

ABRAHAM MOUNITZ

Singular and Plural in Spinoza's Philosophy

This article provides two aspects of Spinoza's philosophy. A careful reading of the statements dealing with the aspiration of the individual to bestow upon the many the height of happiness will show that this aspiration is built into the infrastructure of the *Ethics*. To the extent that the salvation of the individual depends upon the acquisition of ontological scientific knowledge, it is accompanied by the aspiration to make this knowledge and its emotional ramifications common property.

The sociological face of the conatus opens a window onto the ethical side of the question. I shall discuss this aspiration from a stance that combines the metaphysical aspect of the *Ethics* with the ethical aspect. The socio-ethical element combines with metaphysical knowledge, and both express the motivation leading to happiness. All the statements establishing the aspiration to benefit the many as an integral element of the conatus also emphasize its emotional aspect as an aspiration, and outline by means of this aspect a sort of ethical bridge between the individual and his fellow human beings.

On the one hand, the conatus is a metaphysical law of nature that would be incomplete without the sociological aspiration; on the other hand, as an ethical criterion of behavior, the absence of the aspiration to benefit the many in the conatus would leave the "happy" individual in isolation, unable to feel harmony even with a tree or a stone.

Individual knowledge, as a part of the all-inclusive knowledge of nature, is what inevitably binds metaphysics with ethics, the theoretical with the practical into a true universal axiom, and in this way applies metaphysical knowledge on the behavioral-ethical level toward the salvation of man.

This model is relevant to *Ethics* because it opens a window onto various questions involving a number of fields. It represents mutual connections between metaphysical understanding that establishes the multiplicity of being in the unity of the substance, and behavioral-ethical motivation that is expressed in the aspiration of the individual to be part of this unity. Nullifying the gap between metaphysical (theory) and ethical (practice) constitutes a central factor in making the system coherent, especially as a function between the emotional and the rational action.

The interdisciplinary point of view reveals an isometric aspect of the system. Even if an interpretation that focuses only on the metaphysical aspect has a

B.D.D. 24, March 2011

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logical basis, I believe that it does not cover everything since its one-dimensionality prevents it from seeing the introspective aspect of the socio-ethical tendencies of the individual.

The isometric aspect proposed in the article throws light on the internal structure of the system. It shows how Spinoza combines metaphysical logic with ethical man. It is the ethical man whom Spinoza wishes to steer toward well-being, connecting him with the all not only at the theoretical level of action.

It is worth using the multifaceted structure as a means to examine the system. Since the levels of discourse are interconnected, any single approach, be it metaphysical, psychological, utilitarian, physical, causal or ethical, seriously limits the interpretation. A combined approach is likely to help remove impediments to interpretation. When the blessed man is made the goal of the system, he serves as the meeting point of all the levels of discourse, and, as the focus of the system, he combines them all around him. After all, the system is designed for the happiness of man, and not of nature or of God.

I

J. Klatchkin begins his discussion of Spinoza's philosophy as follows: "You see before you a fair castle and strive to find the way to it, and when you have managed to find the entrance and entered within the wall, you realize that you are still outside. Another wall and another entrance [...] and the closer you get to the castle, the harder it is to see it."¹ It is in this spirit that I here propose a two-dimensional examination – simultaneously metaphysical and ethical – of the questions of the link between the individual and the group.

A careful reading and examination of the statements dealing with the aspiration of the individual to bestow upon the many the height of happiness will show that this aspiration is built into the infrastructure of the *Ethics*. To the extent that the salvation of the individual depends on the acquisition of ontological scientific knowledge, it is accompanied by the aspiration to make this knowledge and its emotional ramifications common property. It may thus be examined also from the point of view of ethics. Methodologically, this aspiration is an integral part of the conatus, which would be impracticable in its absence. Without the aspiration to benefit the many, individual salvation is impossible (P. 3, prop. 30; P. 4, prop. 37 proofs and notes).

It is worth emphasizing here that the issue is not about the interest of every individual to uphold the law of the state for his own advantage. The present paper deals with the relationship between the individual and the group as a basic natural

¹ Klatchkin (1923), p. 91.

law, and not with the interest to maintain a socio-political framework as an optimal line of action that the individual has chosen in order to preserve his existence (P. 3, prop. 41; P.4, prop. 40, prop. 73; P. 5, prop. 41).

