**Ethics** – Baruch Spinoza

The *Ethics* is a rigorous, systematic study that aims at absolute certainty by attempting to emulate the method Euclid devised for arriving at geometric proofs, that is, constructing an edifice of true propositions that must necessarily follow once a handful of common sense axioms are adopted.

With that said, the *Ethics* could never have been written outside of the 17th or 18th centuries when mathematics was proving to be a powerful tool in the promising field of scientific enquiry. With the realisation of just how powerful mathematics was as a tool for modelling the world and the commensurate rise in rational thinking, this was a time when the universe was imagined to be a rigorous, ordered system, ticking away with a mechanical precision often likened to that of a clock. Reading it in the 21st century, the mathematical format is somewhat awkward, although the ideas contained within are just as worthy of study as when they were first written.

Another feature that makes the *Ethics* difficult for the modern reader is the use of Scholastic terms like ‘substance’ and ‘essence’. These notions were at the heart of philosophy in the Medieval period, being adopted from Aristotle, but have largely fallen into disuse in contemporary philosophy and as such represent a metaphysical framework quite unlike anything a modern reader is likely to have encountered or used to understand the world by. This can take a bit of getting used to.

There are five sections, each beginning with a set of definitions and axioms from which Spinoza goes on to derive a number of propositions. Each proposition contains a demonstration (sometimes more than one) and may also have a corollary (another mathematical term for an additional proposition incidentally proved in the proving of another proposition) and a scholium (explanatory note), and refers back to at least one definition, axiom or prior proposition as a form of proof of the current proposition’s truth.

As such, I think it is fair to say that if one accepts Spinoza’s definitions and axioms, then, as per his intention, the propositions he derives from them and which make up the bulk of the book do follow with absolute certainty. While this imitation of (or obsession with) mathematical precision doesn’t necessarily make for an easy or dynamic read, the opportunity alone to engage with one of philosophy’s true luminaries makes it well worth the effort.

First Part – *Of God*

Summary

In this part Spinoza identifies God as the one and only necessarily existing substance, infinite and eternal in nature. In a controversial move, he also asserts that an infinite number of things are necessarily created by God, contradicting religious authorities who claimed that God had complete freewill in deciding what to create. Spinoza’s philosophy is deterministic in nature and everything follows, necessarily, from prior causes. This means that there is no such thing as freewill for humans. The difference with God though is that, since He is the first cause, He cannot act from prior causes. Rather, His acts necessarily follow from His nature and this, Spinoza says, makes God free. Spinoza, like a good 17th century philosopher, conceives a kind of perfection involved in absolute certainty and the only way he can truly secure that is by doing away with random, free (that is, uncaused) influences. Since everything is necessary, there is no room for contingent objects (objects that *could* have existed but don’t) in Spinoza’s philosophy.

Detail

The first part describes God and concludes with this paragraph which I will quote in full:

I have shown that He necessarily exists; that He is one God; that from the necessity alone of His own nature He is and acts; that He is, and in what way He is, the free cause of all things; that all things are in Him, and so depend upon Him that without Him they can neither be nor can be conceived; and, finally, that all things have been predetermined by Him, not indeed from freedom of will or from absolute good pleasure, but from His absolute nature of infinite power.

This is worth breaking down a little but before we do, we must turn to three definitions in particular. Definition (3) says “By substance, I understand that which is in itself and is conceived through itself; in other words, that, the conception of which does not need the conception of another thing from which it must be formed”, (4) “By attribute, I understand that which the intellect perceives of substance, as if constituting its essence” and (6) “By God, I understand Being absolutely infinite, that is to say, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each one of which expresses eternal and infinite essence.”

This Scholastic/Aristotelian indulgence of ‘substance’ is probably the biggest hurdle to a modern reader of Spinoza. What is substance? It is a metaphysical concept and perhaps best imagined as something like the most foundational level of reality. It is not something that can be imagined in the mind because it refers to a deeper metaphysical reality that lies ‘underneath’ the stuff that builds up the world we *can* imagine (like atoms). You might try to visualise it as the canvas a painter paints on. The paint is the atomic reality but it rests on something ‘deeper’.

Another tricky concept is ‘attribute’. An attribute is some perceivable quality of a substance which identifies it in some essential way (“as if constituting its essence”). ‘Thought’ and ‘extension’ are two examples of (the only) attribute that we perceive in the world.

There is one more concept we should cover here, that of ‘mode’. Mode refers to the “affections of substance” which must therefore occur, by definition, *in* substance. An example of a mode of ‘thought’ would be ‘desire’ or ‘memory’. Modes are anything that modify or affect substance.

In the first ten propositions, Spinoza clarifies his conception of substance. Proposition 5 tells us that there cannot be two or more substances with the same attribute. If there were, then (since attribute is a defining quality of a substance (by definition 4)) we ought to just admit the one substance with one attribute.

Proposition 7: ***The essence of substance is existence***; ***i.e. substance necessarily exists.*** Spinoza gets to this by noting that, according to definition 3, substance cannot be produced by anything else. This means, he says, that it is “the cause of itself”. And in definition 1, he defines “cause of itself” to mean a thing’s “essence involves existence”.

To say that something’s “essence involves existence” is a form of argument known as the ontological argument (a fairly weak argument usually used to ‘prove’ the existence of God). What it is usually used for is to assert that the very concept of a thing *necessarily* requires that it exist; we can’t even imagine this thing without automatically assuming its existence. (The only people who believe this today are Christians who desperately want to ‘prove’ that God exists).

*There seem to be a number of problematic elements here. The first is the notion that anything can be the “cause of itself”. We can’t even begin to understand this concept, how can something cause itself? Spinoza doesn’t explain it at all. The second is what he assumes in order to get to this idea that substance is the cause of itself. He says that substance can’t be produced by anything else but this only follows because he defined it that way at the beginning. We have no way of knowing if that is true or not; we certainly don’t have an adequate idea of it. The third is that I’m not sure it follows that if something is the cause of itself then its “essence necessarily involves existence”. This goes through because Spinoza defined “cause of itself” that way in definition 1 but there is no discussion about it. The fourth is this whole ontological argument itself, i.e. essence involves existence. It is an extremely slippery concept that also avoids any discussion because it simply appears in definition 1.*

Proposition 8: ***Substance is infinite*** but Spinoza derives this by playing on the word ‘finite’. Finite is defined as something “which can be limited by another thing of the same nature. For example, a body is called finite, because we always conceive another which is greater.” This is clearly not the way we usually define ‘finite’ as something like ‘having a discrete boundary’. So, since each substance is unique (a different substance must have different attributes) then, by definition, a substance X can never be finite, in the sense that we can conceive of another substance X greater than it. Hence, each substance must be infinite. However, because of the definition of ‘finite’ this says nothing more than that each substance is unique, which we already knew.

