

STOIC PSYCHOTHERAPY IN DESCARTES AND SPINOZA¹

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The psychotherapeutic theories of Descartes and Spinoza are heavily influenced by Stoicism. Stoic psychotherapy has two central features. First, we have a remarkable degree of voluntary control over our passions, and we can and should exercise this control to keep ourselves from having any irrational passions at all. Second, the universe is determined by the providential divine will, and in any situation we can and should align ourselves with this divine will in order to achieve equanimity. Whereas Descartes largely endorses the Stoic picture, Spinoza develops a distinctive, intellectualized version of this view.

Although the influence of the Stoic outlook on sixteenth and seventeenth century European culture has been well-documented, it is seldom recalled how, in particular, Stoicism affects the views of the early modern European philosophers.² The works of Descartes and Spinoza supply remarkable illustrations of this impact. Some of the most interesting of these Stoic influences can be found in their writings on therapy for the passions. Both Descartes and Spinoza ground their discussions in the psychotherapeutic theory of the Stoics, and their final views bear the imprint of the Stoic model, although in different respects.

The Stoic theory embraces two controversial claims, each of which gives rise to a therapeutic strategy. The first claim is that we have much more voluntary control over our actions and passions than one might ordinarily suppose, and the associated therapeutic strategy advises that we exercise this control as a means to well-being. The second claim is that the universe is wholly determined by the providential divine will, which is identical with the laws of nature, and the correlated therapeutic proposal recommends that we align our concerns with God's so that we will achieve equanimity even in the most trying of circumstances. Descartes advocates each of these controversial claims and the associated therapeutic strategies. But although Spinoza accepts the Stoics' belief about divine determinism, he rejects their understanding of our voluntary control over the actions and passions. Nevertheless, Spinoza attempts to preserve some of the key intuitions behind each of the two therapeutic strategies, and in this endeavor provides an inventive rethinking of the Stoic conception.



I

A thorough and persuasive account of the first claim is presented by Brad Inwood in his *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*.³ According to the Stoic theory, human action has three main stages. In the first, the possibility of an action is presented to the agent. For example, the possibility of eating a piece of pie might be presented to you by your seeing it on the kitchen table. This stage is called *phantasia*, presentation or impression. Corresponding to a *phantasia* is a *lekton*, a proposition or sayable, for example, *it is fitting for me to eat that piece of pie*, which the agent entertains but does not necessarily endorse when she has a *phantasia*.

In the second stage, *synkatathesis*, assent, comes into play. A mature human agent normally has the power freely and voluntarily to assent to, dissent from, or suspend judgment with regard to the *lekton* corresponding to a *phantasia*. (In the Stoic view, this power is not possessed by animals or by young children.⁴) Its source is the rational, ruling, part of the soul — the *hêgemonikon*. (The other parts of the soul are the five senses, the linguistic part, and the reproductive part). When an agent dissents or suspends judgment with regard to the initial *lekton*, the development of an action ceases. But if the agent assents, the third stage, *hormê*, impulse, results. According to Cleanthes and Chrysippus, the mind is made up a *pneuma*, a composite of air and fire, and *hormê* (which means *setting in motion*) is a forceful motion of this substance that results from assent to a *lekton* as presented by a *phantasia*.⁵ *Hormê* is a psychological (as opposed to physical) component of an action; for instance, the setting of oneself to eat the piece of pie is a *hormê*. Parallel to (and quite clearly causing) the *hormê* is a self-directed judgment, which results from assenting to the *lekton* corresponding to the *phantasia*. In our example, the judgment would be ‘Yes, it is fitting for me to eat that piece of pie,’ and if Inwood is right, the *hormê* is also linked with an imperative like ‘Eat that piece of pie!’⁶

The Stoics’ theory of action is, in part, a subspecies of their theory of judgment. In general, judgment results from the agent’s exercise of its power of assent on the occasion of a *phantasia*. According to Chrysippus, the (normal) function of a *phantasia* is to “reveal itself and its cause” to its recipient, and hence “the word ‘*phantasia*’ is derived from ‘*phôs*,’ [light]; just as light reveals itself and whatever else it includes in its range, so *phantasia* reveals itself and its cause.”⁷ Nevertheless, there are both accurate and misleading *phantasiai*, which the Stoics called *katalêptikê* (literally, capable of grasping (its object)) and *akatalêptos*:⁸

The cataleptic, which they say is the criterion of things, is that which arises from what is and is stamped and impressed exactly in accordance with what is. The acataleptic is either that which does not arise from what is, or from that which is but is not exactly in accordance with what is: one which is not clear and distinct (*mê tranê mêde êtupon*).⁹

A wise person (*sophos*) would refuse assent upon entertaining an acataleptic *phantasia*, and would grant assent only to the cataleptic sort.¹⁰ In the Stoic view, what is distinctive about a *phantasia* that functions as a component of action is that it reveals to the agent something that might motivate her, for example, something that would contribute to her health or well-being. Such a *phantasia* potentially gives rise to *hormê*, and hence it is called *phantasia hormêtike* (hormetic presentation).¹¹ A wise person would refuse assent upon considering a hormetic presentation when, for example, the result would be an action not directed towards the good.

A prominent feature of the Stoic picture is that passions (given a certain specific conception of a passion) are a type of *hormê*, and hence fit into the theory in just the way *hormê* does.¹² Thus for an agent to experience a passion, she must first have an appropriate *phantasia*. She must then assent to a *lekton* as presented by the *phantasia*, perhaps to a *lekton* such as 'it is fitting for me to fear my reputation being ruined by the media.' From assent to such a *lekton* a *hormê* of a special type results, one which is identical with the passion. In the Stoic conception, therefore, passions do not happen to an agent. Rather, whenever an agent has a passion, it has in a sense been chosen by that agent. And accordingly, an agent can avoid struggling against passions altogether, because simply by exercising her power of assent, she can prevent any untoward passion from coming to exist at all.¹³

In the chapter on Zeno of Citium in his *Lives of the Philosophers*, Diogenes Laertius recounts the Stoic classification of the passions.¹⁴ In the classical Stoic view, the word '*pathos*,' (which is standardly but often misleadingly translated as 'passion,') always denotes a state to be avoided, a state upon whose presentation (*phantasia*) one must never assent. Citing treatises by Zeno and Hecato,¹⁵ both entitled *Peri Pathôn*, Diogenes observes that for the Stoics there are four great classes of the *pathê*: craving (*epithumia*), fear (*phobos*), pleasure (*hêdonê*), and distress (*lupê*). Each of these types of *pathos* is irrational (*alogos*). Craving is irrational appetite (*alogos orexis*), fear is irrational avoidance (*alogos ekklisis*), pleasure is irrational elation or expansion (*alogos eparsis*), and grief or distress is irrational contraction (*alogos sustolê*). Craving and fear are irrational attitudes towards what one thinks to be good and bad respectively, while pleasure and distress are irrational attitudes towards getting and failing to get what one wants.¹⁶

Diogenes Laertius reports that the Stoics also maintain that there are three classes of "good passions" (*eupatheia*, which are not *pathê*, by the classical Stoic characterization); joy (*chara*), caution or watchfulness (*eulabeia*), and will or wishing (*boulêsis*).¹⁷ Joy is rational elation (*eulogos eparsis*), and thus corresponds to pleasure, caution is rational avoidance (*eulogos ekklisis*) and is the counterpart to fear, while will as opposed to craving is rational appetite (*eulogos orexis*). (The Stoic classification includes no rational counterpart to

grief or pain — perhaps they think that mental contraction is never rational.) In certain circumstances the *eupatheiai* are appropriately experienced. Joy, for example, is fitting when one contemplates an excellence that one has achieved:

What then is your own? The use of external presentations (*chrêsis phantasiôn*). Therefore, when you are in harmony with nature in the use of external presentations, then be elated; for then it will be some good of your own at which you will be elated. (Epictetus, *Encheiridion* 6)

Hence, joy is appropriate when one's employment of one's power of assent towards external presentations is in harmony with nature (*kata phusin*).¹⁸

Chrysippus characterizes the *pathê* as contrary to nature and thereby irrational.¹⁹ But why are they irrational in this sense? Diogenes attributes to Zeno the claim that the *pathê* are to be avoided because they are *impulses in excess* (*hormê pleonazousa*). By Chrysippus' analogy (reported by Galen), a *pathos* is like running as opposed to walking. When one runs, one cannot stop precisely when one wants to; similarly, once one has a *pathos*, one cannot cease having it just by wanting to.²⁰ But a *pathos*' resistance to voluntary control is not precisely what makes it bad for an agent. Rather, a *pathos* is harmful because of its resistance to voluntary control *under the guidance of reason*, and further, its tendency to impair one's more general ability to exercise rational voluntary control.²¹ A fragment from Stobaeus illustrates this view:

'Irrational' and 'contrary to nature' are not used in their ordinary senses: 'irrational' is equivalent to 'disobedient to reason.' Every *pathos* is overpowering, since people in states of *pathos* frequently see that it is not suitable to do this but are carried away by the intensity, as though by a disobedient horse, and are induced to do it... The sense of 'contrary to nature' in the outline account of *pathos* is of something that happens contrary to the right and natural reason. Everyone in states of *pathos* turns aside from reason, but not like those who have been deceived in something or other, but in a special way. For when people have been deceived, for instance over atoms being first principles, they give up the judgment, once they have been taught that it is not true. But when people are in states of *pathos*, even if they realize or are taught to realize that one should not feel distress or fear or have their soul, quite generally, in states of *pathos*, they still do not give these up, but are brought by them to a position of being controlled by their tyranny. (LS I 411)

Even if one's reason would proscribe the *pathos* that one presently has, the *pathos* will nevertheless resist and overpower one's capacity for rational voluntary control, and one would therefore persist in the *pathos* despite the counsel of reason. Consequently, the wise person never assents to a *lekton* as presented by a *phantasia* of a *pathos*, and is accordingly *pathêless* (*apathê*).

