

Chapter 9

Spinoza's Anti-Humanism: An Outline

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A triangle, if it could speak, would likewise say that God is eminently triangle, and a circle that God's nature is eminently circular.

- Spinoza, Letter 56

But if cattle and horses or lions had hands, or were able to draw their hands, and do the works that man can do, horses would draw the forms of the gods like horses, and with cattle like cattle, and they would make their bodies such as they each had themselves.

- Xenophanes, Fr. 169¹

9.1 Introduction

It is because of this that God humanizes himself, that he is willing to allow anthropomorphism, and that he enters into society with us as a prince with his subjects

- Leibniz, Discourse on Metaphysics, §36

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This paper is a first attempt to explore the scope of Spinoza's critique of humanism. Several issues mentioned in this paper are not adequately discussed due to limitations of space. I hope to develop the paper into a larger project in the future. I am indebted to Robert Adams, Hillel Braudie, Michael Della Rocca, Carlos Fraenkel, Zachary Gartenberg, Zeev Harvey, Eve Krakowski, Jean-Luc Marion, Alan Nelson, David Nirenberg, Oded Schechter, Neta Stahl, Lina Steiner, and Peter Thielke for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. Unless otherwise marked, all references to the *Ethics*, the early works of Spinoza, and Letters 1–29 are to Curley's translation (1985; henceforth C). In references to the other letters of Spinoza I use Shirley's translation (1995; henceforth S). I also rely on Shirley's translation of Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise* (2001). Passages in the *Ethics* will be referred to by the following abbreviations: a(-xiom), c(-orollary), p(-roposition), s(-cholium), and app(-endix); "d" stands for either "definition" (when it appears immediately to the right of the part of the book) or "demonstration" (in all other cases). Hence, E1d3 is the third definition of part 1 and E1p16d is the demonstration of proposition 16 of part 1. Occasionally, I will supplement a reference to Gebhardt's Latin edition, by volume, page, and line (hence, II/23/5 is volume II, page 23, line 5). I will use this notation when the reference by proposition number (in the *Ethics*), chapter, or letter is not specific enough.

¹Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (1983, 169)

I. A common perception of Spinoza casts him as one of the precursors, perhaps even founders, of modern humanism and Enlightenment thought.² Given that in the twentieth century, humanism was commonly associated with the ideology of secularism and the politics of liberal democracies, and that Spinoza has been taken as voicing a “message of secularity” (Yovel 1989, 200) and as having provided “the psychology and ethics of a democratic soul” (Smith 2003, 200) and “the decisive impulse to . . . modern republicanism which takes it bearings by the dignity of every man” (Strauss 1965, 16),³ it is easy to understand how this humanistic image developed. Spinoza’s deep interest in, and extensive discussion of, human nature may have contributed to the emergence of this image as well. In this paper, I will argue that this common perception of Spinoza is mistaken and that Spinoza was in fact the most radical *anti-humanist* among modern philosophers. Arguably, Spinoza rejects any notion of human dignity. He conceives of God’s—and not man’s—point of view as the only objective perspective through which one can know things adequately, and it is at least highly questionable whether he allows for any genuine notions of human autonomy or morality.

The notions of “humanism” and “anti-humanism” have been discussed extensively—mainly among continental philosophers⁴—since the end of World

²For the view of Spinoza’s philosophy as anticipating “secularism. . . , the Enlightenment, and the liberal- democratic state,” see Yovel (1989, ix). For the view of Spinoza as a humanist, see Fromm (1964). Any quick search on the web will yield dozens of ideological characterizations of Spinoza as one of the heroes of modern humanism. See, for example, the following declaration: “We, the Sixth International Congress of the IHEU (International Humanist and Ethical Union), representing humanists from all over the world, meeting in Amsterdam on August 5–9, 1974, wish to pay special tribute to Benedict de Spinoza. . . Spinoza is one of the greatest forerunners of humanist philosophy in modern time. A defender of intellectual and religious liberty and the free mind, he attempted to establish ethics on rational foundations independent of religious dogma. Standing as a bridge between the Middle Ages and Modern science, Spinoza was committed to the use of reason as a source of human freedom” (International Humanist and Ethical Union). Similarly, in a declaration signed by an impressive group of philosophers and intellectuals (among them, W.V. Quine, Arthur Danto, Ernst Nagel, George Hourani, Sidney Hook, Walter Kaufman, and A.J. Ayer) Spinoza is included in a list of “distinguished secularists and humanists who have demonstrated moral principles in their personal lives and works” (Council for Secular Humanism).

³On Spinoza as a champion of human dignity, see also Smith (1997, xvi): “Spinoza did not use the term ‘liberal’ to describe his system of politics But if to be a liberal means to have a lively sense of the autonomy and dignity of the individual, . . . then Spinoza can be described as a liberal.”

⁴Nietzsche, Heidegger, Althusser, and Foucault are probably the most prominent philosophers associated with anti-humanism, though at least in the case of Heidegger, the appropriateness of this association is, to my mind, questionable. In his “Letter on Humanism” (1947, 204), Heidegger criticizes the traditional understanding of the essence of man as ‘*animal rationale*.’ According to Heidegger, this definition fails to recognize man’s unique relationship with language and Being. “Only man is admitted to the destiny of ek-sistence. Therefore ek-sistence can also never be thought of as a specific kind of creature among others” In this sense, Heidegger is an arch-humanist. Furthermore, Spinoza seems to be much more radical than Nietzsche in his critique of humanism. The two share a significantly similar conception of good and evil and are both strict naturalists. Yet, Nietzsche never goes beyond the relativity of human perspectives. For Spinoza, there is an objective perspective, but it is God’s. Max Black is one of the very few analytic philosophers who have developed a serious interest in the issue of humanism. See his (1983).

