

## KNOWING THE ESSENCE OF THE STATE IN SPINOZA'S *TRACTATUS THEOLOGICO-POLITICUS*<sup>1</sup>

Aaron Garrett

*Abstract:* This paper argues that Spinoza's main political writings are concerned, in part, with knowledge of essences as detailed in the *Ethics*. It is further argued that knowledge of the essences of states, and essential properties that belong to states, may be an example of the elusive *scientia intuitiva* or third kind of knowledge. The paper concludes by considering Spinoza's goals in his political writings and the importance of metaphysics and the theory of knowledge more broadly for early modern political philosophers.

Spinoza was both a metaphysician and a political theorist. Furthermore, he was not averse to discussing metaphysics in a work primarily concerned with political theory and vice-versa. Spinoza gave a cryptic and condensed account of some of his basic metaphysical commitments in *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (*TTP*) IV, and he thought that the arguments of the *Tractatus Politicus* (*TP*) followed directly from and were consistent with the *Ethics*.<sup>2</sup> He also stressed the importance of life in the state at the conclusion of Part IV of the *Ethics* (*E* IVP73). But that doesn't mean that the connection between Spinoza's metaphysics and politics is not obscure.<sup>3</sup> In this paper, I will argue that Spinoza saw one connection between metaphysics and political theory in an important type of knowledge -- the adequate knowledge that we have of essences -- and furthermore that he saw this knowledge as crucial for establishing truths about politics.

That an early modern philosopher would seek to establish certain, or at least highly probable, political or moral propositions, laws, and rules is not surprising. For Locke 'where there is no property there is no justice' was paradigmatically certain knowledge. Hobbes, Pufendorf, Leibniz, and many others sought to establish true,<sup>4</sup> certain, and fundamental natural laws. Indeed this was a distinctive feature of much early modern political theorizing -- to educe natural laws of human interaction on the model of the new science and new philosophy (Baconian, Cartesian, Gassendian, etc.) that were as certain as the truths of mathematics or of natural science. Hobbes, Locke, Pufendorf, and a host of others all had theories of knowledge which they relied on to establish certain, or at least stable, political propositions, laws, and rules.

In this essay I will argue that Spinoza attempted to establish a certain proposition about politics and I will try to show how he used his distinctive metaphysics and account of knowledge to do so. I hope that it will elucidate something valuable about both. In the first part of the essay I will describe Spinoza's account of what it is to belong to an essence and connect it to his account of knowledge. I will go into a fair amount of detail both because it is interesting in and of itself and to establish a few important features of

essence for what follows. In the second part of the paper, I will give a brief account of how the structure of the *TTP* draws in turn on different kinds of knowledge leading the reader from lower, suspect types of knowledge to higher, certain and true types of knowledge. In the third section of the paper I will argue that a primary philosophical goal for Spinoza in writing the *TTP* was to establish that we know one particular proposition concerning the essence of a singular thing. In the brief concluding final section I will make a general remark about a consequence of my view.

My claim that the *TTP* moves hand and hoof with Spinoza's metaphysical concerns, and that it has a metaphysical goal, should be surprising. Despite the metaphysical discussion in Chapter IV, the *TTP* is normally treated separately from the metaphysical bits in Spinoza's *Ethics* and had a different intended audience. Taking the *TTP* to have metaphysics in the background opens me to the charge that Spinoza leveled against Maimonides' readings of Scripture in the *TTP* – that I am discovering philosophy where it is not to be found except by those who wish too zealously to discover it.

But nevertheless I will argue that it has a goal connected with Spinoza's metaphysics and account of knowledge – to establish a proposition about the liberty of philosophizing to a sufficient degree that anyone with a broadly Cartesian orientation in the theory of knowledge would accept it, while at the same time showing that this proposition satisfies Spinoza's own definition of an essential truth and is perhaps an example of the elusive *scientia intuitiva* or third kind of knowledge. I will also hint at the end of the paper why Spinoza might have been interested in doing this, since it seems a pretty strange goal for a political work. But, first we need to consider what pertains to an essence.

## I.

In *Ethics* Part II, Spinoza defined 'what pertains to the essence of a thing' as 'that which given the thing necessarily is posited, and that which absent the thing is necessarily taken away; or that which, is neither able to be or to be conceived without the thing, and conversely that without which the thing is neither able to be nor be conceived', (*E* IID2). Although this is a definition of what pertains to or belongs to an essence, for simplicity I will refer to it as Spinoza's definition of essence (although the distinction will be relevant later in the paper). The definition has two legs or parts. The first leg of the definition is 'that which given (*ponitur*) the thing is necessarily posited, that which absent (*sublato*) the thing is necessarily taken away (*tollitur*)'. It does not make any reference to predication, and it need not be construed as establishing a predicate over and above any other sort of thing or state that pertains to some essence (although I will sometimes loosely refer to what belongs to an essence as a predicate or a property). The second leg is 'that which, is neither able to be or to be conceived without the thing, and conversely that without which the thing is neither able to be nor be conceived'.

First, both legs follow from Spinoza's version of the principal of sufficient reason (PSR)<sup>5</sup> – 'For each thing there must be assigned a cause, or reason, for either why it exists or why it does not exist. For example, if a triangle exists, a reason or

cause must be given (*dari*) why it exists; but if it does not exist, a reason or cause must be given (*dari*), which impedes it from existing, or which takes away (*tollat*) its existence’.

There are many causes or reasons for a triangles existence or non-existence. One might think of the definition of essence as providing a special subset of causes and reasons for a particular individuals existence or non-existence – internal causes or reasons. If we have a triangle, and we have something – X -- that belongs to a triangle, that X belongs to the essence of the triangle if it has a unique role in the triangle’s existence or non-existence and is inseparable from the triangle itself.

The first leg of the definition is relatively straightforward. Spinoza presents it in two parts, which together instantiate a bi-conditional or a necessary and sufficient condition.<sup>6</sup> To see how it works consider the example of Rembrandt’s ‘Storm on the Sea of Galilee’. When we have ‘Storm on the Sea of Galilee’ in front of us then that special Rembrandt brush stroke of yellow in the cloud above the ship needs to be there as well. Conversely if there is no ‘Storm on the Sea of Galilee’, there is no brushstroke.<sup>7</sup> As we shall see in a moment the restriction is problematic, but it is at least initially intuitive.

The second leg is a bit trickier. This leg of the definition asserts that if some A pertains to the essence of some B then not only is it the case that A is necessary for B to be, and that A is necessary in order to conceive B, but the converse as well. To return to the example, no ‘Storm on the Sea of Galilee’ implies no brushstroke and no conception of the brushstroke, while no brushstroke and no conception of ‘Storm on the Sea of Galilee’ implies no ‘Storm on the Sea of Galilee’ at all.

If we delete ‘conception’ we have a negative bi-conditional that implies the first leg.<sup>8</sup> So ‘conception’ must either be redundant or must add something. But since Spinoza’s use of ‘or’ suggests that the two requirements are extensionally equivalent, we have a puzzle. The puzzle is solved, at least provisionally, by remembering that the PSR involves causes *and* reasons. We might think of the first leg as a general condition which holds of anything that belongs to an essence and the second leg as specifying that this general condition can be construed as causes (being) or reasons (conceiving). On this reading the two legs are extensionally equivalent but have different roles.

An additional important feature of the definition of essence can be seen with the following example. Imagine that whenever ‘Storm on the Sea of Galilee’ appears Mondrian’s painting ‘Composition 10’<sup>9</sup> appears, and whenever ‘Storm on the Sea of Galilee’ is taken away ‘Composition 10’ is taken away. Following the first leg of the definition of essence, ‘Storm on the Sea of Galilee’ would pertain to the essence of ‘Composition 10’ and vice-versa. I will refer to them as ‘co-essential’. There is no limit on the number of properties that might be co-essential. Indeed I think that for Spinoza everything that pertains to an essence will be co-essential with everything else that pertains to an essence.<sup>10</sup> To see that this is a plausible interpretation, think of the co-essential manner in which justice and omnipotence

might belong to the essence of God for a more traditional theist than Spinoza.<sup>11</sup> If there is maximal justice there is omnipotence. If there is not maximal justice there is not omnipotence. If both, there is God. If neither, there is no God.