Inwood illuminates the Stoic theory of the *pathê* by a fragment from Epictetus:

Presentations in the mind... with which the intellect of man is struck as soon as the appearance of something which happens reaches the mind are not voluntary or subject to one's control; but by a force of their own they press themselves on men to be acknowledged. But the assents... by which the same presentations are acknowledged are voluntary and are subject to human control. Therefore, when some frightening sound from the sky or a collapsing building or the sudden announcement of some danger, or something else of the sort occurs, it is inevitable that even the sage's soul be moved for a short while and be contracted and grow pale, not because he has formed an opinion of anything evil but because of certain rapid and unreflective movements which forestall the proper function of intellect and reason. Soon, though, the sage in question does not give assent... to such presentations... but rejects and refuses them and judges that there is nothing in them to be feared.²²

In the Stoic conception, mere perception of the threat of a dangerous event is causally insufficient to produce the *pathos* of fear. Rather, the occurrence of the *pathos* of fear requires that the threatening event cause in the agent a *phantasia* of the *pathos*, and that he freely assent to a *lekton* as presented by this *phantasia*. The wise person will always refuse to assent upon a presentation of a *pathos*, although such a presentation may initially jar his capacity for reasoning.

The fragment from Epictetus helps us correct several often-misunderstood features the Stoic theory of the passions. First, a *phantasia* that introduces a *pathos* does not leave the agent motivationally unaffected. Rather, a presentation of this sort gives rise to an interest in the agent, and this is the force of classifying it as *phantasia hormêtikê*. Furthermore, given our terminology, we might classify such a presentation as a passion. When I discover that someone has deliberately undermined my interests, we might classify my involuntary emotional response as the passion of anger. One cannot tell whether the Stoics would agree with this categorization, since they have no term corresponding to our word 'passion.' The distinctive claim of the Stoics is that an emotional state that seriously impairs one's capacity for voluntary rational control — a *pathos* — cannot occur unless one voluntarily assents to a *lekton* as presented by a *phantasia* that introduces such a state. In addition, they maintain the optimistic view that since a *phantasia* of this sort occurs involuntarily, it cannot by itself seriously impair one's capacity for voluntary rational control, and that by exercising one's power voluntarily to refuse assent, one can avoid altogether states that hinder reason in this way.

The second therapeutic strategy flows from the Stoics' deterministic view of the universe; "Chrysippus says that fate is a certain everlasting ordering of the whole; one set of things follows on and succeeds another, and the interconnection is inviolable."²³ Both Zeno and Chrysippus maintain that all things are determined by God (*Zeus*) who is identical to reason (*logos*), providence (*pronoia*), and nature (*phusis*). God is a physical substance, apparently identical either to *pneuma*, a combination of air and fire, or just to

fire, which is in everything as its principle of order and design:

The Stoics made God out to be intelligent, a designing fire which methodically proceeds toward creation of the world, and encompasses all the seminal principles according to which everything comes about according to fate, and a breath (*pneuma*) pervading the whole world, which takes on different names owing to the alterations of the matter through which it passes.²⁴

Chrysippus is willing to speak of many gods; for example, in his view Neptune is the air which diffuses itself through the sea. But at the time of the periodic conflagration (*ekpurôsis*) in a Great Year, all the gods are destroyed except Zeus.²⁵ Furthermore, according to Chrysippus the gods are providential, since they are beneficial and friendly toward human beings, and they “made us for our own sake and for each other, and the animals for our sake.”²⁶ Hence, Zeus determines the universe in a manner that is providential for human beings (at least for human beings generally considered, yet apparently not in a way that aims at the good of each individual human being.)

In the Stoic conception, one should accommodate oneself to the determinism of the universe by, as Epictetus puts it, seeking to have things happen as they do happen (*Encheiridion* 8). One should do so even if what happens might be bad from one’s *personal* point of view, that is, from the perspective of one’s ordinary human aspirations for personal survival, happiness, and success. The Stoic recommendation is that one should cease to appraise the events of one’s life from one’s personal point of view, and to evaluate them instead from the divine perspective. That is, one should appraise the events of one’s life solely by the purposes God has in creating and preserving the universe, aims which are distinct from, and may conflict with, one’s ordinary personal concerns.

This abstracted stance towards one’s life is expressed in the Stoic conception of *reservation* (*hupexairesis*, literally ‘exception’).²⁷ In our universe, much is not within our control, and thus we may find ourselves rationally aiming to achieve ends we are not certain to obtain. This sort of difficulty might result either from our lack of power or from our lack of knowledge. If a someone aspires to become president, he may not have the capability to achieve his end, and further, even if he will in fact succeed, he will likely not come to know this when he forms his intent. One strategy for handling this type of difficulty is to avoid striving for anything one cannot be assured of acquiring. But the Stoics do not encourage this approach. Rather, they enjoin *acting with reservation*.

Whenever one acts, one does so by assenting to a *lekton* as presented by the *phantasia* of the action. If one is to act in accordance with the will of God, the judgments one makes as a result of assenting must conform to this will. Thus if one aims to set sail tomorrow, one should not simply resolve to set sail tomorrow, but as Seneca advises in *On Tranquility*, to say “I will set

sail tomorrow unless something intervenes,” or “if it is so fated.” In the explicitly theological formulation one would resolve “I will set sail tomorrow unless it goes against the will of God.” If the judgment that results from one’s assent includes a clause such as ‘unless it goes against the will of God,’ a reserved impulse will ensue.²⁸ Accordingly, the propositional aspect of acting with reservation is matched by a type of mental state. At this level, reservation involves a degree of psychological detachment from any outcome that is not up to us. As a result of this detachment we will not be (as) distressed if an attempt to achieve some end fails. In Seneca’s view, “the suffering that comes to the mind from the abandonment of desire must necessarily be much lighter if you have not certainly promised it success.”

More fundamentally, reservation involves assuming the divine perspective on our successes and failures. It ultimately requires that we evaluate the outcomes of our ventures from the point of view of God’s purposes. If we supplement this stance with the belief that everything that happens is providentially ordained by God, perhaps we will be able to accept the result of any endeavor with equanimity, and even to regard any outcome with joy. Marcus Aurelius recommends an outlook of this sort:

You must consider the doing and perfecting of what the universal Nature (*tê koinê physei*) decrees in the same light as your health, and welcome all that happens, even if it seems harsh, because it leads to the health of the universe (*tên tou kosmou hygieian*), and the welfare and well-being of Zeus. For he would not have allotted this to anyone if it were not beneficial to the Whole (*ei mê tôi holôi sunepheren*). (*Meditations* V, 8)

If we align our desires with the good of the Whole, we will welcome anything that happens to us, even our own impending death, for “cessation of life is no evil to the individual, since ... it is good if it is timely for the Whole, bringing benefit to it, and benefitted by it” (*Meditations* XII, 23).²⁹

These two Stoic approaches to therapy for the passions, one which affirms the power of assent, and the other divine determinism, might be thought incompatible, and the early Stoics attempted to respond to this sort of challenge. Chrysippus holds that despite universal divine determinism, assent is voluntary and free. This is possible because events can be determined to occur in accordance with our free voluntary control: “we contribute much assiduous and zealous effort with respect to these things because it has been ordained that they occur in conjunction with our wills.”³⁰ Although upon considering a presentation we have the capacity to assent, dissent, or suspend judgment, yet whatever our decision turns out to be, it has been determined by God. As we shall see, Spinoza’s rejection of Stoic compatibilism is part of his motivation to disavow the power of assent and the associated form of therapy, while Descartes’ endorsement of this position is an issue in his correspondence with Elizabeth, to which we now turn.

II

In 1645 Descartes learns that Princess Elisabeth, with whom he has already enjoyed a rewarding correspondence, has been ill with a fever for three or four weeks. He diagnoses the cause of her ailment as sadness and anger, whereupon he advises:

you would be unable to be delivered from all these things, unless, by the force of your virtue, you render your soul content, despite the disgraces of fortune. (AT IV 201/B119).

A few months later, Descartes proposes that his future correspondence benefit “from the reading of a certain book, namely, from the book Seneca has written *concerning the blessed life...*” (to Elisabeth, 21 July, 1645, AT IV 252-3/B131). That same year Descartes also begins work on *The Passions of the Soul*, published in 1649, in which he revises and develops the views he discusses with Elisabeth.

The form of therapy Descartes advocates in these writings is clearly Stoical.³¹ In the following excerpt from the letter to Elisabeth of October 6, 1645, the important distinctions correspond to those of the Stoics:

(A) Also we sometimes confuse inclinations (*inclinations*) or habits (*habitudes*) that dispose one to some passion with the passion itself, but nevertheless they can easily be distinguished from the passion. For example, when one announces to a city that enemies are coming to besiege it, the first judgment (*judgement*) the inhabitants make concerning the evil that can happen to them is an action of their soul (*action de leur ame*), not a passion. And though this judgment is similarly found in many people, they are nevertheless not equally moved; rather, some are moved more and others less, according as they possess a greater or lesser habit or inclination towards fear. And before their soul receives the excitation (*emotion*) in which alone the passion consists, it is necessary that she make this judgment; or else, without judging, that she at least conceive the danger and imprint the image of it upon the brain (which happens by a different action called “to imagine”)... (AT IV 312/B161)

This passage reflects several central elements of the Stoic theory of the passions. The judgments the inhabitants of the city make concerning the evil that might occur, which are actions and precede the passions, seem akin to the judgments that result from assent to *lekta* that introduce passions. And the claim that a passion such as fear comes about as a result of such a judgment is clearly Stoical. Moreover, according to Descartes’ Fourth Meditation account, a judgment is formed by the will’s assenting to a preliminary representation, just as the Stoics affirmed (AT VII, 52-62). This view is repeated in the Principles:

In order to make a judgement, the intellect is of course required since, in the case of something which we do not in any way perceive, there is no judge-

ment we can make. But the will is also required so that, once something is perceived in some manner, our assent may then be given (*Principles* I 34/AT VIII A 18).

We can infer that the judgments Descartes refers to in the letter to Elisabeth also have this structure, and thus, that a judgement that results in a passion is preceded by a representation to which the agent voluntarily assents.

Significantly, however, he does allow that a passion might occur without judgment, as long as the soul “conceive the danger and imprint the image of it upon the brain.” In Inwood’s interpretation of classical Stoicism, the *pathê*, by their very conception, can occur only as a result of judgment. The Stoics do maintain, however, that in animals and in young children states analogous to *pathê* occur without assent and judgment, and they call the process by which an action or *pathos*-analogue occurs without assent *yielding (eixis)*.³² Descartes could be allowing that passions might also come about without judgment in adult human beings, but the excerpt does not specify the circumstances under which this can happen. As we shall see, however, a departure from the classical Stoic view along these lines is more definite in *The Passions of the Soul*.

