Strictly-speaking, there are two kinds of forms, substantial and accidental. Substantial forms impose essences onto matter, bringing particular kinds of substances into being. Accidental forms, in contrast, allow a substance to take on certain nonessential properties. In this chapter I will not discuss accidental forms. Consequently, when I refer to “form” I mean “substantial form.”

²¹⁴ In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle considers matter, form, and the compound of matter and form potential candidates for substance (Z 3.1029a2-5), but ultimately argues that form represents substance in the primary sense (Z 5-7, 11), because matter has no determinate being without form (3.1029a10-29) and the matter-form compound exists posterior to both matter and form (1029a29-31). For further discussion of this subject, see, e.g., Cohen’s “Substances”; Lewis’s “Form and Matter”; Loux’s “Aristotle: Metaphysics”; Shields[a] (Ch.2 and 6.6).

9, 11 H.4.1044a26-9). For example, you cannot have a table as an existing matter-form compound without certain kinds of matter, like wood or metal, on which the form of table can be imposed to actualize such a substance. Similarly, you cannot have a human being qua perceptible substance without “flesh and bones” qua enformed matter (Z.11.1036b3-4). According to Aristotle, substances that share the same genera and species will be individuated based on their matter, rather than their form. We can consider Hypasia and Sappho distinct human substances insofar as the form of human is contained within different instances of flesh and blood as parcels of matter (8.1034a5-8).²¹⁵ Aristotle’s hylomorphic account of perceptible substances relies then on the combination of an immaterial, active principle and a material, passive principle.

With this general account of the main kinds of substances in mind, let us now discuss how Aristotle distinguishes between non-living and living substances (at least in the mortal realm). Those substances that are living have a soul, while those that are non-living do not.²¹⁶ Aristotle describes a soul as “the form of a natural body having life potentially in it” (*OS* II.1.412a20-1; see also *Meta* Z.10.1035b14-6) and “an actuality of the first kind” (*OS* II.1.412a27). A soul is, first and foremost, a special kind of form. When imposed on particular kinds of matter that have the potential to sustain life functions, this form will actualize these functions in matter, thereby constituting an existing living substance. We saw above that form, as an active principle, is associated with actuality, rather than potentiality. When talking about the soul, Aristotle offers a more precise account of actuality, drawing a distinction between *first* actuality and *second* actuality. First actuality is the mere possession of a capacity, like possessing

²¹⁵ For richer, more nuanced, discussion of Aristotle’s account of matter and form, in themselves and as a compound, see, e.g., Lewis’s “Form and Matter” and Shields[a] (Ch. 2, 6-7).

²¹⁶ Aristotle primarily talks about souls in the context of mortal substances. For discussion of whether God, or the celestial bodies, both of whom are said to be living (*OH* II.2.285a28-30; 12.292a19-292b1; *Meta* Λ.7.1072b27-9), have souls, see, e.g., Cohoe’s “Living Without a Soul”; Wolfson[c].

the capacity to engage in rational (namely, deliberative or reflective) activities. Second actuality, in contrast, is the actual use or exercise of a capacity through a realized activity (412a10-1). As we saw in the previous chapter, Aristotle argues that happiness resides not simply in the mere capacity or disposition to be rational as a first actuality, but rather the second actuality of *performing* deliberative and/or reflective activities. According to the above description, however, the soul is a first actuality, meaning it consists in the mere possession of certain life functions qua capacities, which one may or may not realize as a second actuality through activities characteristic of life.

What are these life functions that characterize a soul? Foundationally, Aristotle argues that all souls, and thus all living things with functioning bodies, have the capacities of nutrition and reproduction. Their particular enformed qua ensouled body allows such beings to nourish themselves with food to sustain their existence and fully develop as an organism. As well, they are also capable of perpetuating their species (*OS* II.1.412a14; 4.415a23-415b8). The paradigm example of an organism with a nutritive faculty of soul is plants. A sunflower, with sufficient sunlight, soil, and water, will be able to grow from a seed to a full-blown flower and sustain its existence so long as it has these resources to nourish itself. It will also be able to release seeds that allow for the production of further sunflowers under the appropriate nutritional conditions. There are other major faculties of soul however, as life functions, that plants do not possess – namely, sensation, appetite, and thinking (*II*.2.413a26-34; *NE* I.7.1097b34-1098a2).²¹⁷ Animals possess nutrition, sensation, and appetite. Sensation and appetite are closely related because Aristotle argues that each sense has its own pleasurable/painful objects, and pleasures/pains

²¹⁷ Aristotle also lists locomotion as a faculty of soul, although he seems to consider it less central than the others, since not all animals possess locomotion, but nutrition, sensation, and appetite are necessary to classify such beings under this genus (*OS* II.2.413a2-4; 3.414a30-1).

entail desires, namely to pursue pleasurable objects and avoid painful objects (*OS* II.2.413b1-9; 3.414b1-15; *NE* I.7.1098a3-4). Not only do creatures like dogs and cats, for example, have bodies with nutritional and reproductive capacities, but they also have sensory apparatus, desires, pleasures, and pains relative to their species. Anyone who has a dog or cat that functions as an alarm clock for them each morning can attest to the fact that both require food, and that they have noses, eyes, and tongues that they derive great pleasure in using to explore the world. Much like plants, though, animals (for Aristotle) are lacking in a major life function: thinking or reason. While animals are capable of sense perception, they are not capable of deliberation or reflection. Humans, in contrast, are capable of nutrition, sensation, appetite, deliberation, and reflection (as well as locomotion). We possess all the possible major faculties of soul, namely both non-rational and rational faculties.²¹⁸ As a human being, I can consume various foods like steak, potatoes, and water to nourish my body, I can see beautiful landscapes, I can listen to haunting melodies, I can desire to pursue or avoid those foods, places, and people which are sources of pleasure or pain to me (employing my capacity for locomotion towards these ends), and most notably I can deliberate about how best to act in various situations to promote my virtue and happiness and reflect on a multitude of eternal truths. It is this capacity for deliberative or reflective thinking that Aristotle describes as thought or mind (*OS* III.4.429a22-7). As we saw in 4.1, Aristotle also argues that it is this thinking or rational faculty of soul, with its deliberative and reflective capacities, that distinguishes humans from all other living things (*OS* 3.414a29-32; 414b13-29; 415a7-12; *NE* I.7.1097b23-1098a14; 13.1102a26-1103a10; VI.5-

²¹⁸ This feature of human nature also distinguishes us from God and the celestial bodies as eternal substances. While the latter are considered living (and may have souls; see footnote 216), they do not possess nutrition, sensation, appetite, or deliberation – and their respective capacity for reflection may also not be the same. For discussion of the differences between mortal and eternal substances, see, e.g., Cohoes’s “Living without a Soul”; Menn’s “Aristotle’s Theology”; Reece’s “Aristotle on Divine.”

8).²¹⁹ Consequently, the soul, as a special kind of form, grants certain distinctive capacities to living substances relative to their species, some of these capacities entailing others (in the context of mortal substances). In 5.3 and 5.4 we will see that the Stoics and Spinoza place themselves in opposition to Aristotle by providing a more unified account of human beings.

At this juncture we can now delve into how Aristotle understands the relationship between the human soul and body, ontologically and ethically. As mentioned above, forms in general do not exist outside of matter as self-subsisting entities. Instead, they necessarily exist within certain parcels of matter. In line with this, Aristotle asserts: “it is clear that the soul [as a whole] is inseparable from its body” (*OS* II.1.413a3). The soul, as a kind of form, is unable to exist outside of the body to which it gives determinate being, because it actualizes that body’s potential to possess and realize certain capacities characteristic of life.²²⁰ Aristotle’s account of perceptible substance, and the close relationship he describes between soul as an immaterial, active principle and body as a material, passive principle, has encouraged scholars like Matthews (211, 213-4) and Shields[a] (Ch. 7.3) to argue that Aristotle offers a middle-ground position between soul-body dualism and materialism. Soul-body dualism (which we famously see in Plato’s *Phaedo*) considers the soul and body independently existing entities, and thus (from Aristotle’s perspective) two distinct substances. Aristotle’s hylomorphism, in contrast, explicitly

²¹⁹ For comprehensive discussion of *On the Soul*, see, e.g., Menn’s “Aristotle’s Definition of Soul”; Shields[a] (Ch. 7).

²²⁰ I add the qualification “as a whole” to the abovementioned quote because Aristotle may indicate that a part of the rational soul or mind (*nous*) is capable of existing independently of the body and the rest of the soul, insofar as this part has no direct association with the body (*OS* II.1.413a6-7; III.4.429a22-7; 429b4-5; see also *Meta* Λ.3.1070a22-5). Aristotle describes “active” mind as “separable, impassible, unmixed” (*OS* III.5.430a18-9), “immortal and eternal” (430a24), and the passive mind as “perishable” (430a25). It is not clear if Aristotle is referring to humans or God when talking about active mind. If he is referring to God, then this point is fully compatible with the anti-dualist reading of Aristotle. If he is referring to humans, then Aristotle may endorse some sort of mind-body dualism (in fact, as we will see shortly, Aristotle does indeed endorse some sort of dualism). Due to the lack of clarity on the nature of active mind, it will not play a major role in my analysis. For discussion of this topic, see, e.g., Caston’s “Aristotle’s Two Intellects”; Rist[b]; Shields[c].

denies that souls can exist separately from the bodies they enform because forms in general do not exist outside of matter. Materialism (which we find in the Presocratic atomists Leucippus and Democritus and an elemental pluralist like Empedocles) considers the soul, like the body, to be constituted by some sort of configuration of matter, making both essentially material.²²¹ While Aristotle does not think the soul exists outside the body, he also does not think that it is made up of more fundamental bodies or a special kind of body. He agrees with Plato that the soul is essentially immaterial. In fact, he argues that the soul qua form is the aspect of a perceptible substance which is most characteristic of its ontological status as an individual self-subsisting being, because form is that which actively gives one existence as a particular kind of (in this case, living) body (*Meta Z* 5-7, 11). Hylomorphism, on this reading, functions as a middle-ground position concerning the relationship between soul and body, because it considers both the immaterial and material legitimate and mutually existing entities. Neither is reducible to the other, nor can they exist (as determinate beings) independently of each other. Menn (“Aristotle’s Definition” 83-5) interprets the relationship between hylomorphism and Aristotle’s contemporaries differently. He agrees that Aristotle is presenting some sort of middle-ground position, but this position is not meant to be between dualism (where soul and body are distinct entities) and material monism (where the soul is either eliminatively or reductively the body). On the contrary, the materialists that Aristotle is confronting consider the soul a distinct being from the body, albeit one that is corporeal in nature as “fire or air or little round atoms” (84). As a result, Menn argues that hylomorphism is more precisely a middle-ground position between two

²²¹ For Aristotle’s discussion of his predecessors’ accounts of soul, see *OS* I. For fragments and discussion concerning Empedocles and Leucippus/Democritus’s views, see, e.g., Barnes’s *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Ch. XV, XVII, XX); Kirk et al.’s *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Ch. X and XV); Taylor’s *The Atomists*.

kinds of soul-body *dualism*, rather than dualism and monism, namely immaterial-material dualism and material dualism.

Both these readings, however, are restricted to the natural realm of perceptible substance. When we take into account Aristotle's overall conception of reality, which is constituted by imperceptible, immaterial substance and perceptible, material substance, we find a certain kind of substance dualism. Not only does Aristotle argue for the existence of forms as immaterial (albeit not truly self-subsisting) beings, he also more strongly argues for the existence of God as an immaterial self-subsisting being. Aristotle is, of course, not Plato or Descartes, because his hylomorphism denies that the soul as a whole can exist independently of the body, but he nevertheless agrees with them that reality is constituted by distinct immaterial and material substances. It is important to note Aristotle's commitment to hylomorphism and a certain kind of substance dualism, because these positions will place him in agreement and disagreement with Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza in complex ways. In 5.2 and 5.3, we will see that Epicurus and the Stoics, as materialists, deny that reality is constituted by anything other than corporeal beings, although they will agree with Aristotle that the soul is a different kind of being from the body. In 5.4, we will see that Spinoza agrees with Aristotle that reality is constituted by more than corporeal being, but he will deny that (1) there are multiple or mortal substances and (2) corporeal and incorporeal being are ontologically separable or unequal in status.

Overall, Aristotle's account of reality reveals an ontological inequality between the corporeal and incorporeal in general and the body and mind in particular, which treats the incorporeal and intellectual as superior. As discussed above, the immaterial as intellectual being or form is associated with actuality and activity, while matter is associated with potentiality and passivity. Actual being is being in the pure and primary sense because it makes things real and

determinate. Potential being, in contrast, is not truly anything, because it represents what *can* be, but not what *is*. The immaterial is thus more real and representative of being than matter. At every stage, from prime matter to particular eternal or mortal bodies, there must always be something immaterial for there to exist any determinate sort of material being, which at the macro-level is God as the unmoved mover and at the micro-level forms to realize certain potentialities in matter. The material is dependent on the immaterial to exist as anything determinate, but the immaterial is not similarly dependent. Admittedly, forms are not in themselves self-subsisting beings, but in contrast to matter, they represent determinate being as essences. God, however, is a self-subsisting being which is never attached to or mixed with matter in general or a body in particular, but instead exists as purely immaterial and eternal intellectual activity.²²² In the ontological hierarchy of reality, then, Aristotle places matter at the bottom and the immaterial and the intellectual at the top, with perceptible substances as hierarchically diverse mixtures of matter and form in the middle.

What is notable in Aristotle's account of reality is not so much that he considers the actual and active superior to the potential and passive, but more specifically that he considers *matter* inherently potential and passive, which renders the material universe in general and bodies in particular inferior to the immaterial and intellectual. As we will see in 5.2-4, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza, in diverse ways, grant greater ontological status to the body than Aristotle. Epicurus and the Stoics are materialists, so they do not think that reality is ultimately shaped by, or dependent on, immaterial beings. Spinoza, like Aristotle, grants that immaterial, intellectual being is at the foundation of reality, but contra Aristotle, he argues that material

²²² While the mind, as a part of the soul, is at least temporarily mixed with a body, based on OS III.5's description of active mind (see footnote 220), it may be that some part of the mind is ultimately capable of becoming a self-subsisting being. Alternatively, active mind may just be God Itself.

(extended) being is equally as fundamental to reality, because the latter is also inherently active and only conceptually/causally (but not ontologically) distinct from the intellectual.

