



Spinoza's Strong Eudaimonism

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RESEARCH



ABSTRACT

In this paper I defend an eudaimonistic reading of Spinoza's ethical philosophy. Eudaimonism refers to the mainstream ethical tradition of the ancient Greeks, which considers happiness a naturalistic, stable, and exclusively intrinsic good. Within this tradition, we can also draw a distinction between weak eudaimonists and strong eudaimonists. Weak eudaimonists do not ground their ethical conceptions of happiness in complete theories of metaphysics, epistemology, or psychology. Strong eudaimonists, conversely, build their conceptions of happiness around an overall philosophical system that extends far beyond ethics, while nevertheless being directed at the promotion of a happy life. I will show that Spinozistic happiness is not only naturalistic, stable, and exclusively intrinsically good, but that Spinoza is also a strong eudaimonist because his ethical account of happiness is incomprehensible without appeal to metaphysical, epistemological, and psychological doctrines. As well, I will explain how the apparent subjective and relativistic features of Spinoza's ethics do not undermine the eudaimonistic reading, because both Spinoza and the ancient eudaimonists grant that the beliefs/feelings of the subject play a necessary (but insufficient) role in happiness as the highest good.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Many scholars link Benedict de Spinoza's moral philosophy to the ancient Greek ethical tradition of eudaimonism, which treats happiness (*eudaimonia*) as the highest objective good.¹ As Miller (2010) rightly argues, however, we must draw a distinction between the *form* and *content* of eudaimonistic happiness. While all eudaimonists share the same formal or structural conception of happiness as the highest good (amongst other important features, which we will discuss shortly), they crucially differ in content concerning what they think this highest good involves instrumentally, constitutively, and consequently (with the ethical roles of reason, pleasure, virtue, the body, and external things in promoting happiness being common objects of debate in this context).² *Prima facie*, Spinoza's moral philosophy seems to share notable commonalities with eudaimonism in both form and content. Formally, he bases his ethical framework around happiness (*felicitas*) or blessedness (*beatitudo*) as the highest happiness, which he describes as the highest good (*summum bonum*), a theme which remains consistent from the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (likely Spinoza's earliest extant work) to the *Ethics* (his *magnum opus*).³ In terms of content, Spinoza in general devotes rich attention to how reason, pleasure, virtue, the body, and external things relate to a happy life. More particularly, scholars have noted important affinities between Spinoza and many historical eudaimonists, such as Plato (Soyarslan 2021: 19–23; Marshall 2017: 261–63; Zovko 2014), Aristotle (Carriero 2014: 20–22; D. Garrett 2018; Wolfson 1934: I, chap. VII.ii and II, chap. XIX.ii–iv), Epicurus (Bove 1994; Guyau 2020; Vardoulakis 2020), and the Stoics (James 1993; Miller 2015; Pereboom 1994).⁴ In the early modern context, contemporaries of Spinoza, such as Hobbes, Descartes, and Leibniz, were also ethically concerned with happiness, although only Descartes and Leibniz can be seen as potential eudaimonists (CSMK 261–62, 325; AG 211–13, 223–25; Youpa 2005), since Hobbes explicitly denies that happiness is the highest good (*The Elements* I.7.6).^{5,6} Spinoza seems to be considering ethically then the same things as ancient eudaimonists, and there is reason to think that he would not have been the only early modern philosopher to embrace, or at least critically engage with, such an ethical tradition.

The primary issue with an eudaimonistic reading of Spinoza's moral philosophy, however, concerns the question of its meta-ethical status. Eudaimonistic happiness is the highest *objective* good, and it is not evident that Spinoza's ethical framework allows for the objectivity of goodness. On the one hand, there are scholars who read Spinoza as a moral realist who considers goodness objective by being in some sense based on nature and/or independent of a subject's beliefs or feelings, like Marshall (2017), Miller (2005; 2015: chap. 4), and Youpa (2020: chap. 3). Miller (2015: chap. 5) and Youpa (2005), in particular, also read him as an eudaimonist, although the former considers his ethical framework foundationally relativistic while the latter considers it foundationally non-relativistic. Assuming these scholars are in general correct that Spinoza is a moral realist, and we take into account the abovementioned details about the form and content of his conception of happiness, then there may be good reason to classify Spinoza as an eudaimonist.

¹ See Kisner (2011: chap. 4), Lebuffe (2009: chap. 11), Miller (2015: chap. 5), Nadler (2020: 10–11), Rutherford (2013), and Wolfson (1934: II, chap. XIX).

