

The Un-Stoic Spinoza: An Analysis of Spinoza, Aristotle, and
Epicurus's Accounts of Pleasure

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Philosophy

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

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Abstract:

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a contrast to the literature on early modern Dutch philosopher Benedictus de Spinoza's notable agreements with Stoic eudaimonism in his ethical framework. I intend to emphasize what is meaningfully non-Stoic in Spinoza's own eudaimonism, while nevertheless granting that there is undeniable conceptual common-ground between them. I seek to illustrate where Spinoza departs from Stoic eudaimonism by outlining his agreements with two philosophers who function as a conceptual contrast to the Stoics: Aristotle and Epicurus. This thesis, in turn, lays out Aristotle, Epicurus, and Spinoza's respective views on the ontological and ethical (that is eudaimonistic) nature of pleasure. All three philosophers are committed to two fundamental claims that are strongly antithetical to the Stoic view of pleasure: (a) pleasure holds a necessary connection to the health of one's state of being and (b) pleasure is by nature good.

Acknowledgements

A project such as this is in no way a solitary endeavour. It involves support from a wide range of people. Firstly, I must thank Prof. Annie Larivée and Prof. Melissa Frankel for their enthusiasm, commitment, patience, and endless encouragement in helping me conceptualize and produce an undeniably ambitious work. Your guidance has not only bettered this thesis, but also me as a scholar.

Secondly, I must thank my various companions. Nyx Halford, Rebecca Robb, and Courteney Crump, thank you for being the best friends an Aristotelian, Epicurean, or Spinozist could ask for. To Jennifer Shields, my first true Stoic friend, I express my gratitude to you for your welcoming nature, kind encouragement, and intellectual delight. To Emilie Dushesne, I give my utmost love and gratitude to you for your love of learning, thoughtfulness, loyalty, and profound compassion. It is an unquestionable fact that this project would never have been completed without you, and may it be a testament to the virtue of our friendship and perseverance. To my MS family, Patty, Rae, Orion, Tif, Katterina, Raya, Anna, Bex, Mica, Racheal, and Adri, thank you deeply for making me wealthy in love.

Finally, I very humbly thank my parents, James and Janet Smith. I am where I am and I have done what I have done here, precisely because of your profound and endless love, support, patience, and encouragement.

Thank you all for your causal role in my self-contentment, katastematic enjoyment, and true pleasure.

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List of Abbreviations

Aristotle:

NE: Nicomachean Ethics

OS: On the Soul

PoA: Posterior Analytics

PrA: Prior Analytics

All references in the *Nicomachean Ethics* are translated by Christopher Rowe, Oxford UP, 2002.

All other primary sources are taken from *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, edited by Jonathan Barnes, vols, 1 and 2, Princeton UP, 1984.

Descartes:

PP: Principles of Philosophy

All references are taken from *The Continental Rationalists*, vol. 1, Cambridge UP, 1985. *Past Masters*.

Epicurus:

M: Letter to Menoceus

PD: Principal Doctrines

H: Letter to Herodotus

I: Letter to Idomeneus

All primary sources are taken from the *The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia*, edited and translated by Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson, Hackett, 1994.

Spinoza:

E: Ethics

App. = Appendix

Ax. = Axiom

C = Corollary

Def. = Definition

Def. Aff. = Definitions of the Affects

L = Lemma

P = Proposition

Post. = Postulate

Pref. = Preface

S = Scholium

Ep: The Letters

TIE: Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect

All primary sources are taken from *Spinoza: Complete Works*, edited by Michael L. Morgan, translated by Samuel Shirley, Hackett, 2002.

Epicurean/Stoic Sources:

HB: Epictetus, Handbook

LP: Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers

OM: Cicero, On Moral Ends

TD: Cicero, Tusculan Disputations

A: Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

Preface:

The aim of this thesis is to examine, and subsequently to emphasize, the non-Stoic aspects of early modern Dutch philosopher Benedictus de Spinoza's philosophy. For the purposes of this analysis, I will focus specifically on the literature concerning Spinoza's relation to the ethical philosophy of the ancients, namely his eudaimonism. A eudaimonistic ethic understands the end of morality, i.e. the highest good, to be happiness. In English Spinoza scholarship, it is often shown that Spinoza's eudaimonism shares a strong resemblance to the ancient Graeco-Roman eudaimonism of Stoicism.

Scholars such as A.A. Long, Susan James, Jon Miller, Steven Nadler, and Derk Pereboom describe significant agreements between these two philosophies. Spinoza and the Stoics are argued to share a deterministic metaphysics, a critique of passions as involving erroneous judgments, a conception of living happily as synonymous with virtue and living according to Nature, a distinction between irrational (passions) and rational emotions, and finally the view that pleasure, suffering, striving, and avoidance are all (in some sense) primary emotions. Such literature, in turn, makes it persuasive to view Spinoza as a Neo-Stoic in many ways.¹

Other literature, however, seeks to problematize this Neo-Stoic perspective on Spinoza's ethical philosophy. Matthew Kisner argues that for Spinoza, contra Stoicism, passions are not absolutely opposed to virtue, and in fact serve as useful and necessary tools in gauging good/bad

¹ James ("Spinoza the Stoic" 292, 310-16) and Pereboom (1) are explicit in supporting this claim, as both argue that Spinoza is reconceptualizing Stoicism in some sense.

and making oneself more virtuous (“Spinoza’s Virtuous Passions” 761-2, 777-81). Aurelia Armstrong too argues that Spinoza values passions in living happily, by emphasizing the “dynamic power” of individuals through the conatus, which involves a necessary relation between acting and being acted on in perseverance (14-8). Edwin Curley and Genevieve Lloyd take a different approach, claiming there are Epicurean elements to be found in Spinoza’s ethics (Epicureanism being a major Hellenistic opponent to Stoicism). Curley asserts that Spinoza’s Conatus Principle (*E* IIP6) “neatly reconciles Stoic and Epicurean” conceptions of human nature “insofar as it incorporates into the conatus a striving not only for self-preservation [the primary desire for the Stoics],” but also pleasure as increased “power of action,” pleasure being the primary object of desire for the Epicureans (*Behind the Geometrical Method* 114-5). Lloyd also positions Spinoza between the Stoics and Epicureans, arguing that “Spinoza’s treatment of the emotions can be seen as ingeniously bringing together ancient Stoic repudiation of the passions as involving erroneous beliefs, and the apparently opposed Epicurean treatment of pleasure as the highest good . . .” (80). Through these scholars we consequently can see an illustration of the non-Stoic aspects of Spinoza’s eudaimonism in terms of the ethical value of passions, and more specifically pleasure.

This thesis focuses on the subject of pleasure as the strongest point of ethical dissension between the Stoics and Spinoza. My approach, however, differs somewhat from the above scholars. While I too seek to emphasize Spinoza’s separation from Stoic ethical doctrine, I intend to accomplish this task by inverting the Stoic literature on Spinoza through a comparison of his eudaimonism with ancient eudaimonistic ethics that serve as a significant conceptual contrast to Stoicism, namely those of Aristotle and Epicurus. I favour this approach because it is possible to

argue, against Kisner and Armstrong, that Spinoza's valuing of the passions in general may only be an *improvement* on ancient Stoicism rather than a meaningful departure from it, which ultimately would not contradict the Neo-Stoic literature on Spinoza.² Curley and Lloyd provide an interesting starting point for a non-Stoic analysis of Spinoza, but neither provide a comprehensive analysis of the subject. By emphasizing Spinoza's ethical affinity with other ancient Greek philosophers, on the other hand, specifically on points where there is shared disagreement with Stoicism, one can persuasively illustrate the non-Stoic elements of Spinoza's ethics. I therefore take previous literature's focus on pleasure as a point of departure from Stoicism and combine it with a comparison of eudaimonistic philosophies that serve as a meaningful contrast to Stoicism.³

This thesis will ultimately argue that Spinoza's eudaimonism departs from Stoic eudaimonism through his shared agreement with Aristotle and Epicurus on the nature of pleasure in terms of two fundamental claims: (a) pleasure holds a necessary connection to the health of one's state of being and (b) pleasure is good by nature. My thesis will subsequently be divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 ("Stoicism and Spinoza's Eudaimonism") will provide an overview of the ethical agreements between the Stoics and Spinoza, along with an outline of the Stoic conception of pleasure ontologically and ethically. Chapter 2 ("Spinoza's Account of Pleasure") will lay out Spinoza's ontological and ethical views on the nature of transitional/non-transitional

² As I will explain in 5.2, Spinoza's valuing of passions is decidedly non-Stoic, but it is important to establish *why* this difference is not merely an improvement on the Stoic view of passions, ethically.

³ I am not concerned however, for the purposes of this thesis, with evaluating whether or not Aristotle, Epicurus, or Spinoza's views on pleasure make their respective ethical frameworks hedonistic in some sense. Pleasure, as we shall see, is a crucial good for all three philosophers in the happy life. However, pleasure is not the only component of happiness for Aristotle and Spinoza, and Epicurus's conception of pleasure is in many ways unconventional.

and active/passive pleasure. Chapter 3 (“Aristotle’s Account of Pleasure”) will explicate Aristotle’s ontological and ethical views on true vs. merely apparent pleasure. Chapter 4 (“Epicurus’s Account of Pleasure”) will outline Epicurus’s ontological and ethical conception of katastematic and kinetic pleasure. Finally, Chapter 5 (“Spinoza’s Non-Stoic Eudaimonism”) will examine Spinoza’s ontological and ethical agreements/disagreements with Aristotle and Epicurus on pleasure in relation to claims (a) and (b), in order to illustrate where Spinoza’s eudaimonism meaningfully departs from Stoicism.

While there is much that could and should be said about the ways Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics influenced Spinoza through their texts, the purpose of this thesis is conceptual.⁴ Spinoza’s actual views on Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics, and how he might have seen himself as replying to them, will consequently be absent from my analysis.⁵ The reason for this purely conceptual focus is to avoid the complications of what Spinoza’s personal interpretations of these philosophies might have been, based on what we can prove he may have read in terms of primary and secondary literature on them, and whether these interpretations cohere with my own or other contemporary scholars’ positions on Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics. Put simply, Spinoza may have misunderstood any of these philosophies in some way. What truly matters, for my purposes, is the ideas at work and how they relate to each other, rather than the complexities of how Spinoza personally understood each philosophy.

⁴ For analyses that delve into whether Spinoza was significantly influenced by the Stoics, see Long (“Stoicism in the Philosophical Tradition”), Miller (“Spinoza and the Stoics”), James (“Spinoza the Stoic”), and Pereboom (“Stoic Psychotherapy in Descartes and Spinoza”).

⁵ For explicit examples of Spinoza’s comments on these philosophers, see *E* VPref. and *Ep* 56.

Interconnected with this point, it should also be made clear that this thesis is not about classifying Spinoza as an Aristotelian, Epicurean, or Stoic ethically, or even simply on the subject of pleasure. Spinoza constructed his own unique ethical philosophy, and the following comparisons are designed to make the complexity, nuance, and contemporary value of Spinoza's eudaimonism clearer.

Chapter 1: Stoicism and Spinoza's Eudaimonism

In this chapter I will examine the relationship between Spinoza's ethical philosophy and Stoic eudaimonism. Before problematizing the conception of Spinoza's ethics as Stoic or Neo-Stoic, it is important to foundationally establish why there is a strong tendency to view his philosophy in this way. I will subsequently begin with their shared eudaimonism, which envisions happiness as virtue, reason, and living according to Nature. Secondly, I will exposit their dual conception of emotions as irrational and rational, and the subsequent ethical implications of this view. Finally, I will describe the Stoic conception of pleasure ontologically and ethically, so that Aristotle, Epicurus, and Spinoza's agreements on the nature of pleasure may be compared to the opposing view of the Stoics in 5.2.

1.1 Eudaimonism

Happiness as the Ethical and Philosophical Focus

The fundamental point of ethical agreement between Spinoza and the Stoics is their eudaimonism. Both understand the end of ethics, the highest good, to be happiness. According to Stobaeus, the Stoics "say that being happy is the end, for the sake of which everything is done, but which is not itself done for the sake of anything (Long and Sedley 394). Happiness is considered to be the ethical end by the Stoics because everything else is a means to achieving it, or rather is deemed valuable because such things have the potential to bring one happiness. In other words, happiness is valuable in itself, and thus derives its value and desirability from nothing but itself. This reasoning is supported by the way that both Diogenes Laertius and Seneca discuss virtue and reason in a Stoic context. Diogenes Laertius talks about "the virtue of the happy man" when describing Chrysippean Stoicism (VII.89) and Seneca asserts that reason

“makes the full sum of happiness;” he goes on to connect reason to virtue, subsequently making both constituents of the happy or *eudaimon* life (Long and Sedley 395). Passages like these illustrate the Stoic focus on concepts like virtue and reason through the lens of living happily, which connects to Stobaeus’s description of happiness as the Stoic ethical end, in that the moral value of reason and virtue is their relation to happiness. Cicero makes happiness’s relation to morality explicit in his dialogue *On Moral Ends*. The Stoic representative of the dialogue, Cato, lays out the following argument: “[1] whatever is good is praiseworthy; [2] whatever is praiseworthy is moral; [3] therefore whatever is good is moral” (III.27). Cato then goes on to assert that “only a happy life is a source of pride” and the only way to “rightly” achieve such happiness is through morality, meaning “the moral life is the happy life” (III.28). Here Cato is equating the good, morality, and happiness with each other, from a Stoic perspective. To be happy is to live morally and to live morally is to be good, meaning to be happy is to be good. These sources consequently illustrate that Stoicism is a eudaimonistic ethic.

Spinoza’s eudaimonism is evident in his mature work, the *Ethics*.⁶ Happiness is, in fact, the conceptual and structural end of his treatise. Conceptually, this focus is made explicit by the title of his work: *Ethics, Demonstrated in Geometrical Order*. Such a title is curious, because as Steven Nadler points out, the *Ethics* “is a wide-ranging treatise that touches on almost every major area of philosophy: metaphysics, theory of knowledge, philosophy of mind, philosophical psychology, moral philosophy, political philosophy, and the philosophy of religion” (ix). If Spinoza’s treatise is a work devoted to all or most of philosophy, and not merely ethical concerns, then why is its title the *Ethics*? The answer to this question can be found in the preface to Part II. Spinoza says he will “pass on [in this section] to the explication of those things that

⁶ See also *TIE* §1-17.

must necessarily have followed from the essence of God,” the details of which are established in Part I, but clarifies that he is only concerning himself with “those things that can lead us . . . to the knowledge of the human mind and *its utmost blessedness* [emphasis mine].” In other words, Spinoza is clarifying that his ontological and epistemological analyses are motivated by what will bring blessedness or the greatest happiness to the minds of his readers as human beings. That Spinoza equates blessedness with happiness is made explicit in IIP49S, where he asserts that our knowledge of the human mind “teach[es] us wherein lies our greatest happiness or blessedness,” and IVApp.4, where he equates “the highest happiness or blessedness” with the perfection of reason. These philosophical matters are therefore not predominantly or solely theoretical; in fact, they are ultimately ethical in the sense that Spinoza is focused on how our ontological and epistemological knowledge contributes to living happily. The structure of Spinoza’s treatise parallels this conceptual approach. The title indicates not only Spinoza’s conceptual priority, but how the treatise is organized. The *Ethics* begins with metaphysics in Part I, moves to epistemology in Part II, psychology in Part III, the ethics of the body in Part IV, and the ethics of the mind in Part V, culminating in the formal summary of blessedness as intellectual love in VP42’s subsequent proof and scholium. The outline of reality as God/Nature leads into the description of the human mind, and then the psyche; from there, one is able to make sense of what morality involves in bodily and mental terms, and finally how one’s knowledge of these areas provides them with the means to achieve a happy, ideally blessed, life. Conceptually and structurally then, Spinoza begins with metaphysics and the traditionally theoretical, but makes his eudaimonistic priority clear in how these components are explicated and connected.

Spinoza’s eudaimonism in turn emphasizes a more essential agreement with Stoic eudaimonism, namely the subordinate relation between practical ethics and philosophy.

According to Jon Miller, despite the fact that both the Stoics and Spinoza were far more than ethical philosophers, “both parties would have regarded the work which they undertook in those [theoretical domains of metaphysics and epistemology] as ultimately justified by the practical rewards it had to offer” (246). In other words, their eudaimonism makes the goal of *all* philosophical inquiry the *practical* concerns of living a happy life. Understanding of the nature of reality and knowledge is consequently inseparable from its relation to day-to-day living. This view is in direct contrast to (1) the view that theoretical and practical knowledge are distinct and have equal value in philosophy⁷ or (2) the view that philosophy is a predominantly theoretical, and potentially esoteric, institution. In support of his claim, Miller cites Cicero (247-8), who argues (via Cato) that “one cannot make correct judgements about good and evil unless one understands the whole system of nature, and even of the life of the gods, as well as the question of whether or not human nature is in harmony with that of the universe” (*OM* III.73). Here Cato is claiming that moral knowledge is dependent on metaphysical and physical knowledge in terms of the nature of divinity, natural processes, and the place of humanity in the cosmos. When connected with Stoic eudaimonism, theoretical knowledge is then shown not only to contribute to moral knowledge, but to derive its value from the fact that it leads to such ethical knowledge. John M. Cooper agrees with Miller on the practical nature of Stoic philosophy, asserting that “[t]he point . . . of any use of reason in a Stoic life is toward governing our lives in the right way,” namely towards a happy life (“Stoicism” 218). Rationality’s moral value is thus pragmatic.

⁷ As will be discussed in Chapter 3, Aristotle’s eudaimonism is an example of this approach to philosophy. For Aristotle, there are two different happy lives that one can lead (*NE* 1177a12-1179a32): one practical (involving moral virtues accompanied by practical wisdom) and one theoretical (involving scientific understanding of eternal truths). In this system, all philosophy is directed at happiness, but areas of inquiry such as metaphysics and epistemology, while in some ways contributing to it, are nevertheless not subordinate to the day-to-day concerns of life. One can thus enjoy distinctive intellectual pleasures in the happy life that make no reference to practicality.

That Spinoza agrees with this reasoning is evident from the above references supporting his eudaimonism. IIPref. and IIP49S of the *Ethics* establish that Spinoza's motivation for his metaphysical and epistemological inquiries is for the sake of achieving the "utmost blessedness."⁸ Furthermore, Spinoza argues that the greatest happiness is the cultivation of reason (IVApp.4), which is epitomized in the description of blessedness as the "intellectual love of God," i.e. intuitive understanding of Nature (VP36S, P42Proof). In other words, through theoretical knowledge, one understands themselves, the general order of Nature, and the particular relations between natural beings, all of which carry significant pragmatic value in living happily (IV App 4; VP39S, 41, 42S). The Stoics and Spinoza are both therefore decidedly practical in their eudaimonism and approach to philosophy in general.⁹

The Definition of Virtue and Happiness

So far, Spinoza and the Stoics agree in the foundational aspects of their ethics in terms of eudaimonism and the practical centrality of philosophy, and this agreement becomes even stronger when we examine their actual descriptions of happiness. In both philosophies there is a coextensive relationship between virtue (Greek: *arēte*; Latin: *virtus*), reason, and living according to Nature in the happy life. According to Susan James, "Spinoza follows the Stoics in equating virtue with happiness" ("Spinoza the Stoic" 302), meaning that to live virtuously is to live happily in both eudaimonistic philosophies.¹⁰ Diogenes Laertius makes similar claims when

⁸ Spinoza also declares "the end and goal" of "all the sciences" to be happiness in *TIE* §16.

⁹ Spinoza does, admittedly, argue that the mind is in some sense eternal and able to survive the death of the body, indicating that some part of reason does pertain to that which is outside the moral concerns of day-to-day life (*E* VP23, 29). However, Spinoza clarifies that this eternal aspect of reason is nonetheless crucial to living happily (VP38, 41, 42S).

¹⁰ The Stoics and Spinoza, however, do not conceive of virtue in quite the same way. This difference will be explained in Chapter 5.

describing the Stoics, stating that “it is in virtue that happiness consists” (VII.89) and that virtue “is in itself sufficient to ensure well-being” (VII.127-8). Virtue for the Stoics is therefore not just a necessary constituent of happiness, important but insufficient on its own to enable one to flourish,¹¹ but is rather fully adequate in itself to bring about happiness. Spinoza, similarly, makes his own position on virtue and happiness explicit: (1) “virtue itself and the service of God are happiness itself” (IIP49S) and (2) “[b]lessedness [i.e. optimal happiness] is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself” (*E* VP42). This passage, similarly, indicates that virtue is not merely a sufficient *means* to happiness, but rather that which happiness consists in.

Not only do the Stoics and Spinoza agree with defining the happy life as the virtuous life though, they also in many ways agree in what virtue involves, namely following one’s nature, reason, and particularly the cultivation of the knowledge of God (that is Nature). Susan James (“Spinoza the Stoic” 296-7, 299-300), A. A. Long (13-4), and Steven Nadler (225-7) all emphasize the shared understanding between the Stoics and Spinoza of virtue as living according to one’s nature, particularly one’s rational nature. Zeno (the founder of Stoicism) is said to link “life in agreement with nature” to the “virtuous life, virtue being the goal towards which nature guides us” (*LP* VII.87). Chrysippus (third scholarch of the Stoic school), in turn, is described as asserting that “our individual natures are parts of the nature of the whole universe,” meaning that to live “in accordance with nature” is to live “in accordance with our own [individual] human nature,” which is described as “right reason” (VII.87-8). Seneca reinforces Chrysippus’s claim with his description of reason as “man’s [or humanity’s] peculiar good,” which he then equates with virtue and happiness (Long and Sedley 395). As beings of Nature, consequently, the Stoics

¹¹ The obvious example being Aristotle’s view of happiness, whose criteria involves not only virtue, but also external goods conducive to virtue and a full life (*NE* 1098a19-21, 1099a31-1099a8).

understand our virtue and happiness to consist in living harmoniously with the natural world by cultivating that aspect of our personal nature that makes us, from their perspective, distinctly human: rational activity. As Miller (246) and Long (13) argue, Spinoza too emphasizes that we are a part of the natural world (*E* IVP4), specifically as “modes” or expressions of God/Nature’s infinite activity (*IDef.6*, P15-18, 25C), and Nadler comments that Spinoza’s description of “virtue” as “act[ing] from the laws of one’s own nature” (*IVP18S*) “strongly recalls the ancient Stoic doctrine of virtue” (226). Furthermore, Spinoza connects virtue with reason, stating that “to act in absolute conformity with virtue is nothing else in us but to act, to live . . . under the guidance of reason” (*IVP24*). The Stoic and the Spinozist are thus virtuous insofar as they follow their rational nature.

The Nature of Rational Understanding as Natural Knowledge

What is the content of this rational understanding, though? Simply being rational does not mean that the Stoic and Spinozist will understand things in the same way, particularly if they conceive of Nature differently. While there are differences,¹² here too the Stoics and Spinoza share much in common, particularly in the way that metaphysical or natural knowledge is valued in their eudaimonism. Fundamentally, both philosophies contain a deterministic metaphysics, that equates God with Nature as an internal cause.¹³ Cicero refers to what he calls the “fate” of “physics” in Stoicism, which entails that “nothing has happened which was not going to be, and likewise nothing is going to be of which [N]ature does not contain causes working to bring that very thing about” (Long and Sedley 337). Simply put, the natural world consists of fixed causes

¹² Most notably, Spinoza’s assertion of strict identity (see 2.1) between the body and mind (*E* IIP7S) and his rejection of cosmic teleology or providence in Nature (*E* I App; Miller 48; Long 15).

¹³ A common point of emphasis in Spinoza scholarship on this topic. See James (“Spinoza the Stoic” 305, 308), Pereboom (23), Long (10-1), and Miller (245).

that make all phenomena, past, present, and future, necessary in the sense that things could not have occurred and will not occur otherwise. Nature is described by the Stoics as consisting, in essence, of the interrelation between the passive principle of unqualified material substance (*hylē*) and the active principle of reason (*logos*), reason consisting in that which immanently shapes this substance into the various beings and relations of the world (*LP* VII.134). God (*theos*) is explicitly equated with “the reason inherent in” matter (*ibid.*), subsequently making God “the artificer of [Nature’s] orderly arrangement” (VII.137).¹⁴ In other words, God as a rational mind is the internal principle of the material world that gives it distinct being (as a whole and in terms of individual beings) and deterministic order. Spinoza understands Nature in similar terms, describing it as fundamentally extended, i.e. physical, *and* thinking in essence (*E* IIP1-2).¹⁵ Like the Stoics, Spinoza also equates God with the immanent thinking cause in Nature (IP18, IIP1, IVPref.) that strictly determines all phenomena (IP29). The Stoics and Spinoza largely agree then in their metaphysical picture of God/Nature.¹⁶

As outlined above, such metaphysical matters are directed towards an ethical end, namely living happily, in both philosophies. The Stoics and Spinoza in turn both shape their eudaimonism around understanding the divinity and determinism of Nature. According to James, they “argue . . . that nature is identical with god, that god is perfect, and thus that an

¹⁴ Strictly-speaking, God as the active principle is also physical or “corporeal” (Long and Sedley 273), being described by Aetius as a “designing fire” (274-5) and Diogenes Laertius as “an artistically working fire” (VII.156) or *pneuma*. This *pneuma* is corporeal, but a finer form of physical being than the unqualified material substance that it shapes and structures.

¹⁵ The major difference here is that Thought as an attribute of God is not in itself physical, because it represents a conceptually distinct (but ontologically identical) aspect of God’s essence (*E* IIP6-7S). As a result, the thinking aspect of God does not shape matter in Nature, but rather correspondingly conceives of the material structure of Nature (that is the extended essential aspect of God). As well, Spinoza leaves it open theoretically that God’s essence may involve more than Thought and Extension (IDef.6, P9-10; *Ep* 56).

¹⁶ Susan James classifies both philosophies as pantheistic, in that God and Nature are one, and panpsychist, in that all phenomena are described as physical and mental (“Spinoza the Stoic” 303, 306-7).

understanding of nature is simultaneously an understanding of perfection or supreme good” (“Spinoza the Stoic” 302). We have already seen that both equate Nature with the divine, and James cites Cicero’s *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.37-9 to support the further claim that the Stoics consider God/Nature to be perfect (304). God/Nature is, in this text, considered to be “perfect, and complete in all its measures and parts . . . since it embraces everything and there is nothing which is not included in it,” especially rationality (Long and Sedley 326). God’s perfection and supreme goodness is therefore grounded in Its identification with the totality of existence, i.e. the simple fact that God is everything. Stoic virtue consists in living according to Nature, which is understood to be intrinsically rational, and the virtue of human nature is rationality. We have a common connection then between what is good in the individual and what is good in Nature. Happiness, in turn, involves “harmony” between the rational actions of the individual and the rational “will” of the *logos*, that is the divine intellect of Nature that determines all phenomena (*LP* VII.88). In other words, virtue is rationally embracing the causal necessity of the order of Nature, as determined immanently by God. In Epictetus, this understanding consists of knowing what “is in our power” and what “is not in our power” (*HB* 1.1), i.e. recognizing what does and does not pertain to our agency, and subsequently coming to accept and embrace Nature’s structure as it relates both to this agency in the natural order and those things in that order which are outside it (31). To be virtuous/happy, i.e. to live according to Nature, is therefore to understand and live harmoniously with God as the active, deterministic principle of Nature itself.

Spinoza shares this view of God as the perfect totality of Nature (*E* IP11Proof2 and 4, P15).¹⁷ That he equates virtue and happiness with the understanding of God and Its deterministic

¹⁷ It should be noted, however, that Spinoza’s God represents the totality of existence by being “absolutely infinite” (*E* IDef.6); the Stoic God, in contrast, is finite in its representation of the totality of existence (*LP* VII.140; Long 13).

activity is also evident. Spinoza asserts that “the greatest happiness” lies in “the knowledge of God” (IIP49S.1) and that “[t]he mind’s highest good is the knowledge of God, and the mind’s highest virtue is to know God” (IVP28). This divine knowledge is also explicitly linked to the understanding of the deterministic order of Nature. The cultivation of the knowledge of God bestows on the virtuous person understanding of the “actions of God that follow from the necessity of [Its] nature” (IVApp.4).¹⁸ The consequence of this deterministic understanding is that the virtuous person will “desire nothing but that which must be” and “patiently bear whatever happens,” because they recognize that “we have done our duty” and “we do not have absolute power to adapt to our purposes things external to us;” such awareness subsequently allows the virtuous person to be “in harmony with the order of the whole of Nature,” i.e. God (IVApp.32). This latter passage is reminiscent of Epictetus, in that Spinoza emphasizes that understanding God through natural phenomena reveals to us what is inside and outside of our power, i.e. what is up to us/what is not up to us. Spinoza therefore follows the Stoics in conceiving of happiness, virtue, and the knowledge of God in terms of understanding the necessity of the natural order and harmonizing oneself rationally with this order.

1.2 A Dual-Aspect Conception of Emotion

The Nature of Emotion

The most noteworthy point of agreement between the Stoics and Spinoza is their unique conception of emotion (*pathos* in Greek for the Stoics and *affectus* in Latin for Spinoza) and its

¹⁸ As alluded to earlier, Spinoza rejects the cosmic teleology of the Stoics (Long 15; Miller 248). God, in Spinoza’s metaphysics, has no purposes because Its infinite nature necessitates that it lacks nothing (*E* IApp.), acts absolutely necessarily (IP33), and expresses Itself fully (IP16-17s). As a result, It has nothing to achieve in the way of goodness overall nor a desire for the good of individuals, specifically. Nature is neither good/beautiful nor bad/ugly; It just is necessarily what It is.

ethical implications in achieving the happy life. Both philosophies have what Martha Nussbaum refers to as a “cognitive” view of emotion, in the sense that they conceive of emotions as necessarily involving judgments. Whenever I feel an emotion there is then, in some way, an accompanying assertion that x is y (22, 501). Zeno and Chrysippus are said to understand “emotions to be judgments” (*LP* VII.111) and Seneca asserts that “[a]nger not only has to be moved [i.e. felt] but has to rush out. This is because it is an impulse, and impulse never exists without the mind's assent [i.e. an act of judging]” (Long and Sedley 419). Spinoza, similarly, asserts that “knowledge of good and evil [or what I have judged to be good or bad] is nothing other than . . . emotion itself” (*E* IVP8S).¹⁹ Such a view of emotions can be contrasted with the traditional Platonic conception of reason and emotion as separate aspects of the soul or mind, where one’s feelings and reasoning are not necessarily connected (*Republic* 4.439c-443e). For the Stoics and Spinoza, conversely, I cannot experience an emotion without some act of thinking, namely judgment.

Not any kind of judgment is associated with emotions, however. Emotions, from the Stoic and Spinozist perspective, are specifically linked to eudaimonistic *evaluative* judgments (Nussbaum 22, 501), namely the assertion that x is good or bad in relation to one’s state of happiness. With Spinoza, this evaluative focus is evident from the above passage, which links emotions not only to judgments, but specifically judgments pertaining to the “knowledge of good and evil” (IVP8). Cicero, who also connects Stoic emotions with “judgment” (*TD* IV.vii.14), describes these emotions in terms of “expected good” and “expected evil” (IV.vi.11). In both

¹⁹ Spinoza and the Stoics do however differ in subtle, but important ways in their conception of the nature of the mind and judgment (*E* VPref.; Miller 248; Pereboom 21-4). This difference will be outlined in 5.2. For the purposes of this chapter, what matters is that both philosophies understand emotions to necessarily involve judgments.

cases it is understood that to experience an emotion involves judging x to be good or bad in living happily.

Outline of the Emotions

We can see that this is the case through the outline and definitions of emotions given by both parties. According to Miller (247-8) and James (“Spinoza the Stoic” 297-8, 301), the Stoics and Spinoza share a dual-aspect conception of emotions, a given emotion being understood as irrational (a “passion;” *pathos* for the Stoics and *passionem* for Spinoza) or rational (*eupatheiai* for the Stoics and “active” or *agit* for Spinoza). Any given emotion therefore involves reason or cognition in the form of judgments, some being improperly reasoned (i.e. passions) and others properly reasoned (i.e. rational emotions). In support of this claim, Diogenes Laertius differentiates between emotion as “an irrational . . . movement in the soul” (VII.110) and emotion that harmonizes with one’s rational nature (VII.116). Cicero also makes this distinction, between emotion as “an agitation of the soul alien from [i.e. opposed to] right reason” (*TD* IV.vi.11) and emotion as “wise” and thus aligned with right reason (IV.vi.12-4). Spinoza, similarly, distinguishes between “passive emotions” and “active emotions” (*E* IVApp.3). The former involve “inadequate” or “confused” knowledge, in that one does not judge, and thus understand, things clearly and distinctly (IIP56, Proof; VP3).²⁰ The latter, conversely, “arise . . . from reason” (VP7) or “adequate” knowledge (IIP58Proof), which represents clear and distinct judgments and subsequent understanding (IIP29S, 38C). Passions involve erroneous judgments and rational emotions properly reasoned judgments then in both philosophical frameworks.

²⁰ It is important to note, though, that Spinoza refers to passive judgments as inadequate *knowledge*. The significance of this description will be explained in 5.2.

This shared structure is taken even further in their descriptions of primary passions and rational emotions, such emotions being considered “primary” because all other emotions are subspecies of them. The Stoics describe the primary passions (*pathē*) as **desire/craving** (Greek: *epithumia*; Latin: *libido*), **fear** (Greek: *phobos*; Latin: *metus*), **pleasure** (Greek: *hēdonē*; Latin: *laetitia*), and **distress** (Greek: *lupē*; Latin: *aegritudo*).²¹ The primary rational emotions (*eupatheia*), in turn, are **wish** (Greek: *boulēsis*; Latin: *voluntatem*), **caution** (Greek: *eulabeia*; Latin: *cautio*), and **joy** (Greek: *chara*; Latin: *gaudium*). Distress has no counterpart in the rational emotions because the Stoic does not rationally experience any meaningful discomfort (*TD IV.vi.14*).²² In line with the above description of emotions as cognitive, each primary emotion involves an evaluative judgment. Desire, pleasure, wish, and joy all pertain to judgments about what is good, while fear, caution, and distress pertain to judgments about what is bad. Desire is the *irrational* judgment that x as an external thing is worth obtaining because it is good and pleasure is the *irrational* judgment that something one possesses is good (*LP VII.113-4*; *TD IV.vi.11-12*, *vii.14-15*); in contrast, wish is the *rational* judgment that x is worth obtaining because it is good and joy is the *rational* judgment that something one possesses is good (*LP VII.116*; *TD IV.vi.12-4*). Fear, in turn, is the *irrational* judgment that x as an external thing is worth avoiding because it is bad and distress is the *irrational* judgment that something one possesses is bad; in contrast, caution is the *rational* judgment that x is worth avoiding because it is bad (*LP VII.111-3*; *TD IV.vi.11-12*, *vii.14-15*). Distress is the *irrational* judgment that something one possess is bad; it has no rational counterpart, because the Stoic will not

²¹ Cicero (*TD IV.vi.11-2*, *vii.15*) provides the Latin equivalents to these Greek terms.

²² The Stoic can experience immediate bodily pain (that is a sensory impression) from some injury, but they will make no judgment about the pain being bad, and thus they will not experience any distressing emotions directed at this impression. The relationship between impressions and emotions will be explained in 1.3.

consider themselves to possess anything bad (*LP* VII.102, 116-117; *TD* IV.vi.12-4, vi.14-vii.15).²³ As well, it should be noted that rational emotions do not necessarily pertain to judgments about external things as their irrational counterparts do (we shall discuss this point in more detail, shortly).

James argues that Spinoza's conception of primary emotions "differs little" from the Stoic picture just described ("Spinoza the Stoic" 297). Spinoza outlines the primary passions in IIP11S of the *Ethics* as **desire** (*cupiditas*), **pleasure** (*laetitia*), and **pain** (*tristitia*).²⁴ Desire pertains to striving in relation to what is judged to be good/bad (IVP19), pleasure what is judged to be good (IVP8Proof), and pain what is judged to be bad (*ibid.*). We can see a direct correspondence between Spinoza and Cicero here, in that both employ the Latin term *laetitia* to designate the passive emotion of enjoyment. While the Latin terms for desire and sadness do not share this strong link, in content they do nevertheless share meaningful common-ground with the Stoic primary passions. Both philosophies include an experience of striving and significant discomfort in their description of primary passions. Cicero's *libido* and Spinoza's *cupiditas* both reflect this affect of striving. Similarly, Cicero's *aegritudo* and Spinoza's *tristitia* both reflect a fundamental experience of suffering. It might seem that *metus* has no counterpart in Spinoza's primary passions (in fact, *metus* or "fear" is explicitly classified as a species of pain in III Def. Aff.13), but James argues that, in function, the Stoic *libido* and *metus* are both contained within Spinoza's *cupiditas*; the former pertains to striving to obtain something and the latter striving to avoid something ("Spinoza the Stoic" 398). What this means is that Spinoza agrees with the

²³ For the various subspecies of each primary emotion, see *LP* VII.111-6 and *TD* IV.vii.16-ix.

