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Chris Yeomans

Spinoza, Feminism, and Domestic Violence

In this paper I discuss two related ideas and cross-reference them, as it were, on the common ground of the Spinozistic text. First, I want to construct a Spinozistic account of domestic violence and a Spinozistic response to such violence. This will involve attempting to explicate the phenomenon (or at least one aspect of it, to be defined) through the terms and conceptual structure of Spinoza's *Ethics*. Second, I want to discuss a feminist reading (interpretation) of Spinoza, that of Luce Irigaray. The projects work together, as a better Spinozistic account requires a charitable reading of Spinoza to which Irigaray points the way. Irigaray will turn out to be more Spinozistic than Spinoza himself. In addition, the construction of a Spinozistic response to domestic violence will highlight the textual basis of Irigaray's reading. It is hoped that this will contribute to making Irigaray's reading accessible to philosophers trained in the analytic tradition. The undercurrent of both discussions will be an attempt to explicate and further what I take to be a shared moral insight in the late twentieth century, namely, that domestic violence, and in particular violence against women as wives or partners, is morally wrong. That this insight is at least partially a result of the feminist movement perhaps goes without saying, but in any case this intuition forms the *threshold* of my discussion in at least two senses: (1) I will take it as a given and I will not argue for the intuition *per se*, and (2) any Spinozistic account that condones domestic violence as *rationaly acceptable* will cause us great problems. This is not an abstract issue on which we are prepared to suspend judgment, so perhaps the best way to frame the problematic is given by Edwin Curley: "[D]oes being a good Spinozist not require a level of detachment from individual human suffering which is either superhuman or subhuman?" (Curley 1996, 334)

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One further disclaimer needs to be stated here, and that is that there will be little discussion of the question of whether Spinoza's views on sociality, ethics, etc., follow in logically defensible ways from his definitions and axioms. There is already a developed debate on this issue, and I refer the interested reader there (see, e.g., Barbone 1993). Furthermore, to assume that logical validity could be a controlling value would already prejudice the discussion against Irigaray's reading, insofar as (1) Irigaray's reading is clearly intended to extend Spinoza's thought beyond the confines of logical derivation, and (2) Irigaray has claimed elsewhere that any discourse which proceeds from absolute definitions is already patriarchal, regardless of the content of such definitions.¹ This may raise the objection that the attempt to make Irigaray's interpretation plausible to analytic philosophers is doomed to failure. But this would be to identify analytic philosophy with epistemological foundationalism and the method of deduction, which is certainly too narrow. More generally, attempts such as this one must be made if the so-called analytic/continental split in philosophy is to be overcome.²

I. The Problem of Domestic Violence

In an attempt, then, to satisfy the Spinozistic world, it is incumbent upon me to define what I mean by "domestic violence." I mean by "domestic violence" physical or mental (perhaps a dubious distinction in Spinozistic terms) abuse of one partner in a romantic/intimate/marital relationship by his/her partner. By violence I mean an act of one partner which injures the other, i.e., an act which diminishes the second partner's power of activity, and which is motivated by hatred and anger against someone who is also loved. I will further constrain the context to violence in heterosexual relationships, i.e., by men against women or by women against men. I do

¹ I would like to thank Simone Yeomans for pointing this out to me. For a fuller presentation of this and related ideas, see Irigaray 1985, 74–75.

² Precisely because one of the main goals of this paper is to make Irigaray's reading accessible to analytic philosophers, I make only cursory references to other feminist interpretations of Spinoza. Those interested in such interpretations will find interesting reading in Gatens 1996, Lloyd 1994, and Gatens & Lloyd 1999. Because Gatens 1996 is specifically interested in Spinozistic resources for understanding domestic violence, I will try to differentiate her view from Irigaray's later in the paper.

not wish to give the impression that there is not a socially significant incidence of domestic violence in homosexual relationships, but I do think that the connections between Spinoza's *Ethics*³ and Irigaray's reading will be more apparent given this contextual delimitation.⁴ This will suffice for a definition of domestic violence; any further determination will foreclose the possibility of a connection to Irigaray's reading, which will be difficult enough given the strictures of the essay form. Now I want to discuss several of the reasons why, even though we are trying to develop a philosophy to explain our moral intuition, we cannot correlate Spinoza's philosophy with many of the concepts, such as gender, love, and rights, which are involved in our everyday understanding of domestic violence.

