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The Earliest Draft of Spinoza's *Ethics*

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Introduction

The two manuscripts of the *Short Treatise* discovered in the mid-nineteenth century contain two appendices.[1] These appendices are even more enigmatic than the *Short Treatise* itself, and the first appendix is the subject of this study. Unfortunately, there are very few studies of this text, and its precise nature seems to be still in question after more than a century and a half of scholarship.[2] It is commonly assumed that the appendices were written after the body of the *Short Treatise*, and I am not going to challenge this assumption.[3] The first appendix is written in a geometric manner, and it contains seven axioms and four propositions. *Strikingly, it does not include any definitions*. This is in sharp contrast with Spinoza's *Ethics* and his 1663 book, *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy*, which are similarly written in a geometric manner but include *both* definitions and axioms. One could perhaps suspect that the text we currently have is merely a fragment from a more extensive work that included definitions. In my chapter, I will show that this is not the case, and that the first appendix belongs to a genuine work of Spinoza that *never* contained definitions. I would further argue that the first appendix is most probably the earliest draft we currently have of Spinoza's *magnum opus*, the *Ethics*, but we have a long way to go before we reach that conclusion.[4]

Generally, the content of the first appendix (henceforth KV-A1) is close to two other texts: the second chapter of the first part of the *Short Treatise*, entitled "What God Is," and the first eight to ten propositions of *Ethics* Part 1. A major theme of this piece is the problem of individuation. On this issue, as well as a few others, it sheds new light and helps explain some long-standing problems in the argumentation of the *Ethics*. Let me also note that in one of the two manuscripts the first appendix is introduced by the title "On God," which is the title of *Ethics*

Part 1.[5] Although the extant two manuscripts of the *Short Treatise* are in Dutch, the titles of the various sections of KV-A1 are in Latin, i.e., "*Axiomata*" rather than "*Kundigheden*" and "*Propositio*" rather than "*Voorstelling*."[6] With these introductory characterizations in mind, let us delve into a study of this very brief and intriguing text. I will begin by discussing the seven axioms, in the course of which I will also note a crucial and hitherto unnoticed link between one of the axioms and a key Kabbalistic doctrine. Following an examination of the four propositions and demonstrations in the second part of the chapter, I will turn, in the third part, to showing that KV-A1 is most probably the earliest draft of the *Ethics* that we currently have.

I. Axioms

The first axiom of the Appendix reads:

> Substance is, by its nature, prior to all its modifications. [*De zelfstandigheid staat wegens syn natuur voor alle syne toevallen (modificationes).*] [KV-A1a1]

The axiom is virtually identical to the first *proposition* of *Ethics* Part 1:

> A substance is prior in nature to its affections. [*Substantia prior est natura suis affectionibus.*] [E1p1]

It is clear why the same claim appears as an axiom in KV-A1 and as a proposition in the *Ethics*. In the *Ethics*, the demonstration of this proposition (E1p1d) relies immediately on the definitions of substance and mode (E1d3 and E1d5). KV-A1 has no such definitions; hence, the claim must be accepted as an axiom.[7]

The body of the *Short Treatise* has no parallel to KV-A1a1. Moreover, the very notion of mode [*wijz*] plays hardly any role in the first chapters of *Short Treatise* Part 1, where the book's basic ontology is introduced. Even the very brief *Short Treatise* sections dealing specifically with *Natura naturata* (KV, I, chs. viii–ix) tell us very little about the nature of modes, and much of what is written there will be explicitly rejected in the *Ethics*.[8]

The second axiom of the Appendix reads:

> Things that are different are distinguished either really or modally. [*De dingen welke verscheiden zyn, worden onderscheiden, of dadelyk of toevallig.*] [KV-A1a2]

The closest claim in the *Ethics* is E1p4:

> Two or more distinct things are distinguished from one another, either by a difference in the attributes of the substances or by a difference in their affections.

> [*Duae aut plures res distinctae vel inter se distinguuntur ex diversitate attributorum substantiarum, vel ex diversitate earundem affectionum.*] [E1p4]

The body of the *Short Treatise* does not contain any clear equivalent to KV-A1a2. The closest claim—"That there are not two equal substances" [KV, I, ch. ii, §2]—is much vaguer and very different from KV-A1a2.

On a first reading, one might think that E1p4 is also quite different from KV-A1a2: both texts suggest that two things may be distinguished by their modes, but while E1p4 asserts that two things may also be distinguished by their *attributes*, the second axiom of KV-A1 has instead "real distinction," which one might think is a distinction between *substances*.[9] However, the third axiom of KV-A1 elaborates on the nature of real distinction in a manner that seems to close the gap between KV-A1 and E1p4 by explicating real distinction in terms of distinction by *attributes*. Thus, the combination of KV-A1a2 and KV-A1a3 amounts, more or less, to E1p4:

> Things that are distinguished really either have different attributes, like thought and extension, or are related to different attributes, like understanding and motion, of which the one belongs to thought, the other to extension. [*De dingen welke dadelyk onderscheiden worden, hebben of verscheide eigenschappen, gelyk als denking en uytgebreidheid, of worden toegepast aan verscheide eigenschappen, als verstaaning en beweeging, welkers eene behoort tot de denking, en het ander tot de uytgebreidheid.*] [KV-A1a3]

One question that Axiom 3 invites is in what sense can a thing be "related to an attribute" while not having it. In other words, what is the nature of the relation the understanding has to thought, and motion to extension (if it is not the relation of having either of the latter as an attribute)? As far as I can see, Spinoza is trying here to draw an interesting distinction between how substance relates to its attributes (i.e., it *has* the attributes), and the relation of the modes to the attributes to which they belong (i.e., they are *related*—a rather generic term—to the attributes).[10]

The demonstration of E1p4 relies on three definitions—E1d3, E1d4, and E1d5. Since the Appendix contains no definitions, it is clear that the claims asserted in its second and third axioms had to be presented as axioms rather than propositions.[11]

The fourth axiom of the Appendix reads:

> Things that have different attributes, as well as those that belong to different attributes, have nothing in themselves the one from the other. [*De dingen welke verscheide eigenschappen hebben, als mede de dingen welke behooren tot verscheide eigenschappen, en hebben in zig geen dink de eene van de ander.*] [KV-A1a4]

The fourth axiom of the Appendix has a close, but not precise, parallel in the *Ethics*.

