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More About Hume's Debt to Spinoza

Wim Klever

In a recent contribution to the question of Hume's relationship to Spinoza I advocated a more or less Spinozistic interpretation of the first book of *A Treatise of Human Nature*.¹ *Of the Understanding*, so was my claim, is not only very close to *De natura et origine mentis* (*Ethica*, second part) as far as its main affirmations are concerned; the convergence of external and internal evidence makes it also probable that there is a remarkable influence from the one's work on the other and, accordingly, that Hume's defamation of Spinoza's system might well have been disingenuous. This last point was previously also suggested by Richard Popkin in an article in which he compared Hume's philosophy of religion with Spinoza's.²

What motivated me to continue my research in this field? To say it in one word: the unintended discovery of many striking resemblances between Hume's second book, *Of the Passions*, and Spinoza's third part, *De origine et natura affectuum*. I happened to become a member of a group of interested people who concentrate on reading Hume, and, on the other hand, I had acquired some expertise as a Spinoza scholar for quite a number of years, so that I could not avoid seeing the commonalities between the two philosophers. It seems to be fully impossible to explain the resemblances—which I, of course, will show below—by referring to the Spinoza-article in Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (a source once mentioned by Hume in a letter to a London friend), since Bayle does not spend a word to the human passions. It is further a hard fact that there do not exist other written sources from which Hume might have drawn his Spinozistic inspiration in his French period apart from the *Ethics*; all available literature of the time turned around the questions theism versus atheism and free will versus determinism, without entering into the details of human emotions.³ Only one conclusion was possible for me: Hume must have been familiar with Spinoza's own text. Either the Chevalier Ramsay, whose intimate he was for some time,⁴ or another intermediary figure⁵ must have raised his interest.

The best entrance into the material is constituted by Hume's closing remark in his *A Dissertation on the Passions* (1757), in which he elucidates what he in fact has been doing in his analysis of the passions:

I pretend not to have here exhausted this subject. It is sufficient for my purpose, if I have made it appear, that, *in the production and conduct of the passions, there is a certain regular mechanism*, which is susceptible of as accurate a disquisition, as the laws of motion, optics, hydrostatics, or any part of natural philosophy.⁶

In spite of the words “a certain,” this fragment may not be interpreted as a metaphorical assessment. The origin and the processes of human passions are purely mechanical. If this is not what Hume intends to declare, he never could have added the phrase that passions are susceptible of exactly the same kind of accurate descriptions as other natural phenomena. This theory of the mechanism of the passions is certainly not Cartesian. Although Descartes, as a physical scientist, was a great promoter of the explanation of things by means of mechanical causality, he in fact did not extend this method to the life of the passions. In his dualistic philosophy he ascribes to the human mind (with its free will) the capability to interfere with the passions and even to dominate them.⁷ In this field it is Spinoza who paves the way for Hume by sharply criticizing Descartes’ non-mechanistic explanation of the passions. His far-fetched solution of the mind-body interactivity by means of the pineal gland and the animal spirits pushing against it, is called “a hypothesis more occult than any occult quality.”⁸ Spinoza acknowledged that Descartes had good intentions in trying to explain the human affections by their direct causes, but he was inconsistent insofar as he at the same time attempted to demonstrate man’s absolute dominion over them. He, Spinoza, on the contrary, “will consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a question of lines, planes and bodies.”⁹ The analysis of passions is a piece of natural science comparable with geometry, optics¹⁰ and hydrostatics, to mention some other fields of Spinoza’s research. Hume’s statement quoted above is at least an echo of this point of view. Spinoza definitely claimed to give only mechanical explanations of natural phenomena, human behaviour included, convinced as he was of the fact, “that in matter there is nothing but mechanical constructions and operations (*mechanicas texturas et operationes*).”¹¹ Hume seems to follow him in this respect.

In order to demonstrate this filiation we don’t dispose of any argument but the striking convenience of texts. This is no problem, since the coherence of evidence is the best kind of proof for whatever thing.¹² Hume’s dependence on Spinoza’s *Ethics* is such a thing ... or not. I will try to convince the reader of the suggested filiation between our two naturalist thinkers in the question of the passions by generally

first presenting a phrase or fragment of Hume and then backing it with a place in Spinoza, from which it might be derived.

Let me first remind the reader of the remarkable agreement between the full titles of the works on which our discussion concentrates. Human nature (its 'ethos' or 'moral' character) is the object of research in both cases.¹³ Both philosophers also accentuate (according to the accepted terminology of the time)¹⁴ the scientific character of their method. Further, in both works the treatise about the passions, book 2 of the *Treatise of Human Nature* and part 3 of the *Ethics* respectively, follows upon the treatise of the human understanding. Thirdly, in his first section Hume specifies his general title, writing that he "shall now explain those violent emotions or passions, their *nature, origin, causes, and effects*" (T 276, emphasis added); it can hardly be doubted that he wrote this sentence with one eye on Spinoza's text, in which one reads: "Pars tertia. De origine et natura affectuum." Spinoza elucidated his intention by underlining the fact that passions are "natural things," comparable with other natural things, like all of them fully determined according to eternal laws and having "causes" and "properties" by which they may be explained.

