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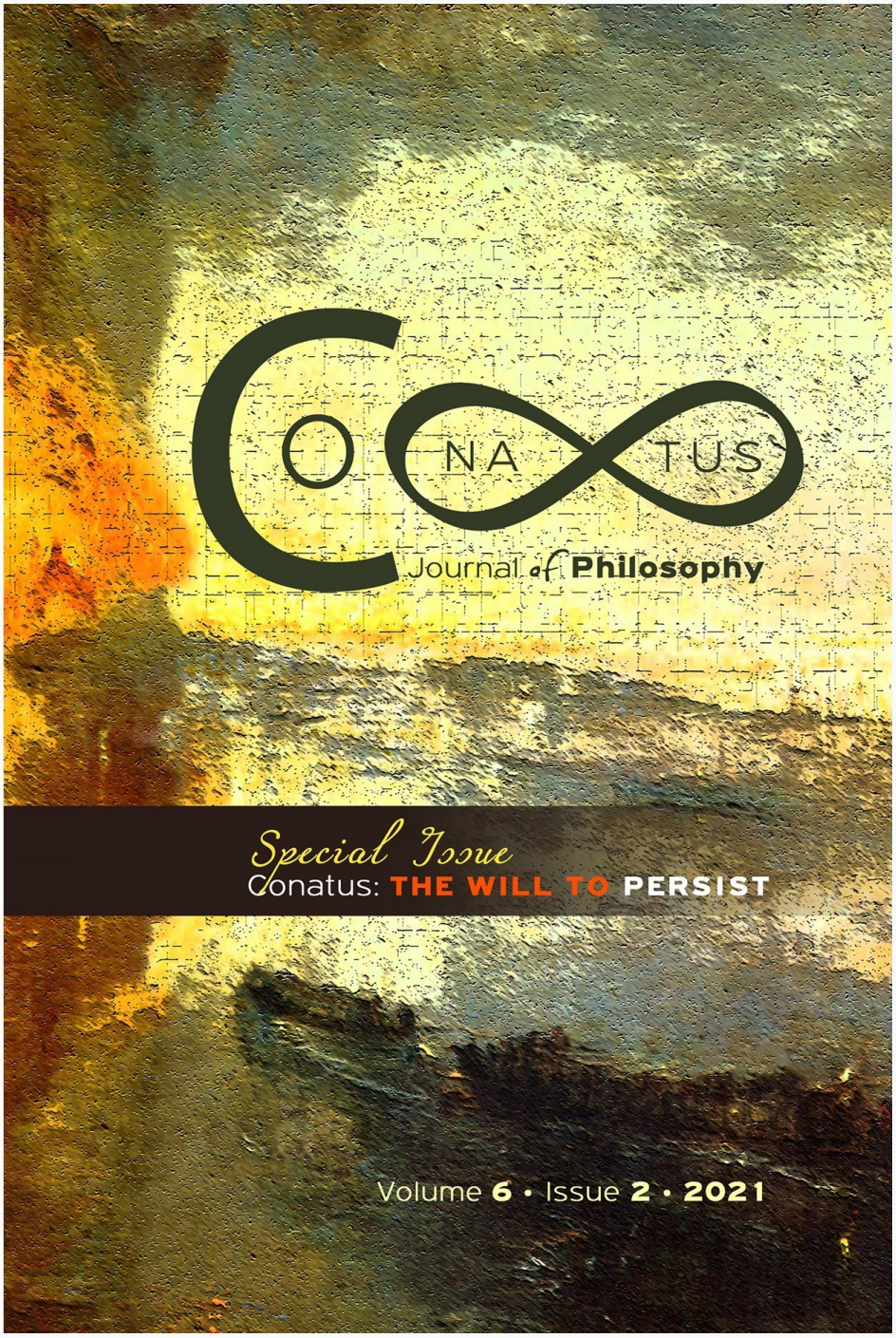

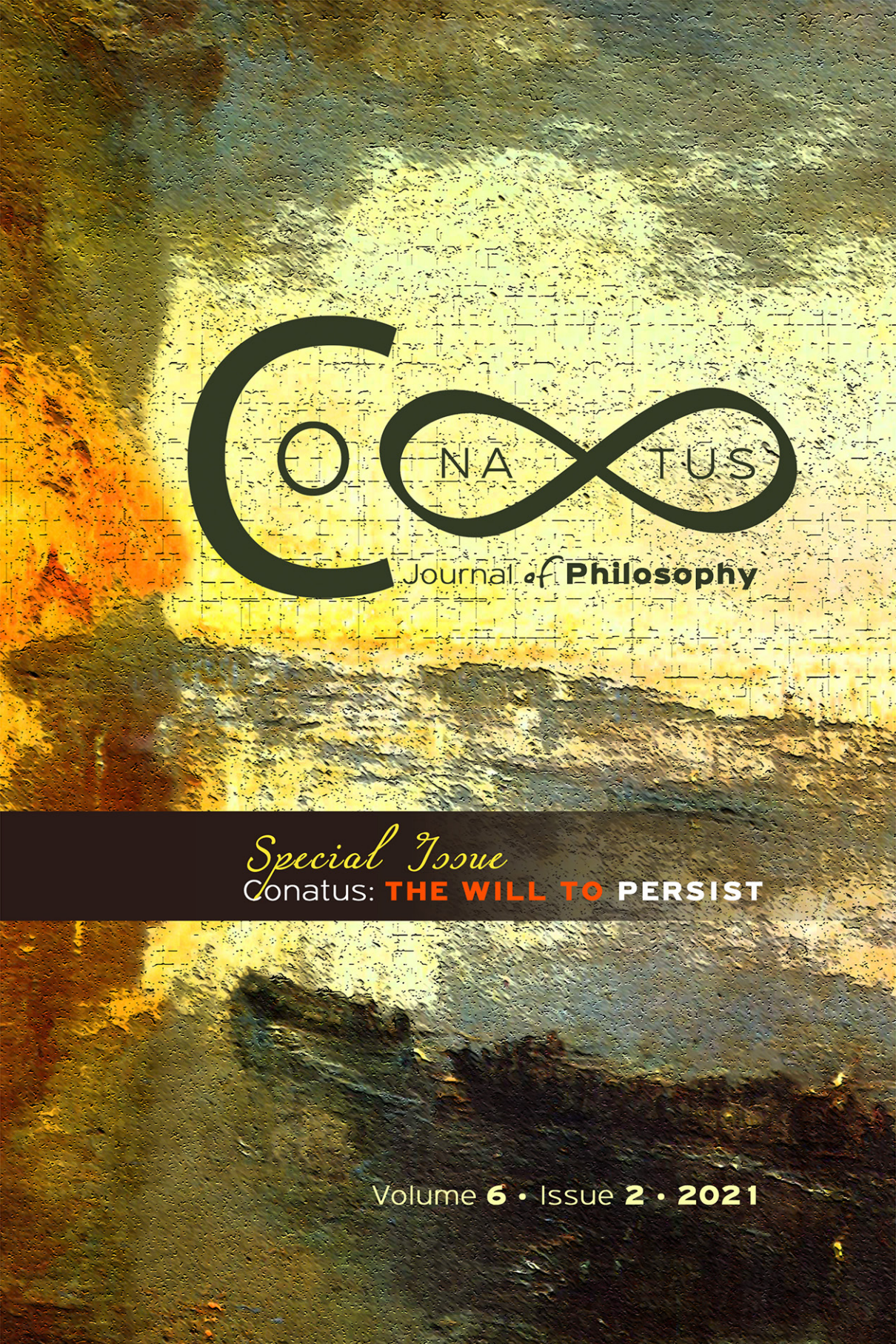
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Jasmin Özel & Nikos Psarros

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introduction

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Conatus, the Will to Persist: An Introduction

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Abstract

The papers collected in this issue address a variety of aspects of the concept of conatus ranging from the explorations of its roots in early ancient Greek thought to its application on modern theories of democratic education. The conatus is a special relation between the parts of a monad and their subparts and the subparts of the subparts to infinity, which ensures that each part and subpart is a part of this monad and not of any other. As a fundamental trait of monadic existence, the conatus is manifested in a multiplicity of facets that sustain the persistence of any real existence. It is thus obvious that there is still a vast field of such manifestations of conatus that awaits philosophical exploration, especially in the realms of Social Ontology and of the Philosophy of Nature.

Keywords: *conatus; Dasein; democracy; education; erotic; ethics; existence; happiness; hormé; inertia; monad; perception; persistence; Streben; will*

I. *Conatus* and monadic existence

Since its explicit re-introduction[1] in modern philosophy in the 17th century, the concept of *conatus* has been formulated in as many versions as there are philosophical endeavours regarding the nature of a living resp. thinking monadic existence, be it conceived as a Cartesian *Ego*, a Spinozist

[1] The concept of *conatus* has its origins in the ancient Greek thought. Cf. the papers of Bagby, Egbekpalu and Kirby in this issue.

Divine thought, a Leibnitzian *Monad*, a Hegelian *Subject*, a McTaggartian *Self*, or a Heideggerian *Dasein*.

Monadological theories of existence are the best explanations of the phenomena associated with personality or personal existence because they are monistic without being reductionist and incorporate the idea of spirit or thinking without recourse to complicated theories of emergence. This explanatory superiority of monadological theories is due to the concept of monadic existence's ability to combine both the ideas of the one and the many – or the ideas of common and separate – without creating a contradiction.

The rough framework of any monadological ontology is thus a system of discrete units that nevertheless are interconnected by their own intrinsic characteristics. To form such a system, a monad must have a very special internal structure that allows for both the absolute separateness of that monad from any other monad and the formation of an external interrelationship between the monads: A monad is considered a *simple* entity – that is, an entity that is not composed of detachable parts. A monad, however, is neither punctual nor atomic (i.e., indivisible). A monad consists of an infinite number of parts that are of the same nature as the monad itself; each part consists also of an infinite number of parts that are of the same nature as the higher parts and the whole monad (i.e., infinitely divisible). The infinite divisibility of a monad is one necessary condition to the unity of the monad so that the parts of one monad belong only to that monad and not to any other monad; thus, each monad is absolutely and profoundly separated from every other monad. Only then is it possible that the monad exists as a discrete unit.

The unity of the monad, however, requires a second condition: a special relation between the parts of the monad and their subparts and the subparts of the subparts to infinity, which ensures that each part and subpart is a part of this monad and not of any other. This relationship, which connects all parts of the monad and ensures its internal unity, is manifested as activity because the monad is an active unit. This activity traditionally has been termed the *conatus* of the monad.

The active monad possesses another active feature that is oriented towards the other monads and aims to integrate them into its own nature. This second form of activity is traditionally called *perception*.

All conceptual variants of *conatus* employed in monadological theories of existence have in common the idea that the *conatus* manifests itself as 'striving,' or as 'will' to persist. Some philosophers, however, have expanded this concept to the realm of lifeless and non-thinking matter creating the concept of *inertia*. *Inertia* as the tendency of a lifeless and inactive body to

adhere passively to a given state of motion is then the *differentia specifica* that divides the realm of the existent into two 'species': The active and perceiving monads *strictu sensu* and the passive and inert units of matter.[2]

Yet, the inert units of matter cannot obviously interact actively via mutual perceptions. Since their only 'activity' consists in the change of their relative positions, i.e., in their motions, they interact only by collisions that are governed by physical conservation laws.[3] The expansion of the concept of conatus to the passive concept of inertia raises interesting metaphysical questions regarding the relationship of spirit and matter that cannot pursued here. However, since the interactions of the units of matter are somehow perceived by the active conative monads and are thus part of their experienced reality, we can safely assume that the world does not consist of two distinct and unrelated realms, and we can also reject the thesis that the relationship between conatus and inertia is merely heuristic.[4]

II. *Conatus*: Revisiting and expanding the concept

The papers collected in this issue address a variety of aspects of the concept of *conatus* ranging from the explorations of its roots in early ancient Greek thought to its application on modern theories of democratic education.

a. Revisiting the origins – *Conatus* as the impulse of nature

In his essay *The Organic Roots of Conatus in Early Greek Thought*, Christopher Kirby reflects on the "earliest Greek treatments of impulse, motivation, and self-animation,"[5] and how they inspired later developments of this "cluster of concepts tied to the *hormé-conatus* concept."[6] Kirby begins with an exposition of the change that the conception of *physis* underwent over time. The Greek concept of *hormé* (ὁρμή) thus "posited an inherent impulse from which all motion"[7] emanated. Roman thinkers then associated *physis* with the Latin *natura*, Kirby continues, and *hormé* with *conatus essendi*. Yet, although they "largely lacked the same implicit growth-principle" Kirby argues, they

[2] In modern physics these units are not any more the classical Newtonian corpuscular *atoms* but have a complicated structure that is described in Quantum Physics.

[3] In this broad sense every physical interaction that is governed by a conservation law is a kind of collision.

[4] Cf. Épaminondas Vamboulis, "Le principe d'inertie et le conatus du corps," *Astérion* 3 (2005): 105-124.

[5] Christopher Kirby, "The Organic Roots of Conatus in Early Greek Thought," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 29-49.

[6] Ibid., 31.

[7] Ibid., 30.

still made "heavy reference"[8] to the concepts of *conatus* and *impetus*. Some "notion of self-animation" remained crucial, also throughout the medieval period, over Early Modern thinkers, up to late German idealism, Kirby continues. He goes so far to say that the *hormé-conatus* concept "is one of the most successful memes in the history of philosophy."[9] Kirby argues that one reason for the success of the concept may lie in its ability to address "a long-standing philosophical problem," namely "the reconciliation of permanence and change."[10]

Kirby then in detail outlines the history of the concept of *hormé-conatus* in Early Greek thought, beginning with Homer's treatment, especially in the *Odyssey*, over Hesiod, Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Empedocles. He closes with a discussion of Sarah Broadie's contribution to the question of how to account for the "underlying causes for the human impulse to philosophize,"[11] and the role that education plays here. Philosophical education "collapses" if it is excessively focused on "nurture[ing] an individual's growth towards singular ends, in a linear fashion," Kirby argues here. Both "Homer's Odysseus" and "Plato's philosopher king" are alike in that their "impulses toward longer-term, more sustainable good" can override their "impulses towards instant gratification,"[12] the author points out.

b. The prefiguration of *conatus* in the Aristotelian thought

John R. Bagby's *Aristotle and Aristoxenus on Effort* examines the roots of the concept of *conatus* in Aristotle's thought, more specifically, the connections between Aristotle's understanding of "life as an internal experience of living force"[13] and the *conatus* doctrine. He argues that both Spinoza and Aristotle agree that effort is not possessed "innately," but instead "emerges gradually by an effort aimed at improvement."[14] Although Aristotle does not have one single term to refer to striving, Bagby argues that the concept is still "prefigured" in Aristotle's understanding of "life, experience, and *energeia*, as an interiority of effort."[15] Bagby here sees a continuity from Aristotle's concept to both early modern and early 20th century thought,

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 31.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 41.

[12] Ibid., 46.

[13] John R. Bagby, "Aristotle and Aristoxenus on Effort," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 51-74.

[14] Ibid., 51.

[15] Ibid., 52.

such as in Bergson's attention *to life*, Heidegger's "care structure," and Deleuze's concept of "intensity."[16] All these concepts share a commitment to an "internal principle of causality,"[17] as we find it in Spinoza's notion of *conatus*. All of them, Bagby furthermore argues, are ultimately "consonant with Aristotle's dynamic sense of effort."[18] The mere fact that Aristotle understood the definition of the soul as a geometric task, as Bagby puts it, did not automatically imply a static conception of the soul, instead, Aristotle argued for the need of a "dynamic" definition of the soul. Such a definition must "include and display the cause," which Bagby understands to refer to the "successive emergence of powers."[19]

Bagby then moves on to discuss the role that effort plays in ethics generally, and how it is related, in particular, to pleasure, attention and virtue. He argues here that Aristotle "presents an ethics of effort."[20] Although progress and development require effort, they are "sustained by pleasures that gradually increase the facility and ease of action,"[21] they require habit, which makes them pleasant. One example of "dynamic effort" that Bagby then explicitly addresses it that of music. It is both a "deliberate skillful action" and a "means of relaxation and amusement that releases tension."[22] Attending to the music, is "*work* of the soul."[23] Continuous exercise "progressively increases the richness of its contents," it is thus the action of a "concrete *conatus*,"[24] one that is can only be explicated "by reference to the effort of the soul."[25]

c. Further on the Aristotelian tracks: Happiness and *conatus*

In *Aristotelian Concept of Happiness (Eudaimonia) and its Conative Role in Human Existence: A Critical Evaluation*, Purissima Emelda Egbekpalu critically reflects on the role of happiness in Aristotle and "its conative role."[26]

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., 53.

[19] Ibid., 55.

[20] Ibid., 61.

[21] Ibid., 60.

[22] Ibid., 69.

[23] Ibid., 70.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Purissima Emelda Egbekpalu, "Aristotelian Concept of Happiness and its Conative Role in Human Existence: A Critical Evaluation," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 75-86.

She ultimately argues that to "sustain man's inner drive to persist in life," happiness ought to be "restricted to only cognitive activities."[27]

On Aristotle's understanding, Egbekpalu begins, "the pursuit of happiness presupposes an inner drive of continuous striving towards good moral character."[28] When it comes to the "conative role" of happiness in human existence, both the "activity of the soul," and desires and emotions related to the "attainment of happiness" are thus relevant, Egbekpalu continues. Happiness in Aristotle "denotes the good life,[29] and is a "lifetime endeavour."[30] Although we do not find any notion of *conatus* before the Stoics, Egbekpalu argues that we can still find related ideas in Aristotle's writing on "happiness, human soul, emotions, and rhetoric."[31] "The drive to attain happiness," Egbekpalu points out is the "focal point" of all human striving in Aristotle.[32] This "ultimate end of man" is always "conditioned by his nature," Egbekpalu emphasizes. It thus differentiates him from "animals and inanimate objects."[33]

Happiness is here understood as an "active state of life," as the "virtuous activity of the soul that presupposes reason," as the "actualization of [man's] potentialities."[34] Aristotle furthermore understands the "conative role of happiness" to be a man's desire, namely "towards objects of action that sustain his persistence to maintain his existence."[35] Desire is here seen as an "activity of the soul" that is closely related to "human emotions," Emelda Egbekpalu continues. The "cognitive, desiderative, affective aspects of man" equally have a "conative role" in Aristotle, she argues. They are apt to cause various "bodily changes, movements and behaviours," they are thus "generally considered as survival mechanisms that motivate responsive behaviours to maintain existence," Emelda Egbekpalu claims. Emotions in Aristotle thus "connote conative experiences."[36] Aristotle may understand virtuous acts to "culminate in cognitive activities," Emelda Egbekpalu concedes, and she closes with some considerations about what "other dimensions of human nature" ought to be considered in response to concerns about this exclusive focus on cognition.

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[27] Ibid., 75.

[28] Ibid., 76.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., 77.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 78.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., 80.

[36] Ibid., 81.

d. *Conatus* and the transition from the teleological to the deterministic view of nature

In his *Nature's Perfection: Aristotle and Descartes on Motion and Purpose*, Justin Humphreys considers the transition from Aristotle's teleological conception of nature to Descartes' conception of nature as purposeless Humphreys argues that this shift is grounded not in empirical discovery, but instead in "differing conceptions of where perfection lies in nature."[37] In order to undermine the teleology of Aristotle's account of motion, Descartes needs to resort to a "theological doctrine," namely one that "derives the principles of motion from the perfections of God."[38]

Humphreys begins by introducing Aristotle's account of motion in *De caelo*, focusing on the two kinds of motion Aristotle discusses here, circular, and rectilinear, and their importance for Aristotle's distinction between superlunar and sublunar motion – a distinction that according to Humphreys sheds light on Aristotle's conception of teleology. Aristotle here argues on Humphreys reading that circular motion is more "perfect" or "complete" than rectilinear motion and is thus "naturally prior."[39] Rectilinear motion, Humphreys continues, is thus "ontologically dependent on the complete, circular motions of the heavens."[40] Humphreys then moves on the demonstrate that Aristotle's division between two kinds of motion corresponds to an analogous division in the heavens, namely between the sublunary and superlunary heavens[41]: Not only are "sublunary things" spatially lower, they are also "less complete and divine" and thus lower in an axiological sense. When it comes to the "epistemic status" of final causes, Humphreys continues, they are not grounded in empirical claims, but instead Aristotle puts forward "a wholly a priori thesis that derives from his conception of perfection."[42] Aristotle here presents an "axiological order of self-motion," starting from the "perfect rotation of the first heaven," moving down more complex heavenly bodies, and ultimately to earthly creatures, "who participate in the divine only by imitation."[43] Although bodies on all levels are "self-movers," an ultimate reference to the "activities of eternal superlunary creatures" is required to at-

[37] Justin Humphreys, "Nature's Perfection: Aristotle and Descartes on Motion and Purpose," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 87.

[38] Ibid., 88.

[39] Ibid., 92.

[40] Ibid., 93.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 95.

[43] Ibid., 97.

tribute purpose to sublunary creatures.[44] The final ends of the latter are thus "conditioned by eternal motion" of superlunar substances, which possess "inherent circular motion" and are both "prior to them" and "more complete."[45]

The paper then moves on to Descartes – whose conception of teleology diverges from Aristotle's, in that Descartes' account of the laws of nature depends on a conception of perfection that is ultimately distinct from Aristotle's. Descartes' "banishes final causes from physics,"[46] and his physics has thus been described as a "mathematization of nature" or a "geometricization of space."[47] Yet, Humphreys points out, in the *Discourse*, Descartes also appears to argue for the claim "that the metaphysical necessity of the laws of nature rests on the perfections of God."[48] Thus, Humphreys argues, the question of the relationship of mathematics to natural objects is in Descartes' ontology ultimately "rests on his theology."[49] In support of this claim, Humphreys points at the three fundamental laws of nature as Descartes presents them in the *Principles* and argues that they metaphysically equally "ground Descartes' dynamical laws in the perfections of God."[50] Descartes' conception abandons the "Aristotelian separation of the heavens and the earth,"[51] and of circular and rectilinear motion, instead requiring of the universe uniformity of motion. Descartes' "theological foundation of physical law" with its exclusion of final causes thus grounds the physics we find here, namely in the form of a "geometry of uniform space of extended objects."[52] Both Aristotle and Descartes thus agree that the "principles in natural science" ought to be derived from "aesthetic considerations about the perfection of nature."[53] The "metaphysical basis of their division," however, is to be found in where they locate this perfection, Aristotle in the superlunar sphere, and Descartes in the deity, Humphreys argues.

e. Back to teleology: A new reading of Spinoza's *conatus*

In *Spinoza's Conatus: A Teleological Reading of Its Ethical Dimension,* Neşe Aksoy argues for a reconsideration of the claim that the *conatus* doctrine

[44] Ibid., 97.

[45] Ibid., 98.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., 99.

[48] Ibid., 100ff.

[49] Ibid., 100.

[50] Ibid., 101.

[51] Ibid., 102.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

represents a mechanistically motivated rejection of teleology. Instead, she argues that Spinoza's conception of conatus remains close to a traditional notion of teleology, namely to what she calls a "mild approach"[54] to teleology. Aksoy first discusses Spinoza's approach to teleology, in order to then argue that this concept finds application when it comes to the *conatus* doctrine. Although Spinoza himself expressed a strongly critical attitude towards teleology, Aksoy here argues that "Spinoza's conception of *conatus* is teleological in character," and that therefore his ethics include "objective, humanistic, and essentialist elements."[55] Aksoy builds here on recent work on Spinoza that argues against the received view – according to which "Spinoza dispenses with any form of teleology"[56] – that Spinoza in fact does retain a notion of teleology, namely when it comes to the "explanation of human affairs."[57] Spinoza, Aksoy agrees, has a "mild approach to human teleology."[58]

After discussing the weaknesses of several non-teleological readings of Spinoza's argument, Aksoy concludes that conatus ought to be understood as more than a mere "blind (mechanical) impulse."[59] Instead, it is a "maximization of power towards certain [future] ends."[60] Importantly, the *conatus* argument according to Aksoy thus implies that "human beings are more than mechanical entities as they have certain ends and purposes of their own."[61]

Aksoy then addresses the consequences that her understanding of conatus as manifesting a "weak teleology" has for ethicality. She here stresses the alleged "sharp contrast" between Spinoza's understanding of ethicality as grounded in "the conative act of the ethical agent" and previous conceptions.[62] Yet, with the understanding of conatus as possessing weak teleology in hand, Aksoy here argues for an understanding of striving as directed "towards the ethical good," namely "because of its conformity to the ideal human nature and vice versa."[63] Spinoza's *conatus* doctrine thus represents what Aksoy calls "Ethical Objectivism," she thus disagrees with positions such as Deleuze's who see Spinoza embracing a radical subjectivism about

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[54] Neşe Aksoy, "Spinoza's Conatus: A Teleological Reading of Its Ethical Dimension," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 114.

[55] Ibid., 107.

[56] Ibid., 113.

[57] Ibid., 114.

[58] Ibid., 114 and 127.

[59] Ibid., 117.

[60] Ibid., 118.

[61] Ibid., 120.

[62] Ibid., 121.

[63] Ibid., 123.

ethical concepts. Aksoy also argues that Spinoza represents a distinctive kind of *humanism*, and against the claim that Spinoza sees no difference between human and animal nature. On her "teleological reading of human *conatus*," human beings occupy a "distinguished place in nature" as ethical subjects, for one thing, they have "autonomy of power compared to the other beings," on Aksoy's reading.[64] Lastly, Aksoy identifies a distinctive kind of *essentialism* in the *conatus* doctrine, namely one that "considers human essence as an act of *conative* power."[65]

f. *Conatus* vs. *Habitus*: Modernism beats postmodernism

Josep Maria Bech claims in his *Spinoza's Conatus Undoes Bourdieu's Habitus* that a closer look at Spinoza's influence on Bourdieu's thought "reveals a long-lasting inconsistency"[66] in the latter's conception of habitus, namely between a commitment to a *strong conatus* and a *weak conatus*. With the notion of a habitus already "staggering," Bech claims that Bourdieu's attempts to salvage it by means of the concept of conatus backfire to such an extent as to give it "an unsettling blow."[67] Bourdieu tried to employ the concept of conatus in two ultimately contradictory ways: First, Bech argues, Bourdieu used the notion of conatus in order to ground his notion of a habitus, thereby endorsing what Bech dubs a *strong conatus*, "i.e., a sort of 'engine of the habitus' endowed with un-revisable strength and impervious to the resistances it will eventually encounter."[68] But second, from 1987 on, Bourdieu also used the concept of conatus in a weak way, namely in order to "reinstat[e] agency in the structuralist mindset."[69] The *weak conatus* required here is one that is "revisable," namely once it is "exposed to the interfering resistance of exterior forces."[70]

Bech here argues that the latter, weak, conatus is "congruent [...] with Spinoza's doctrine," whereas the former, strong, conatus represents a "misreading of Spinoza" on Bourdieu's part.[71] Bourdieu himself realized the problem in 1993, Bech claims, and as a result modified his account by "subordinating conatus to habitus."[72] Bourdieu's two inconsistent notions of conatus are also

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[64] Ibid., 124.

[65] Ibid., 126.

[66] Josep Maria Bech, "Spinoza's Conatus Undoes Bourdieu's Habitus," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 131.

[67] Ibid., 132.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., 132, 136.

[72] Ibid., 132.

reflected in his varying attempts to defend voluntarism on the one, and determinism on the other hand.[73] Bech ultimately argues that the notion of conatus, as Bourdieu uses it, "acts as a litmus test" when it comes to identifying the "ambiguities and shortcomings of th[e] notion"[74] of habitus.

g. *Conatus* in German idealism: The *Streben* of the Fichtean I

In *Streben of the I as the Fundamental Form of Consciousness*, Andrija Jurić argues that Fichte's notion of "striving" of the I is a "necessary condition of finite or individual consciousness."[75] The I thus possesses a "dual nature," one that is both finite, and yet striving towards the infinite – with the resulting tension being the "moving force of the I."[76] Jurić stresses a reading of the I in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* as a "concrete and individually existing I" and of the absolute I as that at which this concrete I strives. For the I to exist concretely, however, it needs to "be in tension and contradiction between its finite and infinite activity."[77] The I is "always activity" and at the same time a product of this activity.[78] It is thus, "activity itself." Positing the I at the same time requires positing what is not-I, "therefore, if we have one activity, we immediately have two."[79]

Jurić then moves on to the topic of striving itself and argues that the "striving of the I must be infinite,"[80] it is the precondition for positing any objects whatsoever. The purpose of striving in Fichte is then, Jurić argues, the "filling out" of infinity. Yet, for there to be an I, "this undefined and undetermined activity that strives towards infinity needs to be limited."[81] Limiting the "infinite tendency" is required if the self is to posit itself. Thus, although the Self posits itself absolutely, it does not do so "in an undetermined way," as Jurić puts it.[82]

In Fichte's terminology, Jurić argues, the *Anstoss* is what puts such limitations on infinity. Denoting both obstacle, hindrance, and also impulse or stimulus, *Anstoss* "puts a task or demand" on the I to limit itself. It thus does not limit the I directly, Jurić argues. It rather motivates the I to "self-limita-

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[73] Ibid. 14.

[74] Ibid. 14.

[75] Andrija Jurić, "Streben of the I as the Fundamental Form of Consciousness," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 153.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid., 154.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., 155.

[80] Ibid., 156.

[81] Ibid., 157.

[82] Ibid.

tion."[83] Yet, Anstoss can only occur in the presence on an "infinite activity of the I."[84] Ultimately, "infinite striving of the I" on the one, and *Anstoss* are thus mutually dependent. In fact, we find here what Jurić calls a "dialectic of infinity and *Anstoss*"[85]: Unless the I strives "outwards," it cannot be *angestossen*. *Anstoss* is thus what Jurić calls a "re-action" of the activity of the I. As such it is spontaneous and not necessarily under voluntary control. Yet, it is not "mindless," as long as it is capable of "return[ing] into itself."[86] Consequently, the self is of a divided character by necessity, namely split "between its finite and infinite activity."[87] What ultimately constitutes the I however, according to Jurić's conclusion, is striving, and it is thus no coincidence that the duality of the self, together with the "dialectic between infinity and finitude" and others, lie at the heart of Fichte's philosophy.[88]

h. Hegel's legacy: Max Stirner's *Ego* and its *conatus*

In *At War in Swaddling Clothes: Stiner's Unique One as a Conative Existence*, Kostas Galanopoulos argues that the Stirnerian egoist – in his striving that is the "fulfillment as the Unique One through ownership" – manifests what Galanopoulos calls "the Stirnerian notion of *conatus*."[89] Moreover, Galanopoulos argues the animosity between individuals that the Stirnerian egoist confronts is both an "ontological precondition and prefiguration of *conatus'* conclusion."[90] Galanopoulos begins by outlining Stirner's reception of *conatus* in Spinoza's thought, particularly "through its Hegelian interpretation,"[91] and in Hobbes's "individualistic ontology." He argues that whatever the differences between Spinoza and Hobbes may be, they concur on the importance of rejecting freedom of the will. They thus leave no room for *human exceptionalism*, according to Galanopoulos. Stirner's own "thoughts on man" start out from "man as a newborn existence in the world."[92] From birth on, man is at war with the surrounding world, "the striving for persistence" is here understood as an "ontological sparking," Galanopoulos continues.

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[83] Ibid., 159.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., 161.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid., 163.

[88] Ibid., 173.

[89] Kostas Galanopoulos. "At War in Swaddling Clothes. Stiner's Unique One as a Conative Existence," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 177.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid., 178.

[92] Ibid., 187.

The "constant combat" that man finds himself in is thus "about the conatus."[93] According to Stirnerian egoism, the individual "consumes whatever is in its power and moves inwards in order to become the Unique One."[94] In direct continuation of the combat situation that the newborn finds himself in, the Stirnerian egoist thus understands everything surrounding him as a "potential possession" for him to consume and to expand himself into. We hence find here what Galanopoulos calls an "unlimited and dynamic notion of ownership" – the exact "reverse of the Kantian imperative."[95] According to Galanopoulos, there exists therefore an important continuity, namely "the same *conatus*" that also "obliged the child to be at war" from the moment he was born.

Ultimately, the Stirnerian egoist will also need to "live within a specific dominion, within a State," and he will here equally confront the need to engage in "political struggle to defend and preserve his ownership."[96] When it comes to the political level, Galanopoulos claims in closing, the *insurrection* is in fact that "'political' application of the Stirnerian *conatus*."[97]

i. *Conatus* and *Dasein*

In *Conatus and Dasein: The Problem of an Existential Theory of Motivation*, Marko Markič argues in support of an understanding of *Befindlichkeit*, findingness, of Dasein in Heidegger as a "specific existential drive,"[98] as a "conative principle."[99]

Dasein always "announces itself in connection with the meaningful structure of the world," it thus cannot be captured "for itself in its own existence," Markič points out. Instead, it is "always determined by its relation to being."[100] The finitude of *Dasein* grounds this relational structure, in the "groundless thrownness."[101] Findingness of existence, Markič argues, here functions as a "motivational, conative principle."[102] *Dasein* always requires self-interpreta-

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[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., 189.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid., 190.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Marko Markič, "Conatus and Dasein: The Problem of an Existential Theory of Motivation," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 193.

[99] Ibid., 199.

[100] Ibid., 194.

[101] Ibid., 195; see also 203.

[102] Ibid., 199.

tion. It is thus "not some self-grounded entity."[103] *Dasein* is instead "constant self-calling-into-existence" and "constantly having to exist."[104] Thrownness is thus a "motivational principle," and not merely a "fact about existence."[105] Findingness, on Markič's account, thus possesses a "dynamic structure."[106]

Markič considers the concepts of understanding and care, and then especially the problem of authentic motivation in Heidegger, and in particular the question of how to "practically understand" the concept in the context of the "perspective of life-world interactions."[107] Authenticity in Heidegger amounts to "taking upon oneself the groundless freedom of one's existence," Markič claims. Building on Dilthey's account of hermeneutics, it is the "freedom of the interpretation always starting from existence itself, not from the life-world."[108] Of particular importance for the existential analysis is authentic motivation, Markič continues. An authentic existence preserves the "motivationally structured problematic openness," authentic findingness thus "dilatates that it has to always gain it back anew."[109]

j. Beyond the biological givenness – *Conatus* and meaning

In *The Erotic and the Eternal: Striving for the Permanence of Meaning*, Beatrice Kobow presents three different conceptions of *conatus,* all of which manifest a "will to persist" that goes beyond "mere biological givenness,"[110] and that instead primarily reflect the individual's participation in a culture or other collective. Both Plato, Heidegger, and Scheler describe "human strife" as an activity that occurs within a collective, Kobow argues. Conatus is here "an aspect of the permanence of meaning" that is "constitutive of human society and culture."[111]

In Plato's *Symposium*, the origin of human striving is described "through the myth of the personified Eros."[112] The "persistence of man" is thus understood as an "individual's endeavour" here, Kobow argues. Just as man may "'use' a woman to sire his child," they may equally use another man "to move

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[103] Ibid., 201.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid., 202.

[107] Ibid., 208.

[108] Ibid., 207.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Beatrice Kobow, "The Erotic and the Eternal – Striving for the Permanence of Meaning," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 213.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid., 215.

towards the Truth."[113] The "erotic strife" that we find in the *Symposium* is thus one for "immortality,"[114] Kobow concludes. And she moves on to reject feminist concerns with the "exclusion of the feminine" when it comes to striving in the *Symposium*. Instead, Kobow argues, the *Symposium* does not only deny a "substantial role" to women in particular, but in fact to "*all* individuals *as individuals*."[115] In Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, the sixth chapter addresses the topic of "Sorge," care. "Sorge" has a double meaning, Kobow points out, in that it means both "Besorgnis," "Bekümmernis" and also "Für-Sorge."[116] It is thus "more than effortful striving," Kobow emphasizes. Heidegger here understands the "*perfectio* of humans as accomplishment of 'care.'"[117] "Sorge" always has an "aspect of futurity and anticipation,"[118] Kobow continues, and is thus intimately related to other central themes in Heidegger, such as his thought about despair and the historicity of Dasein. In the third and last position that Kobow discusses, Scheler's *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*, we find a "unified, non-reductivist (non-vitalist) understanding of human beings."[119] Life is characterized "by certain 'objective' properties" but also by an "inner sense" in which "the 'self' is experiencing life," an "Innesein."[120] Humans can "negate their environment," and they are at the same time "world-open." Yet the "urge" (Gefühlsdrang) and other phenomena that we find here are not merely a matter of "addition," Kobow argues. Humans are "*guided* by spirit" and those always "categorically different from all manifestations of life Scheler thus has a "cosmological conception" of Geist, Kobow concludes.

k. Overcoming Spinoza's *conatus*: Dewey's concept of democratic education

In their *A New Conatus for the New World: Dewey's Response to Perfectionist Conceptions of Democratic Education*, Özel, Beisecker, and Ervin question the claim that Spinoza's perfectionist conception of education, with the strengthening of the student's individual *conatus* as its goal, is particularly suitable for democratic social ideas. Instead, they contrast Spinoza's focus on rational activation in his educational thought with Dewey's conception of education. We find in Dewey, the authors argue, a more thorough commitment to democratic

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid., 216.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid., 221.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid., 223.

[119] Ibid., 227.

[120] Ibid., 222; see also 227.

values, specifically when it comes to the "overall aims of schooling."[121] Education does not merely aim at individual perfection as it does in Spinoza, instead, Dewey claims that education involves acquiring a second nature, namely one that reflects "the norms and expectations of one's specific community."[122]

The authors begin by questioning the claim recent scholars have made, namely that Spinoza "usher[ed] in a form of radical humanism," one that is "distinctly favorable to democratic ideals."[123] Spinoza's educational thought is focused on the "perfection of the rational nature of individuals," on the strengthening of their *conatus*. Spinoza may thus have been a "pioneer" or a "radical" when it comes to the central position that the individual, "at the expense of any deity or community," plays, the authors agree. Yet, Özel, Beisecker, and Ervin argue, the understanding of perfection that we find in the *Ethics* is an anemic one, largely characterized in terms of "independence, or absence of dependence."[124] What "fade[s] away" under this conception, the authors argue, are "social aspects."[125] Education may have positive social consequences in Spinoza's conception, but these are no more than a "happy byproduct,"[126] the authors argue.

In Dewey's *Democracy and Education*, the authors continue, we find a strikingly different conception from Spinoza's, especially when it comes to the aims of education. Instead of focusing on the promoting the student's *independence*, Dewey sees *interdependence* as the main goal of education. Education is supposed to enable lifelong growth of the individual within the society they live in. Instead of raising and "egoistic specialist," the educator should direct their attention at "fostering *joint intentions,* both as means and ends" of their instructions.[127] "Social factors," Özel, Beisecker, and Ervin argue, thus "feature much more prominently" here than in Spinoza. Education is a "necessity of life" in complex societies, Dewey argues, and it is of equal importance for the "formation of community" in the first place.[128] Some ends of education can thus not be "found within," as Spinoza claims, but only within society as a whole, they thus require "continuous readjustment."[129]

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[121] Jasmin Özel, Dave Beisecker, and Joe Ervin, "A New Conatus for the New World: Dewey's Response to Perfectionist Conceptions of Democratic Education," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 238.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid., 240.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid., 241.

[127] Ibid., 245.

[128] Ibid., 246.

[129] Ibid., 247; also 249, and 238, n. 1.

III. Epilogue: The *conatus* of *conatus*

The papers collected in this issue demonstrate that the philosophical treatment and the importance of *conatus* are far from being exhausted. As a fundamental trait of monadic existence the *conatus* is manifested in a multiplicity of facets that sustain the persistence of any real existence. It is thus obvious that there is still a vast field of such manifestations of *conatus* that awaits philosophical exploration, especially in the realms of Social Ontology and of the Philosophy of Nature. Is, for example, the historical phenomenon of empires that survive for centuries a manifestation of *conatus*? And can time itself be conceived as the ultimate manifestation of *conatus* in the universe?
We hope that the present collection will carry on the intellectual momentum for addressing these questions – and many more to come.

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The Organic Roots of Conatus in Early Greek Thought

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Abstract

The focus of this paper will be on the earliest Greek treatments of impulse, motivation, and self-animation – a cluster of concepts tied to the hormē-conatus concept. I hope to offer a plausible account of how the earliest recorded views on this subject in mythological, pre-Socratic, and Classical writings might have inspired later philosophical developments by establishing the foundations for an organic, wholly naturalized approach to human inquiry. Three pillars of that approach which I wish to emphasize are: practical intelligence (i.e., a continuity between knowing and doing), natural normativity (i.e., a continuity between human norms and the environment), and an ontology of philosophical dialectic (i.e., a continuity between the growth of human understanding and the growth of physis).

Keywords: *conatus; pre-Socratics; Homer; Plato; Aristotle*

I. Introduction: Nature's persistence through change

Philosophers have long hoped to integrate the impulses of human behavior within the movements of the natural world. It could be said that philosophy itself commenced when a handful of thinkers in the Greek colonies of Asia Minor began to look for explanations for the natural processes – or *physis* (*φύσις*) – around them. The philosophers that Aristotle called *physikoi* "looked at the world with the steady gaze that did not see any part of it as separate and cut off from the rest, but always as an element in a

living whole, from which it derived its position and meaning."[1] They did not feel the need to question the veracity of their interactions with the world, and therefore did not speak in terms of "experiences," as later Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers would. Instead, the Greeks spoke in terms of organic objects, endowed with powers of self-animation, capacities to act, and potentialities to fulfill. As Aristotle explained in the *Physics*, natural things:

> present a feature in which they differ from things which are not constituted by nature. For each of them has within itself a principle of motion [...]. On the other hand, a bed and a coat and anything else of that sort, *qua* receiving these designations – *i.e.*, in so far as they are products of art – have no innate impulse [*hormê*] to change [...] that nature is a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily, in virtue of itself.[2]

It is interesting to note how the English word "nature" is not a perfect analog for the Greek conception of *physis*, which carries a connotation of organic growth – evident in English as the root of words like "physics" or "physiology." By contrast, "nature" is derived from the Latin *natura*, which connotes a completed, after-product of "birth," apparent through its connection with words like "nativity" and "prenatal." Because of its implicit view of nature as dynamic and growth-oriented, Greek philosophy posited an inherent impulse from which all motion (both human and natural) derived. This concept was known as *hormê* (ὁρμή) and was even more difficult to capture fully in Latin translations.[3]

As Rome transitioned from republic to empire, Greek *physis* was increasingly associated with Latin *natura* and Greek *hormê* with Latin *conatus essendi*. Although Roman thinkers largely lacked the same implicit growth-principle in their concept of nature, they still made heavy reference to *conatus* and its synonym *impetus*. In fact, wherever intellectual achievement occurred for the next millennium, some notion of self-animation – whether conative in

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[1] Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture: Volume I. Archaic Greece: The Mind of Athens*, trans. Gilbert Highet (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945), xx.

[2] Aristotle, *Physics*, 192b12-24.

[3] Even Cicero, who was celebrated for his talent in translating Greek, struggled to find a phrase to adequately capture it. As John Glucker notes: "Cicero has no fewer than five [Greek-into-Latin remarks] on this term: Luc. 24. Fin. III.23 ("adpetitio animi"); Fin.V.17 ("adpetitus animi"); Fin. IV.39 ("naturalis adpetitio"); ND II.58 ("conatus et adpetitio");" cf. John Glucker, "Cicero's Remarks on Translating Philosophical Terms – Some General Problems," in *Greek into Latin from Antiquity until the Nineteenth Century*, eds. John Glucker, and Charles Burnett (London; Turin: The Warburg Institute; Nino Aragno Editore, 2012), 45.

name or in theory – seems to have been in play. It percolated through the Neo-platonic and neo-Aristotelian writings of the medieval period; motivated the mechanics of Galileo, Thomas Hobbes, and René Descartes; engendered the cosmologies of Vico, Spinoza, and Leibniz; animated the theories of "will to life" and volition in late German idealism, and undergirded notions of instinct at the beginnings of modern psychology. It can even be found today as a key concept in theories of neurobiology (e.g. Antonio Damasio's somatic marker theory), ecology (e.g. the deep ecology movement inspired by Arne Næss), educational theory (through the works of Maria Montessori) and perhaps even evolutionary biology, if one takes heed of what Richard Dawkins has written about memes and selfish genes. In fact, it could be argued that the *hormê-conatus* concept is one of the most successful memes in the history of philosophy.

Perhaps one reason for this successful self-replication is how useful the idea is in dealing with a longstanding philosophical problem – *viz*. the reconciliation of change and permanence. Nearly every ancient Greek philosopher tried to find some semblance of order in the chaos of their world. Theirs was a maritime culture, built by the chapped hands and weathered brows of sailors. The early Greeks were a people who understood all too well how quickly clear skies can darken and tranquil conditions take a turn for the worse and, to this day, that anyone on a long, arduous journey fraught with danger is said to be on an odyssey. While philosophers like Heraclitus and Parmenides, or Democritus and Aristotle may not have faced the literal precariousness endured by Odysseus, they did witness the kinds of political and social upheaval that forces one to cast about for answers.

When one is on that kind of intellectual quest, it seems natural to wonder if things really are as they seem. This is why so many of the Greek philosophers questioned the distinction between appearance and reality. They wondered if there was some *archē* underlying the world they experienced, and so, they posited that *logos* might be one way to organize all of the noise into one coherent *theoria*. Regardless of how an individual philosopher worked through those questions, the underlying assumption was always that human understanding was part and parcel of this larger picture, not separate from it, and the most successful ideas were the ones which posited human reason as a movement within the movements of the world.

We face a similar uncertainty in our own time, but perhaps there is insight waiting for us in the ancient roots of the conatus idea. That is why the focus of this paper will be on the earliest Greek treatments of impulse, motivation, and self-animation – a cluster of concepts tied to the *hormê-conatus* concept. I hope to offer a plausible account of how the earliest recorded views on this subject in mythological, pre-Socratic, and Classical writings might have

inspired later philosophical developments by establishing the foundations for an organic, wholly naturalized approach to human inquiry. Just three pillars of that approach which I wish to emphasize here are: practical intelligence (*i.e.*, a continuity between knowing and doing), natural normativity (i.e., a continuity between human norms and the environment), and an ontology of philosophical dialectic (i.e., a continuity between the growth of human understanding and the growth of *physis*).

II. Impulse, action, and practical intelligence in mythological Greece

Despite the distinction Aristotle drew in his *Metaphysics* between the *mythologoi* and *physiologoi*,[4] I believe a study such as this one must adopt a pluralistic approach that breaks from the philosophical tendency which separates *logos* from *mythos*. In Greek mythology, the *daimona* Hormê was an energetic activity personified and, as Pausanias (c. 110-180 CE) recounted, there was an altar dedicated to her in the Athenian agora.[5] With regard to warfare, Hormê was understood as the outset of an attack or assault and, in this sense, could be associated with Eris, the *daimona* of strife. Just as Hesiod depicted two types of Eris in his *Works and Days*,[6] there appears to have been at least two sorts of Hormê in the theogonic usage, one associated with marching into battle and the other with productive diligence. The latter sense appears frequently in Homer's works (particularly the *Odyssey*), where it is associated with its corresponding verb form *horma-ô* (to urge, to start, to rush) and the subsequent derivation *hormain-ô* (to deliberate, to ponder).[7] Thus, it appears that *hormê* in the Homeric usage, could also be associated with practical intelligence, something later Greeks, and particularly the Athenians, held in high esteem. This may be one reason *hormê* became so prevalent during the Hellenistic period, particularly in the Stoic theories of action and the self. Under the Stoic view,

> rational "appearances" or "impressions" (*phantasiai*), which express the way things "look" to human beings, play a crucial role in explaining human action. The fact that people "assent" (say yes) to certain types of impression, namely those that ascribe value to courses of action, is adequate to explain the "impulse" (*hormê*) to act in a given way.[8]

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[4] Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 983b-984a. This distinction can be seen more sharply where Aristotle distinguishes between Homer and Empedocles in Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1447b17-20.

[5] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.17.1.

[6] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, Lines 11-41.

[7] Jeffrey Barnouw, *Odysseus, Hero of Practical Intelligence: Deliberation and Signs in Homer's Odyssey* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004), 116.

[8] Christopher Gill, *Greek Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 9.

The general weight of scholarly opinion until the latter part of the 20th century was that early Greek poetry held no conception of decision making and, *ipso facto*, was unable to present any sort of coherent praxeology.[9] The account usually offered was a developmental one, from the alleged "primitive" understanding of human agency offered in Homer to the "sophisticated, volitionalist" views in Plato and Aristotle. However, a handful of scholars more recently, for instance Bernard Williams in his *Shame and Necessity*[10] and Martha Nussbaum in her *Fragility of Goodness*,[11] have challenged this view. As Williams puts it, regardless of whether or not Homer presents a full-fledged theory of action, "beneath the terms that mark differences between Homer and ourselves lies a complex net of concepts in terms of which particular actions are explained, and this net was the same for Homer as it is for us."[12] Williams argues that, despite the arguments to the contrary, Homer depicts the ability of special characters, who possess "an iron *thumos*," to act against their own urges. Priam's appearance before Achilles at the end of the *Iliad* and Odysseus' decision not to kill the handmaidens at the end of the *Odyssey* are paradigmatic cases of Homeric characters showing self-restraint without reference to any semblance of rational will. Rather, their restraint is likewise said to stem from the *thumos* itself; these men have the capacity to endure against feeling. They have the momentum of a larger, more sustained urge that allows them to overcome the lesser, fleeting ones. It is worth noting that Williams connects this ability, although in passing, to the Greek verb *hormainein*.

Taking this etymological connection a bit further in *Odysseus, Hero of Practical Intelligence*, Jeffrey Barnouw situates an analysis of the Homeric conception of *hormê* within a larger discussion of psychological struggle, as depicted during the moments of deliberation within the *Odyssey* to which Williams referred. Barnouw echoes Williams in asserting that the poet couched such struggles not in Platonic terms of reason versus desire (*logos* and *thumos*), but rather one between rival impulses.[13] In Homer's account, the practical intelligence Odysseus displays consists not in taming the appetites with noble reason, as Plato famously claimed,

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[9] Cf. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, LA, and London: University of California Press, 1951); Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought*, trans. T. G. Rosenmeyer (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953); Jean-Pierre Vernant, and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone Books, 1990).

[10] Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

[11] Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[12] Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 34.

[13] Barnouw, *Odysseus*, 229.

but is instead a matter of a self-motivated mental fortitude, one that enables him to subordinate one impulse to another. According to Barnouw, this aspect of Homer's account is not only a precursor to the Stoic moral psychology found in Chrysippus, but also anticipates the theories of Hobbes, Leibniz, C. S. Peirce, and John Dewey,[14] perhaps best summed up in Peirce's dictum: "The feeling of believing is a more or less sure indication of there being established in our nature some habit which will determine our actions."[15] Indeed, Barnouw labels Homer's Odysseus a "visceral thinker," one whose ability to check his own urges (such as the urge to kill Polyphemus) stems from *thumos* (desire, heart), not *logos*:

> the implication in Homer is not that a supervening conscience, a "higher faculty," suppresses impulses coming from some other source. The source of action, of checking and enduring as well as daring, is *thumos*, whether as a sudden particular impulse, an enduring impulse or a locus of impulses.[16]

Barnouw sees this as a shift in views from the *Iliad*, in which (quoting Hermann Frankel), "As soon as [one] knows what has to happen, he needs no further decision to move on to the act," a view which would seem to follow from the popular view that Homer had no concept of decision and which informs our contemporary befuddled understanding of impulse.[17] In opposition to the characters of the *Iliad*, Barnow explains, the *Odyssey* portrays Odysseus and Penelope as deliberative and purposeful and the verb most closely associated in the text with that sort of emotional deliberation is, once again, *hormainein*.[18] Although "Homer seems to insist on the continuity between thinking of doing something and the impulse to do it," the cunning of Odysseus he praises is precisely his ability to subsume immediate impulses (*e.g.* revealing himself to Penelope before encountering the suitors) under a long term impulse (ridding Ithaca of the suitors once and for all). Barnouw explains:

> This element of incipience in *hormaô* is important to the role of urge or impulse in deliberation, as it allows that what is being pondered are not merely ideas or possible acts but active tendencies, the beginnings of the acts themselves.[19]

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[14] Ibid., 2.

[15] Charles S. Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief," *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (1877): 1.

[16] Barnouw, *Odysseus*, 99.

[17] Ibid., 100.

[18] Ibid., 113-116.

[19] Ibid., 117.

Barnouw holds up Poseidon's final assault on Odysseus at 5.365 as the prime example. The Butler translation reads: "While he was thus in *two minds*, Poseidon sent a terrible great wave" however, the key terms in the Greek here are, once again, *hôrmaine* (to ponder, to turn over) and *thumon*, which should tip the reader off that Homer's view is not as logo-centric as the translator implies.[20] Barnouw shows how the poet brings together several sorts of urges under the same term, "linking *hormaô* and *hormê* to *hormainô*." He concludes:

> [Odysseus'] physical effort (hormê, 416) against the great wave, and his mental visceral activity, 'pondered' (hormaine, 424), work in parallel [...]. The reciprocity of man and nature in struggle, driven in different ways by the gods, is captured by the repeated mirroring of the related terms.[21]

Three points can be drawn from this connection between *hormê*, *hormaô*, and *hôrmaine*. First, there is a connection in Homer between human impulses and those of the natural world, one that points beyond a simple "man vs. nature" narrative toward a more naturalized praxeology, if not invoking harmony with nature, at least one of mutual adjustment. Second, there is the absence of a logo-centric theory of action, one that pits reason against the passions or the appetites. Finally, as the upshot of these first two points, arises a suspicion about the old distinction between mythos and logos, between poetry and philosophy. Even though, as Bruce Lincoln puts it:

> Heroic accounts of [...] the beloved Greek Miracle, regularly grant a prominent place to the transformation in speech and thought that led from the *mythos* of Homer and Hesiod to the *logos* of Heraclitus and Plato, a transformation associated with the move from symbolic to rational discourse, anthropomorphism to abstraction, and religion to philosophy. [...] the story is hardly as simple as it is often made out to be.[22]

The developmental theories of Greek notions of self tend to go hand in hand with this tidy narrative Lincoln calls into question. In a similar critique, Kathryn Morgan writes:

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[20] Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Samuel Butler (Ottawa: East India Publishing Company, 2020), 45.

[21] Ibid., 119.

[22] Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 3.

> Logos, conceived as intellect, is present in the earliest preserved Greek literature. Homeric gods as civilized and 'rational,' and the beginnings of theodicy, are traced in the *Odyssey* [...]. To an even greater degree, Hesiod's *Theogony* strives towards systematization and rational regulation of life. One may envisage a broad movement from irrationality to rationality, but the precise moment and nature of the boundary between the two mental states is hard to specify. No myth is totally irrational; no philosophy (at least before Aristotle) is totally devoid of mythical elements.[23]

It is just this sort of striving towards systematization and regulation of life (whether "rational" or not) that I believe linking the impulses between humanity and nature could accomplish. This is where one might consider Hesiod's account of Strife in both *Works and Days* and *Theogony*.[24] For instance, at *Theogony* we find: "But abhorred Strife bore painful Toil and Forgetfulness and Famine and tearful Sorrows, Fightings also, Battles, Murders, Manslaughters, Quarrels, Lying Words (*Logoi*) [and] Disputes."[25] *Logos,* for Hesiod, is associated with the loathsome sort of Strife. In fact, both *Theogony* and *Works and Days* contain passages connecting logos to seduction, falsehoods, cunning, and the discourse of the weak.[26] The duality of Strife presented in *Works and Days* builds upon this association. Destructive Strife stems from quarrels, lawsuits, and war, but the constructive sort, which Hesiod claims is born of night, is responsible for the *zelôs* (zeal) between neighbors. Competition and emulation of like with like, he says, "is wholesome for men."[27] How much of this idea is handed down to the early philosophers is, of course, hard to say. However, there appear to be several recurring themes here picked up by pre-Socratic writers.

III. Nature, norms, and humanity in the pre-Socratics

It is well known that many of the earliest Greek philosophers, from the Milesian monists to the atomists, sought a solution to the persistence-

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[23] Kathryn A. Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 32.

[24] Here I am setting aside the issues of textual interpolation from later rhapsodes, which is only obliquely relevant to an analysis of the transmission of ideas I have in mind.

[25] Hesiod, *Theogony,* Lines 226-229.

[26] Cf. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 11.

[27] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, Line 24.

through-change quandary. However, the issue is typically couched in terms of substance ontology. If one were to focus not on the substances, but rather on the processes in pre-Socratic metaphysics, on that which is dynamic rather static, could new insights be gleaned? Those thinkers whose work united both the epistemic, and psychological sense of *hormê* found in Homer with the theogonic, and metaphysical sense embedded in Hesiod might be most relevant to such an investigation. Xenophanes may have achieved something like this in his cyclical cosmology, combining a rejection of the Greek mythological pantheon in favor of a singular god. Likewise, Heraclitus brought together *logos* and *eris* in his predilection for change and, despite his derision toward his predecessor, wound up with a depiction of the divine quite similar to Xenophanes. Parmenides' *doxa* also holds striking similarities to Xenophanes, insofar as it presents a theory of recurrent cosmological mixture of two primary bodies. Empedocles presents an even more interesting study, as it is he, who first offered something of a forerunner to Aristotle's four elements, posited two primordial *daimones* (*eros* and *eris*) which initiated the cosmic cycle, and claimed that cathartic purification could lead one through a process of reincarnation toward a state of divine intelligence.

In the interest of brevity, I will try to cast a synoptic look at the evolution of the three main points I find running through the four pre-Socratics just named (to recapitulate: a theory of intelligent action driven by an inner, natural impulses, a normative view of nature, and an ontology of philosophical dialectic). Along the way, the themes which connect them to their mythopoetic forbears should likewise become clearer. Generally speaking, the thinkers I have selected are prime examples of a pre-Socratic view which situates norms of psychological, ethical, and political life within the whole of nature. It should be noted (following Julia Annas and Christopher Gill) that despite being framed with an intimate connection between normative ideals and "physicalist"[28] thoughts about nature, such a view is not necessarily on par with contemporary understandings of physicalism, materialism, or ethical naturalism precisely because "the idea of nature [did not function] for them as a norm within ethical theory."[29] Simply put, pre-Socratic normative nature is not subject to Moore's open question argument because it is not involved in trying to convince anyone that it is rational to be morally good. Instead, thinkers like Heraclitus and Empedocles see normative ideals (*e.g.*, friendship, harmony) as applying to nature, and they claim that the person who recognizes

[28] Julia Annas states, "In its ancient form, physicalism is the theory that everything that exists, including the soul, falls under *phusikê*, enquiry into the constituents and structures of the universe;" Julia Annas, *Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 3.

[29] Gill, *Greek Thought*, 69-70.

this will experience a type of ethical and psychological growth. In this way, the poet-Muse relationship informs the new vision of reality which many of the pre-Socratics wish to communicate.[30]

As a rhapsode who also wrote against the epic poets, Xenophanes' life is symbolic of the complex transition from the Archaic to the Classical ages. He sought to preserve only the sorts of poetry which offered either a true description of the universe or held some social utility. Though he valued the mythic tradition, he was skeptical of humanity's ability to garner knowledge from it and rebuked the Homeric and Hesiodic portrayals of the gods for demonstrating the worst features of human frailty. In this way, Xenophanes offered not a different account of the mythological universe he inherited, but rather an account of a wholly different universe. He claims that if oxen and horses could paint gods, they would make them look like horses and gods. He claims everything is born of earth and water, the admixture of which are the two primary bodies in a cyclical cosmogonic process, whose impulse is the mental power of a singular, completely whole god. Human actions, it is implied, are imperfect reflections of this process and a harmony can be achieved only if one is able to hear the "true words" of mythic poetry – *i.e.*, those elements which maintain social decorum. Xenophanes anticipated what some have called "the god of the philosophers" – that is, a purely abstract, motionless and unknowable entity. He, thus, likewise set up the distinction between true opinion and knowledge that would be heavily employed by Plato.