This ontological picture of inequality between the incorporeal and the corporeal brings us to Aristotle's ethical views on the relationship between mind and body in the context of promoting happiness. As we saw in 4.1, Aristotelian happiness consists in virtuous rational activity, namely practical happiness through practical wisdom (i.e., excellent deliberation concerning action) and/or theoretical happiness through theoretical wisdom (i.e., excellent reflection on eternal scientific truths). Both kinds of human happiness are characterized by intellectual activity and pleasure, rather than bodily considerations. In developing his account of happiness based on what is distinctly human, Aristotle addresses the nutritive, sensitive, appetitive, and rational faculties of the human soul (*NE* I.7.1097b23-1098a18; 13.1102a26-1103a1). He dismisses the bodily (i.e., non-rational) faculties of nutrition, sensation, and appetite as constituents of happiness because they are shared by other living things qua mortal substances, and thus do not define what it is to truly be human and flourish as a human being. A human life naturally involves bodily activities and pleasures grounded in the use of the five senses and the pursuit of nourishment and the avoidance of illness and/or death, but bodily things are not distinctly human. Plants and animals also engage in nourishing activities and animals make great use of whatever senses they possess relative to their species. Intellectual activities and pleasures, which follow from the rational faculty of the soul, are what characterize human beings in the realm of mortal substances, not bodily ones.

In fact, Aristotle does not think that humans can perform activities and enjoy pleasures which are healthy and good (relative to their species), and thus successfully flourish in their lives, without reason. Firstly, as we saw in 4.1, good bodily activities and pleasures for humans

are dependent on practical wisdom. In order to correctly or virtuously pursue and enjoy bodily pleasures (moderation), risk or protect my bodily well-being (courage), or engage in moral conduct towards others (justice), I must be able to successfully deliberate about how to perform the moderate, courageous, or just action in each situation. Even if I desire to do what is good, I will not be able to reliably do so without excellent deliberation.²²³ Furthermore, because practical wisdom cannot be realized without moral virtue, the sensitive and appetitive faculties must be trained to obey reason (I.13.1102b13-1103a4). Ethically, this means that the bodily faculties of the human soul should be subservient to the rational faculty. Secondly, humans have an innate desire to learn and understand things through the theoretical domain of reason (*Meta* A.1.980a21). One cannot live a (at least optimally) happy life if they wholly neglect one of the major faculties of the soul, and fail to cultivate (some degree of) theoretical wisdom. In fact, Aristotle considers reflective activity, through theoretical wisdom, the most important aspect of human nature (*NE* X.7-8). Reflection pertains to eternal (rather than contingent) truths, relies on fewer external things to be realized than practical wisdom and ordinary bodily considerations, and most closely approximates divine activity and happiness (which is purely intellectual and self-sufficient). Since (a) reason is what characterizes a human being, (b) one's happiness is constituted by the characteristic activities of their nature, and (c) reflection is the highest expression of reason, reflection is the greatest kind of activity in the context of human happiness. Aristotle also considers practical wisdom, because of its moral object, subservient to theoretical wisdom (VI.12-13). While moral activities like moderation, courage, and justice are intrinsically

²²³ This is not to say that one cannot succeed in doing good without practical wisdom, or that a morally decent (but not yet virtuous) person with the correct upbringing will not typically perform good deeds in normal situations. My point is simply that only the practically wise person can consistently, knowingly, and optimally do what is good in all situations (normal and abnormal). The actual process through which someone becomes virtuous (practically or theoretically) is beyond the scope of this thesis. For helpful discussion in this regard, see *NE* II, VI, and X.9, *Politics*, *Prior Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Categories*, *Physics*, *On the Heavens*, and *Metaphysics*.

valuable as expressions of the practical dimension of human reason, they also serve as means to create a healthy and secure environment for me to engage in philosophical inquiries and joyfully reflect on my subsequent understanding of God, the celestial bodies, and the various genera and species of mortal substances. Theoretical wisdom, in contrast, is exclusively intrinsically valuable, because all the other faculties are subservient to it but it is not subservient to any of them, and thus the theoretical dimension of reason is most representative of human happiness as the highest good.

The above details explain why theoretical happiness is superior to practical happiness, despite both being virtuous expressions of human reason. What makes practical wisdom inferior to theoretical wisdom is its necessary connection to contingent bodily considerations. Practical wisdom is concerned with context-specific actions that promote the nutritive, sensitive, and appetitive faculties of the soul in healthy ways, and practical wisdom as excellent deliberation depends on the appetitive faculty (through moral virtue) to be properly directed towards the good. Without moral virtue, one is merely clever – not practically wise (VI.12). Practical wisdom is also less divine, because while it is an intellectual activity (and thus much closer in nature to the divine than nutrition, sensation, and appetite), it is not the sort of activity that the gods engage in, since their intellectual activity is restricted to reflection on eternal truths (X.8.1178b8-33). Theoretical wisdom, on the other hand, is not directly concerned with the bodily faculties of the soul, and is dependent on them only insofar as these faculties can impede reflective activities through death, illness, or circumstances that leave no free time for learning or reflection. Furthermore, while human reflection may not be identical with divine reflection (see Reece's "Aristotle on Divine"), it is still the same kind of intellectual activity insofar as its object is eternal truth.

In light of these details, we can see that the inequality and hierarchy between body and mind is also found in the ethical domain of Aristotle's philosophy. Firstly, happiness is not identified with the bodily qua non-rational aspect of the soul, but rather the mental qua rational aspect of the soul. Secondly, even within the rational faculty we find an inequality between practical wisdom and theoretical wisdom. Practical wisdom is considered inferior and less divine than theoretical wisdom because the former is (more) directly connected to contingent, bodily considerations and is thus less representative of pure reason and further away from approximating the eternal and purely intellectual activity and happiness of God. As we will see in 5.3, Aristotle and the Stoics largely agree in considering happiness to be constituted by intellectual, rather than bodily, considerations (although they differ over whether happiness consists in rational activities or mere rational dispositions, respectively). Epicurus and Spinoza, in contrast, will be shown to include the body as a constituent of happiness. With that said, Spinoza will be the only one to consider the body ethically *equal* with the mind. Epicurus and the Stoics agree with Aristotle that the body is in some sense ethically inferior to the mind.

However, Aristotle does not deny the body a direct and meaningful role in happiness. Bodily activities and pleasures are inferior and subservient to mental activities and pleasures, but the former are nevertheless necessary for happiness. First and foremost, despite the rational (namely, reflective) faculty of the soul being the most valuable and divine aspect of our nature, we are not purely intellectual and eternal beings like God. Humans are mortal perceptible substances, meaning that we are by nature material and perishable (X.7.1177b16-32; 8.1178a9-23). The material and mortal aspects of our nature are expressed through the nutritive, sensitive, and appetitive faculties of the soul. Eudaimonistic happiness, as we saw in 2.1.1, is grounded in our nature as human beings. To neglect any major aspect of my nature would frustrate my ability

to live a happy life overall. In line with this, Aristotle argues for the necessity of bodily health, education, friends, resources, and an overall well-functioning state as instrumental goods in promoting happiness qua excellent rational activity (8.1178b34-1179a1). (I.8.1099a32-3; VI.3.1139b25-6 VII.1153b17-22; VIII.1.1155a1-33; 1156b7-14; X. 9.1179b29-1180a5).

Reflection, as an intellectual good, may be more valuable than all these material considerations, but these considerations clearly play a necessary and direct role in optimally promoting this good. The body is thus ethically inferior to the mind, but still plays an important instrumental role in happiness.²²⁴ In the following sections, we will see that Epicurus and Spinoza agree with Aristotle that happiness necessarily involves bodily and external goods in opposition to the Stoics, the latter of whom deny that the body or external things play a direct and necessary instrumental or constitutive role in living happily.

In sum, although the corporeal and bodily play important ontological and ethical roles in Aristotle's system, nevertheless they are inferior to the incorporeal and intellectual.

Ontologically, matter is inherently passive, and thus requires the active influence of something else to bestow determinate being on it. The immaterial is this inherently active influence. God as the unmoved mover functions as the object of desire that compels matter to constitute various eternal and mortal substances which approximate the former's intellectual and eternal nature in diverse ways, form functions as the internal principle which bestows on a certain parcel of matter a particular essence, and soul functions as a special kind of form which turns certain parcels of matter into living bodies with nutritive, sensitive, appetitive, and/or rational capacities. Without

²²⁴ How active mind, which may exist independently of the body, fits into this ethical picture is not made explicit or clear by Aristotle. Possibly the (reflective) activities of active mind can be impeded while still attached to a human soul, but will enjoy permanent freedom from impediment once separated from the rest of the soul. Wolfson[b] argues that Spinoza's account of the eternal dimension of the mind shares commonalities with Aristotle's active mind, as well as Ibn Ezra, Gersonides, Avicenna, and Maimonides' own versions of this concept (289-324).

these immaterial foundations, human life and happiness (which are partly material in nature) would not be possible. Ethically, the non-bodily faculty of the human soul, that is reason, is considered superior to the bodily faculties of nutrition, sensation, and appetite, because the former is what truly makes us human and (when used well) constitutes happiness. While bodily health, activities, and external things are necessary for human happiness, such things nevertheless derive their value from promoting rational activity, because their goodness depends on the guidance of practical wisdom and both serve as means to theoretical wisdom, the latter of which represents the closest approximation to God's purely immaterial qua intellectual activity and happiness. It is therefore God's immaterial and active nature and role as the source of all determinate being that dictates the ontological and ethical inferiority of the material, because the latter is the opposite of God and relies on form for any of the beings it partly constitutes. As we will see in the following sections, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza's respective accounts of the divine will also be important in understanding their ontological and ethical views on the body. Most notably (contra Aristotle), all three consider the divine to be (at least partly) corporeal in nature.

5.2 Epicurus

According to Epicurus (and his followers), reality is constituted by two kinds of eternal substances (i.e., independently existing beings), *atoms* and *void*, both of which are extended in nature. Void is empty space which is intangible or immaterial, and infinite in magnitude (*LH* ~39-41, 44; *L&S* 5A-B, D; 6A). It is also inherently passive, in the sense that void lacks any causal power to "act or be acted upon," in particular providing no resistance to the various kinds of bodies that exist in and move through it (~67). Atoms are physically indivisible (and thus indestructible) bodies, which possess the key features of imperceptibility, size, weight, shape,

resistance, motion, and swerve.²²⁵ They are primarily distinguished from each other based on their size, shape, and weight. While the number of atoms that exist is infinite, the *kinds* of atoms that exist (based on the previously mentioned distinguishing features) are indefinite or inconceivably large to us, but ultimately limited in actual scope (*LH* ~41-2, 54-7, 61; *L&S* 8B).

Atoms are in perpetual motion and are equal in their speed, irrespective of differences in their size, shape, or weight, because void provides absolutely no resistance to their movement. Only an atom's direction of motion can be altered. By virtue of its weight, the typical (linear) motion of an atom (in isolation from other atoms) is downwards (*LH* ~43-4, 61-2; *L&S* 11B5, F). Two potential causes explain why an atom will deviate from this pattern of motion. Firstly, the atom in question collides with one or more other atoms, with the resistance of all the atoms involved bringing about this change. From these atomic collisions, stable relationships between certain kinds of atoms form, thereby constituting various bodily compounds, including (and most importantly) the gods, our particular world (which is one among an infinite number of other worlds), celestial bodies, and natural things like rocks, dogs, and humans (*LH* ~40-5, 54, 61-5; *LP* ~88ff; *L&S* 11B). Secondly, each atom possesses what is referred to as "swerve," which functions as an internal force that randomly alters the atom's direction of movement. In the metaphysical domain, swerve is necessary to explain how bodily compounds are ever formed through collision.²²⁶ If all atoms simply moved downwards, perpetually and at equal speed, they

²²⁵ Atoms are physically indivisible, but not *theoretically* indivisible. Epicurus allows that an atom can have conceptually distinguishable parts (*minima*), even though these parts cannot actually be separated from the atom as a bodily whole (*LH* ~56-9; *L&S* 9B-C). Through this position Epicurus differentiates himself from Democritus, who seems to consider atoms both physically and theoretically indivisible. For discussion of the agreements and disagreements between Democritus and Epicurus, in particular how Epicurus can be understood to be improving on his predecessor's atomistic system, see, e.g., Bailey's *The Greek Atomists*; Furley's *Two Studies*; Morel's "Epicurean atomism"; Rist[a] (Ch. 3).

²²⁶ In the ethical domain, swerve is necessary to support free will and moral responsibility by ensuring that atomic motions are not strictly deterministic (*L&S* 20E2; F-G).

would never interact with each other, and thus atomic relationships could never be realized. The fact that we know empirically that bodily compounds do indeed exist entails the existence of swerve as an indeterministic and internal motive force (L&S 11H; 20E2).²²⁷

From this general account of reality, we can classify Epicurus as a materialist, albeit with a few crucial qualifications. According to Epicurus, all being is fundamentally extended. Void is general empty space, through which individual corporeal beings exist and move. Atoms and atomic compounds are these individual corporeal beings, each possessing its own distinctive size, shape, weight, and motions (the features of the latter being dependent on the former). Similar to Aristotle, Epicurus distinguishes between active being and passive being, material being and immaterial being, and grounds reality in that which is eternal. Atoms are eternal beings which are active insofar as they have the causal power to affect each other through their motion and resistance, and constitute various kinds of bodily compounds. They are the Epicurean counterpart to Aristotle's unmoved mover and forms. Void, conversely, is eternal being which is passive, because it lacks causal power and serves merely as an immaterial receptacle for the existence and movement of atomic and compound bodies. Its Aristotelian counterpart is arguably prime matter.

A crucial difference between these two philosophers is that Aristotle places activity in the immaterial and passivity in the material, while Epicurus does the opposite (another crucial difference being that this activity is rational and teleological for the former and mechanical and random for the latter). He thinks that activity could only come from material beings, because an immaterial being has no coherent way of acting or being acted on (and is thus strongly passive).

²²⁷ For comprehensive discussion of Epicurean physics, see, e.g., Bailey (Part II); Furley's "Two Studies"; Konstan's "Atomism"; Lehoux's "Cosmology and Meteorology"; L&S (4-15, with the respective commentaries of each section); Morel's "Epicurean atomism"; Rist[a] (Ch. 3-5); Taub's "Cosmology and meteorology."

Moreover, while Epicurus grants the existence of immaterial being through void, he does not mean the same thing by “immaterial” as Aristotle. Void is not matter, or a body, but it is still essentially *physical* because, like atoms, it is extended in nature. Aristotelian immaterial being, in contrast, is non-extended, and shares no essential feature in common with matter. In fact, Aristotle thinks that matter either has no genuine being at all or no determinate being, without being mixed with form as immaterial being. From Epicurus’s perspective, immaterial, non-extended being is not merely passive, but rather nothing at all. Strictly-speaking, Epicurus is not a materialist, if by “materialist” we mean that everything is reducible to matter. Unlike nothingness or prime matter, Epicurus considers void to possess genuine being, despite not being material. However, if by “materialism” we simply mean that all being is essentially physical by virtue of being extended, then Epicurus can be accurately classified as a materialist. As we will see in 5.3 and 5.4, the Stoics and Spinoza can also be classified as materialists and opponents to Aristotle (albeit still in a qualified sense), because corporeal being plays a fundamental and active ontological role in their respective systems.

