Introduction

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Scholarly and public interest in Spinoza's philosophy has been consistently high for the past two decades on both sides of the Atlantic. Arguably, one of the reasons for this recent ascendancy is the rehabilitation of metaphysics as a legitimate and central discipline in Anglo-American philosophy. Indeed, Spinoza is currently reclaiming his rightful place as the major metaphysician of the modern period, while his political, ethical, and theological views inspire and inform a variety of contemporary schools and disciplines. Parallel with this emergence of contemporary Spinozism in philosophical discourse is the intensification of scholarly attempts to uncover the meaning of Spinoza's texts. As Spinoza exegesis has broken new ground, scholars have come to realize that we currently do not – as we do with most major philosophers of the modern period – possess a good understanding of significant parts of Spinoza's core philosophy (consider how many crucial pieces of Spinozistic terminology, such as "expresses," "involves [*involvit*]," "being [*esse*]," and "perfection," remain to be properly elucidated).

The current volume brings together the work of an international group of capable scholars (both established and up-and-coming) with the aim of gaining further traction on the challenging system of philosophy that Spinoza sets out in his masterpiece, the *Ethics*. Loyal to the spirit of other volumes in Cambridge's Critical Guides series, the collection does not seek to provide an introduction to all aspects of this work. Instead, we hope to offer accessible, cutting-edge research that reflects, challenges, and promotes the most recent scholarly advances in the field of Spinoza studies.

Don Garrett's contribution to the current volume addresses the crucial yet delicate question of Spinoza's attitude toward "Leibniz's Law." Leibniz's Law states that if x is identical to y, then if x has a property F, y also has property F. Spinoza holds that the human mind is "one and the same thing" as the human body, that the human

mind thinks, and that the human body does not think. Michael Della Rocca has maintained that Spinoza can accept these three claims without rejecting Leibniz's Law because thought and extension are "intensional properties." Arguing correctly that there are no such things as intensional properties, Colin Marshall has argued that Spinoza can retain Leibniz's Law because "being one and the same as" does not express identity. Garrett argues, against Marshall, that "being one and the same as" does express the relation of identity, and that, surprisingly, Spinoza's distinctive conceptions of *truth* and *attributes* provide him with a plausible way to reject Leibniz's Law.

The Principle of the Transitivity of Identity states that if x is identical to y, and y is identical to z, then x is identical to z. Yet Spinoza holds that:

(i) Thought = Thinking Substance
(ii) Thinking Substance = God
(iii) Extension = Extended Substance
(iv) Extended Substance = God

From repeated applications of Transitivity of Identity, it follows from these propositions that Thought = Extension, a proposition that Spinoza nevertheless denies. Garrett argues that Spinoza's distinctive conceptions of *truth* and *attributes* also provide him with a surprisingly plausible way to reject the Transitivity of Identity.

Warren Zev Harvey contends that Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, Part III, chapter 13, had a profound influence on Spinoza's *Ethics*, Part I, Appendix. Both texts, he claims, are critical of teleology and both are zealously anti-anthropocentric. It might be said that the latter text restates the former, smooths over its ambiguities, and mercilessly pushes everything to its supposed logical conclusion. If the former text is enigmatic and equivocal, the latter is brash and unequivocal.

Both Maimonides and Spinoza denied the notion that the universe has a final end outside itself, and both maintained that it was owing to the prejudice of anthropocentrism that this notion had ever gained currency. Both philosophers argue against the universe's having a final end on the twofold ground that it makes no sense to speak about a perfect God's needing to work either through a *means* or for an *end*. Maimonides cites Proverbs 16:4 as a proof-text against anthropocentrism: "God has made everything for *its own* sake" or "for *His own* sake," but not for the sake of human beings. Spinoza refers to theologians and metaphysicians who "confess that God has made everything for His own sake, not for that of created beings." Both philosophers attack anthropocentrism as an error of

the imagination, and both hold that this error is at the bottom of humanity's futile and frustrating search for teleological explanations of the universe. These resemblances between Maimonides and Spinoza are particularly striking in light of the fact that Maimonides' strong anti-anthropocentric and anti-teleological views had no parallel in the medieval philosophical literature, and were not shared by Descartes.

