

# Ethics Demonstrated in Geometrical Order

Benedict Spinoza

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis . . . . indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. This version contains some awkward repetitions of the word ‘God’. They could be avoided through the use of pronouns, but *they* present us with an unattractive choice. Using ‘he’, ‘him’, ‘his’ etc. of God invites the reader, over and over again, to think of God as a person; while using ‘it’, ‘itself’ etc. pokes the reader in the ribs, over and over again, with reminders that God is *not* a person. The former choice misrepresents Spinoza’s doctrine (his other name for God is ‘Nature’), while the latter misrepresents his style. Writing in Latin, which lacks the distinction between personal and impersonal pronouns, he didn’t have this problem.

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## Contents

### Part I: God

Definitions . . . . .	1
Axioms . . . . .	1
Propositions . . . . .	2
Appendix . . . . .	17

### Part II: The Nature and Origin of the Mind

Definitions . . . . .	22
Axioms . . . . .	22

Propositions . . . . .	23
·Physical interlude· . . . . .	28
·Back to the Mind· . . . . .	31
Concluding Note . . . . .	45
<b>Part III: The Origin and Nature of the Affects</b>	<b>49</b>
Preface . . . . .	49
Definitions and Postulates . . . . .	50
Propositions . . . . .	50
Definitions of the Affects . . . . .	75
<b>Part IV: Human Bondage, or the Power of the Affects</b>	<b>83</b>
Preface . . . . .	83
Definitions and Axiom . . . . .	85
Propositions . . . . .	86
Appendix . . . . .	115
<b>Part V: The Power of the Intellect, or Human Freedom</b>	<b>120</b>
Preface . . . . .	120
Axioms . . . . .	122
·Propositions about freedom· . . . .	122
·Looking beyond this present life· . . . .	129

## Part V: The Power of the Intellect, or Human Freedom

### Preface

At last I come to the final Part of the *Ethics*, which concerns the method—the way to be followed—to achieve freedom. In this Part, then, I shall deal with reason's power, showing

what reason can do against the affects, and

what freedom of mind = happiness is.

This will show us how much more the wise man can do than the ignorant. It is, however, not my concern to go into •how the intellect is to be perfected, or •in what way the body must be cared for if it is to function properly. The former is the province of •logic, the latter of •medicine. So here, I repeat, I shall deal only with the power of the mind, i.e. of reason, and shall show above all *how* and *how far* it can restrain and moderate the affects.

•I say 'how far' because, as I have already demonstrated, reason doesn't have unrestricted command over the affects. The Stoics thought •otherwise: they held that •the affects depend entirely on our will, and that we can have complete control over them. But experience cries out against this, and forced the Stoics to admit—in spite of their principles—that restraining and moderating the affects requires a lot of practice and concentration. (I seem to remember that someone tried to illustrate this by the example of two dogs, a house dog and a hunting dog: he was finally able to train the house dog to hunt and the hunting dog to leave the game animals alone!)

Descartes was inclined to this opinion •that the affects can be completely controlled by the will. His position regarding this can be summed up in the following four bits of doctrine•:

(1) The soul (i.e. the mind) is united in a special way to a certain part of the brain called the pineal gland. •This enables the mind to be aware of all the motions aroused in the body (and, •through those movements, to be aware also• of external objects), and •in the opposite direction• •the mind can make this gland move in various ways simply by willing.

(2) The gland is suspended in the middle of the brain in such a way that it can be moved by the least motion of the animal spirits. [Descartes accepted and helped to popularize the view that human physiology involves 'animal spirits'—an *extremely* finely divided fluid that transmits pressures through tiny cracks and tunnels—the body's 'hydraulic system', as it has been called.] The different ways in which the gland can be suspended in the middle of the brain corresponds to the different ways in which the animal spirits can strike against it; and when external objects •acting through the sense-organs• drive the animal spirits against the gland, differences among those objects correspond to differences in the traces that are made on the gland. . . .

(3) Each of the mind's acts of the will is united by nature to a certain fixed motion of this gland. For example, if someone sets himself to *look at a distant object*, this •act of the will• brings it about that the pupil •of his eye• is dilated. But if he sets himself only to *dilate the pupil*, nothing will happen, and here is why. The gland can move so that it drives the animal spirits against the optic nerve in a way that dilates or contracts the pupil; but Nature has joined •that motion with •the will to look at distant or near objects, not with •the will to dilate or contract the pupil.

(4) Although each motion of this gland seems to have been connected by Nature from the beginning of our life with a particular thought, these motions can through training be joined to *other* thoughts. (Descartes tries to prove this in his *Passions of the Soul* I: 50.) So any soul, however weak,

can when well directed acquire an absolute power over its passions. For passions are 'perceptions or feelings or emotions of the soul that are particularly related to the soul, and (pay special attention to this!) are produced, preserved, and strengthened by some motion of the spirits (see *Passions of the Soul* I: 27). But since to any act of the will we can join any motion of the gland (and consequently any motion of the spirits), and since it is absolutely up to us what we will, we can acquire complete control of our passions if we bring our will under the control of firm and certain judgments according to which we will to direct the actions of our life, and join to these judgments the motions of the passions we choose to have.

As far as I can gather from his words, that is what the distinguished Descartes believed. If it hadn't been so clever I would hardly have credited that it came from so great a man. Descartes had firmly decided to draw conclusions only from self-evident principles and to affirm only things that he perceived clearly and distinctly, and had often scolded the scholastics for trying to explain obscure things in terms of 'occult qualities'; yet here he is adopting a hypothesis that is more occult than any occult quality! I am astonished at this performance by a philosopher of his calibre.

What, I want to know, does he understand by the union of mind and body? What clear and distinct concept does he have of a thought's being so closely united to some little portion of quantity [here = 'of matter']? I wish he had explained this union in terms of its immediate cause—i.e. had explained (or tried to explain) *what in detail goes on at the interface* between mind and body. But he had conceived the mind to be so distinct from the body that there was nothing he could assign as the particular cause of this union—or of the mind itself. So he was forced to fall back on the cause of the whole universe, i.e. on God.