²⁴ I refrain from explicitly defining these emotions here, because they do differ from the Stoic definitions in subtle ways unsuitable to this chapter. My discussion of these definitions, primarily that of pleasure, will be reserved for 5.2.

Stoics that attraction and avoidance are primary passions, but he conceives of fear as a species of pain rather than desire. Spinoza's relation to the primary rational emotions follows a similar dynamic, in that he agrees with the structure laid out by the Stoics, but with a qualification. Desire (that is attraction/avoidance) and pleasure both have rational counterparts (*E* IIP58), although Spinoza retains the terms *cupiditas* and *laetitia* when referring to them. In other words, *cupiditas* and *laetitia* are neutral terms, denoting passion or rationality depending on context. Spinoza gives no special terms to his primary rational emotions then as the Stoics do. This point, however, is minor. The fact remains that there is rational striving and enjoyment in both philosophies. Spinoza also agrees with the Stoics in rejecting suffering as a rational emotion. Pain (*tristitia*) does not in itself pertain to reason in Spinoza's system, because, in a similar vein to Stoicism, it inherently represents the *frustration* of rationality (IIP59). Consequently, the Stoics and Spinoza agree in many ways in their outline of emotion.

The Eudaimonistic Ethics of Emotion

This agreement is reflected in their eudaimonism, as well. If passion involves irrationality or flawed moral understanding, then as James asserts, it is opposed to virtue in some ways, and by extension happiness, in both ethical philosophies ("Spinoza the Stoic" 291).²⁵ As outlined in the previous section, to be virtuous and happy in both philosophies is to follow one's rational nature. Anything that serves as an obstacle to the cultivation of reason and the achievement of virtue is in turn bad, because it is a source of suffering. Passions are just such a source, due to their connection with erroneous moral judgment, which in turn hinders one from understanding God and living according to their nature in some sense.

²⁵ As we will see in 2.2 and 5.2, however, passion is not wholly opposed to virtue and happiness for Spinoza.

We can see that this is the case for the Stoics, who describe passions as diseases or disorders of the soul/mind (*LP* VII.115; *TD* IV.v-vi.11) which are opposed to “right reason and contrary to nature,” and thus knowledge of and harmony with God (*TD* IV.vi.11). According to Epictetus, the fundamental issue is that the passions involve judging those things outside one’s power to be valuable, i.e. external things like possessions, reputation, and social status (*HB* 1). When one desires “those things not in [their] power [they] are bound to suffer misfortune” (2.2), because they are striving for that which one can easily fail to obtain. On the one hand, others can acquire those possessions one wants, subsequently preventing one from acquiring these objects themselves. On the other hand, one’s reputation and social status involve the judgments of others, which are malleable and fundamentally outside their control. Fear functions similarly. If one strives to avoid those things that extend beyond their agency, like “sickness . . . or death,” they “will be miserable” (2.1). Finally, with pleasure, one can be “overcome” by the “attraction, allure, and seductiveness” of pleasant sensation, failing to appreciate that enjoyment of external things inevitably leads to distress when one makes themselves sick through excess or no longer has the object of pleasure to enjoy (34).

These passions are thus contrary to one’s rational nature, that which *is* in one’s power, by drawing focus onto transient and uncontrollable things outside the individual, thereby distracting from “the care of [one’s] mind” (41). The reality is that all things in Nature that are the object of passions are neither good nor bad in themselves (31.2, 32.1; *LP* VII.102-5), because they do not constitute virtue/happiness and the circumstances surrounding them are necessarily what they are, as dictated by the laws of God/Nature (*HB* 32). Such obsession with externals distracts me from recognizing this cosmic necessity (31-2), leading me to lament the loss of loved ones and the frustration of my desires (2, 11, 14), as if I could have eliminated the certainty of death or

controlled those things outside myself. As Epictetus argues, evil and misfortune do not “exist in the world” (27), they are the result only of erroneous judgments *about* the world (5, 16).

Ultimately then, passions are dangerous to virtue/happiness because they impede the cultivation of reason, and more specifically the understanding of the deterministic natural order that one is meant to harmonize with.

Spinoza follows similar reasoning in his own ethical evaluation of passions. As previously established, passions in this system involve inadequate knowledge. Inadequate knowledge, according to Spinoza, is the source of all falsity and error (*E* IIP35); in particular, it causes one to judge things as contingent and thus unnecessary (IIP31C), because they understand things in isolation from the deterministic system of God/Nature (IP29, 33S1, IVDef.3). These judgments of contingency, in turn, have harmful consequences. When one mistakenly believes that things are contingent, they experience pain at the loss of these things. When, however, one understands that these goods “could not have been saved in any way” their pain is “assuaged” (VP6S), precisely because they understand the necessity of the situation in light of the deterministic order of Nature (Proof). In fact, Spinoza declares all knowledge of evil, pain, or badness to be inadequate knowledge (IVP64), because it pertains to that which frustrates reason (IVP38Proof, 41Proof).²⁶ Moreover, he explicitly argues that “[w]e know nothing to be certainly good or evil

²⁶ Spinoza does, however, clarify that, as finite individuals that are necessarily subject to natural forces, and thus harm, our knowledge of evil is inescapable (IVP68S). Spinoza can be interpreted as laying out a hypothetical ideal in Prop.64 that *if* humans were capable of pure rationality, i.e. full understanding of Nature’s infinite causal chain, and absolute independence from external forces, then we would possess no irrational (viz. inadequate) ideas or conceptions of harm. Only God, however, is capable of unrestricted reason and invulnerability to harm, meaning only God is free from any conception of evil (VP17). The point is therefore not to say that the human conception of evil is false per se (which, as we will see in 5.2, is not a claim that Spinoza makes), but rather to emphasize that reason minimizes the presence of evil (that is harm and ignorance) through understanding of the natural order.

except what is really conducive to understanding or what can hinder understanding” (IVP27). The good is thus associated with reason and the bad with its frustration.

Spinoza, as well, agrees with the Stoics that things in Nature are neither good nor bad in themselves, because they reflect the order of Nature (IVPref.; *TIE* §1) and thus those things that we do not have absolute power over (*E* IVApp.32). He argues that external things like objects of bodily pleasure, wealth, and honour lead to unhappiness when we mistakenly treat them as the highest good (*TIE* §3). The passions that drive an obsession with objects of bodily pleasure lead to excessive enjoyment of things in the present that ultimately results in suffering (*TIE* §4-5; *E* IVApp.30). What happens is that one judges a bodily part in the present to be more important than one’s nature as a whole in the future, causing mistaken love for an object of pleasant sensation (IVP43). Wealth is dangerous in that one can be tempted to consider it “good in itself” or as the primary means to pleasure (*TIE* §4-5), when in reality it is merely a tool like anything else that can be used well or poorly (*E* IVApp.28). Money, in turn, can lead one to an obsessive, and thus erroneous, love for riches that is contrary to the achievement or maintenance of the happy life. Lastly, but no less harmful, is the intense emotional regard for honour. Honour too is often considered to be valuable in itself by those subject to passions, but its harmfulness lies in the fact that it compels one to “conduct [their] li[fe] to suit” other people’s judgments of value (*TIE* §5). Honour, when inappropriately valued as good per se, places one’s happiness in the hands of others then, instead of in their own nature. Consequently, Spinoza follows the Stoics in describing passions as threats to one’s understanding of and accordance with the order of God/Nature, namely through the erroneous valuing of external things.

The rational emotions, conversely, in both philosophies represent those judgments of value that cohere with and promote happiness (that is the understanding of God/Nature). As

discussed above, for the Stoics emotions are judgments directed at good and bad. Passions, as we have seen, involve judgments that are irrational, and thus directed at the wrong conceptions of good and bad (namely, the valuing of external things). The *eupatheiai*, on the other hand, involve judgments that are rational (i.e. follow from one's rational nature), and so they are directed at the correct conceptions of good and bad (namely, that virtue is good, vice is bad, and external things are morally indifferent *per se*). Since the Stoics consider the good to be virtue and that which frustrates or destroys virtue to be vicious and bad, the rational emotions will fundamentally be directed at virtue, in contrast to the obsession with external things that causes passions and thus vice (*LP* VII.102). Cooper points out however that, contained within virtue as the object of rational emotions, is rational judgment and behaviour towards external things. He argues that, although external things are not good/bad in themselves ("The Emotional Life" 170), there are things in Nature that "it is [nevertheless] natural and appropriate for human beings . . . to pursue and, if possible, obtain or enjoy . . . or, in the other case, to avoid" (180). In other words, despite the fact that those things outside one's power are neither good nor bad, there are things that the virtuous person will judge desirable, enjoyable, or avoidable in line with their nature as humans, even if the natural order does not allow them ultimately to obtain or avoid such things. Those external things that are aligned with one's nature, like health, strength, and pleasant sensations are referred to as "preferred" indifferents and those opposed to it, such as sickness, disease, and painful sensations are "rejected" indifferents (*LP* VII.102-3, 105-6). Such things are "indifferent" because they have no intrinsic moral designation, and thus are unnecessary for happiness (VII.104). These things however are judged and pursued/avoided in an "equable and wise" way with rational emotions, in contrast to the excessiveness that follows from passions (*TD* IV.vi.12). The importance here is not the successful possession or avoidance of such things however, which

are up to the natural order and not the individual, but rather the proper *disposition* towards these things.

Wish is therefore striving for virtue, which is living according to one's rational nature by cultivating understanding of, and subsequently harmonizing oneself with, the natural order in all circumstances. Following from this state of virtue, one will strive to obtain preferred indifferents, but these indifferents will be wished for not as good in themselves, but as reflections of how one should seek to engage with those things that can be aligned with their nature. Caution involves striving to avoid the erroneous judgments that pertain to passions and, in turn, vicious behaviour towards external things (namely, obsession). In regards to external things, one will strive to avoid rejected indifferents, with the understanding that these things do not cohere with human nature but are not in themselves capable of hindering its flourishing. Both strivings will not be about achieving their goals, which is up to God/Nature, but rather to strive in the right ways towards such things in relation to virtue. Joy, in turn, involves taking pleasure in being virtuous, in terms of both living according to Nature in general and engaging with externals properly (that is with the understanding of their moral neutrality). One will then simply enjoy their understanding of the natural order and embrace all that happens within this order, whether it favours their personal nature or not. Again, since distress relies on mistaken judgments about the goodness/badness of Nature and external things, it will subsequently be eradicated by wish, caution, and joy, all proper judgments of Nature and external things.

For Spinoza too virtue is the proper object of rational emotions. Because rational emotions involve adequate knowledge, they both follow from one's rational nature and pertain to understanding of the natural order (*E* IIP1, VP6). Like the Stoics, being virtuous for Spinoza is living according to one's rational nature (IVDef.8, P24) and ultimately flourishing (VP42), and

so these emotions are linked to virtue and happiness rather than vice and suffering. Contained within this rational knowledge of Nature is the proper understanding of good/bad relative to one's virtue. Instead of simply possessing the "knowledge of good and evil" that characterizes emotions in general and passions in a haphazard manner, the virtuous person has emotions involving "*true* knowledge of good and evil [emphasis mine]" (IVP14, 35S). In other words, they desire (through attraction/avoidance) and enjoy that which is proper to their rational nature. Fundamentally then, the object of their desires and pleasures will always be truly directed at virtue.

As with the Stoics, these emotions of reason will be directed at understanding Nature and how to properly engage with external things, so as to eradicate those judgments that create suffering. Two examples of the former are self-contentment and the intellectual love of God. Rational self-contentment is the enjoyment of adequately understanding one's true scope of natural activity (IIIDef.25), i.e. what is up to us, and thus one's virtue itself (IVP52Proof). From this pleasurable self-knowledge comes the understanding of oneself as part of the deterministic order of God/Nature. Consequently, the pleasure one rationally experiences at their self-knowledge is also directed at God/Nature as the cause of their being and as that which they exist in (VP32Proof). This rational pleasure directed at God/Nature is referred to as the "intellectual love of God," which is the enjoyment of rationally contemplating God/Nature itself, to some degree (C). With these rational emotions directed at one's virtue and God/Nature, one is then led to desire and enjoy external things in a manner congruent with their personal nature. When localized pleasures do not hinder one's nature in any way, and are thus aligned with it, such objects are desired and enjoyed insofar as they agree with virtue (IVP39, 41, 43Proof). Cheerfulness is a rational emotion that arises when these localized pleasures are properly

balanced, so as to harmonize with one's nature as a whole (IVP42Proof). External things like food or wealth therefore will not be considered good in themselves, but will nevertheless be pursued and enjoyed when they are the object of rational emotions. Moreover, the virtuous person will desire to avoid misusing these things and thus hindering their nature, virtue (and by extension happiness) being the ultimate object of their appetites. Spinoza's conception of rational emotion therefore agrees in many ways with the Stoic picture of such emotions.

Eudaimonism as Psychotherapy

This shared cognitive conception of emotion is what drives the therapeutic heart of these ethical philosophies. Aurelia Armstrong describes both the Stoics and Spinoza's eudaimonistic frameworks specifically as forms of cognitive psychotherapy. She asserts that they provide "techniques and strategies whereby we can change our beliefs, thought processes, and affective states in order to free our selves from the false evaluations of external events that are the cause of emotional turmoil" (8). One achieves happiness, in other words, by addressing their emotions. Because both philosophies conceive of emotions in terms of judgments, they understand us to have the power to change or remove emotional states through the modification of said judgments. One's suffering is thus not completely out of their control, namely as a feeling unrelated to thought that inescapably happens *to* them. On the contrary, through rational understanding one can combat and ideally remove negative emotions, precisely because these emotions are necessarily connected to their thoughts. The Stoics and Spinoza both strongly emphasize that we have emotional agency, in that we can transform passions into rational emotions and form emotional states that follow from our rational nature directly. The therapeutic strategy at work here then is an analysis of one's emotions, in particular the thoughts linked to one's feelings.

This is why the Stoics stress the cognitive nature of emotional states, to encourage the individual to reflect on their judgments and how these judgments relate to their feelings. Epictetus emphasizes the distinction between what is up to us/what is not up to us in order to illustrate out how our emotions can lead us astray through erroneous judgments about ourselves and Nature. One cannot cultivate rational emotions, and by extension achieve virtue/happiness, unless they understand the cognitive nature of their emotional states and fundamentally their rational agency. This emotional transformation is reliant on coming to recognize that one's passions are grounded in the mistaken valuing of external things, when the proper object of emotion in living happily is virtue, that is rationally living according to the deterministic natural order. Through the recognition of the rationally-problematic nature of passions one can then cultivate judgments that pertain to enjoying God/Nature's cosmic order and one's own nature for what they are.

Spinoza follows the Stoics in making emotional analysis an ethical priority. Parts III and IV of the *Ethics* outline the primary emotions, their subspecies, and their effects in terms of inadequate/adequate knowledge, all for the sake of giving the individual the necessary framework to understand and modify their emotional states. Spinoza asserts that "we should pay particular attention to getting to know each emotion," because "there is available to us no more excellent remedy for the [harmful effects of passions] than that which consists in a true knowledge of them" (VP4S). Through recognizing emotions as evaluative judgments and understanding which reflect irrationality (namely, those that represent the world as contingent and external things as the highest goods) and rationality (i.e. those that reveal the necessary structure of Nature and one's true scope of activity), one is freed from suffering and elevated to true enjoyment of God/Nature and oneself. The Stoics and Spinoza therefore approach

eudaimonism through a kind of proto-cognitive psychotherapy, by stressing the cross-examination of emotions for the purpose of understanding the roots of unhealthy emotion through erroneous evaluative judgments. With such self-reflection, both ethical philosophies, in turn, facilitate the removal of harmful passions and the formation of rational emotions that promote virtue and happiness.

This section concludes the outline of the agreements between the Stoics and Spinoza. In the final section of this chapter, I will outline the Stoic conception of pleasure, so that it will provide a comparative foundation in the final chapter for illustrating where Spinoza meaningfully divorces himself from Stoic eudaimonism. Ultimately, I will argue, in 5.2, that 1.3's description of pleasure is in strong opposition to claims (a) and (b).

1.3 Stoic Pleasure

Pleasure (*hēdonē*) is referenced in two different ways by the Stoics. According to Cooper ("The Emotional Life" 206-7) and Long and Sedley (421), "pleasure" can refer to a sensation (that is impression) or an emotion. As a sensation, pleasure, as noted above, falls into the moral category of an *indifferent* in general and more specifically a *preferred* indifferent. Pleasure as an emotion, conversely, is good when it is rational and bad when it is irrational, with the former promoting happiness and the latter suffering.

Pleasure as Sensation

Pleasant sensation is an indifferent because (1) it is not good or bad in itself, and (2) its moral neutrality entails that it is unnecessary and insufficient for happiness. Pleasant sensations are among those things which, in themselves, "neither benefit nor harm" someone in relation to the happy life (*LP* VII.102). Furthermore, they "happen to good and bad [people] alike,"

meaning such sensations are “neither noble nor shameful – and hence neither good nor bad” (*A* 2.11). In other words, pleasant sensations are associated with both virtue and happiness or vice and suffering. The pleasures I derive from eating, drinking, or exercising, for example, do not in themselves indicate whether I am living virtuously and happily or viciously and miserably; they are compatible with either state of being. More fundamentally though, pleasant sensation is considered indifferent because it pertains to the body. Epictetus classifies the body as something outside our power (*HB* 1.1). Many of the examples of indifferents provided by the Stoics, such as health, disease, beauty, ugliness, strength, weakness, and pleasant/painful sensations, are all deeply connected to bodily concerns (*LP* VII.102-3). The body and its potential states are indifferent because one ultimately cannot stably control the nature of their body or what it undergoes. One might be born, or subject to unpredictable circumstances that make them, physically healthy, sick, strong, weak, beautiful, or ugly. In particular, one does not dictate what will be a pleasant or painful sensation to their body in any given moment. The body and its states are then neither good nor bad for what they are, meaning they are congruent with (and thus no necessary indication of) virtue and happiness or vice and suffering. Consequently, as a bodily state, pleasant sensation is morally indifferent.

This indifference means that bodily pleasure is unnecessary and insufficient for happiness. The Stoics assert that “it is possible to be happy without having” bodily pleasures or any of the other indifferents (VII.104). As outlined in 1.1, happiness for the Stoics consists in living according to Nature, which encompasses living in harmony with one’s rational nature in particular and the deterministic natural order, overall. Cultivating one’s rational abilities (that is the health of the mind through proper judgments) is not about accruing certain sensations, and the intellectual joys involved in achieving understanding do not necessarily have the body as

their object. Moreover, one cannot even make the claim that bodily pleasures are *sufficient* for happiness. Since the body is outside my power it can be associated with my happiness or my suffering, and thus no bodily experience per se, let alone pleasant sensation, can characterize me as happy. Consequently, the happy (*eudaimon*) life for the Stoics has nothing to do with bodily pleasure per se.

With that said, the Stoics do nevertheless grant that bodily pleasure and some other indifferents, “if they are used in a certain way” (VII.104), can harmonize with one’s rational nature, and thus the happy life (VII.105). Bodily pleasure, in other words, is not needed for, nor is any instance of it sufficient to entail that one is, living according to Nature, but this does not mean that the virtuous person must live a life devoid of pleasant sensations, either. Certain bodily pleasures, when enjoyed in rational ways, do agree with virtue, even if they do not play any role in actually constituting it (see 1.2). So long as I understand that they are not good in themselves, the pleasant sensations I derive from eating, drinking, or exercising can be harmonious with living virtuously and happily.

Virtue is fundamentally about one’s reasoning (i.e. that which is up to us); however, contained within that is a proper understanding of how to engage with external things, like bodily pleasures. By recognizing the moral neutrality of these sensations in relation to living happily, one is then able to enjoy them rationally and properly (that is in harmony with one’s nature), if they arise (*TD* IV.vi.12-4). The virtuous person will allow themselves to enjoy bodily pleasures, because they recognize that these sensations are natural to a human life (“The Emotional Life” 180), in the sense that they agree with one’s nature (*LP* VII.107) or “proper functions” (Cicero *On Ends* 3.17, 20-2/Long and Sedley 361), and thus represent those things the divine has disposed them towards (Epictetus *Discourses* 2.6.9/Long and Sedley 356). One, of course,

cannot always succeed in achieving the bodily pleasures they seek, even if those pleasures are enjoyed properly. The enjoyment of such pleasures is up to the order of God/Nature, which is why they represent that which is not up to us. The point is not that the Stoic *needs* any bodily pleasure, but rather that their virtue lies in understanding how best to engage with any bodily pleasure they *may have recourse to enjoy* in following the natural order, while also recognizing that any failure to enjoy a pleasant sensation has no power to affect their happiness. It is this dynamic that makes them “preferred” indifferents (*LP VII.102*). Bodily pleasure is therefore morally neutral, in the sense that it is unnecessary and insufficient in relation to Stoic happiness. However, bodily pleasure will nevertheless be rationally sought after by the virtuous person as something appropriate to their nature, when circumstances permit.

Bodily pleasure is understood in this way, that is as a preferred indifferent, and not an emotion, because, as a sensation, it is only an impression. An impression (*phantasia*) as a feeling has no motivational weight. It is only when one forms an evaluative judgment about that impression, namely whether it represents something good or bad, that a *phantasia* is connected to an emotion (*pathos*) and can subsequently motivate action on the part of the individual (Cooper “Stoicism” 159-60). The fact that one experiences bodily pleasure is therefore insufficient to cause an emotional attachment to that pleasant sensation or the object responsible for it. Simply experiencing a pleasant sensation when eating chocolate, for example, will not motivate me to love chocolate or to desire it in the future. It is due to my *judgment* that chocolate is good, because of the pleasant sensations I receive from it, that I form an emotional connection that compels me to pursue chocolate and to meaningfully enjoy eating it. Pleasure as an impression is in itself morally neutral, i.e. neither good nor bad by nature, and causally inefficacious because it cannot motivate me psychologically without an accompanying judgment that it is the object of.

Pleasure therefore is understood to be an *emotion* when it involves evaluative judgment and an *impression* when it merely reflects how one is affected, the impression being a necessary component but in itself insufficient to spur action.

Pleasure as an Emotion

Emotional enjoyment from an ethical standpoint, however, can make use of pleasant impressions appropriately/inappropriately or virtuously/viciously, depending on whether the emotion is a passion (*pathos*) or rational emotion (*eupatheia*). As discussed in 1.2, passions pertain to erroneous judgments (*LP* VII.110; *TD* IV.vi.11) and rational emotions properly reasoned judgments (*LP* VII.116; *TD* IV.vi.12-4). Since these judgments pertain to the evaluation of impressions, *pathē* are erroneous evaluations of impressions and *eupatheiai* are correct ones. In terms of bodily pleasure specifically, passions misconstrue the value of pleasant sensations, while rational emotions motivate one to cultivate them according to their proper moral value, that is as preferred indifferents.

The mistaken valuing of pleasant sensations leads to excessive behaviour, where one favours bodily pleasure as a good, which ultimately results in distress when one neglects what is truly good (that is reason or virtue) and is inevitably deprived of those sensations they crave. The passion of pleasure consequently involves erroneous and harmful valuing and enjoyment of pleasant sensation. Of course, pleasure as a passion is not restricted to irrational enjoyment of bodily pleasures, enjoyment of anything that is derived from erroneous evaluative judgments of present good will constitute this passion, but the body and its sensations are nevertheless a common object of such emotional pleasures. Pleasure as a passion is consequently wholly opposed to virtue and happiness, thereby making it morally bad per se. The rational emotion of joy, conversely, involves judgments that pertain to the proper value of things in the context of

virtue and happiness. All instances of joy, in turn, involve enjoyment of their objects that is never inappropriate, because it is aligned with rational understanding of Nature as it is. Fundamentally, the object of this rational enjoyment is virtue. Directly, this means one takes pleasure in being rational (i.e. making proper moral judgments) and further cultivating their rational nature. Indirectly, this means one takes pleasure in engaging with external things, such as bodily sensations, as a result of virtuous dispositions that pertain to rational understanding of Nature's causal order and the morally neutral value of those things within it. Rational pleasure (i.e. joy), in contrast to its irrational counterpart, is thus wholly aligned with virtue and happiness, thereby making it morally good per se.

Chapter 2: Spinoza's Account of Pleasure

In this chapter, I will explore the nature of pleasure in Spinoza's eudaimonism. The first section will outline Spinoza's ontological conception of pleasure as a positive affection, the two ways in which he appears to describe this affection, and the relationship between bodily and mental pleasures in his system. These points will illustrate how Spinoza's account of pleasure involves a necessary connection to the health of one's state of being, i.e. claim (a). Section two will examine Spinoza's ethical conception of pleasure and how it corresponds with claim (b): pleasure is by nature good. I will subsequently outline Spinoza's conception of happiness as virtue in terms of adequate causality or ontological self-expression, the way in which transitional and non-transitional pleasures are understood to be good by nature in this eudaimonistic framework, and the hierarchical ethical structure that exists between kinds and degrees of pleasure and happiness.

2.1 Spinoza's Ontology of Pleasure

Spinoza begins his discussion of pleasure (*laetitia*)²⁷ by formally classifying it as a primary emotion or affect.²⁸ He defines an "affect" as an "affection" or expression of being "by which a body's power of activity is increased or diminished, assisted or checked, together with the ideas [of these increases/assistances or diminishments/checks in a body's power of activity]"

²⁷ Curley translates *laetitia* as "joy," arguing that this English term "is more suggestive of the overall sense of well-being that . . . Spinoza has in mind" ("Glossary-Index" 642). He subsequently applies the term "pleasure" to a subspecies of *laetitia*: *titillatio*. As Curley's translation is popular (and justifiably so) in the literature, "joy" is a common translation for this Latin term. However, as pointed out in 1.2, Cicero translates in Latin the Greek Stoic emotion of "pleasure" (*hēdonē*) as *laetitia*. This fact supports Wolfson's claim that *laetitia* is one of many Latin translations of the Greek term *hēdonē* (206). Shirley's translation of *laetitia* as "pleasure" is thus justified. Furthermore, while Curley's reasoning behind his translation has merit, I find that "pleasure" more accurately connotes the primary nature of this affect than "joy."

²⁸ The other two primary affects being *cupiditas*, that is desire, and *tristitia*, that is pain (*E* III P11S; see 1.2).

(*E* IIIDef.3). In other words, an affect is a positive or negative change in one's state of activity, understood through the body and mind. One's state of activity is understood through Spinoza's Conatus Principle, which states: "[e]ach thing, in so far as it is in itself, endeavours to persist in its own being" (IIP6). This endeavour to persist is, in turn, the essence of a given thing (IIP7). A given thing therefore necessarily affirms and strives to preserve its existence, until overcome by another thing capable of hindering or negating its existence.²⁹ Contained within this essential self-expressive force is also a striving to increase this force (IIP12), because the more powerful a thing is the greater its ability will be to affirm its existence or reliably preserve itself (Della Rocca *Spinoza* 172). The conatus is, in other words, one's state of activity insofar as it affirms or expresses one's state of existence. Spinoza, in fact, asserts that "to act, to live, [and] to preserve one's own being . . . mean the same thing . . ." (IVP24). An affect, in turn, pertains to a change in one's conatus or state of self-expression, in terms of it being strengthened or weakened, increased or decreased (IIP57Proof). This conatus, as we shall see, is however strictly related to both the body *and* the mind's activity.

The Ontological Unity of Bodily and Mental Affects

The relation between bodily and mental activity is explained through Spinoza's principle of parallelism, which states: "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (IIP7). Spinoza elaborates on this doctrine, asserting that (1) "whether we conceive of [God or] Nature under the attribute of Extension [i.e. physicality] or under the attribute of Thought . . . we find one and the same order, or one and the same connection of

²⁹ As in the case of a finite being (*E* IDef.2).

causes”³⁰ and (2) “a mode of Extension [i.e. a body] and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, expressed in two ways” (IIP7S). The term “attribute” here refers to a fundamental way in which God expresses itself or can be rationally understood (IDef.4). According to Spinoza, God fundamentally expresses Itself³¹ (at least partly) through physical and thinking phenomena, i.e. bodies and ideas (IIP1-2).³² The principle of parallelism, in turn, states that the causal chain of physical phenomena in terms of the interaction of bodies and the causal chain of thinking phenomena in terms of the interaction of ideas are in fact the same causal chain described in two different contexts.³³

Simply put, for every body (a mode of Extension) there is a corresponding idea (a mode of Thought) and for every idea there is a corresponding body. Furthermore, every change in state that a certain body undergoes will correspond to a change in state in a certain mind. This relation exists between a given body and mind because they are not ontologically distinct beings, but two different conceptual aspects of the same individual. When an individual undergoes some change in their state of being, that change is understood in a bodily and mental context. For example, when I listen to music on the radio my body is affected by sounds through my ears (IIP19, 26) while my mind is simultaneously affected through having the idea, i.e. being aware, of those

³⁰ Spinoza employs the phrase *Deus sive Natura*, i.e. “God or Nature” in the Preface to Part IV. *Sive* here marks a relation of equivalence, making “God” and “Nature” synonymous terms. As a result, all references to “God” will be references to “Nature,” as well.

³¹ Spinoza uses the traditional “He” when referring to God/Nature. To avoid such gendered language and to better connote the impersonal nature of God that Spinoza intends (*E* IP15S; VP17), I will instead use “It” when referring to God or Nature.

³² I say “partly” because God is described as “consisting of infinite attributes” (*E* IDef.6), which could theoretically mean that It expresses Its nature through more than just Extension and Thought. Spinoza confirms this idea in *Ep* 56.

³³ I here follow what Michael Della Rocca describes as “the numerical identity interpretation” of the relation between attributes in Spinoza’s metaphysics, which states that the body and mind of an individual (as modes) ontologically refer to one and the same thing conceived through the attributes of Extension and Thought, respectively. For a comprehensive explanation and defense of this view, see Della Rocca (“Spinoza’s Argument for the Identity Theory”).

sounds that are heard by my ears (IIDef. 3, P23). Spinoza clarifies, however, that there is no causal interaction between bodies and minds, or physical and mental phenomena, meaning that a physical cause cannot produce a mental effect and a mental cause cannot produce a physical effect (IIIP2). As a result, the musical sounds as a physical phenomenon do not cause the idea of those sounds as a mental phenomenon. Instead, my *idea* of those musical sounds is caused by my *idea* of the radio.³⁴ Similarly, my idea of musical sounds does not cause my body to hear those sounds. On the contrary, my hearing of sounds is caused by *physical* sound waves produced by the radio that subsequently interact with the auditory system of my body. Ontologically then, there is only one effect involved in me listening to music in this situation. The physical and mental are merely two fundamental ways in which that one musical effect is expressed or understood by me, through my bodily hearing of sounds and my mental awareness of those sounds.

The principle of parallelism consequently necessitates that any affect is coextensively understood in bodily and mental terms.³⁵ There is no ontological separation, and thus independence, between a bodily affect and a mental affect that causally and relevantly co-occur in an individual, as they pertain to the same affect under different descriptions. As a result, if I experience a change in my *body's* state of activity, then I will also correspondingly experience a change in my *mind's* state of activity.

³⁴ This idea will partly be caused by my idea of sensory stimulation (*E* IIP19, 23, 26), viz. the idea of the sound waves interacting with my ears, and partly by the idea of the radio (a finite thinking mode) that corresponds with the radio as a finite extended mode.

³⁵ Della Rocca makes a similar claim in his discussion of parallelism, describing the “power” or state of perfection of a given mode as a “neutral property” that is referentially transparent in causal contexts, in the sense that it presupposes no attribute when posited (“Spinoza’s Argument” 199). In light of parallelism, such a property will then involve co-occurring, and arguably numerically identical, physical and mental descriptions. An affect, as a positive/negative modification of this power, will also be a neutral property, and therefore it too will involve both physical and mental descriptions that are co-occurring/numerically identical.

The Active/Passive Distinction

Spinoza organizes affects into more than just bodily and mental phenomena, however; affects are also classified as “active” or “passive.” An affect is active insofar as the individual is the “adequate cause” of or their nature is the total explanation for that affect, while an affect is passive insofar as one is the “inadequate cause” of or their nature is the partial explanation for that affect (IIIDef.1-3). In the context of the mind, this dynamic is linked to “adequate knowledge” and “inadequate knowledge,” respectively (IIP1). Adequate knowledge pertains to an idea (singular or composite) that “considered in itself . . . has all the properties – that is intrinsic characteristics – of a true idea” (IIDef.4), i.e. an idea that internally or self-sufficiently expresses the necessary truth or self-evidence of its content (IIP29S, 44). In other words, an idea involves adequate knowledge when one’s mind is the adequate cause of their understanding through the possession of singular, self-evident ideas³⁶ or through putting disparate ideas together in a logically valid manner, that is making the truth of a composite idea indubitable through its constituent ideas.³⁷

In the first instance, we have an example of what Spinoza refers to as “the third kind of knowledge” (*scientia intuitiva*). The third kind of knowledge is defined as “an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God [or Nature],” which leads to “adequate knowledge of the essence of things” (IIP40S2) or intuitive “knowledge of particular things” (VP36S). In other words, *scientia intuitiva* is the immediate conception or “direct apprehension” (Nadler 181) of a clear, self-evidently true idea pertaining to the essence of a given being (primarily as a mode

³⁶ For example, there is a definitive cause for any effect, and if there is no definitive cause there will be no effect (IAx.3); Extension (i.e. physicality) and Thought are fundamental ways in which God/Nature expresses itself (IIP1-2).

³⁷ For example: (1) All men are mortal, (2) Socrates is a man, (3) Therefore Socrates is mortal.

of Extension and Thought from the perspective of a human mind). Such knowledge, in turn, involves adequate causality because it represents the mind's activity in self-sufficiently expressing necessary or eternal truth through a self-evident idea.

The second instance, pertains to the “second kind of knowledge” (*ratio*). *Ratio* consists in “common notions and the adequate ideas of the properties of things” (IIP40S2) or “abstract knowledge” of the relation between beings (VP36S). In contrast to intuition, this adequate knowledge focuses on deducing the common properties among beings (e.g. bodies) instead of conceiving of the essence of a particular being. With such deduction, one subsequently goes through a rational process to arrive at a conclusion. Nadler draws the same distinction between *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva*. The former “is discursive and involves inferring the effect from its causes,” while the latter is “an immediate perception of the connection between causes and effect, resulting in a singular conception of the essence of a thing” (181).³⁸ Furthermore, he parallels this epistemic dynamic in Spinoza with Descartes's outline of the relation between deduction and intuition in his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* (ibid.). Descartes asserts that we distinguish “mental intuition from certain deduction on the grounds that we are aware of a *movement or a sort of sequence in the latter* but not in the former, and also because *immediate self-evidence is not required for deduction, as it is for intuition . . .* [emphasis mine]” (Rule III). Both philosophers share then the view of deduction as a rational process.³⁹

This deductive process is, in turn, performed in two ways: (1) from particularity to generality and (2) from generality to particularity. Deducing what characteristics certain bodies

³⁸ Clare Carlisle also distinguishes between *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva* in this way (229-30).

³⁹ The primary epistemic difference between them is that Descartes treats the intellect and the will as distinct faculties of the mind (*PP* §32), while Spinoza treats them as inseparable and essential components of any given idea (*E* IIP49; *Spinoza* 123-4).

share and do not share, e.g. the feature of being extended, a certain proportion of motion/rest among material parts (individually and/or collectively among a certain group of beings), and the ability or lack thereof for self-locomotion (Lord 78), involves reasoning from particular bodies to conclusions about general properties or laws concerning bodies (IIP38-9). Conversely, one can reflect on general truths in order to deduce something about a particular state of affairs. Spinoza uses the example of “the common property of proportionals” outlined in “Proposition 19 of the Seventh Book of [Euclid’s *Elements*], which enables me (under the assumption I understand the necessity of this proof through adequate knowledge) to deduce from the number series 1, 2, 3, x that $x = 6$ (IIP40S2). With the third kind of knowledge, conversely, I “infer in a single intuition,” or immediate act of conception, certain features shared among bodies or that $x = 6$. This deductive process therefore constitutes a composite adequate idea that consists of constituent ideas that share a certain valid (namely, particular-general or general-particular) relation to each other.

Inadequate knowledge, on the other hand, pertains to an idea that is “confused and fragmentary,” because it is externally caused by disparate sensory ideas (IIP29S), i.e. reliant on ideas pertaining to one’s interactions with the world. In this case, one’s knowledge is deemed inadequate because their mind is the partial cause of a given idea through its inability to express the necessary truth of its content. Passive affects, in turn, involve inadequate knowledge because one’s own mind is the partial (i.e. inadequate) cause of their change in state, i.e. their degree of intellectual activity. Active affects, conversely, involve adequate knowledge, in that the mind is the total cause of the change in their degree of intellectual activity. It is important to remember that, in both the positive and negative contexts, the partial or total causal role of the mind will correspond with the body as a partial or total cause of a change in its degree of physical activity,

due to the ontological identity established by the principle of parallelism. In other words, when the mind is an *inadequate* cause of affects, the body is simultaneously an *inadequate* cause of affects, and when the mind is an *adequate* cause of affects, the body is simultaneously an *adequate* cause of affects.

