

North American Spinoza Society

NASS MONOGRAPH #14 (2009)

**Love and Possession:
Towards a Political Economy of Ethics 5**

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**Loving Well: Affective Economics
in Hobbes, Locke, and Spinoza**

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North American Spinoza Society (NASS)

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Love and Possession: Towards a Political Economy of Ethics 5

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The fifth and final part of the *Ethics* is probably best known for its incomprehensibility. Jonathan Bennett, an appreciative yet critical reader of Spinoza, famously finds the core doctrines of Part 5 to amount to “an unmitigated [...] disaster.”¹ Without endeavoring to provide an account of the entirety of Part 5, I will claim that, halfway through this often opaque section of the *Ethics*, one encounters a key to understanding Spinoza’s philosophy as a whole. Spinoza describes therein a lovesickness that afflicts the mind and precipitates human misfortune more generally: “sickness of the mind [*animi ægritudines*] and misfortunes [*infortunia*] take their origin from too much love toward a thing which is liable to many variations and which we can never possess” (E5p20schol).² In contrast, Spinoza claims almost immediately within the same scholium that the third kind of knowledge “begets a love toward a thing immutable and eternal (see E5p15), which we really fully possess (E2p45), and which therefore cannot be tainted by any of the vices which are in ordinary love, but can always be greater and greater.” Love toward mutable things that elude our possessive grasp can be “too much,” excessive, sickening, and productive of misfortune. One must moderate, calculate, and measure “ordinary love.” But love toward what is immutable and eternal cannot be excessive and always admits of more and more. Furthermore, extraordinary love comprises a real “possession,” a having that is both complete and inexhaustible.

Against the common understanding that the *Ethics* promotes a “radical anti-emotion program,”³ I claim that Spinoza describes an

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1. Jonathan Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1984, 357.
 2. References to Spinoza’s works follow standard conventions. References are from Benedict de Spinoza, *Collected Works*, trs. Edwin Curley, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985, occasionally modified.

immanent transformation of love from a form of madness to an expression of wisdom.⁴ Love as madness produces the affects that another tradition unites in the seven deadly sins, such as lust, gluttony, envy, greed, and pride. Spinoza, however, never condemns these affects as such. Within each affect one can find its “correct use” (E5p10schol), which enables us to love and to live otherwise. As we come to understand our beloveds as determinate expressions both of nature’s power and of our own ability to persevere in being, we find conditions for our liberation within these most burdensome of passions. More specifically, as we diminish our tendency to imagine what we love in terms of its finitude and susceptibility to loss, we are determined to love and to know both others and ourselves by the joyful passions. Ultimately, Spinoza’s portrait of love suggests ways of life that generate the satisfaction of our possessive desire with the collective and inclusive love of, certainly, the eternal and immutable thing, but also the eternal and immutable *in* things, in each other, and above all, in ourselves. In other words, Spinoza’s economics of love and possession point up the desire to appropriate our own power in and of community, in and of nature.

I end the paper with some suggestive remarks about Spinoza’s concern for our affective comportment toward possession appearing in his political writings as well. Although I cannot present an argument for it here, *Ethics* 5’s preoccupation with how we love and possess is not only continuous with the political writings but is necessarily proper to any Spinozian political project. That is, every political order both conditions and is conditioned by how we live out and direct our desires and passions, especially our possessive and amorous ones.

The Perils of Exclusive Love

As I noted, Spinoza locates the source of human misery in the fact that we typically and excessively love things that we cannot possess (E5p20schol). Because the things we usually love are by their nature subject to many variations, are perishable, and cannot be shared with others, our desire to possess them is frustrated. The mind and body attached to mutable things — in other words, to finite modes — are subject to the same violence implied in the particular limits of their objects.

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3. Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 507.
 4. I am by no means alone in understanding the *Ethics* as an affirmation of the affects, or emotions, even as it clearly promotes the salutary benefits of some affects over others. See, for example, Heidi Ravven, “Spinoza’s Materialist Ethics: The Education of Desire,” *International Studies in Philosophy*, 22/3, 1990, 59-78.

Because the object of love must change constantly by virtue of its finite, modal existence, the lover who aims to possess and unite herself with such an object of love suffers; her joy is always accompanied by some measure of sadness.

The “remedy” for this overwhelming, sickening possessive desire, according to Spinoza, does not consist in its constraint or negation. On the contrary, the desire to possess what one loves completely, entirely and without any limit, is entirely realizable and laudatory. One must, however, re-orient one’s love toward the sole object that one can truly possess infinitely, without frustration, without any fear of its loss or degradation. Maladies of the mind and misfortune in life occur by virtue of the fact that we love that which, by its very nature, denies the possibility of its consummate possession. The remedy for the sick mind, therefore, is love of the only thing that can satisfy this inexhaustible, possessive desire. If one can fill the body and mind with love of that which is infinite, immutable, imperishable, and shareable with every other being, one will truly and entirely possess “the infinite enjoyment of existence,” which is to say, eternity (Ep12). Let’s look at this transformation more closely.

Love and joy are ineluctably linked to the amplification of strength, capacity, and power (*potentia*), and thus to perseverance in being, the essential striving belonging to all that exists. The highest good, therefore, necessarily involves joy, love, and pleasure. Usually, however, human beings do not act according to the laws that follow from their proper natures. Rather, they act according to the provocations of their passions, i.e., encounters with external things. “And since,” Spinoza warns, “the greatest good men seek from an affect is often such that *only one can possess it* fully, those who love are not of one mind in their love — while they rejoice to sing the praises of the thing they love, they fear to be believed” (E4p37schol; my emphasis). In the throes of love people experience an exhilarating increase in power, and — like the people described in the *Theological-Political Treatise* — they cannot hold their tongues.⁵ They want nothing more than to sing the praises of their beloved, but this very joyful speech provokes, as Spinoza puts it, the fear of being believed. That is, it provokes the fear of theft. The lover, therefore, is torn

5. P.-F. Moreau has a nice analysis of Spinoza’s treatment of language in the TTP. He notes that, for Spinoza, the inability to shut up (*se taire*) is a fact of human nature and the State only appears ridiculous if it institutes laws proscribing speech. An interdiction upon certain words or feelings would be as futile as an interdiction upon gravity. Or, to use Spinoza’s example, commanding people to hold their tongues is tantamount to forcing a table to eat grass (TP 4/4). Pierre-François Moreau, *Spinoza: expérience et éternité*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1994, 369-376.

by two tendencies at the heart of human existence: on the one hand, “each of us strives so far as he can, that everyone should love what he loves, and hates what he hates” (E3p31cor), because “each of us, by his nature, wants others to live according to his temperament” (E3p31schol); on the other hand, each hopes to enjoy what she loves without fear of its loss or erosion. In other words, there appears to be a conflict between the affects of glory (*gloria*), or ambition (*ambitio*), and avarice (*avaritia*).

Our ordinary loving comportment toward finite things, on Spinoza’s account, is necessarily implicated in an economy of scarcity. We imagine that only one person can ever consummately enjoy the object of love, and we know that enjoyment of any particular finite being cannot last forever. When the object of love is another person, as in most of Spinoza’s examples, the resource is limited by the inability of the other to love everyone equally and fully in return, even though many can love the same individual. Even if humans were successfully to develop non-exclusive institutions of romantic love, individuals can always revoke their love, and, regardless of the interpersonal dynamic, each of us will eventually perish. These problems with quotidian love are clear enough to everyone.

Note that the problem is neither the fact of loving excessively nor the desire to possess the thing that is loved. On the contrary, a problem arises because the love object cannot be shared without loss, for its full possession appears such that it can only be had by one person. The lover, then, is not of one mind whereby she would be solely fortified and pleased by her love. Her mind is beset, at the same time, by fear that necessarily accompanies love toward finite things. Put otherwise, love toward the finite carries with it, inevitably, fear of the finitude of love itself, anxiety about the necessary end to the empowering joy of this encounter between one’s body and that of the beloved. Yet, the difficulties and limits belonging to such love pertain neither to the desire of the lover, nor to the being of the object, but only to the lover’s mode of imagining the object. The lover seeks exclusive rights to her beloved object because she conceives it to be a scarce good. While her love is infinite and uncontainable, her beloved appears finite and vulnerable. We will discover that the infinity of her love, far from needing castigation, is precisely what must be preserved and transformed in order to be fulfilled.