The aspiration to include the group in the political framework is a consequence of expedience at the level of the second kind of knowledge, whereby the aspiration to a consensus on the preservation of the political framework benefits the individual in his daily existence (in Hobbesian terms) rather than his personal salvation, which is the concern of the third level of knowledge.² Socio-political aspiration is distinguished both metaphysically and ethically from the individual's aspiration to benefit the group with his blessedness.

On the face of it, Spinoza's declared mission in *Ethics* would seem to have ended with the salvation of the individual's soul. Yet the individual sating himself from the cup of salvations – the desired result – is left in esoteric isolation, and this seems to run counter to the general rationale of the system. For this very reason, it would seem that Spinoza from the outset provided a place for the aspiration to benefit the group in his definition of the conatus – “each thing, in so far as it is itself, endeavors to persist in its own being.”³

It seems that already at this stage the emphasis on the sociological face of the conatus opens a window onto the ethical side of the question, and I shall approach this with three questions: on this point, does the individual overcome his own egoistic tendencies? Is this aspiration really emotional or in fact clearly intellectual? Why is the individual saved by an emotional feeling after making the entire journey to salvation on the wings of the intellect?⁴

I shall discuss this aspiration from a point of view that combines the metaphysical aspect of *Ethics* with the ethical aspect, basing myself on Part 4, propositions: 35 and corollaries; 36 and scholium; 37, proof and scholium; 66 and scholium; appendix 7, 9, 20, 27, 28; and Part 5, proposition 20, scholium and corollary; and *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect (TEI)* 13, 14.

- 2 On the difference between the law of the state and natural law in the context of the interest of the individual, see Segal (1994).
- 3 Spinoza, P. 3, prop. 6.
- 4 Della Rocca distinguishes between the two levels of ethics. He holds the qualitative one as soft egoism (2008), p. 204. Zeev Levi, in his review of Leo Strauss's critique of Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise*, claims that Strauss misinterpreted Spinoza when he accused his natural philosophy of lacking all consideration of the human, concentrating exclusively on the cosmic: Levi (2003). In this spirit, it seems to me, Spinoza's cosmic and ethic sides are interwoven; see also Y. Yovel, (2003), pp. 28-33.

As far as I am aware, in combining the two aspects (metaphysical and ethical), this subject has not received the scholarly attention it deserves; the statements on the individual's aspiration to involve the group in salvation are being overshadowed, perhaps, by the extensive research on the question of the guidance of the individual toward happiness.

II

One of the consistent components of *Ethics* evolves from the common denominator of all the universe's details. Humanity is not a kingdom unto itself, but an integral part of nature. The human, as any modus of nature, conducts itself by the law of general nature – self preservation – and this law is the essence of the thing (P. 3, he, prop. 6, 7). This metaphysical law embraces all, not merely the physiological aspect, but first and foremost the mental, and is connected to happiness and sadness, knowledge and ignorance, etc. Spinoza expresses this idea in the preface to Part 3:

Most of those who have written about affects, and men's way of living seem to treat not of natural things, which follow the common laws of Nature, but of things which are outside Nature. Indeed they seem to conceive man in Nature as a dominion within a dominion. For they believe that man disturbs, rather than follows, the order of Nature.

“For Spinoza this perseverance is a kind of metaphysical principal of inertia holding not just of physical modes but of all modes, mental, complex, simple, etc.”⁵ A metaphysical-intellectual law, where any person absorbing and coping with the world in an opinionated manner “is, like anything else in nature, a perfectly natural phenomenon.”⁶

As much as matter relates to the human as a part of the general kingdom of nature, the conatus embraces all the details in nature as a metaphysical law. With this, conatus has several other aspects besides the natural, i.e. behavioral and ethical. Therefore, striving to acquire personal knowledge as part of self-preservation is actually an integral part of this law as an overall metaphysical law. Della Rocca says:

5 A.V. Garret (2003), p. 183.

6 Cf. “consciousness for Spinoza” in S. Nadler (2008), p. 597.

Spinoza is primarily a metaphysician. By this I mean not that Spinoza is more interested in traditional metaphysical topics than in other apparently disparate areas of philosophy such as a moral philosophy, political philosophy and epistemology [...] his interests range so widely within philosophy. What I mean by saying that Spinoza is primarily a metaphysician is that his metaphysical commitments dictate his positions in these other areas. Thus Spinoza derives his positions in other parts of philosophy from his metaphysical views.⁷

My claim is that the link between the law of self-preservation and the metaphysical discussion, according to Spinoza, is inevitable. I believe that this was Spinoza's intention. Without this link, humanity would remain a kingdom on its own and the system would suffer from internal contradiction. The following discussion will show that, on the ethical plane, the law of preservation has a primarily practical-behavioral aspect. With this, the human as a behavioral actor, bares the metaphysical knowledge and carries it to the practical world of his life. The mere capability to understand this logic is the freedom that transforms him from passive to active. Nonetheless, one cannot escape the idea that the two levels of discussion are the foundation stones in the system: the relationship between the substance and the attributes and modes, in the metaphysical aspect; and the relationship between individual and the public, in the ethical aspect, singular and plural. These two levels of discussion are linked one to other, as two dimensions of the same structure. They are non-reducible, but rather complementary for the system.