The role of adequacy/activity and inadequacy/passivity in human lives, however, is complex. Spinoza argues that humans, as individuals, are finite beings, meaning we are necessarily limited in our existence and causal power, and thus subject to external forces (IIDef.7, P10; IVP4). As a result, I (that is my nature) cannot strictly-speaking be the total cause of effects, whether in the world or in my own state of being. The effects I create in the world involve things that I interact with, which play an inescapable causal role in whatever effect I realize. For example, let us say I am the cause of my neighbour's window being broken. The shattering of the glass is relevantly connected to my action, viz, the baseball I threw, but this effect could not have occurred without the window. My nature, the nature of the ball, and the nature of the window (along with other geographical and physical foundations of my environment) are necessary components in the causal story of the window breaking. We might be tempted in everyday life to say I am the cause of this effect; however, strictly-speaking, I am not the *total* cause, because I rely on things outside my nature to bring about the effect of the broken window. God, in contrast, can be said to produce the effect of the broken window without the assistance of anything outside Itself.⁴⁰ God, through the infinite and finites modes that follow from the attribute of Extension, is responsible for the physical and geographical foundations of my environment, as well as my actions (prompted by my nature or other external forces) and the current state of the window (IP16, 21-3, 28). At every point in the causal story, God is the

⁴⁰ See Part I and IVPref. of the *Ethics* and 1.1 of this thesis.

ultimate explanation, because every component is an expression qua mode of God, thereby making It fundamentally the explanation of the window breaking (IDef.5, P15).⁴¹ God is thus the total cause of this effect, but as an expression of God I am nevertheless part of this cause, in that I play a necessary role in explaining how the window broke.

Even when causing effects within myself though, I cannot escape the involvement of external causes. For instance, if I nourish my body with food I can be said to be the cause of my body's change in state, i.e. my transition from a state of hunger to a state of satiation. However, again I am not the total cause of the effect in question, in this case because the food I consume and its subsequent nature are also a necessary component of the causal story of my hunger being satisfied. Of course, this situation is in some sense another example of my causal engagement with the world, and so it will be subject to the issues discussed above, but in another sense what is relevant here is the effect that I am causally related to, namely a change in my state of being. Here my engagement with external things pertains to an internal effect in my state of being, whereas the previous example involves an external effect pertaining to the state of being of *something outside myself*. Despite the fact that I am a cause in this example, because I am not the total proximate cause of the change in my state of being, it would appear that I am not an adequate cause, and thus that this affect of nourishing my body is not active. With God, in contrast, there is nothing outside Itself for God to interact with in order to realize effects in Its state of being; God wholly relies on Itself in realizing Its affections (IP14).⁴²

⁴¹ God is the "efficient" cause (*E* IP25), i.e. ultimate or fundamental explanation, of the window breaking, but not the "proximate" cause, i.e. immediate explanation, of this effect (IP28-S). As modes, the broken window, my physical environment, and my nature and actions are ultimately caused by God, but in the particulars of the situation Its causal power in breaking the window is specifically expressed through this environment and my actions.

⁴² In fact, as will be explained later on in this section, none of God's affections are pleasant or painful affects (*E* VP17).

We (as finite beings) are for Spinoza, however, capable of bringing about affects that do not involve direct engagement with external things. The prime example is self-contentment (*acquiescentia in se ipso*), which is “pleasure arising from [an individual’s] contemplation of [themselves] and [their] power of activity” (III Def. Aff.25). This affect can be considered active insofar as one’s understanding of their own bodily/mental activity is the cause of their experience of pleasure. It would appear then that this pleasurable affect can be independent of external causes. However, this is not strictly the case. A being is classified as “finite” if “it can be limited by another thing of the same nature” (IDef.2). Basically, I am finite because there is always another individual who, by the very act of existing, posits their state of being/activity and not mine, i.e. I do not encompass all of existence and causality, as God does. When contemplating my activity then, I cannot fail to be aware of the limits of that activity, because as a finite being there are necessary limitations to what I can do or the effects I can bring about. If I am passively self-contented, i.e. the partial cause of this affect, I may, through inadequate knowledge, fail to conceive of my limitations, but those limitations are objectively present; and in this case, if the affect is passive then I am not the total cause of my awareness of my activity in the first place. However, even in the hypothetical case of *active* self-contentment I can only be rationally aware of my true activity in conjunction with my adequate understanding of what I am *not*, since I am finite and can only understand this fact through my conception of other finite beings. God, in contrast, is infinite and all-encompassing (IDef.6, P15), and does indeed enjoy absolute active self-contentment (VP35-6S), with no reference to anything but Itself through attributes and modes in Its contemplation. It would appear then that I cannot be an adequate (that is total) cause of any effect, and thus I cannot actually experience active affects.

And yet Spinoza does discuss, in the context of finite beings, active affects that pertain to both external (world-directed) and internal (self-directed) engagement. Firstly, active affects involve one's rational understanding as an adequate cause through adequate knowledge (IIIP1; IVApp.1-2;). Secondly, Spinoza equates being rational with seeking out what is properly beneficial to one's nature, which, by virtue of the principle of parallelism, will encompass both the body and the mind (IVP18S, 24). Thirdly, he argues that our bodies necessarily rely on external things for their nutrition or overall preservation, which involves affects (IVP18S, App.27). As a result, if one is led by reason to interact with external things in a manner that is beneficial to their body/mind, then the affects involved will be active. When it comes to the internal engagement of self-contentment, despite the above remarks about the inescapability of external causation, Spinoza nevertheless explicitly asserts that "[s]elf-contentment . . . can arise from reason," and thus that one can be an adequate cause of this affect (IVP52). Furthermore, he clarifies that "if we suppose that a man conceives his own weakness from understanding something more powerful than himself, by the knowledge of which he measures his own power of activity, we are conceiving only that the man understands himself distinctly" (IVP53Proof). In other words, one's awareness of their finitude through conceiving of another existing being who limits them in their existence/activity can involve adequate knowledge of one's own activity, and thus one can be understood to be the cause of any pleasure that arises from this awareness when it is adequate. Consequently, in our causal engagement with the world and ourselves Spinoza appears to argue that we can indeed experience active affects, i.e. affects that we are the cause of.

How exactly do we make sense of this dynamic, though? The definitions of adequate causation and active affect both seemingly entail that one is the total cause of effects, and yet we have already established that human finitude necessitates *external causation that prevents one*

from being the total cause of any effect. The issue is that Spinoza posits the inescapability of external causation for finite beings, which implies the impossibility of us being total causes of internal or external effects, and yet grants that we can nevertheless enjoy active affects in the sense of being an adequate cause of a given change in our state of being (IVP4). Consequently, there appears to be a tension between the necessary passivity, i.e. inadequate or partial causality, of being a finite being and our ability to experience active affects, i.e. to be the adequate or total cause of an internal effect in our state of being.

Scholars like Matthew Kisner (“Freedom as rationality” 29-45) and Michael Della Rocca (*Spinoza* 114-8, 133, 187-9), in response, argue that Spinoza approaches adequacy/activity and inadequacy/passivity in a scalar manner, i.e. as a matter of degree. While only God can absolutely satisfy the definitions of adequate causation and active affect, this does not mean that we, as finite beings, are restricted to absolute passivity causally. Strictly speaking, yes, we are never the total cause of any affect, even self-contentment, and thus we are by nature inadequate causes (which is, in fact, why we are finite). However, we can be *more-or-less* the cause of an effect, or more-or-less active than passive. Spinoza asserts that “the *more* the mind has inadequate ideas, the *more* it is subject to passive states . . . on the other hand, it is the *more* active in *proportion* as it has a greater number of adequate ideas [emphasis mine]” (IIP1C). Firstly, Spinoza’s use of “more” and “proportion” shows that he is conceiving of inadequate knowledge/passivity and adequate knowledge/activity as existing on a spectrum between absolute passivity, that is the absence of any causal role in an effect, and absolute activity, that is to be the total cause of an effect. As an existing finite being my role as an inadequate cause, strictly-speaking, means that I am neither absolutely passive, in that I have some causal power (IP36), nor am I absolutely active (like God), in that I can never be the total cause of any effect.

What this passage tells us, however, is that my mind is closer to absolute passivity than absolute activity based on the number of inadequate ideas I have, and it is closer to absolute activity than absolute passivity based on the number of adequate ideas I have.

It also follows from this passage that I can simultaneously possess inadequate and adequate ideas, which makes sense since some of my ideas can be fragmentary and uncertain (e.g. what I perceive the size of the Moon to be through ideas pertaining to my sight) while others are certain (e.g. that I share the feature of Extension with all other bodies or that $1+1 = 2$). As discussed above, inadequate knowledge pertains to the mind as an inadequate cause of, and thus *passive* in relation to, its ideas, while adequate knowledge pertains to the mind as an adequate cause of, and thus *active* in relation to, its ideas. Since I can possess both inadequate and adequate ideas, so too then can my mind be both passive and active by virtue of those ideas. My mind is passive insofar as my knowledge about something is fragmented, confused, or uncertain, which means that my mind is unable to clearly establish the necessary truth of a given idea (i.e. it is not singularly or compositionally self-evident). My mind is active, conversely, insofar as my knowledge of something is clear and distinct or certain, meaning that my mind *is* able to establish the necessary truth of a given idea (i.e. it *is* singularly or compositionally self-evident). If possessing adequate ideas makes my mind an adequate cause, and thus active, to some degree, then by virtue of the principle of parallelism (that is the ontological identity of the mind and body) my body will correspondingly be an adequate cause, and thus active, as well. As a result, while I cannot as a finite mode be a total cause, and thus be an absolute adequate cause, I can nevertheless participate in relative adequate causality insofar as I possess and cultivate ideas that clearly express their necessary truth. Even among my inadequate ideas (which are, to some degree, inescapable), the more clear and distinct those ideas are in content, or the closer

they are to expressing their self-evidence, the less inadequate, and more adequate, they are.

When applying this dynamic to affects, I then can genuinely experience active affects insofar as a change in my state of being follows from adequate knowledge in my mind, even though my mind does not possess absolute adequate knowledge and I cannot, more generally, be a total cause in bodily or mental terms.

For example, there is a meaningful causal difference between the pleasure I experience from impulsively eating whatever food is front of me and the pleasure I experience from rationally eating some foods over others. In the former case, while I (namely, through my actions, taste buds, and digestive system) play a causal role in my pleasure, the food I indiscriminately eat is also a cause of the experience, making my pleasure undeniably passive due to my role as a partial cause. In the latter case, conversely, I am taking pleasure in foods that I have reasoned through adequate knowledge of their individual natures to be what I need nutritionally. While the food is an inescapable component in this causal story, my nature plays a more substantial role in my experience of pleasure here because I am acting deliberately from a foundation of understanding about the relation between my body/mind and the food I consume. As a result, I am less of an *inadequate* cause, and thus more of an *adequate* cause, in the latter case through the relative degree of self-sufficient activity my mind expresses through adequate knowledge than I am in the former, where I act impulsively through inadequate knowledge or a certain degree of ignorance about myself or the food. In other words, my impulsive eating suggests that I am to *a greater degree passive* than I am active in relation to my pleasure, and my rational eating suggests that I am to *a greater degree active* than passive in my pleasure. This dynamic suggests then that I am not solely active or solely passive, but rather to one degree active (insofar as I am an adequate cause) and to another degree passive (insofar as I am an

inadequate cause). Spinoza says something similar when he asserts that “[t]he more perfection [that is power of activity (IVPref.)] a thing has, the more active and the less passive it is” (VP40). The fact that an affect is a positive or negative change in my state of activity only reinforces this dynamic, because my power of activity overall is itself a proportion, in that my power is increased or decreased by a given affect, which in turn dictates my state of being’s ratio of adequate to inadequate causation. We are given these strict definitions of adequate causation/active affect and inadequate causation/passive affect therefore to illustrate the end points on the spectrum of causality. As finite beings we exist somewhere on this spectrum through a ratio of adequacy/activity to inadequacy/passivity, and through our interactions with ourselves and the world we can become more-or-less active or passive in our state of being and the affects we experience.

In order to bring all these points about adequacy/inadequacy and affects together, let us now return to the music example. My enjoyment or sadness while listening to a song on the radio will be passive insofar as the affect I experience is explained, not only by my ears, but the sound waves produced by the radio that interact with my ears and my corresponding idea of those sounds. To enjoy a song actively, conversely, involves me having adequate ideas of the sounds waves in terms of how they pertain to the instruments or notes that constitute the song, or the way in which each component is arranged to create the melody and harmony that I hear and have ideas of (IIIP1; IVP23S). In this case, while the musical sound waves play an obvious causal role in my enjoyment of the song, my intellectual engagement with it (the mental component) and my corresponding ability to listen more-or-less precisely to the song (the bodily component) render this affect comparatively more active than if I were simply listening to and aware of the sound waves without musical knowledge or reflection. My pleasant/painful change in state is

consequently, in this context, based on far more than just the way sounds interact with my auditory system; instead, I play a more-or less adequate and inadequate causal role in the creation and intensity of my enjoyment or discomfort, through both my mind's musical knowledge and my body's ability to engage with the music. With self-contentment I am passive insofar as circumstances and people influence my experience of my abilities accurately/inaccurately (III Def. Aff. 28 Expl.), and I am active insofar as I derive enjoyment from understanding and correspondingly being able to act in relation to the true scope of my state of activity (IVP52). The adequate and inadequate causal roles of the subject in the realization of an affect are thus central in Spinoza's philosophical system.

The Positive Nature of Pleasure

Pleasure, specifically, is understood as a *positive* affect, because it represents a "transition from a state of less perfection to a state of greater perfection" (IIIDef. Aff. 2), with "perfection" understood here as one's bodily/mental "power" or state of activity (IIIP11s; IV Pref.; VP40). In other words, pleasure represents the promotion of one's state of being through the conatus in terms of an increase in their degree of activity. When I eat and drink, for example, my bodily/mental experience of pleasure comes from being strengthened in my state of being through nourishment that serves to give both my body and mind new energy to act that they did not previously have while I was hungry and in need of nutrition (IVApp.27). This pleasure will be passive insofar as the increase in my state of activity is explained through the food's effect on me. My pleasure is conversely active insofar as my adequate knowledge of what foods will empower me and physical eating of those foods (in line with the self-affirming desire of the conatus) explain the positive change in my state of being. With self-contentment my experience of pleasantness comes from knowing the true scope of my body/mind's activity in a way that

further increases my state of adequate causality through allowing me to make full use of and further enhance my causal power (barring external interference). The more my self-knowledge relies on external factors (i.e. inadequate ideas) the more passive my self-contentment will be, while the more my knowledge relies on adequate ideas, i.e. clearly and distinctly understanding my state of activity, the more active or self-sufficient I will be in my self-contentment. My pleasures therefore are linked to the empowerment of my state of being through the conatus, and the passive and active nature of a given pleasure pertains to my causal role in the positive change that it is associated with.

Curiously, though, Spinoza appears to describe certain pleasures that are *non-transitional*, as well.⁴³ “Blessedness” (*beatitudo*), the highest kind of happiness, is said to involve virtue (VP42), the intellectual love of God (P36S, 42Proof), and intuitive self-contentment (IVApp.4, P32Proof, 36S). These components, as we shall soon see, refer to one’s current state of activity *in itself* rather than a *change* in one’s state of activity. Virtue, as discussed in the first chapter, is one’s “power” to act according to their own nature (IVDef.8, P18S), which is just to say that one’s nature (through the ontological self-expression of the conatus) is the explanation of effects or that one is (to some degree) an adequate cause (IVApp.2). This claim coincides with Spinoza’s assertion that, with blessedness, one’s “mind is endowed with perfection,” i.e. a certain degree of activity (VP33S). Blessedness as virtue is thus a state of relative adequate causality.

The intellectual love of God (*amor Dei intellectualis*) and intuitive self-contentment follow from the third kind of knowledge (VP32Proof-C). In the form of the intellectual love of

⁴³ A detail observed by Clare Carlisle (231), Michael Della Rocca (*Spinoza* 157), Beth Lord (153), and Martha C. Nussbaum (501).

God, one experiences “pleasure accompanied by the [intuitively adequate] idea of God as the cause” of this pleasure (VP32C).⁴⁴ It is a love derived from my intuitive understanding of God in terms of Its attributes (namely, Extension and Thought) and modes (namely, bodily and mental phenomena), the ultimate object, and thus explanation, of this pleasure being some aspect of God. Intuitive self-contentment follows from me taking pleasure in knowing some aspect of God intuitively, i.e. deriving enjoyment from my intellectual activity of intuitive understanding. This form of self-contentment is necessarily part of the intellectual love of God, because, as a mode, my adequate self-understanding involves adequate understanding of a particular way in which “the attributes of God find expression” (IP25C), namely through my existence and activities (IP36). Consequently, the object and cause of my pleasure (or love) in this context is both my understanding of some aspect of God’s infinite state of activity and my own degree of activity as this aspect of God’s activity (VP30, 32Proof, 36S). Moreover, as a proportionate expression of God’s infinite activity, my love of myself and God is in fact part of God’s “infinite intellectual love” of Itself (VP35-6). My intuitive self-contentment and love for God are thus contained within God’s own experience of infinite self-contentment. This self-contented and divine love, in turn, pertain to virtue (and thus blessedness), in that I am acting according to my nature as an aspect of God’s infinite adequate causality, meaning I am the cause of the effect of my experience of pleasure insofar as I simultaneously understand myself and God to some degree (VP42Proof). Beth Lord describes this dynamic similarly, stating that “God’s love of being is . . . understood as the affirmation of God’s [infinite] perfection [i.e. state of activity]. And it is the affirmation of the [proportionate] perfection of ourselves, in God, that constitutes our blessedness” (154). Intuitive self-contentment and the intellectual love of God are therefore

⁴⁴ Love in general is formally defined as “pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause” (*E III*Def. Aff.6) or pleasure that is understood to come from something other than oneself (otherwise, one would be self-contented).

coextensively contained within virtue in the context of blessedness. They are the enjoyment of my state of proportionate adequate causality insofar as it represents an aspect of God's infinite adequate causality. Since God enjoys infinite and eternal activity, Its self-contentment cannot pertain to a positive (or for that matter, negative) change in Its state of being (IP20C2; VP17Proof), meaning that God does not experience "any emotion [or affect] of pleasure or pain," as formally defined in Part III's Definitions of the Emotions (VP17Proof). And because my intuitive knowledge (that is self-contentment) is an aspect of God's own self-contentment, it also cannot be transitional per se. The pleasures of blessedness consequently do not in themselves involve a transition towards greater activity; rather, they affirm or positively express one's current degree of adequate causality.

We can explain the difference between transitional and non-transitional pleasures through the second kind of knowledge (that is deductive reasoning) and the third kind of knowledge (that is intuition), respectively. Pleasure derived from the deductive process of *ratio* involves reasoning that enhances my understanding by establishing the necessity of a given truth, meaning that I have moved from a lesser state of mental activity to a greater state of mental activity (which, by virtue of parallelism, will correspond to an increase in my body's state of activity). *Ratio* as adequate knowledge also represents adequate causality. The pleasure associated with this mental activity represents how my state of perfection *is positively changed* by my own nature through my act of deductive reasoning. This pleasure is thus active insofar as my deductive activity causes a transition in my degree of empowerment. With *scientia intuitiva*, in contrast, I do not go through a process of reasoning that changes my state of understanding about the necessity of a given truth, but rather I immediately conceive of, and thus affirm, the self-evidence of that truth. Because the idea of that truth's necessity is immediately accessible, this

intuitive activity does not modify my state of (namely, mental) being, but rather reaffirms or expresses knowledge (i.e. the degree of mental activity) I already possess. This is supported by Spinoza's assertion that the second kind of knowledge can lead to the third kind of knowledge (VP28), meaning that one can come to immediately conceive of the ideas and structure that constitute a given deductive argument in the sense that one no longer needs to go through a process of reasoning to establish the necessary truth of its conclusion (IIP47S). It is also notable that the only pleasures described as non-transitional are those of blessedness, which consists in intuitive knowledge. The intellectual love of God and intuitive self-contentment, as pleasures derived from mental activities of the third kind of knowledge, consequently do not in themselves involve a transition in one's state of being because they pertain to the enjoyment of immediately accessible knowledge of God and one's own current degree of activity (although, they will, as affections of the conatus, facilitate the cultivation of further transitional and non-transitional pleasures). The active nature of these intuitive pleasures is evident from their association with virtue or the affirmation of one's current degree of adequate causality. It is therefore through intuition that we can explicate the nature of non-transitional pleasures.

A problem arises from Spinoza's discussion of non-transitional pleasures, though. The formal definition of an affect is a *transition* in one's state of activity (IIIDef.3) and pleasure is defined as a positive *transition* in one's state of activity (III Def. Aff. 2). Moreover, Spinoza argues that pleasure is "not perfection [i.e. one's state of activity] itself," meaning that without a change in one's state of being one will not experience enjoyment (III Def. Aff. 3 Expl.). Spinoza supports this claim with reference to pain (*tristitia*), i.e. the transition to a lesser state of perfection (III Def. Aff. 3), arguing that we only experience pain when our conatus is diminished in its state of activity (Expl.). We do not experience as painful then what we cannot actually do,

or what is outside our current state of activity, but rather only the actual frustration or weakening of our ability to act is painful (ibid.). The intellectual love of God and intuitive self-contentment, as non-transitional pleasures pertaining to one's current degree of adequate causality per se, do not appear to satisfy these formal definitions and are seemingly in contradiction with the above explication. How exactly then are the intuitive pleasures of blessedness *pleasures* or more fundamentally *affects* we might ask, if they do not in themselves involve a positive change in one's state of activity? Lord, in fact, denies that these intuitive pleasures are affects (153). Similarly, Carlisle asserts that "[t]he language of the affects becomes problematic in the third kind of cognition," precisely because "there is inevitably an element of 'feigning' in speaking of an eternal [that is non-durational and non-transitional] joy [*laetitia*]" (231). As a result, there seems to be a tension in Spinoza's conception of pleasure, because blessedness consists in pleasures that are non-transitional and that do not cohere with the definitions of affect or pleasure.

One might however respond, as Della Rocca does, that this is "merely a harmless broadening of Spinoza's account of [pleasure] to include enjoyment of power even without transition from a lesser degree of power" (*Spinoza* 157). In this case, despite Spinoza's previous definitions, we can simply accept that he discusses pleasure in transitional *and* non-transitional ways. Spinoza himself seems to recognize that the pleasures of blessedness do not correspond with his definition of pleasure as an affect. When discussing God and a given individual's shared enjoyment of intuitive divine love and self-contentment, he questions "if we may still use this term" of pleasure, since it is not, strictly-speaking, an affect (VP36S). Despite the fact that these intuitive pleasures are contrary to his earlier definitions, Spinoza nevertheless seems inclined then to consider the self-awareness of our relative state of activity in itself as enjoyable in some

sense. What can be said, though, for the sake of some coherence, is that these non-transitional pleasures are still positive *affections* or expressions of being, even if they are not affects.

For the purposes of this thesis, however, I am not concerned with the validity of Spinoza's philosophy, but rather where it can meaningfully be shown to depart from Stoicism conceptually. As a result, the potential contradictoriness or cohesion of Spinoza's conception of pleasure need not significantly trouble us in this context. In either case, whether transitional or non-transitional, it is evident that Spinoza strongly links pleasure to the promotion of one's state of being through the ontological self-expression (i.e. proportionate adequate causality) of the *conatus*.

Overview

Pleasure is fundamentally understood to be a positive affection in that it is linked to the ontological affirmation of a given being's existence, i.e. the activities of the *conatus* through adequate causality. Since all being, from God as substance to individual things as finite modes, is argued by Spinoza to be (at least) coextensively extended and thinking in nature, any expression of the *conatus* will be understood in bodily and mental terms. Pleasure, specifically, is understood to be a positive affection of the *conatus* in two ways. Firstly, some pleasures are understood to be transitional (i.e. affects), in that they represent the strengthening of the *conatus* through an increase in one's state of activity (namely, the ability to express their existence and further empower themselves). Such pleasures can be classified as passive or active. A passive pleasure pertains to an increase in one's state of activity insofar as it is externally-caused. An active pleasure, on the other hand, pertains to an internally-caused increase in activity, i.e. insofar as the individual's *conatus* is the cause of its own empowerment. Finite beings, because they are both necessarily active and passive in their existence, will then necessarily experience

pleasures that are to some degree both active and passive. Secondly, other pleasures are understood to be non-transitional in that they represent the affirmation of one's current state of activity in itself, their degree of adequate causality representing an aspect of God's infinite activity or ontological self-expression. As a result, these pleasures will be solely active, in that the individual's enjoyment is caused by their experience of their current state of activity (i.e. their conatus) in itself.

In all its forms then, i.e. bodily/mental, active/passive, and transitional/non-transitional, pleasure is by nature always connected to the promotion of the conatus, i.e. the ontological expression of one's existence. To experience pleasure is, in other words, for one to be healthy through their ability to express their state of being to some degree. Pain, as the opposite of pleasure, pertains to that which weakens one's conatus, representing the frustration of ontological self-expression or the unhealthiness of one's state of being. These details consequently clearly align Spinoza's ontological conception of pleasure with claim (a).

2.2. Spinoza's Ethics of Pleasure

As I established in 1.1, Spinoza's ethical framework is directed towards happiness. Happiness itself is defined as virtue or living according to one's nature (IIP49S; IVDef.8, P18; VP42). As a mode of God, I am, through my existence and actions, part of Its infinite adequate causality. Living according to my personal nature is therefore synonymous with living in harmony with God (that is, Nature). I only live according to my nature, however, insofar as I am an adequate cause, i.e. insofar as I am the explanation of an effect through adequate knowledge, whether in my state of being or the world in general. The more "perfection" or adequate causality I possess, the more my nature in itself represents some aspect of God's infinite

perfection or adequate causality (IVP45S). As a result, living according to one's nature, being virtuous, and ultimately being happy, involve being an adequate cause.

Happiness and the Conatus

Living according to one's nature (that is virtue or adequate causality) more fundamentally, though, represents the conatus. As outlined in 2.1, the conatus refers to a being's essential striving to persevere in existence. An individual, through their conatus, necessarily seeks to preserve themselves, which entails not only maintaining their current state of existence, but also increasing their ability to exist without hindrance or destruction by external forces. Only God is absolutely free of hindrance and destruction though, since It is infinite (IP8), ontologically/causally independent (IDef.3, P7), and there is nothing outside God (IP14-15) that It can interact with, and thus be harmed by (VP17). If we interpret God as having a conatus (which the attributes and modes as ontological expressions of Its essence would seem to indicate), then Its existential striving involves the absolute affirmation of Its existence. God's features make it impossible, however, for Its striving to increase or decrease. In the former case, It optimally affirms Its existence and thus there is no conceivable degree of striving that God lacks or could aspire to. In the latter case, because God's ontological/causal independence qua substance entails that It is causally immune to anything outside Itself and the Conatus Principle entails that opposition to existing can only come from outside a being (IIIP4, 6Proof), God cannot be weakened in Its ability to exist. Finite beings as modes represent aspects of this absolute striving (IIIP6Proof), but in themselves their striving is necessarily limited because it is susceptible to external influence, positively and negatively. It is because of these limitations that they are capable of affects (i.e. transitions in their degree of activity). The conatus of a finite

being can then be strengthened or weakened precisely because its existential striving is not all-encompassing and immutable like God's.

The conatus, as the essence of any being, is consequently central to our understanding of adequate causality, living according to one's nature, virtue, and ultimately happiness. The heart of Spinoza's eudaimonistic project is self-expression. To express one's state of being through the conatus is to be the cause of effects. For God these effects are all internal, while for finite beings our effects can be both internal (through our role in our own affects) and external (through our role in the affects of other beings). The stronger one's conatus is, the more they will subsequently be an adequate cause, which is why God (which expresses Its being infinitely and independently) is an absolute adequate cause and a finite being (which fluctuates in its degree of ontological self-expression) fluctuates in its degree of adequate causality. Because these concepts are coextensive, the strength of a being's conatus or ontological self-expression will also similarly dictate the degree to which they are able to live according to their nature without limitation, and thus enjoy virtue/happiness. God is therefore an absolute adequate cause, optimally virtuous, entirely in agreement with Its nature, and supremely blessed. All these descriptions, in turn, simply mean that God affirms Its existence absolutely, optimally, entirely, and supremely. A finite being, conversely, is more-or-less an adequate cause, virtuous, in agreement with its nature, and happy – which is just to say that such a being can more-or-less stably affirm its existence depending on its current state of activity and circumstances.

Pleasure as a Self-Expressive Good

Pleasure, as outlined above, is strongly associated with the ontological self-expression and subsequent health and happiness of an individual. It is this close relationship that makes pleasure good by nature. In the context of transitional pleasures, Spinoza explicitly asserts that

“[p]leasure is not in itself bad, but good” (IVP41), because it represents one’s bodily/mental “power of activity” being “increased or assisted” (Proof). Any instance of such pleasure, in other words, pertains to the strengthening of one’s conatus or state of ontological self-expression through adequate causality, meaning that one is more virtuous and better able to live according to their nature. Such a positive change in one’s state of being is always to some degree valuable, and thus good. Non-transitional pleasures, conversely, represent the current strength of one’s conatus in itself, and are thus good in themselves in the sense that they represent the relative enjoyment of affirming one’s current state of activity, virtue, and happiness.

Of course, Spinoza does not deny that certain transitional pleasures can in certain instances be harmful. He explains how such pleasures can be bad through titillation (*titillatio*), a subspecies of transitional pleasure. Titillation is pleasure that pertains to “one or more of the body’s parts being affected more than the rest” (IVP43Proof). It is a localized pleasure, where a specific aspect of one’s nature or conatus is strengthened in its respective activity while the rest of one’s being remains in its current state. Titillation is contrasted with the pleasurable affect of cheerfulness (*hilaritas*), which pertains to one’s body/mind being strengthened in its various activities *as a whole* (IIP11S). It is the localized nature of titillation that puts it at risk of being bad for me in certain situations. Titillation, as a pleasure or increase in my state of activity, is good in itself, but it can be bad in terms of how it relates to the other aspects of my conatus or nature. A localized pleasure is classified as bad when it becomes excessive, in the sense that it “surpass[es] the other activities of the body [and mind]” and “render[s]” my body/mind as a whole “less capable” (IVP43Proof). This pleasure is good in that it strengthens that particular aspect’s own conatus or state of activity, but bad insofar as it harms the other aspects of my

nature. In fact, this excessively empowered aspect can also ultimately be harmed if it relies on cooperation with the other aspects of my nature for its flourishing.

Eating is a perfect example of this dynamic. In the act of eating, my stomach is able to digest food and spread nutrients for the active functioning of my body. Insofar as this activity is pleasurable, my stomach will be promoted in its digestive and nourishing activities. If I overeat, however, a number of harmful things may occur. Firstly, if I consume a radically large amount of food all at once, I might simply overwhelm my stomach in its digestive activity and cause it to burst. In this situation, I have clearly moved beyond the pleasurable, and thus empowering, effect of the food, which is why my eating becomes painful. Alternatively, I may eat an amount that my stomach can physically cope with, but that amount will nevertheless be excessive. What makes eating excessive in this context is that it over-enhances my stomach's ability to store and digest food, causing bloating, nausea, lethargy, or (overtime) obesity – all states of frustrated or diminished activity (“Spinoza’s Virtuous Passions” 779). Consequently, while the pleasure I get from eating is good in the sense that it empowers my stomach, if I eat too much my stomach is empowered to the detriment of the rest of my body. If this behaviour continues and escalates, however, my stomach's empowerment will inevitably be threatened, because I will be hindered in my ability to eat if I am sick, or even dead, from the strain that being overweight can have on my body (e.g. sleep apnea, heart disease, high blood pressure, strokes, etc.). In other words, it is not in my stomach's, that is its conatus's, best interests to overpower the rest of my body. Regardless, I am far more than just a stomach, so my survival depends on no part of my body usurping the other parts. My stomach is important, but by no means can I live and flourish through empowering it alone. As a result, a localized pleasure is considered bad when it moves outside its zone of benefit, because it becomes self-destructive by harming its source and causing

pain, or it proves to be harmful to other aspects of one's nature. Spinoza asserts that cheerfulness, conversely, is a pleasure that can never be excessive, precisely because it pertains to the collective empowerment of my body and mind, and thus "it is always good" (IVP42). Similarly, non-transitional pleasures will also always be good, because they pertain to enjoying one's current degree of bodily/mental self-expression in itself (either in terms of a specific aspect or as a whole). Theoretically, though, titillation, cheerfulness, and non-transitional pleasures can cohere when localized pleasures are not excessive and remain in their zone of benefit. If each localized pleasure is moderately cultivated, then collectively instantiations of titillation can constitute cheerfulness, which in turn grants one a healthy foundation for cultivating the intuitive pleasures of blessedness.

What this dynamic tells us is that pleasure is only ever bad insofar as it is self-destructive, i.e. insofar as any given pleasure hinders further pleasures (from itself or other pleasures that it shares a constitutive relationship with) and thus causes pain (that is a reduced degree of self-expression). In other words, because pleasure is by nature good in Spinoza's ethical framework it can only be bad insofar as it is understood to be contrary to its own existentially self-affirming nature.

The distinction between active and passive pleasures plays a crucial role in ensuring that any given source of pleasure, particularly one that is localized, is enjoyed in a manner consistent with the nature of pleasure, and thus the promotion of the conatus. According to Spinoza, passive affects represent "the power of things external to us" and "fragmentary [i.e. inadequate] knowledge" (IVApp.2), meaning that they "can be either good or evil," while active affects in contrast "are defined by [one's] power, that is, [partly] by reason [i.e. adequate knowledge]," and are thus "always good" (IVApp.3). In other words, the potential badness of certain, namely

transitional, pleasures is restricted to passive pleasure. No active pleasure, transitional or otherwise, can in itself lead to pain and unhappiness, and thus active pleasures are never bad for the individual. The fundamental reason for the potential badness of passive pleasures is their external source. The Conatus Principle entails that no individual can, when acting according to their nature, do anything contrary to the ontological affirmation of their being (IIIP4, 6-7). More concretely, we would say that no individual seeks pain and destruction; rather, one's nature determines them to *live* (i.e. express their existence) and subsequently to seek *pleasure* maximally (IIIP12, IVP19-24).

What this principle does not entail, however, is that external forces will necessarily serve the interests of one's conatus, i.e. that all passive pleasures are equally valuable. Passive affects in general, and passive pleasures in particular, are outside the control of the individual, making them ethically unstable in living happily. Each being (through the conatus) necessarily strives to promote itself, not other beings, meaning that beings' interests can be incongruous with each other, to some degree. Physically, this implies that beings can be both beneficial and detrimental to each other in their bodily interactions because each being is naturally and primarily concerned with their own bodily existence and flourishing, and not the existence and flourishing of other bodies. Mentally, this implies that beings will possess inadequate knowledge of themselves (IIP19, 24, 27, 29) and the beings they interact with (IIP25-6), because their ideas will pertain to only how a certain aspect of their nature and a certain aspect of the nature of another being come together to form an affect in both of their states of being (IIP28-9S). This passive affect represents inadequate knowledge because the idea of the bodily change in either being will not grant them substantial self-knowledge of their essence or knowledge of the essence of the being that they have been affected by. The only knowledge either being possesses in this context is

knowledge of how some aspect of their nature was modified by some aspect of another being's nature. In terms of passive pleasure specifically, I may have the idea, and thus knowledge, of that other being promoting my conatus in some way, but this pleasure will not grant me complete knowledge of my state of being or the nature of the being that caused me pleasure. This inadequate knowledge can, in turn, lead me to falsely understand the goodness of another being. For instance, I may think that, because that being was pleasurable in one way, it will always be pleasurable in that way to me or that the rest of its nature will equally be as serviceable to my conatus. Through this erroneous judgment, as discussed in 1.2 and the above discussion of titillation, I will be led to excessive behaviour in regards to this pleasure (e.g. the localized pleasure of eating a certain food), resulting in the frustration of my state of being as a whole. In summary, passive pleasure can be either good or bad because its source is out of the individual's control, meaning that any given pleasure of this kind, while empowering in some way, cannot be relied upon to stably serve the health and flourishing of the conatus as a whole.