War II. Because these notions carry a variety of historical, ideological, and philosophical meanings, it is important to provide at the outset at least a rudimentary clarification of *my* use of these two terms. By “humanism” I mean a view which (1) assigns a *unique value* to human beings among other things in nature, (2) stresses the primacy of the human *perspective* in understanding the nature of things, and (3) attempts to point out an essential property of humanity which *justifies* its elevated and unique status.⁵ This definition of *philosophical* humanism has only little in common with the *historical* notion of Renaissance humanism,⁶ and seems to match quite well the common understanding of philosophical humanism suggested by current philosophical dictionaries and encyclopedias.⁷

This notion of humanism should be understood in contrast to two competing positions. On the one hand, in contrast to the *theocentric* position that considers humanity to be radically dependent upon God, humanism affirms at least some degree of human independence. On the other hand, in contrast to the *naturalist* position which endorses the scientific examination of human beings just like any other objects in nature, humanists affirm the existence of a metaphysical and moral *gulf* between humanity and nature. This gulf assigns a special value to humanity and does not allow us to treat human beings like any other things in nature. For many humanists, the nature/humanity gulf does not allow the application of the methods of natural sciences to the disciplines of the humanities.⁸

Humanism does not begin with modernity. In order to see how far back we can trace this position, we may recall Protagoras' saying: “Man is the measure of all things, of things that are, that they are, and of things that are not, that they are not.”⁹ In modern philosophy, the humanistic position had regained dominant status

⁵This definition of humanism is intended to be wider than the ideology of secular humanism (pointed out at the beginning of this paper) in order to include religious humanist philosophies like that of Leibniz. Obviously, by claiming that Spinoza was an anti-humanist, I take him to be an enemy of both secular and religious humanism. On the other hand, *speciesism* (the view which suggests that we should favor human beings *only* by virtue of their belonging to our species) would not count as humanism for our purposes. It is not hard to detect the Kantian undertones of my definition of ‘humanism,’ though a very similar view is expressed by Max Black: “[I]n calling human beings *persons*, we are rightfully ascribing to them important properties that cannot, even in principle, apply to other animals or to inanimate material beings” (Black 1983, 99). According to Black, self-consciousness is such a distinctive characteristic of human beings (Black 1983, 104).

⁶The Renaissance humanism of Lorenzo Valla, Erasmus, and Reuchlin has much more to do with the revival of the *studia humanitatis* than with the glorification of man (though admittedly, these were not completely separate). Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola is almost the only figure of Renaissance humanism who is clearly a champion of the philosophical humanism I define above.

⁷See, for example, Audi (1995, 396–7).

⁸Some famous proponents of the latter view are Wilhelm Dilthey and the Neo-Kantian philosophers, Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert. Here again, Max Black provides a crystal-clear statement of this position: “I believe that there are features of human personality that are outside the purview of any of the natural or social sciences, and that there is something therefore conceptually—or, if you like, ontologically—special about human beings” (Audi 1995, 99).

⁹Plato, *Theaetetus* 152a. The “Ode to Man” in Sophocles' *Antigone* (lines 332–375) is another important statement of humanism in ancient Greek culture.

since the Renaissance, and variants of this position were vigorously argued for by prominent thinkers such as Pico della Mirandola, Descartes, Leibniz,¹⁰ Kant, Fichte, and finally, Hegel.¹¹

In this paper, I will argue that Spinoza was a foe, and not a friend, of this tradition.¹² I suggest that, in contrast to these humanist philosophers, Spinoza considers man as a marginal and limited being in nature, a being whose claims and presumptions far exceed its abilities. “To what length will the folly of the multitude not carry them? [T]hey imagine Nature to be so limited that they believe man to be his chief part.”¹³ Arguably, Spinoza locates the origin of our most fundamental metaphysical and ethical errors in a human *hubris* which not only tries to secure humanity an exceptional place in nature but also attempts to cast both God and nature in its own human image.¹⁴

My view of Spinoza as an “anti-humanist” relies on the following four elements of his thought: (1) Spinoza’s perception of human beings as rather marginal and limited beings in an infinite universe, (2) Spinoza’s critique of anthropomorphism as a baseless arrogance that causes people to believe that the world is arranged to fit their fictions and caprices, (3) Spinoza’s radical naturalism about human beings which denies the existence of *any* gulf between humanity and the rest of nature, and, finally, (4) Spinoza’s amoralism. Each of these elements has been subject to detailed discussion in the existing literature; however, as far as I know, they have never been taken as fitting together into a comprehensive world-view. The attempt to draw the outline of such a comprehensive world-view is, I believe, the major innovation of the current paper.

I understand “Rationalism”—the theme of the current volume—as a view that commits itself to the explicability of every fact (or, if you wish, to an unreserved acceptance of the Principle of Sufficient Reason).¹⁵ Spinoza’s critique of humanism

¹⁰See Leibniz’s *Discourse on Metaphysics*, §§34–36 in G.W. Leibniz (1989, 65–68).

¹¹For Hegel’s observation and critique of the “annihilation of man” in Spinoza, see Hegel (1995, III 282).

¹²Hyppolite (1997, 20) seems to disclose a similar view of Spinoza in noting that “Hegel is still too Spinozistic for us to be able to speak of a pure humanism.” Althusser (1976, 136) too detects some anti-humanist elements in Spinoza by pointing out Spinoza’s “radical criticism of the central category of imaginary illusion, the *Subject*.” I discuss the so-called “elimination of the self” in § IV below. Althusser saw, however, only the tip of the iceberg, and the picture I attempt to draw in this paper is far wider and more substantial. In general, Althusser’s reading of Spinoza, while occasionally insightful, is quite crude and ideologically biased. See, for example, his ascription to Spinoza of a causality “which would account for the action of the Whole on its parts, and of the parts on the Whole—an unbounded Whole, which is only the active relation between its parts” (Althusser 1989, 141). If I am not mistaken, “the Whole” in question is Spinoza’s substance, but the latter is neither acted on by its parts, nor is the activity of substance “the active relation between its parts.” For Spinoza, substance is strictly indivisible (E1p13).

¹³*Theological-Political Treatise*, Ch. 6 (III/82).

¹⁴“The human intellect is deceived simply by its own nature, and feigns everything from the analogy of its own nature, not from the analogy of the universe” (Ep. 2 (IV/8/33)).

¹⁵For a similar understanding of rationalism (and an interpretation of Spinoza’s philosophy that takes his rationalism to be the core of the system), see Michael Della Rocca’s recent book (2008).

is at least partly motivated by his strict rationalism. The demand for thorough explicability does not allow for any view which assumes the inner value of humanity as a brute fact. But rationalism does more than that. Rationalism rejects the existence of any "islands" within nature which are governed by "special" laws. As we will soon see, this rejection of human "dominion within dominion" leads Spinoza to debunk any attempt to identify some unique human quality that endows humanity with dignity.

In the first part of this paper, I will attempt to sketch some of the outlines of Spinoza's philosophy, point out the limited place of humanity within this universe, and present Spinoza's views on some crucial issues such as human freedom, human self-knowledge, and the nature of the human mind. In the second part, I will discuss several aspects of Spinoza's critique of anthropomorphism. In the third part, I will discuss Spinoza's naturalistic account of human beings and his amorality.

