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SPINOZA ON ENVY AND THE PROBLEM OF INTOLERANCE

That Spinoza was an early champion of tolerating a measure of religious diversity and political dissent is widely recognized. Interpretive scholarship and histories of early modern political thought continue to reassess the scope and warrants for toleration in Spinoza's ethical and political thought, as well as the originality and influence of his views. Interpretive discussions have also recognized the importance of Spinoza's concern, especially in his ethical works, with affective motivations for intolerance, especially the constellation of fear, hope, ambition (*ambitio*), and hatred. I aim to push this second interpretive trajectory further by examining the mystifying, if counterintuitive, connection that Spinoza consistently makes, between envy (*invidia*) and superstition as motivations for intolerance, primarily in the *Ethics*.

Spinoza's concern with envy has not had a significant place in discussions of the affective grounds of intolerance.[1] I note, however, that Spinoza's references to envy are consistently embedded in the context of claims about the way that superstition amplifies hatred, and in contexts that concern the motivations for blame and punishment, and so *ipso facto*, toleration. Examining these references bring to light Spinoza's nuanced rethinking of a long-standing moral psychology of envy (*invidia*). Spinoza draws upon this background, which already recognized envy as a "last step" toward "hatred of the

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[1] Some examples in recent scholarship: Rosenthal's "Tolerance as Virtue in Spinoza's Ethics" (2001), LAERKE's *Spinoza and the Freedom of Philosophizing* (2021), STEINBERG's *Spinoza's Political Psychology: The Taming of Fortune and Fear* (2018), GARBER's "Anthropomorphism, Teleology and Superstition: The Politics of Obedience in Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus*" (2019), and GUT's "Spinoza's Critique of Religious Intolerance" (2022).

neighbor"; but he foregrounds the affective interconnection of envy with ambition (*ambitio*) and pride, which seek the gratification of others' esteem or recognition. And he seeks to demonstrate that it is these affective interconnections that drive intolerance within the context of "superstition".

Spinoza's view of envy (*invidia*) is articulated within the context of his psychology of the affects, which reflects his consistent methodological commitment to understanding the affects on a "geometrical" model, without any imputation of censure or blame, or as virtue or vice.[2] He contrasts this methodological commitment to treatments of the affects through the lens of longstanding Aristotelian and scholastic virtue "theory", which he rejects for three primary reasons. The first reason (i) is its essentially penitential and "juridical" aims. The second reason (ii) Spinoza broadly (but selectively) rejects longstanding virtue "theoretical" accounts of the passions is that they are variously teleological. For most of Spinoza's interlocutors, passions are understood within a theological anthropology where they are conceived as oriented toward "ends" or purposes via final causes, which can only be understood in reference to God's creative and providential intentions. The third (iii) is that these longstanding approaches of the passions generally assume a notion of free will that exempts human actions from the "necessity" inherent within the essentially efficient causal order of nature. Spinoza argues, by contrast, that seeing human actions and their motivational sources in terms of "free will" only intensifies responses of hatred without contributing in any way to understanding of the passions, and remediating them.[3]

Finally, however, Spinoza sees a critical link between his commitment to a "geometric" method of understanding the passions as "part of Nature", and taking up a posture of broad forbearance that, I would argue, provides an underacknowledged warrant for toleration, and implications for its appropriate scope. One advantage of focusing on Spinoza's reconsideration of envy through the lens of a method that sidelines notions of virtue and blame, is that it brings into view the implications of Spinoza's thought regarding the scope of toleration beyond matters of religious and political toleration to moral difference and disagreement.

In the first section of this essay, I assess Spinoza's reprisal of elements of the longstanding moral psychology of envy. I appeal to Aquinas (on envy

[2] See especially the preface to part 3 of the *Ethics*, and note Spinoza's contrasting of the approach he intends to take from approaches that assign passions to virtues and vices.

[3] For Spinoza's arguments that regarding an action as "free" in the sense of "not necessitated by causes" intensifies hatred, see *E*3p40dem, and *E*3p49s.

and hate) as a prominent and influential Aristotelian view, and perhaps the best possible example of the sort of moral psychology that Spinoza aims to "rethink". I briefly revisit Descartes' treatment of envy as a passion in *Passions of the Soul*, a source that directly informs Spinoza's view. We will see, however, how Spinoza's shift to a "geometry-modeled" approach motivates a reassessment of the connection between envy and hatred, and its location within a constellation of other affects, especially fear, hope, and ambition (*ambitio*) that are implicated in intolerance. It is these affects that, in Spinoza's view, motivate individuals to "take up the position of 'the judge'," seek vengeance and "power" advantage, and subsequently to impose punishment. Here, my discussion will intersect with other discussions in recent scholarship of the role of ambition (*ambitio*) as a motivation to intolerance.[4] In the second section, I will consider how Spinoza's "geometric" approach to envy and the constellation of hateful affects, is implicated in the uptake of "superstition", and why Spinoza regards it as a particular crucible of intolerance. I will finally argue (in the third section) that Spinoza's reinterpretation of envy and its implication in superstition reveals why the posture of forbearance, which he recognizes as an expression of "strength of mind" (or virtue) in his ethical thought, motivates tolerance, both as a "public" (or political) good and "private" (individual) virtue. And I revisit this aspect of Spinoza's thought with a view to its implications for the bounds of tolerance. I conclude that the forbearance that Spinoza counsels on the grounds of his "geometrical" approach to the affects provides conceptual and motivational warrants for extending toleration to forms of "moral" difference and disagreement, beyond questions of tolerating religious confessional difference and dissent, and public philosophical reflection.

1. THE PROBLEM OF ENVY (*INVIDIA*)

Spinoza is heir to Aristotelian and stoic moral psychologies of the passions (including scholastic theological "anthropologies") that long recognized an intrinsic connection between envy and hatred.[5] We can recognize

[4] Justin STEINBERG, *Spinoza's Political Psychology: The Taming of Fortune and Fear* (Cambridge: CUP, 2018), 137–43.

[5] In his *Rhetoric*, bk. II, § 10, Aristotle defines envy as "pain at the sight of such good fortune as consists of the good things…; we feel it towards our equals; not with the idea of getting something for ourselves, but because the other people have it. We shall feel it if we have, or think we have, equals; and by 'equals'."

Aquinas's analysis of the passions, including envy and hatred of the neighbor, as a "best example" of this sort of approach. And though there is no evidence that Spinoza was directly acquainted with Aquinas's view or texts, the broad influence of Aquinas's view in Spinoza's own day is an additional reason to revisit some aspects of Aquinas's account of envy as a passion and vice.

In Aquinas's extensive analysis of hate in the *Summa Theologica*, envy appears as a form of sorrow—a passional form of the "concupiscable" appetite.[6] Aquinas recognizes a longstanding view (quoting John of Damascus) that "envy is sorrow for another's good" (*ST* II-II Q36.a1). He elucidates this claim, however, by noting that the object of sorrow is one's own evil, and considers means by which others' good is apprehended as an evil. He identifies two pathways through which one feels sorrow for another's good, which is when sorrow takes the specific form of envy. The first is when another's good is recognized as a source of potential harm. He cites as an example sorrow for an enemy's prosperity; but he denies that this is envy, because it arises from fear. The second pathway, however, is envy, properly speaking, and he adduces its source:

> (A)nother's good may be reckoned as being one's own evil, in so far as it conduces to the lessening of one's own good name or excellence. It is in this way that envy grieves for another's good: and consequently men are envious of those goods in which a good name consists, and about which men like to be honored and esteemed, as the Philosopher remarks (Rhet. ii, 10). (*ST* II.II.Q36.a1.*responsio*)

Envy, properly speaking, is when another's good is an occasion for sorrow, and so regarded as evil, because their good is apprehended as lessening of one's own excellence or "good name". The concern or "love" of a good name or "excellence" encompasses envying the material possessions of others which do not constitute a threat to one's security—what we might suppose is the paradigmatic case of envy. This pathway to envy, however, also encompasses sorrow for others' possession of goods "in which a good name consists" and which invite "honor" and "esteem" rather than as a source of threat. Aquinas remarks that goods associated with a good name only occasion envy when another is regarded as a rival or when one wishes to surpass

[6] *Summa Theologica* I-II (hereafter: *ST* I-II), Question 23, article 4. All citations of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* are from the complete English translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Westminister, MD, Christian Classics, 1981 (reprint). "Part" is designated by Roman numerals, followed by Q(uestion), number, A(rticle), number.

another's reputation (*ST* II-II.Q36.a1.*reply to objection* 2). And it is a "good" that Aquinas regards as a misdirection of love or charity, with which one should regard another as one's "neighbor". This association of envy with "honor" and "esteem" will be taken up (we will see) by both Descartes and Spinoza.