² See, for example, Aristotle (2002: I-II, VI, VII, X), Diogenes Laertius (1931: VII and X), Epicurus's (1994) Letter to Menoecus and Principal Doctrines.

³ All references to Spinoza's texts are taken from Spinoza (2002). I use the following abbreviations when citing Spinoza's texts: *E* = *Ethics*; *ST* = *Short Treatise*; *TIE* = *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*; *TTP* = *Theological-Political Treatise*. When citing the *Ethics*, I use the following abbreviations: Ax. = Axiom, Def. = Definition, P = Proposition, S = Scholium, C = Corollary, App. = Appendix, Pref. = Preface, Lem. = Lemma, and Def. Aff. = Definitions of the Affects/Emotions. Roman numerals refer to one of the five Parts of the treatise. When referring to a particular passage in a long section of text or making a point about translation, I will also cite the Dutch and Latin in Spinoza (1925), henceforth referred to as 'G.'

⁴ In his own time, Spinoza's philosophy was most closely associated with Stoicism and Epicureanism. See Israel (2001), Lagrée (1994), and Leibniz (1989: 281, 83). 'AG' refers to Leibniz (1989).

⁵ 'CSMK' refers to Descartes (1991). All references to Hobbes are taken from Hobbes (2017). In this edition, Baumgold juxtaposes the content of Hobbes's *The Elements of Law, De Cive*, and *Leviathan* to allow the reader to compare the latter's views and development between texts.

⁶ For criticisms of an eudaimonistic reading of Descartes or Leibniz, see Rutherford (2003; 2013) and Shapiro (2008).

On the other hand, the issue is that not every scholar reads Spinoza as a realist; there is an abundance of moral anti-realist readings, as well.⁷ These anti-realist readings can be roughly divided into two camps: unqualified and qualified. Under the unqualified reading, Spinoza denies that good and bad are at all natural and in turn considers them wholly dependent on the beliefs/feelings of a subject. In general, this reading seems to undermine an eudaimonistic reading of Spinoza, because he rejects the objectivity of goodness. Rutherford (2013: 212–20), however, argues that there is a limited sense in which Spinoza could be considered an eudaimonist, despite being committed to unqualified moral anti-realism. While Spinoza on this reading considers good and bad metaphysically illusory (and thus not truly objective), he nevertheless retains eudaimonistic concepts (like happiness as the highest good) as useful fictions because our ignorance and intellectual limitations make it impossible psychologically to escape moral thinking and we can use this feature of our psychology to improve our lives, namely to increase our adequate knowledge. On Rutherford’s reading, Spinoza is phenomenologically, but not meta-ethically, an eudaimonist. This serves as a plausible explanation for why Spinoza would use eudaimonistic language, despite being an unqualified anti-realist. The fact remains however that, on this reading, Spinoza’s moral philosophy is not genuinely eudaimonistic, because he does not consider anything truly objectively good. The qualified anti-realist reading, in contrast, allows for good and bad to be partly dependent on nature for Spinoza, while nevertheless emphasizing that they are also dependent on the beliefs/feelings (namely, the desires) of a subject. Kisner (2011: chap. 5) takes this position. He argues that Spinoza is a moderate subjectivist, for whom goodness is fundamentally dependent on desire, but with necessary naturalistic considerations concerning what counts as the subject’s genuine desires (i.e., active desires) and how things in the world objectively satisfy or frustrate these desires. Contra Rutherford, Kisner (2011: chap. 4) also reads Spinoza as a genuine eudaimonist, because the latter’s discussion of happiness in both the *TIE* and the *Ethics* meets the eudaimonistic criteria of the highest good. As we will see in the next section, I agree with Kisner that Spinoza’s conception of happiness fits these criteria. The issue with Kisner’s analysis, however, is that he does not explain how moderate subjectivism is compatible with the objective goodness of eudaimonistic happiness, making it unclear how Spinoza could coherently be both a qualified anti-realist and an eudaimonist.