We can see this by examining Spinoza’s advice for overcoming determination by sad affects. In order to remedy the suffering that attends everyday love, one must completely avoid dwelling on human vices and disparaging human weakness (E5p10schol). Such a concentration on viciousness and the imputation of an absence of strength, according to Spinoza, amounts to an eagerness to “enjoy a false appearance of

freedom” (E5p10schol). A person falsely imagines herself free from affective servitude by virtue of ironic, critical, or satirical distance. Implied in the mockery or condemnation of humanity is the imaginary belief either that one does not suffer the same passions or that one can only submit to human suffering, and is thereby left with laughter as one’s only consolation. In reality, dwelling on human folly or viciousness reveals a sad constitution, affected and diminished by human bondage. In order to resist this tendency to condemn and mock human struggle, and to be thus determined by sad passions, “we must always attend to what is good in each thing so that in this way we are determined to acting from an affect of joy” (E5p10schol, translation modified). From this point of view, we discover that “glory” can be either the greatest distraction of the mind (TIE 5), or its greatest source of satisfaction (*acquiescentia*), the greatest thing for which human beings can hope (E5p36schol). The remedy for any given affect, then, is to find what Spinoza calls its “correct use” (E5p10schol), the way in which it is oriented towards the good in each thing. At the heart of affective burdens of human nature — the drive to have others love and desire the same things (*gloria* and *ambitio*) and the quest to possess completely what one loves (*avaritia*) — one can find both what is truly good and the means for its acquisition.

Put otherwise, the “remedy for the affects” in Part 5 of the *Ethics* does not consist simply in the affirmation of some affects and the condemnation of others. The “remedy” is not a tribunal whereby some affects are judged good and others bad (or evil). The remedy finds the good *in* the bad, where “bad” is understood as difficult, cumbersome, problematic, or less useful (*utilius*). Whereas E4 describes human existence insofar as it naturally tends toward its own enslavement, the first half of E5 prescribes practices or exercises by which these very same tendencies can be re-ordered so as to produce an active rather than a passive mind and body. That is, E5 is a program for the cultivation of freedom from within slavery itself. In this way, E5 does not aim to suppress the pre-rational desires that propel us toward suffering and diminish our power to act. On the contrary, the remedy for the affects is emancipatory precisely because it fulfills those pre-rational desires. It fulfills them by re-orienting them towards objects and situations that actually support them, as opposed to those that merely provide momentary satisfaction, followed by terrible sadness.⁶ Insofar as E5 concerns the power of reason to moderate the affects, this moderation consists in cultivating a constellation of relationships by which these affects and drives become nourishing and enabling rather than harmful. Reason does not function best by finding a way to avoid or attenuate the force of the affects. Rather, reason — the active production of adequate ideas — emerges by virtue of the force of

joyful affects.

The primary criterion for identifying a noxious affect is its “exclusivity.” Reason counsels that affects are only harmful insofar as they affect the body and mind in a way that excludes other affections. In Spinoza’s words, “An affect is only evil, or harmful, insofar as it prevents the mind from being able to think” (E5p9dem). This statement serves to demonstrate the proposition asserting that “[i]f an affect is related to more and different causes which the mind considers together with the affect itself, it is less harmful.” An affect that the mind relates to a multiplicity of causes does not have an exclusive relationship with a particular object, and the mind is consequently not fixated upon one thing. On the other hand, affects that are exclusively related to one cause restrict the mind and body, a restriction that is expressed in the affect’s being limited to one part of the body. Even the most beneficial and empowering affects — love and desire — can be excessive (E4p44) when their force is proscribed to one particular part of the body. The impact of an affect upon a highly circumscribed corporeal site consumes the mind, rendering it unable to undergo other feelings or ideas. Although the body is highly moved and excited by a particularly favorable feeling, such an experience provokes a love that effectively encloses it, seals it off from the world, other beings, and other experiences.

Departing from Spinoza’s vocabulary, we can say that consciousness spontaneously concerns itself with its immediate satisfaction. Spinoza repeatedly claims that at the moment of pleasure and joy, one is fixed by the present, enclosed within imagination, whose nature is to consider things as present. Far from considering things *sub specie aeternitatis* (as they are according to the necessary laws of their nature), a person imagines external things only insofar as they presently affect her. A desirable thing captivates her, commands all of her attention, compelling her to consider only the means by which she can guard her covetous object. Her joy in the object is followed by sadness, or fear of its loss. In extreme situations, to which the arts have long attested, a powerful fixation on a beloved can

6. I am hereby in agreement with Heidi Ravven who finds that Spinoza’s ethical project consists in a “(re)education,” a fulfillment and affirmation, rather than a restriction and negation of desire. I depart from her interpretation, however, in that I find the ethical project to be co-extensive with the political establishment of justice (cf. Ravven, 73). In a different article, I aim to understand Spinoza’s concept of justice precisely as the “peace of mind” that accompanies the affirmation and expansion of possessive desire, which is akin to the goals of her project, as I understand them. Hasana Sharp, “Feeling Justice: The Reorientation of Possessive Desire in Spinoza,” *International Studies in Philosophy*, 37/2, spring 2005, 113-130.

provoke madness:

Generally, then, the affects are excessive, and occupy the mind in the consideration of *only one object* so much that it cannot think of others. And though men are liable to a great many affects so that one rarely finds them to be agitated by one and the same affect, still there are those in whom one affect is stubbornly fixed. For we sometimes see that men are so affected by one object that, although it is not present, they still believe they have it with them.

When this happens to a man who is not asleep, we say that he is mad or insane. [E4p44schol; emphasis added.]

The exclusive attention to one thing, albeit rare, can occupy the body and mind to the extent that they are no longer meaningfully affected by the rest of their environment. In this way, someone does not know what is actually appearing before her because she is so moved by something not necessarily present in actuality. Spinoza's assertion underlines his materialism: if the body is arrested by one thing, so is the mind. If the body is occupied, affected determinately and overwhelmingly by something, it cannot be affected by anything else. The mind cannot simply transcend its situation and thereby will itself to contemplate other things. The individual is possessed by something external, constrained to consider only the force of her passion. The single-minded desire to possess results in being oneself possessed.

The situation can become still worse. If this love affecting one part of the body and obsessing the mind endures for a long time, it can change the proportion of motion and rest definitive of the lover. That is, love can kill. For Spinoza, death does not require a corpse (E4p39schol). An individual's essence can be so radically altered by an illness, perhaps a traumatic experience, or even an all-consuming love that she would cease to be the same individual. Just as the Spanish poet (E4p39schol) became another being in essence by virtue of the fever that destroyed his memory, the arresting force of mad love can reconfigure the lover into someone different, killing the individual she was.

Hints of the radically destructive power of love are quite common, according to Spinoza.

[V]ery often it happens that while we are enjoying a thing we wanted, the body acquires a new constitution,

by which it is differently determined, and other images of things are aroused in it; and at the same time the mind begins to imagine other things and desire other things [E3p59schol].

Spinoza likens this experience to boredom with food. “Hence, the presence of food or drink we used to want will be hateful. This is what we call *disgust* and *weariness*” (E3p59schol). The fickleness of love and other appetites does not pose the same dangers as obsessive love. Yet, even the relatively banal and common experience of becoming bored or disgusted with a formerly desirable thing reveals that we are transformed by our enjoyment of a beloved. Our encounters with other beings have determinate effects upon our bodies and minds. These effects can be powerful enough to bring about a radical re-composition or decomposition of the self.

Love, as most of us know, can be either the most enabling human experience or the most destructive. Because it is rather commonplace to seek delirious, crazy love, this intoxicating joy without end, it may appear that we spontaneously seek our own death. Certainly, psychoanalytic accounts would suggest that desire drives toward a kind of decomposition, a return to an empty peace.⁷ There are those who have found a prescription for self-annihilation in E5 and the intellectual love of God. What is this communion with all of nature, if not the loss of the self, the surrender of one’s individuality to indistinct and eternal substance? The conclusion that love seeks death, however, takes an effect for its cause, a common trick of the imagination (E1app). One does not seek death in endeavoring to remain joyous and united with an object of love. One aims at life, power, and an enabling and joyful union, but often in a maladroit fashion.