Aquinas adduces envy not only as a "sinful" but "capital vice", because it "incites man to do certain things, with the purpose either of avoiding sorrow, or of satisfying its demands" (*ST* II.II.Q36.a4.*I answer that*). This is a critical reason Aquinas identifies envy, as such, as a necessary condition—if not cognitive constituent—of hatred of "the neighbor":

> Accordingly just as love arises from pleasure, so does hatred arise from sorrow. For just as we are moved to love whatever gives us pleasure, in as much as for that very reason it assumes the aspect of the good: so we are moved to hate whatever displeases us, in so far as for this very reason it assumes the aspect of evil. Wherefore, *since envy is sorrow for our neighbor's good, it follows that our neighbor's good becomes hateful to us, so that out of envy cometh hatred*. (*ST* II.II.Q34.A5.*responsio*/*sed contra*)

This longstanding representation of the interconnection of envy, sorrow, and hatred will also resound through subsequent moral psychologies of these affects, through Descartes to Spinoza. Finally, the gravity of envy, as a mortal sin and capital vice, is a function of the fact that it is love, disordered under conditions of "the Fall", where the passions defy the sovereignty of the intellect or reason. The neighbor's good is the appropriate object of charity (love); and those who love their neighbor, as God commands, find joy in their neighbors" good. Envy, however, is sorrow at the neighbor's good; and Aquinas claims that sorrow causes hatred.

Descartes, following Aquinas, also locates envy within the scope of joy and sadness. He claims that the "consideration of a present good" excites joy, and the consideration of a present evil, sorrow (*Passions of the Soul*, §§ 61–62, AT 11:376–77; V, 54).[7] When one considers another's present good or evil, however, "we deem them either deserving or undeserving." And when one believes that another does not deserve the good that they enjoy, then consideration of another's good excites envy. Descartes goes on to claim, however, in his treatment of envy as a specific passion:

[7] Citations to Descartes' *Passions of the Soul* will be given both for Adam's and Tannery's 1957–1974 edition (AT) and the widely used Voss' 1989 English translation (V).

> Envy, therefore, insofar as it is a Passion, is a species of Sadness mingled with Hatred, which comes from seeing Good happen to those one thinks to be unworthy of it. This can be rightly thought only of goods of fortune. For as for [goods] of the soul, or even the body, the fact that someone has received them from God before he was capable of committing any evil is sufficient for him to be worthy of them. (*Passions of the Soul*, § 182, AT 11:466–67; V, 118)

One who "loves justice" may sorrow when others enjoy undeserved goods; and Descartes treats this response as warranted envy. But he also recognizes that warranted envy is challenging and rare, even as a functional motivation to seek justice.[8] There are "few who are so just and so generous as to have no Hatred for those who anticipate them in the acquisition of a good not communicable to many" and even when others who have acquired the good are at least as worthy of it as the one who envies them.

Descartes notes, however, that it is "glory" that we envy others, more than anything else, because others enjoying it "renders access to it more difficult and raises its cost" (*Passions of the Soul*, § 183, AT 11:467–68; V, 118–19.) Descartes' comment shows that he implicitly recognizes that enjoying "glory", or receiving the esteem of others, requires one's being able to distinguish oneself from others who do not enjoy it, and the idea that others also recognize this relative difference, favorable to one. In other words, Descartes makes the point that the salience of "glory" is proportional to its exclusivity. So envy appears as finding others' enjoyment of "glory" sorrowful or regretful.

It is this feature of Descartes's account of envy that most prominently echoes in Spinoza's "geometric" account of envy; and it figures critically in the connection that Spinoza makes between envy, hatred, and ambition in the context of superstition. The longstanding association of envy with hatred clearly echoes in Spinoza's definition of envy (*Invidia*) at the end of *Ethics*, part 3.

> XXIII. Envy (*Invidia*) is Hate insofar as it so affects a man that he is saddened by another's happiness and, conversely, glad at his ill fortune.

Note, however, that Spinoza, echoing Descartes' identification of envy as a form of sadness mingled with hatred, already sees envy *as* hatred. This definition also recapitulates a more nuanced discussion of envy in *E*3p55, where Spinoza explores the implications of comparing oneself with others in

[8] Descartes describes the "passion" that an ambitious person has for "glory" as love (see *Passions of the Soul*, § 82, AT 11:388–89; V, 63.) For a comparison to Spinoza, see *E*3p55s, quoted below.

the formation of envy as a form of hatred. In this proposition, he claims: "When the mind imagines its lack of power, it is saddened by it." Imagining others' blame (*vituperium*) or censure only compounds this sorrow. And the sorrow "accompanied by the idea of our own weakness" is humility, by definition. This consciousness of one's lack of power, in the form of sorrow, however, sets one up for envy as a form of seeking to redress one's weakness.

Where Descartes' continued to echo scholastic accounts of hatred as a natural resistance to things apprehended as evil, he also recognized it as a form of pain or sorrow. As such, he surmises that it functions to motivate some resistance to perceived evils, though it is also always "injury".[9] Spinoza, for whom sadness (*tristitia*) is nothing more than consciousness of one's "perfection" or power being diminished, but with only an inadequate (and possibly nonveridical) idea of its cause, hatred's being identified as sadness implicitly evacuates it of *any* necessary role in resisting evil.[10] Since, as a form of sadness, hatred has no functional role, and since Spinoza claims that hatred can never be "good", envy—if it simply "is hatred itself", as he claims—can never be good. It can have no necessary role to play in motivating seeking the good, or what Spinoza sometimes calls one's "true advantage".

Descartes' claim that "glory" is the good most conducive to envy reverberates clearly in Spinoza's account of envy. Envy, Spinoza claims, is most implacable in those who seek the esteem of others ("gloria") as a solace for self-depreciation and humility. Those who are self-depreciating or self-abasing seek the esteem of others without moderation, and are intensely prone to envy the esteem (or "glory") enjoyed by others (*E*4p57s, *E*3def.em.28expl. by implication). And for this reason, weakly-minded human beings are motivated to accentuate their powers of body and mind to others, and to take pleasure in the idea that others take pleasure in them. The proud are most prone to envy because (as in Descartes' view) pride (*superbia*) requires a measure of differentiation of oneself from others—being seen as possessing goods, especially status or recognition—that others do not possess. And this motivation for esteem drives forms of formal, ritualized, or visual privilege or "honors" that are denied others. Seeking this gratification sought in pride takes the form of ambition (*ambitio*) when it is not gratified.

[9] Keith GREEN, "Love, Love, Hatred, and Self-Preservation in Descartes' *Passions of the Soul* and Spinoza's Theory of the Affects," *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica* 112, no. 2 (2020): 433, https://doi.org/10.26350/001050_000194.

[10] GREEN, 435–36.

Spinoza emphasizes, however, that seeking the gratification of others' esteem implicates one in passively (uncritically) imitating the affects of others, and in comparing oneself with others.

> From this it follows, again, that men are by nature envious [see P24S and P32S], or are glad of their equals' weakness and saddened by their equals' virtue. For whenever anyone imagines his own actions, he is affected with joy [P53], and with a greater joy, the more his actions express perfection, and the more distinctly he imagines them, i.e. (by 2p40s1), the more he can distinguish them from others, and consider them as singular things, So everyone will have the greatest gladness from considering himself, when he considers something in himself which he denies concerning others. (*E*3p55s, G 2:183, C 1:525)

Men are, then, "naturally inclined" to hate and envy because it is "natural" to remediate one's reflexive sorrow, or one's painful ideas of one's own weakness, by "wrongly interpreting one's equals' actions in comparison to one's own, or by magnifying one's own as much as one can".

The natural inclination to remediate an image or painful idea of one's own weakness (which one passively affirms) by seeking and enjoying unwarranted or flattering praise or approval from others creates the condition for a particularly "toxic" coalescence of envy and hatred. Spinoza claims that this condition has its cause (unselfconscious motivation) in (being "weakly animated" or, quite literally, "weakly minded") because one is driven to passively affirm ideas of oneself as esteemed by others. Both pride and its "opposite", which Spinoza claims is not self-hatred but self-depreciation (*abjectio*), are "pathologies" (quite literally) of this condition. Spinoza defines self-depreciation as "pain arising from a false opinion which makes a man believe himself inferior to others" (*E*4p42s, recapitulating *E*3def.em. 28expl.; E/C, 266, 215–16).[11]

It is important to remember that according to Spinoza's *conatus* doctrine, sorrow is consciousness of one's essential natural "striving" being weakened; and so it can have only an "external" cause.[12] The pain/sorrow of self-depreciation, Spinoza implies, imitates sorrow conjoined to ideas of oneself that are imputed to others—something to which only those who lack strength of

[11] Self-depreciation (*abjectio*) is arguably a form of self-hatred: *E*3p30s; see Keith GREEN, "Spinoza on Reflexive Affects and the Imitation of Affects," in *The Concept of Affectivity in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Gábor Boros, Judit Szalai, and Olivér István Tóth (Budapest: Eötvös University Press, 2017), 125–26.

