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Introduction

In the Preface to the *Theological–Political Treatise (TTP)*, we read one of the main concerns of Spinoza's Ethics and political philosophy, namely: why people “will fight for their bondage as if they were fighting for their own salvation”? This problem arises because the metaphysical principles of the conatus establish that desire is the actual essence of human beings.⁽¹⁾ Desire strives always for human preservation. Thus human desire should always look for the greater good. This is because the essence of a thing is that which posits its existence, and does not imply anything that contradicts it (3p4–p6). The affections of the human body, as well as their ideas in the human mind—by parallelism—actualize the human essence, which is the same existence of the human being. By this, death cannot come from the essence, nor from the bodily affections (or its ideas in the human mind), but from other bodies, which contradicts the existence of that essence. We experience that human beings have good and bad moments, being affected by good or bad objects that increase or restrain their conatus. Although human beings are not born with the knowledge of what is good and what is bad for them, gaining more experience will let them have a better knowledge of this. But given the experience of certain goods and evils, how is it possible for a human being to keep on looking for those evils that maintain him in bondage towards them, instead of looking for the good he prefers?

The solution to this problem is given in Proposition 10 of Book V of the *Ethics* in the following terms: “So long as we are not torn by affects contrary to our nature, we have the power of ordering and connecting the affections of the body according to the order of the intellect.” (5p10). But in common life human beings are torn by affects contrary to our nature. It will be desirable to live lives where we do not suffer contrary affects, but we usually encounter evils as well as goods, and insofar as we are affected by passions, we do not understand those things by their proximate causes, and we are unable to choose the greater good; which brings us back in vicious circles of negative affects that take away our tranquility of mind. Thus we have to reformulate our question in the following terms: Are we able to overcome this vicious circle and acquire adequate knowledge and freedom? Or are we condemned to bondage, and

unable to overcome this determinism?

In this paper I will attempt two answers to this question, one for the Ethics and another for political philosophy; but beforehand I must also answer the question on how is it possible for a human being to keep on looking for evils instead of goods when these had already been experienced. This paper has three sections. In the first section of this paper, I will consider ambition as the paradigmatic negative passion for Spinoza's Ethics, from which derives social and political problems that he will consider in his *TTP*. I will consider these problems from the affect of self-esteem and the imitation of the affects. In the second section, I will argue that Spinoza's *Ethics* proposes differential strategies to overcome ignorance and the passive passions derived from it—such as ambition and fear—; that is to say, strategies that depend on the knowledge of the *ingenium* of persons and people. Usually translated in English as “temperament,” *ingenium* is their particular imaginative associations, or particular biography, that persons or people realize through education, habit and custom. In the third section I will consider the political version of this rational solution, which is an imaginative solution that can be understood as the conquest of rationality through levels. But these levels could be loose of the state for what they were construed disappears.

1. The Problem of Bondage to Passions: The Case of Ambition

For Spinoza's metaphysics, God is the unique substance, and it is identified with nature. It expresses its essence in infinite attributes, from which thought and extension are two of them. There is no contingency (1p29) because everything that exists is a modification of God (1p15), which means that its existence is a determination of God to exist and act in a certain way (1p24-1p26). Each attribute has the same order and connection. Thus there is no interaction between thought and extension or their respective modifications. Consequently there is no causal interaction between the human mind and its object, the human body (1p28, 2p7). The human mind perceives its body and external bodies through the ideas of its bodily affections (2p26). But the human mind does not have a direct knowledge of itself (2p23d), but it knows itself and is conscious of it only through the ideas of its bodily affections (2p23, 3p9s). The human body has a power of acting, which means that its bodily affections express more the human body nature than the nature of the external affecting objects; whereas the human mind has a power of thinking the ideas of those objects, which express more the human nature than the nature of the external bodies (2p16).⁽²⁾ Thus the human mind will have a better knowledge of its body insofar it considers its body's power of acting, such as the knowledge of the optical rules of the human eyes, which condition our visual perception of bodies. Likewise through these ideas, the human mind will have a better knowledge of its power of acting, which is to understand.