Then since substance is infinite and necessarily exists, by the definition of God (definition 6 – which equates God with substance), proposition 11 states that ***God necessarily exists***. The important thing to note here is that ***God is substance*** which is certainly a far cry from the anthropomorphic Judaeo-Christian God. Rather, it refers to a metaphysical substructure which in some way we can’t imagine, ‘contains’ everything else in the universe. From this point on, Spinoza freely switches between these two words, ‘God’ and ‘substance’, but he creates substantial confusion by also freely using the 3rd person pronouns ‘He’ and ‘Himself’.

*Having gone out of his way to equate ‘substance’ with ‘God’, it comes as quite a shock to hear him suddenly refer to this metaphysical substance as a gendered Being and this is one way I think Spinoza compromises his ‘geometrical proof’, that is, by subtly and gradually substituting his more ‘inert’ substance for a more traditional conception of God.*

At this point, we might still be courting the idea that more than one substance can exist, but proposition 14 asserts that God is the only substance conceivable; i.e. ***there is only one God***. Spinoza can draw this conclusion because he has already defined substance as infinite, that is, possessing infinite attributes, so if another substance were to exist, it would also have to have attributes but since God already has an infinite number of attributes, any attributes this new substance had would already be in God. And by proposition 5, it is impossible for two substances with the same attribute to exist.

*Now, here something funny has gone on with the word ‘infinite’.’ Infinite’ originally meant unable to be limited by another thing of the same nature. That was the only way Spinoza was able to deductively conclude that substance was ‘infinite’, he couldn’t have proven that substance is infinite in the sense of having no boundaries at all because that wouldn’t have followed from any of his definitions or axioms. But now, to get to his conclusion that there is only one God, ‘infinite’ in the sense of having infinite attributes, suddenly takes on the traditional meaning, i.e. something having no boundaries; in this case, ‘possessing all attributes’. So, Spinoza has redefined the word ‘infinite’ in order to apply it to substance, then after concluding substance is infinite, he switches back in the traditional definition to exclude any other substances.*

Proposition 15: ***Everything that is, must be in God***. This follows because the only things that exist are substance (God) and modes of that substance which are, by definition 5, necessarily contained in substance.

Proposition 16: ***Since necessity is a part of the divine nature, infinite numbers of things in infinite ways (that is to say, all things which can be conceived by the infinite intellect) must necessarily follow***. In this way, Spinoza seeks to make God the cause of everything.

In the scholium to proposition 17, he explains this by comparing God to a triangle. From the very nature of a triangle its three angles must equal two right angles. So, from the (infinite) nature of God, all things have been created (and it couldn’t be any other way).

*Spinoza is again relying on the ontological argument, this time to get God to be cause of everything that exists. God is the cause of infinite effects because that is what it means to be God.*

Proposition 17: ***God acts from the laws of His own nature, and is compelled by no one***.

He criticises his adversaries who think saying God follows laws, somehow limits God’s omnipotence. If He *had* to create everything, then He had no choice in the matter. But Spinoza points out that the intellect and will of God “cannot be understood in the sense in which men generally use them” to talk about humans. He counters that “God alone is a free cause; for God alone exists from the necessity alone of His own nature [proposition 11], and acts from the necessity alone of His own nature [proposition 17].” This follows because God is the only substance (proposition 14), and only substance is completely independent (definition 3).

Proposition 19: ***God is eternal***.

*In my opinion, Spinoza seems to equivocate on the word ‘eternal’ here though. In definition 8, he defines ‘eternal’ as being “existence itself, so far as it is conceived necessarily to follow from the definition alone of the eternal thing.” So, ‘eternal’ is a word that means nothing more than ‘existence’ (if that existence is necessary according to the essence of the thing (that suspicious ontological argument again)). So to say that God is eternal is to say nothing more than that the essence of God includes existence, which we already knew from proposition 11. This is certainly not how we usually understand the word ‘eternal’ though as being something without temporal boundaries.*

Since the essence of things produced by God does not involve existence (that is a privilege reserved for things that are the causes of themselves, i.e. substance), the corollary of proposition 24 goes on to say that ***God is the cause of everything’s continued existence***. This follows because since the essence of created things lacks existence, they must get their existence from somewhere, i.e. God.

Proposition 28: Since whatever an infinite and eternal God produces must also be infinite and eternal, the finite and determinate must therefore follow from God or some attribute of God *in so far as the latter is affected by some mode*. ***All things that are finite and determinate must be produced by a finite and determined cause. This cause must then have been produced by a still prior finite and determined cause, and so on ad infinitum***. It seems that Spinoza is simply asserting an infinite chain of cause and effect for things that are *not* substance.

*It is quite disconcerting that Spinoza seems comfortable throwing up an ad infinitum explanation because this is usually considered untenable. No discussion over this seems to be forthcoming either.*

Proposition 29: ***There is nothing contingent***. This follows from proposition 17 where we saw that all things God has created He did out of necessity. In other words, everything that exists must exist and everything that doesn’t exist couldn’t.

Proposition 32: Here, Spinoza delivers one of his most controversial verdicts; that ***there is no such thing as freewill***. Since the will is a mode of thought, and modes (as finite and determinate affections of substance), by proposition 28, must have been produced by a prior finite and determinate cause, and this by another, and so on *ad infinitum*.

In the appendix Spinoza adds to this saying that man “thinks himself free because he is conscious of his wishes and appetites, whilst at the same time he is ignorant of the causes by which he is led to wish and desire”.

In the appendix to the first part Spinoza basically takes it to his critics (the priests) who support a notion of God he obviously thinks is simplistic and ill-conceived. He states that all prejudices people have when it comes to seeking the truth stem from thinking that “all things in nature, like men, work to some end” ultimately assuming God also works this way.

Men first noticed a number of fortuitous things about their lives and assumed that someone bequeathed these to them. “Since he never heard anything about the mind of these rulers, he was compelled to judge of it from his own” and assumed “the gods direct everything for his advantage”. But amidst the beneficial events, there were many that were injurious and which therefore contradicted this conclusion. Instead of destroying the whole structure and building another one, they merely maintained that “the judgments of the gods far surpass our comprehension” and thus ended honest enquiry.