First of all, there is no gender *per se* at the level of Spinoza's theorizing.⁵ If gender can be constructed *with respect to* Spinoza's system, it would be by applying Spinoza's psychological insights to the system of gender division and patriarchy, which operates in our contemporary culture. In this light, one can say some rather interesting things about the masculine and feminine understandings of the world, regardless of whether Spinoza thinks that these are ontologically primary. In fact, an added benefit of this analysis might open the way to an understanding of nature which would transcend such divisions without universalizing the masculine.

We are also denied access to a conception of love as a transcendent force that can cure all evil, as Spinoza tells us that "Love is pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause" (E4DefEm6). While this definition will help us to develop a positive Spinozistic contribution to the understanding of domestic violence, we certainly cannot appeal to a notion of *selfless* love. The task in overcoming a violent relationship will indeed be a return to love,

³ All references to the *Ethics* will be internal, with standard abbreviations: p(roposition), c(orollary), s(cholium), def(inition), app(ending) and ch(apter), with the number after the E(thics) indicating the part number. E2p27s would therefore refer to *Ethics*, part II, proposition 27, scholium. TP refers to the *Tractatus politicus* and TTP refers to the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. TP and TTP are followed by the chapter number.

⁴ There is the further question, of course, as to whether all types of domestic violence could be subsumed under one theory, or whether such generality would be valuable. Mary Eaton (1994, 198–99, 220) argues that such generality would be both disadvantageous and unnecessary for the political solidarity of the feminist movement.

⁵ See also the discussion in Gatens 1996, 131.

but it will be to a “rational love” which may not correspond to our common-sense notions of love.⁶

A third difficulty that one must overcome in constructing a Spinozistic analysis of domestic violence is the invalidity of the concept of rights as it is normally articulated in liberal-democratic political discourse. This notion of rights implies that there is some obligation to behave in a certain way that is derived from some abstract political or legal code, or more importantly, from a moral code which underlies the political and the legal. For example, ~~it is common in the discourse on domestic violence to define it in terms of a~~ crime such as assault. One need only add that such an *unlawful act* was committed in an intimate setting in order to arrive at a definition of domestic violence which already theorizes the ethical import of the act given our presupposition of the morality animating our criminal law (see, e.g., Strauss 1993). One then has a deontic right to be free from the abuse of others. For Spinoza, however, there is no right that is separable from the respective powers of individual people, and there is certainly no right that would accrue to certain kinds or types of individuals, such as spouses (see E4def8, E4p22, E4AppCh8, TTP 16, TP 2, and Barbone 1999, 103). This is not to say that we do not have an obligation to obey the law, for Spinoza says quite clearly that obedience to the law is the rational course of action, even if the law is irrational (Barbone 1999, 104–5 and TTP 16). There are two problems with this, however: (1) Spinoza acknowledges that the state cannot force the individual to do certain very personal things, such as love someone who has given offense, and it seems reasonable to think that the emotions involved in domestic violence would be similar in their resistance to legal influence (TTP 17, TP 3/8, and Curley 1996, 330); and (2) the rationale for the social contract, which provides for the validity of laws, is itself contingent on the power of the government’s agents to enforce the law, a power which they probably do not have on Spinoza’s view. Spinoza’s analysis of the legality of domestic violence is therefore twofold. On the one hand the rational person will obey the law because s/he understands that s/he is more free under a state of law than if s/he only obeys him/herself (E4p73).⁷ On the

⁶ For a more detailed meditation on the theme of love in Spinoza’s work, see Rorty 1991.

⁷ This characterization is limited to civil law, and is not applicable to divine (natural) law. For a discussion of the difference, see Gatens 1996, 113–17.

other hand, the law has no power, and therefore no right, to compel the irrational person either to obey the laws or to become in every instance rational. Thus, the concept of rights as articulated by Spinoza can only come into play later, after we have described the method of transition from irrational, inharmonious relationships to rational love.

To return to our moral intuition, however, I think that I am not the only one who will find any strictly legal account of domestic violence unsatisfying and requiring the sort of detachment Curley contemplates.⁸ Any satisfactory theory of domestic violence will have to explain our moral intuition that, even when domestic violence was not a crime (or even if it were suddenly made legal now), it was (and is) still wrong. Before turning to the *Ethics*, I want to discuss two more (apparent) obstacles to a Spinozistic account of domestic violence.

First, we will be unable to argue that a husband has made a promise to his wife to treat her decently, for as Curley notes, “If all people were rational, [Spinoza] thinks, it would be rational for all people to keep their promises; but most of the time people are not rational, and no natural law obliges them to behave rationally” (1996, 324). Something else must be added to the promise (either a carrot or a stick) in order to make it work. Here we are back at legality with the same qualms discussed above.