Perhaps because he was a writer of prose, Heraclitus had an even graver outlook on the poets. He was deliciously cantankerous, and it is probably safe to say he was the most iconoclastic of all the early Greek iconoclasts. He called the epic poets fools and Pythagoras a fraud. His view of the relationship between *mythos* and *logos* appears, at first blush, to differ greatly from that of Xenophanes – since he is well known as an early champion of the *logos* and never once is *mythos* mentioned in his extant fragments. However, there are several points of connection. First, it is the variety of functions *logos* holds for Heraclitus. In one instance it is treated as a principle of cosmic order, in another as the core of philosophical discourse, and yet another as "the one wise" who allows himself to be called Zeus. Like Hesiod, Heraclitus gives Strife a prominent role, holding the tension between opposites essential for cosmic harmony.

A widely held interpretation of the phrase "*παλίντροπος ἁρμονίη ὅκωσπερ τόξου καὶ λύρης*" in fragment 51 sees it as suggesting a tension between two opposite but equal vectors, or a "connection working in both directions."[31]

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[30] Cf. Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 46-88.

[31] Quoted in Edward Hussey, *The Pre-Socratics* (London: Duckworth, 1972), 43.

The Greek in this fragment, however, has been a source of dispute among specialists for two reasons. The first conflict surrounds the proper understanding of *harmoniê* as Heraclitus would have meant it. During the time of Homer, *harmoniê* would have held the meaning of "fitting together" into a structure and was often used in reference to masonry and carpentry, but also in reference to military treaties – a meaning the English word "accord" might best capture.[32] However, by the time Heraclitus would have been writing, the word had also taken on the association with music that its English cognate holds today, which could suggest the give-and-take of resonance, or mutual reverberation. This meaning also seems to fit within the context of the fragment itself and the representations of the cosmos it employs – *viz*. a bow and a lyre. The second component of the dispute surrounds the choice of the word *palintropos* – which could be translated as "back turning." The received version of the fragment was unclear here though, and some scholars have suggested that the word intended was instead *palintonos* – which could be translated as "back stretching." Edward Hussey has suggested,

> If palintonos is correct, then the bow and lyre are thought of as not functioning, but at rest and in a state of tension, as indeed they both are when strung. If this is so, then the unity of opposites expresses itself in a static state, an equilibrium in which the opposed forces balance each other.[33]

Hussey continues, "If palintropos is correct, then the bow and the lyre are thought of as in use. Their proper functioning implies the movement in opposite or alternate directions of their complicated structure."[34] If the intended meaning of this passage was a "back-turning" (in alternating resonance) then we might be better off to adopt a view centered on the notion of dual-oscillation. This calls to mind the way that Karl Popper suggested we read Heraclitus – *i.e.* as a precursor to process philosophy, but a process in which *logos* is understood as an emergent law, rather than some sort of static *archê*.[35] It seems clear Heraclitus deemed the language of the mythic tradition as conceptually inadequate to convey this message. For him, the sort of *logos* he had in mind should have been apparent and a source of harmony, because it was common to all, but it had been ignored by those claiming simplicity. The only way to rectify this, he believed, is for humanity to search nature,

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 44-45.

[34] Ibid., 45.

[35] Cf. Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1963).

both human nature and nature at large. His oracular style appears to be a call for just that sort of reflection. Like the other pre-Socratics, Heraclitus found himself in the midst of a struggle between narrative and argumentative styles of discourse precipitated by the advent of the written word. Like Xenophanes, he rejected prior mythopoetic discourse, albeit more explicitly, and should be counted as one more step in the shift of discursive authority from narrative (thought to be motivated by external forces, *i.e.* the Muses) to self-motivated argument.[36] Despite this shift, most of the pre-Socratics sought to appropriate mythic authority for their new form of discourse – and this is where Heraclitus should be set apart.

The other two thinkers I wish to highlight can be grouped together even more closely, and not simply because of the traditional connection often made between Parmenides and Empedocles. As Aryeh Finkelberg has argued, Empedocles' physical doctrine can be viewed as "the final stage of a development which can be traced back through Parmenides' *doxa* back to Xenophanes' 'physics.'"[37] Drawing upon testimonies from Theophrastus, Hippolytus, and Simplicius, she suggests that, like the others, Parmenides posited a recurrent cosmological generation and corruption.[38] A process that, for Parmenides, involved the admixture of night and light and the operation of love (*eros*) and discord (*bellum/discordia*). In a move reminiscent of Hesiod, Parmenides also associated cognition with emulation of like by like (this according to Theophrastus). One finds in his *doxa*, a precursor to Empedocles portrayal of love and strife, couched in terms of a *daimona* which governs the recurrent cosmogonical mixture of the two primary bodies. For Empedocles, however, human life itself is only a part of this cosmogonical dance caused by strife, one in which a miserable cycle of metempsychosis is set off due to "false speech." Like Homer and Hesiod, Empedocles invokes the Muse, but his invocation calls for something different – *viz*. to have logos placed in his visceral organs. He sees purification and the ultimate rescue from metempsychosis in the combination of poetry and argument where "one may become a prophet, singer, doctor, or leader, and eventually a god."[39] It is, of course, the relationship between *physis* and *nomos* with which these thinkers engaged that became a major concern for Socrates and his successors and provided Western thought with an enduring idea – that the human body is itself a microcosm, or, in other words, a tiny cosmos. Human inquiry, then,

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[36] Indeed, it could be said that Aristotle's syllogism contains a sort of impulse, insofar as the conclusion "follows" from the premises.

[37] Aryeh Finkelberg, "Xenophanes' Physics, Parmenides' Doxa and Empedocles' Theory of Cosmogonical Mixture," *Hermes* 125, no. 1 (1997): 1-16.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Quoted in Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 62.

is not so much a retreat to a "view from nowhere," but rather an integrated part of organic life that seeks to maximize an organism's functionality with its surroundings. The logical extension of such a line of reasoning leads to the prospect that human animals are continuous with their surroundings, that they are experiencing fields immersed within an environing field.[40]

IV. Philosophical conatus and the ontology of dialectic

In March of 2014, Sarah Broadie, Professor of Moral Philosophy and Wardlow Professor at the University of Saint Andrews, was invited to give the Howison Lecture at Berkeley. The title of her talk was: "The Theoretical Impulse in Plato and Aristotle." In it, she offered a description of philosophical inclination couched in terms of moral psychology and painted a beautiful picture of "the human being as a theoretical adventurer," focusing on how Plato and Aristotle could be used together, rather than "defend one against the other."[41] In the remainder of this paper, I hope to look more deeply at the underlying causes for the human impulse to philosophize. Like Broadie, I will attempt to marry aspects of Plato to Aristotle, not strictly in the interest of equity, but in order to accentuate something of the organic attitude which underlies their thinking.

Among the many conclusions Broadie drew, two stand out. Firstly, while Plato's philosophical exemplar is the one that frees herself and others from impediments to intellectual progress, Aristotle's is the one that is actually experiencing the moment of discovery. This suggests that the ultimate philosophical goal for Aristotle is the act of inquiry, while for Plato it is the "condition of not being hobbled by delusions." This jibes well with the traditional depictions of each: Plato the educator and Aristotle the scientist. According to those depictions, Plato hoped philosophers would remove delusions in others, while Aristotle hoped they would discover (and rediscover) insights, in perpetuity. Apparently, for Plato, the state of philosophical health is more important than the moment of recovery from delusion, and, for Aristotle, the state of philosophical health is just a continuous series of such recoveries. The drive to philosophize for Plato seems to come from the nourishment one receives from a clear vision of ideas. For Aristotle, it is inherent ("by nature") to our biology as a species. I find each of these answers, by itself, lacking. I shall return to this criticism in a moment.

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[40] This way of stating the continuity between humans with their environments is employed by Paul Kurtz in his essay, "Naturalism in American Philosophy," in *Philosophy and the Civilizing Arts: Essays Presented to Herbert W. Schneider*, eds. Craig Walton, and John P. Anton (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1974).

[41] Sarah Broadie, "The Theoretical Impulse in Plato and Aristotle," filmed March 19, 2014, at Berkeley Graduate Lectures, Berkeley, CA, video, 59:52, https://gradlectures.berkeley.edu/lecture/plato-aristotle/.

The second point that stood out in Broadie's talk was a suggestion that Plato's approach, *i.e.*, of clearing delusions by use of the intellect, when taken to its logical conclusion, might lead to a deep-seated distrust of reason. After all, if intellect is used to clear away the impediments produced by the intellect, there arises an obvious circularity. When the intellect is turned inward, on itself, it might foster a solipsistic kind of skepticism. After all, reflectivity seems to go hand in hand with reflexivity. However, despite the long history of this tendency, it may actually be traceable to a wholly contingent transition that occurred in ancient Greece between the seventh and fourth centuries BCE. As Eric Havelock has put it,

> The Socratic dialectic was introduced into Greek culture [...] at precisely that time when the slow transition of [cultural] storage speech away from the [poetic, oral] version and towards a mastery of the [conceptual and literate] had reached a crisis.[42]

Plato stands out among the greatest of philosophers in part because his corpus consisted in a documentation of the Socratic dialectic that was one of the first and still one of most ingenious responses to this reflexivity paradox. Havelock again:

> The dialectic was logos, yet remained exclusively oral, not out of eccentric choice, but because its practitioner [Socrates] grew up as an oralist, a traditionalist, who yet committed himself to a paradoxical task.[43]

At once method and ontology, understanding the interplay and unity of opposites that is dialectic has been the cornerstone of some of the most insightful additions to Western civilization. I believe this legacy is, simultaneously, the greatest inspiration and the biggest stumbling block for countless philosophers. I hope to at least diagnose one facet of the difficulty. I believe the answer has something to do with that first impulse a budding philosopher feels to venture into the theoretical.

This is of course another one of those perennial problems of philosophy; and as a solution, many of the earliest Greek thinkers posited an inherent

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[42] Eric A. Havelock, "The Orality of Socrates and the Literacy of Plato: With some Reflections on the Historical Origins of Moral Philosophy in Europe," in *New Essays on Socrates*, ed. Eugene Kelly (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 74.

[43] Ibid., 77. Later, he writes: "The pioneers preferred to adapt old terms, rather than invent new ones. *Noein*, to be aware or sensible of, *phronein*, to have wits, *logizesthai*, to tally, *skopein* to look at, *epistasthai*, to get on top of (in mastering a skill) were converted to the senses of thinking, reasoning, analyzing, understanding scientifically, and the corresponding nouns, phronesis, episteme, nous, dianoia (thought, science, mind, intellect) began to turn into indexes of sheer thought and abstract intellection [...]. In oral language the actions of agents commonly acted upon something; the subject did something to an object. But here was a new kind of action, namely sheer intellection, which perhaps was not an action at all;" Ibid., 81.

impulse from which movement (both human and natural) could be derived. To illustrate what I wish to pursue, I should like to consider Plato's ideas concerning education, especially in the story known as the "Allegory of the Cave." When reading his allegory of the cave in terms of education, I find it curious that Plato would give an elaborate account of the learning process (especially when his metaphor is extended) yet provide no machinery to start the journey. On one hand, this may only be another indication of Plato's philosophical assumptions; on the other, it could be an intentional omission, itself symbolic of a philosophical truth. The difference that makes a difference here, I must concede, hangs on an interpretive choice – but one that I believe is warranted.

Much has been made of the allegory's political and epistemological symbolism. Likewise, because Plato believed that education was such an essential component in realizing his ideal individual/city, nearly as much has been said about this allegory with regard to the philosophy of education. However, in the true spirit of "allegory," or *ἄλλος ἀγορεύω*, I should like to suggest a "different" way of reading the story which places the metaphor in "wide open (conceptual) space."[44] Thus, before we delve too deeply into the upshots of that choice, let me first recount the story, holding it under a somewhat novel light.

The allegory begins when Socrates turns to the concept of *παιδεία*: "Next," I said, "compare the effect of education (*παιδεία*) and the lack of it on our nature to an experience like this."[45] The reference to *paideia* is worth noting, not only because we see Socrates begin Book VII with his second account of education within the ideal city, but also because of the connection to the previous book's analogies of the sun and divided line, in which a kind of enlightenment – or highest form of knowledge – is presented. Depending on the context, Plato used the Greek terms *φρόνησις*, *σοφία*, *νοῦς*, and *διάνοια* interchangeably to stand for enlightenment, but in each case the value rested at the pinnacle of dialectical progress that transcended the commonplace. This is interesting because, on the one hand, *paideia* could be understood as an across-the-board term for the conventions of a society, as well as the process by which those values are transmitted. In this sense, *paideia* refers to a lifelong edification, one which entails both what is called in English education *and* culture, a sort of "building up" of ideals. Yet, on the other hand, enlightenment for Plato was:

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[44] In Greek, "ἀλληγορία" (*allegoria*) is "veiled language, figurative," from "ἄλλος" (*allos*), "another, different" + "ἀγορεύω" (*agoreuo*), "to harangue, to speak in the assembly" and that, in turn, from "ἀγορά" (*agora*), "assembly."

[45] Plato, *Republic*, 514a.

> [...] the intellectual virtue of the philosopher. It [was] to have the intellectual virtue of the person who has come to grasp the nature of the unchanging Forms. This philosopher's knowledge is both scientific and theoretical, since it constitutes the grasp of the unchanging realities through which all other things become known.[46]

Therefore, we see in this first line of the allegory two ideas being placed in juxtaposition: conventional, communal *paideia* and transcendent, individual enlightenment.

Taking this as our cue, we might look at the rest of the allegory with an aim to decipher its symbolism. It is rather uncontroversial, in light of its similarity to the caves of Orphic stories and to the grotto of Empedocles, to suggest that Plato's cave is meant to represent the ignorance of the mundane, in this case that of those who have not yet received philosophical initiation. But, what shall we make of the rest of the scene? It seems the cave itself is representative of "state sanctioned education," or what we might call *schooling* today, understood in opposition to "self-directed inquiry." In Athens, this was the type of education for which young Athenians paid men like Gorgias or Protagoras handsomely. It also reflects what is described earlier, by Socrates, regarding the education of auxiliaries and the first part of a guardian's schooling within the model city. That the cave is only partially illuminated by a dim fire might be symbolic of the inadequacy of this form of education in divulging the truths of enlightenment. For those of us who teach ideas for a living, it is all too clear how difficult it is to impart critical inquiry to our students. Unless they take it upon themselves to reach for it, it may never be handed down. Many are more interested in receiving brute facts than in trying to see for themselves how the facts hang together. Part of the problem, for us and for the teachers of Plato's day, is that our best efforts are often concealed, as if behind a low-lying wall, by cultural traditions and norms, which often preclude students from seeing their lessons clearly. At best, one can offer them mere shadows of the ideas one wishes to convey. Furthermore, students are often just as bound by the egoism, prejudices, and skepticism of conventional society as the prisoners are by their chains in the allegory. Of course, those who taught ideas for a living, in Plato's day, were known as the Sophists. If we continue our extension of the metaphor, we might say that they are represented by the merchants, hocking their wares on the path between the fire and the wall.[47] Notice that we modern teachers are

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[46] Lawrence Becker, and Charlotte B. Becker, eds., *Encyclopedia of Ethics,* Vol. 3, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 1314.

[47] Any symbolism is dismissed here: "The men are merely a part of the necessary machinery

in a position similar to theirs. Perhaps this could tell us something about how Plato would view the over-professionalization of philosophy today.

When one of the prisoners in the story is suddenly freed, he quickly sees the inadequacies of this system. Fear, anger, and resentment would very likely be his natural reaction. In our contemporary schools, is it any wonder that the brightest students are often those who match this description and are frequently the ones given medication and told simply to "calm down?" The freed prisoner quickly makes his way toward a more brilliant source of light, the sun, at the mouth of the cave. He emerges from the cave of ignorance, and through a slow, arduous process of dialectical edification, he reaches an understanding of the good itself. He is enlightened – or so the story goes. But how was he freed? Plato does not tell us. He does imply that it is an impulse at 515c when he writes that something "suddenly compels" (ἀναγκάζω ἐξαίφνης) the prisoner, "by nature" (*φύσις*).[48] This should be a matter of no small concern for us. If dialectic is the path one must traverse to become a philosopher, then how does one break the bonds of ignorance and convention and start on that journey? How does one break *into* dialectic? From what's been said here it should seem obvious that philosophical education is a voyage of self-discovery as well as a discovery of the self. To illustrate, consider the insights of the late political scientist, Michael Oakeshott, who wrote of education,

> A human life is not [merely] a process in which a living organism grows to maturity, succeeds in accommodating itself to its surroundings or perishes. It is, in the first place, an adventure in which an individual consciousness confronts the world he inhabits, responds to what Henry James called "the ordeal of consciousness," and thus *enacts* and [through enacting, only then] *discloses himself*.[49]

In the same way that one cannot simply say, "Today I will become a philosopher," it does not seem possible to take it upon ourselves to begin the task of reflection. It is an act that is only available to us after we have disclosed ourselves through the context of harmony with the world around us. In this way, the human conatus toward personal growth is an *outgrowth* of the conative principles of nature.

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of the image. Their shadows are not cast on the wall. The artificial objects correspond to the things of sense and opinion in the divided line, and the shadows to the world of reflections, *εἰκόνες*;" Plato, *Republic*, 7.514b.

[48] Plato, *Republic*, 515c.

[49] Michael Oakeshott, "A Place of Learning," *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children* 3, nos. 3-4 (1982): 74.

If we keep in mind that both the *Symposium* and *Parmenides* place Socrates in the position of interlocutor, we might consider this to be something of an origin story for the philosopher. It is also important to note that Parmenides tells Socrates that his objections to the Theory of Forms must be overcome, lest we lose the ability to carry on discourse[50] and that Diotima told Socrates all other loves are just defective forms of philosophy.[51] So maybe the idea that unites these dialogues is that the student of philosophy is attracted to, and strives after, enlightenment but never actually obtains it. Perhaps ideas are beautiful objects of philosophical affection that constantly move away from their suitors. The point is not the destination, but the pursuit. We must remain forever "in between." If we consider what lies "in between" wisdom and a lack of understanding not as a static position, but rather as a dynamic process, we may be offered some insight into how Socrates, the lover of wisdom, might serve as a model for the rest of us who claim to be lovers of wisdom. This is the point of Socratic dialectic, *viz*. the move from a desire to know toward the fulfillment of that desire. But, unlike bodily desire, which results either in satisfaction or frustration, intellectual desire has no final end. Every culmination must eventually sink back into a new desire. This is an important point both theoretically and practically. In this way, the Socratic elenchus is the embodiment of the dynamics of *hormê*.

It appears Plato may have been cognizant of this. Although he claimed each part of the tripartite soul derived from its own *hormê*, only the impulse of *logos* was qualified to rule – either over the individual or the *polis*.[52] Like Homer's Odysseus, Plato's philosopher-king is one whose impulses toward longer-term, more sustainable goods are able to overcome the impulses toward instant gratification.[53] Philosophical education, therefore, collapses when it seeks only to nurture and individual's growth toward singular ends, in a linear fashion. A proper, nonlinear sort of growth comes about not from some teleological design prior to action, but rather emerges through the action itself. As I have written elsewhere,

> The difference between linear and non-linear conceptions of growth is equivalent to the difference between the progress made when traveling toward a set destination and the general progress one makes when fitness training. Only in the former type of activity is growth measured according to a quantifiable

[50] Plato, *Parmenides*, 135c.

[51] Plato, *Symposium*, 211d.

[52] Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 409a-410a, and 580d-586d.

[53] Cf. Ibid., 603d-606d.

> telos. Yet, when a new indeterminate situation arises, those who have experienced non-linear growth, instead, will be able to adapt to the changes in the situation like a healthy organism can adjust to changes in its environment or a skilled jazz musicians can improvise around the notes she hears.[54]

This, I believe, is the legacy both of 1) Plato's freed prisoner, who, once suddenly released from his bonds, is compelled to come back to try to free others and 2) Aristotle's empirical philosophy of becoming. The other prisoners in the cave cannot hear him because they must grasp for themselves the world around them and take the first steps toward becoming philosophers. On such a model, a teacher is a guide, a mentor, a midwife – *not* a leader, or a master, or a birth giver. Therefore, the only break involved in entering the dialectical process is a break from one's old habits of thought (and learning to see those habits as tied up with one's own *inhabitation*) is the initial impulse of that process.

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[54] Christopher C. Kirby, "Dewey and 'the Greeks:' Inquiry and the Organic Spirit of Greek Philosophy," in *Dewey and the Ancients. Essays on Hellenic and Hellenistic Themes in the Philosophy of John Dewey,* ed. Christopher C. Kirby (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 69-70.

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Aristotle and Aristoxenus on Effort

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Abstract

The discussions of conatus – force, tendency, effort, and striving – in early modern metaphysics have roots in Aristotle's understanding of life as an internal experience of living force. This paper examines the ways that Spinoza's conatus is consonant with Aristotle on effort. By tracking effort from his psychology and ethics to aesthetics, I show there is a conatus at the heart of the activity of the ψυχή that involves an intensification of power in a way which anticipates many of the central insights of early modern and 20th century European philosophy. The first section outlines how Aristotle's developmental conception of the soul as geometrically ordered lays the foundation for his understanding of effort. The developmental series of powers of the soul are analogous to the series of shapes in mathematics. The second section links the striving of the soul to the gradual acquisition of virtues as a directed activity unifying multiplicity. The third examines the paradigm of self-awareness that Aristotelian effort involves. In the final section I show how ancient Greek theories of music were founded on the experience of striving. The "nature" of music is defined by Aristoxenus, and Theophrastus, in relation to the passion and intentionality of the soul. The geometrical order, as a synthesis of elements in geometry, music, or ethics, is a generative process in which past elements are retained and reintegrated in later stages of development. It requires effort to think geometrically, and the progress of knowledge itself is an integral aspect of all effort. Effort is the lived and self-aware cause which, moving step by step in an orderly and deliberate way, grows and advances upon itself. For both Spinoza and Aristotle, effort is the immanent intelligence which accomplishes what is in the purview of its understanding. Thus, will, in this conception of effort, is not something we already possess innately, but emerges gradually by an effort aimed at improvement.

Keywords: *effort; conatus; geometrical order; self-awareness; consciousness; ancient Greek music; musicology*

The discussions of *conatus* in early modern metaphysics have certain roots in Aristotle – primarily in his psychological sense of continuity, power, and activity. The language of living force, effort, and striving are prefigured in Aristotle's understanding of life, experience, and *energeia*, as an interiority of effort. Aristotle does not have a single term meaning striving or effort, but there are several relevant terms that he used: *πονεῖν*,[1] *ἐπιμελείας*,[2] *ἐπιτείνειν*,[3] *συντονίας*,[4] *συντείνειν*,[5] *ὄρεξις*,[6] *ὀρέγεσθαι*,[7] *προσέχειν*,[8] *σπουδάς*,[9] and *σπουδαῖος*.[10] Tracking the significance of effort from his psychology to ethics and aesthetics, one finds a *conatus* at the heart of the activity of the *ψυχή* that anticipates many of the insights of early modern and 20th century continental philosophy from Spinoza[11] and Leibniz[12] to Bergson's *attention to life*,[13] Heidegger's care-structure,[14] and Deleuze's intensity.[15] I will examine effort and intensity in Aristotle's philosophy and link them to Spinoza's *conatus*, as an internal principle of causality.

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[1] Effort. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 5: 1138b27, 8: 1154b8.

[2] Effort. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1: 1099b20; care. Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 1: 1370a11.

[3] Intensify. Plato, *Republic*, 6: 498b; strained, Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 1: 1360a 25.

[4] Intense exertion. Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 1: 1370a13; Aristotle, *Politics*, 8: 1342a1; *Problems*, 5: 882b1.

[5] Contribute, concentrate, converge, intensify. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 9: 1050a23; Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1: 1216a33; Aristotle, *On Sleeping and Waking*, 2: 455a35; Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 1: 1360b7; Aristotle, *Poetics*, 4: 1459a26.

[6] Appetite, desire, yearning. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 9: 1048a13; Aristotle, *De anima* 3: 433a7-434a20; Aristotle, *Movement of Animals*, 703a5.

[7] Strive, yearning, stretch out. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1: 980a, 9: 1048a13; Aristotle, *Physics*, 1: 192a20; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10: 1175a16.

[8] Attention. Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 3: 1415a30; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10: 1175b7.

[9] Effort, strain. Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 1: 1370a13.

[10] Intensity of character, serious, strenuous, good. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10: 1176a17; Aristotle, *Categories*, 11b17.

[11] Baruch Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works,* trans. Ed Curley (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[12] G. W. Leibniz, *G. W. Leibniz's Monadology: An Edition for Students*, trans. Nicholas Rescher (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991).

[13] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: The Modern Library, 1944).

[14] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of* Sein Und Zeit, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996).

[15] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

Spinoza understood *conatus* to be the actual essence of singular things,[16] which *adequately* describes the individuation of an enduring human life as striving to persevere in, and increase, its powers of acting. Spinoza may have denied free will as an infinite faculty,[17] but he still had a philosophical vision based on effort, will, and freedom. Freedom is built up gradually through the development of knowledge. One's freedom, for Spinoza, is acquired by a persistent effort striving for the improvement of the understanding. The *improvement*, or emendation, of the intellect is what defines rationality itself for Spinoza. The use of reason is therapeutic and intellectually energizing. A persistent exercise of reason *generates* powers and virtues. The adequate cause, like an adequate idea, is immanent to *conatus* itself – striving and affirming itself. Particular volitions are directly linked to the understanding, so we can only affirm what we understand. We are conscious of our existence in the act of striving as the actual essence of our being. Essence and existence are united in the internal experience of the adequate idea as a causal act which conceives and affirms itself. Furthermore, it is only adequate knowledge (active affects) which leads us to happiness.

Spinoza wondered, if blessedness or true peace of mind were "readily found without great effort, how could nearly everyone neglect it?" and concludes the *Ethics* with the famous line which states that "all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare."[18] While therapeutic rationality and creative intelligence are rare, certain efforts or active ways of *striving* can in fact cause them to come to be. Reason and happiness arise from persevering in the work of cultivating habits and virtues. Ethical progress follows the same rational structure of the causal matrix of nature and thought (exemplified in the geometrical order of the *Ethics* itself). Rather than being constrained by these structures, thought freely affirms their existence in the act of striving, as with the effort of a singular volitions.[19]

I will show how this developmental sense of *conatus* (as a cause which, by becoming conscious of itself and using reason, improves itself) is consonant with Aristotle's dynamic sense of effort. The first section outlines Aristotle's developmental conception of the soul as geometrically ordered. The second links the striving of the soul to the acquisition of virtues. The third examines the paradigm of self-awareness that Aristotle's dynamic-psychical effort involves. In the final section I show how ancient Greek theories of music were founded on the experience of striving. Aristoxenus' *Elements*, while not given

[16] Spinoza, *Ethics*, 3p7.

[17] Ibid., 2p49.

[18] Ibid., 5p42Schol.

[19] Ibid., 2p49.

in the geometrical order, parallels the fundamental ontological significance of *striving* in Spinozism. The geometrical order, as a synthesis of elements, is the same in geometry, music, or ethics: it is a generative process in which past elements are preserved and reintegrated. Effort is the lived and self-aware cause which, moving step by step in an orderly and deliberate way, grows and advances upon itself.

I. The soul's activity as geometrically ordered

Aristotle approached the task of defining the soul geometrically. This does not mean he approached it statically. Much to the contrary, he approached it assuming: (1) The need for a "dynamic" definition, that is to say, the sort of definition of a *composite* which includes matter and form (similar to the sort which Archytas gave[20]).[21] (2) That experience is sufficient to account for its arising as a principle, i.e. by induction.[22] The hylomorphic whole, the ensouled, unifies an infinite multiplicity. There is a sort of syllogism, or cognitive gathering, irreducible to predication, by which the "life of the soul" acts as a dynamic continuity weaving complexity (of movements) and multiplicity (of works) into a unity, by a convergence of causal factors. In the geometrical progress of the soul, prior elements come together and integrate to engender a greater power, complexity, and precision of action. The relation of a triangle to a parallelogram is analogous to the power and activity in the works of the soul. The work of the soul is a gathering or syllogizing of causal ingredients. The first term is the material (multiplicity and potency), the second term is the activity (or "essence" τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι).[23] The "body having life potentially" is a material ingredient, which must be connected to an activity, such as digesting, sensing, or moving, in which body and soul form a community and continuity. The middle terms are the *enactments* of the potentials "held" by the living body, and it is on the basis of the "work" of distinct forms of life that the definitions of different kinds of souls are distinguished.

The definition must "include and display the cause."[24] "Include" translating ἐνυπάρχειν, implies that the power must be placed in its proper position in the "series" (ἕφεξις) of grounding relations of constitutive properties,[25] i.e. a relation to prior powers on which the emergence of subsequent abilities

[20] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 8: 1043a22.

[21] Aristotle, *De anima*, 2: 414a15.

[22] Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 2: 100a10.

[23] Ibid., 2: 94a30-38.

[24] Aristotle, *De anima*, 2: 413a13.

[25] Ibid., 2: 414b20.

depends (as perception depends on nutrition), and to further powers which reintegrate prior activity into a higher order (as thinking depends on, but surpasses experience, memory, and perception).[26] The *inclusion* or *integration* of the cause thus refers to the successive emergence of powers, spanning from the "body having life" to the activities of a soul that is sensing, growing, developing, learning, and acquiring virtues. The soul's activity and all its powers will depend on some particular organized body (involving motion and rest). Aristotle insists that "what is ensouled [ἔμψυχον] is made of both [ἐξ ἀμφοῖν]" and that "the soul is the actuality [ἐντελέχεια] of some body."[27] This formulaic expression of the soul, Aristotle insists, is irreducible to a single definition because each of the powers, each different middle term, will form a different definition based on its peculiar works.[28] This means that we cannot merely deduce one from the other – i.e. nutrition, perception, or memory – each requires its own treatment and involves its own phenomena that must be experienced in its own peculiar works, and with their own particular limits and purposes.

Despite the irreducible diversity of the faculties, they are also intimately connected, as Aristotle says: "For always the one-next-in-the-series [ἔφεξις] includes the prior-one in potential."[29] Aristotle relates his definition to a geometrical one in this conception of a developmental series, i.e. insofar as the geometrical demonstrations of a triangle differ from those of the quadrilateral. The properties of the triangle need to be demonstrated in relation to the triangle itself, and likewise for the quadrilateral. They are irreducible one to the other. But the quadrilateral can be understood by means of triangles inscribed potentially within it, e.g. in parallelograms. All quadrilaterals have eight triangles inscribed in them potentially. But this is not the case with the triangle, since it has no quadrilaterals inscribed within it. It is prior in series, and simpler. Thus, the series of powers of the soul, like figures in mathematics, must be examined both individually and as a development through successive parts involving more and more complicated compositions which both include and surpass the ones which came before. There is a *developmental continuum* emerging from the most rudimentary functions of life such as eating or breathing and rises up through sensory and motor powers to memory, thinking, and deliberating.[30]

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[26] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1: 980a27-982a3.

[27] Aristotle, *De anima*, 2: 414a17.

[28] Ibid., 2: 414b20-35.

[29] Ibid., 2: 414b30, (my translation).

[30] See Felix Ravaisson, *Essai Sur la Métaphysique D'Aristote* (A l'imprimerie royale, 1837), 413-443, 532-540; Veronique Fóti, "Merleau-Ponty's Vertical Genesis and the Aristotelian Powers of the Soul," in *Phenomenology: Japanese and American Perspectives. Contributions to*

The ensouled continuity of the soul, especially in human life, strives for, sustains, and develops many different powers and works. They do not all have equal status or the same consequences. Some ground or make possible the emergence of others (e.g. memory follows after perception, and language follows memory),[31] and others are reciprocally transformed by the relation to the powers they make possible (e.g. logos retroactively transforms emotions).[32] The events of development temporalize the dynamic continuum as a series of sub-ordinate, or prior efforts and activities, rising by an intensification of the power of action. The body having life potentially reaches out towards the quasi-vegetative form of a new-born baby which gradually develops animal-like mobility, perceptivity, and eventually the imagination of a childhood, learning to crawl and speak. The powers of life intensify and grow, rising, becoming more precise and accurate by building on prior achievements. It is only by persevering that experience and thinking later emerge in youth and adulthood. Each individual must rise in the generative series of life's gradual cultivation. This growth is akin to the generation of geometrical knowledge. Furthermore, as we will see going forward, it is a self-initiated causality which is not only the cause of its own mobility, but also of its development and improvement. The mind improves itself by its own exercise: "the one who cultivates the mind by working it [νοῦν ἐνεργῶν], cares for its improvement [θεραπεύων], and brings it into the best condition, seems also to be most dear to the gods [...] and it is likely this person is the happiest."[33]

II. Tendency and effort in ethics

In this section I will examine the role of effort in ethics, outlining how it relates to pleasure, attention, and virtue. Effort can be defined in a restricted sense as a persistence in acting which involves the awareness that the activity is encountering resistance and thus requires attention in order to be accomplished. In this sense, it will be painful and fatiguing. But effort can have a broader sense, as the living force which is continuously exercised attentively and dynamically adjusted by intelligence. In the broader sense, effort is synonymous with care and skill. Since work (ἔργον) involves effort, *energeia* (ἐνέργεια) sometimes involves effort as well.

Of the different *works* that the soul performs well (perception, motricity, memory, speech, etc.), some arise spontaneously and with pleasure, while

Phenomenology, ed. B. C. Hopkins, 39-51 (Dordrecht: Springer, 1991).

[31] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1: 980a27-982a3; Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 2:100a3-9.

[32] Cf. Rudolf Bernet, and Sarah Allen, *Force, Drive, Desire. A Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* (Chicago, CH: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 43-46.

[33] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10: 1179a23-24, (my translation).

others are toilsome and demand our effort.[34] The activities of the soul can contribute to sustaining life as well as possibly leading it to its eventual flourishing (εὐδαιμονία).[35] The growth of happiness emerges from a combination of experience, education, virtues, and friendships. Just as we must learn the properties of triangles before parallelograms (since the latter's demonstrations make use of triangles), so too, we must gain experience before we can have skill or practical wisdom, and we must moderate our urges before we can devote ourselves to education. Effort is the immanent cause sustaining the progress of each person's development.

Pleasure plays an important role in the cultivation of virtues. The activities proper to virtue are potent sources of pleasure and the pleasure that accompanies them is a contributing factor in the "steadfast" engagement and attentiveness in action. Pleasure is not merely something to which one's character disposes them well or badly, as if simply an obstacle on the path to virtue. Nor again is it a useless addition which we feel but has no causal influence. Pleasure plays a positive role by aiding, sustaining, and strengthening the force of striving. Aristotle explains this with an example in *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.5. A musician will find it nearly impossible to pay attention to someone talking if there is really enjoyable music playing in the background. The reason is that the predisposition of a musician involves a *tendency*, or irresistible *attraction*, that draws their attention and fixes it on the greater source of pleasure. This is not a purely passive infliction, it is rather *appeals* to the musical disposition which already belongs to the soul of the listener. The intensity of the pleasure is linked to the activity of the soul. The pleasure has an inborn cause which integral to the soul's being at work. Aristotle emphasizes this fact by specifying that the musician is a flute player and that what they hear is flute playing. The intensity of pleasure in a musician is due to their ability to sympathize with the pleasure of playing the flute passionately.[36] The musician cannot listen without subtly imitating what they hear, and this quickly consumes their attention because there is a pleasure amplifying and concentrating the activity. The most intense listening is not merely passive but involves an active participation: listening as producing the notes again, as if playing along with what one hears.[37]

The key is that pleasures have a constructive and concentrating role in activities. Aristotle says, pleasure contributes to the completeness of the

[34] Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 1: 1370a5-13.

[35] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1: 1097b1-20, 1098b19.

[36] Ibid., 10: 1175b5.

[37] These passages parallel Aristotle, *Problems*, 19: 919a36, 921a36, examined below.

activity.[38] This completeness is not a static state, but a dynamic condition like the prime of life, health, and happiness.[39] Pleasure's influence *focalizes* activity by drawing together a multiplicity of feelings and efforts into a unified striving. Intentionality, and practical action generally, involve a *concentrating* of multiplicity into a coherent whole. Aristotle describes the growing intensity of the soul as a converging multiplicity of activities and pleasures which are conducive to participating in a common ability in a higher order and unity. These pleasures contribute to "the growing-together [συναύξουσι] of the activity."[40] Growing-together implies a mutual augmentation through cooperation. The pleasures of music are *conducive* to intensifying and concentrating the psychical activity productive of, and sustaining, the acts of listening and playing.[41] Each activity has its own particular pleasures which help to focus and amplify that peculiar activity.[42] We are distracted by the pleasure of an activity when it makes us unable to pay attention (προσέχειν)[43] to another activity: "the pleasure coming from the flute-playing diminishes [φθείρει] the activity of reason [λόγον]" (1175b7). The coexistence of the two activities, Aristotle says, leads gradually, by the one producing a greater pleasure, to drive out the other until the other activity ceases.[44] Pleasure sustains the activity by contributing to the intensification of effort and attention. Certain activities require higher degrees of effort and strain, and the pleasures, for the most part, are proportionate to the degree of psychical energy (effort) of the particular act. Intensity of pleasure is proportional to the intensity of effort. The pleasure increases the focus of attention which, again, increases the effectiveness of action. The unique pleasures of each effort are integral to the success of that specific activity. When someone learns music, geometry, or architecture, their achievements are partly due to the fact that people "make progress [ἐπιδιδόασιν] in the works they enjoy [χαίροντες]."[45] The enjoyment facilitates the focus and perseverance.

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[38] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10: 1175a33.

[39] Ibid., 10: 1175a35.

[40] Ibid., (my translation).

[41] Cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, 8: 1341a 38.

[42] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10: 1175a33.

[43] Plato used this word in conjunction with *νοῦς*; Plato, *Republic*, 396b, 406d, 407b, 549d, as "concentrating attention" or "concentration of the mind [προσέχοντας τὸν νοῦν]," Plato, *Republic*, 432b. Aristotle employs this word on a few important occasions, most notably in *Art of Rhetoric*, 3.14. *Προσεκτικόν* is the ability to sustain a listener's attention, something that is required in effective speeches. The rhetorician catches the audience attention by an "appeal to the listener," Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 3: 1415a30. The speaker draws on, or exploits, the attentive capacities of the listener. What they are able to attend to is what they are already striving to hear. Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 3: 1415b3.

[44] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10: 1175b10.

[45] Ibid., 10: 1175a36.

Virtuous activities involve a sustaining and intensifying of effort which progresses by gathering and integrating a multiplicity of contributing factors. This amplifying concentration is at work in practical life: the gathering of many "means" into a single end (τέλος) characteristic of *practical-wisdom* (φρόνησις), which "make[s] us enact the thing related to the end [τὰ πρὸς τὸ τέλος ποιεῖ πράττειν]."[46] Even among the virtues themselves there is an intensification into higher virtues which depend on the cooperation of them all together in a developmental series. The skillful *conducting* of multiplicity into unity is the defining characteristic of *phronesis*, which itself only describes a heightened state of rational intentionality and striving. It is like a funnel that draws into itself a multiplicity of habits, experiences, and deliberations of which it makes use of to intensify its effectiveness in action.[47] It is by the accumulation of conducive elements that virtue grows, so much so that "all virtues will have already begun together when the one, *phronesis*, has emerged."[48] Thus, the virtue which is responsible for good "conduct" (πράξις), for Aristotle, is the one *conducting* life in such a way that brings all the habits and virtues together so they contribute to a common end (τέλος): i.e. doing the right thing at the right time in the right way, and paving the way for happiness or flourishing (εὐδαιμονία). This is explicit in relation to pleasure as well; "it is not necessary for us to inquire what these pleasures are," he says, "but whether they contribute something [συντείνουσί[49] τι] at all to happiness or not, and in what way they contribute [πῶς συντείνουσι]."[50] The pleasures and activities all *strive-together* as a symphonic crescendo that harmonizes as one. Furthermore, there are pleasures which have an affinity (συνῳκειῶσθαι) with each other, and this means that they mutually support and strengthen one another.[51] In practical deliberation, there is a *strain* by which the effort of the soul *draws together* a multiplicity into a dynamic whole so that all the different vectors bend and converge into the one purpose. "Now no one deliberates about the end – this has been assumed (already) by everyone; but about the things that lead [or

[46] Ibid., 10: 1145a6, (my translation).

[47] Ibid., 10: 1142a15-20.

[48] Ibid., 10: 1145a2, (my translation).

[49] The meaning of *συντείνει* is broadly *conduce*, *draw-together, strain, intensify, contribute,* and *converge*. It signifies a concentration of multiplicity. Plato uses *τείνω* verbs to refer to the intensity of human action, such as, "I spoke with too great intensity [ἐντεινάμενος]," Plato, *Republic*, 536c; or, in the analogy between the body and a city, he says that the parts *stretch out* to be integrated by the soul; Plato, *Republic*, 462c. The members "tend [τείνοντας] to the same goal;" 464d. It also has musical connotations, not only the tightening of a string but also as a scale *stretches* from the high notes to the low; Plato, *Republic*, 432a.

[50] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1: 1216a33.

[51] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10: 1175a29.

stretch out to τεινόντων] it – whether this or that contributes [συντείνει],"[52] i.e. contributes to the goal.

The conduct of one who has practical wisdom will draw-in and hold-in-tension a greater and greater mass of experiences and virtues by concentrating all that they developed gradually in education and practice, sustaining this potentiality through the process of development towards the goal of happiness. This effort brings about a strenuous, serious, or intense moral character (σπουδαῖος) (which is the underlying model of excellence which Aristotle assumes throughout his ethics).[53] Moral action is a matter of tuning the appropriate degrees of tension and relaxation of effort (ἐπιτείνειν, ἄνεσιν),[54] as well as of the pleasures which distract or augment virtuous activity.[55] Pleasures, activities, and understanding contribute in a confluence of causal factors which *grows-together* to produce virtue and happiness. The convergence of factors lends itself, above all, to the philosophical or contemplative life,[56] increasing the soul's tension and concentration. Effort, in Aristotle's developmental sense, is a growing and evolving energy of the soul, the exercises of which, by persevering, are increasingly able to act with precision and effectiveness.

Progress and development are initiated by effort but are sustained by pleasures that gradually increase the facility and ease of action. In the *Art of Rhetoric* 1.11 Aristotle says, "pleasure is a sort of movement of the soul, an intensive [ἀθρόαν] and perceptible establishment [κατάστασιν] emerging naturally."[57] Aristotle also tells us that "care [ἐπιμελεία], effort [σπουδάς], and intense exertion [συντονίας], are painful [...] unless people become habituated to them; then habit makes them pleasant." (1370a13, *my modification of Reeves trans.*). In this sense, habit aids the prolonged activity and reduces the pain and fatigue of intense exertion. Philosophy requires great efforts which can even lend the appearance of a mere toil without progress. In the *Protrepticus*, Aristotle goes so far as to argue that philosophy in fact gradually becomes easy (ῥᾳστωνέω), and that, far from being toil, it had progressed in precision more than any other art and in less time, despite the fact that no one was getting paid for their intense efforts (διαπονήσειαν).[58] He explains this by the fact that the

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[52] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 2: 1226b9-13.

[53] Ibid., 10: 1177a1-10.

[54] Ibid., 6: 1138b23.

[55] Ibid., 2: 1106b17-1107a39.

[56] Ibid., 10: 1177a11-1178a9.

[57] 1369b33 (my modification of Reeves translation). This "establishment" is not so much a "settling-down [...] into a state" as Reeves and Freese render it. It is an active *building up*, raising, and emerging growth of intensity.

[58] Aristotle, *Protrepticus: A Reconstruction of Aristotle's Lost Dialogue*, trans. D. S. Hutchinson, and Monte Ransome Johnson, http://www.protrepticus.info, 24-25; cf. Matthew D. Walker,

effort it involves leads to potent pleasures: "the fact that everybody is fond of it and wishes to spend their leisure on it, letting everything else go, is no small evidence that the close attention [it involves] occurs together with pleasure; for no one is willing to work hard for a long time."[59] From this Aristotle concludes that philosophy is something of intrinsic value and which we strive for in a way that is in accord with our nature, echoing the remarks about the contemplative life in *Nicomachean Ethics* book 10.

In conclusion, Aristotle presents an ethics of effort. It is by rational and moderate efforts that he thought virtue and happiness came about. In the prior section I outlined the analogy between syllogistic thinking, hylomorphism, and the growth of life. The first premise is material, and the middle term is an activity. I intentionally omitted mention of the "conclusion" since life moves from middle term to middle term continuously as it develops. The "end," conclusion, or limit of life cannot be a simple termination or completion. The "end" of human action is not death, but rather the continuous engagement in the activities of the virtuous life and wisdom.[60] So too, the "teleology" of *conatus* is not defined entirely in terms of the "goal" towards which it tends as a termination of action but denotes the *completeness* of the effectiveness of the operation of unifying and directing multiplicity. The "end" is not where living activity stops, but the determinacy by which it sustains itself in action.

III. Life as striving: Intensification, and manifestation

In this section I will detail how life is known in a unique way, i.e. by living first hand. Effort is likewise known by being lived, and furthermore, the effort to know and the knowledge of effort coincide. Life is a self-expressive tendency, for Aristotle, either spontaneously as desire (ὄρεξιν) or by deliberate choice (προαίρεσιν).[61] The soul is a source of movement and of sentience.[62] We feel the push of life, both as an interior-force of which we ourselves are the source and also in its resulting movements. Aristotle touches on the duplicity of life's vital push in *Nicomachean Ethics* 9.9 saying that "living in its governing sense appears to be perceiving and thinking."[63] Life is an activity whose exercise is somehow aware of itself at once actively and passively (effort and feeling).

"Aristotle, Isocrates, and Philosophical Progress," *History of Philosophy & Logical Analysis* 23, no. 1 (2020): 197-224.

[59] Aristotle, *Protrepticus*, 25.

[60] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1: 1098b23.

[61] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 9: 1048a10.

[62] Aristotle, *De anima*, 2: 413b13; 3: 433a7-435b25.

[63] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9: 1170a20, (Sachs' translation).

> [I]f one who sees is aware [αἰσθάνεται] that he sees, and one who hears that he hears, and one who walks that he walks, and similarly in the other cases there is something in us that is aware [αἰσθανόμενον] that we are at-work [ἐνεργοῦμεν], so that whenever we perceive we are aware that we perceive [αἰσθανώμεθ', ὅτι αἰσθανόμεθα] and whenever we think we are aware that we think, and if being aware that we are perceiving or thinking is being aware that we are [ἐσμέν] (since our being [τὸ εἶναι ἦν] is perceiving or thinking), and being aware [αἰσθάνεσθαι] that we are alive [ζῇ] is something pleasant in itself [...].[64]

This awareness of existence and life is not a complete transparency in which the self thinks itself as a clear and distinct concept. It is not a static object in which we discern a finite set of components. Life's self-awareness is a continuously intensifying tendency undergoing transformations. It is first only an obscure urge which we feel by living it. This is what we should see within his term wakefulness (ἐγρηγορός), meaning both to awaken-oneself (like the middle voice) and to be aroused or stirred (passively).[65] Wakefulness implies both a vivid awareness of sensation as well as an auto affection of the vivacity of motricity (κινητικόν) – as being an interior source of motion.[66] Wakefulness is the sentience, mobility and self-awareness of an animal, which has its seat in the common-sense faculty, as something all the senses share together with the motor organs. The common sense, as the ruling sense, is "that to which the others converge [πρὸς ὃ συντείνει τἆλλα]"[67] which is also that through which they all grow in intensity by combining together. They mutually amplify each other in experience (connecting sensations, imagination, and memory). Awareness is somehow rooted in touch, and touch, for Aristotle, is almost synonymous with perception itself.[68] And yet, the common sense is not in the skin, but we are told it resides in the heart. But it is not really "in" the heart or the skin or any single organ, (at least not in the way we now think of mental representations as residing in the brain). It is rather an awareness *common* to the

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[64] Ibid., 1170a27-35, (my modification of Sachs' translation).

[65] For Aristotle's subtle descriptions of self-awareness, see L. A. Kosman, "Perceiving That We Perceive: On the Soul III, 2," *The Philosophical Review* 84, no. 4 (1975): 499-519. Cf. P. Corkum, "Attention, Perception, and Thought in Aristotle," *Dialogue* 49, no. 2 (2010): 199-222; who gives an admirable interpretation, making active attention a necessary ingredient in all awareness.

[66] Aristotle, *On Sleeping and Waking*, 2: 455a17.

[67] Ibid., 2: 455a35, (my translation).

[68] See Pascal Massie, "Touching, Thinking, Being: The Sense of Touch in Aristotle's *De anima* and Its Implications," *Minerva - An Internet Journal of Philosophy* 17 (2013): 74-101.

body having life and yet each part still contributes its own peculiar works (hands, ears, mouth, etc.). Now, we can't go into detail here on exactly how this works, but what I mean to underline is that the wakefulness of the common sense is both active and passive, being both a source of movement, coordination, and a convergence of diverse sensations.[69] Appetite (ὄρεξις) has its seat in the center and is the place where force is concentrated and directed.[70] Aristotle says this center, as a mediating term between sensation and mobility, is "well-grown [εὐφυῶς] to be mobile [κινητικόν] and supply strength [παρέχειν ἰσχύν]."[71] The inner force of life (ψυχικῆς) is an inborn (σύμφυτον) spirit (πνεῦμα).[72] It is the nature of this *pneuma* to be able (δύνασθαι) to expand (αὐξάνεσθαι, ἐκτεινομένη) and contract (συναγόμενα, συστέλλεσθαι).[73] These movements and tensions are the primary works (ἔργα) of the common sense.[74] These correspond directly with an increase and decrease of forcefulness, an amplification or attenuation of effort. Thus, the embodied *wakefulness* of life is the pneumatic activity which intensifies its perceptive and mobile *conatus*, unifying and directing animal life.

This self-awareness is not exhausted in any particular act, and so self-consciousness is not something possessed once and for all, nor conceived statically. Its truth is lived in a dynamic, embodied, and self-temporalizing intentionality of the soul. The auto affections, therefore, involve a diversity of vital motions and a plurality of activities. It is, thus, also a hetero affection, since it always involves a relational character of each act. This "self-knowledge" is not conceptual or propositional. It is, instead, a subtle knowledge that cannot be communicated, in the same way that experience generally (ἐμπειρίας), cannot be communicated, but must be acquired firsthand. It must be lived by each of us in our own efforts to learn and develop. Thus, Aristotle says:

> [T]he truth [ἀληθές] in matters of action [πρακτικοῖς] is discerned [ἀποδεκτέον] from works [ἔργων] and from life [βίου], since they are the determining thing [κύριον] in these matters. Thus, we must investigate the things that have been said [concerning happiness

[69] Aristotle, *On Sleeping and Waking*, 2: 456a7.

[70] Aristotle, *Movement of Animals*, 703a5.

[71] Ibid., 703a17, (my modification of Nussbaum's translation).

[72] Ibid., 703a14. See Adriel M. Trott, "Does It Matter? Material Nature and Vital Heat in Aristotle's Biology," in *Contemporary Encounters With Ancient Metaphysics*, ed. Abraham Jacob Greenstine, and Ryan J. Johnson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 167-169.

[73] Aristotle, *Movement of Animals*, 703a20-22, 702b23-24; Aristotle, *On Sleeping and Waking*, 2: 456a13. This parallels many of the views of early stoics on tension, which they described as both effort and *pneuma*; see A. A. Long, and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 280-286. Cf. Felix Ravaisson, *Félix Ravaisson: Selected Essays* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 94.

[74] Aristotle, *Movement of Animals*, 703a19.

> and virtue] by bringing them to the test of works and life, and we must accept them only if they sing-in-harmony [συναδόντων] with these works, while if they are out of tune [διαφωνούντων] one ought to consider them mere words [λόγους].[75]

Thus, life, soul, awareness, and truth are conceived on the bases of an intensification of effort which grows continuously in a developmental process of self-improvements (that reintegrates its past achievements to conduct activity more and more effectively). Greater degrees of self-awareness arise inductively, as experience is gained through carefully and attentive observation across an immense multiplicity of moments.[76] The cognitive act of the soul which conducts multiplicity skillfully must have adequate knowledge of causes. This is the relevant sense of reason in life and its works, as a knowledge of the order and connections constituting the generation of an informed multiplicity. In the same way that certain activities are ends in themselves, undertaken and enjoyed by the same effort, so too self-awareness is enacted and perceived in a complex whole. It is in this same sense that Spinoza ridiculed those who thought possessing virtues deserved recompensed or praise, "as if virtue itself, and the service of God, were not happiness itself, and the greatest freedom."[77] Virtue is an end in itself as an activity which initiates and gives to itself (intensify) in its activity – both exercises and experiences; perseveres and rejoices.

IV. The expressive effort and intensity of feelings in music

In this section I will further examine the psychology of effort and intensity in the aesthetic feelings involved in music. I will draw on, and build off of, the above discussion of pleasure, self-awareness, and the intensification of striving. I will show that effort provided the basis on which Aristotle and Aristoxenus understood the nature of music.

There are many marvelous questions raised about music in the Aristotelian collection of texts called the *Problems* that appeal to the role of effort, attention, sympathy, and degrees of intensity. "Why do many people singing together preserve the rhythm better than few?"[78] "Why do people listen with more pleasure to people singing melodies they happen to know beforehand, than

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[75] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1179a18-20, (my translation).

[76] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1: 980b26-981a23; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 6: 1142a13-32; Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 2: 99b15-100b15.

[77] Spinoza, *Ethics*, 2p49Schol.

[78] Aristotle, *Problems*, 19: 919a36.

if they do not know them?"[79] The problems examined draw up examples in which degrees of intensity of feeling are produced and sustained by active participation in music. One proposed answer to the second question suggests that we listen with greater pleasure to someone singing a melody we are familiar with because we sympathize (συμπαθής) more, due to the fact that we sing-with (συνᾴδει) them, and we are told, everyone enjoys singing who is not forced to do it.[80] The feeling of pleasure which arises while listening to music is, thus, identified as a participation and a *striving* – a free or voluntary initiative undertaken and felt as an auto affection. This parallels the account from *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.4, examined above, in which a flute player's attention becomes engrossed in listening to flute playing. Sympathy, here, involves one's own effort and the degree of attention and participation are proportional to the intensity of pleasure.

This proposed reason, in *Problems*, is echoed by a principle laid down in Theophrastus text on melody. He wrote that "the movement productive of melody, which occurs around the soul is exceedingly accurate: when the soul wishes to articulate [ἑρμηνεύειν] it with vocal sounds, it directs the sounds [...] and it does so in accordance with what it wishes."[81] The melody is a sign of the effort producing it which involves both the *want* and the *success* at steering its movements accurately.[82] Theophrastus tells us that it is, in part, by *leaving out* the notes which, if included, would destroy the melody, that its accuracy is achieved. If the intervening notes were heard, the melody would be destroyed by what is not in tune.[83] Theophrastus rejected the Pythagorean theory that melody arises merely from numbers and ratios. Instead, it is due to the *selective accuracy* of the soul "there is only one thing that can be said to be the nature of music: the movement of the soul that occurs with a view to release from the evils due to the emotions. If it were not this, neither would the nature of music exist."[84] Theophrastus therefore posited a psychological rather than a quantitative underlying nature to musical expression. The qualitative approach makes effort the fundamental element of musical expression. It is impossible to conceive of music, properly speaking, which is not an intimate unity of the subject with the object: between the effort and its manifestation, the want and the accuracy with which it fulfills it. The nature of melody is the growing and dynamic expressivity of the soul which

[79] Ibid., 19: 921a32.

[80] Ibid., 19: 921a36.

[81] Theophrastus, "Theophrastus on the Nature of Music," in *Theophrastus: Reappraising the Sources*, trans. C. M. J. Sicking, eds. J. M. van Ophuijsen, and Marlein van Raalte (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 101.

[82] Andrew Barker, "Theophrastus and Aristoxenus: Confusions in Musical Metaphysics," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 47, no. 1 (2004): 101-117.

[83] Theophrastus, "Music," 105.

[84] Ibid., 106.

acts in an adequate manner (cause) to free itself from spiritual afflictions and affections, amplified by the pleasure that accompanies the attentive effort and draws joy or consolation from its own free, expressive activity.

Another of Aristotle's student, Aristoxenus, also made effort the principle of musical expression. He tells us that the comprehension (ξύνεσις) of music is due to the activity of sense-perception and memory:

> We must perceive the sound that is coming to be and remember that which is past. In no other way can we closely attend to [or keep company with], [παρακολουθεῖν] the music.[85]

This involves both hearing and thinking, so that "by the former we discern the magnitudes of the intervals, by the latter we contemplate the functions of the notes."[86] As Staufer explains, "the nature and value of music (for Aristoxenus) lie in the conscious perception of its sonorous patterns, not in the sonorities themselves."[87] This does not mean that it is purely cerebral or that it leads to an analysis or static concept. Music is a prelinguistic cognition. There must be a training of the perceptive faculty of judgement itself (common sense) developing it to "discern well" (εὖ κρίνειν).[88] In this sense, musical knowledge will remain tethered to the arts (τῶν τέκνων) as something which we have mastery of, (πραγματεύονται), [89] rather than conceptual knowledge.[90] This training will, by intensifying the activity of the common sense and developing its power, enable the soul to perform accurate discernment.[91] One who has a mastery of music, when they hear a series of notes, will be able to anticipate, to some degree, the notes that will follow, because they possess something of the principle of its

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[85] Aristoxenus, *Harmonika Stoicheia: The Harmonics of Aristoxenus*, trans. Henry Stewart Macran (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1902), 193, (translation modified).

[86] Aristoxenus, *Harmonics*, 189, (translation modified).

[87] Amanda Staufer, "The Unifying Strands: Formalism and Gestalt Theory in the Musical Philosophies of Aristoxenus, Descartes, and Meyer," *Musical Offerings* 9, no. 1 (2018): 31-41, and particularly 35.

[88] Aristoxenus, *Harmonics*, 33.20. I use the paragraph and line numbers for the Greek text when I have given my own translation, page numbers when using Macran's translation.

[89] Aristoxenus employed an empirical method of observation to understanding melody, but its data is not an external object, but is something that must be enacted and mastered. Thus, he calls it a mastery *pragmateia* (πραγματεία) which implies the concrete activity of doing what is known: it is *know-how*. The primary initiative taken to produce what will be enacted concretely with mastery for oneself (πραγματεύεσθαι), (middle voice) one must delimit all the movements of voice that singing enacts, i.e. movement in place; Aristoxenus, *Harmonics*, 3.5-7. Melody is something *done* or performed and likewise the study of music is a mastery of concrete action; ibid 1-2.

[90] Aristoxenus, *Harmonics*, 33.21.

[91] Ibid., 33.10.

production: the attitude of the effort which expresses it.

The active attention involved in listening to or making music involves a continuity of effort. Insofar as melody is something that is produced gradually through a succession of pitches, it is continuous in the same way speech (λέξει) is, i.e. by following a natural order and growing the whole from a subordinate series of movements following a natural law.[92] Aristoxenus explains the peculiar form of continuity which defines melodic expression:

> It is not that one needs to pay attention to [intervals] coming to be from equal or unequal [magnitudes] in order to understand [the source of melodic] continuity, but to [pay attention to] the productive-nature [φύσιν] of melody and must attempt [πειρατέον] to attentively-observe [κατανοεῖν] and exert oneself enthusiastically [προθυμούμενον] to establish [τιθέναι] 'what follows what' by natural tendency in the vocalized intervals by song.[93]

Music comes about by the establishment of consecutive vocalizations, but it's not reducible to the consecutively analyzed notes as if taking each discretely and simply comparing it to the others in relation to magnitude or number. Instead, the *following* of each note by another is something which involves the continuity of sustained effort, an enduring attitude, and the ebbs and flows of consonance-dissonance-resolution or tension-relaxation. Again, as with Theophrastus the *nature* of melody is its productive cause, i.e. a psychological *initiative, articulation,* or mobile *intentionality*. Aristoxenus starts with the act of signing itself as the *generative cause* from which his "elements" develop synthetically; by a training that involves both precision in sensitive discernment and intellectual subtlety. The adequate idea will not only involve coherent relations among its parts (explainable in rational demonstration) but will possess the cause itself from which the effects (songs) are produced.[94]

Aristoxenus warns that we will miss the fundamental *nature* of music entirely if we reduce it to either vibrations of air or numerical ratios. The

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[92] Aristoxenus, *Harmonics*, 27.27. Speech uses changes of pitch semantically, like raising pitch signifies a question, but it does not deliberately *hold* pitches. Speech fluctuates in pitch continuously, and if one holds a pitch, the utterance becomes chanting or singing; Aristoxenus, *Harmonics*, 8.14-10.10.