Other points Spinoza makes here include:

* God cannot work to obtain any end because that would mean He was lacking something which means He isn’t perfect
* He calls the explanation referring to the “will of God, the refuge for ignorance”
* He criticises the priests who declaim as a heretic, the man who “endeavours to find out the true causes of miracles, and who desires as a wise man to understand nature”.
* He also attacks priests for taking refuge in ignorance because they know that “if ignorance be removed, amazed stupidity, the sole ground on which they rely in arguing or in defending their authority, is taken away also
* Our notions of good/evil, order/confusion, beauty/deformity, etc. all arise because “men consider all things as made for themselves, and call the nature of a thing good, evil, sound, putrid, or corrupt, just as they are affected by it.”
* Spinoza emphasises reason in the *Ethics*. So why didn’t God create all men so they can be controlled by reason alone? He answers this by saying that God created “everything, from the highest down to the very lowest grade of perfection… because the laws of His nature were so ample that they sufficed for the production of everything which can be conceived by an infinite intellect”

Second Part – *Of the Nature and Origin of the Mind*

Summary

In this section, Spinoza identifies the two attributes (out of the infinite attributes) of God with which we, as humans, can be familiar; thought and extension. Although they are different, they are essentially two different ways substance (God) expresses itself.

He covers the difference between ‘ideas’ and ‘images’. The former are conceptions of the mind arising from reason while the latter arise from the imagination. Neither are related to perception, which Spinoza considers a passive activity.

When we consider duration (Spinoza’s term for temporality or things ‘in time’) we typically do so using imagination which, because it involves a great number of images (see proposition 40), is therefore confused. These inadequate ideas about things as they exist in the past or future prevents us from seeing the necessity with which one event causes another and is therefore the only sense in which things can be called ‘contingent’. Contingency is therefore a deficiency in the human way of thinking about duration. Reason, on the other hand, considers things “under a certain form of eternity” which basically means, as necessary and determined.

Spinoza divides knowledge into three different categories; opinion or imagination which appeals to individual things (this is confused and inadequate and may lead to falsity), reason which derives knowledge from common notions of things and adequate ideas, and intuitive science which Spinoza doesn’t really explain much but apparently works from an “adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things.” (The second and third kinds are always true)

Detail

Before we start, it is important to understand what Spinoza means by ‘idea’. According to definition 3, an ‘idea’ is a “conception of the mind which the mind forms because it is a thinking thing”. This means that an ‘idea’ is not an object to a thinking subject (mind); rather it is something ‘deeper’. Ideas arise in minds, not as an object, as the *way* minds function, the *way* they exist.

Propositions 1 and 2: ***Thought and extension are both attributes of God***. This follows because individual thoughts and individual things are “modes which express the nature of God in a certain and determinate manner”. God must therefore possess attributes which include that conception of both thought and extension.

Proposition 7 (scholium): Even though we are talking about two separate attributes we are talking about only one substance; hence “***substance thinking and substance extended are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute and now under that***. Thus, also, a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing expressed in two different ways” (emphasis added). The example Spinoza gives of this is the circle which exists in nature and the idea of the existing circle in God being the same thing.

Proposition 9: ***Any idea of an existing thing actually existing has God for a cause, but not God as infinite Being, God as He is affected by another idea of an individual thing existing. He is also the cause of the idea of this new thing in the same way… and so on, ad infinitum***.

This follows from the first part (proposition 28) where we saw that the idea of an individual thing existing is an individual mode of thought and finite and determinate. Therefore the cause must also be finite and determinate. But how can the cause be God then? The answer is because everything is in God. Your thoughts, my thoughts, are all modes of thought, and thought is an attribute of substance, which is God. Even though modes of thought are finite and determinate they still come from God (because everything comes from God as we saw in part one); they just come from God in a finite and determinate mode, i.e. us.

This is explicitly stated in proposition 10 (corollary): where Spinoza says “***the essence of man consists of certain modification of the attributes of God… It is therefore something which is in God, and which without God can neither be nor be conceived***” (emphasis added). People who fail to understand this do so because they study the natural world first and then God, which leads to them building the Divine with their ideas about the natural world. The proper order of study is God first and then nature.

Proposition 11 (corollary): The “***human mind is a part of the infinite intellect of God, and therefore, when we say that the human mind perceives this or that thing, we say nothing else than that God has this or that idea***” (emphasis added). Spinoza does qualify this. God can have an idea through humans in two ways. First, in so far as “He forms the essence [or nature] of the human mind” and second “in so far as He has at the same time with the human mind the idea also of another thing”. The difference is that in the second way, the idea is only perceived inadequately. (This will be discussed in greater detail later)

*These two ways God ‘has’ ideas with us seem a little specious and appears to rely on a metaphysical structure which is getting ever harder to swallow.*

Proposition 13: The object of the idea is a physical body, that is, a certain mode of extension. Ideas and the objects they refer to are therefore quite different (although they are linked).

Proposition 16 (corollary 2): Spinoza continues on to affirm that our ideas tell us something about our own bodies, not the external bodies they refer to. This is a consequence of cleaving reality into two attributes, thought and extension (although Spinoza does unite these attributes at a ‘higher’ level, i.e. that of substance).

Proposition 17 (scholium): Spinoza talks about “*images of things*”. ***‘Images’, furnished us by our imagination, are ideas of things “which represent to us external bodies as if they were present” when they are not***. Images themselves contain no error because they are just what they are. Images become erroneous when we falsely believe an image of something non-existent actually refers to something existent.

Proposition 18: Spinoza gives an interesting account of memory. It is “nothing else than a certain concatenation of ideas… a concatenation which corresponds in the mind to the order and concatenation of the affections of the human body”. This aligns nicely with modern views of memory being associative; i.e. we remember in ‘chains’, each memory ‘linking’ to another one even though the content of each linked memory may not be logically (intellectually) connected.

Proposition 21: ***The idea of the mind is united to the mind in the same way as the mind is united to the body***, i.e. since body and mind are the same thing considered under different attributes (proposition 7), then mind and the idea of mind are also the same thing considered under *the same attribute*, that of thought.

Propositions 30 and 31: Here, Spinoza talks about time. ***We cannot know about the duration of our bodies or individual things outside us except with a very inadequate knowledge***. The duration of things depends on (is determined by) an infinite regression of causes and effects which, we are unable to have an adequate idea of. We can only have an idea of this through imagination which, according to proposition 40, is always confused and inadequate. In the corollary to proposition 31, Spinoza then says that ***it is this inadequate knowledge of the duration of things that is what we understand as their contingency***.

Proposition 44: ***Reason considers things as necessary, “under a certain form of eternity”, whereas through the imagination we can only look upon things as contingent with regard to the past and the future.*** When Spinoza says reason considers things under the form of eternity (or necessity), he means that reason allows our mind to be affected equally by the idea of something whether that thing occurs in the past, present, or future. Imagination, on the other hand, is far less affected by things in the past and future because they are not currently present to us.

Proposition 32: ***All ideas, in so far as they are related to God, are true***.