[12] See especially *E*3p6dem.

mind are liable to do. And it implicates one comparing oneself to others, since one's idea or consciousness of oneself can be painful only if imitates another's idea of oneself.[13] The weak- or passively-minded impulse to passively affirm others' painful ideas of oneself, without a rational capacity (or strength of mind) to refuse or refute such ideas, is the "root" of both pride (and by implication, ambition) and self-depreciation:

> For as [the self-depreciating man's] pain arises from the fact that he judges his own weakness by others" power or virtue, his pain will be relieved, i.e. he will rejoice, if *his imagination is occupied in contemplating the vices of others*, whence comes to proverb: It is the solace of the miserable to have companions in misfortune; he will be still more depressed [*constristabitur* 'all the more saddened'] in proportion as he believes himself to be inferior to others. For this reason, none are more prone to envy than self-depreciators; they generally observe the deeds of others for the sake of criticizing rather than correcting them; in short, they only praise self-depreciation and glory in it, though in such a way that they still appear to be depreciating themselves. (*E*4p57s, G 2:252; E/C, 266; italics inserted)

Spinoza then goes on to claim that having seen the real source and relation of pride and self-depreciation, we can understand why insecurely proud human beings, as well as the self-deprecating, are "pathologically" prone to envy.

> (W)e easily conceive that the proud man is necessarily envious [see *E*3p55s]; that he hates those who are most praised for their virtues, that this hatred is not easily overcome by their love or benefits [*E*3p41s]; and that he delights in the presence (company) of those who indulge his mental weakness, and from a fool, turn him into a mad person. (*E*4p57s, G 2:252; E/C, 266)

Spinoza's claim that the proud man is necessarily envious is meant to underscore that envy is an often unselfconscious, essentially involuntary, outcome of a particular pain and weakness-of-mind (*impotentia animi*), such that one is unable to "cease to affirm" or assent to "false opinions" of oneself.[14] These are "false opinions" appended (as it were) to affects of others he passively "imitates".

[13] Note that Spinoza recapitulates a point about thinking ill of oneself because of the "opinions" of others from *E*3dem.em.28, where he originally makes the point that *abjectio* is the "opposite" of pride.

[14] Behind this feature of Spinoza's view is his claim that "affirmation" essentially constitutes "volition", and it can be "active" or "passive". One who, for example, passively imitates ideas of

It is worth noting that even in recapitulating and expanding upon Descartes' insight about the interconnection of pride, ambition, esteem (*gloria*), and envy (in *E*4p57s, quoted above) Spinoza makes it clear that his aim is a "geometric" understanding of the affects rather than any imputation of blame or vice.[15] Spinoza claims, for example, that the impulse of the self-depreciating (those who have passively imitated others' hatred of themselves) to envy others is a "result" or outcome that follows "as it follows from the nature of a triangle that its three angles are equal to two right-angles" (*E*4p57s; E/C, 266). In no less than three places in the *Ethics*, Spinoza comments upon the effects of parents correcting their children by comparing them unfavorably to others (i.e. appearing to withhold their love);[16] and since losing the love or affection of others generates an even more salient hate or need for affective (or "power") compensation, their sons come to prefer the cruel discipline of those who do not love them to the "milder" discipline of their parents. Spinoza also recognizes, however, that passively affirming certain of others" ideas of oneself is also a necessary condition for forming more adequate ideas of oneself.[17] Enjoying the esteem of others can "arise from reason", in which case it is consciousness of one's power *engendered* through another's recognition, where others (like one's parents) have (or should have) a more adequate idea of one than oneself.[18] Where "glory" (pleasure taken in the esteem, approval, or praise of others) is sought, however, as an antidote to self-depreciation, or essentially self-hateful ideas of oneself, envy is essentially "causally" inevitable and "turn him into a mad person".

It is critical to note that envy is the affective concomitant of two affects that in Spinoza's view are perhaps most implicated in intolerance: pride (*superbia*) and ambition (*ambitio*). Spinoza describes *ambitio* (in *E*3p29s) as "striving to do, or not to do, to please another" or to invite the approval and

oneself attributed to others lacks other adequate ideas of causal powers bearing upon one, through which one is "conscious" through imagination and affect. (On affirmation, see Spinoza's letter to Blijenbergh [Letter 21, C 1:378], where he claims that "freedom" simply is having a capacity for "active" as opposed to "passive" affirmation. See also *E*2p49s, where Spinoza collapses distinctions of identity between "will", "desire", and "affirmation".)

[15] See the preface to Part 3 of the *Ethics*.

[16] See *E*3p55s, *E*3def.em.27, and *E*4app13.

[17] See Keith GREEN, "Spinoza on Affirmation, *Anima*, and Autonomy: 'Shattered Spirits'," in *Spinoza and Relational Autonomy: Being with Others*, ed. A Armstrong, Keith Green, and Andrea Sangiacomo (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 187, esp. on Spinoza's example of the Spanish poet in *E*4p39s. See Spinoza's summary description of how it is that one can think "too meanly of oneself" by looking to the "opinions" of others in *E*3def.em.28expl. "pride".

[18] See *E*4p58.

agreement for another. Or as Spinoza puts it in the definitions of affects: "the immoderate desire of glory (*gloria*)" (*E*2def.em.44; E/C, 219). And particularly pertinent to the matter of envy, he adumbrates his initial definition of *ambitio* (in *E*3p31s) to claim that it "striving to bring it about that others should approve one's love and hate." Steinberg notes that Spinoza treats pride and *amibitio* as more or less interchangeable in the *Ethics*; and that *ambitio* is desire for the esteem of others that is not gratified, where pride is joy resulting from the gratification of desire for others" esteem, especially reveling in that esteem.[19] In this condition, envy is perhaps as inevitable as it is pervasive, and it is foundational for intolerance because it becomes implicated in affective responses to others" agreement or disagreement.

Spinoza's account of envy makes one connection that is *not* anticipated by scholastic accounts such as Aquinas, or in the functional account of Descartes; this is its implication with emulation, which Spinoza defines (in *E*3def.em.33) as "that desire of an object that is generated in us by our imagining that others have the same desire." In his explication, Spinoza comments that though it is "customary" to apply the epithet "emulator" to one who imitates what is "honorable useful, or agreeable", emulation simply is an instance of imitation of the affects. [Spinoza cites *E*3p27: "When we imagine another, whom we assume or imagine is 'like ourselves', to be affected with an emotion, even if we are otherwise indifferent to them, we will 'imitate' their emotion."] Emulation is, then, the extension of the phenomenon of imitation from passive affects to desire. Spinoza claims that it is "frequently united with" envy for the following reason:

> We see, therefore, that the nature of men is generally so constituted that they pity those who suffer, they envy those who enjoy, and by the preceding proposition [*E*3p31] they do this with the greater hatred the more they love the thing which they imagine to be possessed by another. We see further that the same property of human nature which renders people compassionate also renders them envious and ambitious. (*E*3p32dem; E/C, 186)

The "same property of human nature" whereof Spinoza speaks is imitation of the affects, where the affect that one imitates is "intensified" by others loving, desiring, or hating what one already loves, desires, or hates; and we "fluctuate" if we imagine what we love or desire is hated by another. Notice, however, that in the claim that envy reflects the intensity of one's

[19] STEINBERG, *Spinoza's Political Psychology*, 141.

loves, especially as magnified by imitating others' affects, echoes an insight of Aquinas's analysis of the relationship between love and envy.

Spinoza claims that the affects, are consciousness of one's power or perfection being causally changed.[20] Self-conscious subjects, however, typically have only inadequate or even nonveridical ideas of the causes of one's joy or sorrow, and therefore, of the causes bearing upon one's power.[21] Envy, in this context, is consciousness of a change in one's power where one's typically inadequate idea of the cause is of other individuals' fortune or power. Spinoza's account of envy may seem very far from Aquinas's view that envy is "sinful" (indeed, a "cardinal vice" and "mortal sin") because it is contrary to charity—love of one's neighbor. Spinoza, however, reprises a critical element of Aquinas's broader psychology of envy—that one's being prone to envy is a function of loves that do not "track" one's "true advantage", the causal sources of one's *conative* power to persevere and flourish as a finite individual. We will see that it is this feature of envy that most lends it to distortion in the context of superstition.

2. ENVY IN THE CONTEXT OF SUPERSTITION

In the *Ethics*, Spinoza represents envy as a critical affective motivation for intolerance in the context of "superstition". Superstition, as Spinoza delineates it, arises within the framework of a prophetic "parable", through which prophets communicate "the means to salvation", revealed in "a human fashion" to them and their hearers by way of imagination. The "parable" functions as a guide to "salvation" for "the many" who lack extensive causal knowledge of Nature (including human natures) or a rational capacity to form adequate ideas of the real causes of their joys and sorrows, and thus, of their "true advantage". It functions, in particular, to bind individuals with inadequate and unphilosophical conceptions of God, or of their genuine advantage, into moral normativity which, in fact, secures their advantage in bringing about a condition of peace in the face of unyielding and potentially destructive affects (including especially hatred and desire). In a letter

[20] Most explicitly in the appendix to Part 3 of the *Ethics*.