Why does the requirement take the form of a bi-conditional or a necessary and sufficient condition? In the *Principles of Descartes Philosophy (PDP)*, published seven years before the *TTP*, Spinoza offered Descartes' essence requirement as 'if something can be removed from a thing, while that thing remains intact, it does not constitute the things essence, but if something, on being taken away, takes the thing away, it does constitute the things essence', (*PDP* IIA2). It is not clear exactly where in Descartes' writings Spinoza got this requirement from, but Descartes' famous wax argument from the *Second Meditation* is a good example. If the honeycomb odor of a piece of bee's wax is goes away we still have a piece of bee's wax. But if the extension of the bee's wax goes away entirely – it ceases to exist. Therefore extension does pertain to the essence and odor doesn't.

Spinoza saw that Descartes' definition of essence led to the following problem (*E* IIP10CS). Assume A pertains to the essence of some B. Now take A= God and B = Man. If there is no God, then there is no man. Fair enough. But, since 'A = God and B = Man' satisfies Descartes' essence requirement, then God would belong to the essence of man. Spinoza took this to be an absurd conclusion, and therefore structured his own requirement as a bi-conditional to rule out this possibility.<sup>12</sup> Or to put it differently, Descartes offers us a sufficient condition but not a necessary one, and what belongs to an essence should be necessary and sufficient in order to avoid merely sufficient essential properties or qualities or states or in order to provide a distinctive internal cause of that particular individual.

By adding the first leg of the restriction, Spinoza has avoided one serious problem, but at a cost. The definition of essence is *severely restrictive* insofar as only unique predicates can properly belong to an essence. A yellow patch *qua* yellow patch can't belong to 'Storm on the Sea of Galilee' because many paintings have yellow patches. Why? We can also conceive a yellow patch when 'Composition 10' is given but we won't be conceiving of 'Storm on the Sea of Galilee' (violating the conception requirement). Indeed it is hard to imagine what might satisfy the requirement beyond other than 'a yellow patch painted in just the unique way that the yellow patch in 'Storm on the Sea of Galilee' is painted'. But that seems at best vapid, and at worst circular. So what could satisfy the definition of essence in a non-trivial way?

I noted earlier that Spinoza would have never used a yellow patch as an example of something that belongs to an essence, and this is an important fact about how Spinoza understood essences. For Spinoza, sense knowledge (and testimony) was 'imagination', the first kind of knowledge and the very lowest grade. Imagination was distinguished from two other kinds of knowledge in that imagination was inadequate and false and the other two kinds of knowledge, reason (the second kind of knowledge) and intuitive knowledge (the third kind of knowledge), were adequate and true.<sup>13</sup>

Spinoza identified reason with generality – what is equally in the part and the whole – in opposition to the particularity of sense knowledge. So general, regular, causal, and law-governed knowledge of physical objects of the sort we have in physics, and knowledge of logic that provides laws governing the interaction of ideas, would both be reason or knowledge of the second kind. Since Spinoza was an even more avid exponent of *a priori* physics than Descartes<sup>14</sup>, there was a great deal we could know in general about the physical world without needing to draw on sense-experience.

Now to return to the definition of essence, we can see that predicates of fairly general and abstract essences, like the essence of a mathematical figure, might satisfy it. For example a triangle is (1) a closed figure with three and only three straight lines. It is also (2) a closed figure with three vertices. (1) and (2) are necessary and sufficient conditions of one another but conceptually distinct. Or to give an example from Spinoza's metaphysics, whenever you have attributes you have substance and vice-versa. So if we are seeking examples of essences we might know, we can find them in mathematics (albeit rather thin) and in metaphysics (far more robustly).

The question, though, that Spinoza invites with the third kind of knowledge is how to bring the *a priori* knowledge we have of general physical laws and laws of thought to bear on particular things. He defined the third kind of knowledge as "a kind of knowing which proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the [NS: formal] essence of things," (E IIP40S2). A triangle is a thing (albeit a somewhat diminished thing). The knowledge we have of the essence of a triangle arises from knowledge we have of common features of the laws of extension (lines, vertices, closed) and the general rules that govern them. Spinoza takes extension to be an attribute, and so our knowledge of the essence of the triangle arises from formal properties of the attribute of extension and thus might qualify as the third kind of knowledge whereas our knowledge of a geometrical demonstration involving triangles is likely the second kind of knowledge.

This is, again, pretty feeble knowledge in part because a triangle is an ontologically impoverished thing.<sup>15</sup> Spinoza primarily discusses the third kind of knowledge in the second part of Part V of the *Ethics* (E VP25-33). In these passages he connects the third kind of knowledge to the love of God, to the greatest striving, satisfaction, and virtue of the mind, and lastly to the eternity of the mind. Contemplating the essences of triangles seems to fall a bit short of this. But it is hard to see what else might qualify given the restrictiveness of the definition of essence.

Furthermore Spinoza claims in the proposition directly prior to the discussion of the third kind of knowledge in Part V that 'the more we understand singular<sup>16</sup> things, the more we understand God' (E VP24). We can, again, understand particular triangles through the knowledge we have of the essences of triangles. But it is hard to see what else we might have knowledge of since most of the typical particular things we have knowledge of we access via the senses or testimony, and consequently the knowledge is inadequate and cannot be the source of adequate knowledge.

What we want is knowledge of the essences of singular things, independent of the senses or testimony, which arises from general, adequate *a priori* knowledge. Examples of particular essences that we know are few and far between in Spinoza's *Ethics*, they are mostly confined to highly general knowledge of definitions of metaphysical entities – substance, attributes, God, etc.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately none of these are singular things.

Fortunately, Spinoza does give examples of knowledge of a singular thing that satisfy the definition of essence. Surprisingly they are found in the *TTP* and the *TP*. The first example is the epigram on the first page of Spinoza's *TTP* and then repeated in the 'Preface':

Not only can it be conceded the liberty of philosophizing preserve (*salva*) Piety and Peace in the Republic: But unless freedom of philosophizing is present Piety and Peace cannot arise (*tolli*) in a Republic.

When "liberty of philosophizing" is present 'Piety and Peace in the Republic' is preserved. From this it follows that when 'freedom of philosophizing' is/are present in the republic 'Piety and Peace' is/are present in the Republic. When 'freedom of philosophizing' is taken away then 'Piety and Peace' are taken away. This establishes a bi-conditional between 'freedom of philosophizing' and 'Piety and Peace'. In the 'Preface' Spinoza adds that showing the truth of this epigram is the goal of the *TTP*.

Spinoza's wording in the epigram is not identical to his wording at *Ethics* IID2,<sup>18</sup> an issue I will return to in the conclusion of this essay. But fortunately Spinoza uses the exact wording in the *TP*<sup>19</sup>:

there are certain conditions that, if operative (*ponitur*), entail that the subjects will respect and fear their commonwealth, while the absence (*sublato*) of these conditions entails the annulment of that fear and respect together with this, the destruction (*tollitur*) of the commonwealth. Thus, in order that a commonwealth should be in control of its own right, it must preserve the causes that foster fear and respect; otherwise it ceases to be a commonwealth. *TP* IV.4<sup>20</sup>

The verbs *tollere* and *ponere* and the use of *sublato* are the same as those used by Spinoza in his definition of essence in the *Ethics*, and the overall structure is the same. Spinoza also presumes that a reader of the *TP* (unlike the *TTP*) will have read the *Ethics* and consequently that the reader will be aware of the formula. I conclude that Spinoza meant us to see reverence and fear as pertaining to the essence of the State under certain conditions, i.e., he took it to be an example of knowledge of the essence of a singular thing. I am interested in this passage both to provide evidence that the *TTP* passage was meant to satisfy the definition of essence and to show us how Spinoza understood the knowledge of the essence of a particular state. I will return to the passage towards the end of Section III.

