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The Circle of Adequate Knowledge: Notes on Reason and Intuition in Spinoza

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One of the fundamental characteristics of Spinoza's theory of knowledge, and one of the most intriguing, is the quasi-automatic character of the progress of knowledge, which Spinoza puts forward in paragraph 85 of the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*[1] and illustrates by the image of the intellect forging its own tools of perfection in paragraphs 30–2[2]. Lia Levy's recent study of Spinoza's notion of consciousness shows the complexity and richness of this problematic, which should be considered crucial for the understanding of Spinoza's theory of knowledge.[3] One can immediately grasp the importance of the automatic or 'quasi'-automatic character of the cognitive perfection of the mind in the framework of a metaphysics of necessity: it is a matter of showing that even the liberation which results from knowledge operates according to the laws

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[1] G ii, 32. The numbering of paragraphs is done according to Bruder (C. H. Bruder, *Benedicti de Spinoza Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1843–6). See C i, 37: 'They never conceived the soul (as we do here) as acting according to certain laws, like a spiritual automaton.' For an elucidation of this formula in the *TIE*, see Wim N. A. Klever, 'Quasi aliquod automa spirituale', in E. Giancotti (ed.), *Proceedings of the First International Congress on Spinoza: Spinoza nel 350° Anniversario della nascita, Urbino 4–8 ottobre 1982* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1985), 249–57.

[2] G ii, 13–14; C i, 16–7.

[3] Lia Levy, *L'automate spirituel. La naissance de la subjectivité moderne d'après l'Éthique de Spinoza* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2000). I share most of Levy's analyses but regret that she did not bring to the forefront the affective dimension of consciousness in Spinoza's theory, a task I attempted in my doctoral thesis ('Conscience et connaissance expérientielle: le rôle des affects dans la progression éthique', University of Ottawa, 2002; unpublished).

of nature, and in particular the laws of the understanding. There would be no point in thinking that the mind could free itself from the determinism of its own essence: its functioning, like that of all things, is mechanical; that is, it obeys the eternal and immutable laws of nature as a whole.

My interest here concerns the concrete way in which this determinism operates at the level of the human individual. More specifically, since the theme is immense and needs to be limited, I am concerned with the ways in which this determinism is actualized in *adequate* knowledge. I am thus deliberately leaving to one side the progress in the first kind of knowledge and the transition from imagination to reason, which I have dealt with elsewhere.[4] I will concentrate solely on what I call the circle of adequate knowledge, which is subsequent to the decisive transition from a mainly inadequate knowledge to a mainly adequate one. I am thus assuming an already wise man, or one already acting for the most part in accordance with right reason, although I am aware that it is all a question of the proportion between adequate and inadequate knowledge, and that the imagination is never totally left behind. The specific focus of what follows is to try to account for the dynamic of progress at the heart of adequate knowledge. This must be done on two levels: the level of the transition from the second to the third kind of knowledge, and then the level of the perfecting of intuitive knowledge. This analysis will allow me to bring to light a circularity of adequate knowledge that reinforces or strengthens itself in the mind, and allows the mind to perfect itself indefinitely. It is thus a matter of finding the 'mainspring' of this spiritual automaton that is the mind or the soul (*mens*), and we will find that this mainspring is affective in character.

BIRTH OF THE DESIRE TO KNOW BY MEANS OF THE THIRD KIND OF KNOWLEDGE[5]

Proposition 28 of the last part of the *Ethics* states clearly and unequivocally that it is impossible to derive intuitive knowledge directly from

[4] See Syliane Charles, 'Le salut par les affects: le rôle de la joie comme moteur du progrès éthique chez Spinoza', *Philosophiques* 29/1 (2002), 73–87. Whereas in that article I dealt mostly with what I am leaving aside here, in this article I develop what I had merely sketched out in the earlier one.

[5] For reasons of uniformity and ease of reference, in this text I make use of the *Ethics*' division of knowledge into three kinds.

imagination: 'The striving, or desire, to know things by the third kind of knowledge cannot arise from the first kind of knowledge, but can indeed arise from the second' (*E*5P28).[6] We should note here that Spinoza does not exactly state that the third kind of knowledge cannot arise from the first, which nevertheless would assuredly be consistent and accurate, but that the *conatus* (striving) or *desire* to know by the third kind of knowledge can only come from the second kind of knowledge—that is, from reason, which according to the *Ethics* corresponds to the formation of 'common notions'. The conatus, effort or appetite, which in its conscious form goes by the name of *cupiditas*, or desire, is the very essence of man (*E*3P7 and *E*3P9S). Concerning the first kind of knowledge, Spinoza very clearly shows that the orientation of desire towards a particular object is never anything other than the fruit of the individual's pursuit of his own good, and is explained by the individual's belief that this object is capable of providing him with an increase in power, which he will experience as joy. Only an affective experience of the joy of adequately knowing could explain the formation of a desire to know more and better. True, one is often in error concerning what is really a source of joy and strengthening, and men do in fact find themselves alienated by their passions, transported totally outside of themselves and their own power over themselves. But the affectivity *at the heart of adequate knowledge* that guides desire towards new objects is not misleading.[7] Only a desire can generate a desire, only a power can be modified into another power, and that holds whether one is at the level of adequate or inadequate knowledge. We can thus understand *E*5P28 to mean that the *joy* felt during the formation of common notions, that is, the increase in the essential power of existing and in the desire to exist, explains the birth of the desire to know by the third kind of knowledge. It seems to me important to underline the necessary role of affectivity to explain the self-generation of desire. In fact, it is this same desire which, modified into joy, acquires by this very fact the power to provide itself with new objects of joy, and thus desire that which gave birth to it: adequate knowledge.

But this raises a theoretical problem. For why would we not remain at the level of rational knowledge, and why would we want to know by

[6] G ii, 297; C i, 609.

[7] Or more exactly, this affectivity is not interpreted erroneously. Indeed, I do not believe that affectivity is ever misleading in Spinoza, even if the judgement that derives from it can be: affectivity is the very expression of being, and is in itself necessarily true; it's just that it can be linked by the mind to inadequate causes when the mind has insufficient knowledge.

the *third* kind of knowledge, if this third kind of knowledge were unknown to us? If we did not have, starting with rational knowledge, the affective experience of the joy of intuitively knowing? It seems to me that this problem only arises, and becomes theoretically insurmountable, if one separates rational knowledge from intuitive knowledge. In other words, if one posits an essential difference between reason and intuition, one cannot understand the emergence from the midst of reason of a desire to know intuitively, rather than rationally over again. In my view, this clearly demonstrates the necessity of uniting them. Although many agree on minimizing the separation between the two, they have not exposed the full extent of the logical implications of anchoring intuition in reason. For the distinction between the two knowledges cannot be ontological: the two knowledges must logically *always* be given together, being in reality the same knowledge, but simply under two different modalities. Before turning to the explanation of my own solution to this problem, I would like briefly to recall the traditional view of intuition in the Spinoza literature.