John Morrison suggests a new solution to two puzzles involving the attribute of thought. The first puzzle concerns how the mind and the idea of the mind can be identical, even though the mind thinks about bodies, whereas the idea of the mind thinks about ideas. The second puzzle involves the mind and the idea of a thing that belongs to an unknown attribute, particularly regarding how they can be identical even though the mind thinks about bodies, whereas the idea thinks about modes of the unknown attribute. Morrison suggests that Spinoza would respond to both puzzles by giving up the Indiscernibility of Identicals. In particular, Morrison suggests that Spinoza links identity to essence, rather than to indiscernibility, so that identical ideas need only share the same essence, and needn't be indiscernible in all other respects. For example, they needn't represent the same modes.

According to **Martin Lin**, Spinoza belongs to that generation of post-Cartesian philosophers who sought to find an account of the relationship between mind and body that avoids what they saw as insuperable problems associated with Descartes's interactionism. Descartes famously held that mind and body are two distinct kinds of substance with nothing in common. And yet the mind and body causally interact. If you stab me in the arm, claims Lin, then your (physical) stabbing causes my (mental) pain. And if I retaliate, then my (mental) anger causes me to (physically) strike you in turn. This is a highly intuitive picture of mind–body interaction, but if one asserts, as Descartes does, that the mind and body are utterly dissimilar, then how is it possible for them to causally interact in this way? We might wonder whether it need be a genuine requirement that causes and effects are similar in some way, but Descartes's early modern heirs did not. Instead, they developed alternative accounts of apparent mind–body interaction, such as Malebranche's occasionalism, Leibniz's pre-established harmony, and Spinoza's parallelism, in which mind and body are correlated without interacting. In his chapter Lin develops a new interpretation of Spinoza's parallelism. On his interpretation, Spinoza's claim that the mind and the body are one and the same thing is literally true: they are numerically identical. There are a number of objections to such a numerical identity

interpretation, which he addresses by offering a new interpretation of the attributes in Spinoza, according to which they are non-descriptive guises or modes of presentation that allow the essence of substance to be intellectually grasped. On Lin's interpretation, each attribute tells the whole story of the world. The story each attribute tells is complete, that is, it leaves nothing out, and it is entirely accurate. Thus, mind and body are two ways of talking about one and the same thing. These ways differ not in *what* is said, but *how* it is said.

After receiving a draft of the *Ethics*, Tschirnhaus exhorted Spinoza to produce a "General Treatise on Physics," noting that he had already "made great advances" in the project with "the lemmata attached to the second part of your *Ethics*, which provide a ready solution to many problems in physics." Ever since Tschirnhaus's suggestion, Spinoza's readers have regarded those lemmata, which along with several definitions and axioms comprise what is known as the "physical interlude" or "physical digression" of the *Ethics*, to constitute Spinoza's attempt to provide the foundations of a rudimentary physics. In the first part of her chapter, **Alison Peterman** discusses the principles of physics suggested by the interlude against the background of Spinoza's treatment of Cartesian physics in the *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy* as well as of the most important physical systems of Spinoza's contemporaries like Huygens, Hobbes, and Leibniz. According to Peterman, we may also wonder to what extent the interlude is specifically physical. Spinoza responds to Tschirnhaus that he has not yet put his physics in due order, which suggests that he does not count the interlude as providing the foundations of a physical theory. In the second part of the chapter, Peterman argues that this is because Spinoza is not concerned there to articulate a physics as much he is to provide an attribute-neutral metaphysical account of individuation and identity. This is evident, Peterman argues, (1) from the fact that Spinoza does not define the central concepts of physics – extension and motion – in the interlude; (2) by the structure of the proofs of the lemmas, which do not rely on those definitions; and (3) from Spinoza's motivation for including the interlude in the second part of the *Ethics*. So while the interlude does have implications for physics, these arise solely by virtue of the attribute-neutral metaphysical principles that Spinoza articulates there, rather than from any distinctively physical considerations. For the interlude to generate a physics, as Spinoza was aware, it would have to be combined with a characterization of extension and motion.