Proposition 34: ***Every adequate and perfect idea in us is true***. According to proposition 11, human ideas are the same as God having those ideas, but God can have these ideas with us in two ways. The first (as the essence of the human mind) is what Spinoza here calls “adequate and perfect”, the second (including more than one idea at the same time) we saw was “inadequate”.

*I already raised some questions about this back in proposition 11 which are only more relevant now.*

Proposition 35: ***Falsity is a privation of knowledge, which involves inadequate (mutilated and confused) ideas.***

Proposition 38: ***Things common to everything and equally in the part and in the whole are adequately conceived***.

Proposition 40 (scholium): Here, Spinoza gives much more detail about these adequate and inadequate ideas. First he explains the origin of confused ideas as they pertain to imagination. The capacity of the human mind to imagine things is limited. If we exceed this number, the images become confused and “all run one into another”. Spinoza points to *universals* (like *dog* or *man*) as an example. Notions of ‘universals’ have been formed by humans imagining many particular instances of these universals at once, i.e. many men, and then trying to identify what is common to them all. But this many instances cannot be imagined properly by the human mind and so confusion arises. Hence we see that when two different people imagine many men, thereby forming a conception of the universal *man*, they both arrive at different results. The moral of the story? ***Imagination is inadequate to arrive at truth.***

In the second scholium Spinoza breaks down his three categories of ideas based on how we form universals:

1. ***From individual things represented to the senses in a confused and mutilated fashion (opinion) or from signs, i.e. words from which we form ideas through which we imagine things (imagination) – knowledge of the first kind***
2. ***From possessing common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things (reason) – knowledge of the second kind***
3. ***From an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things (intuitive science) – knowledge of the third kind***

Proposition 41: ***Knowledge of the second and third orders is necessarily true. Knowledge of the first alone is the cause of falsity***.

Proposition 43: ***Anyone who has a true idea must know at the same time it is true and cannot doubt its truth***.

*I have more than a few problems with this and it turns again on the suspicious proposition 11.*

Proposition 48: Spinoza reiterates the idea that freewill doesn’t exist. The mind is determined to this or that thought by a prior cause, itself determined by an earlier cause, and so on *ad infinitum*.

Proposition 49 (scholium): Here Spinoza details how the understandings he has elucidated in this part can be of service in our lives:

1. They teach us that “we do everything by the will of God alone” and the closer to perfection we bring ourselves the more we partake in the divine nature and come to understand God. They also reveal that our highest happiness lies in the knowledge of God.
2. They teach us that, because all things come from God in necessary fashion, we ought to accept life as it comes to us, not reacting with anger to misfortune or things not in our power.
3. They teach us to hate no one but rather love our neighbours.
4. They teach us how to govern citizens so they may be free to do those things which are best.

Third Part – *On the Origin and Nature of the Affects*

Summary

In this part, Spinoza gives a non-exhaustive list of the different affects by which the mind can be affected. He also notes how they all derive from three primary affects; desire, joy, and sorrow. Desire flows from the essence of a thing (which is self-preservation), joy lifts the body’s capacity to action and enhances the mind’s capacity to thought, and sorrow has the opposite effect. Spinoza’s discussion in this section really portrays humans as completely powerless to control our affects (although he will ameliorate this in the fifth section). He treats affects as absolutely determined by external causes, often framing the proposition in the form, if ‘A’ then ‘B’, where ‘A’ is a situation and ‘B’ the affect aroused in us.

Another important thing in this section is that he explicitly states the mind cannot determine the body to action and the body cannot determine the mind to thought. This overcomes the problem that Descartes struggled with regarding how the mind (an immaterial thing) can cause movement in the body (a material thing). However, although there is no causal connection between the two, when one is affected the other must also be affected. How can this be? Because they are just different aspects of the same thing, substance. Affecting one, naturally affects the other, but the two themselves are not related causally; rather, they are united in a ‘greater’ thing.

Spinoza also reverses our normal moral intuitions. We usually think we do a thing because it is good, but he says we think a thing good because we desire it.

Detail

Spinoza notes in a preliminary discussion to this part that the affects (essentially, emotions) are, like everything else in his philosophical system, completely and fully determined. They “follow from the same necessity and virtue of nature as other individual things”.

Definition 2: Here Spinoza distinguishes between ‘act’ and ‘suffer’. ***We ‘act’ when we are the adequate cause of something done***, which (since everything is necessarily determined) is the same as saying when something happens that follows from our nature and by that nature alone can be clearly understood (i.e. no external influencing factors). On the other hand ***we ‘suffer’ when anything happens of which we are not the adequate cause***.

Definition 3: Spinoza reviews what he means by ‘affect’. He defines this as the “affections of the body, by which the power of acting of the body itself is increased, diminished, helped, or hindered, together with the idea of these affections.” So, an affect is anything that ‘picks us up’ or ‘brings us down’, i.e. anything that *affects* the mind and body. ***Affects are always confused ideas***.

Proposition 2: ***The body cannot determine the mind to thought and the mind cannot determine the body to action***. This overcomes the problem Descartes had of showing how mind and body were causally linked… by saying they aren’t. In support of this, Spinoza gives the example of people who sleepwalk, their bodies carrying out complicated tasks without the mind in control.

Having said this though, we must remember that the body and mind, although not *causally* conjoined, are *one and the same thing*, that is, substance, conceived at one time under the attribute of thought, and at another under the attribute of extension. This means that “the order of the actions and passions of our body is coincident in nature with the order of the actions and passions of the mind.”

In support of this he also points out that we frequently do things we later regret having done and wouldn’t have if our rational mind had been in control at the time. Also, when “agitated by conflicting affects we see that which is better and follow that which is worse” showing how poor we are at governing our appetites. This all leads Spinoza to say, “men believe themselves to be free simply because they are conscious of their own actions, knowing nothing of the causes by which they are determined”.

Propositions 6 and 7: ***Each thing endeavours to preserve itself*** and ***this effort reflects the actual essence of the thing***.

Proposition 9: This effort coming from the mind alone is called *will* (desire), while when it comes from the mind and the body together, is called *appetite*. Since this effort is our essence and our essence necessarily determines those things which promote our preservation it then becomes true ***that ‘appetite’ and ‘desire’ are the same***, with the caveat only that desire is usually “related to men in so far as they are conscious of their appetites.”

It also follows, Spinoza says, that ***we therefore “neither strive for, wish, seek, nor desire anything because we think it to be good, but, on the contrary, we adjudge a thing to be good because we strive for, wish, seek, or desire it.”*** [emphasis added] This phrase reverses our usual thoughts about where our morality comes from. It follows, I think, from the fact that we have no freewill. Our desires flow by necessity from our essences (which are to self-preservation) and so to those desires which further this goal we attribute the name good, to the others, evil.