Second, in the TP Spinoza explicitly states that men have the right to rule over women (TP 11). Now his reasoning in this section is truly embarrassing, including as solid evidence a fantastical account of Amazons that implies that they somehow procreate without men at all! One is tempted, out of respect for Spinoza, to read this passage ironically, but there is also another way out. Spinoza argues that the reasons for the legitimacy of male rule are: (1) in all nations on the earth men rule, and the sexes live peacefully together (!); (2) in the only instance of female rule (the Amazons), men were completely excluded; (3) because of men’s weaknesses in their emotions for

⁸ Such an account would be consistent with a response based solely on punishment, whereas the present experience in the U.S. and other countries with domestic violence laws provide evidence against the efficacy of such a response. Spinoza also takes a dim view of the value of merely positive law, i.e., law which is based merely on the authority of the law-giver where such authority is maintained by fear of punishment. Only laws which command assent based on their rational content can constitute a harmonious body politic. For a discussion of this point with respect to domestic violence, see Gatens 1996, 116–18.

women, they could not handle the sight of powerful women; and (4) by nature, women have less right than men. First of all, we should not push the analogy of family/state too far because, as Barbone notes, individuals exist and have power whereas nations/states do not (Barbone 1999). Second, each of the arguments Spinoza presents can be easily dismissed in the case of domestic violence: (1) can be dismissed because, in such a situation, there is clearly no harmony; (2) can be dismissed as fantasy disguised as history; (3) because this is clearly a problem that men have to deal with, not women; and (4) because this thesis is contradicted by Spinoza's aforementioned thesis that rights cannot accrue to kinds or types of individuals, but only to particular individuals. Thus, Spinoza's explicit views on the status of women seem to be in tension with more fundamental aspects of his philosophy. Such views are therefore prime candidates for rejection in a charitable reading of Spinoza. Nonetheless, we will come back to (3) when we get to Irigaray's reading, for it will lend some credence to her account of the emotional dynamic of domestic violence. Furthermore, it seems that Spinoza himself may have fallen victim to the emotional dynamic underlying this disposition, as evidenced by the tension in his view.⁹

Spinoza's philosophy does seem to have some potential for explicating this problem, however. First of all, there is the emphasis in the *Ethics* on the value of sociality as rational conduct. That is, sociality is developed out of a concern towards the preservation and development of an *individual's* power. This provides a concrete alternative to systems of deontic rights, and will do more than such systems to explicate the psychology of domestic violence. Second, there is the soteriological emphasis of the *Ethics*, of the possibility of salvation through rational living. This is not a transcendent escape but rather a joining with the immanence of God. It certainly seems reasonable to think that the peace or beatitude that would result would replace the emotions that lead to domestic violence in the first place. As we shall see below, this will center on the denial of human free will. Third, there is quite a bit of work which explicates the positive dimensions of Spinoza's contributions to ethics generally, so we might reasonably expect that Spinoza could make a contribution to the issue of domestic violence in particular (see Barbone 1993, Rice 1998). Last, the interpretations of

⁹ Gatens is inclined to understand Spinoza's inconsistency in this way as well. See 1996, 134.

Spinoza as a "feminine" thinker, or from the perspective of feminism, would suggest that Spinoza's thought might be able to redress the rejection of the feminine that is involved in domestic violence.¹⁰ In particular, Irigaray reads Spinoza in a way which highlights the way by which men's illusions of freedom become a source of women's suffering. Now that I have cleared some of the ground, the next task is to conceptualize domestic violence in a Spinozistic framework.

II. A Spinozistic Understanding of Domestic Violence

The most basic starting point for an understanding of domestic violence in Spinoza's terms is with the definition of an individual. In Spinozistic terms, an individual is a finite mode of God, and the essence of an individual is its desire or drive to persevere in its being. By God Spinoza does not mean what we normally think of as the Judeo-Christian God, but rather something more like the totality of all nature; in Spinoza's terms, God is substance, or that which has no cause outside of itself (E1p14). God is the immanent cause of all things (E1p18), and all things that exist, exist in God (E1p15). Individual people exist in God as finite modes: we are conceived only with respect to God (or with respect to the whole of nature) through two of the attributes of God, namely, thinking and extension (E1def5 and E2p13c). Our essence is nothing else but our desire to persist in our own being (which is our *conatus*). This is succinctly stated in E3p6&7: "Each thing, in so far as it is in itself, endeavors to persist in its own being" and "The conatus with which each thing endeavors to persist in its own being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself." Thus, an individual is a finite entity which is composed of mind and body and whose essence is to persist in its own being. This definition of the individual explicitly excludes the possibility of self-destructiveness, and this is made clear in E3p4: "No thing can be destroyed except by an external cause." This means that the analysis of domestic violence will necessarily involve considerations of at least the couple involved, the batterer (or external destroyer) and the batteree (and thus destroyed or at least injured). A more complete analysis would certainly