H. G. Hubbeling, in his authoritative book on Spinoza's methodology,[8] retraces very clearly the sources of Spinoza's distinction between reason and intuition in the philosophical tradition. Platonistic in its origins, the distinction between discursive reasoning and intuition took the form of a very common distinction between *ratio* and *intellectus* in the Middle Ages. As Hubbeling clearly puts it, 'The first faculty forms general concepts out of sense data by means of abstraction, the second guides man to ideas that are free from any sense experience and gives him a direct contemplation of God.'[9] The resemblance between this statement and what Spinoza presents in the *Ethics* is patent. How could one not be struck by the similarity between Spinoza's passages about the intellectual love of God that accompanies the third kind of knowledge, and the medieval idea of a free contemplation of God? It is precisely due to this similarity of vocabulary that mystical interpretations of Spinoza have arisen,[10] and they may surely claim to have a certain basis in the texts. However, the similarity between the medieval conception of intuition and that of Spinoza may well be restricted by Spinoza's particular take

[8] H. G. Hubbeling, *Spinoza's Methodology* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Prakke, 2nd edn., 1967).

[9] Ibid., 17.

[10] See for instance Jon Wetlesen, *The Sage and the Way. Spinoza's Ethics of Freedom* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1979).

on these concepts. After all, it is well known that Spinoza appropriated terms inherited from the tradition—either Scholastic or Cartesian—and transformed them for his own purposes (e.g. substance, mode, etc.). Hubbeling reminds us in the same chapter that in contrast to the scholastic way, Spinoza is not consistent in his use of *intellectus*, and that he uses it when talking both about reason and about intuition. So the question can legitimately be asked: is Spinoza's conception of intuition exactly the same as that of the tradition, i.e. radically separate from 'reason', understood as the faculty of discursive reasoning?

Hubbeling's own explanation of the different kinds of knowledge does not provide us with a clear answer to this question, but there is a useful clue he brings to our understanding of it.[11] For him, there is in Spinoza an intrinsic problem of reconciling his deductive method, which needs general concepts as a starting point (i.e. the definitions), and his nominalism, which leads him to reject all general concepts as abstract and to criticize them as 'universal notions.'[12] Specifically, Hubbeling stresses that Spinoza speaks of reason in the *Treatise on the Improvement of the Understanding* with less respect than in the *Ethics* or in the *Short Treatise* because in the first, this kind of knowledge is said to provide us with universal notions, whereas in the two others it forms common notions, giving real knowledge.[13] Whether this is a matter of evolution or not (a thesis hard to defend, since the writing of the *Short Treatise* is considered prior to that of the *Treatise on the Improvement of the Understanding*), it is clear that Hubbeling points to a major source of differentiation in the understanding of reason in its relation to true knowledge. Furthermore, relying on Letter 12, he seems to minimize the difference between reason and intuition in Spinoza's definite conception.[14] The difference here is drawn only between imagination, i.e. knowledge of the first kind, and 'true knowledge', which in Spinoza

[11] It must be noted that he offers a bolder interpretation in an article published in 1986: 'The Third Way of Knowledge (Intuition) in Spinoza', *Studia Spinozana*, 2 (1986), 219–31. In this article, he clearly says that reason and intuition are not as different from one another as is commonly held, and even that 'the whole of Spinoza's philosophy is now presented in the second way. Thus, the great advantage of the third way is diminished' (p. 229). However, I have chosen to use his 1967 book instead because its main thesis has no equivalent in the more recent paper, and seems more promising to me.

[12] Hubbeling, *Methodology*, 20–3.

[13] Ibid., 13–14.

[14] 'For we can conceive everything in two ways, either abstractly by means of our senses or in itself by means of reason. True knowledge is knowing things in God, *sub specie aeternitatis*' (ibid. 29).

refers to both the second and third kinds of knowledge. For Hubbeling, the confusion present in the text between the two adequate kinds of knowledge, which takes the form of a problem of reconciling knowledge by common notions (reason) with knowledge of the thing's essence (intuition), is itself nothing but a consequence of the original and crucial problem of Spinoza's methodology.[15] The deductive method considers the common notions as a sufficient source for true knowledge. However, on Hubbeling's reading, common notions are left behind in Spinoza's nominalism, which leads him to the idea of an intuition of the *particular* thing in the light of eternity. Hence, on this view, the problem of reconciling the two kinds of adequate knowledge is left open, and the texts are deemed to be ambiguous. Hubbeling is definitely right in saying that they are, despite the fact that many interpreters do not seem to have found the ambiguity to be very problematic.

Let us look more closely at the interpretation of the leaders of Spinoza scholarship in the Anglo-American and French traditions of the twentieth century, for each initiated a very different view of Spinoza's theory of knowledge.

In the Anglo-American world, it was Harry Austryn Wolfson's comprehensive interpretation of Spinoza, *The Philosophy of Spinoza* (1934),[16] that oriented all subsequent approaches to Spinoza by English-speaking scholars. His influence has been determinative, and his insistence on Spinoza's inheritance from the medieval sources, in particular, has never or seldom been put into question in this tradition. As a result of this reliance on Wolfson, Spinoza seems always to have been considered as the thinker who made a superb synthesis of the problems of the tradition, particularly those of the medieval and modern traditions, but who, after all, made *nothing but* a synthesis of them, without 'innovating' in the true sense of the term. The same holds for Spinoza's conception of knowledge, which Wolfson makes conscious efforts to reduce entirely to Saadia's,[17] despite the fact that it requires distorting the text in many respects. This violence done to Spinoza's writings is particularly evident, for example, in Wolfson's invention of three features within the second

[15] Hubbeling, *Methodology*, 30.

[16] H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza. Unfolding the Latent Processes of his Reasoning* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948; 2 vols. in 1; 1st edn., 1934).