[93] Ibid., 28.20-24.

[94] Here, the elements of Spinoza can be fruitfully compared with that of Aristoxenus. The parts must come together and exclude all that prohibits the emergence of the form that wish strives to articulate. For Spinoza, blessedness depends on our properly including and prohibiting affects. Only what harmonizes with reason contributes to active affects.

essence of music, its nature, is the continuity of wish and striving. Good singing is skillful and the accuracy fulfilling the intent is an obviously sources of our enjoyment of an artist's performance. This is highlighted perhaps in difficult passages, we are attracted to and charmed by the skill with which the melody and rhythm are articulated. Aristotle questions why singing a quarter tone is so difficult and "the difficulty is due to the strain and compression of the voice; and there is an effort in these; since they require effort, they are more likely to fail."[95] It is the precision of achieving what one strives for that marks great performers. Effort need not be taken strictly as the strain to act precisely, it encompasses the whole of mental intentionality. Again, the pleasure we take in these sentiments is not merely an external stimulation but will involve the auto affection by which we feel our own power of acting and these sentiments integrate with, and amplify, our attention – the more one's attention is engaged, the more profound the experience becomes.

This interpretation of music as a dynamic quality of effort was already implied in Socrates discussions of modes in *Republic*, book 3,[96] in which Doric is said to suggest a stern and tempered character while Lydian is relaxed, Mixolydian is excessive and lamenting etc. – all of which are credited to the theories of Damon. A mode somehow expresses the intensity, attitude, and character of the one articulating it. Aristotle reiterates this in *Politics* 8.7, which is mainly in agreement with the *Republic*, but gives an even more nuanced view in which Lydian plays a more prominent role,[97] due to its healing and cathartic powers.[98] A guiding question of the passage is whether music should be used only as something merely listened to, or whether it must be taught – involving active participation. Aristotle affirms that the ability to judge musical performance depends on one having already engaged with or even mastered the arts, especially if one is to judge well.[99] It is on the basis of such effort that we must interpret the three "divisions made in some philosophers,"[100] which Aristotle professes agreement with: character (ἠθικά), concrete deliberate action (πρακτικά), enthusiasm (ἐνθουσιαστικά).[101] We should take them as three *tendencies*, each of which essentially involves a degree of tension in psychical energy. His investigation then moves

[95] Aristotle, *Problems*, 19: 917b34.

[96] On the difference between Theophrastus and Plato, see Sicking "Theophrastus on the Nature of Music," 141.

[97] Aristotle, *Politics*, 8: 1342b23-35.

[98] Ibid., 8: 1342a10-17.

[99] Ibid., 8: 1340b15-40.

[100] Ibid., 8: 1341b34.

[101] Ibid., 8: 1341b35.

between two extremes of the tendencies in music. On the one hand, as a deliberate skillful action (πρακτικά), or inspiration and invigoration of spirit, (ἐνθουσιαστικάς),[102] on the other, a means of relaxation and amusement that releases tension,[103] and are *not* strenuous (σπουδαίων).[104] The one extreme involves work, the other rest, but in both cases, it is a matter of intensity or tension of psychical energy. Aristotle observes cleansing (καθαρτικά) and healing (ἰατρείας) powers of music, which can relax excessive tensions and anxieties.[105] This involves an increase in tension giving way to a subsequent relaxation: an ecstatic trance like frenzy which, like a purge, releases one from psychological/emotional afflictions. Aristotle tells us that the *intensity* or *forcefulness* (ἰσχυρῶς) of passions in the soul is a source of purification, which explains the effects of enthusiasm.[106] The listener undergoes a purging of violent emotions, which is followed by the pleasure of relief.[107] He compares this enthusiastic purification to pity and fear.[108] In this way, music involves, for Aristotle, a developmental series of psychical activities unfolding according to a determinate order in which later moments build off and reintegrate the prior.

A related set of questions are raised in *Problems* 19.27, which helps to make sense of this ethical dimension of music. One question raised is, how, "even though melody is without words, [does] it nevertheless possesses ethical character[?]"[109] A proposed explanation given is that it (ἔχει) *has* or *bares* movements in a way different from being moved by a sensible phenomenon.[110] Unlike the movements of normal sensation, this movement has a likeness to character, and is connected to concrete intentional actions (πρακτικαί), which are the signs of character.[111] The

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[102] Ibid., 8: 1340a13.

[103] Ibid., 8: 1342a1.

[104] Ibid., 8: 1339b18.

[105] This parallel claim of Pythagorean music therapy, Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Life* 15, 64,1-65,1, in Sorabji, vol. 1, 304. Also Elias, *Prolegomena* 31, 8-25. "[...] the function of music alone is to heal the afflictions of the soul and body. For this reason, philosophy is the 'greatest music,' because it is healer of the afflictions of the soul, from which it is also called medicine of souls." Quoted from Richard Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators, 200-600 AD: Vol. 1 Psychology (with Ethics and Religion)* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 301-302.

[106] Aristotle, *Politics*, 8: 1342a7.

[107] Ibid., 8: 1342a15.

[108] Ibid., 8: 1342a7. On the complexity of Aristotle's treatment of the cathartic powers of music, see G. R. F. Ferrari, "Aristotle on Musical Catharsis and the Pleasure of a Good Story," *Phronesis* 64, no. 2 (2019): 117-171.

[109] Aristotle, *Problems*, 19: 919b27.

[110] This parallels Aristotle, *Politics*, 8: 1430a30.

[111] Aristotle, *Problems*, 19: 919b27-37.

ethical character of melody is indicative of different dispositions, emotions, and attitudes which produce them. These movements make us sympathize with modes of thinking, feeling, and acting (the specific qualities of effort). Melody (μελῳδός) and song (μέλος) involve a psychical *striving* which both *has* and *manifests* its character.[112] Listening implies a *work* of the soul intensifying and concentrating attention in participation with the character, attitude, or intention of a concrete effort expressing the song. There is a growing intensity in the continuous exercise of this striving which progressively increases the richness of its contents. It is not the attribute of a subject but the operative auto affection of a concrete *conatus*. The results of these creative efforts are acts of signing or playing a melody. Not only is music ethical because it is a *sign* of the character directing and engendering its movements, but also because its suggestive power makes us both imitative and sympathetic. Imitation leads to self-initiated action. This was of particular interest to Socrates in understanding the influence of musical education as part of habit and character development that are conducive to philosophy. One who sings in a way which suggests the firm resolve of a courageous yet temperate spirit, will, by imitating good character, become ready to be that way deliberately. By singing such tunes, one becomes accustomed to strive for the character this music suggests. Furthermore, the communal participation of music fosters a sympathetic and caring attentiveness to others and our place in the community.

To sum up, the *nature* of melodic production is explicable only by reference to the effort of the soul. A musical performance is a sign of careful attention and intentional precision. We sympathize with the striving and imitate it while listening closely to the notes they *choose*. We have a feeling of choice, of wish, and of effort – a delicate but deliberate striving that is alert and manifesting its marvelous facility and ease at shaping sound and giving continuity to movement. The effect of music is not simply a sympathetic feeling *that* someone is acting intentionally (effort in general) but *how* (concrete effort involving character). Again, it's not merely *that* the feeling is intense, but the intensity permeates and shapes the contents. The striving has a *sui generis* character that we struggle to describe, in the same way that we struggle to describe the difference between the taste of blueberries and strawberries. We intuitively know the singular character of a melody and can participate with its *effort*. It is not the attribute of a subject, nor the cogito of intellectualism, but the effort, which is not fully transparent to itself, but still evident in being lived – a *conatus*.

V. Conclusion

Aristotle did not simply define life, force, and psychical activity but appealed to first-hand experience. He elevated them to primary importance as fundamental

[112] Ibid., 19: 920a5.

principles. These principles are also not thereby rendered unintelligible but ground the very life of experience and our striving for truth. It is with effort that the dynamic sense of psychical activity takes on a philosophical primacy. By an analogy with what is most immediately evident, i.e. our own immediate sense of living, we come to grasp the most fundamental principles of philosophy and ethics. Effort, striving, and persevering are not expressed by general concepts, definitions, or even clear and distinct ideas. They are nonetheless known *adequately* by being enacted, and since their enactment is the internal cause of their existence and development, this knowledge must be active and implies mastery. Just as Spinoza's described the generation of virtue guided by reason, so too Aristotelian virtue emerges from a series of dependent conditions and Aristoxenian melody passes through movements which are made continuous by living effort. It requires effort to think, and the progress of knowledge itself is an integral aspect of all effort. *Conatus* is the immanent intelligence which comes to know and to improve itself by acting. Here, the faculty of will and understanding coincide and effort itself is cause and self-aware.

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Aristotelian Concept of Happiness (Eudaimonia) and its Conative Role in Human Existence: A Critical Evaluation

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Abstract

Despite the challenges of human existence, identifying the major features that sustain man's striving to persist in life (conatus) is very essential in understanding who man is. This paper critically evaluates Aristotelian concept of happiness (eudaimonia) and its conative role in human existence as it ignites newness of interest in Aristotelian theory of happiness as the ultimate end of all human activities. Aristotle's notion of happiness connotes conative experiences; actions that signify movements of some sorts for preservation of life. With regard to self-preservation in existence, Aristotle held the opinion that man has the natural inclination to actualize his potentialities through strong efforts of the will towards the right, and at the same time to create new potentialities to sustain his life. Through the activities of the soul (virtuous acts), man propels himself in a distinctive way towards objects of his desire for survival and flourishing. His concept of emotions as having the affective, cognitive as well as behavioural dimensions revealed that emotions have psychological values and vital functions which serve as survival instinct in man. However, they differ in their aims in that they have both attractive and aversive characteristics such that they move him either to seek or to avoid necessary objects that enhance or harm his existence, respectively. Considering the subjective experiences of pains and pleasures of emotions, they dispose man to virtuous actions towards excellence. However, to sustain man's inner drive to persist in life, this paper objects to the theses that happiness can be restricted to only cognitive activities. Despite the weaknesses of his treatise concerning happiness in relation to man's striving to persist, it was observed that Aristotle's notion of happiness aids man's striving in life. For further studies, it recommended clarification of ambiguous concepts and reconciliation of contradictions inherent in the theory.

Keywords: *Aristotle; happiness; conative role; human; existence; evaluation*

I. Introduction

Aristotle has surely earned a very credible status in philosophical endeavour through his systematic articulations. He tried to respond to what constitutes the ultimate aim of man's existence; the end for which every other action tends motivated him to develop a classical treatise on happiness (eudaimonia). He holds that man's supreme purpose of life is to attain the ultimate perfection of his human nature. In his understanding, the pursuit of happiness presupposes an inner drive of continuous striving towards good moral character. Hence, the essence of human existence is not simply to live but to live well and attain perfection. Issues regarding the notion of Aristotelian happiness and its conative role in existence as well as the activity of the soul, the roles of desire, and emotions with regard to attainment of happiness will be critically discussed below.

II. Aristotelian concept of happiness as *conatus*

Aristotle's notion of happiness is chiefly presented in his monumental Nicomachean Ethics (NE) particularly in book I. At the very beginning of the book, he asserts that every rational activity, that is every activity of man, aims at some end or good and that even one end may be subordinated to another end as instrumental string to achieving other goals until the ultimate end is arrived at. So, he states, "every art and every investigation, and similarly every action and pursuit is considered to aim at some good. Hence, the Good has been rightly defined as 'that at which all things aim.'"[1] In his understanding, all intermediate goals, also referred to as instrumental goals, must purposefully aim at final goal which is desired for its own sake. Otherwise, it would entailed an infinite progression of activities. Therefore, he identified the final goal of all human activities as *happiness* (eudaimonia). According to him, "Everything that we choose, we choose for the sake of something else – except happiness which is an end."[2] Actually, Aristotelian happiness denotes a good life. Lawhead considers it to be 'well-being' or 'having a life worthliving.'[3] Kesebir and Diener conceived it as subjective well-being and feeling of satisfaction.[4] The course of attainment of happiness is a lifetime endeavour that encapsulates man's entire life and leads him to

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[1] Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. J. A. K Thomson (New York: Allen and Unwin, 1976), 1094a1-22.

[2] Ibid., 1176a30-b15.

[3] William Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Belmont: Wadsworth-Thomson Learning, 2002), 81.

[4] Pelin Kesebir, and Ed Diener, "In Pursuit of Happiness: Empirical Answers to Philosophical Questions," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 3, no. 2 (2008): 117-125.

perfection and enhancement of his life. It requires as well strong efforts of the will towards the right path of goal-oriented activities of the soul, desire, and emotions. The principle of acquiring happiness is strongly opposed to instant gratification and pleasures of the moment. Aristotle establishes that the attainment of happiness is enshrined in man's natural desire which is implicated in his innate drive (conatus) to persist in life.

The study of *conatus* in regard to man's 'will to live' has gained newness of interest in various disciplines, including philosophy. *Conatus*, generally, concerns itself with the fundamental law of nature which has to do with self-preservation and maintenance of life. It connotes the 'will to persist' which basically implies an innate striving towards self-preservation through necessary activities that sustain life and prevent it from being harmed or even being lost. Simply put, it refers to "an innate inclination of a thing to continue to exist and enhance itself."[5] It also explains the "instinctive 'will to live' of living organisms or to various metaphysical theories of motion and inertia."[6] Keeping oneself from harm and destruction is often considered as the root cause of all human activities and the will to persist in life.

Although the term *conatus* was widely believed[7] to have been used first by the Stoics, with the meaning of the movement of the soul towards an object from which physical actions result, Aristotle's writings especially on happiness, human soul, emotions and rhetoric can be connected to it. Despite the ambiguity of Aristotle's treatise on those themes, it can be still observed that they portray the unfolding of human nature towards self-preservation. It has been established earlier that Aristotle's position on the ultimate purpose of life is happiness. According to him, happiness is that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else. The drive to attain happiness is therefore the focal point of all human endeavours and an ultimate goal in itself. He further clarified that it is something on itself that is completely satisfying. "We always choose it for itself and never for any other reason. It is different with honour, pleasure, intelligence and good qualities."[8] Knowing fully well that views on happiness differ and that different people associate it with pleasures, he quickly distinguishes happiness from mere pleasure. Thus,

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[5] John Traupman, *The Bantam New College Latin and English Dictionary* (New York: Bantam Books, 1996), 52.

[6] Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1934), vol. 2, 202.

[7] Vasiliki Grigoropoulou, "In History of Philosophy," *Proceedings of the XXIII World Congress of Philosophy*, vol. 14 (2018): 55-76.

[8] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1097a15-b2.

> happiness does not lie in amusement; it would indeed be strange if the end were amusement, and one were to take trouble and suffer hardship all one's life in order to amuse oneself.[9]

However, he recognizes that minimal degree of pleasure promotes good life. Lawhead captures it well when he wrote,

> lack of resources as friends, health and sufficient material support take the lustre from happiness. While pleasure is not the goal of human life, it accompanies the life that is morally excellent.[10]

Aristotle meant that man's ultimate end is happiness which is conditioned by his very nature that essentially characterizes him to strive to maintain his existence. This feature distinguishes him from animals and inanimate objects. Again, this purposeful end of human activities presupposes reason and acts of excellence (virtues).

III. Happiness and its conative role in human existence

Aristotle considers happiness not as a passive state but as an active state of life that by itself is self-sufficient and makes life desirable.[11] He adjudges it therefore to a virtuous activity of the soul that presupposes reason. In particular, his explication of happiness presents a teleological image of human nature with purposeful character whereby the essence of man harbours specific inner drive to behave and develop in a peculiar way towards full actualization. The actualization of man's potentialities and the creation of new potentialities are seen as conative features of man's persistence in existence. As man comes into existence, he possesses the natural drive to undergo development. According to Aristotle, happiness is attained when a man lives in accordance to his nature; the inclination to continue to develop through actualization of his potentials. On this note, Lawhead remarks that "nature is a busy drama of restless, changing entities."[12] Against this background, motion is a good character of conatus since the later involves a life force in living things. In Aristotle's understanding, the conative role of happiness in human life can further be seen as an activity of the soul.

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[9] Ibid., 1176a30-b15.

[10] Lawhead, 81.

[11] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1097a15-b2.

[12] Lawhead, 79.

IV. The activity of the soul in conative role of happiness in human existence

Considering the nature of happiness, Aristotle holds that it can be acquired by moral goodness other than by chance. According to him, happiness is a virtuous activity of the soul which guides man's actions and drives him towards excellence. His virtue ethics concerns itself chiefly with life of flourishing and excellence which at the time points to conatus, the will to persist. Hence, virtue has the character of self-preservation through right desire with the right reason and good choice of action. Arguing that moral principles produce human excellence and judgment of right principles to follow, the appropriation of feelings and appetites lead towards its realization, he maintains that virtue involves proper choices and desires. Aristotelian notion of desire explains the movement of the soul towards an object that results to a physical act. This movement also involves aversion of the soul from an object of destruction. Desire also connotes appetite. Appetite itself can be said to be synonymous with conatus. Hence, Aristotle connects appetite to conative activity. In conative context, human desire (appetite) is put in motion by man's natural inclination to conserve himself, to endure and to continue to exist. It seems deeply characteristic of man to propel himself in a distinctive way towards objects of his desire for survival and flourishing.[13] In this way, man is said to engage in goal-oriented behaviours to achieve his conscious and unconscious goals. In his principal psychological treatise *On the Soul* (*De anima*), he explained that the soul is the "first actuality of a natural organic body"[14] that has life potentially. As the actuality of a body has a life force, it is causally responsible for the animate behaviour (the life activities) of a living thing; the *capacity* of a living thing to engage in the activities that are characteristic of its natural kind[15] such as self-nourishment, growth, movement, perception, thought, etc. Therefore, the soul has the capacity for growth and reproduction for self-preservation.

> The soul in living creatures is distinguished by two functions, the judging capacity which is a function of the intellect and of sensation combined and the capacity for exciting movement in space.[16]

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[13] Jeff Malpas, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Zalta (Stanford: Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, Winter 2012), 24.

[14] Aristotle, *De anima*, trans. Polansky Ronald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) II, 1, 412b5-6.

[15] Ibid., II, 1, 412b5-6.

[16] Aristotle, *On the Soul*, trans. W. S. Hett (London: William Heinemann, 1964), 181.

Although the soul is implicated in motion in pursuit of its objects of desire, it is not sufficient to initiate motion but it depends on the appetite (desire) whose major duty is to initiate movement towards the desired end.[17] In this way, he considered desire a faculty in the soul to initiate motion for purposive actions, though not completely.[18] Therefore, he included the faculty of practical reason as a source of movement in working together with the faculty of desire when the object of desire is desirable.[19] This is the conative role of happiness as man's desire as implicated in the activity of the soul towards objects of actions that sustain his persistence to maintain his existence. Aristotle's notion of desire as the activity of the soul also is connected to human emotions.

V. Emotions in conative role of happiness in human existence

The concept of emotion is a complex phenomenon that encompasses cognitive, desiderative and affective aspects of human nature. Understood as capable of arousing distinctive bodily changes, movements and behaviors, emotions are generally considered as survival mechanisms that motivate responsive behaviors to maintain existence. Based on their chains of action, they have five major components of evaluative (appraisal of the object), physiological (the state of the body), phenomenological (subjective experiences of pleasant or unpleasant feelings), expressive (distinctive bodily changes) and behavioural (fleeing or combating tendency). To this effect, emotion theorists have been categorized into three major classes of affective, evaluative and motivational traditions.[20] With Aristotle, human emotions play very vital roles in man's life, including the striving to survive life and maintain himself in existence. As many classical Greek philosophers, Aristotle considers emotions as affective experiences, though co-existing with cognitive aspects of man.[21] As such, he identified both physical and mental states of man in his explications of emotions, though with little emphasis on bodily sensations. For him, emotions are built on beliefs and assessments that give meaning and value to situations of life. Consequently, man's judgments of life's situations are greatly influenced by his emotions. Specifically, he adjudges emotions to be parts of the soul (sensual aspects of the soul as they belong to lower part of

[17] Aristotle, *De anima*, III, 432b14-33a5.

[18] Ibid., 10, 433a31-433b1.

[19] Ibid., III, 10, 433a17-2.

[20] Jesse J. Prinz, *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 559-567.

[21] Jonathan Barnes, "Aristotle's Concept of Mind," *Proceedings of Aristotelian Society* 72, no. 1 (1971-2): 101-114.

the soul) because they are subject to and moderated by reason and they are involved in the pursuit of happiness for man seeks for happiness with his whole soul. His treatise on emotions which he refers to as *pathos* in the second book of his *Rhetoric* stands as one of the three major methods of rhetoric arts namely; *ethos, pathos and logos* and it aims at "relating emotional susceptibilities of an audience to the art of persuasion."[22] Such use of rhetoric arts helps to manage people's emotions in other to produce the desired beliefs in them. Emotions have psychological values and vital functions. Taking critical stance, some authors argue that *pathos* has more to do with affection than with emotion, though it closely connects to the later.[23] In Aristotelian understanding, emotions connote conative experiences; actions that signify movements of some sorts for preservation of life. According to him, emotions regulate man's life. They differ in their aims in that they have both attractive and aversive characteristics such that they move him either to seek or to avoid necessary objects that enhance or harm his existence, respectively. They are related to desires and accompanied by feelings of pleasure or pain.[24] The characteristics of emotions as pain and pleasure map man's value of life. To have an emotion is to have the experiences of pleasure, pain or both which is goal-oriented. The experience of being pained or being pleasured disposes man to ill- or well- regulated passions. In his words,

> we have special class of 'somatic passions' to which the pains of want and the pleasures of replenishment are referred and which may reasonably be supposed to include appetites of hunger, thirst and sex.[25]

Taking into account the subjective experiences of pains and pleasures of emotions as dispositions to virtues towards excellent actions, he states, "the pleasure or pain that actions cause the agent may serve as an index of moral progress since good conduct consists of proper attitude towards pleasure and pain."[26] Considering emotions as states of pleasure and pain, he also refers to it as passions which he primarily regarded as states that affect judgement. And defining passions, he enumerated species of pleasures and pains.

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[22] H. N. Gardiner, "The Psychology of the Affections in Plato and Aristotle," *The Psychological Review* 28, no. 1 (1919): 1-26.

[23] Asli Yazici, "Aristotle's Theory of Emotion," *Turkish Studies* 10, no. 6 (2015): 901-922.

[24] Aristotle, *De anima*; Jonathan Barnes, "Aristotle's Concept of Mind," *Proceedings of Aristotelian Society* 72, no. 1 (1971-2): 101-114.

[25] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1104b20-1105a9.

[26] Ibid., 1104a33-b20.

> By passions, I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, love, hate, longing, emulation, pity, and in general states accompanied by pleasure and pain.[27]

Aristotle's concept of passion has conative characteristics in the sense that it expresses appetites, tendencies and striving to persist in life although with obvious ambiguities. To this end, one actually wonders whether he has it in mind to specifically discuss conatus (the will to persist) in relation to happiness. Therefore, his terms and their explications on the issues should be sharpened to minimize such uncertainties.

VI. A critical evaluation of Aristotelian concept of happiness and its conative role in human existence

As said earlier, Aristotle considers happiness as the meaning and ultimate end of man's life; the whole aim and end of human existence that encapsulate man's entire life. In pioneering the course of man's happiness, he maintained a credible position in philosophical world and in other fields of life, Aristotle maintained a credible position in philosophical world and in other fields of life. Despite his wonderful contributions on the concept of happiness and its conative role in human existence, there are some basic issues inherent in his treatise that elicit critiques.

First of all, one of the most salient problems that this paper tries to address is the multiplicity of notions related to the pursuit of happiness; an inner drive towards 'good moral character.'A question could be: does it mean that those without good moral character (unfortunately, anyway) do not possess an inner drive to persist in life? Again, as Hosseini, Zaraeie and Karami hinted, Aristotle paid too much attention to human reason, while less to the nature of man. His restriction of happiness to cognitive activity stresses that the function of man is to reason.[28] Thus,

> the function of man is to live a certain kind of life and this activity implies a rational principle and the function of a good man is the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed in accord with the appropriate excellence. If this is the case, then happiness turns out to be an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.[29]

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[27] Ibid., 1105b2-26.

[28] Hassan Hoseini, Tayebe Zareie, and Mohsen Karami, "Evaluation of Happiness Concept in the Aristotle Viewpoint," *Journal of Applied Environmental and Biological Sciences* 6, no. 3 (2016): 104-111.

[29] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b22-1098a8.

Then, with regard to the inner drive to persist, one questions the fate of those with cognitive impairment or even those with temporal lack of mental capacity either due to genetic conditions or sicknesses, old age, etc. It is either that he considers them less human for lack of such mental ability or that he adjudges them incapable of attaining the happiness that he propounds. Yet, such people in many cases, especially the sick ones, survive and thrive due to persistent hope and faith in play other than reason. In some human existential conditions, faith prevails reason, especially where science fails, miracle then triumphs.

Furthermore, in his view, the attainment of happiness is teleological in which case he gives the impression that happiness, which is an end and a goal in itself, may not be attainable as it transcends this physical world. Apart from one imagining that Aristotelian concept and course of happiness renders life so strict and makes man only a thinking entity with austere existence, it exposes the danger of the teleological nature of his happiness which demands a good modicum of constant discipline. This lies in the fact that one might easily loose the elasticity of conative character (inner drive) in continuing to pursue what one cannot enjoy as one presently lives in this physical world. It can happen that at a certain point in life, one may be overwhelmed and as such develop *akrasia* (weakness of the will). Hence, the intermediary ends (goals) should have been considered as significantly important as they can serve to sustain the innate drive. That would mean the act of stopping intermittently to enjoy the fount of life and gather energy to forge ahead.

Moreover, the virtuous acts which man reiterates as excellent channels to attainment of happiness harbour some controversies. In the first place, virtuous acts have no universal character and standard of evaluation since they differ across individuals, cultures, epochs and in various circumstances. Therefore, there is no guiding principle to control them. This implicates the existence of moral relativism in the pursuit of the said happiness.[30]

Again, Ezedike's observation of the claim that, "right actions must be understood by reference to virtue"[31] points to another weakness of the theory. This explains that "an action is right if and only if it conforms to virtue."[32] In his critique, it should have been the other way instead, arguing that it is a misplacement of order. More to the point, Aristotelian presentation of virtue as implicated in the 'golden mean' poses kind of difficulty in identifying the extremes. His understanding that virtues are acquired through constant efforts and not given or by mere chances disputes his explication that the inclination

[30] Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 13.

[31] Edward Uzoma Ezedike, "Happiness as an End: A Critique of Aristotle's Rational Eudaimonism," *Inkanyiso: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2018): 51-62.

[32] Ibid., 59.

through the course of happiness which automatically involves virtuous life is natural to man. Just as Spinoza, Aristotle opines that there is a natural tendency of all things to persist and continue to maintain their own characteristics. That is, there is a natural force in every animate being including man towards self-preservation of its very existence. But very little was observed in his writings that addressed the force to avert the things that threaten to harm or take away existence. Among other weaknesses of his treatise that concerned man's striving to persist, Aristotle contradicted himself by explaining that happiness which involves man's inclination to persist in life is innate and naturally given to him, that is, it naturally unfolds itself. However, at the same time, he holds that happiness requires excellent virtuous activity that involves desires, appropriation of feelings and activities, right judgment and right choices that can only be acquired by constant exercise of moral goodness towards excellence other than by chance. Aristotle establishes that man has the natural inclination to continue to develop and actualize his potentials. However, he made us to understand that this natural striving ceases at the very end of the developmental process which he actually referred to as the *entelechy*. In his understanding, the term *entelechy* denotes full realization of man's potentialities that ends the process of his existence. Such cessation possesses no characteristics as to how and when it occurs. Could his notion of *entelechy*, which means an end of developmental process, concede to natural forces opposed to existence?

In addition, the great necessity laid on virtues (action based on proper use of reason) for the realization of happiness invariably suggests that the non-virtuous will not experience happiness. Further still, Aristotelian notion of happiness, which culminates in intellectual contemplation, seems to contradict his explication of man as a being with tripartite dimensions of vegetative, sensitive and rational soul. Now, the emphasis on happiness as the result of man's activity that terminates in pure intellectual exercise negates the other aspects of man that share in nutritive and sensual functions. Again, Aristotle purported that emotions are accompanied by pleasures and pains but his explications were not too clear on their complex functions with regard to man's inner drive to persist. Finally, the inclination to desire poses an epistemological question. Thus, how can man know the right things to desire and the right actions to perform[33] that lead to virtues since virtuous acts lack principle guidelines of universal character?

VII. Recommendations for Further Studies

This paper recommends that studies on Aristotelian happiness especially as it concerns conatus (the will to persist) should be given more attention. Again, it advocates that his concepts and their expositions on matters regarding the

[33] John L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 186.

inner drive to maintain existence and flourish in it should be clarified to minimize ambiguities. Besides, obvious contradictions as mentioned above, should be reconciled. This paper further proposes that individuals should engage in things that bring them real and lasting happiness in this physical world so to sustain with ease the will to live and blossom in life. Above all, the paper proposes that both individual and global peace may be restored through giving meaning to life by concentrating on the activities that drive to virtuous activities of the soul and true happiness of man whereby the means justifies the end for which nothing else may be desired.

VIII. Conclusion

Having critically evaluated Aristotelian concept of happiness and its conative role in human existence, this paper demonstrates that Aristotle's theory remains quite influential for subsequent discussions on conatus (the will to persist) despite all the critiques raised. From the above, it becomes clear that happiness, as conceived by Aristotle as the ultimate end of all human activity, is a very crucial factor that sets man in motion and upholds his innate drive to maintain his existence. The features that characterize man's happiness and determine his persistence in life are implicated in his soul as the capacity to desire rightly, choose rightly and act appropriately towards excellence. Emotions as pain and pleasure map man's value of life. They regulate his life. As pleasure or pain, they can determine moral progress since good conduct consists of proper attitude towards desires. Poor perception of emotions may lead to conditions that do not encourage the will to live. Poor perception of emotions may lead to conditions that do not encourage the will to live, while good judgement of emotions may encourage rightful responses that promote and enhance life. However, to sustain man's inner drive to persist in life, this paper objects to the theses that happiness can only be teleological and that the restriction of virtuous acts, which leads to happiness, culminates only in cognitive activities. Hence, other dimensions of human nature and those individuals that are mentally incapacitated should be put into considerations.

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Nature's Perfection: Aristotle and Descartes on Motion and Purpose

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Abstract

Descartes holds that, insofar as nature is a purposeless, unthinking, extended substance, there could be no final causes in physics. Descartes' derivation of his three laws of motion from the perfections of God thus underwrites a rejection of Aristotle's conception of natural self-motion and teleology. Aristotle derived his conception of the purposeful action of sublunar creatures from his notion that superlunar bodies are perfect, eternal, living beings, via the thesis that circular motion is more complete or perfect than rectilinear motion. Descartes' reduction of circular motion to rectilinear motion, achieved through his theological foundation of the laws of motion, thus marks a crucial break from Aristotle's philosophy of nature. This paper argues that the shift from the Aristotelian conception of nature as self-moving and teleological to the Cartesian conception of nature as purposeless and inert, is not an empirical discovery but is rooted in differing conceptions of where perfection lies in nature.

Keywords: *Aristotle; Descartes; motion; physics; conatus; teleology; mechanism*

I. Cartesian conatus

You swing a ball in a sling in a circle above your head. When you let go, the ball flies off. Why does it travel in a straight line, rather than continuing on its circular path? Descartes argues in *The Principles of Philosophy* that when the ball is in the sling, it has *conatus*, a tendency or striving to follow a straight path, which is arrested and constrained into a

circle by the sling. The circular motion of the ball is a compound of rectilinear motion and a contravening, resting force.[1]

While he likely adopted the term "conatus" from scholastic sources, Descartes' argument is directed against Aristotle's doctrine that circular and rectilinear motion are different in kind.[2] For Aristotle, this rather arcane distinction underwrites a conception of the cosmos on which its sublunar and superlunar regions are systematically divided by the kinds of motions that occur within them. Aristotle's division is motivated by metaphysical considerations about the relation of indestructible superlunar bodies to mortal, sublunar creatures. He holds that the purposeful self-motions of sublunar creatures are imitations of the perfect motions of superlunar substances. Descartes undermines this teleology by attacking the metaphysical assumptions underlying Aristotle's account of motion. But Descartes can establish his alternative only on the basis of a theological doctrine that derives the principles of motion from the perfections of God. Moreover, his rejection of Aristotelian teleology depends on attributions of conatus, a seemingly purposeful endeavor or striving, to inanimate objects.

The plan for the paper is as follows. Section II. develops the distinction between circular and rectilinear motion in *De caelo* I.2, a text that sets up Aristotle's division between superlunar and sublunar motion. Section III. argues that this distinction between the two kinds of motion is crucial to understanding Aristotle's conception of teleology, since sublunar creatures are purposeful insofar as they imitate but do not directly participate in the perfect, circular motion of the heavens. Section IV. returns to Descartes, arguing that his account of the laws of motion in the *Principles of Philosophy* depends on a conception of perfection that is related to – but distinct from – that of Aristotle. If the argument of the paper is correct, Descartes' disenchantment of nature depends primarily not on the formulation of a new scientific method, but on a distinctively modern and monotheistic conception of the perfection of nature.

II. Moving in Aristotelian circles

Aristotle's *De caelo* begins with a characterization of natural science as knowledge of bodies and magnitudes, with their properties and motions,

[1] Today we could characterize this as centripetal force, which leads the ball to feel an acceleration. This acceleration changes the direction (but not the magnitude) of the ball's velocity. However, in this paper I refrain from using post-Newtonian language, which threatens to obscure and pre-judge my central philosophical themes.

[2] See Rodolfo Garau, "Late-Scholastic and Cartesian Conatus," *Intellectual History Review* 24, no. 4 (2014): 479-494.

and with the principles that belong to those substances.[3] Accordingly, the first chapter discusses body and magnitude, features of the whole of nature. Change (κίνησις) never arises in this context, since it is only qua parts that physical objects change relatively to one another. Yet in the second chapter, Aristotle puts aside the topic of whether "nature of the all" is infinite or limited, claiming that this can be addressed only when one has an account of the parts in hand. Here change becomes thematic, since a thing's nature (φύσις) is its principle (ἀρχὴ) of change, and every natural body and magnitude can move locally (κατὰ τόπον) in virtue of itself (καθ' αὑτά). Such intrinsic locomotion – which I call "motion" throughout this discussion – must be either circular, rectilinear, or a combination of the two.[4]

What justifies the inference from a body's being natural to its possessing an intrinsic principle of motion? Aristotle here assumes a distinction made in *Physics* II.1 between natural objects – including animals and their parts, plants, and simple bodies, earth, fire, air, and water – and artifacts like cloaks and beds. The former but not the latter "have an innate impulse to alteration" (ὁρμὴν ἔχει μεταβολῆς ἔμφυτον).[5] This is the only instance of the word, ὁρμή, in the *Physics*, so the significance of the construction is not immediately evident.[6] In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle employs the term to refer to an irrational impulse in the psyche or a rousing of irrational desires, which is opposed by reason and good laws.[7]

> Hurrying on toward danger on account of being driven (ὁρμᾶν) by pain and temper, while foreseeing none of its terrors, is not courage; for then even donkeys would be courageous when they are hungry, since being beaten will not hold them back from their food.[8]

Courage depends on not being ruled by one's impulse, but rather by acting deliberately, in full consciousness of the danger one faces. Aristotle attributes ὁρμή to beasts as well as to humans, arguing that humans alone can exhibit

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[3] Aristotelis, *De caelo libri quattuor*, ed. D. J. Allan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 268a1.

[4] *De caelo*, 268b15.

[5] Aristotelis, *Physica*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 192b13-20.

[6] Aristotle does use ὁρμή in other physical works, where he typically associates it with Democritus. See e.g., Aristotle's description of surface tension at *De caelo*, 313b1-8.

[7] Aristotelis, *Ethica Nicomachea*, ed. I. Bywater (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1894), 1102b21, 1116b30, 1180a23.

[8] *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1116b33-1117a1. I have modified the translation of Joseph Sachs, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (Newbury, MA: Focus Philosophical Library, 2002).

courage, since only they can resist their irrational impulses by obeying law and reason. In the *Physics*, ὁρμή is evidently used in a broader sense, since it is supposed to govern the movements not only of ensouled creatures, but also of simple bodies. Yet in both physical and ethical works, the term signals the innateness of the motion it causes. A simple body's tendency to motion is not accidental, just as it is no accident that the donkey pursues food. Moreover, while ὁρμή can be overpowered by force when one is moved in an "unnatural" way, it is in some sense ineliminable.[9]

Aristotle's appeal to intrinsic locomotion in *De caelo* I.2 is based on the presupposition that natural bodies possess a sort of internal striving that is explanatory of their actual motions. From this presupposition, the chapter proceeds by distinguishing species of simple motion:

Circular	Rectilinear
[I] About the center	[II] Away from the center
	[III] Towards the center

Aristotelian species of simple motion

Aristotle defines motions with respect to an unmoving center, deriving complex motions from them by mixture of [I], [II], and [III]. A body is simple just in case it contains a principle of natural motion. A body compounded from simple bodies will have a motion compounded of the simple motion of each of its constituent bodies. In such a complex body, one of the simple motions will predominate, presumably when one of the simple bodies, such as fire, predominates in the compound.[10]

Aristotle's target in this section is not to analyze simple bodies as such, but to develop the distinction between superlunar and sublunar motion on which his cosmology depends.[11] His central argument is a complex conditional:

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[9] Aristotle must distinguish between the self-motion of living creatures, and the innate locomotion of inanimate bodies, a task he sets for himself in *Physics* VIII. 4. For a discussion of this text, in relation to Aristotle's account of elemental motion in *De caelo*, see Mary Louise Gill, "The Theory of the Elements in *De caelo* 2 and 4," in *New Perspectives on Aristotle's* De caelo, edited by A. C. Bowen, and C. Wildberg, 139-162 (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

[10] *De caelo,* 269a1.

[11] Aristotle's discussion of simple bodies in this section is clearly carried out at a higher level of abstraction than it is in his other works. In *On Generation and Corruption*, 330b31-331a6, b2-10, Aristotle identifies fire and air as forms of body moving away from the center, while earth and water are forms of body moving towards the center and discusses their transformations into one another. In *De caelo*, however, he is interested in giving a quite general account of the basic species of motion.

If [1] There is a simple motion, and
[2] Circular motion is simple, and
[3] Simple motion is of a simple body (for [a composite] body moves with simple motion if it is moved according to a prevailing [simple body]), then
[C] Necessarily there is some simple body that moves in a circle according to its own nature.[12]

Aristotle's aim is to show, from the incapacity of the four simple bodies – fire, air, water, and earth – to move in a circle by nature, that there must exist a "fifth element," aether, that moves in a circle by nature. The existence of the aether, over and above the four simple bodies, underwrites his distinction between the sublunar and superlunar motions.

Aristotle's argument here is apparently a bad one: [2] seems to imply [1], since we make sense of [2] only by supplying an existential quantifier, that is, by taking it to mean: "There is a x, such that x is a simple, circular motion." A separate statement establishing the existence of such motion, as in [1], appears to be unnecessary. Moreover, in dividing [I] from [II] and [III], Aristotle postulates that circular and rectilinear motion are both species of simple motion. Thus, it seems that, even if we accept [1] as stated, and take [2] to indicate that circular motion is a species of simple motion, this is insufficient for establishing that there is *in fact* any simple, circular motion, as required for [C]. It could be the case that only the rectilinear species of simple motion are actualized. Moreover, all that is entailed by [3] is that some simple body has some simple motion, not that there is a simple body that necessarily has *circular* motion. The premises thus seem to be neither necessary nor sufficient for establishing that any simple body in fact has circular motion.

Unless one wants to attribute an invalid argument to Aristotle, these premises must be given a different interpretation.[13] Taking "simple motion" to mean motion of types [I], [II], or [III], I suggest that we re-write the first two premises as implicitly having the form:

[1'] A (species of) simple motion is necessarily realized; and
[2'] Circular motion is a (species of) simple motion.

From these premises, it follows that

[4'] circular motion is necessarily realized.

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[12] *De caelo,* 269a2-7.

[13] I follow Sydney Shoemaker, *Physical Realization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 10, in using "realize" and its cognates to mean "make real" in a constitutive rather than a causal sense.

Following this "realization" reading of the first two premises, one can reinterpret the third premise as meaning that:

> [3'] For any simple motion, there is a simple body that realizes that motion.

Reading the third premise as the claim that simple bodies must realize simple motions produces a valid argument: [C] follows from [3'] and [4'] by modus ponens.[14]

In the remainder of the chapter, Aristotle argues that the four simple bodies could not be the realizers of simple circular motion. Each of these simple bodies has a natural (κατά φύσιν) motion and a contrary unnatural (παρά φύσιν) motion, so that fire and air naturally move up, and thus realize [II], while water and earth move down, realizing [III]. But since these motions are contrary to one another, none of the listed simple bodies has an opposite that can realize [I]. Consequently, because [C] has been established, there must be some fifth simple body, aether, that realizes natural circular motion.

Though these arguments are interesting in their own right, I wish to emphasize that Aristotle thinks of circular motion, and thus of the fifth element that realizes it, as being naturally prior to the rectilinear motion of the four elements. Thus, in the course of eliminating the four elements as candidate realizers of circular motion, he writes,

> But circular motion must be primary. For that which is complete is prior in nature to the incomplete, and the circle is among complete things, whereas no straight line can be so. Neither can an infinite straight line be so, for to be complete it would have to have an end or limit, nor a finite line, for all finite lines have something beyond them: any one of them is capable of being extended.[15]

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[14] Aside from saving Aristotle's argument, the "realization" reading helps make sense of his parenthetical comment that "a composite body moves with simple motion if it is moved according to a prevailing" simple body. This is meant to disarm the objection that a simple motion need not be realized by a simple body, since it may be realized by a complex body. Aristotle's reply is that because a complex body inherits the movement of its most pervasive constituent, any complex body with motion of type [I], [II], or [III] must contain a simple body with the respective type of motion. Thus, if a complex body realizes a simple motion, it does so in virtue of containing the simple body that intrinsically realizes that simple motion. For example, a complex body composed of fire, water, and earth could realize [II] in virtue of containing fire, since of its constituents, fire, is the simple body that realizes [II].

[15] *De caelo*, 269a19-23.

Circular motion is naturally prior to rectilinear motion because it is more "perfect" or "complete" than rectilinear motion, just as the circle is a more complete figure than a straight line. An infinite straight line is imperfect in the sense that it is unlimited, a finite straight line in that it is always extendible. Both lack the inherent concept of limitation possessed by the circle. Though Aristotle does not here say what he means by natural priority, in the *Metaphysics* he suggests that what is posterior cannot be without that which is prior.[16] If that is the meaning intended here, then all rectilinear motions are ontologically dependent on the complete, circular motions of the heavens.

Other statements in the chapter corroborate this interpretation. After arguing for the existence of the fifth simple body, Aristotle claims, "From this, it is clear that there exists some bodily substance besides the four in our sublunar world, which is more divine than, and prior to, all these."[17] This suggests that what is more complete and simpler is more divine. Moreover, since we observe fire naturally moving upward, away from the center, heavenly bodies cannot be composed of fire. Aristotle concludes that there must be "some other body separate from those around us, having a more honorable nature as much as it is removed from" the sublunar world.[18] Aristotle's division of circular from rectilinear motion thus corresponds to the division between the sublunar and superlunar heavens. Sublunar things are "lower" than superlunar things in the spatial sense of being closer to the center, but also in an axiological sense of being less complete and divine.[19] Natural motion in the sublunar world is incomplete and finite, so its realizers must come to a halt. Such a halting occurs when the predominant constituent in a sublunar body comes to its natural resting place: fire on air, air on water, water on earth, and earth, presumably, on earth, down to the center.

Aristotle's separation of circular from rectilinear motion depends on an axiological understanding of natural completeness or perfection. Moreover, his separation of the eternal superlunar sphere from the sublunar sphere

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[16] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 1019a1-4.

[17] *De caelo*, 269a30-32.

[18] Ibid., 269b13-17.

[19] For discussion of whether cosmic circular motion can be reconciled with Aristotle's doctrine of the prime mover in *Physics* VIII and his theological doctrine in *Metaphysics* V, see Emanuela Bianchi, *The Feminine Symptom: Aleatory Matter in the Aristotelian Cosmos* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 145-147; Helen Lang, *The Order of Nature in Aristotle's Physics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 173-186; Aryeh Kosman, "Aristotle's Prime Mover," in *Self-Motion: From Aristotle to Newton*, eds. Mary Louise Gill, and James G. Lennox, 135-154 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). Though discussion of the complex interpretive issues involved in this debate is beyond the scope of the present paper, I observe that Aristotle must exclude the divinity from his natural philosophy, on the pain of violating his own distinction between the three parts of theoretical philosophy: physics, mathematics, and theology.

in which every individual is limited and mortal stems from this distinction between kinds of motion.

III. Aristotle's cosmic teleology

How does Aristotle's doctrine of motion relate to his teleological view of nature, to which Descartes so strenuously objected?[20] According to Aristotle, creatures naturally act for the sake of a final end; for example, teeth continue growing throughout an animal's life for the sake of chewing. A standard interpretation takes these final causes to be irreducible potentials possessed by a natural creature, which may be different from the final causes of its material constituents.[21]

A debate has arisen about the epistemic status of Aristotelian final causes.[22] Gotthelf thinks observation is necessary and sufficient for establishing teleological claims. Waterlow holds that observation is not sufficient for establishing them. However, I argue that the sublunar teleology assumed by Aristotle is a consequence of the different species of motion he believes to be at work in the superlunar and sublunar spheres. If this is correct, sublunar teleology is assumed within Aristotle's system as a rule of inference

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[20] Aristotle's teleology refers to his view that there are natural final causes, which are "that for the sake of which" things act as they do (Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, 715a4f). According to Aristotle, knowledge that x acted for the sake of y counts as causal, since when one says the end y for the sake which x acts, one has explained *why* x acts in that specific way (*Physics* 194b33-195a2). Canonically, one invokes final causes to answer a 'why'-question when one gives the function: for example, Aristotle holds that teeth, but not other bones, continue to grow throughout life *because* they tend to get worn down over time as an animal chews food (*Generation of Animals* II, 745a19-745b9). Here, the answer to the question, 'why do teeth continue growing as an animal ages?' is answered when one says what it is for the sake of which they grow.

[21] Allan Gotthelf, "Aristotle's Conception of Final Causality," in *Philosophical Issues in Aristotle's Biology*, eds. A. Gotthelf, and J. G. Lennox, 204-242 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 227-228, defends this view against two alternatives. On the 'immaterial agency' interpretation, natural teleology is understood in analogy to human action, so that final causes are understood to involve a conscious or quasi-conscious guidance of the process they govern. On the 'explanatory condition' interpretation, final causes are not *real* causes, but merely play a specific role in explanations of natural processes. Gotthelf's view is supposed to avoid both the extreme of attributing conscious agency to natural processes, and of denying that final causes are real causes.

[22] Gotthelf holds that this irreducibility is not an a priori premise of Aristotle's natural philosophy, but is itself an empirical conclusion drawn from the observation of nature. Sarah Waterlow, *Nature, Change, and Agency in Aristotle's Physics: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 91, argues that while the irreducibility thesis is unobjectionable, Gotthelf's image of an 'empiric Aristotle' is overstated. Gotthelf and Waterlow agree, then, that Aristotle is committed to the irreducibility of final causes and that he sometimes appeals to observation to ground claims about elemental motion. Indeed, we saw in the last section that Aristotle appeals to the observation that fire travels upward as an objection to the view that superlunar bodies are composed of fire.

in making causal deductions. In other words, Aristotle's belief in final causes is not an empirical claim at all, but a wholly a priori thesis that derives from his conception of perfection.

Aristotle outlines the causal dependence sublunar motion on superlunar causes in the *Meteorology*. While fire, earth, and other elements are the "causes" of what happens in the sublunar sphere in the sense that they form the underlying material of all sublunar creatures, their cause in the sense of the principle of motion is a δύναμις of eternally moving bodies.[23] While δύναμις typically means "capacity" or "potential," here his thought is that the movement of sublunar elements is generated by the "power" possessed by superlunar bodies that are eternally in motion. A little later in the same text, Aristotle suggests a mechanism by which superlunar bodies can exercise influence on sublunar bodies: in the upper region as far as the moon, aether is contaminated by admixture of air and fire, and exercises power on these sublunar elements. When this low-hanging aether becomes corrupted,

> the circular motion of the first element and of the bodies it contains dissolves, and inflames by its motion, whatever part of the lower world is nearest to it, and so generates heat.[24]

These passages suggest that sublunar elemental motion derives from the interaction of fire and air with aether in the area around the moon. If aether is the realizer of perfect motion, then rectilinear motion is caused by its corruption. The eternal motion of the heavens is the power that produces motion among sublunar creatures by generating heat in the air and fire beneath the moon.[25]

One might object that this theory could only provide an account of the efficient cause of some sublunar elemental motions, but not of the purposeful motion of every sublunar creature. After all, if the final cause of a sublunar creature is an irreducible potential, then Aristotle's explanation of elemental motion in the *Meteorology* is far from explaining the distinctive motions of

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[23] Aristotle, *Meteorology*, 339a30-33

[24] Ibid., 340b10-14.

[25] An anonymous reviewer points out that the Aristotelian account of the corruption of aether implies that higher elevations will tend to be hotter than lower ones. This is an empirical prediction, which the Cartesian could falsify by observation, e.g., of snow on mountain tops. Could the choice between Aristotelianism and Cartesianism then be made on empirical grounds? For two reasons, I doubt that it could be. First, many of Aristotle's false predictions about specific phenomena could be saved by the addition of ad hoc hypotheses. Second, Descartes himself seems far less concerned with refuting particular Aristotelian doctrines than with replacing Aristotle's concepts of body and motion with his own. This suggests that, while Aristotelian and Cartesian physics can be interpreted as rival scientific theories *post hoc*, from Descartes' point of view, they were two ontologies of nature that stemmed from distinct notions of perfection.

compound creatures, such as plants and animals. Nevertheless, I think that Aristotle again appeals to eternal motion to explain the motion of living creatures, implying that their natures, as innate impulses to change, derive from superlunar, eternal motion.

Because sublunar living things cannot preserve themselves "in number" as individuals, each individual has a natural drive to preserve itself "in kind" as species.[26] Consequently, in *De anima,* Aristotle claims that every sublunar living thing has nutritive psyche, by which it strives to perpetuate itself through reproduction.

> For the functions of [the nutritive psyche] are reproduction and the use of food; for it is the most natural function in living things, such as are complete and not mutilated or do not have spontaneous generation, to produce another thing like themselves – an animal to produce an animal, a plant a plant – in order that they may partake of the everlasting and divine in so far as they can; for all desire that, and it is for the sake of that which they do whatever they do in accordance with nature. Yet that for the sake of which is twofold – the purpose for which and the beneficiary for whom. Since, then, they cannot share in the everlasting and divine by continuous existence, because no perishable thing can persist as numerically one and the same, they share in them in so far as each can, some more and some less; and what persists is not the thing itself but something like itself, not one in number but one in species.[27]

For Aristotle, sublunar animals naturally desire to preserve themselves, for the sake of participation in the eternal and divine. Unlike superlunar bodies, however, the corruptible material of the animal ensures that it is individually perishable, that it cannot persist as a "one." Consequently, animal and plant reproduction acts as a sublunar surrogate for the eternal activity of superlunar things. The basic functions of life down here are an imperfect image of the eternal life of the divine bodies in the heavens.[28]

Aristotle views the fundamental functions of sublunar life – nutrition and reproduction – as value-laden and goal-directed activities that imitate

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[26] Aristotle makes this distinction at *De generatione et corruptione*, 338a19-b17, noting that coming to be and passing away are "rectilinear" changes that could not affect superlunar bodies.

[27] Aristotle, *De anima* 415a25-b7. The translation modifies that of David W. Hamlyn, *Aristotle De anima Books II and III*.

[28] Plato's *Phaedo* (78d) and *Symposium* (208a-b) are literary antecedents of this passage.

the activities of eternal substances. The same axiological vision underlies Aristotle's explanation of the activities of superlunar bodies, which he also understands to be ensouled, living creatures. Thus, the activities of sublunar animals can be understood in reference to their goals: "To attain the ultimate end would be in the truest sense best for all; but if that is impossible, a thing gets better as much as it is nearer to the best."[29] Consequently, objects near the earth have few motions, and "do not arrive at the ultimate thing, but reach only as far as they happen to be able to the divine principle."[30] In distinction, the first heaven reaches its goal "by one movement."[31] Thus, Aristotle assumes an axiological order of self-motion, beginning with the perfect rotation of the first heaven, and descending downward, to other heavenly bodies that achieve their goal through many motions, and finally to the creatures moving on the surface of the earth, who participate in the divine only by imitation. At each level, Aristotle considers the bodies to be self-movers, that is, living animals pursuing specific goals. Nevertheless, attributions of purpose to sublunar creatures are ultimately justified by reference to the activities of eternal superlunar creatures.

One might think that since Aristotle's attributions of sublunar teleology (for example, that animals have feet in order to walk) depend on his superlunar teleology, his view must be overtly theological, so that the purposes of individuals can be explained by the purposes of god. Indeed, Aristotle's use of the epithets of divinity to describe superlunar bodies and their motions seems to support this view. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to conclude that Aristotle's cosmology rests on an appeal to theology. For his assertion of the divinity and perfection of the superlunar bodies, and hence his explanation of sublunar teleology, does not depend on any conception of a cosmic designer, on the model of Plato's demiurge or the creator in *Genesis*.[32] One need not take a position on the vexed question of how Aristotle's theology relates to his natural philosophy to grasp that he nowhere describes the divinity as planning or designing the activities of the lesser creatures that inhabit the cosmos. Sublunar life is similar to superlunar life not because God has commanded it to be so, but due to the accidental corruption of aether below the moon. In general, Aristotle seems to think of the life-activities, and hence the goals, of sublunar creatures as stemming, not from a grand design, but from the limited abilities of sublunar creatures to participate in everlasting life.

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[29] *De caelo*, 292b17-19.

[30] Ibid., 292b19-22.

[31] Ibid., 292b22-23.

[32] For an account of Aristotle's debts to, and rebellion from, Plato's global teleology, see David Sedley, "Teleology, Aristotelian and Platonic," in *Being, Nature, and Life in Aristotle*, eds. J. G. Lennox, and R. Bolton, 5-29 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

What are the consequences of this interpretation of Aristotle's teleology? First, sublunar teleology, while not reducible to the self-motion of simple bodies, depends on the teleology of superlunar substances. The corruptibility of sublunar matter entails that numerical identity over time is impossible for sublunar creatures, and thus gives them purpose. Second, the grounds for Aristotle's cosmic teleology are wholly a priori. For his conception of sublunar creatures' final ends being conditioned by eternal motion rests on the idea that those superlunar substances with inherent circular motion are prior to them and more complete. While Aristotle does not offer an analysis of the meaning of completeness in *De caelo*, he generally considers a substance to be complete when "as regards its inherent excellence (τῆς οἰκείας ἀρετῆς) it lacks no part of its natural magnitude."[33] On this reading, the completeness of superlunar beings is necessarily axiological, in the sense that these beings "lack nothing" of their own nature, constantly achieving their purpose, whereas all other creatures' purposes must be derived by reference to them. Thus, while empirical observation could reveal a final cause, teleological attributions are ultimately justified by comparison to the perfect activity of superlunar substances. Aristotle's doctrine of final causes is not an empirical thesis, but a consequence of his axiological conception of the universe as a descent from beings that display perfection. This conception of perfection is axiomatic in Aristotle's philosophy of nature.[34]

IV. Descartes' ontology of nature

I have been arguing that Aristotle's ontology of natural substances depends on the notion that every sublunar creature has a characteristic, imperfect self-motion that is teleological insofar as it is an imitation, in a corrupted body, of the perfect and eternal motion of superlunar substances. Insofar as he banishes final causes from physics, Descartes' physics clearly represents a "modernizing" break from Aristotle and the scholastic tradition. Yet there is disagreement as to what we should take the fundamental motive and effect of this rupture to be. Are Descartes' laws, as exemplified in his reduction of circular motion to rectilinear conatus rehearsed in the opening section, merely an alternative to Aristotelianism, or do they represent a fundamental shift to an ontology of nature that informs and justifies the seventeenth-century Scientific Revolution?

Supporters of the latter view have argued that Descartes' physics represents a "mathematization of nature" or a "geometricization of space," in which natural objects are understood in purely mathematical terms, that

[33] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1021a22-23.

[34] For Aristotle's notion of "axiom," see *Posterior Analytics*, 72a14-17.

is, with reference only to the propositions of geometry and the primitive concepts of extension and motion. As Koryé puts it, Descartes' universe is

> a strictly mathematical world, a world of geometry made real about which our clear and distinct ideas give us certain and evident knowledge. There is nothing else in this world but matter and motion; or, matter being identical with extension, nothing else but extension and motion.[35]

According to Koryé, Descartes' rejection of teleology is intimately related to his mathematization of nature, and of the consequent "reduction" of physics to mathematics. Some more recent treatments of Descartes' natural philosophy, however, argue that these interpretations tend to make dubious appeals to textual evidence.[36] Against this mathematizing interpretation, Ariew has argued that Descartes accepts that corporeal things are divisible, have shape, and are in motion "not because they are geometrical or mathematical, but because they are modes of extension that can be distinctively known."[37] In this view, although the geometry can be used to describe corporeal bodies insofar as they are extended, read in his proper context, Descartes makes no commitment to the objects of nature being essentially mathematical.

Although this debate could be stated in terms of substantive philosophical questions about the connection between mathematics and physics in Descartes' system, or as a hermeneutical question concerning which texts should be privileged in interpreting Descartes' views, one need not appeal to the *Rules* or to Descartes' biography or education to grasp his ontology of the natural object. In the *Discourse*, Descartes reports that in his unpublished treatise, *The World*, he founded the laws of nature in his own, rational theology.

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[35] Alexandre Koryé, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), 100-101. Koryé's view is an extension of Husserl's conception of the "geometrization of his nature" accomplished in early modern physics to the work of Descartes. See Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 28-42; and Justin Humphreys, "Husserl's Archaeology of Exact Science," *Husserl Studies* 30 (2014): 101-127 for a discussion of Husserl's conception of mathematized science.

[36] Roger Ariew, *Descartes and the First Cartesians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 131-37, argues that appeals to the conception of *mathesis universalis* in Descartes' *Rules* can lead to a mistaken impression of the relationship between Descartes's mathematics and his physics. The *Rules* are an immature work, which remained unpublished in Descartes' lifetime, and had virtually no influence on the subsequent development of the physics. When we look to Descartes' main work on physics, the *Principles*, it seems that mathematics mainly serves as a model of clear and distinct perception in the sciences.

[37] Ariew, 136-137.

> I revealed what were the laws of nature; and basing my reasoning on no other principle than the infinite perfections of God, I set out to prove those laws about which one might have had some doubt, and to show that they are such that even if God had created many worlds, there could not be any in which they could have failed to be observed.[38]

If we understand invariance across hypothetical, possible worlds to indicate necessity, Descartes' claim is that the metaphysical necessity of the laws of nature rests on the perfections of God. Thus, the question of the relationship of Descartes' ontology of the natural object to mathematics rests on his theology.[39]

This derivation of the laws to which every object must conform from the perfections of God is carried out in the *Principles*, in which Descartes recognizes three fundamental laws of nature.