¹⁰ Sandra Wawrytko (1981, 269) argues that in Spinoza "the diffuse feminine perspective, subsequently organized into a principle of being, has established itself as being capable of sustaining feminine philosophies."

attempt to diagnose the strains in the cultural context that contribute to domestic violence, but this would involve the construction of a Spinozistic sociology, which is clearly beyond the scope of this paper.¹¹ To return to the limited context of the two individuals, it further appears that what causes the violence must be something that differs between the two people: “No thing can be evil for us through what it possesses in common with our nature, but in so far as it is evil for us, it is contrary to us” (E4p30). Furthermore, what we all have in common is reason: “In so far as men live under the guidance of reason, to that extent only do they always necessarily agree in nature” (E4p35). Thus, to avoid violence (destructiveness) we should choose partners who are most like us. Ideally, this would be because both partners are rational.¹² Having discussed the general context, we can now move to Spinoza’s specific suggestions for romantic or marital relationships.

In the Appendix to E4, Spinoza makes two very important statements about love and violence which are very short and will require some explication. In chapter 19 he says, “all love that acknowledges any other cause than freedom of the spirit, easily passes into hatred unless (and this is worse) it be a kind of madness, and then it is fostered by discord rather than harmony.” He proceeds to make a similar point about marriage in the next chapter, arguing that the best for a marriage is that it be constituted by the desire to raise children well, and that it be caused by “freedom of the spirit.” In these two paragraphs Spinoza has given his answer to the question of domestic violence, if we can only decipher what “freedom of the spirit” means here.

In the terms of the ontology of E1&2, we know that only God can be free (see E1def7 and E1p17), and yet the title of part V is “Of the Power of the Intellect, or Of Human Freedom.” Which freedom is Spinoza referring to? It must be the latter, because at the level of God’s freedom, namely, God’s necessity, there are no distinctions which can be drawn with respect to human behavior. For instance, there is no possibility of constructing human activity or passivity at the level of God, when God is considered as infinite, for activity and passivity involve adequate and inadequate ideas, respectively, and adequate and inadequate ideas are only meaningful with

respect to the individual. An adequate idea is an idea that a mode of God has while only affected by the idea of the individual, and an inadequate idea is an idea that a mode of God has while affected both by the idea of the individual and by something else. God considered in his infinite nature cannot have inadequate ideas. On the other hand, it does seem to make sense to interpret “freedom of the spirit” as human freedom in at least two senses. First of all, freedom and necessity are correlated, and a thing is free if it acts from the necessity of its own nature (E1def7). Human freedom comes from acknowledging the necessity of the divine freedom, and therefore the necessity of each of the modes of God (E5p6). However, part of the necessity of divine freedom is that humans are not absolutely free; their freedom is at most analogous to God’s. Thus, a person who thinks that s/he is absolutely free will always be a slave to his/her emotions. It is here that Irigaray’s reading can connect the threads of Spinoza’s system into a response to domestic violence.

The core of Irigaray’s interpretation is captured in the following passage:

Man *receives* that envelope [the place of dwelling or ground for existence]. By nature, it is true! And the reversal can operate just as well. Man does not provide himself with his own envelope, unless it is his nature to be conceived in woman. By essence, to be conceived in woman.

Woman would theoretically be the envelope (which she provides). But she would have no essence or existence, given that she is the potential for essence and existence: *the available place*. She would be cause for herself—and in a less contingent manner than man—if she enveloped herself, or reenveloped herself, in the envelope that she is able to “provide.” The envelope that is part of her “attributes” and “affections” but that she cannot use as self-cause. If she enveloped herself with what she provides, she could not but necessarily be conceived of as existing. Which, to an extent, is what happens: women’s suffering arises also from the fact that man does not conceive that women do not exist. Men have such a great need that women should exist. If men are to be permitted to believe or imagine themselves as self-cause, they need to think that the envelope “belongs” to them. Particularly following “the end of God” or “the death of God,” insofar as God can be determined by an era of history in any way but through the limits to its thinking. For men to establish this belonging—without the guarantee provided by God—it is imperative that that which provides the envelope should necessarily exist. *Therefore*, the maternal-feminine exists necessarily as the cause of the self-cause of man. But not for herself. She has to exist but as an a priori condition (as Kant might say) for the space-time of the masculine subject. A cause that is never unveiled for fear that its identity might split apart and plummet down. She does not have to exist as woman because, as woman, her envelope is always *slightly open* (if man today

¹¹ Gatens 1996 attempts a general version of this project, particularly in chapter 8.

