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Impassioned by Passion: Knowledge and Love in Plato and Spinoza

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Education is never a purely intellectual affair: the “education of desire” is central to a theory of virtue in Plato and Spinoza. In the *Symposium*, “eros” is “the name for the impulse of desire in all its forms.”¹ In Spinoza’s *Ethics*, the multiple manifestations of desire are collectively signified by the term *conatus*. Both works present by the interweaving of knowledge and eros, naturalism and intellectualism as paradigmatic for the education and perfection of human desire.² Spinoza was familiar with works of important Renaissance Platonists like Abraham Cohen Herrera (*Puerta del Cielo, Casa del Divinidad*, and *Epitome y Compendio de la Logica o Dialectica*) or Judah Abravanel (alias Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d’amore*), and also with direct and indirect sources of Platonist thought like Proclus, Augustinus, Aquinas and the Scholastics, as well as with the Stoics and Neo-Stoics.³ Spinoza interpreters like Gebhardt, Dunin-Borkowski, and Wolfson noted Spinoza’s reception of Platonic ideas and concepts as transmitted through Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Arabic sources.⁴ Recent interpretation has tended to ignore Platonic influences, presumably as irrelevant for a proper understanding of Spinoza’s “naturalism.” Yet comparison of Plato and Spinoza in respect to the relationship of desire and virtue, knowledge and love throws

1. F.M. Cornford, “The Doctrine of Eros in Plato’s *Symposium*,” in G. Vlastos, ed., *Plato II. A Collection of Critical Essays. Ethics, Politics and Philosophy of Art and Religion* (Univ. of Notre Dame, 1978), 119-131; 121.

2. Cf. M.E. Zovko, “Naturalism and Intellectualism in Plato and Spinoza,” in A. Arndt, J. Zovko, eds., *Freiheit und Determinismus. Studia philosophica iaderensia* (Erlangen: Wehrhahn 2012), 11-62.

3. The works of many of these authors, including a Spanish version of Abravanel’s work, *Dialogos d’Amor*, counted among the holdings of Spinoza’s personal library. Cf. Adri K. Offenberg, “Spinoza’s library. The story of a reconstruction,” *Quaerendo*, Volume 3, Number 4 (1973): 309-321.

4. S. Dunin-Borkowski, *Der junge De Spinozad* (Münster: Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1933), (in Allison’s view “The classic study of the influences on Spinoza.” Cf. H.E. Allison, *Benedict de Spinoza. An Introduction* [rev. ed. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987], 228 n. 1); C. Gebhardt, “Spinoza und der Platonismus,” in *Chronicon Spinozanum*, I (1921): 178-234; H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza. Tracing the Latent Processes of His Reasoning*, Vols. I, II, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962).

light not only on Spinoza's doctrine of the affects and bondage to the affects, and the path to freedom and blessedness, but also, in retrospect, on Plato's understanding of the parts of the soul, the stages of knowledge, the ascent of love to the vision of beauty, and the relationship of knowledge and love in our education to virtue.

In fact, Spinoza's description of the stages of knowledge and love in the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics*,⁵ culminating in the unity of *scientia intuitiva* and *Amor Dei intellectualis*, provides a near perfect imaging of the ascent of knowledge and eros as described in the *Republic* and the *Symposium*. The ascent of knowledge in the Analogy of the Line in the *Republic*, seen from the perspective of the *Symposium*, turns out to be a journey motivated by *desire* and by transformation of the natural desire for the good by means of the passion of the intellect for knowledge and truth, and, ultimately, for the contemplation of beauty and the good which awaits the philosopher as reward of the ascent. The ascent describes the progress of the soul through ever clearer knowledge to an ever "greater Love," for, as Spinoza explains in the *Short Treatise*: "Love...arises from the perception and knowledge which we have of a thing, and as the thing shows itself to be greater and more magnificent, so also is our Love greater and greater" (*ST* II, 5; cf. II, 3f.). It is this idea of a "greater love" which resolves the question of similarity and difference of Plato and Spinoza with regard to the doctrine of knowledge and eros. The path to a "greater love" is not thereby one of ever greater abstraction from the singular beings of our experience by means of the "art of reasoning" and a resulting accrument of categorical knowledge – *for we cannot love an abstraction*; and love we must – for this is an absolute and irrevocable condition of our continued existence and realisation of the excellence proper to our being as just these human individuals.

The vision of beauty and the good which is the aim of the philosopher in Plato is rooted in the striving for perfection of desire and harmonisation of the "three impulses which shape life" (Cornford), the reflective, passionate and concupiscent. In Spinoza, the *conatus* or striving (to persevere in being) which comprises the characteristic life force of all things and of nature as a whole achieves perfection in the understanding of the true causes of things, in particular of the causes of the affects, which

5. The thorny issue of the relationship between the *Ethics* and the *Short Treatise* cannot be dealt with here. It is assumed that the two are fundamentally in agreement as regards the main points of comparison presented here, despite differences of method and terminology.

comprises the virtue of the intellect: the *scientia intuitiva* by whose realisation is attained the blessedness of *Amor Dei intellectualis*. In this paper, I consider the striking similarities – and some important differences – revealed by a comparison of the ascent of knowledge and love as portrayed in the speech of Diotima in Plato's *Symposium* and as portrayed in Spinoza's *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics*.

I. Nature and virtue in Spinoza and Plato

Spinoza and Plato both distinguish a conative and a cognitive element in the path to human excellence. True knowledge and true *love* are the condition of the philosopher's task. This duality is at the root of the paradoxical unity in difference of beauty and goodness, naturalism and intellectualism in Plato and Spinoza. It is in the relationship of knowledge and eros, moreover, that the close affinity of Spinoza and Plato becomes clearest and most luminous.

In the exchange between Socrates and Agathon which precedes Socrates' account of the conversation with Diotima, it is agreed that love is of good and beautiful things (201 a-d). Diotima and Socrates agree that love desires what it lacks, and is therefore itself neither beautiful nor good (201e), nor a god (202d), but rather a great *daimon* (202e), halfway between gods and men, the mortal and immortal (μεταξύ θνητού και ἀθανάτου 202e). Lacking good and beautiful things, this daimon is desirous of those things which it lacks (ἐπιβουλός ἐστι τοῖς καλοῖς και τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς, 202d). Socrates advances the proposition that "good things are beautiful" (τὰγαθὰ οὐ και καλὰ δοκεῖ σοι εἶναι; 201c). This is not to say that the good and the beautiful are the same, nor that all beautiful things are also good, but only that whatever is (truly) good is also beautiful. Eros is also said to be "desirous and competent of wisdom throughout life" (φιλοσοφῶν διὰ παντός τοῦ βίου 203d-e), for wisdom "has to do with the fairest things" (ἔστιν γὰρ δὴ τῶν καλλίστων ἢ σοφία). Love, then, since it is a love of what is fair, "must be a philosopher" or lover of wisdom (Ἔρως δ' ἐστὶν ἔρως περὶ τὸ καλόν, ὥστε ἀναγκαῖον ἔρωτα φιλόσοφον εἶναι 203b; cf. 204d).

What *love* is in itself, like the question what the *good* is in itself, and what the *beautiful* in itself, remains undetermined. Diotima takes up the statement of Agathon and turns it into the following questions: "What is the love of the lover of beautiful things?" and "what will he have who gets beautiful things?" As so often in the dialogues, when the inquiry touches on the "highest things," a direct response eludes them, and a more circuitous route is

taken. Leaving the central question unanswered, Diotima tells Socrates to imagine that, instead of the beautiful, the inquiry is to be made about the good (ὥσπερ ἂν εἴ τις μεταβαλὼν ἀντὶ τοῦ καλοῦ τῷ ἀγαθῷ χρώμενος πυνθάνοιτο: 204c). The question then becomes: what is the love of the lover of good things? Without attempting to resolve what love itself, and the good which is the object of love are, the response focuses instead on love's intention: the lover loves what he loves, scil. "good things," to be *his* (204e). The *reason* for his desiring good things is obvious to both Diotima and Socrates: the lover desires good things in order to attain *happiness* (205a). Therewith, a third term is introduced, and, in passing, love is equated with desire. Happiness, in the meantime, is equated with possession of good things

This "love" is "common to all," for "everyone always wishes to have good things" (205a). Nevertheless, as Diotima and Socrates agree, the statement that "all men love the same things always" does not imply that "all men love," but rather, that "some people love and others do not" (205a). Love which is common to all, it is implied, is distinct from love in the proper sense. The first type of love, which ordinarily bears the "name of the whole" (τὸ τοῦ ὅλου ὄνομα), the "desire of good things and of being happy," Diotima designates as the generic category of love (205c: τὸ κεφάλαιόν ἐστι πᾶσα ἢ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐπιθυμία καὶ τοῦ εὐδαιμονεῖν). Love, however, is not only desire for the good, but desire to possess it always, (206a: ὁ ἔρωσ τοῦ τὸ ἀγαθὸν αὐτῷ εἶναι ἀεί), and thereby to ensure our own lasting satisfaction or happiness. How lasting possession of the good may be attained, and what distinguishes love in the general sense of a natural striving for the good from the love by which human beings may be said to love in a proper sense, appears to depend on the nature of the object, whether it is more or less worthy of pursuit. Returning to a variation of his original question: "what is the method of those who pursue [the good] ... and in what the effort of love is comprised," Socrates introduces an important new distinction: love is not love of the beautiful, but of the "begetting on a beautiful thing by means of both the body and the soul" (206b: τῆς γεννήσεως καὶ τοῦ τόκου ἐν τῷ καλῷ). This "engendering and begetting" Diotima describes as "a divine affair... an immortal element in the creature that is mortal" which may only occur "upon" or in the presence of the beautiful (206c). Conjoining striving to engender upon the beautiful with the affirmation that "love loves good to be one's own for ever" Diotima concludes that

"love is of immortality" (207a). In loving, "mortal nature ever seeks, as best it can to be immortal" (207cd). It "seeks to leave behind it a new creature in place of the old," in order "to immortalize itself by leaving behind some new image of itself in place of the old." This striving is a universal characteristic which emerges at a certain stage in any creature's natural development, manifesting itself in a specific way in our own process of physical and intellectual maturation. Thus, even though they cannot literally preserve their own existence living beings strive to persevere by procreation of something like themselves: "Every mortal thing is preserved in this way; not by keeping it exactly the same for ever, like the divine, but by replacing what goes off or is antiquated with something fresh, in the semblance of the original" (208 a-b). It does this, according to Diotima, in one of three ways: by begetting children, by gaining honour and reputation through one's actions or by creation of works of art, good laws and institutions, and through cultivation of virtue.