But before turning to the *TTP*, one final point about essence. Although the *TP* passage makes plausible that Spinoza thought of the State as the sort of singular thing we have knowledge of the essence of, it is not clear how general rules or properties that apply to the part and the whole or a particular thing – in the sense that general properties of extension might apply to the essence of a particular triangle – apply to fear and reverence or to piety and peace. It's not even really clear how they apply in the case of triangles!

Two helpful emendations are in order. First, I have presented 'pertains to an essence' rather starkly, i.e., now you have it, now you don't. This was the source of some of the perplexities connected with it. But there's no reason why it couldn't come in degrees given the wording of Spinoza's definition. The more an object has the essential properties of a triangle the more it instantiates the essence of a triangle and the more triangular it is. If it has the properties maximally, it is a triangle to the highest degree. If it lacks them wholly, it is not a triangle at all. Most triangular objects are somewhere in between.<sup>21</sup>

Second, Spinoza provides an important proviso in the *Ethics* that might begin to explain what sorts of particulars we might be able to know. In Part II, Spinoza asserts that 'If something is common to, and peculiar to, the human Body and certain external bodies by which the human body is usually affected, and is equally in the part and in the whole of each of them, its idea will be adequate in the Mind', (*E* IIP39). So, strict generality is not required for adequacy – that something is in *all* parts and wholes of an attribute – but common to the human body and *certain* external bodies is sufficient. Spinoza's corollary to the proposition is 'from this it follows that the Mind is the more capable of perceiving many things adequately as its Body has many things in common with other bodies', (*E* IIP39C).<sup>22</sup>

## II.

Yet, when we look in the *TTP* we do not find much discussion of reason much the less extended treatments of political metaphysics or any mention of the third kind of knowledge. Instead we find a great deal of discussion of Scripture. In the *TTP* Spinoza, famously, argued that Scripture ought to be evaluated with reference to the beliefs and context of the prophets who were said to have written it. 'One must know the beliefs of those who originally related them and left us written records of them and one must distinguish between these beliefs and what could have been present to their senses' (*TTP* VI). Spinoza criticized philosophical interpreters, notably Maimonides and Lodewijk Meyer, who argued that a judicious reader would find a full-fledged logic, physics and metaphysics hidden within Scripture. He challenged the implicit assumption in such interpretations that the failure to understand a deep philosophical truth in a text was a function of the failure of the interpreter. In doing so he separated imagination from reason in the study of Scripture.

For example, in his discussion of ‘works of God’ in *TTP I* Spinoza examined the different uses of this expression in different books of Scripture and showed that the simplest explanation that takes account of the breadth of the expression – used to describe everything from Prophets to bread to temples to mountains – and the beliefs of those who use the expression is that it just means out of the ordinary or surpassing ordinary understanding. That is the most parsimonious explanation, with no need for recourse to deep philosophical truths of any sort. Any deeper or more sophisticated interpretation would depend on an extra and unnatural unwarranted premise. This analysis (and others like it in the *TTP*) provided object lessons for his readership in how not to confuse reason and imagination due to the object reasoned about – Scripture.

If that’s all there was to it, fanciful misinterpretations and a bit too much philosophy where none should be found, then Scripture could be ignored, the way we ignore people’s guilty pleasures in spy novels or techno pop. But of course the uses to which Scripture are put are sometimes very destructive. It can lend authority to and covers the interested actions of dangerous politicians and theocrats. It can destabilize States and make life awful for the most reasonable citizens. In this sense it is very different from a spy novel.

Scripture can be dangerous, but how best to loosen the grip it has? First, we lessen its grip and diminish the standing it gives to divisive politicians by showing that some destructive ideas given sanction by reference to authority are *merely* ideas of the imagination, just like all other ideas of the imagination. This is an attempt to diminish the influence of a false idea or even dislodge it by showing that it lacks any sort of warranted authority.

Of course this won’t diminish the authority Scripture has over everyone, only those who care about warrant – Calvinist mobs do not often mob for logic lessons.<sup>23</sup> But it would hopefully diminish its grip on liberal Calvinist intellectuals and elites such as Spinoza’s correspondent Lambert van Velthuysen. Velthuysen was one of the main advocates for Hobbes’ political philosophy in Holland<sup>24</sup> and wrote an important work advocating for a Cartesian approach to method, God, and mind a year before the appearance of Spinoza’s *Principles of Descartes’ Philosophy*.<sup>25</sup> He was politically and religiously powerful to boot, having been made political commissary by the city council of Utrecht – the representative of civil power at the church consistory. This resulted in a controversy with the orthodox Calvinists and the publication that year of the critical *Tractaet van de Afgoderye (Treatise on Superstition)* and later four further responses to his orthodox critics where he promoted freedom of Scriptural interpretation.<sup>26</sup> Velthuysen appreciated the need to separate imagination from reason and so might be amenable to Spinoza’s arguments.<sup>27</sup> I will discuss Velthuysen again in the conclusion of the essay.

Second, imagination can be used to actively counteract destructive beliefs in order to free up the minds of those capable of reason but impeded in its exercise by false beliefs. In ethics and politics, inadequate ideas can be used to offset other more destructive inadequate ideas.<sup>28</sup> Political elites can use Scriptural authority to stop the stupid and violent from impeding the state. The resultant security will take the minds of those capable of reason off of troubling ideas of the imagination – the fear of a nearby mob of

the stupid and violent for example – that might otherwise distract them. The imagination can be used to check or undermine false beliefs and to support proper reasoning about them.

These two ways of dealing with the problem of religious authority – by diminishing it as in the ‘works of God’ example and by using it to positive ends as Spinoza argues for in connection with law and morality for the multitude-- correspond to two techniques of the imagination that Spinoza describes in the *Ethics* – diminishing the force of the imagination and using our natural reliance on images to counter our destructive tendencies. These techniques are correctives to both deficiencies, to diminish the force of faulty beliefs and to counter them with less destructive beliefs dislodges bad beliefs and allows us to reason more freely. But they are techniques of the imagination that although in service to reason, do not give rise to reason in and of themselves.

### III.

Consequently, through the lens of Spinoza’s theory of knowledge I see much of *TTP* I-XV, and some passages in *TTP* XVI-XX, as underbrush clearing in the following sense.<sup>29</sup> Many of the earlier parts of the *TTP* are concerned with removing impediments in readers who are capable of reason but in the thrall of destructive religious beliefs. If a reader thought that Mosaic prophecy offered reasons for the laws of a particular Commonwealth (or for its existence), they would discover in the *TTP* that prophecy is, in its nature, the product of imagination and so be disabused of a number of actual and potential false beliefs which might keep them from being able to properly reason about politics. Once these beliefs were removed or offset, rational arguments could then be made with less fear of their being misconstrued. Thus, we can view *TTP* I-XV as providing among many other things a Treatise on the Emendation of the Political Intellect, a preparation for reasoned political thinking.

Where in the *TTP* do we find the reasoned political thinking for which the reader has been prepared? The separation of philosophy and theology is one of the main achievements of the work as asserted in *TTP* XIII-XV. Belief in the authority of the prophets and in Scripture is not rational, it is not capable of mathematical certitude, but because of this it is wholly distinct from and independent of reason and vice-versa, just as for any well-informed Cartesian the independence of sense-experience and reason points to a real distinction between mind and body. Once the separation between philosophy and theology has been established Spinoza begins to present us with positive, general arguments, i.e. reasons. Consequently much reason, as opposed to imagination, is to be found in *TTP* XVI-XX (although not exclusively).<sup>30</sup>

As noted previously, Spinoza thought that politics – discussions of right, sovereignty, the relative merits of different states, etc. – *could* be treated in a geometrical, rational matter consistent with the arguments of the *Ethics*. A clear example of this in the *TTP* is Spinoza’s discussion of natural right (*TTP* XVI) which stresses that right is a principle common to fish and men. It is a paradigmatic example of a general principle or

knowledge of the second kind, but it doesn't say anything about what belongs to an essence.