It is important to note that by describing Spinoza's philosophy as anti-humanist I do *not* mean to suggest that it either despises¹⁶ or is indifferent to human affairs. As I have already mentioned, Spinoza was deeply interested in the question of human nature. Indeed, the greatest bulk of Spinoza's texts deal with the nature of human beings, their associations, and their illusions. However, his interest in human beings results not from any admiration of man or from a belief in the exceptional place of human beings in the universe, but rather from the very simple fact that Spinoza himself was a human being, and that he considered an illusion-free understanding of humanity to be necessary for understanding his own life and "its highest blessedness."

9.2 The Place of Humanity in Spinoza's World

[For Spinoza], the human mind is but a light-ray of infinite thought; the human body is but a particle of infinite extension.

- Heine, Religion and Philosophy in Germany.¹⁷

II. *Man's Marginality in Spinoza's Universe.* At the beginning of the *Ethics*, Spinoza defines God as a "substance consisting of an infinity of attributes [*substantiam constantem infinitis attributis*]" (E1d6). Human beings, however, are constituted by pairs of modes of two of God's infinitely many attributes, Thought and Extension. It is only these two attributes which we can know.

We neither feel nor perceive any singular things except bodies and modes of thinking (E2a5).

For Spinoza, a human being is simply a pair of two modes of God: a body (a mode of extension) and an idea of that body (i.e., a mind): "[M]an consists of a mind and

¹⁶See E4p35s (II/234) and E4app13 (269–70).

¹⁷Heine (1985, 175)

a body” (E2p13c). Yet, since Spinoza’s doctrine of parallelism holds that the order of modes is the same in all attributes, and that modes parallel to each other are identical, one may wonder why we are unable to know the modes parallel to our body in all the other attributes. If I know my body, and a certain mode of the third attribute is *identical* with my body, how can I *not* know it? When challenged with this question by one of his correspondents, Spinoza replied that the mode of the third attribute, which is identical with my body, has its own idea, or mind. However, Spinoza adds, the mind of my body and the mind of the mode of the third attribute (which is identical with my body), “cannot constitute one and the same mind of a particular thing. For each of these ideas has no connection [*nullam connexionem*] with the others” (Letter 66).

Since the mind of my body and the mind of the mode of the third attribute, which is identical with the body, have “no connection with each other,” it makes sense that the two minds cannot know each other. Yet it is still not clear *why* these two minds have “no connection with each other.” This enigmatic doctrine has caused much controversy and wonder among Spinoza scholars. I believe it is a serious doctrine that is consistent with the rest of his system, though space does not permit full discussion of this doctrine in the present paper.¹⁸ Nevertheless, I think we can already recognize here a huge gap between the infinity of God/Nature, and the limitedness of human knowledge, which captures merely two attributes.¹⁹ It is not only that the human mind can never grasp the vast majority of the infinite attributes, but also, in a sense, that the human being is limited in its ability to know itself. My body has infinite parallel modes in these infinitely many unknown attributes. These modes are identical with my body, and in some odd sense, they are me (conceived under other attributes).²⁰ Yet, I have no idea what they are and what they do within the infinitely many attributes unknown to the human mind (Only God knows what they do there!).

If the Copernican Revolution threw man from the center of the physical universe, Spinoza’s metaphysics multiplied this fall infinitely. It is not just that humans are no longer at the center of the (extended) world, but that even the extended world itself turns out to be just one of an infinite number of aspects of nature, the rest of which are eternally barred from human grasp.

III. *Self-Knowledge*. Spinoza does allow for the human mind to know itself. Furthermore, all of my knowledge of external bodies is mediated through my knowledge of my own body.²¹ Yet, this is a rather poor and unreliable form of

¹⁸For a detailed explanation of this issue, see §5.1 of my forthcoming book.

¹⁹In fact, the human mind can know only *one* attribute (extension) and a *tiny* aspect of the attribute of thought (i.e., ideas which represent bodies).

²⁰Cf. Joel Friedman (1983, 105): “It follows, again contra Descartes, that I am much more than a thinking thing.”

²¹See E2p113 and E2p16. For a very helpful discussion of these passages see, Michael Della Rocca (1996, 24–29, 47–48, and 64–66). The role Spinoza assigns to self-knowledge in the attainment of blessedness (E5p15) is primarily a result of the fact that almost all of our knowledge is mediated through our knowledge of ourselves.

self-knowledge.²² “The Mind does not know itself, except insofar as it perceives the ideas of the affections of the Body” (E2p23). For Spinoza, human self-knowledge consists merely of our ability to have first and second order ideas (ideas of our bodies and of our minds, respectively). If I have an idea of a certain event that occurred in my finger, I would also have an idea of that idea. That is all that self-knowledge amounts to for Spinoza.²³ These second order ideas have no privileged characteristics, such as clarity or certainty. In fact, Spinoza claims that “the idea of the idea of any affection of the human Body does not involve adequate knowledge of the human Mind” (E2p29). The inadequacy of human self-knowledge is even more striking given Spinoza's view that human beings have an adequate knowledge of God's essence.²⁴ Thus, it would seem that, for Spinoza, my knowledge of God's essence is *more adequate* than my knowledge of myself.

While for other modern philosophers, such as Descartes, self-knowledge was both the most certain and the most fundamental knowledge,²⁵ it has no such privileged status for Spinoza. Furthermore, as I will later argue, Spinoza does not seem to limit self-knowledge to human beings.

IV. *The Non-Substantiality of the Human Mind.* Another common characteristic of the human mind in modern philosophy is its independent existence as a *substance*, a view which was held by Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and Berkeley, to name a few. Here, again, we find Spinoza in striking opposition to the dominant view. For Spinoza, the human mind is neither a substance nor even a genuinely *simple* being, but rather a mere functionally unified collection of ideas (i.e., modes of Thought):

The being of substance does not pertain to the essence of man, or substance does not constitute the form of man [*substantia formam hominis non constituit*] (E2p10).

The idea that constitutes the formal being of the human Mind is not simple, but composed of a great many ideas [*Idea, quae esse formale humanae mentis constituit, non est simplex, sed ex plurimis ideis composita*] (E2p15).

This denial of the substantiality of the human mind has two crucial implications. First, it denies the existence of a thinking subject that is anything more than

²²Several scholars have ascribed to Spinoza a much stronger view of self-knowledge. See for example, Alan Donagan (1998, 117): “[N]o reflective human being ... can fail to perceive that the idea of himself as thinking cannot be false.” As I will argue shortly, I do not think Spinoza shared this Cartesian view.

²³Though Lia Levy has recently presented a very interesting attempt to reconstruct a thicker account of self-consciousness in Spinoza based on Spinoza's discussion of the affects.

²⁴E2p47: “The human mind has an adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence.” Cf. E247s: “God's infinite essence and his eternity are known to all.”