> Two substances having different attributes have nothing in common with one another. [*Duae substantiae, diversa attributa habentes, nihil inter se commune habent.*] [E1p2]

I take "having nothing in themselves the one from the other" in Axiom 4 of KV-A1 to be the same as "having nothing in common with one another" in E1p2.[12] However, Axiom 4 also contains the provision that "things that *belong to different attributes* … have nothing in themselves the one from the other," which is absent from E1p2 (its closest *Ethics* equivalent is E2p6). It is possible that by the time Spinoza wrote the final version of the *Ethics* he thought that the "belonging to different attributes" provision was redundant, since in E1p1 he already proved that substance is prior to its affections.[13]

Let's turn now to the fifth axiom of the Appendix:

> What has nothing in itself from another thing can also not be the cause of the existence of such another thing. [*Dat geene 't welk in zig niet heeft iets van een ander dink, en kan ook geen oorzaak zyn van de wezentlykheid van zulk een ander dink.*] [KV-A1a5]

The *Ethics* analogue of KV-A1a5 is E1p3:

> If things have nothing in common with one another, one of them cannot be the cause of the other. [*Quae res nihil commune inter se habent, earum una alterius causa esse non potest.*] [E1p3]

Axiom 6 is the only axiom in the Appendix that has no close parallel in the beginning of the *Ethics*.[14] It reads:

> What is a cause of itself could not possibly have limited itself. [*Dat geene 't welk een oorzaak is van zig zelfs, is onmogelyk dat het zig zelfs zoude hebben bepaald.*][15] [KV-A1a6]

In the *Ethics*, Spinoza proves that a substance must be a cause of itself (E1p7d) and infinite (E1p8), i.e., that a substance, or a cause of itself, *is unlimited*. Yet KV-A1a6 does not simply state that the cause of itself *is unlimited*, but rather that "*it could not possibly have limited itself*." What is the reason for the subjunctive mood of this axiom? Why would anyone think that the cause-of-itself *could* have limited itself?[16]

To answer this question, we need to make a brief historical detour. Pantheism had been openly advocated by mainstream Kabbalists already by the thirteenth

century.[17] In this context, Kabbalists frequently noted that the numerical value of the Hebrew word for God, *Elohim*, equals the numerical value of the Hebrew word for nature, *teva*. They relied on this equation to claim that God is identical with nature. Unlike many of their Christian contemporaries, the Kabbalists, at least until the eighteenth century, hardly developed any anxieties about pantheism. Yet the new strand of the Kabbalah, which evolved in sixteenth-century Safed, and was primarily associated with the school of Rabbi Yitzhak Luria (1534–1572), developed the doctrine of the *zimzum*, or divine self-limitation. According to this doctrine, before the creation of the world, God's infinite light withdrew his presence to the margins of the universe and created an empty space (*tahiro*) apparently free from divine presence, in which the drama of our world could take place.

Most Kabbalists adopted Lurianic Kabbalah and the doctrine of the *zimzum* within a very short time period. Yet even among Luria's immediate disciples one can discern allegorical interpretations of the contraction process (*zimzum shelo kepshuto*), interpretations that amount to reaffirming God's presence in the totality of nature, thereby reasserting pantheism. One of the pivotal figures who advocated the non-literal or allegorical interpretation of the *zimzum* was the major Amsterdam Kabbalist, Avraham Cohen de Herrera (*c.*1562–1635). Herrera, a former *converso*, studied the Kabbalah in the Balkans with the noted Kabbalist Rabbi Israel Sarug (fl. 1590–1610), who himself claimed to have studied it directly with Yitzhak Luria.[18] Herrera died in 1635 when Spinoza was just three years old, but his influence on the Spanish-Portuguese Jewish community in seventeenth-century Amsterdam was decisive. Most Rabbinic figures in this community counted themselves as his disciples. That Spinoza was well aware of the pantheistic nature of the Kabbalah we can learn from his remarks in a 1675 letter.[19] I suspect, although at this stage I cannot prove, that the sixth axiom of KV-A1 was Spinoza's own contribution to the then ongoing debate on the proper interpretation of the doctrine of the *zimzum*, i.e., Spinoza—just like Herrera—rejected the notion of divine contraction or self-limitation. This suggestion could easily explain why the sixth axiom is directed particularly against *divine* self-limitation. Remarkably, KV-A1a6 has thus far never been addressed in the extensive, three-centuries-old literature on Spinoza and the Kabbalah.[20]

The seventh and final axiom of the Appendix reads:

> That by which things are distinguished is by its nature prior to such things. [*Dat geene door 't welke de dingen onderscheiden worden, is wegens syn ~~natuurhet~~ eerste (eerder) in zoodanige dingen.*] [KV-A1a7]

Although there is no *precise* parallel to this axiom in the *Ethics*,[21] the following paragraph from E1p5d seems nevertheless to make a very similar claim.

> If [two substances were distinguished] by a difference in their affections, *then since a substance is prior in nature to its affections (by E1p1)*,[22] if the affections are put to one side and [the substance] is considered in itself, i.e. (by E1d3 and E1a6), considered truly, one cannot be conceived to be distinguished from another, i.e. (by E1p4), there cannot be many, but only one. [E1p5d]

This passage relies on E1p1 ("a substance is prior in nature to its affections") in order to argue that substances cannot be individuated by affections that are posterior to the substance, which is also the main point of the seventh axiom of KV-A1. As far as I can see, the body of the *Short Treatise* contains no parallel to KV-A1a7. I turn now to the four propositions that constitute the second half of KV-A1.