> [I] Each and every thing, in so far as it can, always constitutes in the same state; and thus what is once in motion always continues to move.[40]
> [II] All motion is in itself rectilinear; and hence any body moving in a circle always tends to move away from the center of the circle which it describes.[41]
> [III] If a body collides with another body that is stronger than itself, it loses none of its motion; but if it collides with a weaker body, it loses a quantity of motion equal to that which it imparts to the other body.[42]

The first law follows from the immutability of God: "We understand that God's perfection involves not only his being immutable in himself, but also his operating in a manner that is always utterly constant and immutable."[43] What is the logical connection between God's immutability and the conservation

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[38] René Descartes, *Ouvres de Descartes*, eds. Ch. Adam, and P. Tannery (Paris: Vrin/C.N.R.S., 1964-1976), VI, 43.

[39] See Daniel Garber, *Descartes' Metaphysical Physics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) for discussion of the development and reception of Descartes' principles of physics.

[40] Descartes, VIIIA, 62. The translations here are those of John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[41] Descartes, VIIIA, 63.

[42] Ibid., VIIIA, 65.

[43] Ibid., VIIIA, 62.

of motion? Descartes' point can be understood counterfactually: if motion in the universe were not conserved, God's operation of creation would be inconstant or mutable. But God's operations are constant and immutable. Therefore, motion must be conserved. The conservation of inertia is therefore derived from God's perfection of immutability.

The second law is derived almost in the same way as the first. Because the operation by which God preserves motion in matter is immutable and simple, every moving object has a direction at an instant and would continue moving in that direction unless acted upon by an external force. As Descartes puts it, God "always preserves the motion in the precise form in which it is occurring at the very moment when he preserves it."[44] Consequently, any deviation from rectilinear motion would violate God's simplicity, and thus must be attributed to interference by an external force.

The derivation of the third law occurs in two parts. First, Descartes distinguishes between motion and direction, in order to note that an object's change in direction does not entail any change in the total motion of the system. This is not an appeal to a theological principle but a conceptual distinction. Second, Descartes argues that it is by means of immutability of God's actions that "the world is preserved through an action identical with its original act of creation."[45] Descartes concludes his discussion of the third law with the comment that the continual change that can be observed in creation is evidence of the immutability of God.

These arguments play multiple roles in Descartes' philosophical system. Metaphysically, they ground Descartes' dynamical laws in the perfections of God. Epistemologically, they suggest a "natural theology" according to which empirically verifiable conservation laws point to the existence of a cosmic architect, whose continuous creation of the universe is explanatory of physical regularities that can be spelled out in mathematical terms. Indeed, while Descartes third law is false, the first and second laws are simply assumed – without appeal to theology – in Newton's laws of motion.[46] The ground for Descartes' principles is not empirical observation of corporeal bodies, but a wholly a priori conception of the perfections of God.

Descartes' theological foundation of the laws of physics underwrites a conception of natural objects that leaves no room for the Aristotelian separation of the heavens and the earth. Whereas for Aristotle, sublunar and superlunar creatures are of a fundamentally different nature, the Cartesian conception requires that the universe be completely uniform in its motions.

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[44] Ibid., VIIIA, 64.

[45] Ibid., VIIIA, 66.

[46] See Gary Hatfield, *The Routledge Guidebook to Descartes' Meditations* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 62-65, 307.

Thus, the apparent circularity of heavenly motions to which Aristotle attached such importance is reduced to a mere appearance to be accounted for by the mathematics of rectilinear motion and resistant forces. The same foundation entails that there is no real self-motion for Descartes. Rather, apparently independent motions of different object must be caused by the transfer of the fixed amount of motion established in God's original creative act. As a result, there is no meaningful way in which a Cartesian could understand the imitation of heavenly motions by earthly creatures. Aristotelian teleology, like the apparent self-motion it is meant to explain, is thereby excluded from the Cartesian cosmos. Thus, while Descartes does not self-consciously conceive of his ontology as a mathematization of nature, his theological foundation of physical law produces a physics that presents itself as the geometry of a uniform space of extended objects.

I have argued for the somewhat counterintuitive thesis that the inclusion of final causes in physics depends on an axiological but not necessarily theological view of nature, whereas the exclusion of final causes is at root based on a theological doctrine. It is remarkable, then, that Aristotle and Descartes both derive their principles in natural science from what are at base aesthetic judgments about the perfection of nature. For Aristotle, nature is assumed to be perfect in that its best part – the outer spheres of the heavens – is engaged in an immutable and eternal motion that is imitated in the imperfect motions down here. Though Descartes denies any real distinction between circular and rectilinear motion, he remarkably argues for the uniformity and rectilinearity of the motions of the universe on an aesthetic basis quite similar to that of Aristotle. Like Aristotle, Descartes accepts that a perfect being must be eternal, simple, and immutable in its actions. The main difference appears to be that while Aristotle attributes perfection directly to the superlunar sphere, Descartes attributes it to the transcendent creator of the universe, denying the distinction between the sublunar and superlunar parts of the cosmos. The metaphysical basis of the division between Aristotelian natural philosophy and Cartesian natural science thus rests on a decision concerning whether to locate perfection within the whole, perceptible universe, or whether to refer it to a supersensible divinity. This suggests that an essential determinant of Descartes' modernizing conception of nature is a Christian theology according to which God produces nature so that his creatures might come to know his perfection.

V. Conclusion: Competing aesthetics

Aristotle and Descartes both appeal to aesthetic criteria to establish their fundamental physical principles. By designating these criteria, and the judgments from which they stem, as aesthetic, I do not mean that they are necessarily

arbitrary or "in the eye of the beholder."[47] Rather, I mean that they are normative judgments that are underdetermined by any amount of empirical evidence. Neither is Aristotle's judgment that there are grades of perfection, in which lower substances imitate more perfect higher substances, nor Descartes' view that God alone is perfect, his creatures merely being signs of his perfection, the sorts of theses that could be confirmed by observation. In both cases, perfection indicates a kind of completeness and beauty, but any standard of what is perfect will necessarily be independent of judgments made within natural science. Although they agree on little else, Aristotle and Descartes both hold that physics must be established on axioms that originate outside of physics.

Aristotle's physics is based on the idea that natural objects are good when they achieve their intrinsic ends. This is possible only if they can move themselves in such a way as to achieve those ends. His doctrine of motion is thus based on an aesthetic vision of the universe in which each part has its own proper goal and activity. Descartes denies that bodies could have intrinsic ends or move themselves. Thus, while he accepts that motion is the mode of extended substance, he denies that bodies must be active realizers of distinctive types of motion. Rather, Descartes grounds his principles of motion in the perfections of God, holding that a perfect being must be the source of all motion, and will continue to ensure the consistency of that motion at every instant. While Descartes argues that we cannot know God's purposes, he calls on his aesthetic grasp of God's perfections to posit indubitable grounds for mathematical physics.

Aside from its historical interest, this divergence is notable because it marks an exclusive disjunction: either a natural object has or does not have an intrinsic principle of motion. Aristotle's teleological theory has the drawback of assuming one can know the purpose of natural objects. In *Meditation* IV, Descartes argues that this is impious, objecting that searching for final causes depends on the false assumption that we can know the purposes of God.[48] But if Aristotle's conception of nature comes at the cost of a hubristic epistemology, it has the metaphysical benefit of allowing for real indeterminism. Aristotle's views that everything has a cause and that no future event in the sublunar world is necessary are consistent precisely because he understands sublunar creatures to be self-movers.[49] Descartes, by denying intrinsic motion to creatures, risks a

[47] I thank an anonymous reviewer for pressing me to clarify the meaning of "aesthetic" in this context.

[48] Descartes, VII, 55.

[49] For discussion of Aristotle's indeterminism, see Elizabeth Anscombe, "Aristotle and the Sea Battle: *De interpretatione*, Chapter IX," in *The Collected Philosophical Papers of G. E. M. Anscombe*. Volume I: From Parmenides to Wittgenstein, 44-55 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 45-48.

determinism according to which no motion is spontaneously produced. Thus, in the *Meditations*, he identifies freedom with the will, and says that it is in virtue of this that one bears an image and likeness of God.[50] The Aristotelian problem of how a creature can move itself is transformed into the Cartesian problem of mental causation. Freedom is, in this account, located not in the living animal body, but in the human mind. Yet insofar as this freedom is human freedom, the possibility of an indeterminate future is identified with the problem of evil, and once again justified on theological grounds. The universe is more perfect as a whole because some of its parts are not immune from error, while others are infallible.[51]

Why does a ball released from a sling travel in a straight line, rather than continuing on its circular path? For Aristotle, were the ball composed of aether rather than of water and earth, it would have continued in its circular path eternally. Grasping the ball's corrupted, sublunar nature makes clear why its path must be rectilinear and finite. For Descartes, its motion is explained by principles I and II, which in turn are justified by the perfections of God. In other words, the ball's conatus is just a shorthand for the conserving activity of a perfect being. But is it not curious that, having rejected Aristotelian natures and the teleology implied by them, that Descartes must use a conception of natural "striving" to make his physical theory conceptually tractable? Clearly, conatus cannot indicate an intrinsic principle of motion, since that has been excluded from Descartes' system. Instead, I think, it must be Descartes' placeholder for God's ineluctable will or tendency to maintain a coherent system of rectilinear motion. Conatus is thus the name for the retreat from Aristotelian teleology into Cartesian theology.

One might have expected that the conception of a purposeful universe would be linked to the idea of a creator God who guarantees the good of his creatures. Yet, on the contrary, I have argued that the teleological conception was not explicitly theological, but merely required that the activities of nature have intrinsic value. Rather, the conception of a purposeless and inanimate universe that can only correctly be described by mathematics is the accomplishment of a monotheistic worldview, that puts every perfection in God and leaves no space for lower grades of perfection in his creatures.

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[50] Descartes, VII, 57-58.

[51] Ibid., VII, 61.

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Spinoza's Conatus: A Teleological Reading of Its Ethical Dimension

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Abstract

In this article I examine how the teleological reading of Spinoza's conatus shapes the ethical trajectory of his philosophy. I first introduce the Spinozistic criticism of teleology and argue contra many critics that Spinoza has a mild approach to human teleology. On the basis of this idea, I develop the claim that conatus is a teleological element pertaining to human nature. From the teleological reading of conatus, I draw the conclusion that Spinozistic ethics is inclusive of objective, humanistic, and essentialist elements. In this sense, this paper emerges to be a challenge against the anti-teleological reading of conatus that is predominantly related to the subjectivistic, anti-humanistic, and non-essentialist interpretation of Spinoza's ethics. It mainly situates Spinoza in a traditionally teleological context where the human conatus is seen as an act of pursuing objective and essential moral ends that is distinctive to human nature.

Keywords: *conatus; humanistic; Spinoza; essentialist; teleology; ethicality; objectivistic*

I. Introduction

Spinoza's severe criticism of teleology is notoriously known to eradicate any form of teleological attitude. It is generally acclaimed that Spinoza's anti-teleological attitude in ontology leads to a subjectivistic, anti-humanistic, and non-essentialist reading of his ethics. This paper challenges this widely accepted view by suggesting that Spinoza's conception of *conatus* is teleological in character which ultimately leads to interpret the Spinozistic ethics as inclusive of objective, humanistic, and essentialist elements.

The paper divides into three main sections. In the first section, I dwell upon the Spinozistic criticism of teleology. Here, I argue that Spinoza, as a follower of Maimonides and the seventeenth century natural philosophers, is a harsh critic of teleology. I further argue that even though Spinoza is a severe critic of teleology, there are some scholars such as Garrett, Curley and Lin who hold the view that Spinoza has a milder approach to human teleology,[1] namely the fact that the human beings are teleological (or purposive) agents that strive towards the final cause. The claim that Spinoza countenances human teleology will be the key to our further discussion.

In the second section, I embark on the teleological character of *conatus*. After I posit the non-teleological arguments of Bennett, Carriero, and Hübner who basically hold that the conatus is 1) a mechanical tendency to persist in existence; 2) a maximization of one's power or activity; or 3) an act of causing effects, I side with Viljanen, Garrett, and Lin in considering that Spinoza's *conatus* is not merely a mechanical act of creating certain effects, but it is an act of inclination/orientation towards certain goals and ends.

In the third section, I proceed to draw conclusions with regard to the ethics of Spinoza on the basis of the teleological reading of *conatus*. An anti-teleological reading of *conatus* usually leads to interpret the Spinozistic ethics as inclusive of subjective, anti-humanistic, and non-essentialist elements. For example, Gilles Deleuze holds the view that the Spinozian ethical concepts, namely good and bad, are determined subjectively by the individual *conatus*es. I, however, argue that there is a certain objective ideal *(exemplar humanae naturae)* that the *conatus* of individuals aspires towards. Moreover, I contrast with the anti-humanistic and non-essentialist reading of Spinoza's ethics. Holding that the *conatus* of human agents is oriented towards the essential ethical values that distinguish them from other natural entities, I propose that the Spinozian ethics has essentialist and humanistic elements.

All in all, the current paper aims to give a comprehensive overview of the Spinozian ethics as an objectivistic, humanistic, and essentialist paradigm that is grounded on the teleological reading of human *conatus*. The innovation of the paper, I believe, is to offer a multidimensional analysis of the Spinozistic ethics on the basis of the teleological approach to *conatus*.

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[1] As is well known, teleology, in its general use, is a very broad term. It is mainly a doctrine that explains natural phenomena by final causes. However, in this study we will gradually narrow down our scope to studying human teleology, namely the study of human beings as entities that strive towards the final cause as an end. In this sense, in the aftermath of the study, we will embark on the teleological nature of human beings as they are oriented towards the final cause of universe.

II. Spinoza's criticism of teleology

An inquiry into the ultimate telos of creation has been a common concern for the medieval Jewish philosophy.[2] Most medieval thinkers endorsed that the Aristotelian fourth cause (aitia),[3] namely final cause, is the most plausible formula for the explanation of the creation. One of the most renown Jewish philosophers Moses Maimonides, however, emerges as an exception to that. Although Maimonides does not always have reservations about the final cause,[4] he begins his discussion in the *Guide for the Perplexed* with the observation that the minds of the "excellent individuals" have been "perplexed" with the question of the "final end of the world's existence."[5] He bluntly argues that this question is inapplicable since the world has no final end.

Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* has had a profound impact on Spinoza's *Ethics*, Part I, Appendix. Akin to Maimonides, Spinoza maintains in the *Ethics*, Part I, Appendix that the teleological account of creation is baseless as it has simply arisen from the "ignorance" of the people about the "causal order of nature."[6] As Spinoza puts it, the majority of people think of themselves as free because they act on their volitions and appetites but ignore the causes behind their volitions and appetites. It follows that they "act always on account of an end, viz. on account of their advantage, which

[2] Medieval and early modern Jewish philosophers developed their thinking with the influence of ancient Greek – primarily Aristotle – and Arabic sources. Toward the late Middle Ages, Jewish philosophers also established a dialogue with Christian scholastics. In addition to that, Jewish philosophers were extensively influenced by the rabbinic sources and the Hebrew Bible; Yitzhak Y. Melamed, "Teleology in Jewish Philosophy," in *Teleology: A History*, ed. J. K. McDonough (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 123. These sources had a huge impact on the philosophical pursuits of the medieval Jewish philosophers. The medieval Jewish philosophers basically questioned about the ultimate purpose of creation. For example, Judah Halevi in the Kuzari argued that "it is clear that domestic animals were created for the benefit of man" and that "the world was but completed with the creation of man who forms the heart of all that was created before him;" Melamed, "Teleology in Jewish Philosophy," 128.

[3] In *Metaphysics* Book I Aristotle identifies four original causes for explaining nature: material cause, formal cause, efficient cause, and final cause; see Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London, New York: Penguin Classics, 1998), 12.

[4] In his early *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Maimonides expresses extreme teleological and anthropocentric views; Warren Zev Harvey, "Spinoza and Maimonides on Teleology and Anthropocentrism," in *Spinoza's Ethics: A Critical Guide*, ed. Yitzhak Y. Melamed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 43.

[5] See Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, trans. M. Friedlander (Skokie, IL: Varda Books, 2016), 272.

[6] See Benedictus Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, (First Part, Appendix), vol. 1, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 440.

they want."[7] Addressing the dichotomy between the causal explanation and teleology, Spinoza obviously favours the former. Hence, he regards the teleological explanation as an unreliable way of seeing things.

Spinoza's anti-teleological outlook is, moreover, influenced by the advancement in the mechanical sciences in the 17th century. The 17th century science and philosophy in relation to teleology can be seen as a clear break with the medieval tradition. In parallel to the scientific advancements in the century, philosophers such as Bacon, Boyle, Hyugens, and Descartes view nature as a mechanical structure that operates on a causal basis. They come to reject any form of purposiveness in nature as the sciences show that nature can be explained simply through the mechanical principles. For instance, Descartes bluntly suggests that the teleological premises have no place within the domain of natural sciences and philosophy.[8] He utterly banishes the teleological premises from the domain of natural sciences and philosophy especially because he thinks that the finite intellect of the human being cannot grasp the infinite purposes of the God. Similarly, Francis Bacon removes teleology from the domain of natural sciences because he thinks that the study of the final causes gives rise to no practical art.[9] Like Descartes and Bacon, Spinoza known as a stern advocate of the mechanistic efficient causation, attacks teleology severely. However, his criticism extends beyond the anti-teleology of Descartes or Bacon as he does not only remove teleology from the study of metaphysics, but he also bluntly claims that God has no end/purpose. So, we should ask, how could Spinoza's brutal attack on teleology be explicated so that we can get a firmer grasp of it?

It is the Appendix to the First Part of *Ethics* that provides a clear indication of Spinoza's assault on the traditional understanding of teleology. In this text, Spinoza argues that the teleological explanations have simply arisen from a lack of understanding about nature or God (*Deus sive Natura*).[10] In other words, on Spinoza's view, the misapprehension of people about the true causes of the universe is what leads them to imagine that there are purposes/telos in nature to pursue.[11] Spinoza's anti-teleological account instead maintains that the universe/nature has no purposes. He mainly describes

[7] Ibid.

[8] See Rene Descartes, *The Principles of Philosophy*, trans. John Veitch (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2010), 15. Also see Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Michael Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 40.

[9] Martin Lin, *Being and Reason: An Essay on Spinoza's Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 150.

[10] Spinoza identifies God and nature with each other and holds that they are the one and only substance (*Deus sive Natura*).

[11] See Spinoza, *The Collected Works*, (First Part, Appendix), 440.

nature as a causal unit necessitated and determined by God to be the way it is. In such a universe, there is no contingent or accidental being or fact existing. In the *Ethics* Spinoza explains this as follows:

> God acts from the laws of his nature alone and is compelled by no one.[12]
>
> A thing which has been determined to produce an effect has necessarily been determined in this way by God; and one which has not been determined by God cannot determine itself to produce an effect.[13]
>
> In nature there is nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way.[14]

From the above excerpts, we can readily see that in Spinoza's causally determined universe natural beings or facts follow from the absolute necessity of God. In such a scheme, nature acts and preserves itself out of brute necessity. So, causation involves necessity, and nothing is outside of it. As is well known, there is room in Spinoza's system only for one substance, namely the necessarily existing nature or God without which nothing can exist or be understood.[15] The finite beings, however, are the modifications or affections which are produced by the monistic substance God in a causal and determinate manner.[16] In such a system of Spinoza, it is widely acclaimed that God and finite beings interact in an anti-teleological manner. This is mainly supported by Spinoza's anti-teleological attitude in the Appendix of the first part of the *Ethics*. In his discussion in the *Ethics*, I, Appendix, Spinoza explicitly argues that God or Nature knows no final ends since God per se is the cause of all things and it acts from absolute necessity:

> With these [demonstrations] I have explained God's nature and properties: that he exists necessarily; that he is unique; that he is and acts from the necessity alone of his nature; that (and how) he is the free cause of all things; that all things are in God and so depend on him that without him they can neither be nor be conceived; and finally, that all things have been predetermined

[12] Ibid., (First Part, P 17), 425.

[13] Ibid., (First Part, P 26), 431.

[14] Ibid., (First Part, P 29), 433.

[15] Ibid., (First Part, P 14), 420.

[16] Ibid., (First Part, P 26-27), 431-432.

> by God, not from freedom of the will or absolute good pleasure, but from God's absolute nature, or infinite power.[17]

In here Spinoza expresses that God's actions are necessitated by its nature (or essence) and that for this reason it would be wrong to view God's actions as goal oriented. Yitzhak Y. Melamed says that the necessitation of God's actions by his nature makes the teleological explanation redundant.[18] For him, insofar as the God's nature/essence is the sufficient cause of God's actions, teleological explanations appear misleading.[19] To put it in terms of Aristotelian philosophy, there are no final causes and everything is brought about merely through the operation of efficient causation.[20] All talk of God's intentions, aims etc. appears just to be an antropomorhizing story.[21]

In relation to his anti-teleological standpoint, Spinoza goes on to criticize the teleological explanation in the Appendix to Part I in two steps:

> a) *By treating the final causes as the first causes, teleology turns the causality of nature upside down (naturam omnino evertere).*
> b) *Upon depicting God as an agent who aims at something, teleology attributes a lack of self-sufficiency to God.*

How should the preceding arguments be explicated? One useful way to study this part is to analyse it in relation to Spinoza's doctrine of causal determinism. In the first statement above, we read that the teleological approach, on Spinoza's view, is not acceptable as it dismantles the causal order of nature. Spinoza basically holds that the teleological account explains things by appealing to their conclusion. For instance, he imagines a scenario where the stone falls from the roof and kills the man. In this very situation, Spinoza thinks, it is the fall of the stone that caused man to die. He literally gives a causal explanation to the situation. However, the teleological account, Spinoza thinks, would explain the situation in an opposite way: the stone falls from the roof so as to kill the man. Spinoza finds this explanation absurd because he thinks that by taking the effects as the causes, the teleological account turns the law of causality upside down.[22]

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[17] Ibid., 439.

[18] See Melamed, "Teleology in Jewish Philosophy," 141.

[19] Ibid.

[20] See Steven Nadler, *Spinoza's Ethics: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 114-115.

[21] Ibid., 115.

[22] See Spinoza, *The Collected Works*, (First Part, Appendix), 443.

As to the second statement (b), Spinoza asserts that the teleological explanation is erroneous because, upon depicting God as an agent who aims at something, it disregards the self-sufficiency of God. For him, however, God is a self-sufficient agent that would have no aims because he does not lack anything.

The two seminal reasons Spinoza offers to defend his anti-teleological approach, I believe, are consistent within the context of his causal determinism. Arguing that God is the efficient cause of unthoughtful (unliving) things, and that he is a self-sufficient agent, Spinoza obviously leaves no room for divine teleology and unthoughtful teleology.[23] However, I am not so sure, if Spinoza, offering that the teleology is unacceptable due to the aforementioned reasons, does abruptly conclude that the teleology is erroneous altogether. Or is it possible to claim that he is sympathetic to some form of teleology in his metaphysics?

Some commentators of Spinoza like Bennett, Carriero, and Melamed maintain that these two reasons formulated in the First Part of *Ethics* suffice to say that Spinoza rejects teleology altogether.[24] For instance, Melamed in "Teleology in Jewish Philosophy," pointing to the connection between freedom of will and teleology, argues that Spinoza dispenses with any form of teleology (divine, human, or unthoughtful teleology) as he has already eliminated the freedom of will.[25] The human agents in Spinoza, according to Melamed, behave in a causal and determinate manner as is conditioned by God. But they cannot be considered as free agents who have purposes, intentions or preferences of their own.

In recent years, however, a number of scholars such as Curley, Garrett, Manning, and Lin have argued fairly persuasively that Spinoza does not wish

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[23] By the term "unthoughtful teleology," I mean the teleology of the non-living or inanimate things in nature.

[24] Jonathan Bennett in his article "Teleology and Spinoza's *Conatus*" mainly argues that Spinoza rejects all final causes, including the teleological explanations of the human action. However, Bennett affirms that Spinoza has an inconsistency in his system as he presents *conatus* as a teleological concept; see Jonathan Bennett, "Teleology and Spinoza's *Conatus*," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 8 (1983): 143-160. Likewise, John Carriero in "Spinoza on Final Causality" and elsewhere, argues that Spinoza is against the human teleology. Carriero basically argues that Spinoza sees the final ends as the appetites of the human beings. In this way, he suggests that the human ends or purposes are nothing but the motive tendencies. To illustrate his point, Carriero holds that when we build a house, we generally assume that we have an end: to build a house. However, he then puts that when we think of the issue more deeply, we will realize that we actually have no end other than being part of a causal chain of the construction of a house. According to Carriero, in Spinoza's trajectory, building a house is nothing more than a mechanical process; John Carriero, "Spinoza on Final Causality," in *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy: Volume 2*, eds. Daniel Garber, and Steven Nadler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 140-142.

[25] Melamed, "Teleology in Jewish Philosophy," 141-145.

to eliminate teleological explanations altogether. [26] These scholars mainly hold that even though Spinoza is against divine teleology, he countenances the teleological explanations of human affairs. That is to say, the second group of scholars point out that, in rejecting teleology for the above reasons, Spinoza does obviously deny the teleology of God or unthoughtful things, but he does not necessarily object to the fact that there might be certain teleological elements in human nature which they call "human teleology." Garrett, Curley, Manning and Lin each have their own reasons to support the idea that Spinoza has a milder approach to human teleology. For example, Curley attacking the non-teleological reading of Bennett, argues that the human teleology is very central to the Appendix of the part of the *Ethics*. He cites some passages from the *Ethics* which he thinks are supportive of his teleological reading of the human nature: "Not many words will be required now to show that Nature has no end set before it, and that all final causes are nothing but human fictions."[27] Curley thinks that this passage from the Appendix, which is widely held to be a rejection of human teleology, is merely a rejection of the divine teleology. By rephrasing the statement as "all final causes we are apt to ascribe to Nature (or God) are nothing but human fictions,"[28] Curley claims that by this statement Spinoza does merely attack the divine teleology. I tend to stand closer to this approach and my attempt in this study to prove that *conatus* might be considered as a teleological concept will rely on the basic assumption that Spinoza has a mild approach to human teleology.

III. A teleological reading of *conatus*

One of the central aims of the Spinoza's philosophy, I believe, is to discuss and, if possible, define the human nature. Articulated in the First Part of

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[26] Garrett, Manning, and Lin all propose their own reasons for the idea that Spinoza is friendly with human teleology. Garrett, for example, has defined four textual reasons that are supportive of the human teleology. One of the reasons that Garrett holds is that Spinoza in *Treatise on the Emendation of Intellect* explains much of the human activity as performed for attaining certain ends. For Garrett, the fact that the human beings by their very essence are envisaged to pursue the absolute good as an ultimate end is a clear proof for human teleology; see Don Garrett, "Teleology in Spinoza and Early Modern Rationalism," in *New essays on the rationalists*, eds. Rocco J. Gennaro, and Charles Huenemann (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 312. Also see Richard N. Manning, "Spinoza, Thoughtful Teleology and the Causal Significance of Content," in *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes,* eds. Olli Koistinen, and John Biro (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 183. See Martin Lin, "Teleology and Human Action in Spinoza," *The Philosophical Review* 115, no. 3 (2006): 320.

[27] Spinoza, *The Collected Works*, (First Part, Appendix), 442.

[28] See Edwin Curley, and P. F. Moreau, eds., *Spinoza: Issues and Directions: Proceedings of the Chicago Spinoza Conference* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1990), 40.

the *Ethics* as "the mode of the infinite substance"[29] and "an extended and thinking being,"[30] the human nature has been discussed by Spinoza in a limitedly metaphysical manner. Hence, the First Part of the *Ethics* leaves us with a certain expectation that Spinoza will be addressing the issue in the later chapters of his work from a more practical perspective. The concept of *conatus*, which is first incorporated in the *Ethics* in its third Part, steps into the scene at this stage. It helps us conceive of the human being as a less enigmatic and more solid figure in the metaphysics of Spinoza.[31] So what is *conatus*, and in what sense is it definitive and constitutive of the human nature?

Conatus originally comes from the Latin verb *conatur* which literally means "to try or strive."[32] It is used by early modern philosophers, including Thomas Hobbes, to express the notion of striving for what is advantageous.[33] Spinoza incorporates it into his metaphysics in a distinctive manner. In the *Ethics*, he first uses it when he says: "Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being."[34] Then he adds: "The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing."[35] Ontologically speaking, Spinoza's *conatus* argument holds that the human being, just like any other finite thing,[36] is an agent who strives to preserve its existence as its essential feature. So, Spinoza proposes that *conatus* – striving for self-preservation – is the essence of things "which makes each particular thing

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[29] Spinoza defines the mode in the *Ethics* as follows: "By mode I understand the affections of a substance, or that which is in another through which it is also conceived;" Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza* (First Part, D 5), 409. So, he offers that the human being, as one of the affections of God, is not a substance on its own right but it is a mode of the substance.

[30] Ibid., (First Part, P 14, Cor. 2), 420.

[31] Don Garrett, for instance, in his article "Spinoza's *Conatus* Argument" says that the *conatus* argument reveals the behavioural nature of human being as opposed to its being depicted merely as a metaphysical figure in the first part of the *Ethics*; Don Garrett, "Spinoza's Conatus Argument," in *Nature and Necessity in Spinoza's Philosophy*, ed. Don Garrett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 378. Likewise, Steven Nadler argues that *conatus* is the finite or solid manifestation of the infinite quantum of power of Nature or God. Nadler also proposes that *conatus* involves the things' individuation. This being so, the finite things are distinguished from each other "insofar as their parcels of power are distinct from each other;" Nadler, *Spinoza's Ethics*, 195.

[32] Edwin Curley's translation for the Latin word *conatur* is "to strive, try or endeavour." See Beth Lord, *Spinoza's Ethics: An Edinburgh Philosophical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 88-89.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Spinoza, *The Collected Works*, (Third Part, P 6), 498.

[35] Ibid., (Third Part, P7), 499.

[36] Thomas Cook holds the view that it is not only the human beings but also each finite thing that strive to exist in Spinoza. In that sense, Cook points to the universality of *conatus*. See Thomas Cook, "*Conatus*: A Pivotal Doctrine at the Center of the Ethics," in *Spinoza's Ethics,* eds. Michael Hampe, Ursula Renz, and Robert Schnepf (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 153.

what it is."[37] *Conatus* as the act of self-preservation shows that the human beings are essentially active in maintaining their essence. Things are determined to act by their *conatus* in ways that will ensure their survival and promote their well-being.[38] As is well known, the traditional theology appeals to God as the ground for the maintenance of finite things.[39] Spinoza's *conatus* theory, in that sense, radically attacks the traditional metaphysics by attributing a great power to the finite beings in terms of their self-maintenance. In that sense, although Spinoza's system is deterministic where God determines everything as they are, Spinoza leaves room for self-determination to the finite things through *conatus*. In this way, things are regarded to be what they are in terms of their *conative* power.

Conatus has a central role in Spinoza's ethics as well. Spinoza utters in the *Ethics* that *conatus* is the most essential virtue as no other virtue can be conceived prior to it:

> The striving to preserve itself is the very essence of a thing (by IIIP7). Therefore, if some virtue could be conceived prior to this [virtue], viz. to this striving, the very essence of the thing would be conceived prior to itself (by D8), which is absurd (as is known through itself).[40]

As is clear from this excerpt, Spinoza believes that *conatus* is a foundation for ethics which suggests that we cannot conceive of any other virtue without one's *conative* activity. By holding that *conatus* is the most primary virtue, Spinoza centralizes the notion of self-preservation in his ethical theory which ultimately leads to the fact that the ethical concepts, mainly good and bad, are defined through *conatus*. Spinoza radically opposes the traditional ethical theory by holding that we judge good or bad not because they are good or bad in themselves. But we judge them good or bad because we desire (or strive for) them or not. This paradigmatic shift in the Spinoza's ethical theory suggests that there is no good or bad in themselves independent of the subject. Rather, good and bad are defined by the subject's *conative* act.

Now that we have touched upon *conatus* as an ontological and ethical subject, we shall turn to expounding on our teleological view of *conatus*.

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[37] Lord, *Spinoza's Ethics*, 90.

[38] Ibid., 89.

[39] For example, Judeo-Christian religions assume that God is the cause of the essence and existence of creatures. Therefore, the creatures are seen to be totally dependent on God. Although Spinoza similarly claims that God is the cause of the essence and existence of finite beings, he attributes an active power through *conatus* to the finite beings to determine their existence.

[40] Spinoza, *The Collected Works*, (Fourth Part, P22), 558.

When we take a closer look into the Spinoza literature, we can readily see that there is a dominant tradition of viewing Spinoza's system as thoroughly non-teleological in character. Our method in this section will be to give a critical assessment of the non-teleological arguments about *conatus* from a teleological standpoint. None of the arguments can be taken lightly as they represent a large body of scholarly opinion. So, our modest attempt will be only to remain consistent and articulate in our teleological attitude. Let me begin with reciting the anti-teleological arguments on *conatus*.

1. *Conatus* is a mechanical tendency to persist in existence.
2. *Conatus* is a maximization of one's power or activity.
3. *Conatus* is an act of causing effects.

As far as I hold sway over the Spinoza literature, the first argument (1), I have proposed above, has been defended by scholars such as Bennett and Carriero. In *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, Bennett has offered a non-teleological reading of the appetite for survival. In this study, although Bennett believes that the appetite for survival is not a "blind" impulse because we are aware of where they are taking us, he still argues that it might be seen "blind" in the sense that we are not aware of where we are taken into.[41] Hence, Bennett implies that appetite for survival is not a conscious act towards the attainment of a certain end, but it is an unconscious impulse. Similar to that, Carriero discusses that *conatus* is nothing more than a motion for survival without any goal in itself.[42] Carriero approaches Spinoza as a proponent of the mechanical philosophy. Observing a close relation between Spinoza's *conatus* argument and the statements of the 17th century conservation of motion, he proposes that Spinoza's *conatus* is nothing more than a motive tendency for survival.[43]

As opposed to Bennett and Carriero, there is a teleological reading of Spinoza's *conatus* which is much closer to our stance. For instance, in response to Bennett's non-teleological argument, Curley argues that *conatus* cannot be simply seen as a blind impulse. Curley holds that *conatus* has two meanings.[44] In traditional sense it means "striving for something." For Curley, *conatus* in this sense implies that one strives for a certain end. However, Curley argues that *conatus* has another meaning in Cartesian philosophy, namely "the tendency

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[41] Jonathan Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1984), 223.

[42] John Carriero, "Conatus and Perfection in Spinoza," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* XXXV (2011): 86.

[43] Ibid., 85.

[44] See Edwin Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method: A Reading of Spinoza's Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 107.

bodies have to persist in a state either of rest or of uniform motion in a straight line."[45] Curley states that this technical meaning of *conatus* has no implication for a goal the thing literally wants to achieve. According to Curley, Spinozistic usage of *conatus* has been deeply influenced by this Cartesian usage of the term. However, for Curley, unlike the *conatus* of the inanimate things, Spinoza's human *conatus* might not be limited to this technical interpretation of the term. Rather, he supposes that the human *conatus* has an inner representation of future which clearly implies a conscious act towards a future end.

As to the non-teleological argument of Carriero, I would like to posit Viljanen's counter-argument. Viljanen calls Carriero's *conatus* argument as "inertial reading."[46] Viljanen first argues that Carriero's argument is fallacious because the human *conatus* does not act purposelessly (through motive tendency) in that it is not inert, but it aims to have good ideas rather than bad ideas in order to preserve its well-being.[47] Secondly Viljanen argues that Carriero's "inertial reading" ignores the fact that the *conatus* is not self-destructive. According to Viljanen, because we, the human beings, are *conative*ly not self-destructive, we cannot be moving inertly and merely through our motive tendencies.[48] Rather, we should have some conscious act in preserving ourselves which manifests itself in our attempt to avoid anything self-destructive to us.

The second non-teleological argument (2) we mention has been defended, for example, by Carriero who in his article "*Conatus*" utters that there is a theoretical upper limit to the reality to which the individuals with their *conative* power can reach.[49] However, he argues that this upper limit does not refer to any end. For Carriero, the natural things do not exist for the sake of this upper limit, that is, it does not mean that the things are deprived of their existence if they cannot reach this limit. Rather, they are just existing at each moment to maximize their activity and power. This argument brings us again to the "inertial reading" as Viljanen calls it. According to this argument, the *conative* agents are assumed to retain their power and activity without any further end to that. They simply exist for the sake of existing. However, some passages from Spinoza's *Ethics* indicate that *conatus* or the act of self-preservation might be interpreted to have certain goals to achieve. We can read the following remarks in this vein:

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[45] Ibid.

[46] See Valtteri Viljanen, "The Meaning of the Conatus Doctrine," in *Spinoza's Geometry of Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 105-112.

[47] Ibid., 110.

[48] Ibid., 111.

[49] John Carriero, "*Conatus*," in *Spinoza's Ethics: A Critical Guide*, ed. Yitzhak Y. Melamed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 150-151.

> We strive to further the occurrence of whatever we imagine will lead to Joy, and to avert or destroy what we imagine is contrary to it, or will lead to sadness.[50]
>
> When we love a thing like ourselves, we strive, as far as we can, to bring it about that it loves us in return.[51]
>
> A free man who lives among the ignorant strives, as far as he can, to avoid their favors.[52]

In these remarks, Spinoza clearly suggests that the human beings strive towards certain ends such as to maximize joy and to minimize despair, to be loved back by our lovers or to avoid the favour of the ignorant people etc. So, we can see that we, the humans, are not existing only for the sake of existing, as was claimed by Carriero, but we aim to maximize our power and activity towards certain ends such as joy, love, and wisdom.

The last non-teleological argument (3) I have been going through in the Spinoza scholarship has been defended by scholars such as Hübner. In her article "Spinoza's Unorthodox Metaphysics of the Will," Hübner basically states that *conatus* in Spinoza is identified with the essence and that the essence is identified with activity and power.[53] Therefore, for Hübner, the Spinozistic conception of human being is not an inert substance in its essence but an active agent. This active agency, namely *conatus*, is simply an act of causing/bringing about some effects in relation to one's essence. For this reason, Hübner's anti-teleological reading of *conatus* suggests that *conatus* is an efficiently causal productive essence[54] without having any end to realize. We would argue against Hübner that *conatus* is more of a self-realization (preservation of one's essence) than an act of bringing about certain effects. Our counterargument might sound highly Aristotelian or scholastic Aristotelian. As is well known, Aristotle defines self-actualisation as a change from potency to the actuality. Although Aristotle's theory of potentiality and actuality is highly criticized in the later centuries, the Scholastic Aristotelian thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas and Avicenna reformulated it in their own way. They mainly argued that things have a certain level of perfection and reality which is to be actualized.[55] Do we see a similar picture in Spinoza's

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[50] Spinoza, *The Collected Works*, (Third Part, P28), 509.

[51] Ibid., (Third Part, P33), 513.

[52] Ibid., (Fourth Part, P70), 585.

[53] Karolina Hübner, "Spinoza's Unorthodox Metaphysics of the Will," in *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*, ed. Michael Della Rocca (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 352.

[54] Ibid., 353.

[55] See Carriero, "Spinoza on Final Causality," 107-108.

ethical theory? One might answer that question by saying yes and no. First of all, I should definitely note that Spinoza's theory of self-preservation is highly original. This being so, Spinoza never formulates self-preservation as a clear-cut transition from potentiality to actuality in one's state, as is held by Aristotle and scholastic Aristotelians, but as a transition in the degree of the conative power of the agent. Accordingly, Viljanen utters that although Spinoza discards the Aristotelian notion of potentiality and actualisation, he offers an essentialist view of human nature in the sense that the human beings produce effects and determine each other's manner of acting on the basis of their finite essences that are determined by the divine essence.[56] And likewise, Viljanen holds that the Spinozistic concept of *conatus* is end-directed because it is an act of preserving some essential features of the human being such as freedom, virtuousness etc.[57] So, Viljanen's view shows that despite the fact that Spinoza defines the essence of man as *conative* agent[58] that is active and mobile in character, he affirms the essential features that are stable and unchanging in human nature, for he offers that the finite essences are pre-determined by God.[59]

Our attempt to refute the possible non-teleological arguments of Spinoza's *conatus* sheds some light on our path to a teleological reading of *conatus*. Based on the teleological arguments we have suggested above, we can safely draw the conclusions that a) *conatus* is more than a blind (mechanical) impulse as it has a projection towards a future end; b) *conatus* is not merely a maximization of power but it is a maximization of power towards certain ends like joy, love and wisdom; and c) *conatus* is not merely an act of producing certain effects but it is a preservation of essence as the human beings have certain essential features embedded in them. The upshot of these conclusions is that Spinoza's human *conatus* might be seen as a much broader concept than it is suggested by the proponents of the mechanical philosophy. This being so, we can argue that the human *conatus* is not merely a blind mechanism acting purposelessly but it is an act of maintaining one's existence through certain ends and ideals. This approach definitely makes us swim against the dangerous tides of the anti-teleological reading that dominates Spinoza scholarship. However, we feel safe to say that Spinoza's *conatus* argument implies that the human beings are more than mechanical entities as they have certain ends, inclinations and purposes on their own.

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[56] Valtteri Viljanen, "Spinoza's Essentialist Model of Causation," *Inquiry* 51, no. 4 (2008): 427-428.

[57] Valtteri Viljanen, *Spinoza's Geometry of Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 127.

[58] See Spinoza, *The Collected Works*, (Third Part, P7), 499.

[59] See ibid., (Second Part, P26), 431, and (Second Part, P29), 433.

IV. What does the teleology of *conatus* imply in ethical sense?

Spinoza's *Ethics* and other works are largely imbued with an ethical consciousness rather than enunciating moral principles.[60] So, we never see Spinoza formulating moral principles to be followed. Instead, he aims to endow the reader with a certain ethical awareness. Gilles Deleuze in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* draws a distinction between the Spinozian version of ethics and traditional morality.[61] He stresses that despite rejecting the moral norms and values, Spinoza is deeply concerned with elucidating a non-moralistic ethics. This is primarily championed by the Spinozian conception of *conatus*. Accordingly, Spinoza holds that ethicality is not gained through conformity to the moral values and norms but rather through one's *conative* act, namely striving towards what is useful and avoiding what is not.[62] Spinoza is commonly held to offer a subjectivistic, anti-humanistic, and non-essentialist ethical theory mainly because of his conception of *conatus* that is regarded to be egoistic (seeking what is useful and avoiding what is not) and non-teleological. However, our teleological reading of *conatus* in the previous chapter has crucial implications for Spinoza's ethics. In this respect, we will mainly claim that the afore-mentioned teleological arguments of the human *conatus* in Spinoza usher us to interpret the Spinozian ethics as inclusive of objective, humanistic, and essentialist elements.

I. *Ethical Objectivism*. Spinoza's reformulation of ethicality, namely his attempt to ground ethicality on the *conative* act of the ethical agent instead of morality, exposes a sharp contrast with the traditional moral theories. As is well known, the traditional moral theories, from the Platonic and Aristotelian ethics to scholastic Aristotelianism and Cartesian theory, embrace the following dictum: there are certain objective moral values and norms out there which ought to be pursued by the human being. Spinoza, however, considers that the ethical conceptions of good and bad are subjectively determined by the *conatus* of human beings, namely their striving towards what is useful and avoiding what is not.

This might trigger us to think that the ethical agents are egoistic and subjectivistic in terms of their ethical choices and decisions. For instance, Deleuze in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* holds that Spinoza disregards the notion of moral values that are objectively graspable. Rather, to Deleuze,

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[60] Genevieve Lloyd, *Part of Nature: Self-knowledge in Spinoza's Ethics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 133.

[61] Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 17-30.

[62] See Spinoza, *The Collected Works*, (Fourth Part, D1, D2), 546.

Spinoza is subjectivistic in terms of ethical concepts as he propounds that they are determined in accordance with the fact that they are useful to us or not.[63] For Deleuze, the fact that we are ethically driven towards something or avoid it just because it "agrees with our nature or disagrees with our nature" implies a subjective and modal conception of ethicality.[64] This kind of Deleuzian interpretation might lead us to think that the Spinozian ethics is relativistic and egoistic. For example, Melamed clearly proposes that the Spinozian ethics is egoistic. By calling it "Egoism without Ego," Melamed says that every being in Spinoza seeks to promote his own true good.[65] According to Melamed, Spinoza indicates his egoism in ethics especially via his concept of *conatus*.[66] Because the human beings are regarded to be virtuous depending on their individual conative power, Melamed concludes that Spinozian ethicality is subjectively determined.

However, our teleological view of *conatus* is not supportive of such an interpretation. If we recall our first argument that *conatus* is a conscious act towards certain ends rather than merely being a mechanical tendency (a),[67] we shall readily argue that our *conative* act in ethical sense is not simply shaped by our appetites (what is useful to us or not) but it is teleologically oriented towards some ethical good. As Curley argues, the ethical good in Spinoza cannot be regarded as a subjective concept because it is deeply connected to the "ideal of human nature" (*exemplar humanae naturae)*. Curley holds that the human beings strive towards the ethical good which conforms to the idea of ideal human nature.[68] In other words, we, the human beings, have a conception of ideal human nature according to which we define the good and bad. Accordingly, we call something good because it approximates to the ideal of human nature, and we call bad what does not approximate to the ideal. Hence, Curley suggests that the Spinozian ethical agent has an objective criterion to determine what is good or bad. However, note that the good and bad in Spinoza are in no way transcendent values but they are defined by the human beings.[69] Moreover, scholars such as Andrew Youpa argue that Spinoza is more a moral realist than an anti-realist. Arguing that the instances of goodness and badness do not depend on one's desires, emotions

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[63] See Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 22-23.

[64] Ibid., 22.

[65] See Yitzhak Y. Melamed, "Spinoza's Anti-Humanism: An Outline," in *The Rationalists: Between Tradition and Innovation*, eds. Carlos Fraenkel, Dario Perinetti, and Justin Smith (Dordrecht: Springer/Synthese, 2011), 159.

[66] Ibid.

[67] See page 108.

[68] See Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 123.

[69] Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 23.

or appetites, Youpa suggests that Spinoza is a moral realist. For Youpa, the fact that Spinoza proposes an ideal human nature that the individual human beings set for themselves shows that the goodness and badness are not determined on the basis of one's emotions, desires or beliefs, but on their objective notion of ideal and perfect human nature.[70]

If we turn to our teleological view of *conatus*, we shall claim that Curley and Youpa's interpretation of the Spinozian ethics fits in to our paradigm nicely. To put it simply, we shall point out that the Spinozian ethical agent strives towards the good as an end because of its conformity to the ideal human nature and vice versa. Hence, our teleological view of *conatus* implies that Spinoza's ethical agent is not egoistic (pursuing only what is useful or avoiding what is not) but rather it is oriented towards the objective ethical good as an end that is immanent in human nature. In this sense, we can call Spinoza's ethical objectivism as "conative objectivism" as it mainly relies upon the idea that the *conative* act of individuals is oriented towards the ethical good or bad depending on the power they gain through them. Put it another way, we can claim that Spinoza is neither offering a transcendentally objectivistic ethical theory nor a pure subjectivism but a *conatively* constructed objectivism.

II. *Humanism.* Spinoza is widely acclaimed to offer that the human nature has nothing distinctive than other natural beings.[71] This very notion that dominates the literature is mainly grounded on the idea that Spinoza regards all finite beings as the modes of one substance, God. For example, Melamed has argued that Spinozian rationalism "rejects the existence of any "islands" within nature which are governed by "special" laws."[72] In this way, offering an anti-humanist reading, Melamed holds that the humanity in Spinoza is in no way secured a distinguished or elevated place in nature. According to Melamed, the fact that the animals, and even rocks, have self-consciousness or a second-order idea of body, shows that they are not radically different from the human being who is primarily composed "of a body" and "an idea of his body."[73] On this ground, Melamed claims that the human beings and other entities of nature, namely animals and inanimate things, have only a degree of difference but they are fundamentally equal. However, our second teleological argument we have proposed in the previous section tells a different story.

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[70] See Andrew Youpa, *The Ethics of Joy: Spinoza on the Empowered Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 46-54.

[71] As is clear, by humanism, I mean a view that assigns human being a distinctive place among other natural things.

[72] Melamed, "Spinoza's Anti-Humanism: An Outline," 151.

[73] Ibid., 151-152.

As you shall recall, we have formulated our second argument (b) as follows: *Conatus* is not merely a maximization of power/activity, but it is maximization of our wisdom, joy, and love.[74] This teleological view of *conatus* has a highly significant implication in the Spinozian ethics. As is well known, Spinoza is surely against the idea that the human beings can be conceived as "a dominion within a dominion in nature."[75] In the Preface to the Third Part of the *Ethics* Spinoza discusses about this issue at length where he suggests that because nature is same everywhere and for every sort of being, no being can be conceived of differently than the others.[76] Spinoza's claim in here mainly addresses the issue of free will (of the human being). As is well known, the traditional metaphysics (from Plato to the Cartesian philosophy) has a very strong notion of free will (of the human being). For example, Descartes argued that because the human will is absolutely free, the human being is distinctive in its nature for having an autonomy of power compared to the other beings which are simply part of the mechanical nature. Spinoza's metaphysics, however, offers a severe critique to this traditional view. Instead, Spinoza holds that no natural being, that is to say, neither human being nor God, has free will as they are all determined by the causal laws of Nature or God. On a casual reading, this picture might suggest that the human *conatus* and (let's say) animal *conatus* are equivalent on the ground that they are both subjected to the causal laws of nature or God. As we have seen, Melamed has defended this view. However, our teleological reading of human *conatus* shows that the human *conatus* has a distinguished place in nature as an ethical subject. We can elucidate this claim via Spinoza's theory of knowledge.

In the *Ethics* and elsewhere, Spinoza distinguishes three kinds of knowledge: opinion or imagination [*opinio vel imaginatio*], reason [*ratio*], and intuitive knowledge [*scientia intuitiva*].[77] Observing a hierarchical difference between the three types of knowledge, Spinoza argues that the second and third kinds of knowledge are the highest forms of knowledge the acquisition of which is peculiar only to the human being. Apparently, the hierarchical difference between the first kind of knowledge and the second and third kinds of knowledge is mainly due to ethical reasons because the second and third kinds of knowledge are regarded to be the forms of knowledge that "teach us to distinguish the true from the false."[78] The first kind of knowledge, on the other hand, has nothing to do with truth and therefore ethicality. In that sense,

[74] See page 10.

[75] See Spinoza, *The Collected Works,* (Third Part, Preface), 491.

[76] Ibid., (Third Part, Preface), 491-492.

[77] In the *Emendation*, however, Spinoza identifies four types of knowledge*: report alone, experience, belief and clear knowledge* (ibid., 12-13).

[78] See ibid., (Second Part, P42), 478.

it should not be a mistake to say that the second-order idea of body of the animals and rocks can be seen as a form of the first form of knowledge.[79] The human *conatus*, on the other hand, is driven towards the adequate ideas (first and second kinds of knowledge) which are per se ethical for being grounded on the knowledge of God. In my opinion, this sharp difference between the human cogatio (second and third kind of knowledge) and animal or rock's second-order idea of body (self-consciousness) is a clear indication for the fact that Spinoza is not a friend but a foe of the idea that humanity has no distinguished place in the realm of ethicality. For example, Yirmiyahu Yovel in "Spinoza and Other Heretics" proposes that Spinoza's theory of ethical emancipation through self-knowledge is a sign of his humanistic stance.[80] Yovel puts that the humans are exceptional and rare beings in terms of their level of self-knowledge.[81] This way of putting things shows that the Spinozian human *conatus*, which is teleologically driven towards the adequate ideas that brings his emancipation, has originally an ethical orientation towards the truth (or the good) which sets him apart from the other beings that are part of the causal mechanism of nature. However, this can be called "moderate humanism" for Spinoza is highly egalitarian in seeing all things as equally determined by the causal laws of nature/God.

III. *Essentialism*. The concept of essence has had a hard time in the analytic-continental philosophy as essentialism is a loaded word. Essentialism is mainly associated with the Platonic philosophy which holds that we have universals that are stable, necessary and unchanging (Ideas, Forms) on the one hand and we have the particulars that are mutable and variant on the other.[82] It mainly entails the idea that the human essence has universal Forms or Ideas. Undoubtedly, Spinoza offers a highly different ethical paradigm than the Platonic essentialism. But we still tend to claim that Spinoza is an essentialist in his own sense. How is that so?

As is known, having defined the essence of human being as *conatus* (self-preservation),[83] Spinoza proposed that the human essence is mobile and active. Hence, the human essence is basically envisaged to strive to gain power to preserve itself. Spinoza puts forward that the more one has *conative*

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[79] Because Spinoza in the *Ethics* utters that any form of knowledge that is not adequate falls into the category of first kind of knowledge [Ibid., (Second Part, P41), 478].

[80] Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and other heretics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 164-165.

[81] Ibid., 164.

[82] Constantin V. Boundas, *Deleuze and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 31.

[83] See Spinoza, *The Collected Works*, (Third Part, P7), 499.

power, the more real he is. In ethical sense, this means that agents with high level of *conative* power are more virtuous than the ones with less *conative* power. Denying that the good, bad, imperfection and perfection etc. are real properties of things, Spinoza asserts that we define good and bad etc. in terms of how things affect one's essence or power of acting. Things are good insofar as they increase one's *conative* power or help one realize one's power and are bad insofar as they diminish one's *conative* power or prevent one from realizing one's power. This also fits with the afore-mentioned theory of "model of human nature" (*exemplar humanae naturae*) which has been taken as an objective criterion according to which the good and bad etc. are defined. Accordingly, as Justin Steinberg puts it nicely in "Striving, Happiness, and the Good: Spinoza as Follower and Critic of Hobbes," the model of human nature emerges to be "a paradigm of human power or reality, that is a model of a fully realized human essence."[84] So, it seems clear that Spinoza denounces the Platonic notion of essence but offers that the essence of the human being depends upon power. We can therefore call the Spinozian essentialism as "*conative* essentialism," for Spinoza considers human essence as an act of *conative* power. However, at this point, we shall also examine if the *conative* power of the human agent is oriented towards something stable and unchanging, namely something essential. Spinoza defines essence in the *Ethics* as follows:

> I say that to the essence of anything belongs that which, being given, the thing is [NS: also] necessarily posited and which, being taken away, the thing is necessarily [NS: also] taken away; or that without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and which 20 can neither be nor be conceived without the thing.[85]

Thus, for Spinoza, essence is fundamentally associated with necessity. That is to say, the essence of the things is what necessarily makes the thing itself. If we casually think that *conatus* is simply an increase and decrease in power without any purpose, we shall find ourselves defending the idea that every *conatus* is free to act or decide on its own without taking into account anything necessary about its nature. However, recalling our third teleological argument (c),[86] we might say that the human beings are not free from the necessary determination that is embedded in them. Accordingly,

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[84] Justin Steinberg, "Striving, Happiness and the Good: Spinoza as Follower and Critic of Hobbes," in *A Companion to Hobbes,* ed. Marcus P. Adams (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2022), 441.

[85] Spinoza, *The Collected Works*, (Second Part, Def. 2), 447.

[86] See page 108.

we should remember that Spinoza is very clear when he says: "Whatever has been determined to exist and produce an effect has been so determined by God."[87] This shows that the Spinozian human being is not free to produce any effects without the necessary determination of God. In ethical sense, this means that *conatus* is not free and non-oriented towards any purpose but instead it is oriented towards some ethical concepts which are necessary and unchanging. As we have discussed before, it is certainly the adequate ideas (second and third kind of knowledge) that the *conative* act of the human beings is oriented. Hence, this shows that the ethicality in Spinoza is not a so-called libertarian phenomenon of discovering the good and bad etc. in one's specific experience.[88] But, on the contrary, the ethical good and bad etc. are pre-determined by God which are therefore merely to be uncovered by the *conative* act of human beings. In this way, we can conclude our words by saying that the human beings do not create the ethical values such as good and bad etc. themselves but realize them through their *conative* act as they are imprinted in their essences.

V. Conclusion

Throughout this paper I have argued that Spinoza's conception of *conatus* turns out to be considerably closer to a traditional idea of the teleology than to a mechanistically conceived notion of anti-teleology. I have basically relied this notion on the assumption that even though Spinoza severely criticizes divine teleology, he has a milder approach to human teleology. So, I think that even though Spinoza is radically against the traditional metaphysics, he still cannot completely overcome the teleological agenda of the Aristotelian and Aquinian human ontology.

Situating Spinoza in a more traditional context of teleology has certain implications in terms of his ethics. As opposed to the dominant view in Spinoza scholarship that Spinoza's ethics is subjectivistic, anti-humanistic and non-essentialist based on the anti-teleological reading of his ontology, I have proposed that his ethics is more of an objectivistic, humanistic, and essentialist one. However, I have indicated that Spinoza's ethics is not objectivistic, humanistic, and essentialist completely in traditional sense, but in a highly original sense. This being so, I have shown that the teleological character of *conatus* plays a critical role on the reformulation of the objectivism, humanism, and essentialism of Spinoza's ethics. In this sense, I

[87] Spinoza, *The Collected Works*, (First Part, P28, Dem.), 432.

[88] For example, as a representative of the post-modern libertarian view, Jean-Paul Sartre holds the view that the ethical concepts of good and bad etc. are definable by the individual human agents depending on their subjective experience.

have argued that Spinoza's ethical objectivism, humanism, and essentialism is grounded on the fact that the teleological human *conatus* peculiarly defines the objective and essential values itself as a distinguishing feature for human beings.

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Spinoza's Conatus Undoes Bourdieu's Habitus

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Abstract

Bourdieu's intermittent allusions to Spinoza's conatus disclose the weaknesses of his concept of habitus. A thorough inspection of his involvement with the Spinozist legacy reveals a long-lasting inconsistency, for he expects that conatus will assist him in both 1) grounding the habitus and solving the uncertainties that surround this notion by endorsing a strong conatus, impervious to the resistances it will eventually encounter; and 2) re-instating agency in the structuralist mindset, a program retrospectively admitted by Bourdieu in 1987 and bound to a weak conatus, exposed to the interfering resistance of exterior forces and thus determined by the interaction with contingent events. Bourdieu noticed this incongruity around 1993. At that time, he renounced to buttressing the habitus by means of the dynamizing character of conatus. So began the later evolution of his thought, linked to the antithetical demand of both a weak and a strong conatus, a request commanded in its turn by an overarching habitus. One outcome of this conflict is that agency can hardly be summoned if Bourdieu's conception of a "strong" conatus prevails and the dispositions making up the habitus are irreversible. In contrast, both Bourdieu's appeal to controlled improvisation, and the ensuing concept of strategy, demand a "weak" conatus. Overall, the notion of habitus has been dubbed "a Trojan Horse for determinism" and endorses in fact what might be called the "mythology of permanence," that is, the historically long-held belief in an all-embracing everlastingness. Bourdieu's use of Spinoza's conatus, in sum, besides highlighting the immutable social reproduction entailed by the habitus, acts as a litmus test for the ambiguities and shortcomings of this notion.

Keywords: *conatus; habitus; agency; determinism; strategy; hysteresis; Spinoza; Bourdieu*

I. Conatus raises opposite expectations

Bourdieu's recurrent references to Spinoza's *conatus* reveal the fragility of his concept of *habitus*. As will be shown, Bourdieu's use of conatus not only acts as a sort of litmus test for the uncertainties and failings of the habitus but primarily brings to light that this concept entails immutable social reproduction and so reinforces the charge of being a kind of "Trojan Horse" for determinism. In fact, the support that Bourdieu expected from conatus backfired because he applied this notion in conflicting ways, which gave an unsettling blow to the already staggering habitus.

As will be discussed in detail below, Bourdieu summons the Spinozist legacy in opposite ways. In his scattered uses of Spinoza's conatus, two contradictory demands may be discerned. He expects that conatus may assist him in:

1) *Grounding the habitus,* i.e. solving the uncertainties that surround this notion. Does the habitus really exist? Is not this concept a groundless hypostatization? Is its alleged permanence warranted? These ambiguities bid endorsing a *strong conatus*, i.e. a sort of "engine of the habitus" endowed with un-revisable strength and impervious to the resistances it will eventually encounter. Bourdieu's misreading of Spinoza pushes its roots in the rigidity imposed by a well-grounded habitus.