With this basic account of reality in mind, let us now focus on two notable atomic compounds: gods and human beings. The gods are made up of atoms which compose a special sort of living body, which is similar in shape to the human body, but much larger and finer in nature, this fineness rendering divine bodies accessible only to the mind, but not the senses, through certain images as collections of atoms (L&S 23E; L; *ONG* I.109-10). The gods are also importantly described as indestructible and blessed. Unlike human beings, or even our own world qua atomic compound, the gods are eternal and can never cease to exist, and they enjoy absolute, neverending happiness qua freedom from suffering, possibly with no need to act (*LM* ~123; *PD* ~I; Lucretius V.91-109; 1175-82; L&S 23A2; E3-5; F1; *ONG* I.51). Related to these

perfections, Epicurus also denies that the gods play any creative or providential role. As we discussed previously, reality is constituted by (to some degree) indeterministic atomic movements and relations that take place in void. The gods are themselves atomic compounds, not the creators of atoms, void, or other compounds. Furthermore, and most importantly, the gods are not responsible for the structure of reality, or any worlds or beings within it, nor do they have any concern for the actions or well-being of other things, not even human beings. The Epicurean gods simply live an eternal life of permanent blessedness in the space between worlds (*intermundia*), wholly disconnected from and unaffected by the creation, destruction, and various affairs of worlds and individuals (*LH* ~38-9, 76-7; *L&S* 13D-I; 23A; *ONG* I.18, 52-6).²²⁸

By virtue of Epicurus's materialism, the gods are essentially corporeal atomic compounds. This position is in stark contrast to Aristotle, who considers divine being essentially non-extended. Both equate divinity with the highest kind of living being, but what they think is representative of this ontological supremacy is wholly opposite. For Aristotle, God cannot be extended, because determinate being and activity per se can only be found in the non-extended or intellectual. Epicurus may grant intellectual activity to the divine (*L&S* 23E6; *Rist[a]* 146-56), but he is adamant that that which is non-extended constitutes the complete absence of being and that which is immaterial can have no causal power whatsoever.²²⁹ Admittedly, the Epicurean gods may be less active than the Aristotelian God, insofar as the former have absolutely no impact on the structure of reality while the latter indirectly does through final causation (neither

²²⁸ This anti-providentialist account of the gods has also led to debate about Epicurus's theistic status, something we will see he shares in common with Spinoza. For an atheistic reading, see *ONG* I.105-123-4; II.76. For a theistic reading where the gods are mind-independent beings, see, e.g., *Rist[a]* (Ch. 2); Spinelli & Verde's "Theology." For a theistic reading where the gods are mind-dependent beings, see Long and Sedley's commentary on section 23 (p. 144-9; see also 23E7).

²²⁹ For further discussion of the Epicurean gods, see, e.g., Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods*; *L&S* 23; *Rist[a]* (Ch. 8 and Appendix E).

playing a direct creator role), but the fact remains that, from Epicurus's perspective, any activity, divine/intellectual or otherwise, must be grounded in matter or corporeal being, in this case atoms. The Stoics (as we will see in the next section) take a similar ontological view, grounding divine being and activity in corporeal being, although their overall account of reality is more akin to Aristotelianhylomorphism than Epicurean atomism and their pantheistic and (strongly) providential conception of God places them in clear opposition to both philosophers. Spinoza will agree with Epicurus and the Stoics that divine being is essentially extended, but he will also agree with Aristotle that God's essential intellectual being and activity is not reducible to, or more generally dependent on, extended being.

Our final topic in this section will be human beings, namely how Epicurean atomism informs our nature and happiness. For starters, humans are atomic compounds consisting of a soul and a body. The human soul and the human body are both in themselves complex bodies, each being constituted by different kinds of atoms. The soul is "a body [made up of] fine parts" which are mixed together and spread throughout the denser atomic compound that is the human body (*LH* ~63), with the atoms of the soul being "very smooth and very round" (~66n7) and the parts they constitute being akin to fire, air, wind, and something else lacking a name (*L&S* 14C). The soul, as an atomic whole, is also said to be split into two aspects, one rational and the other non-rational. The rational aspect is referred to as "mind" (*animus*). It is located in the chest and is the source of thinking and emotion. The non-rational aspect is referred to as "spirit" (*anima*). This faculty is located throughout the rest of the human body, and is responsible for the other life functions, such as nutrition, sensation, and locomotion. The mind is the dominant aspect of the

soul, however, controlling the various activities of the spirit (*LH* ~66n7; L&S 14B).²³⁰ While they are distinct kinds of atomic compounds, the soul and the body nevertheless cannot exist independently of each other. Without the soul, the body has no “sense-perception,” feelings, thoughts, or capacity for “motion” or activity (*LH* ~63-4). The latter ceases to live and function because its constituent atoms can no longer maintain their relationship to each other, and will subsequently disperse. Similarly, if this bodily “aggregate is destroyed, the soul is scattered [into its constituent atoms] and no longer has the same powers” of sense-perception, feeling, thought, and action (~65). The soul has no capacity to realize its life functions without the medium of the body, nor can its own finer constituent atoms maintain their relationship to each other without this body. The separation of the soul and the body consequently results in the powerlessness and death of both atomic compounds. For Epicurus (contra Plato and Descartes) the human soul is no more immortal or immune to destruction than the human body. On the contrary, they share an intimate relationship that makes them mutually dependent on each other for existence and functioning, because both are material compounds.

In this account of the soul, we find many important agreements and disagreements between Epicurus and Aristotle. Firstly, Epicurus follows Aristotle in considering the soul the source of all life functions, in contrast to someone like Descartes, who restricts the powers of the soul to thinking alone – nutrition, sensation, and locomotion being linked to the body (*MFP* Med. 2 and 6).²³¹ Secondly, both Epicurus and Aristotle distinguish between rational and non-rational aspects of the soul, the former linked to the mind as the power of thinking and the latter

²³⁰ Long and Sedley roughly compare the mind and the spirit to “the brain and the nervous system respectively” (71).

²³¹ For Descartes’s views on the nature of and relationship between minds and bodies, see the *Principles of Philosophy* and the *Passions of the Soul*.

to various bodily powers. Thirdly, both agree that the soul as a whole does not exist separately from the body and the former shares an intimate relationship with the latter.

However, Epicurus crucially differs from Aristotle in considering the soul a particular kind of *body*. As discussed in 5.1, Aristotle's hylomorphism is a rejection of materialism and soul-body dualism. Epicurus is, in contrast, committed to both these positions. As far as he is concerned, if the soul was immaterial or "incorporeal," like void it would lack any causal power, and thus could not be responsible for the abovementioned life functions (*LH* ~67; see also *L&S* 14B3). Moreover, while the soul and the body cannot exist independently of each other, they are nevertheless different and determinate kinds of being. In contrast to Aristotle, who argues that the body qua passive matter has no determinate being without the soul qua active form, for Epicurus the soul does not shape the body into a dense atomic compound any more than the body shapes the soul into a fine atomic compound – each merely provides the conditions for the other to maintain the relationship between its constituent parts, like two people preventing each other from falling off a cliff by closely and firmly holding onto one another. They will necessarily exist and die together in this rough scenario, but are still distinct beings. As well, Aristotle's remarks about the active mind (see footnote 220), and its capacity to exist independently of the body cannot be ignored. If the active mind is linked to the human soul, rather than exclusively to God or the celestial bodies, then Aristotle grants the human mind an immortality that Epicurus denies is possible. The mind can no more exist independently of the spirit than the soul can the body; each is closely entwined and co-dependent. In 5.3. and 5.4 we will see that the Stoics and Spinoza agree with Aristotle that humans can enjoy some sort of existence after the death of the body, but in line with Epicurus neither thinks that this kind of existence can be wholly separated from corporeal considerations.

Moving onto ethics, we find a complex relationship between mind and body. As we saw in 3.2, Epicurus argues that happiness consists in katastematic pleasures as homeostasis (i.e., healthy bodily functioning) and peace of mind (i.e., healthy mental functioning). The first thing to note here is that Epicurean happiness is neither immaterial nor solely intellectual in nature. It is not immaterial in nature, because, by virtue of Epicurus's materialism and atomism, no being except void (which is nevertheless still extended) can be immaterial. The mind is not immaterial, but rather one aspect of the soul as an atomic compound. Mind and body are simply two different species of matter. Furthermore, as discussed above, the soul in general and the mind in particular cannot exist and function without the body. In particular, Torquatus (Cicero's Epicurean spokesperson) asserts that the "[p]leasures and pains of the mind . . . originate in bodily pleasures and pains" (*OM* I.55). There can be no katastematic pleasures of the mind without the katastematic pleasures of the body. Consequently, happiness is material in nature. Katastematic pleasures are not the only pleasures or goods that we can enjoy, though. Epicurus also describes necessary kinetic pleasures which are constituted by restorative processes which produce homeostasis and peace of mind and unnecessary kinetic pleasures which allow one to express their bodily and mental health in diverse ways. Bodily and mental katastematic pleasures rely on bodily and necessary kinetic pleasures, as instrumental goods, for their realization and preservation. The body, of course, needs nutrition and medicine to maintain its various life functions, most notably sense perception. In general, the mind can only function insofar as the body functions, and in particular the mind can only learn successfully (and thus promote its health) if it is able to receive sensory perceptions from the body and apply its intellectual powers to these perceptions for the sake of acquiring knowledge - the foundation of all knowledge, for Epicurus, being the senses (*LH* ~38; *LP* ~86; *LM* ~129; *PD* ~XXIII-IV). Without proper health

resources for the body, the mind will suffer as well. Finally, concerning unnecessary kinetic pleasures, a bodily activity like running, a mental activity like reflecting on scientific truths, or a bodily-mental activity like reading an intellectually engrossing book is only possible with a healthy body conducive to a healthy mind. Bodily goods qua pleasures are therefore necessary for happiness, both instrumentally and constitutively. Here we see that Epicurus agrees with Aristotle (and Spinoza, contra the Stoics, as we will see later) that bodily and external goods play a necessary and direct role in promoting the happy life.²³²

Although the overall existence, functioning, and pleasures of the mind are dependent on the body, and bodily pleasure is a constituent of happiness, nevertheless Epicurus argues that mental pleasures qua goods are superior to bodily ones. This superiority is grounded in the fact that the mind has a greater modal scope than the body. My body can only engage with the present, what is currently affecting me. My mind, on the other hand, can engage with the past, present, and future, through recollection, reflection, and anticipation respectively, each of which is useful for combatting current bodily pains and/or mental disturbances (DL X.137; *OM* I.55-6). Recollection allows me to derive pleasure from memories of the past. Epicurus, while on his deathbed and in excruciating pain from gastro-intestinal issues, describes himself as experiencing “joy in [his] soul produced by the recollection of discussions” with friends (*LI*). In the present, we can reflect on the bodily and mental goods we currently possess, such as nutritional pleasures, homeostasis, peace of mind, scientific understanding, books, and loved ones. Anticipating future goods, namely pleasures, is also enjoyable and useful in promoting freedom from suffering. While experiencing severe pain (like Epicurus) we can content ourselves with the

²³² However, because Epicurus places happiness in mere healthy functioning rather than the performance of various virtuous activities, he thinks fewer external goods are necessary for happiness than Aristotle.

knowledge that such pain will necessarily be short-lived, because it will either result in our death (removing all capacity for suffering) or ultimately fade with our recovery. Conversely, with chronic pain, we can be content knowing that we will be able to distract ourselves from it through engaging in recollective and reflective activities, as well as acquiring various other objects of bodily and/or mental pleasure. A key component of friendship, in fact, is the anticipatory confidence that our friends will always support us in our pursuit of freedom from suffering (*PD* ~IV; *OM* I.49, 57, 66-70). Furthermore, the mind plays an integral role in maintaining the health of the body, which in turn promotes its own health. Through practical wisdom, it is able to understand the ethical hierarchy of kinetic and katastematic pleasures, and make use of memories concerning the previous benefits and harms of various objects in its deliberations about what things to enjoy in the present and future (*LM* ~131-2; *PD* ~V, XVIII, XX-XXX). The mind and its pleasures consequently allow me to play an active, and multifaceted, role in promoting and maintaining my happiness in a manner that my body cannot, because the latter and its pleasures can only engage with the present. This, in turn, makes mental goods superior to bodily goods, because the former's scope of benefit is wider.

The recollective, reflective, and anticipatory pleasures of the mind, in turn, seem to imply that peace of mind is both necessary and sufficient for Epicurean happiness. The wise person on the rack is said to be happy, despite being physically tortured, and Epicurus still describes himself as happy despite his own severe pain (*DL* X.118). In both cases, the mind is still able to function and turn the soul's attention away from pain to various kinds of pleasures. The initial achievement of happiness may then require both homeostasis and peace of mind, but impediments to bodily functioning do not seem to necessarily destroy my happiness so long as I am able to enjoy recollection, reflection, and anticipation. However, if we adopt Rist[a]'s scalar

reading of katastematic pleasure (see 3.2), where the body and mind can enjoy varying degrees of unimpeded functioning due to their nature as atomic compounds, and take into consideration the abovementioned dependency of the mind on the body, it could be argued that it would be ontologically impossible for my mind to enjoy peace of mind and combat bodily suffering if my body was *entirely devoid* of katastematic pleasure – in such a scenario, I would be dead because no part of my body would be functioning and my constituent atoms would have nothing keeping them together. Epicurus certainly emphasizes my ability to enjoy peace of mind even in the face of bodily pain, but his own metaphysics seems to entail that he cannot mean that I enjoy *only* mental pleasures in my *eudaimon* state. On the one hand, we might say that the neither the mind nor the body is superordinate over or subordinate to the other, since the pleasures of both are necessary, and only jointly sufficient, constituents of happiness. On the other hand, mental pleasure seems to be a more valuable constituent than bodily pleasure, due to the former's greater versatility in maintaining happiness. Thus, despite the ontological equality of mind and body as co-dependent atomic compounds, Epicurus is nevertheless (in line with Aristotle) committed to a certain ethical inequality between them in favour of the mental, although (contra Aristotle) this inequality takes place between two kinds of *bodies* rather than between immaterial and material beings.

Overall, then, in this section we have seen that Epicurus's atomism makes him a materialist in general and a soul-body material dualist in particular. As a material dualist, Epicurus considers the soul (and most notably the mind) and the body two different kinds of corporeal beings which share an intimate and strongly reciprocal relationship, neither being able to exist or function without the other (at least, to some degree). Aristotle and Epicurus agree that the soul and body share a close relationship, and that (as a whole) the soul cannot exist without

the body, but Epicurus places himself in opposition to Aristotle by treating the body as a being in its own right qua atomic compound and arguing that soul activities (and activity in general, divine or otherwise) is better explained through corporeal than incorporeal being.