Let's return to the epigram, my candidate for knowledge of the third kind.

Not only can it be conceded the liberty of philosophizing  
preserve (*salva*) Piety and Peace of the Republic: But  
unless freedom of philosophizing is present Piety and Peace  
cannot arise (*tolli*) in a Republic.

First, how are the elements connected? The relation to be established is between 'liberty of philosophizing' and the 'Piety and Peace of the Republic'. I take Spinoza to be arguing that 'liberty of philosophizing' belongs to a republic when both 'piety' and 'peace' belong to the republic, and vice-versa. Consequently I take 'liberty of philosophizing' and 'piety' and "peace" to be co-essential of republics in the sense mentioned in Section I – when there's one there's all, when one is missing the others are missing, when there's one there's all and a certain republic, and when either is missing, there is neither nor a certain Republic. I further take them to be internal causes of this certain Republic – they are the distinctive causes and reasons for why and how this certain Republic is the Republic that it is.<sup>31</sup>

But it could be objected that piety, peace, and philosophizing are not unique to peaceful and pious republics and thus should be disqualified at the outset as belonging to the essence and as providing internal, distinctive causes. This objection does not seem fatal, though.

Spinoza holds that 'liberty of philosophizing' – by which he means in this context the capacity to philosophize unimpeded by civil authorities – uniquely pertains to certain republics. Spinoza defines piety in the *Ethics* as 'the desire to do good generated in us by living in accordance with reason'. This is what Spinoza refers to in passing in the *TTP* as inner or inward piety.<sup>32</sup> But the primary sense of piety discussed in the earlier chapters of the *TTP*, is external piety – the outward forms of obedience to God and God's laws. Spinoza does not define peace, but he clearly means public peace insofar as he refers to it extensively in *TTP XX*. It seems any or all three of these might be present in an enlightened monarchy.

I think the problem is straightforwardly resolved when we see that 'liberty of philosophizing' and 'piety and peace' come in degrees. When a State has them most, when they pertain most to its essence, it is a certain republic – let's say a democratic republic 'wherein all are absolutely bound to the laws of the country only, and live honestly, have a right in the supreme council and can fill the public offices' (*TP XI.3*). It is not a republic to the degree it lacks them. It is not a republic at all if it wholly lacks them.

In the *TP* Spinoza argues that all peaceful and pious forms of government are

peaceful and pious insofar as their power comes from unified people. All forms of government are defined by the right of the commonwealth, which is derived from the power of the people (*TP* III.9). The more unified a commonwealth is, the more it is ‘guided as by a single mind’. And the more the aims of the commonwealth are rational and seek the good for all me, the more it is ‘guided by a single mind’. A democratic republic is the most unified and most powerful of commonwealths in that it is the most ‘guided by a single mind’ -- the citizens are sovereign.

Notably, when Spinoza describes the structures of aristocracies and monarchies in the *TP*, he describes them in terms of features exemplified in democratic republics.<sup>33</sup> He concludes the discussion of monarchy by stressing that a monarchy will be best preserved and most powerful when the people are free and ‘the king’s power is determined only by the people’s power and depends on the people for its maintenance’, (*TP* VII.13). The two types of aristocracies are each defined in terms of how they differ from democracy, which is presented as the most absolute form of government and republic (*TP* VIII.1), and they are distinguished and graded accordingly. Furthermore, Spinoza seems to hold then that monarchies and aristocracies have properties that make them stable and powerful just insofar as they are more or less like an absolute democracy. So we have grades of commonwealths, and they are more powerful insofar as they are more democratic republic-like.

They are also powerful insofar as they possess peace, piety and the freedom of philosophizing. Here Spinoza argues, contra Hobbes, that peace is not just the absence of war but ‘a virtue which comes from strength of mind’ and the most peaceful state and best is also one where men live by ‘reason, true virtue and the life of the mind’, (*TP* V.5). This suggests that the democratic republic will also have maximal freedom of philosophizing and piety. Any particular republic is the sort of republic it is insofar as it has the properties that pertain to the essence of a republic.

So, insofar as a commonwealth approximates a democratic republic, it has the piety, peace, and freedom of philosophizing. Insofar as it lacks them it is not democratic republic-like. An enlightened monarch is enlightened insofar as she or he responded to the needs of the people, and is powerful insofar as the people are virtuous, peaceful, and follow reasons for the common good. An enlightened monarchy is thus enlightened insofar as it is like a democratic republic. Even more strongly the more democratic republic-like an association is, the more it is a commonwealth.<sup>34</sup> Conversely the more it is a monarchy the less a commonwealth at all, less stable, peaceful and powerful.<sup>35</sup>

How does Spinoza justify this, though, in the *TTP*? First, as I’ve noted, in *TTP* XIII-XV Spinoza argues from the distinction between imagination and reason that there is no relation between philosophy and the belief in Scripture or prophecy, that philosophy and belief in scripture are wholly independent. Since there is no

relation between the two at all, there is no way that philosophy can disturb external piety. Therefore, worries about the effect of philosophy on public order are wholly misguided. Still, this does not provide a positive reason for why the liberty of philosophizing should be allowed. But what it does show is that the 'liberty of philosophizing' and 'piety and peace' do not conflict, and therefore can be co-essential predicates. Further arguments, though, need to be educed for the bi-conditional.

Spinoza also famously claims at the opening of Chapter XVII that 'Nobody can so completely transfer to another all his right, and consequently his power, as to cease to be a human being, nor will there ever be a sovereign power that can do all it pleases'.<sup>36</sup> He offers an empirical justification of this claim: no tyrant has managed to ever really divest the citizens entirely to the point that he no longer feared them. But I think this claim is warranted by reason as well, and helps to establish the bi-conditional.

To be a human is to think and act in a way that expresses a human essence and affective structure. If one *wholly* gives over to another how one thinks, acts, and feels one no longer will have the essential properties *of being human*. So one cannot wholly transfer one's right, because to do is to cease to have the distinctive passions, affects, and reasons which make us human.<sup>37</sup>

The epigram that opens the *TTP* does not claim that liberty of thought nor thought as such is inalienable (even if it is as implied in *TTP XX*), nor as Locke and Bayle would later argue that freedom of religious belief is essential to the State, but rather liberty of philosophizing. Spinoza identifies philosophizing with reason and not with imagination. So although it is true that freedom of thought cannot be wholly extinguished, only liberty of philosophizing is the kind of thought that is wholly independent of belief in Scripture.

So now Spinoza has established both that liberty of philosophizing, insofar as it is a subset of liberty of thought, cannot be extinguished and it cannot disturb. Still, why would a despot not choose to engage in the fruitless but perhaps pleasurable enterprise of trying to extinguish philosophical beliefs in one's subjects? The imagination cannot cause the mind to have rational ideas but it certainly can and does impede the forming of rational ideas – so at the very least it might be fun to make the conditions for philosophizing difficult!

External causes mediated by the imagination -- whips, prods, edicts, and so on down the list – are only efficacious in proportion to our susceptibility to allow the imagination and our passions to overwhelm our reason. Even Don Quixote (and Cervantes), not much of a philosopher, was capable of using the imagination to counter all sorts of depressing experience and be relatively happy. True philosophers should be the least susceptible, since by definition they have the most adequate ideas and the least inadequate ideas.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, philosophers will be the class of people for whom it will be most pointless to attempt to stop them

from thinking the thoughts they tend to think. In other words, whatever holds in this regard of thought in general will hold all the more strongly for philosophical thought.