Again, I would love to know how fast the mind can make the pineal gland move, and how much force is needed to keep the gland suspended! For after reading everything Descartes has to say about this, I still don't know whether the gland is driven about more slowly by the mind than by the animal spirits, or more quickly; nor do I know whether, after our 'firm judgments' have been 'joined' to 'the motions of the passions', they can be unjoined again by bodily causes. If so, it would follow that this could happen:

Someone's mind has firmly resolved to face dangers, and has 'joined' to that decision the motions of brave conduct; then danger comes into view; and the gland is suspended in such a way that the mind can think only of flight.

And of course—this being a much deeper and more damaging point—there is no common measure between the will and motion, so there is no way of comparing the mind's power or strength with the body's, so the forces of the body can't possibly be determined by those of the mind.

To this we may add—coming back to matters of relative detail—that the pineal gland is *not* found to be located in the middle of the brain in such a way that it can be pushed around so easily and in so many ways, and that not all the nerves extend as far as the cavities of the brain.

Finally, I pass over everything Descartes said about the will and its freedom, since I have already shown, more than adequately, that they are false.

Therefore, because the extent of mind's power is determined only by understanding, as I have shown above, we shall find remedies for the affects only in what the mind *knows*; and from this truth about how the affects are to be remedied we shall deduce all that concerns the mind's happiness. I think people all know these remedies by experience, but don't observe them accurately or see them distinctly.

## Axioms

A1: If two contrary actions are aroused in the same subject, a change will have to occur in one or both of them until they cease to be contrary.

A2: The power of an effect has its limits set by the power of its cause, insofar as its essence is explained or fixed by the essence of its cause.

This axiom is evident from **III7**.

[Four comments on this: (1) Note that the topic is not the power of an affect, but much more generally the power of an effect. (2) The second clause of the axiom means: insofar as the cause in question really is the *whole* cause of the effect. (3) The attempt to link this axiom with **III7** is bewildering. (4) A2 is used only once in the rest of the work, as an *alternative* basis for **8**.]

## Propositions about freedom.

**1: The states of a body (which are images of things) are ordered and connected in that body in exactly the same way as thoughts and ideas of things are ordered and connected in the corresponding mind.**

The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things (by **II7**), and conversely the order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas (by the corollary to **II6** and **II7**). So just as ideas in the mind are ordered and connected in the same way as the states of the body (by **II18**), so conversely (by **III2**) the state of the body are ordered and connected in the same way as thoughts and ideas are in the mind.

**2: If we separate an emotion = affect from the thought of an external cause and join it to other thoughts, then the love or hate toward the external cause is destroyed, as is the mental instability arising from these affects.**

[In the following demonstration, **IIIAD6** refers to the sixth Affect Definition in Part III. Similarly for other **IIIAD** references from now on.]

What constitutes the form of love (or hate) is pleasure (or unpleasure) accompanied by the idea of an external cause (by **IIIAD6** and **IIIAD7**). So if this idea is removed, the form of love (or hate) is taken away at the same time—meaning that affect in question no longer qualifies as love (or as hate). So these affects are destroyed; and this holds also for affects arising from or involving love (or hate).

**3: A passive affect ceases to be passive as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it.**

[What follows is an expansion—not showable by the dots device—of Spinoza's clipped demonstration of **3**. In it and in **3** itself 'passive affect' translates *affectus qui passio est* = 'an affect that is a passion'.]

A passive affect is a confused idea (by the General Definition of the Affects at the end of Part III). Now, suppose you have such an affect, and that you then form a clear and distinct idea of it; and now consider how this idea relates to the affect itself. That is to ask how an *idea of an idea x* relates to the *idea x*. Well, according to **II21** and the note on it, they are *identical*: the idea of the affect's mental side is the affect's mental side; these are just two ways of conceptualizing what is really one thing. So, by forming a clear and distinct *idea of the affect* you bring it about that the *affect itself* is clear and distinct, therefore no longer

confused, therefore (by **III3**) no longer passive. (All of this is addressed only to affects considered as states of mind, ignoring their role as states of the body.)

**Corollary:** The more an affect is known to us the more control we have over it, and the less passive the mind is with respect to it.

**4: There is no state of the body of which we can't form a clear and distinct concept.**

Things that are common to all can only be conceived adequately (by **II38**), and so (by **II12** and L2 ·in the Physical Interlude· in Part II) there is no state of the body of which we can't form some clear and distinct concept.

**Corollary:** From this it follows that there is no affect of which we can't form some clear and distinct concept. For an affect is an idea of a state of the body (by the General Definition of the Affects), which therefore (by **4**) must involve some clear and distinct concept.

**Note on 3 and 4:** There is nothing from which some effect does not follow (by **I36**), and we understand clearly and distinctly anything that follows from an idea that is adequate in us (by **II40**). So each of us has at least *some* power to understand himself and his affects, and thus some power to make himself less passive with respect to them. ·*Adequacy* has come into the discussion through the fact that the following four, according to my doctrines, stand or fall together:

idea x is adequate in me,  
 x is caused from within me,  
 I am active, not passive, with respect to x,  
 x is a clear and distinct idea.

· So we should take special care to know each affect clearly and distinctly (as far as possible), so that •the affect will lead the mind have clear and distinct thoughts, ones with which

it is fully satisfied, and so that •the affect can be detached from the thought of an external cause and joined to true thoughts. The result will be not only that love, hate, etc. are destroyed (by **2**), but also that the appetites = desires that usually arise from such an affect are stopped from being excessive (by **IV61**).

It is important to note that an appetite that a man has because of some active state that he is in can also be had by him because of a passive state. (·This is something of a digression, but I go into it here because it was presupposed in the final clause of the preceding paragraph·.) Expanding a little on an example of this that I presented in the note on **III31**, consider the appetite = desire that our human nature gives to each of us that everyone should live according to *our* temperament. In a man who is not led by reason this appetite is the passion called *ambition*, which doesn't differ much from *pride*. On the other hand, in a man who follows the dictate of reason it—this *very same appetite*—is active, i.e. is a virtue, and is called *morality* (see the second demonstration of **IV37** and the first note on it). In this way, all the appetites = desires are passions only to the extent that they arise from inadequate ideas, and are counted as virtues when they are generated by adequate ideas. For all the desires that we act on can arise as much from adequate ideas as from inadequate ones (by **IV59**).