An earlier passage in this same letter might initially appear to conflict with the Stoic theory:

...in man [impressions are formed] by the action of the soul, which has the force to change the impressions in the brain as, reciprocally, these impressions have the force to excite in her the thoughts that do not depend upon her will. In consequence of this, one can generally name ‘passions’ all the thoughts that are thus excited (*qui sont ainsi excitées*) in the soul without the concurrence of her will (*sans le concours de la volonté*), and consequently, solely by the impressions in the brain, and without any action that proceeds from her — for everything that is not an action is a passion. (AT IV 310/B160)

Nevertheless, there is really no disagreement with Stoicism here. Descartes might at first seem to be saying that a passion, by its very definition, cannot result from an act of will. Such an initial impression would be mistaken. Descartes’ claim is rather that a passion is never the *immediate* effect of the will, but always an immediate effect of impressions in the brain, and thus, in his terminology, passions are excited without the concurrence of the will. Actions, by contrast, are immediate effects of the will, and thus occur “with the concurrence of the will.” But actions, of which judgments are a subspecies, can generate passions by causing impressions in the brain which in turn cause thoughts that do not depend on the will. And thus, in Descartes’ view, the will can *mediately* cause passions. He provides an illustration of such a process in the passage that immediately follows (A) above:

...and it is also necessary that, by the same means [i.e. judgment or imagination] the soul determines the spirits (*esprits*) that travel from the brain by the

nerves into the muscles to enter those muscles that serve to close the openings of the heart, thus retarding the circulation of the blood; in consequence, all the body becomes pale, cold, and trembling, and the new spirits, which come from the heart to the brain, are agitated in such a manner that they can assist in forming there those images that excite in the soul the passion of fear — all of which events so closely follow each other that it seems but a single operation. (AT IV 312-3/B161-2)

For the passion of fear to arise, the soul must determine the spirits in the brain either by judgment or by imagination. Thereupon the spirits cause a physiological change in the body, which causes new spirits that travel to the brain to be agitated and thereby to assist in forming images that excite the passion of fear in the soul.

It is noteworthy that the term '*esprits*' is derived from '*spiritus*,' the Latin equivalent of '*pneuma*.' Descartes' view accordingly mirrors the classical Stoic conception insofar as he maintains that a passion occurs when a judgment causes a movement in the spirits. For Chrysippus, however, passions, and the judgments that cause them, are actually states of the *pneuma*, of which the mind is wholly constituted. For Descartes, by contrast, passions are states of the immaterial soul, as are the judgments that often occasion them, and the spirits merely play a causal role in the production of the passions.

In the Elisabeth correspondence Descartes also endorses the central pre-emptive component of the Stoic theory:

...all our passions represent the goods to whose pursuit they incite us as very much greater than they are; and also, that the pleasures of the body are never so durable as those of the soul, nor so great when one possesses them as they might appear when one looks forward to them. We must pay careful attention to this, so that when we feel ourselves moved by some passion, we may suspend our judgment (*nous suspendions notre jugement*) until the passion is calmed, and so that we do not easily allow ourselves to be deceived by the false appearances of the goods of the world. (to Elisabeth, 15 September 1645, AT IV 294-5/B153)

Descartes advocates suspending judgment when one is moved by a passion of a certain sort, and his claim would be altogether Stoical had he not affirmed that "we may suspend judgment *until the passion is calmed*." There are two ways to reconcile this assertion with the Stoic view. The first is to interpret 'passion' as it occurs here as 'presentation that introduces a passion,' or, as the Stoics sometimes referred to such presentations, as 'preliminary passion' (*propathēia*).³³ The second is by reading Descartes as extending the Stoic view to a strategy one might adopt once one is already beset by a debilitating passion. Supposing that the judgment that causes the passion is still in place after the passion has developed, Descartes could be recommending that when one is plagued by a harmful passion, one should withdraw one's assent by suspending one's judgment, because this procedure will allow the passion to

subside. In the context of Descartes' correspondence, this interpretation is plausible, since he believes that Elisabeth is already troubled by the passions of sadness and anger, and that she therefore needs a way to eliminate them, and not a method to keep them from arising.

Descartes amplifies several aspects of this theory in his later work, *The Passions of the Soul*. In Part I we find a passage that might again initially seem anti-Stoical:

Our passions cannot likewise be directly excited (*excitées*) or removed (*ostées*) by the action of our will, but they can be indirectly by the representation of things which are usually joined to the passions we will to have and opposed to the ones we will to reject. Thus, in order to excite boldness and remove fear in oneself, it is not sufficient to have the volition to do so — one must apply oneself to attend to reasons, objects, or precedents that convince [one] that the peril is not great, that there is always more security in defence than in flight, that we will have glory and joy from having conquered, whereas one can expect only regret and shame for having fled, and similar things (I 45/AT XI 362-3/V43).

As a result, one may “easily overcome the lesser passions, but not the most vigorous and the strongest, until after the excitation of the blood and spirits has abated” (I 46/AT IX 364/V44). What might at first appear to conflict with the Stoic conception is Descartes' assertion that our passions cannot be directly excited or removed by the action of the will. He means to argue that the will cannot excite or remove a passion simply by willing that it be excited or removed.³⁴ The Stoics, however, do not claim that a *pathos* can be directly excited by the will in the sense that Descartes intends, since they believe that for a *pathos* to come about, a presentation of the *pathos* must first occur. Hence, they might agree with Descartes that passions can only be indirectly excited “by the representation of things which are usually joined to the passions we will to have,” that is, by entertaining or imagining presentations. Furthermore, the Stoics also do not maintain that a *pathos*, once it has come to exist, can be directly removed by the action of the will. Our inability to remove a *pathos* directly by the power of assent is one of their primary reasons for recommending their avoidance, as Chrysippus' analogy to walking and running suggests. This conception is reflected in Descartes' view that

...there is one particular reason why the soul cannot readily alter or check its passions, which has led me to put in their definition above that they are not only caused but are also maintained and strengthened by some particular movement of the spirits. This reason is that they are almost all accompanied by some excitation taking place in the heart, and consequently also throughout the blood and the spirits, so that until this excitation has ceased they remain present to our thought, in the same way as objects capable of being sensed are present to it while they are acting upon our sense organs. (I 46/AT XI 363/V44)

Thus Descartes' claims do not conflict with the Stoic theory.

The Passions of the Soul reflects a more mature view about the power the will has to prevent a passion:

It is also useful to know that although the movements — both of the gland and of the spirits and brain — which represent certain objects to the soul are naturally joined with those [movements] which excite certain passions in it (*soient naturellement joints avec ceux qui existent en elle certaines passions*), they can nevertheless by habituation be separated from them and joined with other quite different ones... (I 50/AT XI 369/V48)

Descartes claims that although physiological motions that cause representations of certain objects may naturally be joined to other physiological motions that excite certain passions in the soul, motions of the first type do not inevitably result in those passions. We have the ability to join such motions to states distinct from the passions to which they are naturally joined. Descartes' picture can be viewed as reflecting two Stoic themes: first, a distinction between a passion proper and a mental state which, like a *phantasia*, precedes it, and second, our capacity to avoid the passion usually associated with such a state. That this capacity is a function of the will is clear from the discussion that immediately precedes the above passage, for there Descartes repeatedly attributes to the will the ability to combat the passions (I 48-9/AT XI 366-8/V46-7).

This conception is embellished in Descartes "general remedy for the passions" at the close of the treatise (III 211/AT XI 485/V132). Although throughout *The Passions* he maintains that passions are very often good, he also calls to mind the Stoic conception of the *pathê* when he argues that passions are bad when they hinder one's capacity for rational action by causing certain reasons to seem stronger than they are (III 211/AT IX 486-7/V134).³⁵ In an important respect, however, Descartes now more clearly diverges from the classical Stoic view:

... I have included among these remedies the forethought and skill whereby we can correct our constitutional deficiencies, in applying ourselves to separate within us the movements of the blood and spirits from the thoughts to which they are usually joined, I grant that there are few people who are sufficiently prepared in this way against all sorts of contingencies, and that these movements, excited in the blood by the objects of the Passions, immediately follow so swiftly from mere impressions formed in the brain and from the disposition of the organs, *even though the soul may in no way contribute to them*, that there is no human wisdom capable of withstanding them when one is insufficiently prepared for them. (III 211/AT XI 486/V133-4, emphasis mine)

As we have seen, the Stoics attribute *yielding* — a presentation's causing an impulse without the mediation of the power of assent — to young children and animals, but argue that this process is not a feature of (normal) adult

human psychology. In this passage, however, Descartes suggests that passions can arise independently of any contribution on the part of the soul in human beings considered generally. Thus, by contrast with the Stoics, he now seems to maintain that a process like yielding may often underlie passions in any human being. And hence, he might well deny the Stoic doctrine that normally, whenever an adult comes to have a *pathos*, she must have assented to *lekton* that corresponds to a presentation of that *pathos*.

But even if he deviates from Stoicism in this way, he nevertheless reaffirms that we always have the power to avoid or (indirectly) to remove a passion by an appropriate act of will:

And those who are strongly inclined by their constitution to the excitations of Joy, Pity, Fear, or Anger cannot keep from fainting, crying, trembling, or having their blood all stirred up just as though they had a fever, when their fantasy is greatly affected by the object of one of these Passions. But what can always be done on such an occasion, and what I think I can set down here as the most general remedy for all the excesses of the Passions and the easiest to put into practice, is this: when one feels the blood stirred up like that, we should take warning, and recall that everything presented to the imagination tends to deceive the soul, and to make the reasons for favoring the object of its Passion appear to it much stronger than they are, and those for opposing it much weaker. (III 211/AT IX 486-7/V134)

At this point Descartes distinguishes two sorts of passion. One motivates the agent to a goal the achievement of which requires delay, and the other motivates the agent to a goal that requires immediate action:

And when the Passion favors only things whose execution admits of some delay, one must abstain from making any immediate judgment about them (*il faut s'abstenir d'en porter sur l'heure aucun jugement*), and to distract oneself by other thoughts until time and rest shall have completely calmed the excitation in the blood. Finally, when it incites one to action requiring one to reach some resolution at once, the will must be inclined above all to take into consideration and to follow the reasons opposed to those the Passion represents (*que la passion represente*), even though they appear less strong. As is the case when one is unexpectedly attacked by some enemy, the situation does not allow one to spend any time deliberating. (III 211/AT XI 487/V134)

When the blood is agitated by an object of a passion, one can always perform certain acts of will which allow the agitation to subside. Significantly, in this passage Descartes makes a stronger claim for the power of the will than any the Stoics maintained, since he argues that *even if the passion is already in place* one has the power to suspend judgment until it is calmed.