The lover desires eternal joy. The problem, according to Spinoza, is that with these quotidian pleasures and loves — of, to use his example, “a mistress or a prostitute” — one cannot maintain ceaseless joy without being crazy. Sempiternal love — that is, love with a beginning but no end — of finite things is neither possible nor sane. All finite things pass away, making it impossible. But even if it were possible, such a love would constrain and harm the body. If, however, one loves the infinite thing exhaustively and without reserve, one can undergo eternal joy. Therefore, the lover ought to orient her inexhaustible desire to possess eternally her object of love — her desire to generate a stabilizing and enriching experience of this enabling joyful union — toward the one thing that can genuinely,

7. The classic account of this phenomenon is Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trs. James Strachey, New York: Norton, 1975.

ontologically support it. Only with love toward God (*amor erga deum*), or all of Nature, is one truly, and eternally exposed to pleasure and joy. With the constant joy proper to love toward God, one is no longer mad but as wise as possible. What must happen, then, in order to transform this tendency toward mad love into wise love? How can insanity become philosophy?

Inclusive Love or *Hilaritas*

The problem posed by mad love is a problem of “economics.” Mad love relates to an isolated part of the body and thereby constrains the mind to an isolated object. To use the lexicon of the market, such love is “high risk” since the lover is not sufficiently diversified. Furthermore, the consummate investment of the mind and body in a circumscribed thing violates the sovereign principle of reason — utility (*utile*).

Whatever so disposes the human body that it can be affected in a great many ways, or renders it capable of affecting external bodies in a great many ways, is useful to man; the more it renders the body capable of being affected in a great many ways, or affecting other bodies, the more useful it is; on the other hand, what renders the body less capable of these things is harmful [E4p38].

Crazy love closes most of the body and the mind off from most of the world, and, in this way, injures the individual. The concept of utility operates as a selective criterion determining reason to seek openness — passive as much as active — to the world. The effort to know demands that one endeavor to multiply corporeal sites susceptible to affection, as Spinoza establishes in E2p14. In addition, the greatest peace of mind (*acquiescentia in se ipso*) emerges from considering one’s actions in the world, one’s ability to relate to and affect others (E4p52dem).

In E4, Spinoza defines “cheerfulness” (*hilaritas*) as precisely the kind of joy that comes from an openness of the entire body to being affected by other natural beings: “Cheerfulness (see its definition in E3p11schol) is a joy which, insofar as it is related to the body, consists in this, that all parts of the body are equally affected” (E3p42dem). Because the human body is a complex individual with many different kinds of parts, this demands that it relate itself to many different kinds of things and love in as many ways as possible (see, e.g., E4p45schol). Following the rule of utility (E4p38), through which one aims to be affected and to affect others as much possible, is the rational path leading toward intuition; *utile* reveals how “striving, or desire, to know things by the third kind of knowledge

[...] can indeed arise from the second” (E5p28).

Cheerfulness, or *hilaritas*, does not generally occur spontaneously. Naturally, humans, prompted by imagination, fixate upon a single (albeit complex) source of joy, identify a single love object, and thereby fall prey to various sicknesses of the mind and follies of fortune. If one can engage, however, in a practice by which the lovesick mind opens itself to ever more objects of pleasure and joy and amplifies as many parts of its body as possible, it will find itself on the path toward the intellectual love of God.

Mad love is exclusive: it is a love that touches especially one part of the body, is available only to one person, closes that person off from most of her fellow human beings, and, in the worst cases, destroys her singular proportion of motion and rest, changing her essence so as to bring about her death. Love toward God, on the other hand, delivers eternal joy because it affects every part of the body at once. It is an inclusive love that opens the body to relate all of its affections to God. There is no part of nature that cannot enjoin the body to know and love God still more. Nothing is, in principle, excluded as a possible object of love.

Commentators have noted a distinction between the first and second halves of E5. Whereas the first twenty propositions appear to be relatively intelligible, the final twenty-two become increasingly obscure and even mystical.⁸ Macherey finds that the first half describes the “love toward God” (*amor erga deum*) and the second yields the “intellectual love of God” (*amor intellectualis dei*).⁹ Love toward God emerges through a rational practice, an exercise of freedom whereby one deliberately relates one’s affections to the power of nature as a whole. I understand this to mean that by endeavoring to understand experiences and beings in their necessity, one ceases to react to one’s immediate (and narcissistic) mode of imagining. One is assuaged in grasping things and events in terms of a whole constellation of relationships rather than as immediate indications of, for example, one’s individual worth. Experiences cease to be implicit judgments, divine or human. *Amor dei*, on the other hand, ceases to deduce natural or divine order and becomes an immediate affirmation of God, or the infinite power

8. Bennett notes this difference by wishing that Spinoza had only written the first half. “Those of us who love and admire Spinoza’s work should in sad silence avert our eyes from the second half of Part 5” (375). Macherey claims that the two halves mark two different solutions to human servitude — a “weak” or “minimal” solution in the first half and a “maximal solution” in the second (*Introduction à l’Éthique de Spinoza, La cinquième partie, les voies de la liberation*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1996, 40-43).

9. This is one way to characterize Macherey’s overall interpretation of E5.

of existence. Love is no longer *erga deum* since God ceases to be an external cause or the name for the necessary laws of nature through which all beings act. *Amor erga deum* becomes *amor dei* as one's body is re-composed by loving more and more objects, according to the rational precept of utility (*utile*), as *utile* yields *hilaritas*. I will proceed, in the remainder of this paper, to show how the opening of the body enables one to have and to love otherwise, that is, how ordinary love can move from madness to love toward God and, finally, to love of God.

According to this schema, the first half of E5 is the rational program through which the lovesick mind re-orient its irrepressible drive to love toward what will make it healthy, sane, and wise. As Moreau notes, a human being cannot choose whether to love but only what, and perhaps how, to love.¹⁰ The cure for lovesickness, I am claiming, is more love but love that takes its object to be infinitely variegated and open, such that love ultimately infuses all of nature. The training of E5 involves learning to love more and different things in and through the object of one's love, opening oneself to more and different sources of affection. The "remedy" consists in considering one's affects as they actually are, that is, as modifications of one's power provoked by various causes at once, and thereby to consider one's power to be conditioned in myriad ways by qualitatively different relationships with other beings. By endeavoring to understand one's experiences as "overdetermined,"¹¹ the lover learns to relate her affects more and more to the idea of God, the infinite and necessary power by which everything exists. Because "everything that is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God" (E1p15), this practice of relating one's affects, experience, and ideas to God is supported by the nature of existence itself. If the mind truly conceives its affections, it conceives them as *in Deo*. Spinoza claims that when one understands things according to this procedure — relating one's affects, pleasant or otherwise, to the idea of the infinite productive power of God — one cannot but love oneself, God, and things. Increasingly, then, one ought to be able to love with one's whole body, each part at the same time. The body's power is thereby augmented entirely, part for part, and its proportion of motion and rest remains intact.

10. Moreau, 177.

11. "Overdetermination" is a term coined by Freud and expanded by Althusser to refer to events and social formations that have a multiplicity of causes. The term militates against reductivist mono- or serio-causal explanations for psychic phenomena, ideology, or social and political relationships. It resists an assertion that any given phenomenon might be the brute determination of, for example, "It's the economy, stupid," or, even, "It's God, stupid." See Louis Althusser, "Contradiction and Overdetermination," *For Marx*, trans. B. Brewster, London: Verso, 1996.

The body, thus, becomes increasingly “capable of a great many things” and “has a mind whose greatest part is eternal” (E5p39).

In other words, the body implicated in “useful” love relationships arrives at a wise, proportional love, which is initially understood to be love toward God. Such wise love conditions a conception of things, and especially oneself, as in God, as belonging to God. Moreover, insofar as the lover belongs essentially to God or nature, she expresses and constitutes its infinite power. In other words, the body’s openness to the world, and its cultivation of love toward God, becomes *acquiescentia*, peace, or repose in oneself by virtue of considering oneself an active and definitive constituent of being (E4p52dem). The rational practice of relating one’s affects and experiences to singular things as constitutive of God leads, in this way, to the third kind of knowledge. The third kind of knowledge is hereby understood as the intuitive grasp of one’s essential striving to persevere in being, in concert with others, and ineluctably constitutive of God, or nature. This wise love consists in an apprehension of oneself within the infinite productive power of nature, along with other beings. It is an inclusive and including love.