There is even more in the first section which seduces the reader to a comparison with Spinoza. Hume distinguishes between "*original impressions* or impressions of sensation," which "are such as without any antecedent perception arise in the soul, from the constitution of the body, from the animal spirits, or from the application of objects to the external organs" (T 275, emphasis added), and "*secondary or reflective impressions*," which "are such as proceed from some of these original ones, either immediately or by the interposition of its idea. Of the first kind are all the impressions of the senses, and all bodily pains and pleasures: Of the second are the passions, and other emotions resembling them" (ibid.). Well, the counterpart is there again. On the one hand, there are the "*affectiones*" of the body, varying according to the various dispositions of the affecting and the affected bodies. Spinoza refers to them in the third postulate of his physical excursion (after 2E13), in which he presents "a few statements concerning the nature of bodies" (2E13s). Also, Hume confines himself to an indication of their physical character: "As these depend upon natural and physical causes, the examination of them wou'd lead me too far from my present subject, into the sciences of anatomy and natural philosophy" (T 275-76). And just like, according to Hume, the impressions of the body are reflected and reacted to in "*reflective impressions*" which are not physical but mental, Spinoza affirms the existence of "*affectus*" in parallelism to the physical affections.¹⁵ Both Hume and Spinoza, use the word 'passion' primarily for these (direct or indirect) physical 'reflections' of changes in the body.

Hume starts his exposition (sec. 2) by considering two indirect passions, namely *pride and humility*. They have the same object (the self). The relation to the self is a necessary condition. And, "According as our idea of ourself is more or less advantageous, we feel either of those opposite affections" (T 277). It is not difficult to find the Spinozistic equivalents. "Self-contentment (*acquiescentia in seipso*) is pleasure arising from the fact that man regards himself and his power of acting" (3Edef 25). "Humility (*humilitas*) is sadness arising from the fact that man regards his want of power or weakness" (3Edef 26). The passions are caused, as Hume further explains, by the idea man has of his valuable or worthless qualities: a perfect rendering of Spinoza's definitions in which the pleasure and sadness are said to arise (*orta ex*) from the ideas (contemplation) one has of his power or weakness. Pride and humility "take place alternately; or if they encounter, the one annihilates the other, as far as its strength goes" (T 278). In the same way their "opposition" is stressed by Spinoza in a special "explication."

In section 4, "Of the relations of impressions and ideas," Hume asks us to reflect "on certain properties of human nature, which tho' they have a mighty influence on every operation both of the understanding and passions, are not commonly much insisted on by philosophers" (T 283). He must have known that Spinoza was clearly on his side in respect of this 'associationism'.¹⁶ This mechanism is fully contained in 2E17 and 2E18 and likewise called a "property" of the human mind.¹⁷ In the context of his treatise on passions Hume especially underlines the association among resembling impressions, or—as he also says—"resembling affections" (like in the cycle grief, disappointment, anger, envy, malice). This word "affections," however, must be interpreted here as an equivalent for "reflective impressions."

In the section, "Of vice and virtue" (sec. 7), Hume appropriates Spinoza's naturalism when establishing as "the most probable hypothesis," that "the very essence of virtue ... is to produce pleasure, and that of vice to give pain" (T 296). To approve something means to feel a delight upon its appearance and to disapprove of it is to be sensible of an uneasiness. This position is traceable to Spinoza's 4E8, which summarizes a headline of part 3 in the proposition: "The knowledge of good and bad is nothing else than the passion (*affectus*) of pleasure or pain in so far as we are conscious of it."¹⁸ Hume, then, applies this theory to pride and humility: "by *pride* I understand that agreeable impression, which arises in the mind, when the view either of our virtue, beauty, riches or power makes us satisfy'd with ourselves: And that by *humility* I mean the opposite impression" (T 297).

Clear points of contact between our two heros may also be found in section 10, in which Hume incidentally opposes "the scholastic doctrine of *free-will*, which, indeed, enters very little into common life,

and has but small influence on our vulgar and popular ways of thinking" (T 312). It is interesting to note that Hume's defence of *determinism* is based upon what he calls "*common notions*," a technical term in Spinoza's work. Never before had he spoken about common notions, which, though, now suddenly appear in favour of the theory that powerful motives fatally determine our behaviour. A reader of the *Ethics* knows that the common notions are the notions everyone possesses concerning the common things (2E37-38) and that they constitute the foundation for our rational or scientific deductions (2E40s²). "Hence it follows that there are certain ideas or notions common to all men" (2E38c). "We perceive many things ... third, from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things. And I shall call this reason (*ratio*) and knowledge of the second kind" (2E40s²). Hume's example might also have been inspired by Spinoza. "*Fear* of the civil magistrate is as strong a restraint as any of iron. ... [W]hen a person acquires such an authority over me, that not only there is no external obstacle to his actions; but also that he may punish or reward me as he pleases, without any dread of punishment in his turn, I then attribute a full power to him, and consider myself as his subject or vassal" (T 312, emphasis added). This is a typical case of social-political pressure which is irresistible for any human. Spinoza often discussed it in his political works. Compare the distinction in 2TP10: "He has another under his power, who holds him bound, or has taken from him arms and means of defence or escape, or inspired him with fear, or so attached him to himself by past favour."

Determination of our will by external motives does not imply that our will is constant. "Nothing is more *fluctuating and inconstant* on many occasions, than the will of man" (T 313, emphasis added). Hidden impacts, irregular and from various sides, push us hither and thither. Again we hit on an item which is typical for Spinoza's anthropology, in which the "*fluctuatio animi*" (3E17s) has such an important place. One never is in equilibrium. "From what has been said it is clear that we are driven about in many ways by external causes, and that, like waves on the sea, driven by contrary winds, we toss about (*fluctuare*), not knowing our outcome and fate" (3E59s). Also the word "inconstans" acquires a high frequency in Spinoza's text. "Men can disagree in nature insofar as they are torn by affects which are passions; and to that extent also one and the same man is changeable and inconstant" (4E33).