²⁵Recall Descartes' memorable conclusion of the Second Meditation: “I know plainly that I can achieve an easier and more evident perception of my own mind than of anything else” (*The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), vol. 2, pp. 22–3 (AT VII 34)).

a bundle of ideas.²⁶ Second, it rejects the Cartesian ascription of unique ontological independence to human minds.²⁷

Similarly, Spinoza claims that the human body is not a substance but is rather a collection of modes of extension.

V. *The Denial of Free Will.* Descartes's affirmation of the freedom of the will is the target of one of Spinoza's sharpest criticisms.²⁸ For Spinoza, the notion of free will [*voluntas*] is nothing but a human illusion which results from the fact that human beings "are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes by which [their actions] are determined" (E2p34;s).²⁹ In fact, Spinoza denies that *any* being—even God (E1p32c1)—has free will, since everything that happens, happens necessarily.

Yet, in spite of his unequivocal denial of free will, Spinoza does not repudiate all notions of freedom. At the beginning of the *Ethics*, Spinoza defines a free thing as follows:

That thing is called free [*libera*] which exists from the necessity of its nature alone, and is determined by itself alone. But a thing is called necessary, or rather compelled [*coacta*], which is determined by another to exist and to produce an effect in a certain and determinate way (E1d7).

This definition allows Spinoza to claim that,

Although God exists necessarily, he nevertheless exists freely because he exists solely from the necessity of his own nature (Letter 58),

and that

God alone is a free cause [*causam liberam*]. For God alone exists only from the necessity of his nature, and acts from the necessity of his nature (E1p17c2).

Since, like any other finite beings, human beings do not exist "from the necessity of their nature alone," and since their actions are always determined by external

²⁶A crucial implication of the non-simplicity of the human mind is that it seems to undermine one of the most common arguments for mind eternity. Indeed, Van Blijenbergh, one of Spinoza's correspondents and a Christian Cartesian, attacks Spinoza on precisely this point. If in death, claims Van Blijenbergh, "as the human body, when it disintegrates, is resolved again into the thousands of bodies of which it was composed, so also our mind.... And as the scattered bodies [which composed] our human body no longer remain bound to one another, but other bodies separate them, so also it seems to follow that, when our mind is disintegrates, those countless thoughts of which it was composed are no longer combined, but separated" (Spinoza 1985, Ep. 24, 391).

²⁷Cf. Van Blijenbergh's complaint in Ep. 20 that Spinoza "makes man dependent on God in the way the elements, stones, and plants are" (IV/103/15). For the substantiality of the human mind in Descartes, see the Second Meditation. For Descartes's definition of substance, see his *Principles of Philosophy*, I 51.

²⁸See, e.g., E2p33s2, Letter 21, Letter 58.

²⁹Cf. Letter 58 (S 284): "[T]hat human freedom which all men boast of possessing . . . consists solely in this, that men are conscious of their desire and unaware of the cause by which they are determined. In the same way a baby thinks that it freely desires milk, an angry child revenge, and a coward flight." See Michael Della Rocca, "The Power of an Idea: Spinoza's Critique of Pure Will," *Nous* 37 (2003), 200–231.

causes as well, it is clear that they cannot be free even according to Spinoza's own definition of freedom.³⁰ However, in various places in his writings Spinoza attempts to mitigate this conclusion by relaxing his definition of freedom so that it would allow for a variety of *degrees* of freedom.

In his correspondence with Van Blijenburgh, Spinoza seems to hold that *the more* our actions follow from our nature, *the more* we are free:

If God's nature is known to us, then affirming that God exists follows necessarily from our nature . . . [W]e are never *more free* than when we affirm a thing in such a way (Letter 21| IV/130/6; italics mine).

Since Spinoza holds that the actual essence, or nature, of every finite being is the striving to persevere in its being (E3p8), it would seem that the more a person strives to persevere in her being, the more she is free.

The result of this relaxation of the definition of freedom is a rather humble view of human freedom. Furthermore, freedom does *not* seem to distinguish man from the rest of nature. The *conatus*, or the striving to persevere in one's being, belongs to the essence of any finite being,³¹ and to that extent, any cockroach which follows its essence and strives to persevere in its being is—to some extent—free.³²

9.3 The Battle Against Anthropomorphism.

VI. *The Finite and the Infinite.* In E2p10s2, Spinoza rebukes those philosophers who

did not observe the order of Philosophizing. For they believed that the divine nature—which they should have contemplated before all else (*because it is prior both in knowledge and in nature*)—is last in the order of knowledge, and the things that are called objects of the senses are prior to all. That is why, when they contemplated natural things, they thought of nothing less than they did of the divine nature; and when afterwards they directed their minds to contemplating the divine nature, they could think of nothing less than their first fictions [*figmentis*].” (Emphasis mine)

That philosophy must begin with the infinite and then conceive the finite through the infinite (and not the other way around) is one of Spinoza's most important

³⁰For an insightful discussion of the “free man” as an impossible model, see Dan Garber (2004, 183–207).

³¹E3p6: *Unaqueaque res, quantum in se est, in suo esse perseverare conatur.* In his aforementioned article (1983, 105–6), Max Black suggests that having a need for the individual's survival (rather than survival of the species) is another unique characteristic of human beings; he then quotes Spinoza's *conatus* doctrine in support of this claim. It is hard to understand what made Black think that the *conatus* is particularly human, while Spinoza explicitly states “Each thing [*Unaqueaque res*] . . .” Indeed, in Letter 58, Spinoza openly discusses the *conatus* of the stone which “as far as in it lies” strives “to continue in motion” (S 284).

³²Spinoza's rejection of free will seems to motivate his views on the punishment of criminals. Since Spinoza does not consider harmful actions by human beings to be anchored in free and morally responsible agents, he suggests that the punishment of criminals should be justified by the very same considerations which make people exterminate poisonous snakes (CM II, viii| I/265/23).

methodological principles and arguably one of his most significant innovations.³³ This principle is expressed most clearly in the definitions of Substance and Mode (E1d3&5) that make the modes dependent on substance both for their existence and for their conceivability. It also functions as the conceptual foundation of Spinoza's crusade against anthropomorphism.

It is not easy to summarize all the errors, illusions, and misconceptions that Spinoza finds to result from anthropomorphic thinking. In the appendix to the first part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza lists *good, evil, order, confusion, warm, cold, beauty, ugliness* as notions that result from people's belief that "everything that happens, happens on their account," and that everything is valued by its usefulness for human beings (II/81/27). This list is far from exhaustive.

Spinoza presses the charge of anthropomorphism against both philosophers and theologians, both Jews (whom he describes as the most "accustomed to grant all things human attributes"³⁴) and Christians (whom he criticizes for believing that "God took upon himself human nature"³⁵). Here, I will concentrate on four issues that seem to me the most crucial for Spinoza's battle against anthropomorphism: the critique of Scripture, teleology, the problem of evil, and the critique of morality.