In the ethical domain, the co-dependent relationship between soul and body entails that bodily kinetic pleasure serves as an instrumental good in promoting happiness as both bodily and mental functioning. While happiness is essentially mental through peace of mind and mental pleasure is a superior good to bodily pleasure due to the latter's greater modal scope, happiness is nevertheless also essentially bodily, since metaphysically the mind is not immaterial and homeostasis is just as much of a constituent of this state of being as peace of mind is. Here Aristotle and Epicurus agree that bodily things are necessary goods for happiness, and that mental goods are superior to bodily goods, but the latter considers happiness equally bodily and mental in nature while the former considers happiness primarily mental (the body being merely a necessary receptacle for rational activity). In the next two sections, we will see that the Stoics and Spinoza agree with Epicurus (contra Aristotle) that corporeal being is, in itself, capable of activity, the Stoics and Epicurus (contra Aristotle and Spinoza) agree that all being is extended being, and Epicurus, Aristotle, and Spinoza agree (contra the Stoics) that bodily things are genuine goods – although, Spinoza will take this point further than Epicurus and the others by treating bodily and mental goods as identical and equal.

5.3: The Stoics

For the Stoics, reality consists of void, matter, and God or reason, all three of which are eternal and extended in nature. Void is infinite empty space, which is incorporeal because it lacks any sort of resistance, and thus solidity. This empty space is what the universe exists in (L&S 44A; 49A, C, E-F, J). The universe itself is constituted by matter (*hyle*) and God (*theos*) or

reason (*logos*). Both beings are corporeal in nature, making them bodies with “threefold extension [i.e., length, breadth, and depth] together with resistance” (L&S 45F). Here the Stoics place themselves in general agreement with Epicurus and disagreement with Aristotle concerning what kind of being lies at the heart of reality. The Stoics, like Epicurus, can be classified as materialists. Both consider reality fundamentally extended and restrict all causal power to bodies (thus excluding void as extended, but incorporeal, being), because in their view there is no intelligible sense in which an incorporeal or non-extended being could affect anything or be affected by anything (45A-C). In contrast, Aristotle thinks that reality is partly constituted by God as a non-extended being, and that activity can only be found in non-extended being, because matter or corporeal being is inherently passive. The Stoics and Epicurus consequently stand on one end, and Aristotle the other, of a debate concerning what kind of being *per se* can support activity. In 5.4, we will see that Spinoza responds to this debate by arguing that being in general is inherently active, meaning activity resides in extended being and non-extended being equally.

Returning to the Stoic account of the universe, they argue that it is constituted by two inseparable corporeal principles, one passive and the other active. Matter is the passive principle of the universe, that which is acted on. It is unqualified and finite substance – the basic, featureless stuff out of which determinate beings come into existence (44C1-2, D-E; DL VII.134). God, conversely, is the active principle because it is “the reason inherent in” matter (VII.134), which purposefully acts on the latter to providentially form the structure and order of the universe and the various beings within it, such as the classic four elements, celestial bodies, rocks, trees, dogs, and humans (VII.136-7; L&S 44C3-7, E3). God *qua* body is described as a creative “breath pervading the whole” universe and an intelligent “designing fire” (46A; see also

DL VII.156). Although they are distinct bodies, God does not exist separate from matter. Instead, they are eternally entwined. The Stoic God is thus a corporeal craftsman who operates from within matter to create the universe. This conception of divinity and the universe is opposed to (1) the Platonic conception, which sees God as a non-extended, intellectual being who exists separately from the material universe that it purposefully creates and crafts (*Timaeus* 28aff.), (2) the Aristotelian conception, which sees God as a non-extended, intellectual being who is the non-intentional and indirect cause of the structure and order of the universe through final causation, and (3) the Epicurean conception, which denies any role whatsoever to the gods qua corporeal beings in creating or shaping the universe. Despite these differences, the Stoics agree with certain aspects of each of these accounts. Fundamentally, they agree with Epicurus, contra Plato and Aristotle, that divinity must be corporeal in nature in order to live and act.²³³ However, the Stoics are not atomists like Epicurus. Their account of the universe is, in many respects, a combination of Plato and Aristotle's respective accounts. Like the Platonic God, the Stoic God is a purposeful creator. The Stoic universe, on the other hand, is similar to the Aristotelian universe, in the sense that both are constituted by an active, *immaterial* principle and a passive *material* principle, the former shaping the latter from within. Of course, Aristotle does not say that God itself is the active and purposeful constituent of the universe as the Stoics do, and the Stoics still consider the active principle corporeal in nature unlike Aristotle (because God is simply a different kind of body from matter), but the basic metaphysical notion of matter being

²³³ The Stoics are also committed, in a certain sense, to the existence of multiple gods. The traditional Greek gods are simply different aspects of the underlying power of God as the active principle of the universe. Zeus is God's power to give life, Athena its power in the ethereal realm of the celestial bodies, Hephaestus its power in relation to fire, Poseidon its power over the sea, Demeter its power over the earth, etc. (DL VII.147). The celestial bodies are also described as gods (L&S 46D; *ONG* II.39).

given determinate being, structure, and order from within is present in both philosophies. The Stoics ultimately present then a materialist and (strongly) providentialist form of hylomorphism.

Based on this metaphysical account, in particular the inseparability of and intimate relation between the active and passive principles, the Stoics can also be classified as pantheists. God is the universe insofar as it is a substance with determinate being (DL VII.137; *ONG* I.39, II.22, 37-9), God being the soul and matter the body which together form a living thing possessing perfect sensation, rationality, virtue, and happiness (VII.139, 147; L&S 44C, 46E-F, 47C). With that said, it is important to note that the universe is perishable, while God and matter are eternal. The Stoics argue that the universe undergoes a cyclical process of being generated from God's creative fire and being consumed back into God by this very same fire (DL VII.141-2, 147; L&S 47F-I, K-P). While the universe is in existence though, God function as its soul and rational ordering principle, with all existing things within it partaking in God's rationality in different ways and to differing degrees.

The manifestations of God in things can be characterized through the principles of tenor, physique, soul, and rational soul. Tenor in itself is what constitutes and sustains the essential existence of inanimate things, like dirt, rocks, and bones, as beings of basic rational (and divine) construction (L&S 47L-N, P2, Q2, R3; 53A2; DL VII.139). Physique contains the basic constitutive and conservational power of tenor, but also the nutritional qua self-sustaining power necessary to produce and reproduce life in plants (L&S 47N, P3; 53A3, B1-3). Soul possesses the powers of tenor and physique, with the additional powers of impression (i.e., sensation) and impulse, which enable animals to not only live but also move themselves and act by virtue of their reactions to stimuli within their environment (47N, P4; 53A3-4, B4-9, G, P). Finally, a rational soul has the powers of tenor, nutrition, reproduction, sensation, and impulse, with the

additional power of reason, which allows humans (as rational animals) to deliberate and make judgments about their impressions and how they should act (47P; 53A5, G9, J, R).

It is important to note at this juncture that the Stoic conception of the soul in general, and the human soul in particular, differs from the Aristotelian conception in three crucial ways. Firstly, although the Stoics agree with Aristotle that the soul functions as the active principle which gives determinate being and life to matter to constitute a particular body, the soul is not an immaterial form that exists outside of God. On the contrary, the Stoic soul is part of God as the active principle of the universe, and since God itself is a breath-like body acting on matter, the soul is corporeal and breath-like in nature (45D5; 47N; 53B, G). Secondly, while the Stoics agree with Aristotle that the human soul has nutritive, sensitive, and rational powers, *contra* Aristotle (and Epicurus) they do not think the soul is divided into two distinct parts, one non-rational and the other rational, which can be in conflict or harmony with each other. Instead, for the Stoics, the human soul is one in the sense of being wholly rational (61B9; 65G, I4). Aetius compares the soul to the body of an octopus, with reason (from which impulse and emotion follow) as the ruling or commanding faculty at the head, and the nutritive, reproductive, sensitive, and oral faculties each being its own tentacle following from this head (53H; see also 47P1; 53K, M, V; DL VII.110, 139).²³⁴ Just as inanimate things, plants, animals, and humans are not beings distinct from God *qua* reason, but are instead particular manifestations of divine being in matter, so too the seemingly non-rational parts of the soul like nutrition, reproduction, and sensation are not distinct from the rational part, but are instead particular manifestations of this ruling part. Finally, the Stoics say that at least some souls can survive the death of the body. The reason for this is because individual souls are parts of God's eternal soul. However, individual souls are,

²³⁴ The Stoics, like Epicurus, locate the body that is the soul in the heart (L&S 53D).

unlike God, not truly immortal. While souls can outlive the body, they cannot outlive the destruction of the universe when the latter is consumed by God's creative fire. At this point, souls as breath-like bodies lose their determinate being and there is just God as fire. Some Stoics, such as Cleanthes, think that all souls will survive until this conflagration, while others argue that only rational souls will survive, and still others, such as Chrysippus, think only virtuous rational souls will live until the conflagration (VII.156-7; L&S 53W).

Here we can see that Aristotle and the Stoics agree that rational souls can exist independently of the body, although they differ in that Aristotle (1) restricts this survival to only the active dimension of the rational faculty of the soul, (2) thinks this faculty, and the soul as a whole qua form, is incorporeal in nature, and (3) considers this active mind eternal, and thus truly immortal and incapable of destruction. Excluding the gods as eternal atomic compounds, Epicurus provides no foundation for the survival or immortality of souls after the death of the body. On the contrary, he considers it ethically important that we understand that the soul perishes with the body and is subsequently free of harm. Spinoza, as we will see in the next section, allows for some aspect of individuals to be eternal (see footnote 253), although the details of this eternality are debatable.

Moving back to the Stoics, now that we have a strong grasp of the nature and relationship between the mind and body, we can finally discuss what role each plays in happiness. In 4.3, we learned that Stoic happiness consists in virtue as living according to one's rational nature, namely making correct judgments about nature, and the value of those things within it (DL VII.87-89, 127; L&S 63D). These rational judgments involve two main components. Firstly, reason involves recognizing the providential and deterministic order of the universe, which ultimately aims at absolute rational perfection, because this order follows from God as the

internal and rational craftsman of all determinate being (DL VII.134-8; L&S 54H1; 55L2).

Secondly, reason reveals that virtue (i.e., reason itself) is the only natural good for humans and vice (i.e., erroneous reasoning) is the only natural bad in this eudaimonistic context, because the Stoics place happiness solely in that which is within the subject's complete control (*HB* 1.1-4). As a human being, only my rational faculty (and the impulses that follow from it), and whether I use it well (virtuously) or poorly (viciously), is fully within my control (DL VII.101, 111, 115; *TD* IV.vii.11, 14; xv.35; *OM* III.10-11; L&S 61B11; 65X2). Only my use of reason plays a necessary and sufficient role in my happiness or unhappiness, in this case as a constituent.

Everything else is morally indifferent, playing neither a necessary nor sufficient role as a means or constituent in relation to my happiness (DL VII.102-4; *HB* 1.1-4). All other things I have, at best, partial control over, because they are ultimately determined by the outside influence of providence.²³⁵ Of particular note as a moral indifferent is the body. I obviously have some direct and necessary control over the states of my body as something which is part of me, certainly more than I do over external things like other people, various objects, and my overall environment. For example, I (a rational adult) am not wholly passive with respect to obtaining bodily health and sensual pleasures. I can deliberately pursue things which nourish my body or favourably stimulate my senses, as well as deliberately avoid things which make my body sick or cause me to experience sensual pain, and I can be successful in these endeavours. However, these and all other states of my body need not follow from my volitions. A doctor can, strictly-speaking, force me to do things conducive to my health that I do not want. On the other hand, I

²³⁵ Providence also has an internal influence on the individual, but in this case providence manifests itself through one's actions being determined by their rational nature, that is the individual directly partaking in God's rationality and providence. The Stoics equate freedom with natural self-determination, so they do not consider internal providence something outside the control of the individual. For further discussion, see 4.3, footnote 174.

may do all I can to keep my body healthy, and yet still fall victim to illnesses, like influenza and rabies, because of various external forces. Similarly, other people or things can easily impose sensual pleasures or pains on me irrespective of my expectations and desires (e.g., forcing me to eat something I find delicious/disgusting or being tickled, cut, or punched). In general, just because I want my body to be in certain states does not mean that it will be. Providence, as an external force, always determines whether my endeavours are successful or not, and there are many instances where my pursuit of healthy/pleasurable states or avoidance of unhealthy/painful states clearly fails.

In contrast, I have complete control over my mental well-being. When I reason well, my mind is healthy (i.e., functioning properly), and I experience pleasurable emotions, free from suffering. When I reason poorly, my mind is sick (and thus impeded in its functioning), and I experience emotional suffering. No person or external thing determines the health and emotions of my mind, because they have no control over my judgments. Moreover, since the Stoics in turn place happiness and unhappiness solely within the states of my mind, no one but me has any degree of control over the happiness or unhappiness of my life. Admittedly, the Stoics grant that some moral indifferents are naturally preferable, like bodily health and sensual pleasure, while others are naturally unfavourable, like bodily sickness and sensual pain, meaning a happy person should be disposed towards the former and away from the latter by virtue of human nature. However, because I do not have complete control over my bodily possession of health, sickness, pleasure, or pain, these things cannot be truly good or bad. As we saw in 3.3, they are at best potential, but unnecessary, tools for practicing and developing virtuous conduct or expressing prior virtue and happiness. The body consequently plays no necessary instrumental or constitutive role in happiness – happiness is instead a purely mental good.

Here the Stoics place themselves in opposition to Aristotle and Epicurus. They agree with Aristotle that reason constitutes happiness (ignoring here Ch. 4's distinction between dispositions and activities), but they do not think that our mental well-being and rational capacities have a strong and necessary dependence on the health of the body or the favourableness of things in our environment as Aristotle does. A healthy body, wealth, social status, virtuous parents, an effective education, and a well-functioning state that provides the necessary resources for these things can all be useful in developing or expressing one's rational faculty, but none of them are strictly necessary to live a happy life in the Stoic ethical framework. A Stoic can be happy even if they are sick and/or impoverished, were raised and educated poorly, or live in a poorly-run or tyrannical state as a slave or lower-class citizen in general. As we saw in 4.3, the Stoics think that one can even be completely happy while being physically tortured. Like all eudaimonists, the Stoics consider happiness a stable state, but they follow this criterion more strictly than Aristotle and other eudaimonists by restricting happiness only to what one has complete control over. Because we cannot fully control the states of our body, the body represents something unstable, and thus cannot be a necessary component of happiness. Happiness as a stable state can only be found in the mind for the Stoics, namely the rational faculty, which we have complete control over. Turning to Epicurus, the Stoics agree with him that everything, including the mind, is corporeal in nature, with the mind in this case being a superior kind of body to the human body and its well-being serving as a constituent of happiness. What is notable here is that the ethical inequality between the human mind and the human body for both is not based on an inequality between non-extended being and extended being, as it is for Aristotle, but is instead based on the differences between two kinds of bodies. With that said, there is significant disagreement between them concerning whether the human body, and the material conditions surrounding it,

play a necessary role in happiness. Epicurus considers bodily health qua katastematic pleasure a constituent of happiness in conjunction with mental health qua katastematic pleasure.

Furthermore, although he thinks that happiness requires fewer bodily and external things than Aristotle, Epicurus nevertheless agrees with Aristotle (contra the Stoics) that bodily and external things can be genuinely good or bad in relation to living a happy life. Consequently, despite their shared commitment to (qualified) materialism, Epicurus still grants a greater ethical role to bodily and external considerations than the Stoics.