As expression of "love of what is immortal," the desire to engender and beget is praiseworthy in itself, but even more so in proportion to the *excellence* of the thing striven for (208e). Herein lies the basis for the distinction between love which is "common to all" and love in a proper sense, specifically, in the interest of the latter for "*the most beautiful things*." This happens to be the particular concern of the philosopher, the lover of wisdom, which has to do with "the fairest things." The philosopher is one of those persons who go about pregnant in their souls, and "in their soul still more than in their bodies conceive those things which are proper for soul to conceive and bring forth... Prudence, and virtue in general" and "by far the highest and fairest part of prudence... that which concerns the regulation of cities... sobriety and justice" (208e-209a). Moreover, one whose "soul is so far divine that it is made pregnant with these from his youth," desiring when he has reached maturity "to bring forth and beget" *virtue*, "goes about seeking the beautiful object whereon he may do his begetting." The "beautiful object" upon which the philosopher may conceive bring forth virtue is one who like himself is desirous and capable of philosophy. If he chances upon "a soul that is fair and noble and well-endowed," "he takes in hand the other's education," then he applies all his resources, discoursing with him "of virtue and what should be the good man's character and what his pursuits..." (209b-c).

The curious bond of beauty and goodness (*kalokagathia*), which constitutes the ideal of being human and characteristic expression

of virtue in classical Greece⁶ is thus transformed in Diotima's speech from the *eudaimonia* of one who possesses or can obtain the transitory goods afforded by material possessions, position, honours, long life, into the *eudaimonia* afforded by the society of those whose common concern is for virtue and the cultivation of virtue, whose union brings forth children far "fairer and more deathless" than physical children (209d). Love in the *Symposium* appears, on this account, to be inextricably tied to the desire to preserve one's being, both physical and intellectual, and to the immortality attained by the procreation of virtue in oneself and a kindred soul. The association of virtue and justice with beauty, and of striving for virtue (the fairest thing) with desire for immortality is of key importance to the comparison of Plato with Spinoza. In the identification of love of the good with desire to preserve one's own being, Plato and Spinoza are in complete agreement.

In Spinoza, the essence of all things is *conatus*,⁷ more precisely *conatus sese conservare* or *conatus in suo esse perseverare*.⁸ Striving to persevere in one's being is conceived of as a universal law of nature, governing all things and their behaviour, from the purely physical to the characteristic unity of mental and physical processes that comprises human individuals. In humans, *conatus* is accompanied by *consciousness* of one's striving to persevere in one's being, and is called *appetite* (cf. *Ethics* 1App.). Because of their consciousness of their own striving to persevere, *conatus*

6. W. Jaeger, *Paideia, The Ideals of Greek Culture*, trans. by G. Highet, Vols. I-III, repr. of 2nd ed. (New York: Blackwell, 1954-1965), I, 13.

7. Spinoza's *Ethics* synthesizes a naturalist theory of motivation with an intellectualist theory of virtue. The relationship of naturalism and intellectualism in Spinoza's *Ethics* is characteristic of a type of virtue ethics and moral perfectionism whose roots can be traced to the Socratic paradoxes. Cf. "Naturalism and Intellectualism," 3, 4.

8. *Ethics* 3P6: "Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being [*in suo esse perseverare conatur*]." Cf. *Ibid.*, P7: "The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing." It is important to note the universality of this striving, which is best understood as a physical force, analogous to Newton's law of inertia. Even the affections of the body strive to persevere in being, each affection receiving, from its cause the force to persevere in its being, which... can neither be restrained nor removed, except by a corporal cause... which affects the Body with an affection opposite to it... and stronger than it." (4P7) For this reason, it is incorrect to identify *conatus* with psychological egoism. Cf. "Naturalism & Intellectualism," 6. In the following, Spinoza's *Ethics* and the *Short Treatise* are quoted according to the translation of E. Curley, *The Collected Works of Spinoza* (hereafter CW) Vol. I (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). The *Ethics* is cited by an Arabic number referring to the part, a letter standing for an abbreviation as follows: D=definition, A=axiom, P=proposition, S=scholium, C=corollary, App.=appendix, Pref.=preface.

manifests itself in human beings – as opposed to animals, plants, or inanimate things, where this striving is unconscious or instinctive – as a specific, characteristic relationship of body and mind, necessity and freedom, nature and virtue.

Spinoza's "thoroughgoing naturalism" forms the primary focus of discussions of Spinoza's philosophy today.⁹ This "naturalism," however, is of a peculiar kind, well-known in the history of Platonism, closely related, for example, to Plotinus' idea of the One as source and principle of all things and the manner in which the levels of reality proceed from the One (cf. *Ennead VI, 8 On Free Will and the Will of the One*). The absolute necessity with which all things proceed from the One is, paradoxically, one with its absolute freedom, its limitation by and dependence on no thing. In the same way, the cause of causes, origin and ground of all reality, the *substantia infinita, causa sui, natura naturans*, exists and acts from the necessity of its nature alone (*ex sola suae naturae necessitate*) and compelled by no other thing. There is exactly one such self-caused substance, which is in itself and is conceived through itself (1D1, D3), whereas everything else that is, is *in* substance, is caused by substance and conceived through substance (1A1, A2, D2, D5). The *substantia infinita* is therefore the only thing that can properly be called *free* (1D7, 1P17 and C2) whereas everything else is *determined* or *compelled* by another to exist and act.¹⁰

Human beings, like other finite modes, are *part of nature* and follow the order of nature according to which all things ensue, proceeding from the one infinite substance with the same necessity with which "from the nature of the triangle follows "that its three angles are equal two right angles" (cf. *Ethics* 1D1,2,6; 1P17S). According to Spinoza, we perceive and deem to be good that which arouses our appetite and which we are stimulated to pursue as necessary or beneficial to our perseverance in being. Striving for what is "good" in this sense, and the associated ability to persist in one's being, is in itself of no moral consequence, although it forms the necessary condition of our existence and of our moral behaviour. For "no one can desire to be blessed, to act well and to live well, unless at the same time he desires to be, to act, and to live, i.e. to actually exist" (4P21).¹¹ *Conatus* alone, then, cannot explain what it is to be human; for human beings' nature includes *intellect*, and our striving to persevere is a striving to benefit

9. Cf. "Naturalism & Intellectualism," 1ff.

10. *Ibid.*. 3-4.

11. Cf. *Ibid.*. 10, 6.

ourselves not only as physical, but also as intellectual beings.

Spinoza's naturalist theory of the affects or emotions is, accordingly, tied to an intellectualist theory of human virtue.¹² This is the basis for the similarity between Spinoza's ethical theory and the famed paradoxes of Socrates: no one does evil willingly or knowingly, i.e. everyone desires what appears to him to be good, and its corollary: "knowledge is virtue." In other words, to know what is good is to want and to do what is good. For *knowledge* (as opposed to instinct, or any other physical force alone) ensures that human beings pursue what is truly beneficial to them.¹³ The first statement describes the natural striving for whatever *appears* to ensure our continued existence (a fundamental physical drive humans share with other living beings), whereby we may or may not identify our true end – what it means to preserve our existence – and the means to attain it correctly. The second statement affirms the specifically human means of striving for what will ensure our genuine fulfillment as just this sort of being.

Like the Socratic paradoxes, the *Ethics* can be seen as operating on two plains, exploring, on the one hand, the natural motivation of emotion and action, elaborating, on the other, the life of virtue and freedom constituted by adequate knowledge of the true causes of things.¹⁴ To merely follow our affects results in bondage to the "pleasures of the moment" (App XXX) and "the power of external causes." If, however, we follow "the better part of us," "that part of us which is defined by understanding," we shall – while remaining "part of the whole of nature, whose order we follow," and wanting "nothing except what is necessary" ultimately find satisfaction in "what is true," that is, in adequate knowledge of the true causes of things as they follow from the *substantia infinita*. By this means, "the striving of the better part of us" is brought into agreement "with the whole order of nature" (4App.XXXII).

Above and beyond the harmonisation of our being as part of nature with understanding under the guidance of the reason, the conscious aim of human striving requires the perfection

12. Cf. M. LeBuffe, *From Bondage to Freedom. Spinoza on Human Excellence* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press 2010), 19f.