2) *Re-instating agency* in the structuralist mindset, a program retrospectively acknowledged by Bourdieu in 1987. This desired re-establishment demands a *weak conatus*, i.e. a revisable conatus exposed to the interfering resistance of exterior forces, and thus congruent, in this respect, with Spinoza's doctrine. The predicate "weak" alludes to a mode of existence altogether oriented upon itself, albeit devoid of self-consciousness and uncommitted to clear-cut aims. Primarily, it becomes determined by interactions of contingent events (hence its "weakness").

Bourdieu noticed this inconsistency around 1993. He saw that an alleged "dynamizing character" of conatus (Bourdieu endorsed this view from 1984 to 1993) does not assist in neither grounding the habitus nor re-instating agency. In his later thought he tried to solve this twofold quandary by subordinating conatus to habitus, while retaining the muted antagonism between a *weak* and a *strong* version of conatus. A scrutiny of the Spinozian background of conatus (the staple reference for Bourdieu) appears indispensable for revealing the full impact of this incongruity.

II. Conatus and the social sciences

According to Spinoza, as is well known, substance (Spinoza's immanent God, the *natura naturans*) is infinitely productive, has generated everything, and ex-

presses itself through the finite *modi*, all of them impelled by the affirmative force of the conatus. More precisely, Spinoza derives the notion of conatus from his metaphysical thought concerning finite things and their relation to the infinite substance, God: each finite thing is a determinate expression of the essence of God, hence an expression of God's power. Nothing can be destroyed except by an external cause. This fundamental principle applies to all finite modes.

"Conatus," therefore, indicates a general tendency towards self-preservation. Each thing, be it conceived under either thought or extension, "endeavours to persist in its own being" and has an "active power" to stay in that way. This conatus remains constant unless actively interfered with (this is what the Bourdieuan occasional endorsement of a "strong" conatus tends to forget).

While the fundamental thesis of the conatus doctrine is that "each thing, insofar as it is in itself (quantum in se est), endeavours (conatur) to persevere in its being,"[1] when Spinoza speaks of a thing as far as it is in itself, however, he appears to mean "insofar as it is unaffected by anything else." It is worthwhile to remark that in the same *Eth.* III6 he states that nothing has "in itself" anything by which it can be destroyed ("While we attend only to the thing itself, and not to external causes, we can find nothing in it which could destroy it."[2]). In the next proposition, Spinoza understands this "endeavour"[3] (conatus) as a "power" (potentia), displayed by "each thing, in so far as it can by its own power [*de potentia*]." This is "the power, or endeavour, by which [each thing] endeavours to persevere in its being."[4]

In short: according to Spinoza, things (modes) affect each other while each strives to maintain its own being. Thus, what a thing actually does is not the outcome of its endeavour or power alone. It results, on the contrary, from the interaction between its endeavour or power and the endeavours or powers of the other things that affect it. The conatus of any entity can only be destroyed by an exterior force. "Everything essentially opposes (opponitur) anything that can threaten its existence."[5] Stuart Hampshire furnished a clear rendering of this circumstance:

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[1] *Eth.* III6. References to Spinoza's *Ethics*: Capital Roman numerals designate Books I-V. Cf. Edwin Curley, ed., *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, Vol. 1 (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985).

[2] *Eth.* III4.

[3] This should not be understood, of course, in reference to the "endeavour" of someone who has conscious aims or objectives, because according to Spinoza the body as well as the mind can be said to "endeavour." "Will" is only a type of conatus. Cf. *Eth.* III9.

[4] *Eth.* III7.

[5] *Eth.* III6.

> The identity of any particular thing in nature logically depends on its power of self-maintenance [...]. This tendency, in spite of external causes, makes it the particular thing that it is [...]. The greater the power of self-maintenance of the particular thing in the face of external causes, the greater reality it has, and the more clearly it can be distinguished as having a definite nature and individuality.[6]

It should come as no surprise, therefore, the assiduous involvement of the social and political sciences with the idea of conatus. "While the philosophical reading of Spinoza sets out by the concepts of *causa sui* and substance, the sociological reading begins with the concept of conatus."[7] Small wonder, because intuitively the conatus undergirds the life trajectory of any human being as set against the backdrop of successive social contexts. This pre-eminence has been repeatedly highlighted: "The concept of conatus, i.e. the tendency of everything to persevere in its being, is the Spinozist concept chiefly favoured by the social sciences."[8] This positive reception, however, must be profiled against the ideological pressures of our age, which have tended to view the Spinozist conatus as the "figurehead (figure tutélaire), in former times occupied by Marx, of a critical-materialist philosophy."[9] It has happened, in short, that,

> Spinozism has mesmerized present-day political thought not only through its ages-old aura of materialism and radical atheism but also by its socio-political mindset, which privileges force and struggle for power and denounces the contractualist fetichism adopted by the bourgeois political standpoint.[10]

III. Grounding the habitus

Bourdieu repeatedly saw the necessity of grounding the habitus, which meant above all justifying its existence, countering its shortcomings, and offsetting

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[6] Stuart Hampshire, *Spinoza* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1951), 122.

[7] Frédéric Lordon, "Conatus et institutions: Pour un structuralisme énergétique," *L'Année de la régulation* 7 (2003): 118.

[8] Yves Citton, and Frédéric Lordon, *Spinoza et les sciences sociales* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2008), 18.

[9] Antoine Lilti, "Rabelais est-il notre contemporain? Histoire intellectuelle et herméneutique critique," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 59, no. 4 (2012): 80.

[10] Citton, and Lordon, 15.

its fragility. But he deployed this concept in manifold ways, which jeopardizes the search for an ultimate formula. Habitus exists in many forms, has a wide range of uses, and operates in several levels. In the words of Karl Maton,

> Habitus is one of the most misunderstood, misused and hotly contested of Bourdieu's ideas. It can be both revelatory and mystifying, instantly recognizable and difficult to define, straightforward and slippery. In short, despite its popularity, 'habitus' remains anything but clear.[11]

The habitus must be defended against current indictments. Chiefly among them are the charge of being a baseless construction or reification and its alleged inability to explain social change (its covert imposition of determinism is a quandary discussed below). In fact, the habitus is a conservative notion, hardly amenable to any sort of learning process and resistant to development and change. The baffling disparity between the generative experiences of any habitus and the resulting dispositions has also been remarked. These dispositions are simply tendencies to act in a particular way, yet if closely observed entail several riddles. How are they formed? Do they need to become indefinitely actualized, or they get extinct by lack of effective realization? Can they disappear under the pressure of a systematic counter-socialization?

Small wonder if, as will be discussed in detail below, Bourdieu's references to Spinoza's conatus are intertwined with his repeated efforts to specify the concept of habitus. Brought to its simplest features, habitus is the system of socially constituted dispositions that guides agents in their perception and action. In Bourdieu's words, habitus is the "past that survives in the present, [...] laid down in each agent by his [sic] earliest upbringing." This temporal dimension of the habitus is best highlighted by its socio-somatic aspect, which amounts to a long-lasting encounter between a knowing body and a repressed but unconsciously enacted history. This time-boundedness means, among other things, that

> the habitus acquired in the family underlies the structuring of school experiences, [so that] the habitus transformed by schooling, itself diversified, in turn underlies the structuring of all subsequent experiences.[12]

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[11] Karl Maton, "Habitus," in *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, ed. Michael James Grenfell, 48-64 (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008), 49.

[12] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 82, and 8 [originally published as *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique*

Bourdieu stresses the taken-for-granted ways of perceiving, thinking, and acting on the part of social actors immersed in their everyday habits.[13] This explains Bourdieu's long-held fascination with Spinoza's conatus, albeit distorted by his "strong" misreading of the philosopher. Conatus grants propensities to people thanks to the habitus they have acquired. These predispositions impel them to act in specific ways and evolve into lifelong personal projects, even if they tend to remain unconscious.

Still, an array of fundamental questions remains unsolved[14]. How can a single habitus account for a vast number of practices and discourses? How does the sedimentation of past experiences mutate into an array of propensions and dispositions? Granting the temporality of the habitus (it is neither wholly structural nor entirely subjective), how does it activate the passivity of simple habits, dynamizing their pastness and converting them into actuality? In a wider scope, how can extra-corporal reality become embodied? How can an array of socializing experiences cohabit in the same body? How can they stay there long, and how are they mobilized at the opportune moments of a social trajectory? In conclusion, is habitus "often little more than theoretical icing on an empirical cake" so that "the concept can be removed without any loss of explanatory power?"[15]

These difficulties increase if we consider the structure of the habitus. It consists in both the *hexis* (i.e. the unconsciously interiorized ways to relate to and to use our body, such as physical demeanour, bodily dispositions and linguistic accent) and more diffuse mental habits (principles and values oriented to practice, schemes of perception, classification, feeling and action, also unconsciously internalized and far different from simple habits, for they allegedly facilitate new solutions to new situations without previous deliberation). As to the *hexis* dimension of the habitus, it is worthwhile to recall the origins of this notion. Already Aristotle pointed out that any intention to act must be coupled to an "efficient cause" whose staying power greatly surpasses that of the habit, seen as a mere array of basic motor acts. The *hexis* ap-

(Geneva: Droz, 1972)].

[13] It is worthwhile to stress that *habit* and *conatus* reinforce each other. Any habit tends to persist, and conversely anything that persists is somehow habitual. Habit is the inevitable consequence of conatus, and conatus is what habits necessarily possess.

[14] The ahistoricism and limitless validity of the habitus come into view by comparison with the Bourdieuan concept of "field," which possesses only "regional" validity. These "fields," as Bernard Lahire puts it, "are nowhere to be found in the Guayaki society described by Pierre Clastres or in Claude Lévi-Strauss' Nambikwara." Cf. Felice Dassetto, and Bernard Lahire, "À propos de l'ouvrage de Bernard Lahire, Dans les plis singuliers du social," *Recherches Sociologiques* 44, no. 2 (2013): 161.

[15] Maton, 63.

peared thus as an acquired, active, and persistent condition, a sort of hoarded knowledge which stays permanently committed and never becomes passive. Bourdieu inherited these Aristotelian views, and in his later work the *hexis* became crucial for understanding the disposition to act, for it designates both the (socially conditioned) physical body, its gestures and attitudes, and above all its constituting efficacy.

Regrettably, these quandaries have been often misunderstood by commentators: "Bourdieu's sociology allows a detailed approach to the way in which conatus works, and conversely its conceptual foundations can be enhanced by means of Spinoza's philosophy [...]. This sociology could indeed adopt the conatus as the principle of action it evidently lacks."[16] It has been said as well that conatus undergirds habitus in multiple ways. This view, however, tends to aggravate the congenital blur of habitus:

> Bourdieu uses his concept of habitus to generalize through quite different domains of human activity. Its originality is to suggest that these may be an underlying connection or common imprint across a broad sweep of different types of behaviour, including motor, cognitive, emotional or moral behaviours. But this very appealing conceptual versatility sometimes renders ambiguous just what the concept actually designates empirically.[17]

To overcome these perplexities, it is worthwhile to inspect Bourdieu's involvement with Spinoza's conatus. His references are sparse, and their meaning underwent a subtle turnaround over time. A gradual loss of relevance can indeed be observed. In the initial uses of the term (roughly from 1984 to 1993), conatus simply "dynamizes"[18] the habitus. Bourdieu's initially far-reaching attitude, however, softens somehow during a brief, intermediate period (aprox. from 1993 to 1996), when conatus no longer commands or determines habitus and merely "inhabits" (or "is located in") it. Lastly, in the final years from 1994 to 2001, the reversal is complete. Now it is conatus that "is fulfilled by" (or emerges "embodied in") the habitus. In other words, conatus appears prevailed upon by habitus in this later time. As a result, it seems to possess the "strong" features surmised by Bourdieu, while it merely

[16] Lordon, 124.

[17] David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 109.

[18] Steve Fuller carelessly presupposes that Bourdieu's whole oeuvre endorses this "dynamizing" power held by conatus by enabling the social agent to act in particular ways: "conatus provides habitus with its dynamic character." Cf. Steve Fuller, "Conatus," in *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, ed. Michael James Grenfell, 171-182 (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008), 178. But a closer look at Bourdieu's texts detects a dramatic (and revealing) evolution of his thought.

replicates the habitus' imperviousness to change. Even when the individual's conatus is foiled by the ups and downs of human existence, his or her adjustment to the social world does not evolve.

Let us examine in detail this baffling about-turn in Bourdieu's concern with Spinoza's conatus. In a text from 1984, conatus assists the reproduction of social reality. Bourdieu asserts that there is

> a multiplicity of simultaneous but independent inventions, albeit objectively orchestrated, realized [...] by agents endowed with similar systems of dispositions and, so to speak, the same *social conatus* (by which we mean that combination of dispositions and interests associated with a particular class of social position which *inclines* social agents to *strive to* reproduce [...] the properties constituting their social identity)[19]

Likewise, in a text of 1989 conatus appears as both the internal determination of the habitus and the ground of its tendency to perpetuate itself:

> Given that habitus is genetically (as well as structurally) linked to a position, it always *tends to express*, through schemata that are its embodied form, both the space of the different or opposed positions [...] and a practical stance towards this space [...]. Its tendency to perpetuate itself according to *its internal determination*, its *conatus*, by asserting its autonomy in relation to the situation [...], is a tendency to perpetuate an identity that is difference.[20]

At that time, thus, habitus seems to be endowed with conatus. A few years later (1992) conatus is understood, more precisely, as the specific inertia of the habitus (aka. hysteresis):

> [In certain situations] conduct remains unintelligible unless you bring into the picture habitus and its specific inertia, its hysteresis. [In Algeria,] peasants endowed with a precapitalist *habitus* were suddenly uprooted and forcibly thrown into a capitalist cosmos, [which] is one illustration [of hysteresis]. [Likewise, in] histori-

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[19] Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, trans. Peter Collier (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), 176 (italics added) [originally published as *Homo Academicus* (Paris: Minuit, 1984)].

[20] Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, trans. Lauretta C. Clough (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 2-3 (italics added) [originally published as *La Noblesse d'État* (Paris: Seuil, 1989)].

> cal conjunctures of a revolutionary nature, changes in objective structures are so swift that agents whose mental structures have been moulded by these prior structures become obsolete and act at cross purposes (à contre-temps). [...] In short, social groups owe this *tendency to persevere in its being* mostly to the fact that the agents are endowed with durable dispositions, apt to survive the social and economic conditions partly created by themselves.[21]

Around 1991, Bourdieu maintains that conatus stirs the action of the people holding power:

> Power is animated by a kind of *conatus*, as Spinoza called it, a tendency to perpetuate itself, a tendency to persist in its being [...]. People who hold power or capital *act*, whether they are aware of it or not, in such a way as to perpetuate or increase their power and their capital. This conatus, which is *the constant movement* by which the social body is sustained, *leads* the different bodies that hold capital to confront one another [...].[22]

Mitigating the approach endorsed thus far, in which conatus prevailed upon habitus, around 1993 Bourdieu begins to relax his stance and wavers between asserting that conatus "is located in" the habitus and precising that "conatus is a striving, inclination, natural tendency, impulse or effort." This last depiction appears in a note to a text on issues related to family and education, where Bourdieu explains that

> the father is the site and the instrument of the 'project' (or better yet, of a conatus) *inscribed* in inherited dispositions and attributes [...]. To inherit is to relay these immanent dispositions, to perpetuate this *conatus*, and to accept making oneself the docile instrument of this 'project' of reproduction.[23]

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[21] Pierre Bourdieu, and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 130 (italics added) [originally published as *Réponses: Pour une anthropologie réflexive* (Paris: Minuit, 1992)].

[22] Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State: Lectures at the College de France 1989-1992*, eds. Patrick Champagne, Remi Lenoir, Franck Poupeau, and Marie-Christine Riviere, trans. David Fernbach (Cambridge: Polity 2014), 265-266 (italics added) [originally published as *Sur l'État: Cours au Collège de France 1989-1992* (Paris: Seuil, 2012)].

[23] Pierre Bourdieu, et al., *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, trans. Priscilla P. Ferguson (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 508 (italics added) [originally published as *La Misère du monde*, ed. P. Bourdieu (Paris: Seuil, 1993)].

In this same year, Bourdieu envisages conatus as a tendency located in the habitus (as well as in the social field), for both are

> *the site of* a sort of *conatus*, a tendency to perpetuate themselves in their being, to reproduce themselves in that which constitutes their existence and their identity [...]. It is not true that everything people do is aimed at maximizing their social profit; but one may say that they do it to perpetuate or to augment their social being.[24]

In 1994, while asserting that the family and the education system are the main forces impelling social change, Bourdieu perceives conatus as the basic impulse for all strategies of social reproduction:

> Families are corporate bodies *animated* by a kind of *conatus*, in Spinoza's sense, that is, a tendency to perpetuate their social being, with all its powers and privileges, which is *at the basis of* reproduction strategies [concerning] fertility, marriage, succession and, last but not least, education.[25]

These "strategies of reproduction" appear hazily related to conatus (it is said to be their "basis" or *principe*) in another passus of the same text. There, Bourdieu maintains that they

> are found, in different forms and with different relative weights, in all societies, and whose *basis* is this sort of *conatus*, the unconscious desire (la pulsion) of the family or the household to perpetuate itself by perpetuating its unity against divisive factors [...].[26]

At the closing years of Bourdieu's lifetime (roughly from 1994 to 2001), he reverses his position concerning the consequences of conatus, which now appears "fulfilled by" (or emerges "embodied in") habitus. At that time, in short, habitus prevails upon conatus. In a work from 1997, conatus is fuzzily

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[24] Pierre Bourdieu, "Concluding Remarks: For a Sociogenetic Understanding of Intellectual Works," in *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*, eds. Craig Calhoun, Edward LiPuma, and Moishe Postone, 263-275 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 274 (italics added).

[25] Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, trans. Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), 19 (italics added) [originally published as *Raisons pratiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1994)].

[26] Ibid., 107 (italics added).

sketched as a historical dynamic wielded by the social world:

> The social world has a history, and for this reason it is *the site of an internal dynamic*, independent of the consciousness and will of the players, a kind of *conatus* linked to the existence of mechanisms which tend to reproduce the structure of the objective probabilities [...].[27]

In another place of this same text, conatus appears "fulfilled" by the habitus:

> The inherited and therefore immediately attuned habitus, and the corporeal constraint exercised through it, are the surest guarantee of direct and total adherence to he often implicit demands of these institutions [*scil.* the corporate bodies]. The reproductive strategies which it engenders are one of the mediations through which the social order *fulfils* its tendency to persevere in its being, in a word, its *conatus*.[28]

Finally, in 2000, while Bourdieu is describing the competition among the members of a senior management, the agents involved appear to embody the conatus of their social position:

> In the struggles in which they engage to press their own 'views' [...] in so far as each of them in a sense *embodies* the 'tendency to persevere in being,' the *conatus*, of the position he or she occupies and which his or her entire social being, his or her habitus, expresses and realizes, the protagonists commit the capital they hold, in its different species and its different states.[29]

Despite Bourdieu's wavering, these references to conatus share a highly relevant trait. Bourdieu conceives a "strong" conatus because he assigns it an exclusive power of permanence and tends to disregard the Spinozian stress on the dependence of conatus vis-à-vis opposing forces.

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[27] Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 215 (italics added) [originally published as *Méditations pascaliennes* (Paris: Seuil, 1997)].

[28] Ibid., 152 (italics added).

[29] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Social Structures of the Economy*, trans. Chris Turner (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 217-218 (italics added) [originally published as *Les structures sociales de l'économie* (Paris: Seuil, 2000)].

IV. Re-instating agency

Appealing to the explanatory resources of the habitus and opposing both social physics and canonical structuralism, Bourdieu intended "to re-introduce agents" in a context dominated by the active presence of the past sedimented in the present. There, "embodied history, converted in nature and hence forgotten as such"[30] was hegemonic:

> I wanted, so to speak, to reintroduce agents that Lévi-Strauss and the structuralists [...] tended to abolish, making them into simple epiphenomena of structure. And I mean agents, not subjects. Action is not the mere carrying out (la simple exécution) of a rule. Social agents, in archaic societies as well as in ours, are not automata regulated like clocks, in accordance with laws which they do not understand. In the most complex games [...] they put into action the incorporated principles of a generative habitus.[31]

Yet "recovering human agency from the grip of structure" (for this is what Bourdieu has in mind) presupposes building a case for agency (i.e. understanding how agents, presumedly, "are able to do otherwise"[32]). This is a strenuous commitment because agency cannot but emerge circumscribed, or in other words: actors know little from the mechanisms governing social reproduction. They can behave only within historically rooted modes of activity, and their actions may have unintended consequences. Society encroaches upon (and intervenes within) human agency in the form of unconscious motivations for action and through specific stockpiles of knowledge. Individuals draw unconsciously upon this hoarded expertise while endeavouring to articulate it. Small wonder that the human disciplines highlight the tension between the power of structures and the positing of human agency, ancillary to a conception of the human being as both subject and object.

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[30] Pierre Bourdieu, *Le Sens pratique* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1980), 91.

[31] Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 9. Bourdieu is discussing the foundation of *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* in 1975 and in the same page he precises his thought: "In retrospect, the use of the notion of habitus [...] can be understood as a way of escaping from the choice between a structuralism without subject and a philosophy of the subject. Unfortunately, people apply to my analyses the very alternatives that the notion of habitus is meant to exclude, those of consciousness and the unconscious, of explanations by determining causes or by final causes."

[32] Every attempt to rescue agency, indeed, must confront the difficulty described by Barry Smart as "the dark side" of agency, i.e. the troubles hampering the active, creative, autonomous human faculty "to be able to do otherwise." Cf. Barry Smart, "Foucault, Sociology, and the Problem of Human Agency," *Theory and Society* 11, no. 2 (1982): 129.

Bourdieu's basic tenet is that the most resourceful or spontaneous actions undertaken by individuals reproduce the structures that brought about their habitus. As a result, human action is directed by dispositions beneath discursive consciousness. Both practices and perceptions are grounded on pre-discursive familiarity with the social worlds we inhabit. Our incorporated dispositions are triggered by both the spurs and the hindrances that eventually emerge.

> The theory of habitus has the primordial function of stressing that the principle of our actions is more often practical sense than rational calculation, [that] the past remains present and active in the dispositions it has produced, [and that] social agents have, *more often than one might expect*, dispositions (tastes, for example) that are more systematic than one might think.[33]

On the one hand, habitus is a model for understanding how we function as agents,[34] making deliberate choices within the constraints of a social space. Bourdieu's approach to action highlights its regularity and coherence, without ignoring its negotiated and strategic character. Action is not the automated execution of a rule. In this respect, it is a mystery that when people's actions and interactions generate new social institutions and cultural arrangements, habituses (and thus structures) consequently move on.

On the other hand, the subjective structures of habitus generate objective practices (they are *structuring* structures) but they result from the objective structures that govern social life (they are *structured* structures as well). The subjective structures that generate objective structures obey to prior objective structures. In fewer words: the habitus reproduces the structures that produced the habitus in the first place.[35] In addition, habitus is inadequate when confronting phenomena already explained by rules and intentions, such as reflection, cultural antagonism, or social change. Many issues that Bourdieu discusses are better explained intentionally.

a. An array of difficulties

Small wonder, then, if relevant commentators coincide in their adverse judgement on Bourdieu's effort to reinstate agency in social thought. In James

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[33] Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 64.

[34] Stated in Spinozist vocabulary, the "second nature" in which the habitus consists, insofar as it descends from habit, is both *naturata* (i.e. history become nature) and *naturans* (able, that is, to convert in natural what is historical).

[35] The structuralist mind inveighs against agency: the truth of the social world lies on its hidden face.

Bohman's view, for instance, "Bourdieu's theory provides no basis for practical agency. He furnishes no reference to intentional level of explanations [*sic*] of what agents see themselves as trying to accomplish."[36] This spurning opinion is shared by Nick Crossley: Bourdieu's habitus ignores the generative role of agency. There is something more to agency than the concept of habit can fully capture. There is a creative and generative dynamic that makes and modifies habits."[37] Moreover, as William Sewell puts it,

> In Bourdieu's habitus, schemata and resources (what he calls 'mental structures' and 'the world of objects') so powerfully reproduce one another that even the most cunning or improvisational actions undertaken by agents necessarily reproduce the structures.[38]

Overall, this is a case of incompatible viewpoints. The habitus is ancillary to a dualism of objective structures and subordinated individuals, and the attempt "to re-introduce agents" must confront a determinist frame if, as observed above, habitus rests upon conatus in Bourdieu's "strong" interpretation. Contradicting his earlier belittling of a social life led by a "repertory of rules" which yet allow agentic resources, some remarks by Bourdieu seem to imply that individuals are dominated by objective social structures:

> The habitus is the product of the work of inculcation and appropriation necessary for those products of collective history: the objective structures (i.e. of language, economy, etc.), to succeed in reproducing themselves more or less completely, in the form of durable dispositions, in [...] individuals lastingly subjected to the same conditions of existence.[39]

Bourdieu highlights the ways in which domination perpetuates itself over time and does not discuss how they can be lessened or thwarted. He focuses on reproduction and repetition and insists that there is little freedom in social life. He does not fail to notice that "improvising" means at bottom "transgressing the rules in accordance with the rules for transgressing."

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[36] James Bohman, "Practical Reason and Cultural Constraint: Agency in Bourdieu's Theory of Practice," in *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Shusterman. 129-152 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 145.

[37] Nick Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus and Its Construction," *Theory and Society* 30, no. 1 (2001): 95-96.

[38] William H. Sewell Jr., *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 138-139.

[39] Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 85.

In the scholarly discussion of Bourdieu's understanding of the habitus, the references to determinism abound. Deserve to be highlighted, among them, the insight about "the impure determinism of Bourdieu's thought"[40] or the suggestion that "Bourdieu allows a structural determinism in the last instance,"[41] especially if welded to Bourdieu's "strong" take on conatus. Most of them, however, adopt a staple query: How can an agent innovate despite the crushing weight of his or her habitus? How can an objective structure, independent of both the consciousness and the will of individuals, and bound to constraining practices and representations, allow a margin of initiative and creativity?

The presumed rigidity of the "strong" habitus suggests an associated difficulty, ancillary to the alleged "overwhelming might of the past." Agency can hardly be summoned, indeed, if Bourdieu's conception of a "strong" conatus prevails and the dispositions of the habitus are irrevocable. By invoking a "strong" conatus, as we have seen, Bourdieu implied that the habitus expresses the impossibility of amending, altering, forgetting, deleting, un-learning. But then, how can agency co-exist with a habitus whose chief characteristic is its permanence or durableness, since it consists in a system of acquired dispositions that cannot change? Otherwise stated, the habitus is all-powerful, and its dispositions are sealed for ever. Therefore, the possibility of backwards alteration is excluded, and the dominance of the past appears inescapable.

b. Subjective expectations vs. objective possibilities

The unswerving character assigned to the habitus explains the survivance, amid altered settings, of precedent schemas for action. This is due to the decalage caused by the inertial properties of the habitus (in short, its "strong" conatus), which if not counterbalanced by external forces destroy any possible fit between mental and social structures. Bourdieu names "hysteresis" these inertial traits: "there is an inertia (or hysteresis) of habitus which have a spontaneous tendency to perpetuate structures corresponding to the conditions that produced them."[42] This permanence accounts for the errors of perspective that lead social agents to "wrong" decisions and appraisals. "The hysteresis of the habitus [...] is doubtless one of the foundations of the structural lag between opportunities and the dispositions to grasp them, which is the cause of missed opportunities."[43]

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[40] Cf. Miriam Aiello, "Habitus. Per una stratigrafia filosòfica," *Consecutio Rerum* 1, no. 1 (2016): 202.

[41] Cf. Richard Jenkins, "Pierre Bourdieu and the Reproduction of Determinism," *Sociology* 16, no. 2 (1982): 270-281.

[42] Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 160.

[43] Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 83.

A hardened array of dispositions, therefore, must cope with a potential infinity of unforeseen situations. The inevitable transformation of the objective conditions enforces a gap between the habitus (a huge reservoir of history) and the present social experiences of his or her carrier. According to Bourdieu,

> As a result of the hysteresis effect, necessarily implicated in the logic of the constitution of habitus, practices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment with which they are actually confronted is too distant from that in which they are objectively fitted.[44]

Its determinist aura notwithstanding, and despite the negative connotations (deficiency, delay) suggested by the etymology of the term, the hysteresis has eye-opening consequences. On the one hand, it provides opportunities for the socially dominating strata to dominate further, whereas the dominated are bound to continue misrecognizing their (doubtless meagre) assets in the social game. On the other hand, as the precedent quote suggests, the inertia of the habitus (particularly highlighted in *The Logic of Practice*) seems to open a weird window of opportunity for the dominated. After all, it is conceivable that they reshape their practices upon noticing that their dispositions are manifestly ill-adjusted:

> The presence of the past in the kind of false anticipation of the future performed by the habitus is, paradoxically, most clearly seen when the sense of a probable future is belied.[45]

c. Individual strategies are impossible

Considering Bourdieu's "strong" view of conatus, the habitus presupposes a reawakening of the past that disables the individual's initiative. It is startling, therefore, that according to Bourdieu the habitus can allow *strategies*[46] (that is, ensembles of coordinated moves, oriented to an end) containing room for manoeuvre and presupposing improvisation. In his view, these practical skills for decision-taking imply a pre-reflexive, unconscious familiarity with the so-

[44] Ibid., 78.

[45] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 62.

[46] Perhaps it is worthwhile to recall that in current parlance "strategy" is understood as an ensemble of coordinated moves, oriented to an end and presupposing intention. A conscious agent calculates the best relationship between acquired advantages and possible gains. The active response *by* the agent is bound to match structural constraints *on* the agent. Understanding the situation seems imperative.

cial world, acquired through a long involvement. Such practices are finalized behaviours:

> the good player [...] does at every moment what the game requires. This presupposes a permanent capacity for invention, indispensable if one is to be able to adapt to indefinitely varied and never completely identical situations.[47]

These strategies are not intentional modalities of action, and the agents are seldom conscious of them. While closely related to extant opportunities and exclusions, they cannot be the result of consciously determined aims.[48] They result from the interaction between the dispositions of the habitus and the constraints imposed, or the possibilities offered, by the social world. According to Bourdieu, besides, any strategy is the *opus operatum* in regard of habitus as *opus operandi*. He thus advocates,

> working back from the *opus operatum*, from practices that reveal themselves to intuition like a data rhapsody, to the *modus operandi,* to the generating and unifying habitus that produces objectively systematic strategies.[49]

This means that the habitus, understood as "a system of dispositions acquired by implicit or explicit learning, which functions as a system of generative schemes [...] generates strategies" adequate to both familiar and unforeseen situations. In both cases, these strategies "can be objectively consistent with the objective interests of their authors without having ben expressly designed to that end."[50]

The link of Bourdieu's "strategy" to a *weak* conatus, ceaselessly subjected to the constraints of opposite powers, has been remarked by prominent commentators:

> The active resistance offered by conatus to a total annihilation by stronger exterior forces appears as an existential affirmation

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[47] Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, 63.

[48] Some strategies are both reinforced and concealed by a "second-order" strategy. Social games (for instance the gift) often imply that the players misrecognize the objective truth of the game.

[49] Bourdieu, *State Nobility*, 274.

[50] Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question*, trans. Richard Nice (London, Thousand Oaks, CA, and New Delhi: Sage, 1993*)*, 76 [originally published as *Questions de sociologie* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1980)].

> that amount to a strategy. Resistance and strategy are entailed by the essence of any real entity. The idea of strategy permanently decides the stakes of life and death for any conatus.[51]

Overall, then, Bourdieu's subject cannot freely choose his or her strategy, for it consists in the crossing of multiple, heterogeneous causal series, "the individual trace of a whole collective history."[52] A kind of collective decision (amounting to a "weak" conatus) prevails upon rational individual choice:

> You can see that the subject is not the instantaneous *ego* of a sort of singular *cogito*, but the individual trace of an entire collective history [...]. In fact, nobody knows any longer who the subject of the final decision is.[53]

Otherwise stated, intentionality plays only a subordinated role in Bourdieu's notion of strategy. The dispositions of the habitus are predominantly unconscious, for the average social practice does not consist in reflexive, intentional, and creative action. The social struggle can only take place by concealing the strategies involved.

V. A Trojan Horse nested inside another Trojan Horse

It has been often pointed out that while Bourdieu appears to defend voluntarism ("I wanted to reintroduce the agents that the structuralists tended to abolish") by endorsing controlled improvisation (i.e. improvisation within limits), in fact determinism prevails in his thought, as shown by his varying involvement with a "strong" conatus. Objective structures mould the subjective structures and these in turn shape once again the objective structures, which leaves scarce leeway to spontaneity. Jeffrey Alexander displayed figuratively this Bourdieuan liability when he dubbed the concept of habitus "a Trojan Horse for determinism."[54] According to Alexander, Bourdieu fostered a determinist upheaval from within the beleaguered Troy of the agency-homesick using (albeit unwittingly) deceptive means.[55] Extending this metaphor,

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[51] Laurent Bove, *La stratégie du conatus. Affirmation et résistance chez Spinoza* (Paris: Vrin, 1996), 14.

[52] Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, 91.

[53] Ibid., 91-92.

[54] Jeffrey Alexander, *Fin de Siècle Social Theory: Relativism, Reduction, and the Problem of Reason* (London: Verso, 1995), 137.

[55] The agency-homesick have backed this subversion in a self-defeating way. After all, the Trojan Horse was the stratagem that caused the unsuspecting Trojans *to request their foe* (the concealed Greeks) into their strongly defended citadel.

the conatus may be viewed as another, in this case pivotal Trojan Horse nested Matryoshka-like inside the habitus (Alexander's staple Trojan Horse). It must be kept in mind, however, that this furtive conatus achieves opposite outcomes (its impact may be either subversive or reinforcing) depending on whether it is read as "weak" or "strong."

In the first case, Bourdieu's recurrent commitment to a "weak" conatus may appear as an unruly Trojan Horse for universal fickleness and unpredictability nested inside the alleged Trojan Horse for determinism. This Bourdieuan view, indeed, further jeopardizes the already questioned capacity of the habitus to explain permanence in the social world. Yet such permanence (unrelated to willed and intentional endurance) seems assured if we accept Bourdieu's "strong" reading of the conatus, which in this case can be viewed as the loyally nested Trojan Horse that reinforces the determinist sway of the habitus.

Still, deciding to what extent events *are* somehow permanent (i.e. whether permanence amounts to a socio-historical "rocky bottom") is of course a thorny issue. Concisely stated: do the effects of everything that has happened endure forever, or they undergo instead a progressive erosion and ultimately fade out? If perpetuation prevails, the "strong" version of conatus emerges as an antidote against disappearance and loss. On a wider scope, then, a concept of habitus supported by Bourdieu's intermittent preference for a tough reading of the conatus endorses the age-old assumption that can be called "the mythology of permanence."

This mythology amounts to a hypostasis of tradition and historical continuity. Its central tenet is a ceaseless staying power held by all outcomes along time. It is assumed, indeed, that they: *a)* remain immune to present choices; *b)* are supported by both manifest carriers and self-concealed undercurrents; and *c)* do not become exposed to disappearances, recoveries, distortions, or transformations. In short, they would fall prey to the Darwinian disparagement of calcified inheritances that result in unimaginable accumulations. Yet this is precisely what a habitus backed by a "strong" conatus is bound to bring about, because in that case all human beings would become "walking museums of ancestral decrepitude, pock-marked from ancestral plagues, limping relicts of ancestral misfortune."[56]

In this regard, the gist of the preceding research involves deciding upon several alternatives. They set up the divide between a "strong" and a "weak" conatus, which is crucial, as already shown, for Bourdieu's incompatible projects. Does a specific conatus dissipate itself spontaneously the further it gets from its origin? Or does it maintain itself over time, in some way kept alive by other people's conatus? Or else does it remain unchanged unless

[56] Richard Dawkins, *A Devil's Chaplain: Reflections on Hope, Lies, Science, and Love* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 90.

actively interfered with? Spinoza's position in that respect, as we have seen, contrasts with Bourdieu's wavering. Outcomes fade out, get eroded, undergo corrosion, are resisted. Some of them, fortuitously, survive. In other cases, further phases of a given process negate the precedent ones. Unintended consequences, on occasion, may deflect antecedent aims. Then permanence re-emerges (for it may be intermittent) with altered features.

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Streben of the I as the Fundamental Form of Consciousness

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Abstract

This paper aims to show that Fichte's concept of Streben or striving of the I is the necessary condition of finite or individual consciousness. The I posits itself absolutely, but in doing so it posits the not-I as well, therefore it posits itself absolutely as self-limiting I. If there was no limitation on the infinite striving of the I's activity, then there would be no I, at least as we know it. Firstly, the paper emphasizes why this activity or striving needs to be infinite, and at the same time determined. Then, why is it necessary for theoretical self-consciousness, regarding the idea of Anstoss, divided self and absolute I. Finally, why is it also necessary for practical standpoint, considering the ideas of practical striving, tendency, longing, drive, and desire (both in individual striving towards self-coherence and social drive for intersubjectivity). It will be concluded that the I possesses a "dual nature" or divided character: it is finite, but it strives towards infinity. The tension arising from this contradiction should be the moving force of the I.

Keywords: *absolute I; consciousness; drive; not-I; self-consciousness; striving; tendency; the I*

I. Introduction: The Fichtean I as *finite*

One of the main misinterpretations of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* is, ironically, one regarding its fundamental notion – the concept of absolute I. It stems mostly from the view which Schelling ascribes to Fichte's transcendental idealism: "gnostical metaphysics,"[1] or "grotesque narcissism,"[2] a

[1] Allen W. Wood, "Fichte's Philosophical Revolution," *Philosophical Topics* 19, no. 2 (1991): 13.

[2] Daniel Breazeale, "Check or Checkmate? On the Finitude of the Fichtean Self," in *The Modern Subject: Conceptions of the Self in Classical German Philosophy*, eds. D. Sturma, and K. Ameriks,

"pantheistic supra-personal speculative Absolute."[3] The origin lies in understanding the pure I only as absolute I, and the latter as Absolute, a kind of metaphysical or god's consciousness. Newer interpretations have shown that this is almost surely not the case.[4] Fichte's I is always a concrete and individually existing I, while the absolute I is an idea that lies in its basis, and/or something towards the I strives.

The goal of this paper will be to show exactly this, in light of Fichte's understanding of I's infinite *striving* (Streben), *tendency* (Tendenz) for reflection, *longing* (Sehnen) to overcome the obstacle, *drive* (Trieb) and *desire* (Begierde). Striving will first be analyzed from a theoretical standpoint or part of *Wissenschaftslehre*, and then from the practical sphere. In the end, it will be concluded that for the I to exist concretely it needs to be in tension and contradiction between its finite and infinite activity – thus limited, but also open for determination, concrete and actually existing. As Fichte puts it,

> The Science of Knowledge is therefore *realistic*. It shows that the consciousness of finite creatures is utterly inexplicable, save on the presumption of a force existing independently of them, and wholly opposed to them, on which they are dependent in respect of their empirical existence.[5]

II. Infinite activity of the I in theoretical consciousness

Fichte begins the presentation of his system from theoretical self-consciousness.[6] If that is not unified, then there could be no practical activity whatsoever.[7] The I is always activity and, simultaneously, a product of it.[8] Meaning that it is not some kind of static or passive *substance*, an *ego* that *is* active, 'doing' this or that; not something active (ein *Handelndes*) – rather, it is the activity itself.[9] There is

87-114 (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 87.

[3] Wood, 8.

[4] Alex Guilherme, "Fichte: Kantian or Spinozian? Three Interpretations of the Absolute I," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 29, no. 1 (2010): 4ff.

[5] J. G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, eds. and trans. P. Heath, and J. Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 246.

[6] Frederick Neuhouser, *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 52.

[7] J. G. Fichte, "Concerning the Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre*," in J. G. Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. D. Breazeale (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 112.

[8] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 97.

[9] J. G. Fichte, "First introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*," in J. G. Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. D. Breazeale (Indianapolis, and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 26; J. G. Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right According to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. F. Neuhouser, trans. M. Baur (Cambridge: Cambridge

nothing 'before' the I. In this way, the I is primarily being actively produced as a result of its active doing.[10]

What is this activity? In *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte posits two opposite activities: *ideal* and *real* (or in other contexts centripetal and centrifugal). It should essentially mean that in any given consciousness (or mental state), there are two 'sides': the subject side or the I, and the object side or the not-I.[11] It is the same activity, but with different directions.[12] He also differentiates between two acts: self-positing and repeating of that positing, i.e. positing for itself:

> The self posits itself absolutely, and is thereby complete in itself and closed to any impression from without. But if it is to be a self, it must also posit itself as self-posited; and by this new positing, relative to an original positing, it opens itself, if I may so put it, to external influences; simply by this reiteration of positing.[13]

Only this second, or reiteration of positing, is the necessary condition for reflection. To posit the I is to posit the not-I at the same time, therefore if we have one activity, we immediately have two.[14] For example, if we say that this object *is* red in color, it is also saying that it is *not* of any other color. Being red means that it is limited and determined (that it *is* something, and *isn't* something else).[15] But, in self-reference a paradox occurs: the I is at the same time that which 'speaks' and that about what something is 'said.'

If the I wasn't, so to say, 'larger' than itself in this way, then it wouldn't be able to find itself as limited and to determine itself, while also 'knowing' that it's determined and that it's free to be more, or different.[16] The I is both active and passive, *determinant* and *determinate*, its passivity is determined

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University Press, 2000), 3.

[10] Neuhouser explains this self-production in analogy with the motion of electrons that "produces" the electric current: current both "is" and "is a product of" its own activity, in Neuhouser, 108.

[11] This could also be interpreted as Fichte's take on the intentionality of consciousness, that it is always about something, i.e. the not-I.

[12] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 241.

[13] Ibid., 243. In this paper I will be treating terms "the I" and "self" as synonyms, especially considering the translations, even though the self is a lot broader term than what Fichte had in mind with "das Ich."

[14] Wood, 12.

[15] J. G. Fichte, "Outline of the Distinctive Character of the *Wissenschaftslehre* with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty," in *Early Philosophical Writings*, 283.

[16] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 132.

through its activity and its activity through passivity. In Fichte's words, the activity of the I is infinitely striving, for it to be able to find itself as limited.

a. Infinite striving

The striving of the I must be infinite, for there would be no objects for the I. In other words, the infinite character of striving is the prerequisite for the positing of objects; i.e. its 'directedness outwards' is the condition of possibility for there to be an object at which the I is, in the end, directed. And, its character is necessarily infinite, for if it was limited (in advance), then the 'sphere' of possible objects would be also.

> The result of our inquiry so far is therefore as follows: *in relation to a possible object*, the pure self-reverting activity of the self is a *striving*; and as shown earlier, *an infinite striving* at that. This boundless striving, carried to infinity, *is the condition of the possibility of any object whatsoever*: no striving, no object.[17]

The striving is towards 'filling out' the infinity. Wood calls this "unconscious striving,"[18] because it just 'is' – in reflection it is limited, but not in striving. When we are 'staring' into the distance, we are not actually looking (at anything), it is rather an unconscious activity; but when we 'snap out' of it, in reflecting we realize that we *were* in fact staring. This kind of striving is *infinite* and *insatiable*. When the striving has a "fixed, determinate and definite" character, it's called a *drive*.[19] Infinite striving doesn't even have an object:

> The indeterminate striving in general – which to that extent should really not be called striving, for it has no object, though we neither have nor can have a name for it, since it lies beyond all determinability – is infinite; but as such it does not attain to consciousness, nor can it do so, since consciousness is possible only through reflection, and reflection only through determination.[20]

It is insatiable as it is 'against' every and any object – no object can *satisfy* it.[21] Striving is opposed to any object because it 'pushes' against it. "The

[17] Ibid., 231.

[18] Wood, 14ff.

[19] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 253.

[20] Ibid., 237.

[21] Just like, while looking, our "sight" as an activity is directed "from" the eye, towards and "object"

self initially contains a striving to fill out the infinite. This striving resists termination in the *individual* object."[22]

It cannot be fulfilled, because "striving is never to have causal efficacy."[23] Seen in this way, Wood believes that Fichte's concept of striving leads directly into Schopenhauer's concept of Will and Nietzsche's Will to Power.[24] This activity of the I isn't actually *infinite*, but only in its striving:

> The self is infinite, but merely in respect to its striving; it strives to be infinite. But the very concept of striving already involves finitude, for that to which there is no *counterstriving* is not a striving at all.[25]

Now, for there to be genuine consciousness – for that I to *be* an I – this undefined and undetermined activity that strives towards infinity needs to be limited.

> But now the infinitely outreaching activity of the self is to be checked at some point, and driven back upon itself [...] it must occur, if a genuine consciousness is to be possible.[26]

Therefore, something to *limit* that infinite tendency is "[r]equired – if I may so put it – is the presence of a check on the self, that is, for some reason that lies merely outside the self's activity, the subjective must be extensible no further."[27]

In other words, the I posits itself absolutely, but it does so not in an undetermined way – it posits itself absolutely *as* the I, i.e. "it can posit itself only as limited and standing in a relationship with something foreign to itself."[28] The idea is that the I cannot be in consciousness without something else also being present with it, i.e. not-I, but this is precisely what the I needs to be distinguished from.[29]

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in front of us (at a table, or a tree, or into the distance) the activity has a direction: from eye towards object, whatever that object may be.

[22] Ibid., 256.

[23] Ibid., 265.

[24] Wood, 16.

[25] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 238.

[26] Ibid., 242.

[27] Ibid., 189. We will see later why this check *must* come from the outside.

[28] Breazeale, 89.

[29] Wood, 27, note 22. Woods mentions different instances in Fichte's work where this idea is

We can see Fichte's dialectics at work here: something that is infinite (absolute, striving) isn't something that *is* or *can* be determined – infinity isn't 'defined.' To be determined, to be some-*thing* (any-*thing* at all), it first needs to be limited.

b. *Anstoss*: limitation of infinity

This *check* is, what some interpreters believe, Fichte's solution to the Kantian problem of thing in itself. It is, so to say, an 'essence' of the not-I, but not as a thing existing outside of and independently from the I.[30]

The activity of the I that strives towards infinity – we will later see why it *must* strive infinitely – is necessarily, at some point, limited in order to be 'something' at all, i.e. something determined. Nothing can be determined which is not first limited.[31] The I posits itself absolutely, but it does that only *as* finite and limited I, and *exists* in this way.[32] It is thus because the I is only in *relation* (and as determined by) the not-I. Therefore, the limiting 'point' or 'moment' at which the I (as absolute spontaneity) differentiates between itself and the other, or objective, is necessary. "Hence something must in general be present, wherein the active self traces out a boundary for the subjective, and consigns the remainder to the objective."[33]

It is limited by *Anstoss* which usually translates as *check*. It means both an 'obstacle,' a 'hindrance,' but also an 'impulse' or 'stimulus' to overcome it. The *Anstoss* must be something "beyond I's control."[34] *Anstoss* both *limits* and *stimulates* – stimulates the tendency towards comprehending it, or reflecting about itself as infinite.[35] "[T]he necessary finitude of all subjectivity and the unavoidable element of contingency – 'facticity,' if you will – at the heart of the Fichtean self."[36]

Representation also cannot be explained only through the pure activity of the I, only as a product of reciprocal interaction of the I and not-I.

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explicitly stated.

[30] J. G. Fichte, "Second Introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*," in *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*, §6.

[31] Ibid., 74-89. From the possibility of the I, the limitation can be deduced, but not "specific determinacy." Also, Fichte, "Some lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation," in *Early Philosophical Writings*, 148ff. The absolute self-identity is the form of the pure I. The characteristic of the not-I is multiplicity, whilst the I is complete unity.

[32] Breazeale, 89.

[33] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 186.

[34] Breazeale, 93.

[35] Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, 267.

[36] Breazeale, 98.

> For we could in no way think representation to be possible at all, except on the assumption that an *Anstoss* occurs to an undetermined and infinitely outreaching activity of the I.[37]

If it were the product of the absolute activity of the pure I it would be, firstly, *solipsistic* explanation and, secondly, we wouldn't be able to explain the representations followed by the feeling of necessity (which is the experience), i.e. that what is represented is outside of our control and will. The I is unable to produce representations on its own.[38]

Anstoss is, therefore, not a fact about the world, or an effect of thing in itself (for it would revert Fichte to Kantian dogmatism) – it is a fact about the mind itself; a fact about the I, not about the not-I.[39] The *Anstoss* doesn't limit the activity of the I itself, rather it puts a task, or a demand on it to limit itself. It is, therefore, both a hindrance (obstacle), but also an *impetus* for self-limitation. We could say that the infinite activity of the I 'stumbles' upon, so to say, a '*no*.' That 'no' is to be posited as a not-I in the same act with which I am posited as that which has encountered a 'no' – same act brings about both as determined by each other. A 'no' that means: "[F]or some reason that lies merely outside the self's activity, the subjective must be extensible no further."[40]

A 'no' is just a mere *resistance* (not yet determined as a resistance of 'what').[41] A not-I in its core contains a 'no,' as '[no]t-I.' This 'what' is actually the positing of not-I for the reason of explaining the feeling of limitation.

> Feeling is the most primordial interaction of the I with itself, and even precedes the not-I, since of course a not-I must be posited to explain feeling. (We are speaking, naturally, of a not-I *in* and *for* the I.) The I strives toward infinity; it reflects upon itself and thereby limits itself.[42]

The *Anstoss* 'provokes' or 'motivates' the I to self-limitation. It can also limit the practical striving of the I. What is important here is that *Anstoss* can't occur if there isn't an infinite activity of the I.

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[37] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 220.

[38] Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*, 8.

[39] Breazeale, 99.

[40] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 189.

[41] J. G. Fichte, *The System of Ethics According to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre*, trans. and eds. D. Breazeale, and G. Zöller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 89. *Anstoss* could also be understood as *Widerstand*, a resistance.

[42] Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, 274. Cf. Fichte's critique of Kant's thing in itself as a thought trying to explain a feeling, ending up as *circulus vitiosus*, in Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*, 51ff.

> The check (unposited by the positing self) occurs to the self insofar as it is active, and is thus only a check insofar as there is activity in the self; its possibility is conditional upon the self's activity: no activity of the self, no check. Conversely, the activity of the self's own self-determining would be conditioned by the check: no check, no self-determination.[43]

The infinite striving of the I and *Anstoss* upon it are mutually-dependent. Self-limitation need not be voluntary: productive imagination reflects upon original *Anstoss*, posits it again until it finally obtains determinate consciousness (of the not-I).[44] It also is only *for the I – Anstoss* is not a thing in itself, that comes to subject from outside, some external source; rather, it is that which "happens to" the activity of the I.[45] If there were no outwardly striving activity of the I (that can also reflect into itself), then no *Anstoss* could occur to the I.[46]

> [T]his check did not occur without concurrence of the self, but took place, rather, in consequence of the latter's own activity in positing itself; that its outward-striving activity was, as it were, thrown back (or reflected) into itself, from which the self-limitation, and hence everything else that was called for, would then very naturally follow.[47]

The infinity of activity, but also the necessity of its limitation, is a motif that we can see in different places and contexts in Fichte's work, for example, in the "Second introduction":

> Just as surely as I think at all, I think of something determinate; for otherwise I would not have been engaged in an act of thinking and would have thought of nothing. In other words, my freedom of thinking, which I posit as capable of having been directed at

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[43] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 191.

[44] Breazeale, 91.

[45] When we hear knocking on the door, we (who are sitting inside the room) only hear the sound which is coming to us from the door, but we can't know who or what is knocking. That someone or something *is* knocking, we have to posit as the not-I. Just as the sound is something that "occurs" inside of the room, *Anstoss* is something that 'happens' to the activity of the I. The activity got 'indented,' and we can only witness the indentation from the inside.

[46] Ibid., 91.

[47] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 191.

> an infinite number of objects, is now directed only upon this limited sphere, viz., the sphere that is involved in thinking about my present object. My freedom of thinking is restricted to this sphere.[48]

The activity of thinking is *free*, I can think this or that, but if I don't actually engage in thinking something, then I wouldn't be thinking at all. The freedom is absolute, but if it's not realized, then it just stays an infinite possibility – nothing real or actual. The meaning of this is *twofold*: firstly, it must be absolutely free (or striving), and secondly, it must be always limited in that absolute activity (for it to be actualized, and be something real). I need to *be able* to think different things, and I also must *think* something – to think at all.[49]

c. Dialectic of infinity and *Anstoss*

The activity of the I "left to its own devices" must strive towards unbounded, indeterminate and indeterminable, that is, towards infinity.[50]

If the I wasn't infinitely striving 'outwards,' "if the I did not constantly strive to extend itself it could not be *angestossen* (checked)."[51] The *Anstoss* is an occurrence, a happening on the activity of the I. It's a 're-action' of the activity, something that is spontaneous, not an act of volition. If it weren't able to return into itself, the activity of the I would be "mindless"

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[48] Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*, 78.

[49] If I have understood Fichte correctly, then the next analogy is in place: we can imagine a human eye, metaphorically speaking, its 'activity' is *looking*, and it, so to speak, 'goes away' (or is directed) from the eye. When we are simply looking into the distance, our look goes to 'infinity' because it's not limited by anything – we are not looking at any*thing* (or some*thing*), we are simply looking. Paradoxically, at the same time, we are not exactly looking – in the common usage of the term – we are *staring*, and our mind wanders lost in our thoughts and not actually 'there.' Now, place an object in front of us at which our look is focused, for example, a tree, and now we have a proper looking, i.e. a *seeing*: we are focusing on a concrete object before us – the object is 'seen' by us, and we are 'seeing' the object. Therefore, only when an activity is determined from both sides, do we have a proper activity, one that has form and is not just some undetermined, undefined staring, but focused seeing. There is no object as 'seen' if there is no one to see it, and *vice versa*, there is no 'seeing' subject if there is nothing to be seen. See, for example, Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 168: "it is the law of consciousness: *no subject, no object*; *no object, no subject*." Note that this "object" isn't yet something, a not-I, even less is it a thing in itself – as *Anstoss* its firstly some "objection" that snaps us out from daydreaming by suddenly entering our field of vision, we 'feel' interrupted; only in reflection do we posit ourselves as seeing (the I), and object as seen (not-I), to explain this interruption.

[50] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 192.

[51] Breazeale, 91.

and "directionless."[52] "If the self's activity did not extend into the infinite, it could not itself set limits to this activity."[53]

On the other end, if the activity of the I *was* infinitely striving, but is *without Anstoss*, there would again be no genuine consciousness:

> The absolute self is absolutely identical with itself: everything therein is one and the same self, and belongs (if we may express ourselves thus figuratively) to one and the same self; nothing therein is distinguishable, nothing manifold; the self is everything and nothing, since it is nothing *for itself*, and can distinguish no positing or posited within itself.[54]

Therefore, if the I wasn't *infinite* (in its striving), but only *finite*, there would be no concrete, actual I at all; conversely, if the I was infinite, but without limitation (*Anstoss*), again there would be no actual consciousness – distinguishable and determinate. This is the moment where *tendency* comes into play: the I has a tendency to reflect upon itself and to posit itself. But, something alien, different or heterogenous is necessary to occur in absolute striving, as to 'push' it back, into itself and to realize its tendency. Therefore, we could say that striving is an activity, but the tendency is a possibility to revert that activity into itself (if the right conditions are met, namely *Anstoss*). If it does not, then no self-limitation could be made possible regarding the *Anstoss*. The reason for this is: "[T]hat which actively posits this boundary must itself – simply as active – be one of the clashing elements."[55]

If this never happens, there would be no reason to ponder about an object – with which we never 'made a contact' – also, there would be no need to realize ourselves, or to think about oneself as 'that which feels' this or that, because there is no feeling whatsoever, and therefore, no need for the not-I (to explain it), and for the I.[56] The *Anstoss* is a 'spark' to *ignite* the consciousness.

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[52] This activity still isn't a 'fully formed' consciousness, therefore it lacks any notion of will or Hegel's concept of *Willkür*, i.e. arbitrariness. It lacks intentionality, being "about" something determined, rather, its insubstantial directedness. Albeit their *modus operandi* could be compared, the scope of such comparison would require its own paper.

[53] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 192.

[54] Ibid., 233.

[55] Ibid., 191-192. Here, we have opted for Breazeale's translation, found in Breazeale, 104-105, note 13.

[56] We can imagine being confined in a dark room trying to navigate our way out. What reasons are there to assume that there are other objects in the room or that the room was empty? – None. We could try walking in any direction and sooner or later we could hit our leg on something. Now, Fichte would point out that we didn't hit our leg on 'something' (not-I), rather we felt the impact (and possibly still feel the pain) and therefore conclude that there *is* something on which

In Breazeale's interpretation, this means that consciousness possesses original "openness" towards the world.[57]

d. The divided or split character of the self

Wissenschaftslehre shows the "necessarily *divided* character of the self."[58] It is divided, 'split' between its finite and infinite activity. In this happening of *Anstoss*, the I posits itself and not-I, but, there is a twist: the I is one of the elements of this interaction, i.e. the activity of the I, infinitely striving outwards – is, at the same time this posited I in contrast with the not-I. This is the meaning behind the I being *for itself*. But Fichte is quick to point out that these 'two' I's are in fact one and the same: "Both the limited and the limiting I, synthetically united by absolute spontaneity, are posited – and posited as the same I."[59]

"The self in general is a self; in virtue of its own self-positing, it is absolutely one and the same self."[60] We could say that the I is simultaneously 'split' and again, the same.

> [W]e have the self in a dual aspect: partly, insofar as it is reflective, and to that extent the direction of its activity is centripetal; partly, insofar as it is that upon which reflection takes place, and to that extent the direction of its activity is centrifugal, and centrifugal out to infinity at that.[61]

Simply put, the I, striving infinitely, must posit itself (for itself) together with the not-I. A paradox occurs: the I is simultaneously *infinite* and *finite*. "*[N]o infinity, no limitation; no limitation, no infinity. Infinity and limitation are united in one and the same synthetic element.*"[62]

If I am, for example, writing an autobiography, I'm at the same time the writer, having literary freedom, and the main protagonist that has events and

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we stumbled upon. We 'evoke' this something (not-I) in order to explain what we feel. The concept of feeling is very important, because it is something entirely *subjective* (so to speak, they are 'only' my mental events), and yet – it doesn't have an *origin* within me, because I can't voluntarily feel or stop feeling pain. It is something exclusively subjective, yet outside my control. Thus the need for *Anstoss*, but not as a thing in itself – and if not for this, there would be no reason to suppose that there are other objects, to think that it was the table and not the chair that we stumbled upon, or to think ourselves as *those-who-feel-pain*.

[57] Breazeale, 99.

[58] Ibid., 93.

[59] Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, 274.

[60] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 219.

[61] Ibid., 241.

[62] Ibid., 192.

things 'happening' to him. I am (as the protagonist) for myself (as the writer), just the same as some event in the book that I'm writing about (not-I). In the end, the protagonist (the I) and an event (not-I), are both products that are *posited* by the writer (absolute I). This, so to say, 'dual aspect' of the I is the essence of Fichte's concept of the I: it *is*, but it is *for itself*. It cannot be otherwise, because if the 'link' between *I-as-the-writer* and *I-as-the-protagonist* is severed, there would be no *auto*-biography. There needs to be, at all times, this self-reference, or *auto-referential* act. There is no autobiography if the writer constantly forgets that he is writing about himself.[63] Of course, the writer doesn't have to constantly and explicitly think of himself *as* the author and *as* the protagonist – he can be lost in his thoughts, visualizing things and events happening to him and thinking about his reactions – but he *is*, and at any given moment can become explicitly (self-)conscious about it.

If the I wasn't infinite in this way (and, at the same time, finite), there would be no I at all, because it wouldn't be able to 'have' itself; i.e. if I was only the protagonist, then there wouldn't be any autobiography being written (because I would be 'living' those events); and if I was only the writer (writing about something else and not himself), then again, there would be no autobiography. Therefore, the I posits itself *as* posited, and also remains something 'more.'