As did the Stoics, Descartes advocates consulting reason when confronted with a passionate attitude towards an object or an inclination towards such a passion. For him, the appropriate role of the will in this type of situation is to initiate consideration of reasons against having the passionate attitude.

Reflection of this sort involves recalling the tendency of the agitation of the blood to make reasons for having the passion seem stronger than they are, and reasons against seem weaker. Sometimes such deliberation should lead us to suspend judgment, so that the agitation in the blood will be calmed. At other times, when one does not have the time to allow the agitation to abate, the consideration of contrary reasons can permit one to refrain from performing actions that the passion inclines one to perform.³⁶ Cultivating the habit of considering contrary reasons makes such restraint possible.

In summary, Descartes' theory is similar to its Stoic counterpart in several core respects. Like the Stoics, he maintains a distinction between representations that precede and incline one towards a passion and the passions themselves. Furthermore, in his correspondence with Elisabeth he seems to favor the Stoic view that in the typical case, a passion results only when an appropriate judgment is made, where a component essential to any judgment is the will's assent upon entertaining a preliminary representation. And, although in *The Passions of the Soul* Descartes suggests that passions can occur without judgment, still he does claim that a passion can always be avoided by an act of will. And finally, adopting a position more radical than the traditional Stoic view, he argues that even when one is already in the grip of a passion, that passion can be eliminated by the voluntary act of suspending judgment, whereby it is allowed to subside.³⁷

III

In his correspondence with Elisabeth Descartes also develops the second Stoic therapeutic strategy for the passions, together with its theological underpinning. In his letter of October 6, 1645, he advances the view that God is the cause of every effect:

...it seems to me that all the reasons that prove the existence of God, and that he is the first and immutable cause of all the effects that do not depend upon the free decision of men, likewise prove in the same way that he is also the cause of all those that do depend on it. For one could not demonstrate that God exists save by considering him as a being sovereignly perfect; and God could not be sovereignly perfect if something could happen in the world that did not come entirely from him... philosophy alone suffices to give us the knowledge that the least thought cannot enter the mind of man if God had not wished and willed from all eternity that it enter therein. (AT IV 313-4/B162)

God is the cause of everything that exists or happens; he is the *total cause* (*cause totale*) of everything, whether it is something that depends on a free decision or whether it is not, and "thus nothing can happen without his will" (AT IV 314/B163). Descartes later indicates to Elisabeth that he believes the infinitude of divine power to entail God's being the cause of everything, and that in his view, if human actions did not depend on God's will, his power would be finite (to Elisabeth, 3 November, 1645, AT IV 332/B169).

In the letter of October 6 Descartes also claims that no change can occur in God's decrees on the occasion of some free decision on our part. He then points out a consequence of this claim for the proper objective of prayer. We should not pray "that we might teach [God] what we have need of, nor that we might try to persuade him to change something in the order established by his providence from all eternity: both would be blameworthy." Rather, "we pray only so that we might obtain what he has wished from all eternity to be obtained by our prayers" (AT IV 316/B163-4). Descartes is recommending, in effect, that in prayer the perspective we take on our lives should not be the one we might ordinarily have, but rather the divine perspective. We should pray only for what God has wanted for us from all eternity, and indeed, only for what God has wanted for us from all eternity *to be obtained by our prayers*.

The passage that most dramatically advocates his version of the second Stoic strategy occurs in a letter to Chanut, the French ambassador to Sweden. Descartes intended this letter to reach Christina, the queen of Sweden, by whom he was later employed. In this excerpt, he sets out "the path one ought to follow to arrive at the love of God:"

But if, in addition, we heed the infinity of his power, through which he has created so many things, of which we are the least part; the extension of his providence that makes him see in one thought alone everything that has been, is, shall be, and could be; the infallibility of his decrees (*decrets*), which, although they do not disturb our free will (*libre arbitre*), nevertheless cannot in any fashion be changed; and finally, if, on the one hand, we heed our insignificance, and if, on the other hand, we heed the grandeur of all created things, by noting the manner in which they depend on God and by considering them in a fashion that has a relationship to his omnipotence, without confining them in a globe, as do they who think the world finite: meditation upon all this so abundantly fills the man who hears it with such extreme joy that, realizing he would have to be abusive and ungrateful toward God to wish to occupy God's place, he thinks himself as already having lived sufficiently because God has given him the grace to reach such knowledge (*il pense déjà avoir assez vécu de ce que Dieu luy a fait la grace de parvenir à de telles connoissances*); and willingly and entirely joining himself to God, he loves God so perfectly that he desires nothing more in the world than that God's will be done. That is the reason he no longer fears either death, or pains, or disgraces, because he knows that nothing can happen to him save what God shall have decreed; and he so loves this divine decree, esteems it so just and so necessary, knows he ought so entirely to depend upon it, that even when he awaits death or some other evil, if *per impossibile* he could change that decree, he would not wish to do so. But if he does not refuse evils or afflictions, because they come to him from divine providence, he refuses still less all the goods or licit pleasures one can enjoy in this life, because they too issue from that providence; and accepting them with joy, without having any fear of evils, his love renders him perfectly happy. (to Chanut, 1 February, 1647, AT IV 608-9/B206-7).³⁸

In this passage, Descartes advocates abstraction from the personal point of view, from the perspective of one's ordinary human aspirations for personal survival, happiness, and success, just as Marcus Aurelius does. In Descartes' understanding, if our love for God were of the right sort, our identification with the divine perspective would be so complete that even if we could, we would not refuse our own death or other evils, since they proceed from the decree of God.

In this letter to Chanut, Descartes' picture of how we identify with the divine perspective does differ in an important respect from the classical Stoic view. One of the most pressing issues for the Stoic therapeutic theory is to provide reason and motivation for making this identification. The doctrine of reservation and Marcus Aurelius' injunctions suggest that we align ourselves with the divine point of view so that we will enjoy equanimity no matter what happens, even if what happens conflicts with the good as conceived from the personal point of view. One might doubt whether such a reason is sufficient to motivate many of us; Thomas Nagel remarks that normally "one is supposed to behold and partake of the glory of God, for example, in a way in which chickens do not share in the glory of *coq au vin*."³⁹ By analogy, imagine that one's ruler has a utilitarian concern for the aggregate community which is seldom disappointed, but her scheme causes one to be poverty-stricken so that many others might be well-off. Trapped in this situation, one might consider assuming the sovereign's concerns while abandoning one's personal perspective on the good, for the reason that making these psychological moves would result in one's achieving equanimity. Very few of us, however, are capable of being motivated by this reason in such circumstances. Consequently, for Descartes' version of the second strategy to be feasible, we need another proposal for a reason that might motivate us to align ourselves with the divine purposes as he conceives them.

In his letter to Elisabeth of 15 September 1645, Descartes argues that "it is necessary to prefer always the interests of the whole, of which one is a part, to the interest of one's own person in particular," although "this is to be done with measure and discretion." He points out that one is sometimes motivated to behave accordingly; "by considering oneself as part of the public, one takes pleasure in doing good to everyone," and as a result, one does not even fear to risk one's life to save others. Descartes then claims:

One is naturally led to act from such a consideration when one knows and loves God as one ought: for then, abandoning oneself completely to his will, one rids oneself of one's particular interest (*on se despouille de ces propres interests*) and has no other passion save to do what one believes to be agreeable to him; in consequence of which one has satisfaction of mind and contentments incomparably more valuable than all the small fleeting joys that depend upon the senses. (to Elisabeth, 15 September, 1645, AT IV 294/B152)

Love may be what most commonly provides reason and motivation for other-regarding actions and attitudes, and perhaps it is therefore plausible for Descartes to advocate love for God as the reason and motivation for identifying with the divine point of view.⁴⁰

But the love required for the second strategy must be a very powerful sort, since it must be capable of causing a person to resign her personal concerns to the extent that Descartes envisions. Developing a love of this strength would seem unlikely if one were aware that God, despite his capacities, had no special regard for one's personal good, and all the more so if one had no hope of his attitude ever changing. There are people who on occasion develop a self-sacrificing love for someone who, although he could, has no regard for the lover's personal good. Sometimes such love arises even toward someone who shows no sign of developing such a concern. But we would not want to model love for God on such pathological cases. In non-pathological situations, a love so powerful requires that one believe that the person one loves, supposing he is able, has a genuine concern for one's personal good.⁴¹

It is surprising that Descartes does not here advocate the Pauline Christian conception by which God's concern is directed toward the good of each individual who loves God; "for in all things God works for the good of those that love him" (Romans 8:28), and even towards the good of each individual "as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:22).⁴² Rather, just as in Marcus Aurelius's understanding, in the picture Descartes advances in his letters to Elisabeth and Chanut the divine conception of the good need make little concession to the good as conceived from any individual's personal perspective. We might draw the following contrast. By the Pauline idea, one's personal good is also a concern of God's, and thus, although one might have to renounce mistaken conceptions of one's personal good in order to assume the divine point of view, one need not disengage from any personal conception of one's good whatsoever. According to the Stoic and Cartesian picture, one must abandon one's personal conception of the good — one's ordinary human aspirations for survival, happiness, and success — and adopt instead the divine vision of the good, which may not have such a personal conception as a component. The persistent problem for the Stoic and Cartesian view is that we lack a satisfying model by which human beings, given their psychological character, will have reason and motivation to make the sort of identification it advocates.⁴³

IV

The stark compatibilism of this set of Stoic beliefs presents a challenge for Descartes, as it did for Chrysippus. If God causes everything, how can we have the power to assent, dissent, or suspend judgment upon entertaining a presentation? When Elisabeth confronts Descartes with this issue, he re-

sponds with an illustration.⁴⁴ Imagine a king who has condemned duelling, and who knows that there are two gentlemen in his kingdom who would duel if they met. Suppose the king gives each gentleman travelling instructions so that the two will assuredly meet on the road. Descartes argues that although the king's will (and arrangement of events) results in the gentlemen duelling, they still freely do so, and consequently they can justly be punished (AT IV 352-3/B174-5). But in this illustration the role of the king is disanalogous with the part God plays in the Cartesian universe, where he is the cause of every effect, whether it be dependent on human free decisions or not. Thus if the king's role were comparable to God's, the king would, in addition, cause the gentlemen to be motivated as they are, and if that were so, our intuition that the gentlemen act freely would be jeopardized.