If this is the case, then it is plausible to think that the attempt to control philosophy would both undermine piety and peace. If the goal of life in the state is, minimally, to ‘to live securely with a healthy body’ then the attempt to pursue the impossible goal of extirpating philosophical thoughts can only be destructive of this goal. Spinoza gives a number of examples of these negative consequences, for example, turning dissenters into martyrs and thus fomenting internal dissension. This will in turn lead to impiety and disobedient beliefs of all sorts that will further undermine the state. Furthermore the most dishonest and criminally minded will be the least affected in that they will be the least driven to present their beliefs honestly and publicly, so the laws will have the least effect on the most destructive (*TTP XX*). Concentrating on the intellectuals has the unintended consequence that more brutal conflicts between more brutal and less intellectual factions will emerge.<sup>39</sup> Even in the most imaginatively controlled and controlling state, the Mosaic theocracy, conflicts arose leading to great internal dissent (*TTP XX*). These arguments provide pragmatic reasons not to attempt to dislodge beliefs in general, and the arguments will hold all the more in the case of recalcitrant or even imperturbable philosophical beliefs.

This is the line of argument that Spinoza uses to support the negative side of the bi-conditional establishing his definition of essence. But what about the positive claim that the more liberty of philosophizing the more peace and piety in a Republic? One justification might be along the following lines. Peace is a property of individuals and of republics insofar as they are made up of individuals – a peaceful republic will be one with the many peace-seeking and peaceful individuals.<sup>40</sup> Philosophers are the most peaceful individuals in the sense both that they are undisturbed by others and the sense that they are least likely to seek to disturb others because according to Spinoza they would then become hateful and disturb themselves. As philosophers they desire most of all to philosophizing, and philosophizing is an activity that by its very nature does not disturb. When more philosophers, or those who reason, are present in a republic, then more peaceful individuals will de facto be present. Liberty of philosophizing will allow those capable of reason to engage in reason with the least impediments of the imagination.

Now it might be reasonably objected that this is a justification, but not one found in the *TTP*! I think, though, that this justification is tacitly made in *TTP XX*. Spinoza frequently points out that rational and philosophical citizens will obey laws, not cause public disruptions, and contribute to the health of the polity.<sup>41</sup> ‘The real disturbers of the peace are those who, in a free state, seek to curtail the liberty of judgment which they are unable to tyrannize over’, (*TTP XX*) i.e., those who attempt to curtail the liberty of philosophizing by stirring up the mob. I take this contrast – philosophers more peace, piety and prosperity, seditious bigots less

peace, piety, and prosperity – as providing this tacit argument.

So when freedom of philosophizing is given peace is promoted. When freedom of philosophizing is taken away and tyrants or seditious bigots reign, then peace is taken away. What about piety? As we have just seen, philosophy cannot undermine non-cognitive obedience grounded in Scripture or imagination because of the gap between reason and imagination. But conversely, when freedom of philosophizing is present there will always tend to be more internal and external piety. The presence of philosophers possessing adequate ideas and justified reasons for their actions can only lend support to that sort of obedience to Scripture that is most peaceful and pious. This is what Spinoza is attempting with the *TTP*, and one can only think that there would only be more support for this if there were more philosophers, a goal which could only be aided by the freedom of philosophizing.

If we accept these arguments as plausible (if sketchy) and plausibly Spinoza's, then what kind of knowledge have we now acquired? All of the arguments seem at best to be arguments from the second kind of knowledge or reason, with additional historical and pragmatic evidence added for support. But in establishing the bi-conditional on which the epigram rests I want to suggest that we have an example of Spinoza's third kind of knowledge – ‘a kind of knowing which proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the [NS: formal] essence of things’, (*E* IIP40S2).

First, we have adequate knowledge of the essence of a thing – knowledge of co-essential predicates of a particular republic. To support this claim I would like to examine the passage from the *TP* more closely and then turn to the passage from the *TTP*. First the passage from the *TP* in context:

[1.] For if a commonwealth were not bound by the laws or rules without which the commonwealth would not be a commonwealth, then it would have to be regarded not as a natural thing but as a chimera. So a commonwealth does wrong when it does, or suffers to be done, things that can cause its own downfall; and we then say that it does wrong in the sense in which philosophers or doctors say that Nature does wrong, and it is in this sense we can say that a commonwealth does wrong when it does something contrary to the dictates of reason. [2.] For it is when a commonwealth acts from the dictates of reason that it is most fully in control of its own right (Section 7 of the previous Chapter). Insofar, then, as it acts contrary to reason, it falls short of its own self, or does wrong. This can be more clearly understood if we reflect that when we say that very man has the power to do whatever he likes with an object over which he has right, this power has to be limited not only by the potency of the agent but also by the suitability of that which is

the object of the action. If, for example, I say that I have the right to do whatever I like with this table, I am hardly likely to mean that I have the right to make this table eat grass. Similarly, although we say that men are not in control of their own right but are subject to the right of the commonwealth, we do not mean that men lose their human nature and assume another nature, with the result that the commonwealth has the right to make men fly, or -- and this is just as impossible -- to make men regard as honorable things that move them to ridicule or disgust. [3.] **No, what we mean is this, that there are certain conditions that, if operative, entail that the subjects will respect and fear their commonwealth, while the absence of these conditions entails the annulment of that fear and respect together with this, the destruction of the commonwealth.** [4.] Thus, in order that a commonwealth should be in control of its own right, it must preserve the causes that foster fear and respect; otherwise it ceases to be a commonwealth. For if the rulers or ruler of the state runs drunk or naked with harlots through the streets acts on the stage, openly violates or holds in contempt those laws that he himself has enacted, it is no more possible for him to preserve the dignity of sovereignty than for something to be and not be at the same time. Then again, to slaughter subjects, to despoil them, to ravish maidens and the like turns fear into indignation, and consequently the civil order into a condition of war. *TP IV*<sup>42</sup>

In the first section of the passage [1.] Spinoza asserts that a commonwealth is a natural thing with natural laws, and these laws are the necessary condition of the commonwealth. This is in implicit contrast with Hobbes' claims that a sovereign is above the law and that a commonwealth is an *artificial* man. Insofar as a commonwealth is a natural thing its laws are not arbitrary but necessarily determine how the commonwealth might become more powerful or might cease to exist, just as the laws of medicine determine what will make a body sick or healthy. A commonwealth is powerful and healthy insofar as it follows the dictates of reason, and it becomes sick and dies insofar as it goes against them.

In the second section of the passage [2.], Spinoza provides an important proviso. Commonwealths are made up of men, and consequently the laws governing commonwealths are restricted by human nature. A commonwealth cannot make men do what is impossible -- for example wholly give up their right -- in the same sense that one cannot make a table eat grass. The restrictions of human nature are given by the psychology of the affects.

Humans cannot honor what they feel disgust for due to the structure of their affects, regardless of education or socialization. The operative word is *cannot*. A human cannot respect a drunken sovereign any more than a table can eat grass

since what it is to be human (in part) is to have the general affective structure – the affections, likes and dislikes – that humans have human desires as opposed to insect lusts (IIP57S). To have this affective structure is to be human. Consequently any larger structure made up of humans, a commonwealth for example, will be restricted by the affective structure of human beings.

This explains the third and fourth sections of the passage. The “certain conditions” are the causes that foster fear and respect in the commonwealth. When these causes are present, the commonwealth flourishes, and when they are absent, the commonwealth dissolves. [3.] is in the form of the first leg of the definition of essence.

Spinoza has not specified all of the causes, but he gives a few examples of actions of sovereigns that diminish fear and respect. The examples are taken from Tacitus’ account of the reign of Nero in the *Annals*, so we can take this as an empirical case supporting his correlation.<sup>43</sup> He seems to suggest that when sovereigns act in ways that bring forth disgust, this has general consequences for the commonwealth as a whole.

Let’s return to Spinoza’s definition of the third kind of knowledge -- "a kind of knowing which proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the [NS: formal] essence of things," (*E* IIP40S2).