And—coming back now to my main point—we can't devise any *usable* remedy for the affects that is better than this one—namely having true knowledge of them. For, as I have shown in **III3**, the only power the mind has is the power to think and to form adequate ideas.

**5: Other things being equal, an affect toward something is strongest in someone who merely imagines the thing—not imagining it as necessary or as possible or as contingent.**

Imagining something while being ignorant of its causes and having no thought about its causes is imagining the thing as *free* (by what I have shown in the note on **II35**). And an affect toward something we imagine to be free is greater than an affect toward something we imagine to be necessary (by **III49**), and thus greater by an even larger margin than an affect toward something we imagine as possible or contingent (by **IV11**). So **5** follows.

**6: Insofar as the mind understands all things as necessary, to that extent it has a greater power over the affects, i.e. is less acted on by them.**

The mind understands all things to be necessary (by **I29**), and to be caused to exist and act by an infinite chain of causes (by **I28**). And so (by **5**) to that extent the mind comes to be less passive with respect to the affects springing from these necessary things, and (by **III48**) to have less strong affects toward them.

**Note on 6:** The mind's control over an affect is greatest when the particular thing the affect is directed toward is imagined distinctly and vividly, with the knowledge that it is necessary. We can learn this not only from my doctrines but also from experience, as when we see that someone's unpleasure over some good that he has lost is lessened as soon as he comes to realize that the loss was utterly inevitable. Another example: a baby can't speak or walk or reason, and will live for many years with (as it were) no consciousness of itself; yet we see that no one pities it, because we regard infancy as natural and inevitable. If most people were

born adults, and only a very few were born infants, everyone would pity the infants because they would regard infancy not as natural and inevitable but as a fault or flaw in Nature. Many other examples could be given.

**7: Affects that arise from, or are aroused by, reason are, if we take account of time, more powerful than those that are related to particular things which we regard as absent.**

[The core of Spinoza's obscure 'demonstration' of **7** says this: (i) affects arising from reason are tied to 'the common properties of things', and so are always present; whereas (ii) affects toward particular things come and go. So in a conflict between (i) and (ii) it is the permanent and thus stable (i) that will win. The demonstration has more details, but they are hard to connect with **7** as stated. The only subsequent mentions of **7**—in the notes on **10** and **20**—fit tolerably well with this truncated version of the demonstration.]

**8: An affect is greater in proportion to how many causes collaborate in producing it.**

A given number of causes together can do more than a smaller number of causes could do (by **III7**), and so (by **IV5**) the more causes that collaborate in producing an affect the stronger it is. [The switch from 'greater' to 'stronger' follows Spinoza's Latin.]

**Note on 8:** This proposition is also evident from A2.

**9: As between an affect A which is related to several different causes that the person considers together with the affect itself, and an equally great affect B which the person relates to fewer causes (and perhaps only to one), (i) A is less harmful than B, (ii) the person is less passive with respect to A than B, and (iii) the person who has A**

**has less of an affect toward each individual cause than does the person who has B.**

(i) An affect is only bad = harmful to the extent that it prevents the mind from being able to think (by **IV26** and **IV27**). So the affect A which involves the mind in considering many objects together is less harmful than B which focuses the mind on one or a few objects so that it can't think of others.

(ii) Because the mind's essence = power (by **III7**) consists only in thought (by **II11**), the mind is less acted on by affect A which has it considering many things together than by the equally great affect B which keeps the mind engaged solely in considering one or a few objects.

(iii) The more the person relates affect A to many external causes, the less affect he has toward each cause individually (by **III48**).

**10: So long as we are not attacked by affects contrary to our nature, we have it in our power to order and connect the states of the body according to the order of the intellect.**

Affects that are contrary to our nature, i.e. (by **IV30**) bad affects, are bad because they prevent the mind from understanding (by **IV27**). Therefore, to the extent that we aren't attacked by affects contrary to our nature, the power by which the mind tries to understand things (by **IV26**) is not hindered, and it has it in its power to form clear and distinct ideas, and to deduce some from others (see the second note on **II40** and the note on **II47**). so to that extent (by **1**) we have the power to order and connect the states of the body according to the order of the intellect.

**Note on 10:** Through this power to order and connect the states of the body properly, we can lessen our vulnerability to bad affects. For (by **7**) it takes more force to restrain affects that are ordered and connected according to the order of the intellect than to restrain ones that are uncertain and random. So while we don't have perfect knowledge of our affects the best thing for us to do is to think up a correct principle of living, i.e. fixed rules of conduct, to commit them to memory, and to apply them constantly to particular situations of kinds that are frequently encountered in life. In this way our imagination—our casual everyday thinking—will be permeated by them, and we shall always have them ready.

An example is the rule of conduct that I laid down (see **IV46** and the note on it) that hate is to be conquered by love = nobility, not by returned hate. In order to have this rule of reason always ready when it is needed, we ought to reflect often on the wrongs that men commonly commit, and on how nobility is the best defence against them. For if we combine the image of a wrong action to the imagination of this rule, it will always be ready at hand for us (by **II18**) when a wrong is done to us. If we have ready also •the principle of our own true advantage, and also •the good that follows from mutual friendship and common society, and also keep in mind that •the highest satisfaction of mind stems from the right rule of living (by **IV52**), and that •men like other things act as their nature compels them to act, then the wrong or the hate usually arising from such wrong actions will occupy a very small part of the imagination, and will be easily overcome.

The greatest wrongs usually cause anger that is not so easily overcome; but even this ·intense· anger will still be overcome—though not without some vacillation—in far less time than would have been needed if we hadn't thought about these things beforehand in the way I have described (as is evident from **6**, **7**, and **8**).