Section 11, "Of the love of fame," brings us even closer to central propositions in Spinoza's treatise of the passions. I am deeply convinced that Hume read them before writing the following passage:

No quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than that *propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments*, however different from, or even 'contrary to our own. This is not only conspicuous in children, who implicitly embrace every opinion propos'd to them; but also in men of the greatest judgment and understanding, who find it very difficult to follow their own reason or inclination, in opposition to that of their friends and daily companions. (T 316, emphasis added) ¹⁹

Well, in 3E27 Spinoza demonstrates carefully (that is, geometrically) the following proposition concerning the *imitation of affects* (*affectuum imitatio*), which is fundamental in his whole treatise according to the best scholars available: ²⁰

If we imagine a thing like us (*nobis similem*), toward which we have had no affect, to be affected with some affect, we are thereby affected with a like affect (*simili affectu afficimur*).

This means that the passions, the inclinations and sentiments of other people, become ours by simple imitation. Commiseration and benevolence are not the only consequences of this mechanism. More important is our ambition or, as Hume calls this passion in the title of the section, our "Love of fame." "We strive to do also whatever we imagine men to look on with joy, and on the other hand, we shall be averse to doing what we imagine men are averse to" (3E29). Hume accepts this as a cause of our own behaviour; the "opinions of others" have "an equal influence on the affections" as the other causes of pride and humility. "Our reputation, our character, our name are considerations of vast weight and importance" (T 316). Spinoza agrees with him, considering the immoderate desire of glory (*ambitio*) as one of the strongest passions, "which can hardly be overcome" (3Edef44).

In fact, Hume offers a marvellous comment on Spinoza's definitions and propositions in a nearly unsurpassable literary style.

A good-natur'd man finds himself in an instant of the same humour with his company; and even the proudest and most surly take a tincture from their countrymen and acquaintance. A chearful countenance infuses a sensible complacency and serenity into my mind. ... Hatred, resentment, esteem, love, courage, mirth and melancholy; all these passions I feel more from communication than from my own natural temper and disposition. (T 317)

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Passion is often only compassion, participation in the feelings and desires of other people by sympathy. The process runs via impressions to reflective impressions: the body is affected and so also the mind. Explaining this, Hume faintly reverts to another proposition of Spinoza saying, "Whatever object, therefore, is related to ourselves must be conceived with a like vivacity of conception, according to the foregoing principles" (T 317). Compare this with 2E12: "Whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human Mind must be perceived by the human Mind."²¹ All this has much to do, of course, with their common epistemology, which I explained previously. Human nature is everywhere the same, according to Hume and Spinoza: "nature has preserv'd a great resemblance among all human creatures. ... The case is the same with the fabric of the mind, as with that of the body" (T 318); and "Natura una et communis omnium est" (7TP27).²² "This resemblance must very much contribute to make us enter into the sentiments of others and embrace them with facility and pleasure" (T 318). In Spinoza the basis of this reasoning is to be found in 2E39.

The last section of *Treatise* 2.1 is dedicated to the passions of the animals. Hume's attention for the life of animals is one of the most original features of his philosophy. In *Treatise* 1.3, he wrote with much sympathy about the reason of animals, ascribing to them nearly the same faculties as to men. This line of arguing is also followed here. He claims a "*correspondence of passions in men and animals*" (T 326, emphasis added) (which is, of course, not the same as a complete similarity). Pride and humility may be discovered in their behaviour just like among human beings. "The very port and gait of a swan, or turkey, or peacock show the high idea he has entertain'd of himself, and his contempt of all others" (T 326). Hume does not hesitate to use the expression "evident proofs" for these or similar illustrations of his claim. I can't help that there is again a clear parallel in Spinoza's text, in which not only the difference between animals and men, but also the similarity of their passions is defended. "From this it follows that the affects of the animals which are called irrational ... differ from men's affects as much as their nature differs from human nature. Both the horse and the man are driven by a Lust to procreate; but the one is driven by an equine Lust, the other by a human Lust. So also the Lusts and Appetites of Insects, fish and birds must vary" (3E57). According to Hume there is no reason why we should not call the collection or relation of ideas in them "the *minds of animals*" (T 327, emphasis added). The memory functions in the same way in dogs as in humans: "the three relations of resemblance, contiguity and causation operate in the same manner upon beasts as upon human creatures" (T 327). But also for Spinoza "omnia, quamvis diversis gradibus, animata sunt"

(2E13s), which lead him even to the most general affirmation of "*mentes rerum*" (3E1).

Part 2 of *Treatise 2* gives us much more interesting stuff for a comparison between our two authors. *Love and hatred* is the second pair of indirect passions to be discussed. One is immediately confronted with a most disturbing sentence, which is, however, purely Spinozistic.

As the immediate *object* of pride and humility is self or that identical person, of whose thoughts, actions, and sensations we are intimately conscious; so the *object* of love and hatred is some other person, of whose thoughts, actions and sensations we are not conscious. This is sufficiently evident from experience. Our love and hatred are always directed to some sensible being external to us. (T 329)

This external object being a mistress or a friend, is not truly known to us! Is that not disappointing? or a mistake? Perhaps the first, certainly not the latter. Compare 2E13: "The object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body, or a certain mode of Extension which actually exists, and *nothing else*." Love, an inadequate mode of thinking, is essentially self-love, wherever one is loving his friends or other things. What one knows in love, is one's own feelings of pleasure. One is only conscious of the other insofar as one is affected by him or her. Hume had well understood this lesson of Spinozistic epistemology.