[17] Ibid. ii. 132.

kind of knowledge: (*a*) simple ideas, (*b*) common notions, and (*c*) deductions drawn from these two as in a syllogism, although he recognizes that Spinoza only explicitly mentions one, i.e. common notions.[18] It is no surprise, then, to see that Wolfson argues that Spinoza's view of reason differs greatly from that of intuition, as is the case in the philosophical tradition he merely follows.[19]

Because of Wolfson's great influence, the similarity between the two kinds of adequate knowledge has rarely been considered a valuable subject matter for Anglo-American interpreters, as if the question had been solved once and for all.[20] In the French tradition, however, which was until recently unaware of English-speaking philosophy,[21] the opposite approach was adopted. Far from being crushed under the weight of a giant and all-inclusive tradition, Spinoza was rediscovered at the end of the 1960s and considered a truly innovative thinker—often excessively, as if someone could philosophize in isolation from any history of ideas. Indeed, if he was read in regard to a tradition, it was almost exclusively Cartesianism. Just as any Anglo-American approach to Spinoza in the twentieth century was made through the lens of Wolfson and bears his mark, any French reading of Spinoza up to the end of the 1980s was made through the lens of two or three major interpreters, namely Martial Gueroult, Gilles Deleuze, and, to a lesser extent, Alexandre Matheron.[22] This multiplicity of leading interpretations, as well as the

[18] 'Under the second kind of knowledge he is going to mention only the common notions which form the basis of knowledge derived from them by the art of reasoning . . . It is these which in Propositions XLIV–XLVI Spinoza identifies with the common notions—one of the three subject-matters of the second kind of knowledge' (ibid. ii. 158).

[19] 'The common notions of Spinoza's second kind of knowledge, like the immediate premises in Aristotle's demonstrative knowledge, are ultimately in their final analysis traceable to sense-perception. They are considered to be the work of the intellect only because it is the intellect which transforms these sense-perceptions into scientific universal notions. Spinoza's third kind of knowledge, however, is of a different nature. It has no connection with sense-perception at all' (ibid. ii. 155).

[20] An important exception in this respect is Errol E. Harris, who does not draw such a sharp distinction between reason and intuition. See for example *Spinoza's Philosophy: An Outline* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992), 48: '*Scientia intuitiva* is not below or less than reason, but beyond it. It is reason raised to its highest power, the intellect functioning with consummate efficiency, the ultimate grasp of reality as it is in the intellect of God.'

[21] For instance, it is only very recently that Wolfson's book was translated into French: *La philosophie de Spinoza: pour démêler l'implicite d'une argumentation*, trans. Anne-Dominique Balmès (Paris: Gallimard, 1999).

[22] See Martial Gueroult, *Spinoza*, 2 vols. (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968 and 1974); Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1968), trans. Martin

proximity of other philosophical trends in Europe (particularly German interpretations), makes it more difficult to discern one major voice speaking in French Spinoza literature, but it should be noted that these three readings do not disagree on any fundamental point of interpretation either. And in the 1990s, a new Spinoza scholarship was developed in France (under the influence of Pierre-François Moreau, Alexandre Matheron, Pierre Macherey, and others), working in intense conjunction with Spinoza societies and scholars in Europe, especially in The Netherlands and in Italy, toward a more 'empiricist' and 'ethics-directed' reading of Spinoza. The interpretation I put forward in this essay pertains to this latest trend. And in this whole French tradition, the continuity of the second with the third kind of knowledge is very commonly acknowledged (although the two are not united to the extent I wish to show they are).

Gueroult and Deleuze both theorized the continuity of the two kinds by saying that common notions lead the mind to an idea of God as the cause of everything, which accounts for the transition to the knowledge proceeding from God's essence to 'the adequate knowledge of the essence of things' (*E*2P40S2), i.e. intuitive knowledge. In addition, they both relate this transition to the question I am starting from, i.e. that of the birth of the effort to know by the third kind of knowledge in the second. Gueroult offers no detailed account of this transition from one to the other.[23] Deleuze, on the other hand, offers a more extended explanation of the relation between reason (or knowledge by common notions) and intuition, devoting a chapter of his *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* to it.[24] He explains how the idea of God effects the transition: all common notions lead to God as the universal cause of everything, but in so far as the idea of God is not itself a common notion, since it is individual, it helps the mind to transcend knowledge by

Joughin: *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (New York: Zone Books, 1992); and Alexandre Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969).

[23] See Gueroult, *Spinoza, ii*, esp. 467–71: 'The effort to know through the third kind of knowledge arises from the second as well as from the third kind of knowledge (*E*5P28). It can arise from the second kind, as it is obvious that when the mind raises itself by Reason to know that all things depend on the very necessity of God's eternal nature (*E*2P44C2), it is naturally led to know these things through the cause that produces them, that is, through God, and to deduce their essence from the formal essence of those attributes of God of which the mind has an adequate idea; that is, it is led to know things through knowledge of the third kind' (471).

[24] Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 289–301.

common notions and to discover knowledge through essence.[25] Deleuze even asks himself, in a footnote, if those two kinds of knowledge should be considered one, but he gives a very nuanced—and finally timid—answer to this 'complex problem'.[26] Finally, Matheron went a step further again by acknowledging a sort of *unity* of the two kinds of knowledge in 1969. But once again, the explanation is condensed in a few pages and, particularly, in a footnote that intends to make a synthesis of those pages, but in fact adds the very elements of unity or circularity that lack development in the body of the text.[27] In sum, this idea of continuity between, or even unity of, the second and third kinds of knowledge as an explanation of the transition from the one to the other is definitely promising, but it seems to be truncated in these authors.

We have seen that this view is almost completely lacking in Anglo-American interpretations of Spinoza because of Wolfson's long-lasting influence and authority. Although traditional interpretations of Spinoza's theory of adequate knowledge do not insist on the fundamental unity of its two kinds, or even contradict it, it seems to me necessary to see reason and intuition as two angles of the same knowledge, this logical necessity simply following from the question of the transition from the second to the third kind of knowledge. It is precisely the coherence of this hypothesis that I will attempt to demonstrate in what follows.

THE 'MOMENTS' OF ADEQUATE KNOWLEDGE

As *E*2P40S1 indicates, for Spinoza, universals, transcendentals, and general notions do not correspond to anything existing; rather, they are

[25] Ibid. 299: 'The idea of God thus plays in the *Ethics* a pivotal role . . . (1) Every common notion leads us to the idea of God. As related to the common notions which express it, the idea of God itself belongs to the second kind of knowledge. It represents, in this respect, an impassive God; but the idea accompanies all the joys that flow from our power of understanding (insofar as this power proceeds through common notions). The idea of God is thus the limiting point of the second kind of knowledge. (2) But although it necessarily relates to common notions, the idea of God is not itself a common notion. So it propels us into a new element. We can come to the idea of God only through the second kind of knowledge; but in arriving at the idea we are determined to leave behind the second kind of knowledge, and enter into a new state. In the second kind of knowledge, the idea of God serves as a basis of the third; and by "basis" must be understood the true driving force, the *causa fiendi*. This idea of God will then change its content, taking on another content in the third kind of knowledge to which it determines us.'