II. The Four Propositions of KV-A1

The first proposition of KV-A1 and its demonstration read:

> To no substance which really exists can we relate [*toegepast worden*] the same attribute that is related to another substance, or (what is the same) in Nature there cannot be two substances unless they are distinguished really.[23] [KV-A1p1]
>
> If the two substances are two, they are different. And consequently (by KV-A1a2) are distinguished, either really or modally. Not modally, for then (by KV-A1a7) the modifications by their nature would be prior to the substance (contrary to KV-A1a1). Therefore, really. Hence what can be said of the one cannot (by ~~KVA1-a4~~) be said of the other. This is what we were trying to prove. [KV-A1p1d]

The *Ethics* equivalent of KV-A1p1 and its demonstration is E1p5d, which we have already encountered. In both texts, Spinoza argues that things cannot be distinguished through their modes, since this would make substances dependent on their modes. However, two important points are unique to the Appendix version of the demonstration. First, KV-A1p1d refers to the attributes as "what is said *of* the substance," which is a technical Aristotelian-Scholastic term.[24] Second, it refers to a distinction by attributes as a *real* distinction (while E1p5d does not employ that terminology). In KV-A1p1, just as in its *Ethics* parallel, Spinoza is not worried by the possibility Leibniz will later point out, i.e., that two substances can share *some* attributes and thus be distinguished by the attributes they do not share.[25] Finally, this proposition shows that KV-A1, unlike the *Short*

Treatise itself, is a resolutely un-Cartesian text, insofar as it does not allow for a plurality of substances sharing the same attribute.

The second proposition of KV-A1 addresses the issue of causal relations between substances:

> One substance cannot be the cause of the existence of another substance. [KV-A1p2]
>
> Such a cause can have nothing in itself of such an effect (by KV-A1p1), for the difference between them is real, and consequently (by KV-A1a5) it cannot produce [*voortbrengen*] it [existence [*wezentlykheid*]]. [KV-A1p2d]

The clear *Ethics* parallel of this proposition is E1p6, which relies on the very same justification—causation requires a shared attribute—in order to conclude that there cannot be causation among substances.

> One substance cannot be produced by another substance. [*Una substantia non potest produci ab alia substantia.*] [E1p6]
>
> In nature there cannot be two substances of the same attribute (by E1p5), i.e. (by E1p2), which have something in common with each other. Therefore (by E1p3) one cannot be the cause of the other, or cannot be produced by the other [*sive ab alia non potest produci*], q.e.d. [E1p6d]

One thing that we can learn from comparing KV-A1p2d and E1p6d is that, for Spinoza, *production* is just causing the existence of something. Here again, the ban on causal interaction between substances diverts significantly from Descartes's views.

The third proposition addresses the infinity of substance and attribute:

> Every attribute, or substance, is by its nature infinite, and supremely perfect in its kind [*oneyndig, en ten oppersten volmaakt in zyn geslacht*]. [KV-A1p3]
>
> No substance is produced by another (KV-A1p2); consequently, if it exists, it is either an attribute of God or it has been a cause of itself [*een oorzaak van zig zelfs*] outside God. If the first, then it is necessarily infinite and supremely perfect in its kind, as are all God's other attributes. If the second, it also must be such; for (by KV-A1a6) it could not have limited itself. [KV-A1p3d]

Let me suggest a few observations regarding this proposition. First, in the demonstration, Spinoza seems to move seamlessly between attribute and substance, treating the two as virtually identical (this attitude is present in other parts of the first appendix, as well as in the first drafts of the *Ethics* quoted in Ep. 2 and Ep. 4).[26] Second, the demonstration is the first time God is mentioned at all in KV-A1. In the absence of a definition of God, each is left to rely on her or his own

understanding of God. Presumably, the vast majority of Spinoza's contemporaries would agree that God is "necessarily infinite and supremely perfect in its kind." Still, in later drafts of the *Ethics*, Spinoza will state these points explicitly in the definition of God.[27] Third, there is no precise *Ethics* parallel to this proposition. Still, E1p8, its demonstration, and its first scholium cover most of the content and reasoning of the third proposition of KV-A1. Fourth, Spinoza's use of Axiom 6 in the demonstration shows that by the "limitation of a cause of itself," he meant an infinite substance turning into a finite substance. Fifth, the demonstration of Proposition Three allows for a plurality of *causa sui* substances (just as the possibility of a plurality of substances is not ruled out in the *Ethics* until E1p14).

The fourth and final proposition of the Appendix is its longest and most substantial unit.

> Existence belongs [*behoord*], by nature, to the essence of every substance, so much so [*ook zo zeer*] that it is impossible to posit in an infinite intellect the idea of the essence of a substance which does not exist in Nature. [KV-A1p4]

In E1p7, Spinoza proves that "it pertains [*pertinet*/*behoort*] to the nature of substance to exist," and the necessity to conceive of substance as existing is argued in E1p8s2 (relying partly on E1d1 and E1a7).[28] However, unlike these *Ethics* passages, the fourth proposition of KV-A1 refers specifically to *God's intellect*.[29] Let us turn now to the demonstration of the fourth proposition.