Proposition 11: Spinoza explains *joy* and *sorrow*. ***‘Joy’ is “the passion by which the mind passes to a greater perfection” while ‘sorrow’ is “the passion by which it passes to a less perfection***.” By ‘perfection’, Spinoza means the body’s power of action and the mind’s power of thought. ‘Joy’ then, energises our body and sharpens our mind, while sorrow has the opposite effect. ***To joy and sorrow, Spinoza adds ‘desire’ giving three primary affects from which all the others arise***.

Throughout a number of propositions in this section, Spinoza concerns himself with identifying and describing a number of affects taking special care to show how they derive from one of the three primary affects. I will only mention a few of them here:

* *Love* is joy accompanied by the idea of an external cause. *Hatred* is sorrow with an external cause (proposition 13)
* *Cheerfulness* is the affect of joy which affects every part of the mind and body equally, thereby benefitting the whole organism. *Melancholy* is its opposite.
* *Pleasurable excitement* is joy which affects one part or the mind and body more than others and is therefore imbalanced. Its opposite is *pain*.
* *Hope* is unsteady joy from an image of a future or a past thing about which we are in doubt. *Fear* is unsteady sorrow.
* *Favour* is the love we feel towards a person who has affected with joy a thing we love, while *indignation* is the opposite.

Proposition 17: ***Our state of mind can be affected by two contrary affects at the same time and Spinoza calls this vacillation of the mind***.

Proposition 18: ***Our minds can also be affected, through the imagination, by the image of something past or yet to come and this affect will be the same as if a thing is present to us***.

Proposition 25: ***The mind naturally endeavours to imagine those things that affect it with joy and to exclude the existence of things that affect it with sorrow***.

Proposition 28: ***We endeavour to bring into existence anything which causes us joy and destroy anything which causes us sorrow***.

Proposition 31: ***If we imagine that a person loves, desires, or hates a thing we love, desire, or hate, than we shall love, desire, or hate that thing more steadily***. In the corollary, Spinoza asserts that this explains why “everyone endeavours as much as possible to make others love what he loves, and to hate what he hates.

Proposition 32: ***If we imagine a person to enjoy a thing only one can possess, then we will do all we can to prevent him possessing it***.

Proposition 35: ***If I imagine someone else has a closer bond to an object I love than I do, I will be affected with hatred towards that object and shall envy the other person***. This is called *jealousy* and arises from a vacillation of the mind feeling both love and hatred together.

Proposition 39: ***If a man hates another man, he will endeavour to do him evil and if he loves him will endeavour to do him good***. Here, Spinoza asserts that to hate a person is to imagine him as a cause of sorrow and, by proposition 28, he will therefore seek to remove or destroy him.

Proposition 42: ***Any favour we do for anyone is done with a desire that we may be loved in return***.

Proposition 46: ***If we have been affected with either joy or sorrow towards someone of a different class or nation from our own then we will love or hate not just that person, but the whole class or nation they belong to***.

Proposition 51: ***Different men may be affected by the same object in different ways and the same man may be affected by one object in different ways at different times***.

Proposition 57: This ties desire together with joy and sorrow. Desire is the nature or essence of a person (as we found in proposition 9). Joy and sorrow are the passions by which a person preserves his essence, but this effort we defined (in proposition 9) as appetite. Since appetite is nothing more than desire, desire is nothing more than joy and sorrow in so far as the former is increased or decreased in response to external circumstances.

In this proposition, Spinoza also notes in passing that ***the joy by which a drunkard is enslaved is quite different from the joy which affects a philosopher***.

Proposition 59: ***All affects which are related to the mind, in so far as it acts (not suffers), derive from either joy or desire***. This follows from proposition 11, where we saw that joy is that which enhances the mind’s power of thought and proposition 9 where we saw that our essence, i.e. the effort to preserve ourselves, is desire. By contrast, sorrow diminishes the mind’s power of thought. It is therefore contradictory to imagine that sorrow could be related to the mind, as it acts, for how could a thing actively seek to lessen or limit its own power?

In the final section of this third part, which Spinoza has entitled *The Affects*, he runs through each affect and adds some details. The following are things I consider to be of some importance:

* Affirming what he said at the beginning, Spinoza reminds us that our ‘desires’ are often opposed to one another and draw us hither and thither, contributing to the theme that we have no control over our affects, i.e. they are fully determined and follow necessarily
* When parents praise or blame their children they cause joy and sorrow to be associated with those actions and thus “education alone, therefore, will determine whether a man will repent of any deed or boast of it.” He points to different customs and religions for proof of this relativity of morals.

Fourth Part – *Of Human Bondage, or of the Strength of the Affects*

Summary

In this part, Spinoza clarifies his notion of morality by stating that good and evil are just modes of thought which do not refer to any feature in things themselves. Since they are internal to us, not a part of the external world, then anything useful to us we call good, anything that hinders us we call bad. In addition, our ideas of good and evil appear to be nothing more than the affects of joy and sorrow (as Spinoza has defined them).

Equating morality with usefulness allows Spinoza to claim that since nothing is more useful to one person than another person of the same nature then, according to reason, we ought to wish for others the exact same things we wish for ourselves. So even though Spinoza’s rational man acts in his own interest, his own interest *is* that everybody else thrive in the same way as him.

Another consequence of Spinoza’s view on morality is that without a State, i.e. a community in which we all agree to live in harmony, sin and justice don’t exist because there is no established, universal moral code of conduct (i.e. no good or evil) and no property rights.

The affects are stronger than knowledge considered as knowledge alone. It is only in so far as knowledge acts like an effect, i.e. stimulating the emotions or passions, that it can overcome another affect. This is obvious to anyone who has tried to subdue some unwanted emotion by appeal to logic or reason. All of the reasoning in the world will never chase away a bad feeling. And then you suddenly get some good news and that new emotion effortlessly displaces the old one. This is what Spinoza is talking about here. Only a different affect (emotion) can overcome an existing affect (emotion). Although Spinoza has emphasised the strength of the affects, it is worth pointing out that reason can determine action in exactly the same way as the affects; it is just not as powerful.

Probably one of the most important points to take away from this part is that we can choose to act from reason or from the affects (emotion). The former, where we live according to our essence, is the path of the “free man”; the latter, where we are yanked “hither and thither” by external events, is the path of the slave.

Spinoza also introduces virtue as something very similar to desire, i.e. the power by which we strive to preserve our being. Since this draws directly from our essence, nothing can be more important than virtue. In addition, since virtue is acting according to reason and reason is concerned with understanding and the highest thing we can understand is God, the highest virtue is to know God.

Detail

In the preface to this section, Spinoza begins by saying that ***a man who cannot govern or restrain the affects is in bondage*** and that this section will outline why this is and how morality (good and evil) are related to the affects.