[26] Ibid. 300 n. 34: 'To what extent are ideas of the second and third kinds the same ideas? Are they differentiated only by their function and use? The problem is a complex one . . .'.

[27] See Matheron, *Individu et communauté*, esp. 580–2, with the important n. 42.

purely fictitious constructions of the imagination. There thus can be no 'knowledge' of them in the proper meaning of the term, as they are nothings, empty objects. If one wants to avoid making the *Ethics*' knowledge by common notions into a nothingness of knowledge, that is, into a purely abstract knowledge, one must assume that this knowledge corresponds to the understanding of that which is common to everything *among finitely existing things*; or to the grasp of that in the universal which is contained in the *particular*, if one prefers to continue using this term. What matters is to see that all knowledge remains a knowledge of what exists, and that what exists always presents itself to us in the first place under a modified, finite form. The interpretation of adequate knowledge that I am proposing respects the idea that knowledge is always and above all knowledge of the particular. By that, I mean that the object of rational knowledge and that of intuitive knowledge are fundamentally the same, namely, a particular existing object in nature. Knowledge loops back on itself in passing through a knowledge of what is *involved* in the mind, namely, the infinite divine power, which allows knowledge to be determined differently (one passes from knowledge *sub duratione* to knowledge *sub specie aeternitatis*). But there no more exists an abstract, adequate knowledge than there are abstract beings. Adequate knowledge remains knowledge of a particular existing thing.

Let us take a simple example. I perceive a desk in front of me. My inadequate knowledge of this desk is a particular knowledge; it expresses the precise way in which my body is affected by it. If now I have an adequate knowledge of the desk in front of me, which I obviously continue to perceive through the imagination, this is because I see that in it which expresses common notions. Not 'general notions', refuted from the outset in the first Scholium to *E*2P40 by Spinoza's nominalist position (thus I do not suddenly see 'deskness' through the desk), but I see what is common to every body without exception, and which corresponds in particular to the finite, mediate modes of extension that are motion and rest, and to their properties—like dimension, surface, etc. (note that common notions are characterized as ideas concerning the attribute of extension).[28] Adequately conceiving this desk simply means

[28] See *E*2P38: 'Those things which are common to all, and which are equally in the part and in the whole, can only be conceived adequately' (G ii, 118; C i, 474); its demonstration, which is carried out only with reference to bodies; and its corollary: 'From this it follows that there are

understanding that the desk, like all things, is a particular expression of infinite power (the infinite power of being extended in this case). That means understanding its necessity through its divine cause. Thus, in my knowledge by common notions of the desk in front of me, I have a perception of the infinite power that it involves. I also have an idea of myself as being in the truth, and so of the infinite power of thinking—this point will be developed shortly. This is the 'ascending' angle of the loop.

Now, working from this perception of divine power and eternity, I come back to the particular thing, no longer as it appeared to me in a determinate time and space, with such-and-such a form, colour, height, etc., but to its essence, which is simply a degree of power. I then see this desk—inanimate though it may be—as a particular part of the whole of nature, of the infinite power of nature. This is the 'descending' angle of the loop, that which 'proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things' (*E*2P40S2).[29] And this is intuition; we can see that the definition of intuitive science given in the second Scholium of Proposition 40 of *Ethics* II is contained in this quotation. Knowledge returns to the particular object to be known by means of grasping the infinite divine power that is expressed by it. But this remains the same knowledge, due to the Spinozistic notion of the involvement or implication of the cause in the effect, such that one cannot know the effect without simultaneously knowing the cause, as stated in the important Axiom 4.[30]

certain ideas, *or* notions, common to all men. For (by Lemma 2) all bodies agree in certain things, which (by P38) must be perceived adequately, *or* clearly and distinctly, by all' (G ii, 119; C i, 474). It seems that rational knowledge can be realized only on the basis of a perception concerning the attribute of extension, and knowledge of the attribute of thought follows secondarily (on the logical plane) from knowledge by common notions. Knowledge of the infinite mediate mode of the attribute of thought is simply not explicitly presented as the inevitable passage towards knowledge of the attribute of thought, and the mystery surrounding it thus remains. Note that the infinite mediate mode of thought has been characterized by Gueroult, in order to make up for the silence of Letter 64 to Schuller, as 'the universe of existing ideas that the attribute produces absolutely through the intermediary of essences generating their existences' (Gueroult, *Spinoza, i.* 318). It has been very differently characterized as 'the infinite love that God bears toward himself' by Jean-Marie Beyssade; see 'Sur le mode infini médiat dans l'attribut pensée. Du problème (lettre 64) à une solution,' *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 119/1 (1994), 23–6. However, I cannot try to settle this thorny question here.

[29] G ii, 122; C i, 478.

[30] *E*1Ax4, G ii, 46 (Ci. 410): 'The knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves (*involvit*), the knowledge of its cause.'

If I may schematically summarize what I am proposing before going into a more rigorous examination: one can divide reason and intuition into two 'moments' each, provided that we understand the 'moments' in question here not as moments in time, which would be meaningless, but as simultaneous and simply logically distinct steps of a knowledge that 'involves' different objects in order to return to itself, particularizing itself in the course of this logical journey.

In rational knowledge, according to the *Ethics*, my first perception is of whatever the body that is the object of my idea has in common with all other things: this is the first moment of rational knowledge. It does not yet provide a conception of the essence of the thing, but only a conception of a general characteristic, which moreover is identified in relation to extension.

The fact that I possess this true idea immediately implies an awareness of being in the truth, a doubling back on itself of knowledge in the form of certainty (see *E*2P21S, *E*2P43 and D, *KV* 2/2 and 3, *TIE* 34): 'As soon as someone knows something, he thereby knows that he knows it, and at the same time knows that he knows that he knows, and so on, to infinity' (*E*2P21S).[31] For, as theorized in paragraphs 33–35 of the *Treatise of the Emendation of the Intellect*, this awareness, this idea of an idea, this 'knowing oneself knowing', or this certainty, is nothing other than the objective essence of my mind, which finally experiences itself as it is in God, as the adequate idea of a thing, and does this in a doubling-back that is unlimited because it takes itself as an object indefinitely. This is the second moment of rational knowledge: the mind knowing itself in its own power, that is, as it discovers the infinite power that it involves. This is the 'moment' related to the attribute of thought as we can reconstruct it from the *Short Treatise* and the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. Moreover, if one takes into account the introduction of common notions in the *Ethics*, one can say that in grasping a characteristic common to all bodies in one's true idea of a thing, the mind at the same time understands the power of expressing a certain constitutive ratio of motion and rest, and thus discovers the infinite power of the attribute of extension.