In this article I cannot follow Hume in all the details of his exposition; I shall select the most striking points which remind me of Spinoza's text, which is, of course, in itself not sufficient evidence for a real borrowing. In section 2, my eye falls on the following passage:

Nothing is more natural than to bear a kindness to one brother on account of our friendship for another, without any farther examination of his character. A quarrel with one person gives us a hatred for the whole family, tho' entirely innocent of that, which displeases us. Instances of this kind are every where to be met with. (T 341)

This is a smart summary of a whole range of propositions in *Ethics 3*. Quotations may demonstrate this: "Any thing can be the accidental cause of Joy, Sadness, or Desire" (3E15). *Sympathy and antipathy* might originate from accidental or marginal causes. "From the mere fact that we imagine a thing to have some likeness to an object that usually affects the Mind with Joy or Sadness, we love it or hate it, even though that in which the thing is like the object is not the efficient cause of these affects" (3E16). And from this it is only one step to realizing

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the unavoidability of *discrimination*, also alluded to in Hume's 'translation': "If someone has been affected with Joy or Sadness by someone of a class, or nation, different from his own, and this Joy or Sadness is accompanied by the idea of that person as its cause, under the universal name of the class or nation, he will love or hate, not only that person, but everyone of the same class or nation" (3E46). Everybody may dream up many cases of his experience to confirm this law of human relationships. All these phenomena are a question of determination of our fantasy. "[T]he very same reason, which determines the imagination to pass from remote to contiguous objects, with more facility than from contiguous to remote, causes it likewise to change with more ease, the less for the greater, than the greater for the less. *Whatever has the greatest influence is most taken notice of*" (T 342, emphasis added). Yes, it cannot be otherwise. The greatest affections and mutations in our body must necessarily most occupy our minds, or, to say it correctly, are automatically reflected. We may 'fall' from the one contemplation into the other; man may be suspended in admiring great things (that is, unusual impressions) "that he cannot think of other things" (3E52s).

In love and hatred, that is, our positive and promoting or negative and destructing attitude, our relation to objects is proportional to our experience of their profit or damage for our well-being. "Nothing is more evident, than that any person acquires our *kindness*, or is expos'd to our *ill-will*, in proportion to the pleasure or uneasiness we receive from him, and that the passions keep pace exactly with the sensations in all their changes and variations" (T 348, emphasis added). This again is purely Spinozistic, pointed out in a range of at least fifteen propositions, based on the following: "We endeavour to promote the coming into existence of everything that we imagine conducive to pleasure; but what we find repugnant to it, or, conducive to sadness, we endeavour to remove or destroy" (3E28). The proportion of our mental strivings to the impressions and processes in our body is explicitly stressed in the demonstration of this proposition.

Section 4, "Of the love of relations," contains, as it were, a theory of the passion 'humanity': "Whoever is united to us by any connexion is always sure of a share of our love" (T 352). Hume does not cite those "melancholic" people, "who take a pleasure in declaiming against human nature" (*ibid.*). The chapter praises social life in the most broadest sense, together with games and all kinds of entertainment. In this way, "the whole man acquires a vigour, which he cannot command in his solitary and calm moments. Hence company is naturally so rejoicing, as presenting the liveliest of all objects, *viz.* a rational and thinking Being like ourselves, who communicates to us all the actions

of his mind" (T 353). It does not seem improbable that in writing this Hume had still in mind the following effusion of Spinoza in 4E35s:

Man is a God to man. ... They [men] can hardly live a solitary life; hence, that definition which makes man a social animal has been quite pleasing to most. And surely we do derive, from the society of our fellow men, many more advantages than disadvantages. So let the Satirists laugh as much as they like at human affairs, let the Theologians curse them, let Melancholics praise as much as they can a life that is uncultivated and wild, let them disdain men and admire the lower animals. Men still find from experience that by helping one another they can provide themselves much more easily with the things they require.

The fact that the words "melancholic" and "solitary" make their appearance in both texts, which, moreover, have the same intention, namely to recommend human company, with the same argument, namely that the fellow man is the most profitable good among other goods, constitutes some evidence for the claim that also here Hume was inspired by Spinoza's text.

Although Hume refuses to give a definition of love and hatred in the first lines of part 2,²³ he nevertheless arrives in section 6, "Of benevolence and anger," at a definitive statement which could hardly be stronger: "According to this system, love is nothing but the desire of happiness to another person, and hatred that of misery. *The desire and aversion constitute the very nature of love and hatred*" (T 367, emphasis added). In the immediate context it is explained that pleasure and pain are the causes of the desire and aversion. With Hume's own terminology we get the following schedule.

The very nature of the passions love and hatred respectively:

<i>causes</i>	<i>object</i>	<i>attitude</i>	<i>end</i>
pleasure	person inclined to	benevolence	happiness
pain	person averted to	anger	misery

Just before giving these definitive statements, Hume felt that some kind of explanation would be appropriate. Is it not impossible for us to acquire accurate knowledge concerning the nature of things? That is true, he admits, with regard to the composition of external bodies, "[b]ut as the perceptions of the mind are perfectly known, and I have us'd all imaginable caution in forming conclusions concerning them, I have always hop'd to keep clear of those contradictions, which have attended every other system" (T 366). Hume's method, therefore, is that he tries

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to explain the passions (and other phenomena) by *deducing* them from *perfectly known perceptions*, that is, clear concepts or the adequately known "common notions" he previously referred to. Is there, apart from Spinoza's axiomatization, any difference between his method and Spinoza's? I don't see it any more. The second kind of knowledge proceeds "ex eo quod notiones communes rerumque proprietatum *ideas adaequatas* habemus" (2E40s²).