In the Fourth Meditation Descartes relies on God's benevolence to prove that if we use the will properly and assent only to such clear and

distinct ideas that command our assent, we can be sure to avoid error, since otherwise God – who created us with this incorrigible propensity toward false belief – would be a deceiver. Unlike Descartes, Spinoza has no reason to assume that God or nature cannot deceive us systematically. In his chapter, **Yitzhak Y. Melamed** explains Spinoza's elegant analysis of the necessary causes of our (false) belief in free will. Melamed shows that for Spinoza we are born and spend our lives in an epistemic condition which elicits the belief in free will, and that this false belief is barely corrigible. In spite of the fact that we may rightly conclude that freedom of the will is just an illusion, we cannot avoid acting and behaving in accordance with this belief. The essential conditions of human action in the world are such that they constantly enforce on us the erroneous belief in free will.

No complete account of Spinoza's views on human behavior and volition can leave out an analysis of his famous *conatus* doctrine, namely, that "each thing, so far as it is in itself, strives to persevere in its being." According to **John Carriero**, Spinoza's introduction of his theory of *conatus* at the beginning of Part III of the *Ethics* has puzzled scholars in recent years. Commentators (e.g., Bennett, Della Rocca, and Don Garrett) have found Spinoza's argument for the *conatus* doctrine riddled with fallacies and the theory itself open to obvious counterexamples (e.g., burning candles and suicide). Some (e.g., Garrett) have exercised considerable ingenuity in attempting to show that the fallacies are only apparent. Carriero argues, however, that much of the original worry is misplaced. By embedding Spinoza's theory in the context of his plenum theory, we can see the *conatus* theory as a large part of his attempt to articulate what counts as a finite real (as opposed to mentally constructed) being in the physical universe. (An important idea here is that a real being must be naturally unified both synchronically and diachronically.) Against this background, Spinoza's *conatus* argument flows reasonably smoothly and his claims are not subject to easy counterexamples, which is not to deny that important and interesting substantive issues remain. One issue that emerges is that Spinoza's conception of a finite real thing or finite mode has (like Leibniz's later conception of a corporeal substance) a quasi-biological cast that our modern, post-Kantian notion of an object lacks. Carriero carefully positions Spinoza's thesis that things tend to persevere in their being vis-à-vis the traditional thesis that all things seek the end or good of being, in order to better understand the novelty of Spinoza's theory of *conatus*: while Spinoza agrees with the tradition that things tilt toward their being, his analysis of this tendency, which does not ground this tendency in

a thing's being an "end" or a "good" for it, departs significantly from the analysis given by the Aristotelian tradition.

Cognition of the third kind, or *scientia intuitiva*, is supposed to secure *beatitudo*, or virtue itself (E5p42). But what is *scientia intuitiva*, and how is it different from (and superior to) reason? In her chapter, **Kristin Primus** suggests a new answer to this old and vexing question. On the view she develops, Spinoza's *scientia intuitiva* resembles Descartes's *scientia* more than has been appreciated. Although Spinoza's God is not Descartes's benevolent, transcendent God, Spinoza agrees with Descartes that the highest certainty requires that a cognizer correctly conceive of God and her relation to God; it is only with cognition of the third kind that a cognizer can be certain that her clear and distinct representations of extramental things agree with formally real, extramental *ideata*, and so are true. Importantly, cognition of the third kind is not simply a matter of correct representation: Primus explains that in order to avoid circularity, a cognizer must *intuit* the correct representation of God and God's relation to things.

Spinoza's understanding of consciousness has been a contentious issue in recent scholarship. In her chapter, **Lia Levy** assesses the sense of the odd expression that occurs in the explanation of the definition of desire at the end of Part III of the *Ethics*: "*causa conscientiae*," the "cause of consciousness." Levy shows that the sense and limits of the conception of consciousness that can be inferred from the analysis of this definition and its explanation can shed new light on the reasons why Spinoza rejects the Cartesian thesis on the right order of philosophizing: self-consciousness shall not be the point of departure of philosophy, not because it should be dependent on knowledge of the external world, but because it is a derivative concept in the sense that the qualification of thinking things as conscious beings presupposes certain ontological conditions that are not met by all beings: finitude and duration. To establish this, Levy claims that the aim of the text where the expression arises is to elucidate the conditions under which the concept of consciousness applies, not to express differently the same thesis of E2p23 and E3p9sc. Spinoza's point there is not that the human mind – or the human body – must be determined by an external cause in order to be conscious of itself, but that it has to be determined by any affection, regardless of its origin. Therefore, the inside-outside approach must be replaced by consideration of the duplication of the determination. This twofold structure is the conceptual element that must be added to the definition of "appetite" in order to account for the cause of consciousness, and its

analysis will show that for Spinoza only finite modes of thought that exist in duration can be conceived as conscious beings.