¹² However, this condition might also obtain for same-sex partners, as Spinoza does seem to *imply* that the two sexes have different natures.

thinks of himself as God, woman becomes, according to Meister Eckhart, an adverb or quality of the word of God). (Irigaray 1997, 38)

We can read the most crucial parts of this passage as a comment on the confusion of divine with human freedom. For Spinoza, only one entity can be absolutely free according to E1def7, and that is God (E1p17c2). The crucial part of this reasoning is that God acts only from the necessity of his own nature, and not as a result of anything outside of him. Furthermore, God is cause of himself (this is, essentially, the very first principle of the *Ethics*, but the significance of E1def1 is not fully elaborated until E1p20). Irigaray translates this concept of God as self-cause in the following manner:

This definition of God [E1def1] could be translated as: *that which provides its own place for itself*; that which turns itself inside out and thus constitutes a dwelling (for) itself. Unique and necessary. Solitary. But in itself. Sufficient. Needing no other in its reception of “space-time.” Men may, perhaps, contemplate or seek to contemplate God in his place; men do not give God his place.

Which also means: that which by nature can be conceived only as existing, or *that which provides its own envelope* by turning its essence outward, must necessarily exist. That which provides its own space-time necessarily exists. (Irigaray 1997, 38)

People, on the other hand, can only be conceived in God: they are essentially finite modes of God, as I discussed above. In this sense people, considered as mind and body, are caused by God considered either as a thinking or extended thing, respectively (E2p6). To make this into an interpretation of Irigaray we must cease to regard individuals as gender-neutral, and we can then formulate her point this way: For a man to keep up the illusion that he is free in the divine/absolute sense, he must deny that he receives his envelope—i.e., his specificity, the place or content of his life—from woman “as fetus, as lover, as father.” So woman has to exist but only for man, and not for herself. If she exists for herself, then she cannot be subsumed into the nature of man and therefore becomes an external condition of his existence.

Thus, man is humiliated at any sign of independence or opposition from woman because such opposition destroys his carefully cultivated illusion that he is actually free. In terms of the analysis of right and power, a man has no right to divine freedom because he does not have the power that would correspond to that freedom, and there is nothing within any human’s power which would allow a person to become divine. The man has no right

to be respected as absolute authority, for there will always be something else which will limit him. Irigaray’s analysis also explains the repetitive nature of domestic violence, for nothing will ever be able to satisfy a man’s illusion of his freedom. In order to feed the illusion, the appearance must be maintained that the woman exists only for the man, even *as part of the man*. She must exist, so that the ground of his being should exist. But she must also exist only for him, so that this ground is always available.¹³ Spinoza seemed to understand this at several points. The last section of the TP is one of these points, and I have discussed this above. Another point is chapter 19 of the appendix to part IV, in which Spinoza acknowledges that any relationship which is not exclusively founded on “freedom of the spirit” will easily turn to hatred.

Most importantly, woman cannot exist *as woman* because *as woman* “her envelope is always *slightly open*” and so her identity can never be fixed; in a certain sense she does not exist. Rather the horizon of her being—the specific conditions under which she is intelligible—is always open to the possibility of another child and another lover. This is, in fact, the condition of possibility for any particular person at all. This provides us with a positive ethics of intimate relationships. Irigaray writes, “If man and woman are both body and thought, they provide each other with finiteness, limit, and the possibility of access to the divine through the development of envelopes. Greater and greater envelopes, vaster and vaster horizons, but above all envelopes that are qualitatively more and more necessary and different. But always *overflowing*: with the female one becoming a cause of the other by providing him with self-cause. The setup must always be open for this to

¹³ This is a good point at which to understand the difference between Irigaray and Gatens. Where Irigaray sees this phenomenon as arising out of a false self-understanding, Gatens sees it as arising from the nature of the emotion of lust: “Lustful sexuality tends to desire the possession of the object. As such the desired object becomes a constant source of anxiety, hope and fear, since actual possession of the object is not possible” (1996, 132). See also Rorty (1991, 353–57). Gatens thinks that Irigaray’s work suffers from the same problems as the old (pre-post-structuralist?) Marxist notion of ideology: it cannot account for either the diversity of the representations of the social sphere, nor for their largely subconscious operation (1996, viii–x). In fairness to Irigaray, however, what I am characterizing as the “self-understanding” of men certainly is not, and need not be, explicitly or fully conscious, nor need it be the universal or exclusive understanding possessed by men.

occur" (Irigaray 1997, 39). This passage seems to speak to a central concern of Spinoza in the *Ethics*, namely, sociality. Man and woman provide each other with the ability to understand more and more in terms of scope, i.e., greater and greater horizons of being and knowing (where knowledge is itself a mode of existence). In doing so they promote the highest good contemplated by Spinoza, which is the advancement of the understanding of God. It is to the positive ethics of intimate relationships that we now turn.