And now the Spinozistic background of what Hume writes about the pairs love-benevolence and hatred-anger. "We strive to affirm concerning ... what we love, whatever we imagine to affect with Joy ... what we love. On the other hand, we strive to deny whatever we imagine affects with Sadness ... what we love" (3E25). "We strive to affirm, concerning what we hate, whatever we imagine to affect it with Sadness, and on the other hand to deny whatever we imagine to affect it with Joy" (3E26). Love produces an *appetitus benefaciendi* whereas hatred begets destructive acts. These are the effects of love and hatred, which consist, according to Spinoza's definitions, in "pleasure (*laetitia*) or Sadness (*tristitia*) related to an external cause," more concretely in "inclination" (*propensio*) and "aversion" (*aversio*).²⁴ The *strict correlation between love and hatred on the one hand and benevolence and anger on the other hand*, is likewise affirmed by both authors. Hume: "According as we are possess'd with love or hatred, the correspondent desire of the happiness or misery of the person, who is the object of these passions, arises in the mind, and varies with each variation of these opposite passions" (T 368). Spinoza: "The desire that arises from sadness or joy, and from hatred or love, is greater, the greater the affect is" (3E37).

Hume practically follows the order of Spinoza's exposition. "Compassion" (sec. 7) or "*commiseratio*" (3E27s) is the next subject. Hume writes:

"Twill be easy to explain the passion of *pity*, from the precedent reasoning concerning *sympathy*. ... All human creatures are related to us by *resemblance* [emphasis added]. Their persons, therefore, their interests, their passions, their pains and pleasures must strike upon us in a lively manner, and produce an emotion similar to the original one. ... If this be true in general, it must be more so of affliction and sorrow. (T 369)

After having given proposition 3E27 (quoted above) in which the "*similitudo*" is considered to be the (accidental) cause of our having the same passions as other things or men, Spinoza continues in a scholium as follows: "This imitation of the affects, when it is related to sadness is called Pity; but related to desire it is called emulation, which,

therefore, is nothing but the desire for a thing which is generated in us from the fact that we imagine others like us to have the same desire."²⁵ Hume applies the principle also on shame: "From the same principles we blush for the conduct of those, who behave themselves foolishly before us" (T 371). Spinoza, who gives many more instances of the principle, comes to a summary in 3E31 with its interesting corollary and the scholium.

Section 8 is dedicated to malice and *envy*, treated by Hume as being one and the same passion, namely the opposite of pity. This passion "gives us a joy in the sufferings and miseries of others, without any offence or injury on their part" (T 372). Spinoza: "Envy is nothing but hate, insofar as it is considered so to dispose a man that he is glad at another's ill fortune and saddened by his good fortune" (3E24s). One cannot avoid making comparisons. "The misery of another gives us a more lively idea of our happiness, and his happiness of our misery. The former, therefore, produces delight; and the latter uneasiness" (T 375). The value we attribute to ourselves and our capacities is inversely proportional to the qualities we imagine to be present in other people. "To the envious nothing is more agreeable than another's unhappiness, and nothing more burdensome than another's happiness" (3E39s).

After all, those negative passions originate not so much from a neutral comparison of things as well as from an opposition of interests. Hume has well exposed and stressed this point in section 9: "Suppose, that two persons of the same trade shou'd seek employment in a town, that is not able to maintain both, 'tis plain the success of one is perfectly incompatible with that of the other. ... [*H*]atred always follows upon the contrariety of interests; as ... love arises from their union" (T 383, emphasis added). Scarcity of goods raises economic competition, but also envy and conflicts. "When all alike want something, they are alike an obstacle to one another. ... They hate one another" (3E31s). "If we imagine that someone enjoys some thing that only one can possess, we shall strive to bring it about that he does not possess it" (3E32). "We see, therefore, that for the most part human nature is so constituted that men pity the unfortunate and envy the fortunate, and with greater hate the more they love the thing they imagine the other to possess" (3E32s). Hume again: "the pleasure and advantage of an antagonist necessarily causes my pain and loss. ... Our concern for our own interest gives us a pleasure in the pleasure, and a pain in the pain of a partner. ... [T]he same concern for our interest makes us feel a pain in the pleasure, and a pleasure in the pain of a rival" (T 383-84). Hume and Spinoza stay on common grounds and develop the same *mechanism* of the human emotions, deducing them from the same principles.

This becomes even more evident in the third part of *Treatise 2*, "Of the will and direct passions." Here the lover of Spinoza's philosophy

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cannot but enjoy the finest and truly congenial expression it has got by the pen of Hume. "Of liberty and necessity" is a section which may give him much comfort as far as he does not feel alone any longer. Spinoza's most anomalous *determinism*, not adhered to by any other seventeenth century philosopher,²⁶ is here openly and fully represented. This striking convenience alone is enough to consider Hume as a follower of Spinoza's naturalism.

Hume first establishes (and in this respect Descartes is a common forerunner) "that the operations of external bodies are necessary. ... Every object is determin'd by an absolute fate to a certain degree and direction of its motion" (T 399-400). The specific difference, however, between Hume and Spinoza against Descartes and other philosophers, is the extension of mechanical causation to the explanation of human behaviour. "[H]uman society is founded on like principles" (T 401) as nature as such. An illustration may be helpful to convince us: "For is it more certain, that two flat pieces of marble will unite together than that two young savages of different sexes will copulate? ... There is a general course of nature in human actions, as well as in the operations of the sun and the climate. ... [T]his uniformity forms the very essence of necessity" (T 402). Hume clearly repeats the statements Spinoza gave in his introduction to *Ethics* 3: "The way of understanding the nature of anything, of whatever kind, must also be the same, viz. through the universal laws and rules of nature. The affects, therefore, of hate, anger, envy etc. considered in themselves, follow from the same necessity and force of nature as the other singular things."²⁷