This knowledge proceeds from more general features of the attribute of thought and extension. Through knowing more essences in the attributes – *conatus*, mind, the ratios that organize bodies, and so forth – we can know the structure of human psychology.

It might be objected that Spinoza wrote in *Ethics* VP24 ‘the more we understand singular things, the more we understand God’ and derived it from IP25C where he stated that particular things were modes which expressed God’s attributes in a particular and determinate way.<sup>44</sup> This suggests that the third kind of knowledge involves knowledge of particular, determinate things. But is generic knowledge of properties of states really knowledge of particular things? It would seem a more likely candidate for reason or the second kind of knowledge.

Insofar as we are human beings we have ideas and bodies in common. A state is ultimately made up of human beings and certain other bodies, i.e. we who seek to know states are also the stuff of states and states are made up of human minds and human bodies like our own and other bodies chosen for their commonalities with our bodies (computers, meeting tables).<sup>45</sup> In fact the strength of the state depends on the commonality. This is Spinoza’s highly metaphysical version of a Baconian maker’s knowledge argument, we are particularly suited to know some (but not all) features of ourselves (since we have de facto commonalities with them) and so are particularly suited to know what we make and what is made from us.

Perhaps this distinctive kind of knowledge, knowledge of what we are and what follows from what we are, will help us to make sense of Spinoza's infamous explanation of the third kind of knowledge in terms of the fourth proportional (IIP40S2).<sup>46</sup> Imagine you are given three numbers – w, x, and y – and you want to figure out a fourth number z which is to y as x is to w. Merchants who use numbers in their business will multiply x and y and then divide by w. But what warrants this? Some merchants will rely on a rule they learned from a teacher, or will have figured the rule out by trial and error with small numbers. These are both examples of imagination and consequently inadequate, insofar as there is no rational warrant given for a general rule which applies to *all* numbers. The rule can be, and is, proved in Euclidean geometry as a common property of proportional lines. This is a paradigm example of reason, knowledge of something common to the part and the whole – in this case knowledge of common properties of extension. It isn't knowledge of the essence of a particular thing but of all proportional lines.

Spinoza then goes on to note that the Euclidean demonstration is not necessary in the simplest numbers – given 1, 2, 3, no one could fail to see that 6 is the proportional number and 'we see this more clearly because from the ratio itself that the first number has to the second, we deduce the fourth number in a single intuition'. The suggestion seems to be that there is something in the relation of 1 to 2 such that given three we immediately conclude six. The example further seems to suggest that the relation of 3 to 6 just is the relation of 1 to 2 and we see this immediately.

This is consistent with the sort of knowledge I have described above. Insofar as we are human we have immediate access to human desires, interests, etc. Of course this immediate access is often confused, but it can be analyzed, as it is in the *Ethics*, to give rise to the second kind of knowledge or reason. Indeed Spinoza's introduction to the third part of the *Ethics* claims he will do just that – treat human affects in a geometrical manner as if they were lines and planes. This knowledge of human psychology provides the basis for knowledge of larger composites of human beings – commonwealths. We know the essential properties of commonwealths by knowing the essential properties of the human beings that make them up<sup>47</sup> and the rules that unite them.

Consequently we know the macro-properties of a large individual, that a drunken sovereign will lead to the withering of a republic through our knowledge of suitably analyzed human psychology in just the way that we know 6 is to 3 through knowing what 2 to 1-ness is. The most simple properties in this case are directly accessible properties of human psychology that allow us to know more complex entities intuitively.

But even if our knowledge of republics rests on our knowledge of humans, which in turn rests on our metaphysics and metaphysical psychology, is this a particular

republic as objected previously? Our knowledge of human psychology is general so it would seem that the knowledge that follows from it is general. This reveals a disanalogy with the fourth proportional although not one that I think is destructive to the claim that maker's knowledge of commonwealths is an example of the third kind of knowledge. It is not destructive because Spinoza denies the existence of universals and he also holds that general properties amenable to definition instantiate entities otherwise they cannot have a positive definition or essence. This does not mean that they are singular things, but we can know singular things through them in a way that differs from knowing a state under a category of universals.

Now recall the point that just as there are more and less triangular objects so to there are more and less republican states. There are also more or less singular things, the more that the several individual things concur as causes of one effect (*E IID7*) they are a singular thing, the less they do the less they are. This is intuitively plausible – a heap of stones is less a singular thing than a battleship but both are made up of many individual things. The more a state is like a democratic republic, the more it is a state or commonwealth as such, not just the more it is this or that state. To understand a particular state, the Dutch Republic, is to know its features or properties that are shared by other democratic republics. And to know a particular state is to know the degree to which it is a democratic state. The Dutch Republic qua republic just is that degree to which it is a democratic state. This does not imply that we know everything about the singular thing in their particularity (that we know the reasons why the Dutch Republic had the precise amount of citizens it did). We know those positive properties amenable to definition and belonging to the essence of the state insofar as it unites to cause effects (as opposed to those many properties of some of the individuals who make up the state). The security, piety, and stability insofar as they are present to the degree that they are present are perfect examples of this.<sup>48</sup>

Our understanding of these properties involves knowledge of God because although we have immediate access to human minds and affects that doesn't mean that we have adequate knowledge. To properly understand human minds, affects, bodies and what is built from them we need to know about essences, metaphysics, minds and much more. We also need to shed many illusions in order to have this knowledge. In the case of simple numbers they are sufficiently simple that we just *do* know them in a rigorous enough way suitable to immediately seeing the proportional. In the case of human passions and politics it takes a great deal of analysis and underbrush clearing to see these immediate connections. Much theology must be undercut, which deforms our knowledge of both politics and human nature, and our analysis must be honed through careful definitions. But once this is done, we will immediately see that more freedom of philosophizing implies more piety and peace, less implies less, and we will see this *through* our understanding of the basic facts of the natures of creatures like us. And we will know about God and ourselves.

Early in the essay I pointed to an apparent difference in extension between the two legs of the definition of essence. I would like now to suggest that the difference is just apparent and that for Spinoza to pertain to an essence entails conceivability and vice-versa in the sense I have just outlined. To return to our now familiar examples: to be part of the essence of a triangle entails to be conceived through other co-essential predicates, through the essence of the triangle, and vice-versa; to be ‘peaceful and pious’ entails to be conceived with and through ‘liberty of philosophizing’, through the essence of the republic, and vice-versa. These entailments follow from bedrock assumptions in Spinoza’s metaphysics.<sup>49</sup> They are relevant to the present discussion because they point to how Spinoza thinks the third kind of knowledge works. Relations between essences and what belongs to them entail relations of conception that capture them adequately.

Although all essences are conceivable in and of themselves, they may not be accessible to and conceivable by our finite minds. But for those essences that are accessible to our finite minds – general metaphysical facts about the world, *a priori* physics, and adequate features of human life – what belongs to those essences can be known through knowing other things which belong to the essence as well as through knowing the essence to which they belong.<sup>50</sup> So if there is an essence of the state it is knowable, and if it is *accessibly* knowable we can also necessarily have certain and adequate knowledge of what pertains to its essence. The second leg of the definition of essence allows for a science of essences, the third kind of knowledge of the same essences by establishing that to pertain to an essence is to be conceived adequately through it and through what else belongs to the essence.

Spinoza would also draw the further inference that the more there is in common, the more adequate ideas, the more powerful the state, and that democracy (due to the fact that it has the most rational citizens with the most in common) is the most powerful form of government. And this responds to our other worry – the knowledge is not trivial. I want to stress, again, that if this argument is accepted then the metaphysical political investigations of human groups and societies leading to truths about their essences will be a paradigmatic third kind of knowledge.

All this said, even if my argument that the political knowledge discussed above is a candidate for the third kind of knowledge, Spinoza think of it at least<sup>51</sup> as the second kind of knowledge.