In summary, the Stoics stand in a complex relationship to Epicurus and Aristotle concerning the body. Ontologically, there is general agreement between the Stoics and Epicurus that extended being is the foundation of all things, including the soul and the mind, although the former's precise account of reality can be considered a materialistic and pantheistic emendation of Aristotelian hylomorphism. Ethically, the Stoics side with Aristotle in declaring reason the core constituent of happiness, although they go further than Aristotle in denying that anything outside the rational faculty of the mind is in any way good or bad, meaning (contra Aristotle and Epicurus) the body plays no necessary or direct role in living happily. All three eudaimonists agree that the human mind is ethically superior to the human body, but their core reasons for espousing this inequality are different. The Stoics and Epicurus justify the mind's superiority based on bodily considerations, while Aristotle justifies this position based on the supremacy of non-extended being over extended being. In the next section, we will see that Spinoza distances himself from all three eudaimonists by arguing for the ontological/ethical identity and equality of extended and non-extended being.

5.4 Spinoza²³⁶

Substance also lies at the heart of Spinoza's account of reality. Specifically, he describes a substance as that which is ontologically and conceptually independent (*E* IDef.3), which in turn also makes it causally independent or self-caused (IDef.1; IAx.4-5, IP3, 6, IIP6, IIP2).²³⁷ It relies on absolutely nothing else for its existence, and in understanding the nature of the substance in question we need not appeal to the concept of anything else. Spinoza defines God as “an absolutely infinite being” or a “substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence” (IDef.6), clarifying that “whatever expresses essence [without] any negation belongs to [God]” (Expl.). In other words, God is an eternal and infinite substance that unrestrictedly expresses all possible being in its essence. An attribute is a fundamental feature that “intellect” (*intellectus*) understands as a constituent of the essence of a substance (IDef.4/G II 45), and thus also as infinite and eternal in nature (IP19). Since God essentially expresses all possible being, it possesses every attribute that a substance could possess (Attributes Pluralism: IP9). Spinoza explicitly argues that Thought and Extension are attributes of God (IIP1-2), while clarifying that it also possesses other attributes to which we lack epistemic access (*E* IP9-10S; IIP7S; *Ep* 9, p. 782/G IV 44-5; *Ep* 56, p. 905/G 261).²³⁸

Spinoza's mention of “intellect” in his definition of attribute, however, has led to rich debate concerning how we should understand the relationship between God qua substance and its attributes. On what we might call a *subjectivist* reading of the attributes, the mention of the

²³⁶ A version of this section is published in *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review/Revue Canadienne De Philosophie* as “Spinoza's Early Modern Eudaimonism: Corporeal and Intellectual Flourishing,” pp. 1-26, doi: <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0012217323000409> (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

²³⁷ It is important to note here that, for Spinoza, there is a biconditional relationship between causal and conceptual relations: *x* is caused by *y* iff *x* is conceived through *y*. For discussion of this point, see Della Rocca[b] (9-17); Garrett[c] (362-3 and note 22); Melamed[a] (Ch. 3.1).

²³⁸ Here I side with scholars, like Melamed[b] (96-9), who read the Spinozistic God as possessing infinitely many attributes.

intellect indicates that the attributes do not actually belong to God's essence, but are instead simply how a (finite human) mind cognizes God. Attributes on this reading are then mind-dependent features imposed on God, *as if* they constituted its essence. A classic defender of this view is Wolfson[a] (146-57). In contrast, on what we might call an *objectivist* reading of the attributes, the attributes are mind-independent features that genuinely constitute God's essence.²³⁹ Some defenders of this view are Della Rocca[b] (Ch. 9), Lin[c] (81-5, 91-2), Melamed[b] (90-6), and Shein[a] (525-31).²⁴⁰ While I consider the (narrow) objectivist reading more plausible than the subjectivist reading, I will nevertheless explain how both readings in some sense entail equality between mind and body.

Spinoza ultimately argues that God is the only substance (Substance Monism), and that all other beings are modes and immanent (i.e., internal) effects of God (*E* IP14-5, 18), including individuals like human beings (IIP10). A mode is something which is ontologically and conceptually dependent on something else as an affection or property of the latter.²⁴¹ A mode, in other words, expresses some aspect of the nature of the being that it depends on. A mode can have its own modes (e.g., my individual mind and body, as modes, can have expressions of their being through emotions like pleasure, pain, love, and hate), but since any given mode is in itself

²³⁹ The classic debate between subjectivist and objectivist readings involves other considerations, such as whether Spinoza is referring to a finite or infinite intellect, why he uses the language of perception (*percipit*) in *E* IDef.4/G II 45, what he intends *tanquam* to mean in the definition (i.e., "as [really]" vs. "as if [but not really]"), and how we should understand Spinoza's claim in IP10S/G II 52 that the attributes are "really distinct" (*realiter distincta*). My concern here is simply whether the attributes truly belong to God's essence or not, and the implications of either reading in this narrow sense. For comprehensive discussion of more general subjectivist and objectivist readings, see, e.g., Lin[c] and Shein[a]. For discussion of why Spinoza uses the language of perception, rather than conception, see, e.g., Della Rocca[b] (166) and Melamed[b] (note 50).

²⁴⁰ Lin[c] and Shein[a] do not describe their respective readings as objectivist in the general sense, because both consider Spinoza to be committed to some sort of conceptual or rational distinction (*distinctio rationis*) between the attributes, despite their ontological identity. Instead, both see themselves as presenting middle-ground interpretations which are not subject to the traditional issues of subjectivist and/or objectivist readings.

²⁴¹ Curley (*Behind* 30-48) argues that Spinoza considers modes mere effects of God qua substance, and not properties. Melamed[a] (Ch. 1), in contrast, argues (quite persuasively and comprehensively, in my view) that modes are indeed properties (namely *propria*) in Spinoza's metaphysical framework.

a dependent being all modes are ultimately dependent on a substance. More precisely, they will be dependent on, and express the being of, a substance's attributes. Consequently, modes are different ways in which the essential features of God's nature are expressed (IDef.5; IP16Proof, 25C, 28S, 36Proof).

There are three kinds of modes: immediate infinite modes, mediate infinite modes, and finite modes. Immediate infinite modes follow directly from God's attributes, mediate infinite modes follow from the immediate infinite modes (IP21-3), and finite modes follow from a combination of mediate infinite modes and finite modes (IP28). Spinoza's account of the infinite modes of each attribute and their relationship to finite modes is notoriously sparse, so here I offer only a general and speculative outline, which will nevertheless be sufficient for understanding the relationship between mind and body.²⁴² The immediate infinite mode of Thought is absolutely infinite intellect/will, or the idea of God, which consists in God's understanding of all its attributes and the modes that follow from each of them (IP30, 32C2; IIP3-4, 49; *Ep* 64/G 278). The immediate infinite modes of Extension are motion and rest (*E* IP32C2; *Ep* 64/ G 278).²⁴³ The mediate infinite mode of Extension is the infinite composite body of the universe, which is constituted by a fixed proportion of motion and rest between its constituent material parts (*E* IIP13L1-L7S; *Ep* 64/ G 278), and in Thought the infinite composite idea or intellect of the universe, which represents in its content the infinite body of the universe, as well as the

²⁴² For comprehensive discussion of the infinite modes, and their relationship to finite modes, see, e.g., Melamed[a] (Ch. 4); Nadler[g]; Shein[b].

²⁴³ Spinoza, like Aristotle (*Physics* IV) and Descartes (*PP* II.16), is committed to a plenum, meaning within the realm of Extension there is no void, vacuum, or space devoid of matter (*KV* I.II, note 12; *E* IP15S; *Ep* 13/G IV 65). Where Spinoza crucially differs from both, however, is in arguing that matter is inherently active and actual, because it belongs to God's nature and God is inherently active and actual (*E* IP17S, 31S). For discussion of Spinoza's critique of Descartes's conception of Extension, see, e.g., Peterman's "Spinoza on Extension"; Robinson's "Spinoza on the Vacuum." Peterman is noteworthy, because she argues that Spinoza also breaks with tradition by denying that length, breadth, and depth constitute the true nature of Extension.

relevant mediate infinite modes of the other attributes (IIP11). Finite modes of Thought are individual ideas or minds and finite modes of Extension are individual bodies (IIDef.1). The human body is a particular material ratio of motion/rest and the human mind is the idea of the body as this particular material ratio (IIDef.1, 3; IIP5, 11-13). Spinoza does not make it clear how we get from mediate infinite modes to finite modes,²⁴⁴ but for our purposes we need only note that the human mind is part of God's infinite intellect or the composite intellect of the universe (IIP5-6, 9, 11C), and the human body is part of the infinite body of the universe (IIP13Ax.1-Post.6). Roughly, in Spinoza's cosmological framework, we might say that we move from the general being of God's attributes to the infinite modes as progressively more particular beings and natural laws, with finite modes as individual instantiations of these prior beings and laws.²⁴⁵

With this general account of reality in mind, we can now discuss the ontological relationship between God's attributes and the modes that follow from them. The central passage on this subject is IIP7S, which outlines what Melamed[a] refers to as "Inter-Attributes Parallelism" (142).²⁴⁶ Here Spinoza argues that "thinking substance and extended substance are

²⁴⁴ Historically, some figures like Salomon Maimon and Hegel have read Spinoza as an acosmist, meaning he denies (among other things) the genuine existence of finite modes. For comprehensive discussion of the evidence for an acosmist reading, as well as a refutation of such a reading, see Melamed[a] (Ch.3.2). See also footnote 242.

²⁴⁵ As discussed in Ch. 1, Spinoza argues that (1) this cosmological picture is non-providential (*E* IApp.) and (2) the universe is neither inherently good or bad (IVpref.). (1) places Spinoza in opposition to the Stoics and (2) places him in opposition to Aristotle and the Stoics. Epicurus agrees with Spinoza, to some extent, concerning (1) and (2).

²⁴⁶ Deleuze (Ch. 7) and Melamed[a] (Ch. 5) argue that Spinoza also presents an epistemological doctrine in *E* IIP7 concerning the relationship between mind and body, what Melamed[a] refers to as "Ideas-Things Parallelism" (142). This doctrine states that there is a strict representational correspondence between ideas and the things that constitute reality. The idea of God perfectly mirrors and represents in its content God's infinitely many attributes (including Thought) and the causal orders of modes that follow from those attributes. In the realm of mind and body this means that for any given body there is necessarily an idea that both corresponds with and essentially represents that body, and for every state of that body there will be a corresponding idea of it (IIP12-3). In terms of the relationship between Inter-Attributes Parallelism and Ideas-Things Parallelism, Deleuze argues that the former follows from the latter (126-8). Melamed[a], in contrast, argues that these two doctrines are distinct (142-6, 189-91).

one and the same substance, comprehended now under this attribute, now under that. So, too, a mode of Extension and the idea of that mode [qua mode of Thought] are one and the same thing, expressed in two ways.” As discussed above, there is only one substance, God, which possesses all possible attributes, of which two are Extension and Thought. As essential features, Extension and Thought equally constitute God’s nature, meaning God does not express the one kind of being without expressing the other (which applies to all other attributes, as well).²⁴⁷ The attributes are ontologically inseparable, and in fact identical (“one and the same substance”), being merely conceptually and causally distinct aspects of the same underlying being, that is God.²⁴⁸ There is then no ontological inequality of priority between Thought and Extension, because through the identity of the attributes God’s “[actualized] power of thinking is coextensive [or equal (*aequalis*)] with [its] actualized power of acting” (IIP7C/G II 89).

This ontological and conceptual/causal dynamic applies to the modes of these attributes, since the modes by their very nature depend on the attributes and are expressions of them.²⁴⁹ Infinite will/intellect and motion/rest, the composite intellect of the universe and the composite body of the universe, and my particular mind and body, while being modes of different attributes (the former Thought and the latter Extension) are not ontologically distinct beings, but the same being (i.e., an immediate infinite mode, a mediate infinite mode, and a finite mode, respectively) expressed and understood in two different ways (with there possibly being infinitely many other

²⁴⁷ As discussed in 4.4, God’s power is fully actual, so there is no dimension of its nature, that is no possible attribute or mode of an attribute, that goes unrealized or unexpressed (IP17S, 31S).

²⁴⁸ Lin[c] and Melamed[b] disagree over how this conceptual distinction should be characterized. Lin[c] argues that the distinction is one of “reasoning reason” (*distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*), which allows for the essence of substance to be understood in diverse ways without entailing that the attributes constitute ontologically distinct beings or substance is somehow in itself simultaneously metaphysically plural and unified (80-1). Melamed[b], conversely, argues that the distinction is one of “reasoned reason” (*distinctio rationis ratiocinatae*), because it truly captures mind-independent aspects of the essence of substance (101-2). I leave it to the reader to decide which distinction better suits what Spinoza has in mind.

²⁴⁹ This means that mind and body do not causally interact, because they are the same thing (E IIP2).

ways in which this being can be understood relative to the attribute in question).²⁵⁰ More precisely, we can draw a distinction between “neutral” modes (Della Rocca[a] 132-40) or “modes of God” (Melamed[a] 82-6), which presuppose or are conceived through every attribute, and “modes of attributes,” which are the expression of these neutral modes through each attribute.

In the realm of mind and body, we can take these details even further. The conatus, pleasures/pains, and activities of my mind and the conatus, pleasures/pains, and activities of my body are not ontologically distinct things. On the contrary, my conatus, my pleasures/pains, and my activities are neutral modes, each of which finds simultaneous expression through Thought and Extension, that is to say my mind and body as modes of attributes, respectively. Spinoza asserts that “the conatus of the mind, that is, its power to think, is equal to [*aequalis*] and simultaneous in nature with the conatus of the body, that is, its power to act . . . [emphasis mine]” (IIP28Proof/G II 162; see also IVP45S). Furthermore, the well-being of my body qua self-affirmative power cannot be promoted or impeded without the well-being of my mind being respectively promoted or impeded, and vice versa (IIP11; see also IIP14; IVP45S; IVApp.27). The mind and the body are thus empowered and disempowered together, again because they are not ontologically distinct or unequal beings but rather different and equal aspects of the same being. Even if Thought and Extension, mind and body, were not identical, there would still be a strict correspondence, according to the abovementioned passages, that would preclude the ontological priority of one over the other.²⁵¹ Ultimately then there follows from God’s nature one

²⁵⁰ For rich discussion of how best to characterize the identity of mind and body in Spinoza’s philosophical framework, see, e.g., Della Rocca[b] (Ch. 7-9); Hübner’s “Representation and Mind-Body Identity in Spinoza’s Philosophy.”

²⁵¹ Considering Spinoza does consider them identical, however, some scholars have noted that “parallelism” may be a misleading term for this doctrine, particularly because Spinoza never uses the term himself (Della Rocca[a] 19;

infinite causal order, each thing qua neutral mode in this order finding equal expression through every attribute.