Yes, "in judging of the actions of men we must proceed upon the same maxims, as when we reason concerning external objects ... deducting the inferior from the superior" (T 403). So did Spinoza, so does Hume in his wake. In the question of human liberty this method logically enforces the following point of view:

we conclude, that the chance or indifference lies only in our judgment on account of our imperfect knowledge, not in the things themselves, which are in every case equally necessary, tho' to appearance not equally constant or certain. (T 404)²⁸

Theoretically, we cannot admit that things on themselves are undetermined; practically, we sometimes do so on account of a shortage of knowledge concerning the determining causes and laws. But "[o]ur way of thinking in this particular is, therefore, absolutely inconsistent" (T 404). We may not assert and deny the same thing at the same time. Elsewhere in our everyday conceptions—so it is marvellously shown by Hume—we fully acknowledge the essential regularity in human behaviour. His conclusion is everything but ambivalent: "there is no

known circumstance, that enters into the connexion and production of the actions of matter, that is not to be found in all the operations of the mind; and consequently *we cannot, without a manifest absurdity, attribute necessity to the one, and refuse it to the other*" (T 404, emphasis added). Not only does he come here very close to the famous identity proposition 2E7 ("The order and connexion of ideas is the same as the order and connexion of things"), he also joins Spinoza in accepting and defending the necessity in the actions and passions of the mind. "Our mind is partially active and partially passive; namely insofar as it has adequate ideas, thus far it necessarily acts, and in so far as it has inadequate ideas, thus far it necessarily is passive" (3E1). This proposition about the necessity of mental acts and passions was, as it were, the 'format' of all more detailed propositions on its passions and desires.

According to Hume, there is not only ample "moral evidence" in favour of determinism, it is also presupposed by economics and political science. "[W]hoever *reasons* [emphasis added] after this manner, does *ipso facto* believe the actions of the will to arise from necessity" (T 405). In this respect one may not contradistinguish natural science against moral science. Both kinds of reasoning implicitly acknowledge the necessity in the structure of their objects, as Spinoza demonstrated in his compact 2E44: "It is of the nature of reason to regard things as necessary, not as contingent."

In section 2, three objections against full-fledged determinism are answered with arguments anticipated by Spinoza. The prejudice that we only act freely when not feeling force or constraint, is easily explained. "Spontaneity" or, as Spinoza says, "*leviter petere*" (3E2s) creates the illusion of liberty because in this mood we give quickly way to other things we are reminded of, in contrast to the cases where we feel a strong desire and are not so easily deviated. The difference is only gradual. The second objection together with the required response is summarized in the sentence: "We feel that our actions are subject to our will on most occasions, and *imagine* we feel that the will itself is subject to nothing" (T 408). I accentuate the word "imagine," which is implicitly also done in the context where Hume continues: "We may *imagine we feel a liberty* within ourselves; but a spectator can commonly infer our actions from our motives and character" (ibid., emphasis added). 'Imagination' is Spinoza's technical term for the lowest kind of knowledge, the inadequate, confused and false ideas originating from our unreflected experience.²⁹ Both, the existence of a faculty called will from which activities could proceed, as well as the freedom of such a chimerical faculty, are instances of human imagination or fiction.³⁰ That, thirdly, necessity is not in conflict with religion but "has universally, tho' tacitely, in the schools, in the pulpit, and in common

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life, been allow'd to belong to the will of man" (T 409) and does not undermine human morals, is likewise common doctrine in Hume and Spinoza. The latter extensively discussed the subject in his *Theological-political Treatise*. Hume sticks to his proposition that "all actions of the will have particular causes" (T 412), a thing affirmed by Spinoza in his first letter to Oldenburg, in which he wrote "that the particular volitions are not free but determined by external causes and not at all by the will" (Ep2).

In section 3, "Of the influencing motives of the will," Hume makes clear, contrary to the common opinion about the pre-eminence of reason above passion, that reason does not belong to this category. "In order to shew the fallacy of all this philosophy, I shall endeavour to prove *first*, that reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will; and *secondly*, that it can never oppose passion in the direction of the will" (T 413). The impotence of reason against the passions is the main theme of *Ethics* 4, as is indicated in its title "De servitute humana seu de affectuum viribus" ("On human bondage, or the powers of the affects").³¹ "Man's lack of power to moderate and restrain the affects I call bondage. For the man who is subject to affects is under the control not of himself but of fortune, in whose power he so greatly is that often though he sees the better for himself, he is still forced to follow the worse" (first lines of the preface to 4E). Reason gives not more than an abstract delineation of a perfect life; not being a direct acquaintance of the human perfection, she is too weak against the lower but immediate knowledge contained in the passions. In the seclusion of La Flèche Hume must have cast a glance on the pages of *Ethics* 4, otherwise the closeness of some of his sentences to Spinoza's propositions is not explainable. "Nothing can oppose or retard the impulse of passion, but a contrary impulse" (T 415, emphasis added) is a principle in his argument,³² as it is in Spinoza's: "A passion cannot be restrained or taken away except by a passion opposite to, and stronger than, the passion to be restrained" (4E7). According to Hume, the reason is no party for the passions. "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of passions" (T 415, emphasis added), a sentence which reminds one of Spinoza's calling the impotence of reason a "servitutum." And what to say about the appearance of Spinoza's own terminology (*modus*) in this context? "A passion is an original existence, or, if you will, *modification* of existence" (*ibid.*). I don't claim that everything in Hume's disquisition is Spinozistic, only that some of his sentences, not the ones of minor importance, do originate from direct contact with Spinoza's text.