VII. The Critique of Scripture. The claim that Scripture describes God in vulgar, anthropomorphic terms prevails both in the *Theological Political Treatise* and in Spinoza's correspondence.³⁶ In fact, however, this is the *least* innovative aspect of Spinoza's discussion of anthropomorphism. Indeed, Spinoza explicitly attests: "I have never seen a Theologian so dense [*crassum*] that he did not perceive that Sacred Scripture very often speaks of God in a human way" (Letter 21 | IV/132/22). The claim that Scripture frequently describes God in human terms in order to be accessible to the masses was not only a major theme in medieval Jewish philosophy (especially for Maimonides and his followers³⁷), but it had also been a central hermeneutic principle in the early Talmudic literature, which relentlessly warns the reader that "Scripture speaks in the language of common human beings."³⁸ In this respect, Spinoza's biblical criticism contributes little that is new.

VIII. The Critique of Teleology. At the beginning of the Appendix to Part One of the *Ethics*, Spinoza states:

All the prejudices I here undertake to expose depend on this one: that men commonly suppose that all natural things act, as men do, on account of an end; indeed, they maintain as

³³Cf. KV I, 22 (I/101/3–7) and KV II xxiv (I/107/1). For Spinoza's critique of those who claim to know God only through created things, see TTP Ch. 2 (III/30).

³⁴Spinoza (1962, 29).

³⁵Letter 73.

³⁶See, for example, the first two chapters of the TTP and Spinoza's correspondence with Van Blijenbergh (Letters 18–24).

³⁷See Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, Part I, Chapter 26. For an excellent and comprehensive account of Maimonides' influence on Spinoza (including the critique of anthropomorphism), see Warren Zeev Harvey (1981, 151–72 [esp. 164]).

³⁸See, for example, *Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Hulin*, 4b; cf. *Tractate Nedarim*, 3a, and *Tractate Avoda Zara*, 27a.

certain that God directs all things to some certain end, for they say that God has made all things for man, and man that he might worship God (II/78/1–6).

Being aware of their appetites—and ignorant of the causes of these appetites—people believe that their actions are freely determined by the purposes they set for themselves (E1app (II/78/18–22) and E4Pref (II/206–7)).³⁹ They also believe that other intelligent beings act in a similar way. When they find various things in nature that are useful for them and know that these things were not created by human beings, they feign the existence of gods and assume that the gods created those things for the sake of man. Being ignorant of the nature of these gods, people assume that they are just like them, though much more powerful. Thus, they try to satisfy the gods with gifts, offerings, and prayers (E1App). This, *in nuce*, is Spinoza's analysis of the genealogy of religion.

For Spinoza, this kind of thinking is a mixture of illusion, ignorance, and *hubris*. *Deus sive Natura* acts and exists for the sake of no end (E4Pref| II/207/1). Of course, human beings can use nonhuman individuals for their own advantage, but these nonhuman individuals can just as well use humans for their sake. For a human being to eat a cow is no more *natural* than for a lion to devour a human being, or even for one human being to eat another. None of these individuals was created for the sake of another.

For Spinoza, the most crucial error of teleological thinking seems to be the inversion of the infinite-finite relation. When people believe that God acts for the sake of man and in order to be praised by man, they make the infinite depend on the finite; furthermore, to the extent that God, allegedly, acts in order to attain something he lacks, teleological thinking makes the infinite God—imperfect:

This doctrine concerning the end turns nature completely upside down. For what is really a cause, it considers as an effect, and conversely. What is by nature prior, it makes posterior. And finally, what is supreme and most perfect, it makes imperfect (E1App| II/80/10–14).

IX. *The Problem of Evil*. Spinoza has a simple and clear-cut solution to the problem of evil that at first may appear similar to traditional theodicy, such as Leibniz's: the idea of evil is merely a result of the limitedness of human thinking. But when we ask Spinoza to elaborate, we receive a response radically different from any traditional theodicy. According to Spinoza, when human beings say that a certain particular—whether it is an act, a person, or an event—is evil, what they actually do is to compare the particular in question with a certain perfection it *could* have and judge that it *could have been* better. To put the same idea in Spinoza's own words, evil "is only a privation of a more perfect state" (Letter 19| IV/91/3). In order to judge that the particular in question could have been more perfect, we compare the particular to a universal under which it falls. Realizing that the universal is much better ("more perfect"), we judge the particular to be evil. However, Spinoza

³⁹Notice that for Spinoza the rejection of necessity and the belief in free will are preconditions for the emergence of teleological thinking (E1app|II/78/21). The issue of teleology in Spinoza has recently been a subject of intensive debate. Unfortunately, I cannot weigh in here on this important question.

argues, the use of universals is a mark of the limitedness of human cognitive faculties. Universals belong to a certain cognitive compensation mechanism that helps us find our way in the world in spite of the strict limitations of our perception and memory, which cannot conceive a great number of particulars with all their characteristics. Thus, for example, when we see seven flying monsters, we form the concept of a “flying monster” in order to avoid the difficult task of conceiving these seven particulars with all their detailed characteristics.⁴⁰ When *God* thinks of particulars he does not conceive them through these abstract universals, but rather knows them directly in their particularity (Letter 19| IV/92/1; Cf. E4Pref| II/207/19).⁴¹ Knowing that the particular in question could not act otherwise, God does not judge it to be lacking anything that would naturally belong to it. Thus, Spinoza argues that privation and evil “can be said only in relation to our intellect, not in relation to God’s” (Letter 19| IV/92/20). From God’s perspective, says Spinoza, appetite for the good belongs to the nature of a wicked person no more than it belongs to the nature of a stone; hence, neither the stone nor the wicked person is *deprived* of goodness (Letter 21| IV/129/1). In other words, for Spinoza, “evil”—as privation of the perfection of goodness—cannot be attributed to Hitler any more than to a rock.

Had Spinoza witnessed the great earthquake in Lisbon, his response would have been straightforward and simple: there was *nothing* evil in that event. The land of the city was just exhibiting its particular nature, and it was *as perfect as it could be*. To say that the mass death that resulted from that event was evil is to make the erroneous comparison between a particular (“the land of Lisbon,” or a certain person who perished in that event) and a universal (“land,” or “humanity,” respectively), and falsely conclude that the particular lacks a perfection which naturally belongs to it.

