

LSU PHIL 2035, Spring 2015

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One page review sheet on Spinoza.

Using concepts from each Part of the *Ethics*, describe what Spinoza means by "freedom."

PART 1: God = Nature, the power of producing continually differing events: everything that happens is just God, or nature, changing itself. All things happen necessarily so neither you nor God / Nature have free will! (Ip32c1). Thinking you have free will, and projecting this onto God, is a terrible superstition that sets you up for exploitation by priests and tyrants and condemns you to a life of miserable "bondage" to "sad affects." The *Ethics* will explain how you can free yourself from that bondage.

PART 2: P7: Parallelism: a thought and a body are the same event, the same way God / nature expresses his essence in different attributes. Bodies are ways God / nature modifies itself in extension and minds are ways God / nature modifies itself in thought, and these are exactly parallel: they are the same event in different attributes. The mind is the active grasp of the state of the body. A body hangs together through a range of encounters that it can master – if it can't master the encounter it fails to repeat its structure: it falls apart. As we're in very complex causal webs, we find ourselves in the *first form* of knowledge or *imagination*, which is composed of *inadequate ideas*. That is, we are grasping the state of our body as it is changing under the influence of other bodies. Here we *imagine* what the cause of our changing body is by pinning that change to an outside object. The *second form* of knowledge is *rational knowledge of adequate ideas*. That means that we can work our way up from common notions – that which is in common in our encounters – to figure out the laws of nature as they unfold in parallel in extension and thought.

PART 3: A passive emotion occurs when things happen to us that change our bodies as we undergo encounters in the causal web and an active emotion occurs when we do something from our own nature, from our own power of acting. Joy or "uplift" is the feeling of the increase of power, and sadness or "downfall" is the feeling of decrease of power.

PART 4: we can learn how to disentangle the causal web and isolate the way our nature produces an emotion out of an encounter. Understanding our own emotional reaction patterns allows us to truly judge what will increase our power of action in any one situation.

PART 5: P3-4: we can convert passive emotions to active emotions by gaining adequate ideas of them. That is, if we can untangle the causal web of any one passive emotion – which is the idea or active conceptual grasp of a changing body under the influence of an encounter – we can disentangle what comes from our nature from what comes from the encountered thing. The external event is really just a prompt or stimulus, and the true cause of the emotion is the reaction of your essence or conatus or striving to maintain a characteristic pattern. So understanding your nature's role in the arising of the emotion is an increase in active power or "joy." *Understanding a reaction pattern is not a reaction; it's an action!* See also P10s: if we concentrate on the fact that "men, like everything else, act from the necessity of their nature, then the wrong or the hatred that is wont to arise from it, will occupy just a small part of our imagination and will easily be overcome." "Necessity of their nature" means the causal history that has produced their emotional reactions. So freedom for Spinoza is not freedom *from* causation: it is coming to understand how our actions come from our causal history as that is an expression of God / nature.