In *Ethics* Part III, Spinoza introduces a series of propositions that detail various workings of the mind, including memory and a set of principles of affective association in the imagination whereby the mind is affected by a thing that it imagines in a way similar to that in which it is affected by another, resembling thing (E3p16). Regardless of whether a thing is present, past, or future, the mind is affected by whatever it imagines in the same way (E3p18). Moreover, the mind is affected by things in a way directly proportional to the causal relations in which they are imagined to stand to things that affect us positively or negatively (E3pp19–23). As has been widely noted, these principles of association shape the account of human interaction that follows in *Ethics* Part IV. But it has also been noted that these principles of affective association prefigure Hume's principles of association, which for the latter thinker also guide the imagination. As for Hume, for Spinoza these associative principles elaborate his account of the human mind and form the basis for his account of human understanding. In her chapter, **Lisa Shapiro** attempts to explicate not only how precisely these principles follow from Spinoza's earlier claims about the imagination – the propositions draw on central propositions in *Ethics* Part II (E2pp16–18) where Spinoza defines imagination as that which presents bodies *as* being present to us – but also how they provide the basis for Spinoza's account of reasoning as undertaken by imperfect, finite human beings. Elaborating this account of human reasoning will shed light on the important role of the regulation of the affects for knowledge (of both the second and third kinds) for Spinoza.

According to **Pina Totaro**, the affects or passions have always been considered the expression of a very close union, *intima coniunctio*, of soul and body. The body, in particular, was considered the "mirror" or "window" of the soul, that is, the element in which the contact between the "external" and "internal" is reflected in a complex play of relationships. The passions were traditionally the subject of medicine. In fact, medicine, studying outward signs, revealed what was hidden in the innermost part of the soul. What was taken to be the value and significance of these signs altered profoundly with changes in theoretical and philosophical-scientific horizons. The physiology of Descartes broke the traditional model of the link between body and soul such that the conception of the passions became destined to undergo profound changes. The passions were conceived in a new light as the symptoms of a condition of a complex nature that had its origins in the psychic sphere of the individual and of his

cognitive system. The physical world of the humors of traditional medicine and of the correspondences established by physiognomy were extricated from the dynamism of emotional life, from the universe of mental and social affections.

Spinoza subtracts the passions from the traditional view of *perturbationes* or *aberrationes*: they are no longer an "evil to be eradicated" and a "beast to tame" or a cosmic force infused into the world. In opposition to this traditional approach he pursues a new conception of the passions as part of a psychophysiological theory established independently of theological or moral premises. Spinoza undermines the Cartesian conception of the passions as sensations that depend on "*ab arcta unione mentis cum corpore*." With the metaphysical conception of "*substantia*" Spinoza provides a different assessment of the passions and offers a new definition of the affections and of the whole human emotional universe. This new dimension of emotional life is couched in a peculiar terminology for which an epistemological point of view is fundamental. The concepts of the three different kinds of knowledge, imagination, reason, and intellect, all require and justify the use of distinct vocabulary. Totaro adduces specific examples to demonstrate that in Spinoza the names of affects change according to the different kinds of knowledge they can be seen to be connected with.

According to **Colin Marshall**, many of Spinoza's readers have taken him to be an anti-realist about morality. This reading is largely inspired by the way Spinoza revises some moral notions and rejects others. In his chapter, Marshall argues that Spinoza was a moral realist. Part of his aim in defending this view is to show that contemporary metaethicists and Spinoza scholars stand to benefit from closer attention to one another. Marshall begins by distinguishing three ways in which the moral realism/anti-realism distinction has been defined: via paradigm figures, via the literal truth of moral claims, and via certain defining features such as non-relativity and mind-independence. Marshall then surveys several elements of the *Ethics* that have inspired anti-realist readings. These anti-realist elements, Marshall argues, are outweighed by realist elements, which reveal a contrast between Spinoza and Kant on reason, the connection Spinoza sees between virtue and reality, and the deep similarities between Spinoza's God and Plato's Form of the Good. Both Spinoza's and Plato's moral realism, Marshall claims, are compatible with their rejection and revision of much of commonsense morality.