Active pleasures, both transitional and non-transitional, on the other hand, lie *inside one's power*, in that one's nature is the cause of the pleasure. Here the Conatus Principle entails that, since no being's nature in itself can determine them to harm their state of being, insofar as a pleasure is derived from the conatus by way of adequate causality it will always be harmonious with the health of one's state of being as a whole. Physically, this means that the body will be led to enjoy only those pleasures that will maintain or strengthen it and the mind's flourishing (i.e. degree of virtue/happiness). Mentally, this means that one's pursuit of pleasure will follow from adequate understanding of what is harmonious with the preservation and strengthening of the conatus, as well as how to make use of external things in a manner conducive to this end

(VP10S).⁴⁵ One's knowledge in this context is adequate because it conceives of itself and other things "clearly and distinctly" (IIP29S), its constituent ideas of all its affects sharing a logical relationship to each other that expresses the necessity of their truth because they follow from "the order of the intellect [i.e. the mind's power of understanding]" (VP10) instead of "the fortuitous run of circumstance [i.e. passive affects]" (IIP29S). In terms of active transitional pleasures, no instance of pleasure will be self-destructive or harmful to the other aspects of one's state of being. On the contrary, any localized pleasure will be enjoyed moderately and will subsequently be congruous with the pursuit of cheerfulness. As well, one's enjoyment and realization of their own activity in this case will reside in clear and distinct self-awareness that is stably empowering, in contrast to an externally-imposed self-image that is unreliably empowering because it lies in the power of other beings and how I relate to their interests. Through active pleasures, one's state of being will consequently always be enhanced in fruitful ways. Non-transitional pleasures, because they cannot be anything but active, are even more clearly and stably good. They represent the clear and distinct enjoyment of being in itself, through bodily action and intellectual activity, which is conducive both to maintaining one's current state of adequate causality and enhancing one's state of activity through transitional pleasures. Active pleasures are thus ethically superior to passive pleasures due to their stable promotion of the conatus, in transitional and non-transitional ways.

⁴⁵ Strictly speaking, pleasures that pertain to my interactions with the world are passive pleasures, because my pleasure does not follow solely from my nature. However, when we remember the scalar dynamic between activity and passivity, through my current degree of adequate knowledge I can make it so that my nature plays a greater role in how a given external thing benefits me. This passive pleasure can therefore be more active than passive, depending on my degree of adequate causality (viz. adequate knowledge) in relation to it. For a comprehensive analysis of how passive pleasures can be deemed virtuous, see Kisner's "Spinoza's Virtuous Passions."

The Hierarchy of Pleasure and Happiness

We have now established the necessary connection between happiness and pleasure in terms of adequate causation, virtue, and living according to one's nature (that is the conatus), these states being coextensive. Transitional pleasure is good per se in the sense that it increases these aforementioned states, and thus one's degree of happiness. Non-transitional pleasure, in turn, pertains to one's enjoyment of their relative state of activity or virtue per se, this pleasure's goodness consequently being that it is, in itself, the affirmation of one's current degree of happiness as ontological self-expression. Passive pleasure is deemed ethically lesser than active pleasure because the former is unstable in its link to the ethical nature of pleasure, since such pleasures are derived from external sources that do not exist in themselves to serve an individual's conatus (rather they are determined to serve their own conatuses) and subsequent happiness. Active pleasure, conversely, is deemed ethically superior because it is harmonious with the true interests of the conatus (since it in fact follows from the conatus itself in body and mind), and is thus stable in promoting happiness.

However, not all active pleasure is ethically equal in its relation to virtue and happiness. Because these concepts exist on a spectrum, i.e. one can be more-or-less active, virtuous, and happy, some instantiations of these states, and the pleasures they are linked to, will be more valuable or good than others. We can see this dynamic in Spinoza's hierarchy of knowledge. Knowledge of the second kind (i.e. deduction) and knowledge of the third kind (i.e. intuition) both represent adequate understanding and causality (IIP40S2; IIIP1). As a result, the second and third kinds of knowledge in Spinoza's epistemology necessarily involve virtue/happiness. However, Spinoza makes it clear in a number of passages that intuitive knowledge is epistemically and ethically superior to deductive knowledge. He states that (1) "that knowledge

of particular things which I have called ‘intuitive’ or ‘of the third kind’” is superior and preferable to “that abstract knowledge which I have called ‘knowledge of the second kind’” (VP36S), (2) “[t]he highest conatus of the mind and its highest virtue is to understand things by the third kind of knowledge” (VP25), and (3) “[f]rom this third kind of knowledge there arises the highest possible contentment of mind” (VP27).

Claim (1) largely addresses the epistemic hierarchy, between deductive and intuitive knowledge. Knowledge of the second kind (*ratio*) expresses necessary truth through a deductive process involving ideas of common properties or “notions” among beings. Through such general knowledge of necessary truth, one’s mind is rendered more self-sufficient in its understanding and correspondingly the body is able to act more diversely and effectively. Furthermore, this increase in activity entails that my affects/emotions are derived more from *my nature’s interactions with the world* through my degree of adequate causality than how *the world impresses itself upon me* through my degree of inadequate causality. More concretely, as discussed in 1.2, the more I understand the necessary general laws that govern me and my interactions with other things, the more I am able to act fruitfully (namely, in cultivating the best possible pleasures) and the less subject I am to suffering from ignorance, particularly the mistaken notion that events could have occurred differently (VP6-7Proof, 42S). The third kind of knowledge (*scientia intuitiva*) functions similarly but is more epistemically powerful, in the sense that it more effectively and stably expresses necessary truth. Here my knowledge still involves adequate causality, but in this case my idea of an eternal truth is immediately accessible or conceivable, and directed at the nature of a certain thing. I am correspondingly able to interact with a given being fruitfully through intuition, not because I understand general abstracted laws that I then apply to that particular being, but because I understand that being in itself, particularly

the concrete and complex ways in which it is beneficial through pleasure and detrimental through pain to my state of being. Moreover, this understanding does not involve a process of reflection on how best to proceed in my interactions with this being, i.e. what will make our interactions pleasurable, as *ratio* does (IVP45S; VP10S). On the contrary, through intuition, I *immediately* know what the pleasurable thing to do is.

It is this contrast between reflecting on general principles to deduce what is pleasurable in a particular situation vs immediately knowing what is pleasurable about each being I interact with that makes *scientia intuitiva* epistemically and ethically superior to *ratio*. Epistemically-speaking, understanding the particular eternal nature of *things* over *general eternal laws* involves more concrete knowledge of truth. Ethically-speaking, my intuitive knowledge is more valuable in pursuing pleasure than my deductive knowledge because the former is more stable, concrete, accessible, and ultimately efficient in its expression of truth and usefulness.

The ethical difference between these kinds of knowledge also corresponds to the two kinds of pleasure we have been discussing. With intuitive self-contentment, I do not have to deliberate on my state of bodily/mental adequate causality or virtue to experience pleasure; on the contrary, I am immediately aware of my current degree of adequate causality or virtue, my experience of pleasure being simultaneous with this knowledge. With the intellectual love of God, I am immediately and adequately aware of the nature of a certain being and how that being necessarily relates to God (namely, through the attributes of Extension and Thought). My experience of pleasure consequently follows from understanding this being's divine and natural essence, and that God is the cause of my pleasure through both my activity of adequate understanding (which is an aspect of God's infinite adequate understanding) and the content of my idea (i.e. the being whose nature I am able to adequately and immediately conceive of

through the attributes of God). In either case, whether we discuss the pleasures of intuitive knowledge in the context of my enjoyment of understanding *something* or my enjoyment of *my understanding per se*, these pleasures will be non-transitional in that they are associated in themselves with the affirmation of my current degree of virtue and happiness in themselves, instead of a process of *becoming* more virtuous and happy (although such intuitive pleasures will, if left unimpeded, lead to greater virtue/happiness through further transitional and non-transitional pleasures). And these non-transitional pleasures, in this context, are considered superior to transitional pleasures because the former (that is intuitive activity) is epistemically superior to the latter (that is deductive activity).

This discussion of the epistemic superiority of *scientia intuitiva* now enables us to make sense of claims (2)⁴⁶ and (3),⁴⁷ which address the ethical superiority of intuition over deduction in the context of pleasure. The conatus pertains to a given being's ontological self-expression in terms of actively preserving themselves and (if unrestrained) increasing their degree of activity. For finite beings, their conatus will exist on a spectrum between absolute activity (possessed only by God) and absolute passivity (that is the absence of being). As a being's conatus is strengthened through transitional pleasure one's scope of self-expression will increase (i.e. they will be less subject to harm/destruction and more capable of preserving and further empowering themselves as an adequate cause). This increase in one's degree of adequate causality also entails that one enjoys greater virtue. Both *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva* are forms of adequate causation through adequate knowledge, and thus are virtuous. However, as we have just discussed, these activities of the mind and their corresponding pleasures are not equal. Both forms of adequate

⁴⁶ "The highest conatus of the mind and its highest virtue is to understand things by the third kind of knowledge" (*E* VP25).

⁴⁷ "From [the] third kind of knowledge there arises the highest possible contentment of mind" (*E* VP27).

knowledge represent the conatus and virtue of my mind, but because intuition is epistemically superior to deduction, it is the more powerful expression of the intellectual activity of my nature. Furthermore, the third kind of knowledge is not only superior to the second, but it represents optimal mental activity in kind. This is why Spinoza describes intuition as the “highest” conatus and virtue; there is no greater expression of understanding than immediate knowledge of the essential nature of a being. Since intuitive self-contentment and the intellectual love of God consist in *scientia intuitiva*, they are consequently the highest and most virtuous pleasures that we can enjoy. This fact, in turn, explains claim (3), because there is no higher expression of pleasurable self-understanding than intuitive knowledge of one’s own nature.

In line with this ethical dynamic, it is also possible to see a subtle difference between “blessedness” (*beatitudo*) and happiness in general. Blessedness, since it consists in virtue or adequate causality, is happiness. However, it represents not just any kind of happiness, but the *highest* kind of happiness, due to its relation to intuitive knowledge and non-transitional pleasure. Blessedness is always referenced when discussing the “highest” (IV App.4) or “greatest” happiness (IIP49S). Virtue consists in adequate causality, and in the mind specifically, adequate knowledge. Adequate knowledge is not restricted to intuition, however. Deductive knowledge is also adequate, and thus virtuous. This is why the third kind of knowledge is referred to as the “highest” virtue of the mind, rather than simply virtue itself. It represents optimal virtue and happiness but does not encompass *all* virtue and happiness. As a form of adequate causality deductive knowledge also involves happiness, but in a lesser sense. For instance, one might possess adequate knowledge of apple trees that corresponds with the ability to benefit from an apple tree nutritionally. In the deductive case, one goes through a process of reasoning about the nature of apple trees which corresponds with the ability to identify/pick from

such a tree only the most nutritional apples for one's body/mind. In the intuitive case, conversely, one's ability to identify/pick the most nutritional apples corresponds with knowledge of the apple tree that is immediately accessible. It is important to recognize that both cases involve virtue and happiness, since *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva* represent the mind's own causal role in its ability to understand, but intuition's immediacy and particularity make it a greater expression of intellectual power, and therefore virtue/happiness, than the process and generality of deduction.⁴⁸

Both deduction and intuition as adequate knowledge lead to happiness and are associated with active and stable pleasure, but the former is deemed ethically lesser because it involves and leads to lesser degrees of happiness than the latter. Intuition, in other words, is more effective in producing further adequate knowledge (both deductive and intuitive) and thus further transitional (that is active and comparatively less passive) and non-transitional (that is solely active) pleasures. Deduction, as adequate knowledge/causality, is also (strictly speaking) capable of producing both kinds of adequate knowledge and pleasures (in that deductive ideas can become intuitive), but it will be less effective in doing so because it is a lesser expression of one's state of activity. Overall then, the ethical relationship between pleasure and happiness involves a complex hierarchy of transitional and non-transitional pleasures and a spectrum of more-or-less happiness in terms of one's degree of virtue, adequate causality, or ontological self-expression.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Spinoza is not forthcoming, however, about how the epistemic difference between deduction and intuition corresponds with one's degree of bodily adequate causality, but by virtue of parallelism we would expect that the degree of bodily activity that corresponds with intuition will be superior to the degree of bodily activity that corresponds with deduction. Furthermore, we might interpret the difference in terms of preciseness or quickness of bodily activity.

⁴⁹ Because the conatus of a given being necessarily expresses a certain degree of adequate causality that represents an aspect of God's absolute adequate causality and no existing being can be absolutely passive, arguably no existing being can then be truly devoid of virtue and happiness. The ethical concern is therefore not to

Overview

Pleasure is deemed good by nature because it represents, transitionally/non-transitionally and actively/passively, the promotion of ontological self-expression, adequate causality, virtue, and thus happiness. Transitional pleasures pertain to enjoying increases in one's degrees of self-expression, adequate causality, and virtue, while non-transitional pleasures pertain to the enjoyment of one's current degrees of self-expression, adequate causality, and virtue in themselves. Non-transitional pleasures are deemed ethically superior, in the sense of leading to greater happiness in kind (that is blessedness) and degree because they involve intuition, which is epistemically a greater expression of the mind's intellectual activity (and corresponds with more efficient bodily activity) than deduction, because the former pertains to immediately accessible knowledge while the latter pertains to knowledge gleaned through a process of reasoning. Furthermore, while both kinds of pleasure perpetuate transitional pleasures, those that follow from intuitive pleasures will be more empowering and thus more valuable or good. Active pleasures, which can be both transitional and non-transitional, are always good. Because they are pleasures that follow from one's degree of bodily activity and adequate understanding of themselves and others, active pleasures can never be contrary to the conatus, and are thus a stable good. Passive pleasures, however, while good per se can nevertheless lead to pain. The reason for this is that such pleasures are derived from external sources that exist outside one's complete control and whose respective conatuses do not, strictly-speaking, serve the interests of one's own conatus. External things can, of course, benefit me (which is why passive pleasures exist), but

become virtuous and happy, but rather to become *more* virtuous and happy, namely by aiming towards optimal happiness (i.e. blessedness). We might see this dynamic as sharing a similar spirit to Stoicism (see 1.1), in that one's recognition of themselves as a necessary aspect of the causal chain of Nature is sufficient for virtue and happiness. For the Stoics, however, one is either virtuous or they are not (that is you are a fool or a Stoic-in-training); they would not agree with Spinoza that we can be more-or-less virtuous.

because they do not exist in themselves for the sake of my empowerment, they are an unreliable good in promoting happiness. Overall then, active and non-transitional pleasures are ethically superior, or higher goods, than passive and transitional pleasures.

In all these forms, however, pleasure is nevertheless explicitly classified as good per se. Some pleasures, namely those that are active in general and non-transitional in particular, are valued more in maintaining and enhancing happiness, but even the lesser pleasures, i.e. those that are transitional in general or passive in particular, are classified as “pleasures” because they promote one’s conatus in some way and are thus undeniably good, to some degree. This complex ethical dynamic consequently illustrates Spinoza’s strong commitment to claim (b).

Chapter 3: Aristotle's Account of Pleasure

In this chapter, I will examine the nature of pleasure in Aristotle's eudaimonism. The first section will cover the ontology of pleasure, namely the distinctions Aristotle makes between the source of pleasure vs. the experience of pleasure, that which is pleasant by nature vs. that which is pleasant to a particular individual and true pleasure vs. merely apparent pleasure. The purpose of this section will be to illustrate that Aristotle's account of pleasure agrees with claim (a): pleasure necessarily pertains to the health of one's state of being. In the second section, I will explore Aristotle's ethical discussion of pleasure. I will begin with an outline of Aristotle's conception of happiness, move to pleasure's role in the happy life as a good, and conclude with an analysis of the ethical relationship between bodily and mental pleasures in the happy human life. This section will showcase how Aristotle's ethical view of pleasure corresponds with claim (b): pleasure is by nature good.

3.1 Aristotle's Ontology of Pleasure

The Issue in Aristotle's Account of Pleasure

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle seemingly provides two different critical discussions of pleasure (*hēdonē*). In Book VII, pleasure is defined as “an activity of a natural disposition” that is “unimpeded” (1153a13-5). Pleasure is understood here then to pertain to an activity that follows from one's nature when it is healthy, in the sense of being devoid of pain (*lupē*) or the appetite (*epithumia*) to replenish one's body (1153a1-6). Book X, conversely, defines pleasure as that which “completes [an] activity” as a “sort of supervenient end” (1174b32-4). In other words, this definition of pleasure conceives of it as that (i.e. an additional end) which necessarily

accompanies or follows from a successfully performed activity (said activity being its own distinctive end).⁵⁰

There is much debate in Aristotle scholarship on how we are to understand the difference between these descriptions. What drives this issue, adding tension to the conceptions of pleasure in Books VII and X, is that Aristotle seems to explicitly contradict himself. Following his description of pleasure as a supervenient end, Aristotle clarifies that, while the inseparable connection between pleasure and activity creates the impression that they are identical, it would nevertheless be “strange” to say that pleasure *is* activity itself (1175b30-7). In this context, in other words, pleasure is understood to be what accompanies or follows from activity, and not activity itself. It would then be absurd, according to Aristotle, to claim that any given pleasure is an activity. Such a qualification, however, appears to directly deny Book VII’s description of pleasure as an unimpeded *activity*.

How then should we respond to this issue? The easiest response is to concede that Aristotle has contradicted himself, or that there has been a significant editorial mistake in the copying and transmission of his text at some point in its history, and thus that his view of pleasure is undeniably incoherent, to some degree. The principle of charity and pragmatism demand, however, that we at least attempt, as many scholars have, to provide a reasonable explanation for how these seemingly disparate descriptions of pleasure could cohere.⁵¹ It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis to delve into the various potential solutions to this problem, meaning I

⁵⁰ For a more comprehensive analysis of Book X’s description of pleasure, see Aufderheide (138-78), Bostock (251-3), and Shields (“Perfecting Pleasures” 204-9).

⁵¹ See Aufderheide (200-2), Irwin (“Notes” 357, 377) Owen (136-8, 151), Pakaluk (304-12), and Shields (“Perfecting Pleasures” 193, 202-3, 210).

will have to restrict myself to outlining and defending a solution I have found persuasive and coherent with Aristotle's other assertions about pleasure.⁵²

I will refer to this view, as proposed by both G.E.L. Owen (136-8, 151) and Joachim Aufderheide (200-2), as the source/experience distinction. Here the difference in descriptions is based on the fact that Aristotle is discussing pleasure in two different ways. On the one hand, he is focused on what is the *source* of pleasant experience, and on the other, Aristotle is concerned with what *pleasant experience itself* is. Book VII is consequently an analysis of pleasure as a source and Book X is an analysis of pleasure as an experience.⁵³

As Owen points out, both descriptions are set up as a rejection of pleasure as a *kinesis* or process (137), but the way in which they support their respective conclusions is different.⁵⁴ The critique of pleasure as a process in Book VII is centered on arguing that pleasure by nature does not pertain to the restoration of the body (i.e. a change in state), because there are pleasures, like reflective activity, that do not involve deficiency in terms of pain or appetite, and thus no process *per se* (1152b32-1153a14). Aristotle, in this analysis, refers to what we "enjoy" or "*things that are pleasant*" on the one hand (1153a3-7), and on the other the "*pleasures deriving from them* [emphasis mine]" (1153a8). He subsequently argues that pleasures do not truly "occur because a

⁵² With that said, this interpretation is not crucial to establishing claims (a) or (b), and others may be equally as serviceable and coherent. I concede that much of the finer details of what I may argue is contentious, and open to revision. My intention is to provide a reasonable outline of each philosopher's conception of pleasure in order to illustrate their agreement with these two central claims. If or when the reader disagrees with me, I ask only that they consider whether their disagreement refutes Aristotle's arguable commitment to claims (a) or (b).

⁵³ The primary difference between Owen and Aufderheide is that Aufderheide emphasizes that pleasure is referred to as a source *and* an experience in both VII and X; however, one referent predominates over the other in each book (201-2).

⁵⁴ A process (i.e. "incomplete activity"), in this framework, is understood to be that which aims at an end outside itself, and as a capacity is removed when that end is realized (e.g. the capacity to build ceases once a building is actualized). An (that is complete) activity, conversely, is that which aims at itself as an end, and as a capacity remains present when this end is realized (e.g. the capacity to see or reflect is not removed when one actualizes sight or reflection). See Irwin ("Glossary" 386).

coming to be [i.e. a process] is in train but because capacities are being put to use” through activities (1153a9-12). These references indicate that Aristotle is critiquing the process view with the *source* of pleasant experiences in mind, the point being that a change in state is not the “thing” responsible for causing pleasant experiences. The source of any pleasant experience is rather an unimpeded activity of one’s nature.

In Book X’s rejection of pleasure as a process, Aristotle returns to his previous critique of understanding pleasure as the “replenishment” of the body, this time however focusing on bodily feelings. He argues that “someone [may] undergo [the feeling of] pleasure while replenishment is in process,” but the replenishment as a change in state is not pleasure itself or what it means to be “pleased” (1173b10-3). Here the focus of the critique of restoration as a pleasure is not the thing in which a pleasure is derived from, but rather the experience of being pleased itself. In other words, Aristotle is not repeating his restoration argument from Book VII, but rather analyzing restoration from a different angle, namely why the feeling of pleasure is not a restoration. Aristotle goes on to argue that in “being pleased” one also does not say the feeling in itself is quick/slow (3.1173a34-1173b5) or partially there/partially not (1174a13-4.1174b8), as in the case of a movement or that which is coming into being (i.e. *actualizing*). Pleasure, on the contrary, is better understood to be “whole” in the sense of being that which is fully realized, i.e. *actual* (1174b8-14). In other words, I am either being pleased in a given moment or I am not. It is nonsensical to talk about *being on the way to being pleased*. It is more accurate, in Aristotle’s view, to talk of being on the way to being pleased, partially, quickly, or slowly in terms of one’s *goal to be pleased*, i.e. a process. Pleasure therefore, in this section, cannot be said to be a process, or a change in one’s state of being, because it cannot be felt as anything but present or actual in a given moment. This critique, in turn, leads to Aristotle’s description of pleasure as a

supervenient end on activity (1174b32-4). That this description pertains to the *experience* of pleasure is evident from the fact that it follows directly from these critiques of pleasure as a process, and that these critiques are centered on *being pleased or feeling pleasure*, rather than *taking pleasure in an object*. Consequently, the experience of pleasure is that (as an end in itself and not a process) which follows necessarily from an actualized activity.

This distinction between source and experience, in turn, reasonably resolves the apparent tension between Books VII and X's descriptions of pleasure. Indeed, it means that Aristotle is not defining pleasure in different ways, but rather is discussing the two ways in which pleasure is commonly referred to, that is as a source and an experience. The *source* of pleasant experience is an unimpeded activity that follows from one's nature, while the *experience* of pleasure is that which supervenes on that unimpeded activity. As we will see in the following sections, this interpretation also coheres with what Aristotle says about that which is pleasant by nature vs. that which is pleasant to a particular individual and true vs. merely apparent pleasures.

Pleasant by Nature vs. Pleasant to a Particular Individual

In his discussions of pleasure, Aristotle draws a distinction between what is "pleasant by [namely, human] nature" (1148b15; 1154b20) vs. what is pleasant to a particular individual in terms of their current constitution (1152b25-32; 1176a10-5). That which is naturally pleasant is stably pleasant to an individual's nature as a human being when it is unimpeded (i.e. devoid of pain), and thus healthy (1153a3-6; 1154b16-8). Seeing and reflection are activities that are pleasant by nature, because both follow from one's nature as a human being and are pleasant when it is in a healthy state. That which is pleasant to a particular individual is, conversely, pleasant only when they are in a certain state appropriate to realizing that pleasure. Aristotle asserts that "the same things delight some while giving pain to others" depending on their current

state of being (1176a11). Any of these classes of pleasure can be bodily or mental in nature, insofar as they pertain to the senses or perceptual activities in the former (1174b21-2; 1176a1-3; 1175a27-8; *OS* II.3.414b1-15) and thought or intellectual activities in the latter (*NE* 1174b21-2; 1175a27-8; 1176a1-3; *OS* 415a8-12).⁵⁵

Related to that which is pleasant to a particular individual is incidental pleasure. Those things that are “incidentally pleasant” pertain to when one’s state of being “happens to be cured” (1154b17-9), in the sense that these pleasures are “the processes restoring one to [their] natural state” (1152b34-5). Incidental pleasures, in other words, pertain to deficiencies in one’s nature (e.g. hunger, exhaustion, sickness, etc.) and the subsequent enjoyment one experiences in the process of removing these deficiencies, and thus restoring themselves to a healthy state. What makes these restorative pleasures *incidental*, however, is that, for Aristotle, they are not truly pleasures; rather, they “only appear so” to an individual when they are in a deficient state (1152b33). This discussion of restorative pleasures is part of Aristotle’s larger rejection of understanding pleasure as a process. The reasoning, as stated above, is that not all pleasures involve the removal of bodily desire and pain, which necessitate a change in one’s state of being. When one is healthy, they can experience pleasures which arise from unimpeded activities like seeing and reflection, both of which are the enjoyment of an aspect of one’s current state of being in itself (1153a1-3, 1173b16-20). If not all sources/experiences of pleasure involve a change in state, then the essence of any given pleasure is not restoration. On the contrary, Aristotle argues that what is actually pleasant as a source is “the activity of the part [of one’s

⁵⁵ While bodily pleasures find their source in the senses, such pleasures more fundamentally pertain to the faculties of the soul, rather than the body (as do all pleasures). Part of Aristotle’s rejection of pleasure as a process has to do with the fact that the body involves restoration while pleasure in itself (as a source or experience) does not; rather, pleasure co-occurs with the restoration of the body as an activity of some aspect of the soul (*NE* 1173b8-13).

nature] that remains healthy” or unimpeded (1154b19-20). In other words, in the case of restorative pleasures, one is aware of a positive change in their state of being in conjunction with a pleasant feeling, the latter of which they mistakenly attribute to the change in state as the source. In reality, the pleasant experience is only possible due to a part of one’s nature that is healthy and active, namely an unimpeded activity. Without this unimpeded activity, one would be incapable of experiencing enjoyment in that deficient state.⁵⁶ And since the experience supervenes on this activity, the pleasant experience itself is not the change in state either, but rather that which accompanies the realization of that activity. Restorative changes in state are therefore incidentally pleasant in the sense that they co-occur with pleasant experiences and the sources of those experiences (that is unimpeded activities), but do not themselves cause or consist in those pleasant feelings.

True Pleasure vs. Apparent Pleasure

We have already outlined the distinction between what is pleasant by nature and what is pleasant to a particular individual, and Aristotle makes another distinction between “what appears so” to an individual and that which “*is so*” (1176a17). What *appears* pleasant to an individual can be linked to that which is pleasant to a particular individual, while that which is truly pleasant can be linked to that which is pleasant by nature.

Aristotle asserts that for the person possessing excellence or virtue (*aretē*) what appears to be pleasant and what is pleasant are synonymous. He asserts that “excellence . . . is the measure for each sort of thing [namely, pleasure]” (1176a18-9), and those pleasures which

⁵⁶ There is some debate over what this unimpeded activity is, e.g. perceptual activity (Bostock 269-71) or the activity of the nutritive faculty of the soul (Aufderheide 123-5). For the purposes of this thesis, viz. its central focus on Spinoza contra Stoicism, it is however unnecessary to answer this question, since it is sufficient for my main argument to establish that pleasure is closely linked to healthy activity in Aristotle’s system.

“appear so to [the virtuous person] will be pleasures, and the things *he* delights in will be pleasant” (1176a19-20). The virtuous person therefore enjoys what is truly pleasant, in the sense that their experience of pleasure supervenes on an activity that is pleasant by nature. In contrast, one “whose nature is corrupted” (1176a22-4) by “pathological” sickness (Broadie 395; *NE* 1148b15-21) or vice (1104b22-3) enjoys those things which “should be declared not to be pleasant” when one’s nature is healthy and expressed virtuously (1176a23).⁵⁷ These pleasures, according to Aristotle, are pleasant “in a sense that is secondary or many times removed” from the essence of true (that is natural) human pleasures (1176a28). For the pathological or vicious person what is pleasurable to them is not what is truly a pleasant thing to a human being. Those in a pathological or vicious condition, in turn, find pleasant those activities which are not pleasant by nature, in the sense that they represent the impediment of one’s nature as a human being in some way, meaning such pleasures are merely apparently pleasant. For the virtuous person, in contrast, what is pleasurable to them will be what is pleasant by nature or “human pleasure in the primary [i.e. truest] sense” (1176a28), because they enjoy those activities that truly follow from human nature when it is unimpeded. In the virtuous and pathological/vicious examples, we then see a clear demarcation between what is truly a pleasant thing and what appears to be a pleasant thing to an individual, subsequently bringing us back to the earlier distinction between that which is pleasant by nature and that which is pleasant to a particular individual. In case of the virtuous person, these categories are harmonious, while in the case of the pathologically sick or vicious person they are in some sense incongruent.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Examples of pathological sickness are being disposed towards eating fetuses or humans in general, pulling out one’s hair, chewing one’s nails, deviant sexual activity, etc. (*NE* 1148b20-9). Examples of vice will given in the next section.

⁵⁸ I shall explain what virtue and vice involve in 3.2. Pathological sickness, however, is “something outside the limits of badness of character,” and thus will not be a major part of the discussion of Aristotle’s eudaimonistic ethics (*NE* 1149a1-2).

Finally, when examining this dynamic between what is pleasant by nature and what appears pleasant to a particular individual, or what is truly pleasant and merely apparently pleasant, we find, according to Michael Pakaluk, that it involves the source/experience distinction (294).⁵⁹ If a thing is pleasant by nature, it will be a true source of pleasant experience. This experience in turn can be linked to what appears to be pleasant to a particular individual, i.e. what they experience as pleasant. In other words, that which is pleasant by nature pertains to that which is a true *source* of pleasant experience, while that which is pleasant to a particular individual pertains to what that person *experiences* as the source of pleasure, based on the dispositions (that is appetites and reasoning) of their current state of being. The virtuous person experiences as pleasant, or takes pleasure in, activities which are true sources of pleasure to their particular nature, namely the unimpeded activities of a human being (e.g. seeing and reflection). The pathological or vicious person, conversely, experiences as pleasant activities which are not true sources of pleasure to their nature. This is why Aristotle denies that the pathological or vicious experience what is truly pleasant, because their impeded nature causes them to take pleasure in that which is not natural to a human being.

The source/experience distinction, in turn, makes it clearer what characterizes a true pleasure from a merely apparent pleasure. A true pleasure will pertain to an activity that follows from one's nature when it is healthy and that activity is performed in a virtuous manner, because one's experience of pleasure is harmonious with its natural source, in the sense that the pleasant experience supervenes on an activity that truly corresponds with human nature (Pakaluk 294).

⁵⁹ Pakaluk rejects, however, that the source/experience distinction is a solution to the discrepancy between Books VII and X of the *NE*, because both sections reference pleasure as a source and an experience (302-6). Aufderheide refutes this argument, however, by pointing out the difference in emphasis between the two referents of pleasure in each book, pleasure as a source being emphasized in VII and pleasure as an experience in X (201-2).

The experience of a pathological or vicious pleasure, on the other hand, supervenes on an activity following from a state of being that is contrary to human nature. In other words, one takes pleasure in a certain activity that is not truly a source of human pleasure, because it is performed in a manner contrary to the health and realization of their nature.

It should be noted, however, that Aristotle is not denying that pathological or vicious activities are genuinely pleasant, as he is with restorative processes. Julia Annas, similarly, argues that Aristotle “is not denying claims about how people *feel*, merely rejecting *feeling* as the measuring rod for all pleasures [emphasis mine]” (“Aristotle on Pleasure and Goodness” 297). The standard by which a pleasure is judged to be a true (that is human) pleasure is instead based on the *source* of a pleasant experience and not that experience itself.⁶⁰ As outlined above, Aristotle understands the source of pleasant experiences to be unimpeded activities of one’s nature. Only when one is taking pleasure in actively following human nature, though, can their pleasures be classified as truly or naturally pleasant. When one is disposed towards enjoying pathological or vicious activities that are contrary to their nature, their pleasant experiences consequently only approximate the enjoyment of a human being.

Overview

For the healthy and virtuous person what is pleasurable in particular to them is pleasant by nature, meaning they experience as pleasant those things (that is unimpeded activities) which are true sources of pleasure to their nature as a human being. For the pathologically sick or vicious person, conversely, what is pleasurable in particular to them is not pleasant by nature, meaning their experiences of pleasure arise from those sources (i.e. activities) that are misaligned

⁶⁰ As evidenced by the references to virtue and vice in this section, and as we will explore in the next section, this standard also applies to these distinctions in an ethical context, as well.

with one's nature as a human being. As a result, these pleasures are merely apparently pleasant. What this distinction between true and merely apparent pleasures tells us is that pleasure is, in essence, deeply connected to the healthy functioning and actualization of one's nature. Aristotle's ontological conception of pleasure is then in strong agreement with claim (a).

3.2 Aristotle's Ethics of Pleasure

The Definition of Happiness

Before we can delve into pleasure's ethical role, we must first understand Aristotle's eudaimonism. That happiness (*eudaimonia*) is Aristotle's ethical concern is evident from Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. He states his intention to discover what the "chief good" is, namely that which "we wish for because of itself, while wishing for the other things we wish for because of [this good], [meaning] we do not choose everything because of something else [i.e. any other potential good]" (1094a19-22). In other words, Aristotle's focus in this treatise is concretely defining the goal of ethics, which is the good that is intrinsically valuable and that all other goods derive their value from. In his analysis, Aristotle ultimately settles on "happiness" or "living well and doing well" as that which is sought solely for its own sake, and thus bestows value on all other goods (1095a14-20). However, he is quick to concede that identifying the highest good as happiness is hardly a concrete definition. People tend to have various opinions about what living and doing well consists in, the pleasurable, political (that is honourable), and reflective lives being common answers to this question, leaving it unclear at face value what the happy life actually involves (1095a20-3; 1095b14-20).

Aristotle ultimately concludes that happiness is a full life of virtuous, namely rational activity, with the presence of external goods conducive to achieving and maintaining this state of

flourishing. It must be a full or “complete” life, because “a single day, or a short time, [does not] make a man blessed and happy” (1098a20-1). Living happily, as the highest good, must be something stable and meaningful. It cannot be decided based on the fluctuating conditions of day-to-day life. We would not say that someone (e.g. a child) flourished if they died in the midst of realizing themselves, precisely because they were robbed of the opportunity to become virtuous. Of course, one who is already virtuous (*aristos*) and noble (*kalon*) can face many misfortunes and make the best of their circumstances (10.1100b19-23, 30-3; 1101a1-3). In such cases their life might be relatively happy. However, it will not be “blessed” (*makarios*), i.e. completely and unrestrictedly happy, because certain misfortunes (e.g. the premature death of loved ones) can lessen one’s happiness to some degree (1100b23-30, 1101a6-8). Furthermore, certain misfortunes are even too great for the virtuous person to remain happy in the face of (e.g. the loss of all one’s loved ones, young and old, in their elder years or being imprisoned and tortured with no likely expectation of ever being free). While we might praise this person’s moral character in these situations and the life they have lived, Aristotle argues that “no one would call the person who lived [either] kind of life happy” (1096a1-3). The point is that virtue per se is not enough to ensure that one lives happily. A substantially long life is therefore necessary in order to achieve and maintain happiness.

With that said, no happy life can be devoid of virtue or excellence (*arēte*). Firstly, happiness is an activity (1098a6-7). To live and flourish is not to merely passively exist, but to *act*. The activities we perform, however, can be poorly done or inappropriate in themselves, which is why there is a significant difference between simply *living* and *living well*. Happiness is a life spent acting in fulfilling ways. If one acts improperly then their life is unfulfilling, and they cannot be said to flourish. What makes an act fulfilling, though? According to Aristotle, the

activities we should concern ourselves with in relation to happiness are those that follow from the “characteristic function” (*ergon*) of humanity, i.e. the activity that is unique to human beings (1097b25-9). For the human function to be a constituent of happiness, though, it must be performed well; half-heartedly acting according to one’s nature is neither fulfilling nor conducive to a flourishing life. For Aristotle, to be disposed to properly act in accordance with one’s nature is what it means to be virtuous (1098a12-7, II.6.1106a14-24). One consequently cannot achieve happiness if they are not performing those activities appropriate to human nature, and if those activities are not performed excellently.

Aristotle argues that this human function is rational activity. While human nature, or the human soul (*psyche*), possesses a nutritive faculty in the sense of being able to sustain itself/grow (1102a33-1102b4; *OS* 415a23-415b8), a sensitive faculty that allows for sensory perception and the experience of pleasure and pain, and (following from sensation) an appetitive faculty pertaining to various desires, these aspects, according to Aristotle, are not what makes us distinctly human (414a31-414b15; 424b22-425a13). All living things, from plants to humans, possess a capacity for sustenance and growth, so this feature is hardly unique to humans (*NE* 1097b34-1098a2; *OS* 413b1-2, 415a24-6). Sensation and appetite are better candidates, since they are restricted to animals (413b2-5), but again such capacities are not solely characteristic of humans (*NE* 1098a2-3). It is evident to us, for example, that cats, dogs, whales, and a number of other creatures have sensory apparatus, perceive the world around them, desire things, and experience pleasure/pain. What is not common, however, to every living thing or animal is the

capacity for “calculation and thought” (*OS* 415a7-12). This rational faculty Aristotle specifically ascribes to humans (414b17-9), declaring it to be our distinctive activity (*NE* 1098a4-8, 12-4).⁶¹

Of course, as outlined above, it is not enough for one to simply attempt to think or calculate through the activity of reasoning; to be happy one must reason *well*, that is virtuously. In order to understand what virtuous reasoning entails, however, we must first lay out the different kinds of virtue that are described by Aristotle. Fundamentally, he argues that virtue can be split into moral (i.e. character) excellences and intellectual excellences, both of which correspond to an aspect of the human soul (1103a4-6). Moral virtue pertains to the non-rational sensitive and appetitive faculties, which are amenable to the rational faculty through calculation (1102b13-1103a1), while intellectual virtue is linked to the rational faculty in its “proper sense” or purest form through understanding (1103a1-3).