Spinoza believes that a reconciliation between divine determinism and the free and voluntary power of assent is impossible, and he therefore denies that we have such a power. Noting that by the will he understands "a faculty by which the mind affirms or denies something true or something false, and not the desire by which the mind wants a thing or avoids it" (II/129-130), he claims

IIP48: In the Mind there is no absolute, or free, will (*In Mente nulla est absoluta, sive libera voluntas*), but the Mind is determined to will this or that by a cause which is also determined by another, and this again by another, and so to infinity. (II/129)

The crucial element in the proof of this proposition is divine determinism, that "all things have been predetermined by God, not from freedom of the will or absolute good pleasure, but from God's absolute nature, or infinite power" (I Appendix, II/77). Spinoza later affirms, by way of explanation, that "experience itself, no less clearly than reason, teaches that men believe themselves to be free because they are conscious of their own actions and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined" (IIP2s, II/143).

Spinoza also rejects another fundamental element of the first strategy. According to the Stoic and Cartesian view, one's assent, dissent, or suspension of judgment is an act distinct from entertaining the proposition to which one directs the act of will. This claim is crucial because the first strategy requires that one's assent, dissent, or suspension of judgment be subsequent to (and thus distinct from) entertaining the proposition that expresses the possibility of a passion. Spinoza argues, however, that in general acts of will are not distinct from acts of entertaining propositions; "The will and the intellect are one and the same," and this is because "the will and the intellect are nothing apart from the singular volitions and ideas themselves" and "the singular volitions and ideas are one and the same" (IIP49C, II/131). In Spinoza's understanding, the will and the intellect are identical because every token idea is identical to a token volition, and every token volition is identical to

a token idea. It turns out that for him the assent that results in a passion would not be distinct from one's entertaining the proposition to which the assent is granted.

Spinoza's demonstration of the thesis that there is no distinction between token volitions and token ideas assumes the following principle: A and B are token-identical just in case A cannot be conceived without B, and B cannot be conceived without A (IIP49d).⁴⁵ His illustration features the token idea that the sum of the measures of the internal angles of a triangle is 180° ($m=180^\circ$, for short), and token the affirmation that $m=180^\circ$. First, Spinoza plausibly claims that the token affirmation that $m=180^\circ$ cannot be conceived without the token idea that $m=180^\circ$. But then, more controversially, he argues that the token idea that $m=180^\circ$ cannot be conceived without the token affirmation that $m=180^\circ$. One might object to this view on the grounds that in general one can entertain an idea without affirming it. Indeed, Spinoza's own counterexample expresses this objection: "someone who feigns a winged horse does not on that account grant that there is a winged horse; i.e., he is not on that account deceived unless he at the same time grants that there is a winged horse" (IIP49s, II/132-3).

But Spinoza responds by arguing that the absence of affirmation in such cases results either from background ideas or from the perception that one's idea is inadequate (i.e. lacks some intrinsic qualities of a true idea, such as internal consistency) and not from an idea-independent act of will (IID4, II/134).⁴⁶ When one is in possession of one's faculties and imagines a winged horse, one also has background ideas that undermine the affirmation-aspect of the idea of the winged horse. Nevertheless, there is no voluntary act of dissent or suspension of judgment, occasioned by these background ideas, and distinct from any idea, that accounts for the absence of affirmation. On the contrary, it is explained solely by the causal influence of the background ideas themselves.

Spinoza's response is interesting, but even if his theory is plausible for belief, this plausibility does not clearly extend to action and passion. He believes it does, for he concludes his discussion of the triangle example by remarking: "...what we have said concerning this volition (since we have selected it at random), must also be said concerning any volition, viz. that it is nothing apart from the idea" (IIP49d, II/130). Spinoza believes that to will an action is to perceive it in a certain way, perhaps as one's best available option for action. By this conception, my deciding to eat a piece of pie would not be distinct from my entertaining the proposition that eating it is my best available course of action. Spinoza illustrates his view by claiming that someone "who perceives nothing but thirst and hunger, and such food and drink as are equally distant from him... will perish of hunger and thirst." Presumably Spinoza believes this because the person does not perceive any one

course of action as better than every other (II/135). Since there is no act of will distinct from something's being perceived in a certain way, the person will not act in one way rather than the other.

If Spinoza has shown that we have no free will, and that assenting to a proposition is not distinct from entertaining it, then he has undermined the foundation for the first therapeutic strategy as the Stoics conceived it. And this is precisely what he believes he has done. At the outset of Part V of the Ethics, Spinoza reproaches the Stoics for thinking that the affects "depend entirely on our will, and that we can command them absolutely" (II/277), and he subsequently criticizes Descartes' similar claim (II/278).

But if the first Stoic strategy has been undermined, must we abandon any hope of controlling our passions? Spinoza thinks not. While the will may not be the source of such control, the intellect is:

Therefore, because the power of the Mind is defined only by the understanding (*sola intelligentia definitur*), as I have shown above, we shall determine by the Mind's knowledge alone (*sola Mentis cognitione determinabimus*) the remedies for the affects. (II/280)

Since he maintains that we cannot keep passions from arising by exercise of the will, Spinoza looks instead to the intellect for a therapeutic technique.⁴⁷ And as I shall now argue, his scheme can be viewed as an attempt to develop wholly intellectual analogues for the two main Stoic strategies.

V

The Stoics maintain that the power of assent gives us absolute control over whether or not we will have *pathê*. Spinoza proposes that the intellect provides us with a similar kind of absolute control:

An affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it. (*Affectus, qui passio est, desinit esse passio, simulatque ejus claram, & distinctam formamus ideam.*) (VP3, II/282)

There is no affection of the Body of which we cannot form a clear and distinct concept. (*Nulla est Corporis affectio, cujus aliquem clarum, distinctum non possumus formare conceptum.*) (VP4, II/282)

Together, VP3 and VP4 entail that one has the ability to form a clear and distinct idea of any of one's passions, thereby eliminating what makes them passions.⁴⁸ And hence, Spinoza is arguing that not our will, but rather our intellect has the power to keep us entirely free from passions.

To understand the claim of VP3, we must consult Spinoza's definitions of terms. Let us first consider 'clear and distinct idea' and 'adequate idea.' At IP8s2 Spinoza characterizes a clear and distinct idea as a true idea (II/50), and in IA6 he states that "a true idea must agree with its object" (II/47). Subsequently, he defines an adequate idea as "an idea which, insofar as it is

considered in itself, without relation to its object, has all the properties, or intrinsic denominations, of a true idea" (IID4, II/85). In his explication of this definition, Spinoza remarks: "I say intrinsic to exclude what is extrinsic, viz. the agreement of the idea with its object." One might conclude that in his picture an idea is clear and distinct just in case it has the extrinsic denomination of a true idea, i.e. it agrees with its object, and an idea is adequate just in case it has the intrinsic denominations of a true idea, such as internal consistency. But for all that, perhaps we need to keep in mind only that each of these notions is somehow closely tied to veridicality. For as Bennett argues, Spinoza often conflates them, and in fact he appears to do so in the arguments we are about to consider.⁴⁹

In the summary of the definitions of Part III Spinoza distinguishes actions from passions in the following way:

...if we can be the adequate cause of any of these affections, I understand by the Affect an action (*tum per Affectum actionem intelligo*); otherwise a passion (*alias passionem*). (II/139)

A cause is adequate "whose effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived through it" (IID1, II/139). By contrast, a cause is partial or inadequate "if its effect cannot be understood through it alone" (IID1, II/139). Thus an affect is an action of A just in case it can be clearly and distinctly understood (or perceived) through A alone. Correlatively, an affect is a passion of A just in case it cannot be clearly and distinctly understood through A alone (cf. IID2, II/139). Spinoza maintains that we have passions in virtue of being causally affected by other natural things (IVP2).⁵⁰ Accordingly, it would seem that a passion can be clearly and distinctly understood only through the other natural things that contribute to its genesis.

Given these characterizations, we can now exhibit a difficulty for the claim that one has the ability to form a clear and distinct idea of any of one's passions, and thereby to eliminate whatever makes it a passion. What Spinoza has in mind is that if I clearly and distinctly understand my passion, it will be transformed into an action. The definitions of Part III entail that for my present passion to become an action, I would have to become the adequate cause of a state of which I am not now the adequate cause. And for this to occur, I would have to clearly and distinctly understand my passion through my nature alone. But this would seem impossible given Spinoza's view that we have passions because we are affected by other things in nature. My clear and distinct understanding would reveal rather than eliminate the external causes of my passion, and hence could not make it any less true that I am not the adequate cause of it. As Bennett suggests, the distinction between passion and action turns on causal history, and coming to understand the causal history of a passion will not change that causal history.⁵¹

The justification Spinoza cites for the crucial step in the proof of VP3 is

IIP3: The actions of a Mind arise from adequate ideas alone; the passions depend on inadequate ideas alone.

a claim which figures prominently throughout Part V. This proposition, by Spinoza's account, depends for its justification on

IIP1: Our Mind does certain things [acts] and undergoes other things, viz. insofar as it has adequate ideas, it necessarily does certain things, and insofar as it has inadequate ideas, it necessarily undergoes other things. (II/140)

In his proof for this last proposition Spinoza assumes that "from any given idea some effect must necessarily follow (IP36)." He then claims

(1) but if God, insofar as he is affected by an idea that is adequate in someone's Mind, is the cause of an effect, that same Mind is the effect's adequate cause (by IIP11C)

and

if something necessarily follows from an idea that is adequate in God, not insofar as he has in himself the Mind of one man only, but insofar as he has in himself the Minds of other things together with the Mind of that man, that man's Mind (by the same IIP11C) is not its adequate cause, but its partial cause.