[21] On how Spinoza thinks it is possible to have nonveridical ideas (or "no idea") of the causes of one's affects, see *E*3p15, especially the scholium, and *E*3p30, where Spinoza addresses reflexive affects which are forms of love and hate because they actually have "external" causes, but where the subject of the affect has an idea of the cause as "internal".

to Blijenbergh, Spinoza describes the function of the "parable", but in a way that also reveals why it is also the foundation of superstition:

> I say that Scripture, being particularly adapted to the needs of the common people, continually speaks in merely human fashion, for the common people are incapable of understanding higher things. That is why I think all that God has revealed to the Prophets as necessary for salvation is set down in the form of law, and in this way, *the Prophets made up a whole parable depicting God as a king and lawgiver*, because he had revealed the means that lead to salvation and perdition, and was the cause thereof. These means, which are simply causes, they called laws, and wrote them down in the form of laws; salvation and perdition, which are simply effects necessarily following (resulting) from these means, they represented as rewards and punishment. All their words were adjusted *to the framework of the parable rather than to truth*. (Letter 19 to Willem Blijenbergh, dated 5 January 1665; Sh, 809–10; italics mine)

God is conceived in the imaginations of prophets "in human form", as a king and lawgiver, "sometimes angry, sometimes merciful", looking to the future, jealous, suspicious, even deceived by the Devil. Images of God as a "personal agent" are, however, warranted only within the framework of the prophetic "parable", and only insofar as "the works" these images enjoin motivate individuals to seek justice and loving-kindness or love of one's neighbor.[22] And prophetic texts that communicate and deploy the parable are only appropriately interpreted—"the adjustment of words"—with reference only to other texts that iterate "the parable", and only to the end of enjoining obedience.[23]

[22] See *TTP* 14[25]–[28], C 2. Daniel Garber also recognizes that Spinoza does not wholly reject appeals to anthropomorphized images of God, insofar as seeing God in those terms enjoins love of one's neighbor, and a commitment to do justice, see his "Anthropomorphism, Teleology and Superstition: The Politics of Obedience in Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus*," in *Spinoza in Twenty-First-Century American and French Philosophy: Metaphysics, Philosophy of Mind, Moral and Political Philosophy*, edited by Jack Stetter and Charles Ramond (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 305ff.

[23] If the inclusion of history within Spinoza's conception of the scope of philosophical understanding needs textual justification, see his argument for the need of a "natural history" of the texts of the Bible, their canonization, and their uses (in virtue of which they are "sacred") over time. *TTP* 7[7-8], G 3:98, C 2:171). The significance and implications of this claim are better realized in reference to Spinoza's claim that humans do not constitute a "kingdom within a kingdom" but are "part of nature", and do everything they do "from the necessity of their natures" and never through any exception from the causal nexus of Nature.

Spinoza's controversial interpretation of "the Fall" also well illustrates how Spinoza thinks "the parable" of God as lawgiver and judge should function (to enjoin "obedience" for those who do not know their own "true advantage", and cannot guide their actions in reference to an idea of it). In *E*3p68, Spinoza claims that if human beings were born free, they would form no ideas of good or evil. It follows that God, who has only adequate ideas, and who therefore regards nothing as "evil", does not, and cannot, have an idea of Adam's "eating the forbidden fruit" as *evil*. Spinoza then follows up with an interpretation of Adam's "punishment" that flew in the face of every conventional and confessional interpretation of Adam's fall. What God actually communicated to Adam by means of "natural understanding", was simply that consuming something poisonous causes death. Adam, however, viewing the causal order of "nature" as the purposeful actions of a personal being, and imitating the affects of the animals among whom he lived, experienced the causal result of eating the fruit (death) not simply as a causal effect, but as a punishment for disobedience.[24]

Spinoza claims, however, that the "means to salvation" is simply, and in reality, a knowledge of perfectly "natural" efficient causes (adequate ideas in the attribute of thought) that effectually bear upon human power and perfection, thus, upon joy (which is a consciousness of one's perfection).[25] These "means" are, however, communicated ("called" and "written down") and transmitted as "laws" by the prophets for those who cannot know what truly redounds to their genuine advantage and joy. The prophets, who had in mind the good of the many, not only communicated the means of salvation in the form of "laws", they "strongly commended" humility, penitence, and reverence because those who are "liable to these emotions" can be led more easily than others "ultimately to live in accord with reason" through *obedience* to law (reiterated in *E*4p54s). [26]

In a late letter (Letter 73 to Henry Oldenburg [dated 1675]; Sh, 942–43), Spinoza claims that Christians "turn their faith, true as it may be, into superstition, by "(resting) their case simply on miracles, this is, on ignorance, which is the source of all wickedness." The explanation for this "turn" to superstition rests in an inversion in ideas of the causal order of Nature—an

[24] See, for example, Letters 18 and 20 from Blijenbergh (Sh, 820).

[25] For Spinoza's "immanent" conception of salvation as *acquiescentia*, see Donald RUTHERFORD, "Salvation as a State of Mind: The Place of *Acquiescentia* in Spinoza's *Ethics*," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 7, no. 3 (1999): 447–73.

[26] See GARBER, "Anthropomorphism," 304, on Spinoza's view of the nature of obedience, and the implicit contrast between obedience and the love of God, in a philosophical sense. See *TTP* 17[5] (G 3:202, C 2:207) for Spinoza's comment on what constitutes obedience.

inversion that Spinoza describes in the appendix to Part I of the *Ethics* as "prejudices". "(P)eople commonly suppose all natural things to act, as they themselves do, for the sake of an end, and even regard it as certain that God himself directs everything to an end (for they say that God made everything for the sake of man, and man that he might worship God)." Spinoza goes on to claim that the "prejudice" to interpret Nature as purposeful "has given rise to the prejudices concerning *good* and *evil*, *merit* and *sin*, *praise* and *blame*, *order* and *confusion*, and *beauty* and *deformity*" (*E*1 appendix, G 2:77–78; E/C, 104–5). Seen through the lens of this inversion, individuals, like Adam, conceive joy as reward and sadness as recompense or punishment; and so "buy into" the prophetic parable that laws they are compelled to obey have been commanded by God, and that many occasions of suffering are judgement and punishment by God for disobedience of the law.

Those caught up in "superstition" invoke God's purposive actions (actions with an intention) as an efficient and proximate cause of changes or states in nature (miracles). Yet, the existence and changes of everything in nature, including human beings, all their actions, and the artefacts of their actions, are actually brought about by efficient causes, and so have a "natural history". [27] Within the "view" inverted by "prejudice" (which perhaps Spinoza best explicates in *E*3p51s, among other places), sadness or sorrow resulting from constraints upon, or results of, human actions, especially where human beings are viewed as acting with "free will" (where there are no adequate ideas of the causes of actions but a perception of uncoerced choice), will likely be seen as "intended"—as punishment. Punishment, fear of punishment, and penitence are all, however, forms of sadness. And on Spinoza's view of the affects, they must *all* (and not only punishment) have actual causes "external" to the essential natural "striving" of the individual whose actions they restrain. Those causes are *actually* civil powers" legislating law, and exercising the threat of punishment, but amplified by conjoining of "sadness" to actions regarded as "wrong" (disobedient to laws) and of esteem to "rightful" actions by means of education, custom, and "religion" over time.[28]

[27] Spinoza claims that scripture can only be interpreted with reference to other texts that are "sacred" in virtue of their "usage" in a particular community (*TTP* 7[12]–[14], G 3:99, C 2:172.) But even sacred texts must, as products or effects of human activity and use, have a "natural history". Where the sources and canonization of Biblical texts, their origins, canonization, and "use" as "Sacred" texts are understood through the framework of a "natural history", however, this "natural history" appears to the superstitious as a dangerous skepticism or outright rejection of their confessional obligations.

[28] See, in particular, the *explication* of *E*3def.em.27 (*pœnitentia* is conventionally translated as "repentance", but more aptly rendered "penitence", reserving "repentance" for acts of repenting).

On Spinoza's view, laws can only actually derive their binding force (or normative power) through an entirely "human", and so "natural" history—being legislated by sovereign powers, but given normative salience through "custom" and "religion".[29] But "the parable" of a personal God who legislates, judges, and punishes, conceals and mystifies the "natural history" of "moral normativity"—the sense of being "bound" by duty or obligation in assenting to ideas of "right", "wrong", "honorable", "dishonorable", and of imputations of vice or virtue.