13. Cf. G. Santas, "The Socratic Paradoxes," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (Apr. 1964): 147–164; 147 and n., cf. 157. *Meno* 77b–78b, *Prot.* 345e; 358c, 360d3, *Gorg.* 468c5–7; 460b–d, 509ge5–7; "indirect statements of the doctrine occur in *Meno* 87, 89; *Laches* 98; *Charm.* 173."

14. This is why Spinoza can say, on the one hand, that the first and only foundation of virtue is *striving to persevere* and, at the same time, that it is *striving for understanding* (4P26, P22).

of intellect itself. The "ultimate end of the man who is led by reason," his "highest Desire, by which he strives to moderate all the others" is "to conceive adequately both himself and all things that can fall under his understanding," above all to understand "God, his attributes, and his actions which follow from the necessity of his nature." By this knowledge and understanding, the intellect is perfected, and our freedom and "blessedness," which consist in "that satisfaction of mind that stems from the intuitive knowledge of God," achieved (4AppIV).

The virtue or power of the intellect lies then in adequate knowledge of things, especially of the true causes of the affects, to which without such knowledge we otherwise live in bondage.¹⁵ Spinoza differentiates in this connection emotions which are actions from emotions which are passions.¹⁶ A person is said to *act* only insofar as he *understands*, where acting is doing "something which is perceived through his essence alone" (4P23), and "[A] citing from the laws of one's own nature" or doing something which is perceived through one's essence alone is the definition of *freedom* (1Def6). "To attain freedom... requires knowledge:"¹⁷ self-knowledge, knowledge of things, knowledge of God (cf. 4App.IV). "Striving to preserve oneself" is "the first and only foundation of virtue" (4P22 & C), but to act from virtue means "acting, living, and preserving our being... by the guidance of reason, from the foundation of seeking one's own advantage" (4P24).¹⁸

In Plato, realization of the virtue proper to human beings requires appropriate nurture and education of the emotive, volitional and intellectual parts of the soul.¹⁹ In the opening lines of the *Meno*, three

15. After laying the ontological foundation for the treatment of his topic in Part I, *De Deo*, with his explanation of God's nature and properties and the dependence of all things on him, Spinoza proceeds in Part II to the explanation of "those things which must necessarily follow from the essence of God" (the *substantia infinita*), not, however, all things, since from the *substantia infinita* "infinitely many things must follow... in infinitely many ways," but rather "only those that can lead us... to the knowledge of the human Mind and its highest blessedness." (2Pref.) Cf. "Naturalism and Intellectualism," 6.

16. Spinoza differentiates affects or emotions which are *actions*, i.e. which follow from us as their adequate cause by reason of our forming adequate ideas of their true causes, from emotions which are *passions*, i.e. to which we are in "bondage" on account of our being ignorant of their true causes. c.f. Appendix I for further explanation.

17. *From Bondage to Freedom*, 20.

18. Cf. "Naturalism & Intellectualism," 12.

19. The *epithumetikon*, *thumoeides* and the *logistikon*, cultivated respectively by the appropriate form of *mousike*, *gymnastike* and the various arts and sciences *tehnai* and

possible routes by which virtue may be attained are distinguished: 1) instruction 2) practice and 3) nature (70 a). The path of the philosopher constitutes an ascent through these three stages, beginning with the natural inclination for the good, advancing by means of good practice instilled in youth, and perfected by proper instruction. In the *Republic*, justice, the pinnacle of virtue in which all virtues are united, is achieved by education of each part of the soul to the fulfillment of its proper function, and cooperation of all with one another.²⁰ The highest object of instruction (*megisthon mathema*), by which the ruler acquires the virtue of the philosopher-king and the ability to realize justice in his own soul and in the state, is *knowledge of the good*, culminating in the vision of the Idea of the Good. This is illustrated in the three central Analogies of the *Republic*, dedicated respectively to the Idea of the Good (Analogy of the Sun), the stages of knowledge and ascent to the vision of the Good (Analogy of the Line), and, in the Analogy of the Cave, *paideia* or education, featuring the philosopher who ascends from the darkness of the cave to the light of the sun, from blindness to vision, from ignorance and self-deception to knowledge, and who descends again in order to free those imprisoned by their fascination with the illusion of sense phenomena, which exist only as a weak and distant shadow of what really *is*, and lead them upwards on the path to knowledge of reality and truth.²¹

Transforming passion into action, inadequate into adequate knowledge, accidental associations among images and memories of bodily affections into adequate ideas of their true causation is the basis for attainment of virtue, freedom and happiness in Spinoza.²² An affect is an "idea of an affection of the body," and as such already involves "some clear and distinct concept" (5P4C). This natural predisposition to ideation lies at the base of our ability to form an idea of the causes of things, including our ability to form an idea of an affect. By utilizing and developing this natural disposition we can come to understand ourselves and our affects, and so bring it about that we are "less acted on by them" (5P4C).²³

The same affect can be a passion or an action, depending on whether or not we form an adequate idea of it (an idea of the idea

epistemai, along with proficiency in abstract reasoning cf. *Rep.* 521e ff., cf. 525b ff.

20. Cf. *Rep.* 554 e.

21. *Rep.* 504a ff.

22. "Adequacy" is in the *Ethics* the primary criterium of truth, and refers to the intrinsic validity or self-consistency of ideas. See Appendix II.

23. Cf. "Naturalism & Intellectualism," 21-22.

of a bodily affection); for it is the same affect "by which a man is said to act, and... to be acted on." Mastering the affects should, therefore, be a very straightforward matter. Because we are not purely intellectual beings, however, but part of the "common order of nature," affects cannot be mastered by reason alone.

Affects in Spinoza are an expression of both a physical and a mental state. As an idea of an affection of the Body, an affect "affirms of its body a greater or lesser force of existing than before." Because of its dependence on a bodily state, an affect "can be neither restrained nor taken away except by the idea of an opposite affection of the body stronger than the affection through which it is acted upon" (4P7C).²⁴ For example, Joy and Sadness are ideas of affections of the Body which increase or diminish, aid or restrain our power of acting.²⁵ We experience *joy* when something happens to our body which increases our power of acting, and *sadness* when something happens to our body which decreases our power of acting.²⁶ What we call *good* or *evil* is only "an affect of Joy or Sadness, insofar as we are conscious of it." Good and evil, in the words of the *Short Treatise*, are not "real beings;" they are neither things nor actions, and nothing in nature, but only "beings of reason," corresponding to a "universal idea."²⁷ As "relations, which have reference to different things," they nevertheless "help us to understand things more distinctly" (ST I, 10; CW I, 92).

In the language of the *Ethics*, our knowledge of good or evil is an idea of an idea of an affection of the Body, an idea which "follows

24. Cf. *Ibid.* 27. My italics.

25. Joy, Sadness and Desire ("appetite together with consciousness of the appetite") are the three fundamental affects from which all others arise. Apart from these Spinoza acknowledges no others (*Ethics* 3P11S, cf. 3P9).

26. The natural mechanism which drives us to pursue what is beneficial and avoid what is harmful is in Aristotle the experience of pleasure and pain (EN 1172a 20–26). In Spinoza, the opposition of pleasure and pain is reflected in the emotions of Joy and Sadness, which are an expression of success or inhibition of the fundamental striving to persevere, and by the associated *appetite* for things which increase our ability to act, and repulsion from things which diminish the same ability (cf. 3P9S, 3P11S; cf. 4P19).

27. Spinoza differentiates "universal" from "particular ideas," eg. the idea of Peter and Judas. Only particular ideas, whether of things or of actions, exist in nature. Things "must agree with their particular Ideas, whose being must be a perfect essence and not with universal ones," because only particular ideas exist. Cf. ST I, 10. The idea of an individual being extends to and includes the idea of his or her particular body, for "to produce in substantial thought an Idea, knowledge or mode of thinking, such as [this soul of] ours now is, not just any body whatever is required... but one which has this proportion of motion and rest and no other" (ST II, 1).

necessarily from the affect of Joy or Sadness itself" (4P7; cf. Part 2, Gen. Def. of the Affects). The idea of an affect (as idea of an idea of an affection) is "united to the affect in the same way as the Mind is united to the Body."²⁸ Nonetheless, it is not the idea as *knowledge* which is capable of restraining an affect, but only such knowledge "considered as an affect" (4P14, 15). In other words, only by a *stronger affect* – what Spinoza calls a "*greater love*" – can an affect be overcome. This *greater love*, however, is not attained by *abstraction* from the individual, nor is it aroused by or directed toward a universal idea or category. To be sure, it is only once an affect has been transformed from a passion to an action by our having formed a clear idea of its true causes that we are set free from our bondage to it. For only when we live according to the guidance of reason may we properly be said to *act*. This is because, for human beings to act freely, they must themselves be the *cause* of their actions through which those actions are understood, in the sense in which "whatever follows from human nature, insofar as it is defined by reason... must be understood through human nature alone" (5P35, cf. 3P3, 3D2). When human beings act according to reason, they act, moreover, in accordance with the laws of their nature in the proper sense, desiring what they judge correctly to be good, and striving to avoid what they judge correctly to be evil, since "what we judge to be good or evil, when we follow the dictate of reason, must *be* good or evil," and not merely appear to us to be so.²⁹

Affects which arise from the affections which singular things produce in our bodies, if they are not understood with respect to their true causes, exclude and replace each other in succession over time, remaining present only through associations with other affections, images and ideas in our memory (cf. 5P7). Affects which arise from reason, on the other hand, are "necessarily related to the common properties of things;"³⁰ and so always regarded by us as present. Since "there can be nothing which excludes their present existence... we always imagine them in the same way" (5P7). As related to "a number of causes concurring together," such an

28. The idea of an affect is only "conceptually distinguished" from the affect itself, i.e. the idea of a Body's affection. Spinoza eliminates herewith the logical consequence of an infinite regress which the relationship of idea to ideatum would otherwise entail (4P8) 28.