I would like to maintain this claim also with regard to "the effects of custom," the subject of section 5. "Custom has two *original* effects upon the mind, in bestowing a *facility* in the performance of any action or the conception of any object; and afterwards a *tendency or inclination*

towards it" (T 422). As far as I know there is no philosopher before Hume except Spinoza who approaches him in his assessment of the overwhelming influence of custom on human thought. "And in this way each of us will pass from one thought to another as each one's custom (*consuetudo*) has ordered the images of things in the body" (2E18s). "Custom and religion are not the same for everyone. ... Hence, according as each one has been educated, so he either repents a deed or exults at being esteemed for it" (3Edef 27). It is tantalizing to suppose that Spinoza is the unnamed "late eminent philosopher" alluded to in the last paragraph of section 5, but I don't dispose of specific evidence for this interpretation. Anyhow, "the mind always forms its judgments more from its present disposition than from the nature of its objects" (sec. 9; T 446). The present disposition, an effect of custom and the order of nature, was also for Spinoza the determinant of our mind, on account of which its "ideas of external bodies more indicate the constitution of our own body than the nature of external bodies" (2E16c²).

Conclusion

Many other details of Hume's treatise of the passions might be compared with Spinoza's homonymous work. Such a comparison shall certainly also reveal considerable differences. In this article, however, it was merely my intention to ask attention for some points of agreement between the texts and arguments of our two philosophers. The agreement covers a whole range of concepts and ideas concerning the passions and was to my knowledge never discovered before. Sometimes one might doubt whether the similitude is strong enough to support the suggestion of a filiation; sometimes, however, the evidence seems to be convincing. Both thinkers consider the passions in their mutual relationships as a *mechanism*,³³ which is apt for a scientific investigation. Both present causal explanations about their nature and origin without burdening the reader with moralizing judgements. Both are determinists, both are naturalists, for whom nothing in nature is irregular or as it should not be. "Per realitatem et perfectionem idem intelligo" ("By reality and perfection I understand the same thing") (2Edef⁶). This was Spinoza's axiom, by which he distinguished himself from all contemporary and previous philosophers, for whom the evil in man and nature is a fact. But ... this was also Hume's principle, as he confessed in a paradoxical phrase of his *Essays*: "All ills arise from *the order of the universe, which is absolutely perfect.*"³⁴

Is Hume a 'Spinoza in disguise'? I would certainly not like to affirm this. Hume is a very original thinker, in which many other influences besides the input from the side of Spinoza come together and constitute

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a new philosophical form. My claim is more modest: Hume is an eminent interpreter and 'translator' of many Spinozistic propositions of which he must have had first hand knowledge.

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The following abbreviations are used for references to Spinoza's works within the text and notes: E: *Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata*; Ep: *Epistolae*; TP: *Tractatus Politicus*. The following abbreviations are used when reference is made to the *Ethics*: c: corollarium; def: definitio; s: scholium. Translations are taken from Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, ed. and trans. G. H. R. Parkinson (Everyman's Library, 1989); and *Collected Works*, ed. E. Curley, vol. 1 (Princeton, 1985).

1. See my "Hume Contra Spinoza?" *Hume Studies* 16, no. 2 (November 1990): 89-106.
2. Richard H. Popkin, "Hume and Spinoza," *Hume Studies* 5, no. 2 (November 1979): 65-93. The literature on the subject is extremely scarce. Apart from what I mentioned in my own article, I only found one new item: J. P. Cléro, "La présence de Spinoza et du Spinozisme dans le *Traité de la Nature Humaine* et les *Dialogues sur la religion naturelle* de Hume," in *Spinoza au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. O. Bloch (Paris, 1990), 203-13. Contrary to what the title seems to suggest, the author defends an opposite view: "les routes suivies sont divergentes" (p. 203); "Il est improbable que Hume ait directement lu Spinoza" (p. 204); "On ne trouve guère en 1739 chez Hume un effort de probité à l'égard des textes de Spinoza" (p. 205). On a Spanish Spinoza Conference (October 1990), however, I listened to a paper with the title "Autour de l'éthique de Spinoza et de Hume," read by Lee C. Rice (Marquette University, Milwaukee), in which was said: "une comparaison de Spinoza avec Hume sur les questions de la nature de l'individu et la notion de la causalité révèle en général que les points d'accord sont plus nombreux que ceux de désaccord."
3. See Paul Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1982).
4. Ramsay dedicated himself to original research of Spinozism as appears from an anonymous article of his in the *Mémoires de Trévoux*, April 1735. Vernière (above, n. 3) writes: "Nous voilà tout à coup avec Ramsay au centre vital de l'*Ethique*; il ne s'agit plus d'une réfutation naïve, mais d'une vue pénétrante sur le double plan spinoziste de l'éternité et de la durée" (p. 406). Ramsay observes in a later work, posthumously published in 1751, that all