III

In *TEI*, Spinoza is enquiring into what may be defined as "true good" and explains that "The highest good is to arrive together with other individuals" (*TEI* 13).⁸

This is a clearly socio-ethical statement, which a little later receives introspective reinforcement:

This, then, is the end I aim at: to acquire such a nature, and to strive that many acquire it with me. That is, it is part of my happiness to take pains that many others may understand as I understand, so that their intellect and desire agree entirely with my intellect and desire. (*TEI*, 14)

This statement of intent is clearly not directed at the level of the second kind of

7 Della Rocca (2007), p. 851.

8 Spinoza (1996), p. 25.

knowledge, the pragmatic wisdom on the socio-political plane, about which Spinoza elsewhere says: "... the social organization of man shows a balance of much more profit than loss" (P. 4: 35 Cor. 2 schol., and P. 4: App. 27, 28). For the benefit of piety, strength of mind, and nobility to the group is insignificant when compared with the eternity of mind (P. 5: 41, and proof). Here Spinoza speaks of "the highest good," "true good," "the good of guiding by reason," which is designed to express the third kind of knowledge, and declares that this knowledge will not reach perfection without striving "that many acquire it with me" (*TEI* 14). A little later, "what that nature is we shall show in its proper place" (Ben Shlomo, n. 3 to 13). Ben Shlomo believes that Spinoza explains the highest good in the system developed in *Ethics* as "knowledge of the unity of the soul with the whole of nature."⁹

Clearly, not only the harmony between man and trees, rocks and animals is intended, but also and even especially between man and man, mankind as a whole. Even before developing his system, Spinoza had formed in his mind the idea of benefitting the many as an ethical aspect of the intellectual motivation seeking the highest good in the "knowledge of the unity of the soul with the whole of nature."¹⁰ De Dijn rightly emphasizes the importance of these remarks for their socio-ethical significance deriving from "convenientia." He links these with their counterparts in *Ethics* and with Stoic ethics (*TEI* 36-40), which heavily influenced Spinoza's philosophy. I believe that the early socio-conative emphases in *TEI* support those in *Ethics*, and we shall return to them presently.¹¹

Spinoza's egoistic concern for others does not rely in this way on the increased good will of Others toward me. Instead, Spinoza argues that my helping the others become more rational will benefit me even without those others coming to have an increased desire to help me in particular and to return the favor to me in particular. For Spinoza, the ones I help will benefit me simply by being more rational, simply by acting on the basis of their nature.

Because they share their nature with me, their rational actions will benefit

9 Spinoza (1976), p. 27, editor's note 38. The interpretation that sees the inclination to favor the majority from a Naturalistic point of view also supports the claim. Consequently, the issue is not only harmony with nature, but harmonizing the complete human environment and even striving for complete human harmony.

10 Ibid., editor's note 38.

11 E.g. Delarosa claims that beyond Hobbesian's Egoism of this ambition, there is a striving for materialization of Natural Harmony (Delarosa, 2008).

me too even if they are not aware of me in particular.¹²

The claim that reason, the force guiding man toward happiness, will not achieve perfection so long as it remains the property of the individual alone, receives support from a statement in *Ethics*: “This love towards God cannot be tainted with emotions of envy or jealousy, but is the more fostered as we think more men to be joined to God by this same bond of love” (P. 5, prop. 20). What is intended by this is not egoism or benefit arising from the aspiration to a socio-political consensus, but it is rather one of the places in which Spinoza intended to explain propositions 13-14 in *TEI*. The connection between the metaphysical and behavioral-ethical face of the conatus is remarkable precisely when the latter draws the former to the empirical realm, the singular-plural relationship.