In keeping with his attitude toward many moral or otherwise evaluative predicates, Spinoza is suspicious of attributing perfection or imperfection

to the natural world: "men are accustomed to call natural things perfect or imperfect more from prejudice than from true knowledge of those things" (E4pref). He claims that these properties, like good and evil, are merely "modes of [our] thinking" and that ascriptions of perfection or imperfection to things reveal more about the person who ascribes these terms to those things than about the things themselves. And yet, throughout his early works and in the earlier parts of the *Ethics* itself, Spinoza appeals to the perfection of God or nature in order to defend some of his most controversial metaphysical views. These appeals presuppose that God's perfection is founded on more than merely a human comparative judgment; such perfection is a mind-independent property of the world, we might say. So is perfection a mind-independent property or not, for Spinoza?

It is tempting to think that Spinoza's identification of *reality* and *perfection* (E2d6; E4pref) is his novel and preferred way of removing this tension. Perhaps by reducing mind-independent perfection to another, more Spinoza-friendly mind-independent notion, *reality*, Spinoza can invoke the traditional language of divine perfection without falling prey to his later critiques of perfect-being theology. But the same criticisms he levels against ascriptions of *perfection* are also made against ascriptions of *reality* in the *Ethics*, and so it is not clear how much progress is made by this identification. (Furthermore, identity is not reduction, and the tight association of perfection and reality is found throughout Scholastic philosophy.) **Samuel Newlands** argues instead that Spinoza's solution lies in developing a non-axiological, purely metaphysical account of perfection, and that it is *this* notion of perfection that does the heavy lifting in his earlier arguments. In his chapter, Newlands explores the contours of this purely metaphysical account of perfection, focusing especially in his early works and letters where it is most explicitly developed. Newlands shows how this account of perfection then plays a role in his more familiar arguments about God's nature and existence in the *Ethics* and how it escapes his later critique of alternative, axiological notions of perfections in Part IV of the *Ethics*. He concludes by showing how Spinoza's account of perfection, which is broadly similar to an early account developed by Leibniz, poses an underappreciated challenge for substance pluralists like Leibniz who want to maintain that God is the *ens perfectissimum*, despite the existence of distinct finite substances. In this way, we can see both that Spinoza has an interesting account of metaphysical perfection and that he can invoke it consistently to draw significant philosophical conclusions about the nature of the world.

Turning from more squarely metaphysical and moral concerns to the social and political spheres, it is interesting to note that Spinoza – systematic thinker though he was – overtly has little to say about economics, as **Beth Lord** points out. In the Appendix to *Ethics* Part IV, he mentions that money is "a convenient instrument" for men to acquire the goods, services, and assistance that they must get from others, and as such, "its image usually occupies the mind of the multitude more than anything else" (E4app. xxviii). In the next section he notes that the desire for money is a vice only in those who seek it for its own sake, whereas those who know its "true use" and seek only the money they need "live contentedly with little" (E4app. xxix). With this broadly Aristotelian formulation Spinoza appears to close the discussion. Yet this cannot be all there is to be said on the matter of economics. If money mediates most instances of mutual aid, and if its image occupies most human minds more than anything else and accompanies the majority of our desires, then money plays a role in virtually every human interaction. Certainly money is foremost in the minds and interrelations of the less-rational multitude, but it also mediates the rational minority's necessary interrelations with those they have to work with and rely on. Society, as a group of individuals of the same kind helping each other to become more powerful, rational, and virtuous, cannot be formed without economic relations of work, exchange, and debt. This means that economic interactions are a key part of the ethical and political domains that Spinoza presents in *Ethics* Part IV. Lord suggests that many propositions of this part of the *Ethics* can be read in this light. The question of how the "free man" relates to others – in particular, less rational others – is bound up with his need to interact with them economically. The explication of the benefits of the state, and the question of what kind of state we should prefer, are bound up with determining the rules that should govern human interactions – including, in particular, economic interactions that mediate mutual aid. For Spinoza, ethics and politics revolve around our desire for self-preservation and our need to seek help from one another, neither of which can be fulfilled without economic exchange of some kind. Lord's chapter argues that the key ethical question "how should we relate to each other?" and many of Spinoza's statements about the behaviors of the "free man" with respect to his interactions with others and his citizenship in a state, can and should be conceived in terms of economic relations. This thesis promises to present a novel interpretation of *Ethics* Part IV while also illuminating core themes of Spinoza's ethics and politics from this portion of the text.