Spinoza says that “[w]hen the mind considers itself and its power of acting, it rejoices, and does so the more, the more distinctly it imagines itself and its power of acting.” (3p53c; cf. 3da25). This consideration increases the power of the human mind and brings rejoice to it. Thus, “[s]elf-esteem is really the highest thing we can hope for. For [...] no one strives to preserve his being for the sake of any end.” (4p52s). Self-

esteem is the affect of its own power of acting, and will rejoice him more than the idea of any external object.

Nevertheless, when we imagine, we are not clear about the way in which our images represent our power of acting, and in which way they represent external objects. For instance, if we are ignorant about the laws of optics, we will err when thinking the real distance and size of the sun, and affirm that it is about 200 feet away. Only if we have adequate ideas of optics, will we be able to know that our sense perception of the sun is derived from the power of our sight. As happens in this case, when we imagine, we do not have a distinct idea of our real power, and in this way our self-esteem does not increase our power.

However, in relation with other human beings we spontaneously find other ways to have a more distinct idea of our self and increase our self-esteem. One of these ways is through the passion of ambition, for which Spinoza gives the following definition: "*This striving to do something (and also to omit doing something) solely to please men is called ambition [ambitio], especially when we strive so eagerly to please the people that we do or omit certain things to our own injury, or another's.*" (3p29s). Ambition is a desire to please others—but guided by an inadequate idea of what they really need to realize fully their essence. This idea is inadequate because it follows from the particular *ingenium* of the agent, that is, from the accustomed association of the agent's imagination, that is, the associations of its bodily affections.⁽³⁾ It is important to note that there is no term in English that translates all the meanings of the Latin term "*ingenium*," but several terms are used to translate it according to the context; such as "temperament," "cleverness," "genius," "natural disposition," and "natural ability." This diversity of terms translate one and the same concept in Spinoza's philosophy, that which refers to the particular way in which a person or a people have realized the laws of imagination; for instance, the law of association (2p18), which explain memory, language, habit, etc. It is important to note that the order of nature and the constitution of things are the causes of our duration, and insofar we do not have the knowledge of it, all those affections are inadequate ideas in us. The ideas recollected in our memory are inadequate, uncertain and random, because they are images that follow the common order of nature, instead of the order of the intellect. By the common order of nature, the experience of being affected repeatedly or rarely by certain objects and persons will be different in each person. And this experience in conjunction with the person's essence, will determine the person's *ingenium*.

Ambition is natural to human beings guided by imagination because they are prone to search for ways to rejoice, and praise will be one of the stronger ways of achieving it. We have seen that self-esteem is the more powerful affect that we can have, and praise or blame from others are ways to imagine more distinctly our self and its power of acting. Thus, self-esteem "is more and more encouraged and strengthened by praise (by 3p53c), and on the other hand, more and more upset by blame (by 3p55c)" (4p52s). Or in other words, "[t]he ambitious man desires nothing so much as glory [gloria] and dreads nothing so much as shame [*pudor*]." (3p39s). Ambition arises in an individual when his *ingenium* does not have an adequate idea of the human nature, thus he is incapable of perceiving the true goods for him and

the others, and they keep on looking for false goods. Nevertheless, Spinoza says that: “each of us strives, so far as he can, that everyone should love what he loves, and hate what he hates.” (3p31c). Through the process of imitation of affects—that we tend to imitate those affects that we see in persons to which we identify ourselves (3p18)—the ambitious individual is striving for others to imitate his own desires, thus he could be praised, and his particular self-esteem could be empowered and rejoice. But this is not so easy. Spinoza says that:

This striving to bring it about that everyone should approve his love and hate is really ambition (see 3p29s). And so we see that each of us, by his nature, wants the others to live according to his temperament [*ingenium*]; when all alike want this, they are alike an obstacle to one another, and when all wish to be praised, or loved, by all, they hate one another. [3p31s]

This passage shows the main source of social and political conflicts. According to this, everybody is looking for the same good, namely, for the others praise; they look for this through means that bring people evils instead of goods, and nobody realizes their desires and they start hating each other because they appear to be obstacles to his desires. The Ethics conclude that it is natural for human beings to look for the praise of others, thus “we are guided most by love of esteem and can hardly bear a life in disgrace.” (4p52s). Even though we can be aware that our ambition is harming other persons, this affect is so strong that we may be unable to avoid that harm.