29. *Ibid.* (my emphasis). Cf. 2P41.

30. Nevertheless, common properties of things are nothing in themselves, but only in relation to "real beings," i.e. really existing particular beings or actions in nature (cf. n. 29, *ST I*, 10).

affect is more powerful than those related to fewer causes (5P8).³¹

II. Stages of knowledge in Spinoza and Plato

Corresponding to the transformation of the striving to persevere we share with all things according to the "common order of nature" into striving according to the "order of intellect," Spinoza differentiates levels of awareness. These correspond to the types of knowledge outlined in Part 2 of the *Ethics* and in chs. 1-4 and 21-22 of the *Short Treatise*. The hierarchy of the stages of knowledge described by Spinoza belongs to a long tradition descended from Plato's Analogy of the Line. In his description, Spinoza distinguishes three or four or stages of knowledge, depending on whether the first two types are counted as one or as two individual stages.³² In Part II of the *Ethics*, the following types or stages of knowledge are differentiated:

1. *imaginatio*
2. *opinio*
3. *ratio*
4. *scientia intuitiva*

In the *Short Treatise*, Spinoza describes human beings as consisting of modes of thinking substance, divided into "opinion" (arising either from "experience" or "hearsay"³³), "true belief," and "science" or "clear and distinct knowledge." This division and the corresponding one in the *Ethics* reproduce the main division of Plato's Line into the realm of appearances and opinion (δόξα), and the realm of reality and ideas or true knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), along with their subdivision, with *imagination* and *opinion* corresponding to the individual cuts of the lower segment

31. Cf. "Naturalism & Intellectualism," 32.

32. Wolfson relates Spinoza's division to the division of Plato's Line (II,133 and n. 1, with text references: Rep VI 511 D, VII, 533 E: νόησις (νοῦς, ἐπιστήμη), διάνοια, πίστις, εἰκασία; and the various classifications in Aristotle (*Ibid.*, and n. 2: *Analytica Posteriora*, II, 19, 100b, 7-8: δόξα, λογισμός, ἐπιστήμη, νοῦς; *De Anima* III, 3, 428, 4-5 αἰσθησις, δόξα, ἐπιστήμη, νοῦς; *Metaphys.* XII, 9, 1074b, 35-36 ἐπιστήμη, αἰσθησις, δόξα, διάνοια; *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 3, 1139b, 16-17: τέχνη, ἐπιστήμη, φρόνησις, σοφία, νοῦς, ὑπόληψις, δόξα. Wolfson notes the apparent inconsistency of Spinoza's numbering of the stages of knowledge in the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*, the *Ethics*, and the *Short Treatise* (II, 131f.) In fact, the division into three or four is a result of Spinoza's close association of the first two stages, because of their dependency on the senses and their relative unreliability and subordinate position with respect to the attainment of true knowledge.

33. For clarification of terminological inconsistencies with regard to Spinoza's use of the words belief (*geloof*) and opinion (*waan*) in this passage cf. Curley, *CWI*, 97 n. b.

into the lower intellectual capacities of εἰκασία and πίστις, and *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva* corresponding to the higher segment and the higher functions of intellect, διάνοια and νόησις. The manner in which our notions or concepts are formed with respect to this hierarchy determines whether our notions of things will be adequate and our knowledge clear, distinct, and true.³⁴

In order to illustrate by a "single example" the specific relationships of the three (four) stages of knowledge, Spinoza employs, in both the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics*, an *analogy* – one that, in its key characteristics, corresponds precisely to the analogy of Plato's Line. For not only does Spinoza deem analogy the appropriate method for elaborating the ascending scale of the stages of knowledge; as his primary analogue and point of departure for his comparison he explicitly chooses the "rule of three," i.e. the law of proportion,³⁵ the same rule which forms the basis for Plato's Analogy of the Line.³⁶ Spinoza compares the different approaches of applying the rule of three to solving a proportion to the individual levels of knowledge: one who has "merely heard someone else say that if... you multiply the second and third numbers, and divide the product by the first, you then find the fourth number, which has the same proportion to the third as the second has to the first," will perform this action "without having... any more knowledge of the rule of three than a blind man has of color," and "whatever he may have been able to say about it" he repeats, "as a parrot repeats what it has been taught" (*ST II*, 1). Another, acting on the basis of *opinio*, an acquired but unproven habit of mind, "tests it with some particular calculations, and finding that these agree with it... gives his 'belief'" to the rule. He thus confirms it by "the experience of some particular [cases]," but cannot be sure that this is a rule for all. A third person, "consults true reason" which

34. "Naturalism & Intellectualism," 33.

35. The rule according to which, given three numbers, of which the first two form a specific ratio, one may obtain the value of a fourth, unknown term, by multiplication of the means and extremes. For an interpretation of the division of Plato's Line according to the image of a geometrical proportion, which provides the original basis for the use of the word *analogy*, cf. the excursus by M.E. Zovko in J. Zovko, M.E. Zovko, "The Metaphysical Character of Philosophy," in: M. Pestana (ed.) *Metaphysics*, (Rijeka: InTech 2012) 9-44; 16-19.

36. On the central role of the law of proportion to interpretation of Plato's Line cf. M.E. Zovko, "The Way Up and the Way Back is the Same. The Ascent of Cognition in Plato's Analogies of the Sun, the Line and the Cave and the Path Intelligence Takes," in: *Platonism and Forms of Intelligence* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag), 2008: 313-341. 326-336, and "The Metaphysical Character," 16-19.

"tells him that because of the property of proportionality in these numbers the rule necessarily applies. A fourth, however, "has the clearest knowledge of all," for having "no need either of report, or of experience, or of the art of reasoning," "through his penetration *he immediately sees the proportionality* [and] all the calculations."³⁷

By this use of analogy, as from the motif of the analogy itself, the close relationship of knowledge and affect is brought to the fore. Whereas, on the one hand, the affects are constituted as ideas of affections of the body, from the stages of knowledge arise, on the other hand, as from their proximate cause all the passions of the soul, from each according to its type: from the first, *imaginatio* and *opinio*, those "which are contrary to good reason;" from the second, *ratio*, "the good Desires;" and from the third, *scientia intuitiva*, "true and genuine Love." The highest form of knowledge, namely, is "clear knowledge" which "goes far beyond the others," for it "comes not from being convinced by reasons, but from being aware of and *enjoying* the thing itself." It is a knowledge which is itself enjoyment (ST II, 2).³⁸

Affects which are no longer passions, but which are not yet actions, Spinoza connects with the activity of imagination, defined

37. My emphasis. For further discussion and quotations of the corresponding passage from the *Ethics* c.f. Appendix III

38. Herein, as Sigwart notes, Spinoza differs from Descartes *Passions de l'ame* I, 27 who sees "motions of the animal spirits" as causes of the passions (cf. Curley CWI, 99 n. 2). This corresponds in Spinoza to affects which are passions, but not to the same affects insofar as they are capable of being actions. This dual view of the relation between knowledge and the affects is also apparent in Spinoza's discussion of the imagination: despite its apparent devaluation in connection with the hierarchy of affects, Spinoza sees imagination in itself as a virtue or strength of our nature. He notes nonetheless how much more of a virtue imagination would be, if "the Mind's faculty of imagining were *free*," that is, if its functioning "depended only on its own nature," instead of on the changing affections which the unending succession of the singular things of our experience produces in our Body, a hypothetical state surpassing even that of adequate knowledge of our affects. Although we can *imagine* what it would be like to enjoy – and in certain types of creative activity might even be said to participate in – an equivalent power of imagination, in fact, freedom of imagination in this sense is attributable only to the *substantia infinita* (cf. *Ethics* ID7). Kant's idea of an "intellectual intuition," impossible to humans but hypothetically attributable to God, and of an analogous type of "productive" or "spontaneous" imagination in humans, shows important similarities to Spinoza in this point. Cf. *Critique of Pure Reason*, Unified Edition, trans. W.S. Pluhar, intro. P. Kitcher (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1996) B 68, 72; Cf. B 103, 151; *Critique of Judgment*, Including the First Introduction, trans. w. intro. by W.S. Pluhar, w. foreward by M. J. Gregor (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1987), 240–244. Cf. "Naturalism & Intellectualism," n. 72.

as "an idea by which the Mind considers a thing as present" (4P9; Cf. 2P17S). Imaginations indicate "the constitution of the human Body more than the nature of the external thing" (4P9; cf. 2P16C2) and do not represent true knowledge of the causes of things which affect the body (4P9).³⁹ The human mind, however, conceives things as actual in one of two ways: either in relation to a certain time and place, or as contained in God and as they follow from the necessity of the divine nature. Things known in the first manner are known only confusedly and fragmentarily. Only things conceived of "under a species of eternity" (*sub specie aeternitatis*), that is: "through God's essence, as real beings... insofar as through God's essence they involve existence," are known *adequately*, or as they truly are.⁴⁰ The *essence of the human mind* consists, namely, "in knowledge [...] which involves knowledge of God," (4P37) so that, ultimately, the human mind is defined and perfected by its capacity "to have an adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence" (5P36, cf. 22P47). Therefore, "the greatest good of those who seek virtue is to know God" (5P36).⁴¹

III. Knowledge and Eros in Plato and Spinoza

Both Plato and Spinoza distinguish a proportionality in the division of the ages of knowledge which is tied to a proportionality in the objects of knowledge and desire in the same way as the ascent of knowledge is tied to the perfection of human nature. The question remains: what is the final aim of the ascent, what is the love of the lover and how is its fulfillment attained? We have seen that in Spinoza the striving which defines our essence as humans is ultimately a striving for understanding whose goal is virtue, and hence freedom, and happiness. In Plato, too, love is fundamentally love of virtue. But is virtue, as the adage goes, and as Spinoza seems to confirm, its own reward?