In contrast to mad love, wise love does not fear to be believed. Whereas intoxicating love includes the anxiety that it will be stolen by others, wisdom’s love wants nothing more than to be shared with others, to include others in its joyful engagement. Joy belonging to the love toward God is increased by being shared with other beings and admits always and necessarily of “more and more.” Substance, by definition, cannot be divided into parts, such that each person would receive her equal share of nature’s power. God, or nature, does not belong to an economy of scarce resources but to a dynamic of power absolutely without limits. Love toward God is a communication of power by means of useful (*utilius*) encounters. Beings who encounter and relate to one another in a joyful way amplify each other’s power mutually. One does not lose power by virtue of another being’s growth or strength. On the contrary, joyful encounters characterized by *hilaritas* (rather than *titilatio*) reciprocally intensify and augment each being’s corporeal and mental aptitudes together at once. These encounters are rational and useful insofar as they belong to bodies that love openly, with all of their parts, mutually furnishing a way of being that discloses to them the real conditions and expression of their power. The mutual joyful empowerment of the inclusive love toward God shows the individual who and what she is. In other words, love with one’s entire body, though sought rationally, gives rise to intuitive knowing. That is, it enables the understanding of oneself as eternally joyful by means of the inviolable and unending co-implication of one’s own essence and that of God, by means of, not over and against, one’s engagements with other

finite beings.

In everyday life, our desire to possess fully and exclusively what we love provokes avarice, jealousy, and competitive struggles with fellow human beings. Yet, this desire to have and not to lose what we love is not our source of suffering, according to Spinoza. Although we are made sick and suffer because we love what we cannot have, we are not sick because we want — desperately even — to have it. We can assuage these unpleasant affects of avarice and jealousy if we love what we can really have, what will never diminish, and what is not threatened by other beings. Love toward God cannot be taken away: once it is achieved, it comprises one's being and is entirely devoid of sadness (E5p18cor). Moreover, if other people love God, one is compelled both to love them and God more. "This love toward God cannot be tainted by any affect of envy or jealousy: instead, the more men we imagine to be joined to God by the same bond of love, the more it is encouraged" (E5p20). It is both a love and a manner of possession entirely compatible with human sociality. Both its enjoyment and its possession are made all the more possible by being shared. In fact, its full possession is neither a private nor a solitary experience but rather depends upon residing in a relatively free commonwealth and being among a community of relatively free and wise friends.¹²

12. I do not have space to defend this controversial claim presently. I will note that it departs from many interpreters, especially in the anglophone tradition. See, for example, Steven B. Smith who finds that the intellectual love of God is an "utterly solitary" pursuit and has no relationship to Spinoza's political philosophy, (*Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, 121). The dominant interpretation in the francophone tradition, however, holds that the freedom of E5 is contingent upon the attainment of political freedom. Jean-Marie Beyssade contests the interpretation that conjoins ethical and political freedom (and salvation) by proposing a kind of middle path whereby it is desirable, yet not ontologically necessary, to attain such freedom through collective political emancipation, "VIX (Éthique IV Appendice chapitre 7) ou peut-on se sauver tout seul?" *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 4, 1994, 493-503. I would claim that certain social and political conditions are necessary to the full enjoyment, or possession, of *acquiescentia* and freedom, but I do not think we could anticipate or describe those conditions in advance. If we think that Spinoza himself enjoyed such freedom and self-love, we would be compelled to assert that 17th-century Amsterdam along with Spinoza's community of interlocutors and friends met those conditions. I do not think it would be outrageous to speculate that had Spinoza's family remained (and survived!) in a far more politically repressive situation that he would not have been either as wise or as at peace with his existence. Spinoza clearly guarded his own freedom and its institutional conditions very carefully, as is evident from his refusal of a university position (Ep48). The understanding of Spinozian love as social rather than solitary is supported by Jeffrey Bernstein, "Love and Friendship in Spinoza's Thinking," *NASS Monograph* 9, 2000, 3-16.

It may seem that the lover must forsake her finite object of love for a more mature or wise love of the infinite. It may appear that the selfish love of our children, friends, partners, and even our particular nations should be rejected in favor of a more dispassionate respect for nature, necessity, and the infinite causal power. Spinoza notes, however, that the more we know and love singular things, the more we know and love God (E5p24). We cannot love God except through and in singular things. We do not apprehend the infinite directly and in itself. The third kind of knowledge “proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things” (E2p40schol2). Intuitive knowledge and intellectual love are not abstracted from singular essences but rather apprehend the infinite in things as constitutive of their essences. In terms of everyday experience, I think this means that love of my child, for example, would not only be love of the way she makes me feel but love of the way she comprises a determinate aspect of nature, or being.¹³ In loving her, I love both the myriad causal forces (including myself) that produce and sustain her being and the singular way she determines the precise shape of nature, her singular essential striving in and as God. In my intellectual love of God, I love my child for who she is as a unique and irreproducible part within the whole and as an actual constituent of nature’s character. As a parent, loving my child in her necessity would allow me to see her not solely as an indication of my power (or lack thereof) to determine existence but more precisely as she is in herself.¹⁴ Ultimately, the love of God makes possible for the first time a true love of singulars because one apprehends them in their uniquely creative and determinative capacity. Conversely, the love of God, at least for finite human beings, only occurs in and through this true love of singular beings.

Spinoza believes that, from this perspective, when others love what we love, we are only enjoined to love those things more and by extension to love the community of lovers. The typical psychic economy desires the exclusive love of others since we are all in competition to best approximate some imaginary paradigm of the good human being. Glory and ambition are reserved for the few only if we apply the same measure to everyone,

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13. My thoughts about how one’s love of a child would be shaped by the program in E5 were prompted by a question at the NASS meeting at the Eastern APA (December 2004).
 14. My understanding of Spinoza on love was shaped very early on by Amélie Rorty’s analysis, such that I am not even aware of my debt to her, which is surely profound. “Spinoza on the Pathos of Idolatrous Love and the Hilarity of True Love,” *The Philosophy of (erotic) Love*, eds. Solomon and Higgins, Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1991, 352-371.

including ourselves (or, more likely, project our individual standards [*norma*] onto everyone else, E1app). One ordinarily seeks esteem by conforming to the popularly praised models of humanity rather than acting according to an understanding of one's proper nature, or essence. Intuitive love, however, gives one genuine "glory" in that it includes a rich understanding and appreciation of oneself as an absolutely unique part of nature. One is not measured by anything except the laws of one's own nature, which become more visible as one cultivates more active affects, which also generate "self-esteem." As the lover actively constructs her world through understanding the useful relationships in which she is implicated, she cannot but esteem herself, others, and God. She esteems herself, nature, and other beings in that together they constitute the real movement of being. The joy and self-love that emerges from the shared and sharable love of God is the fulfillment of our possessive desire, our desire to have a ceaseless joy and an eternal union with another.

Love toward God does not belong to an economy of scarcity in that one wants nothing more than for others to love God as well. Moreover, this desire for esteem and glory, in Spinoza's view, does not correspond to a desire to be desired: "He who loves God cannot strive that God should love him in return" (E5p19). God cannot love us back, because neither God nor nature is exterior to our essence, or being. Love toward the infinite does not participate in an economy of debt but in an economy of reciprocal empowerment, mutual affirmation, and reciprocal communication of power. The love of God is not like love as it is defined in E3: it is not "a joy accompanied by the idea of an external cause" (E3def6). Although I suggested that the possessive desire fulfilled by love toward God includes a drive toward union with another, God is not merely an extrinsic but, importantly, an intrinsic determination of one's power. Insofar as this love remains in the realm of reason, however, it is primarily experienced *through* others, *with* others, in the domain especially of inter-human relationships. Understood from the perspective of intuition, however, love *toward* God becomes the love of God, in both senses of the genitive. It is no longer love toward God as all that affects and enables one's body and mind but love of God as the constitutive desire that comprises one's very essence. Our self-love and self-possession thereby becomes the "love by which God loves himself" (E5p36).

Conclusion: Towards a New Economy of Possession

In loving God, one is not possessed or consumed as with an overwhelming, finite love. Paradoxically, Spinoza suggests that one possesses most completely when one affirms oneself as belonging entirely to nature. More precisely, a person finds that she does not belong to nature, as if nature were the ground of her being, but rather she finds that she is nature, that her power comprises the being of nature, or God, itself.¹⁵ Still, how can we call this affirmation of oneself as a constituent part of the power of nature a “possession”? What does one have? How is the desire to possess what one loves fulfilled in the love of God?