2. Differential Strategies in Ethics: Human Kindness

How is it possible to overcome ambition bondage? Do we have to put aside our *ingenium* and follow only the universality and coldness of natural laws? I will call “Differential Strategies” to the planning that Spinoza’s Ethics proposes using *ingenium*. Thus, the strategies that work for one person may not work for another person, even though his experience can throw light for the others own remedy. But each one has to consider the particularities of its *ingenium*, as well as consider their particular perception of the common order of nature.

Spinoza proposes the following remedy to overcome bondage to passions:

By this power of rightly ordering and connecting the affections of the body, we can bring it about that we are not easily affected with evil affects. For (by 5p7) a greater force is required for restraining affects ordered and connected according to the order of the intellect than for restraining those which are uncertain and random. The best thing, then, that we can do, so long as we do not have perfect knowledge of our affects, is to conceive a correct principle of living, or sure maxims of life, to commit them to memory, and to apply them constantly to the particular cases frequently encountered in life. In this way our imagination will be extensively affected by them, and we shall always have them ready. [5p10s]

The first step of the remedy for the negative passions is to propose a model of the virtuous and free man, who acts only according to reason and human nature. Insofar we are affected by passions, we do not

need to have an adequate knowledge of the reasons behind the free man model. We can have inadequate ideas of it, but as long as it maintains secure principles for practical life (*certa vitae dogmata*), and we imitate it, we will be more perfect and freer from bondage to the passions. After we follow this model, we will be able to contrast our previous passionate activity with the new activity, and find by ourselves the reasons behind the free man model.

Nevertheless, to follow this model does not mean to leave behind our ingenium, but to consider it as part of the necessary means that will lead us to realize the model. And this is present in the cited passage in the use of memory, that is, in the use of the order of associations that a particular person has accustomed to do. If we want to preserve something new in our memory—even if it is inadequate knowledge—we need to associate it with other things that are actually in our memory. That is to say, the second step of the remedy for the negative affects is to adapt the order of the intellect to the order of the ingenium. Only by this we will be able to continue to the third step, which is to apply those maxims of life to the particular cases that a given *ingenium* frequently encounter in life. And by doing this everyday, we will be able of adapting the *ingenium* to the order of the intellect.⁽⁴⁾

Let us go back to the passion of ambition to see how this remedy works. In this case, Spinoza says that:

[I]t should be noted that in ordering our thoughts and images, we must always [...] attend to those things which are good in each thing so that in this way we are always determined to acting from an affect of joy. For example, if someone sees that he pursues esteem too much, he should think of its correct use, the end for which it ought be pursued, and the means by which it can be acquired, not of its misuse and emptiness, and men's inconstancy, or other things of this kind, which only someone sick of mind thinks of. For those who are most ambitious are most upset by such thoughts when they despair of attaining the honor they strive for; while they spew forth their anger, they wish to seem wise. So it is certain that they most desire esteem who cry out most against its misuse, and the emptiness of the world. [5p10s]

Given the particular constitution of the ambitious individual, its *ingenium* is looking literally all the present and future time for praise and glory. But if this person does not obtain them, then his self-esteem is restrained and he will feel sad. His sadness will lead him to complain about those persons or objects that people praise, because he wants to be the person praised by them. Thus Spinoza underlines that those who complain about the emptiness of the world are really ambitious persons unable to overcome the passions harm.