What the first long passage quoted above from Irigaray seems to suggest is that if man understands that only God is free (in the sense of self-caused), then the psychological motivation for repressing woman's activity (or human freedom) will disappear. While Irigaray does not spell this out, Spinoza gives us the concepts which will allow us to explain the possibility of a transition to a peaceful relationship.

Spinoza tells us that only what is different between two people can cause injury. It is now time to flesh out this concept with Spinoza's ideas about what leads to differences and to similarities. Things can be similar with respect only to their power or what is positive in them, and never in what is negative in them or deficient (Spinoza justifies this by E3p7: "The conatus with which each thing endeavors to persist in its own being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself"). Of the two types of emotions allowed by Spinoza, active emotions are positive and passive emotions negative, so that people can be said to agree only with respect to active emotions (E4p35). Active and passive emotions are caused by adequate and inadequate ideas, respectively (E3p3). We have adequate ideas only of those things "that are common to all things and are equally in the part as in the whole" (E2p38). We have inadequate ideas regarding the affections of the human body (E2p29), where an affection is understood as the interaction of at least two bodies. Putting all of these together, we understand that people agree with each other only in so far as our desires are caused by ideas of those things which are common to all things. These "common things" turn out to be none other than what we rationally judge to be for our own advantage (E4p35). There is, therefore, nothing more advantageous to us than someone who wants the same things that we do (E4p35c1). In the case of marriage this goal is specifically "begetting children and rearing them wisely" (E4AppCh20), and for intimate relationships generally the goal, as well as the motivation, is "freedom of the spirit" (E4AppCh19&20). As the former goal seems self-explanatory, though not self-evident, we will pass

on to the second. What is "freedom of the spirit?" How would it function specifically within the confines of an intimate relationship? If we can answer these two questions, we will have constructed a Spinozistic response to domestic violence.

While certain aspects of Spinoza's social theory will explicate "freedom of the spirit," we will want to use only those aspects that do not assume any political state or social contract, for we have already decided two things in this connection: (1) a response to domestic violence which judges it wrong simply because it is illegal will be unsatisfying, and (2) Spinoza himself says that the state rarely has the power to affect what individuals do or feel at such an intimate level. By combining those aspects of Spinoza's social theory with his comments about the "free man," we will come to an understanding of Spinoza's rational alternative to a state of violence.

The first aspect of Spinoza's rational relationship is a kind of subdued harmony where moderation is praised. Consider the following propositions: "Cheerfulness [*hilaritas*] cannot be excessive; it is always good. On the other hand, melancholy is always bad" (E4p42). "Titillation [*titillatio*] can be excessive and bad. But anguish [*dolor*] can be good to the extent that titillation or pleasure is bad" (E4p43), and "Love and desire can be excessive" (E4p44). Spinoza also counsels us to some typically altruistic values, even if they have a different, egoistic motivation, such as the value of repaying hatred with love (E4p46) and the value of avoiding excessive pride (E4p49, 55 & 56). Most importantly, Spinoza counsels peace: "Whatever... causes men to live in harmony, is advantageous, while those things that introduce discord into the state are bad" (E4p40). The rationale for this is not altruism, but rather Spinoza's doctrine that the most advantageous thing for one man is another man. The next question is, how do we get from an inharmonious, violent relationship to a rational, harmonious relationship?

The long explanation of the possibility of this transition lies in part V, which we will discuss shortly, but the short explanation for this transition is in E4p59: "In the case of all actions to which we are determined by a passive emotion, we can be determined thereto by reason without that emotion." In the proofs and scholium to this proposition, Spinoza makes it quite clear that he means this to be as broad as it reads: *all* actions. The love that has obviously been lost in a violent situation can be reanimated by reason. If we combine this with the analysis of chapters 19 & 20 of the appendix to part

IV, we get the following sequence of causes for domestic violence: (1) Love for the partner originates out of lust; (2) Because of the nature of such lust, this love easily turns to hatred (whether this is simply because of jealousy, which Spinoza seems to assume, or whether this is because of the disillusionment of the man which Irigaray diagnoses); (3) The rational person will seek harmony, and will again love his/her partner out of reason, i.e., the desire to raise children and/or freedom of the spirit. Because reason and human freedom are essentially one and the same, it would seem that if we understand the nature of the free person we will understand what a rational love would seek and promote for both partners. While this is generally true, this account will have to be modified when we take into account Spinoza's thoughts in part V of the *Ethics*, where the subject of a different kind of knowledge — intuition — will come up.