In fact, when evaluating whether Spinoza is or is not a genuine eudaimonist, it is important to make sure that we are clear on what we mean by the ‘objectivity’ of eudaimonistic happiness. Is eudaimonistic happiness objective in the way that the laws of physics are objective, that is, it applies universally and naturally with no necessary appeal to the perspective of a subject? If so, then neither kind of anti-realist reading is compatible with eudaimonism, because both assert that there is a necessary subjective component to Spinoza’s ethical framework. Thankfully for the proponent of the eudaimonistic reading however, I do not think that this is the case. As we will see in Section 2.1, there is a necessary, but insufficient, subjective dimension to eudaimonistic happiness. While happiness is not wholly dependent on the beliefs/feelings of a subject, it is certainly an important part of being happy (*eudaimon*). The paradigm example of a moral realist in the ancient Greek tradition is Plato, who argues (on the traditional reading) that the Good is an immaterial and eternal entity (i.e., a Form), which exists separate from the material world, but is the ultimate source of all goodness and knowledge of goodness in this world (*Republic* V–VII).⁸ The Form of the Good is natural in the sense of being an independently existing thing (i.e., a substance), rather than a property, a mental construct, or an illusion, and in turn it is not remotely dependent on the mind of a subject. For Plato there is in principle a clear definition of goodness which captures the Form of the Good. This definition, in turn, has universal application and serves as the standard for judging whether anything is genuinely good or not. In line with this position, he also famously rejects the premise that ‘Man is the measure of all things,’ particularly epistemically and morally, which rules out (at least) unqualified relativism or subjectivism (*Theaetetus* 152a;

⁷ For an overview of moral realist and anti-realist readings of Spinoza in the literature, see Kisner and Youpa (2014: 5–7). See also Marshall (2017) and Youpa (2020: chaps. 3–4) for discussion of the different forms moral realism and anti-realism can take.

⁸ All references to Plato’s works are taken from Plato (1997).

see also 172a–c). Despite this sort of realism about goodness, though, in the context of happiness Plato acknowledges subjective elements, like love (*eros*) and pleasure directed at the Form of the Good, as necessary for being *eudaimon* (*Republic* IX; *Symposium* 204a–205a; 210e–211e). As well, one need not embrace Plato’s conception of the Good to be an *eudaimonist*. Arguably, the paradigm *eudaimonist* is Aristotle, and he denies that there is an all-encompassing definition of goodness that applies to everything we truly classify as good (*NE* I.6).⁹ Instead, he argues for a qualified relativism based on species and means, whereby goodness is dependent on the species in question (in this case, a universalizable and true account of human nature) and how one achieves the highest good is dependent on the subject’s particular constitution and socio-political circumstances (I.7–8; II.9; X.8–9). Furthermore, with Epicurus, while (as we will see shortly) he relies on naturalistic considerations to derive his account of goodness (*LM* ~129), nevertheless he embraces neither Plato’s Theory of Forms nor Aristotle’s species essentialism (L&S 13E, I–J; 20J–L).¹⁰

I mention the differences between these philosophers in order to illustrate (1) how widely *eudaimonists* can differ in their views on the content of the highest good and (2) how we need to be clear on what we mean by ‘objectivity’ and ‘subjectivity.’ Depending on how we define these concepts, they may be mutually exclusive and all-or-nothing on the one hand, or compatible with each other and admitting of weak and strong manifestations on the other. A key part of this paper will be to show that *eudaimonism* does not embrace a strong sense of objectivity like the laws of physics, which can allow no appeal to subjective considerations of belief or feeling. On the contrary, *eudaimonism* embraces a weaker sense of objectivity that allows for a necessary, but insufficient (and thus weak), subjectivity. If there is indeed a subjective dimension present in this ancient ethical tradition, then a qualified moral anti-realist reading is not obviously incompatible with an *eudaimonistic* reading of Spinoza’s moral philosophy. My own position, which I argue for elsewhere, is that (i) Spinoza is neither an unqualified moral realist nor an unqualified moral anti-realist, and in fact, because his meta-ethical position is best read as qualified, (ii) I do not think Spinoza can be cleanly read as a moral realist or an anti-realist in general since he seems to exhibit both through the respective naturalistic and affective dimensions of his conception of the *conatus* (which we will see later serves as the foundation of his mature moral philosophy).¹¹ For the purposes of this paper, however, I need only show that both ancient *eudaimonists* and Spinoza attribute to happiness the same formal objective and subjective features, thereby paving the way for reading Spinoza as a genuine *eudaimonist*. In defending this reading, I also wish to add to this discussion the acknowledgement that *eudaimonists* differ in their philosophical scope. Some are committed to *eudaimonism* in a weak sense, by which I mean they do not ground their respective ethical conceptions of happiness in complete theories of metaphysics, epistemology, or psychology. Others, however, are committed to *eudaimonism* in a strong sense, in that their conceptions of happiness are built on overall philosophical systems that extend far beyond ethics, while nevertheless being directed at the promotion of a happy life. In what follows, I will show that Spinoza’s ethical philosophy is similarly grounded in such an overarching philosophical system. This distinction between weak and strong *eudaimonism* does not, in itself, entail that Spinoza is an *eudaimonist*, because he could coherently be an unqualified moral anti-realist who grounds his ethical framework in non-ethical doctrines.¹² However, it is valuable in showing that Spinoza is not only committed to *eudaimonism*, but also that he shares with certain other *eudaimonists* a robust and sophisticated understanding of the relationship between happiness and the various disciplines of philosophy as a whole.