It could seem that the correct thing to do is to “erase” this *ingenium* and try a new start. But this is impossible for Spinoza, because *ingenium* is the physical and mental constitution that a human being has built during his whole life. Contrary to erasing the ingenium, the remedy requires certain knowledge of it to order the maxims of life, commit them to memory, and apply them to the frequent cases that that person will encounter. This is what happens with the affect contrary to ambition, that is: the desire to please men and not do what displeases them, which “is usually called *human kindness* [*humanitas*].” (3p29s).⁽⁵⁾

This desire is guided by an adequate idea of human nature—what is common to any human being—and it always looks for the good for human beings: “he who strives from reason to guide others acts not by impulse, but kindly, generously, and with the greatest steadfastness of mind.” (4p37s1). If we look for praise through real goods, this affect wouldn’t do harm to anybody; on the contrary, we would strive for common goods and be kind to others. And this remedy will let us acquire the praise that we want, without doing harm to ourselves or to others. Thus we will rejoice and increase our power of thinking and acting.

Spinoza continues on the remedy for the affect of ambition: it is not “peculiar to the ambitious—it is common to everyone whose luck is bad and whose mind is weak.” (5p10s). After we consider what increases our self-esteem more than anything, we can identify our ingenium and know its tendency toward ambition, greed, hate, anger, fear, etc., and apply the remedy for ambition. Instead of complaining about the vicious of men regarding the passion that affects us, we should think in its correct use on behalf of the common good. For example, for greed, it could be the benefits of commerce.

3. Differential Strategies in Politics: The Origin of the Hebrew State

Spinoza says at the end of 5p10s:

One [...] who is anxious to moderate his affects and appetites from the love of freedom alone will strive, as far as he can, to come to know the virtues and their causes, and to fill his mind with the gladness which arises from the true knowledge of them, but not at all to consider men’s vices, or to disparage men, or to enjoy a false appearance of freedom. [5p10s]

The *Ethics* remedy for moderating affects and appetites derives from the love of freedom by itself. Spinoza proposes the model of a truly free man—which is based on common notions of human nature—and strives to imitate it. This imitation will lead to love to the others, as well as to true knowledge. Contrary to this, the passage announces three problems of political and religious bondage, namely: claims against men’s vices, disparaging other men, and enjoying a false appearance of freedom. These attitudes come from fear derived from ignorance to the future, and their remedy comes along with that of ambition.

Let us now consider how to overcome political and religious bondage. In order of doing so, I will consider briefly the case of the creation of the Hebrew State by Moses. According to Spinoza, the political and religious history of the Hebrew began with the departure from Egyptian slavery. This is because before that they did not had a religion or a nation of their own, but followed Egyptian rules. According to Spinoza’s metaphysics:

Nature certainly does not create nations, individuals do, and individuals are only separated into nations by differences of language, law and practiced customs [morum receptorum]. It can only be from these latter factors, namely law and customs [morum], that each nation has its unique character [ingenium], its unique condition, and its unique prejudices. [TTP 17, §26: 217]⁽⁷⁾

Spinoza rejects the idea that God created directly the Hebrew nation, or any other nation. A nation is an

individual conformed by human beings that act in the same way, have the same kind of bodily affections, and have the same kind of ideas (inadequate and adequate). For Spinoza, language is also a collection of frequent associations between images, which includes words, sounds, and perception of things. Hence a nation is formed by three kinds of frequent affections: language, law and practiced customs. Among these kinds of affections, Spinoza gives more relevance to law and practiced customs to give a unique *ingenium*, condition and prejudices to a nation. According to this, before departing from Egypt, the Hebrews were part of the Egyptian state, even though they had their own language and certain ideas that differentiate them from other slaves.

Moses guides the Hebrews to leave the Egyptian slavery with the promise of security and the prosperity of their state; in other words, with the promise of increase the power of their *conatus*. As they depart, a series of events were beneficial for them and also disadvantageous for the Egyptians. For Spinoza's philosophy, those events had efficient causes that are part of the common order of nature, which does not work under any finality. For Spinoza there are no miracles, but everything that happens in nature follows the laws of nature. But Moses and the Hebrews were ignorant of the common order of nature; and believed that God and nature were two different things, that the former is invisible (has no natural form) and controlled the latter. Thus they thought that the help they received were miracles from God, and, at the same time, that he destroyed their enemies. Given this believe, on the one hand, they also thought that God was an omnipotent judge with freewill. On the other, as far as they only knew a small part of the world, and their experience was limited to these events and people, they thought that God preferred them to any other people, and that he showed this through miracles.