Saverio Ansaldi writes that, with intuition, “the mind is in full possession of its means, it deploys entirely its power of knowing, which it renews incessantly within the expression of its desire.”¹⁶ According to Ansaldi’s insight, the *Ethics* is a project of love grounded in a dynamic of power by which the lover “appropriates” her power of activity. Spinoza claims that intuition

begets a love toward a thing immutable and eternal (E5p15), which we really fully possess (E2p45), and which therefore cannot be tainted by any of the vices which are in ordinary love, but can always be greater and greater (by E5p15), and occupy the greatest part of the mind (by E5p16), and affect it extensively [E5p20schol].

Although this love occupies and fills up the greatest part of the mind, it is something “we really possess.” It may seem that this love possesses and captivates the human mind, but it constitutes a real possession, something that we truly have, something of our own. It belongs to the mind. I second Ansaldi’s claim in that love yields the full realization of the lover’s own powers. It allows the individual to appropriate to the greatest extent possible her own constituent power within and of nature. Ultimately, the lover accedes to a kind of self-possession.

The practice of relating one’s affects to an idea of God consists in a rational process because it begins from the experience of being affected

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15. Giorgio Agamben explores the difference between immanence in being and belonging to a ground in “Absolute Immanence,” *Potentialities*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999, 220-239.
 16. “Amour, perfection, et puissance: un modèle de la nature humaine?: En marge de la Cinquième Partie de l’*Éthique* (Spinoza et G. Bruno),” *Archives de Philosophie* 64, 2001, 746.

and relates this experience to the power of nature in an inferential procedure. By repeating this inference again and again, the lover ceases to be sickened by the sadness accompanying her love of finite things. The lover is progressively enabled to understand her being affected as the expression of a genuine power of her own body. At the same time, she progressively understands her own activity as a necessary part of nature's self-expression. With much practice and application, as Spinoza urges repeatedly in E5, the "cheerful" cultivation of the body's powers assuages the mind as it delivers an understanding of the limits and extent of the individual's own power. The body's unreserved love of God delivers to it full possession of its power to act, and to the mind full possession of its power to think. Once her affects are always necessarily accompanied by an idea of nature's power, the lover generates ideas in the same order as nature, by inferring from the common to the singular and ultimately apprehending their co-constitution, or immanence. With her ideas in proper genetic order, her mind is in full possession of its power to think. By fulfilling her desire to "really possess" what she loves, the lover's reason gives rise to intuition, and the rational remedy for the affects yields the intellectual love of God.

This therapeutic transformation of one's possessive desire is the common project of the *Ethics* and of Spinoza's political writings. Both ethics and politics, from a Spinozian perspective, train one's comportment toward possession. In the *Ethics*, one learns to have and to hold otherwise. The tendency to imagine the beloved as situated within an economy of scarce resources taints love with sadness and subjects the soul, or mind, to violent vacillation (*fluctuatio animi*) and discomfort, which undermines the freedom and fortitude of the individual. This admittedly abstract account conveys the need to comport oneself toward "ordinary love," or the love of finite individuals, so as to open oneself and one's beloveds onto increasingly joyful engagements with other natural beings. Envious and avaricious love is conservative and exclusive in a way that harms both the lover and the beloved. This maddening and sickening love aims to possess things as we imagine them in our initial joyful encounters and thereby ironically thwarts the very amplification of power that first provokes our love. The drive to possess things through fixing them and captivating them undermines our own power, and the urge to possess the other must eventually fail. A love that aims, alternatively, at self-possession through joyful and enabling encounters with other beings opens the lover to affect and be affected by ever more beings. Ultimately, this inclusive love is such that love of finite individuals makes one more loving generally, more powerful oneself, and more receptive to the powers and affections of others. When one resists the immediate desire to fix the original titillating moments of love, pleasure, and excitement, and instead learns to undergo *titillatio* as a

portal to *hilaritas*, the love of finite beings opens onto love of the infinite. We do not cease to love finite beings, but rather the love of our family, friends, and partners becomes a project of amplifying the power and pleasure of the whole constellation of beings that makes any such love possible. We come to understand our love as neither a solitary experience nor an exclusive possession. Rather, our love is the effect of a complex constellation of bodily encounters and strivings, encounters and striving which encourage yet more love and produce yet more sources of connection and affection. Love of singular, unique individuals does not seal us off from community or distract the mind from “higher forms” of love; it opens us onto the world and other people and reveals to us the infinite productive power of nature.

Similarly, Spinoza defines justice in both political treatises as “the constant mind [*animi constantia*] to attribute to each what is his by civil right” (TTP, 180; translation modified). Justice is a stable desire, a “constant mind,” and thus an affective disposition through which we affirm what belongs to others by virtue of collective power, or “civil right.” As I try to suggest elsewhere,¹⁷ the cultivation of a “constant mind” comprises a “real possession” analogous to the self-possession (*acquiescentia animi*) attained with the intellectual love of God. Conferring upon others their finite pleasures and possessions with a constant — not a vacillating, envious, or troubled — mind delivers actual power and satisfaction to individuals *in a just society*. Because many societies, or political regimes, are far from just, they cannot provide a “remedy for the affects” that would fulfill the possessive desire through a more satisfying comportment toward possession and self-understanding. In a just social order, “civil right,” or the aggregate power of minds in some degree of “unity” (*animorum unione*) (TP6/4), appears so as to enable individuals to apprehend their power as immanent to this greater power. That is, each citizen achieves something like an intuitive grasp of her singular power as a definitive part of a wider whole. When one’s power ceases to be an exclusive possession, but is rather conditioned by a constellation of productive and enabling relationships, one develops a more inclusive comportment toward possession in general. Because it generates an actual increase in power and self-determination for particular individuals, justice soothes the soul. Although this sketch has been all too brief, I have suggested that both the *Ethics* and the political writings provide a “remedy for the affects” that aims to deliver peace and fortitude (*acquiescentia* or *constantia animi*) to social beings by situating their possessive desire within an inclusive rather than an exclusive economy. Both love and possession, in a just society among joyful friends,

17. Sharp, cited above.

yield minds and bodies “capable of a great many things.”

Loving Well: Affective Economics in Hobbes, Locke, and Spinoza

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Love and Nature

Against those who think that, for Spinoza, the affects are to be negated or repressed, Hasana Sharp traces Spinoza's account of a transition between what she calls "mad love" and "wise love," i.e., of a recompartment of our affects and desires away from objects whose finite nature precludes our actual possession of them, toward the one "object" that we actually can desire without fear of losing it: nature, and (by consequence) our own space within it. On this reading, Spinoza's problem is not that we desire. Indeed, to live is to desire. Rather, the problem is that we do not desire well, which is to say that we do not live well. According to the logic of mad love, our affects are directed toward an object considered in abstraction from its embeddedness as a finite mode of nature. However, this object-in-abstraction is a confused projection of the imagination. When we love such a projection, we love in constant fear that the object will be taken from us, which amounts to loving in constant fear that the object will be returned to the commons from whence it came, taken from our exclusive possession. Thus, when we do not desire well, we vacillate between "momentary satisfaction" and "terrible sadness" (6 *supra*), resulting in an inevitable "sickness of the mind" (E5p20schol). Wise love, by contrast, allows us to redirect our affects away from these imaginative abstractions and to the singular things that other finite modes actually are. As we love these singular things, our love of nature itself (as the infinite collection of singular things) grows as well. Not only will nature not desert us, but by divesting ourselves of the illusion that we could possess finite modes exclusively, we divest ourselves of the inevitability that the desire to possess them will be disappointed.¹

1. It would thus not perhaps be too much of a stretch to argue, as indeed Sharp intimates, that it is only by loving finite modes in their singular finitude that we actually love them at all.