A further layer of support is provided a little later: “moreover, we desire that all men should enjoy it,” and he adds: “... is the more fostered as we think more men to be joined to God by this same bond of love” (P. 5, prop. 20 and proof). In the context of the sociological motif we are discussing, I would like to consider here the significance of the word “desire” (in Latin, “cupiditas”). Desire is a basic activity in man, a complex activity, “appetite accompanied by consciousness of itself” (P. 3, definition of the Emotions 1). It is also the aspiration of everything, especially man, expressing the determination of its nature. In the terminology of Spinoza, this is “the essence of man” (P. 4, prop. 37, proofs and scholia). A careful examination of the relevant sentences reveals that Spinoza interchanges between conatus (endeavor) and cupiditas (desire). For example, in P. 4, prop. 37, proofs and scholia, these terms appear seven times each, alternately. We learn from the proofs and scholia following this proposition that:

1. The connection between the highest good and the aspiration to benefit the many is a necessary one.
2. The desire to benefit the group is part of the essence of the man who has attained the third kind of knowledge, the happy man. It is therefore an integral part of the system, and not an additional element,¹³ since “there is no emotion directly contrary to this love by which this love can be destroyed” (*ibid.*, scholium). That is to say, the greater the connection of a view independent of place and time existing between a man (as a mode) and substance, the greater, necessarily, is the aspiration to share this view with all mankind, with infinite modes like me individualized from substance. These conclusions derive deductively from

¹² Della Rocca (2008), p. 197.

¹³ Amihud Gilead declares that man and the system are one; see Gilead (1986).

Spinoza's references to P.4, definitions 1-3, from P.3, proposition 6, to P.1, proposition 25, and through this to P.1, axiom 4, and definition 2.

The picture we have drawn so far shows the socio-ethical element combined with metaphysical knowledge, and both express the motivation leading to happiness. All the statements establishing the aspiration to benefit the many as an integral element of the conatus also emphasize its emotional aspect as an aspiration, and outline by means of this aspect a sort of ethical bridge between the individual and his fellow human beings, the group. For the conatus is a (metaphysical) law of nature that would be incomplete without the sociological aspiration which is an integral part of it; similarly, in the absence of the aspiration to benefit the many, the conatus, as an (ethical) criterion of behavior, would leave the happy individual wrapped up in himself, unable in his isolation to feel harmony even with a tree or a stone. I believe that, like the metaphysical demand for inclusivity, also with regard to the ethical aspect the theory does not allow for an esoteric system at the center of which would stand a wise man happy in himself. Spinoza is quite clear about this. In P. 4 he links "the highest good" with "those who pursue virtue" and claims that "that is common to all, and all can equally enjoy it" (P. 4, prop. 36). That is to say, it really does exist necessarily, but, together with this, the individual ability of man, which this doctrine wishes to improve, is dependent upon the man's aspiration to benefit the group. Being equally the common property of all,¹⁴ it derives its ability from the general knowledge and imposes upon the individual knower the socio-ethical aspiration to connect with the whole of humanity. It is not for nothing that the expression "common to all" is repeated a number of times in this proposition and its note. In the same way, the two target propositions concluding the *Ethics* are worth noting, since, unlike the preceding propositions, they are expressed in the plural. This apparently prosaic fact is significant because Spinoza is presenting it in terms of a fully realized socio-ethical unity by expressing the conative-metaphysical aspiration in the first person plural.

Through the ethical point of view, it is possible to see precisely here the sociological relationship between the particular and the universal. The proposed three-dimensional aspect reflects the connection between the three fields of knowledge: individual happiness, acquired through internalizing metaphysical knowledge, joined to the ethical and sociological aspiration to share his happiness with the group, and conforms with the causal-metaphysical rule concerning the interdependence of all natural entities. From the socio-ethical point of view, this

14 See also the note to the last sentence of the *Ethics*.

rule is a link in the internal-conative chain between the individual and the many, and axiom 2, P. 1 and prop. 28 in this part, can be interpreted in this spirit.

Moreover, in light of Spinoza's assertions, it seems to me that in the absence of the aspiration to have one's fellow participate in the "connection of love," the ethical aspect in the *Ethics* would be redundant, and the title of this work, and that of *The Treatise on God, Man and his Well-Being*, would lack meaning. Individual knowledge, as a part of the all-inclusive knowledge of nature, is what inevitably binds metaphysics with ethics, the theoretical with the practical into a true universal axiom, and in this way applies metaphysical knowledge on the behavioral-ethical level toward the salvation of man.¹⁵ Metaphysical knowledge is common to all men and is an essential element of the third kind of knowledge. This level experiences the knowledge of the individual as a part of universal reason, and it is available equally to all mankind. Here is an example of the application of metaphysical knowledge on the behavioral level, as demanded daily of the reasoning individual by the system:

While driving according to the Highway Code, I am overtaken illegally by a dangerous driver who thereby puts my life in jeopardy. According to Spinoza's theory of affections, whereby activity leads to joy, passivity leads to misery. Seemingly, I have a choice between two types of action: 1. the emotional; 2. the rational:

1. Become angry, regard his behavior as intentionally directed against me, pursue him and teach him a lesson, etc. This action is not driven by choice, rather an emotional entailment due to the events, "Passio" (P. 3, def. 2). Without the logical base, this action lacks the element of choice, since it was driven by external circumstances.
2. Pass my personal case through the lens of metaphysical knowledge that I have internalized. In this case, the choice is between refraining from entailment due to the recent events. Due to his logical capabilities, the free man has the choice of not entailing after the events, but applying the metaphysical knowledge that he accumulated earlier and acting in the event according to practical logics, "Actio" (P. 3, def. 2, the causal chain, the totality, and the determinism originating

15 Amihud Gilead puts the matter well: "The highest level of knowledge overcomes, so far as is possible for man, the gap between theory and practice (...). In this way, the highest level of knowledge will remove the dualism between man's knowledge and benefit, and the sharing of knowledge which creates a dependency between all natural entities, and sets up the general framework which is a necessary condition for the unity of nature as a cohesive system," Gilead (1986), p. 458.

in the cause of causes, the self-caused; P. 1, def. 1).¹⁶ On the strength of this knowledge, to try to imagine the genetic picture that the driver inherited from his parents and ancestors (irritability, madness, etc.); to try to imagine the circumstantial framework in which he passed his childhood (flawed education, poverty, violence, parents on drugs or alcohol, etc.), which necessarily led to his present behavior. Perhaps because of some disaster he is rushing to hospital or a burial, and his judgment has been impaired with regard to the law and safety regulations. This sort of reasoning will lead to the conclusion that the bad driver is not doing anything personally against me, but is being made to do so by an accumulation of determinate reasons originating in God, and what happened is nothing but an inevitable natural process. This stage of overcoming anger, the transition from passivity to activity, by means of reason, is the emotional expression of rationality and the gateway to blessedness. Then I would act coolly and judiciously, and my choice of action would not be important, e.g. ignoring the incident, or reporting it to the police. Conquering the anger which is misery, and the transition to judiciousness following the application of metaphysical knowledge is itself the expression of the successful transition from theory to practice, from metaphysics to ethics, as required by the system; and this I shall aspire to bestow upon all my acquaintances, if possible upon all mankind, including that reckless driver.

The explanatory model offered here opens a window onto various questions involving a number of fields.¹⁷ This model is relevant to *Ethics* because it represents mutual connections between metaphysical understanding (which establishes the multiplicity of being in the unity of substance) and behavioral-ethical motivation (which is expressed in the aspiration of the individual to be part of this unity, and especially of the whole of humankind). According to the above example, the inability to actualize the (metaphysical) "true idea" (P. 2, prop. 43, scholium) means

16 In the light of "Actio," the projection of metaphysical knowledge that he had accumulated allows the free man to act from tranquility. In this spirit, Hampshire says: "The free and wise man [...] feels no resentment towards the particular things and persons around him, both because he understands why they are what they are and why they cannot be otherwise, and because he no longer ignorantly sees them as the true causes of his own pleasures and pains," Hampshire (2005), p. 124.

Damasio terms the impediment of free choice in nature determinism "fighting position"; see Damasio (2003), p. 7.

17 For example, this article allows a two-pronged examination of the question of the particular-universal relation, and of the question of eternity, whether it is about duration in time, or a feeling of a temporality, and so on. See below nn. 21, 24.

remaining in theory alone, and the prevention of realizing “the highest good”; that is to say, only knowledge of “the more highest good” (P. 5, prop. 44, proof) is common to all mankind, and the desire to bestow this upon everyone will advance the aims of the system toward realization. Nullifying the gap between (metaphysical) theory and (ethical) practice constitutes a central factor in making the system coherent; they are two dimensions of the same structure, especially in light of the emotional result accompanying rational action. Hence, it is impossible to isolate the body of metaphysical discussion from that of ethical discussion. In the absence of the aspiration to benefit the many, the theory and practice, and, in parallel, the Substance as a unity, and man (the Mode) as a multiplicity, would remain as polar opposites. This assertion is also supported by Spinoza writing to W. Van-Blyenbergh: “For as you know, the necessity of things touches Metaphysics, and the knowledge of this must always come first” (letter 27).¹⁸ This raises the question of which field of knowledge Spinoza means should be preceded by the acquisition of metaphysical knowledge. I believe that Spinoza’s statement provides the following information:

1. Scientific-metaphysical theory must be distinguished from its application on the socio-ethical level in everyday life. Metaphysical theory in Spinoza’s system is a layer, a theoretical stage preceding action. For this reason, he claims that the truths of metaphysics and physics are to be learned first. The metaphysical knowledge comes before the ethical, primarily in the structure and its logic. The metaphysical part opens the discussion of the *Ethics*, and creates the path toward an ethical guide. We act only if we know, says Spinoza in P. 5, prop. 6. Prop. 14, 15 show that the intonation of the path is due to the power of man to act at the ethical level, in the context of the detached reality.
2. This knowledge, intended essentially to be applied, is what gives the system its ethical coloring (see above for the example of anger).
3. By implication, while the two levels remain disconnected, the system will not achieve its objectives through (metaphysical) theory alone.
4. Redemption through realizing personal aspiration will be expressed in the emotional aspect of ontological knowledge, together with the aspiration to bestow this on the group (from the personal aspect, and not through benefit on the social-political level).

From the point of view of methodology, for as long as the mode (man) that has individuated from substance¹⁹ on the level of metaphysical discourse remains in

18 Spinoza (1966), p. 200.

19 The mode is modification of the substance.

the theoretical sphere and has not passed its metaphysical knowledge to the practical sphere, he will reflect an internal contradiction in the system. He will be reflected in it as a differential mode, isolated from that metaphysically undefined and indifferent generality from which it was individuated.²⁰ Spinoza's philosophy is outstandingly practical and does not propose a theoretical ethic, and certainly not a deontological one, but a combination of knowledge and intent with practice in order to achieve a result. Therefore, Spinoza established the remedy for this contradiction already at the beginning of the journey, in the conative principle, and it reappears at the end as an integral part of the third kind of knowledge.

IV

We have already seen how theoretical knowledge is integrated into the individual (mode) turning him into an active behavioral-ethical unit,²¹ and how this individual and unique mode among an infinity of modes in universal being is not self-standing. This is the case not only because of its metaphysical dependence on the causal chain, the ontic sequence and the infinite logical coherence of the all, but because existence and personal salvation are dependent on feelings toward others; and this dependency, when all is said and done, is not only a matter for a tree and a stone in the cosmic all. It should be recalled that this is not just a social correction as was discussed in the *Tractatus Politicus* and in the fourth part of the *Ethics*.²² Reflected in the combined point of view is the metaphysical plane as a ground on which the behavioral-ethical activities grow and are nourished through theory. This perception sits well with Spinoza's statement that the rules of human behavior are an integral part of the universal laws of nature (preface to Part 3).²³ Of interest to us is the fact

20 Differentiated and undefined and indifferent, in all senses. According to Spinoza's philosophy, the individual (mode) is limited and can be physically defined (place, size, volume) together with its being concerned (not psychologically indifferent); on the other hand, the generality of nature or God is physically indefinite (absolutely infinite) and undefined and unconcerned (apathetic – the emotional test toward its modes does not exist).

21 This point is important to the claim that, as a principal, knowledge and experience function together. There are commentators who claim that even the low passions have a mental aspect as an optional first step to redemption (Kisner [2008], pp. 761-65); R. Solomon, in his cognitive point of view, claims that emotions are judgments of a certain sort that lie in a certain relation to other mental states (Solomon [2004], p. 76).

22 In the preface to the Hebrew translation of the *Ethics*, Klatchkin pointed out that Spinoza's philosophy combined epistemology, ethics, psychology and somatology; and physics is connected to metaphysics; Klatchkin (1967), p. 2.