To maintain their *conatus* and commonwealth, Moses realized that they needed God's protection; that is, through external benefits. Thus he convinced the Hebrews to make a covenant with him, in exchange of their exclusive obedience to him. Through this agreement, the Hebrews will transfer to God their natural right to decide what is better for them. For Spinoza, everyone has the natural right to act according to his own essence and it is determined solely by each person's power (TTP 16, §7: 192-93). Through his natural right everyone "judges what is good and what is evil, considers his own advantage according to his own temperament [*ingenium*] [...], avenges himself [...], and strives to preserve what he loves and destroy what he hates [...]" (4p37s2). On the one hand, in the first section we saw the social problems that give rise the *ingenium* guided by imagination, not by reason. On the other, *ingenium* plays an important role in the use and transfer of the natural right, because it establishes what are good, evil, advantageous, and disadvantageous for each one. Thus in order of attaining the transfer of the natural right of the Hebrews, Moses makes use of the Hebrews' new prejudices: that God is omnipotent, that they are his preferred people, and that he shows this through miracles (TTP 3: 49; TTP 16: 193). The Hebrews accept to do the covenant with God because they have experienced God's help to preserve their existence (TTP 17: 205-6. Ex 19:4-5), and transfer to God their power to guide themselves according to their own *ingenium* (4p37s2). Spinoza underlines that this covenant only offers material goods, security and commonwealth to the Hebrews, but not internal peace nor supreme happiness. Under this first agreement

with God, all the Hebrews had the same right to interpret God's miracles and give cult to him, as well as to receive his benefits. In this sense of equilibrium of power, they all could be able to organize a collegial government.

Nevertheless, Spinoza says that the Hebrews were "people accustomed to Egyptian superstition, [...] were rude [*rudis*] and reduced to the most abject slavery" (TTP 2, §15: 38)⁽⁸⁾ Those Hebrews could not have "any sound conception of God" (Ibid.), and they were unable to worship an invisible God that controls all visible things. Thus, after the absence of Moses, the Hebrews "asked Aaron for visible gods, and the idea of God which they finally arrived at as a result of so many miracles was a calf." (TTP 6, §10: 87-88). With this they broke the first agreement with God. For Spinoza this happened because the Hebrews "were not in any way fit to make laws wisely or organize a government in a collegial manner among themselves; for they were all of rude temperament [*rudis ingenii*] and down-trodden by the miseries of slavery." (TTP 5, §10: 75).⁽⁹⁾ Even though the Hebrews escaped from slavery, and they lived in freedom, they did not change their *ingenium*; thus they were incapable of thinking otherwise than when they were slaves, so they continue their slavery toward false gods. In this case, they were unable to see the benefits of maintaining their obedience to an invisible God. Thus Spinoza continues:

[A]fter Moses got to know the obstinate temper and spirit of his nation [*ingenium and animum suae nationis contumacem*], he saw clearly that they were not able do what they had undertaken to do, without great miracles, and special external help from God, and would inevitably perish without such assistance. [TTP 3, §10: 53]