Thus, at least, would be one way of characterizing the results of Sharp's reading of E5. I characterize it as such in order to emphasize the degree to which "Love and Possession" reminds us of the fundamentally moral and political comportment of Spinoza's *Ethics*, a comportment that remains under-emphasized in Anglo-American commentary in particular. More importantly, Sharp's paper helps us to situate Spinoza into the context of early modern political thought and to identify ways in which Spinoza's thought can contribute to a project of human freedom. The recognition of *conatus* as constitutive of human nature, and thus the consideration of politics in affective terms, specifically in terms of the need to productively channel the affects, was fundamental to the seventeenth century and unites Spinoza with such otherwise disparate figures as Grotius, Hobbes, and Locke.²

Grotius' account can be taken as exemplary and as framing the issue. In his *De Jure belli ac Pacis*, he writes of those principles that are first by nature:

Those in accordance with which every animal from the moment of its birth has regard for itself and is impelled to preserve itself, to have zealous consideration for its own condition and for those things which tend to preserve it, and also shrinks from destruction and things which appear likely to cause destruction.³

War, as a means of this self-preservation, is thus not contrary to nature; "the end and aim of war being the preservation of life and limb, and the keeping or acquiring of things useful to life, war is in perfect accord with those first principles of nature" (I.2.1). Grotius' discussion carries an ambivalence which will be significant, as emerges quite clearly slightly earlier in the text. There, clearly drawing on the stoics and Lipsius, he defines the "unjust" as "that which is understood to be necessary, although it is repugnant to the nature of reason and society."⁴

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2. On this, see generally Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government 1572-1651*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Tuck emphasizes that these thinkers were responding to challenges raised by an amalgam of skepticism and stoicism.
 3. *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* I.2.1.1. I quote the translation in *The Law of War and Peace*, trans. Francis W. Kelsey, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962. The passage is cited in Tuck, 197. It does not seem to appear in the original 1625 edition of the text.
 4. "Iniustum autem id demum intelligi quod necessarium cum natura rationali ac sociali habet repugnatium" (*De Jure Belli ac Pacis*, Paris, 1625, I.1). The 1645 edition drops the clause about necessity (*Love of War and Peace* I.1.2.1).

The Grotian analysis suggests three ways in which the desire for something can be analyzed: in relation to necessity, in relation to reason, and in relation to society. One way of putting a central problematic of seventeenth-century political thought is the need to sort out how these relations are to be understood and how that understanding then maps onto an understanding of justice. Spinoza's famous resolution of this problematic is a tentative affirmation of the "multitude."⁵

Situating Spinoza in this way underscores the sharp contrasts between Spinoza and Locke, on the one hand, and Spinoza and Hobbes, on the other. It is these contrasts that I will pursue in what follows. Most broadly, one might say that the contrast revolves around what turn out to be fundamentally different understandings of nature. For Locke, nature is fundamentally teleological. Political society is in this sense natural — we are commanded by God to be a part of it — but also couched in juridical terms. In Hobbes, on the other hand, one finds very little about natural law in a juridical sense. Not only that, politics turns out to be unnatural in that to join political society is to separate from nature. Spinoza's account of our own immanence in nature manages to dispense both with the Hobbesian separation from nature and with the Lockean juridical language.

Anti-Locke

According to much received opinion, Locke is the philosopher who justifies and legitimates a regime of exclusive private property rights. It is thus perhaps unusual to notice that his political writings are suffused with a pronounced ambivalence about attachments to objects in this world.⁶

This ambivalence begins with our bodies. Although it is true that "every man has a property in his own person" (II, 26), it is also true that "person" — a "thinking, intelligent being, that has reason and reflection"

5. Much recent Spinoza scholarship is concerned with his use of the multitude. In this light, "Love and Possession" is significant because Sharp does not immediately move to consideration of the "multitude" as the locus of political subjectivity. Instead, she focuses what one might call the enabling affects of the multitude: love and joy. Cf. the works of two of Spinoza's most enthusiastic disciples: militancy today "makes resistance into counterpower and makes rebellion into a project of love" and "this is the irrepressible lightness and joy of being communist" (Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000, 413). I discuss Hardt and Negri's interpretation and offer what I take to be a Spinozist critique of it in my "Capital sive Natura: Spinoza and the Immanence of Empire," *International Studies in Philosophy* 37, 2005, 15-35. Warren Montag suggests that there is a deep ambivalence in Spinoza about the multitude. See his *Bodies, Masses, Power: Spinoza and his Contemporaries*, London: Verso, 1999.

(*Essay* 2.27.9) — connotes something quite different from the corporeal structure that is “man.”⁷ Thus, I have a property right over my person but not over my own biological organism. He writes that “men being all the workmanship of one omnipotent and infinitely wise maker,” they “are his property, whose workmanship they are, made to last during his and not another’s pleasure” (II, 6). Suicide is for that reason forbidden (*ibid.*), as is selling oneself into slavery (II, 23). The latter especially contrasts sharply with Grotius.⁸ In the language of property that Locke uses, one might suggest that our possession of our body is as a usufruct or perhaps an easement; our status on earth is similarly a tenancy.⁹ So too, the right to war in self-preservation delineated in Grotius is preserved but only as an effect of the right to punish those who violate the law of nature by

6. A more thorough account would also consider his discussion of happiness in *Essay* 2.21. Because I want to track the political resonances of Sharp’s reading, I will confine myself to only a brief comment on the *Essay*. What emerges there is that happiness is fundamentally calculative (2.21.58), and that a failure to attain happiness is the result of bad calculation of effects; we are thus to regulate the affects by reason (2.21.53). Locke’s account would be deeply unsatisfying to a Spinozist: it involves a detached faculty of the will, and it stacks the calculation with “the rewards and punishments of another life” (2.21.70), which are supposed to have “no proportion” to those of this life. This transcendentalizing of God is precisely what Spinoza tries to overcome; in Locke’s context, it is difficult to see how it would not guarantee the sort of anxiety that, on Sharp’s reading, Spinoza is trying to overcome. For Locke, at the end of the day, I by nature desire finite things, but rationally I know that they are without value, *qua* finite things, and thus impossible to order in any sort of quotidian calculation of what I should do today. My anxiety over losing those things, because they might disappear, is displaced onto an anxiety over losing myself, because someday I will disappear into infinite happiness or unhappiness. Not only do I not possess other things, I do not even possess myself.

All Locke citations are per convention: *John Locke: An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. H. Nidditch, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975; *Two Treatises on Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960, by treatise and paragraph number; for the *Essays on the Law of Nature*, I cite the text in John Locke, *Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, by page number.

7. See, e.g., *Essay* 2.27.6, and the discussion in John W. Yolton, “Locke’s Man,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62, 2001, 665-683.

8. Grotius says that one might sell oneself into slavery due to one’s own weakness or financial insecurity (2.5.27), though *strictu sensu* one cannot legally alienate one’s body (2.6.6), presumably because it is not detachable. Suicide is more complicated. Grotius claims that “by nature a man’s life is his own, not indeed to destroy, but to safeguard” (2.17.1.1), though when he endorses a ban on suicide (2.19.5.2), it is in the context of a discussion of common law, not natural law.

destroying God's other tenants (II, 8). Thus, punishment is tied to God's command that we preserve ourselves and others. Finally, property, which had been a simple matter of first possession in the Grotian account (1.2.1.5), becomes subject to a full range of natural-juridical stipulations in Locke.

Insofar as Spinoza's account of *conatus* admits of even fewer juridical structures than Grotius', one should expect to see a contrast between Locke and Spinoza on property, and indeed, on Sharp's reading, Spinoza identifies what we would now call liberalist property relations as one of the primary sources of anxiety and as one of the sad affects. Specifically, in mad love, we love excessively what one would now call "rivalrous goods" — things that we cannot all possess because they cannot be shared. To the extent that Locke imposes moral limits on property, his analysis can thus be seen as an attempt to address the problems of mad love. The complexity of his account, and the ambiguities in interpretation that it licenses, should serve to indicate the precariousness of exclusive property rights as a resolution of these problems. In particular, Locke's repeated invocation of natural law can appear as a *deus ex machina* that resolves issues of rivalry before they can emerge.¹⁰

The *Second Treatise's* discussion, nominally on the justification of property in the commons, revolves around productive use of the earth and its resources. Locke frames the question as one of how individual property might come to be morally justified, given a context in which God may be presumed to have given the earth to people in common. In particular, he is concerned to show, against Filmer, that individual consent is not necessary: so long as one leaves "enough and as good" for others, they have no

9. Cf. James Tully: "man's property is the right to use and preserve what is essentially God's property, similar to a tenant's property" (*A Discourse on Property: John Locke and His Adversaries*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, 114). Richard Ashcraft concisely remarks that for Locke we are God's "productive tenants" (*Revolutionary Politics and Locke's Two Treatises of Government*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, 261).