23 Spinoza's statements in the preface to Part 3, bands the metaphysical realm with the ethical, in general, to be understood in terms of human behavioral laws.

that the rational man, acting on the strength of the conative law and his knowledge,²⁴ is nourished by knowledge of the universal laws, and, by the aid of this knowledge, he reaches the peak of his self-realization in knowing his place. This ascension is not only in relation to the universal as theory, but from it and in it in relation to the other individuals. That is to say, as a recipient he is nourished by metaphysical knowledge, and he aspires to pass on the fruits to the whole of mankind in his role as an ethical provider.²⁵

Concerning the identity of the link between the metaphysical and ethical bodies of discourse with the link between theory and practice:

1. The aspiration to share with the many is not only rational but essentially ethical, and, since it is impossible in Spinoza's system to isolate the theoretical from the practical, or the metaphysical from the ethical, we end up with this complex picture.
2. The interdisciplinary point of view reveals an isometric aspect of the system. Even if an interpretation focusing only on the metaphysical aspect has a logical basis, I believe that it does not cover everything since its one-dimensionality prevents it from seeing the introspective aspect of the socio-ethical tendencies of the individual. Hence, it is unable to outline the structure of the system in depth. It is a fact that three of the five parts of the *Ethics* fill a pedagogical role that is concerned with the proper use of knowledge advanced in the first two parts of the work.

That the third kind of knowledge overcomes the duality between theory and practice in Spinoza's philosophy²⁶ should give man valid knowledge about his place in the all-encompassing metaphysical system, and thereby provide him with the means to realize his aspiration to happiness that is itself virtue and not the wages of virtue (P. 5 prop. 42). That is to say, the beginning of virtue is in (internal) cognitive perfection and its actualization in realizing the knowledge in relation to the world outside the ego. It transpires, therefore, that virtue, embracing metaphysical-theoretical knowledge, receives its practical expression on the behavioral plane, on which the true idea is realized in a practical result (such as overcoming anger in the example presented above). In other words, the individual's aspiration to share blessedness with the group is an inseparable part of the conatus and it is this that

24 Desire, which is the essence of man, is nothing other than "appetite accompanied by consciousness of itself" (Part 3, "Definitions of Emotions 1," p. 142).

25 J. Ben Shlomo believes that Spinoza emphasizes the concrete and places at the center his ethics while linking it with his metaphysics: Spinoza (1978), p. 49 (preface).

26 This point is well and extensively discussed in Gilead (1986), pp. 453-58.

expresses in itself as a metaphysical law the socio-ethical coloring, I believe, in a system designed for the salvation of men, not the salvation of substance. It is the meeting between theory and practice, between the level of knowledge and the level of behavior, which represents the inevitable application of metaphysics in ethics.

V

The two levels of discourse, therefore, outline a three-dimensional structure whose components may be seen isometrically, as follows: man has no existence without the all, which is the platform by which he is nourished. That is to say, he learns with the true idea of knowing his place in the all, and when he has learned his place, he becomes a happy ethical agent. In other words, he blossoms upwards on this platform and aspires to share his happiness with all mankind, which is the ceiling of the structure.²⁷ The isometric aspect proposed here throws light on the internal structure of the system which has man at the center. It helps us to better see how Spinoza combines metaphysical logic with the ethical man. It is the ethical man whom Spinoza wishes to steer toward well-being by connecting him with the all and the theoretical and ethical-behavioral levels of action. The heart of the matter is that when the purely metaphysical interpretation speaks of the activity of reason as the desired aim, it expresses only the individual feeling in harmony with the all, and ignores the connection between the rational act and its emotional results on the socio-ethical level.

I believe that this level is extremely important to our understanding of the concept of personal salvation. That is to say, the psycho-metaphysical height of happiness, whereby the harmony of the self is swallowed up in the all (the cosmos), opposes the basic conative demand and ignores the existence of others as individuals who are necessarily components of the whole of mankind. In the same degree, the purely ethical point of view (divorced from metaphysics) is likely to wander into sentimentality devoid of rational criticism, and miss the aims of the system. Thus, when Spinoza talks about realizing the goal to which he leads the reader, he is careful to place his remarks concerning the aspiration to benefit the many in passages

27 It might appear that there is here a degree of goodwill, the will to benefit others; but methodologically speaking, this will is nothing other than aspiration, a part of the will to self-existence, which at the height of its actualization becomes a part of the true intelligible. "Will and intellect are one and the same thing" (P. 2, prop. 49 corollary). Because this is so, I have found no place for the concept of will in order to express the goodwill to share happiness with others, despite the emphasis on the behavioral-ethical aspect in this article.

dealing with personal happiness. The methodological significance is that the link between both levels of discourse cannot be ignored.

As a rule, perceiving the pleasure of the individual both as the object of metaphysical theory and the object of psycho-ethical theory allows us to better understand the methodological dependency between the individual and the general in the system. The aspiration to benefit the many permeates both levels of discourse. On the metaphysical level, Spinoza treats it as an element built into the central principle of the system (conatus); on the behavioral level, the symbiotic dependency between personal happiness and the sociological tendency of the one enjoying it clearly entails ethical significance. The famous geometrical structure of the system, therefore, is not the be all and end all concerning the formal coherence. Spinoza establishes that the logic behind the metaphysical idea of "whatever is, is in God and nothing can be conceived without God" (P. 1, prop. 15) loses its validity as a true idea in the absence of its ethical application, including virtue and the aspiration to share with all as a condition for blessedness.