How Spinoza sees being caught up in the normative affective grip of the "parable" as a condition of mind that "sets one up" for envy, is perhaps best illustrated in a letter to Jacob Olstens dated February 1671. Spinoza responds to Ostens' report of criticisms of his anonymously circulated the *Theologico-Political Treatise* by Lambert Velthausen, who accused Spinoza of dissembling his atheism, and "renouncing religion (*per se*) to avoid the accusation of superstition". To Spinoza, the criticisms of his views imputed to Velthausen likely echo blasphemy accusations that were used to persecute others who dissented from the radical Calvinism that was ascendent in Dutch political life in his day, especially figures like Adriaan Koerbagh—who rejected conventional notions of original sin and divine judgement, among other things.[30] Spinoza says of Velthausen:

> (I) think I see in what mud this man is stuck in. He finds nothing in virtue itself, or in understanding, which delights him, and he would prefer to live by the impulse of his affects, if one thing did not stand in the way: he fears punishment. So he abstains from evil actions and obeys the divine commandments, like a slave and with a vacillating heart. For this slavery, he expects God to load him down with gifts far more pleasant to him than the love of God. And he expects this all the more, the more he resists the good he does and the more unwillingly he does it. As a result, he believes that everyone not held back by this fear lives without restraint and casts off all religion. (Letter 42 to Jacob Ostens, dated February 1671; G 4:221b, C 2:385)

[29] In the *TTP*, Spinoza seeks to demonstrate how Moses' formation of the "Hebrew state" though deploying the idea laws that he "laid down" were enjoined ("miraculously", one might note) by God, and submission was to God, where submission made equal those who submitted. See *TTP* 17[27], [33], [87] (G 3:205, 216; C 2:301, 303, 315). Note, there, that being under the law, and in addition, its all-encompassing ritual requirements, created a sense of national distinctiveness, and a deep and intractable hatred of others. See *TTP* 17 [81]–[82], G 3:215, C 2:314.

[30] See STEINBERG, *Spinoza's Political Psychology*, 130–34.

When we place this "diagnosis" of Velthausen's objections to the *TTP* alongside Spinoza's account of the affective character of envy, and of "the fall" of Adam, in the *Ethics*, we get a broad glimpse of affective sources of envy as a motivation for persecution and intolerance.

Spinoza represents the penitent and humble as set up to envy those who are not evidently "held back" by "fear of God" (God's judgement and punishment), and who *appear to them* to live "without restraint" and to "cast off all religion".[31] Recall that Spinoza has defined envy (in *E*3def.em.23) as "hate insofar as it so affects a man that he is saddened by another's happiness and, conversely, glad at his ill fortune". In a clear break with scholastic moral psychologists like Aquinas, and with Descartes' functional account of hate, Spinoza claims, flatly and without qualification, that hate is *never* good. But Spinoza claims that envy *just is* hate: sadness conjoined to an idea of a cause, in this case, other's enjoyment of a good. In the *scholium* of *E*4p45, where Spinoza makes this claim about hatred, and by implication, all affects that are "related" to hate, or arise from it—"Envy, Mockery, Disdain, Anger, Vengeance, and the rest"—he goes so far as to claim that they are, *without qualification*, evil. In a remark that singles out envy, he states:

> (N)o deity, nor anyone else, *unless he is envious*, takes pleasure in my lack of power and my misfortune; nor does he ascribe to virtue tears, sighs, fear, and other things of that kind, which are signs of a weak mind *(animi impotentis*). On the contrary, the greater the Joy with which we are affected, the greater the perfection to which we pass, i.e. the more we must participate in divine nature. To use things, therefore, and take pleasure in them as far as possible—not, of course, to the point that we are disgusted with them, or there is no pleasure (joy) in that—this is the part of a wise man. (E4p45s, G 2:244, C 1:572; italics mine)

The rhetoric of Spinoza's afrgument is as compelling as its logic. No theist or theologian, of any sect whatever who affirms the perfection of God, would ever claim that God was envious. (Spinoza must have been aware of Biblical texts that describe God as a "jealous" God [Exodus 20:5–6].) Since

[31] Since some religious dissenters contemporary with Spinoza—Adriaan Koerbagh is just one example, who denied the existence of heaven and hell (see Adriaan KOERBAGH, *A Light Shining in Dark Places*, Brill Studies in Intellectual History 207/12, trans. Michael Wielema [Boston: Brill, 2011], 320–55) repudiated ritualized expressions of penitence or repentance, notions of divine judgement as eternal damnation, or Socinian rejections of the idea that Jesus's death was a final sacrifice that atoned, or "made satisfaction" for, the sins of humans (see the Racovian Catechism, "Refutation of the Vulgar Doctrine about the Satisfaction of Christ for our Sins"), Spinoza's claim here has implications for motivations for intolerance of confessional dissent.

Spinoza argues, however, that since God is perfect, God (unlike the so-called "teachers of virtue") cannot—from the necessity of God's nature—take pleasure in the penitential sorrow of repentant sinners. The envious, who take pleasure in the sorrow and penitence of others need to *see* repentance expressed. Where they do not see it, especially where the "sinners" actions are seen through the lens of free will, hatred is intensified. To the degree that one desires goods which only fear of punishment and penitence restrains one from enjoying, one finds painful (or regards with sorrow) others' apparently unrestrained enjoyment of those goods. And, through association, the penitents' ideas of the cause of their sorrow becomes nonveridical—the "wrongs" committed by other, especially nonrepentant sinners or wrongdoers, rather than the threat of punishment that secures one's own restraint.[32] The fear of punishment is, however, literally encountered as a restraint, and is the only sort of restraint one can recognize *as such*.

In the context of superstition, Spinoza argues, subjects are motivated to "do good in order to avoid evil"—i.e. subjects for whom moral normativity is a matter of being bound up within a network of hateful affects. For these subjects, blame and liability to blame (including shame and fear of shame) have motivational salience in securing subjects" following "moral" rules, and fulfilling duties and obligations. A whole economy of practices to enjoin penitence and ritualize repentance emerge as ways of "producing" and signifying obedience, and to keep vacillating subjects "in line". These penitential practices are, then, recognized as constituting "piety", and they effect the "binding" or "enslaving" of the affective web of normativity.

> The superstitious who know how to reprobate vice rather than to teach virtue, and who endeavour to lead people to reason but so restrain them by fear that they rather shun evil than love virtue, aim at nothing but to make others as miserable as themselves. (*E*4p53s1, G 2:249; E/C, 271)

> But those who know how to *find fault* [*exprobrare*] with men, to *castigate vices* rather than teach virtues, and to *break men's minds* rather than strengthen them—they are burdensome [Eliot translates as "injurious"] both to themselves and to others. That is why many, from too great an impatience of mind [*animi impatientia*], and a false zeal for religion, have preferred to live among the lower animals, rather than among men. (*E*4app13, G 2:269–70, C 1:589–90; italics mine)

[32] To see how Spinoza accounts for having "no idea" of the causes of one's affect (Spinoza meaning "no idea" in the *de re* sense)—i.e. an inadequate or nonveridical idea, see especially *E*3p15s.

Spinoza's choice of words here bears particular attention. "(B)reak(ing) their spirits or minds" connotes punishment in the civil and religious world of Spinoza; and what these words connote is well be illustrated by educational advice from another contemporary of Spinoza's who was much more sympathetic to the Calvinism of Spinoza's critics: John Locke (and who, unlike Spinoza, embraced more of his fellow Calvinists' interpretation of "the Fall"):[33]

> A prudent and kind mother, of my acquaintance, was, on such an occasion, forced to whip her little daughter at her first coming home from Nurse, eight times successively the same morning, before she could master her stubbornness, and obtain a compliance in a very easy and indifferent manner. If she had left off sooner, and stopped at the seventh whipping, she had spoilt the child forever, and, by her unprevailing blows, only confirmed her refractoriness, very hardly afterward to be cured; but wisely persisting, "*til she had bent her mind, and supled her will, the only end of correction and chastisement*, she established her authority thoroughly in the first occasion, and had ever after a very ready compliance and obedience in all things from her daughter (italics mine).[34]

Spinoza (in notable contrast to Locke) *contrasts* "strengthening men's minds" and "teaching virtue" to "breaking" or "shattering their spirits". "Knowing how to finding fault" and "castigating vices" are already forms of injury, both to the one who "castigates" and to the object of their rebuke. Spinoza sees them as an expression of "impatience of mind" and "false zeal for religion", which he describes as "living among the beasts". Here, Spinoza deploys an image of Adam that he also deploys in his account of "the Fall" (in *E*4p68s).[35] Those who are inclined to blame others, and punish

[33] See John LOCKE's *Two Treatises on Government*, bk. 1, chap. 5, § 44, "Of Adam's Title to Sovereignty by the Subjection of Eve". § 46 in the same document invites the speculation that it might be a repudiation of Spinoza's argument that the prophets, who themselves were generally educated men with a bent for philosophical reflection, to variously adapting their speech to their common or vulgar level of understanding of their audience.

[34] John LOCKE, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, § 78. I owe reference to this comment of Locke's to Emma Barettoni.

[35] One might note that in the "yahwist" creation narrative of Genesis 2:4b–9, 15–25 (v. 20ff.), YWHW brings "all cattle", "birds of the air" and all "animals of the field" before Adam (the man made of earth), who names them, but finds among them no "helper as his partner". And Eve is created from Adam's rib as a consequence. So in claiming that those who, "from too great an impatience of mind, and a false zeal for religion" "preferred to live among the lower animals/ beasts", Spinoza is implying that they reject the ideal of companionship represented in Adam's fellowship with Eve, which, before her succumbing to temptation and subsequent disobedience

them so as to "break their spirits", are doing just what Spinoza has interpreted Adam as doing in seeing his subjection to death from eating the plant as a punishment—*choosing* to "live among the beasts" and so *rejecting* "salvation".