As it stands, this overall metaphysical framework places Spinoza in agreement and disagreement with his fellow eudaimonists in several notable and nuanced ways. Fundamentally, contra Aristotle, thinking or intellectual being is not ontologically prior to extended being, nor (contra Epicurus and the Stoics) is extended being prior to intellectual being. Both kinds of being are ontologically equal in the sense that they belong to God or reality in the same constitutive way. On the subjectivist reading of attributes, they are *weakly* equal, in the sense that neither actually constitutes God's essence, but God is equally cognized through both. Here Spinoza's account of the divine differs drastically from his fellow eudaimonists, since they consider God genuinely intellectual and/or corporeal in nature. On the objectivist reading, Thought and Extension are strongly equal because they are both genuine constituents of God's essence. Here Spinoza agrees with Aristotle that God is essentially intellectual, Epicurus and the Stoics that the divine is essentially extended and corporeal, and the Stoics that the universe is in some sense equivalent to God.²⁵² However, contra Aristotle and the Stoics, he denies that any possible kind of being (namely matter) can exist outside of God, and contra Epicurus and the Stoics he denies

Deleuze 104-9; Jaquet[a] 12-9; Melamed[a] 144). Jaquet[a] (19-26) argues that this doctrine is better characterized by the term "equality," since Spinoza explicitly uses *aequalis* to describe the relationship between Thought/mind and Extension/body. I am inclined to agree with Jaquet, and thus (*pace* Melamed[a]) I think that the argument of IIP7S is best described as the doctrine of "Inter-Attributes *Equality*." For the sake of terminological clarity and consistency, however, I will continue to refer to this doctrine as "Inter-Attributes Parallelism."

²⁵² In 1.3, we discussed the scholarly attribution of pantheism to both the Stoics and Spinoza. Two things should be noted, however. Firstly, if we read Spinoza as a pantheist, he is arguably a stronger pantheist ("all is God") than the Stoics, since the latter do not think that matter qua passive principle is contained within God, even if God is eternally entwined with it. For Spinoza, in contrast, there is no possible being that is not contained within God. Secondly, some scholars question whether "pantheism" is the correct term for Spinoza's conception of the relationship between God and the universe. Some, like Nadler[c], read Spinoza as an atheist (112-21). Others, like Carlisle (Ch. 3), argue a better term is "panentheism" (i.e., "all is *in* God"), because God's nature transcends the thinking and extended universe. My own position is that Spinoza presents what he takes to be the only logically coherent account of divinity, and Spinoza is at least in some sense a stronger pantheist than the Stoics.

that the intellectual capacities of the divine are ontologically dependent on corporeal being. As well, he does not think that, in principle, God or the universe is restricted to intellectual or extended being. Humans may only have epistemic access to these two kinds of being, but reality is ultimately infinitely more complex, since (on the objectivist reading) God contains all possible attributes in its essence.

Moving to the individual level of minds and bodies, Spinoza thinks that, while the powers of the mind and the powers of the body are conceptually/causally different (i.e., minds express Thought through ideas, judgments, and knowledge and bodies express Extension through size, shape, motion, and rest), ontologically they cannot possess these powers independently of each other. Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics all grant some degree of independence of powers between minds and bodies. For them, mental pleasures, pains, and activities are distinct from bodily pleasures, pains, and activities, in the sense that the mind can experience pleasure/pain the body is not experiencing and can act when the body is inactive, and vice versa. Although Aristotle and Epicurus emphasize the reliance of mental well-being on bodily well-being, nevertheless they consider them distinct well-beings, which simply have a necessary, instrumental connection to each other. Spinoza's unique contribution here is to argue that mental and bodily well-being, pleasure/pain, and activity are ontologically identical and equal.

Whether we associate Spinoza's conception of the soul with the mind (which he explicitly does in *KV* App. 2 and *E* IIIP57S) or with the conatus as an active principle, we find no possible separation between soul and body, or reduction of one to the other. This unified account of the mind and body, in turn, indicates that Spinoza is neither a substance dualist, nor a materialist, nor an idealist, because thinking and extended being are equally fundamental aspects of the one substance and they do not exhaust this substance's scope of being. With that said,

Spinoza notably agrees with Epicurus and the Stoics (contra Aristotle) that bodies are wholly explained through the principles of extended being, with absolutely no appeal to the principles of non-extended or intellectual being. If by “materialism” we simply mean that corporeal being is causally and explanatorily self-sufficient, then in this qualified and *non-exclusive* sense Spinoza may be accurately described as a materialist (as well as an idealist concerning ideas).²⁵³

Ultimately, though, for Spinoza the corporeal and intellectual are identical and equally fundamental.²⁵⁴

This commitment to identity and equality has important ethical implications. As we have seen in previous chapters, Spinozistic happiness in general consists in virtue, adequate causality, and adequate knowledge. More particularly, Spinoza seems to allow for two kinds/levels of happiness, one that follows from reason and the other intuition. Intuition, the greatest kind of

²⁵³ For discussion of dualism in Spinoza, see, e.g., Bennett (Ch. 2.12-3) and Melamed[a] (196-9). For materialist readings of Spinoza, see, e.g., Curley (*Behind* 89-93); Hampshire’s “A Kind of Materialism”; Montag’s *Bodies, Masses, Power*. For idealist readings of Spinoza, see, e.g., Della Rocca[a] and [c]; Murray’s “The Idealism of Spinoza.” For further, more nuanced, discussion of why Spinoza is neither a materialist nor an idealist, see, e.g., Lin[c] (100-1) and Melamed[a] (Ch. 6.7). Spinoza has also been described as a neutral monist or double-aspect theorist (Kim 96; Stubenberg’s “Neutral Monism”), which I consider a more accurate description of what he has in mind.

²⁵⁴ There are two potential issues with this equality reading, one concerning the attribute of Thought and the other the eternity of the mind. Concerning the first issue, because the attribute of Thought represents all of reality, it appears to express more being and power than any other attribute (*E* IIP7C; Ep 64/G IV 278; Melamed[a] Ch. 6). As a result, intellectual being seems to be ontologically superior to every other kind of being (including corporeal being), which undermines the equality of intellectual and corporeal being that I argue for above. Concerning the second issue, Spinoza argues that a part of the mind (namely, its essence) can survive the death of the body because it is eternally contained within the attribute of Thought (*E* VP2-23; Wolfson[b] 293-6). If the mind possesses eternal existence that the body does not, then this would indicate an ontological inequality between body and mind, with the body being inferior to the mind due to the former’s exclusively mortal existence. Ultimately, I do not think that either issue is an insurmountable threat to my reading. In response to the first issue, Spinoza himself cautions us against judging the perfection or power of things based on features that are not inherent to their respective natures (*E* IApp./G 83; see also IVPref. and Ep 19, 21, 36). Representational power cannot be used as a point of ontological comparison between Thought and Extension, because it is not a neutral feature that could belong to any other attribute than Thought. In response to the second issue, while Spinoza emphasizes the eternity of part of the mind, this does not preclude part of the body from being eternal, as well (particularly in light of IIP7S). Just as the essence of the mind is eternally contained within the attribute of Thought, so too the essence of the body is eternally contained within the attribute of Extension (IIP8, 45S; VP29S). In both cases, the inequality between intellectual/mental and corporeal/bodily being is merely apparent.

adequate knowledge and the “highest virtue” (VP24) constitutes blessedness, the highest happiness and good, which more precisely consists in intuitive self-contentment and “intellectual love of God” (VP42; see also IVP28). In our discussions of happiness thus far we have seen that mental power and pleasure are clear constituents of happiness. It is noteworthy, however, that Spinoza never explicitly describes a *bodily* constituent of happiness which would be the counterpart of adequate knowledge in general or reason/intuition in particular. In fact, Spinoza argues that “we know nothing to be certainly good or evil except what is really conducive to understanding or what can hinder understanding” (IVP27). Does this mean that Spinoza considers happiness a purely intellectual good?

Miller[a]’s answer to this question is “yes.” He argues that happiness has no bodily counterpart, because Spinoza considers all bodily goods external in nature (199-202). Every conceivable bodily good, like “food, drink, exercise, [and] health” is external, because such things are “not entirely due to us” (200). In other words, anything that is beneficial to the body must come from outside of it and hold only circumstantial instrumental value, which is in stark contrast to the internal and intrinsic goodness of intellectual activity qua adequate causality that the mind enjoys with intellectual love of God. Miller[a] concedes that this conception of bodily goods is in tension with Parallelism (IIP7 and IIP7S).²⁵⁵ However, he thinks a solution can be found in the distinction Spinoza draws between what is in “human power” and what is “outside” of human power, even if Spinoza himself had not quite solidified his thoughts on this matter (IVApp.32; see also IIIDef.2; IVP18S, App.2). What is in human power is reason, which fits with Spinoza’s identification of the highest good with intellectual love of God, the highest intellectual power/pleasure. Conversely, bodily factors are (at least partly) outside of human

²⁵⁵ Miller[a] does not distinguish between Ideas-Things Parallelism and Inter-Attributes Parallelism.

power, which explains why the body has no intrinsic good. The circumstantial nature of bodily goods is therefore the reason why the body is not a constituent of the highest good.

Miller[a] is correct that Spinoza draws an important distinction between what is and is not in human power, which we may connect to his distinction between activity and passivity in fruitful ways (IIIDef.2). However, there is little reason for mapping this distinction onto the relationship between mind and body or restricting virtue to intellectual power. As Miller[a] himself admits, IIP7S entails a strict correspondence, and in fact identity, between mind and body. The conatus, its power, and its pleasures and pains are equally mental and bodily in nature. Since virtue just is the power of the conatus considered in itself, virtue is also equally mental and bodily in nature (IVP8). Miller[a]’s point seems to be that, while the mind has a bodily correlate, the body by nature possesses a passivity that the mind does not, which is why all possible bodily goods are external.

It is true that Spinoza’s description of the body emphasizes its causal receptivity: [t]hat which so disposes the human body that *it can be affected* in more ways . . . [emphasis mine]” (IVP38). There are two things to note here, however. Firstly, in IVP38, Spinoza also emphasizes the body’s causal power: “or [that] which renders it capable of affecting external bodies.” In fact, we might say that this description implies that a body’s causal power fundamentally lies in having as much of a causal role (as cause or recipient) in phenomena as possible, similar to the way that God qua substance plays an absolute causal role in everything because it is every cause and is the recipient of every cause (IVP14-15, 18). Secondly, this causal dynamic is also not restricted to the body. In IVP18S, Spinoza asserts that “surely our intellect would be less perfect if the mind were in solitude and understood nothing beyond itself” and in IVApp. 27 he references the knowledge we gain from “observing [external things] and changing them from

one form to another.” There is also the more fundamental fact that the mind possesses inadequate ideas, which are indicative of its passivity (IIP1, 3, 9). These passages indicate that intellectual power also involves receptivity. This makes sense, because by virtue of IIP7S, the activity and passivity (or degrees of perfection and imperfection) of a being is attribute-neutral – it does not presuppose only one attribute, but all of them (IVApp. 27, 30; VP39-40). Any degree of passivity the body possesses the mind will necessarily possess. What is in our power is both mental and bodily, and what is not in our power is that which is distinct from our mind and body (IVP45S; VP39).

Moreover, after arguing for the intrinsic goodness of understanding, Spinoza goes on in IVP38Proof to argue that “that which disposes the body” to affect and be affected “is necessarily good,” meaning the body is not neglected in this ethical conversation. Nor is the power and goodness of the one treated as separate from the other: “[A]s the body is more capable of being affected in many ways and of affecting external bodies in many ways, so the mind is more capable of thinking” (IVApp.27; see also IVP45S; VP39). It is also important to remember that mind and body are identical because Thought and Extension are identical constituents of God, and in turn my mental/bodily power is a particular manifestation of God’s thinking/extended power, which is why Spinoza says that the more adequate causal power we have the more we directly partake in the divine (IIP49S/G II 135; IVP45S). Consequently, *pace* Miller[a], by virtue of the Conatus Doctrine (IIP6) as the foundation of Spinoza’s ethics and Inter-Attributes Parallelism (IIP7S), the body has an intrinsic good, just like the mind: self-affirmative and adequate causal power/pleasure. We are ultimately talking about the same power, pleasure, and intrinsic good in the context of virtue and happiness – mind and body are merely two different aspects of these things.

Why then does Spinoza consistently mention the mind, but not the body, when discussing virtue and happiness? And if reason/intuition and love of God/intellectual love of God express the intellectual dimension of virtue and happiness, what precisely expresses the physical dimension of them? One potential explanation for the first question is Spinoza's comment that "nobody as yet" has complete knowledge of "what the body can and cannot do" or "all its functions" (IIP2S; see also *Ep* 83). Spinoza is obscure about what bodily power and goodness consist in, because he believes that the science of his time (and he himself) still has a long way to go in fully explaining the nature of the human body. In fact, Spinoza clarifies that his philosophical project in the *Ethics* is specifically aimed at "knowledge of the human mind and its utmost blessedness" (IIPref.). He also does not argue that the highest virtue and highest good consist *solely* in intuition or intellectual love of God. What Spinoza actually says is that this form of knowledge/pleasure is the highest virtue and highest good "of the mind" (IVP28, VP25). These points tell us only that his main ethical concern in this text is the mental dimension of blessedness, not that there is no bodily dimension to this causal and affective state.²⁵⁶

Admittedly, Spinoza might personally care more about the ethical role of the mind than the body, but what I have attempted to show in this section is that his actual doctrines do not entail the ontological/ethical priority or superiority of the mind over the body.