In doing so, the mind has 'the adequate idea of the essence of certain attributes of God': this is the starting point for the third kind of knowledge.

[31] G ii, 109; C i, 468.

The idea of the attribute of *thought* is provided to the mind by the unlimited doubling-back of its self-consciousness given with each true idea, that is, by the fact that when it fuses with its own objective essence, it experiences God's infinite power of thought. And as far as the adequate idea of *extension* given to the mind is concerned, the common notions of the *Ethics* constitute the mind's access to grasping the power of the attribute of extension, thanks to the recognition of extension's power acting in all bodies.

The mind then 'proceeds' from the infinite to the finite in returning to the particular object of its knowledge, conceived as a part of this infinite power. This is the second 'moment' of intuition: in other words, the mind has the intuition of the essence, of itself, *and* of the thing on the basis of its experience of the infinite power, this essence being simply a precise and unique degree of power.

Note that my way of characterizing the 'moments' follows the dual structure of Spinoza's expressions to designate them: as can be seen in the citations given above, it is said that the mind is conscious of itself or of being in the truth 'at the same time' that it knows a thing through reason, and it is said that intuitive knowledge 'proceeds' from a certain idea or knowledge to another. Indeed, the very idea that I am proposing concerning an ultimate complementarity between reason and intuition—at the heart of a 'circular', adequate, global knowledge of a given object—rests on the fact that the second moment of rational knowledge is identical to the first moment of intuitive knowledge, that is, that of the knowledge of the essence of (i.e. of the power proper to) the attribute of thought and the attribute of extension. Adequate knowledge of a particular thing, single despite its two angles, quite simply is that which apprehends what the mind involves: the divine power. And given that its object is a state of power, this apprehension is an affective knowledge, as will be shown in what follows.

THE MOMENTS CORRESPONDING TO AN AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCE

Now that this tentative characterization of the 'circular' journey of adequate knowledge has been carried out, I can turn to my main goal by trying to discern in this journey the affective moments that would allow

me to demonstrate: (1) the birth of the desire to know by the third kind of knowledge at the heart of rational knowledge, which would explain the automatic transition from reason to intuition; (2) the birth of a desire to know adequately other objects, which this time would be produced at the heart of the third kind of knowledge, since it is clear that no one is content with intuitive knowledge of *one* thing, but that one would want to know as many things as possible by this kind of knowledge. I am seeking affective moments here because, as I explained above, only desire can generate desire. It is thus a matter of identifying, from among the elements relative to adequate knowledge (of the second or third kind), those qualified by Spinoza in affective terms or terms concerned with feeling. My intent is to conduct this study by re-examining each of the logical 'moments' in order to find the affective mainspring of the automatism of knowledge.

The first moment is the perception of a thing using common notions, or the conceiving of any true idea: this moment is purely perceptual; its object is the particular thing. Here we are at the limit between comparative imagination and reason. There is no apparent affectivity in this grasp of the object through reason.

Then follows (on the logical plane, not the temporal one) the moment of certainty, or of the mind's self-consciousness: this knowledge is an affective experience of power, as evidenced by the vocabulary of experience used on this subject in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, notably in the following passage from paragraph 34: 'Everyone can experience this, when he sees that he knows what Peter is, and also knows that he knows, and again, knows that he knows that he knows, etc.'[32] Or by the vocabulary of feeling in paragraph 35: 'certainty is nothing but the objective essence itself, i.e. the mode by which we are aware of [*sentimus*, 'we feel'] the formal essence is certainty itself.'[33] This experience is that of an *increase* in the power of thought, which the mind can experience only joyously: this moment is thus eminently 'affective'. As for the *object* of this knowledge at its 'second' moment, it is a certain type of power, an infinite power which in the *Ethics* is grasped in extension through the common notions, as much as in thought through self-consciousness. In

[32] *TIE* 34, G ii, 14; C i, 18.

[33] *TIE* 35, G ii, 15; C i, 18. Curley's translation does not reflect the affective dimension evident in the Latin.

sum, this 'moment' is the apprehension of the power involved both in our mind and in the particular body. One could further adduce as proof of the affective character of this knowledge the fact that a secondary form of it corresponds to the *amor erga Deum*, the mind's love towards God which accompanies its self-consciousness,[34] which clearly shows, if further evidence were needed, that the knowledge given to the mind here is a joy.[35]

Moment 'three', that of the knowledge of the attributes, from which the formal essence of the particular thing is deduced, can be identified with the preceding moment, or else can be seen as its immediate logical consequence. In that case, what one deduces from the affective grasp of the infinite divine power is its property of eternity. The third moment thus could correspond, through knowledge of the power of thought and of the power to express a certain proportion of motion and rest, to the understanding of the *necessity* for substance to exist and to modify itself through an infinity of forms (including the particular form that one finds in the fourth moment in deducing it logically, almost arithmetically, from its eternal possibility of coming into existence). The necessity for substance to exist in a determinate form is none other than a particular mode's eternal possibility of existing, an eternal possibility that constitutes its own eternity (one can already catch a glimpse here of the fourth moment, the descent back down to the particular).[36] This eternity corresponds to the eternal possibility of an existing essence, in the sense that, by existing, it detaches itself from the pure abstractness of the arithmetical infinity of possible essences—like a blank wall on which a particular essence detaches itself by its transition to existence, says Spinoza (*KV* 2/20 Adn 3,8), or again like rectangles which, once

[34] 'He who understands himself and his affects clearly and distinctly loves God, and does so the more, the more he understands himself and his affects' (*E*5P15, G ii, 290; C i, 603). See also *E*5P14.

[35] I leave to one side the question of '*acquiescientia (Mentis, sui, in se ipso . . .)*', which by itself would require a separate study.

[36] An excellent explanation of the meaning of the eternal essence of a particular body can be found in an article by A. Matheron, 'La vie éternelle et le corps selon Spinoza', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 119/1 (1994), 27–40. See esp. pp. 38–9: 'To conceive the essence of a thing under the aspect of eternity, consequently, is to conceive the thing itself, as a real being, on the basis of God's essence: it is to conceive it through God and to understand that, from the mere fact that it is conceived by God, it must necessarily exist at some time or other . . . Thus, to the degree that we *are* this eternal idea, we ourselves are, for all eternity, the knowledge of the third kind of the essence of our body and of our mind that God forms.'

they have been drawn inside a circle, are distinguished from the infinity of other rectangles one could draw (*E*2P28S). The 'third' moment, the first moment of intuition, is thus quite obviously the moment of an experience of power, which one can furthermore understand as the experience of an essential property of infinite power: its eternity, that is, the necessity of its existence.