X. *Spinoza’s Amoralism*. Given the title of Spinoza’s main work⁴² and the fact that a considerable part of the book deals with the improvement of human conduct, one may be surprised to find Spinoza described as an “amoralist”. Nevertheless, this title is recurrently ascribed to Spinoza, and, I believe, rightly so.⁴³ For Spinoza’s “moral theory” is essentially nothing but a *theory of prudence*. It begins with a clear egoistic foundation and proceeds to show that a prudent egoist would in many respects behave in a way that would be *judged* righteous by common morality, and that he would adopt characteristics that fit the common understanding of

⁴⁰For Spinoza’s account of universals, see E2p40s1. Cf. TdIE §99 (II/36/18) and CM I, I (I/235/22–5).

⁴¹“We, on the contrary, attribute knowledge of singular things to God, and deny him a knowledge of universals, except insofar as he understands human minds (*Cogitata Metaphysica*, II, vii [I/263/9]).

⁴²Since Spinoza’s *summum bonum* is nothing but the knowledge of God (E4p28), it seems that his ethical discussion begins with the very first definition of Part I of the *Ethics*; hence the aptness of the title of the work.

⁴³Spinoza himself clearly expected the charge of amoralism to be brought against him. See E4p18s (II/223/21–4): “I have done this to win, if possible, the attention of those who believe that this principle—that everyone is bound to seek his own advantage—is the foundation, not of virtue and morality, but of immorality.”

virtue.⁴⁴ Spinoza's is indeed a very peculiar kind of egoism. One may name it "Egoism without Ego," for, as we have already seen, Spinoza rejects the robust unity of the self.⁴⁵ Yet, notwithstanding the fuzziness and weakness of the Spinozistic self, Spinoza encourages each entity to concentrate on the promotion of its own true good.

As I have already mentioned, in the Appendix to Part One of the *Ethics*, Spinoza includes *good* and *evil* in the list of prejudices that result from the belief that man is the end of nature (E1App| II/78/10 and II/81/30). Following this list, Spinoza provides a short elucidation of the common understanding of good and evil: "What conduces to health and the worship of God, they have called *good*; but what is contrary to these, *evil*" (II/81/35). Spinoza's own definition of good and evil—though it excludes the relevancy of the worship of God—does not radically differ from the above common understanding of these two notions:

By Good I shall understand what we certainly know to be useful to us [*Per bonum id intelligam, quod certo scimus nobis esse utile*].

By Evil, however, I shall understand what we certainly know prevents us from beings masters of some good [*Per malum autem id, quod certo scimus impedire, quominus boni alicuius simus compotes*] (E4d1 & 2).⁴⁶

Along the same line that takes *good* and *evil* (as commonly understood) to be human prejudices, Spinoza includes *just* in the list of anthropomorphic predicates that we erroneously ascribe to God.⁴⁷

The most fundamental doctrine of Spinoza's "moral theory" appears already in the third part of the *Ethics*. This is the famous doctrine of the *conatus*: "The striving [*conatus*] by which each thing strives to preserve in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing" (E3p7). In the fourth part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza relies on the doctrine of the *conatus* in order to claim that since the *conatus* is the essence of man, human *virtue* is nothing but human *power* (E4d8 and E4p20d). Thus, the more a person strives to persevere in his being—and does so *prudently*—the more he is endowed with virtue. The more an act strengthens a person's power to preserve herself, the better this act is. In the *Theological Political Treatise*, Spinoza embarks on a very similar line in claiming that an individual's right—no matter whether this individual is a human being, an animal, or a state—extends as far as its power does.⁴⁸

⁴⁴For a helpful discussion of Spinoza's egoism, see Della Rocca (2004).

⁴⁵For a detailed discussion of the weakness of individuation in Spinoza, see my article, "Acosmism or Weak Individuals? Hegel, Spinoza, and the Reality of the Finite" (2009).

⁴⁶See E2p29s for equally self-centered definitions of 'praise' and 'blame': "*The Joy with which we imagine the action of another by which he has striven to please us I call Praise. On the other hand, the Sadness with which we are averse to his action I call Blame.*"

⁴⁷*Theological Political Treatise*, Ch. 4 (III/65). Cf. E4p37s2 (II/239). For a compelling argument regarding Maimonides' influence on Spinoza's conception of good and evil, see Harvey (1981, 158–60).

⁴⁸See *Theological Political Treatise*, Preface (III/11), Chapters 16 (III/189) and 20.

It is important to note that Spinoza does not limit the identification of right and power only to the state of nature. Even in the political state, the supreme right of the sovereign is nothing but a reflection of its supreme power.

With regard to political theory, the difference between Hobbes and myself, which is the subject of your inquiry, consists in this, that I always preserve the natural right in its entirety, and I hold that the sovereign power in a State *has right over a subject only in proportion to the excess of its power over that of a subject.*⁴⁹

When Spinoza advises the sovereign to promote the wellbeing of all his subjects,⁵⁰ he is merely counseling *prudence*. A state that promotes the wellbeing of all subjects, Spinoza thinks, is more stable and less likely to go through internal turmoil. Therefore, a prudent sovereign will seek to promote the general good—or at least will make the impression that he does so—*for his own sake*.⁵¹

Admittedly, from this very egoistic foundation of his practical philosophy, Spinoza derives many counsels that we would willingly embrace. He suggests that we should treat other human beings—or at least the wisest among them—in a just and honorable way, since in nature there is nothing more *useful* to us than the friendship of other—wise—people (E4p18s). However, think about the following situation. Suppose the commander of an extermination camp was a strict Spinozist. Was he doing anything wrong according to Spinoza?⁵² It was within his *power* to kill 10,000 people a day and therefore this act would seem perfectly within his *right*. Of course, one may say that killing 10,000 people is not very prudent: one risks the revenge of the families and friends of those executed,⁵³ and it is also imprudent because this commander could *use* these thousands of people (or the wisest among them) as friends.⁵⁴ But is this really what we mean when we say that it was wrong to

⁴⁹Letter 50 (IV/238–9); italics mine. Cf. *Theological Political Treatise*, Chapter 16, p. 177, and Chapter 20, p. 223.

⁵⁰See *Theological Political Treatise*, Ch. 16 (III/194) “In their own interest and to retain their rule, it especially behooves [the governments] to look to the public good.”

⁵¹See Curley’s reading of Spinoza as the “most Machiavellian of the great modern political philosophers” (1996, 315). Cf. Spinoza’s own sympathetic evaluation of Machiavelli (*Political Treatise*, Ch. 5 | III/296–7)

⁵²In E4p45d Spinoza claims that it is evil to destroy a man we hate. This is so, however, primarily because hate (which is a kind of sadness for Spinoza), is in itself evil.