10. It of course matters tremendously in this context how one reads Locke on property. In general, I do not agree with commentators who think that Locke wrote the *Second Treatise* as a whole, or chapter 5 in particular, "in order to justify private property." For reasons of space, I will not defend a full reading of Locke on property here. That said, and however one resolves the details of an interpretation, I think it is fairly clear that property relations are subordinate to, and governed by, the need to fulfill God's command that we preserve ourselves and our species. Thus, Locke's claim is that property rights, heavily circumscribed by the laws of nature, are a legitimate way to secure *conatus*.

reason to complain of an act of appropriation.¹¹ The concern here is one of security: as Locke puts it, “if such a consent as that was necessary, Man had starved, notwithstanding the plenty God had given him” (II, 28). Thus, possession (at least initially) is a matter of appropriating things *out of* the commons, i.e., of separating them from their connectedness with other natural things and closing them off for individual use.

Locke specifically invites us to consider our actions of appropriation as not affecting others by introducing two provisos. An appropriation does not violate the tenants of natural law when it leaves “enough and as good” for others (II, 27), and when the products thus appropriated or produced are not allowed to spoil or waste (II, 31). These spoilage and sufficiency provisos operate in the context of Locke’s focus on labor: objects are to be taken out of nature and appropriated because nature by itself is not productive. That we are to labor in this way is God’s command, a point that Locke frequently makes throughout his writings.¹² Locke’s message is perfectly clear: goods which are held in common are wasted; nature is not really productive unless enclosed:

There cannot be a clearer demonstration of anything than several nations of the Americans are of this, who are rich in land and poor in all the comforts of life; whom nature having furnished as liberally as any other people with the materials of plenty, i.e., a fruitful soil, apt to produce in abundance what might serve for food, raiment, and delight, yet for want of improving it by labor have not one-hundredth part of the conveniences we enjoy. And a king of a large and fruitful territory there feeds, lodges, and is clad worse than a day-laborer in England [II, 41].

The myriad factual mistakes in Locke’s account should not distract one’s

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11. For a discussion of various strategies for reading Locke as answering Filmer, see Gopal Sreenivasan, *The Limits of Lockean Rights in Property*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 21-25; Sreenivasan also suggests that the sufficiency proviso is basis for Locke’s position (48). That Locke is addressing Filmer and not (say) Hobbes is emphasized by Laslett’s note in *Two Treatises*, 286n, comparing Locke’s and Filmer’s presentation of the consent problem with Hobbes, Grotius, and Pufendorf.
 12. God gave the earth “to the use of the industrious and rational - and labor was to be his title to it” (II, 34). Compare the formulation in the *Essays on the Law of Nature*: because we have faculties that are able to do things, and because God gave us nothing in vain, we know that “God wills that we do something” (ELN, 105). Cf. Ashcraft, *Revolutionary*, 261ff, citing also I, 85-86.

attention from his essential point, which is that it is my individual productive power — the “admixture” of my labor with objects in the world — that allows me to rightfully claim to own them. I am granted this claim right because my labor is in fulfillment of God’s commandment to preserve self and species.¹³

Of course, such possession is not secure, since having the right to things does not guarantee that I have the power to keep others away from them. This is why, Locke says, we enter into government in the first place, and why people will generally attempt to institute a new government if theirs dissolves. Hence, “the great and chief end [...] of men’s uniting into commwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property. To which in the state of nature there are many things wanting” (II, 124).¹⁴ The state of nature turns out to be a poor place in which to find security: there is no agreed standard for right and wrong (II, 124); there is no judge in the state of nature (II, 125); and there is no power to back up juridical decisions. As Locke’s language makes clear, the first two defects are a product of the affects and of mad love, and the third is an artifact of Locke’s separation of juridical and physical power.¹⁵

Political society is thus explicitly specified in terms of the security it provides for finite things that one is afraid of losing. Natural law, were it enforceable, would at least contain the miseries of mad love. How one forms government, as the enforcement mechanism for this law, thus matters as well. Hence Locke’s complaint against absolute monarchy, where one’s entire right is handed over to an individual “corrupted with flattery and armed with power” (II, 91). He does not think anyone with

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13. Hence: “whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property” (II, 27). This passage has been notoriously difficult to interpret. My sympathies lie with Tully and the “maker’s right” reading; see his *Discourse on Property*. For a recent critique of Tully, and defense of the more traditional “admixture” interpretation, see A. John Simmons, “Maker’s Rights,” *Journal of Ethics* 2, 1998, 197-218. I do not think that anything in what follows hinges on settling the debate between Tully and Simmons.
 14. Property is defined broadly. The state of nature is full of “fears and continual dangers [... to people’s] lives, liberties, and estates, which I call by the general name ‘property’” (II, 123).
 15. People are both biased and ignorant of the law of nature (II, 124; cf. the fuller account of this at ELN 109ff); as for the second reason: “with too much heat in their own cases, as well as negligence and unconcernedness to make them too remiss in other men’s” (II, 125).

sense would be fooled by defenses of the giving absolute juridical right to monarchs:

This is to think that men are so foolish that they take care to avoid what mischiefs may be done them by polecats or foxes, but are content, nay, think it safety, to be devoured by lions [II, 93].

Political society, then, steers a middle course between the insecurities of the state of nature and of absolute monarchy. Hence, although government is the correct remedy for the “inconveniences of the state of nature,” absolute monarchy will remedy none of them (II, 13). The problem with both nature and autocracy is that the law of nature, defined as God’s command for how we should live, is unenforceable.

What emerges as the most general point about the contrast between Locke and Spinoza is that Locke sharply separates physical and juridical power and then subordinates the former to the latter. In the early *Essays on the Law of Nature*, Locke complains of those “who trace the whole law of nature back to each person’s self-preservation”; the result of such theory would be that “virtue would seem no to be so much man’s duty as his convenience” (116). His definition of “political power” in the *Second Treatise* is along the same lines:

The right of making laws with penalties of death and, consequently, all less penalties for the regulating and preserving of property, and of employing the force of the community in the execution of such laws and in the defense of the commonwealth from foreign injury; and all this only for the public good [II, 3].

Power on its own — the “use of force without right” — is “war” (II, 232). If one insists on nonetheless calling this a form of power, it is “despotic”: “an absolute, arbitrary power one man has over another to take away his life whenever he pleases” (II, 172).¹⁶ Natural law language serves the same function here as it does in the state of nature. Only in the last instance, when one confronts despotism, is there even a glimmer of ambivalence

16. The contrast is also apparent in the *Essay*, where Locke defines “power” as the ability to do or not do something, depending on one’s will (2.21.27) — this created by the absence of physical constraint. A more complete account would need to specify carefully the relation between the “will” which is operative in the definition of power, and the “desire” which gives rise to the affects.

about the *potentialpotestas* relation in Locke. In situations where the executive power has transgressed the will of the legislative, “in all states and conditions, the true remedy of force without authority is to oppose force to it” (II, 155).¹⁷ But even this is cast in juridical terms: by failing to preserve his subjects, a despot has declared war on them, and so they can exercise their “appeal to heaven” as part of the divine command of preservation and ban on self-enslavement (II, 168).

The contrast with Spinoza can be further specified in that the law of nature in Locke is that of the transcendental lawgiver that Spinoza critiques in the TTP. As noted above, God does not want his property destroying itself or its other components, as evidenced by the prohibitions on suicide and selling oneself into slavery, as well as the general claim that every person ought “when his own preservation comes not in competition [...] preserve the rest of mankind” (II, 6). All of this is the transcendentalizing of the Spinozist *conatus*: all things for Spinoza attempt to persevere in their own being, not because this is what God tells them to do, but because that is what it means to exist. In other words, Locke writes juridical power into the order of the universe, which is the move that Spinoza refuses by declaring God to be immanent, as *deus sive natura*. When Locke claims that “God Almighty himself is under the necessity of being happy” (*Essay* 2.21.50), the claim thus strikes the Spinozist ear as evidence of a fundamental confusion as to what God is.¹⁸

Anti-Hobbes

If Locke resolves issues of juridical versus physical power by subordinating the latter to the former, Hobbes is deeply ambivalent about the relation between them. Historically, that ambivalence has been lost in the collapse of Hobbes to Spinoza. In his *Epistola* of 1671, for example, Johannes Melchior accuses Spinoza of following that “English Machiavelli,” Hobbes; the Cambridge Platonist Henry More, arguing that nature and God really are distinct, proclaims that Spinoza’s work is “pure, really pure Hobbesianism.”¹⁹ Indeed, it does look on the surface as though Hobbes is moving in a Spinozist direction. The Grotian defense of war as

17. That Locke is defending the right to revolt against a bad government is the central thesis of Ashcraft, *Revolutionary Politics*.