Moving to the second question, what does the bodily dimension of happiness concretely involve? Kisner (78-9) identifies this bodily good with brain activity and James[b] (147-59) identifies it with the ability to physically act in parallel to one's knowledge (152-4). Affectively, DeBrabander (60-2) describes cheerfulness as the bodily correlate to intellectual love of God qua mental pleasure (*E* IVP42). Spinoza himself never makes it clear, but all three answers are

²⁵⁶ This is a further reason for why Spinoza only explicitly discusses the eternal dimension of the mind in the *Ethics*.

plausible. In fact, these three interpretations are compatible with each other, brain activity being a central manifestation of the general physical activity that parallels one's knowledge and cheerfulness being the affective aspect of such physical activity insofar as it pertains to the body as an empowered whole. Even if these potential responses are incorrect or Spinoza had not yet decided what the true good of the body is precisely, the fact still remains that the identity between mind and body, in conjunction with the *conatus* as the foundation of Spinoza's ethics, entails that mental power and bodily power are equally good and equal constituents of happiness, because they are simply two aspects of one ultimate good: self-empowerment.²⁵⁷

Here we see that Spinoza distances himself ethically from Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics, the latter of whom all consider the body ethically inferior to the mind. For Aristotle, rational activities constitute happiness, because the intellectual dimension of the soul is the faculty most characteristic of human nature, the closest approximation to the eternal reflective activity of God, and the only thing that is exclusively intrinsically good. The bodily dimension of the soul is ethically inferior because it shares its faculties, activities, and pleasures with other living things, is furthest removed from the intellectual nature of the divine, relies on practical wisdom to flourish, and is ultimately valued and nurtured for the sake of promoting the flourishing of the rational faculty (particularly reflection). Although Epicurus and the Stoics, contra Aristotle, consider both the divine and mental essentially corporeal, nevertheless they think the mind is special in a way that makes it superior to, and thus more valuable than, the body in promoting happiness. For Epicurus mental pleasure is superior to bodily pleasure because the former can refer to the past, present, and future, while the latter is restricted to the

²⁵⁷ Klein's "Materializing Spinoza's Account" similarly argues against an intellectualist or "arch-rationalist" reading of Spinoza, with an emphasis on the material dimension of freedom.

present. This superior modality makes the mental better equipped than the bodily to combat suffering. The Stoics go even further than Aristotle and Epicurus by arguing that only the mind and its reasoning have true eudaimonistic value, because only our rational capacity is wholly within our control. The body and the external things that impact it will always be to some degree outside of our control, and thus they are not worthy candidates for happiness as a truly stable condition of living. Spinoza places himself then in ethical opposition to Aristotle and the Stoics by arguing that happiness is equally bodily and mental in nature, and all three ancient eudaimonists by denying that mind and body can have ontologically distinct powers, pleasures, and vulnerabilities which would make one more valuable than the other.²⁵⁸

In sum, this section has shown that Spinoza has a drastically different conception of the ontological and ethical relationship between mind and body than his fellow eudaimonists. On the one hand, Spinoza agrees with Aristotle and the Stoics that the divine, the universe, and happiness are essentially intellectual. He agrees with Epicurus and the Stoics (contra Aristotle) that the divine and the universe are essentially corporeal, and in turn that corporeal being is not ontologically inferior to intellectual being. Finally, he agrees with Epicurus (contra Aristotle and the Stoics) that happiness is constituted by mental and bodily pleasures, rather than being a primarily or solely intellectual good. On the other hand, Spinoza denies that bodily activities and pleasures are distinct from or less valuable than mental activities and pleasures (i.e., ethical

²⁵⁸ Concerning external goods, Spinoza sides in general with Aristotle and Epicurus on their necessity, contra the Stoics. More particularly, he agrees with Epicurus that few external goods are necessary for happiness, but also Aristotle that any external goods that I acquire will increase my happiness. As we saw in 1.3, Miller[a] thinks that Spinoza agrees with the Stoics that external goods are neither necessary nor sufficient for the well-being and happiness of the mind. For the reasons I give above concerning the identity of mind and body, in particular their equal activity and passivity, I disagree. One important thing that Miller[a] fails to acknowledge is that, contra the Stoics, Spinoza (as we saw in 3.4) considers passions indicative of genuine and direct benefits and harms to one's mental and bodily well-being, in the sense of increases and decreases in power, respectively. Spinoza does not think, like the Stoics, that external things are mere tools for achieving or expressing prior virtue and happiness – they can also directly make me more virtuous and happier.

intellectualism). Contra Epicurus and the Stoics, for Spinoza intellectual being is not reducible to corporeal being, and contra Aristotle, corporeal being is not ontologically dependent on intellectual being. The corporeal and the intellectual are equal (i.e., identical and only conceptually distinct) constituents of the divine and the universe, with this same equality applying (contra Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics) to the self-affirmative powers, pleasures, and goods of the mind and body. Here Spinoza has no strong ontological or ethical agreement with any particular ancient eudaimonist. Each, in one way or another, treats the corporeal/bodily and the intellectual/mental as distinct and unequal in a manner wholly opposed to Spinoza's mature philosophical framework.²⁵⁹ Thus, Spinoza's distinctive contribution to eudaimonism is to fully unify mind and body ontologically and ethically.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we examined Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza's respective views on the nature of the body and its ethical role in happiness. In Aristotle's hylomorphic framework, corporeal being is ontologically and ethically inferior because, on the macrocosmic level it depends on the active and non-extended influence of God and forms for determinate being, and on the microcosmic level of humans the bodily faculties and goods of the soul depend on and serve the rational faculty of the soul and its goods, the latter of which constitute the distinctive nature of humanity and most closely approximate the intellectual activity and pleasure of God. Epicurus, in contrast, places corporeal being at the foundation of reality with his atomism and rejection of causal power to anything incorporeal (which includes void as empty space). Ethically, while he considers mental goods qua pleasures superior to bodily goods (due to

²⁵⁹ Again, as I clarify in footnote 204, I leave open the likely possibility that Spinoza endorses ethical intellectualism in his early works, even though he rejects such a position in his mature philosophy.

the former's greater modal scope), nevertheless for Epicurus the mind is fundamentally corporeal and happiness is constituted by both mental and bodily katastematic pleasures. The Stoics follow Epicurus in placing the source of reality and causal power in corporeal being, but in this case offer a materialistic version of hylomorphism, where the universe is constituted by God as an active body and matter as a passive body. However, despite their ontological materialism, in the ethical realm the Stoics are strong intellectualists – happiness is constituted solely by reason, with all bodily and external things being morally indifferent to happiness both constitutively and instrumentally. Spinoza, while agreeing with his fellow eudaimonists in certain respects, ultimately distances himself from all of them by defending the ontological and ethical identity and equality of corporeal and intellectual being, from the macrocosmic level of God's extended and thinking essence to the microcosmic level of the human body and mind.

From this comparative analysis, we can ultimately conclude that Spinoza offers a unique contribution to the eudaimonistic tradition through his doctrine of Inter-Attributes Parallelism (*EIP7S*). Spinoza is distinctive because, where his fellow eudaimonists established ontological and ethical distinctions and hierarchies between the corporeal and intellectual, Spinoza offers an account that truly unifies them. Thought and Extension are equal (and only conceptually/causally distinct) constituents of God's essence, which in turn means that any being which follows from God's nature as a neutral mode is equally extended and thinking in its essence and modes. My conatus, activities, pleasures, pains, virtue, and happiness are thus both corporeal and intellectual in nature, the bodily and the mental simply being conceptually/causally distinct aspects of my underlying essence and states of being. As we saw in 4.4, even will and intellect, and the practical and theoretical, find unity in Spinoza's philosophy. Spinoza's eudaimonism

consequently can be characterized as a moral philosophy of unified, but diverse and active, self-empowerment.²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ This emphasis on unity in Spinoza's philosophy may tempt the reader towards an acosmist reading. However, I side with Melamed[a] (Ch. 3.2) in denying that Spinoza is an acosmist. According to Melamed[a], "one of the most fascinating achievements of [Spinoza's] system" is his synthesis of Substance Monism and Attributes Pluralism (198). I agree, and wish to emphasize that this beautiful synthesis finds its way into his moral philosophy, as well. Melamed[a] fails to appreciate this latter fact because he considers Spinoza an unqualified moral anti-realist (36-7; see also Melamed[c] 157-61), a general metaethical reading I refute in 2.3 and in "Spinoza's Metaethical Synthesis."

Conclusion

Many early modern thinkers, such as Astell (*A Serious Proposal II*), Descartes (the preface to the *PP*; *PS*; “To Princess Elizabeth), Du Châtelet (*Discourse on Happiness*), Gassendi (*Three Discourses*), Hobbes (*The Elements*), Leibniz (*DM* ~4, 12, 30-37; *M* ~83-90; “Happiness”), and Masham (*A Discourse*), were (like Spinoza) meaningfully engaged with ancient ideas and/or focused on happiness in their respective ethical frameworks. Similarly, we find enthusiastic and robust engagement with the ideas of eudaimonists among contemporary thinkers as well, philosophers and non-philosophers alike. Plato and Aristotle’s influence on contemporary virtue ethics is well-documented, and includes attempts to present modern forms of eudaimonistic virtue ethics in Annas[d], Bloomfield’s *The Virtue of Happiness*, Franklin’s *The Psychology of Happiness*, and LeBar’s *The Virtue of Living Well*.²⁶¹ In the realm of emotions and distributive justice, Martha Nussbaum makes extensive use of Aristotelian and Stoic ideas.²⁶² There have also been a plethora of books in the last few decades on the contemporary value of Hellenistic philosophies.²⁶³ However, just because there has been rich engagement with the ideas of ancient Greek philosophers in early modern and contemporary contexts does not mean that the abovementioned thinkers are eudaimonists, and (as we saw in Ch. 2) not all accounts of happiness are eudaimonistic (recall from the Introduction that Hobbes explicitly distances

²⁶¹ For general discussion, see Hursthouse and Pettigrove’s “Virtue Ethics.”

²⁶² For Nussbaum’s comprehensive analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and the Sceptics’ respective medical approaches to philosophy and emotions, see *The Therapy of Desire and Upheavals of Thought*. For her synthesis of Aristotelian and Stoic ideas with respect to human vulnerability, flourishing, equality, and dignity through her capabilities approach, see *Frontiers of Justice* and *Women and Human Development*.

²⁶³ See, e.g., Austin’s *Living for Pleasure*; Holiday’s *Courage is Calling and Discipline Is Destiny*; Robertson’s *How to Think Like a Roman Emperor*; Sherman’s *Stoic Warriors*; Wilson[c].

himself from eudaimonism). For a philosopher's use of ancient ideas, or ethical framework, to be eudaimonistic they must be committed to a specific conception of happiness as the highest good.

In the contemporary context, there is also the obvious question of the applicability of eudaimonism in general and Spinozistic eudaimonism in particular. In his article "The ancients can't help us now," Fraenkel expresses scepticism concerning the feasibility of adopting the eudaimonistic views of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics in the present-day, and in "Can We Deduce Our Way to Salvation?" expresses a similar sentiment in relation to the applicability of Spinoza's own brand of eudaimonism.²⁶⁴ While all four offer potentially valuable ways to combat and achieve tranquility and happiness, their ethical views are strongly dependent on accounts of reality and nature that may be outdated and unpersuasive to contemporary, largely secular, audiences.²⁶⁵ For many people, there is no good reason to believe in immaterial, eternal forms, an immortal soul that can survive and flourish beyond the death of the body, a universe that is intrinsically and purposefully good by virtue of the influence of some sort of divinity, or a substance (which is identical with God) containing Thought, Extension, and infinitely many attributes and modes. Quantum Physics has also seemingly refuted (at least strong) determinist accounts of the universe, thereby undermining any ethical frameworks (like those of the Stoics

²⁶⁴ Here Fraenkel specifically critiques Nadler[a]'s optimism concerning the contemporary applicability of Spinozistic ethics, namely Spinoza's conception of the free human as a model of virtuous rationality. Other scholars who argue that Spinoza has much to offer contemporary moral philosophy with his ideas about emotion, freedom (namely, autonomy), and self-empowerment are Kisner (in *Spinoza on Human Freedom*) and Youpa[b].

²⁶⁵ It may be an entirely different story with respect to those who belong to religious traditions like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which have historically drawn substantial influence from Plato and Aristotle, and to some extent the Stoics. Fraenkel's concern, however, seems to be predominantly with secular people, who do not have such traditions to rely on. The extent to which Spinozism would be agreeable to a Jew, Christian, or Muslim is a complex issue, considering the complexities of Spinoza building his ethical framework around God as a supremely perfect being, while also denying that God is purposeful, benevolent, wholly transcendent, and capable of emotions. For nuanced discussion of Spinoza's approach to religion and divinity, see, e.g., Carlisle's *Spinoza's Religion*. For Fraenkel's review of this text, see "Horrible heresies?" For his own reading of Spinoza's approach to this topic, see "Spinoza's Philosophy of Religion" and *Philosophical Religions* (Ch. 4).

and Spinoza) which consider the recognition of the strict necessity of all natural things a crucial component of happiness.²⁶⁶ Moreover, the rampant intellectualism of many of these moral thinkers, which subordinates all bodily consideration to the cultivation of reason as the ultimate expression of divinity, may be quite unappealing to us today. Can mere scientific contemplation of the universe provide adequate comfort or true happiness to those struggling with the loss of a loved one (e.g., a parent, child, or friend) or facing racism, anti-Semitism, classism, misogyny, and/or various other kinds of prejudice and hate? And what if one does not believe in any sort of god?

Finally, as we saw in Ch. 2, eudaimonism offers an account of happiness that is meant to be partly *objective* by virtue of being naturalistically and universally grounded. Firstly, since at least Hume, many philosophers up to the modern day have been highly critical of attempts to derive values and norms from facts about nature, particularly essentialist accounts of human nature which run the risk of promoting various kinds of prejudice, discrimination, and oppression.²⁶⁷ Secondly, in contemporary liberal societies (if not other kinds of contemporary societies) there is the strong individualistic mindset that every citizen has equal right to pursue their own form of happiness. More generally, many people today consider happiness a largely subjective matter, and thus not the kind of thing that someone can be an authority on with respect to others (i.e., no one can tell you what it means for *you* to be happy except yourself). It seems then that we are required to commit ourselves to a lot of peculiar or counter-intuitive non-ethical

²⁶⁶ For discussion of how quantum physics undermines determinism, see, e.g., both Parts I and II of Popper's "Indeterminism in Quantum Physics and in Classical Physics." These articles are particularly noteworthy, because Popper argues that classical physics (although traditionally considered deterministic) is also fundamentally indeterministic.

²⁶⁷ For discussion of the facts-values distinction, see, e.g., Hume's *A Treatise on Human Nature*; Moore's *Principia Ethica*.

doctrines before any of these eudaimonistic accounts of happiness are applicable or enticing to us.

This Thesis

Through this dissertation's exploration of Spinoza's engagement with ancient Greek philosophy, however, I think we can make significant progress toward alleviating or eliminating many of the abovementioned issues. Before discussing my response to these issues, let us review the key findings of this comparative analysis. In Ch. 1, we discussed the rich primary and secondary literature on Spinoza's relationship to Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics. Because he agrees and disagrees with each of these philosophers in complex and nuanced ways, I concluded that Spinoza is ultimately not a disciple or innovator of a particular ancient philosophy. In other words, when taking into consideration Spinozistic philosophy *as a whole* (rather than certain dimensions of it, such as substance, teleology, anti-providentialism, pantheism, panpsychism, the critique of superstition, political theory, and the intellectual dimension of happiness), we do not find Neo-Aristotelianism, Neo-Epicureanism, Neo-Stoicism, or any particular Neo-Greek position.

Instead, in Ch. 2, I argued that the best way to characterize Spinoza's engagement with ancient Greek philosophy is to say that he extends and develops the ancient Greek ethical tradition of eudaimonism. Eudaimonists in general are formally committed to a conception of happiness as something that is: (a) naturally universalizable; (b) partly, but not entirely, dependent on the beliefs/feelings of a subject; (c) structurally stable; and (d) exclusively intrinsically good. Certain eudaimonists, like Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics, are also committed to the further claim (e) that happiness depends on the intimate relationship between both ethical and non-ethical philosophical doctrines – what I refer to as “strong eudaimonism.”