⁵³At the beginning of the 20th Chapter of the TTP (III/240), Spinoza argues that it is not within the right of a tyrant to liquidate his citizens for the most trivial reasons, since such a behavior will put the government in great risk. Thus, Spinoza continues, such behavior is not within the absolute power of the sovereign (and therefore not within his right). While this political rule of thumb may work in many, perhaps most, cases, Spinoza fails to provide any strict proof ruling out the possibility that on certain uncommon occasions it may well be within the sovereign’s interest to eliminate some or all of his citizens in order to secure his well being. It is not difficult to construct various scenarios of this sort.

⁵⁴And finally, this mass killing might be imprudent, and hence evil, because society imposes certain emotions on its members, so that they will be mentally tormented by guilty feelings were they to conduct illegitimate killings. Yet, these considerations remain well within the domain of the egoistically imprudent.

be a commander of an extermination camp? Do we merely mean that it was simply imprudent and not conducive to one's own advantage?

9.4 Spinoza's Radical Naturalism

XI. *No Dominion within Dominion.* In the course of modern philosophy, we find a central humanistic stream of thought that attempts to secure humanity a distinguished place, elevated above nature. Spinoza, to my mind, is a foe, not a friend, of this tradition. In the preface to the third part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza famously criticizes those who

conceived man in nature as a dominion within dominion [*imperium in imperio*]. For they believe that man disturbs, rather than follows [*sequi*], the order of nature, that he has absolute power over his actions, and that he is determined only by himself (II/137/10–15).⁵⁵

Whether it is the capacity to act *freely, morally,*⁵⁶ *rationally,* or have *self-consciousness*, Spinoza denies that any of these characteristics separate humanity from the rest of nature.⁵⁷ Human bodies follow precisely the same laws that govern the body of the snail, and ideas of human bodies (i.e., human minds) are governed by precisely the same laws that govern the mind of the snail.

In the midst of his discussion of the human mind in the second part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza notes:

The things which we have shown so far are completely general and do not pertain more to man than to other Individuals, all of which, though in different degrees, are nevertheless animate. For of each thing there is necessarily an idea in God, of which God is the cause in the same way as he is of the idea of the human Body. And so, whatever we have said about the idea of the human Body, must also be said of the idea of any thing. (E2p13s| II/96/26–32)

One bold implication of this passage is that snails—and apparently rocks as well—are self-conscious. Since, for Spinoza, self-consciousness is nothing but having a second-order idea of the body, Spinoza would *have to hold* that snails are self-conscious. In the passage above, he states explicitly that all things have minds

⁵⁵Cf. *Cogitata Metaphysica*, II, ix (I/267/10: “[M]an is part of Nature, which must be coherent with the other parts”).

⁵⁶In E3p5 to E3p9, Spinoza explicitly claims that “all things”—rocks and hippopotamuses included—have *conatus*. Since his theory of the affects is mostly an explication of the doctrine of the *conatus*, there seems to be no reason why we could not construct similar theories of the affects of rocks and hippopotamuses (alas, the latter would be quite dull). Since the doctrine of the *conatus* and the theory of affects provide the foundations for Spinoza's moral theory, it seems likely that we could even construct a moral theory for hippopotamuses and rocks (provided that Spinoza's “moral theory” for human beings is recognized as a genuine moral theory).

⁵⁷Traditional Aristotelian and scholastic philosophy (with its conception of various kinds of souls) seems to suggest much more continuity between humans and other living beings than the modern philosophies of Descartes and Kant. On this issue, Spinoza seems to be much closer to his medieval predecessors than to most modern philosophers.

(i.e., ideas of their bodies), and since the doctrines of divine omniscience (E2p3) and parallelism (E2p7) commits him to the view that all ideas have their parallel second-order ideas (insofar as ideas too *are* things and must be conceived by one of God's ideas⁵⁸), it seems that all bodies—snails and rocks included—have their own second-order ideas and are thus self-conscious.

A view which states that snails know God's essence and that the snail's mind is eternal may seem even more striking.⁵⁹ However, when we look closely at Spinoza's proofs of the doctrines that the human mind has an adequate knowledge of God (E2p45–7), and of the eternity of the human mind (E5p22–23), we see that both proofs rely on very general considerations about the relation of individual minds to God. There seems to be *nothing* in these proofs which is peculiar to the human mind, and apparently nothing that would preclude a construction of similar proofs regarding the snail's—or even the rock's—mind.⁶⁰ To view snails and rocks as having adequate knowledge of God as well as eternal minds is indeed quite daring,⁶¹ but it seems to be a clear result of Spinoza's strict naturalism, which denies *any* chasm between human and non-human individuals in nature.

Spinoza does recognize that different particulars have different natures, and though they all strive to persevere in their being, each particular does so in its own way:

Though each individual lives content with his own nature, by which he is constituted, and is glad of it, nevertheless that life with which each one is content, and that gladness, are nothing but the idea, or soul [*anima*], of that individual. And so the gladness of the one differs in nature from the gladness of the other as much as the essence of the one differs from the essence of the other. (E3p57s)

Spinoza also acknowledges that there is a difference of *degree* between the intelligence of the snail and that of human beings (and between the intelligence of any two individuals, in general). He takes this difference to be the mental parallel to the physical difference between the complexity and capabilities of the snail's body and those of the human body:

[T]o determine what is the difference between the human mind and the others, and how it surpasses them, it is necessary for us, as we have said, to know the nature of its object, that is, of the human body. I say this in general, that in proportion as a Body is more capable than others of doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once, so its Mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once. And in proportion as the actions of a body depend more on itself alone, and as other bodies concur with it less in acting, so its mind is more capable of understanding distinctly. And from these we can know the excellence of one mind over the other. (E2p13s| II/97/7)

⁵⁸See E2p20d and its reliance on E2p3 and E2p7.

⁵⁹I discuss this issue in more detail in a yet unpublished paper, "Spinoza on the Fish's Knowledge of God's Essence."

⁶⁰For a similar point, see Wilson (1999, 343).

⁶¹"It would follow that a tiny, but only a tiny, portion of brutes' minds is 'eternal'. (As much or more as in the case of human babies? Who can tell?)" (Wilson 1999, 350 n.27).