#### IV.

I’ve referred to Velthuysen a number of times in this argument. I’ve hinted at the fact that I think that Velthuysen and others like him such as Joachim Nieuwstad the Secretary of Utrecht were the intended audience for the *TTP* – liberal, open-minded, powerful, Hobbesian and Cartesian political elites. I mentioned early in this essay that the

formulation of the epigram for the *TTP* does not as precisely match the essence formula as the passage I've cited from the *TP*. Why?

The answer might be a contingent consequence of the order in which Spinoza wrote these works – the *TP* was written later than the *TTP*, and perhaps it reflects a later wording of the definition of essence since the *Ethics* itself evolved over a long period of time and, like the unfinished *TP*, wasn't published until after Spinoza's death in 1677. But I think the answer is likely connected to the purpose of the *TTP*. Spinoza did not write the *TTP* for his inner circle or for readers of the *Ethics*. So there was no need to state the epigram to precisely conform to his wording in the *Ethics*. Rather, as he did with his basic metaphysical concepts in *TTP* IV, he worded the epigram in a way that he hoped would be acceptable to a range of open-minded readers, but particularly to those of a Cartesian bent who would recognize his approach to Scripture and politics as Cartesian.<sup>52</sup> But at the same time Spinoza would of course only present arguments that he thought were not only convincing to those he wished to convince but also true. Fortunately anything that satisfied Spinoza's definition of essence also satisfied Cartesian definition of essence (but not vice-versa).

Similarly, Spinoza's vagueness about 'certain Republics' allows the theory to apply to the Dutch Republic, in a way amenable to his contemporaries (including active citizens of a more Hobbesian bent like Velthuysen). But at the same time Spinoza's theory holds most of maximal republics, the sort of democracies he began to describe in the *TP* (which, unfortunately for us, he died before he was able to finish) and which he hoped the Dutch Republic might become: more powerful, peaceful, pious, and free. The vagueness is an example of one of Spinoza's favorite philosophical techniques – drawing a potentially favorable readership in and then gradually revealing to your more discerning readership what they are intellectually committed to if they are consistent.<sup>53</sup> In this case a Cartesian should assent to the *TTP* if rigorous and consistent.<sup>54</sup> Eventually they should assent to a full-blown metaphysics of essences and a science of politics with the essence of democracy at its center.

In conclusion, we should not be quick to separate the metaphysical and epistemic commitments that early modern philosophers have from their political theories, or we will not correctly understand what they are up to and why. In the case of Spinoza, by focusing on metaphysics and the theory of knowledge in investigating the *TTP*, a work which is apparently minimally concerned with metaphysics and the theory of knowledge, we see aspects of the political theory and the argumentative structure of his political works which are at first not evident. The converse holds as well. If we accept that political knowledge is one form, and maybe even a paradigmatic form, of knowledge, we will have a very different understanding of the goal and scope of Spinoza's metaphysics theory of knowledge and the import of particular substantive claims (such as *E* IIP39).

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and the students in my past, present, and future Spinoza classes. All translations from Spinoza 2002 except where otherwise noted. Where no translation is given abbreviated references used as noted in the text.

<sup>2</sup> See *TP* I.4-5.

<sup>3</sup> The most influential and interesting attempt to connect the politics and the metaphysics has been in the work of Alexandre Matheron, particularly Matheron 1969 where he argues that Spinoza is committed via his metaphysics of individuation to a republican theory of the state as a powerful, unified individual with a mind and body made up of the common features of the minds and bodies of its citizens. He treats the role of the third kind of knowledge differently than I will, as connected to the community of the wise (cf. ch. 14), but I don't think his treatment conflicts with mine.

<sup>4</sup> I am using true and certain quite loosely here. Obviously true and certain will mean different things to a Hobbist, to a Lockean, or to a Cartesian.

<sup>5</sup> Della Rocca (2008: 95-96).

<sup>6</sup> The definition has the logical form  $[(A \star B) \& (\neg A \star \neg B)]$ . But since  $(\neg A \star \neg B) \equiv (B \star A)$  we have  $(A \star B) \& (B \star A)$  or  $A$  iff  $B$ . The definition includes 'necessarily' but I haven't construed it modally, since I think what Spinoza means by necessarily is captured by logical implication and the bi-conditional.

<sup>7</sup> [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f3/Rembrandt\\_Christ\\_in\\_the\\_Storm\\_on\\_the\\_Lake\\_of\\_Galilee.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f3/Rembrandt_Christ_in_the_Storm_on_the_Lake_of_Galilee.jpg). This example is meant just for illustration; for Spinoza if something belongs to an essence it could not depend on descriptions of sense-experience.

<sup>8</sup>  $[(\neg A \star \neg B) \& (\neg B \star \neg A)]$ , i.e.,  $\neg A$  iff  $\neg B$ . This implies  $A$  iff  $B$ , i.e.,  $[(\neg A \text{ iff } \neg B) \text{ iff } (A \text{ iff } B)]$ .

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/mondrian/comp-10.jpg>

<sup>10</sup> If this were not the case, then we could have an  $x$  and a  $y$  both of which pertain to an essence  $Z$ , but which were not co-essential. That would mean that we could have  $x$  and  $Z$ , but not  $y$ . But then  $y$  would be taken away and  $Z$  would not be taken away which would contradict the assumption.

I take this as a consequence of how Spinoza understands attributes of substance. See D. Garrett 1990.

<sup>11</sup> Velthuisen (1662: 98) gives an example of divine attributes varying in this manner. For Spinoza, justice would not be a divine attribute, but extension and thought would be co-essential in a similar way.

<sup>12</sup> Since we can have  $(A \star \neg B)$ , God but no man, "A = God and B = Man" does not satisfy the first leg of Spinoza's essence requirement  $(A \star B)$ , since if it did we would need to conclude  $(B \& \neg B)$  or a contradiction.

<sup>13</sup> Adequacy is one of the most difficult of Spinoza's concepts to get a handle on, but pervasive and crucial. Spinoza defined an adequate idea as that which 'has all of the properties or intrinsic denominations of a true idea, insofar as it is considered in itself without relation to the object' (*E* IID4). It follows that every true idea is adequate (insofar as by the above definition every true idea has the intrinsic denominations that make for adequacy plus the extrinsic denominations that make for truth) but it does not necessarily follow that every adequate idea is true (in Spinoza's technical sense). For the purposes of this essay think of adequacy as denominating an internal standard of truth

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without correspondence to a referent, for example the formal validity of a deduction or Descartes' clarity and distinctness criteria.

<sup>14</sup> In a letter to Henry Oldenburg, the Secretary of the Royal Society, Spinoza criticized Descartes for using observations to explain the behavior of physical objects which should instead be deduced solely from reason:

'These events cause me to wonder not a little at the rashness of Descartes who says that the reason why the planets next to Saturn (for he thought that its projections were planets, perhaps because he never saw them touch Saturn) do not move may be because Saturn does not rotate on its own axis. For this is not in agreement with his own principles, and he could very easily have explained the cause of the projections from his own principles had he not been laboring under a false preconception, etc.', (Letter 27 in Spinoza (2002: 175-6)).

The letter contains the following implicit argument. (1) Descartes claimed that the planets around Saturn do not move because Saturn does not move, i.e., the observed lack of motion of Saturn's planets must be caused by Saturn's lack of motion. (2) This claim conflicts with Descartes' own metaphysically derived principles. (3) Descartes had unwarrantedly deviated from his metaphysically derived physical principles on the basis of observation. (4) New observations with better instruments show that Saturn has no satellites, and consequently Descartes' unwarranted deviation from his theory was based on mistaken observations. (5) Descartes "could very easily have explained the cause of the projections from his own principles had he not been laboring under a false preconception, etc."

Spinoza does not say that Descartes needed better observational data but rather he was misled away from his rational principles by trusting poor observations. The new observations are consistent with Descartes' metaphysical physics, but these observations are fallible as well. The metaphysical physics can only be warranted on its own rational basis, from common properties of extension.