Moses knew that the Hebrew state would perish without God's external help, and they need to make a new agreement with God. But Moses also reconsiders the Hebrew *ingenium*, that is, the real beliefs and capacities that his people had to guide their own actions. Thus he could not longer let all of them give cult to God according to their own particular *ingenium*, and he finally decided to transfer the natural right of the Hebrews to those who did not worshipped the golden calf, that is, the Levites (TTP 17, §26: 218; Numbers 8.17). Through civil law, Moses guides the actions of the Hebrews that will maintain the state and benefit their conatus. But insofar they are unable to see those benefits, Moses has to reinforce their compliance to the law by adding something that is not related directly with the benefits of the law. According to Spinoza, Moses acts like legislators, who by this kind of acting "have tried to restrain the common people like a horse with a bridle, so far as it can be done." (TTP 4, §2: 5).⁽¹⁰⁾ Moses uses the Hebrew *ingenium* to add promises for the observant of the law and punishment for the offender. For instance, the worst punishment that a Hebrew could received was to be expelled from the Hebrew nation, and this would mean to be driven out "from God's inheritance and [be] obliged to serve other gods (see 1 Samuel 26.19)" (TTP 2, §14: 39). This happened to David when he was forced to live in exile by his persecutors. Moses reinforces theses promises and punishments through the prejudices that the Hebrews' *ingenium* had formed on God:

When therefore Scripture states that God chose the Hebrews for himself above other nations (see Deuteronomy 10.15) so as to encourage them to obey the law, and is near to them

and not to others (Deuteronomy 4.47), and has laid down good laws solely for them and not for others (Deuteronomy 4.2), and has made himself known to them alone, in preference to others (see Deuteronomy 4.32), and so on, Scripture is merely speaking according to their capacity [*captum*]. [TTP 3, §1: 45]⁽¹¹⁾

The particular *ingenium* of the Hebrews required this kind of prejudices in order of maintaining their obedience to an invisible God.

Spinoza argues that:

Moses was well equipped to hold power since he far excelled the rest with a divine virtue and convinced the people of this by offering them many examples of it (see Exodus 14, last verse, and 19:9). On the basis of this divine virtue, which was the source of his power, he made laws and prescribed them to the people. But in all this he took great care to ensure that the people would do its duty willingly and not through fear. Two factors most influenced him to take this approach: the obstinate character of the people (which does not allow itself to be coerced by force alone), and the threat of war. For in war it is vital to success to encourage the soldiers rather than to cow them with threats and punishments, for each soldier is more eager to win distinction by gallantry and courage than merely to avoid punishment. This is why Moses, with his virtue and by divine command, introduced religion into the commonwealth, so that the people would do its duty more from devotion than from fear. [TTP 5, §§10-11: 75]

Moses maintained power over the Hebrews because he excelled them on divine virtue, that is, in acting under the divine commandments. These commandments were civil laws that looked for their conatus, that is, for their commonwealth, and will acquire it if they followed them constantly. But it was really important that Moses guided the Hebrew *ingenium* as if he was not guiding it, because they needed to be obedient in all moment to a God that was strange for them, as well as they needed to act in the same way all the time. Thus one of the ways to acquire this is the political version of the differential strategy that considered in the second section of this paper, namely: guiding the natural ambition of the people, by giving civil and religious distinction to those Hebrews that excelled in gallantry and courage. Other way to acquire the obedience to the law was to imitate Moses, as well as to look for ceremonies and religious activities that maintained them obeying the law. According to Spinoza, Moses

bound them to him with benefits, and by divine inspiration made many promises to them for the future. He did not make the laws too severe, as anyone who has studied them will readily concede, particularly if he looks at the circumstances required for the condemnation of a defendant. And finally, in order that a people which could not run its own affairs should depend upon the words of its ruler, he did not permit them, accustomed as they were to slavery, to do anything at their own pleasure. They could do nothing without being obliged at the same time to bring to mind a law and follow commands that depended upon the will of the ruler alone. They were not permitted to plough or sow or reap as they pleased, nor could they eat or dress or shave their heads or beards as they pleased, but all in accordance with a

fixed and specific ordinance of the law. They could not rejoice or do anything at all except in obedience to orders and commands prescribed by the law. Not only that, but they were obliged to have certain symbols on their doorposts, in their hands and between their eyes, to remind them continually of their obedience. [TTP 5, §11: 75]

By all these strategies Moses could maintain the second covenant between the Hebrews and God. Guided ambition, hope, ceremonies, among other strategies, maintains the Hebrew acting under the law, which translated in the maintenance of their commonwealth. These strategies are different from those he used in the first covenant, because they consider the particular *ingenium* of the Hebrews.