Moral virtue involves a disposition towards the mean or that which is “intermediate” in relation to one’s passions (*pathē*) and actions, i.e. the middleground between the vicious extremes of excess and deficiency (1106b16-1107a6, 1108b11-9). In other words, the morally virtuous person feels (primarily in terms of desire and pleasure/pain) and acts in a balanced manner, relative to their nature and current situation. Vice (*kakia*), in this case, lies in feeling or acting too much or too little. Examples of moral virtue are moderation (*sōphrosunē*) and open-handedness (*eleutheriotēs*), and examples of moral vice are self-indulgence (*akolasia*)/insensibility (*anaithēsia*) and wastefulness (*asōtia*)/avariciousness (*aneleutheria*). Self-indulgence and insensibility are extremes pertaining to bodily pleasure. The self-indulgent

⁶¹ Aristotle clarifies that these faculties have a cumulative dynamic. While not all living things possess sensation/appetite, no being with a sensitive/appetitive faculty can be devoid of the nutritive faculty (*OS* II.3.415a1-4), and no “mortal” or non-divine being with the capacity for thinking can be devoid of nutrition and sensation/appetite (415a7-11).

“go to excess in all respects . . . enjoy[ing] some things one shouldn’t” and concerning those pleasures “one should enjoy, they enjoy them more than one should” (1118b24-7), while the insensate “enjoy [pleasures in general] less than one should” (1119a6-7). Self-indulgence is consequently the excessive extreme, in that one indiscriminately enjoys bodily pleasures too much, and insensibility is the deficient extreme, in that one inappropriately forsakes pleasure.⁶² The moderate person, from “an intermediate state” (1119a12), conversely, enjoys those things that “conduce to health and fitness . . . desir[ing] moderately and in the way one should” (1119a17-8). Moderation involves, then, a correctly balanced relationship with bodily pleasures in a manner conducive to one’s flourishing. Wastefulness and avariciousness are extremes pertaining to the giving/taking of money. The wasteful person has an indiscriminate “appetite for giving” their money away for things (often self-indulgent pleasures) or to people (e.g. the vicious) who may not be worth the expenditure (1121b3-11), resulting in the depletion of their resources and the potential for avariciousness (1121a31-1121b3). The avaricious person, in turn, is “deficien[t] in giving and excess[ive] in taking” money (1121b19). As a result, wastefulness involves an *excess* in giving money and a *deficiency* in taking or keeping money, and avariciousness involves spending *little* money on anything and an *aversion* to giving anyone money. The open-handed person, however, is understood to “give and spend on what one should and as much as one should” (1120b28-9). Open-handedness therefore pertains to a proper relation to wealth, in both its use and acquisition. In summary, moral virtue involves appropriate, i.e. balanced, relationships in regards to one’s day-to-day life that follow from the aspects of

⁶² Aristotle argues that the insensate person is rare and inhuman, because to significantly neglect sensory pleasures in one’s life is strongly opposed to human nature, or in fact the nature of any animal (1119a7-9). To feel no pleasure at all is considered even more inhuman, and thus even more profoundly contrary to one’s nature (1119a9-12).

one's nature that are not rational per se (i.e. passions and actions), but that can nonetheless be harmonized with reason.

Intellectual virtue, in contrast, is directed at, not feeling or acting properly, but *thinking* excellently. Aristotle asserts that the function of intellectual virtue is truth (1139b12). This understanding of truth breaks down into two different virtues: “wisdom” or practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) and “intellectual accomplishment” or theoretical wisdom (*sophia*).⁶³ Practical wisdom pertains to “calculative” reasoning, i.e. deliberating on “variable things” or contingent truths (1139a8-9, 14-6). More specifically, the practically wise person (*phronimos*) is concerned with “deliberat[ing] well about the things that are good and advantageous to himself [and others] . . . [in] the good life . . .” (1140a25-9). Practical wisdom is therefore the disposition to correctly calculate what is harmonious with living happily. Aristotle, in turn, links *phronēsis* to moral virtue, declaring them to be inseparable. He in fact formally defines moral virtue as the “relative” disposition towards the mean “in the way in which the [practically] wise person would determine it” (1106b36-1107a2). The mean, in other words, is not truly understood without rational deliberation. Secondly, Aristotle asserts that moral virtue “makes the goal correct, while [practical] wisdom” makes what leads to it correct (1144a8-9). Moral virtue subsequently disposes one towards the mean in passion and action, while practical wisdom allows one to figure out *how* to achieve the mean. As a result, one needs to be practically wise in order to truly be morally virtuous, i.e. to realize those feelings and actions proper to their nature, and to deliberate in a practically wise manner one must be disposed to do so by moral virtue, i.e. the

⁶³ While I quote Rowe's translations of *phronēsis* and *sophia* here, I equate them, respectively, with “practical wisdom” and “theoretical wisdom,” because I feel these terms better capture the dual-aspect nature of intellectual virtue. As a result, I will use practical wisdom and theoretical wisdom throughout this chapter, and the thesis as a whole, when referring to Aristotle's conception of *phronēsis* and *sophia*.

desire to devise the best way in which to achieve a virtuous goal. These two kinds of virtue, one moral and one intellectual, are thus interconnected and deal with the proper satisfaction and health of the sensitive and appetitive faculties of one's soul or nature. *Phronēsis* is consequently the intellectual virtue that allows one to understand how to harmonize the non-rational aspects of human nature with one's rational function in the practical concerns of living a flourishing life.

Theoretical wisdom, in contrast, moves outside the moral concerns of day-to-day life (namely, the health and use of the sensitive and appetitive aspects of the soul). It is concerned with “principles [that] cannot be otherwise” (1139a7-8), and thus is classified as “scientific” reasoning (1139a12). According to Aristotle, theoretical wisdom consists in *epistēmē* or “systematic knowledge” and *nous* or “intelligence” (1141b3-4). Systematic knowledge pertains to necessary and eternal truths that are explicable through induction⁶⁴ and deduction (139b22-32),⁶⁵ while intelligence pertains to the understanding of the “starting-points” of systematic knowledge (1140b31-1141a9).⁶⁶ The theoretically wise person, in other words, is disposed towards understanding the strict and interrelated laws of Nature that govern all phenomena. This kind of wisdom is considered superior to practical wisdom (1143b34) since it pertains to the “better of the two rational parts” (1145a8) or that which is most purely rational and divine, due to its connection to eternal truth (1177a14-22; 1177b19-1178a8). It is therefore the virtue most closely aligned with the rational function of human nature. Theoretical wisdom, in summary, is the highest intellectual virtue due to its focus on understanding the eternal truths of Nature.

⁶⁴ An argument which entails reasoning from particular premises of perception to a universal premise (*PoA* I.1.71a5-9, 18.81a38-81b9).

⁶⁵ Arguments that entails reasoning to a conclusion from a universal premise and a particular premise (*PrA* I.4.26b29-32).

⁶⁶ Intelligence grasps both contingent and eternal truths, but is linked to theoretical wisdom through its understanding of eternal truths only (*NE* 1141a4-9).

These virtues, moral or intellectual, are unrealizable, however, if one lacks the proper resources necessary for achieving them. Fundamentally, for one's rational function to be realized one "needs bodily health" (1178b35). This assertion follows from Aristotle's description of the nutritive and sensitive/appetitive faculties of the soul. Simply put, if one does not care for their body, it will be in no position to allow them to act in regards to moral virtue and the mind will be unable to think unimpededly in order to realize its own intellectual virtues and activities.

Aristotle also argues that "it is impossible, or not easy, to perform fine [and virtuous] actions if one is without resources [e.g. good upbringing, family, friends, wealth, and social status]," and that one of "low birth" or one who lacks or has lost family/friends "we would be not altogether inclined to call happy" (1099a32-1099b8). In other words, being virtuous involves external goods. A family who raises their child properly to be a good person and citizen will instill virtue in their offspring, while poor parenting can dispose a child towards all that is pathological or vicious, and thus contrary to their nature. The same dynamic applies to friendship. Bad friends only frustrate the actualization of one's nature, while virtuous friends promote and reinforce each other's flourishing (1155a3-16; 1156b7-14). Education also shares a relationship with what is essential in human nature, namely the rational function. One who does not have recourse to learn about society or the world socially and scientifically will have little opportunity to develop practical wisdom in the former context or theoretical wisdom in the latter. One must therefore be part of a society that grants them the resources necessary for the development of virtue. With that said, Aristotle clarifies that one does not need "many" external goods or such things "on a large scale" in order to be happy; on the contrary, they need only "moderate resources" or those external goods sufficient to the development of their nature and its virtues (1179a2-9). In other words, while one cannot flourish without *any* resources, one does not need *every* conceivable

resource to flourish. It is a mark of the vicious to obsess over obtaining every external good, while the virtuous are characterized by their contentment with those external goods they need to flourish and currently have access to. Happiness therefore involves external things in order to be realized, but does not demand the possession of every external good (although, by no means does it demand the *rejection* of unnecessary external goods, either, when they are accessible to the virtuous person).

Once all the requirements of happiness are met, however, Aristotle clarifies that there are two different kinds of happy life, one superior to the other: the *practically* happy life and the *theoretically* happy life.⁶⁷ The practically happy life pertains to being morally virtuous and practically wise (1178a9-23). This life constitutes happiness because its virtues are linked to the rational function of human nature through calculative thinking. As discussed previously, one does not become truly morally virtuous without *practical wisdom*, i.e. the virtuous deliberative faculty that deals with contingent truths, to guide their actions towards the mean in a given situation. A life without proper feeling and action relative to one's nature and circumstances would not be considered happy, because one would be subject to the instability of the extremes of excess and deficiency, which would only lead to the frustration of one's nature rather than its flourishing. Aristotle, however, classifies the practically happy life as *eudaimonia* in a "secondary" sense (1178a9). Because it is the rational part that deals with the *non-rational* sensitive and appetitive faculties of the soul and the contingencies of passion and action in day-to-day life, practical wisdom does not represent reason, and thus the human function, in its highest or purest form. Furthermore, because *phronēsis* pertains to rational deliberation it is not,

⁶⁷ For a more comprehensive analysis of Aristotle's dual-aspect view of happiness, see Cooper (*Aristotle: Philosophy as Two Ways of Life* 91-9, 137-143), Shields ("Living Well" 340-5), and Dahl (66-91).

strictly speaking, knowledge (1140a33-1140b5). Knowledge, in essence, is systematic knowledge, in that it pertains to stable, eternal truths.

Pure reason and systematic knowledge are subsequently found in intelligence through its grasping of these eternal truths, and thus theoretical wisdom. While the theoretically wise person (*sophos*), according to Aristotle, does not explicitly reflect on what is needed to flourish (1143b19-21), they can nevertheless be happy so long as, in conjunction with practical wisdom, they realize the entirety of one's intellectual excellence (1144a1-7). The theoretically happy or "reflective" life is what follows from theoretical wisdom, that is the activities of intelligence (1177a12-28, 1178a6-8), which are considered the most divine part of human nature (1177a14-8; 1177b26-32). Through these activities, one enjoys reflection (*theōria*), which is the contemplation of eternal truths. According to Aristotle, the highest and most "complete happiness" resides in "a reflective kind of activity" (1178b8). Reflection is considered to be the most self-sufficient form of happiness, because one needs (after the achievement of those external goods deemed necessary for flourishing) no other thing than their own mind to actualize this activity; the morally virtuous person, in contrast, needs to physically interact with people and things to realize their virtues (1177a27-1177b1). For instance, the moderate person needs to engage with pleasurable objects and the open-handed person money in order to be morally virtuous. In reflecting on eternal truths about Nature, however, one is not directly dependent on engagement with anything but their own intelligence. Therefore, due to its connection to the divine and most rational aspect of human nature and its greater degree of self-sufficiency, the theoretically happy life is superior to the practically happy life.

With that said, Aristotle is not arguing that we should forsake moral virtue and practical wisdom for theoretical wisdom and reflection, in the sense of purely reflecting on systematic

knowledge and neglecting to engage with people or things. The theoretically happy person will also possess moral virtue and practical wisdom, even if reflective activity represents the greatest expression of human flourishing. Firstly, the majority of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is devoted to analyzing the nature of moral virtue itself in Books II-III and particular instantiations in Books III-V and VIII-IX. If moral virtue's secondary role in human flourishing meant that it was unimportant or unnecessary, then Aristotle would have devoted far less attention to the nature of practical virtues and how we achieve them, in favour of a more comprehensive analysis and description of intelligence, theoretical wisdom, and reflection. It is evident, then, from the comprehensiveness of the discussion of moral virtue in the treatise that its role in flourishing, while not supreme, is nevertheless crucial. That moral virtue is important can be seen by examining the multiplicity of the human soul. As discussed above, Aristotle describes humans as having nutritive, sensitive/appetitive, and rational faculties. The rational faculty may be that which distinguishes humans from other living things, and that which is most divine in us, but reason is not all that humanity consists in. Humans have bodies that seek nutrition and growth, experience pleasure and pain, and possess a diversity of natural desires. Why would Aristotle outline these aspects of human nature, and the virtues that correspond to each, if the rational faculty is all that matters? More commonsensically, can one truly be said to flourish according to their nature if only one aspect of it is nurtured? Furthermore, as stated above, one cannot enjoy virtuous reflective activity if they lack a healthy body (1178b34-6), and therefore it is crucial to properly nurture the nutritive and sensitive/appetitive faculties in addition to the rational faculty.

Aristotle also makes it clear that this rational faculty in itself deals with both the practical and theoretical concerns of living happily. This is why intellectual virtue is divided into *phronēsis* and *sophia*. While theoretical wisdom attends to rational *knowledge*, practical wisdom

is concerned with rational *deliberation*. If happiness involves fully actualizing our rational function, then it would be problematic to see flourishing as demanding the nurturing of rational knowledge and the neglect of rational deliberation. Both are part of what it means to be rational, and therefore one cannot be said to optimally flourish if either is neglected. In fact, Aristotle asserts that theoretical wisdom “is brought to completion by virtue of a person’s having [practical] wisdom and excellence of character,” meaning the practical virtues facilitate the realization of theoretically virtuous activity, namely reflection (1144a7-8). In other words, the practical virtues ensure that one has a healthy body conducive to intellectual activity and that one, primarily through *phronēsis*, understands when and how to virtuously reflect on eternal truths. The reflective life is thus dependent on practical happiness, through practical wisdom and moral virtue, in order to be realized excellently.

It is important to emphasize, however, that these practical virtues nonetheless constitute their own happy (*eudaimon*) life, even if it is a lesser form than reflection. The fact that Aristotle classifies the morally virtuous and practically wise life as “happiness” at all suggests that such a life is sufficient for the flourishing of one’s nature, albeit not optimally in the absence of *sophia* and *theōria*. Aristotle would not classify the combination of these practical virtues as *eudaimonia* unless they constituted a state of flourishing in themselves. Furthermore, because moral virtue is inseparable from *phronēsis*, the practical life is still a life of virtuous rational activity, thereby making it a happy human life.⁶⁸ Practical happiness is ranked second because it does not represent the complete realization of one’s rational nature, but it nevertheless involves a relative state of flourishing, in that one’s rational function is fulfillingly realized through

⁶⁸ Keeping in mind the other criteria of (1) sufficient external goods conducive to the realization of virtue and (2) a complete or significantly long life to ensure the achievement and preservation of one’s flourishing.

excellent calculative thinking. As a result, while the reflective life pertains to the highest and most complete form of happiness (that is the blessed life), it cannot be realized without practical happiness and is consequently not the only happy life available to the individual.⁶⁹

Pleasure in the Happy Life

Now that we understand the criteria for happiness, and its dual-aspect nature through practical and theoretical virtues, we are prepared to examine how pleasure fits into this complex system. Aristotle rejects, in Book I, the life of bodily pleasure per se as that which happiness consists in, declaring it to be an “utterly slavish” life best-suited to “grazing cattle” (1095b20-1). Considering Aristotle’s pluralistic view of the human soul, this denial is unsurprising. Just as I argued that a purely intellectual life that ignored the non-rational sensitive and appetitive aspects of human nature could not be understood as true flourishing, so too a life restricted to *only* the non-rational sensitive and appetitive faculties would fall short of human happiness. For Aristotle, the neglect of the rational part of the soul is opposed to a happy life, because reason is the characteristic activity of humanity. An individual who fails to realize any rational activities, namely practical deliberation or reflection, cannot be said to be living a *human* life, let alone a *virtuous* human life. This is why Aristotle refers to the life of bodily pleasure as the life of “cattle.” To take pleasure in satisfying one’s bodily needs is natural and important, but since all animals, like cattle, act in this way, one’s enjoyment and potential flourishing in this regard fall short of what makes us human, that is our capacity for rationality. Bodily pleasure alone, consequently, is insufficient to ensure a happy *human* life.

⁶⁹ This basic view is also proposed by Norman Dahl (87-9, 91).

Pleasant experiences, whether bodily or mental, are not always good, and thus conducive to the happy life, however. Aristotle concedes that “some pleasures are bad . . . without qualification,” thereby making them vicious (1153b8-14).⁷⁰ The self-indulgent person and the avaricious person, for example, cannot be said to take pleasure in what is good or appropriate to one’s nature. On the contrary, because they are vicious, they experience pleasures that “they shouldn’t, or when they shouldn’t, or in a way they shouldn’t . . .” (1104b22-3). They are, in other words, disposed to take pleasure in those things contrary to the health and realization of their nature through relative excesses and deficiencies. With self-indulgence, one enjoys objects of bodily pleasure in an excessive manner that is harmful to the health of their body, and its subsequent flourishing. In terms of avariciousness, one takes pleasure in hoarding their money inappropriately, failing to spend it or to give/lend it to someone when they should. This inappropriate use of monetary resources can hinder one from purchasing those objects conducive to their flourishing (e.g. adequate food and supplies necessary for one’s education). As well, it can lead to social alienation when one refuses to help others in need (e.g. the lonely miser who joyfully hoards money while others suffer in poverty). As outlined above, family and friends are necessary external goods for flourishing, and avariciousness often serves to deprive one of the crucial support of others, precisely because one neglects to support them in return. In the case of either vice, the individual is taking pleasure in that which frustrates their nature, making such pleasures undeniably bad. The mere fact that one takes pleasure in something consequently does not mean that that thing is good or pertains to a flourishing life; on the contrary, there are many

⁷⁰ Pathological sickness is also not conducive to human happiness, since it represents an unhealthy state of being that is opposed to (that is a perversion of) human nature. As a pathological disposition, however, it does not pertain to moral character.

ways that one can take pleasure in that which is bad or opposed to happiness through vicious dispositions. Pleasant experience is therefore not always good or indicative of happiness.

Aristotle is not, however, rejecting pleasure as *a* good, nor is he denying it a significant role in the flourishing life. He clarifies that the fact that “some [namely, pathological or vicious] pleasures are bad is not a reason why the chief good is not a certain kind of pleasure . . .” (1153b8-9), and that because pleasure in essence is the “contrary” to pain, which is something that we naturally avoid as bad in itself, it must “[n]ecessarily, then, be a good” (1153b1-5). The point is that while we cannot simply define happiness as a life of pleasant experiences, since there are many pleasant experiences that frustrate our nature, we also cannot simply classify pleasure as bad in itself. The strongest reason for denying this claim is the fact that the desire for pleasure is *natural*. Aristotle asserts that all beings with a sensitive faculty of soul, i.e. animals, seek out pleasure, and that this common desire among such beings suggests that pleasure “is in a way the chief good” (1153b25-7). The nature of an individual is, in other words, essential in deciphering what is good/bad, virtuous/vicious, excessive/deficient/moderate for them morally, specifically in terms of flourishing. Since the nature of an individual is the ethical standard in this eudaimonistic paradigm, what follows from it (e.g. desire, the capacity for pleasure/pain, and rationality) cannot in itself be bad or immoral, but rather must be good in some way. Consequently, because pleasure is a predominant end that follows from both human and animal nature, it is necessary to, and thus a good in accordance with, happiness.

In fact, Aristotle argues that pleasure is a crucial component in virtue and happiness. While vice pertains to taking pleasure in that which is inappropriate through excess/deficiency, virtue conversely involves enjoying intermediate activities that are proper to the realization of one’s nature (1104b19-1105a14; 1172a20-5). Furthermore, Aristotle argues “no one would call a

person just if he failed to delight in acting justly, nor open-handed if he failed to delight in open-handed actions; and similarly in other cases [of virtue]” (1099a18-20). As indicated above, virtue is not simply being disposed to act excellently according to one’s nature in a given situation, but also involves desire and deliberation directed at the same end. The desire for virtue is particularly important in this case, because without it the realization of one’s virtuous action will not be pleasurable or will not supervene on an actualized activity *because* it is virtuous. To be moderate, for instance, is not only about taking pleasure in the right objects, but also *taking pleasure in* taking pleasure in the right objects. If one only sought appropriate objects of pleasure, but nevertheless desired to take pleasure in immoderate objects, even if they never acted on these desires they would not be virtuous, precisely because they would be unable to truly enjoy being moderate in itself.⁷¹ Similarly, reflection cannot be said to be virtuous if one is pained at or apathetic towards their understanding of eternal truths; on the contrary, to reflect excellently entails a sense of joy in one’s reflections. Since virtue in general and reflection in particular are involved in human flourishing, happiness is therefore necessarily pleasurable, as well. Aristotle goes so far as to declare happiness “what is best, and finest, and *pleasantest* [emphasis mine]” (10099a25). Such a claim is unsurprising in this context, because what would be more enjoyable than truly flourishing in my life according to my nature as a human being? In summary, happiness does not consist in pleasure alone, but pleasure is nonetheless a good that is both necessary and crucial in living happily.

⁷¹In this case, one would have self-control (*enkrateia*), meaning that they would possess vicious desires, but would instead choose to follow their rational deliberations about the mean in their actions (1145b8-21). Self-control is superior to incontinence (*akrasia*), where one deliberates rationally about what objects of bodily pleasure are proper to pursue but follows their vicious desires instead of their reasoning, but since self-control is not a virtue it is not a constituent of happiness (ibid.).

Pleasure as a Good

We now know that Aristotle deems pleasure a necessary and important good, in the sense that its absence is counter to the realization of virtue and happiness, but, positively-speaking, what makes pleasure good? As discussed in the first section of this chapter, Aristotle's understands pleasure to hold a necessary relation to the health of an individual's state of being. The true source of pleasant experience is unimpeded activity, where the body or mind is sufficiently healthy enough to successfully perform an activity, a pleasant experience being that which accompanies/follows from its realization. It is important to emphasize, though, that it is the *unimpeded* state of an activity that enables it to be a source of pleasant experience. In other words, in Aristotle's philosophical system it is only possible to experience pleasure insofar as one is healthy enough to act in some way. Insofar as one is severely ill or injured, and thus unable to realize bodily or intellectual activities, they are not only obviously pained, but also prevented from experiencing enjoyment. Fundamentally, it is because pleasure necessitates health and activity in some way that it is considered good.

This relation to health is strengthened by the distinction between merely apparent and true pleasures. Pathological sickness pertains to activities that represent an unhealthy state precisely because they are a perversion of human nature. Vice, similarly, disposes one towards extreme behaviour, in this case enjoyment of activities that are deficient or excessive in relation to one's nature as a human being. The self-indulgent person is a prime example, in that they pursue and enjoy excessive bodily pleasures through their activities. While they enjoy pleasures that are bad and contrary to healthy being, these pleasures are merely apparently pleasurable, and are thus not naturally pleasant. Vicious activities and the pleasures that supervene on them, in a way, follow from one's nature, but not truly because they are not harmonious with the

intermediate states that constitute the health and flourishing of one's nature. This incomplete relation to one's nature is what makes these pleasures merely apparent, because they only approximate the pleasures one would experience as a human being if they were not impaired in their state of being by harmful behaviour. Conversely, the activities that truly follow from one's nature, that is virtuous activities, involve pleasant experiences that are themselves harmonious with one's health and flourishing as a human being, making them truly (that is naturally) pleasant (1176a16-29). What this distinction between merely apparent and true pleasure shows is that the further away a pleasure's association is to the health of one's nature the more it is deemed pleasant in a lesser sense and bad, while the closer a pleasure is linked to healthy being the more it is considered truly pleasant and good. In other words, in Aristotle's system "we cannot say what is pleasant without some reference to what is good, since pleasure and good are internally connected" (Annas "Aristotle on Pleasure and Goodness" 297). The nature of pleasure itself is consequently deeply linked to goodness, and when pleasure is connected to what is bad it is understood to be divorced from or opposed to its own nature in some way.

Following from this dynamic, we now move to the function of pleasure, i.e. what effect experiencing pleasure has on the individual in relation to their happiness. According to Aristotle, the pleasant experience that supervenes on a given activity "contributes to increasing" that activity, making one's performance of it "more discriminating and precise" (1175a30-3), resulting in the activity being "longer-lasting" (1175b14-5). Pleasure, in other words, enhances the effectiveness of an activity and perpetuates its performance. My enjoyment of playing drums, for instance, increases my ability to use my sticks and each drum effectively to create longer, more nuanced, and more creative beats and solo sets. Furthermore, the more one is able to realize an activity and is motivated to continue realizing that activity in the future, the more one is able

to derive enjoyment from its performance. My increased skills and creativity with the drums, as prompted by prior pleasure, leads to ever greater enjoyment of this activity. As a result, a pleasant experience not only perpetuates the activity it is linked to, but also perpetuates its intensity as an experience through the enhancement of that activity's realization. This is the main positive effect of pleasant experience, but there is also a negative effect. The pleasure I derive from one activity interferes with me realizing other activities, because the pleasures associated with those other activities are less intense than the pleasure linked to my current activity (1175b2-12). For example, I may enjoy writing, but if I derive greater enjoyment from playing the drums, then I will be more inclined to spend my time drumming than writing. My writing skills consequently will stagnate or suffer to some degree while my drumming skills continue to progress, because for me drumming is more pleasurable than writing. The positive and negative effects of pleasure apply to morality, as well. Vicious pleasures will enhance and perpetuate excessive/deficient activities that are contrary to the health and flourishing of one's nature, while virtuous pleasures will enhance and perpetuate activities harmonious with the health and flourishing of one's nature. As a result, vicious pleasures will interfere with the realization of virtuous activities, while virtuous pleasures will prevent the realization of vicious activities. It is therefore crucial in the happy life that one habituates taking pleasure in virtuous activities, so that one promotes activities/pleasures that agree with the flourishing of human nature, instead of pleasures/activities that frustrate it in some way.

In summary, pleasure is good insofar as it is necessarily linked to the health and flourishing of one's state of being. The source of pleasure is unimpeded activity, i.e. activity free of the restrictions of pain. As a result, one is only able to derive pleasant experience from a given activity insofar as one is healthy enough to perform that activity successfully. The pleasure from

an activity will promote its effectiveness and the frequency in which it is performed. In moral terms, enjoyment of good activities will perpetuate virtue and enjoyment of bad activities will perpetuate vice. Vice, however, pertains to merely apparent pleasures, in that the excessive/deficient activities that they supervene on are misaligned with one's nature, meaning these activities and pleasures are contrary to human flourishing. Virtuous activities and pleasures, conversely, are harmoniously aligned with one's nature, and thus truly pertain to human flourishing.

Pleasure is therefore, strictly speaking, good in itself, because those pleasures that are classified as bad are mere approximations of what pleasure properly is to a healthy individual. The happy life involves living fully according to one's natural state of being, and so the pleasant experiences involved in this life pertain to what it truly means for a human being to experience enjoyment. Vicious pleasures, in contrast, are mere glimpses at natural enjoyment, because they supervene on excessive/deficient activities that are contrary to human flourishing. True pleasure is consequently by nature good in the context of happiness, by virtue of its relation to the health of one's natural state of being.

The Moral Relation Between Bodily and Mental Pleasures

The fact that all true pleasures are good by nature, however, does not mean that they all share the same ethical relationship to human nature and happiness. As discussed above, human nature consists of multiple faculties, namely nutrition, sensation, appetite, and rationality. We grow, desire things for our bodies and minds so that they are capable of various activities, experience pleasures/pains, and think about ourselves and the world around us. Not one of these aspects can be neglected if one wishes to truly flourish as a human being. The body must satisfy its natural desires in order to be nourished and to maintain a state of health that is necessary to

the realization of the activities of one's nature. Insensibility, i.e. the vicious disposition towards deficient behaviour in one's enjoyment of bodily pleasures, is described by Aristotle as contrary to human nature precisely because it disposes one to deny the sensitive and appetitive aspects of their state of being (1119a6-12). In fact, without the sensitive faculty, one is incapable of experiencing any pleasure. Consequently, we are as humans meant to thrive bodily and to experience pleasure in our activities.

However, all animals seek bodily nourishment and activity and subsequently experience bodily pleasure. These aspects are essential to a human life, but none of them represent what makes us *distinctly human*. The characteristic function of humanity is reason, because thinking through both deliberation and knowledge is the one aspect of human nature that is absent in other living things, and thus distinguishes humans from all other mortal beings. The bodily faculties are, as discussed above, crucial elements in realizing moral and intellectual virtue, and thus happiness, but they do not in themselves represent distinctly *human* virtue and happiness. A happy human life is an excellently rational life. The practically happy life, however, partly concerns itself with bodily matters such as health and the proper use and realization of sensitive activities. Moral virtue disposes one towards acting and experiencing as pleasant that which is in accordance with the health and realization of one's nature through the activities of their senses. Moderation ensures that one's tastes for bodily objects are balanced and healthy, while other virtues like liberality, justice (*dikaiosunē*), and friendliness (*philia*) promote physical interactions with others that are mutually conducive to flourishing. *Phronēsis*, in turn, enables one to calculate how best to make use of one's senses in a given situation, in a manner harmonious with the appropriate moral virtue. It is important to remember here, though, that without this intellectual virtue one will only *desire* to act virtuously and to take pleasure in being morally

virtuous, but will ultimately be ignorant about *how* to successfully perform the morally virtuous act relative to their circumstances. For example, I may desire to joyfully act moderately by virtue of eating a balanced, healthy breakfast, but if I lack the ability to rationally deliberate on the best foods and proportions necessary for accomplishing my goal, I will fail to realize this virtuous bodily activity and its supervening pleasure. While the practically happy life necessitates the realization of bodily activities and pleasures, those activities/pleasures are nevertheless subordinate to reason through the desires they are derived from (1102b31-1103a4; 1175b27-30). One might take pleasure in an activity that the virtuous person would perform, but unless that activity was desired and reasoned properly it will not be enjoyed *for being virtuous*. Without explicit appetitive reference to virtue and rational deliberation on how to achieve it, the supervening pleasure will not fully correspond to one's nature and its proper capacity for enjoyment. Bodily pleasures are then part of human nature, but without the guidance of reason one cannot experience them in a virtuous, and thus genuinely human, way.

The theoretically happy life, as explained above, is the superior or most human form of flourishing through its relation to the knowledge of eternal truths (that is theoretical wisdom) and reflection on these truths. *Sophia* and *theōria* represent thinking at its purest, most stable, and most divine, as a result of the unchanging nature of its content. Aristotle declares reflection, through intelligence, to be "superior" to the activities of moral virtue (1177b19-30). Their relation to the rational function of human nature is therefore the strongest, making theoretical wisdom the most distinctly human virtue and reflection the most distinctly human activity. The pleasures that follow from them will, in turn, also be the most distinctly human. Aristotle asserts that "of [the] activities in accordance with excellence it is the one in accordance with [theoretical wisdom] that is agreed to be pleasantest," such pleasures being "amazing in purity and stability"

by virtue of their connection to eternal, instead of contingent, truth and that which is most divine in us (1177a23-6). Since reflection is “the highest kind of activity” to follow from this intellectual virtue (1177a20-1), reflective activity involves the greatest, most human, and most divine pleasure, and thus the happiest human life, i.e. the blessed life (1177b30-1178a8).

However, Aristotle clarifies that a life of only reflective activity is “higher than the human plane; for it is not in so far as [one] is human that [they] will live like this, but in so far as there is something divine in [them] . . . [which] is superior to the compound [of the human soul as a whole]” (1177b26-9). Reflection represents that which is most excellent, divine, and unique in human nature, but of course it does not encompass all of human nature. Humans are bodily as well, with appetites and sensations that are susceptible to the commands of reason but are not themselves rational. Furthermore, if these appetites and sensations are ignored one is prevented from virtuously realizing reflection. On the one hand, an active and healthy mind is dependent on an active and healthy body (1178b34-35) and, on the other hand, rational deliberation and systematic knowledge involve perception and induction (1098b3-4; 1139b25-32), i.e. sensory engagement with the world. In other words, one’s rational faculty relies on the health of the other faculties for its functioning and the content of one’s rational deliberations and reflections pertains to knowledge gleaned by the body’s senses. Reason may have greater ethical value in the sense that it harmonizes all the faculties of one’s nature and represents that which is most human and divine, but it does not live in isolation from the body and is instead dependent on it to flourish.

Only the gods enjoy absolute reflective activity free of bodily concerns of appetite, sensation, and moral action in their (exclusively) blessed life (1178b8-23). Happiness according to their divine nature is purely intellectual and their subsequent pleasures purely mental. Because

human beings are both bodily and intellectual in nature, with corresponding bodily and mental pleasures, a life of only virtuous reflective activity is unsuitable and in fact impossible.

Moreover, while human reflection is described as divine, it is not truly and absolutely divine in the way godly *theōria* is, due to human reflection's connection to the body and its health and flourishing. As a result, the human blessed life can only approximate divinity in its excellent reflective activities (1178b23-8). One cannot shed bodily and moral concerns then to live a happy human life of solely intellectual activity. The blessed life of a human being is, on the contrary, both morally *and* intellectually virtuous. The practically happy life is sufficient for flourishing insofar as it realizes our rational *ergon* through practical wisdom's relation to moral virtue, but optimal human happiness is found in the combination of practical wisdom *and* theoretical wisdom, i.e. a life of excellently moral and intellectual activities. Overall then, mental pleasures play a more prominent and authoritative role in the happy human life, but bodily pleasures are nonetheless crucial to the flourishing of any human being.

Overview

Pleasure is considered good by nature because those pleasures that are associated with badness are merely apparently pleasant. Pathological sickness represents the perversion of human nature. Vice is pleasant in a lesser sense, in that it involves activities of one's nature that are performed in a manner that is excessive/deficient, and thus contrary to health and flourishing. Such activities have supervening pleasant experiences, but these experiences do not truly capture what it means to feel pleasure as a human being because of the extreme nature of said activities. Only virtuous pleasures are pleasure in its primary, i.e. most human, sense. These pleasures supervene on intermediate activities that harmoniously follow from one's nature, thereby making them conducive to health and flourishing. They truly capture, through their intermediacy, what it

means to feel pleasure as a human being, both perceptually and intellectually. Aristotle's ethical conception of pleasure is therefore strongly aligned, albeit in a qualified manner, with claim (b).

Chapter 4: Epicurus's Account of Pleasure

In this chapter, I will outline Epicurus's ontological and ethical conception of pleasure. The first section will show how Epicurus links pleasure to the unimpeded functioning of one's nature, i.e. opposition to suffering, and how he distinguishes between kinetic and katastematic pleasures and necessary and unnecessary desires. These points will serve to illustrate how pleasure holds a necessary connection to the health of one's state of being, i.e. claim (a). The second section will, in turn, illustrate how Epicurus argues for pleasure as the highest good, or that which happiness consists in. We will in turn see why pleasure, kinetically and katastematically, is considered good in itself, that is claim (b), and how some pleasures and desires are more valuable than others.

4.1 Epicurus's Ontology of Pleasure

Pleasure as Unimpeded Functioning

Epicurus predominantly discusses pleasure (*hēdonē*) in a negative manner, that is as the absence of suffering in some way. In the context of this chapter, "suffering" will refer to any state of impeded functioning in one's nature or state of being, whether it be bodily or mental. Suffering in the body will be referred to as "pain" and suffering in the mind will be referred to as "disturbance." I employ this terminology, because of Epicurus's descriptions of pleasure as (1) "the lack of pain in the body [*aponia*] and disturbance in the soul [*ataraxia*]" (*M* §131) and (2) "the health of the body and the freedom of the soul" (§128). These descriptions associate pleasure with the body insofar as it is healthy, which we can in this context take to mean unimpeded in its functioning, and the mind insofar as it is untroubled, and thus able to

unimpededly and peacefully think.⁷² Pleasure is linked, then, to the absence of bodily or mental suffering.