- opponents of Spinoza are mistaken and that Bayle remains on the surface of the things. His sympathy is clearly on the side of Spinoza himself.
5. A good candidate for the mediation may also have been the Comte de Boulainvilliers (1658-1722). "C'est un fait que Boulainvilliers ... demeure le véritable introducteur du spinozisme en France" (Vernière [above, n. 3], 322). Hume praised Boulainvilliers as "a noted republican" and as "a man of learning, very conversant in history." He shows great sympathy for his Spinozistic idea that authority is commonly at first founded on force and violence and not so much on consent, referring for this to his three volume work *Etat de la France* (London 1727). See David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. E. F. Miller (Indianapolis, 1987), 486 (note to part 1, essay 12).
 6. David Hume, *A Dissertation on the Passions*, in *The Philosophical Works*, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose, 4 vols. (Darmstadt, 1964), 4:166, emphasis added.
 7. Cf. *Les passions de l'âme* (1649), in which Descartes writes (title of the first part, art. 50): "Qu'il n'y a point d'âme si faible qu'elle ne puisse, étant bien conduite, acquérir un pouvoir absolu sur ses passions" (Descartes, *Oeuvres philosophiques*, ed. F. Alquié, vol. 3 [Paris, 1973]). In art. 18 Descartes had distinguished between two activities of the will: "les unes sont des actions de l'âme qui se terminent en l'âme même ...; les autres sont des actions qui se terminent en notre corps."
 8. Preface of *Ethics* 5.
 9. Preface of *Ethics* 3.
 10. See Wim Klever, *Le concept de la mathématique de Spinoza* (Paris, 1990; *Philosophie et mathématiques*, no. 68); "Insignis opticus. Spinoza in de geschiedenis van de optica," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 6 (1990): 47-63; "Moles in motu: Principles of Spinoza's Physics," *Studia Spinozana* 4 (1988): 165-95.
 11. *Cogitata Metaphysica* 2.6.1. In the context of the quote Spinoza rejects the Aristotelian distinction between the three different souls of plants, animals and men.
 12. "We may draw inferences from the coherence of our perceptions, whether they be true or false" (T 84); "all belief arises from the association of ideas, according to my hypothesis" (T 112); "the opinion of the continu'd existence of body depends on the COHERENCE and CONSTANCY of certain impressions" (T 195). David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3d ed., rev., ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1975).
 13. Hume's "Human Nature" is not only paralleled by the central position of "man and his well-being" in the title of Spinoza's first

draft of the *Ethics*, namely *Korte Verhandeling over God, den Mensch en deszelfs Welstand*, but also by his explicit indication, in the preface of *Ethics 2*, that after having considered the general features of the infinite and eternal being, from now on the human existence and human behaviour will be the only subject of his concern.

14. This was the "geometric way" of exposition in the seventeenth century, applied also by Descartes (sometimes), Hobbes (sometimes) and Huygens (always); after Newton, however, one should call this scientific method "experimental method of reasoning," of which, indeed, reasoning is an essential ingredient. Hume never denies its partially *deductive* character. Compare his expression: "explaining all effects from the simplest and fewest causes" (T xvii), or "deducting the inferior from the superior" (T 403).
15. I must give here their definition in Latin: "Per *affectum* intelligo corporis affectiones, quibus ipsius corporis agendi potentia augetur vel minuitur, iuvatur vel coercetur, et simul harum affectionum ideas" (3Edef³). In the "general definition of the passions (*affectus*)" at the end of 3E the accent is more directly laid on the latter element: "An *affectus* which is called a passivity of the soul (*pathema animi*) is a confused idea wherewith the mind affirms a greater or less power of existing of its body or of any part of it than before, and which being given, the mind is thereby determined to think of one thing rather than of another."
16. Klever, "Hume contra Spinoza?" (above, n. 1), 92-93.
17. Cf. the sentence at the end of part 2, in which Spinoza claims to have sufficiently explained "naturam mentis humanae eiusque proprietates."
18. Cf. also 3E39s: "By good here I understand every kind of Joy, and whatever leads to it, and especially what satisfies any kind of longing, whatever that may be. And by evil every kind of Sadness, and especially what frustrates longing. ... Each one, from his own affect, judges, or evaluates, what is good and what is bad, what is better and what is worse, and finally what is best and what is worst."
19. Compare T 365: "In general we may remark, that the minds of men are mirrors to one another, not only because they reflect each others emotions, but also because those rays of passions, sentiments and opinions may be often reverberated."
20. See for instance, A. Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1988): "L'ultime fondement des relations interhumaines nous est dévoilé dans la proposition 27" (p. 151). Cf. also Jon Wetlesen, *Internal Guide to the Ethics of Spinoza; Index*

- to Spinoza's cross references in the *Ethics*, rearranged so as to refer from earlier to later statements (Oslo, 1974).
21. Later in this section one reads: "Ourself is always intimately present to us."
 22. This idea was also forcefully formulated in the preface of 3E: "For nature is always the same, and its virtue and power of acting are everywhere one and the same."
 23. " 'Tis altogether impossible to give any definition of the passions of *love* and *hatred* " (T 329).
 24. See definitions 6, 7, 8 and 9 in *Ethics* 3.
 25. Cf. 3E23s: "Insofar as one imagines a thing like oneself to be affected with an affect of sadness, one must be saddened."
 26. Neither Hobbes nor Leibniz are determinists; both accept the freedom of the will and man's responsibility for his behaviour. I gave textual evidence for this claim in my "Determinism, the 'true belief' according to the *Korte Verhandeling*," in *Dio, l'uomo, la libertà*, ed. F. Mignini (L'Aquila, 1990), 189-201.
 27. Cf. Spinoza's general propositions concerning the natural determinism: 1E28, 29, 32 and 33.
 28. I forgot to quote here some of the many places where Spinoza explains the origin of our fiction concerning the freedom of the will in humans by a lack of knowledge. "Men are deceived in that they think themselves free, an opinion which consists only in this that they are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined" (2E35s).
 29. "Hunc res contemplandi modum cognitionem primi generis, opinionem vel *imaginationem* in posterum vocabo" (2E40s²).
 30. Cf. 1E32, 2E35s, 3E2s, etc.
 31. Cf. *Korte Verhandeling* 2.14: "Want ik niet en meyne dat de Reeden alleen magtig is, ons van alle deze passien te bevryeden."
 32. This point is further elaborated in *A Dissertation on the Passions*, where it is said that contrary passions are mutually destructive "like an *alkali* and an *acid*, which, being mingled, destroy each other" (*Works*, 4:143).
 33. *A Dissertation on the Passions*: "internal mechanism, which we here explain" (*Works*, 4:155).
 34. *Essays*, 173.