Here we encounter Spinoza's fundamental error. In the last analysis, this demonstration is the one that is supposed to underwrite the claim that when one forms a clear and distinct idea of one's passion, it ceases to be a passion. More precisely, if Spinoza's attempt to establish VP3 were to be successful, (1) would have to entail

(2) A person cannot have an adequate (= clear and distinct) idea of a passion,

that is, a person cannot form a clear and distinct idea of a passion and it remain a passion. But (1) provides no support for (2). Even if a Mind is the adequate cause of an effect whenever God is the cause of that effect insofar as he is affected by an adequate idea in that Mind, it does not follow that a Mind is the adequate cause of an effect whenever it simply has an adequate idea of that effect. For although it may be impossible for an effect not to be wholly caused by an adequate idea in a Mind if God is the cause of that effect insofar as he is affected by that adequate idea, it is still possible for an effect not to be wholly (or even partially) caused by an adequate idea in a Mind if God is not the cause of that effect insofar as he is affected by that adequate idea in that Mind. It might be, for example, that an effect of which a Mind has an adequate idea is partially caused by the Mind and partially caused by natural things external to that Mind. Given Spinoza's view that passions are partially externally caused, this is precisely the situation one would expect

to obtain when a Mind forms a clear and distinct idea of a passion. Hence, Spinoza's reasoning fails to secure VP3.⁵²

Although taken together VP3 and 4 suggest that we can actually form clear and distinct ideas of any of our passions, and thereby eliminate whatever makes them passions, Spinoza's claim in VP4s is more guarded:

We must, therefore, take special care to know each affect clearly and distinctly (*as far as this is possible*), so that in this way the Mind may be determined from an affect to thinking those things which it perceives clearly and distinctly, and with which it is fully satisfied, *so that the affect itself may be separated from the thought of an external cause and joined to true thoughts.* (II/283, emphasis mine)

Spinoza now seems to admit that there may be a limit to understanding one's affects clearly and distinctly. Furthermore, he appears to be suggesting that by forming clear and distinct ideas we *separate* affects from their external causes, rather than *eliminating* these external causes.⁵³ Perhaps Spinoza's view is that if one acquires clear and distinct ideas of one's passions, one's attention will be directed towards one's own causal role in the production of these passions, and this, in turn, will result in one's ignoring their external causes. But why would such a procedure be therapeutic?

Stuart Hampshire has suggested that Spinoza's strategy foreshadows Freudian theory.⁵⁴ But although Spinoza and Freud do share the view that acquiring knowledge of one's affects is therapeutic, we find no analogue in Freud to Spinoza's aversion to external causes. I suggest that here Spinoza is attempting to secure a benefit of the first Stoic strategy despite having challenged its theoretical foundations. An important feature of this first strategy is that it encourages us to hold ourselves causally responsible for our *pathê* despite their external triggering causes. Given Stoic psychology, such a stance can be reasonable. I can reasonably consider myself causally responsible for my *pathê*, for no matter what the external circumstances, I can keep myself from having *pathê* by dissenting or suspending judgment upon entertaining their presentations. But taking this stance can have a benefit that we have not yet encountered. The following passage from Epictetus suggests what this benefit might be:

It is not the things themselves that disturb humans, but their judgements (*dogmata*) about these things. For example, death is nothing dreadful, or else Socrates too would have thought so, but the judgement that death is dreadful, this is the dreadful thing. When, therefore, we are hindered, or disturbed, or grieved, let us never blame anyone but ourselves, that is, our own judgements. It is the part of an uneducated person to blame others where he himself fares ill; to blame himself is the part of one whose education has begun; to blame neither another nor his own self is the part of one whose education is complete. (*Encheiridion* 5, cf. 20)

Among the more harmful passions are those that involve absorption in negative attitudes towards others. Anger and fear might be the principal examples. Thinking of oneself as causally responsible for one's anger, however, could undermine the inclination to hold an external agent responsible for it, and hence might decrease one's tendency to be absorbed in negative attitudes towards that agent. Perhaps this type of benefit can be achieved by acquiring clear and distinct ideas of one's passions, if, as Spinoza believes, this would occasion one's attention to be directed towards one's own part in the production of one's passions, which would in turn cause one to disregard their external causes. Such a strategy might diminish one's preoccupation with the other's causal role, and thereby mitigate the debilitating power of the passions.⁵⁵ This, I suggest, is the process Spinoza envisions.

VI

In Part V of the *Ethics* Spinoza also advances a view that has the outline of the second Stoic strategy. He claims that "the greatest satisfaction of Mind there can be results from having *the third kind of knowledge*" (VP27), knowledge that "proceeds from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things (VP25). To have the third kind of knowledge is to understanding things as following from the necessity of the divine nature, which is to conceive them *sub specie aeternitatis*, from the point of view of eternity (VP29s). But "the more the Mind understands things by the second and third kind of knowledge, the less it is acted on by affects which are evil, and the less it fears death" (VP38; the second kind of knowledge is "from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things" (IIP40s2). And thus, identifying with the divine point of view (and also acquiring other types of knowledge) provides a form of therapy for the passions.

But just as rejecting the Stoics' theory of the will precludes Spinoza from endorsing their version of the first strategy, so disavowing their conception of God prevents him from advocating a genuinely Stoic second strategy. The crucial feature of Stoic theology he rejects is the view that God acts for the sake of ends and concerns (I Appendix, II/77-83). Spinoza argues that if God acted for the sake of an end, he would not be perfect, for he would then want something he lacked (II/80). Consequently, Spinoza would also claim that since divine providence involves God's acting for the well-being of the universe (as the Stoics maintain), or for the benefit of human beings, there is no divine providence. Thus, identifying with the divine perspective cannot amount to evaluating events that occur by the standard of God's purposes, because he has none. And furthermore, we cannot be motivated to identify with God's point of view by reflecting on divine providence, because there is no such thing.

As an alternative, Spinoza advocates an intellectualized version for the second Stoic strategy, parallel to what he did for the first. Let us briefly summarize Spinoza's argument. As we have seen, Spinoza affirms that "the greatest satisfaction of Mind there can be arises from this third kind of knowledge" (VP27, II/297). This is because understanding things by the third kind of knowledge is the greatest virtue of the Mind, and therefore "he who knows things by this kind of knowledge passes to the greatest human perfection." Spinoza then claims that by his definition of joy — "a man's passage from a lesser to a greater perfection" (III Definitions of the Affects II, II/190) — it follows that a person who understands things by the third kind of knowledge will be affected by the greatest joy, and that given that this joy is accompanied by the idea of oneself and one's virtue, this person will experience the greatest satisfaction of Mind (III Def. Aff. XXV). And because one can conceive of oneself through God's essence, i.e. *sub specie aeternitatis* (VP30), one can understand that the joy and satisfaction that issue from having the third kind of knowledge are caused by God (VP32). Since love is "a joy, accompanied by the idea of an external cause" (III Def. Aff. VI), one will therefore love God. For the reason that this affect is not love of God "insofar as we imagine him to be present, but insofar as we understand him to be eternal," Spinoza calls it *intellectual love of God (amor intellectus Dei)* (VP32).

Further, Spinoza argues that there is something that pertains to the essence of the human Mind which is eternal, in the sense that no temporal predicates correctly apply to it ("eternity can neither be defined by time nor have any relation to time" (VP23s)). For there is an idea which expresses the essence of the human body *sub specie aeternitatis*, "with a certain eternal necessity" through the essence of God, and because the object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the human body (IIP13), it follows that this idea is something eternal which pertains to the essence of Mind (VP23d). Spinoza then affirms that the more the Mind knows things by the second and third kind of knowledge, the more of it that remains and is eternal (VP38d,s). But to the extent that our Mind is eternal it cannot be touched by affects contrary to our nature (VP38d). Hence, the more of the Mind that is eternal, the less it can be harmed by affects, like harmful passions, whose causal genesis involves things external to us.

As several commentators have persuasively argued, Spinoza's attempt to confirm this picture is less than successful.⁵⁶ For example, in addition to the problem with the argument for the eternity of some aspect of the human mind, one might fault his derivation of love for God from the third kind of knowledge. Even if one acquires joy from the third kind of knowledge (and this is not a foregone conclusion — one can imagine acquiring such knowledge as a result of classroom coercion and therefore failing to obtain joy), Spinoza's

God may seem too impersonal to be a proper subject of love. If we discovered that an inanimate machine produced and causally determined the universe, coming to know how this machine produced things would not lead us to love this machine, even if we deeply enjoyed acquiring this knowledge and we realized that our learning itself was caused by the machine.

Still, Spinoza has a certain vision of our identification with God which can be expressed without his rigid formalism. Spinoza, just as the Stoics, is a pantheist. In his view, God or Nature (*Deus sive Natura*) is the only substance, and we are modes of God. But although God is eternal, our existence seems thoroughly temporally qualified. Our temporality allows us to be vulnerable to things that are contrary to our nature, and therefore we can be affected by debilitating passions. We can also die. Nevertheless, there may be a respect in which we are eternal as God is, and if so, then in this respect we are exempt from the harmful passions and from death. Everything that exists follows from the divine essence. Since by reason we can come to know how things follow from the divine essence, reason allows us to identify, in our metaphorical sense, with the divine point of view. The intellectual love occasioned by this employment of reason can reinforce our identification with the divine perspective. But to the extent that we so align ourselves with God, we are actually, non-metaphorically, identical with aspects of his essence:

The Mind's intellectual Love of God is the very Love by which God loves himself, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he can be explained by the human Mind's essence, considered *sub specie aeternitatis*; i.e. the Mind's intellectual Love of God is part of the infinite Love by which God loves himself (VP36, II/302).

Spinoza seems here to advocate an intellectualized form of the Neo-Platonic vision of mystical union with The One. And in his view, to the extent that we are fused with the divine essence, we are eternal, and because it makes no sense for something to be contrary to the nature of an eternal entity (VP37, VP38d), to the degree we are eternal we are immune from the harmful passions and from death.

VII

Each of the two strategies for psychotherapy, in their original Stoic formulations, has a radical aspect. The first embraces an extreme view about the range of our voluntary rational control, while the second prescribes an alignment with the divine perspective that is exceptionally difficult to attain. Descartes and Spinoza manage these radical features of the Stoic picture in different ways. While Descartes endorses them and redevelops the surrounding theory, Spinoza rejects them to produce a new conception that nevertheless preserves some of the main therapeutic intuitions of the Stoic view. As we have now seen, both of these philosophers adhere to a Stoic model despite

serious difficulties for their resulting theories, and this attests to the tenacity of the Stoic influence on the seventeenth-century European imagination.