To put aside fear we must in the same way reflect on *resoluteness*, often describing and imagining the common dangers of life, and how they can be best avoided and overcome by presence of mind and strength of character. [This paragraph expands a little what Spinoza wrote, in ways that ·dots· can't easily signal.] In all our ordering of our thoughts and images, we should always (by the corollary to <sup>IV</sup>63 and <sup>III</sup>59) focus on what is *good* in each thing, so that in this way we shall always be led to act by pleasurable affects. For example, if someone sees that he is working too hard to win men's esteem, he should change his approach, but *not* by •brooding on how esteem is misused and how empty it is, or on men's inconstancy, or other things of this kind—these are all thoughts of a sick mind. Rather, he should •think about the proper use of esteem, the purpose for which it ought be pursued and the means by which it can be acquired. The difference between these two approaches points to a way of telling whether someone *sincerely* wishes to moderate his attitude to the esteem of others. The positive, healthy approach won't be adopted by the disappointed person who is still ambitious: when *he* despairs of attaining the honour that he has been trying to win, he will be upset by thoughts of the proper use of esteem, and so on. If he tries to seem wise by expressing such thoughts, the performance will be spoiled by the evident anger that he is spewing forth. It will be easier and more natural for him to scream about the misuse of fame and the emptiness of the world.

Not only the ambitious person; this ·negative· approach is common to everyone whose luck is bad and whose mind is weak. A poor man who is greedy won't stop talking about the misuse of money and the vices of the rich; and all he achieves by that is to distress himself and to show the rest of us that he resents not only his own poverty but the wealth of others.

Similarly, someone who has been badly received by his lover broods on women's inconstancy and deceptiveness and other well-advertised vices. As soon as his lover receives him again, he forgets all this.

So someone who is led solely by his love of freedom to moderate his affects and appetites will try his hardest •to come to know the virtues and their causes, and to fill his mind with the joy that comes from the true knowledge of them; he will *not* •think about men's vices, or disparage men, or take pleasure from putting up a show of being a free man.

If you observe these carefully (they aren't difficult) and regularly put them into practice, you will soon be able to direct most of your actions according to the command of reason.

**11: The more things an image is related to, the more often it occurs—the more often it springs into life—and the more it engages the mind.**

The more things an image or affect is related to, the more causes there are by which it can be aroused and encouraged, all of which the mind (by hypothesis) considers together with the affect. And so the affect is the more frequent, or springs up more often, and (by 8) engages the mind more.

**12: Images are more easily joined to images related to things we understand clearly and distinctly than to other images.**

Things we understand clearly and distinctly either •are common properties of things or •are deduced from such properties (see the definition of *reason* in the second note on <sup>II</sup>40), and so (by 11) they are aroused in us more often [presumably meaning: they are more often in our thoughts]. And so considering other things together with *them* can more easily happen

·than considering the things together with things we don't understand clearly and distinctly, because the latter are not in the same way *always with us*·. Hence (by <sup>II</sup>18) ·images of things· are more easily joined with ·things we understand clearly and distinctly· than with others.

**13: The more things an image is joined with, the more often it springs into life.**

The more other images an image is joined with, the more causes there are (by <sup>II</sup>18) by which it can be aroused.

**14: The mind can bring it about that all the body's states—i.e. its images of things—are related to the idea of God.**

There is no state of the body of which the mind can't form some clear and distinct concept (by 4). So (by <sup>I</sup>15) it can bring it about that they are related to the idea of God.

**15: He who clearly and distinctly understands himself and his affects loves God, and the more he understands himself and his affects the more he loves God.**

He who understands himself and his affects clearly and distinctly has pleasure (by <sup>III</sup>53), and this pleasure is accompanied by the idea of God (by 14). Hence (by <sup>III</sup>AD6) he loves God, and (by the same reasoning) loves God the more, the more he understands himself and his affects.

**16: This love toward God must engage the mind more than anything else does.**

This love is joined to all the states of the body (by 14), which all encourage it (by 15). And so (by 11) it must engage the mind more than anything else does.

**17: God has no passive states, and isn't affected with any affect of pleasure or unpleasure.**

All ideas in their relation to God are true (by <sup>II</sup>32), that is (by <sup>II</sup>D4) they are adequate ·in relation to God, which means that they are caused wholly from within God·. And so (by the General Definition of the Affects) God is without passive states. [Spinoza could have argued more simply: There is nothing other than God (by <sup>I</sup>14), so nothing other than God can act on God, so none of God's states can be passive.]

Next, God cannot go from a lower to a higher level of perfection or from a higher to a lower (by the second corollary to <sup>I</sup>20); hence (by <sup>III</sup>AD2 and <sup>III</sup>AD3) God is not affected with any affect of pleasure or unpleasure.

**Corollary:** Strictly speaking, God doesn't love anyone or hate anyone.

**18: No-one can hate God.**

The idea of God that we have is adequate and perfect (by <sup>II</sup>46 and <sup>II</sup>47). So to the extent that we are thinking about God we are active (by <sup>III</sup>3). Consequently (by <sup>III</sup>59) no-one can have unpleasure accompanied by the idea of God, which is to say (by <sup>III</sup>AD7) that no-one can hate God.

**Corollary:** Love toward God cannot be turned into hate.

**Note on 18:** But, it can be objected, in understanding God to be the cause of all things we consider God to be the cause of unpleasure. To this I reply that insofar as we understand the causes of unpleasure it ceases (by 3) to be a passion, i.e. (by <sup>III</sup>59) to that extent it ceases to be unpleasure. And so in understanding God to be the cause of unpleasure we have pleasure.

**19: Anyone who loves God cannot try to get God to love him back.**

If someone did try to do this, he would desire (by the corollary to 17) that God not be God. But he loves God, so in wanting God not to be God he would (by **III19**) be wanting to have unpleasure, which is absurd (by **III28**). So 19 follows.

**20: This love toward God can't be tainted by an affect of envy or jealousy; on the contrary, the more men we think of as joined to God by the same bond of love, the more our love is encouraged.**

This love toward God is the highest good we can want according to the dictate of reason (by **IV28**), and it is common to all men (by **IV36**); we want everyone to enjoy it (by **IV37**). And so (by **IIIAD23**) it can't be stained by an affect of envy or (by 18 and the definition of *jealousy* in the note on **III35**) by an affect of jealousy. On the contrary (by **III31**), the more men we think of as enjoying it the more it is bound to be encouraged.

**Note on 20:** In this way we can show that there is no directly opposite affect by which this love toward God could be destroyed. So we can conclude that this love is the most constant of all the affects, and in its bodily aspect it can't be destroyed unless the body itself is destroyed. As for the nature of this love in its mental aspect, I shall come to that later.