> Put differently, if the I were *only* finite, then it would not be able to posit itself *as* an I – even as a finite I. [...] the concept of a subject conscious of its own finitude – implies that one and the same I must be simultaneously limited (with respect to the sheer occurrence of the *Anstoss*) and unlimited (with respect to the necessary positing thereof), or, in Fichte's somewhat hyperbolic language, finite and infinite at one and the same time.[64]

> [W]hat is active in bounding must itself, and simply *as* active, be one of the parties to the encounter [...]. This is possible only if the activity in question, in and by itself, and left to its own devices, reaches out into the unbounded, the indeterminate and

[63] I believe that this is also the meaning behind Fichte's later formulation of the I as I-Subject and I-Object in his later texts, and *Nova methodo*. In short: I-Subject would be 'the writer,' and I-Object 'the protagonist,' and the synthesis is the realization that it is *one* and the *same* I. That realization cannot be a product of reflection, because I don't infer that I am writing about myself, rather, at every point of the book, I *am* (self-)conscious that I'm writing about myself. See Fichte, "A Comparison between Prof. Schmid's System and the *Wissenschaftslehre*," in *Early Philosophical Writings*, 323: "*The I is what cannot be the subject without, in the same undivided act, being the object, and cannot be the object without, in the same undivided act, being the subject. And conversely, anything which can be characterized in this way is the I.*"

[64] Breazeale, 92.

> the indeterminable, that is, into the infinite. If it did not extend to infinity, it would follow not at all from a bounding thereof, that a check to its activity would have occurred; it could well be the boundary set by its own mere concept.[65]

This is an almost paradoxical way to eliminate solipsism or the I not as absolute, but as *the Absolute*: if this activity didn't extend to infinity, then the limitation set by *Anstoss* need not be real – it could well be set by its own concept, it would be absolutely posited finite I. Only this infinite striving guarantees that we will eventually encounter something real, or that *Anstoss* or check originates from something different than ourselves.

> Both are to be one and the same; this signifies, in brief: *no infinity*, *no bounding*; *no bounding*, *no infinity*; *infinity and bounding are united in one and the same synthetic component*.[66]

Another important reason why the I must have, so to speak, 'dual nature' is its self-knowledge. The I is not 'produced' by reflection, rather, it finds itself in it, because it has a reflective character.[67] Fichte's critique of the reflection model of self-consciousness is that reflection presupposes that which it wants to explain, i.e. the I. If I 'reflect' upon myself, I ought to already exist and 'be' me. If I stand in front of the mirror in order to see my own reflection, I ought to already know what I look like, or I wouldn't be able to 'recognize' myself in the reflection. Therefore, if the I reflects upon itself, then it already has to 'be' there, to be posited. Also, the object of reflection is always something determined (when I am thinking, I'm thinking of something: this table or that tree). When I think of myself, I find myself as 'this person,' a human being, etc., but I am also 'more' than this because I'm also a free activity that is right now thinking itself to be this person.[68] When the I reflects upon itself, it finds itself *as* determined. "As surely as the self reflects upon itself, it is in fact limited, that is, it fails to occupy the infinity which it nonetheless strives to fill."[69]

If the I wasn't 'larger' than what it found (in its reflection) then it wouldn't be able to find itself at all, i.e. be for itself. For all the same reasons, I can't infer or deduce myself.

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[65] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 191-192.

[66] Ibid., 192.

[67] Fichte, *The System of Ethics*, 201-202ff.

[68] Ibid., 207.

[69] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 257.

e. Absolute I

What then is absolute I? As we have seen in the above quote, the absolute I is absolutely 'identical with itself,' and therefore there is nothing distinguishable or manifold in it, nothing *positing* or *posited*.[70] The absolute I is *nothing* (determinate or defined) because it is nothing *for itself*.

> The absolute self of the first principle is not *something* (it has, and can have, no predicate); it is simply *what* it is, and this can be explained no further. But now, by means of this concept, consciousness contains the *whole* of reality; and to the not-self is allotted that part of it which does not attach to the self, and *vice versa*.[71]

But the absolute I is also an idea that is posited by the practical striving of the I, as the result of its demand to encompass all reality and exhaust the infinite.

> This demand of necessity rests on the idea of the absolutely posited, infinite self; and this is the *absolute* self, of which we have been talking. [Here the meaning of the principle, *the self posits itself absolutely*, first becomes wholly clear. There is no reference at all therein to the self given in actual consciousness; for the latter is never absolute, its state being invariably based, either mediately or immediately, upon something outside the self. We are speaking, rather, of an idea of the self which must necessarily underlie its infinite practical demand.[72]

The actual consciousness (individual I) is never absolute because its being is always based by something outside of itself. The I as an *Idea* is in the basis of practical, infinite demand. In other words, the actual I is always finite and concrete, but in its basis lies the infinite idea as an absolute I, so it strives to encompass all of the not-I back into itself – ultimately resulting in abolishing the difference between the I and not-I, positing and posited, again becoming indistinguishable.

III. Limitation of the practical striving of the I

This dialectic of infinitely going outwards (*thesis*), being limited by something outside of our control (*antithesis*), and resulting in returning back or reflecting (*synthesis*), is also the foundation of practical striving.

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[70] Ibid., 233.

[71] Ibid., 109.

[72] Ibid., 244.

Both infinite and finite activity of the I presuppose a *practical striving* to fill out the infinity and to overcome all external and internal obstacles, to make itself independent.[73] It is this activity of infinite, practical striving, to which the demand of *Anstoss* is directed. As we have seen in the feeling of limitation: in the determination of practical striving, *Anstoss* is accompanied by the idea of feeling or *Gefühl*, as its content.

> [T]he self never feels an object, but merely feels itself; yet can only produce the object through ideal activity [...]. But the self cannot conjure up feelings in itself; for if so, it would have causality, which it is not supposed to possess.[74]

Feelings are purely subjective states, but are not free willing; therefore, Fichte uses the concept to satisfy both ends: it is subjective, but not *of* the subject. The I feels itself as limited, 'unable' and constrained, which serve to stimulate reiteration of positing acts, to overcome the limitation. The consciousness of this infinite striving Fichte calls longing:

> Hence it is an activity *that has no object whatever*, but is nonetheless *irresistibly driven out towards one*, and is merely *felt*. But such a determination in the self is called a *longing*; a drive towards something totally unknown, which reveals itself only through a *need*, a *discomfort*, a *void*, which seeks satisfaction, but does not say from whence.[75]

Longing is the means by which the I, confined in itself, is driven "*out of itself*," and only thereby is the external world revealed within it.[76] Similarly, as *Anstoss* is an 'impulse' on the activity of the I, longing is also without an object; it originates from the *restriction* that is felt.[77] If it is determined by an individual object, longing becomes *desire*.[78] We have noted above that *striving* also doesn't have an object, but a *tendency* (amongst others, for reflection), which manifests itself in different, determinate forms:[79] (1) to overcome the not-I,

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[73] Breazeale, 93.

[74] *The Science of Knowledge*, 268.

[75] Ibid., 265.

[76] Ibid., 266.

[77] Breazeale, 98.

[78] Wood, 15.

[79] Ibid., 15.

> Man's ultimate and supreme goal is complete harmony with himself and – so that he can be in harmony with himself – the harmony of all external things with his own necessary, practical concepts of them.[80]

(2) to appropriate objects,

> [T]he I strives to make what is intelligible dependent upon itself, in order thereby to bring that I which entertains representations of what is intelligible into unity with the self-positing I.[81]

Or (3) to make them conform to the I.

> Hence, what is required is the conformity of the object with the self; and it is the absolute self which demands this, precisely in the name of its absolute being.[82]

Therefore: striving, tendency, drive, longing, and desire are all intrinsically intertwined and, basically, the same. The tendency is also interpreted as the ability to 'return,' and longing is the 'need' to overcome the obstacle. That means the I is limited in opposition with not-I, some object as a hindrance, and therefore, there is a longing to overcome that hindrance. Because it just *is* and is the condition of possibility for consciousness (in reflection), it itself is unconscious:

> [T]he I produced (for the possible observer) a not-I and did so without any consciousness. The I now reflects on its product, and in this reflection it *posits* this product *as* not-I, and posits it as such absolutely and without any further specification. Again, this positing occurs unconsciously, because the I has not yet reflected upon itself.[83]

What was said above, means that the I is *constituted* by its striving: the activity that posits the not-I is the activity of the absolute I (which, in turn, is

[80] *Early Philosophical Writings*, 150.

[81] J. G. Fichte, "Review of *Aenesidemus*," in *Early Philosophical Writings*, 74.

[82] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 230.

[83] Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, 270.

interpreted as the spontaneity of reason).[84] The I is necessarily reflective (i.e. able to think of itself as the I), but it's not 'created' through reflection. The world (similarly like in phenomenological tradition) is constituted 'world-for-us.' Therefore, it has "meaning only in relation to the human self's infinite striving."[85]

The activity that constitutes the world (or our representation of it) is the real activity, as opposed to the ideal activity which reverts back into itself and constitutes the I. As mentioned in the introduction, the real and ideal activities, or centrifugal and centripetal, are one and the same activity that has two 'directions': outside and inside (it could be represented as 'action and reaction.' in the same activity).[86]

As we quoted above, the I strives to encompass all reality, and this demand rests on the idea of absolutely posited, infinite I, or absolute I. Centrifugal force – the one going 'outwards' – is that of the absolute I (the activity of reason), that constitutes the demand that all reality should be in the I.[87] It strives, to realize it, but it's unachievable. Yet, it continues to lay in the basis of the I, as practical demand. The goal in itself is contradictory because it means 'to realize the infinity.'

In the "Second introduction," Fichte opposes the I as *intellectual intuition* and the I as an *Idea*: both are not actual, finite I's. First is just a form of the I that the philosopher finds (i.e. it's not a 'complete' I, but its necessary form); second, is the idea that exists for the I (not for the philosopher):

> The I exists in this form only *for the philosopher* [...] But the I is present as an Idea *for the I* itself, i.e., for the I the philosopher is observing. The philosopher does not portray this as his own I, but

[84] Guilherme, 10.

[85] Wood, 13.

[86] Parallels could be drawn with Hegel's master-slave dialectics, about *Anerkennung*, i.e. recognition. Fichte proclaims: "No Thou, no I; no I, no Thou," in *The Science of Knowledge*, 172-173. For Hegel, two opposite, independent self-consciousnesses encounter one another in a life and death struggle and mutual recognition, cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. and trans. T. Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 108ff. Albeit explaining the intersubjectivity similarly, but with less conflict, Fichte puts greater importance on the generative aspect of pre-reflective self-consciousness by its innate and necessary structure, whilst for Hegel self-consciousness is a product of society and culture. Therefore, we could make a distinction here, in my opinion, between *self-consciousness* understood as a pre-reflective, structural component of consciousness, i.e. original self-givenness, and *consciousness of* or about (one)self, in which the subject (the I) is taken as an object, which also implies knowledge or 'truth' of oneself, etc. Development of self-consciousness, at least at this place, isn't an intersubjective achievement. However, delving deeper into this comparison far outreaches the scope of this paper.

[87] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 241-242.

> rather as the Idea of the natural, albeit completely cultivated, human being [...]. The I as an Idea is identical with a rational being. [*Das Ich, als Idee, ist das VernunftWesen*]. The latter is nothing but an Idea. It cannot be thought of in any determinate manner, and it will never become anything real; instead, it is only something to which we ought to draw infinitely nearer.[88]

The I as Idea is the rational being if (1) this being has become 'rational through and through,' if exhibits universal reason within itself; and (2) if it also completely realized reason outside of itself, in the world. In other words, it is realized if and only if one becomes a paradigm of the universal reason (thus stops being an individual), and shapes the outside world in the 'image' of reason. But this idea is unachievable, we can only infinitely strive towards it: to become *more* rational and to shape a *more* rational world. Realization of this Idea can be exhibited only in the practical part of philosophy and is the ultimate aim of reason's striving.[89]

a. Limitation of striving in intersubjectivity

Anstoss puts out the demand to the I to limit itself in its infinite striving. It can limit the I not only as intelligence but also in its practical striving.[90] In *Foundation of Natural Right*, Fichte introduces the notion of *Aufforderung* (equivalent to *Anstoss* in theoretical part) – it is a consciousness of being externally summoned to exercise one's freedom through voluntarily limiting it.[91] *Anstoss* in the sphere of practical is (1) immediate sense of other's freedom and (2) moral obligation to act in accordance with that freedom.[92] This is immediate consciousness about the freedom of other free rational beings.[93] Self-limitation is a necessary part of the structure of consciousness, but also the structure of intersubjectivity – in both, I limit my infinitely striving activity.

In both cases it is a demand on the I to limit itself, coming from the 'outside.' *The Other* is limited by me in the same way I am limited by *Him*: our freedoms limit each other. It's the basis of interaction with others, based on *Erziehung* (education and upbringing). We are "internalizing" the demands of others;[94] *recognizing* others as autonomous, free, and self-conscious agents (like ourselves).

On top of this, Fichte builds reciprocity of relation and recognition, and

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[88] Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*, 100-101.

[89] Ibid., 101.

[90] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 190; Breazeale, 91.

[91] Breazeale, 97; Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, 31.

[92] Breazeale, 96.

[93] Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, 31-32.

[94] Wood, 19.

also, the relation of rights.[95] Mutual recognition is the basis of the relation of rights between two rational beings that recognize each other as such.[96] Notions of practical are expressed in the not-I, therefore the need for others, and harmony and coherence with them. It becomes a fundamental requirement for there to exist others: "One of the things that man requires is that rational beings like himself should exist outside of him."[97]

But that relation is not the same as relation towards objects, because relations with others are based on coordination.

> [T]he social drive is one of man's fundamental drives. It is man's *destiny* to live in society; he *ought to* live in society. One who lives in isolation is not a complete human being. He contradicts his own self.[98]

Interaction, reciprocal causality, mutability, communication, education and upbringing, etc. – all rely on the social drive and recognizing others as myself. This mutual recognition also plays a part in constituting self-consciousness: recognizing others as free agents and being recognized as such.[99] Only as limited and in this tension, the I can be finite and in-the-world, in society and among other material things.

b. Finite I: drive towards absolute self-unity

The I can't be an absolute I – it is always limited and determined (this person). If it is always limited, it needs to be immersed into concrete and actual situations, contexts, practical options, etc. The finite I only interacts in finite projects, situations, obligations. I, as finite I, can't be described by this infinite, undetermined, undifferentiated striving. Therefore, the I must also have a drive towards *determining* itself.[100]

> Properly speaking, who am I? I.e., what kind of individual am I? And what is the reason for my being *who* I am? To this question, I respond as follows: from the moment I become conscious, I am *what I freely make myself to be*, *and this is who I am because this is what I make of myself*. – At each moment of my existence, my

[95] Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, 44-45, 111.

[96] Wood, 20.

[97] Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, 155.

[98] Ibid., 156.

[99] Breazeale, 97.

[100] Wood, 17.

> being is through freedom, if not with respect to its conditions, then at least with respect to its *ultimate* determination.[101]

We can't stay undefined or undetermined as an insatiable striving – just the same as our freedom to think this or that must be realized by actually thinking something. In this, we gain our identity because we unify ourselves coherently. The idea of a system – that which is defined by a single principle – or unity of reason is present here also: all drives must be united into a single one; all strengths into one, single strength, etc. It is represented by a drive towards self-coherence, or to be a single coherent or harmonious system. "This drive may be described as the self's *drive to interdetermination* through itself, or the drive to absolute *unity* and completeness of the self within itself."[102] This is not a characteristic of humans, but all rational beings.

> The ultimate characteristic feature of all rational beings is, accordingly, absolute unity, constant self-identity, complete agreement with oneself. This absolute identity is the form of the pure I and is its only true form; or rather, in the conceivability of identity we *recognize* the expression of the pure form of the I.[103]

It is the *form* of the I. If we are in situation A led by principle X, and in situation B by principle Y, etc. – we are self-contradictory.[104] In the end, we could also be a hypocrite and biased. Without this drive, there exist self-deception, despair, and conflict with oneself. But, for Fichte, the reason is and can only be one. This also means harmony with the world through notions of practical. Therefore, becoming more self-coherent, we at the same time become more like one another – in infinity, losing our individualities; this way a finite, rational being exhibits 'universal reason within itself.'

This tendency belongs to the essence of the I – it can't be eliminated without eliminating the I itself. On the basis of self-limitation, Fichte deduces the relation of the I with the outside world, embodiment of the I, his fundamental drive towards self-unity, and intersubjectivity.

> Only free, reciprocal interaction by means of concepts and in accordance with concepts, only the giving and receiving of knowledge, is the distinctive character of humanity, by virtue of

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[101] Fichte, *The System of Ethics*, 211.

[102] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 284.

[103] Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, 149.

[104] Fichte, *The System of Ethics*, 333. Our life should not contradict our teachings.

> which alone each person undeniably confirms himself as a human being.[105]

IV. Conclusion: The I as constituted by striving

Fichte shows that the character of the I is 'necessarily *divided*,' and that unity of consciousness isn't just posited on the first principle, but also practically demanded even as forever unachievable goal of human striving.[106] Undifferentiated unity of the I, homogeneity, can't be more than an *Idea*: if it was to happen, then self-consciousness as we know it, our finite I would be destroyed.

> We see more definitely here that the self must be finite and limited. No restriction, no drive (in the transcendent sense): no drive, no reflection, (transition to the transcendental): no reflection, no drive, and no limitation and nothing that limits, etc., (in the transcendental sense): so runs the circuit of the self's functions, and the inwardly linked reciprocity of the latter with itself.[107]

The circle goes from the drive towards reflection – the striving, through reflection, comes into the transcendental sphere. This conflict within the I itself, this tension is the condition of possibility of the I in the first place. Yet, this infinite striving towards self-harmony, self-unity is unachievable. The I needs to be in contradiction with itself in order to *be* at all. The drive towards self-unity is the drive towards self-destruction, a drive towards death (of finite and concrete, individual I). The undifferentiated unity of consciousness is always an infinite goal, and actual consciousness remains a striving towards that goal – an infinite striving for an infinite goal. A contradiction, to be sure, but a necessary one, because it is the *moving force* of both theoretical self-consciousness and practical self-activity.[108] Only the tension between opposites produces these dynamics. If consciousness was to be only finite or only infinite, there would, effectively, be no consciousness at all. The paradox is that the I must count on itself (take itself) as absolute, but also to recognize that it is (to be) limited.

This dialectic between infinity and finitude, freedom and necessity, striving and reflection, etc. is at the heart of Fichte's philosophy. It is also the

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[105] Fichte, *Foundation of Natural Right*, 38.

[106] Breazeale, 93.

[107] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 258.

[108] Breazeale, 100-101.

original duality of the self, therefore being embedded into the structure of consciousness, i.e. subjectivity. The tension caused by contradiction is both the limiting factor and the mover of the I – contradiction with itself and the endless struggle to overcome this self-contradiction. But that unity is a necessary albeit infinite idea.

> The nature of the I is henceforth determined in this manner, insofar as it can be determined at all, and the contradiction therein is resolved, insofar as it can be resolved at all: The I is infinite, but only with respect to its striving: it strives to be infinite. But finitude is already contained within the very concept of striving, since that to which there is no *counterstriving* is no striving at all. If the I were more than a striving, if it possessed an infinite causality, then it would be no I; it would not posit itself, and therefore it would be nothing. But if it did not possess this endless striving, then again it could not posit itself, since it could not posit anything in opposition to itself; thus it would also not be an I in this case, and hence it would be nothing.[109]

This kind of self which is not infinite, and not finite (but *just right*) is the finite kind of self, limited, but not determined, dependent, but not absolutely, and independent, but not absolutely. Only in this way can it be a practical agent, acting in the world – at the same time 'in' the world, and opposed to it. It constantly (re-)affirms its freedom, through struggle.[110] Striving of the absolute I forces the I to encompass the whole reality, so there was no not-I.[111] But, that is not possible, because the not-I is needed for the I to reflect itself and be limited and determined. Breazeale interprets this characteristic as Sartrean "striving to be God"[112] – therefore being a self-contradiction, because if somehow, we do become God, we would stop being who we are – finite, concrete, and determined, this and not that person.

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[109] Ibid., 113.

[110] Ibid., 102.

[111] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 137.

[112] Breazeale, 101.

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At War in Swaddling Clothes: Stirner's Unique One as a Conative Existence

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Abstract

In its simplest and primary sense, conatus is about self-preservation. It further involves the obligation, the duty, the imperative even, deriving from the Law of Nature for man to do whatever within his power to maintain his life. Even though this idea has been an old one, it was reintroduced in a more sophisticated form by modern philosophy as no longer a cruel necessity of life but ontologically tied to Reason and Natural law. It was with Hobbes that the idea of self-preservation was put at the core of his anthropological narration (with well known political connotations) and with Spinoza that conatus was delved into within his ontological universe. Regardless of their ontological starting points, both philosophers ended up eventually in a resolution with regard to that primary anthropological tension between individuals, whether this was a common legislator, the political society or the state. Somewhat radical at the beginning, Hobbes and Spinoza had to make some mitigations in order to arrive at a resolution. Yet, that was not Stirner's case. On the contrary, Stirner's opening ontological statement was rather too extreme and inconceivable even: it is also the newborn child that gets to war with the world and not only the other way around. It is the purpose of this paper to argue that this extreme trailhead leads the Stirnerian egoist to his fulfillment as the Unique One through ownership and that this agonistic tremendous striving constitutes the Stirnerian notion of conatus. That notion offers no resolution to the ontological animosity between individuals; on the contrary, that animosity is required as ontological precondition and prefiguration of conatus' conclusion as well.

Keywords: *conatus; Stirner; Hobbes; Spinoza; egoism; property*

I. Stirner in the making

This would be a rather short essay if Stirner had quit reading Spinoza's *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* right after its first pages and, in particular, this passage: "Our first priority must be to lay down certain rules for living, as being good rules [first of which is]: To speak to the understanding of the multitude and to engage to all those activities that do not hinder the attainment of our aim. For we can gain no little advantage from the multitude, provided that we accommodated ourselves as far as possible to their level of understanding."[1] To begin with, even the appeal for a set of good rules for living would be something rather unacceptable for Striner, let alone that first rule being engaging with the multitude and its degree of understanding. This is of course an imaginary scenario and, for the sake of it, we may suppose as well that Stirner was a careful reader. Therefore, he could not but have noticed a passage prior to the above mentioned which probably made him rather angry:

> I shall state briefly what I understand by the true good, and at the same time what is the good true. In order that this may be rightly understood, it must be borne in mind that good and bad are only relative terms, so that one and the same thing may be said to be good or bad in different respects.[2]

In addition, Stirner must have also gotten in touch with Spinoza's thought through its Hegelian interpretation. Spinoza was, for centuries, one of the most notorious philosophers, whose thought came to be synonymous with the notions of atheism and materialism. Surely this would be another reason for a young Stirner – a notorious thinker in the making – to continue reading the works of his predecessor. Stirner declared his philosophy as a (non)system that radically breaks up with every philosophy prior to him. Such a disputatious declaration, not only in its sharpness and radicalism but also in its structure, reflected his unwillingness to acknowledge anyone as his philosophical ancestor. However, while continuing to read the Spinozist *Treatise,* he would discover a precious ally in his major endeavour, i.e., the radical undermining of abstract thinking and of the various *phantoms* that enslave the human mind.[3] Certainly, rejecting theoritically abstract thinking

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[1] Baruch Spinoza, "Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect," in *Ethics, Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect, Selected Letters*, ed. Seymun Fedman, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Hackett Pub. Co., 1992), 236.

[2] Ibid., 235.

[3] He would have read, for instance: "Starting form universal axioms alone, the intellect cannot

along with its consequent ideological and political implications could either be the deliberate outcome or the ultimate goal of a philosophical structure that had to arrive there through specific reasoning, based on the grounds of a corresponding ontology. If this rejection was an outcome which, in order to be accomplished, required the previous rejection of the basic ontological dualism, i.e. the mind/body dualism, Spinoza was Stirner's man of interest, as was also Hobbes for that matter. Nevertheless, even the rejection of the mind/body separation, however deep in uprooting traditional and highly respected notions and dangerously radical with regard to its political implications, was not as radical as the one that preceded it: the interpretation of man as a creature with the sole primal duty of self-preservation, of survival. This was by no means a modern idea, not even an early modern one, as it originated way back in Western thought. We would not oversimplify the matter if we suggested that it has not served as the basic ontological layer until the first major ontologies of modern philosophy introduced by Spinoza and Hobbes. In Hobbesian anthropology, man's duty for self-preservation was declared as the first natural law:

> The Right of Nature, which writers commonly call *Jus Naturale*, is the liberty each man hath, to use its own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own Nature; that is to say of his own Life; and consequently of doing anything, which in his own Judgment and Reason he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto.[4]

So, "What is radical about it?" one may ask and that would be a fair question. However, we should not forget that the unquestionable duty of man to preserve his existence by all means necessary was now accompanied by, or, better put, was now grounded on its ontological parallel, i.e. the interpretation of man as mere matter, mere body, mere existence, as *res extensa*. Spinoza's version of that radical ontology, the one-substance doctrine, was rather more sophisticated than Hobbes's. It nevertheless served the same goal or, at

descent to particulars, since axioms are of infinite extension and do not determinate the intellect to contemplate one particular thing rather than the other," ibid., 257. The political implications of that undermining of abstract thinking and of ideological phantoms was by no means sprang out of just one source, no matter what Stirner would had to say about that: "From seeing [liberals] individuals as primary and society secondary, from seeing individuals as more 'real' than society and its institutions it is not a great step to seeing social institutions as 'logical fictions' [...] it follows that no rational person could elevate the supposed interests of fiction above the real interests of real individual people," Anthony Arblaster, *The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 38.

[4] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), 90.

least, led to the same consequences: the materialistic interpretation of man. This consisted an absolute necessity for the anthropological premises of the polemical ontology of the Enlightenment and, more precisely, of the Radical Enlightenment:

> Spinoza [...] was perfectly aware of the radical implications of his ideas and the violent reaction they were likely to provoke, since his philosophy stood in total contradiction to the tenets of all forms of Christianity, as well as Cartesianism and the mainstream of the western tradition since the end of antiquity [...]. Spinoza and spinozism were in fact the intellectual backbone of the European Radical Enlightenment everywhere.[5]

Israel, rather fairly, stresses the importance of Spinozism with regard to the political radicalism of Enlightenment.[6] However, that radicalism took various forms and expressions, sometimes awkward and, most times, dangerous. In order to, at least, do justice to Hobbes's intentions – the English philosopher may be regarded as the "philosopher of the weak"[7] – that Hobbesian ontological starting point was the beginning of a line that traversed Enlightenment's body and connected some strange figures such as Meslier, La Mettrie, Sad, and Stirner as well for that matter.

II. But, at the beginning was Hobbes. And Spinoza

As above mentioned, the idea that all things and later also man have an innate inclination to maintain their existence was not new. The Stoics had entertained it, but Aristotle had already said something about it too. In Medieval philosophy it was connected with motion and, as expected, it got characteristically complicated and debated upon. However, in regard to our issue here, it was by Descartes that the idea of *conatus* (as the technical term

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[5] Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 93, vi.

[6] "Spinoza with his one-substance doctrine [...] extends this 'revolutionary' tendency appreciably further metaphysically, politically, and as regards man's highest good than do [...] Hobbes," Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind. Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010), 2.

[7] That is Martinich's characterization of Hobbes: "Nietzsche celebrates the exercise of power for its own sake [...] Hobbes praises that the exercise of unrestrained power inevitably ends in premature death [...] Nietzsche is the philosopher of the strong, Hobbes is the philosopher of the weak," Aloysius Martinich, *Hobbes. A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 351.

came to be) was reintroduced in a modern physics' mechanistic sense.[8] That was undoubtedly a big step, for a distinct part of that mechanistic universe was man. Yet, Descartes' dualistic mind/body notion held back this radical potential which modern physics embodied, i.e. materialism. Hobbes was much more determined with respect to that matter and, regardless of his personal and theoretical ambiguities, he could not but have forseen the radical outcome of his theories, at least with regard to his conception of the body. For Hobbes the body was just *extensia*, a corporeal substance, mere matter. Furthermore, as all substances are material, then they are all bodies:

> According to that acceptation of the word, *Substance* and *Body*, signifies the same thing; and therefore *Substance Incorporeal* are words, which when they are joined together destroy one another.[9]

So, man has/was one substance, a material one, a body, and, furthermore, has a duty ordered by the Law of Nature to preserve it in any case and within its power. If there is one attribute that we can ascribe to the body, that is motion. As a result, every human action can be explained as elementary movements of the body. Hobbes distinguishes between two kinds of motion:

> There are two sorts of *Motions* [...] one called *Vital*; begun with generation and continued without interruption through their whole life [...]. The other is *Animal Motion,* otherwise called *Voluntary Motion* [...]. These smalls beginnings of Motion, within the body of Man, before they appear in walking, speaking, striking and other visible actions, are commonly called Endeavor.[10]

Endeavor is Hobbes's technical notion for *conatus*. Furthermore, as motion is the beginning of everything and, according to Hobbes's analysis,

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[8] See, for example: "It is important to note the gloss Descartes gives to the *conatus* [...] where an attribution to a *conatus* to a body is said to mean that the body will in fact travel in a rectilinear direction, unless it is prevented by doing so by another cause," Daniel Garber, *Descartes' Metaphysical Physics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 354.

[9] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 236. For his and Descartes' agreement on mechanism, see: "Descartes' Dualism and Hobbes's materialism notwithstanding, their theories of the world are very similar in that each tried to give a mechanistic explanation of all physical phenomena," Aloysius Martinich, *A Hobbes Dictionary* (London: Blackwell, 1995), 10. Hobbes focuses on the concept of *conatus* in *De Corpore* as the most important element of his "rational mechanics." Leibniz's own version of the notion reflected Hobbes's precedent, see Howard R. Bernstein, "*Conatus*, Hobbes and the Young Leibniz," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science,* 11, no. 1 (1980): 26. Leibniz referred to *conatus* as the gate to philosophy.

[10] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 44.

imagination is the first internal beginning of every voluntary motion, it comes as a consequence that the separation of mind and body as well as of their faculties is undermined and rejected.[11] At this point, it is important to bear in mind that this tendency for motion is not some inherent power of the body. It is rather determined by the movement of other bodies. Moreover, whatever is in motion maintains this motion, unless something hinders it, or, to better put it, regardless or despite of, or even against the opposite power exercised on it by the other body.[12] According to the most awkward but also significant application of the notion of *conatus* in man's State of Nature, bodies – meaning people – are moving in order to preserve their lives, turning against each other as their motion inevitably meets the motion of others. This is a highly individualistic state, a natural habitat where moving monads collide and all of them are being involved in a constant war against every other. However, even if the problem is presented in an individualistic world, its solution is only plausible within a world of collaborating citizens/subjects.

Hobbes's individualistic ontology resolves into the totality (of the sovereignty) as a way out of that frightful state of nature must be offered. Namely, that state where autonomous and isolate individuals wage war against each other in order to fulfill their primary duty, self-preservation. Surely one might notice that prior to that frightful individualistic state stands the universality of the self-preservation duty common to all people. In any case, this is what Spinoza says:

> I've demonstrated all theses conclusions from the necessity of human nature, however it may be considered. That is, I've demonstrated from that universal striving all men have to preserve themselves, a striving in all men, whether they're wise or ignorant. So however we consider men, whether as guided by an affect or by reason, the result will be the same. For the demonstration is universal.[13]

The issue here is necessity – universal by its nature and particularized within human nature – and, furthermore, another layer of universality, that of the striving for "all men to preserve themselves." Layers of universality,

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[11] Bernstein stresses the importance of *conatus'* "initial appearance in Hobbes as a means to resolve the mind-body problem," and in a reversed direction from Leibniz's emphasis, i.e. from mind to body, see Bernstein, "*Conatus*," 37.

[12] See Juhani Pietarinen, "Hobbes, *Conatus* and the Prisoner's Dilemma," *The Paideia Archive: Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy* 11 (1998): 144.

[13] Baruch Spinoza, "The Political Treatise," in *The Collected Works of Spinoza,* v. I, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 524.

ontologically structured the one upon the other, result in an interpretation of the world as a universality of necessity. It is at this exact point that Spinoza discovers the only plausible meaning of human freedom through the following reasoning: man has no free will because he is free only to the extent of his obligation to preserve himself in order to be his own master. Thus,

> a man can't be called free on the grounds that he can *not* exist, or that he can *not* use reason; only insofar as he has the power to exist and have effects, according to the laws of human nature, can he be called free.[14]

Even so, one should pay attention at this point, because no matter how universal that necessity or that strive might be, it is the individual, the human monad, that this necessity and striving apply to. After all, Spinoza's thought is not so far apart from Hobbes's since, according to his State of Nature, people are enemies – as they are for Hobbes – because they are for the most part guided by their passions. Therefore, people are "by their nature enemies."[15] Additionally, each one is governed by his own right, as long as he is capable of fending off every force that threatens him and of living according to his mentality. This procedure is clearly connected with or guided by the striving for self-preservation defined by one's power. Even in the Spinozist version of that common idea, each one's right applies as far as his power does. At this point – as was also the case with Hobbes – an answer must be offered, a way out has to be demonstrated. Thus, Spinoza proposes what would be expected from him to, which is the foundation of a civil society, a state that will enforce a common law, a universal right above the contradictory particular rights. However, this is not merely a technical solution as one might think of that of Hobbes's. On the contrary, it is grounded on an ontological assumption:

> Since it's futile for one person alone to try to protect himself from all others, it follows that as long as human natural right is determined by each person's power, and belongs to that person, there is no human natural right. What's more, it's certain that each person can do that much less, and so has that much less right, the greater the cause that has for fear. To this we may add that men can hardly *sustain their lives* and *cultivate their minds* without mutual aid.[16]

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[14] Ibid., 510.

[15] Ibid., 513.

[16] Ibid. (emphasis added), 513. Here is Spinozist *conatus* in its both senses, self-preservation and the cultivation of mind. In the next paragraph Spinoza states his agreement with Stoic's notion

We have to admit that the necessity of men joining together in order to sustain their lives is an ad hoc ontological condition, one that someone may as well argue that is only a practical method connected to the ontological obligation of *conatus*. After all, what is happening at the primal ontological level is that men are "bound to live and to preserve themselves, as far as they can by their own power."[17] Still, at the same time, it is necessity that bounds people to collaborate in order to succeed. Since necessity constitutes the universal ontological condition, it comes as a result that it is man's unique ontological condition. Necessity dictates that without mutual help men live in utter wretchedness, and are inevitably debarred from the cultivation of reason; [so in order] to live safely and well men had necessarily to join together, which could only happen within a state.[18] What is really at stake here is the cultivation of reason, naturally, as man ought to adjust his living to the dictates of reason. What comes next is something that would probably make Stirner very angry: A man who is guided by reason should be more free in a state, where he lives according to a common decision, than in solitude, where he obeys only himself.[19]

III. The unique hand of the Unique One

Whatever their differences, Spinoza and Hobbes hold something in common that was of much importance: the idea that there is no such thing as free will. That idea may be explained in terms of the absolute predominance of necessity, provided that necessity is framed within the broad cosmological notion of Nature.[20] Whether Nature is God, as in Spinoza, or God is matter,

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of man as a social animal. The same in *Ethics*: "[Men] can hardly live a solitary life; hence, the definition which makes man a social animal has been quite pleasing to most," Baruch Spinoza, "Ethics," in *The Ethics and Other Works*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 217. In this of course Spinoza departs from Hobbes.

[17] Baruch Spinoza, "The Theological-Political Treatise," in *The Collected Works of Spinoza,* v. I, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 283.

[18] Spinoza, ibid., 284. In Ethics, as well: "To man there is nothing more useful than man. Man, I say, can wish for nothing more helpful to the preservation of his being than should all so agree in all things that the minds and bodies of all would compose, as it were, one mind and one body," Spinoza, "Ethics," 210. See also, "It is true that Spinoza proceeded form the alienated individualism of *The Prince* to the communitarianism of the *Civitas Dei* [...]. It is part of Spinoza's ethical philosophy to lend a helping hand to others and together with them to form a social and political life in which [...] the the goals of individual freedom and the brotherhood of man are merged," Robert J. McShea, *The Political Philosophy of Spinoza* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968), 204.

[19] Spinoza, "Ethics," 238.

[20] Thus, "the very notion of a defence of necessity was indelibly associated in most eighteenth-century minds with Hobbism, Spinozism, fatalism, immortality, and atheism." It is quite

i.e. nature, as in Hobbes, the crucial idea here is that man is an inseparable part of Nature. There is no room, in both theories, for a concept of *human exceptionalism,* meaning that man is of another ontological status compared to every other thing within the natural world. Spinoza stated it like this:

> Most of them who have written about the affects, and man's way of living, seem to treat not of natural things [...] but of things that are outside Nature. Indeed they seem to conceive man in Nature as a *dominion within dominion*.[21]

So, if man is mere nature, mere matter, if what distinguishes him is a matter of degree and not of quality, then it follows that he is subject to the inescapable laws of nature which is to say to the natural necessities. There is a not-so-distant echo of that interpretation of man in Feuerbach's critic against Stirner, as the latter describes it:

> Feuerbach raises the question: [...] can you sever masculinity form what you call mind? Are your feelings, your thoughts unmanly? Are you merely a mere animal? What is your unique, incomparable and consequently sexless I?[22]

Stirner was rather amused by the "sexless" allegation, but nevertheless natural preconditions of man were quite absent, or hardly visible, in his *The Unique and His Property*. His reply to Feuerbach's critic, however, is illuminating about his thoughts on the matter. To "realize the species" is not prior to the realization, and the more important that realization is a "realization of your own." Striner provides a clear example:

> Your hand is fully realized for the purposes of the species [...]. But when you train your hands, you do not perfect them for the purposes of the species [...] but you make of them how and what you want and are able to make them; you shape your *will* and *power* into them.[23]

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characteristic that Samuel Clarke titled one of his books *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God: More Particularly in Answer to Mr. Hobbes, Spinoza, And their Followers. Wherein the Notion of Liberty is Stated, and the Possibility and Certainty of it Proved, in Opossition to Neccessity and Fate*! See James A. Harris, *Of Liberty and Necessity. The Free Will Debate in Eighteenth-Century British Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 86, 46.

[21] Spinoza, "Ethics," 152 (emphasis added).

[22] Max Stirner, *Stirner's Critics*, trans. W. Landstreicher (Oakland: LBC Books & CAL Press, 2012), 89.

[23] Stirner, 91 (emphasis added).

That is not a species hand no more, that is a *unique* hand shaped by the *Unique One*. Stirner's Unique One is a *dominion within*. By doing so, Stirner departs from what had seemed to be the main goal of Left Hegelians, especially Feuerbach and Marx, which was the resolution of the individual/community problem in the form of the *species-being* [Gattungswesen]. One specific Hegelian route

> followed by Strauss and Feuerbach leads to the affirmation of universality as community or shared interests, while placing less emphasis on the formal side, the element of individual willing. [That route], in the political application which Feuerbach together with Marx gave to it, leads to the notion of a collective substance or species-being.[24]

This particular route from Hegel, according to Bauer's interpretation, was a Spinozist one. Bauer detected also a Fichtean trend in Hegel's thought but – curiously enough given Fichte's ontological emphasis in the Ego – he read Stirnerian thought as derived from the Spinozist route. And that is why Stirner took up the one side of Spinoza's attributes of substance, that of thought (the attribute of extension was taken up by Feuerbach). Bauer ascribes to Stirnerian Unique One being a substance without any content, "neither physical nor physic,"[25] and, by doing so, that substance becomes the greatest abstraction. Stirner would be happy with the former and unhappy with the latter. In addition, Stirner would be unhappy if someone traced back to Spinoza some ontological trends implicit in his thought (and to anyone, for that matter). Yet, what could be more Stirnerian than Spinoza's notion of substance as that, which is the cause of itself, *causa sui*. Additionally, what could be more Stirnerian than that substance, which has an internal inclination to self-preservation, a striving to maintain itself, the *conatus*.[26] And this is

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[24] Douglas Moggach, "The Subject as Substance: Bruno Bauer's Critique of Stirner," *The Owl of Minerva* 41, nos. 1-2 (2009-2010): 65. See also: "Bauer derived his notion of infinite self-consciousness from Hegel's philosophy of subjective spirit, and opposed it to the pantheistic Hegel readings of Strauss and Feuerbach. Hegel had stressed the concept of substance as the pure universal that absorbed the particularity of the self and this 'Spinozist moment' misled a number of Young Hegelians into granting substantiality a certain independency over consciousness," Widukind De Ridder, "Max Stirner, Hegel and the Young Hegelians: A Reassessment," *History of European Ideas* 34 (2008): 287.

[25] Moggach, "The Subject as Substance," 69.

[26] Moggach claims that, "the application of this idea to Stirner, as an account of his concept of 'ownness' is highly illuminating, and I take it that this is what Bauer is proposing. The *conatus* of Spinoza is the secret of Stirnerian 'ownness,'" Moggach, ibid., 73. See also, in more general terms: "The concept developed by Stirner [...] regarding the *owner* or the *one and only* is a

Stirner's archetypical formulation of it: "Only when I am under obligation to no being is the maintaining of my life – my affair."[27]

Already in the first paragraph of the book Stirner provides us with his thoughts on man as a newborn existence in the world. Those lines, by the way, are the closest we will come to some kind of Stirnerian anthropology. Man is since the time of his birth in constant and permanent war with everything that surrounds him. And when in war, there are only two options: *victory* or *defeat*. Stirner describes man's entry in the world in rather existential terms:

> From the moment when he catches sight of the light of the world a man seeks out *himself* and gets hold of *himself* out of its confusion, in which he, with everything else, is tossed about in motley mixture.[28]

The idea that man is in war with his surroundings is for sure too old to make any difference. Still, Stirner continues with some rather tempestuous description of the attitudes of the newborn: "Everything that comes in contact with the child defends itself in turn against his attacks, and asserts its own persistence!"[29] Hence, *conatus* is Stirner's opening ontological statement. The striving for persistence is something of an ontological sparking, still in accordance with former formulations of the notion. But only Stirner, as far as we can tell, was so bold or idiosyncratic as to declare that the world is in a state of defense against a child. That was indeed an opening ontological statement that made the way for what would follow: warlike motion was directed from inwards, from the individual, towards the world and not the opposite. Stirnerian man was ontologically attacking its surroundings, not defending himself against them. And that constant combat was about the *conatus*: "Because each thing *cares for itself* and at the same time comes into constant collision with other things, the *combat* of self-assertion is unavoidable."[30] That was not an abstract description, since Stirner was obliged to set man – the child – in that state of immediate offensive war as there was no way around the primal social condition of man, i.e. family. There is a natural state and that is the society

more straightforward implementation of a monadological ontology. In Stirner's philosophy the owner is conceived as a monad whose *conatus* is manifested as the tendency to appropriate and to consume the world and the other monads," Nicos Psarros, "Monadological Ontologies in the Wake of Spinoza: Leibniz, Hegel, Stirner, McTaggart, Tarde and Weil," Conference Paper (2017), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319967914.

[27] Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, trans. Steven Byington (London and New York: Verso, 2014), 303.

[28] Ibid., 3.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

of the child with his mother: "Society is our *state of nature*. Not isolation or being alone, but society, is man's original state [...]. We are already living with our mother before we breathe."[31] That primal strong bond had to be broken because man should freely choose his contacts and set himself free from the family bonds that he had not chosen. This was the beginning of an astounding course towards *egoism* through the exercise of self-will, which led to self-ownership:

> The politicians, thinking to abolish *personal will*, self-will or arbitrariness, did not observe that through *property* [Eigentum] our *self-will* [Eigenwille] gained a secure place of refugee. The Socialists, taking away *property* too, do not notice that this secures itself a continued existence in *self-owenship*.[32]

The *egoist* is not *man*, he is the mature, conscious and settled formation of the individual as a conquered potentiality. He has no right to his existence, he becomes an *egoist* only through his own effort of conquering himself. Only then he becomes an *Owner* because *ownership* is the exclusive possession of the self. To be an Owner is not to be free. Stirner is too careful to distinguish between the two. He admits that a certain level of coercion and restriction is necessary and unavoidable.[33] Thus, in order to declare a field of unrestricted independence he moves from the field of freedom to that of ownership. The egoist can remain the owner even within the dominion of the State, provided that state sovereignty remains in the periphery of his ownership. Hence,

> that a society (such as a society of the State) diminishes my *liberty* offends me little. Why, I have to let my liberty be limited by all sorts of powers and by everyone who is stronger [...]. But *ownness* I will not have taken form me.[34]

Therefore, ownership is not freedom because freedom is the passive avoidance of something. It is rather the energetic possession, the outcome and the creation of the individual's power. Being the outcome, ownership can only be

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[31] Ibid., 286.

[32] Ibid., 118.

[33] "Limitation of liberty is inevitable everywhere, for one cannot get rid of everything [...] *Liberty itself*, *absolute liberty* was exalted into an ideal and thus the nonsense of the impossible to come glaringly to the light," ibid., 288.

[34] Ibid., 286, 287. It comes as a result that for the egoist the State is indifferent, as long as his ownership remains *untouched* by the State, and only when the State tries to interfere only then the Owner "takes an active interest in it." Otherwise, the egoist "has nothing to say to the State except 'Get out of my sunshine,'" 217.

the manifestation of power's application. Yet, "my power is *my* property, my power *gives* me property, my power *am* I, and through it I am my property."[35] Hence, through power I own my property, therefore I own myself. The Stirnerian notion of property is not that of the possession of things. On the contrary, property in Stirner has an extensive meaning, because "property depends on the *owner*."[36] This is firstly because it is only through power that the claim for something is sanctioned. Consequently, the strength of the power defines the extent of the ownership. Secondly, it is because property is whatever lies within the individual at some specific point and makes it whatever it *is* at that particular time. Lastly, it is because property is not static nor fixed, but constantly and potentially expanding wherever the owner has the power to do so, i.e. other people's properties. The Owner declares: "I do not step shyly back from your property, but look upon it always as *my* property, in which I need to 'respect' nothing."[37] Stirner, unlike Proudhon, considers possession and property to be coinciding. As a result, whatever I *can* possess, I *own* it and that remains *mine* for as long as I have the power to possess it.[38] This unlimited and dynamic notion of ownership leads to the idea that everything surrounding the egoist constitutes a potential possession, a field for the egoist to expand, to exploit, to *consume*. This is the definite reverse of the Kantian imperative: "For me no one is a person to be respected, but solely, like other beings, an *object in* which I take an interest or else do not."[39] Thus, Stirnerian egoism moves away from even radical forms of individualisms in the sense that he does not recognize a series of separate – though adjoining – individualities, but only one unique ego which consumes whatever is in its power and moves inwards in order to become the Unique One. This creates an extended circle from birth till the creation of

[35] Ibid., 171. It is on that notion of property that Stirner's egoism is seen, as Nathan Jun puts it, an "extremely radical form of classical liberalism," Nathan Jun, *Anarchism and Political Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 132. See also, Costas Galanopoulos, "Man, 'Quite a World of Federations.' The Incompatibility of Anarchism and Individualism," *Anarchism Studies* 25, no. 2 (2017): 75-88. Stepelevich on the contrary argues that "in holding that mere ego, abstract personality, must find its freedom, happiness and concreteness in ownership, Stirner plainly follows Hegel," although he adds that "it is no accident that Stirner's last literary efforts were directed to translating Adam Smith," Lawrence Stepelevich, "Max Stirner as Hegelian," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 46, no. 4 (1985): 611.

[36] Stirner, *The Ego*, 230.

[37] Ibid., 231.

[38] "Property is conditioned by might. What I have in my power, that is my own. So long as I assert myself as a holder I am the proprietor of the thing; if it gets away from me again, no matter by what power, then the property is extinct," ibid., 234.

[39] Ibid., 291. Also: "Where the world comes in my way [...] I consume it to quiet my hunger of my egoism. For me you are nothing but my food, even as I too am fed upon and turned to use by you. We have only one relation to each other, that of *usableness*, that of utility, of use," 277.

the Unique One, which now comes to its closure: "I am not an ego along with other egos, but the sole ego; I am unique. Hence my wants too are unique, and my deeds." It is this same *conatus,* which obliged the child to be at war from the very first moment of its life, that makes the Unique One:

> It is only as this unique I that I take everything for my own, as I set myself to work, and develop myself, only as this. I do not develop men, nor as man, but, as I, I develop myself. This is the meaning of the Unique One.[40]

This is the meaning of the Stirnerian *conatus*.

IV. Conclusion

Is the Stirnerian *conatus* all about the self-creation of the Unique One? If this agonistic striving comes to its fulfillment, to the Unique One, is that all for Stirner and his notion of *conatus*? Certainly not. After all, careful examination of the inner structure of that course towards Uniqueness reveals that there is more to it. For Stirner, it is not enough and even means nothing for the egoist to just preserve his existence, to just secure the continuation of his life. On the contrary, he states that

> I enjoy myself at my pleasure. I am not longer afraid for my life, but "squander" it. Henceforth, the question runs, not how one can acquire life, but how one can squander, enjoy it; or, not how one is to produce the true self in himself, but how one is to dissolve himself, to live himself out.[41]

A qualitative level of living is therefore referred to by Stirner, *self-enjoyment*, which involves a meaningful expansion of life, not just its prolongation: "He who must expend his life cannot enjoy it."[42] So, what about politics? Ultimately even the Unique One will be obliged to live within a specific political dominion, within a State. In addition, in spite of his principal indifference towards it, he will have to engage at some point in some sort of political struggle in order to defend and preserve his ownership. The *insurrection* [Empörung] is the "political" application of the Strinerian *conatus*. That is because insurrection has nothing to do with the establishment and its overthrow, but only with the individual and its striving to exclude himself from it.

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[40] Ibid., 338.

[41] Ibid., 300.

[42] Ibid., 301.

> The insurrection, says the egoist, starts from men's discontent with themselves, its a rising of individuals [It] leads us no longer to *let* ourselves to be arranged, but to arrange ourselves [...]. It is only a working forth of me out of the establishment [...] my elevation above it.[43]

Stirner declared the ontologically inconceivable; he did not put at war the world against the individual (man), but, on the contrary, the individual (child) against the world. The world must defend itself against the offensive warlike attitude of the newborn. From that point on, a tremendous agonistic striving begins in order for the individual to become – by its own will and power exclusively – the true egoist, the Owner, the Unique One; and also, in order to preserve its life through the expansion of its property by consuming and exploiting whatever is in his power and to *enjoy* and *spend* his life at his own pleasure as well. That is the Stirnerian notion of the *conatus*. Unlike his predecessors – notably Hobbes and Spinoza – Stirner creates a conative ontology that never ends up with a resolution of that primary ontological tension between individual human beings. All in all, no one before or after him dared to depart from such a radical and inconceivable ontological trailhead!

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[43] Ibid., 296.

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Conatus and Dasein: The Problem of an Existential Theory of Motivation

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Abstract

In the article I articulate an interpretation of the findingness (Befindlichkeit) of Dasein in Heidegger as a specific existential drive, basing it on an interpretation of his concept of existence, drawing from his earlier lectures before Being and Time, and relying on the clarification of the existential meaning of relation. Following a related interpretation of understanding and care, I offer some considerations pertaining to the problem of authentic motivation and its possible practical application. Initially, I offer an interpretation of existence as it relates to the meaning of being, understanding the relata in this ultimate sense as two aspects of speech. In this, I understand the meaning of being as a groundless call or address. Building on that, I propose a motivational understanding of findingness as the necessary drive of Dasein toward its self-interpretation as it relates to the enigmatic call of being. I supplement this view with an interpretation of existential understanding as a coequal aspect of the groundless freedom of that relation of Dasein to itself. Finally, I offer an interpretation of authenticity, in line with the aforementioned explicated understanding of existence and the corresponding meaning of the authentic motivational findingness of Dasein. In conclusion, I raise a question of how such authentic motivation could be practically understood in the perspective of life-world interactions.

Keywords: *Befindlichkeit; Dasein; authenticity; relation; Heidegger*

In contemporary Heidegger scholarship, there is considerable confusion regarding the core concepts of existential analysis, such as Dasein, world, being. In my view, this is mainly conditioned by the fact that the meaning of these terms is not understood in their problematic intention; rather, one tries to interpret them with regard to some unproblematic everyday concepts that are already at hand, completely contrary to their original intention.[1]

[1] Existence is mostly understood in the literature by an analogy with living; being a Dasein means roughly the same as living as a human being. I shall hopefully have the opportunity to systematically present my understanding of basic existential concepts in another publication; in this article my focus is to interpret the concept of findingness and its possible practical application.

I. Some key existential concepts

a. Dasein (existence)[2]

In Heidegger's formulation of Dasein as a being that in its own being its being is an issue, the meaning of "being" is not taken as problematic in the literature, as if its meaning was obvious, as everyone is, "exists," and has one's own "being" as an issue for it.

By Dasein I understand 1. a questioning relationship of interpretative understanding and the meaning of being, and 2. an interpretation of this very relationship. As any interpretation can be construed as a form of relation, Dasein can be thus understood as a relation to the relationship of understanding and being. To this one must add: 1. Dasein is not questioning the meaning of being and its own relationship to it just incidentally, but always and in principle, it is a basic universal structure of existence. 2. This questioning of being happens by way of a distinction, differentiating between beings (ens) and being (esse), in the form of the interpretative carrying out of the ontological difference. However, this means that Dasein is questionable for itself in its own existence and, as being always announces itself in connection with the meaningful structure of the world, Dasein is questionable in its relationship with the world. The main point here is that Dasein is always determined by its relation to being.

In understanding itself as questioning and questionable, it shows itself as an always already accepted thrown possibility; this is what is, in short, meant by Dasein's facticity.

Now, let me briefly explain why and how we should understand Dasein as a relationship to being.[3]

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[2] The following proposed interpretation of existence in *Being and Time* is gathered from Heidegger's lectures. Martin Heidegger, *Ontologie. Hermeneutik der Faktizität* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), §2, GA 63, and *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie. 1. Die Idee der Philosophie und das Weltanschauungsproblem* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1919) §4; §13–§15, GA 56/57.

[3] One could immediately object to interpreting existence as a relation though, as Heidegger warns multiple times against such (see for example *Sein und Zeit* §43a) understanding. Despite this admonition I maintain this conceptuality for the sake of analytical clarity. It has to be admitted that this brings along a certain formalization. However, it has to be kept in mind that in this relation, correlation is not a logical subject-object relationship, but is filled with a phenomenal meaning, exhibited first in the hermeneutics of every day being-in-the-world. The concept of relation should then be understood here just as a methodological, interpretative, and analytical tool. The fear of terminological confusion is unnecessary, if the purpose this concept serves is clearly defined. Without maintaining the concept of relation analytical, we lose the meaningful independence of Dasein and the world as well as everything in *Dasein* as a unitary structure. The correlation of Dasein and being should then be understood in the strict existential, hermeneutical sense of a call-answering factical interpretation. We need to be cautious, however, to not consider the relationship between the meaning of Dasein and

1. Meaning announces itself in speech. In speech, an understanding of the meaning of being, an interpretative relation to the meaning of being is also always articulated or at least implicitly present. The meaning of being articulated in speech calls the understanding into a relation to itself as a relation to that which is called-upon by this meaning, as the addressee. Dasein has an interest in being. This self-relation is not logical, as it is not something that a reflection would decide for or against. However, if we say that speech is just structured in this self-reflective way, we have not really explained this phenomenon.

2. The fundamental reason for this relation-to-relation-to-being structure is "finitude," understood here broadly as groundless thrownness, which always implies the possibility of being thrown out from that in which the thrown is thrown, the groundless unnecessity of the meaning of being. This in which Dasein is thrown is thus something that remains hidden, foreign, mysterious, yet at once always the nearest and what forms the meaningful context and background of any meaning. Therefore, such is the meaning of being. This relationship is always in action, even though it announces itself only privatively and motivates the very turning away from it and hiding from it in relationship with beings. In this possibility, this relation is a problem for itself.

3. Owing to that, the meaning of being functions as a certain meaningful resistance, so that it always puts understanding in question, in the way that questioning the understanding of the meaning of being is always involved in what it is questioning (the meaning of being). The meaning of being could not announce itself at all, if it would not announce itself as a problem, an enigma, which of course already means as an enigma for some understood interpretation.[4] Thus, for this mutual relationship of understanding and the

meaning of being as clarified or even obvious based on the aforementioned conception. On the contrary, the exposition of the relation structure of existence should achieve is a clear problematization of the possibility, meaning, and mode of this relation. What Heidegger seems to want to emphasize is this: thrownness is the phenomenal meaning and existential foundation of meaning relation and not the other way around. I have to agree with this: the explication of existence as relation is a formalization. The full phenomenal meaning can be discerned only in the coequal structure of being in, of care. Although I think that this interpretative use of the idea of relation is meaningful insofar as it contributes to some much needed systematic clarity, which always has to be accompanied by a note of its full phenomenal meaning. The question of the existential meaning of the relationship between *Dasein* and the world is of course necessary, but that does not mean that it becomes unimportant, that there is some form of relation between the understanding of *Dasein* and the meaning of being. In fact, Heidegger does not deny completely the relation, but only maintains that this structure of being in the world should not be reduced to an empty, formal relation, as its phenomenal content is factical transcendence.

[4] One could object that this being that is always meant is some other meaning of being

call of being to be able to happen at all, this relation has to be transparent to itself as such. Only because the relationship to being is problematic for itself, can it allow the problematic call of being and interpret it as such.

4. However, this means that the relationship of the meaning of being is in its full structure a primordial unity, structured as a dynamic intertwining or circling of both moments, where the transitioning from one moment to the other has the structure of self-interpretation,[5] which preserves the meaning unity of both moments and is founded in an incessant intepretative motivation by the meaning of being. This factical involvement in the call of being also demonstrates the primordial unity of the understanding and meaning of being. This is because involvement is possible only on groundlessness, which implies primordial unity, where no moment of the relation founds the other, as it is not a logical, thing-like relation.

5. The meaning of thrownness in the relation with the world is expressed in speech. Who is in relation then? Obviously, this can only be speech itself. What is then the meaning of this relation to relation? Just the relation of speech to itself, in its fundamental structure of being thrown as being called by the meaning of being. Speech makes itself as that which is called by the meaning of being as a factical acceptance of the call into a meaning moment (with the power of concept formation, formal indications, construction, and interpretation), and so it can interpret itself in relation with this moment of the call of meaning. Speech cannot be in relation with the call of the meaning of being, if it was not in relation with itself as being in this relation,[6] but this it can be only if it "posits" itself as this relation.[7] Existence is nothing else than speech thus understood.

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than the enigmatic being, and one could discuss which one is more original, thus the point of existential hermeneutics would be reduced to some mode of being always being co-expressed. However, this very enigma of being always announces itself in every expression of the meaning of being.

[5] As soon as we speak of a relationship – toward – we tacitly presuppose some meaning of this "toward," as subjective intentionality, etc. By reducing meaning to facticity, the only thing left is the relationship of understanding and meaning. Traditional philosophy did just this; it hypostasized relationship, so that the intellect, or the subject, in addition to being in a relationship, has itself a relationship structure, where what remains unclear is of course how such structure is supposed to pertain to it, and so takes refuge in the concept of spontaneity, drive, the movement of negativity, etc.

[6] If only the relation of two moments internal to speech existed, then one could not talk of a calling of the meaning of being as something in a sense transcending speech, but only as something transcendent to that particular moment of speech, though still completely and in all sense immanent, transparent, and disclosed in speech as a whole.

[7] This does not mean though that speech objectifies itself in some way or becomes reflectively external to itself. On the contrary, only as involved in the calling of meaning can it "reflect" this relationship. Only because the meaning of being affects the understanding of speech as such, is speech incited to put itself in relation to its own relation with this call, which shows this call as such, that is in relation with speech. However, Heidegger developed the foundations of

b. Being

The meaning of the concept of being is probably the most contested one in the literature and, of course, at once the most fundamental one, upon the understanding of which any interpretation of existence as understanding of being necessarily stands or falls. Thus, I start with a brief explanation of what I understand by being in Heidegger.

The meaning of being with which existence is in a questioning relation, is neither some metaphysical in itself nor some logically independent meaning of being, but just the meaning of being as it announces itself in speech. However, on the other hand, the meaning of being is a limit phenomenon, being is an expression of a limit, a wondering of the groundless existence upon that it meets some meaning at all. The understanding of being, which at once always hides this meaning of being, does not involve some knowledge of being, rather it incites questioning.[8]

c. World

The concept of the world as the structural moment of being in the world can easily be taken too lightly, maybe even the most of all concepts. It is a peculiar nature of existential analysis that it interprets the most fundamental, "everyday" notions such as world, in a way completely removed from the everyday understanding.