> The true essence of an object [*van een voorwerp*] is something which is really distinct from the Idea of that object, and this something (by KV-A1a2)[30] either exists really, or is contained in[31] [*begrepen in*] another thing which exists really and from which one cannot distinguish this essence really, but only modally [*wyzelyk* [*modaliter*]]; such are all the essences of things we see which, when they did not previously exist, were contained [*begrepen*] in extension, motion and rest, and which, when they do exist, are distinguished from extension not really, but only modally. And also it involves a self-contradiction to maintain that the essence of a substance is contained in another thing in this way, since in that case it would not be distinguished from it really (contrary to KV-A1p1); also, it could then be produced by the subject which contains [*begrypt*] it (contrary to KV-A1p2); and finally, it could not be infinite through its nature and supremely perfect in its kind (contrary to KV-A1p3). Therefore, because its essence is not contained [*begreepen*] in any other thing, it must be a thing that exists through itself. [KV-A1p4d/G I 116, l. 8–26]

Spinoza begins the demonstration by denying that essences are just ideas, a point he also stresses in the *Cogitata Metaphysica*.[32] He then moves to arguing

that the essence of substance cannot be "contained [*begrepen*]" in another substance (i.e., a thing which is really distinct from the original substance). The key to understanding Spinoza's claims here is the precise meaning of the term "*begrepen*." Fortunately, Spinoza makes very similar claims in E1p8s2. Let us have a look at this passage. I add in parentheses the corresponding Dutch terms from the *Nagelate Schriften*:

> This is how we can have true ideas of modifications which do not exist; for though they do not actually exist outside the intellect, nevertheless their essences are comprehended in another in such a way that they can be conceived through it [*hun wezentheit in een ander in ~~dir~~ yoegen begrepen, dat zy door 't zelfde bevat konnen worden*]. But the truth of substances is not outside the intellect unless it is in them themselves, because they are conceived through themselves. [E1p8s2/G II 50, l. 8–12]

For Spinoza, we can have true ideas of non-actualized modes because we can adequately "comprehend" their essences through their substance.[33] The relation *x is comprehended through y* must be closely related to the relation *x is conceived through y*, as Spinoza infers the second relation from the first in the third line of the last passage. Both in the above excerpt from E1p8s2 and in the demonstration of the fourth proposition of KV-A1, Spinoza argues that the essence of substance (unlike the essence of modes) cannot be "contained" or "comprehended" in another, and thus it must be contained in the substance itself. In the demonstration of the fourth proposition of KV-A1, Spinoza also relies on the second proposition of KV-A1 in order to infer that the *existence* of substance cannot be imported from outside it. Thus, both the essence of substance and its existence must be conceived through itself. In sum, the demonstration of the fourth proposition seems to rely on considerations very similar to E1p7d and E1p8s2.

I turn now to the corollary, the last textual unit of the fourth proposition (and of KV-A1 as a whole).

> Nature is known through itself, and not through any other thing. It consists of infinite attributes, each of which is infinite and perfect in its kind. Existence belongs to its essence, so that outside it there is no essence or being [*zyn*]. Hence it agrees exactly with the essence of God, who alone is magnificent [*heerlyke*][34] and blessed. [KV-A1p4c/G I 116, l. 27–32]

The conclusions of the corollary are virtually the same as in E1p11 ("God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists") and E1p15 ("whatever is, is in God, and

nothing can be or be conceived without God"). Still, the trajectory leading to these conclusions is quite unique. Most of the assertions in this corollary are not derived (or derivable) from earlier axioms or propositions in KV-A1. For this reason, and because it is the last textual unit of KV-A1, I assume the corollary is a very rough draft which Spinoza never polished. Were it to have been polished, Spinoza would have had to introduce new axioms. That being said, we should not miss the corollary's skeletal yet fascinating argument for the identity of God and Nature, which relies on a variant of the Identity of Indiscernibles. (1) God has infinitely many (and all[35]) attributes each of which is perfect in its kind (Premise). (2) Nature has infinitely many (and all) attributes each of which is perfect and infinite in its kind (Premise). Therefore, (3) God and Nature are indiscernible (from 1 and 2). Hence, (4) God and Nature must be identical (from 3 and the Identity of Indiscernibles). Perhaps at this point Spinoza realized that his axiomatic-system-sans-definitions makes his desired demonstrations highly cumbersome. Indeed, in the final version of the *Ethics*, Premise 1 of the above argument is stated as part of the definition of God (E1d6). Finally, the corollary comes very close to asserting the identity of God and Nature ("[Nature] agrees exactly with the essence of God"), but it stops just one tiny step short of explicitly inferring this conclusion.

III. The Nature of KV-A1

In an editorial gloss to his translation of KV-A1, Edwin Curley notes: "This appendix is not designated as such in the manuscript and is generally believed to be posterior to the main body of the *Treatise*."[36] Along the same lines, KV-A1 (as well as KV-A2) contains no explicit reference to any part of the *Short Treatise*. This is in contrast to the manner in which the *Cogitata Metaphysica* makes frequent reference to *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy*. Another crucial point we can establish by now is that the KV-A1 never contained a section of definitions. All the proofs of the four propositions are designed as relying merely on the seven axioms and the previous propositions.[37] It is a genuine manner of trying to present the core of Spinoza's metaphysics (at the time) in an axiomatic method, without relying on definitions.

In this part of the chapter, I will argue that KV-A1 is most likely the earliest draft of the *Ethics* that we currently have. I will first present a series of considerations aiming to show that KV-A1 is *a draft* of the *Ethics*, and then turn to arguing that it is *the earliest* draft. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the content of KV-A1 is somewhat similar to two other bodies of

texts in Spinoza's oeuvre: (1) The first eight propositions of *Ethics* Part 1 and (2) Chapters 1, 2, 8, and 9 of *Short Treatise* Part 1, which deal respectively with: God's existence, the nature of God, *Natura naturans*, and *Natura naturata* (other parts of the *Short Treatise* have much less in common with KV-A1). My chief claim would be that it is much more reasonable to consider KV-A1 as a draft of the beginning of the *Ethics* than as a reorganization of the aforementioned four chapters of KV Part 1. Already, while we were scrutinizing the axioms and propositions of KV-A1 in the earlier parts of this chapter, I frequently pointed out parallels between KV-A1 and the beginning of the *Ethics* (and, usually, the absence of such parallels with the body of the KV), but I will repeat some of these points in order to provide a more comprehensive picture.