With this I have completed my account of the remedies for the affects, i.e. of everything that the mind, considered solely in itself, can do against the affects. From what I have said it is clear that the mind's power over the affects consists:

I. in sheer knowledge of the affects (see the note on 3 and 4);

II. in the mind's detaching an affect from the confused thought of an external cause (see 2 and the note on 3 and 4);

III. in the greater durability of the states related to things we understand as compared with states related to things we conceive confusedly = in a mutilated way (see 7);

IV. in the numerousness of causes of states that are related to common properties or to God (see 9 and 11);

V. in the mind's ability to order its affects and connect them to one another (see the note on 10 and also 12, 13, and 14).

[This paragraph expands what Spinoza wrote, in ways that can't be signalled by the ·dots· device.] To understand better this power of the mind over the affects, we need to have a good grasp of *differences* in the strength of the affects. These differences underlie our descriptions of affects as 'great' or 'strong'. We talk in that way when we are •comparing two men who have the same affect, and observe that one of them is troubled by it •more than the other; or when we are comparing two different affects of a single man, and observe that one of them moves him—interferes with his life—•more than the other does. But we do have the notion of how strong a given affect of a given person is, considered just in itself without comparing it with any other affect-person pair; though *this* notion of affect-strength is also comparative in a different way, as follows: How much force a given affect has depends (by **IV5**) purely how much power its external cause has •compared with the power of the person who has the affect. The power of the person—i.e. the power of his mind—depends purely on how much knowledge he has; whereas its weakness, i.e. its passivity, is measured by his lack of knowledge, i.e. by the state of affairs that gives him ideas that are called 'inadequate'. So an extreme case of a passive mind is one that is mostly made up of inadequate ideas—a mind characterized more by what is done to it than by what it does. On the other

side, an extremely active mind is one that is mostly made up of adequate ideas; it may have as many inadequate ideas as the extremely passive mind, but what it is notable for are not *those* ideas but rather its adequate ideas—not by its ideas that testify to human weakness but rather its ideas that are attributed to human strength = virtue.

The chief cause of unhappiness and mental sickness is excessive love for something that is liable to many variations and that we can never fully possess. No-one is disturbed or anxious about anything unless he loves it; and wrongs, suspicions, and enmities arise only from love for things that no-one can really fully possess. So it is easy for us to grasp what can be done against the affects by clear and distinct knowledge—and especially that third kind of knowledge (see the note on <sup>II</sup>47) that is based on knowledge of God. If clear and distinct knowledge doesn't absolutely remove passive affects (see **3** and the note on **3** and **4**), at least it makes them the smallest part of the mind (see **14**). Furthermore, such knowledge creates a love for ·God·, something unchangeable and eternal (see **15**) which we really fully possess (see <sup>II</sup>45), and which therefore can't be tainted by any of the faults that occur in ordinary love, but can continue to grow more and more (by **15**) until it engages the greatest part of the mind (by **16**) and pervades it throughout.

### ·Looking beyond this present life·

Now I have ·in **1–20**· completed everything that concerns this present life. In these few words I have covered all the remedies for the affects (and you will *see* that I have if you attend to ·what I have said in this note, to ·the definitions of the mind and its affects, and to ·<sup>III</sup>1 and <sup>III</sup>3). So now the time has come for me to pass to the things that pertain to the mind's duration without relation to the body.

### **21: A mind can't imagine anything or recollect any past thing except while its body endures.**

A mind doesn't express the actual existence of its body, or think of its body's states as actual, except while that body endures (by the corollary to <sup>II</sup>8). Therefore (by <sup>II</sup>26) it doesn't think of *any* body as actually existing except while *its* body endures. So it can't imagine anything (see the definition of *imagination* in the note on <sup>II</sup>17) or recollect anything from the past (see the definition of *memory* in the note on <sup>II</sup>18) except while its body endures.

### **22: Nevertheless, in God there is necessarily an idea that expresses the essence of each particular human body, under the aspect of eternity.**

[Spinoza writes something meaning 'the essence of this and that human body' (not 'this or that').]

God is the cause not only of the ·existence of this and that human body but also of its ·essence (by <sup>I</sup>25). ·That is, God = Nature didn't just cause that body of yours to *exist*; it is also the source of the abstract *possibility* of there being a body such as that one of yours. Nature is the source of the actuality of your body and also of the blueprint, so to speak, according to which it is constructed·. So each body must be conceived through God's essence (by <sup>I</sup>A4) by a certain eternal necessity (by <sup>I</sup>16), and this concept must be in God (by <sup>II</sup>3).

[In Spinoza's usage, *tempus* = 'time' always refers to time considered as cut up or portioned out into measurable stretches. Accordingly, in the next demonstration a phrase of his that literally means 'duration that can be made definite by time' will be translated as 'measurable duration'. Similarly with some later occurrences of 'measure' or its cognates.]

**23: A human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the corresponding body, but something of it remains which is eternal.**

·First, let's be clear about what **is not** being said here:· We don't attribute to a human mind any measurable duration except while it expresses the actual existence of the corresponding body (an existence that does involve duration and can be measured). That is to say (by the corollary to **II8**) that we don't attribute duration to the mind except while the body endures—for example, when someone has physically died we don't say 'His mind still lingers on', implying that it has lasted *longer* than the body·.

·Now for what **is** being said·. In God there is necessarily a concept or idea that expresses the essence of your body (by **22**); so this is something that must pertain to the essence of your mind (by **II13** ·which says that a human mind is the idea of the corresponding human body·). So there is *something* that •is conceived with a certain eternal necessity through God's essence (by **22**) and •pertains to the essence of the mind and •will necessarily be eternal.

**Note on 23:** There is, as I have said, this idea that expresses the essence of the body under the aspect of eternity—a certain mode of thinking that pertains to the essence of the mind and is necessarily eternal. It is impossible that we should recollect having existed before the body—since there can't be any traces of this in the body. ·And anyway·, eternity isn't a matter of long-lastingness; it doesn't have any relation to measurable time. But still we feel and know by experience that we are eternal. ·I say 'feel'· because the mind feels the things that it conceives in the •understanding as much as it does those it has in its memory. For •demonstrations are the eyes of the mind, through which it sees and observes things.