Further evidence of this negative conception of pleasure can be found in the *Principal Doctrines*, where Epicurus asserts that “[t]he removal of all feeling of [suffering] is the limit of the magnitude of pleasures. Wherever a pleasurable feeling is present, for as long as it is present, there is neither a feeling of pain [in the body] nor a feeling of distress [in the mind], nor both together” (§III). In other words, wherever I experience pleasure in my state of being, that area will be free of suffering, in terms of bodily pain and mental disturbance. Conversely, wherever pain and disturbance are present in my state of being, I will not experience pleasure. For example, when I experience pleasure from eating or being satiated, my stomach cannot be impeded in its functioning, and thus it cannot be in pain. If, however, my stomach is upset or aching, neither eating nor being satiated will be pleasurable to me, precisely because my stomach is impeded in its functioning (namely, processing food for nourishment) in some way. Similarly, insofar as I experience mental pleasure from learning or reflecting my mind is undisturbed or unimpeded in its capacity to think. If I am riddled with fear and anxiety from certain beliefs (e.g. that I need certain objects that I do not have or that death is of great harm to me), on the other hand, the use of my mental faculties will to some degree be impeded because I am not psychologically at peace.

These details bring to light a certain uniqueness in Epicurus’s conception of one’s state of being. As Cicero (*OM* I.38, II.6-18) and Raphael Woolf (158) point out, Epicurus seems to reject a middle, “halfway” (Cicero), or “neutral” (Woolf) state of being that is neither pleasurable

⁷² We can be certain that Epicurus is referring to the mind, or one’s intellect, when he refers to the soul, because he lists one’s “thought-processes” and feelings as part of the “abilities” or aspects of the soul (H §63).

nor painful. Typically, we tend to think of ourselves, in our day-to-day experiences, as feeling pleased, pained, or “fine.” When our bodies or minds are affected favourably in some way, we understand ourselves to feel pleased. If we are harmed in a bodily or mental context, we are understood to be pained or disturbed in some way. When nothing is affecting us favourably or detrimentally, however, we might understand ourselves to be in a neutral state where we are experiencing neither enjoyment nor discomfort. Epicurus agrees that this so-called neutral state is not painful, but strongly disagrees with the claim that feeling “fine” is not pleasurable. In fact, the tendency to refer to such a state as being “fine” indicates a lack of appreciation for the simple experience of being physically and mentally unimpeded, in a certain way or as a whole. As Christopher Gill puts it, there is a distinctive sense of enjoyment in “simply being alive” or expressing one’s nature without interference (139-40). The negative connotation of Epicurus’s description of pleasure can be somewhat misleading then, because it emphasizes what is *not* experienced rather than what is. However, by classifying this state of absent suffering as “pleasure,” Epicurus is on the contrary pointing to the “positive qualitative character” and “relaxed freshness” of a healthy body and peaceful mind (Woolf 173-4). In other words, there is nothing numbing or experientially neutral about one’s nature per se being unimpeded. If one is untroubled, then why would that experience not be considered pleasant? Epicurus’s point is thus to emphasize that our state of being can only ever be *impeded* or *unimpeded* in its functioning, with impediment representing painful/disturbing experiences and freedom from impediment representing pleasant experiences.

The Dual-Aspect Nature of Pleasure

In order to more concretely understand why this unimpeded state of being is considered pleasurable, we will need to examine what appears to be Epicurus’s dual-aspect view of pleasure.

Cicero reports that Epicurus describes pleasure in two different ways: (1) “the sort of pleasure which stirs our nature with its sweetness and produces agreeable sensations in us” or the “removal” of desires like hunger and thirst and (2) “the pleasure . . . which is felt when all pain [i.e. suffering] is removed” or the “liberation and release from all that is distressing [all emphasis is mine]” (OMI.37). Along similar lines, Diogenes Laertius asserts that Epicurus understands pleasure as both a “motion” and a “state of rest,” pleasures of “motion and activity” pertaining to “joy and delight” and pleasures “which imply a state of rest” consisting in “peace of mind and freedom from [namely, bodily] pain” (X.136). Epicurus himself distinguishes between “the pleasures of consumption,” and activities like “partying,” and those pleasures associated with “lack of pain in the body and disturbance in the soul” (M §131-2). In the literature, these two forms of pleasure are typically referred to as “kinetic” pleasure (*kata kinesis*) and “static” or “katastematic” pleasure (*katastematikos*).⁷³ While “static” is a reasonable term for contrasting pleasurable freedom from suffering with the transitional nature of pleasures associated with “motion,” it also somewhat connotes a sense of passivity that can be misleading. As discussed above, in spite of the negative emphasis in Epicurus’s descriptions of pleasure, pleasure is ultimately linked to the functioning of one’s nature, and thus it involves a sense of continuous and potentially diverse freedom of living and natural expression that does not perfectly cohere with the connotations of stasis.⁷⁴

We have then, on the one hand, pleasures which refer to a change or modification in one’s state of being, and on the other hand, pleasures which stem from one’s state of being in itself, that is insofar as it is unimpeded. Kinetic pleasures are those experiences we traditionally

⁷³ See Annas “Epicurus on Pleasure” (8-10), Cooper “The Epicurean” (233-5), Gill (138), Rist (102-9), Woolf (170)

⁷⁴ Cooper (“The Epicurean” 234) and Rist (121-2) also criticize the use of “static” to describes those pleasures associated with one’s unimpeded state of being.

think of as pleasant, e.g. eating to satisfy hunger, recovering from being sick, reading, feeling a refreshing breeze, learning, reflecting, etc. In some instances, my enjoyment involves moving to a healthier state of being (e.g. satisfying hunger/thirst, recovery from sickness, removing fears and anxieties through learning) and in others my state of being, insofar as it is unimpeded, is expressed through some modification (e.g. feeling a refreshing breeze, reading, or reflecting).⁷⁵ Katastematic pleasures, conversely, pertain to the simple unimpeded functioning of one's body and mind, e.g. being satiated, well-rested, warm, psychologically content, etc. We might not usually think of these states as pleasant (certainly Cicero seems reluctant to in *OM* 2.9-16), but there is no difficulty in understanding Epicurus's rationale here. If some experience is not *unpleasant* to me, then why would the experience *not* be pleasant in some way? Certainly, insofar as I am suffering I cannot be said to be having an enjoyable experience. It is only natural, then, to conceive of opposition to that suffering as pleasurable.

The Tension Between Kinetic and Katastematic Pleasure

Even if we accept that freedom from suffering is pleasurable though, why exactly would we classify *both* of these experiences as pleasant? One is a change in one's state of being, and the other refers to one's unimpeded state of being in itself. Cicero argues that Epicurus could have adopted the conventional view of pleasure as "the sweet and gratifying arousal of the senses [i.e. kinetic pleasure]" or simply broken from tradition and "called freedom from pain alone [i.e. katastematic pleasure] by the name of pleasure" (*OM* 2.19); instead, Epicurus describes both experiences as pleasurable. This fact, in turn, begs the question as to *how* they are ontologically reducible to the same "state" or essence (2.20)? Similarly, Julia Annas argues that "[i]t takes

⁷⁵ I will say more about this kind of kinetic pleasure when we discuss the relationship between kinetic and katastematic pleasures.

theory . . . to sustain the distinction between these [two] kinds of pleasure, and to connect the condition of having one's needs pleasantly satisfied with the notions of the *natural* state and the condition of functioning unimpededly" ("Epicurus on Pleasure" 9). In other words, we need substantial justification for *how* kinetic pleasure and katastematic pleasure both ontologically represent the same fundamental thing, otherwise we are left to conclude that the classification of either or both as "pleasure" is arbitrary or mistaken.

Cooper, however, does not see any difficulty in linking these two experiences under the ontological category of "pleasure." He argues that "Epicurus did not intend to distinguish pleasure into two *kinds* at all," but rather "two different sorts of circumstances" ("The Epicurean" 232) or sources that constitute "a single state of feeling" (236). "Pleasure" then refers to the same essence in terms of an experience, but this experience arises from two different states of affairs: (1) when one's state of being is modified and (2) when one's state of being is unimpeded in its functioning. While I agree with Cooper that kinetic and katastematic pleasures are not distinct *kinds* of pleasure, I am hesitant to say that they consist in simply the same *experience*, and thus that they should be distinguished based solely on source. Cicero, as a counterexample to his Epicurean interlocutor Torquatus, asks the following question: "[D]o you claim that in mixing a drink for another when one is not thirsty oneself one feels the same pleasure as the thirsty person who drinks it?" (*OM* II.17). In essence, he is asking if the experience of not being thirsty and the experience of quenching one's thirst are the same experience, i.e. do they consist in the same feeling? Cicero is here appealing to our intuitions about our pleasant experiences. We would tend to say that I feel different *drinking when I am thirsty* than I feel when *I am not thirsty*, and if I classify both experiences as pleasant (which, admittedly, Cicero would not, believing only the former to be rightfully classified as "pleasure"),

then they would seem to feel pleasant in different ways. Of course, maybe we are wrong in our intuitions, and Epicurus's point is that satisfying desire and having no desire representing an impediment to one's functioning can in fact consist in the same experience. It is not clear how we could be mistaken in this intuition, however, and not necessarily because Epicurus's extant works fail to justify this assertion. On the contrary, I would argue that Epicurus is not making such a claim. Firstly, he focuses on our sense-perceptions and feelings (namely, pleasures and pains) as the standards for ascertaining truth (*LP* X.31; *H* §38, 82). If the experience of satisfying my thirst and the experience of being quenched feel different, then for Epicurus I should trust that these perceptions and feelings are in some sense true. Moreover, opponents to the existence of katastematic pleasures (like Cicero) are largely motivated by the fact that *removing suffering* and *not suffering* feel very different. It is more reasonable to say that enjoying quenching my thirst and enjoying not being thirsty consist in *different feelings* of pleasure. As a result, I would argue that Cooper is wrong to solve the kinetic-katastematic distinction through distinguishing pleasure as a source from pleasure as an experience.

Where he is correct, however, is in denying that kinetic and katastematic pleasures consist in different kinds of pleasure, in the sense that they would be irreducible to an essential state (which is Cicero's position in *OM* II.20). They are indeed reducible to a single state or essence, it is just not a single experience. The essence of pleasure is, rather, that which is contrary to suffering. In the case of both kinetic and katastematic pleasures we have forms of opposition to suffering. The former pertains to changes in one's state of being that serve to oppose suffering (either through its removal or as a varied expression of its absence), while the latter are associated with opposition to suffering through the absence of pain or disturbance. It is not only katastematic pleasures that represent the contrary of suffering then, but kinetic

pleasures, as well. Epicurus cannot restrict himself to understanding pleasures as solely kinetic or katastematic, contra Cicero, because to do so would be to miss a significant aspect of the nature of pleasure as the contrary of suffering. If all pleasures are deemed kinetic, we ignore the ways in which one's unimpeded nature is enjoyed in itself through the absence of pains or disturbances. If all pleasures are deemed katastematic, conversely, then we ignore the ways in which (1) satisfying our desires removes discomfort and (2) we derive enjoyment from various bodily (that is sensory) and mental (that is intellectual) changes in our state of being when it is unimpeded in its functioning. At the heart of both descriptions of pleasure is opposition to suffering or agreement with the unimpeded functioning of one's state of being. Epicurus's conception of pleasure therefore does not inexplicably involve two *kinds* of pleasure, but rather two coherently different *expressions* of pleasure as the contrary of suffering or the representation of healthy (i.e. unimpeded) natural being.

The Relationship Between Kinetic and Katastematic Pleasures

Kinetic pleasure, as a change in one's state of being, has two forms, as well. Some kinetic pleasures satisfy desire and constitute katastematic pleasure, while others simply follow from katastematic pleasure and vary its expression. The first form of kinetic pleasure can be found in Cicero's example of drinking. He asserts that "[a] quenched thirst is a 'static' pleasure, whereas the pleasure of having one's thirst quenched is 'kinetic'" (*OM* II.9), which coincides with his interlocutor Torquatus's earlier discussion of the "delight" of "liberation and release from all that is distressing" and the pleasure that follows "[w]hen food and drink rid us of hunger and thirst" (I.37). Torquatus does not use the terminology of "static" and "kinetic" in this context, but we can easily apply those terms to his comments, "liberation and release . . . from distress" being katastematic pleasure and the removal of "hunger and thirst" kinetic pleasure. In these passages,

the pleasurable change in one's state of being pertains to the removal of pain in terms of the satisfaction of desire, namely drinking to quench one's thirst or eating to eliminate one's hunger. This change (i.e. kinetic pleasure) is, in turn, shown to cause katastematic pleasure, through the contrast drawn between *quenching* thirst/*removal* of suffering and *quenched* thirst/*liberation* and *release* from suffering. The result of the process of removing the pain of hunger or thirst is the absence of hunger or thirst, and thus the pain associated with it. Because this process necessarily involves a pleasant experience, we can then say that this kinetic pleasure causes the absence of pain, i.e. a katastematically pleasant experience that is associated with unimpeded bodily functioning.

Once one has achieved katastematic pleasure though, this experience does not remain static or uniform. According to Epicurus, when "the feeling of pain produced by want is removed, pleasure in the flesh will not increase but is only *varied*" (*PD* § XVIII). In other words, one does not simply experience a state of freedom from suffering that is unchanging in its content. One's activities or interactions while in that katastematic state (and insofar as they do not remove it) can modify the expression of their unimpeded state of functioning. When my body is properly nourished and rested, I can enjoy running and reading or the simple sensations of a cool breeze and petting the soft fur of a cat. Because these pleasant experiences consist in changes in my state of being, i.e. motions or activities, they can be considered kinetic, which is confirmed by Cicero in his own discussion of the varied pleasures that follow from being free of suffering (*OM* II.10). According to Diogenes Laertius, what applies to bodily pleasures will also hold true for mental pleasures (X.136). In support of this claim, we are told in the *Principal Doctrines* that "the limit of mental pleasures is produced by a reasoning out of these very pleasures [of the flesh] and of the things related to these [that is objects and Nature in general],

which used to cause the greatest fears in the intellect” (§ XVIII). On the one hand, this passage can be interpreted as asserting that certain processes of reasoning about our bodies and the world are associated with opposition to our “fears” or disturbances of the mind, in the sense that they can remove them. On the other hand, since the passage refers to “fears in the intellect” in the past tense (i.e. “used to cause”), that would imply that one’s reasoning, as a kinetic pleasure, in this context could also be understood as following from a katastematically pleasant state of mind, i.e. that one’s particular activities of reasoning about Nature vary the expression of the mind’s functioning. As a result, both the body and mind can enjoy kinetic pleasures that follow from katastematic pleasure, these enjoyable modifications in one’s state of being serving to diversely express the healthy functioning of one’s nature in its freedom from suffering, rather than to restore it through the removal of suffering.

Rist, however, argues that all kinetic pleasures should be understood as variations of katastematic pleasure in a way, or that “all kinetic pleasure supervenes on katastematic pleasure” (110). He references §III of the *Principal Doctrines* and the example of the wise Epicurean on the rack in support of this premise. §III mentions that “[w]herever a pleasurable feeling is present, for as long as it is present, there is neither a feeling of pain nor a feeling of distress, nor both together.” Rist interprets this passage as claiming that “whenever something that brings pleasure is present (obviously to a sensitive organ), then there can be no pain simultaneously present to that organ” (110) and ultimately argues that kinetic pleasures depend on “previously existing katastematic pleasures in the part of the organism directly involved” (172). The idea is that, even in the case of kinetic pleasures that transition one’s state of being to a healthier state by removing suffering, that transition can only take place and subsequently be pleasurable if relevant aspects of one’s nature are unimpeded. For example, the kinetic pleasure of satisfying

one's hunger is predicated on a functioning stomach, i.e. a stomach free of pain and thus in a state of katastematic pleasure. If one's stomach is injured or malfunctioning in some way (e.g. if the stomach's interior is burned/blistered or when the flu prevents the stomach from keeping food within it because of vomiting), they are unable to enjoy satisfying their hunger, precisely because the stomach is in pain through being impeded. Similarly, Rist argues that "[i]f we are so mentally disturbed [that our mind cannot function at all] . . . Epicurus would think that we are incapable of the [kinetic pleasures] of learning . . . [t]hus when we learn, we have a pacified [i.e. katastemically enjoyed] section of the mind" (171). The mind too, then, must have some degree of functionality for one to take pleasure in the strengthening of it through the removal of disturbance.

The relationship between the body and mind is also dictated by katastematic pleasure. According to Epicurus, an individual consists of an "aggregate" of certain atoms that constitute their body and its subsequent capacities and a collection of other "finer parts" or atoms, spread throughout the body, that constitute the soul or mind (*H* §63).⁷⁶ The body and mind, through their constituent atoms, thus represent two different kinds of (viz. material) being that are synthesized to form the individual as a living, functioning thing. These two beings are, however, reliant on each other for their continued existence. Without the soul, the body has no "sense-perception," feelings, thoughts, or capacity for "motion" or activity (§63-4). Ultimately, one's body ceases to live and function in such a situation, resulting in the eventual dispersal of its constituent parts (i.e. the phenomenon of decomposition). Similarly, the soul has no independent existence without the bodily aggregate that it is interspersed with. If this "aggregate is destroyed,

⁷⁶ For a comprehensive outline of Epicurus's atomism see the *Letter to Herodotus*; Morel (65-83); Rist (41-99). For an analysis of the soul specifically, see Gill (125-143) and Rist (74-99).

the soul is scattered and no longer has the same powers” of sense-perception, feeling, thought, and action (§63, 65). The soul’s constituent parts, in other words, cannot stay linked without the body. Here too then this separation between the body and the mind leads to the absence of life in the individual, through destruction of both fundamental aspects of their state of being.

These points relate to katastematic pleasure because they indicate that the body and mind share a crucial reciprocal relationship, in the sense that if either is significantly or entirely impeded in its functioning, then the other will be impeded or cease to function, as well. The katastematic pleasure of the mind is consequently dependent on a certain degree of katastematic pleasure in the body, namely enough that the aggregate and the soul stay united. The katastematic pleasure of the body is, in turn, reliant on a significant degree of katastematic pleasure in the mind, namely enough to maintain the unity of the aggregate/soul and to deliberate about and act for the sake of those pleasures the body needs to preserve its functioning. One’s mind needs a healthy body to think and one’s body can only remain stably healthy when they have a mind that can effectively think and enable action for the sake of their body. The body and mind therefore mutually rely on each other for their katastematic pleasures.

Finally, Rist references the “Epicurean paradox” (110) that “[e]ven on the rack the wise man is happy [i.e. experiencing katastematic pleasure] . . . however, he will [nevertheless] give vent to cries and groans” (*LP* X.118).⁷⁷ The paradox is, of course, that the wise Epicurean experiences katastematic pleasure, i.e. freedom from suffering, while simultaneously suffering because of torture. How are we to make sense of this state of affairs? Rist responds that “[t]he two statements can be fitted together only if we realize that the [pleasure] of the wise man is the

⁷⁷ The connection between happiness and katastematic pleasure will be outlined in the next section.

[pleasure] of the largest groups of his bodily and mental constituents, while the pain is experienced in atomic structures composed of smaller numbers of atoms” (111).⁷⁸ In other words, while the wise man on the rack does not experience complete freedom from pain, he is nevertheless not incapable of experiencing katastematic pleasure in that moment, because significant portions of his state of being, both physically and mentally, are still functioning. His arms, legs, and muscles, for instance may be subject to extreme pain, but physically his heart, lungs, stomach, and face may remain unimpeded, and mentally he may have unimpeded (i.e. undisturbed/peaceful) access to good memories and the understanding that he still enjoys katastematic pleasures in those areas just listed, despite his bodily sufferings (*I*). If the wise man were then to be rescued or freed, he would subsequently be in the position to cultivate kinetic pleasures that would remove pain from the afflicted areas of his body and enhance his katastematic state. And his capacity to achieve these pleasures will be reliant on those portions of his body and mind that are currently functioning, and thus already in a state of katastematic pleasure.

In both the localized and global cases, then, kinetic pleasure cannot arise without prior katastematic pleasure. In the former, the relevant aspect of one’s being that directly causes the restorative transition, thereby removing suffering, must itself be free of suffering in order to function and serve as the cause of kinetic pleasure. The latter entails that a significant or relevant portion of one’s state of being as a whole must be in a position of unimpeded functioning, (certainly enough that one is capable of living via the aggregate/soul union) for localized aspects

⁷⁸ Epicurus, as far as his extant works show, does not explain his account of pleasure in explicit relation to his atomism. However, scholars like Gill (125-41) and Rist (102) do not see any reason to believe that these two areas of Epicurus’s philosophy are incompatible. As Rist shows (102-26, 170-2), we can theoretically explain pleasures and pains in terms of how they promote (in the former) and interfere with (in the latter) the relations between atoms that constitute the unified relationship between the soul and the aggregate that is the body.

to serve as direct causes of kinetic pleasures. Some kinetic variations on katastematic pleasure are involved in the removal of suffering and the achievement of further katastematic pleasures, while others simply pertain to unimpeded functioning alone. A well-functioning stomach varies its katastematic pleasure, for instance, through nourishing activities and processes that remove the pain of hunger and cause an enjoyable state of satiation (i.e. *aponia*), and thus further bodily katastematic pleasure. Mentally, one's prior knowledge of natural phenomena can vary their current pleasant peace of mind by helping them make sense of a particularly distressing occurrence (e.g. coming to understand that a dead loved one who was gravely ill is now forever free of suffering), leading to the enjoyment of greater peace of mind or *ataraxia* (*PD* §II; *M* §124-6). The bodily and mental kinetic pleasures of reading, conversely, vary or express in a particular way one's current state of bodily and mental katastematic pleasures, without directly involving the removal of pain or disturbance. In summary, all kinetic pleasures are dependent on prior katastematic pleasures in some sense and kinetic pleasures vary katastematic pleasures either by removing suffering through an unimpeded aspect of one's being or by simply expressing that aspect through a sensory or intellectual activity that can follow from this unimpeded state.

Kinds of Desire

Epicurus describes three kinds of desire, the satisfaction of which in turn dictate the kinetic and katastematic pleasures one will experience. These desires are classified as follows: (1) natural and necessary desires, (2) natural and unnecessary desires, and (3) non-natural and unnecessary desires (*M* §127; *PD* §XXIX). Those that are natural and necessary are deemed essential "for happiness . . . freeing the body from troubles . . . [and] for life itself" (*M* §127), and the "unwavering contemplation of these [necessary desires] enables one to refer every choice and

avoidance to the health of the body and the freedom of the soul from disturbance (§128).

Natural/necessary desires, in other words, pertain to those natural wants that involve suffering when left unsatisfied. In bodily terms, these are the desires for things like food, sleep, and warmth. Mentally, one's natural/necessary desires are to remove the psychological disturbances of ignorance, anxiety, and fear through learning (*PD* §X-XII; *M* §122-7; *H* §76-83). Natural and unnecessary desires, on the other hand, are classified as such because they “do not bring a feeling of pain when not fulfilled” (*PD* §XXVI). These preferential wants follow from one's nature, but do not frustrate the functioning of one's state of being if left unsatisfied. The Scholiast to the *Principal Doctrines* lists the desire for “expensive food” as natural/unnecessary (footnote 20). One needs to eat and drink in order to live and function, but no specific food or beverage is necessary in this goal. I do not need a steak and fine wine to be free of hunger; any kind of food and beverage (e.g. bread, chicken, water, etc.) is sufficient for achieving such a state. Similarly, while expressing one's sexuality in a procreative or leisurely manner is congruent with one's nature, failing to express this aspect of one's being does not involve harm to its healthy functioning (*LP* 10.118-9; Rist 117-8). Finally, non-natural and unnecessary desires neither follow from one's nature itself nor do they frustrate the functioning of one's state of being. The Scholiast uses the example of “crowns and the erection of statues” (*PD* footnote 20), i.e. praise and fame. In other words, non-natural desires (which are by their nature unnecessary) pertain to desires constituted by “groundless opinion[s]” (§XXIX), e.g. social conventions. One can form desires for things like wealth, beauty, marriage, social approval, or fame that neither express their state of being per se nor directly promote its functioning (Rist 119). I do not need money, an attractive appearance, a romantic partner, or social rewards to serve the health of my body and mind, when merely being free of hunger, thirst, and exhaustion is sufficient. Such things, money

in particular, often can assist in satisfying natural/necessary desires, but they do not in themselves follow from one's nature nor are they strictly essential to the health of one's state of being.

With these distinctions now laid out, we can examine how each kind of desire pertains to kinetic and katastematic pleasures. Natural/necessary desires are associated with those pleasures we derive from removing pain. As a result, they lead to kinetic pleasures that vary prior katastematic pleasure (i.e. relevant aspects of one's state of being that are currently unimpeded) by causing further katastematic pleasures through the removal of suffering from other aspects of one's nature. The pleasure of satisfying one's hunger, for example, is an expression of the enjoyably unimpeded state of one's stomach, which enables greater overall functioning in the body through its nourishing activities. In the mind, the katastematic pleasure of prior knowledge is expressed through facilitating the kinetic pleasures of learning, which in turn lead to greater peace of mind through greater understanding. Natural/unnecessary desires, conversely, are said to "merely provide variations of pleasure but do not remove the feeling of pain" (*PD* footnote 20). These pleasures are also kinetic, but pertain to simply expressing the desires of a given aspect of one's nature that is unimpeded, with no reference to the removal of suffering. In bodily terms, seeing, walking, and juggling are all activities that satisfy the desires of a functioning aspect of one's body. Mentally, reflecting on one's understanding of the phenomenon of cloud formation can satisfy a desire to express an aspect of their peaceful natural knowledge. Alternatively, one could also express their relative peace of mind by reflecting on good memories of past days with their loved ones, such as we see in the *Letter to Idomeneus*. Regardless, these desires and pleasures do not in themselves pertain to the removal of suffering. Finally, non-natural and unnecessary desires have no direct connection to removing pain or

varying one's katastematic pleasures. The desire for, and subsequent enjoyment of, praise, beauty, wealth, marriage, and fame in themselves do not promote freedom from suffering, nor do they follow from one's nature in itself. Because they pertain to the satisfaction of desire and in a certain manner represent a change in one's state of being with the subsequent possession of such objects, these pleasures are kinetic. In this case, however, they consist in indirect or loose variations of katastematic pleasure. One must possess some degree of functionality in order to achieve or enjoy these pleasurable objects, but ultimately these pleasures, and the non-natural/unnecessary desires they follow from, are not intimately connected to one's state of being.

Overview

At its heart, pleasure pertains to freedom from bodily/mental suffering or the unimpeded functioning of one's nature through the body and mind. The uniqueness of Epicurus's ontological conception of pleasure is that it rejects the existence of a neutral state of being between pleasure and pain. Rather, the absence of pain (or more generally, suffering or a state of impairment) is considered to be enjoyable in some sense. In one way, we delight in removing impediments to our nature (i.e. kinetic pleasures), and in another way, we simply enjoy being unimpeded to some degree or as a whole (i.e. katastematic pleasures). Moreover, as discussed above, we in fact cannot take pleasure in removing any kind of suffering unless we first enjoy some degree of functioning in our state of being. These points, in turn, serve the purpose of illustrating pleasure's necessary connection to healthy being. Where pleasure is absent, either kinetically or katastematically, one is understood to be suffering, and thus impaired in the functioning and expression of their bodily or mental nature. As a result, Epicurus clearly aligns himself with claim (a).

4.2 Epicurus's Ethics of Pleasure

That Epicurus is concerned with happiness is evident from a number of passages in his extant works. In the *Letter to Herodotus*, Epicurus outlines his views on physics. Throughout this letter, he claims that natural knowledge liberates us from “disturbance and fear” (§82) imposed upon us by ignorance or false opinions about the nature and structure of the cosmos (§79, 81). Such knowledge ultimately leads to “tranquility” or *ataraxia* (§83), and thus an “undisturbed and blessed state” (§80). *The Letter to Pythocles* similarly asserts that there is no other “goal” to “knowledge of meteorological phenomena” or physical knowledge in general than “freedom from disturbance” (§85). Finally, Epicurus tells us in the *Letter to Menoeceus* (his ethical outline) that the study of philosophy itself is for the sake of “produc[ing] happiness [*eudaimonia*], since if that is present we have everything and if it is absent we do everything in order to have it” (§122). This last passage, in particular, is instructive, because it shows that Epicurus (like most of his Greek philosophical contemporaries and predecessors) considered happiness to be the highest good, i.e. the end upon which all other things aim. Epicurus's linking of natural knowledge to tranquility, freedom from disturbance, and blessedness further supports this premise. Philosophy, physics, and ethics are thus collectively aimed at happiness.

The Definition of Happiness

Of course, as we did with Aristotle, we have to ask: what does happiness consist in? According to Epicurus, pleasure itself “is the starting-point and goal of living blessedly” (*M* §128). In other words, pleasure is the highest good, and thus the happy life is the pleasant life.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Diogenes Laertius references “two sorts of happiness” in Epicurus's ethical framework. One, the “highest possible,” pertains to the gods, because it “cannot be augmented,” while the other form of happiness consists in “the addition and subtraction of pleasures,” and is thus restricted to mortal beings (X.121). For the purposes of this

Epicurus's reasoning for this conclusion is "the fact that living things, so soon as they are born, are well content with pleasure and are at enmity with pain, by the prompting of nature and apart from reason" (*LP* X.137). As a result, he asserts that pleasure is "our first innate good" and "our starting-point for every choice and avoidance," in that we judge "every good by the criterion of [this] feeling" (*M* §129). The standard for deciding what happiness consists in, then, is the nature of living things. When Epicurus says that we seek out pleasure and shun pain irrespective of reasoning, he means that the desires directed at pleasure/pain per se follow necessarily and directly from our nature, with no necessary influence from deliberation or judgments. Whether I believe that pleasure is good or not, it is the ultimate object of my nature, and whether I believe pain is bad or not, it is the ultimate antagonist to my nature. This claim is easier to understand, and subsequently more persuasive, when we recall how Epicurus conceives of pleasure and pain ontologically. The former, by its very nature, promotes the *functioning* of one's state of being and the latter, by its very nature, pertains to the *frustration* of one's state of being. Pleasure is therefore good in itself because it is necessary and sufficient for happiness.

The Moral Relation Between Pleasures

However, Epicurus is not claiming that every pleasure is morally equal nor that every pleasure is related to happiness in the same way. Some pleasures are undeniably more valuable and central than others in their relation to the happy (*eudaimon*) life. Epicurus asserts that while "every pleasure is a good thing, since it has a nature congenial [to us]" (*M* §129) and thus "[n]o pleasure is a bad thing in itself" (*PD* §VIII), nevertheless "not every [pleasure] is to be chosen"

thesis, I am concerned with human, i.e. mortal, happiness. As a result, I will be describing the latter form of happiness, although Epicurus's description of happiness as pleasure will apply to both forms. The primary difference between them is that the pleasures of divine happiness are permanent, whereas mortal happiness necessitates continuous restoration of these pleasures.

(*M* §129) and “certain pleasures bring troubles many times greater than [those] pleasures” considered in themselves (*PD* §VIII). Any given pleasure, by its very nature, is good, because of its necessary connection to the functioning of one’s state of being. However, some pleasures will be more valuable than others in their relation to opposing suffering. Some pleasures can lead to suffering when inappropriately cultivated, either because, on their own, they do not in themselves directly contribute to the functioning of one’s nature or because one nurtures them in the wrong way.

We can see the first instance reflected in unnecessary desires. My enjoyment of satisfying the non-natural desires of praise, fame, or wealth is good insofar it expresses aspects of my bodily or mental nature that are in a state of katastematic pleasure, but if I value the attainment/preservation of these things over eating, sleeping, learning, and reflecting, I will neglect those desires/pleasures that are most crucial to my survival and happiness. The joys of praise, fame, and wealth in themselves do not contribute to the functioning of my state of being, particularly in constituting katastematic pleasures, which is why they stem from non-natural desires. Similarly, if I place too much weight on my natural/unnecessary desires for the taste of a delicious steak and fine wine, then the subsequent pleasures I enjoy will cause me to neglect other foods my body needs for its nutrition, thus hindering my functioning. The delights of taste are good in that they express the katastematic state of my mouth, but again such pleasures can be bad if they predominate over those pleasures associated with necessary desires. It is not that unnecessary pleasures, non-natural or natural, are bad per se then, but rather that they can lead to bad results if given ethical priority. Beyond obvious impairments to my body in such cases, my mind also suffers because it is focused, due to “groundless opinions” of value (*PD* §XXIX-XXX), on objects that can be difficult to obtain and keep or that do not in themselves properly

pertain to the health of my state of being, and which therefore my nature does not need. The functioning of my state of being is consequently impaired in such situations because I am rendered unhealthy from neglect of my body and because my attention is focused on unstable goods. In response to this danger, Epicurus argues that “becoming accustomed to simple, not extravagant, ways of life makes one completely healthy . . . put[ting] us in a better condition for the times of extravagance that occasionally come along” (M §131). In other words, if I enjoy wealth, fame, praise, and the tastes of steak/wine (namely, “extravagant” unnecessary desires) from a healthy state of being (i.e. subsequent to the satisfaction of “simple” necessary desires and prior katastematic pleasures) and truly understand that these pleasures follow from unnecessary desires, then I can enjoy them in harmony with my nature and subsequent happiness (that is, freedom from bodily pain and mental disturbance).⁸⁰

In the second instance of how enjoyment can lead to suffering, we have pleasures derived from both natural/unnecessary and natural/necessary desires. Let us return to the steak/wine example. Here our focus is not on the kinetic pleasures of *taste*, but rather the kinetic pleasures associated with satisfying one’s hunger. Steak and wine are genuinely good as pleasures, in this case because they remove the pains of hunger and thirst, but if they are enjoyed in excess they will inevitably lead to suffering. On the one hand, if I eat too much steak and drink too much wine I will make myself sick, and thus impede the functioning of my nature. On the other hand, even if I eat/drink in a moderate fashion, when I focus exclusively or predominantly on steak and wine, I neglect other foods (e.g. bread, cheese, vegetables, milk, etc.) that are necessary to the proper nutrition of my body. Here too I can therefore be rendered sick by pleasures that are good *per se*, because I enjoy them contrary to their nature as pleasures. Along similar lines, even the

⁸⁰ For an enlightening analysis of the role of “luxurious” pleasures in Epicurus’s eudaimonism, see Woolf (158-78).

pleasures from natural/necessary desires can lead to suffering when enjoyed excessively. Food and drink are obviously crucial to the functioning of my nature, but these alone are insufficient to constitute health and happiness. One must also satisfy their desires for things like sleep and learning in order to fully function. If I focus my happiness on the joys of food with little regard to other aspects of my body or the functioning and reasoning of my mind, then I will enjoy limited katastematic pleasure while the rest of my state of being is impeded through exhaustion, constipation, ignorance, fear, or anxiety. The pleasure of food is therefore necessary in the happy life, but if it leads to the neglect of other necessary desires, this necessary pleasure will become bad by impeding the functioning of the rest of my state of being.

Ultimately then, pleasures are bad insofar as they stray from their nature, i.e. insofar as they fail to oppose suffering. All pleasures necessarily promote the functioning of one's state of being, but certain pleasures are morally superior because they play a more stable and essential role in constituting freedom from suffering, and thus happiness. Firstly, as illustrated above, the pleasures of natural/necessary desires are more valuable or higher goods than those that stem from unnecessary desires. These are the most valuable kind of kinetic pleasure, because their absence necessarily entails suffering. Without the pleasures of food, drink, sleep, and learning, one cannot achieve the state of functioning that embodies the happy life. Unnecessary desires pertain to pleasures that we can live without, pleasures that in themselves can express happiness in various ways, but not create it. As a result, one should only enjoy unnecessary pleasures when the opportunity arises, understanding that such pleasures do not cause or remove one's happiness, but rather only vary it. With that said, since one's nature is the standard for deciding good/bad in this eudaimonistic framework, the more closely aligned one's desires are to their nature the more valuable they will be. As a result, while desires for preferential pleasures (e.g.

specific foods and drinks) are unnecessary, they are nevertheless *natural*, meaning that they express the functioning of one's state of being more intimately than the joys of wealth, praise, and fame, i.e. non-natural/unnecessary pleasures. All three kinds of desires/pleasures are thus good because of their relation to freedom from suffering, but in order to be true to that nature, and to ultimately achieve and preserve happiness, they must be prioritized correctly.

Natural/necessary desires should be cultivated first, natural/unnecessary desires second, and non-natural/unnecessary desires last, the latter two kinds being contingent on prior and proper satisfaction of necessary desires in order to be considered good, and therefore true to the nature of pleasure.