In his comment about Velthausen, Spinoza remarks that the envious *see* those who do not appear restrained by fear (of punishment, by implication penitence) as without restraint. It is not that the impenitent are not actually self-restraining, but that their restraint is not visible, because it does not come from fear of punishment and is not expressed through conventional ritualized forms of "repentance". It matters, within the larger framework of Spinoza's ethical thought, that those who are able to live by the guidance of reason are *sui iuris*—they are a "law unto themselves" because their actions are guided by a knowledge of their "true advantage, so by what they genuinely love".[36] They are not restrained from harming others through fear of punishment, even though they will collude with "the judge", in a sort of alliance with civil or sovereign powers who enjoin the law and punish violations of it from love of the good of the community (i.e. piety).[37] Those who can live by the guidance of reason conform their actions to civil law (formally "obeying" it) but without relinquishing their own power.[38] They do not live "under the law", so therefore enjoy the benefits of common life and cooperative human activity, but without fear. According to Spinoza's "immanent" conception of salvation, they are "saved" or "freed" from "bondage" to the law, yet without the risk of harm to others.

Since "love cannot spring from fear", however, obeying laws conceived as God's laws out of fear of punishment cannot constitute genuine "piety" or "religion" and such "slavish" obedience is not at all motivated by a genuine "love of virtue". (See Letter 43 to Ostens [dated ?1671], and Letter 21 to

and subordination to Adam's authority, is a fellowship of equals, even in a long line of essentially Augustinian interpretations of "the Fall".

[36] See *PT* 2 [9], G 3:280, C 2:512.

[37] It is not hatred that makes one an "enemy" of the state, in Spinoza's view, but "living outside the state's power". See *TTP* 16[47], G 3:197, C 2:291.

[38] In *E*4p35dem, Spinoza claims that those who live by the guidance of reason are said only to "act", and so to do so from their own nature. If one acts from one's own nature, one acts from one's own power. So if human beings lived according to the guidance of reason (and so from the necessity of one's own nature) they would live without any injury to each other, but without alienating their own natural right (i.e. from their own power), in contrast to Hobbes. See *E*4p37s2 (G 2:233, 237; C 2:562, 567). See GREEN, "Spinoza on Turning the Other Cheek," 166. See GARBER's "Anthropomorphism," 305, for his argument that those who love their neighbor from the guidance of reason do not, literally speaking, do so from obedience.

Blijenberg [dated 28 January 1665], most clearly in the translation of Shirley, p. 826.) In fact, it is the obedience that Spinoza identifies as "slave" morality in his comment upon Velthausen. Those who, by contrast, genuinely "pursue virtue" do so because they love it as something "precious" in itself. They understand that the "command" given or "revealed" to Adam, as it is "revealed" to us by way of "natural understanding", is simply knowledge that "poison is deadly". So if God can even be spoken of as having "aims", God's "aim" in revealing this truth to Adam was to make Adam "more perfect in knowledge".[39] Those who "love virtue", therefore, never obey like slaves.

Where obedience is only motivated by fear of divine punishment, and by a fear of shame, however, those who obey are apt to envy those who do not *appear* to obey from fear or penitence. In exposing the apparently disobedient to judgement, the envious implicitly "take up the position of judge" themselves, and securing punishment of others satisfies because it redresses their own weakness in comparison with those "lowered" by punishment.[40] Here, superstition becomes a particularly dangerous engine for the formation and expression of envy; yet envy just is hatred itself.

> §31: Superstition, on the contrary, appears to pronounce that good which causes pain, and evil which causes pleasure. But as we have already seen (see *E*4p45s) no one, *unless he is envious*, delights in my weakness or discomfort. For in proportion as we are affected with pleasure, we advance toward greater perfection, and consequently participate more fully in the divine nature; and pleasure can never be evil, so long as it is controlled by a rule of utility. But he who is led by fear, and does good in order to avoid evil, is not under the guidance of reason. (see *E*4p53, *E*4appendix, § 31, G 2:275; E/C, 285)

Envy emerges, and is intensified, within the superstitious framework, because it compensates enjoyments of insecure goods of fortune restrained by fear of punishment or penitence. It also conceals the source of the weakening, of which the sorrow of the penitent is a consciousness, but without an idea (a *de re* idea) of the cause. The cause of the penitent's sorrow or "weakening" (their "servitude") is actually civil (social) power mediated through the threat of punishment; but the penitent's idea of the cause of their "sorrow" or "pain" is of something else—the sin or wrongdoing of the "unrepentant"—a

[39] Letter to Blijenbergh, dated January 1665 (Letter 23), G 4:93–94, C 1:360.

[40] Remember that for Spinoza, punishment is a matter of being "brought low" by the exercise of power, though in accord with civil law, partly for the purpose of securing its ongoing authority. See *TTP* 7[33], G 3:104, C 2:177–78.

displacement accomplished by associations of ideas perpetuated by education, custom, and "religion".[41] Envy, however, moves the penitent to "fight for their own servitude or enslavement" by displacing their idea of the cause of their sorrow or "servitude", and moving them to collude and take pleasure in "weakening" or "bringing low through punishment" those who appear to them to exempt themselves from "servitude". This targets those who do not *appear* to restrain themselves from prohibited goods through recognized expressions of penitence. So within the unrecognized parabolic framework of superstition, envy represents the affective cooptation and collusion of weakly-minded subjects into intolerance of those who defy concealed civil power.

3. ENVY, FORBEARANCE, AND THE LIMITS OF PUNISHMENT

Even though Spinoza's aim is to understand envy as an affect and not as a vice—without any imputation of judgement or blame—he actually reprises Aquinas's insight about the connection between envy and the orientations of love in two critical ways. Spinoza claims that one who is envious is oriented to seeking goods of fortune (possessions, others' esteem for their status—"glory") that not everyone can enjoy without loss to others.[42] We see this most clearly in *E*3p32, where Spinoza claims those who envy do so "with the greater hatred the more they love the thing which they imagine to be possessed by another". It is significant, however, that the goods that Spinoza says genuinely free persons will seek for themselves, as their "true advantage", they will seek for others, and without any loss to themselves (including love of God).[43] Where these goods are loved, there is no scope for envy.

We also saw that Spinoza follows Descartes in reprising Aquinas's insight that inordinate love of others' praise ("gloria" or esteem) motivates envy above all other goods, and so counters "love of neighbor". Spinoza, however, contributes the insights that (i) envy sets individuals up to seek others" agreement with their loves and hatreds (and so, with their *ingenium*)—but without consideration of the degree to which one has adequate ideas of the goods loved, or whether they engender all individuals" "real advantage".

[41] See, again, Spinoza's account of how association of ideas explains having nonveridical ideas (or no *de re* idea) of the cause of ones loves or hatred, see E3p15s. See Moira GATENS et al., "Spinoza: Thoughts on Hope in Our Political Present," *Contemporary Political Theory* 20 (2021): 200–31.

[42] See especially *E*4p36s.

[43] For Spinoza's opinion on the love commands, see *E*4p36s.

And (ii) since envy is actually consciousness of one's own impotence, but only through the lens of comparison with ideas of others" goods or power, it compounds ignorance of the real causes of individuals" weakening or impotence. Envy, then, is implicated in an impulse to disapproval and judging others ("castigating vice"), and to punishing others, even with cruelty. Those who are hated, however, are not actually the causes of weakness or injury of those who hate them with a will to diminish or punish them.

Michael Rosenthal has defined of toleration as "the refusal, where one has the power to do so, to prohibit or seriously interfere with conduct that one finds objectionable".[44] One implication of toleration, then, is that it entails "the refusal, where one has the power to do so, to *prohibit* or *punish* conduct that one (otherwise) finds objectionable."[45] The upshot of Spinoza's argument that if hatred is never good, and that envy *just is* hatred, then even where punishment has *prima facie* justification as a means to engender obedience and security, it should never be motivated by envy. Since the only legitimate deployment of punishment that Spinoza recognizes is to uphold the power of the civil community to secure peace or concord, it can only be warranted when it actually restrains injury to individuals. When it does not actually do so (which requires having adequate ideas of the actual causes of threats and weakening resistance), any other motivation to punish will amount to hatred, because it can only be motivated by hatred. In particular, one should forbear, and never punish (or perhaps even disapprove or "judge") forms of "enjoyment", or confessional (religious) and moral difference or dissent that do not *actually* and demonstrably weaken the security of civil community. Only where wrongdoing cannot be "repelled by generosity" however, must anyone who "loves his neighbor" collude in the state's punishing (and defeating) the wrongdoer.[46]

It matters that Spinoza argues that punishment *just is* "weakening" those who compromise the capacity of sovereign power to secure the peace. In the *Appendix Concerning Metaphysical Thoughts*, he draws an infamous analogy between punishing and killing a venomous snake, implying that the aim of punishment is not retribution, but defence.[47] In *TTP* 7[33], he treats punish-

[44] Michael ROSENTHAL, "Tolerance as a Virtue in Spinoza's Ethics," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 39, no. 4 (2001): 535.