Here then are the reasons to consider KV-A1 as a draft of the beginning of the *Ethics*:

(1) The most salient feature of KV-A1 is the use of the axiomatic method. The axiomatic method will become one of the most celebrated, daring, and scorned features of the *Ethics*. No part of the body of the *Short Treatise* exhibits such pattern of presentation. Piet Steenbakkers insightfully pointed out that unlike the other texts of Spinoza that were written in a geometrical manner—*Descartes' Principles of Philosophy*, the *Ethics*, and the excerpts from drafts of the *Ethics* mentioned in Spinoza's correspondence—KV-A1 is the only such text lacking explicit reference to the *mos* or *ordo geometricus*.[38] As far as I can see, there is a simple explanation for the absence of such an explicit reference. KV-A1 is an experiment, an experiment that turned out mostly successful, and led Spinoza to develop and finesse the method of exposition that his great predecessor, Descartes, claimed to be unfit for the study of "metaphysical subjects."[39] During this first experiment with the new method of exposition, the new method had quite likely not yet been given a title, as it was not yet clear that it was a genuinely new *mos*.

(2) When we compare the content of KV-A1 with the first eight propositions of the *Ethics*, on the one hand, and with the aforementioned four chapters of the *Short Treatise*, on the other hand, it would be fair to say that, generally, the overlap with the *Ethics* is *far more significant* than the overlap with the body of the *Short Treatise*. I will immediately elaborate on specific topics and issues.

(3) A major theme in KV-A1 is the question of *individuation*, i.e., by virtue of what things are distinct. The very same issue is also paramount at the beginning of the *Ethics*. The topic is almost completely absent from the *Short Treatise*.[40]

(4) Unlike the KV-A1 and the *Ethics*, the *Short Treatise* makes hardly any attempt to conceptualize the nature of modes or affections. This is true not only of the first two chapters of *Short Treatise* Part 1, dealing with God, but also with the chapters discussing *Natura naturata* (KV, I, chs. viii–ix). Thus, the claim that substance is prior to its modes—central both in KV-A1 and the *Ethics*—is absent from the *Short Treatise*.

(5) In the first dialogue following the second chapter of *Short Treatise* Part 1, Reason [*Reden*] scolds its Cartesian opponent, Lust [*Begeerlijkheid*], for following the senses and affirming the existence of many distinct substances. Then Reason adds:

> And if you want to call the corporeal and the intellectual substances in respect to the modes which depend on them, *you must equally call them modes too*, in relation to the substance on which they depend. *For you do not conceive them as existing through themselves*. In the same way that you call willing, sensing, understanding, loving, etc., different modes of what you call a thinking substance (all of which you lead back to one, making one of them all), so I also infer, by your own proof, *that infinite extension and thought, together with other infinite attributes (or as you would say, substances) are nothing but modes of that unique, eternal, infinite Being, existing through itself*.[41] [KV, I, ch. ii/G I 29, l. 24–29]

There are two crucial (and related) points which set this passage apart from the metaphysics of the *Ethics*. (i) The passage suggests that the thinking and extended substances also are modes "of the unique and eternal Being." The *Ethics* would categorically rule this out by the very definition of substance as not being dependent on anything else (E1d3). (ii) According to the above passage, "the corporeal and the intellectual substances" are *not* conceived as "existing through themselves." Compare this with E1p7 ("it pertains to the nature of substance to exist"), and the claims that each of the attributes "expresses existence" (E1p20d), and that "each of the attributes must involve eternity," i.e., (per E1d8) existence. On both of these issues, KV-A1 sides unequivocally with the *Ethics*, against the claims of Reason in the dialogue; KV-A1p2 makes it clear that one substance cannot depend on another substance for its existence, while KV-A1p4 makes it clear that existence belongs to the nature of *every* substance.

(6) The causal self-sufficiency of substance is a major theme in both KV-A1 and the first eight propositions of *Ethics* Part 1. The *Ethics* proof of God's existence in E1p11 relies crucially on this key claim. In contrast, KV, I, ch. i presents a series of intriguing proofs for the existence of God. *The causal self-sufficiency of substance plays no role in any of these detailed proofs*. The

proofs of KV, I, ch. i are mostly elaborations on Descartes's proofs of the existence of God. Here again, KV-A1 embarks on a path strikingly different from that of the *Short Treatise*.

(7) Several scholars have convincingly pointed out the clear Cartesian nature of many of Spinoza's claims in the *Short Treatise*, especially when compared with the *Ethics*'s systematic rejection of many, probably most, of Descartes's major claims.[42] This can hardly be said about KV-A1. Each of the four propositions of KV-A1 is *resolutely* anti-Cartesian.[43]

The considerations I have presented so far purport to establish that KV-A1 is *a draft* of the *Ethics*. The reason to think that it is *the earliest draft* that we currently have is quite simple. Ep. 2 (September 1661), Ep. 4 (October 1661), and the lost enclosure to Ep. 2 (which has been carefully reconstructed by Giuseppa Saccaro del Buffa Battisti and Hubertus G. Hubbeling)[44] contain significant excerpts from early drafts of the *Ethics*, presented in the axiomatic method, and include *definitions*, as well as axioms. All later drafts of the *Ethics*, cited in Spinoza's correspondence, contain a definitions section.[45] Thus, in deciding on the dating of KV-A1, we have two alternative narratives. According to one, KV-A1 is *posterior* to Eps. 2 and 4, and thus it would appear that Spinoza began with an axiomatic method which contained both definitions and axioms. Then, for unknown reasons, he switched to a model without definitions (KV-A1), and then eventually returned to a model which included definitions.