It is not natural/necessary kinetic pleasures that happiness consists in, however. Epicurus makes it clear that when he is referring to pleasure in terms of the happy life, he means “not the pleasures of the profligate or the pleasures of consumption . . . but rather the lack of pain in the body and disturbance in the soul” (*M* §131). Freedom from suffering or the unimpeded functioning of one's nature is what the happy life involves, and thus to be happy is to experience katastematic pleasures. The kinetic pleasures that follow from natural/necessary desires should be the ethical priority in relation to achieving/maintaining happiness, because they are crucial to the realization of katastematic pleasures in contrast to unnecessary desires/pleasures, but kinetic pleasures per se are not what the happy life consists in. This fact is already evident in that all kinetic pleasures rely on katastematic pleasures for their realization, and even those that lead to further katastematic pleasures through the removal of suffering are ultimately expressing a prior katastematic state. Moreover, katastematic pleasures represent a more stable good than kinetic pleasures, since the latter pertain to the enjoyment of fluctuations in one's state of being while the former represent the enjoyment of one's unimpeded state of being in itself. In other words,

because katastematic pleasure is the most intimately connected to the functioning of one's nature, and optimally represents opposition to suffering, it is the highest good.

Even among katastematic pleasures, though, there is still a difference in moral value. While both bodily and mental katastematic pleasures are crucial to the health of one's nature, Epicurus nevertheless considers "mental pleasures to be greater than those of the body," which also entails that disturbance is worse than pain (*LP* X.137). The most valuable katastematic pleasure is therefore freedom from disturbance. According to Diogenes Laertius, the reasoning behind this moral claim is that "the flesh endures the storms [and pleasures] of the present alone, [while] the mind those of the past and future as well as the present" (*ibid.*). The mind, in other words, involves a greater scope of capacity and experience than the body, because the former is not restricted to the here and now as the body is. The mind can remember the past, contemplate the present, and deliberate on the future. For example, despite excruciating bodily pain on his deathbed, Epicurus described himself as "blessedly happy," because of the "joy . . . produced by the recollection of the discussions" he had once had with beloved friends (*I*). Here we see kinetic pleasures of memory varying Epicurus's peace of mind (*ataraxia*). This freedom from disturbance, expressed through recollection, subsequently played a prominent role in offsetting Epicurus's bodily pains in a stronger manner than any co-occurring bodily pleasures (e.g. functioning heart, lungs, sight, hearing, etc.) he may also have experienced.

For Epicurus, the mind's fundamental power and value lies in the "sober calculation which searches out the reasons for every choice and avoidance and drives out the [namely, groundless] opinions which are the source of the greatest turmoil for men's souls" (*M* §132). The mind's capacity to reason contributes to happiness by granting knowledge of natural phenomena and the best pleasures in a given situation. In the first instance, the mind's understanding of

natural science dissolves one's "fears about the phenomena of the heavens and about death and pains" (*PD* §X). By reflecting on events that cause fear and anxiety and learning about the causes and effects at work in them, one is better placed to cope with and potentially flourish from them, because they are able to escape the pitfalls of their ignorance. For example, Epicurus argues that there is nothing to fear in death. Death involves the dissolution of one's body and soul, and "what has been dissolved has no sense-experience, and what has no sense-experience is nothing to us" (§II). What Epicurus means is that our fears and anxieties are linked to the expectation of harm, but we can only be harmed if we can suffer. The experience of suffering (as well as pleasure) is predicated on having sensations, which we do not have in death. As a result, death can neither benefit nor harm us, which is why it is meaningless to concern ourselves with it. Understanding this fact "makes the mortality of life a matter for contentment," because it "remov[es] the longing for immortality" and ensures that one knows that "there is nothing fearful in life for one who has grasped that there is nothing fearful in the absence of life" (*M* §124-5). Through reasoning about life and death, one is then able to remove the disturbances of death and strengthen their commitment to life by focusing on the katastematic pleasures of happiness.

In terms of the practicalities of life, we can now move to the second instance of the mind's contribution to happiness: its ability to deliberate on what the best pleasures are for achieving and preserving happiness. As discussed above, while all pleasures are by nature good, they are not equal in their goodness. Some pleasures are more valuable than others in kind (that is necessary kinetic pleasures and katastematic pleasures), while others are contingently valuable (that is unnecessary kinetic pleasures that vary katastematic pleasure). Reasoning reveals to us the differences in moral value between kinds of desires, enabling us to prioritize those pleasures that are most closely aligned with happiness. However, even the best kinds of pleasures have to

be utilized correctly in a manner harmonious with their nature (i.e. in opposition to suffering). Because of these facts, Epicurus asserts that to live happily one must “make all these decisions [about pleasures] by comparative measurement and an examination of the advantages and disadvantages” of each pleasure available to them (M §130). In other words, one performs a calculus, weighing the benefits and detriments of enjoying certain things, in order to best achieve stable katastematic pleasures. Epicurus, in fact, grants that suffering, while bad by nature, can nevertheless be contingently good if it ultimately leads to pleasures aligned with happiness (§129), just as certain pleasures can be bad insofar as they lead to overall suffering. For example, I might forego the pleasures of learning because I am desperately in need of food and sleep. My reasoning in this situation will be that my body is insufficiently functioning for me to properly focus on my studies, and thus any disturbance from my lack of understanding should be tolerated temporarily. I may be functional enough (i.e. in a sufficient katastematic state) to enjoy studying to some degree, but rationally I can expect a greater degree of intellectual enjoyment, and thus a more effective and robust learning experience, if I am satiated and well-rested. Alternatively, exercising can strain my muscles, and thus cause me pain. However, if I organize my exercises well, then this pain will serve to make my body stronger, thus increasing my overall experience of katastematic pleasures, and potential kinetic pleasures that express this enhanced bodily functioning.

The moral superiority of mental pleasures over bodily pleasures is consequently based on the fact that the mind is integral in leading me to enjoy pleasures in a manner conducive to happiness, that is freedom from pain and disturbance. If it is disturbed by fears and anxieties, and mistaken beliefs about which desires/pleasures are most valuable to the functioning of my state of being, then I will act contrary to the health and happiness of my nature. The disturbance of the

fear of death, for example, can also lead to avoidance of pains that are ultimately beneficial (e.g. neglecting exercise for fear of a heart attack), and valuing beauty, praise, or fame over being well-rested and satiated can lead to serious illness. When sufficiently free of disturbance, however, the intellect is able to deliberate on “the goal[s] and limit[s] of the flesh” and remove further fears and anxieties (*PD* §XX). Katastematic pleasures of the mind are thus crucial in stably cultivating and maintaining bodily and mental katastematic pleasures.

The Role of Virtue in The Pleasant Life

Virtue or excellence (*arētē*) plays a crucial, but qualified, role in the happy life of katastematic pleasures. Epicurus asserts that it is “impossible to live prudently, honourably, and justly without living pleasantly” (*PD* §V). For starters, this claim tells us that pleasure is a prerequisite for a given virtue. The prudent, honourable, or just person will then necessarily experience pleasure when acting from their given disposition. However, Epicurus is not merely making pleasure *a necessary component* of virtue, but rather the heart of what it means to be virtuous. Virtues are chosen “on account of pleasure and not for their own sake” (*LP* X.138). The value of virtue, or what makes a given disposition virtuous, is that it contributes to constituting pleasure, in particular katastematic pleasures. Virtue, in other words, is not an end, but a means, because its moral value is justified by its role in constituting pleasure. Merely being disposed towards pleasures in the correct manner therefore does not entail that one is happy (*eudaimon*). It is only when one actually achieves katastematic pleasures because of these dispositions that one can rightfully be said to possess happiness.

With that said, virtue is nevertheless necessary to the pleasant life. According to Epicurus, it is also “impossible to live pleasantly without living prudently, honourably, and justly . . . whoever lacks [these virtues] cannot live pleasantly” (*PD* §V). Each virtuous disposition, in

other words, plays an important role in cultivating pleasures in a manner harmonious with living happily. While every instance of pleasure is in some sense good, in that it represents opposition to suffering, one must prioritize their pleasures in a certain way in order to ensure that their freedom from suffering is stable. Cultivating pleasant experiences haphazardly is both contrary to the nature of pleasure and the achievement/preservation of happiness. As a result, one must be disposed towards pleasure (that is its kinds and instantiations) in the right way, otherwise they will still fall victim to suffering.

Epicurus establishes prudence (*phronēsis*) as the primary virtue in accomplishing this goal. He describes it as “the sober calculation which searches out the reasons for every choice and avoidance and drives out the opinions which are the source of the greatest turmoil for men’s souls” (*M* §132). The kind of reasoning, as discussed above, that contextually evaluates specific pleasures/pains and reflects on natural phenomena is therefore prudence. Both these aspects of reasoning are understood to be prudent because their goal is happiness. In the first instance, which deals with situationally prioritizing pleasures for the sake of happiness, this goal is evident. In the second instance, which is concerned with natural science, this eudaimonistic end is less obvious, but revealing. The fact that Epicurus classifies natural knowledge under the category of prudence implies that theory is subordinate to practicality in his ethics.⁸¹ This claim is supported by his abovementioned assertions in the *Letter to Herodotus* (§79-83) and the *Letter to Pythocles* (§85), which state that the goal of natural knowledge is freedom from disturbance, i.e. katastematic pleasure. Prudence is thus the primary virtue because all reasoning and knowledge is valued for the sake of achieving and preserving the pleasant life.

⁸¹ The contrast being that theory is either superordinate over, or of distinct and equal moral value to, practicality.

What does this prudential primacy, and its focus on pleasure, mean for other virtues like temperance, friendship, justice, and courage, though? Moderation, as Cooper points out, is fairly evident in its pleasure-focused goal and naturally follows from prudence. Through prudential reasoning, one “know[s] that all pain or distress, physical and mental, has the potential either to disrupt totally one’s katastematic enjoyment . . . or to place severe pressure on one’s ability to hold onto it” (“The Epicurean” 251). As a result, the prudent person will never “be given to excesses of bodily indulgence . . . nor will they ever seek to vary their katastematic pleasure through an intense and unseemly pursuit . . . [of] kinetic pleasures” (ibid.). The reasoning we discussed above about valuing each kind of desire in the proper order and cultivating pleasure in harmony with its nature therefore leads to moderation. Achieving katastematic pleasures then necessarily involves being disposed towards kinds and instantiations of pleasure in a balanced manner. Friendship, while being an other-directed virtue in many ways, can also be made sense of in this ethical framework. Epicurus describes friends as providing “security” from misfortune, and thus suffering (*PD* §XXVIII). Friends, in turn, protect each other from harm, and promote the achievement and preservation of katastematic pleasures. Furthermore, friendship is said to consist in “a partnership in the enjoyment of life’s pleasures” (*LP* X.120). Friends not only promote pleasure by providing security and support, but also by sharing in the pleasures of life with us.⁸² Variations on katastematic pleasures become deeper in meaning and diverse in content when we experience them collectively with others rather than in solitude (Cooper “The Epicurean” 267-8). The virtue of friendship in this context is therefore centered on the mutual experiences of security from suffering and enjoyment of katastematic/kinetic pleasures.

⁸² For a comprehensive analysis of the nature of Epicurean friendship, see Cooper (“The Epicurean” 264-70) and Rist (127-139).

It is less obvious, however, how justice and courage serve the pleasant life as the highest good. We could reasonably say that the just or courageous person should *enjoy* being just or courageous, but it seems peculiar to say that *pleasure* is the ultimate goal of these dispositions. Justice, broadly-speaking, seems to involve proper (that is respectful) relations with others in some sense, where the interests of others are not sacrificed for the sake of my personal interests. If being just, in this context, is directed at achieving/preserving a pleasant life for myself, how does this position not involve sacrificing the interests of others? It might almost seem like this ethical focus on pleasure is contrary to the conventional view of justice as a virtue. Epicurus, however, makes it clear that he does not see his pleasure-focused eudaimonism as contrary to the essence of what we traditionally mean by justice. He describes justice as “a pledge of reciprocal usefulness, [i.e.,] neither to harm another nor be harmed” (*PD* §XXXI). Like friendship, justice involves security in one’s relations with others, except here the emphasis is less on intimate support and more on mutual agreement not to harm or impede each other. One engages in proper, respectful relations with others then in order to protect themselves from suffering. In doing so, one is able to “acquire the greatest confidence from [the threats posed by] their neighbours,” and subsequently live “most pleasantly with the surest guarantee” (§XL). By mutually agreeing not to contribute to the suffering of others, each person is able to enjoy a significant degree of stable freedom from suffering in their daily life and interactions, and thus experience katastematic and kinetic pleasures in a secure environment.

Courage, however, seems to necessitate suffering in some ways, in particular pain. It “involves not being dissuaded from tasks one reasonably sees as important merely because . . . they [may] turn out to involve threats of bodily harm or pain, or may even threaten one’s own life” (Cooper “The Epicurean” 250). In other words, courage traditionally involves putting

oneself in situations that hold a high potential for suffering. Such a disposition, even if grounded in reason, would seem to be strongly opposed to a pleasure-focused eudaimonism like Epicurus's, and thus the courageous person would appear to be far from virtuous. There are unfortunately no extant passages explicitly discussing courage, that is promoting or rejecting it as a virtue, meaning that we can only speculate on what Epicurus might have said about it. Cooper however argues that, as one of the traditional cardinal Greek virtues, Epicurus would not have rejected courage's ethical status. Like justice and friendship, courage serves the pleasant life by providing security. He asserts that "[i]f we lost all our property to some bully, or we saw our family destroyed, or we lost our friends through betraying them, or our country fell into [a] kind of disarray . . . we would certainly face very severe strains, and difficulties in keeping our lives on an even keel" (254). If performed prudently, it is entirely appropriate for one to put themselves at risk, because they are fighting for the sake of ensuring they live in a secure environment conducive to stable katastematic pleasures. I will take up arms against a bully or invader (of my home or country), or stand my ground to protect myself, my friends, or my community, and thus face potential (even severe) suffering, because the alternative is losing a secure foundation for achieving/preserving a pleasant life. Cowardice and subservience may still allow me to achieve/preserve katastematic pleasure, but they can never bring me the relative certainty and stability that courage can. There is far greater disturbance and risk in not acting courageously, and failing to fight for security, than there is in attempting to avoid all risk or potential suffering. Here is a prime example of Epicurus's abovementioned assertion that suffering can be useful. Courageous acts involve facing pains or the risk of pains for "a greater [namely, katastematic] pleasure [that] follows for a long while if we endure the[se] pains" (*M* §129). Courage is therefore rightly a virtue in Epicurus's framework and an aspect of prudential

reasoning, because it pertains to facing pains in a manner conducive to maintaining stable katastematic pleasures, i.e. facing risks for the sake of security. In summary, all virtues are means in Epicurus's eudaimonism, their moral essence and value being dictated by their respective roles in constituting the katastematic pleasures of happiness.

Overview

Pleasure's goodness, as we have seen, is due to its existence and role as the contrary to bodily and mental suffering, that is the impeded functioning of one's natural state of being. Where suffering is present pleasure is absent, and where pleasure is present suffering is absent. Katastematic pleasures represent a state of freedom from suffering, i.e. the absence of pain in the body and disturbance in the mind. Kinetic pleasures pertain to a change in one's state of being through the expression of a current state of katastematic pleasure, either in itself or through the removal of suffering in another part of one's state of being and the subsequent realization of further katastematic pleasure in that part. Every instantiation of pleasure, katastematic or kinetic, represents the promotion of the functioning of one's nature, and is thus good in itself. Pleasures are only considered bad insofar as they lead to suffering, and thus stray from their nature as the contrary of pain/disturbance. Suffering, in fact, only has value insofar as it can provide one with greater pleasures in the future. All these points, in turn, elucidate why Epicurus makes (katastematic) pleasure the highest good, i.e. that end which is sufficient for happiness. When cultivated in harmony with its nature, pleasure guarantees the health of one's state of being and its capacity for expression. Epicurus's ethical conception of pleasure as the highest good consequently perfectly aligns his eudaimonism with claim (b).

Chapter 5: Spinoza's Non-Stoic Eudaimonism

In this chapter I will compare Spinoza's conception of pleasure ontologically and ethically to the views of Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics. The first section will examine the complex ways in which Spinoza, Aristotle, and Epicurus agree and disagree in their commitment to claim (a) pleasure holds a necessary connection to the health of one's state of being and claim (b) pleasure is by nature good. In the second section, I will explain why the Stoics reject these claims and how Spinoza's agreements with Aristotle and Epicurus on the nature of pleasure help emphasize the non-Stoic elements of his eudaimonism.

5.1 Spinoza's Relation to Aristotle and Epicurus

Ontology of Pleasure

In the last three chapters I established that Spinoza, Aristotle, and Epicurus all agree with the claim that pleasure holds a necessary connection to the health of one's state of being. For Spinoza, pleasure is an affection that pertains to the promotion (i.e. enhancement or affirmation) of one's conatus, which is the essential self-expressive (that is self-preservative) force of their nature. Any given instance of pleasure therefore contributes to one's health to some degree in the sense that it promotes one's state of activity through the conatus. While Aristotle grants the existence of pathological and vicious pleasures, i.e. those pleasures associated with an unhealthy state of being, he nevertheless argues that true pleasures are those associated with virtue, namely those activities that follow from one's unimpeded nature in accordance with the mean. Pathological and vicious pleasures are only approximations of what one would experience as enjoyable since they do not truly correspond with human nature, and are thus merely apparently pleasant. Pleasure in its true sense is then strongly linked to the health of one's natural state of

being. Similarly, Epicurus associates pleasure with the unimpeded functioning of one's nature. Any given pleasure per se pertains to the health of one's state of being as that which is essentially contrary to anything that serves as an impediment to the stable functioning and potential expression of one's nature. Starting from this foundational point of pleasure's necessary connection to healthy being, we can now examine the specific nuanced agreements and disagreements between Spinoza, Aristotle, and Epicurus on the ontological nature of pleasure.

Beginning with their primary descriptions of pleasure, Epicurus and Spinoza do not draw, implicitly or explicitly, a distinction between the *source* of pleasant experience and *pleasant experience* itself, as Aristotle does. Epicurus and Spinoza's outlines of pleasure are compatible with both ways of referring to pleasure. For Epicurus, pleasure is the contrary to suffering, i.e. pain in the body or disturbance in the mind. The *cause* of pleasant experience is opposition to suffering, either as a change in state (kinetic pleasure) or as a state of unimpeded natural functioning (katastematic pleasure). The pleasant experience itself, though, also consists in this opposition to suffering. A kinetic pleasure is simply the experience of having one's state modified and a katastematic pleasure is simply the experience of being unimpeded in the functioning and subsequent expression of one's nature.

For Spinoza, pleasure pertains to the promotion of one's conatus or state of activity, which can be transitional or non-transitional. With transitional pleasures, the source of the pleasant experience is the positive change in one's state of activity and the pleasant experience is also this transition. When talking about non-transitional pleasures, here too the source and experience are indistinguishable, with the pleasant experience being derived from the affirmation of one's current state of activity and the experience itself consisting in this very affirmation of the conatus. Aristotle conversely distinguishes the source of pleasant experience *as an actualized*

activity from pleasant experience itself as that which *follows from an actualized activity*. This distinction, in turn, connects with his other distinction between that which is pleasant by nature (i.e. a true source of pleasure) and that which is pleasant to a particular individual (i.e. what one experiences as pleasant). In the case of the virtuous person, what is pleasant to them as an individual will be that which is pleasant by nature, meaning that their pleasant experience supervenes on that which is a source of pleasure *proper to human nature*. For the pathological or vicious person, in contrast, what is pleasant to them as an individual is *not* that which is pleasant by nature, meaning that their pleasant experience supervenes on a source of pleasure that is *incongruent with (that is an approximation of) human nature*. The source/experience distinction is therefore important to Aristotle in a way that it is not in Epicurus and Spinoza's respective frameworks, due to the further nuanced distinction between true vs. merely apparent pleasure.

A distinction that is made by Epicurus and Spinoza, though, is between pleasure derived from a change in state and pleasure derived from one's state of being itself, both of which are considered true pleasures in their respective systems. Aristotle, however, denies that any pleasure *per se* is a process or change in state. As outlined in 3.1, those pleasures that we would consider processes, namely restorative pleasures, are said to be misidentified as pleasures, being only incidentally pleasant. What is actually the source of one's pleasant experience in this context is an unimpeded activity that co-occurs with the change in state. Because of the correspondence between this activity and the restorative process, one can mistakenly attribute their pleasant experience to the restoration of their state of being, instead of the realized activity that this experience truly supervenes on (e.g. perceptual activity or the activity of the nutritive faculty). Pleasure for Aristotle is then always connected to one's healthy state of being itself, that is the actualized activities of one's nature, and not processes *per se*. Epicurus and Spinoza, conversely,

grant that not all pleasures arise from one's healthy state of being in itself; for them, some pleasant experiences (namely, necessary kinetic pleasures and pleasant affects) arise from (restorative) changes in one's state of being, as well. Here then is an ontological distinction in the context of pleasure that Aristotle does not make, although he does nevertheless refute the conception of pleasure as a change in state.

Spinoza does however share Aristotle's emphasis on pleasure in terms of activity. Both philosophers describe an intimate and necessary connection between pleasures and activities. Spinoza's non-transitional pleasures, as affirmations of the activities of the conatus (i.e. one's nature), strongly parallel Aristotle's pleasures as experiences that supervene on actualized activities of one's nature. In both philosophies the realized activities of one's nature are closely associated with pleasures that arise from them. Although Spinoza grants, contra Aristotle, that some pleasures consist in changes in state, even these transitions are intimately connected to activity because they represent the enhancement of one's natural scope for activity, and subsequent ability to cultivate further activities and pleasures. Here then another parallel can be drawn to Aristotle, in that he similarly argues that pleasures perpetuate themselves and the activities they are linked to. For both philosophers then pleasures promote the activities they are associated with and facilitate the realization of further activity and pleasure. Epicurus, however, emphasizes pleasure, kinetically or katastematically, simply in terms of unrestricted functioning. This is not to say that an individual experiencing katastematic pleasure will not have greater potential for activity, certainly activities express one's katastematic state through unnecessary kinetic pleasures (see 4.1), but the essence of pleasure for Epicurus is its opposition to the impairment (i.e. suffering) of one's state of being rather than the promotion of activities that

follow from it.⁸³ One need not act to experience pleasure; simply being able to stably function (that is live unimpededly) is sufficient in Epicurus's ethical framework. There is then a subtle difference between these three philosophers in their description of pleasure's necessary relation to healthy being. Aristotle and Spinoza conceive of pleasure in a positive sense in that it represents the promotion of the activities of one's state of being, whereas Epicurus in a negative sense conceives of pleasure as simply the absence of impediment to one's state of being.

Another point of nuanced difference between Spinoza, Aristotle, and Epicurus is how they conceptualize the relation between bodily and mental pleasures. For Spinoza, the principle of parallelism entails that bodily and mental pleasures are ontologically identical (i.e. they refer to one and the same pleasures, distinguished only conceptually).⁸⁴ A given pleasure is then understood to be both bodily and mental in nature, thus simultaneously representing the health of the body *and* the mind. Aristotle and Epicurus, however, understand pleasures of the body and the mind to be ontologically separable in some sense. My enjoyment of sensory pleasures is not identical with, nor does it necessitate, my enjoyment of intellectual pleasures. I can enjoy unimpededly seeing the snowy forest in my backyard without the unimpeded intellectual enjoyment of understanding the mechanics of my sight or the biological/ecological elements of what I am seeing (although, of course, these enjoyments are not incompatible, either). Furthermore, my sensory enjoyment here is not ontologically identical with my intellectual enjoyment, precisely because they can occur independently of each other. Aristotle and Epicurus

⁸³ Aristotle and Spinoza, similarly, would not deny that the activities of one's nature are necessarily reliant on their nature being unimpeded in its functioning.

⁸⁴ I remind the reader that I am following the numerical identity interpretation of the relation between attributes in Spinoza's metaphysical system. With that said, I would argue that other interpretations of *E* IIP7 would likely still posit a closer ontological relationship between the body and the mind than either Aristotle or Epicurus would grant.

therefore do not conceive of such a strict and intimate connection between the pleasures of the body and the mind as Spinoza does.

With that said, all three nevertheless share the view that bodily and mental pleasures have a necessary dependence on each other. For Spinoza this dependence is embodied in the relationship of identity between the body and the mind. Nothing occurs in the body that is not mirrored in the mind, because they represent different fundamental descriptions of the same state of being. Because the body and the mind are ontologically inseparable (and arguably numerically identical) they are dependent on one another then in the sense that a body and its physical pleasures cannot be present without a mind and its intellectual pleasures (*E* IIP7; IIIP11).

Aristotle and Epicurus do not see the body and the mind as identical, but they too understand them to share a necessary and important connection to each other. In 3.1, we discussed Aristotle's multifaceted view of the human soul as possessing nutritive, sensitive, appetitive, and thinking faculties. Aristotle views these faculties in a cumulative manner, where each faculty presupposes some aspect of the being in question. Any being with a sensitive, appetitive, or thinking faculty must have a nutritive faculty (i.e. be alive), any being with an appetitive faculty must have a sensitive and nutritive faculty, and any mortal (i.e. non-divine) being with a thinking faculty must have a nutritive, sensitive, and appetitive faculty (*OS* 415a1-11). The importance of this dynamic is that it entails that the mind (that is the thinking faculty) cannot exist without the body (that is the nutritive, sensitive, and appetitive faculties). The mind's dependence on the body is stronger than simply this dynamic, though. Aristotle asserts that the health of the mind and its intellectual pleasures are reliant on a healthy body, meaning that one's mind will be impeded in its functioning and activities if their body is impeded in its own activities. Furthermore, the intellectual activities, and supervening pleasures, of deliberation

and reflection rely on the senses for their content. One deliberates on their perceptual engagement with the world and their scientific understanding of the world relies on induction, which is itself dependent on perceptions. The mind and its intellectual pleasures are thus dependent on the body for their functioning and content. However, the body also relies on the mind (through practical wisdom) to maintain a state of health free of excess or deficiency. In Aristotle's system, the body and the mind are consequently mutually dependent on each other for their functioning and the realization of their activities/pleasures.⁸⁵

Epicurus describes a similar relationship of interdependence between the body and the mind. If the aggregate of atoms that form the body are not properly taken care of, that is nourished and protected from illness/injury, then those parts will separate and the body will die. If this aggregate collapses, then the atoms that constitute the soul (and, in particular, the mind) will no longer stay unified, and the soul will die, as well. As a result, if the body is not in a sufficient state of katastematic pleasure, i.e. freedom from impeded functioning, then the mind too will be unable to enjoy katastematic pleasure and any kinetic pleasures that might supervene on it.⁸⁶ On the other hand, the body needs the soul, that is its thoughts and feelings, in order to maintain itself, and thus achieve katastematic pleasure. Without a functioning mind to deliberate on what the body needs, it will either not be nourished at all or ineffectively nourished, which in turn will hinder the body's functioning or destroy it altogether. With that said, the content of the mind's deliberations relies on sense-perception, which is only possible due to the state of unity between the aggregate and the soul, the soul being that which perceives and the aggregate the

⁸⁵ Keeping in mind that pleasures fundamentally pertain to the faculties of the soul, and not the body per se.

⁸⁶ The mind, as illustrated in the *Letter to Idomeneus*, can, of course, enjoy (namely, recollective) pleasures in spite of bodily pains. However, this is why I say the body must be in a "sufficient" katastematic state to realize mental pleasures. If the body is too damaged or impeded in its functioning, even if one is not currently dead, their suffering will be nonetheless too great for even recollection.

medium through which the soul's capacity for perception is realized. Consequently, the body and the mind share a mutual dependence on each other for Epicurus as well, the functioning or katastematic pleasure of the one being crucial to the functioning or katastematic pleasure of the other. Despite their differences in explicating the relationship between the body and the mind, Spinoza, Aristotle, and Epicurus therefore nevertheless agree that the body and the mind are necessarily interdependent in some sense.

Ethics of Pleasure

Spinoza, Aristotle, and Epicurus all attribute ethical importance to pleasure. In fact, all three argue that pleasure is by its very nature good. Spinoza and Epicurus are explicit in making this claim. Spinoza argues in IIP41 of the *Ethics* that pleasure, because it pertains to the promotion (that is enhancement or affirmation) of one's bodily/mental state of activity, is good in itself. As a result, any given instance of pleasure, locally or globally, is good, in that it strengthens or affirms one's conatus in some way. Similarly, Epicurus asserts that pleasure is good per se in the *Letter to Menoecus* (§129) and the *Principal Doctrines* (§VIII). He argues that pleasure in itself is harmonious with one's nature, in that kinetic and katastematic pleasures all oppose suffering, i.e. the impairment of the functioning of one's state of being. Aristotle is less straightforward, and more nuanced, in his outline of pleasure in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (namely, Books VII and X), but nevertheless still ultimately argues that pleasure is by nature good. Pleasures of vice, while commonly experienced as pleasant, are declared to be merely apparent pleasures. They are linked to activities of one's nature that can be true sources of pleasant experience, but because these activities are performed deficiently or excessively they do not truly cohere with one's nature as a human being. Vicious pleasures, in other words, merely approximate the pleasures one would experience if their activities were harmonious with their

nature. Consequently, only virtuous pleasures are truly pleasant, because they represent the pleasures of a healthy, truly actualized nature (that is the pleasures of a human being). Since virtue is good, and true pleasures are necessarily and intimately connected with virtuous activities, pleasure is by nature good. All three philosophers consequently attribute great ethical importance to pleasure as a good in itself in their respective eudaimonistic ethics.

The actual role of pleasure in the happy life varies subtly between them, however. All three philosophers view pleasure (bodily and mental) as a necessary component of the happy life, but they do not all agree that it is sufficient for happiness. In Aristotle's ethical system, happiness does not solely consist in the pleasant life. His reasoning is that a full life is also crucial in living happily, and not every pleasant experience is harmonious with happiness. Firstly, while the virtuous person possesses the practical wisdom to cope with and respond to many of the struggles of life, there are certain profound misfortunes that absolutely no one can remain happy in the face of, such as losing all one's loved ones (or even one's community) near the end of their life or spending one's remaining days being severely tortured. The virtuous person may have the stable capacity to live more effectively and truly pleasantly than others, but if their circumstances significantly impede the activities/pleasures of their nature, then they will be unable to flourish, despite their excellence. As well, one may not even have the opportunity to develop virtue if they die at a young age, either prior to developing virtue or prior to virtuously actualizing the activities of their nature. Because happiness can be stunted in its pursuit or taken away in certain circumstances, a full life is therefore an important criterion. Secondly, not all pleasant experiences pertain to virtue, and by extension happiness. Much of Aristotle's analysis of moral character outlines vicious dispositions, where one takes pleasure in performing activities that are excessive or deficient in relation to their nature, meaning that such activities are contrary to the

health and flourishing of their state of being, subsequently making the pleasures that supervene on them bad in themselves. It is true that Aristotle considers vicious pleasures to be merely apparent pleasures, in the sense that they only approximate human enjoyment, but he does not deny that we genuinely derive pleasant experiences from vicious activities (in contrast to restorative processes, which are not really sources of pleasure). The problem is that, in our vices, we fail to appreciate that there are more satisfying, stable, and truly human pleasures that we could be experiencing (i.e. virtuous pleasures). As a result of this dynamic, simply experiencing pleasure is no guarantee that one is happy or even on the right path to achieving happiness. In summary, pleasure is important in Aristotle's eudaimonism, but the nuances in his account of happiness and pleasure show that living pleasantly (even when virtuous) is insufficient to ensure that one's life is happy.

For Epicurus and Spinoza, conversely, pleasure is in some sense sufficient for happiness. Epicurus describes the happy life as bodily and mental katastematic pleasure, i.e. freedom from pain (*aponia*) and disturbance (*ataraxia*). Kinetic pleasures, in themselves, do not constitute happiness. However, because any given kinetic pleasure expresses in some way a prior katastematic pleasure, kinetic pleasures are then intimately connected with the achievement and expression of the happy life, in the sense that the presence of a kinetic pleasure implies katastematic pleasure (prior or consequent to it), and thus a certain degree of happiness. In Spinoza's ethical framework, on the other hand, pleasure is sufficient for the happy life, but is nonetheless not the only component of it. Here pleasure is interconnected with other crucial aspects that are involved in living happily. Happiness consists in virtue, which pertains to one's ability to act in accordance with their nature through the *conatus* (i.e. to express and further empower their state of being as fully as they can). Through virtue, one necessarily experiences

either transitional pleasure (e.g. deductive self-contentment) that further increases one's degree of bodily/mental virtue or non-transitional pleasure (e.g. intuitive self-contentment) which involves the enjoyment of affirming one's current degree of bodily/mental virtue in itself and leads to further transitional and non-transitional pleasures. In either case, the presence of pleasure in itself indicates that one is virtuous, and thus happy, to some degree. Consequently, for both philosophers if one cultivates their bodily and mental pleasures properly (i.e. in a manner harmonious with the nature of pleasure), then those pleasures per se will involve happiness.

All three philosophers, on the other hand, agree that external goods are necessary in the achievement and maintenance of happiness, although they do differ in the weight and scope they attribute to such goods. Aristotle argues that, without a variety of resources (e.g. food, shelter education, social status, wealth, friends, etc.), one will not be in the position to develop virtuous dispositions, nor then will they be able to realize virtuous activities and pleasures. A child who is deprived of these things, or an adult who has such things entirely taken away from them, will be frustrated in ultimately realizing and expressing the activities of their nature, and thus they will be prevented from achieving or maintaining a happy life. With his focus on cultivating natural/necessary kinetic pleasures for the sake of katastematic pleasures, Epicurus also believes that we need some resources in achieving/maintaining happiness. However, the resources Epicurus calls for (namely, the necessary desires/pleasures of food, warmth, and shelter) are easily attained from his perspective (*M* §130), compared to the additional educational and societal necessities demanded by Aristotle. Spinoza similarly asserts that one's body/mind requires various pleasurable objects for the preservation and enhancement of their virtue or state of activity (*E* IIP13Post.4; IVApp.27). However, Spinoza's scalar approach to activity and

passivity (i.e. that one, as a finite being, is neither absolutely active nor absolutely passive, but rather a ratio of both) suggests that the absence of certain external goods (e.g. wealth and education) only relatively hinders the increase of one's degree of virtue/happiness. Strictly-speaking, it is impossible for one, while alive, to be absolutely devoid of virtue and happiness. Like Aristotle, Spinoza recognizes the necessity of external goods for the health of one's state of being and the subsequent expression of the activities of their nature in the happy life. However, like Epicurus, Spinoza believes that we can nevertheless be happy so long as we enjoy pleasures that are sufficient for survival, that is pleasures that are enough to sustain the conatus via the body and mind (*E IVApp.27, 29, 30*). In other words, all three philosophers concede the importance of external goods in the happy life, but Aristotle, strictly speaking, argues for a more substantial dependence on external goods than either Epicurus or Spinoza. Both will grant that one can virtuously make use of various external goods in their state of happiness, but the necessary external goods involved in the happy life are minimal for them compared to Aristotle.

With that said, Aristotle and Spinoza argue that we can increase or enhance happiness in a way that Epicurus does not grant. For Epicurus happiness consists in the unimpeded functioning of one's nature, or the experience of katastematic pleasures. Kinetic pleasures serve, in turn, either a subservient or purely incidental role. Those (namely, necessary) kinetic pleasures that remove suffering are subservient because they are a means to further katastematic pleasures, i.e. further unimpeded functioning. Their pleasantness and value end the moment suffering is absent. Those pleasures (that is activities) that express a katastematic state in varied ways have incidental value because they do not increase one's state of happiness, but rather contingently express it through the satisfaction of unnecessary desires (*PD §XVIII*). As explained in 4.2, Epicurus does not instruct us to reject such pleasures, but he argues nonetheless that happiness

does not rely on them. In other words, we enjoy these unnecessary kinetic pleasures as potential expressions of happiness, but not to enhance the happy life. Admittedly, the wise man on the rack example suggests that one's state of being as a whole need not be free of suffering for one to enjoy happiness, so long as one experiences some katastematic pleasure and possesses the necessary virtue to appreciate this fact. In a way, then, one's happiness can be enhanced insofar as they widen the scope of unimpeded functioning in their state of being by achieving further katastematic pleasures. However, it is still the case that happiness involves nothing more than simple functioning. Anything further that can follow from one's nature is unnecessary and incidental to the happy life, which is (as I shall outline in the next paragraph) much less than what Aristotle and Spinoza envision happiness to involve. As a result, because katastematic pleasure is what happiness consists in, the highest good in Epicurus's eudaimonism is simply for one's nature to function without interference.