[45] ROSENTHAL, 535.

[46] See GREEN, "Anthropomorphism"; see especially discussion of Spinoza's expansion of the notion of "piety" and of loving one's neighbor in *TTP* 19 (pp. 104–7), and esp. *TTP* 19[25], C 2:337, G 3:232–33).

[47] *Appendix Concerning Metaphysical Thoughts*, chap. 8, G 1:265, C 1:331.

ment as a matter of (i) seeing that each individual citizen or subject is "given his due" according to the civil law; (ii) "upholding justice and the laws of one's country"; and (iii) "preventing the wicked from rejoicing in their wickedness." It engenders obedience to laws by means of fear of punishment where obedience is insufficiently motivated by hope.[48] Punishment must, therefore, not only weaken the wrongdoer, but cause him to anticipate being "lowered", and so move him to obey the laws of the state by avoiding an "evil".[49] (iii) It is critical that Spinoza specifies that punishment also countervails wrongdoers "rejoicing" in their wrongs. Rejoicing (*laetitia* 'joy') is, after all, consciousness of one's striving or power being increased; and for the wicked to be conscious of being empowered through their disobedience makes them all the more dangerous.

A critical upshot of Spinoza's remarks on punishment, however, is that civil judgement and punishment must never express hatred for wrongdoers, or by implication, take pleasure in making them "miserable". A judge should never be moved to punish a wrongdoer by hatred or indignation, even when civil law stipulates the imposition of lethal punishment.

> Indignation, as defined by us [see def. 20 of emotions] is necessarily evil [by E4p45]. But it must be noted that when the state punishes the citizen who does an injury to another, I do not call this indignation against the citizen, since the state is not impelled by hatred to ruin the citizen, but actuated by duty [Curley translates as "piety"] to punish him. (*E*4p51s, G 2:248; E/C, 263)

Spinoza goes on to claim that though indignation seems to "bear an outward show of equity" it amounts to individuals "taking up the position of judgement" that should be reserved to the state. There is no such thing as "righteous" indignation:

> All the other painful emotions which men feel toward each other are directly opposed to justice, equity, honor, piety, and religion, and although indignation seems to carry an appearance of equity, yet in fact, that is a state without a law

[48] Spinoza implies that one who disobeys, and goes unpunished, weakens the power of the state in just the way that sedition weakens it. See *TTP* 16 [25]; G 3:193; C 2:287. Hence he claims in the *TTP* 16 [47]; G 3:197; C 2:291, that the state punishes wrongdoers from the "right of war", securing the peace for those who live under its power or those who make alliance with it.

[49] See Keith GREEN, "Forgiveness, Pardon, and Punishment in Spinoza's Ethical Theory and 'True Religion'," *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 5, no. 1 (2016): 71.

> where each is allowed to judge the actions of another, and vindicate his own right or that of another. (*E*4app24, G 2:272; E/C, 283)

Judges should not only not be motivated to punish wrongdoers by hatred, but should seek to benefit the wrongdoer as much as the one who has suffered a wrong, and who seeks redress of the wrong by means of the law (*Korte Verhandling* 2.18, in *Spinoza opera*).

> Indignation, as we have defined it [*E*3def20: hatred toward one who has injured another], is necessarily evil (*E*4p45). But it should be noted that when the sovereign power, through its duty to safeguard peace, punishes a citizen who has injured another, I am not saying that it is indignant with the citizen. It punishes him not because it is stirred by hatred to destroy the citizen, but from a sense of duty [*pietate*]. (*E*4p51s, G 2:248, C 1:575)

Spinoza argues, however, that "it is permissible for us to avert, in the way that seems safest," whatever we judge to be *"able to prevent us from being able to exist and to enjoy a rational life*" (*E*4app8, C 1:589, G 2:268; italics mine).

Even though Spinoza countenances no "transcendent" retributive rule of justice "above" civil law to determine when punishment is "deserved" or "proportional" to an offence, there is only a *reason* for punishment if it *actually* serves the end of "enabling us to exist and enjoy a rational life". To that end, it must be specified in civil law, and judgement reserved for civil power.

Since punishment involves aiming to weaken or destroy the other—the definitive motivational uptake of hatred—the only other motivation punishment could possibly have where it does not demonstrably redress genuine injury to individuals, would be hatred. Since envy, by definition, enjoys the misery of others, any punishment motivated by envy, which Spinoza has argued *just is* hatred, is implicated in intolerance.

Other interpreters of Spinoza's view of toleration have focused on his arguments for toleration of religious difference and degrees of political dissent; and they have noted Spinoza's arguments that punishing confessional nonconformity or reasoned dissent does not strengthen, but actually weakens, the state's power to promote its legitimate *raison d'etre* to secure the peace. I wish to redirect focus, however, on forms of "moral" difference—punishing what appears to the envious to be mere "enjoyments"—since such cases were the focus where Spinoza argues explicitly in the *Ethics* that hatred is never good, and where he counsels forbearance. It is important to keep in mind that Spinoza claims that Joy (or *laetitia* 'pleasure') as such is

"good", insofar as it is consciousness of (or "tracks") one's perfection being strengthened. Enjoyments, then, are not necessarily mere "entertainments" or diversions, but where they are noninjurious, are actually consciousness of one's perfection being animated. Where enjoyment of anything is "guided by reason" (according to a rule of "utility" or mindful of one's "genuine advantage"), Spinoza flatly claims that it "can never be evil". Through the experience of joy, one "even" participates more fully in the divine nature. We should take note that it is in the *scholium* of the very proposition where Spinoza argues that hatred can never be good, that he compares seeking reasonable enjoyment to "rid ourselves of melancholy" to seeking food and drink to assuage hunger and thirst. The forms of enjoyment with which Spinoza claims the practically wise person will seek to "refresh himself"—"pleasant food and drink, with scents, with the beauty of green plants, with decoration, music, sports, the theatre, and things of that kind"—are, he claims, those *which anyone can enjoy without injury to another*" (*E*4p45s, italics mine).

Yet the very forms of enjoyment that Spinoza thinks "the wise" will seek to "rid oneself of melancholy" are among the very enjoyments condemned by many of Spinoza's "pious" interlocutors and critics (who, by contrast, "commend tears and sobs"). They were ever keen to prohibit and punish these enjoyments. This is especially true of the orthodox Dutch Calvinists who believed that it was the duty of the state to enjoin God's law. Spinoza sees, however, that where anyone can enjoy a good "without injury to another", superstition is critically implicated in motivating envy of those who embraced these sorts of enjoyments without apparent restrain from fear of divine punishment or repentance. The superstitiously envious are primarily those who see those who are not "miserable" as themselves (i.e. not visibly engaged in penitential self-restraint), as *living without restraint*; and this yields the motivation to punish where punishment yields no real protection from injury. We should note, in this connection, Spinoza's comments from the late *Political Treatise* criticizing "sumptuary laws" that can be violated without injuring anyone (at least other than the person who acts).[50] One sense in which Spinoza does prefigure later modern liberalisms is in the notion that one should limit legal prohibition and punishment to deeds or actions that produce demonstrable harm to other individuals—anything that genuinely impedes "*being able to (continue to) exist and to enjoy a rational life*".

Rosenthal endorses his definition of toleration as aiming to "capture the central tension between disapproving some conduct and yet allowing it to

[50] *PT* 10[5], G 3:355–56, C 2:599.

continue that we find in the etymology of the word itself, which comes from the Latin *tolerare*, which means to bear or endure".[51] His adumbration, however, notes a "central tension" because it assumes that disapproval might extend *with justification* beyond the scope of warranted punishment. In *E*4app13, in the very context where Spinoza associates blame and envy with the will to "break others' spirits" through punishment, Spinoza commends a posture of forbearance that he associates with the "rule of reason" but contrasts to the inclination to blame, and by implication, "disapproval":

> But skill and alertness are required for this. For men vary—there being few who live according to the rule of reason—and *yet generally they are envious*, and more inclined to vengeance than to Compassion. So it requires a singular power of mind (*singularis animi potentiæ*) to bear with each according to his understanding (*ex ipsius ingenio*), and to restrain oneself from imitating their affects. (*E*4app13, G 2:269–70, C 1:589–90).

We noted that Spinoza associates envy, in this argument, with motivations to "finding fault" (taking up the position of "judge") and "castigating vice", as well as seeking to "break men's spirits" from an inclination to vengeance (rather than to compassion). Spinoza implies, here, that disapproval bespeaks lacking the "singular power of mind" to bear with others according to their *ingenium* or temperament. We should see, however, that "lacking" this "power of mind" also results in having no adequate ideas of the actual causes of the pain or sadness that one takes in others" enjoyment of noninjurious goods. So envy represents the displacement of resistance to the real causes of individuals" weakness or impotence, of which the envious "have an idea" as the enjoyments of others, or the goods they enjoy. It follows that colluding in the punishment of those one envies (for their enjoyment of goods that are not genuinely injurious) amounts to "fighting for one's own servitude".