According to Spinoza, insofar the Hebrew sustained the freedom of their state and commonwealth in front of other nations, these strategies are positive. But in the moment in which they loose their state, to follow these same strategies does not acquire any freedom for them, but slavery, because they became customs that preserve a passive state of slavery of the people before another nation or state. This give raise to one of the main problems in the political realm: people that are ignorant of their true well being, are easily deceived by those who promise them means to attain what their *ingenium* teaches them to be the goods. This people will be fighting for their slavery as if it were their freedom. Thus Spinoza is really critical to the maintenance of any idea or ceremony that grew in a nation that no longer exists.

Conclusions

I argue that the knowledge of the particular *ingenium* of persons or people—no matter if they are common people or wise—is a necessary condition for the passage from the bondage of passion to its rational guidance in order of acquiring more freedom from passions. This give us the solution to the problem posed at the beginning of this paper: we must not only have adequate ideas from common notions of human bodies, but we must order and connect them to the *ingenium* of each one, and reorganize the affections of our individual bodies, that is, weave those suitable ideas with our *ingenium*. The relevance of *ingenium* in the strategy of planning affections is that it works as if it were the sole reason, because it makes each one to look for their own utility, which is to love oneself, and desire everything that leads him to greater perfection and strive, as in much it depends on him, to preserve his being (4p18s). Scientific knowledge abounds in a better understanding of the true value of human being, to become perfect, increase their power, and be freer. The political version of the rational solution of negative passions is an imaginative conquest of rationality through levels; but we saw that these levels could be loose of the state for what they were construed disappears.

Let me use the metaphor of a boat to illustrate the ethical and political remedy to the bondage to passions: let us consider the human *conatus* to be a boat in motion by the wind, and that we are piloting it and are unable of stopping its impulse immediately; that impulse and direction will be given by *ingenium*, the wind continues impelling the boat, and the boat maintains its inertia. Nevertheless, this does not mean that we are unable to do anything about its course. On the one hand, we are able to grasp in a certain way

our *ingenium*, know the impulse of the boat, as well as the future by considering frequent past encounters; we can do so by considering our memory and experience. On the other, this will give us certain control over the future, in the sense that we can encourage or avoid certain encounters by guiding the course of the boat in the direction that increase our power, and avoid whatever restrains it. In other words, we can decide in advance when to steer the ship in the future, even though we cannot make a 180-degree change alone or stop it altogether. But we can plan for the future within certain margins of action by temporal distance.

For the differential strategy the temporal threshold becomes an advantage considering that it “locates” the affections within the same force, so we can enunciate the rules of rational decision and remain in balance between deciding a greater good over a lesser good, etc.—Not so much to know the exact temporal distance of the thing that affected or will affect, but enables the agent to anticipate possible outcomes of different actions and make the best election for him and others. This empower human beings to plan their agenda for the future and choose and succeed for their own good, although it does not totally depend on them. It is in the *potentia* of human beings to make good rational planning, not only to identify true goods, but also the best route to enjoy them, and likewise to identify inevitable evils and find the best route to avoid them.⁽¹²⁾

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(1) The nomenclature for references to the Ethics is the following: first the number of the book; then “d” stands for Definition; “a” for Axiom; “p” for Proposition; “c” for Corollary; “post” of Postulate; “s” for Scholium; “d” for Demonstration; “A” for Appendix; “praef” for Preface; “lem” for Lemma. For other works: “TTP” for *Theological-Political Treatise*, followed by chapter and number of page in Gebhardt’s edition.