The free person is guided by reason, and is therefore not guided by fear (E4p63). The free person thinks of the future and judges his/her future good in comparison with his/her present good (E4p65). The free person thinks of life and not death (E4p67), always acts in good faith (E4p72), and is grateful to other free people (E4p71). The free person "is more free in a state where he lives under a system of law than in solitude where he obeys only himself" (E4p73). The reasoning for this last characteristic is crucial, for Spinoza argues that the rational person also desires freedom and knowledge for the rest of mankind (E4p37), and so we can construe E4p73 in a more general form than Spinoza states it: The free person is more free when s/he lives with others than when s/he lives alone. This returns us to Irigaray's positive ethics for intimate relationships. What remains to discuss is the more specific form of this transition from a state of inharmonious slavery to our emotions to a state of true understanding, and here the role of the intuition will allow us to see how Irigaray is perhaps more Spinozistic than Spinoza himself.

At the end of part IV Spinoza explains that part V will "demonstrate the extent to which human virtue can achieve these objectives [the objectives of the free person], and the nature of its power" (E4p73s). We should thus expect part V to give us the gritty details of the transition described in E4p59, i.e., the practical suggestions for making the transition. These suggestions center around the ways in which we can understand our experience more precisely by considering our own nature, thereby controlling our own emotions by developing adequate ideas of them. Furthermore, the suggestions are centrally concerned with the cultivation of our intuition.

To understand intuition we must go back a bit and discuss Spinoza's theory of the three kinds of knowledge: imagination, reason, and intuition. In E2p40s2, Spinoza discusses these three types. Imagination is knowledge "from individual objects presented to us through the senses in a fragmentary (mutilate) and confused manner without any intellectual order" or knowledge from symbols. Reason is knowledge "from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things." Intuition is not described directly, but all three are described in an example (although the difference between the first two is certainly not made explicit): "Three numbers are given; it is required to find a fourth which is related to the third as the second to the first." Now there are several ways that this problem can be solved, although the mathematical description of each is the same: multiply the second by the third and divide by the first. One may know this by rule learned without proof (imagination from symbols), or because it has always turned out this way in one's experience (imagination from experience without intellectual order), or from Euclid's or other mathematical demonstration (reason). But in most cases none of these are necessary and anyone with any acquaintance with mathematics can tell the answer by direct intuition. In part V Spinoza will go even further and say that intuition is the highest virtue of the mind and it is the only way to reach the intellectual love of God which is our highest contentment. The path to this intuition is reason however, and so reason has a part to play in preparing the mind for intuition. For instance, the method of the *Ethics* is itself rational, working from certain commonalities, e.g., the definitions and axioms of part I, to certain universal ideas, e.g., the conception of God in the propositions of part I.

In E5p28 Spinoza argues that the desire for intuition arises out of rational knowledge, but the proof that he offers is telling because it assumes that a desire for intuition *has* arisen, and so it proceeds by process of elimination to determine that the cause must be reason and not imagination. This seems fairly uncontroversial from the example which he gives of the series of numbers, for very few of us (perhaps only mathematicians) would be interested in the "long way" of answering the problem. But at the more philosophical level, intuition is superior because it *begins* or *has its cause* in the knowledge of the attributes of God and proceeds deductively to the understanding of individual things, whereas reason proceeds inductively from certain common notions to the formation of universal concepts (E2p40s2). Because of Spinoza's concept of God as nature as the only

immanent being, this distinction far surpasses the distinction between induction and deduction: intuition understands things *in God considered as an infinite being*, whereas reason understands things only by lower-level commonalities. The immediate benefit of such intuition can be seen if we return to the consideration of the practical suggestions for the control of the emotions.

The first four propositions of part V suggest that if we remove the idea of an emotion from the idea of an external cause, then we form adequate ideas which lead to active emotions and therefore to greater control over our emotions. This involves, as Spinoza suggests in E5p4s, no small amount of inner reflection and searching, in which one should closely attend to each emotion until it is known clearly and distinctly. In E5p6 intuition's superiority begins to become apparent; it reads: "In so far as the mind understands all things as governed by necessity, to that extent it has greater power over emotions, i.e. it is less passive in respect of them." The scholium outlines the method of this understanding: "The more this knowledge (namely, that things are governed by necessity) is applied to particular things which we imagine more distinctly and more vividly, the greater is this power of the mind over the emotions, as is testified by experience." This is the deductive method of intuition, moving from an adequate knowledge of the attributes of God (specifically the necessity of their nature) to an understanding of particular things.