As for the last moment, that of the understanding of the inclusion of a particular essence in this infinite essence and its properties, this is also the moment of an idea of power, not infinite this time, but finite: one puts the eternal essence of the particular thing, in so far as this has been actualized, back into the midst of this infinity of possibilities. This understanding, the *Short Treatise* affirms, is an awareness and an enjoyment of the thing itself: 'We call that clear knowledge which comes not from being convinced by reasons, but from being aware of and enjoying the thing itself. This goes far beyond the others.'[37] It corresponds to knowledge of the thing *sub specie aeternitatis*, it being understood that knowledge of eternity is necessarily implied in the apprehension of the particular thing as a finite mode of infinite and eternal substance.

Is it possible that this affective understanding, inasmuch as it is the idea of a certain power, is logically also the feeling or *experience* of eternity that Spinoza refers to in the Scholium of Proposition 23 through the expression 'we feel and know by experience that we are eternal'?[38] I think so, and in fact I can see no decisive reason for denying it. Let us briefly examine the terms of the affirmation contained in this Scholium: the 'we' refers to all men; the verbs designate a sensation or a feeling (*sentimus*) and an experience undergone (*experimur*: we have an experience of, we experiment); 'that we are eternal' refers indeed to individual eternity, not to abstract substantial eternity. Faced with the choice between the sensation and feeling as the referent of '*sentimus*', I would have to choose the affective referent of 'feeling', which is the only one which conforms to the fact that it is not the body which feels, but the mind. Evidence for this is found in the following quotation, and in particular the connection made between 'feeling' and memory:[39] 'Though we do not recollect that we existed before the body, we nevertheless *feel* that our mind, insofar as

[37] *KV* 2/2, no. 2, G i, 55; C i, 99.

[38] 'Sentimus, experimurque, nos aeternos esse' (*E*5P23S, G ii, 296; C i, 607–8).

[39] The following sentence affirms this: 'For the mind feels those things that it conceives in understanding no less than those that it has in the memory' (G ii, 296; C i, 608).

it involves the essence of the body under a species of eternity (*quatenus Corporis essentiam sub specie aeternitatis involvit*), is eternal.'[40] This last sentence allows us to see clearly that the mind feels its eternity in so far as the eternity of its body is *involved* (*quatenus . . . involvit*) in its own essence: in other words, the eternity felt by the mind is both its own eternity and that of the body, but this sensation of self is mediated by the eternity included, involved, in the essence itself. There is thus a mediation here that is similar to the circular schema I am proposing for the mind's movement through the divine power that it *involves* in order to know adequately a particular thing, of which the ascending side of the circle is called 'reason' and the descending side 'intuition'.

It is difficult to conceive of any other experience of one's eternity than that which could be provided by the affective moments at the heart of adequate knowledge identified above. My reading of experiential affectivity and eternity in Spinoza, largely and generally inspired by the works of Pierre-François Moreau[41] and Chantal Jaquet,[42] here radically departs from them in that it sees in the experience of eternity a necessarily *adequate* structure of knowledge. Neither of them are willing to grant this, since, according to them, experience in Spinoza's works is always linked to inadequate knowledge, is always 'vague' (*experientia vaga*). But it is certain that for one thing, there exist active affects for Spinoza, and that for another, Spinoza refers to an affect (and incidentally identifies it with an experience) in the Scholium of a proposition which, by its very position after *E*5P20S, concerns adequate knowledge (in the Scholium to Proposition 23 of *Ethics* V). Moreover, I have clearly identified the affective moments at the heart of the circle of adequate knowledge that would be excellent candidates for corresponding to the moment when the mind has consciousness of itself as eternal. The 'feeling' of eternity or the (adequate) affective knowledge of eternity itself referred to in *E*5P23 *could* then very well be the intuition of its own

[40] *E*5P23S, G ii, 296; C i, 608 (italics added).

[41] Pierre-François Moreau, *Spinoza. L'expérience et l'éternité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994). We owe to this work an innovative element that is absolutely fundamental to Spinoza studies, namely, the interest it takes in experience, which until then had been unjustly looked down upon. My own work is heir to this new understanding of Spinoza's 'rationalism', although I take this understanding beyond the limits assigned to it by Moreau.

[42] Chantal Jaquet, *Sub specie aeternitatis. Études des concepts de temps, durée et éternité chez Spinoza* (Paris: Kimé, 1997).

essence given to a mind that takes itself as its object, or, quite simply, that conceives any true idea at all.[43]

EXPLANATION OF *E*5P26 AND 28 THROUGH THE NOTION OF AFFECTIVITY

Before examining here some of the problems connected to this view, it would be appropriate to show in what way this identification of the affective phases in the two kinds of adequate knowledge are relevant to explaining the formation of the desire to know at its different levels.

One does indeed find an experience of power, or an affective structure, which allows the mind to desire to know a thing from the standpoint (or under the aspect) of the eternity it involves[44] as soon as that thing is grasped through reason. This is the structure of self-consciousness, or of the certainty of the mind that immediately 'doubles back' every true idea it conceives. This immediate reflexive structure seems to correspond to a logical effect that is simultaneous with what I earlier called the 'first' moment of rational knowledge: the effect is inevitable, and is besides a form of joy, and thus of a strengthening of the mind by its power of thought. This then is the explanation that can be given for the problem raised by *E*5P28; this joy, like every experience of a specific degree of power, has the power to generate the desire for its own strengthening. The first moment of intuition itself just is this experience, in so far as this experience includes knowledge of the principal property of the infinite divine power, namely, its eternity or its necessary self-expression.

[43] The most logical course, in my view, is to say that it is an *intuition* that is given in the experience or feeling of eternity—which means that this intuition is given to everyone. I will reply below to the objections that could be raised against such a thesis. One might think that this feeling of eternity corresponds exactly to the mind's becoming self-aware, which 'doubles back' the mind's conception of any true idea; that is, that it corresponds to the moment referred to above as the second moment of rational knowledge. More specifically, the inclusion of the notion of eternity in self-consciousness leads me to think that we are already at the first moment of intuition, then, which almost coincides with the preceding moment, but corresponds, according to the logical divisions I am proposing, to the (also affective) knowledge of eternity as a property of God's attributes. Since the difference between reason and intuition indeed seems negligible here, because the first is transmuted automatically and necessarily into the second, it does not strike me as useful to determine more exactly at what precise 'moment' the feeling of eternity enters into it.