Before this, he discusses the history of the notions *perfection* and *imperfection*. At first, a thing was called perfect if it was completed according to the intentions of the agent. Therefore, without knowing these intentions, we would be unable to form a judgement as to whether the thing was perfect or not. But then, men began to form *universal ideas* and to prefer some types of thing to others, so now each person calls a thing perfect if it agrees with his or her universal idea of that thing. In the same way, i.e. according to universal ideas of things, the words *perfect* and *imperfect* also began to be made to apply to nature herself. So, people can now claim that nature failed or committed an error here or there. This “custom of applying the words *perfect* and *imperfect* to natural objects has arisen rather from prejudice than from true knowledge of them.”

In reality, ***perfection and imperfection are only modes of thought***, notions which we form by comparing one individual of a species with another of the same. For this reason, ***Spinoza equates reality with perfection, referring all individuals in nature to one genus, the most general of all, the notion of being***. This is the only true measure of a thing’s perfection. In so far as we find limitation, termination, impotence, etc., i.e. anything which involves negation, we should call a thing imperfect.

***Good and evil are also nothing more than modes of thought and do not refer to anything in things themselves***. This is evident because one and the same thing may be good, evil, or indifferent all at the same time.

So, ***when Spinoza uses the words good or perfect, he means anything which brings us nearer to the model of human nature we set before us, i.e. anything which increases our power of action.*** This model takes no account of the duration of a thing because ***“no individual thing can be said to be more perfect because for a longer time it has persevered in existence”*** [emphasis added]. ***Evil or imperfect means anything which hinders us from reaching that model***.

Definitions 1 and 2: ***Good is that which is useful for us; bad, that which hinders us from possessing anything good***.

Definition 8: ***Virtue and power are the same; virtue is that which can be understood from the essence or nature of man in so far as he has the power of affecting things***.

Proposition 4: ***Man is, and must be, a part of nature; he is therefore necessarily always subject to passions***.

Proposition 7: ***An affect can only be removed by a stronger affect***.

Proposition 8: ***Knowledge of good or evil is nothing but an affect of joy or sorrow in so far as we are conscious of it***. This follows when we see that the definition of good and evil at the beginning of this part is identical to the definition of joy and sorrow in proposition 11, part 3. From there, we can link the *idea* of joy or sorrow to the *idea* of good or evil because “as we perceive that any object affects us with joy or sorrow do we call it good or evil, and therefore the knowledge of good or evil is nothing but an idea of joy or sorrow.” Then from proposition 21, part 2, an idea of an affect is united to an affect in the same way as the mind is united to the body, i.e. the idea and the affect itself are the same thing, which gives us the notion in this proposition; i.e. The idea of joy or sorrow is the same as the affect of joy or sorrow.

Proposition 14: ***Even true knowledge of good and evil cannot restrain an affect unless this knowledge is considered as an affect itself***.

Proposition 15: as an extension of the above, ***desire which arises from true knowledge of good and evil is limited in strength because it springs from our essence alone. Desire which springs from affects is always stronger***.

Propositions 16 and 17: ***Desire which springs from a knowledge of good and evil and is connected with the future or contingent objects is easily overpowered by the desire of things which are present.***

Proposition 18: ***Desire which springs from joy is more powerful than that which springs from sorrow***. This follows because desire is the very essence of a human, the effort by which an individual strives to preserve his or her being, i.e. our essence naturally ‘pushes’ in the same direction as joy.

In this proposition, Spinoza also draws three conclusions from the definition of virtue as acting according to the laws of our own nature:

* ***The foundation of virtue is that endeavour to preserve our own being, and this is happiness***
* ***Virtue is to be desired for its own sake and nothing is more useful or excellent than virtue***
* ***People who commit suicide have been totally overcome by external causes opposed to their nature***

We are not alone and it is better that we aren’t. There are many things outside of us which are useful to us. Of these things, other humans are easily the most beneficial, if “two individuals of exactly the same nature are joined together, they make up a single individual, doubly stronger than each alone.” From this, Spinoza concludes that there is nothing more excellent for an individual’s preservation than that the minds and bodies of all humans be joined to form one mind and one body. Hence, men who are governed by reason and therefore seek their own profit, naturally desire nothing for themselves which they do not desire for others. ***A rational man, in seeking his own profit, will naturally desire the good of the whole.***

Proposition 35 (corollary 2): ***Men are most profitable to each other when each man seeks what is more profitable to himself.*** Here, Spinoza asserts that there are far more advantageous to live in a community than live alone. Only by mutual help can we procure what we need and avoid dangers.

Proposition 20: ***The more a person strives for his own profit, the more virtue he possesses. The more he neglects to preserve his own being, the more impotent he is***.

Proposition 22: ***The endeavour after self-preservation is the primary and only foundation of virtue***, for it is the essence of the thing itself.

Proposition 24: ***To act in conformity with virtue, one must act, live, and preserve our being (these three are the same) in accordance with reason.***

Proposition 27: ***The only things we know for certain are good or evil are those which aid our understanding or those which inhibit it.***

Proposition 28: ***The highest good of the mind is the knowledge of God, and the highest virtue is to know God.*** This follows from the fact that to understand is virtue as it is concerned with the mind, and since the highest thing the mind can understand is God, the highest virtue of the mind is to know God.

Proposition 36: ***The highest good is common to all and all may enjoy it***, i.e. it is not only for a select elite.

Proposition 37 (scholium 1): Spinoza claims that killing animals is in accord with reason for we ought not to unite with things whose nature is different from our own. He doesn’t deny that animals feel, only that we ought not to use them for our own profit or pleasure.

*This is very difficult to agree with*.

Proposition 37 (scholium 1): Here, Spinoza defines *religion* as anything we do and which we are the cause of in so far as we possess an idea of God or in so far as we know God. *Piety* is the desire we are born with to live according to reason.

Proposition 37 (scholium 2): Next, Spinoza talks about the State. For us to live in harmony with one another (which is a benefit to all) we must cede our natural rights and agree to abide by a common set of laws. Since (by proposition 7), no affect can be restrained except by a stronger affect, reason is not enough to ensure obedience. Rather, society must claim the rights which an individual possesses when it comes to avenging itself and deciding what is good and evil. This society is the *State*.

Next, Spinoza says that ***in a natural state, there is nothing by which universal consent can adjudge good or evil, since each individual decides according to his or her own profit. Therefore in a natural state there is no such thing as universal good or evil and therefore no such thing as sin.*** ***Sin only arises in a State***.

***There is also no sense of ownership or rightful property in a natural state. Therefore there is no such thing as justice, except in a State where it is decided by universal consent what is one person and what is another’s***.