As strong eudaimonists, these philosophers intimately tie their respective accounts of happiness to their views on reality (metaphysics), the natural world (physics), opinion vs. knowledge (epistemology), and human emotions (psychology). In this chapter, I showed Spinoza's consistent commitment to (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e) from his early epistemological work, the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, to the mature presentation of his overall philosophy in the *Ethics*. Spinoza conceives of blessedness (the highest happiness), that is intellectual love of God, as the end of all ethical considerations and a stable (namely eternal), naturally universalizable good, which is subsequently grounded in his metaphysical, epistemological, and psychological doctrines concerning God, the conatus, and adequate vs. inadequate causality, knowledge, and emotions. I also explained how both Spinoza and ancient eudaimonists are committed to both necessary objective (i.e., naturalistic) and subjective (i.e., affective) considerations in their shared formal account of happiness. This means that happiness is neither wholly subject-*independent*, like the laws of physics, nor wholly subject-*dependent*, the latter of which would entail that the beliefs or feelings of a subject serve as both a necessary *and sufficient* condition for being happy. Spinoza is therefore engaged with ancient Greek philosophers as a fellow strong eudaimonist, namely someone who considers happiness the highest good and bases their overall philosophical system around the pursuit and maintenance of a happy life.

Ch. 3-5 explored Spinoza's engagement with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics as fellow eudaimonists concerning the themes of pleasure, virtue, and the body. Ch. 3 revealed Spinoza's kinship with Epicurus (contra the Stoics) on the subject of pleasure, because both argue that pleasure holds a necessary connection to healthy being, is good by nature, can be divided into transitional (i.e., health-oriented changes in one's state of being) and non-transitional (i.e.,

healthy states of being per se) pleasures, and constitutes happiness in its non-transitional form (i.e., happiness consists in a healthy natural life). In Ch. 4 we saw strong agreement between Spinoza and Aristotle (contra Epicurus and the Stoics) with respect to their views on virtue. Both conceive of happiness as a life of virtuous intellectual activities that admits of levels/kinds and degrees. With this in mind, Spinoza can be said to combine the insights of Epicurus and Aristotle by treating non-transitional pleasure and virtuous activity as coextensive (if not identical) constituents of happiness. We also saw Spinoza's strong agreement with Epicurus and the Stoics, in opposition to Aristotle, that theoretical reason is neither distinct from nor superordinate over practical reason. Finally, Ch. 5 showcased Spinoza's distinctive contribution to the eudaimonistic tradition. Despite certain ontological and ethical agreements with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics on the centrality of corporeal being and intellectual being, Spinoza ultimately presents a drastically different position than his fellow eudaimonists. While Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics all argue for some sort of hierarchy between corporeal and intellectual being (including some sort of ethical intellectualism), where one is dependent on or subordinate to the other, Spinoza argues that corporeal and intellectual being are identical and equal in ontological and ethical status. Being and happiness are equally corporeal and intellectual in nature, meaning the body is not dependent on or subordinate to the mind, and vice versa. Instead, for Spinoza, bodies and minds are equal expressions or aspects of being and happiness – a position that is not found in previous eudaimonists.

What makes this contribution truly novel, distinctive, and innovative is that it showcases Spinoza's overall synthesis of unity and plurality. Thought and Extension, mind and body, will and intellect, practical and theoretical reason, and pleasure and activity are revealed, in each ontological context, to be different (and strictly corresponding) aspects of one and the same

thing. Although there is still ontological (concerning substance and mode) and ethical (concerning adequate and inadequate knowledge) hierarchy in Spinoza's philosophy, he nevertheless brings together and equalizes things that are traditionally considered separate and/or unequal. On my reading, both materialist and intellectualist interpretations of Spinoza capture something foundational to Spinozism, but their mistake is often thinking that they are offering truly distinct readings – instead, I have sought to illustrate that they are outlining different aspects of *the same underlying reading*, by virtue of Spinoza's (Neutral) Substance Monism, Inter-Attributes Parallelism (or Equality), and Attributes Pluralism (see footnotes 253 and 260). Contemplation is at the heart of blessedness, but for Spinoza contemplation is not separate from, or superior to, practical and affective reasoning, nor can contemplative activity and pleasure be separated from physical activities and pleasures – as genuine aspects of being, they are ultimately a multifaceted unity. Consequently, Spinoza's Substance Monism, Inter-Attributes Parallelism, and Attributes Pluralism together bring a new and sophisticated form of unity and harmony to the eudaimonistic tradition.

Moving Forward

This ontological and ethical reading of Spinoza, in turn, offers us a valuable foundation for future work concerning the history and applicability of eudaimonism. Firstly, the formal criteria for eudaimonism that I discuss in Ch. 2 provide us with a clear, precise, and rich foundation for a larger exploration of the presence of eudaimonism in early modern and contemporary contexts. Through the presence or absence of (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) we gain greater insight into the meaningful ways in which moral thinkers like Descartes, Astell, Masham, Annas, Bloomfield, and Lebar agree and disagree *formally* with eudaimonists (including Spinoza), and the interesting reasons *why* they accept or reject some of the abovementioned

features – which, in turn, adds further insight into their (implicit or explicit) critical dialogues with each other concerning the concrete *content* of happiness (and philosophy in general).

Secondly, while there is truth to the abovementioned issues concerning the contemporary applicability and appeal of eudaimonism, I believe that my distinctions between (i) the form and content of eudaimonism and (ii) weak eudaimonism and strong eudaimonism provide a potential foundation for seeing contemporary value in this happiness-oriented ethical paradigm. I agree with Fraenkel that true Platonism, Aristotelianism, or Stoicism may not resonate with or help many people today. However, Fraenkel's concerns are more with the *content* of certain eudaimonistic frameworks, rather than the form of eudaimonism itself.²⁶⁸ He himself concedes in “The ancients can’t help us now” that the Epicureans and the Sceptics (although less popular) offer ethical frameworks far less tied to problematic and outdated metaphysical commitments, and thus there are certain eudaimonistic frameworks that could inspire and help contemporary audiences. Even if no historical instance of eudaimonism turns out to be feasible, that fact does not in itself rule out the possibility of developing new ethical frameworks (as we see with Annas, Bloomfield, Franklin, and Lebar) that promote an eudaimonistic approach to living happily, or being able to draw on certain ancient (or early modern) ideas to serve in this development. While I have discussed (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e) as important traditional features of eudaimonism, I now leave it open how many of these features are strictly necessary for meaningfully describing an account of happiness as eudaimonistic. We saw with my discussion of weak eudaimonism that there is good reason to consider (e) unnecessary. It may be that only (d), namely exclusive intrinsic goodness, is a strictly necessary feature. However, even if they are considered

²⁶⁸ It should also be noted that Fraenkel's concern is not so much with the potential *truth* of these accounts, but whether psychologically and practically an individual could actually *embrace* them.

unnecessary, (a), (b), (c), and (e) are important for fleshing out potential degrees of formal complexity in eudaimonistic accounts, because these have historically been central features for many eudaimonists. The eudaimonistic conception of an exclusively intrinsic, partly subjective, and structurally stable good is not obviously incompatible with contemporary sentiments.

Admittedly, the naturalistic dimension of happiness may be problematic for those who deny that values and norms can be derived from facts about nature, or that a universalizable account of happiness can or should be offered. However, the facts-values distinction is not a given, and we have already seen with Epicurus, the Cynics, and Spinoza (on an anti-realist reading of the latter's conception of human nature) that eudaimonism can offer a conception of happiness based on natural features without endorsing a fixed or dogmatic view of what it means to be human.²⁶⁹

Moreover, it may be possible to reject (a) and (e), that is metaphysical and naturalistic foundations, while nevertheless meaningfully endorsing some sort of weak eudaimonism (as we potentially see with Socrates and the Cynics; see footnote 89). In line with this possibility, we might also follow Hadot in his suggestion that we separate the "spirit and essence" of ancient ways of life from their "outmoded cosmological or mythical elements" to develop Neo-Aristotelian, Neo-Stoic, Neo-Epicurean or hybrid positions better suited to our modern scientific and socio-political climate (*Philosophy as a Way of Life* 273). Of course, all of this is speculative and quite general. I make no pretense of having definitive answers to the issues raised above. However, I ultimately believe that my formal criteria and distinctions open up meaningful space for showing how some early modern and contemporary moral philosophers exhibit greater or lesser degrees of eudaimonism in their respective ethical frameworks. Some may not turn out to be as strongly eudaimonistic as Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Spinoza, but there is still

²⁶⁹ For criticism of the facts-values distinction, see Foot's "Moral Beliefs"; Macintyre's *After Virtue*; Putnam's *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy*.

great conceptual scope for seeing eudaimonism as a live option in the ethical climates of the early modern period and the 21st century.

A (Brief) Defense of Spinozistic Eudaimonism

I shall conclude this dissertation by briefly explaining why I also do not think that we should rule Spinozistic eudaimonism out as quickly as we might Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Stoicism. Firstly, there have been notable works arguing that Spinoza has valuable insights to offer in metaphysics, epistemology,²⁷⁰ biology, neuroscience, psychology, philosophy of mind,²⁷¹ religion,²⁷² ethics, and politics,²⁷³ so the non-ethical doctrines surrounding his ethics are by no means obviously outdated or useless. More specifically, it is important to keep in mind that in the *Ethics* Spinoza provides us with metaphysical, cosmological, and physical *foundations*, not a comprehensive account of reality as a whole. In 5.4 we discussed how sparse Spinoza's account of infinite modes is and his assertion that he and his contemporaries have considerably more work to do in physics. Spinoza does not pretend to have all the answers about reality and nature; instead, in this treatise (similar to Descartes's *Meditations*) he primarily seeks to better situate progress in the various sciences for the ultimate sake of promoting blessedness (*E* IIPref.). Spinoza's sparsity in this regard is to our advantage, because it leaves much space for expanding on or emending his account of the core constituents of reality and the natural laws that follow from them (particularly if we adopt Peterman's reading, where Spinoza means by "Extension" something more fundamental than length, breadth, and depth; see footnote 243). Contemporary metaphysics and physics may require us to give up Spinoza's substance-attribute-mode

²⁷⁰ See, e.g., Colbourne's *The Joy and Sorrow of Believing*; Della Rocca[b] and [d]; Gilbert's "How Mental Systems Believe"; Newland's "Spinoza's Relevance"; Steinberg's "Spinoza's Dynamic Theory."

²⁷¹ See, e.g., Damasio's *Looking for Spinoza*; Della Rocca[b].

²⁷² See, e.g., Carlisle's *Spinoza's Religion*; Fraenkel's *Philosophical Religions* (Ch. 4).

²⁷³ See, e.g., James[c]; Lord's *Spinoza Beyond Philosophy*; Negri's *The Savage Anomaly*; Sharp's *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization*; Vardoulakis's *Spinoza: The Epicurean*.

terminology and modify how thinking and extended being are understood to some extent, but I suspect that we are far less distant from, and better equipped to meaningfully expand on, Spinoza's metaphysical and physical foundations (in relation to living happily) than we are those of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics (who all rely on a geocentric and providential conception of the world) or even Epicurus (whose non-providential, indeterminist, and atomistic picture of the world may be more appealing to us than the views of his predecessors and contemporaries, but not as well-defended). Even on the issue of quantum physics something can be said. It is not certain that quantum physics is incompatible with determinism in general.²⁷⁴ With that in mind, a Neo-Spinozist position is possible that endorses some form of weak determinism.²⁷⁵ The key therapeutic points that Spinoza makes in Parts IV and V concern the *scientific* understanding of *non-providential* natural laws concerning one's mind/body and emotions, in order to facilitate greater intellectual, physical, and emotional empowerment and weaken/eliminate harmful (i.e., disempowering) passions. The indeterministic character of quantum physics does not preclude the existence of genuine natural laws or our ability to grasp these laws and their effects – it simply weakens the causal foundations of reality to some extent. Such concessions may not be true or classic Spinozism, but as I said above, Spinoza's foundations leave us a lot of room for expansion and emendation without wholly removing ourselves from his philosophy and its insights.

Secondly, while Spinoza certainly speaks heavily and positively about God and contemplation of eternal truths in his ethics, it is important to remember the bigger picture

²⁷⁴ See, e.g., Vaidman's "Quantum theory and determinism."

²⁷⁵ While I read Spinoza as a necessitarian or strong determinist (see Garrett[e] for defense of this reading), there have been compelling analyses, by e.g., Curley (in *Spinoza's Metaphysics*) and Newlands (in "Spinoza's Modal Metaphysics"), which qualify and/or potentially weaken his commitment to determinism. Depending on the correctness of these readings, quantum physics may be less of a threat to the contemporary applicability of classic Spinozism and there may be less need for some sort of Neo-Spinozism.

behind those claims. By “God” Spinoza means the substance of all being, that is reality, the cosmos, or the universe itself. When Spinoza instructs us to strive to adequately know God, he is ultimately saying that we should strive to scientifically understand the cosmos and the natural world (*E* IP15, 18, 25; VP24; *TTP* Ch. 4, p.427-8/G III 59-60). Part of the reason why scholars like Nadler[c] read Spinoza as an atheist is because the concrete details of his account of God are about natural laws and beings, rather than some mysterious, supernatural, or wholly transcendent being. Whether we think Spinoza naturalizes divinity or divinizes nature, the key point here is that Spinoza’s talk of divinity is always meant to direct us toward *our* world and *our* lives, not some wholly transcendent realm of being. Concerning contemplation, we saw in 5.4 that, while intellectual activity and pleasure are constituents of happiness, happiness is not a wholly intellectual good for Spinoza, because no being – from God qua substance to myself or a rock qua finite mode – is solely thinking in essence. All beings are (at least) essentially thinking and extended in nature, because Thought and Extension qua attributes and the mind and body qua finites modes of these attributes are identical and only conceptually/causally distinct. The heart of Spinoza’s eudaimonism is self-empowerment, and this state of empowerment is equally intellectual and physical in nature. Intellectual and physical activities/pleasures are merely strictly corresponding aspects of the same underlying activities/pleasures. Spinoza is not subject then to the same issues that we find in the contemplative frameworks of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, because the latter consider bodily considerations inferior and subordinate to intellectual considerations, while for the former both kinds of considerations are equally important by virtue of being identical.

As I have sought to show throughout this dissertation, Spinoza offers us an ethical philosophy, a distinctive form of eudaimonism, which unifies God and the universe, intellectual

and corporeal being, mind and body, will and intellect, practical and theoretical reason, and bodily and mental virtue/activity/pleasure, while nevertheless embracing the plurality of being in general and human life in particular. Far from trying to console us with a mysterious purposeful God or knowledge detached from our actual lives, Spinoza encourages and inspires us to find empowerment, love, and understanding in the universe, life, our fellow beings, and in ourselves, not so that we may be invulnerable to misfortune and tragedy, but instead so that we may persevere through, rise above, and grow from such hardships with ever greater wisdom, strength, and resources. Through Spinoza's eudaimonism, we and the world ultimately become bigger and more diversely active while always remaining intimately and joyfully connected.

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