[44] Curley's standard translation of *sub specie aeternitatis* as 'under a species of eternity' seems more confusing than the paraphrases proposed here.

In intuition's two moments, one also has an experience of infinite power (God's attributes in so far as they are eternal) and of finite power (the formal essence of a particular thing). Once one has 'looped the loop', that is, once the mind has returned to the particular object it started from, it feels within itself such a strengthening and such a joy that it can only desire to know more things in this manner. That is why, even if a few true ideas do not a wise man make, our mind has the power of perfecting itself in order to come as close as possible to wisdom, in seeking to know more and more objects in an adequate manner. In doing this, it first relates to God the objects that affect it in the imaginative mode, and it 'has the power' to do so (*E*5P14). In other words, it orders its affections (which still exist) according to an order suitable to the understanding (see *E*5P10 and S), an order that agrees with its essence such as this essence is grasped objectively in God.[45] Following this, the mind which has known certain objects through the properties of the divine attributes, and so through the eternity included in their essence, desires to know more and more objects in the same manner, *sub specie aeternitatis*.

This is what Proposition 26 of Part V of the *Ethics* calls our attention to, a proposition that is itself inexplicable without the joy's power to account for the self-perpetuation of cognitive progress: 'The more the mind is capable of understanding things by the third kind of knowledge, the more it desires to understand them by this kind of knowledge.'[46] For, as if anyone needed reminding, it is this knowledge of the third kind which results in the highest joy or the mind's highest satisfaction,[47] and also the highest form of love,[48] as the mind's intellectual love of God is but a secondary form of this affect of joy.

This is how one can reply to the problem of the interpretation of Proposition 28 of Part V of the *Ethics* with which we began. Before concluding, however, I should examine some of the problems involved in this reading and attempt to resolve them, even though I recognize that the theme of adequate knowledge and its modalities in Spinoza is extremely complex. The explanation I offer here is merely tentative.

[45] For a more detailed exposition of this point, see Matheron, 'Vie éternelle', 29.

[46] *E*5P26; G ii, 297; C i, 608.

[47] See *E*5P32D: 'From this [third] kind of knowledge there arises the greatest satisfaction of mind there can be, i.e. joy' (G ii, 300; C i, 611 [altered]).

[48] See *E*5P32C and P36S.

EXAMINATION OF TWO PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS

Two questions or objections seem to arise quite legitimately from an examination of the reading I have proposed. The first concerns the access to intuition that is supposedly given to everyone, according to my explanation; the second asks to what extent this explanation can account for *everything* that is said about intuition in Spinoza's different works.

If one accepts the division of knowledge into two large kinds (i.e. inadequate and adequate knowledge), instead of into three or four, one is led to regard reason and intuition as two logical steps of the same grasp of the object from the standpoint of eternity. Intuition would be automatically implicated, 'involved', in rational knowledge: whoever has a true idea necessarily also has an intuition. Nonetheless, as the final sentences of the last Scholium of the *Ethics* remind us, the road to wisdom is hard, and those who attain it are rare. From which arises the following question: does not this reading result in diminishing the specificity of the wise man by making everyone wise?

No, simply because having a few true ideas, and even a few intuitive ideas thereby, is not yet to be a wise man. Exactly the same problem arises concerning the feeling of eternity, clearly attributed to everyone by the collective 'we' of *E*5P23S, and which one *can* nevertheless consider characteristic of intuitive knowledge, as I showed earlier. I cannot agree with the notion that the fact that the experience of eternity is shared generally among men proves that it is not included in adequate knowledge, or more particularly, in intuitive knowledge. This disparaging conception of the experience of eternity in relation to intuition persists, rather paradoxically in my view, even at the core of the interpretations that have contributed the most in recent years to the rehabilitation of experience in Spinoza; it takes the form of a difference between 'felt eternity' and 'known eternity.'[49] The main argument in favour of the idea that the experience of eternity is not identical to the conception of the self *sub specie aeternitatis*, and that it is not true knowledge, would seem to rely on the Scholium to Proposition 34 of Part V of the *Ethics*, which states that 'If we attend to the common opinion of men, we shall see that they are indeed conscious of the eternity of their mind, but that

[49] See Moreau and Jaquet (for the latter, see esp. pp. 98 f.).

they confuse it with duration, and attribute it to the imagination, *or* memory, which they believe remains after death.'[50] The argument consists in saying that if this feeling of eternity given to everyone were a true idea, it would be impossible for it to be as wrongly interpreted as it obviously is.

But if one argues that, then how is one to account for the fact that *all* men have a true idea of God, as Spinoza explicitly says in *E*2P47, and yet interpret it wrongly? The clarification given by Spinoza in the Scholium of *E*2P47, which says that 'men do not have so clear a knowledge of God as they do of the common notions', in no way diminishes the fact that 'God's infinite essence and his eternity are known *to all*' (my emphasis), as Spinoza reiterates at the beginning of the same Scholium. It is precisely this which grounds the possibility for all men to know by the third kind of knowledge. Exactly the same goes for the experience of eternity. And perhaps even 'exactly' in the strict sense, since the true idea of God that each person has can only be the eternity involved in our objective essence that each person can feel or sense when forming any common notion.

The problem with the argument that differentiates between felt eternity and known eternity (which in a way amounts to once again subordinating experience to the understanding instead of uniting the two) is that it seemingly forgets that one does not become free all at once, with a single true idea, but that it is all a question of proportion. The vocabulary of proportion in the last part of the *Ethics* is striking. I will mention here only the most obvious passages (my emphasis):

> This love toward God must engage the mind *most* (*maxime occupare*). (*E*5P16)[51]

> He who has a body capable of doing *a great many things* . . . has a power of ordering and connecting the affections of his body according to the order of the intellect . . . The result is that it is affected with a love of God, which must occupy, *or* constitute *the greatest part of the mind*. Therefore, he has a mind whose *greatest part* is eternal. (*E*5P39D)[52]

> *The more* the mind knows things by the second and third kind of knowledge, *the greater* the part of it that remains, and consequently, *the greater* the part of it that is not touched by affects which are contrary to our nature, i.e. which are evil.

[50] *E*5P34S; G ii, 301–2; C i, 611–12.
[51] G ii, 290; C i, 604.
[52] G ii, 305; C i, 614 [altered].