According to the second alternative, KV-A1 *precedes* Eps. 2 and 4. In this narrative, Spinoza experimented with an axiomatic model without definitions (KV-A1), realized its significant shortcomings (e.g., that it required seven axioms to prove just four propositions) and cumbersomeness,[46] and switched from that time onward to a model that included both definitions and axioms. This second narrative seems to me far more probable not only because it provides the simpler explanation (with only *one* significant change in the structure of the axiomatic system), but also because Spinoza's correspondence from around 1661 provides no motivation for either one of the changes that the first narrative assumes. Thus, I conclude that it is highly probable that KV-A1 is the earliest draft of the *Ethics* we currently have.[47]

Conclusion

A new philosophical method does not appear complete and polished *ex nihilo*. Clearly, Spinoza's model in developing his axiomatic method was Euclid's *Elements*, but in philosophy there are very few precedents for the use of

axiomatization.[48] In his Synopsis to the *Meditations*, Descartes boasted that "the only order which [he] could follow was that normally employed by geometers, namely to set out all the premises on which a desired proposition depends, before drawing any conclusions about it."[49] Having read carefully the *Meditations*, and failing to see how this description could fit that text, Mersenne asked Descartes to fulfill his promise and "set out the entire argument in geometrical fashion, starting from a number of definitions, postulates and axioms."[50] I will leave it to the reader to have her own impression from Descartes's response to Mersenne at the end of the Second Set of Replies, although, for my part, I strongly suspect that Descartes's disparaging and hardly convincing claims about the unfitness of the axiomatic method to the study of philosophy made a strong impression on Spinoza, and perhaps even made him think that, voilà, he just found a method.

Not only did Spinoza's axiomatic method hardly have any anticipators, it had very few followers as well. Schelling's 1801 *Darstellung meines System der Philosophie* was written *more geometrico*, but it is barely a pale shadow of the *Ethics* in terms of the rigor of its proofs.[51] The rest of the German Idealists seemed to adopt Descartes's claim that the axiomatic method is not adequate for philosophy. Thus, Hegel argues against Spinoza that philosophy, unlike mathematics, cannot begin with given, presupposed definitions and axioms.[52] The question of how a philosophical system should begin is indeed a deep and serious question, but, as far as I can tell, it is completely orthogonal to the use of the axiomatic method. The axiomatic method renders the argumentative structure of the system bare naked (or so it claims to). As such, it *makes transparent* many methodological problems, such as the question: where should philosophy begin? Yet it neither creates, nor even contributes to the creation of, the problem, and the question of how to avoid arbitrary beginnings in philosophy must haunt Hegel's non-axiomatic exposition of his philosophy just as much as it does Spinoza.

Transparency should always be considered a virtue, not a vice. With the advent of modern mathematics in the late nineteenth century, the use of axiomatization in various branches of mathematics became widespread. Since the rigor of mathematics was the main source of inspiration for the analytic philosophers of the twentieth century, one might have expected some philosophers to attempt a systematic axiomatization of some branches of philosophy, rather than rely on disassociated amalgams of intuitions (or a vaguely formulated "reflective equilibrium between intuitions and principles"), but thus far, this hasn't happened. Systematic axiomatization of philosophy is not an easy task.

In the current chapter, I have argued that KV-A1 was Spinoza's first attempt to present his philosophy *more geometrico*, and that most probably it is the earliest

draft of the *Ethics* that we currently have. I have much admiration for Spinoza's attempt to develop his philosophy in a systematic and axiomatic manner. Needless to say, there are quite a few gaps in the demonstrations of the *Ethics* (as there are quite a few gaps in Euclid's *Elements*). The exposure and evaluation of the threat of these gaps to the conceptual edifice of the *Ethics* are a significant part of the day (and sometimes night) job of a Spinoza scholar.[53]

My study of the first appendix of the *Short Treatise* leaves a number of important and intriguing questions unanswered. What brought Spinoza to experiment with an axiomatic system free of definitions? And why did he avoid definitions in KV-A1, while his early *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* pays very close attention to the issue of the adequacy of definitions?[54] I leave both questions for another occasion, or for other scholars. As one of the early Talmudists—Rabbi Tarfon—tells us: "You are not obliged to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist from it."[55]

Notes

1 On the discovery of the *Short Treatise*, see Curley's editorial preface in C I 46–53. For an illuminating and updated discussion of the genesis of this work, see Filipo Mignini, "Introduction au *Court Traité*," in Spinoza, *Œuvres I: Premiers écrits*, ed. Filippo Mignini (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2009), 159–180. I would like to thank Justin Bledin, Martjin Buijs, Zach Gartenberg, Mogens Lærke, Don Garrett, and Jack Stetter for their extremely helpful comments on earlier versions of this chapter. I have presented drafts of this chapter at conferences at the ENS Lyon in November 2011 and at Paris 8 in June 2016. I would like to thank the participants and audiences at both conferences for their comments. Finally, I would like to thank Dan Garber, Michael Della Rocca, and Steven Nadler for helpful conversations about my argument in this paper.

2 *Studia Spinozana 4: Spinoza's Early Writings*, ed. Filippo Mignini, Pierre-François Moreau, and Guido Van Suchtelen (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1988), and *The Young Spinoza: A Metaphysician in the Making*, ed. Yitzhak Y. Melamed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), contain some valuable studies of the *Short Treatise*, though none that concentrate on the first appendix. Among the very few studies of the first appendix, one should note Stanislaus Von Dunin-Borkowski, "Der erste Anhang zu De Spinozas *Kurzer Abhandlung*," *Chronicon Spinozanum* 1 (1921): 63–80, and Christoph Sigwart, *Spinoza's neuentdeckter Tractat von Gott, dem Menschen und der Glückseligkeit* (Gotha: Rudolf Besser, 1866), 145–158.

3 See Curley's editorial remark in C I 150 n. 1, and Abraham Wolf, *Spinoza's Short Treatise on God, Man, & His Well-Being*, reprint edn. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), cxxii.

4 An earlier scholar who gestured in the direction of my chief claim in the current article is Wolf, who wrote in his *Spinoza's* Short Treatise, cxxii: "[The First Appendix] is intimately related to the *Ethics*."

5 The title "DE DEO" appears also at the beginning of Part 1 of the recently discovered Vatican manuscript of Spinoza's *Ethics* (see *The Vatican Manuscript of Spinoza's Ethica*, ed. Leen Spruit and Pina Totaro (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 83), although, noticeably, the title of the complete book—"*Ethica*"—is absent from the Vatican manuscript.