So although we don't recollect existing before the body, we nevertheless feel that our mind, by involving the essence of the body under the aspect of eternity, is eternal and that this existence that it has can't be a matter of long-lastingness. ·That last clause is important. To reinforce it, I repeat·: our mind can be said to last for a certain specific length of time only while it involves the actual existence of the body. Only then can it have thoughts about when things begin and end, thoughts about how long they last.

**24: The more we understand particular things the more we understand God.**

This is evident from the corollary to **I25**.

**25: The mind's greatest effort and its greatest virtue is understanding things by the third kind of knowledge.**

The third kind of knowledge goes from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things (see its definition in the second note on **II40**), and the more we understand things in this way the more we understand God (by **24**). Therefore (by **IV28**) the greatest virtue of the mind—i.e. (by **IVD8**) the mind's power or nature, i.e. (by **III7**) its strongest effort—is to understand things by the third kind of knowledge.

**26: The more capable the mind is of understanding things by the third kind of knowledge, the more it wants to understand them by this kind of knowledge.**

This is obvious. For the thought of the mind as able to understand things by this kind of knowledge is the thought of it as being caused to understand things in that way; and so (by **IIIAD1**) the more the mind is able to know in this way the more it wants to do so.

**27: The greatest contentment of mind there can be arises from this third kind of knowledge.**

The greatest virtue of the mind is to know God (by <sup>IV</sup>28), i.e. to understand things by the third kind of knowledge (by 25); and the more the mind knows things in this way the greater the virtue is (by 24). So someone who knows things by this kind of knowledge moves to having the greatest human perfection, and consequently (by <sup>III</sup>AD2) has the greatest pleasure accompanied (by <sup>II</sup>43) by the idea of himself and his virtue. Therefore (by <sup>III</sup>AD25) the greatest contentment there can be arises from this kind of knowledge.

**28: The effort = desire to know things by the third kind of knowledge can't arise from the first kind of knowledge, but can from the second kind.**

This proposition is self-evident. For when we understand something clearly and distinctly we understand it either •just as it stands •as self-evident• or •through something else that we understand in that way. That is to say: ideas that are clear and distinct in us, i.e. are related to the third kind of knowledge (see the second note on <sup>II</sup>40), can't follow from the mutilated and confused ideas that (by the same note) are related to the first kind of knowledge; but they can follow from adequate ideas, i.e. (by the same note again) from the second and third kind of knowledge. Therefore (by <sup>III</sup>AD1) 28 follows.

**29: When a mind understands something under the aspect of eternity, this doesn't come from its conceiving the •corresponding• body's present actual •existence, but from its conceiving the body's •essence under the aspect of eternity.**

•The negative part•: In conceiving the present existence of its body, a mind conceives of measurable duration, and that is its only way of conceiving things in relation to measurable time (by 21 and <sup>II</sup>26). But eternity isn't to be defined in terms of duration (by <sup>I</sup>D8 and its explanation). Therefore, a mind's conceiving the present existence of its body doesn't give it the power to conceive things under the aspect of eternity.  
•The positive part•: It is of the nature of reason to conceive things under the aspect of eternity (by the second corollary to <sup>II</sup>44); and it also pertains to the nature of the mind to conceive the •corresponding• body's essence under the aspect of eternity (by 23); and these two are *all* that pertains to the mind's essence (by <sup>II</sup>13). Therefore this power of conceiving things under the aspect of eternity is something a mind has only in conceiving its body's essence under the aspect of eternity.

**Note on 29:** We conceive things as actual in two ways: either conceiving them to •exist at a certain time and place, or conceiving them to •be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature. But when we conceive things as true = real in this second way, we are conceiving under the aspect of eternity, and they involve the eternal and infinite essence of God (as I have shown in <sup>II</sup>45 and the note on it).

**30: In knowing itself and its body under the aspect of eternity, our mind necessarily has knowledge of God, and knows that it is in God and is conceived through God.**

Eternity is the very essence of God insofar as this essence involves necessary existence (by <sup>I</sup>8). So conceiving things under the aspect of eternity is conceiv-

ing them as

*real beings* because of their conception through God's essence, or as *involving existence* because of their conception through God's essence.

So our mind in conceiving itself and its body under the aspect of eternity necessarily has knowledge of God, and knows, etc.

**31: The mind in being itself eternal is the formal cause of the third kind of knowledge.** [This, the only occurrence of 'formal cause' in the *Ethics*, defies explanation.]

The mind conceives nothing under the aspect of eternity except by conceiving its body's essence under the aspect of eternity (by **29**), that is (by **P21** and **23**) except by *being* eternal. So (by **30**) in being eternal the mind has knowledge of God, knowledge that is necessarily adequate (by **II46**). And therefore the mind in being eternal is capable of knowing all the things that can follow from this given knowledge of God (by **II40**), that is, capable of knowing things by the third kind of knowledge (see the definition of this in the second note on **II40**). So the mind in being eternal is the adequate = formal cause of the third kind of knowledge (by **III D1**).

**Note on 31:** Therefore the more knowledge of this kind that each of us can achieve, the more conscious he is of himself and of God, i.e. the more perfect and happy he is. This will be even clearer from what follows. ·An important point of procedure· should be noted here: Although we are now certain that the mind in conceiving things under the aspect of eternity *is eternal*, I can make a better job of explaining the things I want to show if I consider a mind as having *just this minute come into existence* and just starting to under-

stand things under the aspect of eternity (as we have just started to do!). I don't run any risk of error in this way of proceeding, provided I am careful to draw my conclusions only from evident premises.

**32: We take pleasure in anything that we understand by the third kind of knowledge, and our pleasure is accompanied by the idea of God as a cause.**

From this kind of knowledge there arises the greatest ·contentment of mind there can be (by **27**), that is (by **III AD25**) the greatest ·pleasure; this pleasure is accompanied by the idea of oneself, and consequently (by **30**) it is also accompanied by the idea of God, as its cause.

**Corollary:** From the third kind of knowledge there necessarily arises an intellectual love of God. For from this kind of knowledge there arises (by **32**) pleasure accompanied by the idea of God as its cause, that is (by **III AD6**) love of God—not in imagining God as present (by **29**) but in understanding God to be eternal. This is what I call intellectual love of God.