9 ‘NE’ refers to *Nicomachean Ethics* in Aristotle (2002).

10 ‘LM’ refers to *Letter to Menoeceus* in Epicurus (1994). ‘L&S’ refers to Long and Sedley (1987).

11 For my defense of this metaethical reading of Spinoza, see Smith (2022). Marshall (2017) also argues that there are realist and anti-realist elements in Spinoza’s moral philosophy, but he classifies Spinoza as a moral realist, placing (incorrectly, in my view) the burden of proof on the anti-realist to undermine this reading.

12 I thank an anonymous reviewer for encouraging me to clarify this point.

The following analysis will consist of three sections. In Section 2 I explain eudaimonism by outlining what it means for happiness to be the highest objective good through its (a) naturalistic universality, (b) necessary (but insufficient) appeal to the beliefs/feelings of a subject, (c) structural stability, and (d) exclusively intrinsic value as a good. I will also distinguish between weak eudaimonists and strong eudaimonists, the latter of whom are committed to the additional claim (e) that happiness depends on the intimate relationship between both ethical and non-ethical philosophical truths. In Section 3, I show Spinoza's consistent commitment to (a), (c), and (d) from the *TIE* to the *Ethics*, and (e) how his non-ethical doctrines play a necessary role in the general moral philosophy that he presents in both the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics*. Finally, in Section 4, I analyze certain subjective and relativistic features of Spinoza's ethical framework that seem to undermine an eudaimonistic reading and support an unqualified moral anti-realist reading. I explain how these features commit Spinoza to (b), thereby showing how his conception of happiness shares with eudaimonistic happiness both objective and subjective dimensions. Ultimately, I argue that Spinoza is not merely an eudaimonist, but a strong eudaimonist, since his conception of happiness as the highest good is necessarily reliant on metaphysical, epistemological, and psychological doctrines that form an overall philosophical system aimed at the ethical pursuit of a happy life as a whole.

2. ANCIENT EUDAIMONISM

2.1 THE GENERAL FEATURES OF ANCIENT HAPPINESS

At the heart of ancient ethics is the concern with how one ought to live their life, promote their well-being, and cultivate the correct kind of moral character (Annas 1993: 27–31; Cooper 2012: 3–8). This foundation leads to inquiries about the nature of the good and what things are good in life, in particular the relevance of (and relationship between) virtue (*arete*) and happiness (*eudaimonia*) as goods. In Plato's *Euthydemus*, Socrates claims that 'we all wish to be happy [*eudaimon*]' (282a), and in the *Symposium* concludes that happiness is the ultimate end of one who desires 'good things' and successfully comes to possess them (204e–205a). Similarly, Aristotle identifies the 'chief good' (*NE* 1094d22) or 'the topmost of all achievable goods' with 'happiness' (1095a19–20). For Plato and Aristotle, and later eudaimonists (e.g., the Stoics and Epicureans), the ultimate motivation of human beings is to be happy. Happiness is thus the highest good, that is, the ultimate standard by which things derive their value. The goodness and badness of things is measured by their relationship to the promotion and frustration of happiness, respectively.