18. In other words, the point is not that Locke’s theory is grounded in theology; it is that the model of God is anthropomorphized. On this bilateral relation between God and politics in Locke, see Vivienne Brown, “The ‘Figure’ of God and the Limits to Liberalism: A Rereading of Locke’s *Essay and Two Treatises*,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60, 1999, 83-100.

an aspect of *conatus* becomes a generalized right to everything in the state of nature. Hence, a law of nature is “a Precept, or generall Rule, found out by Reason, by which a man is forbidden to do, that, which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same.” Since the natural condition is a *bellum omnium contra omnes*, he follows that “in such a condition, every man has a Right to every thing; even to one anothers body.” The fundamental insecurity thereby induced generates “a precept, or generall rule of Reason, *That every man, ought to endeavour Peace, as farre as he has hope of obtaining it.*”²⁰ It is a commonplace to explain the next step as a collective action problem or a prisoners’ dilemma: in a Hobbesian natural state, it is individually rational to war against others but collectively rational to cooperate and form a political society. I do not wish here to contribute to a discussion about what all of this means for interpreting Hobbes except to note that the relation between physical power and juridical right is actually quite difficult to discern in this context.

In the Latin *Leviathan*, speaking of the institution of a commonwealth, Hobbes writes that the reduction of the multitude to the social contract is so “that the power [*potentia*] of every will is used for the common defense and peace.” He adds that “he who bears the person of the

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19. “*Purus putus Hobbianismus est.*” For Melchior, see J. J. V. M. De Vet, “Letter of a Watchman on Zion’s Walls: The First Reaction of Johannes Melchior to *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*,” in *L’Hérésie Spinoziste: la discussion sur le Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, 1670-1677, et la réception immédiate du spinozisme*, ed. Paolo Cristofolini, Amsterdam: APA-Holland University Press, 1991, 36-48 (qtd. 38). For More, see his *Opera Omnia*, London, 1675-1679, I, 592, quoted and discussed in Luisa Simonutti, “Premières réactions anglaises au *Traité théologico-politique*,” in *L’Hérésie Spinoziste*, 123-137: 132. For more on this assimilation, see the other essays in *L’Hérésie Spinoziste*, as well as the more general discussion in Paolo Rossi, *The Dark Abyss of Time: The History of the Earth and the History of Nations from Hooke to Vico*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. Whether Spinoza is influenced by Hobbes is a matter of much contemporary debate. The following citations are exemplary. *Sic apparetur*: Jean Bernhardt, “Intelligibilité et Réalité chez Hobbes et chez Spinoza,” *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger* 2, 1985, 115-133. *Sed contra*: Karl Schuhmann, “Methodenfragen bei Spinoza und Hobbes: Zum Problem des Einflusses,” *Studia Spinozana* 3, 1987, 47-86. *Resolutio*: for more nuanced accounts, see Emilia Giancotti, “The Birth of Modern Materialism in Hobbes and Spinoza,” in *The New Spinoza*, eds. Warren Montag and Ted Stolze, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, 49-63 and Noel Malcolm, “Hobbes and Spinoza,” in *Aspects of Hobbes*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002, 27-52.
20. *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, references by chapter and page (here L 14, 91-2, emphasis in original).

commonwealth is said to have all [the] power [*potestatem*].”²¹ How this is to happen is a point of tension in Hobbes’ work. In his early work, *De Cive* in particular, individuals transfer their *potentia* to the commonwealth; as of *Leviathan*, they instead authorize the commonwealth to act on their behalf.²² In both cases, it seems clear that the state is supposed to both be a fictive representation and also to embody the real power of the multitude, to constitute the “real Unitie of them all, in one and the same Person” (L 17, 120). Thus united, the “multitude” becomes a “people.” Hobbes is quite clear that a “multitude” cannot act as such but that a “people” can; how the transition between them happens and the nature of the represented status of the state are extremely murky topics, and, for the present purpose, perhaps best illustrated by way of contrast with Spinoza.

One way to draw that contrast is through their differing accounts of the relation between politics and nature. In the *Political Treatise*, Spinoza explicitly says that “because people, as we say, are more led by affect than by reason, it follows that the multitude is not led by reason, but by some common affect naturally to come together, and want to be led as if by one mind.”²³ Hence “man by nature desires the civil state, and it cannot happen that men ever dissolve it all the way.”²⁴ The contrast with Hobbes, for whom fear of the dissolution of the commonwealth at the very least overdetermines the rhetorical strategy of *Leviathan*, is striking.²⁵ For

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21. “ut potentia omnium arbitrio suo ad pacem et communem defensionem uteretur. Is autem, qui civitatis personam gerit, summam habere dicitur potestatem” (*Opera Philosophica quæ latine scripsit omnia*, ed. William Molesworth, London, 1839 [OL], III, 131). *Potentia* is defined at OL III, 68.
 22. This is somewhat contentious point in the Hobbes literature on which space-constraints prohibit my fully defending here. The best presentation of the reading is found in Yves Charles Zarka, *Hobbes et la pensée politique moderne*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1995.
 23. “Quia homines, uti diximus, magis Affectu quam Ratione ducuntur, sequitur, multitudinem non ex Rationis ductu, sed ex communi aliquo affectu naturaliter convenire, et una veluti mente duce velle” (6/1).
 24. “statum civilem homines natura appetere, nec fieri posse, ut homines eundem unquam penitus dissolvant” (6/1).
 25. “It may be perceived what manner of life there would be, where there were no common Power to feare [i.e., in the state of nature]; by the manner of life, which men that have formerly lived under a peacefull government, use to degenerate into, in a civill Warre” (L 13, 90). On *Leviathan* as a polemical political intervention, see also Quentin Skinner, “Conquest and Consent: Thomas Hobbes and the Engagement Controversy,” in *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement 1646-1660*, ed. G. E. Aylmer, Archon Books, 1972, 79-98.

Hobbes, the creation of the commonwealth is precisely not natural. Rather, the institution of the commonwealth “is like a creation out of nothing by human wit,”²⁶ and “man is made fit for society not by nature, but by training.”²⁷ That is, and paradoxically, the Hobbesian accounting of nature requires that nature be precisely what is left behind in political theory. He writes:

If Nature therefore have made men equall; that equalitie is to be acknowledged: or if Nature have made men unequall; yet because men that think themselves equall, will not enter into conditions of peace, but upon Equall terms, such equalitie must be admitted [L 15, 107; cf. DC 3.13].

As in Locke, then, the Hobbesian account depends on assigning a negative role to nature. Nature by itself is unhelpful; the mad loves it generates have to be regulated by the physical force that makes juridical decrees what they are. Importantly, destructive desires are to be conquered, not transformed.

This Hobbesian conquest allows one to indicate Spinoza’s departure from Hobbes. Of wise love, Spinoza writes that “nothing in nature is given which is contrary to this intellectual love, or which is able to cancel it.”²⁸ In other words, wise love toward God is beyond such logics of conquest. Earlier, Spinoza had defined contrariety explicitly defined in terms of opposition: “if two contrary actions are instigated in the same subject, a change must necessarily take place in both or in one of them until they cease to be contrary” (E5ax1). Hence, in contrast to the space of Hobbesian politics and meaning — the commonwealth — *scientia intuitiva* in Spinoza is meant to go beyond such contrariety. One might suggest from the point of view of the *Ethics* that the Hobbesian horizon has only two alternatives: the confusion that constitutes the passive affects and second-order knowledge through universals. These two are presented as contraries, the second operative by sovereign fiat over the first, which means that they

26. *Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*, manuscript circulated 1640, printed 1650, reported as *Human Nature and De Corpore Politico*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, 20.1

27. Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, ed. and trans. Richard Tuck and Michael Silverstone, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998 [DC], 1.2, note.

28. “Nihil in Natura datur, quod huic Amori intellectuali sit contrarium, sive quod ipsum possit tollere” (E5p37).

can only vacillate: there is no way to move beyond them and hence no way to move beyond the artificial imposition of transcendence. And in that context, there is no way truly to be happy.