Therefore, *the more* the mind understands things by the second and third kind of knowledge, *the greater* the part of it that remains unharmed, and hence, *the less* it is acted on by affects, etc. (*E*5P38D)[53]

The proportion of true ideas progressively increases relative to the proportion of false ideas: the true conceptions of the understanding are systematically connected to false causes so long as the mind lacks the strength to demonstrate its judgement, which it acquires when the mind is strengthened, and it is strengthened in knowing more things adequately, and so on. Thus we once again come upon 'the circle of adequate knowledge', a circle which fortunately is not vicious—otherwise ethics would be meaningless and vain. Once adequate ideas occupy a proportionally larger amount of the mind than the ideas of the imagination (which continue to affect it), it is possible to infer that its progress is not 'quasi'-automatic, but automatic; for nothing can stop it from knowing still more and better. *This*, then, is wisdom, or an indefinite progression towards wisdom that nothing can stand in the way of any longer. All men, then, have true ideas, and one can say that their common experience of eternity is a true intuition, but this in no way negates the difficulty of attaining 'wisdom'. In a way there would be a quasi-unconscious degree of intuition itself, which would, at the same time as the mind, become more and more conscious of itself, and more and more powerful and luminous, over the course of ethical development.

On a different level, one might ask how my analysis can account for all the passages in his work where Spinoza explains the different kinds (or modes, or types) of knowledge. I certainly recognize that the example of finding the fourth proportional number, offered repeatedly with slight variations each time, might be difficult to make sense of using this framework for interpreting reason and intuition. For it is true that the conception of reason proposed here appears very different from the calculation performed by mathematicians using the rule of proportion that they take from Euclid's proof (*KV* 2/1103; *TIE* 24; *E*2P40S2). In the way this arithmetical example is presented in the *Ethics*, Spinoza even seems to limit the possibility of intuition to the intuition of small numbers, leaving us to understand that the laborious route of calculation is

[53] G ii, 304; C i, 613 [altered].

absolutely necessary for complex numbers, and that consequently one cannot have an intuition of everything.[54] Obviously, the calculation of a number and the intuition of its proportionality seem very different from the adequate knowledge whose two moments I described earlier. But they are also very different from the definition of intuitive knowledge that Spinoza gives in the *Ethics*, because in these examples one finds nothing of common notions or of the formal essences of particular things that are deduced from knowledge of the formal essence of God's attributes, knowing that this divine essence is the absolute power. This is more a problem of the coherence of Spinoza's texts among themselves than of the present interpretation, and other explanatory frameworks must be adopted to account for these diverging explanations offered by Spinoza.[55]

Finally, Spinoza many times over says that one must surpass rational knowledge in order to reach intuitive knowledge. Indeed, this poses a greater problem to my unifying interpretation of reason and intuition. But we may think that the main reason Spinoza makes this claim is simply an ethical one. For if it is greatly preferable to know by intuition,

[54] 'But in the simplest numbers none of this [calculation] 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' (*E*2P40S2; G ii, 122; C i, 478).

[55] One interpretative hypothesis could perhaps explain this problem of internal coherence. Spinoza's discovery of the theory of common notions as the basis of rational knowledge led him to redefine not only reason in the *Ethics*, but also intuition. From the *Short Treatise* onward, there is a noticeable influence of the ancient Greek model of knowledge, which distinguishes reason from intuition and subordinates the former to the latter. This thesis is put forward by Plato (in the passage on the divided line, *Republic* VI. 509d–511e) as well as Aristotle (see *Analytica Posteriora* II. 19, 100b 7–8; *De Anima* III. 3, 428a 4–5; *Metaphysics* XII. 9, 1074b 35–6; and *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 3, 1139b 16–17), from whom it derived its legitimacy throughout the Middle Ages. The example of the deduction of the fourth proportional number is completely understandable in the context of this heritage from antiquity, which took mathematics and geometry as models. While modifying his theory in the *Ethics*, Spinoza would not have seen the need to change his example, perhaps because he himself was not aware of the different implications of his theory. However, another interpretation of the example of the fourth proportional number can allow us to account more convincingly for the discrepancy between the description and the illustration of intuitive knowledge in the *Ethics* itself. This interpretation presupposes the persistence of two models of intuition throughout the works of Spinoza. The first one, which may be called the 'empirical' model of intuition, is the one referred to in this essay and corresponds to Spinoza's definition of intuition as a deduction of the individual thing's essence from the attributes of God. Its objects are empirical beings. The 'mathematical' model of intuition, on the other hand, corresponds to the example of the fourth proportional number and can be understood as an intellectual process of *use* stemming from repetition. Its

this is because it is at this stage of knowledge that the mind enjoys the greatest satisfaction of which it is capable. The important thing for Spinoza's ethical objectives, in effect, is not so much the object of knowledge as the form of knowledge, not so much the fact of knowing as what knowing brings us. Without this implying the slightest teleology or utilitarianism with respect to the joy that knowledge brings us, we should bear in mind that it is this joy that constitutes our blessedness or beatitude, even though it is included in the adequate *knowledge* of God. That could justify the superiority claimed for intuition over the other kinds of knowledge, since it is at the two moments of 'intuition' that the experience of joy is given.

In conclusion, the main advantage of this 'circular' reading of adequate knowledge seems to me that it allows us to deal with the problem raised by Proposition 28 of Part V of the *Ethics*, and that it explains why progress in knowledge is indefinite, or why one is not content with just one intuitive idea but is 'automatically' moved to know more adequately, once one has reached a certain stage. As it happens, first, this interpretation accounts for the birth from the second kind of knowledge of the desire to know by the third kind by identifying an affective stage in the second kind of knowledge, that of the mind's self-consciousness or certainty, which *necessarily* leads it to experience the infinite power it bears within itself. This consciousness is equivalent to a knowledge of self and of God. Consciousness of the place occupied by things within this universe of power would be given implicitly in the descent back of the circle of knowledge to the particular object. Second, one can understand why the progress of knowledge can have no end, and is in a position to generate itself in order to give itself the desire to know new objects with the same clarity. For we have seen that the two moments that can be distinguished in intuition correspond to affective experiences, and thus can account for the birth of a desire for intuition's self-perpetuation.

Note that I have left aside the question of the different forms of the mind's love: strictly speaking, there is no 'need' of them to account for

objects are numbers, figures, and theoretical truths (for the latter model of intuition, see my 'Habitude, connaissance et vertu chez Spinoza', forthcoming in *Dialogue* 43/1, 2004). This difference in object would resolve the apparent contradiction between the definition and the illustration of intuition.

the transition from one moment to another, since these are all *effects*, forms *derived* from the joy experienced. The primary affect of joy, identified as much in the experience of eternity as in the *acquiescientia sui* (self-contentment) deriving from intuitive knowledge, is enough to account for it. Recognition of the affective origin of the determination to perfect oneself thus provides a plausible explanation, despite the difficulties recognized in the last part of this essay, of the automatic character of adequate knowledge and its basis in an ontology of desire.

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