A striking difference between the speech of Diotima and Spinoza's account of love in Part V of the *Ethics* is the seeming absence in Spinoza of any reference to love of beauty and the

39. When we imagine something future or past, "we are affected by the same affect as if we were imagining something present" (3P18), but the intensity of the imagination depends on whether or not other things are imagined at the same time which exclude "the present existence of the external thing" which we perceive as cause of the bodily affection whose idea the affect is (cf. P9S & C). Neither the image nor the affect, however, conveys the *nature* of the external thing which we perceive as the cause of the affection.

40. *Ethics* V, 29, Schol.

41. Cf. "Naturalism and Intellectualism," 32f.

associated desire for procreation, or their related manifestations in nature, art, or human forms of life.⁴² Whereas the concept of Beauty is absolutely central to the treatment of love in the *Symposium* and Abravanel's *Dialoghi*, it is not explicitly present in the *Ethics*. In Abravanel's 3rd dialogue, beauty is distinguished from goodness, and made a condition of human love, as a "grace which brings pleasure to the mind which perceives it" and so moves it to love (195) (207a). The absence of this central concept appears to undermine the hypothesis of any affinity between Spinoza's theory of love and that of Plato and the Platonists. If we turn to the definition of Love in the *Short Treatise*, however, and compare it to the exposition of the stages of love in the speech of Diotima, genuine parallels to the concept of beauty in Spinoza are brought to light.

"Love," according to the *Short Treatise*, "is nothing but enjoying a thing and being united to a thing" (II, 5; Curley CW I 105). Enjoyment and being united with the object of love is the fulfillment of *conatus* or the universal striving to persevere which in humans is ultimately love of immortality. The stages of love are divided "according to the qualities of the object man seeks to enjoy and unite with." Thus, love "arises from the perception and knowledge which we have of a thing, and as the thing shows itself to be greater and more magnificent, so also is our Love greater and greater" (II, 5; CW I 104, my italics). The quality of the love we have toward a thing depends on the type of knowledge from which it arises – and on the manner in which it the object manifests itself to us. The objects of love are divided thereby into three categories: those which are "corruptible in themselves," those, which "through their cause, are not corruptible," and a third kind "which, solely through its own power and capacity, is eternal and incorruptible." By "corruptible" objects, Spinoza means "singular things, which have not existed from all time, or have had a beginning." By objects which are incorruptible by virtue of their cause, he means "all those modes which [...] are the causes of the singular modes;" and by the third kind he means "God, or what we take to be one and the same thing, the Truth" (CWI, 105). The first type of love-objects are those perceived by the the first kind of knowledge or *opinion*. From this type of knowledge and its objects (undifferentiated experience of particular things) arise emotions which are passions, which displace each other in succession, since "whenever someone sees something good, or thinks he does, he is always inclined to unite

42. For extended discussion of this point and some bibliographical notes see Appendix IV.

himself with it." This continuous displacement of competing objects of desire is subject to the perception of whatever one perceives to be better at any given moment, for whenever one "comes to know something better than this good he now knows, then his love turns immediately from the first to the second" (CW I, 100). The same type of displacement may occur under the influence of the opinions or prejudices of others or from "mere report," as Spinoza calls it.

The second type of knowledge, *true belief*, refers to the causes of the singular modes, but "teaches us only what it belongs to the thing to be, not what it is," i.e. its general characteristics. This type of knowledge "can never unite us with the thing we believe," because it sees its object as a thing external to itself. It is nevertheless good insofar as it leads to true knowledge and "makes us perceive intellectually those things which are not in us, but outside us," "awakening us to things that are truly worthy of love," and propelling us toward "a clear understanding, through which we love God" (ST II 3, CWI 102f.; 4, 104). True belief (in the *Ethics*, *ratio*) thus "provides us with the knowledge of good and evil, and shows us all the passions that are to be destroyed." In other words, the passions which come from opinion "are sifted by this second kind of knowledge, to see what is good and what is evil in them," i.e. what is beneficial and what detrimental to our perseverance in our being.⁴³

Love cannot be aroused by this type of discursive rationality, because of the abstract and general nature of its objects. "Our nature," however, "requires us to love something and to unite ourselves with it, in order to exist." On the basis of true belief and clear understanding we strive to free ourselves of the passions which come from opinion. Nonetheless, "we never strive to free ourselves" from love itself as we do from the passions. Spinoza gives two reasons for this: "1) because it is impossible; 2) because it is necessary that we not be free of it" (ST I, 5; 104f.). The reason it is impossible is because we do not decide whether or not to love a thing; rather, the object of our love or desire arouses in us the love we feel toward it, because of "the good or advantage we find in the

43. According to Spinoza, "In Nature there is no good and no evil." Rather, "whatever we require of man," the standard by which we measure human actions, relates "only to his genus," to an "Idea" we have conceived "of a perfect man in our intellect." Standards of good and evil are thus only "beings of reason" or "modes of thinking." "Whatever helps us to attain that perfection" we call *good*, and "whatever hinders our attaining it, or does not assist it," we call *evil*. General questions regarding "man's good and evil" must be carefully distinguished from the "good and evil of, say, Adam." In forming such judgments, a true philosopher must "scrupulously avoid" confusing "a real being with a being of reason" (II, 4, CW 103f.)

object." Our response to the object is in this respect automatic. In knowing an object which appears to hold some good or advantage for us, we *must* also love it, and we cannot *not* know the objects of our desire, at some level or another, as long as we *are*. It is *necessary*, furthermore, that we love some object of our desire, because "we could not exist if we did not enjoy something to which we were united, and by which we were strengthened" (*Ibid.*, 105). Our striving to persevere and our love for the objects which enable us to do so is the necessary condition of our very existence. Nonetheless, loving particular things at random and uniting ourselves with them "does not strengthen our nature at all," and is even harmful to us. *True love*, on the other hand, "comes always from knowledge that the thing [scil. the object of our love] is splendid and good:

Love is a union with an object that our intellect judges to be good and magnificent...a union such that the lover and the loved come to be one and the same thing, or to form a whole together. (*STI*, 5; Curley *CWI* 105f.)

Of the three types of love-objects, the third is the only one which provides true and lasting satisfaction. He "who unites with corruptible things is always miserable," since the things he unites himself with are "outside his power and subject to many accidents." Particular things, nonetheless, "at least have some essence;" far more miserable are they "who love honour, wealth and sensual pleasure, which have no essence." The second kind of objects, though eternal and incorruptible, are "not such through their own power;" they are "nothing but modes which depend immediately on God." Thus, we cannot conceive them "unless we have at the same time a concept of God." In God, however, "[b]ecause he is perfect," "our love must necessarily rest." Indeed, "it will be impossible for us, if we use our intellect well, not to love God." This is because "when we who love something come to know something better than what we love, we always fall on it at once, and leave the first thing." God, however, "has all perfection in himself alone." Therefore, "we must love him." Furthermore, "if we use our intellect well in the knowledge of things," we will come "to know them in their causes." Nevertheless, "since God is a first cause of all other things," the knowledge of God is "prior, according to the nature of things, to the knowledge of all other things," while "the knowledge of all other things must follow from the knowledge of the first cause." What

else can follow from this, "but that love will be able to pour forth more powerfully on the lord our God than on anyone else? For he alone is magnificent, and a perfect Good" (ST I, CW I, 106-107).