**33: The intellectual love of God that arises from the third kind of knowledge is eternal.**

The third kind of knowledge (by **31** and by **I A3**) is eternal. And so (by **I A3** again) the love that arises from it must also be eternal.

**Note on 33:** Although this love toward God has had no beginning (by **33**), it still has all the perfections of love, just as if it had only just come into existence (as I pretended in the note on **31**). [Spinoza says 'in the corollary to the preceding proposition', that is to **32**, but this has to be a slip.] The only difference ·between the real case and the fictional one· is that the perfections that our fictional mind has acquired recently have been *eternally* possessed by the ·unfictional· mind, accompanied by the idea of God as an eternal cause. So if pleasure

consists in rising to a greater perfection, blessedness—the ultimate pleasure—must surely consist in the mind's being endowed with perfection itself.

**34: Only while the body endures is the mind subject to passive affects.**

An imagining is an idea by which a mind considers an ·external· thing as present (see its definition in the note on <sup>II</sup>17), though it is more informative about the present state of the ·corresponding· human body than about the nature of external thing (by the second corollary to <sup>II</sup>16). So an imagining, because it indicates the present state of the ·corresponding· body, is an affect (by the General Definition of the Affects in Part III). So (by 21) only while the body endures is the mind subject to passive affects.

**Note on 34:** If we look to the common opinion of men we shall see that they are indeed conscious of the eternity of their mind, but that they confuse eternity with duration ·= long-lastingness·, and credit their imagination = memory with being eternal, believing that it lasts after death.

[In 35 and 36 and their appendages, the text has 'God loves God' etc. instead of 'God loves himself' etc. The trouble with 'himself' is that it implies that God is a person, which misrepresents Spinoza's doctrine: his other name for God is 'Nature'. It would be more accurate to put 'God loves itself', but that misrepresents Spinoza's style: he doesn't keep nudging us with reminders that God is *not* a person. Writing in Latin, which lacks the distinction between personal and impersonal pronouns, Spinoza didn't have this problem.]

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

God is absolutely infinite (by <sup>I</sup>D6), i.e. (by <sup>II</sup>D6) the nature of God enjoys infinite perfection accompanied (by <sup>II</sup>3) by the idea of ·God, i.e. (by <sup>I</sup>11 and <sup>I</sup>D1) by

the idea of ·God's cause. And this is what I have said (corollary to 32) intellectual love is.

**36: A mind's intellectual love of God is part of the infinite love by which God loves God. It isn't to be identified with ·God's love of God with God considered as infinite, but only with ·God's love of God with God considered as including the essence of that mind considered under the aspect of eternity.**

This love that the mind has must be related to its active nature (by the corollary to 32 and <sup>III</sup>3); so it is an *action* by which the mind thinks about itself with the accompanying idea of God as its cause (by 32 and its corollary), that is (by the corollaries to <sup>I</sup>25 and <sup>II</sup>11), an action by which God—considered as including the human mind—thinks about God with the accompanying idea of God ·as the cause·; so (by 35) this love that the mind has is part of the infinite love by which God loves God.

**Corollary:** God, in loving God, also loves men, and consequently God's love of men and the mind's intellectual love of God are one and the same.

**Note on 36:** From this we clearly understand that our salvation = happiness = freedom consists in a constant and eternal love toward God, i.e. in God's love toward men. And this love = happiness is called *glory* in the holy scriptures—not without reason. For whether this love is considered as being had by God or as being had by a ·human· mind, it can rightly be called satisfaction of mind, which really the same thing as glory (by <sup>III</sup>AD25 and <sup>III</sup>AD30). For considered as had by God (by 35) it is pleasure (if I may still be permitted to use this term) accompanied by the idea of God ·as its cause·; and similarly when it is considered as had by a ·human· mind (by 27).

Again, because the essence of our mind consists solely in knowledge, of which God is the beginning and foundation (by **I15** and the note on **II47**), it is clear to us how our mind—its essence and its existence—follows from the divine nature and continually depends on God.

I have thought it worthwhile to point this out here, so as to show by this example •how much can be accomplished by the knowledge of •particular things that I have called ‘intuitive’ or ‘knowledge of the third kind’ (see the second note on **II40**), and •how much more powerful it is than the •universal knowledge I have called ‘knowledge of the second kind’. For although I have shown in •general terms in Part I that everything (and thus the human mind also) depends on God both for its essence and its existence, and although that demonstration is legitimate and free from all chance of doubt, it still doesn’t affect our mind as much as when this result is inferred from the very essence of any •particular thing that we say depends on God.

**37: Nothing in nature is contrary to this intellectual love or able to take it away.**

This intellectual love follows necessarily from the nature of the mind considered as an eternal •truth through God’s nature (by **33** and **29**). So something contrary to this love would be contrary to the •true; consequently something could remove this love would bring it about that what is true is false, and this is self-evidently absurd. Therefore **37** follows.

**Note on 37:** I think it must be obvious to everyone that the axiom in Part IV concerns particular things considered as located in times and places.

**38: The more things a mind understands by the second and third kinds of knowledge, the less it is acted on by bad affects and the less it fears death.**

A mind’s essence consists in knowledge (by **II11**); so •the more things a mind knows by the second and third kinds of knowledge •the greater the part of it that remains ·when the body is destroyed· (by **23** and **29**), and consequently (by **37**) •the greater the part of it that is untouched by affects that are contrary to our nature, i.e. (by **IV30**) by bad affects. Therefore, the more things the mind understands by the second and third kinds of knowledge, the greater the part of it that stays unharmed, so the less it is acted on by ·bad· affects ·and the less reason it has to fear death·.

**Note on 38:** From this we understand something that I touched on in the note on **IV39** and promised to explain in this Part, namely: the greater a mind’s clear and distinct knowledge, and thus the more it loves God, the less harm death can do.

And a second point: because (by **27**) the highest possible contentment arises from the third kind of knowledge, it follows that a human mind can be of such a nature that the part of it that I have shown perishes with the body (see **21**) is insignificant compared to the part that remains. I shall soon treat this more fully.