6 In contrast, in the body of the KV the chapter titles, like the rest of the text, are in Dutch.

7 In the *Nagelate Schriften*, the 1677 Dutch translation of the *Opera Posthuma*, E1p1 reads: "*De zelfstandigheit is eerder in natuur, dan haar aandoeningen*." "*Aandoeningen*" is the Dutch translation of "*affectiones*" (as opposed to "*toevallen*" ["accidents"] in KV-A1). On Spinoza's switch from the terminology of accidents to that of modes already in the early drafts of the *Ethics*, see Yitzhak Y. Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance and Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 28–30. See also Mogens Lærke's illuminating discussion of this issue in his response to my chapter in the current volume.

8 See, for example, the claim that finite modes ("singular things") are produced by the infinite modes [KV, I, ch. viii / G I 47, l.32], a claim Spinoza rejects in E1p22. Cf. Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 116.

9 On real and conceptual distinctions in Spinoza, Descartes, and Suarez, see Yitzhak Y. Melamed, "The Building Blocks of Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance, Attributes, and Modes," in *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*, ed. Michael Della Rocca (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 99–102.

10 See: E2p21s, E3p2s, and E4p4d [G II 213, l. 24].

11 In principle, E1d3, E1d4, and E1d5 could have been presented as three additional axioms in KV-A1, and then Spinoza could have inferred the content of E1p4 from these axioms. However, Spinoza is not using any definition-like axioms in KV-A1.

12 In passing, let me note that in E1p2d Spinoza claims that E1p2 is "evident from E1d3." In fact, E1p2 seems to rely on E1a5 in addition to E1d3.

13 E1a5—"Things that have nothing in common with one another also cannot be understood through one another, *or* the concept of the one does not involve the concept of the other"—is making a point related to yet distinct from the fourth and fifth Axioms of the KV-A1.

14 E1p8d is the closest *Ethics* equivalent, although it addresses the possibility of one substance being limited "by something *else* of the same nature" (my emphasis).

Another possible equivalent is the *Nagelate Schriften* version of E1p8s1, which reads: "If we assume a finite substance, we would, in part, deny [*ontkennen*] existence to its nature, which (by E1p7) is absurd." E1p7 asserts that "it pertains to the nature of substance to exist." Still, it is not at all trivial that a being to whose nature belongs existence cannot limit itself.

15 In the *Short Treatise*, Spinoza tries to prove that an unlimited substance could not have limited itself, "for being unlimited, it would have had to change its whole essence" [KV, I, ch. ii, note b / G I 20, l. 21]. Since in KV-A1 it is not given that the cause-of-itself is unlimited, this line of argument is not available.

16 Relying on the *conatus* doctrine, which appears at the beginning of *Ethics* Part 3 (E3p6), Spinoza infers that the essence of each thing cannot limit its existence (E3p8). One could, perhaps, argue that divine self-limitation is inconsistent with the *conatus* doctrine insofar as the former allows for internal self-limitation. Still, it is not clear why Axiom 6 of the Appendix targets specifically *divine* self-limitation, rather than state a general principle—akin to the *Ethics*'s *conatus*—banning *any* self-limitation.

17 See Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Meridian, 1978), 147, and Yoseph Ben-Shlomo, *The Mystical Theology of Moses Cordovero* [in Hebrew, untranslated] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1986), 302–303.

18 See Gershom Scholem, "Sarug (Saruk), Israel," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 26 volumes, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd edn (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference, 2007), vol. 18, 63–64.

19 "That all things are in God and move in God, I affirm, I say together with Paul … though in another way—I will also be so bold as to say, with all the ancient Hebrews, as far as can be conjectured from certain traditions [*quibusdam traditionibus*], corrupted as they have been in many ways" [Ep. 73 / G IV 307–308, l. 11]. The literal meaning of the Hebrew word "*Kabbalah*" is "tradition," and the view of the Kabbalah as ancient wisdom and a system of symbols whose original meaning got corrupted was widespread in the early modern period.

20 For Scholem's overview of Spinoza's relation to the Kabbalah, see his introduction to Abraham Cohen Herrera, *Das Buch* [*Sha'ar ha-shamayim*] *oder Pforte des Himmels*, trans. F. Häussermann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974).

21 It is not at all clear that KV-A1a7 leaves any room for the possibility of distinct substances. Per Axiom 7 of the Appendix, if substances A and B were distinct, they must be distinct by virtue of something that is prior to them, but KV-A1 makes no reference to anything that is prior to substance. I suspect that A7 is just a somewhat imprecise formulation of the claim that things cannot be distinguished by something that is posterior to them. I am indebted to Justin Bledin for drawing my attention to this issue.

22 Italics added.

23 Here the Monnikhoff manuscript adds: "Or (what is the same) in nature, no two substances of one and the same nature can be posited," a wording which is almost identical to E1p5. See Curley's editorial note in C I 151, note 5.

24 See Aristotle, *Categories*, 1a20. Cf. John Carriero, "On the Relationship between Mode and Substance in Spinoza's Metaphysics," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 33 (1995): 246–247.

25 See L 198–199; Don Garrett, "*Ethics* Ip5: Shared Attributes and the Basis of Spinoza's Monism," in *Central Themes in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Jan A. Cover and Mark Kulstad (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1990); and Michael Della Rocca, "Spinoza's Substance Monism," in *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes*, ed. Olli Koistinen and John Biro (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 17–22.

26 See Yitzhak Y. Melamed, "A Glimpse into Spinoza's Metaphysical Laboratory: The Development of Spinoza's Concepts of Substance and Attribute," in *The Young Spinoza*, ed. Yitzhak Y. Melamed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 272–286.

27 See Ep. 2 [G IV 7, l. 25].

28 "If someone were to say that he had a clear and distinct, i.e., true, idea of a substance, and nevertheless doubted whether such a substance existed, that would indeed be the same as if he were to say that he had a true idea, and nevertheless doubted whether it was false (as is evident to anyone who is sufficiently attentive). Or if someone maintains that a substance is created, he maintains at the same time that a false idea has become true. Of course nothing more absurd can be conceived. So it must be confessed that the existence of a substance, like its essence, is an eternal truth" [G II 50, l. 13–19].