In comparison, discursive reasoning, though it enables us to recognize standards of moral behaviour, does not have the power "to bring us to our well-being" (ST II, 22; CW I, 138). The reason we can see the good and fail to find in ourselves the power to "do the good, or omit the bad," is that *ratio* or discursive reasoning does not provide us with direct experience of the thing, but only with conclusions arrived as a result of logical derivation from general concepts. Spinoza explains this by reference to the rule of three, "for we have more power if we understand the proportion itself than if we understand the rule of of proportion" (ST II, 21; CW I, 138). The kind of knowledge that produces love, as opposed to "the desire which proceeds from reasoning," is not a consequence of anything else, but *an immediate manifestation of the object itself to the intellect* (my italics). It is "clear understanding," not arrived at "as a result of a second thing," and not coming "from outside." Discursive reasoning has only the power of controverting the opinion of others or a "report," and can in this capacity "be a cause of the destruction of those opinions which we have only from report...but not of those which we have through experience." *The love which arises from the experience of particular things, on the other hand, can only be destroyed by another love that is greater, and this is possible only through direct experience or "clear understanding" of the proportion itself: "For the power the thing itself gives us is always greater than that we get as a result of a second thing"* (ST II, 21; Curley CW I, 138).⁴⁴

The image of the proportion provides in its illustration of the type of higher-level perception by which the solution of the proportion equation is recognized an analogy for the direct experience which the intellect has of the "immediate manifestation" of the sole object which is in itself "magnificent and good," i.e. God. At the same time, it constitutes itself an example of the type of higher-level perception and reasoning, i.e. the recognition of and reasoning from analogy, which it is intended to illustrate. Through this clear understanding "the soul necessarily becomes united" with its true object, just as the body necessarily unites itself with particular objects according to the manifestation and experience of their goodness, and this despite the fact that we may not "know him [God] as he is," just as we do not know particular things as they are,

44. Spinoza's position in the *Ethics* appears to contradict this view of reason. For a full explanation see Appendix V.

but only according to the affections they produce in our bodies.⁴⁵

This, then, is Spinoza's equivalent of the vision of beauty in the *Symposium*, the union of the lover with the object of his love, which corresponds to the culmination of the ascent of love in Diotima's speech: *the clear understanding of the proportion, the direct experience of the object which is "most magnificent and best of all" (heerlijkst, gloriosissimus/optimus)*. This type of knowledge, "which is the knowledge of God, is not the consequence of anything else, but immediate" – and furthermore, "is the cause of all knowledge which is known through itself alone, and not through any other thing." Knowledge of God, moreover, is knowledge from within, as is "evident from the fact that by Nature we are so united with him that without him we can neither be nor be understood;" and it is "because there is so close a union between God and us" that "we can only understand him immediately" and not "as a result of a second thing," i.e. as a consequence of reasoning (ST II, 22; CW I, 138f.).

IV. *The Ascent of Love in Plato and in Spinoza*

According to Diotima, "human nature can find no better helper than love" (212b). Diotima portrays what appears to be a hierarchical ordering of love, based on its objects and leading to an ultimate object, beauty itself, which is the principle of all other objects and determines their place on the ladder.⁴⁶ The vision of beauty which is the consummation of striving for beauty present at all levels of human striving is equated furthermore with love and desire for immortality. To attain the ultimate goal of love as desire of beauty and immortality the lover progresses from love of physical beauty in a particular love-object to love of physical beauty in all its instances, thence to love of beautiful laws, institutions, sciences, and finally to the science whose object is beauty itself.

Vlastos disparages Plato's account of love in the *Symposium* as "egocentric."⁴⁷ As the desire to possess what is beautiful, it is, in Vlastos' view, centered on satisfaction of one's own desires. Any

45. That this "greater love" is not a negation of, or mere abstraction from, the love we have for particular things, but its consummation, is made clear by Spinoza's comparison of direct experience of the most magnificent object with our experience of individual things, concerning which Spinoza exclaims: "For even in the knowledge we have of the body we do not know it as it is, or perfectly. And yet, what a union! what a love!" (ST II, 22; CW I, 139)

46. D. Levy, "The Definition of Love in Plato's *Symposium*," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Apr.- Jun. 1979): 285-291; 285.

47. "The Individual as Object of Love in Plato," *Platonic Studies* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973), 30.

love of persons as individuals is in his estimate made subordinate to love of beauty in itself; we love only the "image" of the Idea when we love an individual. Vlastos considers Plato's theory, insofar as it sees this "lesser love" as a mere stepping stone (*Symp.* 211c) to the attainment of the vision of beauty itself, and "does not provide for love of whole persons, but only for love of that abstract version of persons which consists of the complex of their best qualities," as lacking in comparison with Aristotle's definition: "Love is wishing good things for someone for that person's sake."⁴⁸

Spinoza's understanding of love and its grounding in the *conatus suo esse conservare* provides the basis for a proper understanding of what to Vlastos appears to be the egocentrism of Plato's account – by illuminating *conatus* as the necessary condition of any kind of love, and *virtue* as *conatus'* ultimate aim. What comes across as egocentrism in Plato's and Spinoza's theory of love is, in fact, nothing but the natural desire for and striving to obtain what appears to be beneficial for our existence, and constitutes the necessary condition and factual basis of our perseverance in being. The final aim of that striving: true knowledge, virtue and happiness, cannot help but include love for particular individuals and objects of our desire. These are not negated by a categorical abstraction, but consummated in the singular vision and direct experience of their source and cause.⁴⁹ The ultimate object of love in the *Symposium*, beauty itself, is intimately tied to the good, as in the Greek concept of *kalokagathia*, and to the attainment of one's own virtue. As Levy argues, if "the good one desires for oneself" is to possess virtue, then "At least some of the time, desiring to possess virtue for oneself consists in wishing good things for someone for that person's sake." In fact, union with the true love-object entails without exception desiring the same good for others we desire for ourselves.⁵⁰ According to Spinoza, the object of "Love toward God," the equivalent of Love toward Beauty and the Good in Plato, and in Spinoza "the highest good which we can want from the dictate of reason," "is common to all men." Therefore, "we desire that all should enjoy it." In other words, it "cannot be tainted by an affect of Envy or Jealousy." Rather, "the more men we imagine to enjoy it... the more it is encouraged" (5P18).

The union we have with God "by Nature and by love" is

48. *Ibid.*, 30, 31, 32.

49. Cf. *Ibid.*, 286.

50. Cf. M.E. Zovko, "Involved in humankind: Nature, virtue and the good we desire for ourselves and for others," *Knowledge Cultures* 1(2), 2013: 264-300.

grounded in the union which the whole of nature has with God, for "there can be nothing in Nature of which there is not an idea in the soul of the same thing," and "since the whole of Nature is one unique substance, whose essence is infinite, all things are united through Nature, and united into one... viz. God." According to Spinoza, "there can be nothing in Nature whose Idea does not exist in the thinking thing." Thus, there is an idea of the body, "the very first thing our soul becomes aware of." But the idea "cannot find any rest in the knowledge of the body, without passing over into knowledge of that without which neither the body nor the Idea itself can either exist or be understood," and "as soon as it knows that being, it will be united with it by love" (ST II, 22; CWI, 140). By the union with the body, and knowledge of and passions toward corporal things, "all those effects which we are constantly aware of in our body arise." When, however, "our knowledge and love come to fall on that without which we can neither exist nor be understood, and which is not at all corporal," we are necessarily united with that object, and effects arise from that union which are "incomparably greater and more magnificent." When this occurs, "we can truly say that we have been born again," and have achieved *immortality*, for the Soul can be united either with the body of which it is the idea, or with God, without whom it can neither exist nor be understood." The state of being united with God which is achieved through *scientia intuitiva* as adequate knowledge of particular things and their true causes,⁵¹ is that of a "second birth."

For our first birth was when we were united with the body. From this union have arisen the effects and motions of the [animal] spirits. But our other, or second, birth will occur when we become aware in ourselves of the completely different effects of love produced by knowledge of this incorporeal.

Insofar as the soul is united with the idea or with God it remains immutable or immortal. The third kind of knowledge (2P47S), "whose foundation is the knowledge of God itself," "begets," moreover, "a Love toward a thing immutable and eternal... which we really fully possess..." (5P20S). Imagination and memory cease, according to Spinoza, when the duration of the body comes to an end (5P21); but "in God there is necessarily an idea that expresses the essence" of each individual body and each individual mind, "under a species of eternity," and "which is necessarily eternal"

51. Because of the presence in God of an idea of every particular thing, Spinoza can assert that "The more we understand singular things, the more we understand God" (5P24)

(5P22, 23). And although "it is impossible that we should recollect that we existed before the body – since there cannot be any traces of this in the body...*still we feel and know by experience that we are eternal*" (5P23, my italics). Here again, the close connection and ultimate union of knowledge and love are brought to the fore. By the third (fourth) kind of knowledge we proceed "from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things," and vice versa, from ever greater understanding of things to an ever greater understanding of God. It is from this type of knowledge that "the greatest satisfaction of Mind" and the greatest pleasure, "accompanied by the idea of God as a cause," that is the *greatest love* arises.

An analogous relationship between the hierarchy of knowledge and that of love as well as their respective objects can be observed in the *Symposium*. The "three aims" of *eros* according to the speech of Diotima: "knowledge of beauty, beauty itself, and immortality," are related to the three forms in which human beings strive to achieve immortality: physical procreation (207a6-208b6), lasting fame (208c1-209e4), and true virtue based on the knowledge of beauty and the good (210a1-212 a7). Only the last of the love-objects ensures true immortality, qualifying *eros* which aims for that goal as love in the proper sense, but this aim is not totally disconnected from the other two, just as knowledge is connected with *eros* or desire at every stage of the ascent. Chen sees in the progress from one stage of striving to the next the aims of *eros* "mingled with the steps of cognitive striving until the last step."⁵² The lover of beauty perceives beauty first in individual instances of beautiful bodies. He recognizes thereby the *kinship* of beauty in these individual instances. By a gradual process of "de-individualisation," he is led to love the beauty of beautiful bodies indifferently with regard to, though not separately from, these particular bodies, whose beauty he perceives as *kindred* to every other instance. In Chen's view, this kinship is not to be confused with a general category, i.e. "beauty-in-all-bodies as such," just as in Spinoza's analysis it is not a category we love, but a particular thing. A similar situation can be observed with regard to love for beautiful (virtuous) souls. This love, too, is directed toward individual instances, for whom the lover creates discourses, in order to improve their virtue, and not toward "beauty-in-all-souls as such." In the same way when the lover advances to love beautiful institutions and laws he still

52. L. C. H. Chen, "Knowledge of Beauty in Plato's *Symposium*," *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 33, No. 1 (1983): 66-74.