The next several propositions all relate to good and evil.

Proposition 38: Whatever allows the human body to be affected in many ways or makes it capable of affecting external bodies in many ways is good

Proposition 39: Whatever keeps the different parts of the body in harmony is good

Proposition 40: Whatever is conducive to the universal fellowship of men is good

Proposition 41: Joy is good, sorrow is evil

Proposition 42: Cheerfulness is also always good, melancholy is always evil.

Proposition 43: Pleasurable excitement may be excessive and evil, pain may be good. This follows because these affects affect one or some parts of the body more than others

Proposition 44: Love and desire may also be excessive. Since the affects we are usually affected by tend to be related to one part of the body more than others, cheerfulness is more easily imagined than observed. ***When one part is affected more than others, the mind is held down to the contemplation of one object and it can’t think of anything else***

Proposition 45: Hatred can never be good

Proposition 47: Hope and fear cannot be good in themselves. Neither can exist without sorrow

Proposition 47 (scholium): For the same reason as above the following affects all indicate lack of knowledge and impotence of mind so because of this, we ought to live without them: confidence, despair, gladness, and remorse

Proposition 46: ***Someone who lives according to reason will return hatred and anger with love or generosity***.

Proposition 56: The primary foundation of virtue is the preservation of our being according to the guidance of reason. Someone who acts according to reason must know he is acting according to reason. If someone is ignorant of himself, he is therefore ignorant of all virtue, and so ***the greatest impotence of mind is ignorance of self***.

Proposition 59: ***All actions which are determined by an affect can also be determined solely by reason***. Acting according to reason is nothing more than doing those things that follow from the necessity of our nature considered in itself alone. Since joy and sorrow affect this same power of action, reason and the affects determine the same set of actions. Desire is also nothing but the endeavour of itself to act and so it too leads to the same place.

Another demonstration of this proposition follows from considering that no action considered alone can be either good or evil since the same action can sometimes be good and sometimes evil. Therefore, we may sometimes be led by reason to an action which would be evil had it arisen from an evil affect.

Proposition 61: ***A desire springing from reason can never be in excess***. This follows because since desire is the essence of man, if it were able to be in excess this would mean that human nature could exceed itself, which is absurd.

Proposition 62: Here, Spinoza echoes what he said in propositions 31, 32 and 44, part 2, namely, that ***the mind is equally affected by an idea in the past, present, or future if it is formed by the mind according to reason***. This is because reason conceives things “under the same form of eternity or necessity” and therefore understands things not currently present with just as much certainty as it knows things that are currently present.

Proposition 63: ***Whoever does what is good to avoid what is evil is led by fear, not reason***. All affects related to the mind in so far as it acts are related to reason and are only those of joy and desire. Anything led by fear can therefore not be led by reason.

Proposition 63 (scholium): Here Spinoza has a dig at the religious authorities pointing out that they “study not to lead man by reason, but to hold him in through fear, in order that he may shun evil rather than love virtue, [hence they] aim at nothing more than that others should be as miserable as themselves”.

Proposition 64: ***The knowledge of evil is inadequate knowledge***. This follows because evil is sorrow itself and sorrow is a passage to less perfection. It therefore, cannot be understood through the essence of man, that is, reason and so it must be inadequate.

The rest of this section discusses the “free man” of Spinoza.

Proposition 66 (scholium): ***A man led by the affects is a slave, whereas a man led by reason is free***.

Proposition 67: ***A free man does not think of death. His wisdom is a meditation on life***. This is principally for two reasons: 1) Spinoza conceives thinking of death as meaning being *fearful* of death and 2) The power of action and desire for self-preservation represent the essence of the human for Spinoza.

Proposition 68: ***A man born free would have no conception of good and evil***. This follows because a man born free would have nothing other than adequate ideas according to reason and therefore have no conception of evil. Without a point of comparison he would also have no idea of good.

Proposition 73 (scholium): ***A free man can hate no one, be angry with no one, can neither envy, be indignant with, nor despise anybody, and cannot be proud***.

Fifth Part – *Of the Power of the Intellect, or of Human Liberty*

Summary

In this part, Spinoza outlines the five ways the mind can restrain the affects. First, through having clear and distinct ideas of them. Affects are always confused ideas and so understanding them through reason makes them adequate ideas, giving us control, i.e. allowing us to ‘act’ rather than ‘suffer’. Second, changing the associations we make in our mind between affects and external causes will render the external causes impotent or change their effects on us. Third, understanding objects and events as being “under the specific form of eternity”, i.e. accepting that nothing is contingent, allows us to be less affected by them. Fourth, being aware of the many causes which lead to any event helps to prevent our mind from fixating on only one and therefore being overcome by an affect. Fifth, the use of “maxims of life” can retrain our minds to automatically respond with reason, rather than the passions.

Regarding God, Spinoza states that since the only ideas God can be related to must all be true, then by definition, God cannot be affected by passions, i.e. God is never affected by joy or sorrow AND God neither hates nor loves anyone.

Spinoza doesn’t believe in life after death as it is conventionally conceived in religious circles, rejecting the idea that the mind can imagine or recollect anything without the body. However, he argues that an *idea* of an individual essence exists in God “under the form of eternity” which seems to be some kind of consolation, although whatever it is that continues to exist certainly has very little to do with ‘you’ as ‘you’ currently are.

Spinoza also expounds his theory of the “intellectual love of God”. The first kind of knowledge (opinion and imagination) allows us to imagine God as present to us but this only gives a confused idea of Him. The ideal for Spinoza is the third kind of knowledge which allows us to know God in so far as He is eternal (via reason) and the feeling of joy that accompanies this is what he calls the intellectual love of God. Spinoza equates this intellectual love of God with *blessedness* or *salvation*.

Detail

Spinoza starts off by saying he will deal solely with the power of the mind or of reason in this part, showing “the extent and nature of the authority which it has over the affects in restraining them and governing them for that we have not absolute authority over them we have already demonstrated.”

He also talks a little about Descartes and how implausible his theory of mind-body interaction through the pineal gland located in the middle of the brain is.

Proposition 2: ***Detaching an affect from the thought of an external cause will destroy the love or hatred we feel towards that object***.

Proposition 3: ***An affect ceases to be a passion once we have a clear and distinct idea of it***.

Proposition 4: ***We can form a clear and distinct idea of any affect***.

Proposition 5: ***An affect we do not imagine as necessary, possible, or contingent, i.e. one we imagine as free, is a powerful affect***.

Proposition 6: ***Any affect we understand as necessary is diminished in its power to make us suffer***.This follows from experience because we don’t feel sorrow when something happens if we consider it inevitable and necessary (which of course, everything is).