Aristotle and Spinoza, however, conceive of happiness as more than merely the unimpeded functioning of one's state of being. The happy life necessarily and crucially involves expressing as much of the activities of one's nature as possible, and the greater that the scope for one's natural self-expression is the greater their happiness. For Aristotle, human nature possesses nutritive, sensitive, appetitive, and thinking faculties, and human happiness involves nurturing all of these aspects. The happy life is specifically described as the life of virtuous rational activity because reason is not only the distinctive (and most divine) feature of humans, but is also considered crucial in nurturing all of these faculties in a harmonious manner. Aristotle arguably lists so many virtues (e.g. courage, justice, moderation, truthfulness, wittiness, and open-handedness) and vices (e.g. cowardice/rashness, unjustness, self-indulgence, imposture/self-deprecation, buffoonery/boorishness, and wastefulness/avariciousness) to emphasize the various

ways in which we can and should/should not express our nature in the happy life. Furthermore, we can be more-or-less precise in our realized virtuous activities as a result of the pleasures that supervene on them, thereby making our enjoyment of happiness more-or-less intense (*NE* 1174b21-1175a11, 1175a29-1175b2). Finally, Aristotle distinguishes between the practically happy life and the blessed life. The practically happy life is one of practical wisdom, where one applies their reasoning to realizing and harmonizing the sensitive and appetitive activities of their nature in line with moral virtue. The blessed life, conversely, represents optimal happiness, where one also enjoys theoretical wisdom and reflective activity, thereby expressing the entirety of their moral and intellectual virtues. Unimpeded functioning is crucial to all these abovementioned points (if the nutritive faculty cannot provide stable nourishment to the body then one cannot live, let alone realize sensory and intellectual activities, and there is no pleasure without unimpeded senses), but simply being able to live without interference is insufficient for happiness in Aristotle's ethical framework. Happiness is about acting excellently according to our nature (1098a7, 1099b27-8), and "if there are more excellences than one, then in accordance with the best and most complete" excellence, meaning all those activities that follow from moral and intellectual virtue (1098a17-18). Aristotle's account of happiness therefore involves a life of varied activity and intensity of pleasure that fully captures every possible aspect of one's nature.

While Spinoza is less demanding than Aristotle in his conception of what the happy life consists in, he nevertheless does agree that the various pleasures we might enjoy do meaningfully modify our state of happiness through the activities of our nature. The conatus pertains to the ontological affirmation of one's state of being. Fundamentally, this affirmation involves basic self-preservation, but in complex beings such as humans this striving to preserve oneself can be expressed through a desire to increase one's state of activity (*E* IIP12). The more

active I am, the greater my ability will be to affirm, and thus preserve, my existence. In other words, my very nature demands that I seek to express myself as fully and diversely as possible, in order that I might more stably maintain my state of existence. I do not then seek out bodily/mental pleasures merely to preserve the health of my body and mind, i.e. to retain my current state of bodily/mental activity (although, of course, this state is sufficient for me to be relatively happy, insofar as I can affirm my existence or express my nature). On the contrary, acting according to my conatus, i.e. being virtuous, involves increasing my degree of activity as far and effectively as possible. Spinoza asserts that it is “the part of the wise man to make use of things and to take pleasure in them *as far as he can* . . . to refresh and invigorate himself in moderation with [not only] good food and drink . . . [but also] with perfumes, with the beauty of blossoming plants, with dress, music, sporting activities, theatres and the like [emphasis mine]” (IVP45S). Good food and drink are sufficient to ensure that I am active, and thus virtuous or happy, but all the pleasures of life, when rationally cultivated, serve to make me *more* active, virtuous, and happy. They do not merely express my happiness in various ways, but genuinely enhance it. The non-transitional pleasures of intuitive self-contentment and the intellectual love of God, as well, are not restricted to the enjoyment of my current state of activity. When I adequately, intuitively, and joyfully reflect on my activity and the activity of God understood through me and other beings, I become better equipped to empower myself by seeking out further pleasures that grant me ever greater happiness in general and blessedness in particular. Blessedness is the optimal form of happiness because it involves non-transitional (and subsequently more effective transitional) pleasures through intuitive knowledge, but even our enjoyment of the blessed life can be increased, in that the human (i.e. finite) mind can always achieve more intuitive knowledge (IIP40; VP42Proof). Moreover, blessedness parallels

Aristotle's blessed life, because both understand the optimally happy life in terms of maximally expressing the activities of one's nature.

The happy life is therefore more ambitious in Aristotle and Spinoza's respective ethical frameworks than in Epicurus's. Part of the appeal of Epicurus's eudaimonism, though, is that it is easily acquired once one is able to modify their beliefs (admittedly, a task with its own potential difficulties) through distinguishing between necessary/unnecessary desires and appreciating the pleasurable nature of having no necessary desires to satisfy or suffering to remove. Only katastematic pleasure, i.e. unimpeded functioning, is necessary and sufficient for the happy life. Because happiness is grounded in activity for Aristotle, on the other hand, instead of simple unimpeded functioning, and the activities of our nature are varied and can be more-or-less effective or precise, happiness in turn can be increased/decreased depending on how successfully and fully our nature is expressed. Spinoza, on the one hand, agrees with Epicurus that fulfilling our basic needs is sufficient for happiness, but because of his shared focus with Aristotle on the happy life in terms of activity, he allows for happiness to be enhanced in a way that Epicurus does not. Spinoza conceives of happiness as activity, that is the ontological affirmation of one's existence, and so the more active one is or the more things one can do and take pleasure in, the happier they become. Consequently, all virtuous pleasures necessarily, in some way, enhance the happy life for Aristotle and Spinoza, while virtuous pleasures for Epicurus can only lead to the achievement, maintenance, and expression of happiness as a stable state of functioning. To put it another way, the happy life for Epicurus is the simple, but potentially diverse, enjoyment of natural being, while Aristotle and Spinoza see happiness as the diverse enjoyment of naturally being all that one can be.

It is important to note that, while all three intimately connect virtue with bodily and mental pleasures, their views on virtue in the happy life are not the same. Aristotle and Spinoza consider virtue to be an end in itself. Epicurus conceives of virtue as a necessary and crucial *means* to the happy (that is katastematically pleasant) life, but not an end. Spinoza, in turn, differs from both Aristotle and Epicurus in arguing that virtue, as an end, is *sufficient* for happiness. In fact, Spinoza does not understand virtue to be a disposition in the way that the ancient Greeks did; rather, he conceives of virtue as activity. Part of the reason virtue is insufficient in the happy life for Aristotle and Epicurus is that merely being disposed towards the proper end in the right way (i.e. rational activity for Aristotle and katastematic pleasure for Epicurus) is not the same as achieving that end. For Spinoza, on the other hand, virtue is not a disposition in the sense of being a potentiality that may or may not be realized, but is instead one's nature insofar as it *is* realized through the activities of the conatus. Virtue is therefore sufficient for the happy life as an end in Spinoza's ethical framework precisely because it represents one's nature (that is the conatus) in itself. Furthermore, Nadler points out that virtue is not a "trait" of characteristic excellence for Spinoza as it is in ancient Greek eudaimonism (225-6). Bodily and mental activities are not in themselves virtuous for the Greeks; one must perform such activities excellently (that is in harmony with their nature) for those activities to be identified as virtuous. Spinoza agrees that activities are virtuous when they are harmonious with one's nature. However, his scalar approach to virtue suggests that insofar as one acts they express their conatus, and thus their nature, to some degree. One can, of course, be more-or-less effective in actively preserving their state of existence in line with the conatus, but so long as they exist they necessarily express their nature through activities to some degree and are therefore also virtuous to some degree. In other words, one cannot be absolutely devoid of virtue

for Spinoza, nor does an activity need to be performed well to be relatively virtuous, strictly-speaking. This difference between Spinoza and his ancient Greek counterparts is, in turn, illustrative of exactly why one cannot simply reduce Spinoza's ethical philosophy, even if we are agreed that it is eudaimonistic, to any particular Greek view. The topic of virtue reveals subtle, but nonetheless important, normative differences between these philosophies.

Another significant area in which Spinoza separates himself from both Aristotle and Epicurus is the moral relation between bodily and mental pleasures. As outlined in 2.1, Spinoza's principle of parallelism implies that a given pleasure, as an affection of an individual's state of being, can be understood in both bodily and mental terms. As a result of this ontological dynamic, bodily and mental pleasures are thus morally equal in value, in that they refer to and promote the same states of activity. In Spinoza's eudaimonistic framework, to seek out or value mental pleasure is to simultaneously seek out and value bodily pleasure, and vice versa, because the cultivation of one entails the cultivation of the other.

Aristotle and Epicurus, in contrast, argue that mental pleasure is more valuable than bodily pleasure. With Aristotle, the moral superiority of mental pleasure in the happy life is based on the fact that reason is the characteristic function of humans and that which is most divine in us. Humans possess other aspects, such as nutrition, sensation, and appetite, but these aspects are not unique to humans, and as a result are insufficient (but nevertheless necessary) to constitute a happy *human* life. Aristotle describes happiness as a life of virtuous *rational activity*, precisely because reason is what distinguishes us from other mortal beings. Moreover, reason is crucial for nurturing and balancing the various aspects of one's nature. Both the practically happy and theoretically happy lives involve practical wisdom, i.e. proper deliberation on the mean in any given situation. The blessed life, in turn, is characterized by the possession of

practical and theoretical wisdom, which facilitate reflective activities/pleasures (namely, that which is most human and divine). Mental pleasure in Aristotle's ethical framework consequently shares a more intimate and *superordinate* connection to happiness than bodily pleasure. Similarly, Epicurus posits the superiority of mental pleasures over bodily pleasures in moral value, due to the mind's greater scope of capacity and experience. The mind experiences pleasures pertaining to the past, present, and future, whereas bodily pleasure is purely restricted to the here and now. This capacity allows the mind to calculate how best to cultivate and maintain bodily and mental pleasures in the happy life. One cannot achieve and maintain stable freedom from pain (*aponia*) without the prudential reasoning of the mind. Moreover, the mind's capacity to understand natural phenomena like death and desire leads to the enjoyment of peace of mind (*ataraxia*) and bolsters one's calculative activities. For Epicurus then, the superior value of mental pleasures lies in their link to the proper cultivation and maintenance of those katastematic pleasures (bodily and mental) that the happy life consists in.

However, while Aristotle and Epicurus see mental pleasure as more valuable than bodily pleasure, they nevertheless agree with Spinoza about the necessary goodness of bodily pleasure in the happy life. For Aristotle, the nutritive, sensitive, and appetitive faculties are essential aspects of human nature, and its subsequent flourishing. The pleasures derived from properly nurturing these aspects and realizing their respective activities are crucial goods in achieving and maintaining the mind's functioning and the realization of its intellectual (and distinctly human) activities. For Epicurus, the mind is reliant on a significant degree of katastematic pleasure in the body (namely, enough to maintain the atomic aggregate) for its functioning (i.e. state of katastematic pleasure) and subsequent ability to cultivate further bodily and mental pleasures through prudence. In the absence of bodily (katastematic) goods the pleasant life is not merely

lacking then, but in fact strictly impossible. The happy life is, in turn, necessarily one of both bodily *and* mental pleasures for Aristotle, Epicurus, and Spinoza, despite their differences on the moral value between these two forms of pleasure.

5.2 Spinoza's Relation to the Stoics

Now that we have examined Spinoza's nuanced agreements with Aristotle and Epicurus on the ontological and ethical nature of pleasure, we can compare these points to the Stoic conception of pleasure. What is Aristotelian or Epicurean in Spinoza's eudaimonistic view of pleasure will ultimately serve to elucidate where he is significantly non-Stoic in his ethical philosophy.

Ontology of Pleasure

As Chapters 2-4 (and 5.1) have shown, Spinoza, Aristotle, and Epicurus all argue for the claim that pleasure is, by nature, necessarily linked to the health of one's state of being. 1.4, however, shows us that the Stoics, in contrast, do not hold this ontological view. Pleasure, as an impression or as an emotion, is not necessarily connected to the health of one's state of being overall in their philosophical framework.

Pleasant sensations in themselves, for the Stoics, are neither beneficial nor detrimental to the health of one's body. The food I eat and drink can provide pleasurable nourishment that sustains and strengthens my body in its functioning and subsequent activities. Exercising, similarly, can enjoyably make my body stronger and capable of doing more. However, the pleasures of eating, drinking, and exercising can also impede my body. My stomach could become upset from eating/drinking and my muscles could strain or tear from exercising, in spite of my prior enjoyment. As a result, I might intend to serve the health of my body with these

pleasurable activities, but such pleasures are not always linked to an unimpeded bodily state. These pleasant sensations therefore in themselves do not entail that my body is healthy, because they can promote bodily functioning or impediment. For pleasant sensations to share a necessary connection to the bodily health of my state of being I would always have to be healthy in some way when they are present, which is not the case from the Stoic perspective. Even if such sensations could be relied upon to promote the health of my body, though, they would not influence the health of my mind. As will be made clear in what follows, the Stoics argue that the state of the body does not affect, positively or negatively, the state of the mind. The Stoics cannot grant claim (a) then, precisely because they understand no pleasant sensation in itself to promote the health of one's state of being in bodily or mental terms.

Pleasure as an emotion, as well, cannot be said to cohere with this claim in the Stoic framework. The emotion of pleasure, from their perspective (see 1.2), involves the judgment that something one presently possesses is good or valuable in itself. Pleasure, in this context, can be either an irrational emotion, i.e. a passion (*pathos*) or a rational emotion (*eupatheia*). Passions pertain to irrational judgments of value that pertain to the mind when it is in a diseased state. These emotions involve enjoying the possession of things (like pleasant sensations) that are, in fact, not good in themselves. These erroneous judgments, in turn, make such pleasures excessive, and thus harmful, to one's mental health. When I experience emotional enjoyment from eating because I judge food to be good for my body, I will then either eat too much or despair when I do not have access to the food I desire, with both outcomes resulting in mental distress. Rational emotions, conversely, are properly-reasoned (and thus healthy) judgments of value, namely the recognition that external things are morally neutral per se (some being harmonious or disharmonious with one's nature) and that virtue (i.e. being disposed to make correct evaluative

judgments) is good in itself. Rational pleasure (joy) involves then the enjoyment of possessing that which is truly good, which for the Stoics is virtue. Similar to the reasoning about bodily pleasure, emotional pleasure is not necessarily associated with the (in this case mental) health of one's state of being, because emotional pleasures can be harmful when they are passions (namely, by leading to distress). The fact that some emotional pleasures, that is rational ones, correspond with the health of the mind through correct evaluative judgments is insufficient to make any pleasure as an emotion a guarantor of healthy being, because a given experience of emotional pleasure can be rational or irrational. Furthermore, the mind can be healthy regardless of the current state of one's body, because its health pertains to judgments not bodily functioning. Emotional pleasure, as conceived by the Stoics, is consequently in strong disagreement with claim (a), through its potential to be a passion (i.e. a diseased mental state) and its association with only the health of the mind, rather than one's state of being overall.

Pleasure for Spinoza is a positive affection related to one's state of bodily/mental activity, which can be expressed as either an increase in one's degree of activity (transitional pleasure)⁸⁷ or the affirmation of one's current degree of activity in itself (non-transitional pleasure).⁸⁸ The first big difference between Spinoza and the Stoics is that he does not distinguish between pleasure as an impression (that is a bodily state) and pleasure as an emotion (i.e. that which involves an evaluative judgment in the mind). In both its transitional and non-transitional forms, pleasure pertains to the body and mind simultaneously as two different fundamental descriptions of the same state of being. As a result, any given pleasure represents a certain (that is transitional or affirmative) promotion of one's bodily state of being and a corresponding idea or judgment of

⁸⁷ See *E IIIIP11*, Def. Aff.2

⁸⁸ See *E VP36S*, 42Proof

the body being promoted in that way (which is, in fact, the promotion of the mind's own state of being through its degree of awareness or understanding). There is no ontological separation between bodily pleasures and mental pleasures in Spinoza's framework, as there is for the Stoics. A pleasant impression does not, in itself, involve any judgment by the mind from the Stoic perspective, and thus can be experienced on its own. The evaluative judgment that is necessarily involved in an emotional pleasure can pertain to bodily impressions, but as the example of judging one's own virtue to be good in itself suggests, one can enjoy a pleasure of the mind for the Stoics that is distinguishable from the body (namely, by taking pleasure in one's activity of reasoning alone). Aristotle and Epicurus do not share Spinoza's view of a strict relationship between bodily and mental pleasures, but all three nevertheless argue for a necessary interrelation between both kinds of pleasure in a manner that the Stoics strongly oppose. It is because they distinguish between pleasure as an impression and pleasure as an emotion that the Stoics have the mind experience rational joy, which is indicative of the health of the mind, irrespective of the state of the body. Spinoza, due to the principle of parallelism, in contrast, cannot grant the presence of a healthy mental pleasure that does not necessarily correspond with a healthy bodily pleasure, since ontologically they refer to the same healthy pleasure.

Pleasant sensations are considered natural by the Stoics, but since a given bodily pleasure can be linked to the health or impediment of the body and has no effect on the health of the mind, such sensations have no strict association with the promotion of the health of one's state of being in any way. Aristotle, Epicurus, and Spinoza, conversely argue that a natural pleasure (bodily or mental) will in some sense be connected to overall healthy being. Insofar as a pleasure leads to the unhealthiness of one's state of being, it is considered by all three philosophers to be contrary to its nature as pleasure.

These claims are also opposed to the Stoic view of emotional pleasure. Rational joys are associated with the health of the mind, since they pertain to proper rational judgments, but rational joys are not the only emotional pleasures we can experience. Emotional pleasures that are passions are diseases of the soul because they involve the misapplication of one's reasoning in their evaluative judgments, leading to excessive enjoyment that is contrary to the mental health of one's state of being by ultimately causing distress (*LP* VII.115; *TD* IV.v-vi.11). In light of the dual-aspect nature of emotional pleasure, the experience of a given pleasure of this kind is no guarantee of health, in that that pleasant experience could be a passion or a rational joy. Such a view is, in turn, strongly opposed to Aristotle, Epicurus, and Spinoza's shared view that any given pleasure, insofar as it is truly considered a pleasure, will necessarily be associated with healthy being overall.

In Spinoza's case, however, we can delve a bit deeper into how this claim is contrary to the Stoic conception of pleasure, ontologically. As outlined in 1.2, Spinoza and the Stoics share a dual-aspect view of emotion, in that both argue emotions can involve erroneous judgments of value (passions) or properly-reasoned judgments of value (rational emotions). Moreover, they agree that rational emotions, such as rational pleasures, are connected to a healthy mind that makes proper judgments. Where Spinoza departs from Stoics in this view, though, is that he links passions to healthy being, as well. A passive pleasure is less reliable than an active emotion in promoting the health of one's state of being through the conatus, because the former involves the causal power of an external thing while the latter (strictly speaking) does not, but for that passive pleasure to be a pleasure it must contribute to the strengthening of the conatus in some way. Spinoza's formal definition of transitional pleasure applies equally to both active (that is rational) and passive (that is irrational) pleasures, because both represent positive transitions in

one's state of being. Furthermore, Spinoza makes it clear that passive pleasures are necessary to the health of the body and mind. He talks about the diverse passive pleasures of food, perfumes, plants, music, sports, and theatre as "fresh and varied nourishment so that the entire body may be equally capable of all the functions that follow from its nature, and that the mind may be equally capable of simultaneously understanding many things" (*E IVP45S*). Such pleasures are not only harmonious with the health of one's state of being then, but necessarily contribute to maintaining and enhancing the health of one's body and mind, so that one's nature is expressed as fully as possible. Spinoza conceptualizes emotional pleasures in a similar manner to the Stoics, in that they are either passions or rational emotions (both of which involve judgments of value), but ultimately his view of pleasure is significantly different because he intimately connects all such pleasant emotions with the health of one's state of being, whether they pertain to passions or rational emotions.

In summary, Spinoza significantly departs from Stoicism in terms of his ontological conception of pleasure, in that he grants claim (a) while the Stoics deny that pleasure (as an impression or an emotion) holds a necessary connection to the health of one's state of being. Due to the principle of parallelism, Spinoza understands bodily and mental pleasure to be ontologically identical. One consequently cannot experience bodily pleasure without mental pleasure and vice versa. The Stoics, conversely, understand bodily pleasure as an impression to be separable, strictly speaking, from the mental enjoyment of emotional pleasure. Spinoza, more fundamentally, conceives of any given pleasure as an affection that promotes the self-expression, and thus health, of one's state of being (i.e. the *conatus*), while the Stoics argue that any pleasant sensation per se can be linked to the health or impediment of one's body and that any pleasure of passion (in contrast to rational joy) is a disease of the mind. Of particular note is Spinoza's

assertion that those pleasures that are passions also contribute to the health of the body and mind. Such a claim is in strong disagreement with the Stoics, who are adamant that such pleasures by their very nature hinder one's state of being (namely, the health of the mind through distress).

These differences are not merely emendations of Stoicism, however. Spinoza is not simply improving upon Stoic principles to construct a Neo-Stoic view of the ontology of pleasure. On the contrary, the fact that Aristotle and Epicurus (as a meaningful conceptual contrast to Stoicism) agree with Spinoza in positing claim (a) in one form or another, while the Stoics reject this claim entirely, illustrates that Spinoza's ontological view of pleasure is truly non-Stoic.

Ethics of Pleasure

Aristotle, Epicurus, and Spinoza, as outlined in the previous chapters, all argue for the claim that pleasure is good by nature in some way. In contrast, the Stoics (as is evident from 1.3) strongly deny that pleasure, as an impression or an emotion, can be considered good in itself.

Bodily pleasure (as an impression) is classified as a preferred indifferent by the Stoics. It is indifferent in the sense of being neither good nor bad in itself. This moral neutrality, in turn, extends to bodily pleasure's role in the Stoic conception of the happy life. Pleasure as an impression has its status dictated by its relation to the body. The body overall is neither necessary nor sufficient for happiness. Happiness pertains to what is in one's control (*H* 1.4). As something outside our control, we cannot stably and reliably promote health or prevent sickness in the body. Because we ultimately cannot control the body's states, it has no role to play in either promoting or hindering the happy life (a state of being that should be stable), meaning that one can be happy regardless of the state of the body (i.e. it is unnecessary). Moreover, the health

of the body has nothing to do with happiness because what matters ethically (i.e. what is in our control) in achieving and maintaining the happy life is one's mind, or more specifically their (rational) evaluative judgments (*A* 6.32). As a result, any state of the body is insufficient for happiness. As a bodily state, pleasant sensation will also be unnecessary and insufficient in the happy life, for precisely the same reasons. The virtuous, happy person need only take (mental) pleasure in making properly-reasoned evaluative judgments, and these judgments need not pertain to the body or its pleasures in their content at all.

Bodily pleasures are, however, preferred indifferents, because they can be enjoyed harmoniously with one's nature in the happy life, even if they do not positively or negatively affect one's state of happiness. According to the Stoics, as an impression, bodily pleasure has no motivational weight. In other words, merely experiencing a pleasant sensation from some object will not lead me to pursue that object (or any other object I might think capable of producing the same sensation). I will only pursue a pleasant sensation if I have made an evaluative judgment about that sensation being worthy of pursuit in some way, i.e. if that sensation is the object of emotional pleasure to me. With rational wish I will pursue pleasant sensations in a manner conducive to the health of my body and free of distress. However, rational joy involves taking pleasure in knowing that pleasant sensations and the body in general (as things outside my control) are morally indifferent to virtue and happiness. More specifically, rational joy pertains to taking pleasure in being virtuous, i.e. being disposed towards judging the value of things accurately. The disposition is what one rationally values/enjoys though, not whether one succeeds in obtaining pleasant sensations or any other morally indifferent object (e.g. bodily health). Through rational joy bodily pleasures will be harmonious with one's nature when they arise, but their harmony does not contribute to the achievement or maintenance of one's state of

happiness, because it is the disposition of virtue that is in one's control (and is consequently considered good per se), not the pleasant sensations or the objects that bring those sensations about.⁸⁹ Pleasure as an impression is thus not good by nature in the Stoics' eudaimonistic framework, because it is meaningless to the cultivation or preservation of the virtuous and happy life.

Emotional pleasure also does not cohere with claim (b) in Stoic eudaimonism. To merely experience emotional pleasure is no guarantee of the health of one's mind (i.e. peace of mind instead of distress), and by extension it is also no promise of virtue and happiness. The pleasure one experiences may be a passion instead of a rational emotion, meaning it is associated with the mistaken valuing of certain (namely, external) things that one possesses, in which case this passion will lead to distress, an emotion indicative of vice and suffering (*LP* VII.104; *H* 1.5-2, 12, 20). Only the emotional pleasure of rational joy is good, because it pertains to "peace of mind" through proper judgments of value, making it both necessary and sufficient for virtue and happiness (12). Emotional pleasure is therefore not good in itself, because a given emotional pleasure may be a passion (and thus bad) instead of rational (and thus good) in its relation to the virtuous, happy life.

Spinoza agrees with the Stoics that external things are neither good nor bad in themselves and that virtue and happiness involve pleasure as a rational emotion (consisting in evaluative judgment), but these points do not lead him to deny that pleasure is good in itself. Firstly,

⁸⁹ Spinoza's differing conception of virtue applies to the Stoics, as well. It is a central feature of Stoicism that one need only be disposed in the right way, in this case to make excellent (that is rational) evaluative judgments, in order to be happy. Whether or not one fails to realize activities that follow from virtue has no influence over one's happiness or suffering. In Spinoza's case, however, virtue is (bodily and mental) activity itself, and any degree of activity involves a degree of virtue and happiness (which is also why any natural activity qua activity need not represent excellence).

Spinoza does not consider the body to be an external thing or something truly outside our control. The principle of parallelism dictates that the mind and body are inseparable aspects of the individual, and both equally represent the conatus or the same essential activity of the individual. What happens to one is mirrored in the other, meaning that the health/unhealthiness of the body strictly corresponds with the health/unhealthiness of the mind. In an ethical context, virtue, and thus happiness, pertains to both the body and mind simultaneously.⁹⁰ One consequently cannot be happy without the health and virtue of the body. For Spinoza, contra the Stoics, it is in fact ontologically impossible for the mind to enjoy health, virtue, and happiness if the body lacks them. Pleasant sensation, as a state of the body, is in turn also of greater ethical importance for Spinoza in the virtuous and happy life. Bodily pleasure, due to parallelism, is inseparable from mental pleasure, in that they both in themselves represent the same promotion of one's conatus. Bodily pleasure, in itself, is therefore always beneficial and good (any harm that results from it being contrary to its nature; see 2.2). As a result of bodily pleasure's intimate relationship with the conatus (as a positive transition or affirmation), it also holds a necessary connection to the achievement and maintenance of virtue and happiness. While Aristotle and Epicurus view bodily and mental pleasure as distinct and consider mental pleasure in some sense more valuable than bodily pleasure, they nevertheless agree with Spinoza (in opposition to the Stoics) in arguing for the goodness and necessary presence of bodily pleasures in the happy life.

⁹⁰ Susan James also argues this point in "Spinoza, the Body, and the Good Life." This detail is significant, because James is one of the scholars, referenced in 1.1-2, who outlines the conceptual common-ground between Spinoza and the Stoics (see "Spinoza the Stoic"). Beyond mentioning "the broadly Stoic practice of using our abstract understanding to make our bodies more impervious to disempowerment by external things," James admittedly does not explicitly discuss in the first article Spinoza's relation to the Stoics (155). However, it is notable nonetheless that James has also provided an article in the literature that can be helpful in emphasizing Spinoza's *departure* from Stoicism.

Spinoza, in line with his views on bodily pleasure, also considers pleasures as passions to be good in themselves and necessary for achieving and maintaining happiness. Because Spinoza does not distinguish between pleasure as an impression and pleasure as an emotion, bodily pleasure *is* in fact an emotion, or more accurately emotional pleasure simultaneously and necessarily refers to both sensation (in the body) and judgment (in the mind). Spinoza conceives of pleasure in this way because, contra the Stoics, he does not consider the idea of bodily pleasures, as impressions, to be evaluatively neutral. Any given idea, according to Spinoza's epistemology, necessarily expresses an affirmation or negation (that is x or $\text{not-}x$) in its content, meaning any given idea is volitional or involves a judgment (*E* IIP49). Moreover, Spinoza argues that no idea is erroneous or false in itself by virtue of its content, but rather what is *lacking* in its content, that is how it is necessarily true (IIP33, 35). Take for example the idea of an apple as the cause of pleasure in my state of being. The content of this idea, for Spinoza, is necessarily expressing the affirmation that the apple caused me pleasure, and this affirmation is in some sense undeniably true (namely, in its representation of how my body interacted with the apple, to some degree).⁹¹ Because Spinoza conceives of pleasure (by nature) as that which promotes my conatus, this idea in itself (since it cannot be false *per se*) truly affirms that the apple promoted the health of my state of being and is thus good, to some degree. This means that passions involve deficient knowledge through judgments, but that these judgments are nonetheless classified as knowledge (in the sense that they represent a certain degree of truth). Irrationality

⁹¹ This assertion is further supported by Spinoza's denial of suspension of judgment, where he argues that suspension of judgment is really an idea x (i.e. a judgment) expressing one's doubt about the certainty of an idea y , because one or more other ideas place the certainty of idea y in question (*E* IIP49S). I will only suspend judgment about the truth of my idea about the pleasurable effect of the apple, then, if there are other ideas that oppose its content (e.g. the ideas of a disgusting rotten apple, a stomach ache from a previous apple, or the danger of a poisonous apple), i.e. if I have an idea whose content expresses that I am uncertain about whether apples are necessarily (that is always) pleasurable.

therefore represents deficient understanding in this context, rather than an inherently false judgment. For Spinoza then, those moral appraisals associated with passions are insufficiently understood, but nonetheless accurate to some degree. By virtue of the conatus, i.e. my essential striving to preserve my current state of bodily/mental existence and further empower myself, I will seek out whatever external things I judge to be pleasurable (and thus good) in relation to virtue/happiness (IIP11-2; IVP19, 39, 63CProof, App. 27). Because my idea of the apple (as an impression) is in itself volitional and necessarily involves a true evaluative judgment, it is sufficient to motivate me to pursue more apples as true goods for the sake of virtue and happiness.⁹²

For the Stoics, conversely, the pleasure of the apple as an impression is not evaluative or volitional in content. My idea of the apple causing me pleasure, for them, does not in itself involve a judgment of the goodness or badness of the apple or motivate me to pursue or avoid apples for the sake of virtue/happiness. There must be a separate mental act where I evaluatively judge this impression before I will be influenced by it in my actions. In fact, if my emotional pleasure is a passion it involves a false evaluative judgment per se (i.e. that the apple, as the cause of my pleasure, is good in its relation to happiness). Because, for Spinoza, bodily pleasures are emotions, i.e. they necessarily involve a corresponding idea that is volitional and a true evaluative judgment (again, to some degree), and such pleasures are by nature understood to promote my bodily and mental health, pleasures as passions are in some sense good in relation to the happy life. Spinoza, admittedly, agrees with the Stoics that rational pleasures (i.e. joys) are

⁹² It should be noted that this epistemological dynamic also applies to the two other primary passions, desire and pain. The moral judgment pertaining to a passive desire is to some degree true, in that one seeks something that is genuinely valuable to the conatus to some degree and avoids something that is genuinely harmful to it to some degree, even if such a desire is unreliable or of minimal value in the happy life. Similarly, pain pertains to a true judgment about how something can harm one's conatus, even if this judgment is vague in accurately detailing the nature of this harmful relationship and likely to lead one to overestimate their knowledge of the thing in question.

crucial to virtue and happiness in a way that makes them ethically superior to pleasures as passions (namely, as stable goods), but he nevertheless grants (contra the Stoics) that passive pleasures are also good per se and subsequently contribute to the enhancement of the happy life to some degree.

Spinoza's agreement with claim (b), and subsequent disagreement with the Stoics on the ethical role of pleasure, is therefore based on his views of the body and the nature of judgment in emotion. Aristotle, Epicurus, and Spinoza all stress the necessary importance of the health of the body and its subsequent pleasures in the realization of the health and pleasures of the mind. Because of this necessary interrelationship the pleasures of both the body and mind are important elements of the happy life in all three ethical philosophies, in stark contrast to the Stoics, who consider happiness to solely consist in the health and pleasures of the mind (namely, through rational evaluative judgments). It is because of Spinoza's agreements with Aristotle and Epicurus on the ethical role of the body that he understands what he and the Stoics refer to as pleasures of passion to be necessary goods in achieving and maintaining happiness. Furthermore, Spinoza shares with Aristotle the view that bodily pleasures (when cultivated in line with virtue) can enhance one's state of happiness (through the bodily and mental activities of one's nature) in a way that neither Epicurus nor the Stoics would grant. Due to these agreements on the ontological and ethical nature of bodily pleasure, and his own distinctive epistemological views, Spinoza does not agree with the Stoics that pleasant sensations can be mere impressions (i.e. evaluatively neutral) and even as passions they are necessary goods in the virtuous and happy life.

While his views on the nature of emotion and judgment, in isolation, might be argued to be a Neo-Stoic aspect of Spinoza's eudaimonism, in the sense that Spinoza is merely improving on rather than rejecting the Stoics' cognitive view of emotion, his relative agreements with

Aristotle and Epicurus illustrate how significantly far his view (primarily in relation to bodily pleasures) departs from the spirit and ethical foundations of Stoicism. In summary, despite his shared views with the Stoics on the dual-aspect and cognitive nature of emotions and pleasures (that is as passions and rational emotions involving evaluative judgments) and the ethical superiority of rational pleasures over pleasures of passion, Spinoza's central agreements with Aristotle and Epicurus on the nature of happiness reveal that his ethical conception of pleasure is in significant ways opposed to Stoicism.

5.3 Conclusion

In this thesis I have set out to emphasize what is meaningfully non-Stoic in Spinoza's ethical philosophy. To accomplish this task, I have focused on Spinoza's agreements with Aristotle and Epicurus (as a meaningful conceptual contrast to Stoicism) on the ontological and ethical nature of pleasure. All three philosophers, contra the Stoics, argue the following two claims: (a) pleasure holds a necessary connection to the health of one's state of being and (b) pleasure is by nature good.

Chapter 1 lays out the literature on Spinoza's various notable agreements with Stoicism, providing a background for why there is a need to showcase the ways in which Spinoza's ethical philosophy departs from the Stoics. Both philosophies are eudaimonistic (i.e. happiness-directed), deterministic, and share a cognitive and dual-aspect view of emotion. As well, this chapter describes the Stoic view of pleasure (that is as an impression and an emotion), for the purposes of comparison in the final chapter. Chapter 2 outlines Spinoza's ontological and ethical views on pleasure. Pleasure is understood to be an affection of the conatus (expressed transitionally/non-transitionally and actively/passively), which is one's essential striving to express their state of existence (namely, through preserving and increasing their current state of

adequate causality). Due to its intimate connection with the conatus, pleasure is considered by Spinoza to necessarily promote the health of one's state of being, and thus to be good in itself, through its strengthening/affirmation of one's degree of ontological self-expression. Chapter 3 explains Aristotle's ontological and ethical conceptions of pleasure. Pleasure as a source is an unimpeded activity that follows virtuously from one's nature, while pleasure as an experience is that which supervenes on said activity. Pleasure's connection (as a source and experience) to the unimpeded activities, and thus expression, of one's nature is what links it necessarily to healthy being for Aristotle. Aristotle argues that only those pleasures that follow from virtuous activities are true pleasures (pathological and vicious pleasures merely approximating the human experience of pleasure), thereby making pleasure by nature good. Chapter 4 explores Epicurus's ontological and ethical views of pleasure. Fundamentally, Epicurus describes pleasure as that which is opposed to suffering (that is pain in the body and disturbance in the mind) or the unimpeded functioning of one's state of being, which can take the form of kinetic pleasure (the removal of suffering) or katastematic pleasure (the absence of suffering). Pleasure is thus strongly and necessarily linked to the health of one's state of being, and in turn is deemed good *per se*, in that it pertains to the unimpeded functioning of the body and mind. Finally, Chapter 5 outlines Aristotle, Epicurus, and Spinoza's nuanced agreements on the ontological and ethical nature of pleasure, and proceeds to use these agreements to illustrate how Spinoza's eudaimonism departs from Stoic eudaimonism on the topic of pleasure.

As clarified in the Preface, the purpose of this thesis has not been to reduce Spinoza's ethical philosophy to Aristotelianism or Epicureanism in any way, nor has it been to reject the rich literature on Spinoza's relation to Stoicism. While I have sought to emphasize what is meaningfully non-Stoic in Spinoza's eudaimonism, it is equally as true that there are also

meaningful conceptual agreements between them (e.g. their dual-aspect view of emotion). Rather, this comparative analysis is meant to contribute to the literature on Spinoza's eudaimonistic approach to philosophy and ethics by highlighting the nuanced ways in which Spinoza shares significant conceptual common-ground with Aristotle (namely, the aim to express all the activities of one's nature as fully as possible), Epicurus (namely, the transitional and non-transitional ways in which pleasure in itself promotes the happy life), and the Stoics (namely, therapy through the examination of emotion and recognition of necessity in the world). Such comparisons assist us in better understanding the complexities and notable practicality of Spinoza's seemingly theoretical and abstract philosophy. As well, since Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics (e.g. Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius) still inspire and guide many philosophers and non-philosophers alike, it may just be that Spinoza too has much wisdom to offer the modern world in the pursuit of happiness.

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