**39: Someone whose body is capable of a great many things has a mind whose greatest part is eternal.**

Someone who has a body capable of doing a great many things is least troubled by bad affects (by **IV38**), i.e. (by **IV30**) by affects contrary to our nature. So (by **10**) he has the power to order and connect the states of his body according to the order of the intellect, and consequently (by **14**) to bring it about that

all the states of his body are related to the idea of God. The result (by **15**) is that he has a love of God that (by **16**) must occupy = constitute the greatest part of his mind. Therefore (by **33**), he has a mind whose greatest part is eternal.

**Note on 39:** Because human bodies are capable of a great many things, there is no doubt that they can be of such a nature as to be related to •minds that have a great knowledge of themselves and of God, •minds of which the greatest or chief part is eternal, so that they hardly fear death. To get a clearer understanding of these things, consider this: We live in continuous change, and as we change for the better or worse we are called fortunate or unfortunate: someone who has gone from being a baby or a child to being a corpse is called unfortunate; whereas if we pass the whole length of our life with a sound mind in a sound body, we are considered to be fortunate. And really, he who, like an infant or child, has a body capable of very few things, and very heavily dependent on external causes, has a mind which considered solely in itself is conscious of almost nothing of itself, or of God, or of things. On the other hand, he who has a body capable of a great many things, has a mind which considered only in itself is very much conscious of itself, and of God, and of things.

In this life, then, we mainly try to bring it about that the baby's body changes (as much as its nature allows this and helps in it) into another body that is capable of a great many things and related to a mind that is very much conscious of itself, of God, and of things, in such a way that whatever is related to its memory or imagination is of hardly any moment in relation to the intellect (as I have already said in the note on •38.

**40: The more perfection each thing has, the more it acts and the less it is acted on; and conversely, the more it acts, the more perfect it is.**

The more perfect a thing is, the more reality it has (by **III D6**), and consequently (by **III 3** and the note on it) the more it acts and the less it is acted on. This demonstration also holds good in the opposite direction, proving that the more a thing acts the more perfect it is.

**Corollary:** The part of the mind that remains ·when the body dies·, however large ·or small· it is, is more perfect than the rest.

The eternal part of the mind (by **23** and **29**) is the intellect—the only part of the mind through which we are said to *act* (by **III 3**). And what I have shown to perish ·with the body· is the imagination (by **21**), the only part of the mind through which we are said to *be acted on* (by **III 3** and the General Definition of the Affects). So (by **40**) the intellect, however extensive it is, is more perfect than the imagination.

**Note on 20–40:** That completes what I wanted to show concerning the mind when considered without relation to the body's existence. From those propositions—and at the same time from **I 21** and other things—it is clear that our mind, insofar as it understands, is an eternal mode of thinking which is determined by another eternal mode of thinking which . . . and so on to infinity; so that all together they constitute God's eternal and infinite intellect.

**41: Even if we didn't know that our mind is eternal, we would still regard as of the first importance morality, religion, and absolutely all the things I have shown (in Part IV) to be related to resoluteness and nobility.**

The first and only foundation of virtue, i.e. of the method of living rightly (by the corollary to <sup>IV</sup>22 and 24) is the pursuit of our own advantage. But in determining what reason prescribes as useful in Part IV, I didn't take into account the eternity of the mind, which came into sight only in Part V. So back when we didn't know that the mind is eternal, we still regarded as of the first importance the things I showed to be related to resoluteness and nobility. And so, even if we still didn't know this, we would regard as of the first importance the same rules of reason.

**Note on 41:** The usual conviction of the multitude seems to be different. For most people apparently think they are free to the extent that they can indulge their lust, and that in being obliged to live according to the divine law they are giving up their rights. In their view, then, morality, religion, and absolutely everything related to strength of character are *burdens* that they hope to put down after death, when they also hope to be receive a reward for their bondage, that is, for their morality and religion. They are induced to live according to the divine law (as far as their weakness and lack of character allows) not only by this •hope but also, and especially, by the •fear of horrible punishments after death. If men didn't have this hope and this fear, and believed instead that minds die with the body and that they—poor wretches who are exhausted with the burden of morality—have no after-life to look forward to, they would return to their natural disposition and choose to shape their lives according to their lusts, and to be ruled by fortune rather than by themselves.

These opinions seem to me as absurd as if someone, because he doesn't think he can nourish his body with good food to eternity, should prefer to fill himself with poisons; or because he sees that the mind is not eternal = immortal, should prefer to be mindless and to live without reason. These attitudes are so absurd they are hardly worth mentioning.

**42: (i) Happiness is not •the reward of virtue; it •is virtue. (ii) And it is not the case that we are happy because we restrain our lusts; on the contrary, we are able to restrain our lusts because we are happy.**

(i) Happiness consists in love of God (by 36 and the note on it), a love arising from the third kind of knowledge (by the corollary to 32). So this love (by <sup>III</sup>59 and 3) must be related to the active mind. Therefore (by <sup>IV</sup>D8) it is virtue itself.

(ii) The more the mind enjoys this divine love = happiness, the more it understands (by 32), that is (by the corollary to 3) the greater its power over the affects, and (by 38) the less it is acted on by bad affects. So because the mind enjoys this divine love or happiness, it has the power to restrain lusts. And because human power to restrain the affects consists only in the intellect, no-one enjoys happiness because he has restrained the affects. Instead, the power to restrain lusts arises from happiness itself.

**Note on 42:** That brings me to the end of everything I wanted to show concerning the mind's power over the affects and concerning its freedom. What I have shown makes clear how much the wise man is capable of, and how much stronger he is than one who is ignorant and is driven only by lust. For not only is the ignorant man troubled in many ways by external causes, and unable ever to have true peace

of mind, but he also lives as if he didn't know himself or God or things; and as soon as he stops *being acted on* he stops *being*. On the other hand, the wise man (considered *as* a wise man) is hardly troubled in spirit; and being by a certain eternal necessity conscious of himself and of God and of things, he never stops being, and always possesses true peace of mind.

The road to these things that I have pointed out now seems very hard, but it *can* be found. And of course something that is found so rarely is bound to be hard. For if salvation were ready to hand and could be found without great effort, how could it come about that almost everyone neglects it? But *excellence* is as difficult as it is rare.