Another advantage to this interpretation is that it can also provide an answer to the third question asked above: Why should a man whom the system has led all the way on the wheels of reason be saved by an emotional feeling? Does reason really serve emotion? According to our combined approach, man is perceived as one who can improve his conative-desiring behavior (to preserve his existence) by means of reason (scientific-metaphysical knowledge), but can never get rid of his emotional characteristics based on conatus as a law of nature. Therefore, Spinoza, who began the way to salvation in conatus as an impulse and aspiration, had to methodologically close the circle in emotional parameters that are "the intellectual love of God." Since there is no way in which the intellectual love of God cannot be an emotional feeling (love, joy, an upwelling of the soul), it follows that the intellect is a means leading to a goal that is clearly emotional.

It is not only possible but also worthwhile using the multifaceted structure as a means of examining the system. Since the levels of discourse are interconnected, any single approach, be it metaphysical, psychological, utilitarian, physical, causal or ethical, seriously limits the interpretation. A combined, even isometric, approach is likely to help remove impediments to interpretation. When the blessed man reaches the goal of the system, he serves as the meeting point of all the levels of discourse. After all, the system is designed for the happiness of man, and not of nature or of God.

The approach offered here allows a combined interpretation of other questions in Spinoza's philosophy, e.g. the question of the relation between the particular

and the universal, especially regarding the plurality of the attributes in the indivisible substance,²⁸ the parallelism of the attribute problem, the double morality problem,²⁹ and the problem of the relation between temporality and eternity.³⁰ These and other problems are worth examining with interdisciplinary interpretation, since the starting point of the system is man as the focus and the meeting point of all fields of knowledge, and he is its goal. The happiness of man as the goal of the system is indeed suffused entirely in its metaphysical motivation, but, to the same degree, it can be examined from the point of view of epistemology, logic, physics, causality, ethics, and perhaps even religion. Thus every problem, contradiction and criticism that arises from the metaphysical aspect may be examined by an interdisciplinary approach. In the context of the polemics concerning the nature of religions, Spinoza says to Albert Burgh: "I do not presume that I have the best philosophy, but I know that I think the true one" (letter 76).³¹ It seems to me that this rare remark by Spinoza about the validity of his philosophy compared to the validity of the religious philosophies revolved only around their contribution to the happiness and salvation of man, and he testifies to the centrality of the ethical aspect in his system. The link between the reader wishing happiness and the advantage he derives from it is what Spinoza views as "the true philosophy," as opposed to the religious system. Man, advantage, system and truth are bound together in the *Ethics*. Rational certainty concerning the rational content of metaphysics is not divorced from ethics, and

- 28 Beyond the metaphysical problem, the combined perception also emphasizes the ethical aspect of the relation between the individual and the whole of mankind, as in the principle of sharing with the many, which is in conatus. For these topics as discussed, without examining the multi-dimensional point of view, see for example, on the metaphysical side of this question, Bennet (1996), pp. 85-86; *idem* (1984), pp. 60-66; Curly (1969), p. 21; Gilead (1986), pp. 38-45, 52-65; Hampshire (2005), pp. 36-55; F. Van Der Burg (2007), pp. 20-67; for an earlier view see Wolfson (1934).
- 29 See n. 2 above, where the distinction is hinted at between the advantage of the individual's political situation and the absolute demands of reason as a condition for the salvation of man. As spoken, the gap between man's civic duty and the free man's obedience to the laws, are derived from his liberated wisdom (*Liberum orbitrium*) not from the obligation to do so.
- 30 In order to clarify whether Spinoza's philosophy deals with temporal duration or atemporality or eternity, the metaphysical aspect of the problem can be examined in combination with the psycho-physical feelings that are also relevant to the redeemed man. Discussions about continuity, rhythm or eternity divorced from these two are not only about the past, present and future, but are also about an internal feeling. For an extensive survey of the range of opinions on this problem, including an exhaustive bibliography, see Rice (1992). See also the original approach of Dugdale (2001).
- 31 Spinoza (1966), p. 362.

therefore cannot be discussed separately from the emotional-ethical experience built into the methodological fabric of the system.

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