29 Still, since in E2p46 and E2p47 Spinoza argues that even our inadequate ideas involve cognition of God's essence (see Yitzhak Y. Melamed, "On the Fish's Knowledge of God's Essence, or Why Spinoza Was Not a Skeptic," in *Studies in Skepticism*, ed. G. Vetri, E. Spinelli, R. Haliva, and S. Schmid (Berlin: DeGruyter, forthcoming)), and since God's essence is existence (as per E1p20, cf. Yitzhak Y. Melamed, "Spinoza's Deification of Existence," *Oxford Studies in Early Modern* Philosophy *Volume VI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)), it seems that in the final version of the *Ethics*, Spinoza would rather affirm that even for a *finite* intellect the essence of substance involves existence.

30 Curley adheres to the manuscript and has here KV-A1a3. Gebhardt and Mignini emend to KV-A1a2. Since the modal distinction is discussed in a2 but not in a3, I tend to accept their emendation.

31 Or alternatively, "understood through."

32 Cf. CM I, ch. ii [G I 238, l. 26].

33 Spinoza discusses the issues in greater detail in E2p8.

34 Perhaps better "lordly," thus affirming in a traditional language that God alone is the Lord.

35 "Outside it there is no essence or being" [G I 116, l. 31].

36 C I 150, note 1. Cf. von Dunin-Borkowski, "Der erste Anhang," 63.

37 Of course, there might be (and indeed there are) *gaps* in the four demonstrations, but nothing in these demonstrations indicates that the text we have ever relied on definitions.

38 Piet Steenbakkers, *Spinoza's* Ethica *from manuscript to print* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1994), 158.

39 Descartes, *Second Set of Replies* [CSM II 111 / AT VII 156–157].

40 With the small exception of the vague claim "that there are not two equal substances" [KV, I, ch. ii / G I 20, l. 4]. Spinoza's justification for this claim [G I 21, ll. 3–6] is also completely different from the crucial requirement—both in KV-A1a7 and E1p5—not to make the individuation of substances dependent on their modes.

41 Italics added.

42 See, for example, Daniel Garber, "Spinoza's Cartesian Dualism in the *Korte Verhandeling*," in *The Young Spinoza*, ed. Yitzhak Y. Melamed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 121–132.

43 In passing, let me note that the second appendix to the KV seems to cover, more or less, the content of the first half of the *Ethics* Part 2. This appendix, however, is not written *more geometrico*. Perhaps this was an embryonic draft which Spinoza intended to recast in a geometric manner. Regrettably, Spinoza's correspondence does not provide us with much information on the development of this part of the *Ethics*.

44 See Giuseppa Saccaro del Buffa Battisti, "La dimostrazione dell'esistenza di Dio dall'abbozzo del 1661 e dalla *Korte Verhandeling* al *De Deo*," in *Dio, l'uomo, la libertà: Studi sul* Breve Tratatto *di Spinoza*, ed. Filippo Mignini (L'Aquila: Japadre, 1990), and Hubertus G. Hubbeling, "The Development of Spinoza's Axiomatic (Geometric) Method," *Revue Internationale de philosophie* 31, no. 119/120 (1977): 53–68. A reconstruction of the lost enclosure is translated by Curley in C I 166, note 6.

45 See, for example, Ep. 9 [G IV 45, l. 35 and G IV 46, l. 24].

46 Hubbeling ("The Development," 65) wonders why Spinoza used fewer axioms in the enclosure to Ep. 2 than in KV-A1. The answer seems to be straightforward: an axiomatic system which contains definitions is more powerful and can *prove* what would otherwise have to be presented as an axiom. Thus, for example, Axiom 1 of KV-A1 will appear as a proposition in later drafts of the *Ethics*, once the definitions of substance and modes are introduced.

47 Both Mignini, in Spinoza, *Korte verhandeling/Breve trattato*, ed. and trans. Filippo Mignini (L'Aquila: Japadre, 1986), 773–786, and Hubbeling, in "The Development," contend that KV-A1 is earlier than Ep. 2 and its enclosure. For a dissenting view, see Buffa Battisti, "La dimostrazione." Cf. Steenbakkers, *Spinoza's* Ethica, 157.

48 A notable piece in this respect is Jean-Baptiste Morin's 1635 theological treatise, *Quod Deus sit.* On Morin's booklet, see Daniel Garber, "J.B. Morin and the Second Objections," in *Descartes and His Contemporaries: Meditations, Objections, and Replies*, ed. Roger Ariew and Marjorie Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Cf. Aaron V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 9.

49 CSM II 9 / AT VII 13.

50 CSM II 92 / AT IV 128.

51 See F. W. J. Schelling, "Presentation of My System of Philosophy" [1801], in J. G. Fichte and F. W. J. Schelling, *The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling: Selected Texts and Correspondence (1800–1802)*, ed. and trans. Michael Vater and David W. Wood (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012). For a study of the *Darstellung* essay and its relation to Spinoza's *Ethics*, see Yitzhak Y. Melamed, "*Deus sive Vernunft*: Schelling's Transformation of Spinoza's God," in *Freedom, Nature and Systematicity: Essays on F. W. J. Schelling*, ed. G. Anthony Bruno (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

52 See G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic* [1813, 1816, 1832], ed. and trans. George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 11.377, and G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, 3 vols (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), III: 263–264.

53 Many gaps in the *Ethics* can be easily bridged by making explicit premises that were demonstrated—or affirmed as definitions and axioms—in earlier parts of the book. Other gaps are much more troubling.

54 See TIE §§94–97. I am indebted to Dan Garber for raising this second question. For an insightful discussion of the nature of definitions in Spinoza, see John. A. Brandau, *Spinoza on Definition and Essence*. PhD dissertation. Johns Hopkins University, 2016.

55 Mishna, Tractate Avot, 2:16.