- (2) Sight can exemplify this: the human eyes and the dog eyes follow the rules of optics, but they have different natures and capture light in different ways, registering different colors on the same object view. Thus the sight of the human eyes and the sight of the dog eyes have different affections that express more their own nature than the nature of the affecting body. The example of human sight illustrates the human body's power of acting, in the sense that it is able to do certain things, such as perceive colors and register what it sees in its memory. The same will happen for the others external senses of the human body.
- (3) For further reading on ingenium in Spinoza's philosophy: Moreau, *Spinoza. L'expérience et l'éternité*, pp. 379-465.
- (4) This remedy is related to that of Descartes in his *Passions*, I, 50, but Spinoza rejects the mind-body relation through the pineal gland, as well as the conception of freedom as absence of causes.
- (5) Spinoza also links modesty [*modestia*] to this desire, cf. 3da43.
- (6) According to Spinoza, while Jews “dwelt among other peoples before the exodus from Egypt, they had no special laws, and were bound only by the natural law and, indubitably, the law of the state in which they were living, so far as it did not conflict with the natural divine law.” (TTP 5, §5: 72). Spinoza considers that the patriarchs sacrifices were not Hebrew ceremonies but influence of their cohabitation with other people, use to increase their devotion through sacrifices; or by imposition of the State under whose surveillance they lived. Language will be the only thing that maintained the Hebrews united under the Egyptian power, because they could also be polytheists (TTP 5, §5: 72-73).
- (7) I change the translation following the Latin text: “an natura? haec sane nationes non creat, sed individua, quae quidem in nationes non distinguuntur nisi ex diversitate linguae, legum & morum receptorum, & ex his duobus, legibus scilicet & moribus, tantum oriri potest, quod unaquaeque natio singulare habeat ingenium, singularem conditionem & denique singularia praejudicia.”
- (8) I change the translation following the Latin text: “Nec sane credendum est, quod homines superstitionibus Aegyptiorum assueti, rudes, & miserrima servitute confecti, aliquid sani de Deo intellexerint [...]”
- (9) I change the translation following the Latin text: “Attamen ad nihil minus erant apti, quam ad jura sapienter constituendum, & imperium penes sese collegialiter retinendum; rudis fere ingenii omnes erant, & misera servitute confecti.”
- (10) Spinoza says that this is so because “legislators have wisely contrived (in order to constrain all men equally) another purpose very different from the one which necessarily follows from the nature of laws. They promise to those who keep the laws things that the common people most desire, and threaten those who violate them with what they most fear.” (TTP 4, §2: 5)
- (11) I change the translation following the Latin text: “Cum igitur Scriptura, ut Hebraeos ad obedientiam legis hortetur, dicit Deum [...] ad eorum captum tantum loquitur.”
- (12) I wish to thank to Laura Benítez and the members of the Seminar on History of Philosophy of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM); Daniel Garber; Enrique Chávez-Arviso; Rafaella della Rosa; Laura Keating; Justin Steinberg; Abraham B. Anderson; Marc Sable; Luciano Espinosa; Pedro Lomba and Paulina R. Landecho for important comments and corrections to previous drafts.

Differential Strategy in Spinoza's Ethics and Political Philosophy

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Abstract: In the Preface to the Theological–Political Treatise (*TTP*), we read one of the main concerns of Spinoza's Ethics and Political Philosophy: to understand why people “will fight for their bondage as if they were fighting for their own salvation” in order to find means to overcome bondage and be able to empower the intellect and acquire human freedom. On the one hand, this is a problem for Spinoza due to his identification of desire as the essence of man (3dA1), a striving for the preservation of his own being that should always be acting toward a greater good. On the other, meanwhile the *TTP* identifies the origin of this problem with the external guidance of the self-preservation; the *Ethics* understands it as the incapacity of a rational guidance of the self-preservation, which manifest in the subordination to a negative passion. Given both problems, in this paper I will argue that the *TTP* concurs with the *Ethics* in one solution: overcoming passive passions—such as ambition and fear—is possible only through differential strategies, which depend on the knowledge of the *ingenium* of individuals and people. Usually translated in English as “temperament,” *ingenium* is the particular imaginative associations (or particular biography) that individuals or people realize through education, habit and custom. I argue that the knowledge of the particular *ingenium* of individuals or people—no matter if they are common people or wise—is a necessary condition for the passage from the bondage of passion to the metaphysical freedom proposed in the *Ethics*; as well as the civil freedom proposed in the *TTP*.