Proposition 7: This proposition concerns duration. ***Affects arising from reason are more powerful than those related to an object which is absent (i.e. imagination)***. This follows because ideas which conform to reason are always present to us.

Proposition 9: ***An affect which is related to a number of different causes creates less suffering than an affect related to only one or fewer causes.*** This follows because an affect is only bad in that it hinders thinking, i.e. locks it in on one object. If an affect has a number of causes, the mind is naturally drawn to a number of different thoughts and therefore involves less suffering.

Proposition 11: ***The more objects to which an image is related, the more constant it is***.

Proposition 10: ***We can arrange and connect the affections of the body according to the order of the intellect***. By this, Spinoza just means it is possible for us to ‘reorient’ ourselves so that the affects that were causing us to suffer from the imagination, now enable us to act from reason.

Proposition 10 (scholium): In order to achieve this, Spinoza recommends a technique straight out of the Stoic playbook (Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditations* to be precise), that is, forming a number of “maxims of life” – “to commit these latter to memory, and constantly to apply them to the particular cases which frequently meet us in life, so that our imagination may be widely affected by them, and they may always be ready to hand.” But for this to work, we need to continually meditate on or ‘rehearse’ situations in which we successfully apply these maxims to some real life situation. We need to ensure that the image of injury is connected with the imagination of the maxim so it is automatically recalled at the time it is needed.

Proposition 14: ***The mind can cause all affections of the body to be related to the idea of God***. This follows because we can form clear and distinct ideas of any affect (proposition 4) and every adequate idea is true (proposition 34, part 2), and every true idea is related to God (proposition 32, part 2).

Proposition 15: ***Whoever clearly and distinctly understands himself and his affects loves God***. This follows because joy accompanies the understanding of adequate ideas and since this joy is associated with the idea of God (proposition 14), then by proposition 13, part 3, he loves God.

Proposition 16: ***This love of God ought to completely occupy the mind***. This follows because Spinoza holds that the more objects to which an image is related, the more it occupies the mind.

Proposition 17: ***God is free from passions, i.e. he can’t be affected by joy or sorrow***. This follows because all ideas related to God are true, which means ‘adequate’, and since affects are by definition 3, part 3, confused ideas, God has nothing to do with them.

Proposition 17 (scholium): ***Therefore, God neither loves nor hates anyone.***

Proposition 18: ***No one can hate God***. This follows by the same reasoning as in proposition 17. In the scholium here, Spinoza considers an objection. Someone may argue that if God is the cause of everything, then he is also the cause of sorrow; on that basis we can hate him. The problem is that on a proper understanding of sorrow, that is to say, as an adequate idea, it will cease to be a passion (affect), and so there is no longer any reason to hate God.

Proposition 20 (scholium): Here Spinoza reviews the five ways the mind has power over the affects:

1. In knowledge of the affects – (see propositions 3 and 4)
2. In detaching the affect from the thought of a confusedly imagined external cause – (see proposition 2)
3. In duration, where affects related to objects we understand surpass those related to objects conceived in a confused manner – (see propositions 5 and 7)
4. In the multitude of causes which relate the affects to the common properties of things or to God – (see proposition 9 and 11)
5. In the order in which the mind can arrange and connect its affects – (see propositions 10 and 14)

It’s interesting that the first three all deal with knowledge and forming true, adequate ideas of the affects or thoughts of objects.

In this part, Spinoza also states that ***much of our sorrow stems from having too much love for an object subject to many changes and which we can never possess***.

Proposition 21: ***The mind cannot imagine or recollect anything when the body doesn’t exist***.

Proposition 22: ***In God, there exists an idea which “expresses the essence” of each individual human “under the form of eternity”***. Remembering that ‘eternity’ has nothing to do with duration, but is rather associated with necessity.

Proposition 23: ***The human mind is not completely destroyed with the body, something of it is eternal***. This ‘something’ seems to be the idea that God has of the individual.

Proposition 23 (scholium): Spinoza says here that even though we have no memory of existence before the body “we feel that our mind, in so far as it involves the essence of the body under the form of eternity, is eternal”.

*This whole proposition seems to rest on particularly weak foundations (we* feel *that our mind is eternal) and we must not forget that eternal, according to definition 8 of part 1, doesn’t mean forever, it only means something like having necessary existence.*

Proposition 25: ***The highest virtue is to understand things by the third kind of knowledge***.

Proposition 27: ***From the third kind of knowledge arises absolute peace of mind.*** This follows because this kind of knowledge leads to the highest human perfection and therefore affects us with the highest joy accompanied with total understanding of the self. This, Spinoza calls peace of mind.

Proposition 32: ***The third kind of knowledge is accompanied with joy and is ultimately related to the idea of God as the cause***.

Proposition 32 (scholium): ***The third kind of knowledge leads to the intellectual love of God***. This kind of knowledge gives joy attended with the idea of God as the cause, that is, the love of God. But this love is associated not with God as we imagine Him to be present, but with God in so far as we understand that He is eternal (via reason). This is what Spinoza calls the intellectual love of God.

Proposition 34: ***The mind experiences affects only as long as the body exists***. Imagination (the source of the idea of affects) always contemplates objects as present, and in doing so, indicates more about that body and mind doing the imagining than the object imagined. Hence, there can be no imagination without the body and no affect without the imagination.

Proposition 35: ***God loves Himself with an infinite intellectual love***.

Proposition 36: ***The intellectual love of God we experience is a part of the infinite love with which God loves Himself***. This seems to follow because at bottom, everything is only the one substance, i.e. God. In the scholium, Spinoza calls this intellectual love of God our *salvation* or *blessedness*.

Proposition 41: ***Even if we didn’t know the mind was eternal, Piety, Religion, and all the conclusions we came to earlier would still be of primary importance***.

Proposition 41 (scholium): Spinoza thinks that most people seem to believe that piety, religion, and living according to virtue are burdens which they expect some reward for being faithful to, after their death. It is “also and chiefly fear of dreadful punishments after death, by which they are induced to live according to the commands of divine law”. Without a belief in the continuation of life after they die, they would therefore prefer to be controlled by their passions, abandoning reason. This, Spinoza sees as completely absurd because for him living according to reason is the only way to live free. Living according to the passions is not a better life; it is a life in bondage.

Proposition 42: ***Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, it is virtue itself. We don’t delight in blessedness because we restrain our lusts; but because we delight in it, we are able to restrain them***. This follows because blessedness is the love of God (proposition 36), which arises from the third kind of knowledge, which is therefore related to the mind in so far as it acts. Since virtue is our power of affecting things, then blessedness and virtue are one and the same.

Also, the more we partake in blessedness, the more we understand, the more power we have over affects and hence the less we suffer from them.