It is important to note, however, that by 'happiness' (*eudaimonia*) the Greeks mean a condition of living that is objective and pertains to one's life as a whole (Annas 1993: 45–46; Shields 2007: 311–12). This conception of happiness is contrasted with a strongly subjective and/or momentary understanding of the happy life. On a strongly subjective account, my happiness is either not strictly universalizable or entirely dependent on my beliefs or feelings. In the first instance, there is no necessary feature that my life must share with the lives of other people in order to be classified as happy, and any similarities would be incidental. With the second instance, I am happy simply because I believe or feel that I am living happily, meaning my beliefs/feelings are a necessary and sufficient condition for happiness. Because my beliefs/feelings are what constitute my happiness, under this conception I can never be mistaken about living happily (i.e., my beliefs can never be false) and thus claims about my happiness lack truth-value. On the momentary account, happiness is conceptualized in terms of a specific period of time. During this period (e.g., a morning, a day, a week, etc.) I am happy, while during another period of time I am unhappy. Under this conception, happiness is a transient or intermittent condition, in the sense that it can appear and disappear throughout one's life.

An eudaimonistic conception of happiness, in contrast, is objective in the sense of being naturally universalizable, having truth-value, and not being based merely on a subject's beliefs/feelings. *Eudaimonia* is fundamentally about personal well-being, but is grounded in what it means for individuals to live a happy life based on certain shared natural features.¹³ Aristotle appeals to the

¹³ For a comprehensive analysis of this naturalistic standard, see Annas (1993: chaps. 3–9).

distinctive function (*ergon*) of human nature, which he takes to be reason, arguing that a core component of happiness is the virtuous and successful realization of activities that follow from this natural rational function (NE I.7.1097b25–198a16). For the Stoics, happiness consists in living in agreement/accordance with nature (DL VII.87–88), which in the case of humans pertains to the virtuous application of reason (VII.88; L&S 63D).¹⁴ Epicurus grounds the *eudaimon* life in the pleasure of the unimpeded functioning of one's natural state of being, which is to say a body that enjoys homeostasis and a mind that enjoys tranquility (LM ~129). For each there is (a) some natural feature that is considered universal, and subsequently sets the standard for what does and does not constitute a happy life. How such a life is achieved or expressed may vary according to individual circumstances, because individuals might differ in how they perfect reason, restore/maintain their health, etc., but the goal and success of the endeavor are ultimately judged by appeal to the relevant foundational and universal natural feature(s) posited by each eudaimonism.

This naturalistic standard also rules out appealing solely to beliefs or feelings, meaning claims about happiness have truth-value. A foundational premise of eudaimonism is that we can be, and often are, mistaken about what will make us happy. Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics partly conduct their analyses of happiness to correct (from their respective naturalistic perspectives) common, erroneous conceptions of living happily. Aristotle critiques the common associations of sensual pleasure, wealth, or honour per se with happiness (NE I.4–5), Epicurus addresses different kinds of desire and pleasure that we fail to distinguish in our attempts to live pleasantly (LM ~127–32), and the Stoics criticize the traditional view that external things have any direct and necessary role in achieving/hindering *eudaimonia* (HB 1.1–4; DL VII.102, 104).¹⁵ However, eudaimonism does not consider beliefs or feelings irrelevant. Aristotelian virtue is about thinking, desiring, and experiencing pleasure and pain according to what is true to human nature and its flourishing (NE I.6, II). The Stoics argue that our ethical judgments, and the truth/falsity of them, play an essential role in our emotional reactions and achievement of happiness (HB 1.1; DL VII.111; TD IV.vii.14), and consider rational emotional pleasure (i.e., joy) to be a necessary consequent of the happy life (DVB 15.2).¹⁶ Epicurus considers pleasure, and its absence in the form of pain, the fundamental standard by which we judge things to be truly good and bad in promoting a happy life (LM ~128–29). Beliefs and feelings are therefore (b) *necessary* for eudaimonistic happiness (i.e., I cannot be happy if I do not believe/feel I am happy), but they are *not sufficient* for it because our beliefs can be false and we can misunderstand what our feelings truly represent relative to our nature (i.e., just because I believe/feel I am happy does not entail that I am indeed happy).¹⁷

Finally, this naturalistic account of happiness culminates in a concern for the structure of life as a whole. Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics understand the happiness of life, not in terms of transient or intermittent periods of time, but rather (c) as a stable condition of living in harmony with one's nature.¹⁸ One's happiness or lack thereof, in other words, is decided by the way in which one approaches and organizes the entirety of their natural life. Focusing on life as a whole, however, does not entail living a *full life* from childhood to old age. Aristotle adds this condition to his conception of happiness (NE I.7.1098a19–21), but in general eudaimonists are less concerned with the *quantity* of a life than its *structural quality*, that is am I living my life overall (for as long as circumstances permit) in ways harmonious with the sustainable flourishing of my nature? This conception of happiness is thus objective and structurally stable, rather than merely (i.e.,

¹⁴ 'DL' refers to Diogenes Laertius (1931).