To translate this account of self-control over emotions back into the context of domestic violence, one sees that Spinoza's advice is to seek happiness only in the love of God, which cannot possibly revert to hatred (E5p18c). Living with another person is conducive to such love if each person seeks those things that truly bring his/her self-understanding, a seeking which is fostered by harmony and harmed by discord. Furthermore, Irigaray's suggestion that partners provide each other with access to the divine can be read as meaning that the process of domestic harmony moves the partners *together* towards the knowledge of God, which is the very condition of intuition and peace (Irigaray 1997, 39).

III. Conclusion

Spinoza's contribution to the analysis of domestic violence is not quite as detached as Curley's question might have led us to suspect. It acknowledges

that the batteree has no supervening obligation to endure abuse that she (either alone or utilizing societal resources such as shelters) has the power to resist or remove from herself. It also concludes that the batterer's lack of freedom is not the partner's fault, but rather the batterer's nature as a finite being. This mistaken understanding of man's own finitude is itself a certain powerlessness, a passivity in the grip of destructive passions. Furthermore, this mistaken self-understanding need not be restricted to individual pathologies, but is rather a general element of certain cultures. On this point Irigaray and Gatens have a common cause. If domestic violence is not the result of aberrant or distinctively particular pathologies, but rather of a more general context that affects many individuals, then the response to domestic violence must look to these contexts. As Gatens puts the matter, "So long as the law continues to treat the criminal as an 'aberrant individual' or a 'monster' and as the sole locus of responsibility, our civil body will continue to structure human relations in ways which systematically encourage violence" (1996, 120).

The response to the problem takes the form of an understanding of its causes that gives us power over those causes to the extent that they are emotions that originate in an inadequate understanding of the nature of love. In Irigaray's language, this means that men must learn to allow women *not to exist*, i.e., not to be available to them as a finished *a priori* ground of their being but rather as an always-open enveloping inscribed in a chain of cause-and-effect which is, from the point of view of gender, endlessly recursive (one generation after another). Woman does not "exist" because her identity cannot be fixed. This is one way of understanding the necessity of certain aspects of intimate human relationships in a way which drains them of some of their emotion, while leading to love of the nature in which these chains of birth (conception), human love (happiness), and reproduction are inscribed.

It is in this last sense that the most feminine aspect of Spinoza's philosophy is apparent. One can develop an ability to see the infinity of nature in one's everyday life, and not simply as the ever-receding limits of the universe. The argument I have developed implies that Irigaray's conception of a female person is the clearest expression of Spinoza's conception of a human being. Thus, the value of Irigaray's reading can be seen not only in the way in which it helps to articulate a Spinozistic account of domestic violence, but also in the fact that in so doing, it helps to construct

a charitable account of Spinoza's thought that is beyond the boundaries of Spinoza's own view of women.

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Naïve Logic

One of philosophy's oldest paradoxes is the apparent contradiction between the great triumphs and the dramatic failures of the human mind. The same organism that routinely solves inferential problems too subtle and complex for the mightiest computer often makes errors in the simplest of judgments about everyday events. (Nisbett and Ross 1980, p. xi)

The main questions of Descriptive Epistemology are: What strategies do we use in forming and revising beliefs? How do these strategies compare with established normative methodology for obtaining and assessing information? What does human rationality consist in?

The dynamic construction of knowledge largely consists in subjecting the contents of our beliefs to inferential procedures that yield new beliefs. Until recently, a highly idealized model of human reasoning was universally accepted almost without questioning. The laws of classical logic were considered, at least implicitly, to be the laws of thought. Since the 1960s psychologists have conducted massive research into human reasoning. The results, though of controversial interpretations, shook that prevailing assumption. The traditional view of the human being as a rational animal (Aristotle), "noble in reason, infinite in faculties" (Shakespeare), was severely challenged by the results of repeated experiments that display, unequivocally, a disturbing picture of human inferential abilities.¹ An alarming number of normal adults commit deductive fallacies (such as Affirming the Consequent or Denying the Antecedent) when given simple, ordinary problems. Almost all untrained reasoners fall into the trap of accepting as valid an argument that either has a similar structure to a familiar

¹ Detailed surveys of reasoning experiments can be found in Evans 1982 and 1989, Falmagne (ed.) 1975, Stich 1991, Gentner and Stevens 1983, Johnson-Laird and Byrne 1991, Wason and Johnson-Laird 1972, Cohen 1986, Nisbett 1993, and others.