Spinoza clearly associates taking up a posture of forbearance with his commitment to view the affects on the model of geometric reasoning, without imputations of blame or vice in many places, but as a desideratum of his aims, most clearly a letter to Oldenburg.

> For I do not think it right of me to mock nature, much less to lament it, when I reflect that men, like all other things, are only part of nature, and that I do not know how each part agrees with the whole, to which it belongs, and how it co-

[51] ROSENTHAL, "Tolerance," 535.

> heres with the other parts. And I find, simply from the lack of this knowledge, that certain things in nature, which I perceive in part and only in a mutilated way, and which do not agree at all with our philosophic mind, previously seemed to me to be vain, disorderly, and absurd, whereas now I permit each to live according to his own mentality. (Letter 30 fragment, to Oldenburg, dated 1665, G 4:165–66, C 2:14).

It follows, then, that having a capacity to forbear others—"to bear with each according to his understanding"—is a posture that has both individual ("private") and political ("public") implications for toleration. Goods sought and enjoyed by others only "injure" when they genuinely impede individuals being able to *(continue to) exist and to enjoy a rational life*. And "enjoying" a "rational life" would consist in being able to take pleasure in the strengthening of one's powers of reason and knowledge-seeing, and of other goods to the aim of sustaining strength of body and mind (dispelling melancholy).

Spinoza criticized the deployment of punishment to suppress religious confessional nonconformity and political dissent, as well as "sumptuary" enjoyments. In our changed context, we can, perhaps, best appreciate the relevance and implications of his view if we consider as examples other forms of nonconformity which invite calls for prohibition and punishment—in our time, and in many places, this prominently includes conventional gender nonconformity, sexual identity difference, same-sex sexuality, and same-gender marriage. It is also noteworthy that those who call for the legal suppression or punishment of gender nonconformity, and for punishing same-gender sexual expression and denying marriage rights, often view them as essentially and merely "sumptuary"—mere "pleasures" or "enjoyments" unconnected to "*being able to (continue to) exist and enjoy a rational life*".

We should also note that it is typically upon religious grounds—claims about God's creating humans as conventionally gendered simply in virtue of having bodies with specific visual features or reproductive capacities examples—or taking Biblical injunctions as divine commands—that inform calls for suppressing and punishing gender nonconformity and same-sex sexual relationships and marriage recognition. In light of Spinoza's concern with envy as a driver of the will to punish, we are reasonably led to question whether his diagnosis of religious and political intolerance extends to cases like intolerance of gender and sexual-desire–orientational difference. Are these cases that Spinoza did not evidently anticipate "test cases" for the continuing relevance and critical power of his diagnosis of intolerance, and the implication of envy in it? I end with this question.

CONCLUSION

I have focused upon Spinoza's concern with the implications of envy amplified by "superstition" as a "driver" of intolerance, especially in the context of "moral" disagreement and difference. Spinoza's contribution to the "moral psychology" of envy is to see that it *just is* hatred, as he had defined hatred—a case of sadness or pain without an adequate idea of its genuine cause. This is why Spinoza, in contrast to Aquinas and Descartes, offers a "double" definition of envy. Envy is *both* sorrowing or sadness conjoined to an idea of another's good; it is also joy conjoined to an idea of the other's being weakened or destroyed (however caused). Envy *just is* hatred itself. As such, Spinoza sees envy as a pathology of the affects—and as an unqualified "evil"—rather than a "sin" or vice for which one deserves blame or rebuke. What sets envy apart, as an affect in the environment (or "attribute") of thought, is that the envious subject forms ideas of others" good or power relative to one's own. It necessarily entails "comparison". For the envious, sadness is conjoined to an idea of another as enjoying some good denied to one that both cannot possess without loss to the other. So one is conscious of one's being "strengthened", relative to the other individual, only through an idea of the other being weakened—an idea that is necessarily conjoined to joy or pleasure. And one is conscious of one's denial of a good enjoyed by another necessarily as sadness or sorrowful. So "striving" to increase one's own power or perfection, relative to the other, will always take the form of enjoying or desiring and participating in the diminishing of another's esteem, or seeking the esteem of others, as such. We saw that it is for this reason that envy drives both ambition and pride. And when envy is not gratified by the esteem of others, it becomes even more intensified and intractable hate.

Spinoza saw that envy is amplified by "superstition". The "superstitious" are bound into obedience to law by means of a "parable"—the idea that the laws that one is obligated to obey were commanded by a "personal" God who will judge and punish the disobedient. The "parable" amplifies and legitimates sovereign power, and the means by which it secures obedience to its laws—especially by subjecting the disobedient to punishment. Where a subject loves and desires goods that one can only possess to the exclusion of others—possessions or others' esteem—the threat of punishment will be experienced as an impediment to one's enjoyment. And the self-punishing penitent is particularly set up to envy those who appear disobedient and ungrateful,

and to take satisfaction in "bowing" apparently disobedient "sinners" by way of punishment. Here, however, it is important to see that Spinoza reprises another insight from Aquinas—that envy is a pathology of misdirected loves—for Spinoza, love of goods that one can enjoy only to the exclusion of others, and of goods that do not actually empower one *to continue to exist over time and to enjoy a rational life*, envy drives not only seeking and taking pleasure in the esteem of others, but also taking pleasure in the misery of the "unrestrained".

Other interpreters of Spinoza's account of the affective sources of intolerance are surely not wrong to point to the role of ambition—seeking others' "agreement" with one's own loves and hates, or with one's *ingenium*. In terms of Spinoza's "naturalizing" account of the affects, however, it is envy that drives the unrelenting comparison of "self" with others—something Spinoza says the "penitent" and self-depreciating are particularly prone to do in the context of superstition. And it is especially here that envy drives ambition, and thus intolerance, especially of moral disagreement and difference. And yet, Spinoza apparently thinks that those who love goods that one can enjoy without the exclusion of others, including the love of "virtue"— will have no motivation to envy. They will be able to enter into friendship with others without imitating their hateful affects, and to "ward off" the hatred of others through generosity. And the reason is that the true "lovers of virtue" (or of whatever it is that enables humans *to continue to exist and to enjoy a rational life* together) will not be pained by others' enjoyment of the same goods, and will not (therefore) take pleasure in seeing the spirits of others being "broken" either through punishment, censure, or nature taking its inexorable causal course.

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SPINOZA ON ENVY AND THE PROBLEM OF INTOLERANCE

Summary

In this paper, I examine Spinoza's account of envy (*invidia*) with specific attention to his consistent remarks about envy in the context of "superstition"—how "superstition" amplifies envy as an affect, that along with fear and ambition, motivates intolerance. Spinoza counterposes his methodological commitment to view the affects, on a "geometric" model, to Aristotelian and scholastic accounts, and to Descartes' *Passions of the Soul*. But they inform his account of the relationship between envy, esteem (*gloria*), pride (*superbia*), self-depreciation (*abjection*), and ambition (*ambitio*). Spinoza argues that envy just is a form of hate, it encompasses both sadness at another's good, but joy at others' misfortune, and he regards it as evil, even though he refuses to describe it as a vice. Within his methodological framework, it is a consciousness of weakness with an idea of others' good as the cause. This accounts for its amplification by "superstition", and its role in motivating ambition and intolerance. I focus, in particular, on the implications of Spinoza's discussion for tolerance of moral disagreement and difference.

Keywords: envy; hate; superstition; intolerance; affects

SPINOZA O ZAZDROŚCI I PROBLEMIE NIETOLERANCJI

Streszczenie

W niniejszym artykule analizuję opis zazdrości u Spinozy (łac. *invidia*), zwracając szczególną uwagę na jego konsekwentne uwagi na temat zazdrości w kontekście „przesądu" — w jaki sposób „przesąd" wzmacnia zazdrość jako afekt, który wraz ze strachem i ambicją motywuje nietolerancję. Spinoza przeciwstawia swoje metodologiczne zobowiązanie do traktowania afektów w ramach modelu „geometrycznego" opisom arystotelesowskim i scholastycznym, a także *Namiętnościom duszy* Kartezjusza. Stanowią one jednak podstawę jego opisu związku między zazdrością, szacunkiem (*gloria*), dumą (*superbia*), samoponiżeniem (*abjection*) i ambicją (*ambitio*). Spinoza argumentuje, że zazdrość jest po prostu formą nienawiści, obejmuje zarówno smutek z powodu dobra innych, jak i radość z powodu nieszczęścia innych, i uważa ją za zło, chociaż odmawia zaliczenia jej do wad. W jego ramach metodologicznych jest to świadomość słabości z ideą dobra innych jako przyczyny. Wyjaśnia to wzmacnianie jej przez „przesąd" i jej rolę w motywowaniu ambicji i nietolerancji. Skupiam się w szczególności na implikacjach dyskusji Spinozy dla tolerancji moralnej niezgody i różnicy.

Słowa kluczowe: zazdrość; nienawiść; przesąd; nietolerancja; afekty