grasps only their συγγένεια (210c3-5) and not the γένος; being συγγενές is not the same as being one and the same genus.⁵³

Thus, with regard to "beautiful institutions and laws," the lover "sees that the beauty of them is of one family (*syggenes*), but he does not grasp the genus itself."⁵⁴ The progress of love Chen sees as one of a "horizontal expansion," which advances from recognition of the kinship of beautiful bodies, to recognition of the kinship of beautiful souls, and, finally, to recognition of the kinship of beautiful sciences and institutions; but he rejects the idea that what is happening is a process of "abstraction and generalization" like the one which takes place in "empirical logic." There something "common" is discovered: "Generalization in empirical logic produces a concept." The progress of love, on the other hand, proceeds by recognition of the kinship of beautiful individuals: "for Plato the apprehending is of an Idea – in the *Symposium*, the Idea of beauty, a being, an entity, not a concept"⁵⁵ – just as for Spinoza it is not a "being of reason" or "mode of thinking," not an abstraction or generalization, which arouses love, but a really existing singular thing.⁵⁶

If Chen is right, the ascent of love in the speech of Diotima is to be seen as a single upward movement that "has only one step and no more, i.e. the step from beautiful instances to the Idea of beauty." In other words, "there is no ascent until the final step in the whole movement is taken. All the other steps in the process are steps of horizontal expansion preparing for the ascent."⁵⁷ Spinoza's view of our progress through the stages of knowledge and love agrees with this interpretation; for it is only in the last step that a transformation of affect occurs, although advancement from *imaginatio* and *opinio* to *ratio* represents a "horizontal expansion" from a confused and fragmentary perception of particular instances of beauty based on random circumstances of time and place and associated ideas of the bodily affections to which they give rise to understanding of kindred instances as mediated by their common properties – though not themselves as instances of some generic property beauty. In Spinoza's account, too, "there are only two tiers, the level of Ideas and the level of particulars,"⁵⁸ and no "generic hierarchy," no ascent by means of abstraction and generalisation, from species to

53. *Ibid.*, 67.

54. *Ibid.*, 67f.

55. *Ibid.*, 69.

56. Cf. above 14 f. and n. 29.

57. Chen 70.

58. *Ibid.*.

genus. There are no "unities" at the different "levels" of beauty, no identity of the beautiful in the many beautiful instances, and no species or kinds.⁵⁹ Chen considers the possibility, suggested to him by an "anonymous scholar" of an ascent in *value*, and points to evidence in the text which supports this point of view, for example, where it is "explicitly stated...that beautiful souls are *timioteron* than beautiful bodies," and beautiful bodies are characterised as "as *smikron ti* in comparison with beautiful souls (and with beautiful institutions and laws, too." Chen concludes, that "the same progress from beautiful bodies to beautiful souls, or to beautiful institutions" is "from the ontic viewpoint...a horizontal expansion and from the viewpoint of value...an ascent." Nevertheless, he finds that the "value-relation" doesn't apply for the ascent from beautiful souls to beautiful laws and institutions, nor from these to beautiful sciences, rather "The text knows no value-relation either between the first two groups or between the second two groups." Here, there is no motivation for the "ascent" – in the sense of abandonment of one group of beautiful instances for the other.

In the pinnacle of his experience of beauty, the lover "cognitively touches the beautiful itself, gains direct intellectual contact with it or a vision of it." The question is: "what is the content of his vision, or what does he apprehend of the beautiful itself?" Chen identifies "four positive predications" which correspond to a preceding series of "negations predicated of beauty:" "itself by itself, with itself, uniform, and always being." Beauty shares these predications with the other ideas, and it is not possible to distinguish the nature of beauty on the basis of them. *To define beauty*, however, "is not the purpose of the *Symposium*," and indeed something like a "common nature" of beauty eludes us. It is only "the peculiar nature of beauty as a moral and/or aesthetic value" as it reveals itself to us only in individual, kindred instances that are the object of the lover's love.⁶⁰

Chen's characterisation helps to illuminate the relationship of knowledge and love in Plato and Spinoza. In the relationship of desire for union with and enjoyment of the highest object of love the deep similarities of Plato's and Spinoza's positions emerge. The similarities in the language by which they describe the final stages of the ascent of knowledge provide hereby the key to a resolution of the difficulty posed by the apparent absence of a term for beauty in Spinoza. Both Spinoza and Plato are very clear on the priority of "intuitive" knowledge (*scientia intuitiva*, *noesis*)

59. Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 23.

60. *Ibid.*, 71.

with respect to discursive knowledge (*ratio, dianoia*). Spinoza emphasizes "how much more powerful" the former is than the latter. He even takes his own exposition in Part I of the *Ethics* to task in this respect, for although there he showed "generally... that all things (and consequently the human Mind also) depend on God both for their essence and their existence, nevertheless, that demonstration, though legitimate and put beyond all chance of doubt, still does not affect our Mind as much as when this is inferred from the very essence of any singular thing which we say depends on God" (5P37; my italics). In the *Symposium*, too, as Chen notes, "two distinct cognitions" are contrasted: "first the vision of the beautiful itself, and then a sort of *dianoia* expressed as a general description of it."⁶¹ Although, as in the Line, the two are interdependent, the first, the noetic vision of beauty takes priority as the final stage by which to reach the goal and pinnacle of the ascent.

At first, *beauty* appears to be absent from Spinoza's treatment of love, and we might be inclined to view the ascent to the Love of God along the lines of the kind of hierarchical ascent through a process of abstraction and generalization which Chen rejects with regard to the ascent of Love in the *Symposium*. In Spinoza, however, the highest form of knowledge, the *scientia intuitiva*, rests in "the very Love of God by which God loves himself, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he can be explained by the human Mind's essence, considered under a species of eternity..." (5P36). This Love is related to the Mind's actions, and is itself "an action by which the mind contemplates itself, with the accompanying idea of God as its cause." By this Love, the Mind "is part of the infinite love by which God loves himself." This "constant and eternal Love of God," Spinoza identifies with what is called *Glory* (*heerlijkheit, gloria*) in Sacred Scripture. For "whether related to God or to the Mind, it can rightly be called satisfaction of mind, which is really not distinguished from Glory." He compares this with two definitions from the catalogue of the affects at the end of part III of the *Ethics*: Def. XXV: "Self-esteem," as "a Joy born of the fact that a man considers himself and his own power of acting," and Def. XXX, "Love of esteem," understood as "a Joy accompanied by the idea of some action of ours which we imagine that others praise." These affects in humans form an analogy to the Love of God, which may be described metaphorically as "Joy... accompanied

61. *Ibid.* The *Phaedo*, on the other hand, in describing the "pursuit of the knowledge of Ideas," doesn't distinguish *logisesthai* and *dianoesthai* as forms of discursive thought from *theasthai* and *kathoran*, an intuitive grasp.

by the idea of himself... And similarly as it is related to the Mind."

In Spinoza, as in Plato, the highest form of knowledge, its "greatest striving" or *love* and its "greatest virtue," by which we attain understanding, is not knowledge based on categorical statements, or the common properties of things and their behavior. This discursive form of knowledge helps us "to distinguish the true from the false" and thus to overcome false associations which occur among our emotions and ideas. The highest form of knowledge, *scientia intuitiva*, however, is based on a form of higher-level perception and reasoning by analogy,⁶² proceeding "from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things" (5P24), enabling us to perceive things "under a species of eternity" (5P28), i.e. as they are "contained in God... and follow from the necessity of the divine nature" (5P29, and S; 2P44 and C2). From *scientia intuitiva* or the knowledge of things as they are contained in God and follow from him arises the greatest possible Joy and satisfaction of Mind (5P32). This Joy corresponds to our passage from passion or subjugation to the affects to action or their clear understanding, in other words, from a lesser to a greater perfection of the Mind, "accompanied by the idea of oneself" and "by the idea of God, as its cause." This transformation gives rise to what Spinoza calls the "*intellectual Love of God*" (*Amor Dei Intellectualis*, 5P32) a love which has no beginning and no end. By *scientia intuitiva*, the adequate knowledge of things as they proceed from the necessity of God's nature, we participate in the "infinite intellectual Love" with which God loves himself (5P35, 36). This Love is "an action by which the Mind contemplates itself" accompanied by the idea of God as its cause, and is therefore "an action by which God, insofar as he can be explained through the human Mind, contemplates himself," accompanied by the idea of himself as cause. It is thus that Spinoza can affirm "that insofar as God loves himself, he loves men, and... that God's love of men and the Mind's intellectual Love of God are one and the same" (5P35C). The freedom which this clear understanding brings frees us from fear and sadness, for he who continually contemplates nature, the totality of being and time, does not fear death.⁶³

Through *scientia intuitiva* is achieved hope or *love* of immortality and the perfection of human nature. For one "who understands himself and his affects clearly and distinctly rejoices... and this Joy is

62. Cf. Zovko, "The Way Up and the Way Back," 334f. and n. 49-52.

63. "A free man," Spinoza says, "thinks of nothing less than of death, and his wisdom is a meditation on life, not on death" (*Ethics* IV, 67).

accompanied by the idea of God" (5P15). In God there is, moreover, an idea "not only of the existence of this or that human Body, but also of its essence...which therefore must be conceived through the very essence of God... by a certain eternal necessity" (5P22). And just as there is necessarily in God an idea of the essence of this particular human body, there is also an idea of the essence of the particular human mind whose object is this body (5P23). Although we "do not attribute to the human Mind any duration that can be defined by time, except... while the Body endures," yet there is an "idea, which expresses the essence of the body under a species of eternity." The idea which constitutes the essence of this mind and the singular body to which it pertains must necessarily be eternal, for every single unique individual "exists by the highest right of nature" (4P37S2), and both the mind and the body of every individual are conceived "with a certain eternal necessity, through God's essence." Although we cannot "recollect that we existed before the Body," "still, we feel and know by experience that we are eternal," "we feel that our mind, insofar as it involves the essence of the body under a species of eternity, is eternal, and that this existence it has cannot be defined by time or explained through duration" (5P23).⁶⁴

That which affects the mind causing it to love God and its own immortality by uniting itself with the object of its knowledge is ultimately, then, not the logical consequences of the common properties of things as based on their derivation from a rule, but *the beauty of the proportion* as recognized in direct intuition. It is the beauty of the mathematical proportion which converts us, not the wearisome proof: "For there is more power in us from the recognition of the proportion itself than from the knowledge of the rule of proportion" (ST II, 9; CW I, 113). Although, then, the term "beauty" is not used explicitly in this context by Spinoza, the analogous condition for the object of knowledge and love being able to inspire us to *a greater love* is given by the character of the object itself: "if the object is glorious and good, then the soul will necessarily be unified with it," for "it is knowledge that causes love."