Spinoza relies on the same general principle in order to explain the difference in mental capacities between children and adults (E5p39s| II/305/25). Thus, the difference between man and other animals is of the same kind as (though apparently greater than) the difference between two people or *any* two individuals.⁶²

XII. *Spinoza's Speciesism*. Given Spinoza's denial that human beings are qualitatively elevated above the rest of nature, it is interesting to view Spinoza's strong objection to vegetarianism:

The law against killing animals is based more on empty superstitions and unmanly compassion [*muliebri misericordia*] than sound reason. The rational principle of seeking our own advantage teaches us the necessity of joining with men, but not with the lower animals [*brutis*], or with things whose nature is different from human nature. We have the same right against them as they have against us. Indeed, because the right of each other is defined by his virtue, or [*seu*] power, men have a greater right against the lower animals than they have against men. Not that I deny that the lower animals have sensations. But I do deny that we are therefore not permitted to consider our own advantage, use them at our pleasure, and treat them as is most convenient for us. For they do not agree in nature with us, and their affects are different in nature from human affects. (E4p37s1)

As one can easily see from this passage, Spinoza refuses to invoke any *meta-physical* difference that grants humanity a special value. His argument against vegetarianism is simple and straightforward. Assuming that

1. Human beings are more powerful than other animals (premise), and that
 2. Right is identical with power (premise),
- we can conclude that
3. Human beings have more right than other animals (from [1] and [2]).
- Having more right than weaker beings "allows" us to use them for whatever purpose we prefer. Yet, since
4. The best way to use another being is to join with it in friendship (premise),
- we could have thought that
5. It is best for us to use other animals (or any weak beings) as friends (from [3] and [4]).
- Spinoza reminds us, however, that
6. The natures of other animals is significantly different from ours (premise), and therefore
 7. We cannot communicate with animals (from [6]).⁶³
- But, since
8. Communication is a pre-condition for friendship (premise), it is clear that

⁶²That Spinoza considered animals to be—to some extent—rational can be seen also from his talk about "the animals which are *called* [*dicuntur*] irrational" (E3p57s| II/187/5; my emphasis).

⁶³Although he does not mention it explicitly, Spinoza seems to be relying here on the doctrine of the imitation of affects (E3p27).

9. We cannot use animals as friends (from [6]–[8]).
 From (3), (4), and (9) we can finally conclude that
 10. Since we cannot use animals as our friends, we can—and may—use them in any other way.

It is not hard to detect here the principles of Spinoza's egoistic "ethics" (seeking one's own advantage) and politics (the identification of right with power). This time, however, they are applied to a group—human beings—rather than to a specific individual. To the extent that this group has any *power* over another group, it has the *right* to use members of the other group "at their pleasure." Fortunately, Spinoza did not believe that there are species of human beings that are superior (even only in degree) to other humans;⁶⁴ for otherwise Spinoza would have to be counted among the founders of modern racism. Yet, were I a young child, an autistic person, or even someone who refuses the friendship of B.d.S.,⁶⁵ I would think twice before becoming his neighbor.

9.5 Epilogue

XIII. In the current paper, I have not touched upon several important issues that are relevant to Spinoza's critique of humanism. These include Spinoza's reason for supporting democracy, his view of women, his rejection of the separation of state and religion, and the extent to which Spinoza's metaphysics allows him to talk seriously about a unified human nature (i.e., a nature or essence that is shared by all human beings). Also, I have mostly avoided evaluating Spinoza's claims. My aim here was to shatter a popular myth that celebrates Spinoza as a hero of modern humanism and liberalism. The Spinoza I perceive is far darker and more complicated. I do find his criticism of humanistic hubris extremely important and powerful, and there are at least *parts* of this criticism that I would like to accept. But there are also other aspects of his thought (primarily those dealing with morality) that I find quite unsettling. Whether Spinoza's criticism of human hubris can be separated from his view of morality is, I think, a crucial question.

The four aspects of Spinoza view of humanity discussed in this paper—man's marginality, the illusions resulting from anthropomorphic thinking, Spinoza's strict naturalism about human beings, and his amorality—do not logically necessitate each other; one can consistently adopt each of these positions while rejecting the other three. Yet, they do, I believe, fit with and support each other. Taken together, they constitute a certain comprehensive view, which does not follow from any one of these doctrines alone. This comprehensive view neither ridicules nor eliminates man (as Hegel tends to think),⁶⁶ but rather attempts to remind him of his rather humble

⁶⁴See *Theological-Political Treatise*, Chapter 3, (III/47).

⁶⁵Indeed, in the TTP (Ch. 16, III/196), Spinoza makes clear that anyone who refuses to be an ally (or citizen) of the state should be considered an enemy against whom any measures may be used.

⁶⁶"[In Spinoza] The world has no true reality, and all this that we know as the world has been cast into the abyss of the one identity. There is therefore no such thing as finite reality, it has no truth

and limited place in nature. In a word, it cuts short any talk of *human dignity*⁶⁷ or of the *inner value* of humanity (insofar as this dignity is not shared, to a degree, by snails and rocks as well). A nice way to illustrate this point is by contrasting Spinoza's view of humanity with the opening lines of Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798):

The fact that the human being can have the "I" in his representations raises him infinitely above all other living beings on earth. Because of this he is a *person* [*Person*], and by virtue of the unity of consciousness through all changes that happen to him, one and the same person—i.e., through rank and dignity [*Rang und Würde*] and entirely different being from *things* [*Sachen*], such as irrational animals, with which one can do as one likes. (Kant 2006, 15 [Ak. 7:127])⁶⁸

Hardly a single one of these claims is true, Spinoza would respond. Man is endowed by no special unity of consciousness, no personality or rationality not shared by other beings, and therefore, no preeminence or distinguishing dignity.

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whatever; according to Spinoza what is, is God, and God alone. Therefore the allegations of those who accuse Spinoza of atheism are the direct opposite of the truth; with him there is too much God. They say: if God is the identity of mind and nature, then nature or the individual man is God. This is quite correct, but they forget that nature and the individual disappear in this same identity; *and they cannot forgive Spinoza for thus annihilating them*. Those who defame him in such a way as this are therefore not aiming at maintaining God, but at maintaining the finite and the worldly; *they do not fancy their own extinction . . .*" (Hegel 1995, vol. 3, 281–2; italics mine). Hegel is fully aware of Spinoza's critique of modern humanism and pays very close attention to most of the issues discussed in this paper. Hegel notes that, in Spinoza's system, there is "an utter blotting out of the principle of subjectivity, individuality, personality, the moment of self-consciousness in Being" (Hegel 1995, vol. 3, 287).

⁶⁷For the contrast between *market price* (relative worth) and *dignity* (inner worth), see Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Ak. 4:434–5).

⁶⁸Strikingly, Spinoza and Kant, in spite of their opposing views of the value of humanity, arrive at almost the same perspective on the issue of human treatment of animals. Compare Kant's last sentence at the passage above with Spinoza's claim in E4p37s1 that since we cannot use animals as friends we "may use them at our pleasure, and treat them as is most convenient for us." For a recent endorsement of the view that grounds "the distinctive dignity of human beings" in human self-consciousness, See Manfred Frank (1995, 80).

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