The world has a specific existential meaning of the wholeness of the meaning of being, and is primarily a problematic concept. Based of metaphysics, moments of wholeness take on characteristics of unity, uniqueness, and perfection; however, these are just titles for the problem of an existential clarification of the meaning of the world, and at once a problem that addresses itself to concrete and not just theoretical existence.[9]

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this understanding only in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*. Also, this moment that "represents" speech to which it is in relation, is not something other than itself; there is no relation to a copy so to speak, but of sameness of meaning, so that there can be no question of objectivation or alienation.

[8] Sheehan in interpreting the *Dasein* as the world, existence as clearing, and Dasein as the meaning of being meaning, completely overlooking the phenomenological correlation. See Thomas Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift* (London, and New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014). Also, as a critique to the interpretation of Capobianco, if one does not maintain the distinction among being, revealedness, and disclosedness, the entire phenomenological project collapses, for it presupposes that in Dasein some meaning of being is revealed. If we identify revealedness and meaning, we are left with a tautology (what is revealed to *Dasein* is *just* the revealedness itself). *Dasein* does not primarily consist of relating to disclosedness, but to being itself (of course, in its disclosedness, that is to say, insofar it shows itself), and only on this basis, to the disclosedness itself. See Richard Capobianco, *Heidegger's Way of Being* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 7-20.

[9] Here, the following problem needs to be addressed: in what sense and why is worldliness supposed to be the structure of Dasein and not an independent meaning of being? How does

II. Interpretation of the "Findingness" (Befindlichkeit) of Dasein and Care

a. Findingness[10]

In this section I now turn to the motivational, conative aspect of factical existence. The Heidegger literature has mainly been devoted to, along with the basic commentaries, the "hard" problems of the interpretation of *Being and Time*, namely, death, authenticity, time, being, and truth, and has presupposed the concepts pointed at in the paragraph on being-in (the world) as such as largely needing no further explanation or problematization. This is absurd, considering

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Heidegger claim that worldliness is somehow Dasein itself, how is this thesis motivated? We have to differentiate among several meanings of worldliness as far as it is said to pertain to the structure of existence. a. In one sense, worldliness is the structure of the entire meaning, structured as the meaning of being at hand. In this sense, worldliness is a meaning related to Dasein. b. In another sense, worldliness is a character of Dasein, insofar as it pertains to Dasein that it is worldly, that it is always in relation with worldliness in the first sense. c. In a third sense, worldliness is a moment of Dasein as an originally unitarily, interpretatively, and relationally structured meaning, it is a moment of Dasein, insofar as Dasein expresses a relation of understanding and being. All three meanings have textual support. If we identify Dasein with the being in the world, then we can claim that the world is a constitutive moment of Dasein. In such a case, however, we have to clarify what is meant by Dasein. The appearance of a logical necessity that the world is a meaning moment of Dasein as it relates to the world and being in the world, arises because it is overlooked that Dasein in this sense, as it relates to the world, (as the understanding that is in relation to the world), is already an analytically isolated moment of the originally unitary meaning of understanding and world. King [see Magda King, *A Guide to Heidegger's* Being and Time (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), 52] explicitly interprets the "world" in the structure of being-in-the-world as the way in which Dasein exists, as an existential-ontological concept, that is to say, a concept that expresses Dasein's relation to being. In my view, Heidegger quite often uses concepts in this relational sense; the foremost example is being itself, which, when referring to the existence of Dasein, I understand means the relation to being. If worldliness is conceptualized as meaningfulness, the conceptual distinction between Dasein and world as an independent meaning is already blurred. Unless this meaningfulness is understood in the sense of the original unity of Dasein and the world. Meaningfulness could also be understood transcendentally as meaning-giving, and worldliness as the whole of meaningfulness would be understood primarily relationally, as the whole of meaning-giving. When Heidegger says that *Dasein* is existing in its own world, this should be taken to be expressed emphatically, for rhetoric effect. We can also talk about worldliness as the medium of both, as one could clumsily say, as the original unity of meaning. It seems that Heidegger has this meaning in mind several times. Why has he not himself distinguished these meanings? In this preparatory analytic he was focused on gaining an horizon of the interpretation of Dasein, not on clear analytical distinctions. As this part of the text is a preparatory hermeneutics of everydayness, it is necessary that it remains obscured just as the everydayness itself. The fundamental character of *Dasein* is that it exists for the sake of itself, but also of the world. What is the relation between the two? One should not reduce this character to *Dasein* alone, as then it would follow that the character of existing for the sake of the world one-sidedly originates in *Dasein* as some primary principle. See for such an interpretation King, 65. With world I shall always understand the meaning of the wholeness of meaning being as a structurally independent moment in the original unity of meaning.

[10] This term is used also by John Haugeland, *Dasein Disclosed* (Cambridge, and London: Harvard University Press, 2013).

this paragraph functions as the key paragraph of the entire work and any misinterpretations of its central concepts inevitably lead to misinterpretations of all the other parts of the work.

It appears that findingness has not been approached as problematic in the literature. This could be attributed to several reasons. 1. The concept of existence is already simplified and not viewed as problematic in relation to being. 2. Findingness is approached in a pragmatic manner and based on a definitive understanding of facticity. 3. Findingness is regarded only as a burden, which is its first and most obvious meaning, but not in relation to a motivational problem of existence.[11] 4. The reason for the latter is that existence is not understood as a problematic relation to a relation to being.

Against that, I maintain that the findingness of existence is something that still has to be explained adequately and in a properly existential manner and that it even has to remain partially enigmatic, if it should function as a motivational, conative principle.

b. The problem

What in an existential sense in meant as the findingness of Dasein, is ontically experienced as mood. But should the analysis content itself with just observing this fact of everyday existence and in addition observe that existence as such obviously has some universal structure, that enables all the particular moods? If the analysis is to be existential, it has to relate to some hermeneutically, interpretatively conceptualized facticity, and, in relating to being, not just an ontic facticity. The ontic moods can here serve only as an illustration of a problem. Existential findingness is not exhausted by what we can gather phenomenologically from moods. Too often, purely existential problems are confused for still phenomenological, albeit ontic problems.

On the other hand, we also have to always consider the historical context of any conceptuality and not let the traditional concepts and understanding determine a contemporary interpretation.[12] Based on this, Heidegger's

[11] See for instance: "As factically thrown into its there, dasein always has some 'sense of' or 'feel for' or 'appreciation of' how it is doing or how life is going for it" (Haugeland, 144). For such an ontical understanding of facticity see also Ernst Tugendhat, *Über den Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger* (Berlin: de Gruyter 1970), 300-306; Michael Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's* Being and Time (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989), 80-81; 121, and Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's* Being and Time*, Division I* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990), 168-170.

[12] The "there" of thrown facticity has never been reflected in the philosophical tradition, hence is also absent from modern psychology. From the Christian world viewpoint, this concept is understood as createdness, in ancient philosophy it is known as nature, *physei,* and platonically it is interpreted as emanated hypostasis, that is to say, always on the basis of some reason. In opposition to this view stands the existential meaning of thrownness as the groundless findingness of the self-relation to having to be in relation with the world. In taking over

findingness can be easily understood according to a traditional mode of mood as affect. At the same time, the traditionally understood affectivity and orectivity pose a problem or a question to the existential analysis. *How* are we namely to conceptualize the fact that for Dasein its existence (as the relation to being, to the phenomenon, that there is a world) is originally imposed on it, that it *has* to exist (as such relation)? What is the ground for that? The tradition of the concept of affectivity offers a basis for a hermeneutical destruction of this concept, which, guided by the reduction to the phenomenon of existence, offers a possibility of an existential construction of Dasein's affectivity and findingess.[13]

The conceptual core on which Heidegger bases his analysis and which we can, in some sense, preserve existentially, is the drive or inclination toward existing, which is always interpreted in some manner, or the privative modification of such a drive, and not the modern conception of affect, ridden of its original connection with the motivational driving principle. The subsuming of *appetitus* under affect or the sharp distinction between the two, is already a symptom of a rationalistic mode of the subject, so that what is left as the only sense of affectivity is negative irrationality.

In traditional terms, my interpretative thesis can be expressed in the way that Heidegger's expressions that Dasein has to exist, that its existence is an issue, is not to be understood only purely affectively as a burden, but orectically, as *conatus*, drive, a motivational principle, that is to say, dynamically.

c. The proposal

Dasein is always already called into self-interpretation, being a factical relation to the relationship of understanding and meaning. That Dasein has to exist as itself is not imposed on it by some obscure capacity of self-affection, but to Dasein as self-interpretation there belongs an inclination, drive, toward its relation to the relationship with being. Dasein thus always already interprets itself in the respect that it has to exist as itself as an "existential imperative," it has always already found itself in this inclination; this is the meaning of findingness.

But what is the meaning of this? Why does understanding *require*, *impose* self-interpretation?

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the ancient conception, the *dia* of the original diathesis became confined to the meaning of "apartness," losing the medial meaning of the "through," as in "posited" through the world, where the *dia* names the original unity of *Dasein* and the world.

[13] The nature of the *pathos* already includes the relation to being. *Hexis* and *pathos* are in a certain way co-equal. This is what Heidegger seems to express with his interpretation of findingness as *hedone*, which connects both these concepts. See Niall Keane, "The Affects of Rhetoric and Reconceiving the Nature of Possibility," in *Heidegger on Affect*, ed. Christos Hadjioannou, 47-67 (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 57.

Dasein in its existing is never just a foreign phenomenon, held at a theoretical distance, which could be only observed, but its meaning is always its ownmost. Now, the afore-sketched involvement of facticity has to be clarified "concretely," namely with regard to the meaning of the individual unique existence.

The involvement of facticity has been explained from groundlessness – Dasein is not some self-grounded entity, that could further ground itself in some way, in some dialectical reflexivity. In this groundlessness, because of it, Dasein is necessarily always delivered to itself as a unique problem, a question that implicates itself as questioning the relation to its existence.

What is then *the ground of the drive* of Dasein toward its interpretative existence as a problem? *The relation to the constant already being-called by the being meaning as enigmatic*. For:

> 1. This call of the meaning of being is groundless. As such, it is enigmatic, problematic, and questionable.
> 2. Owing to this, the meaning of being is always and already calling Dasein into an interpretative relation with it, addressing it as a problem.
> 3. As this call is structured, as was explained above, as self-relational, Dasein is constantly impelled to a relation to this relation to the call of being, as itself enigmatic, problematic.
> 4. Thus, Dasein is impelled to take on itself the relation to the relationship with the meaning of being as problematic, questionable, enigmatic, and its most defining; however, it would try to avoid it and has, in some way, be it however unclear, interpreted itself as such. Dasein is thus constantly self-calling-into-existence (understood as relation-to-the-relation-to-being), constantly having to exist (in the aforementioned sense).

Thrownness, facticity, is thus not to be understood just as some fact about existence, but as a motivational principle, the constant being called in thrown existence. That Dasein has to exist, be in relation to the relation to being and not only be in relation to being; this is the original meaning of facticity, thrownness. The thrownness of the relation to being already co-expresses the relation to thrownness in that relation to being.[14] Thrownness can be properly understood only as a relation to the relation (to being).

[14] With regard to the simplified interpretation of mood and findingness as the ground of that some being can meaningfully affect us in some way and a meaningful affectedness with the world, it has to be said that the real task is to explain the structure of this relation as thrown. The structural and the motivational aspects, as Dreyfus calls them, are though inextricably connected; see Dreyfus, 226.

Findingness is then a dynamic structure, it means holding itself in one's findingness, finding oneself always anew, arising from groundlessness, interpretatively holding oneself in that being and impelled toward a relation to the relation to being.

That Dasein "has to exist" also implies that it cannot choose the meaning of being it is in relation with, nor the way it is related to being (except inauthentically or authentically). However, this is secondary to the primary meaning of being called toward existing from the groundless call of being.

However, there is a certain illusion created by the fallen structure of purposeful meaning that it functions spontaneously. For this purposeful structure of meaning is in fact possible only because of the facticity of findingness of having to exist.

d. Findingness and affectivity of moods

It would be wrong to distinguish an existential structure of findingness and then, in addition, a structure of affectivity of moods, which would enable particular moods, while findingness would then express the original condition of possibility of affectivity. Existence is not built as a logical system, but in a way of coequal dynamical intertwining of meaning, interpretative structures. That is why affectivity, the modifiability of Dasein in particular moods, is just findingness itself, viewed from the perspective of this possibility, and not some special structural possibility of Dasein. This means that findingness is coequal with its affective expression, meaningful only in relation to it and in it, and not just some formal structure.

e. Understanding

For Dasein to interpret its own findingness in speech, it has to always *understand* itself in its existence. *Verstehen,* understanding, or know-how, expresses a certain being-ahead-of-oneself. In understanding there is a foregrasping of the possibility of meaning. To understand something means to have a certain relation to some meaning context, so that one can already in advance, before any particular practical or mental moment, orient oneself, that one can, in short, interpret it.

Initially, we can characterize understanding as a meaningful, interpretative relation to thrownness, as a groundless possibility. On the basis of findingness, I can project myself in certain possibilities, I can affirm or deny my relation to the world. The fact that I can at all be in relation to myself as a relation to the world, and that from myself, for the sake of myself as a free relation, that my relation to the world is not grounded in any being or being-context, in something in myself, or outside myself, is an existential moment. For the sake of itself then means: understandable, interpretable only from itself.

Thus, possibility has to be understood negatively, against any prior actuality, prior form, or any prior given meaning that would ground this possibility that would only on the basis of this grounding be a possibility.

That means that groundless thrownness can be understood only in groundless freedom.[15] This free relation to groundless factical possibility is what is meant by projection. However, the free understanding of being thrown is always lagging behind itself as a projection and has to always project itself anew, interpretatively accepting itself in its own thrownness as such. Moreover, this freedom is coequal with findingness imposed on Dasein and has to exist, though indeed as free.[16] However, we have to preserve the groundlessness, problematic character of the original unity of meaning; the task of existing is not to "come to an end" with it, but to preserve this call of the original enigma of relation, which lays in the final analysis in the groundless enigma of being itself.[17]

f. Care

How can we then conceptualize care as the unitary structure of existence as ahead of-itself, with regard to the proposed interpretation of findingness?

> 1. Being ahead of itself is in essential connection with the thrown projection. This has been explained as Dasein always already accepting itself in its thrown freedom.
> 2. How is this accepting to be understood though? It means that Dasein always, necessarily, and inexorably holds itself in its thrown possibility as its own. This holding oneself though, is itself to be understood as not allowing oneself to be ever fully absorbed in the world of beings and the possibilities that it offers, in which it can engage.

Dasein can then be its own thrown projection only as far as it holds itself in this possibility, by constantly projecting itself in this thrown projection so to speak. In any case, this being ahead of oneself is in no way to be understood to mean that some concrete particular possibilities of the life-world always remain open for Dasein; this would be an ontic, not an existential level.

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[15] As Schürmann observes, both findingness and understanding can be grasped in their specific meaning only in their mutual contrast; see Simon Critchley, Reiner Schürmann, and Steven Levine, *On Heidegger's Being and Time* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), 85.

[16] The interpretation of understanding as some release from thrownness is fundamentally wrong, as it overlooks the strict and final co-equalness of thrownness and possibility. See for such an interpretation ibid., 142.

[17] This is what Critchley calls the enigmatic *apriori*. Ibid., 135.

Therefore, the motivational principle of care consists of two co-equal motivational moments: the findingness of having to exist (as a thrown, groundless relation to the relation to being) and the free possibility of self-interpretation in the form of this findingness. There is no conflict between the freedom and necessity of findingness; these two are aspects of a single motivation.

III. The motivational structure of Dasein and *conatus*

Heidegger seems to gather his existential concept of motivation from the interpretation of Leibniz,[18] or at least uses this discussion to present his own concept, which he interprets as closely related to that of Leibniz. In Leibniz, *appetitus*, drive, seems to be oriented by a primal (perceptual) givenness. Thus, Heidegger interprets that drive is neither a (scholastically understood) disposition or capacity nor a process (a movement, understood by analogy with natural movement as one could understand Aristotle), but a "taking upon itself."[19] In existential terms, Dasein taking it upon itself means to explicate its own existence in self-interpretation, as it has always already found itself.

In Heidegger's discussion of Leibniz's concept of *conatu*s we can discern three main moments of his existential interpretation of the concept.[20] Together they form the hermeneutical background of the motivational, conative interpretation of Dasein that I present (and as I claim, Heidegger does as well). We can summarize its content as determined by facticity (1), ontological difference (2), and hermeneutics of interpretation (3).[21] I interpret these moments with the following characterization:

> 1. Inclination, directiveness, which can be understood in opposition to idealistic spontaneity (for example, as a Hegelian movement of formal negativity), that is, out of thrownness, findingness in relation to the enigmatic meaning of being.
> 2. Releasement, which can be understood as Dasein freeing itself for its relation to being, by overcoming the obstacles to the drive to its relation to being that are implicit in findingness (facticity), being thrown in the life-world of beings, opposed to the free relation to the enigma of being that is Dasein. Existentially, drive (toward the

[18] Martin Heidegger, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausganf von Leibniz* GA 26 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978), 86-105; 111-123.

[19] Ibid., 102.

[20] In the later part of this interpretation, Heidegger also discusses the conceptual relation of finitude and world, in their inter-connectedness to the concept of drive.

[21] It could be argued that each of these moments are articulated in an opposition to a traditional metaphysical notion of conatus, be it understood teleologically as *orexis* in Aristotle, or deterministically as the self-explication of substance in the chain of *modi* in Spinoza.

> relation to the meaning of being) is meaningful only as far as it helps overcome the obstacles to the problematic relationship with being, with Dasein always already interpreting itself as this overcoming.[22]
> 3. Transcendence, which can be understood as the structure of self-surpassing in the sense of self-explication of interpretation, which has to happen always anew, as it is structured as releasement, movement against beings that determine it by closing off the enigmatic transcendence of being, and at the same time, because it is structured as facticity, as findingness, in the sense that it has already found itself. Thus, it has to self-transcend in order to be capable of self-interpretation. In its findingness, Dasein has already found itself amidst beings claiming Dasein's relation in this or another character of their being; as threatening, comforting, at-hand, and found itself thus interpretatively disposed in its relation to being, that is, in its transcendence.[23]

What constitutes their interrelatedness and co-equalness is the enigmatic, problematic character of the groundless meaning of being.

IV. Authentic motivation

In this and the following sections I shall discuss the existential concept of an authentic motivation or conatus, as explicated above.

Heidegger distinguishes two basic modes of existence: authentic and inauthentic.[24] Findingness and care are always already modified in one of these

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[22] Ibid., 100.

[23] Ibid., 115.

[24] Here I have to briefly argue my position on the problem of the modal indifference of *Dasein*, which mainly rests on the problem of the interpretation of the meaning of *beziehungsweise* (bzw), which Heidegger uses to refer to the modally indifferent mode of *Dasein*. Compare Jo-Jo Koo, "Heidegger's Underdeveloped Conception of the Undistinguishedness (Indifferenz) of Everyday Human Existence," in *From Conventionalism to Social Authenticity: Heidegger's Anyone and Contemporary Social Theory*, eds. Hans Bernhard Schmid, and Gerhard Thonhauser, 53-79 (Cham: Springer, 2017), 56-70. This expression can have two meanings, a disjunctive and an explicative one. In distinguishing authenticity, inauthenticity, and modal indifference one is making an existential-analytical distinction; if the analysis initially considers *Dasein* as existing first and foremost, and if that is taken to mean *Dasein* as indifferent in regard to its modality, then this just means that it does not consider the aspect of authenticity/inauthenticity. This does not mean though that everyday *Dasein* is not inauthentic. Indifference is not a proper existential term, meaning, it does not refer to any original structure of *Dasein*, it is just an analytical, methodological term. Yet, in another sense, Dasein truly exists indifferently, in an "indifference of modal sense," as far as it shows itself in the aspect that it exists at all, that it is structured as existence at all. So even as authentic, it still exists "indifferently," in some sense, as far as it exists as thrown, understanding. This bzw is then not to be understood in an exclusive sense of "either." An interpretation of indifference as neither choosing itself nor not

modalities. As there is inauthentic findingness, there is authentic findingness and care.

Authenticity is again not understood adequately in the Heidegger literature, as what is lacking is an interpretation of the authentic meaning of the world, and the meaning of existence is not understood properly from the beginning, as it is understood as unclarified "being" instead of the relation to the relation to being.[25] By authenticity one should definitely not understand *exclusively* any specific way of being in the life-world, any specific way of dealing with the pragmatic public world, choosing some life-world possibilities over others, or the possibility thereof.[26] The problem of a practical application of the idea of authentic existence, to which I turn later, indeed consists of the question of how to understand authenticity in this practical aspect. However, this should not be understood as its primary meaning.

An authentic relation to the unique being of the world is a relation that is in relation to itself in the way that it is an "active," dynamic, taken-upon, contributing, co-forming, invested relation to the giving of the unique being of the world, but only as I myself let it happen, only as I "participate" in the happening of this relation in a unique, ownmost manner. Heidegger discovered this motivational principle of authentic existence on the basis of the insights of Dilthey's hermeneutics (the idea of facticity and the hermeneutic spiral) and phenomenology (the idea of correlation).

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choosing itself as authentic, but lost in the they, because it is not yet met with anxiety (see ibid., 61) is a formalistic, unnecessarily schematic and without any phenomenal grounding, as Dasein has always already chosen itself this way or the other, and as it has always already fallen, this is just the meaning of its facticity. In my view, one should always apply Ockham's razor in interpreting the structure of Dasein; we should not multiply existential structures without necessity. The entire problem can be reduced to the question if in-authentic is fully interchangeable with inauthentic as Jo-Jo Koo observes (ibid., 68) and proposes (ibid., 70) that Dasein is in the mode of indifference not fully but only relatively value-neutral. At this point, this becomes pure speculation and arbitrary ascribing of concepts. With regard to textual support: Heidegger does not claim that the entire analysis of the first division, until the analysis of the they is an analysis of a modally indifferent Dasein, but that this is a goal of this analysis, reached in the analysis of being-in (the world) as such. The real existential question is rather, why does *Dasein* has to be always already modified, always authentic or inauthentic? Heidegger answers: because it is in each case mine, that is to say, because in its facticity it is an issue for itself as its ownmost possibility. See also Magda King's interpretation of the indifference of everydayness as meaning that the distinction between the authentic and inauthentic self has not yet come to light. King, 42.

[25] A widespread understanding of the "existential philosophical" view of motivation seems to be one that sees the freedom of existence as some empty self-relation of "being" without any positive character that could serve as a basis for an ought. The understanding of authenticity that is prevalent in the literature, is centered on pragmatic concerns with the meaning of social norms.

[26] Or, on the other hand, as Dreyfus' interpretation goes, the insight into the fundamental indifference of choice, stemming from anxiety and fallness; see Dreyfus, 337.

Authenticity means taking upon oneself the groundless freedom of one's existence, as nothing intra-worldly is finally the ground of one's relation to the relation to the being of the world. It means the freedom of the interpretation always starting from existence itself, not from the life-world. Being transparent in one's freedom is a condition for being transparent in one's uniqueness, and vice versa. Both moments are connected and founded in their co-equalness in the groundlessness of existence.

Authentic Dasein frees itself from falling in the public world and thus transcends it toward the being of the world as such. With the transcendence of the world I thus mean that the world as such, in its being, shows itself only in transcending the everyday world. In releasement from the life-world existence, it enables itself as a released openness for the enigma of the being of the world, covered over in everyday existing by constant appropriation and clinging to the proximate being meaning. However, Dasein can exist authentically only insofar as it stays a problem, an enigma for itself. Nevertheless, this is possible only in attempting the creation of new meaning.

Existential analysis ascertains that man's existence always contains a motivational principle, a *conatus*, a drive toward an authentic meaningful relation to the world of being as such (not some "pure will to live"), even if all the classic, standard psychical motivators, be their emotional, social, or ethical, are taken away from him. This drive is a drive toward a free meaningful relation to that one has to exist at all, to be in relation to the world, to accept oneself as a constant problem, burden, task of this relation.

Authentic findingness and care as motivational principles can be understood only in opposition to the falling of Dasein. In falling, Dasein turns away from findingness of care as such, the free having to exist (as a relation to the relation to being). It transposes it into the ever-new dealings with beings. In falling it seems like the only possibilities of meaningful self-interpretation that are available to existence are those that it has already discovered in the world, even if it has created them itself, this created character gets covered over. However, the structure of the life-world is such that its purposefulness exhausts itself sooner or later and boredom and depression can set in, as also the relation to the relation with the being of the world is understood only from this limited life-world perspective.

Meanwhile, the unique relation to the relation with the enigmatic unique being of the world, as long as it is understood as such, cannot be exhausted, except as it can fall back into falling. In the authentic orientation of existence, the being of the world shows itself as a transcendent, never exhaustible, absolute meaning, which constantly calls existence into relation with it and into the self-relation, as a meaning that has to be created ever anew, against the tendency toward falling.

In authentic existence then, what is always at issue is preserving the motivationally structured problematic openness for this openness of the meaning

of the being of the world as such, preserving the possibility that the world can address one in a unique meaningful way in its transcendence, which can show itself in aesthetical, ethical, sublimely natural, and other ways. What Dasein, as always already fallen, has always already lost in this falling is then the problematic, enigmatic unique drive to the relation to the meaning of the being of the world as an enigma; authentic findingness dictates that it has to always gain it back anew.

Authentic findingness means the awareness of existence that has to tend toward the relation with the unique being of the world for the sake of that relation itself, not for the sake of something intra-worldly. The authentic task of existing is then to exist as a unique ground of the problematic, enigmatic transcendence of the world.[27] Dasein has a possibility of creating new meaning as far as it has a possibility of creating a unique relation to the relation with the being of the world, a unique form of original unity with the being of the world, in self-interpretation.

As the being of the world is enigmatic, the very relation to this being is itself eminently enigmatic and problematic and in this way meaningfully motivated. The "feeling" of a duty to oneself as existence that can motivate consistently, can be experienced only in relation to the problematic unique transcendence of the world.

This means that there is an existential self, without regard to the self or personal identity constituted in the life-world. From this freedom, new meaning can be created in the life-world. This freedom can function as a principle of motivation, even when all the motivational factors in the life-world have been exhausted.

What motivates the transition from the inauthentic to the authentic mode of findingness (care) is finitude, in the sense of the possibility of not-being in the relation with the being of the world. Finitude manifests itself in all limit possibilities of existence (boredom, anxiety).

From the groundlessness of existence, namely that meaning is fundamentally not founded in anything intra-worldly, the relation toward that groundlessness can open up, opening up a view that there still remains nevertheless a meaningful relation. As this relation, as groundless, not founded in anything intra worldly, is unique, I can project meaning from this uniqueness of the relation, as far as I let it enlighten my life-world interactions.

V. Conclusion

The problem of the practical application of these insights to concrete everyday life, the dialogue of life and existence, should be perceived as a persistent problem, task, and challenge, not as something solved in advance. What kind

[27] Tugendhat poses the question of authentic motivation and sees the truth, understood as the self-disclosure of *Dasein* as the motivational principle for the transition to authenticity; see Tugendhat, *Wahrheitsbegriff*, 319-320. This seems to me too formalistic, for what has to be explained is exactly why the authentic self-disclosure of *Dasein* motivates it in its authentic existence.

of theoretical, ethical, and aesthetical relation should I adopt toward the world in view of the findingness of my having to exist, to be in relation to my relation with the world?

The deep motivator is the unique relation to one's own relation to the relation to the being of the world as a problem, being for oneself the unique problem of the relation to the world. The practical question is then, through which relations can the individual cultivate their own unique problematicity in relation to the enigma of the being of the world? At least in principle, the care for the unique relation to the unique being of the world can motivate the relation to life as a whole, which can then motivate particular actions in the life-world.

Authentic moments of relation to the relation with the being of the world may be rare, but one can cultivate a disposition that induces such moments, and these moments can enlighten all our actions in the life-world. At the same time, this relation to the relation to the being of the world is intuitively, emotionally available.

In philosophical tradition, the "ought," motivation, is always deduced from some prior essence of man and then imposed as a principle of action, as a self-imposed norm.[28] Meanwhile, in an existential perspective, the "ought" is already implied in the very structure of existence, thrown in its having to exist, to be in relation to the relation to being, which can only be freely accepted. In a motivational regard, this existential perspective is well-founded in phenomenology and appeals to a phenomenally real content of existence, while the idealistic motivational principle always necessarily remains on a level of a postulate, which can be effective only insofar as it is a specific formulation of the existential drive toward a self-interpretative relation to the world. Contrary to the traditional theory of motivation, where the thought of the final purpose of the highest possible fulfilment or actualization of capacities is central, the existential theory of motivation proposes that what motivates is only the fact that Dasein has to develop and cultivate its unique, ownmost relation to the problem of the relationship with the being of the world, for the sake of this problem itself, as well as the practical forms of this relation in communication with the life-world.

However, this means that any theory that postulates as a motivational principle any form of spontaneity, is fundamentally wrong. Appealing to such a posited capacity can be effective in practice only because it happens to hit on the

[28] However, in Fichte there is the factical moment of the *Anstoss*. In Aristotle, this relation of freedom and thought is more complicated, as the ought follows from the free relation to the natural necessity, purpose (telos). See Taylor Carman, *Heidegger's Analytic: Interpretation, Discourse and Authenticity in* Being and Time (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 133. One should distinguish the purpose as only a rational thought and as a motivational principle. Carman discusses this in connection with Heidegger's distinction of for-the-sake-of-itself and purpose. Heidegger's view would probably be that rational purpose alone lacks motivation; this is also in line with Aristotle's metaphysics (see the relation of will and reason in his theory of the soul).

co-equalness of having to exist and freedom, in the way of appealing to freedom. Both philosophical praxis and all forms of therapy, counselling, and psychological therapies in general, presuppose an enlightened, Cartesian rational individual, a subject that is capable of understanding themselves analytically and, on the basis of this understanding, motivate some presupposed principle of will.

Contemporary psychological theories have taken over the Aristotelian model of purposeful drive, will, but at the same time cut it off from transcendence, in relation to which this model can only be meaningful. It is an idealist, cognitivist presupposition that values themselves motivate. In fact, having values presupposes a certain rationalistic relation to one's own existence. Heidegger's existential analytic uncovers the original groundlessness of man. In does not promise nor offer faith, trust in any values, norms, purpose, life form, happiness, good, fulfilment of potential, etc. It offers only insight and acceptance of the original groundlessness of the relation to the being of the world, and its motivational structure.

It is thus a fundamental mistake, if the everyday, normal life is presupposed as a standard, as a normal expression and form of motivation, and if one tries to appeal to non-normalized existence with this same standardized model, out of the life-world instead of from existence in its findingness. Such an approach overlooks a problematic aspect, the only one which can truly, consistently and persistently motivate for meaning, namely, that one has to always exist meaningfully anew and answer for oneself the practical question of how it is uniquely possible for one's existence in connection with the life-world. Psychology cannot reach to the original uniqueness of the individual, to existence as the relation to the relation to being and its motivational structure, it cannot conceptually reach uniqueness of existence, and for that reason cannot adequately grasp the principle of deep, persistent motivation.

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The Erotic and the Eternal: Striving for the Permanence of Meaning

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Abstract

The paper presents three conceptions of 'conatus' that show the will to persist as being connected to the individual's participating in a culture or other collective entity and which present human striving as transcending mere biological givenness. The human strife as a movement between the 'erotic' and, the 'eternal' is analyzed in three conative 'myths' – 'eros' in Plato's Symposium, 'cura' in Heidegger's Sein und Zeit, and 'Geist' in Scheler's Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos.

Keywords: *eros; existentialism; platonism; transcendental; feminist critique*

I. Introduction: Conatus and the permanence of meaning

In this essay, I investigate 'conatus' as the 'will to persist' of an individual as part of a (cultural) collective. Moving beyond an understanding of a 'will to persist' as the common aspect of all animate entities by which they strive to stay alive (sometimes referred to as a 'vitalist' understanding), I focus on 'conatus' as an aspect of the permanence of meaning constitutive of human society and culture. Current philosophical anthropologies explain

the transcendental conditions of human existence[1] with reference to different interpretations of the 'conative' aspect in this second sense, and this is their foremost task.[2] My thesis is that the specific difference of the conative strife in human beings manifests itself as the quest for a permanence of meaning.

I would like to put into comparative perspective the multi-layered and understudied concept of strife as it can be found in three canonical texts which are rarely read side-by-side or under this aspect: Plato's *Symposium*, Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* and Scheler's *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*. Such a comparative reading, should it be fruitful, at all, must avoid several dangers. Applying the concept 'conatus' must avoid anachronisms; it cannot lightheartedly be applied in the three authors. Then, there is the limit of time and patience (in the reader), which puts a full stop to the material which can be covered in the space of an article. I focus on three conative foundation-stories, the myth of 'Eros' in Plato's *Symposium*, the fable of 'Cura' in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, and the term 'Geist' in Scheler's *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*. They each capture the defining features of the conative human striving in the form of a 'myth' which prior to a systematic reading tells of the origin of human striving and provides a starting point for further (ontological) investigation. The present essay explores these different concepts of strife as they negotiate the individual's space *in*, but also *beyond* contingent existence.

What connects these three and stands out to me is that they describe a movement between 'the erotic' and 'the eternal,' and that this movement characterizes human striving. With these three exegetic vignettes, I hope to shed light on the transition of the concept 'conatus,' from the ancient to the contemporary philosophical point of view and illustrate the philosophical relevance it might have, today. All three conceptions consider the striving of human individuals as not merely going beyond self-preservation. By inverting the common understanding of need, these conceptions propose that

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[1] Here, I refer mainly to current projects of post-critical philosophical anthropologies (including mine) for which Kantian considerations set the stage. See Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, *Sinn* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 43: "In Kants Gegenüberstellung von 'transzendent' und 'transzendental' geht es daher gerade darum, jede Rede über ein solches vermeintes Jenseits immanent zu deuten, also auf Formen unserer condition humaine zu beziehen." (Translation mine; Kant's confrontation of 'transcendent' with 'transcendental' is aimed at interpreting all talk of an alleged hereafter as immanent, to relate it to forms of our *condition humaine*).

[2] Scheler states, for example, that the questions of a philosphical anthropology have gained much acclaim, in recent years, but, more importantly, that there is a new readiness to accept the possible answers to the question of who man is: "In dem Augenblick, in dem der Mensch sich eingestanden hat, daß er weniger als je ein strenges Wissen habe, von dem, was er sei, und ihn auch keine Möglichkeit der Antwort auf diese Frage mehr schreckt, schein auch der neue *Mut der Wahrhaftigkeit* in ihn eingekehrt zu sein [...]." Max Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (Berlin: Michael Holzinger, 2016), 6.

flourishing through striving forms the very foundation of human existence, and that this conative 'essence' is the point of departure for any comprehensive understanding of human existence.

II. Striving out of need towards knowledge: 'Eros' in the *Symposium*

a. The Myth and its implications

The origin of human striving, which for the Greeks equals its essence, is described by Diotima in Plato's *Symposium* through the myth of the personified 'Eros' – an allegorical rendering of man's conative essence: 'Eros,' a daimon (Geist), is the child of 'Penia,' whose name means 'poverty' or 'need' and 'Poros,' whose name means 'resourcefulness' or 'fullnes.' At a garden-party of the gods on Aphrodite's birth-day, 'Penia' rapes 'Poros' and they conceive the child 'Eros,' who inherits his mother's and father's essences. He is suspended between the poles 'fullness of wisdom and resource' (his father) and 'void of wisdom and resource' (his mother). 'Eros' is forever striving towards perfection born out of a lack of it.[3] This metaphor, for Socrates, captures the movement (and motivation) of a person who lacks love or beauty and is therefore drawn to beauty. In this striving, the person thus moved gradually ascends towards the final goal, Beauty itself.[4]

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[3] Plato, *Symposium* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925). The eros-myth that Diotima relates reads as follows: [203b] "'That is rather a long story,' she replied, 'but still, I will tell it you. When Aphrodite was born, the gods made a great feast, and among the company was Resource the son of Cunning. And when they had banqueted there came Poverty abegging, as well she might in an hour of good cheer, and hung about the door. Now Resource, grown tipsy with nectar – for wine as yet there was none – went into the garden of Zeus, and there, overcome with heaviness, slept. Then Poverty, being of herself so resourceless, devised the scheme of having a child by Resource [203c] and lying down by his side she conceived Love. Hence it is that Love from the beginning has been attendant and minister to Aphrodite, since he was begotten on the day of her birth, and is, moreover, by nature a lover bent on beauty since Aphrodite is beautiful. Now, as the son of Resource and Poverty, Love is in a peculiar case. First, he is ever poor, and far from tender or beautiful as most suppose him: [203d] rather is he hard and parched, shoeless and homeless; on the bare ground always he lies with no bedding, and takes his rest on doorsteps and waysides in the open air; true to his mother's nature, he ever dwells with want. But he takes after his father in scheming for all that is beautiful and good; for he is brave, strenuous and high-strung, a famous hunter, always weaving some stratagem; desirous and competent of wisdom, throughout life ensuing the truth; a master of jugglery, witchcraft, [203e] and artful speech. By birth neither immortal nor mortal, in the selfsame day he is flourishing and alive at the hour when he is abounding in resource; at another he is dying, and then reviving again by force of his father's nature: yet the resources that he gets will ever be ebbing away; so that Love is at no time either resourceless or wealthy, and furthermore, he stands midway betwixt wisdom and ignorance [...]."

[4] Songe-Møller discusses Plato's choice of Diotima as 'teacher' of Socrates; she is herself 'wise,' that is: she is not striving for truth guided by the homo-erotic 'eros;' her identity as an old woman places her beyond the hetero-sexual 'Eros' of procreation; yet, her identity as a *gyni* makes her more of an expert in questions relating to child bearing and birth. Vidgis

> "Now then," said Socrates, "let us agree to what we have so far concluded. First, is not Love directed to certain things of which, in the second place, he has a want?"[5]

We must keep in mind that the previous speakers, although dismissed and corrected by Socrates, contribute to the overall picture Plato presents to us. From this emerges that what is wanting to man is this – unchanging oneness (it is also called: Truth, Beauty, the Good). The *goal* of 'Eros' (the second topic Socrates wants to discuss, after discussing the origin and essence of 'Eros') is to lead man away from simple gratification of the carnal desires towards seeing Beauty and Truth; this can be achieved "by loving boys correctly," for it is the homoerotic 'eros' which leads along this path.[6] The erotic strife does not refer to biological reproduction. Philosophical Love (the homoerotic 'eros') describes the conative as a striving for beautiful ideas or Beauty (Truth) itself – the erotic moves towards the eternal.

The persistence of man (as a species *and* as partaker of truth) is seen as an individual's endeavor. Man might 'use' a woman to sire his child and he might 'use' another man (or boy) to move towards Truth. The homoerotic 'Eros' allows him to appreciate beauty in the other (as likeness), then move on to Beauty itself, leaving the lover behind. In this conception, birth and reproduction can be instantiated in three different ways, each of which is but continuation of sameness: the maintenance of one's body by cell-reproduction, the continued existence of the human kind from generation to generation by way of 'copying' oneself in a child, and the realization of the eternal by parturition of true ideas (the last being the only way in which men can glimpse immortality proper).

b. Impossible difference – Receiving a feminist critique

The *Symposium* accounts for erotic strife as a striving for immortality (permanence, continued existence). Songe-Møller reads this 'Eros'-myth with the aim of a feminist critique. Her critique is first and foremost a critique on the exclusion of the feminine; more generally, it can be seen as the exclusion of difference. Departing from her critique, I maintain that the erotic strive for truth does *not* necessarily deny a substantial role to women in particular (as long as they participate 'as men'), but paradoxically it does deny a role to *all* individuals *as individuals*[7]:

Songe-Møller, *Philosophy without Women – The Birth of Sexism in Western Thought* (London: Continuum, 2002), 105.

[5] Plato, *Symposium*, 200e.

[6] Ibid., 211b.

[7] Setting as highest goal the Sameness or Unity symbolized, for example, also in the circle which forms the Greek polis of equal citizens; see Songe-Møller, Chapter 3 'The Logic of

i. Reproduction beyond sexual difference to the exclusion of the possibility of the feminine:

> My aim in describing the love discourse of the *Symposium* in these terms has been to show how the kind of metaphoric language that Plato uses in this text – images relating to sexuality and birth – facilitate a particular understanding of philosophy: philosophy as the highest form of reproduction – the reproduction of the One and of Likeness – with immortality as its objective and a radical homo-eroticism as its precondition.[8]

Attributing a more perfect form of reproduction to men and equipping 'Eros' with both male and female attributes not only moves towards a one-sex solution, but also takes away from the only way in which women are perceived in the first place – as *gynaikes*, that is: women in the biological sense of sexual reproduction.[9] One result of the *Symposium* in this reading is the (functional) devaluation of the female qua description of a male birth (of ideas). In the *Symposium*, according to Songe-Møller, Plato presents an account of a masculine birth, a birth only possible through homo-eroticism which allows for 'loving the same:' "The attraction is that of what resembles oneself, or more accurately, of what resembles one's own ideal."[10]

From an intellectual standpoint, writes Songe-Møller, Socrates could also have written about 'Eros' as a female figure, promoting love between the same sex as between women.[11] Or he could have opted for describing the highest love as a spiritualized union between the two sexes. The latter is an unlikely candidate because the union of the sexes, as we have seen, naturally results in biological procreation and as such necessarily ends in the consumption of carnal desire, not being suited to point towards anything beyond itself. The former is disregarded because women are variously described as feeble-minded (along with slaves and children) and only the most masculine women can become 'men' in their own right (and only if they dress up and 'act' as men), that is: they can participate only if and as long as they negate their femininity. Beyond observing that every declared identity

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Exclusion and the Free Men's Democracy.'

[8] Ibid., 112.

[9] "Phaedrus begins, since he is, as we are told, 'father of the thought.' Here, we should note that Plato is craftily inverting what was a well-known verse from a (lost) tragedy by Euripides (Melanippe): "The word is not mine, but my mother's. In Plato's text the source of the words is not the mother, but the father." Ibid., 95.

[10] Ibid., 96.

[11] Ibid., 92.

already rests on a suspension of the insight that (in a strict sense) nothing is alike, such identity-proclamations express definitions of relevance, or value.[12] To say that the 'gynaikes' are the non-same, excluded others, is to judge them less relevant than that which is declared the positive 'norm' (here: the male). These definitions presume gendered and value-laden dualisms, for example, that (ideal) sameness is masculine, and (non-ideal) difference or otherness is feminine. Yet, such a gendering of concepts seems problematic and, actually, counterintuitive.

Even if we put these gender-contentions aside, for a moment, what remains problematic is the conception of procreation as aiming for sameness, rather than allowing for difference. Where Songe-Møller first emphasizes the negation of the feminine in her reading, she extends her critique to the implied negation of love as interpersonal:

> The ideal of love that Diotima is made to advocate is something beyond all forms of interpersonal love; it is a love that cannot acknowledge and has no need of the Other, and which is unaware of differences – especially the differences of sex.[13]

An identity-philosophy with immortality (truth) as its aim can be attempted through companionship of sameness, but can be achieved ultimately only by leaving the other behind, standing alone gazing upon beauty.[14] Seeing the truth means to give birth to many graciously beautiful ideas and theories, concludes Diotima on a hopeful note.[15] The implications of this parturition are serious and, on further reflection, deleterious to individuality.

ii. The annihilation of difference: The argument for the denial of the feminine and of interpersonal love implies more generally the superfluidity

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[12] In speech, sameness on the level of statements and identity referring to objects are in general characterized by waiving more subtle distinctions which would always be possible, but are rarely relevant. In this sense, every topic owes its unity and identity to a kind of double negation in a logic of relevance: "Gleichheiten auf der Aussageebene und Identitäten auf der objektstufigen Ebene des Besprochenen sind generell durch einen Verzicht auf gewisse feinere Unterscheidungen bestimmt, die immer möglich wären, aber selten relevant sind. In diesem Sinn ist jeder Redegegenstand in seiner Einheit und Identität über eine Art relevanzlogische Negation der Negation bestimmt." Stekeler-Weithofer, 15.

[13] Songe-Møller, 111.

[14] We are reminded of Dante who sees God in Paradiso, only by looking past his guides and into the light.

[15] "Do but consider," she said, "that there only will it befall him, as he sees the beautiful through that which makes it visible, to breed not illusions but true examples of virtue, since his contact is not with illusion but with truth. So when he has begotten a true virtue and has reared it up he is destined to win the friendship of Heaven; he, above all men, is immortal." Plato, *Symposium*, 212a.

of the individual as individual.[16] It is not discourse which shows us truth, in Plato's model, but authority. Plato's liberating One delivers us from all differences.[17] It thereby also renders pointless our individual difference – our individual opinions, standpoints, our contingent discourses. Vis-à-vis the eternal, unchanging truth, all anecdotes of context and fleeting qualities of individuality are rendered meaningless. Inside the Platonic cave the prisoners have a certain kind of freedom – they have discourse, they talk, they hear themselves speaking, their standpoints matter. "As a child of the cave one can regard oneself as an individual with a personal – empirical – history; as children of the sun we are all the same, impersonal, and quite lacking in individual traits."[18] Where sameness is the goal, individuality needs to be overcome.

The parallelism between birth/reproduction and the description of love as the movement of philosophy shows humans as striving because they are lacking (in wisdom, in immortality), and it shows the eternal as the perfect aim of this striving. This conception is motivated by the perception of the mortal (impermanent) as lacking, and in need of reproduction. Biological reproduction is necessary for one (imperfect) kind of permanence, but needs to be overcome to partake of permanence proper. For Plato, seeing beauty, that is: Truth, the One, or Eternal Oneness, goes beyond interpersonal love. When we behold the eternal, all erotic desire ceases because the eternal itself does not know of deficiency or imperfection which are the things that love strives to overcome. Understanding the eternally self-identical also means delivering a true image of oneself to oneself and thus reaching perfect self-understanding. The philosopher (who gazes upon truth) no longer desires a person who resembles him, but Beauty (Likeness itself) and beyond that: he sees Beauty all at once and separated from the path of 'Eros' (privation), itself

[16] Songe-Møller, 115. With Luce Irigaray's reading of the cave-myth as an investigation into the foundation of knowledge as reflection, we must observe that the prisoner who leaves the darkness of the cave is violently subjected to the reorientation of reason. Although blinded and disoriented, according to Irigaray, she soon falls under the intoxication of authority. "In order to illustrate what Irigaray regards as the fundamental problem of Platonic philosophy, it can be useful to think of the following image: just as the eye is attracted by the source of light, namely the sun, that makes it possible for the eye to see, so our soul is attracted by the source of all knowledge, namely truth. But the sun is paradoxical in nature. It is not just a condition for the eye's ability to see, it also threatens to destroy the sense of sight. The result of staring directly into the sun will be blindness. By analogy, those who open their souls to the light of truth without preparation are also in danger of being blinded, or driven to distraction. How can we receive the blinding light and the consuming flame of wisdom without risking the conflagration of our souls in the process?"

[17] "The ultimate aim of Plato" philosophy is to create the truest possible – meaning the most masculine and virginal – images of the form of the Good, or of the Father, as Irigaray calls it. Songe-Møller, 126.

[18] Ibid., 128.

not lacking anything. Paradoxically, this categorical separateness places the goal of striving outside of the strife. This same paradox we will encounter again in Heidegger and in Scheler.

III. Movement in the now towards the future (death): Cura in Heidegger

a. The fable and its context

The sixth chapter of *Sein und Zeit* is titled "Die Sorge als Sein des 'Daseins'" (Care as the Being of Existence). The fable of how 'Cura' creates the first Human Being is given by Hyginus in his *Fabulae*.[19] Heidegger quotes the original Latin in its entirety (followed by a German translation) in Chapter 6, Section 42 of *Sein und Zeit*. There, Heidegger refers to the fable as a 'Bewährung' (in the sense of validation): "Das im 'Dasein' selbst liegende Seinsverständnis spricht sich vorontologisch aus."[20] In the fable, the deity 'Cura' (*care* or *Sorge*) forms a human figure from clay, then Jupiter (spirit) breathes life into it, and Tellus (earth) gives from his body the material for the creation. The ensuing custody fight between Care, Jupiter and Tellus is arbitered by Saturn (time) who decides that Jupiter and Tellus will get back what they loaned upon the death of the new creature which is called after the material (humus) from which it was shaped: 'homo.' Care shall be allowed to keep it as long as it lives.[21]

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[19] Hyginus, *Fabulae from The Myths of Hyginus*, trans. and ed. Mary Grant (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1960), poem 220.

[20] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 2, Abteilung 1: Veröffentlichte Schriften (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), 197. English: "The inherent self-understanding of being expresses itself pre-ontologically." (Translation here and in the following footnotes mine).

[21] Hyginus, poem 220. The full fable reads as follows: Cura cum fluvium transiret, videt cretosum lutum sustulitque cogitabunda atque coepit fingere, dum deliberat quid iam fecisset. Jovis interventi, rogat eum Cura ut det spiritum, et facile impetrate. Cui cum vellet Cura nomen ex sese ipsa imponere, Jovis prohibuit suumque nomen ei dandum esse dictitat. Dum Cura et Jovis disceptant, Tellus surrexit simul suumque nomen esse volt cui corpus praebuerit suum. Sumpserunt Saturnum iudicem, is sic aecus iudicat: Tu Jovis quia spiritum dedisti, in morte spiritum, tuque Tellus, quia dedisti corpus, corpus recipito, Cura enima quia prima finxit, teneat quamdiu vixerit. Sed quae nunc de nominee eius vobis controversia est, homo vocetur, quia videtur esse factus ex humo. Once when "Care" (a female deity) was crossing a river, she saw some clay; she thoughtfully picked up a piece and began to shape it. While she was thinking about what she had made, Jupiter came by. "Care" asked him to give it spirit, and this he gladly granted. But when she wanted to give it her name, Jupiter objected, and demanded that it be given his name instead. While "Care" and Jupiter were arguing, Tellus (Earth) stood up and wanted his own name to be conferred upon the creature, since he had given it part of his body. They asked Saturn (Chronos / Time) to be the judge, and he made the following decision, which seemed a just one: "Since you, Jupiter, have given its spirit, you shall receive that spirit at its death; and since you, Earth, have given its body, you shall receive its body. But since 'Care' first shaped this creature, it shall be hers for as long as it lives. And since you disagree as to its name, let it be called 'homo,' for it is made out of humus (earth)."

Sorge, or care, traditionally has a double meaning on which Heidegger's interpretation of the fable rests. In a footnote, Heidegger refers to Burdach's 1923 essay *'Faust und Sorge'* in which Burdach relates Goethe's reworking of a poem by Herder and the double meaning of 'Sorge.'[22] The testimony of the fable shows, according to Heidegger, *Sorge* as the key to understanding 'Dasein,' provided that Sorge is understood in this double sense, not simply as "Besorgnis," "Bekümmernis." *Sorge* in this first sense refers to burdens, worries or troubles.[23] In the second sense, care means "Für-Sorge," devotion or regard. Burdach emphasizes how it is more than effortful striving: Horace and Seneca connote concern and solicitude as 'Bemühung,' a striving which allows humans to perfect themselves towards fulfilling their potential.[24] This etymological observation (with Burdach) allows Heidegger to incorporate Seneca's interpretation of 'cura' as diligence/care, as that which allows man to achieve perfection – where divine perfection lies in divine nature and is completed 'naturally,' man needs 'cura' to achieve perfection to fully become human: unius bonum natura perficit, dei scilicet, alterius 'cura,' hominis.[25] Heidegger can understand the 'perfectio' of humans as accomplishment of, care, perfection is "das Werden zu dem, was er im Freisein für seine eigensten Möglichkeiten (dem Entwurf) sein kann."[26] The fable has a testimonial sense: "das Zeugnis soll zeigen dass die existenziale Interpretation keine Erfindung ist" (the testimony is intended to show that the existential interpretaion is not an invention; translation mine). It shows that the proper understanding of

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[22] Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke, Erster Theil, Gedichte* (Berlin: G. Hempel, 1879), 18-20. The four last stanzas of Herder's 'Das Kind der Sorge': "Saturn sprach: 'Habet es Alle! / So will's das hohe Geschick. / Du, der das Leben ihm schenkte, / Nimm, wenn es stirbet, den Geist; // Du, Tellus, seine Gebeine; / Denn mehr gehöret Dir nicht. / Dir, seiner Mutter, o Sorge, / Wird es im Leben geschenkt. // Du wirst, so lang' es nur athmet, / Es nie verlassen, Dein Kind. / Dir ähnlich, wird es von Tage / Zu Tage sich mühen ins Grab.' // Des Schicksals Spruch ist erfüllet, / Und Mensch heißt dieses Geschöpf; / Im Leben gehört es der Sorge, / Der Erd' im Sterben und Gott."

[23] Virgil, for example, places before the gates of the underworld *ultrices curae,* vengeful cares. We also meet a sinister care in Goethe's Faust II whose sisters are penury (remember the mother of 'Eros' in Socrates' tale), lack and guilt, and whose brother is death. Heidegger makes reference to the Greek term μέριμνα, in biblical use with both connotations, (from μερίζω, to be drawn in different directions, but also: anxiety of things pertaining to earthly existence and care to be taken of), and in the Vulgata as *sollicitudo*.

[24] Unius bonum natura perficit, alterius cura, hominis – the good of the one is completed by nature, the good of the other, of human, by care, of human. Ellis, along with other English sources, understands this to mean that the aim is the good which the god reaches naturally, human only with the help of care; but, as Heidegger points out, what is achieved is not "the good," but perfection in each case. Ellis Dye, "Sorge in Heidegger and in Goethe's Faust*," Goethe Yearbook* 16, no. 1 (2009): 208.

[25] Heidegger, 264 (quoting Seneca, epistula 124).

[26] Ibid. English: "being free for its very own possibilities and becoming that (the projection)."

being is provided by 'time' (Saturn): The pre-ontological *Wesensbestimmung* (essential determination) of humans exhibits ex ante the mode of being which governs the temporal worldly progression of human existence ("Die in der Fabel ausgedrückte vorontologische Wesensbestimmung des Menschen hat sonach im Vorhinein die Seinsart in den Blick genommen, die seinen zeitlichen Wandel in der Welt durchherrscht").[27] In the double sense of 'cura' (given an understanding of the history of the term) and in 'cura's' life-long tenure of man (given the fable), we find a key to the essentially dual structure of life as a 'geworfener Entwurf' (thrown and projected).[28]

b. 'Historicity' as the self-referential aspect of care

Ellis Dye explores the connection between *Sorge* in Goethe's Faust II and Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, indicated by Heidegger's reference to and close reading of Burdach's "Faust und Sorge." The guiding question is – *as what* does Sorge show itself to Faust, what is its *apophantic* (self-indicating) sense for Heidegger?[29]

> When Sorge, and she alone, enters a chamber of Faust's palace, a rite of introduction takes place in which she answers Faust's inquiry: "Wer bist du denn?" with the puzzling words: "Bin einmal da" [...]. It may have escaped the notice of Faust critics, or perhaps seemed to them a negligible lexical coincidence, that this answer is a form of the term 'Dasein,' which in Heidegger means the same thing as personhood, a personhood constituted by facticity, i.e. the specific situation into which 'Dasein' is thrown and which determines the possibilities available to it.[30]

Sorge declares her identity as: Bin einmal da.[31] As allegory, *Sorge* could be what Scheler calls the *Innesein*, or 'inward perspective' of life.[32] But, as Dye

[27] Ibid., 263.

[28] Or: passive and active, or: habituated or intentional. See Beatrice Kobow, *Der Sprung in die Sprache oder Denken als-ob* (Paderborn: Mentis, 2019).

[29] See Heidegger, 289. Heidegger uses *aphophantic* in relation to the truth of a statement which refers to the uncovering of being; truth points to, lets being be seen (apophansis).

[30] Dye, 210.

[31] In a privately distributed review of Jaspers's "Psychologie der Weltanschauungen" (1921), Heidegger shows that an ontology of "Da sein" is an ontology of the "Ich bin." See Dye, 212: "Sorge, like her repulsed sisters: *Not*, *Schuld*, and *Mangel*, is clearly an allegory, but what is the ontological status of allegory, or of any generic convention? Where does allegory reside in the world? If this very dichotomy were not so much in question, Sorge could be said to be more inside than outside."

[32] Scheller, 10.

points out, Heidegger marks as a misconception the idea that we are as selves opposed to a world and shows that only this misconception brings us to place doubt on the existence of the world; whereas, with Heidegger, we are always already in the world. *Sorge* proclaims herself as that which is *da* (here), and this identification essentially ties *Sorge* to the real-world indexical coordinates of a (lived) life.[33] *Sorge* forces us to face our contingency (given in the indexicals: here-now-so), while at the same time forcing us to project ourselves (violently outside of these coordinates) towards possibility. For Heidegger, the 'ancient fable' affirms the situatedness of humans in their existence; he has summarized this situatedness as 'Existenzialität' (existentiality), 'Faktizität' (facticity), 'Verfallensein' (fallenness), a structural unity which is brought into relief by 'Angst' (fear, anxiety).[34]

Sorge is shown to have an aspect of futurity and anticipation for both Goethe and Heidegger. Someone who worries "Ist der Zukunft nur gewärtig / und so wird er niemals fertig" – the ambiguity of possible translations of the second verse foreshadows our conclusion: he who is aware only of the future, never comes to an end; nor reaches a goal; he remains in flux; is never perfect. This describes Faust's specific character-trait of strife, Heidegger's idea of 'Neugierde' (curiousity) as 'Aufenthaltslosigkeit' (being without resting place),[35] and corresponds in an interesting way with Plato's description of 'Eros' as unhoused, without abode, in the very sense of an inner restlessness or striving; on the other hand, both 'cura' and 'eros' are said to be the driving force which allows man to achieve his potential. Both conceptions place the goal outside of the strife; thus, it must remain out of reach.

In his lectures on Augustine, on which he builds his analysis here, Heidegger speculates that in despair itself lies a kernel of hope (for the mercy

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[33] See Dye, 213: "The verbal complement "da" also eliminates the possibility that she is simply asserting her existence per se – her being as opposed to the possible alternative of non-being – and saying, after Descartes, "I am" or after God in the Jewish Bible: "I Am That I Am" (*Exodus*, 3:15)."

[34] Ibid., referring to Heidegger, Section 41. Dye summarizes: "As Dasein, we are the kind of beings who are worried about meaning, entities for whom our being is an issue, so Sorge's answer to Faust: "Bin einmal da," amounts to her self-representation as an inquisitor of the meaning of being, capable of luring the question of the meaning of Dasein out of its hiding place, according to Heidegger's definition of truth as aletheia or unconcealment. On the other hand, she lays claim to a contrary capacity to make someone in her power indifferent to everything: "Wen ich einmal mir besitze, / Dem ist alle Welt nichts nütze." (11453-11462) – the same power to make "Seiendes" slip away into "Gleichgültigkeit" that Heidegger attributes to Angst."