The Stoic view about the passions has an effect on our imagination as well, although its force has diminished considerably since the time of Descartes and Spinoza. The type of control the Stoics advocated, if employed to relieve the relatively minor irritations that plague us, would undoubtedly improve our lives. But the Stoics advocated a much more ambitious conception:

With everything that entertains you, is useful, or of which you are fond, remember to say to yourself, beginning with the very least things, "What is its nature?" If you are fond of a jug, say, "I am fond of a jug;" for when it is broken you will not be disturbed. If you kiss your own child or wife, say to yourself that you are kissing a human being; for when it dies you will not be disturbed. (Epictetus, *Encheiridion* 3)

When the Stoic recommendations are applied to grief upon the death of one's child, or to anger that results from serious abuse or torture, the likelihood of self-deception and subsequent failure to deal with one's emotions is considerable. This excessive character of Stoic psychotherapy is at times reflected in the views of Descartes and Spinoza. If one is tempted by their advice, one would do best to proceed with caution.⁵⁷

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NOTES

1. Abbreviations for works cited:

The Stoics:

- Encheiridion: Epictetus, in *The Discourses as Reported by Arrian, The Manual, and the Fragments*, with a translation by W. A. Oldfather, in two volumes, Loeb Classical Library, (London: New York: Putnam and Sons, 1928).
- LP = Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, with an English translation by R. D. Hicks, in two volumes, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970).
- LS = *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Translations of the principal sources with philosophical commentary, in two volumes. Volume 1 contains translations and commentary, volume 2 the original texts.
- Meditations: Marcus Aurelius; citations are from G. M. A. Grube's translation, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985). The original text can be found in *The communings with himself of Marcus Aurelius Antonius, Emperor of Rome*, with an English translation by C. R. Haines, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).
- SVF = *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, H. von Arnim, ed. (Stuttgart: 1903-5).

Descartes' Works:

- AT = *Oeuvres de Descartes*, edited by Ch. Adam and P. Tannery (revised edition, Paris: Vrin/C.N.R.S., 1964-76. Unless otherwise indicated, translations of Descartes' works are from *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, 3 volumes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
- B = *Descartes: His Moral Philosophy and Psychology*, translated, with an introduction and conceptual index by John J. Blom, (New York: New York University Press, 1978).
- V = *The Passions of the Soul*, translated and annotated by Stephen Voss, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989).

Spinoza's Works:

Translations are from *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, volume 1, edited and translated by E. M. Curley, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). References to passages are given by volume and page numbers provided in the margins of Curley's edition, taken from *Spinoza Opera*, edited by Carl Gebhardt, 4 volumes (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1925). For citations from Spinoza's *Ethics*, VP4s, for example, refers to Part V, Proposition 4, Scholium; 'A' indicates an axiom, 'D' a definition, 'd' a demonstration, 'c' a corollary.

Citations of the various translations include some alterations.

2. Stoic influences on Descartes' moral theory did not go unnoticed by his contemporaries. In Adrien Baillet's *La Vie de Monsieur Descartes* (Paris: Chez Daniel Horthemels, 1691) we find the claim that "*D'autres Sçavans ont crû que nôtre Philosophe avoit voulu faire revivre la Morale des Stoiciens dans la sienne*" (volume 2, p. 534). The marginal reference is to Leibniz, it would appear to a letter to Molanus from around 1679, in which he argues that Descartes often borrowed ideas from other philosophers. For example, he claims that

Descartes wants us to follow reason, or else to follow the nature of things, as the Stoics said, something with which everybody will agree. He adds that we should not trouble ourselves with things that are not in our power. That is precisely the Stoic doctrine; it places the greatness and freedom of their much-praised wise men in his strength of mind to do without the things that do not pertain to us, and endure things when they come in spite of ourselves. (From G.W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, translated by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), pp. 240-5, at p. 241; in Gerhard, *G. W. Leibniz, Die Philosophischen Schriften*, (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1965), v. IV, pp. 297-303, at p. 298; see also the remainder of the letter)

A fine account of the effect of Stoicism on French moral theory in the late sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries can be found in Anthony Levi's *French Moralists*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964). For further descriptions of the Stoic influence in this period, see, for example, Gerhard Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), and Mark Morford, *Stoics and Neostoics: Rubens and the Circle of Lipsius*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

3. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985, see pp. 42-101 for the account of the theory of action.

The founder of Stoicism was Zeno of Citium (336-265 B.C.), Cleanthes (331-232 B.C.) was the second head of the Stoic school, Chrysippus (279-206 B.C.) the third. None of the works of these philosophers of the Old Stoa survives in complete form, but it is known that Chrysippus wrote voluminously; Diogenes Laertius reports that there are more than 705 items in the list of his writings (LP 7.180). The main philosophers of the Middle Stoa were Panaetius (185-109 B.C.) and Posidonius (135-50 B.C.). The most prominent Stoics of the Roman period were Seneca (5-65), Epictetus (50-130), and Marcus Aurelius (121-180).

4. Inwood, pp. 66-91.

5. Contrary to Inwood's suggestion, it is not clear that *hormê* can always be the setting of oneself to do something, since, as he himself point out, *pathê* like distress and pleasure are also *hormê*. Perhaps, then, *hormê* is essentially a forceful motion of *pneuma* caused by assent to a *phantasia*. Such a forceful motion can have different psychological manifestations, and the setting of oneself to do something and the various *pathê* are among them.

6. Inwood, pp. 46-8, 60-6; for a discussion of Inwood's view, see Gisela Striker's critical notice of *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* in the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 19 (March 1989), pp. 91-100, at pp. 96-7.

7. From Aetius, SVF 2.54/LS I 237.

8. Discussed by Long and Sedley, LS I 250.

9. From Diogenes Laertius, LP 7.46 (SVF 2.53), translation from LS I 242, cf. LS I 236-259.

10. LS I 254-6, e.g. from Plutarch

[Fate]... frequently produces impressions (*phantasiai*), in matters of very great importance, which are at variance with one another and pull the mind in opposite directions. On these occasions the Stoics say that those who assent to one of them and do not suspend judgment are guilty of error; that they are precipitate if they yield to unclear impressions, deceived if they yield to false ones, and opining if they yield to ones which are incognitive quite generally. (SVF 2.993/LS I 255)

Some of the main elements of the Stoic theory of judgment are also discussed by Cicero in his *Academica*:

Here first of all [Zeno] made some new pronouncements about sensation itself, which he held to be a combination of a sort of impact offered from outside (which he called *phantasia* and we may call a presentation (*visum*) ...) well, to these presentations received by the senses he joins the act of mental assent which he makes out to reside within us and to be a voluntary act. He held that not all presentations are trustworthy but only those that have a 'manifestation,' peculiar to themselves, of the objects presented; and a trustworthy presentation, being perceived as such by its own intrinsic nature, he termed 'graspable' — will you endure these coinages?" "Indeed we will," said Atticus, "for how else could you express '*catalêpton*'?" (*Academica* I, xi, 40-1; translated by H. Rackham, in Cicero, *De Natura Deorum and Academica*, Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann, 1933).

11. Inwood, pp. 55-6, who cites Stobaeus' *Anthology*.

12. "They [the Stoics] say that passion is impulse which is excessive and disobedient

to the dictates of reason...” (Stobaeus 2.88,8/SVF 3.378/LS I 410; cf. Galen SVF 3.462/LS I 413; SVF 3.466/LS I 416; Seneca, *On anger* 2.3.1-2.4/LS I 419.) My summary of the Stoic theory of the passions is adapted largely from Inwood, pp. 127-181.

13. See, for example, Cicero *Academica* (I, x, 38-9), *Tusculan Disputations* (Book IV, esp. iv-x), and Diogenes Laertius 7.117

14. LP 7.111-114, cf. LS I 410-412.

15. Hecato was a Stoic from the middle period, a pupil of Panaetius of Rhodes and an associate of Posidonius.

16. Inwood, p. 146; cf. from Andronicus, SVF 3.391/LS I 411/II 405. Each of these passions has a number of subspecies; for example, according to Diogenes Laertius, under craving the Stoics classified “want, hatred, contentiousness, anger, love, wrath, and resentment” (LP 7.113).

17. LP 7.116. See also Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* IV, vi, 12-14.

18. For the Stoics, for something to be in harmony with nature is for it to be in accordance with the will of God, which is equivalent to its being rational.

19. SVF 4.2.10-18, LS I 413.

20. Inwood, pp. 155-6, cf. Galen, SVF 4.2.10-18, 4.5.21-5 translated in LS I 413-4.)

21. Galen’s interpretation of the analogy of running is “when someone has the impulse he is not obedient to reason.” (SVF 4.2.10-18, LS I 414)

22. Inwood, p. 177, preserved by Gellius, in *Noctus Atticae* (P.K. Marshall, OCT, 1968) 19.1.14-20 = fr. 9./cf. LS I 419.

23. From Gellius, SVF 2.1000/LS I 336, cited by Josiah B. Gould, in *The Philosophy of Chrysippus* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1971), p. 143; cf. LS I 333-343.

24. From Aetius, SVF 2.1027/LS I 274-5; cf. LS I 274-277.

25. SVF 2.1049, cited by Gould; cf. LS I 275-7.

26. SVF 2.1152/LS I 329, cited by Gould, p. 156; cf. SVF 2.1163, 2.1169-70/LS I 328-9.

27. See Inwood, pp. 119-126; for some criticisms of Inwood’s account, see Striker’s critical notice of Inwood’s *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, pp. 98-9, (cf. my note 6).