64. Cf. "Involved in Humankind," 294.

Appendices

I) Spinoza distinguishes, accordingly, between strivings or desires (i.e. striving together with consciousness of striving or appetite) which "follow from the necessity of our nature in such a way that they can be understood" through our nature alone "as through their proximate cause," and strivings which follow from the necessity of our nature "insofar as we are a part of nature, which cannot be conceived adequately through itself without other individuals" (4App.I). The former are "related to the Mind insofar as it is conceived to consist of adequate ideas." The latter "are not related to the Mind except insofar as it conceives things inadequately" and are "defined not by human power, but by the power of things that are outside us." The former are therefore "rightly called actions," the latter "passions," the former "indicate our power," the latter "our lack of power and mutilated knowledge" (4AppII). Good and evil relate to each of these levels in a specific way. Good is, on the one hand "whatever there is in nature that we judge... to be useful for preserving our being and enjoying a rational life," on the other, in reference to our specific nature, that which aids us "to enjoy the life of the Mind" as defined by understanding. Evil is equated, on the one hand, with "whatever there is in nature that we judge to be...able to prevent us from being able to exist," on the other, with whatever may prevent a human being "from being able to perfect his reason and enjoy the rational life" (4App.V, VIII). Of these two: the power to persevere in one's being and the power to perfect our intellect or reason and to achieve understanding, *understanding* ultimately takes priority, leading to true fulfillment, the enjoyment of the life of the Mind. Cf. "Naturalism & Intellectualism," 17.

II) Adequacy" is in the *Ethics* the primary criterium of truth, and refers to the intrinsic validity or self-consistency of ideas. An idea is "adequate" "which ... considered in itself without relation to an object, has all the properties or intrinsic denominations of a true idea." The term "intrinsic" is used "to exclude what is extrinsic," i.e. correspondence or "agreement of the idea with its object," which for Spinoza is only a secondary criterium of truth (*Ethics* 2Def4). In a letter to Tschirnhaus, Spinoza differentiates "true" from "adequate" as follows: "the word 'true' refers only to the agreement of the idea with that of which it is the idea, while the word 'adequate' refers to the nature of the idea itself; so that there is really no difference between a true and an adequate idea except this extrinsic relation." Cf. *Epistola* 60, cited by Wolfson II, 101. As Wolfson explains, "internal criteria" of truth, including the Cartesian criteria of clearness and distinctness, "are used by Spinoza as something independent of correspondence," to avoid the impression that a true idea "must be a copy of something which actually happens to exist outside the mind." "On the contrary, the idea "must agree with the reality of its ideate," but "the reality with which a true idea must agree is not necessarily an external object; it may be its ideal nature conceived by the mind as something necessary in itself, or as something which follows by necessity from that which is conceived as necessary by itself, or as something which follows necessarily from its own nature and definition" (*Ibid.*, 104).

III) "Suppose there are three numbers, and the problem is to find a fourth which is to the third as the second is to the first. Merchants do not hesitate to multiply the second by the third, and divide the product by the first; because they have not yet forgotten

what they heard from their teacher without any demonstration, or because they have often found this in the simplest numbers, or from the force of the Demonstration of P[7] in book VII of Euclid, viz. from the common property of proportionals.

But in the simplest numbers none of this is necessary. Given the numbers 1, 2, and 3, *no one fails to see* that the fourth proportional number is 6 – and we see this much more clearly because we infer the fourth number from the ratio which, in one glance, we see the first number to have to the second” (2P40S2, my italics).

In this version, the merchant who relies on knowledge of the first type uses a kind of trial and error “with simple numbers” representable by things of sense (as per *imaginatio, eikasia*), while in the merchant in the second example applies rote learning without genuine understanding of the rule “received from a master” (*opinio, pistis*). If the merchant arrives at the solution on the basis of Euclid’s demonstration of the general property of proportionals, then his knowledge is obtained by the second (third) type of knowledge (*ratio, dianoia*) *ex eo, quod notiones communes rerumque proprietatum ideas adequatas habemus*. The highest form of knowledge, however, is something like the higher form of perception or intuition designated by the term *noesis* in Plato’s Line. Given a ratio of simple numbers, one to two, and a third number: three, “everyone can see that the fourth proportional is six.” This intuitive grasp of the proportion provides us with a much clearer grasp of the solution than the other three approaches, “because we *infer* the fourth number from the ratio” which we “see the first number to have to the second.” This type of thought forms the necessary complement and presupposition of discursive thought, enabling us to *see the whole* and to formulate hypotheses and explanatory models capable of describing complex phenomena, providing the basis for their understanding and appreciation and also for an effective approach to the mastering of complex tasks and problem-solving.

IV) A prominent feature of the treatment of love in works of the Italian Renaissance, including Marsilio Ficino’s commentary on Plato’s *Symposium* (1474-75), and Judah Abravanel’s (Leone Ebreo’s) *Dialoghi d’amore*, for whom Plato’s and Plotinus’ theory of beauty provided the “historical and substantial presupposition.” Cf. W. Beierwaltes, “Marsilio Ficinos Theorie des Schönen im Kontext des Platonismus,” in *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Jahrgang 1980, Abh. 11: 1-56; 9. The *Dialoghi d’amore* (1501-02, published 1535) were present in Spinoza’s library in Spanish translation, the *Dialogos d’amor*, at the time of his death. Though Wolfson plays down the importance of Abravanel for Spinoza’s philosophical development, the obvious parallels make it plausible that Spinoza “derived from it his doctrine of the Intellectual Love of God” (C. Roth, “Introduction” to L. Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love [Dialoghi d’Amore]*, [London: Soncino Press 1937], xv). The pairing, in the first dialogue, of Love of God and knowledge of God, in which true happiness consists, parallels Spinoza’s conjoinment of *scientia intuitiva* and *Amor Dei intellectualis* in *Ethics* V. Abravanel, like Plato, distinguishes as objects of love and desire the useful, the pleasant and the good. With regard to humans’ true ends: love and desire of the good, “whence spring virtue and wisdom,” no limit is enjoined on us, as is the case with respect to objects of pleasure and usefulness. The universality of love, i.e. the fact that it is common to all things animate and inanimate, as well as its differentiation, in the second dialogue, into three kinds: natural (in inanimate things), sensitive (in animals) and voluntary and rational (in human beings) is perfectly in accord with Spinoza’s concept of *conatus* and its articulation according to the orders of nature and the intellect. Spinoza departs from Ebreo in his rejection of

anthropomorphizing references to God's will or intellect, or to his love toward the *modi*.

V) Spinoza's position in the *Ethics* appears to contradict this view of reason, when he says that "an affect that arises from reason" and which "is necessarily related to the common properties of things," since we "always regard [such properties] as present" is "more powerful than those related to singular things which we regard as absent (5P7), whereby "things we understand clearly and distinctly are either common properties of things or deduced from them" (5p12D, cf. 2P40 S2). Nevertheless a man "does not know himself except through affections of his Body and their ideas" (3P53; cf. 2P19 and P23), and since "no affect can be restrained by the true knowledge of good and evil insofar as it is true, but only insofar as it is considered as an affect" (5P14), it is *through the knowledge of God considered as an affect* that we are liberated from bondage to affects or emotions which are passions, i.e. by which we are made to suffer instead of to act. Desires which arise from affects "by which we are torn," whose "force and growth" are "defined by the power of external causes," "can be more violent" than desire which arises from the second kind of knowledge (4P16). "Love toward God" alone is able to engage the mind in a manner that liberates it completely from bondage to affects which arise from external causes. This is possible precisely because "this Love is joined to all the affections of the Body" (5P16) through a knowledge by which the "Mind knows itself and the Body under a species of eternity," by which knowledge "it necessarily has knowledge of God and knows that it is in God and is conceived through God" (5P30). From this kind of knowledge arises "the greatest satisfaction of Mind there can be...Joy... accompanied by the idea of oneself, and also accompanied by the idea of God as a cause" (5P32), in other words "Love of God, not insofar as we imagine him as present, but insofar as we understand him to be eternal." This is what Spinoza calls "intellectual Love of God," a love by which we partake of the same "infinite intellectual love" with which God loves himself (5P35, cf. 5P36).

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