<sup>15</sup> Triangles and other geometrical figures are mental constructs. See Letter 83.

<sup>16</sup> It is clear from the proof (*E* IP25C) that he is using "singular" and "particular" interchangeably in this context.

<sup>17</sup> It will turn out that the knowledge of essences holds of bodies as well. Thanks to an anonymous reader for pointing this out.

<sup>18</sup> Thanks to Don Garrett for stressing the importance of this point.

<sup>19</sup> Thanks to Piet Steenbakkers for bringing this crucial passage to my attention.

<sup>20</sup> Spinoza (2002: 696-7).

<sup>21</sup> This point is derived from a number of papers by Don Garrett, but most of all from Garrett 2002. I am also greatly indebted to Michael Della Rocca and Justin Steinberg for convincing me that adequacy comes in degrees. An anonymous reader has objected, quite reasonably, that something is either a triangle or not. But objects can be more or less triangular, and they are more or less triangular insofar as they are more or less like a paradigmatic triangle. Put differently, if one says that there are only triangles and not triangles, then a cherry pie is just as triangular as a croissant.

<sup>22</sup> I've used Curley's translation.

<sup>23</sup> I underscore mobs since Calvinist intellectuals were actually very keen on logic lessons.

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<sup>24</sup> See Tuck (1981: 139-140).

<sup>25</sup> Velthuysen 1662.

<sup>26</sup> See C. Secretan “Introduction,” in Velthuysen (1995: 11-15). Velthuysen was also known to be sympathetic to Collegiants, a number of whom belonged to the Spinoza circle.

<sup>27</sup> It is Velthuysen’s seventh rule for philosophizing, preparatory to his account of God and mind – ‘to distinguish well between what is attributed to the senses and what is attributed to reason,’ Velthuysen (1662: 76).

<sup>28</sup> *Ethics* IIP20 is an example of this technique – “He who imagines that what he hates is destroyed will rejoice.”

<sup>29</sup> I stress “much of” and do not mean to imply that there are not many other arguments going on in the *TTP*. What I have offered is one extremely general rubric.

<sup>30</sup> An exception is *TTP* IV.

<sup>31</sup> Thanks to Richard Tuck with help in clarifying this.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *TTP* XIX. Spinoza (2002: 558).

<sup>33</sup> Thanks to Aubree Lopez for making this point explicit for me.

<sup>34</sup> This is a rejection of Hobbes’ claim that democracies and monarchies are equally commonwealths or states, but are not equally stable. Spinoza wants to argue that to be less democratic is to be less stable or peaceful which makes it less of a state or commonwealth since a state or commonwealth is a stable association.

<sup>35</sup> Thanks to Eric Nelson for help in clarifying this point.

<sup>36</sup> This is a core issue of the natural law tradition associated with Grotius. See, in particular Grotius I.3.8.1..

<sup>37</sup> Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that Spinoza’s argument concerns human affects and not more general metaphysical considerations (as I had previously argued). For more see the discussion of paragraph 2 of the passage cited from the *TTP* below.

<sup>38</sup> Spinoza associates the virtues of tenacity and nobility (*E* IIP59) with philosophers. Both tenacity and nobility are aspects of strength of character that follow from having adequate ideas. Tenacity is the desire to preserve one’s being solely from the dictates of reason and nobility the desire to aid others and join them in friendship. The more adequate ideas that someone has the more tenacity and nobility they will have and the less likely they will be to be led astray by the imagination whether it is by bad observations or thumb screws.

<sup>39</sup> Of course, like much else here, this is debatable. Throughout this essay I’m not advocating for Spinoza’s position, but trying to put his arguments in a plausible form not in drastic conflict with the textual evidence.

<sup>40</sup> Justin Steinberg has objected to me that this argument relies on a compositional fallacy, but I think in this case the objection is misguided. Although there might be a polity made up of aggressive individuals who all check each other’s aggressive actions, making for an overall peaceful polity, I can’t see how this would be any more peaceful than a polity made up of a maximal number of maximally peaceful individuals – like Spinoza’s community of the wise (cf. *E* IVP71).

<sup>41</sup> This holds of civil peace but I do not mean to imply that philosophers will not engage in strong debates – just that the debates will not cause sadness and lack of tranquility to

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philosophers or disrupt civic order. Thanks to an anonymous referee for pointing to this distinction.

<sup>42</sup> Spinoza (2002: 696-7). Emphasis and numbers added.

<sup>43</sup> Spinoza provides an *a priori* argument from human nature, and then shows that the argument is supported by the best empirical evidence available.

<sup>44</sup> Spinoza distinguishes between particular things and singular things, but they can be treated together for our purposes.

<sup>45</sup> This argument depends on *Ethics* IIP7 and the physics after IIP15. According to Spinoza there's a particular idea that corresponds to each body and vice-versa in the same sense that each of my mental states correspond to one or more bodily or brain states.

Mental commonalities follow from bodily commonalities and vice-versa.

<sup>46</sup> I rely heavily on Matheron in my discussion, as I do throughout this essay. See Matheron (1986: 125-150). See also A. Garrett (2003: 197-8).

<sup>47</sup> This does not mean that we know the essences of human beings, but rather we know some of what pertains to or belongs to the essences of human beings and this knowledge gives rise to knowledge of the state.

<sup>48</sup> Thanks to Eugene Marshall for helping me to clarify this (to the degree I can)!

<sup>49</sup> This seems to be the best way to make sense of the crucial step to the monism argument, IP5. See D. Garrett 1990.

<sup>50</sup> To clarify, I am claiming that from knowledge of what belongs to essences (general metaphysical facts about the world, knowledge of affects, etc.) and knowledge of essences (of attributes, substances, modes, etc.) we are able to have knowledge of particular essences (of states). That satisfies the definition.

<sup>51</sup> By 'at least' I only mean to suggest that it is at least essential knowledge and perhaps essential knowledge of particular things.

<sup>52</sup> The *PDP* "Cartesian" definition and the epigram to the *TTP* both use the word "tollī" and neither use *ponere* or *sublato*. By recognizing the politics as Cartesian I mean seeing the importance of the highly Cartesian use of the imagination/reason distinction.

<sup>53</sup> See A. Garrett 2003.

<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately although Spinoza was highly skilled in abstract argument in the theory of knowledge and political metaphysics, he was less skilled in understanding liberal Calvinist intellectuals. Velthuysen was horrified by the *TTP*, and communicated a review of the *TTP* to Spinoza via their mutual friend Ostens. Velthuysen immediately grasped the consequences of the metaphysical doctrines presented at *TTP* IV, and concluded his review 'Here most accomplished Sir, you have in brief space a summary of the doctrine of the political-theologian, which in my judgment banishes and thoroughly subverts all worship and religion, prompts atheism by stealth, or envisages such a God as cannot move men to reverence for his divinity, since he himself is subject to fate: no room is left for divine governance and providence, and the assignment of punishment and reward is entirely abolished,' Letter 40 in Spinoza (2002: 236).

A few sentences later Velthuysen added further, and most damningly, "and the author has not left himself a single argument to prove that Mahomet was not a true prophet... for the Turks too, in obedience to the command of their prophet, cultivate those moral virtues about which there is no disagreement among nations." (ibid.)

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Velthuysen was an intelligent and discerning reader, and clearly Spinoza drastically misunderstood the mindset of his audience. Henry Oldenburg, the Secretary of the Royal Society whom I have mentioned *in re* Spinoza's discussion of Descartes' theory of the planets was similarly horrified. That Spinoza had hoped that Velthuysen would be open to his argument is evident from his own letter to Ostens (Letter 41) that has a hurt and defensive tone unique in Spinoza's correspondence. Five years later, Spinoza wrote a further letter to Velthuysen asking if he could publish extracts to Velthuysen's review and his own responses to the criticisms. It clearly rankled him.

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