28. This account, and the quotations from *On Tranquility*, are from Inwood, pp. 119-122.

29. Marcus Aurelius speculates as to why one’s death might benefit the Whole:

If souls live on, how has the air of heaven made room for them through eternity? How has the earth made room for such a long time for the bodies of those who are buried in it? Just as on earth, after these bodies have persisted for a while, their change and decomposition makes room for other bodies, so with the souls which have migrated into the upper air. After they have remained there for a certain time, they change and are dissolved and turned into fire as they are absorbed into creative Reason, and in this way make room for additional souls who come to share their dwelling place. (*Meditations* IV, 21)

30. SVF 2.998, cited by Gould, pp. 150-1; cf. Cicero, *On Fate*, esp. 28-30, LS I 339-40.

31. The Stoic theory of judgment, action, and passion was available to Descartes

through numerous writings, and was very much in the air during his education at La Flèche. An encyclopedic account of the Stoical influence on French moral philosophy of this period can be found in Anthony Levi, *French Moralists*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964). Some of the most important of sources of Stoic views for Descartes' contemporaries are Cicero's *Academica* (I, xi, 40-1) for the theory of judgment, his *On Fate* (xviii, 41-2) for theory of action, and the *Academica* (I, x, 38-9) and the *Tusculan Disputations* (Book IV, esp. iv-x) for the theory of the passions. (In addition to the theories of judgment and the passions that Descartes comes to adopt, we find in Cicero's *Academica* an account of the skeptical argument from the unreliability of the senses (II, xxv, 75-80), a discussion of the dream argument (II, xxvii, 88), mention that Chrysippus "carefully sought out all the facts that told against the senses and their clarity and against the whole of common experience and against reason" before answering himself (II, xxvii, 87), and these remarks about the size of the sun: "What can be bigger than the sun, which the mathematicians declare to be nineteen times the size of the earth? How tiny it looks to us! to me it seems about a foot in diameter" (II xxvi, 82; translation of *Academica* passages are by H. Rackham, in Cicero, *De Natura Deorum, Academica* (London: William Heinemann, 1933).) Furthermore, the Stoic theory of the passions had undergone a significant revival beginning in the last half of the sixteenth century. Two of the then-prominent works in this area that display thorough Stoical influence are Justus Lipsius' *Manuductio* (1604) and Saint Francis de Sales *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu* (1616). For comments on which works Descartes is likely to have read see Levi, p. 271, n.3, and Geneviève Rodis-Lewis's introduction to Stephen Voss' translation of *The Passions of the Soul* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989) pp. xvi-xvii, n.6.

In the *Principles of Philosophy* Descartes presents of rudimentary theory of the passions. His view in this work reflects a Stoic conception, despite his caricature of one Stoic thesis:

In the same way, when we hear good news, it is first of all the mind which makes a judgement about it and rejoices with that intellectual joy which occurs without any bodily disturbance and which, for that reason, the Stoics allowed that the man of wisdom could experience <although they required him to be free of all passion>. But later on, when the good news is pictured in the imagination, the spirits flow from the brain to the muscles around the heart and move the tiny nerves there, thereby causing a movement in the brain which produces a feeling of animal joy. (*Principles* IV 190, AT VIII A 317)

It was common then, as it is now, to claim that for the Stoics the *sophos* is without passion in a more familiar sense of 'passion,' (not in the technical sense of the Stoic's *pathos*) despite clear counterindications, for example, in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* IV, vi-vii, and in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Philosophers* 7.117.

32. See Inwood, pp. 72-81.

33. See Inwood, pp. 175-181.

34. See Paul Hoffman's discussion of this issue in "Three Dualist Theories of the Passions, *Philosophical Topics* 19 (Spring 1991), pp. 153-200, at p. 167-8.

35. See Paul Hoffman's discussion at p. 166.

36. Descartes continues by saying:

But it seems to me that what those who are accustomed to reflect on their actions can always do when they feel themselves to be seized with fear, is to try to turn their thoughts away from the consideration of danger by representing to themselves the reasons which prove that there is much more certainty and honour and resistance than in flight. And on the other hand, when they feel that the desire of vengeance and anger incites them to run thoughtlessly towards those who attack them, they will recollect that it is imprudence to lose their lives when they can without dishonour save themselves, and that, if the match is very unequal, it is better to beat an honourable retreat or to ask quarter, than to expose oneself doggedly to certain death. (III 211/AT XI 487-8)

37. In addition, Descartes' claim in II 144 of the *Passions* is very similar to Epictetus' *Encheiridion* 1: "And it seems to me that the error most commonly committed in connection with Desires is to fail to distinguish sufficiently the things that depend entirely on us from those that do not depend on us." (AT XI 436; cf. Voss' note 70, V97).

38. The end of the Third Meditation (AT VII 52) reflects some of the ideas in the letter to Chanut, as does a passage from II 146 of *The Passions of The Soul* (AT XI 439).

39. Thomas Nagel, "The Absurd," in *Mortal Questions*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 16.

40. In the letter to Chanut of 1 February, 1647, Descartes takes care to indicate that the notion of love he has in mind is significantly independent of the senses. "To represent the truths that excite this love in her, the soul must detach herself very much from dealings with the senses..." (AT IV 609/B207). But he also maintains that the appropriate type of love involves having a passion. From the independence of this love from the senses it seems to follow [that the soul] cannot communicate it to the imaginative faculty to make a passion of it. But nonetheless I have no doubt that she does communicate it. For although we cannot imagine anything in God, who is the object of our love, we can imagine our love itself, which consists in the fact that we wish to unite ourselves to a certain object, that is to say, as regards God, to consider ourselves as a very small part of the entire immensity he has created; because, according as the objects are diverse, one can unite oneself with them or join them to oneself in different ways (*on se peut unir avec eux, ou les joindre à foy en diverses facons*); and the single idea of that union suffices to excite warmth around the heart and to cause a very strong passion. (AT IV 610/B207-8)

In this way identification with the divine perspective can be assisted by our affective nature.

41. For discussions of self-disregarding love of God, see Robert M. Adams, "Pure Love," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 8 (Spring 1980), pp. 83-99; reprinted in his *The Virtue of Faith*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 174-192, and William E. Mann, "Hope," in *Reasoned Faith*, edited by Eleanor Stump, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 251-280.

42. Cf. Romans 5:18, Romans 11:32, Colossians 1:20; but see also II Thessalonians 1:8-9. Descartes does affirm the immortality of the soul (e.g. *Second Replies*, AT VII 153-4) but it seems to play no role in his of views on identification with the divine perspective, at least as this issue is discussed in the letters to Elisabeth and Chanut.

43. See also the criticisms of Descartes' conception of God in Leibniz's letter to Molanus of ca. 1679 (Ariew and Garber, p. 242/Gerhard IV, p. 299, cf. my note 2 for references).

44. Elisabeth argues that

It necessarily follows from his sovereign perfection that he could be the cause of these effects, which is to say, he would be capable of not having given free decision to men; but since we feel we have it, it seems to me contradictory to common sense to believe that free deciding is dependent upon God in its operations as it is in its being. (to Descartes, 28 October, 1645, AT IV 322-3)

45. Here Spinoza cites IID2

...to the essence of any thing belongs that which, being given, is necessarily posited and which, being taken away, the thing is necessarily taken away; or that without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and which can neither be nor be conceived without the thing. (II/85)

46.

...for if the Mind perceived nothing else except the winged horse, it would regard it as present to itself, and would not have any cause of doubting its existence, or any faculty of dissenting, unless either the imagination of the winged horse were joined to an idea which excluded the idea of he same horse, or the Mind perceived that its idea of the winged horse was inadequate. (IID4, II/134)

47. Spinoza's view on when affects are bad reflects the Stoic conception: "An affect is only evil, or harmful, insofar as it prevents the Mind from being able to think" (VP9d, II 286/C I 601).

48. Alan Donagan, however, argues that this conclusion fails to follow because VP4 is not about affects as kinds but about affects as individuals. His reason is that the proof of VP4 depends on the premise that those things common to all can only be conceived adequately. Donagan reads VP3,4 as claiming that "while the mind has little or no power to form an adequate idea of the individual affect that is a passion, it has unlimited power to form adequate ideas of the various kinds of affect, and that gives it limited power over individual affects." (*Spinoza*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 186.)

49. See Bennett, p. 335, cf. pp. 175-184; see also my note 52.

50. In addition, since

it is impossible that a man should not be a part of Nature, and that he should be able to undergo no changes except those which can be understood through his own nature alone, and of which he is the adequate cause. (II/212)

it would seem to follow that it is impossible for us to avoid having passions.

51. See Bennett, pp. 333-337, and also R. J. Delahunty, *Spinoza*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 215-220.

52. On Bennett's alternative analysis, Spinoza typically ignores Part II's definitions of 'adequate idea' and 'inadequate idea' in favor of causal characterizations of these notions. He claims to find in IIP24d the view that an idea of mine is inadequate if it is caused from outside my mind, and he argues that correlatively, an idea of mine is adequate when it is caused from within my mind (pp. 177-8). One problem with this interpretation is that it would render the complex demonstration of the crucial IIIP1 unnecessary. As Bennett

makes clear, it is also true that these causal characterizations would make Spinoza's attempt to establish VP3 quite obviously unsuccessful. Since my passions are by definition partially caused from outside me, and if my forming a clear and distinct idea of A entails that A is caused from within me, it would seem to follow that I cannot form clear and distinct ideas of my passions (pp. 335-6). See also Hoffman's discussion at p. 181.

53. This move connects the discussion of VP3,4 to VP2:

If we separate emotions, or affects, from the thought of an external cause, and join them to other thoughts, then Love, or Hate, toward the external cause is destroyed, as are the vacillations of mind arising from these affects. (II/281)

54. Stuart Hampshire, *Spinoza*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1961; first published by Penguin, London, in 1951), p. 106,

55. Nevertheless, a risk accompanies this strategy, for as a result, one might come pathologically to regard oneself as blameworthy for one's anger and envy. Perhaps, then, this strategy corroborates Epictetus' observation that "to blame himself is the part of one whose education has begun." The strategy of divine determinism, however, may illustrate his claim that "to blame neither another nor his own self is the part of one whose education is complete." Spinoza believes that reflection on the nature of God will lead one to believe that no one is ever to blame, because everything that happens follows from the divine essence.

56. See, for example, Bennett, pp. 357-375, Delahunty, pp. 279-305, but also Donagan, pp. 190-207.

57. This paper is largely a result of a seminar I taught during the summer of 1989 on Hellenistic influences in early modern European philosophy. I am grateful to the participants of this seminar, as well as to Marilyn Adams, Robert Adams, James Allen, David Christensen, Jeremy Hyman, Hilary Kornblith, Don Loeb, and J. D. Pereboom for helpful comments and discussion.