[35] Heidegger, 229: Curiosity, in contrast to Scheler, is not amazed gazing (taumazein), but knowledge for knowledge's sake and constitutes the three aspects of curiosity for him: Non-dwelling (Unverweilen), distraction (Zerstreuung), Aufenthaltslosigkeit (homelessness).

of God).[36] Care is not only appetite (orexis, or striving), as in Faust's most characteristic trait, but also hope and with it gives an end (or meaning) to the striving. Sorge presents herself as the interrogator of the meaning of being and attributes to herself the power to negate all differentiations and thus all meaning. In Faust II, Faust rejects Sorge and she has to leave. Before she goes, she blinds him: "Die Menschen sind im ganzen Leben blind, nun Fauste, werde du's am Ende!"[37] His last moments on earth are literally spent blindly, blissfully 'free of care' – in an inner brightness ('Allein im Innern leuchtet helles Licht').[38] Planning and organizing in the present, Faust states:

> Eröffn' ich Räume vielen Millionen, / Nicht sicher zwar, doch tätig-frei zu wohnen [...]. Solch ein Gewimmel möchte ich sehn, / Auf freiem Grund mit freiem Volke stehn. / Zum Augenblicke dürft' ich sagen: / Verweile doch, du bist so schön! [39]

This very line echoes Faust's wager with Mephistopheles in Faust I:

> Werd' ich zum Augenblicke sagen, / Verweile doch! du bist so schön! / Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen, / Dann will ich gern zu Grunde gehn! / Dann mag die Todtenglocke schallen [...].[40]

We might, as audience, perceive this moment of self-deception at the end of Faust's life as tragic – it is the moment in which 'Faust' loses who he is by losing his strife; more than in his actual death (which follows on his reminiscence as an affirmation of the 'Augenblick' – "Im Vorgefühl von solchem hohen Glück / Genieß' ich jetzt den höchsten Augenblick"), Faust's self-deception is the very moment in which 'Faust,' prototypical example of human strife, ceases to exist.[41]

For Ellis Dye, Heidegger's self-perception of not having developed an adequate relationship with Goethe (as per his letter to Jaspers in 1949 with

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[36] Ibid. Heidegger refers to his lecture on Augustine as the basis for his work on Sorge in Footnote 3, 264: "Die in der vorstehenden existenzialen Analytik des Daseins befolgte Blickrichtung auf die Sorge' erwuchs dem Verf. im Zusammenhang der Versuche einer Interpretation der augustinischen – das heißt griechisch-christlichen – Anthropologie mit Rücksicht auf die grunsätzlichen Fundamente, die in der Ontologie des Aristoteles erreicht wurden."

[37] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust II* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1986), 11497-11498.

[38] Ibid., 11500.

[39] Ibid., 11563-4, 11579-11582. Faust mistakenly takes the creatures, whom Mephistopheles commands to dig Faust's grave, for workers preparing the ground for building Faust's vision of a fertile valley.

[40] Ibid., Faust I, 1699-1703.

[41] Ibid., Faust II, 11585-11586.

which Dye opens his essay) and his conceptual unlocking of 'Dasein' with *Sorge,* a clue provided by Faust II, is bordering on self-deception:

> Indeed, the liquid term 'influence' needs to give way to something more complex and comprehensive – 'facticity' perhaps. We are not just suckled by our heritage, we are enveloped and informed by it. No single metaphor will do, not even that of sculpting, as when 'cura' sculpted 'homo' out of clay. [42]

In the justification of why the fable is given such a central place in the discussion of *Sorge als Sein des Daseins*, the meta-poietic[43] importance of 'historicity' in the self-referentiality of 'Dasein' becomes clear. This discussion also includes the peculiar anti-realism in Heidegger's treatment of realism in relation to Sorge as in §43c: *Realität und Sorge*, and the inherent paradoxical extra-situatedness of the end, here: death, vis-à-vis the striving. Considering this point in relation to the 'cura'-fable puts us in a position to refine our response to the criticisms against Plato's concept of an erotic conatus (in the conclusion). Heidegger writes in a 1921 letter to Karl Löwith:

> Ich arbeite konkret faktisch aus meinem 'ich bin' – aus meiner geistigen, überhaupt faktischen Herkunft – Milieu – Lebenszusammenhängen, aus dem, was mir von da zugänglich ist als lebendige Erfahrung, worin ich lebe [...]. [44]

The "ich bin" is, like the fable, an expression of 'Dasein.' The references to a permanence of meaning in Heidegger's Chapter 6 itself shed light on the issue of 'Dasein' as self-reflexive through historicity (in canonical meaning,

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[42] Dye, 214. See also, ibid., 215*:* "Goethe is a factor in Heideggers factic 'ich bin.'" This sentence challenges the adequacy of Heidegger's reading of *Dasein* qua *Sorge*.

[43] Poiesis – making/creating; Diotima refers to creation beyond mortality – 1) natural poiesis in procreation, 2) poiesis in the city through fame, 3) poiesis in the soul through knowledge. For Heidegger poiesis is a bringing-forth (a gathering, a fulfilling); meta-poiesis as main purpose of human existence, that is: the practice humans need to develop to encounter the modern world refraining from the two dangers, nihilism and fanatic participation: "The task of the craftsman is not to generate the meaning, but rather to cultivate in himself the skill for discerning the meanings that are already there." Hubert Dreyfus, and Sean Dorrance Kelly, *All Things Shining* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 209.

[44] The text of this letter of August 19, 1921 can be found in: *Zur philosophischen Aktualität Heideggers*, eds. Dietrich Papenfuss, and Otto Pöggeler (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1990). Here, I quote it with Dye, 212, who remarks: "This statement, like others in Heidegger, prohibits easy distinctions between the self and the non-self. Heidegger's claim that he works concretely and factically out of his "Ich bin" reflects his criticism of Descartes's sum, which implies the separation of the self from its world, without involvement in which there can be no such thing as a self."

and ultimately: in language).[45] This is so even before Heidegger takes us back to his verification of the understanding of the meaning of existence (Sinn vom Sein) in his analysis of time (in the following chapters). 'Dasein' is characterized by historicity; it is always in some way 'understood,' even if the different modi of being are not yet differentiated.[46] Most commonly this entails the pre-reflected assumption of 'a world,' corresponding to the modus: fallenness (in which the present inauthentically dominates being and all action becomes busy activity, designed to further veil 'Dasein'; this is also the mode in which adhering to conventions (the 'man') provides solace; being is then seen as the cohering of things (res) – a 'reality.'[47] The basic determination of Being is as substantiality. The horizon of an understanding of 'Dasein' is shifted, it disappears from view because Being now takes on this sense of 'reality.' With Kant, Heidegger rejects the question whether the external world exists. This is not, as with Kant, on account of the world being given qua self, but rather vice-versa, the self being given qua world (against the assumption that the self could exist in isolation).[48] With this argument, Heidegger turns equally against realism and idealism. Heidegger writes that he seemingly, but quasi *doxographically* agrees with realism in the assumption of the existence of an external world. Yet realism misguidedly assumes this existence could be proven; whereas idealism rightfully denies that Being can be explained by or reduced to the existence of things, but does not give a comprehensive analysis of the 'res cogitans' and therefore cannot understand how Being can include the existence of an independent non-mental reality. This is, of course, possible because of the historicity of 'Dasein.'[49] It is in this sense that Heidegger's insistence on the fable not being an 'invention' comes to fruition: meanings are never 'invented,' 'set' or 'made,' but always revealed through lived circumstance which does not simply mean contingent

[45] Dye quotes Goethe's words to K. J. L. Iken: "Da sich gar manches unserer Erfahrungen nicht rund aussprechen und direkt mitteilen läßt, so habe ich seit langem das Mittel gewählt, durch einander gegenüber gestellte und sich gleichsam ineinander abspiegelnde Gebilde den geheimeren Sinn dem Aufmerkenden zu offenbaren" (September 1827). Dye, 214. In an interview with Bhikku Maha Mani, a Buddhist monk, in 1963-64, Heidegger formulates this insight with specific reference to language: "Das Wesen des Menschen ist dadurch bestimmt, dass er existiert, indem er dem Sein ent*spricht*." (The human being is essentially determined as existing by answering to being). This very thought is also the turning point for Scheler.

[46] Heidegger, 261.

[47] Ibid., 266.

[48] Ibid., 273.

[49] Death (as that towards which my life is oriented) becomes an end which is doubly external: it is external to the striving of my life (Seneca, for example, among other stoic thinkers, denies that death is even an event of (my) life) and it is external to its meaning which is constituted with reference to past meanings and qua future projections (beyond death, purposefully ignoring its possibility).

material lives, but life in all of its complexity, including the historical sources of meaning, preserved in the canon.

IV. Movement of 'Geist' (deity) through 'Drang' (urge): *Mensch* in Scheler

a. The term 'Mensch' as 'Wesensbegriff'

Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos contains Scheler's views on some of the main aspects of a philosophical anthropology, a project he had been working on since 1922.[50] In this inquiry into the essential nature of human beings, Kant's question "Was ist der Mensch?" is examined and the alleged exceptionality of humans ('Sonderstellung') is put to the test. According to Scheler, "the educated European" (standing in for the Western tradition) relates the term 'Mensch' back to three different traditions: (i) the Jewish-Christian religious teaching of divine creation; (ii) the tradition of Greek philosophy in which humans are humans qua reason (logos, phronesis, ratio, mens); and (iii) modern natural sciences which in a theory of evolution describe humans in continuity with other life-forms (and might attribute the exceptionality-thesis to a quantitative surplus in intelligence and choice-behaviors in humans, or deny it altogether).[51] The project of Scheler's philosophical anthropology is to develop a unified and non-reductivist (non-vitalist) understanding of human beings. He bases his account on a 'Wesensbestimmung' (essential determination) in which the term 'Wesen des Menschen' provides the radical starting point for a systematic reading (like the myth of 'Eros' and the fable of 'Cura'); on this basis, Scheler can critically reply to different reductivist accounts, such as formal-mechanistic theories (for example: Democritus, Epicurus, Lamettrie, Hume, Mach) and vitalist reductivisms (such as, James, Dewy, Marx and Nietzsche), but also nihilism (Buddha, Schopenhauer), and classic dualist (e.g. Descartes) and teleological accounts of 'Geist' (e.g. Hegel).

In Scheler's account, life is characterized by certain 'objective' properties, such as movement, differentiation, formation, and spatial and temporal containment of an individual unit, a 'self,' but also by the essential feature that there is an inner sense in which this 'self' is experiencing life, a basic self-givenness (Fürsich-und Innesein).[52] This 'Innesein' is the basic form of 'soul' which even plants have. Anorganic matter is lacking a sense of interiority and self-givenness. It is the defining feature of life to possess an ontic center, a unique spatio-temporal unity which is 'individuality.' Plants, animals and humans partake in what Scheler

[50] It is the script of a 1927 lecture which Scheler intended as a precis of a longer text to be published in 1929. Scheler died in 1929 and no continuous larger text on a philosophical anthropology was published posthumously.

[51] The cura-myth no doubt also echoes in the mind of the reader the Biblical creation story, responding to it and altering it in interesting ways.

[52] Max Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (Berlin: Michael Holzinger, 2016), 10.

calls 'Gefühlsdrang' – an unconscious, undifferentiated sense of striving, a mere object-less 'towards' or 'away.'[53] Plants have this sense, yet they do not have any feedback of the states of their individuality to a 'command center' and hence live ecstatically into their situatedness. Like all living beings, plants also already exhibit another core feature of life, an *expression* of their self-givenness, indicating a quality of life; for a plant this may be 'wilted,' 'strong,' 'abundant,' 'poor' (matt, kraftvoll, üppig, arm) and it is an answer to the question of how this particular individual is doing.[54]

Animals are specialized further and have an act-center, feedback of states to this center, specific self-movement in reaction to this feedback, associations, acquired reflexes, and in addition to expression the communicative ability to indicate their states to others. This feedback and modification of the status quo constitutes a second degree self-givenness for animals. It does not amount to self-consciousness, yet: all of the things that an animal notices and understands are contained in its environment. The specific difference of the animal (its urges, its perceptual apparatus) forms a closed unit with its environment. Thus, the animal lives ecstatically into its environment and cannot separate itself from it (neither spatially, nor temporally). In this way, it affirms the environment.

In contrast, humans can negate their environment. They can distance themselves from their environment, transforming it into 'a world' forming a symbolic representation of 'the world.' Where the interaction between animal and environment is closed, the interaction between human and environment is open and can be extended indefinitely. 'World-openness' is a defining feature of human existence. Humans are capable of a self-givenness of the third degree (sharing the first level of self-givenness with all life-forms as 'Gefühlsdrang,' and the second degree with animals as self-awareness): by being able to understand contingency in an act of objectification as 'dingliche Welt' (world of objects) and then applying this act of objectification to their own psycho-physical being (Sammlung), they gain self-consciousness (Selbstbewusstsein). Humans are only capable of this third degree self-givenness on account of 'having spirit.' "But it would be wrong," writes Scheler, "to assume that we have an additive model, that humans have in addition to the other psychic strata: urge (Gefühlsdrang), instinct, associative memory, intelligence and choice, just one new level in addition."[55]

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[53] Ibid., 14: "selbst die einfachste Empfindung ist nie bloß Folge eines Reizes, sondern immer auch Funktion einer triebhaften Aufmerksamkeit."

[54] Ibid., 13.

[55] Ibid., 32: "Ich behaupte: Das Wesen des Menschen und das, was man seine 'Sonderstellung' nennen kann, steht hoch über dem, was man Intelligenz und Wahlfähigkeit nennt, und würde auch nicht erreicht, wenn man sich diese Intelligenz und Wahlfähigkeit quantitativ beliebig, ja bis ins Unendliche gesteigert vorstellt. Aber auch das wäre verfehlt, wenn man sich das Neue, das den Menschen zum Menschen macht, nur dächte als eine zu den psychischen Stufen Gefühlsdrang, Instinkt, assoziatives Gedächtnis, Intelligenz und Wahl noch hinzukommende

The Greeks call this principle reason, but Scheler prefers the more encompassing term 'Geist' which, according to him, includes reason (thinking ideas), intuition (Anschauung) and understanding (of values as essential determination), and certain volitive and emotional value-acts (such as love, regret, awe, wonder, bliss, despair).[56] 'Geist' constitutes the exceptionality of human beings: Humans are *guided* by spirit (deitas, Geist) which is categorically different from all manifestations of life (in that these manifestations are all further specifications of 'Gefühlsdrang').[57] 'Geist' is opposed to 'life' and allows humans to inhibit their urges, distance themselves from their immediate environment and suspend an immediate (instinctual, affective, reflexive) psychophysical response to the resistance of the environment surrounding the self and experienced with anxiety. Through this distancing, humans are capable of transforming environment into world and self-awareness into self-consciousness. A third important characteristic of 'Geist' is its pure actuality. It is only actualized in the free execution of 'acts' by a 'person,' 'person' not being a concrete entity (a human being, for example), but a continuous organization and essentially determined order: "Die Person ist nur in ihren Akten und durch sie."[58] All aspects of soul are implementations of 'Gefühlsdrang,' they are realized 'in time,' that is: as a sequence of events and thus 'gegenstandsfähig' (objectifiable), whereas 'Geist' itself can neither in ourselves nor in another person be understood as objectified, only as that act which allows us to objectify the movements of our own soul (Sammlung). Therefore, vis-à-vis the being of our own 'person,' we can only 'gather our wits,' 'focus towards it,' but not place ourselves at an objectifying distance from it. In the same way, we cannot objectify the person of another, but understand it in a spiritual act of consummation (Mitvollzug) which is diametrically opposed to objectification.

b. Beyond biology and time: Cosmological limits of 'Wesen'

Scheler's conception of 'Geist' is unique in several respects and this is so by design. In contrast to the platonic and classical conceptions, Scheler considers 'Geist' to be opposed to the principle of life (inhibiting it); to be itself without any force or impetus (vs. classical and theist conceptions); and to be supra-

neue Wesensstufe psychischer, der Vitalsphäre angehöriger Funktionen und Fähigkeiten, die zu erkennen also noch in der Kompetenz der Psychologie und Biologie läge [...]. Schon die Griechen behaupteten ein solches Prinzip und nannten es 'Vernunft.' Das Aktzentrum aber, in dem Geist innerhalb endlicher Seinssphären erscheint, bezeichnen wir als 'Person,' in scharfem Unterschied zu allen funktionellen Lebenszentren, die nach innen betrachtet auch 'seelische Zentren' heißen."

[56] Scheler, 32.

[57] Even increasing man's intelligence and the ability to choose indefinitely (the highest degree of specification of Gefühlsdrang) would not capture the specific difference, because it is a categorical difference.

[58] Ibid., 40.

individual and external to human beings (contrary to reductivist assumptions which deny anything external to biology). It is, indeed, a cosmological conception that he puts forth:

i. A life-inhibiting principle: How is 'Geist' enabling the openness to the world and the self-conscious self-givenness (of the third degree) of human beings? When Scheler thinks about 'sublimation' (of vital urges, of excess energy) and also about 'life-denial' (omne ens est malum),[59] he arrives at a conception of 'Geist' as that which negates life by suspending the 'Gefühlsdrang;' this entails the suspension of sense-perceptions and urges.[60] We must conclude that anxiety will be overcome in this 'ascetic' act of unmaking reality through a deactivation of 'Gefühlsdrang.' Thus, the effect for human beings is liberating, suspending anxiety, extending their reach beyond the closed interaction with environment experienced by (non-human) animals (as 'Welt-offenheit'), and presenting everything in the world, including themselves, as subject matter for understanding. Human beings as essentially determined by Geist are in this way external and superior to the world and their own being as a life form: "So ist der Mensch als Geistwesen das sich selbst als Lebewesen und der Welt überlegene Wesen."[61]

ii. A principle without force? The 'Geist durch Drang' – solution:[62] In a spectacular inversion, Scheler understands all power-relations to be universally bottom-up (instead of top-down).[63] Most powerful and independent is the anorganic order, then, descending from more to less *powerful*, plant-life, animals, human beings (Scheler none-the-less maintains a traditional nomenclature of life-forms whereby the further developed are called 'higher'). Thus, each 'higher' life-form

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[59] Ibid., 46-47: In actualizing of life-urge, human beings are masters of no-saying, ascetics of life (in Buddha's sense); this holds questions of value and ideology notwithstanding, be it that you might propagate a denial of life, deem reality itself as evil, or believe, as Scheler does, that there is a balance between Idea-Geist and reality-urge and that the calling of humans is to return to reality and their contingent existence (zurück zur Wirklichkeit und ihrem Jetzt-Hier-So-sein).

[60] See Ibid., 46. For Plato, senses and urges belong to one-another, that is why to philosophize is to 'continuously die.'

[61] Ibid., 40.

[62] We are reminded of the Charioteer-image of the human soul (in Plato's *Phaedrus*): two horses are pulling a chariot, steered by a charioteer. The obedient horse represents spiritual desires; the other horse represents carnal desires and follows its own immediate urges (carnal desire). The charioteer is reason.

[63] Ibid., 55: "Der Kräfte-und Wirkstrom, der allein Dasein und zufälliges Soein zu setzen vermag, läuft in der Welt, die wir bewohnen, nicht von oben nach unten, sondern von unten nach oben. In stolzester Unabhängigkeit steht die anorganische Welt in ihrer Eigengesetzlichkeit da – an ganz wenigen Punkten so etwas wie 'Lebendiges' enthaltend. In stolzer Unabhängigkeit steht Pflanze und Tier dem Menschen gegenüber, wobei das Tier weit mehr vom Dasein der Pflanze abhängig ist als umgekehrt [...]."

is vis-à-vis the 'lower' life-form relatively powerless and depends on the 'lower,' yet more powerful life-form for realization.[64] In its 'pure' form, Geist is without all force, power, and activity. Only its working on humans and effecting a suspension of urges (indirectly) lends activity and force to it: "Geist und Wollen des Menschen kann nie mehr bedeuten, als 'Leitung' und 'Lenkung.'"[65] We are reminded of the charioteer in Plato's metaphor of the soul which has to steer and direct the souls' powers. The traditional dichotomy body-soul is dissolved into the dual principles Geist-Life (as Drang), which, although in tension, are developed in accord: Over time, there is as a (necessarily historical) development[66] an (ever) further realization of spirit through life which is the aim and end of finite being and (temporal) events; while a theist account falsely places *creatio ex nihilo* at the beginning of this process, a mistake caused by the conception of 'deitas' as all-powerful, not all-powerless.[67] Both principles, 'Geist' and 'Leben' depend on each other, spirit facilitates openness to the world, self-consciousness and *meaning* (understanding of values and 'Mitvollzug'), life animates spirit: "Geist und Leben sind aufeinander hingeordnet."[68]

iii. Supra-individuality and externality of spirit: Scheler's idea of the realization of Geist through life is one of constant becoming and of Geist as supra-individual, yet realized in 'persons.' Scheler describes the peculiar phenomenon that human beings perceive space and time to be 'empty,' as existing even without being furnished by objects and events; this, he claims, is an effect of the ability to 'abstract' from the concrete environmental, psychophysical contingency:

> So blickt der Mensch, ohne es zu ahnen, seine eigene Herzensleere als 'unendliche Leere' des Raumes und der Zeit an, als ob diese auch bestünden, wenn es gar keine Dinge gäbe! [69]

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[64] Ibid., 56: "Jede höhere Seinsform ist im Verhältnis zu der niedrigeren relativ kraftlos – und sie verwirklicht sich nicht durch ihre eigenen Kräfte, sondern durch die Kräfte der niedrigeren."

[65] Ibid., 57. English: Geist and intention of the human being can never mean more than 'guidance' and 'steering.'

[66] Ibid., 44: "Eine 'konstante' Vernunftorganisation, wie sie Kant angenommen hat, gibt es dabei keineswegs; sie unterliegt vielmehr prinzipiell dem geschichtlichen Wandel. Nur die Vernunft selbst als Anlage und Fähigkeit, durch Funktionalisierung neuer Wesenseinsichten [...] ist konstant."

[67] Ibid., 59: "Die gegenseitige Durchdringung des ursprünglich ohnmächtigen Geistes und des ursprünglich dämonischen, d.h. gegenüber allen geistigen Ideen und Werten blinden Dranges durch die werdende Ideierung und Vergeistigung der Drangsale [...] ist das Ziel und Ende endlichen Seins und Geschehens – der Theismus stellt es fälschlicherweise an seinen Ausgangspunkt."

[68] Ibid., 73. English: "'Geist' and life are organized towards one another in an enabling relationship."

[69] Ibid., 39.

Equally, once having become 'Welt-exzentrisch' – standing outside of the world, and not being able to perceive themselves as part of the world, leads human beings to the question of their own standpoint and, in necessary consequence, to the question why there is a world and why they themselves are, and not instead nothing.[70]

Human beings are "'Mitkämpfer,' 'Miterwirker' der Gottheit": This does not mean that there is a personified God in whose fellowship humans stand (as slaves, servants or children), but instead that *they* are united in bringing about 'Geist' – this is 'Mitvollzug' (across individuals, across historical time and contingent place). 'Mensch' is thus the seat of 'Geist' in that the processes of lived life and of the entirety of temporal becoming of the world ("der Weltprozeß, den der Geist in Kauf nimmt") are necessary for any realization of 'Geist.' At the same time, 'Geist' is itself beyond space and time and beyond individual human beings, external to them. It is only 'cutting across' the temporal progression of life: "Die Intentionen des Geistes schneiden sozusagen den Zeitablauf des Lebens." [71]

The cosmological dimension of Scheler's conception is controversial because it entails an understanding of 'Geist' (as deitas) as not possessing any positive creative power ("so kommt dem, was wir den 'Geist' und die 'Gottheit' in diesem Grunde [der oberste Grund des Seins] nennen, keinerlei positive schöpferische Macht zu"),[72] but insists on this principle as highest reason for being and assumes that all temporal events are shaped by it, while denying a (historical) teleology, but affirming as aim the self-realization of deitas (indirectly) dependent on the processes of temporal becoming.[73] The human being whose ontic center is the 'person' provides the space of the realization of 'Geist.'[74] Thus, the spirit is external to the human being, but present in its 'person.' Scheler insists on this duality, partially, because he rejects reductivist accounts.

A simple move in Scheler's argument makes it possible for him to differentiate his own approach of the 'conditio humana' from most other accounts (at his time), opens them up to his criticism and allows him to show an alternative solution: Separating 'Geist' from the sphere of 'life' (defined

[70] Ibid., 74.

[71] Ibid., 67.

[72] Ibid., 59.

[73] Ibid.: "Der Grund der Dinge musste, wenn er seine deitas, die in ihr angelege Ideen – und Wertfülle verwirklichen wollten, den weltschaffenden Drang enthemmen, er musste den Weltprozeß sozusagen in Kauf nehmen, um in und durch den zeithaften Ablauf dieses Prozesses sein Wesen zu verwirklichen."

[74] Ibid., 77.

fundamentally by 'Gefühlsdrang'), and declaring 'Geist' to be 'without force per se,' of working through and on life qua inhibition (Hemmung) of urges, instead.

"Man wird mir sagen und man hat mir in der Tat gesagt, es sei dem Menschen nicht möglich, einen unfertigen Gott, einen werdenden Gott zu ertragen!"[75] Recognizing the erotic movement towards the eternal as historically given and interpersonally realized, and ourselves dedicated to it, we can reject reductivism and embrace an order of ideas and values beyond individual strife and, yet, as its' end.

V. Conclusion

At the center of these three exegetic re-considerations stands the philosophical wonder at the complexity and meaningfulness of the canon. All three philosophical 'myths' render the question of a permanence of meaning as it poses itself to individual human beings and collectives, and with the aim of re-affirming a transcendental (that is, in this sense: non-reductivist) conception of the conative.

I have re-introduced to the reader three descriptions of conative strife which go beyond biological existence. In these accounts, the striving transcends the here-and-now of the physically given. The goal of striving has moved outside or beyond the strife. There are many points of intersection, congruence and difference of these positions which merit further inquiry. In sum, historicity as a self-reflexive aspect of the conative trumps an understanding of the conative strife as limited to biological functioning.

Let me conclude by pointing out several features shared by all three non-naturalist accounts. They show humans wrestling with the question of relevance, that is, with the question of how meaning can be permanent while being transmitted 'in time;' this concerns both individual mortality and the permanence of meaning in the collective. The survival of the species (partaking of immortality) cannot simply be achieved by psychophysical survival, but by sharing of and in 'immortal ideas.' The motivation for the (individual's) strife is privation and the fundamental movement of 'Eros' is a striving towards 'fullness' (possession) while this goal is categorically different from the strife (and thus placed beyond it; it can never be reached).

The three conative myths provide the starting point for the philosophical deliberation on the 'nature' of human beings, but they are also the reason for philosophizing: 'Eros,' as a striving from privation towards knowledge, initiates the movement of philosophical love (as path to enlightenment) for

[75] Ibid., 78. English: "I will be told and I have in fact been told that it is impossible for humans to bear the thought of an inchoate, a becoming god!"

Plato. The cura-fable is a testimony of 'Dasein;' since 'ich bin' for Heidegger is the concrete facticity of the lived life and includes 'geistige Herkunft' – intellectual provenance as a fact, it is the engagement with this fable which begins and justifies the elaboration of asking for the meaning of Being ('die Ausarbeitung der Frage nach dem Sinn vom Sein').[76] For Scheler, an appropriate and necessary response to the world-excentricity (der weltexzentrisch gewordene Seinskern) of human beings is 'taumazein,' philosophical wonder.[77]

Plato has Diotima maintain that partaking of real immortality is possible,[78] to look upon essential beauty which is "not infected with the flesh and color of humanity;"[79] at the same time, she claims that

> every mortal thing is preserved in this way: not by keeping it exactly the same forever, like the divine, but by replacing what goes off or is antiquated with something fresh, in the semblance of the original.[80]

The reaction to this conundrum of divine immortality as sameness and human mortality as becoming is echoed in Heidegger and Scheler as a reaction to Kant's rejection of the questioning of an external world. Scheler writes:

> Der Mensch muss den eigenartigen Zufall, die Kontingenz der Tatsache, daß 'überhaupt Welt ist und nicht vielmehr nichts ist' und 'daß er selbst ist und nicht vielmehr nicht ist' mit anschaulicher Notwendigkeit in demselben Augenblicke entdecken, wo er sich überhaupt der Welt und seiner selbst bewusst geworden ist.[81]

The contingency of this fact is grounded (with Heidegger) in the facticity of a lived life; and, viewing essential beauty beyond humanity, is, of course, only possible from the vantage point of the coordinates of such a life. Yet, grasping the world and contingent existence in it takes place from a perspective 'between

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[76] Heidegger, 265.

[77] Scheler, 76.

[78] Plato, *Symposium*, 212a: Do you call it a pitiful life for a man to lead – looking that way, observing that vision by the proper means, and having it ever with him? 'Do but consider,' she said, 'that there only will it befall him, as he sees the beautiful through that which makes it visible, to breed not illusions but true examples of virtue, since his contact is not with illusion but with truth. So when he has begotten a true virtue and has reared it up he is destined to win the friendship of Heaven; he, above all men, is immortal.'

[79] Ibid., 211e.

[80] Ibid., 208a-b.

[81] Scheler, 75. In English: The human being discovers the peculiar coincidence, the contingency of the fact "that there is a world at all and not rather nothing" and "that she herself is and not rather not" with ostensive necessity in the same moment in which she becomes aware of the world and of herself.

ignorance and knowledge' (if we understand ignorance as not being self-aware, at all, and knowledge as viewing beauty entirely pure and unalloyed) and in a move from privation towards understanding; it is the move of the erotic towards the eternal of human conative striving.

A human being is 'in a mean between ignorance and knowledge,' striving towards perfection. In this striving she is dedicated to and held by care, which directs her towards the future and possibility, but binds her to her contingent existence. The engagement with her environment includes not only material circumstances, but also the canon by which meaning is transmitted. This is how humans are confirmed by one another (Mitvollzug) as 'persons,' the act-centers of a supra-individual, external, transcending order of values and ideas. This order is realized continuously and self-reflexively as a temporal order, as 'historicity' by individuals in their reflection of Truth (Geist, 'Dasein').

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A New Conatus for the New World: Dewey's Response to Perfectionist Conceptions of Democratic Education

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Abstract

We argue for a reconsideration of the claim that Spinoza's perfectionist conception of education was ushering in a form of radical humanism distinctly favorable to democratic ideals. With the rise of democratic societies and the corresponding need to constitute educational institutions within those societies, a more thoroughgoing commitment to democratic social ideals arose, first and foremost in American educational thought. This commitment can be seen especially in Dewey's philosophy of education. Specifically, Dewey and Spinoza had strikingly distinct conceptions of the overall aims of schooling. While Spinoza takes the aim of education to be the perfection of a student's original nature, Dewey takes education to involve the collective acquisition of an additional nature, reflecting the norms and expectations of one's specific community. In this paper, we juxtapose these two distinct conceptions of education alongside one another, with an eye towards illuminating the limitations of a perfectionist theory of education for the individual, as we find it in Spinoza, within a democratic society.

Keywords: *conatus; education; collective; democracy; humanism; perfectionism; Spinoza; Dewey*

I. Introduction

Recent scholars have taken Spinoza's thought, including his ideas about the education of individuals, as ushering in a form of radical humanism that is distinctly favorable to democratic ideals. However, with the rise of democratic societies and the corresponding need to constitute educational institutions within those societies, a more thoroughgoing commitment to democratic[1] social ideals arose, first and foremost in American educational thought. This commitment can be seen especially in Dewey's philosophy of education. Specifically, Dewey and Spinoza had strikingly distinct conceptions of the overall aims of schooling. While Spinoza takes the aim of education to be the perfection of a student's original nature, Dewey takes education to involve the acquisition of an additional nature, reflecting the norms and expectations of one's specific community. In this paper, we juxtapose these two distinct conceptions of education alongside one another, with an eye towards illuminating the limitations of a perfectionist theory of education for the individual, as we find it in Spinoza, within a democratic society.

II. Spinoza's educational thought

Spinoza's ethical thought, including his educational thought, has been lauded as that of a "pioneer" or a "radical" among the early modern thinkers. He has even been described as the "first philosopher of modern times to avow himself a democrat."[2] Spinoza's thought was in fact radical in its pronounced focus on the individual – at the expense of any deity or community. The *Ethics* espouses a "naturalistic, egoistic and enlightened ethical theory of self-actualization and

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[1] We will discuss the notion of democracy in detail in part III. It is worth mentioning here already that Dewey understands a "democratically constituted society" as characterized primarily by an increase in participation: On the one hand, we find here "more numerous and more varied points of shared common interest" and also a "greater reliance upon the recognition of mutual interests as a factor in social control;" on the other hand, we encounter "freer interaction" between social groups that once used to be isolated from each other; this "varied intercourse" then leads to "continuous readjustment" between the individual members of society. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1944), 86f.

[2] Steven Nadler characterizes him as "one of the most important philosophers – and certainly the most radical – of the early modern period." Steven Nadler, "Baruch Spinoza," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2020 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/spinoza/. Others have recently even gone so far as to claim that he was the one who gave us modernity, Rebecca Goldstein, *Betraying Spinoza: The Renegade Jew who gave us Modernity* (New York: Schocken Books, 2006); or to call him the "first political philosopher of modern times to avow himself a democrat," Lewis S. Feuer, *Spinoza and the Rise of Liberalism* (New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1987), 102. Quoted in Nimrod Aloni, "Spinoza as Educator: From Eudaimonistic Ethics to an Empowering and Liberating Pedagogy, *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 40, no. 4 (2008): 532.

self-affirmation,"[3] a "rationalist and perfectionist ethics of virtue" that manages to dispense with religious notions such as holiness, duty and sin,[4] or any other appeal to teleology. For Spinoza, through education the student reaches "higher levels of thought and knowledge," allowing them to conduct a rational life "governed *by reason*" – instead of *by God*.[5] In that sense, Spinoza's educational thought can be understood as part of his "pragmatic humanism"[6]: It focuses on the perfection of the rational nature of individuals as striving things, on their *conatus*.

For Spinoza, individuals are primarily understood as striving for natural self-perfection. His point of departure is that of an individual standing alongside other individuals in their environment, all striving – and occasionally competing – for self-preservation. Every being has its own *conatus* – a natural drive, power, and capacity for self-preservation. Indeed, the *Ethics* claims that our own individual essences consist in just this striving: "The conatus with which each thing endeavors to persist in its own being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself."[7]

Rational beings like us have a particular capacity to enhance our powers to persevere, to free ourselves from the influence of other things that are also striving.[8] Such is the aim of education for Spinoza. As we strengthen our *conatus*, we "act more from our nature as striving things." Moreover, doing so makes us more virtuous, for the strengthening of one's *conatus* constitutes the basis of human virtue in the *Ethics*; the more an individual "endeavors and is able to preserve his own being," the more "he is endowed with virtue" and hence "human power"[9]:

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[3] Aloni, 532.

[4] William B. Frankena, "Spinoza's New Morality," in *Spinoza: Essays in Interpretation,* eds. Maurice Mandelbaum, and Eugene Freeman, 85-100 (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1971), 85, quoted in Aloni, 533.

[5] Stuart Hampshire, "Spinoza's Theory of Human Freedom," in *Spinoza: Essays in Interpretation,* eds. Maurice Mandelbaum, and Eugene Freeman, 35-48 (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1971), quoted in Aloni, 537. It is worth noting that we do not intend to take a stance here on the question of whether Spinoza understands reason as distinct from God in the *Ethics* (we thank an anonymous reviewer for raising the issue).

[6] Aloni, 537. Spinoza's focus on the "distinctive human way" of conatus, namely at the expense of a deity, is what makes him a representative of what Aloni calls "pragmatic humanism": "The distinctive human way – by virtue of human nature – to preserve their being and increase their power and liberty in relation to other things consists in reaching higher levels of thought and knowledge and therefore conducting rational life that is generated and governed by reason."

[7] Baruch Spinoza, *Eth.* III7, in *Spinoza Complete Works,* ed. Michael L. Morgan, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2002), 283. All footnotes and corresponding bibliographical entries for Spinoza, *Ethics* use the notation of Part (Roman Numeral), Proposition, and Scholium (s).

[8] Johan Dahlbeck, "A Spinozistic Model of Moral Education," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 36, no. 5 (2017): 537.

[9] Spinoza, *Eth.* IV20, 332.

> The conatus to preserve oneself is the primary and sole basis of virtue. For no other principle can be conceived as prior to this one (preceding Pr.), and no virtue can be conceived independently of it.[10]

As rational beings, we all strive for self-preservation and are subject to the same (natural) forces. Education helps the student identify what strengthens their *conatus* and what hampers it, thus making them more effective in their striving for self-preservation. The individual reaches an understanding of the "rational unity of nature"[11] with the help of education, which strengthens their rational capacities and hence their *conatus*. Education also mutes the passions, and teaches the students how to distinguish the apparent from the real good, or, between what "truly benefits my striving to persevere and what does not."[12] Education in Spinoza thus affords the recipient with a better understanding of themselves and the world around them.[13]

Perfection in the *Ethics* is thus characterized by independence, or absence of dependence. The more perfect one is, the more self-subsistent and self-reliant they are. God, as the most perfect being, would possess the highest degree of independence. This notion of independence includes not just physical dependencies, but extends to social ones as well. For that reason, Spinoza was especially leery of institutional dependencies and influences born of church and state hierarchies. As a result, the freedom and independence that Spinoza espouses is a largely *negative* one. Education is beneficial because it can rid us of such dependency.

Under this conception, our social aspects generally fade away. A perfect being (like God) wouldn't need to be social, or have need of teachers. So, perfection does not require socialization or education. It is only a contingent fact that imperfect beings like us do. Although Spinoza may have envisaged at the end of his *Ethics* a utopia that includes a peaceful social order ("individuals that enjoy good health, tranquility and happiness, and a society that is blessed with a rational social contract that secures freedom,

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[10] Ibid., IV22, 333. And further: Proof. The conatus to preserve itself is nothing but the essence of a thing (ibid., III7, 283), which, insofar as it exists as such, is conceived as having a force to persist in existing (ibid., III6, 283) and to do those things that necessarily follow from its given nature (see Definition of Appetite in ibid., III9s, 284).

[11] Tapio Puolimatka, "Spinoza's Theory of Teaching and Indoctrination," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 33, nos. 3-4 (2001): 398.

[12] Dahlbeck, "A Spinozistic Model," 544.

[13] Much of this will be a matter of individual experimentation, especially when it comes to education of the imagination. Cf. Aislinn O'Donnell, "Spinoza, Experimentation and Education: How Things Teach Us," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 50, no. 9 (2018): 821.

fairness, and peace"),[14] education is not directly aimed at the production of that order. It is a happy byproduct of individual perfection. Spinoza took a focus on the individual *conatus* without any view to their particular social environment, an "enhancing [of] the humanity of every individual," to be sufficient for "establishing a society based on the principles of reason, liberty and justice."[15] "The good which every man who follows after virtue desires for himself, he will also desire for other men."[16] Once "rationally activated," students may benefit more from being with others who are also rational: "The more students learn to do this [rational activation], the more powerful they will become, and the more they will benefit from being in a community with others who respond in a similarly rational way."[17] Thus the community is not an essential element of Spinoza's conception of education. It has at best a secondary role to play, both when it comes to its role for the process and to the aims of education.

Although perfection on this account is exhausted by a "development and actualization of the [student's] inner nature," it commonly leads to positive social consequences for the student. The end of education may be determined by the student's first nature, and hence "guided by a *telos* or vocation that is immanent in the nature of every human *qua* human,"[18] and yet, "the gradual development and actualization of the potentialities that lie in everyone's inner nature would lead to higher states of personal and social existence"[19] – as a mere corollary. But neither does the community figure as an *end* nor as a *means* in Spinoza's conception of education. In fact, even education itself is contingent here: Education is merely a "useful means by which students may be brought more in line with their nature, which is to persevere and to flourish in being."[20]

And yet, it is a fact that human beings are educated alongside with and by others. Although each individual strives for their own self-preservation independently of others, all humans resemble one another in their striving as rational beings. Due to the similarities we all share by nature, Spinoza claims that "there are certain things that are good for all of us."[21] It is the educators' role to see to it that the individual student becomes more rational

[14] Aloni, 534.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Spinoza, *Eth.* IV37, 339.

[17] Dahlbeck, "A Spinozistic Model," 535.

[18] Aloni, 535ff.

[19] Ibid., 535.

[20] Spinoza, *Eth.* III6, 283.

[21] Dahlbeck, "A Spinozistic Model," 543.

and thus virtuous. Successful educators impart what Spinoza calls "guiding principles" to their students, instructions that are beneficial to all rational beings, and that assure that their "striving for self-preservation will be guided by reason rather than by the passions."[22] Education improves the students' striving because they will know better how to draw on their "own cognitive resources," and hence they will increase "the number of true and adequate ideas."[23]

The educator in Spinoza's educational thought is just as self-interested as all other striving beings.[24] He takes on what LeBuffe calls the role of the "optimistic nutritionist."[25] He "oversees the cognitive training of the students" by "ensuring that their experimentation is guided by reason rather than by the passions."[26] And he does so by directing the student's attention towards what will be beneficial to him, instead of what merely appears beneficial, by keeping the passions from derailing the "imagination into seeking out things that are detrimental for the student."[27]

In particular, the "optimistic nutritionist" ensures that the correct relation between *laetitia* (joy) and perseverance is preserved, "so that students do not 'mistakenly, anticipate laetitia in other things [i.e. things that are not conducive to perseverance] and so desire them."[28] The student may, for instance, mistake sweetness for nutrition. But the teacher knows better and guides the student to help him seek out what is both sweet and nutritious, and avoid what merely tastes good but is in fact unhealthy. The teacher hence helps the students focus their attention on what will help them sustain themselves, on what will help them "strengthen their *conatus*."[29]

At the same time, the educator directly benefits from helping the student strengthen their *conatus*, for "if we perceive others to desire to be more rational, more active, more powerful, we will tend to emulate that desire and also seek to become more powerful."[30] Far from being altruistic, then, Spinoza's pedagoge is actually concerned with their own *conatus*: "the

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Steven Nadler, *Spinoza's Ethics – An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge, 2006), 193, 161. Quoted in Aloni, 537.

[24] Dahlbeck, "A Spinozistic Model," 545.

[25] Michael LeBuffe, "Spinoza's Psychological Theory," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2020 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/spinoza-psychological/.

[26] Dahlbeck, "A Spinozistic Model," 544.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

Spinozistic teacher is always motivated by his or her egoistic striving for self-preservation and flourishing (much like anyone else)." It is the "desire to become more rational" themselves that motivates the teacher to help the student become more rational. He "can mold the student into a moral exemplar for him or her to emulate."[31]

In summary, we can agree that the educational thought as we find it in the *Ethics* is in fact progressive in some respects, and hence already somewhat more suitable for democratic societies: First, the *goal* of education, namely rational activation, is common to all who are capable of it, and so in principle unrestricted by social status. Second, education proceeds with *means* that work for all, namely by way of "guiding principles" that help all rational beings strengthen their *conatus*. And third, the goal of education is no longer centered upon improving social status: "[A]cquiring understanding rather than social status is of the greatest importance."[32]

At the same time, however, there is an ultimately inegalitarian (and thus possibly undemocratic)[33] line of thought in Spinoza: While education should be extended to all, without regard to social distinction, not everyone is capable of achieving rational self-perfection. Those who are not capable of rational activation can only be educated by the imagination,[34] by the means of imaginative fictions, allowing them to do the right thing, even though they may not be capable of grasping the reasons why.[35] Though standing in the same general tradition as Spinoza, it is worth noting that Rousseau subscribes to a much more optimistic view regarding the natural capacities of *all* humans in the state of nature. Like Spinoza, Rousseau emphasizes the role of the drive for self-preservation, which Spinoza would call *conatus*, as an instrument towards individual and collective perfection. For both, a chief ethical aim is to free persons from the corrosive influences of coercive social hierarchies, perhaps by removing them from such environments altogether. Rousseau

[31] Ibid., 545.

[32] Aloni, 535.

[33] Although there may be a close connection between democratic forms of government and the promotion of the value of equality, we thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing that that while education is distributed in an inegalitarian way in Spinoza, this does not need to imply that his view is undemocratic in this respect.

[34] Genevieve Lloyd, "Spinoza and the Education of the Imagination," in *Philosophers on Education: New Historical Perspectives,* ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, 157-172 (London: Routledge, 1998).

[35] We thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that imagination, as a source of knowledge, was also a common idea in Medieval Arabic and Jewish philosophy. Cf. Alfred Ivry, "Arabic and Islamic Psychology and Philosophy of Mind," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2012 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/arabic-islamic-mind/.

sees that to be sufficient for them to develop their natural capacities fully, which in the end will be of mutual benefit. Rousseau thus calls on us not to conclude with Hobbes that man is evil by nature, "that because man has no idea of goodness, he must be naturally wicked."[36] Quite on the contrary, the state of nature should be understood as "that in which the care for our own preservation is the least prejudicial to that of others," and that it is hence "the best calculated to promote peace, and the most suitable for mankind."[37] Moreover, even in the state of nature, instead of merely competing in their striving, human beings are guided by the "force of natural compassion."[38]

III. Dewey's educational thought

As we have seen, Spinoza develops an educational theory, whereby the goal of education is that of individual self-perfection. A strikingly different account of the aims of education can be found in John Dewey's *Democracy and Education*, to which we now turn. Though not mentioning Spinoza explicitly, there can be little doubt that Dewey had Spinoza in mind, especially in some of the earlier chapters of *Democracy and Education*. It is clear that Dewey was at least familiar with some of Spinoza's work. In 1882, Dewey published "The Pantheism of Spinoza" in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*.[39] We find him here raising many of the same issues as in many of the earlier chapters of *Democracy and Education* such as in the chapter on "Education as a Social Function," and in the chapter on "Education as Growth":

> Two logical pantheistic systems are possible. One must start with the conception of an Absolute Perfect Being in whom are all things, but this theory cannot account for things as we find them. It must deny that they are what they seem to be, and elevate them into the Divine [...]. Here is where Spinoza failed. The other theory must start from the conception of things as they seem to be, and produce its Pantheism, not by elevating them into God, but by bringing God down to them.[40]

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[36] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality," in *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. George Douglas Howard Cole, 155-246 (London, and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1923), 196.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., 79. "On certain occasions, the impetuosity of *amour-propre*, or, before its birth, the desire of self-preservation, tempers the ardour with which he pursues his own welfare, by an innate repugnance at seeing a fellow-creature suffer." Ibid., 73.

[39] John Dewey, "The Pantheism of Spinoza," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 16, no. 3 (1882), 249-257.

[40] Ibid., 257.

However, reflecting the limitations of an account of education that aims at the student's *independence* from other striving objects, the aim for Dewey here is rather *interdependence*.[41] As he puts it in *Democracy and Education*, the aim of education is to "enable individuals to continue their education," and the main objective of learning is to "develop a continued capacity for growth."[42] Growth in democratically constituted society, however, will take place in the context of a "social life in which interests are mutually interpenetrating and where progress or readjustment, in an important consideration,"[43] instead of mere independence. Rather than raising an egoistic specialist,[44] as advocated by Spinoza, the educator should focus on fostering *joint intentions*, both as means and ends of his instruction.[45] As Dewey puts it in "My Pedagogic Creed," education "comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself":[46]

> Through these demands he is stimulated to act as a member of a unity, to emerge from his original narrowness of action and feeling, and to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs.[47]

For Dewey, then, social factors feature much more prominently among the goals of education. Schooling is not merely contingent, but a human necessity, in particular for the survival of the social whole. The necessity of schooling arises as societies become more complex,[48] particularly once societies depend on a written record. "With the growth of civilization, the gap between the original capacities of the immature and the standards and

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[41] Or *solidarity*, as Rorty would put it later on. Cf. Richard Rorty, *Achieving our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[42] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 100.

[43] Ibid., 87.

[44] See also the work of Johan Dahlbeck, "The Egoistic Teacher: Educational Implications of Spinoza's Ethical Egoism," *Ethics and Education* 12, no. 3 (2017).

[45] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 16. Participating in a "joint activity," carrying out a "common pursuit" are the educational bedrock that sets up "an active connection between the child and the grownup," they are the "guarantee for the same manner of use," Ibid., 15. And further: "things gain meaning by being used in a shared experience or joint action."

[46] John Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed," in *The American Hegelians: An Intellectual Episode in the History of Western America*, ed. William H. Goetzmann, 310-320 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1973), 311.

[47] Ibid. Dewey's legacy from the St. Louis school of Hegelianism is manifest in this passage.

[48] Dewey, *Democracy and Education,* 3.

customs of the elders increases."[49] Education is thus a "necessity of life," a "means of [the] social continuity of life."[50] The continuity of society and of the community depend on it.[51]

Apart from enabling its survival, education is also of paramount importance to the formation of community in the first place. Forming a community requires being cognizant of a common goal, and education is necessary in order to bring about the sharing of such a common end.[52] In stark contrast to Spinoza, a mere instruction of a set of rules that supposedly work for everyone hence cannot be sufficient: "Giving and taking of orders modifies action and results but does not of itself effect a sharing of purposes, a communication of interests."[53]

One integral aim of education, at least in such complex societies, is thus social. Dewey, reflecting his Hegelian roots, for that reason emphasizes *Bildung* or acculturation, or the inculcation of a *second nature*. Some ends of education cannot be found within us, waiting to be unfolded. Rather, they can only be identified by looking to the larger social milieu a student inhabits. The ends appropriate in one social environment might not carry over to another. Power here is not only self-perfection, but rather social power, and for Dewey, this power comes with an increase in dependence. As long as a community "remains social, or vitally shared," it will be "educative to those who participate in it,"[54] it will help them increase their power.

In order to perform this acculturating function, Dewey describes how schools set up simplified (or "special") environments, in which the students can be ushered into and internalize the greater social world that they will come to reside. Education proceeds indirectly: "We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment."[55] Instead, we educate by means of an environment that is modified with certain aims in view, such as a reduction of complexity, the elimination of undesired features in the curriculum, and

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[49] Ibid., 19. "Roughly speaking, they come into existence when social traditions are so complex that a considerable part of the social store is committed to writing and transmitted through written symbols [...]. Consequently as soon as a community depends to any considerable extent upon what lies beyond its own territory and its own immediate generation, it must rely upon the set agency of schools to insure adequate transmission of all its resources."

[50] Ibid., 3.

[51] Ibid., 4. "Society not only continues to exist *by* transmission, *by* communication, but it may be fairly said to exist *in* transmission."

[52] Ibid., 5. "If, however, they are cognizant of the common end and all interested in it so that they regulate their specific activity in view of it, then they would form a community."

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., 6. "Only when it becomes cast in a mold and runs in a routine way does it lose its educative power."

[55] Ibid., 19.

with an eye to the balancing out of different social backgrounds: The school "provide[s] a simplified environment" by selecting "features which are fairly fundamental and capable of being responded to by the young."[56] It moreover "eliminate[s], so far as possible, the unworthy features of the existing environment from influence upon mental habitudes."[57] Finally, the school environment "balance[s] the various elements in the social environment." [58]

This last point is especially relevant in the United States, as a country "composed of a combination of different groups with different traditional customs."[59] Dewey of course was especially concerned with how educational institutions were to be implemented in democratic societies, and how they could foster and promote democratic ideals.[60, 61] Education is of particular importance in a democratically constituted society, where both a multitude of viewpoints ("more numerous and more varied points of shared common interest")[62] and simultaneously a greater need for social control arise ("greater reliance upon the recognition of mutual interests as a factor in social control" [63]). There will be both "freer interactions between social groups," and at the same time a need for continuous change in social habits through "continuous readjustment."[64]

On this conception, education is sharply distinguished from mere training in that it requires the student's participation in a common pursuit in order for him to successfully form dispositions: Physical training may bring about a "blind response." Yet, education proper always requires the participation in a *joint activity*: "While we can shut a man up in a penitentiary, we cannot

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[56] Ibid., 20.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid. "and to see to it that each individual gets an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born, and to come into living contact with a broader environment."

[59] Ibid., 21. "It is this situation which has, perhaps more than any other one cause, forced the demand for an educational institution which shall provide something like a homogeneous and balanced environment for the young. Only in this way can the centrifugal forces set up by juxtaposition of different groups within one and the same political unit be counteracted."

[60] Indeed, his brand of neo-Hegelianism owed much to the 19th-century reception of Hegel in the Americas. See, Joe Ervin, David Beisecker, and Jasmin Özel, "The St. Louis Hegelians and the Institutionalization of Democratic Education," *Philosophy of Education* 77, no. 1 (2021).

[61] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 87. It is worth noting here that Dewey understood a democracy to be "more than a form of government": "it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience."

[62] Ibid., 87.

[63] Ibid., 86.

[64] Ibid.

make him penitent."[65] We hence ought not to "confuse a physical with an educative result."[66] Education is *direction*,[67] but not mere physical direction. It is rather by means of "the person's own participating dispositions" that education should develop "within him an intrinsic and persisting direction in the right way."[68] We form dispositions by participating in joint activities with others, just as we "attach the same meaning to things and to acts which others attach." Ultimately, engaging in joint activities will render us "like-minded with them."[69]

In short, for Dewey the goal of education is not individual self-perfection. Rather, the goal is *growth*. Specifically, it is growth towards greater social *interdependence*. While Spinoza's conception of education focused exclusively on the unfolding of the student's inner powers through the strengthening of their *conatus* by bringing the child more in line with their own nature and freeing them from any outside interference – Dewey's conception of education focuses on *social* efficiency and acculturation. Rational insight, understanding or other perfection need not, and even should not, be the primary goal of education. The educator's main purpose should rather be to provide the student with means that help him "come to identify his own interest with the interest of this social whole," to "interpret the child's present interest in the light of this objective reason and will" – to help the student develop his *second nature*.

One important implication of Dewey's conception of growth as the aim of schooling is that the end of education cannot be a "fixed goal."[70] Education cannot be subordinate to any goal other than growth. In fact, if there is any goal that we could ascribe to education, it would be perpetual change and transformation: The educational process "has no end beyond itself; it is its own end"[71] writes Dewey, and moreover: "the educational process is one of continual reorganizing, reconstruction, transforming."[72] Growth consists in "*having* an end" instead of in "*being* and end."[73]

The purpose of institutionalized schooling on this conception is to foster life-long growth, namely by laying the foundations for continual learning. The

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[65] Ibid., 26.

[66] Ibid., 27.

[67] As we can even see in the title of the third chapter of Dewey, *Democracy and Education*: "Education as Direction," 23ff.

[68] Ibid., 27.

[69] Ibid., 30.

[70] Ibid., 50.

[71] Ibid., 30.

[72] Ibid., 50.

[73] Ibid., 50.

student's education should "not cease when one leaves school."[74] Schooling assists the student's continuing learning "by organizing the powers that insure growth."[75] And education just is "continuous growth, having as its aim at every stage an added capacity of growth."[76] Education ends, however, once any goals are fixed.[77]

The need for "continuous readjustment," depending on conditions, as a defining characteristic of education is also reflected in Dewey's comparison of the educator with the farmer. This comparison is quite different from Spinoza's vision of the educator as "optimistic nutritionist." Both the educator and the farmer have "certain things to do, certain resources with which to do it, and certain obstacles with which to contend."[78] Just as it would be absurd to "set up an ideal of farming irrespective of conditions," the same holds for setting up ideals when it comes to the growth of children.[79] Any educational aim will need to "be founded upon the intrinsic activities and needs [...] of the individual to be educated."[80] Education is democratic if it addresses the "intrinsic significance of growth," which is the only aim education has according to Dewey, and its "democratic criterion."[81]

Dewey also objects to the view that the purpose of education is merely *preparation* for the future.[82] In some sense, education is always preparation for the future, for it ought to further growth at later stages in life: Since growth consists in a "continuous leading into the future," at each stage, education needs to "make individuals better fitted to cope with later requirements."[83] Yet, in Dewey, very much in contrast to the perfectionist conception we saw in Spinoza, education does not consist in an "unfolding of latent powers towards a definite goal," the goal here is hence decidedly not "conceived as completion, perfection."[84]

Historically, Dewey sees these two conceptions of education exemplified in Froebel's and Hegel's thought respectively. Dewey concludes that Froebel's

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[74] Ibid., 51.

[75] Ibid., 51.

[76] Ibid., 54.

[77] Ibid., 54. The fixing of aims brings about the "arrest of growth."

[78] Ibid., 106.

[79] Ibid., 107.

[80] Ibid., 108.

[81] Ibid., 109.

[82] Ibid., 54. Dewey sees the view of "education as unfolding" as "[l]ogically the doctrine is only a variant of the preparation theory" of education, and as thus to be rejected. Ibid., 56.

[83] Ibid., 56.

[84] Ibid.

conception of education, in contrast to Hegel's, "failed to see that growing is growth, developing is development," instead "placing the emphasis upon the completed product."[85] Just as both Spinoza and Dewey claim to offer an "immanent" account of human life, so do both Froebel and Hegel. Both understand the "ideal" not to be a mere ideal, but as "operative in the here and now,"[86] yet their respective understandings of what it means for the goal to be "implicitly, 'potentially,' or in an enfolded condition"[87] differ: For Hegel, it is worked out through a series of historical institutions which embody the different factors of the Absolute. For Froebel, all the educator needs to do is present the child with the right kinds of symbols so that the "whole, or perfection, sleeping within him, is awakened."[88] Dewey mentions Froebel's discussion of the use of the circle in Kindergarten as a striking example in this context: The circle is not merely a "convenient way of grouping children" but rather, Froebel argues, it must be used "because it is the symbol of the collective life of mankind in general."[89]

Froebel thus sets up a goal, which to Dewey "means the arrest of growth."[90] Hegel, by contrast, focuses on institutions, rather than symbolisms: He sees the "weakness of an abstract individualistic philosophy" and the "impossibility of making a clean sweep of historical institutions."[91]

Dewey reminds us here that we find in Hegel a staunch advocate of the positive influence "of the great collective institutional products of humanity," just as we do in many other German thinkers around 1800 – Dewey mentions Lessing, Herder, Kant, Schiller, and Goethe.[92] But Dewey does not only reject the view that there are certain faculties that all of us share, and that can be activated through the same kinds of symbolisms, he is equally dissatisfied with the view that denies the existence of mental faculties altogether, namely Herbart's. Herbart argues that instead of education being an "unfolding from within," or a "training of the faculties resident in mind itself," education should rather be conceived of as the formation of mind itself: by setting up "certain associations or connections of content by means of a subject matter presented from without."[93] Herbart thus denies the "existence of

[85] Ibid., 58.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid., 59.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., 69.

innate faculties," instead, the mind is "simply endowed with the power of producing various qualities in reaction to the various realities which act upon it."[94] Yet Herbart, according to Dewey, neglected the importance of what we could call *joint intentionality* in education: "it slurs over the fact that the environment involves a personal sharing in common experiences."[95] And, even more importantly, Herbart did not sufficiently capture what, as we say above, Dewey sees as the essence of education, namely "the operation of the genuinely novel and unforeseeable," the "vital energy seeking opportunity of effective exercise."[96]

IV. Conclusion

We saw that for both Spinoza and Dewey, education is a developmental process,[97] but the developmental ends differ: For Spinoza, we start with naturally common ends, the recognition of which is vital to our self-preservation and perfection. For Dewey, we need to achieve common ends as well, though they need to be nurtured and fostered, not disclosed or uncovered. Our starting point is rather one of difference, not commonality. In sharp contrast with Spinoza's conception of education for individual perfection, democratic education is marked by an appreciation of the "intrinsic significance of growth."[98] Growth occurs through the accommodation of these differences. Growth thus does not consist in a reduction of interference by others, but rather an increase in social dependencies, which equals an increase in power, an increase in *positive freedom*: "From a social standpoint, dependency denotes a power rather than a weakness; it involves interdependence."[99] The end of growth on Dewey's conception is thus not to be found within the individual, but rather within one's community.

The new conatus for the new world will hence not be that of an individual organism. Instead, it is that of the "social organism" Dewey was so fond of bringing up.[100] If we wish to determine an appropriate aim of democratic

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[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid., 71.

[96] Ibid.

[97] As chapter 4 ("Education as Growth") of *Democracy and Education* argues.

[98] Ibid., 109. Growth needs to be the only aim of education and constitutes its "democratic criterion."

[99] Ibid., 44.

[100] See for instance chapter 5 of *Democracy and Education*: "But the social organism, interpreted after the relation of the organs of the body to each other and to the whole body, means that each individual has a certain limited place and function, requiring to be supplemented by the place and function of the other organs." Ibid., 60.

education, then, it ought to be the "continued capacity for growth"[101] of this *social* organism instead of just that of individual organisms.[102] The aim will constantly be subject to testing through the group action of such a collective, and it "must always represent a freeing of activities."[103] And so, through education, students come to identify with, and participate in, a social organism with its own growth trajectory and a *conatus* of its very own.

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[101] Ibid., 100.

[102] Ibid., 87. "A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience."

[103] Ibid., 105.

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