¹⁵ 'HB' refers to Epictetus (2014).

¹⁶ 'TD' refers to Tusculan Disputations in Cicero (1945). 'DVB' refers to De Vita Beata in Seneca (1932).

¹⁷ Eudaimonism can be understood as a type of virtue ethics, with its foundational focus on character (i.e., correct thinking, feeling, and acting). For discussion of how ancient and modern virtue ethics differ, see Annas (1993: chap. 2).

¹⁸ There are, however, crucial differences in content between their respective views. Aristotle (NE 1099a32–1009b8) and Epicurus (LM ~127–32) grant that some external things are necessary for happiness, but once one has achieved happiness, Epicurus (contra Aristotle [NE I.10]) denies that external things can enhance or diminish this state (PD ~XVIII). The Stoics deny external things any direct and necessary role in the achievement/frustration of happiness (DL VII.102–4) and argue that happiness qua virtue does not admit of degrees (VII.127).

strongly) subjective or transient/intermittent, thereby committing eudaimonists to (a), (b), and (c) as features of a happy life.¹⁹

2.2 HAPPINESS AS THE ULTIMATE GOOD

From this foundation of objectivity and stability, we can now discuss what precisely makes happiness the highest good. According to Aristotle, the highest good is that which (1) ‘we wish for because of itself’ (NE I.2.1094A18–19), (2) we wish ‘for the other things we wish for because of it’ (1094a19), (3) ‘we do not choose everything because of something else’ other than it (1094a20), (4) ‘is complete ... [or] always desirable in itself and never because of something else’ (1097a34–1097b1), and (5) is ‘self-sufficient’ in that it ‘makes life desirable and lacking in nothing’ (1097b14–15). In relation to (1), we seek out and value a happy life for its own sake. All other things, like bodily pleasure, wealth, social status, and family, we can be said to desire and value because they promote happiness in some way (2), with there being no alternative ultimate end that these things derive value from (3). In agreement with (4), happiness is never understood to be a means to anything (i.e., instrumentally good); it is on the contrary always an end (i.e., exclusively intrinsically good). In contrast, bodily pleasure and social status might be considered valuable in themselves, but they may also be means towards happiness (depending on the account of happiness in question). Finally, a happy life is a self-sufficient good (5), because the structure of such a life is in itself fulfilling, and thus lacking in nothing necessary or meaningful.

Later eudaimonists follow in Aristotle’s footsteps. The Stoics (according to Stobaeus) declare happiness to be ‘the end, for the sake of which everything is done, but which is not itself done for the sake of anything’ (L&S 63A). Similarly, the Epicureans are said by Cicero to focus on ‘the final and ultimate good’ as ‘the end to which everything is the means, but is not itself the means to anything’ (L&S 21A1) and Epicurus himself states that ‘if [happiness] is present we have everything and if it is absent we do everything in order to have it’ (LM ~122). With the Stoics we see explicit reference to (2) and (4), which imply at least (1) and (3), and with the Epicureans we see explicit reference to (2), (4), and (5), which imply (1) and (3). In sum, happiness is understood to be the highest objective good because it is a stable condition of natural living that is (d) exclusively intrinsically valuable, meaning all other goods serve as means to, or consequents of, it.

2.3 A DIFFERENCE IN SCOPE

We can also distinguish between what we might call *weak* eudaimonism versus *strong* eudaimonism. Weak eudaimonism is any ethical view that is merely concerned with the achievement and maintenance of happiness as the highest good. Strong eudaimonism, conversely, is any ethical view that relies on an overall philosophical system that appeals to more than ethical doctrines (e.g., metaphysical, physical, epistemological, or psychological doctrines) in its conception of happiness. This distinction is not one that is explicitly made by ancient eudaimonists, but it captures certain approaches in some ethical philosophies compared to others. Examples of weak eudaimonists are Socrates and the Cynics. The philosophical Socrates is depicted as committed to discovering truths about the good of the human soul, in particular its flourishing through virtue (*Apology* 29d–30b, 36c–e, 38a).²⁰ His analyses, however, do not move beyond the ethical dimension to provide complete metaphysical or physical answers about the cosmos or the natural world (19b–c, 29a–c; *Phaedo* 96a–100a). Socratic ethics is then arguably a weak eudaimonism because its focus on happiness is not necessarily connected to other complete philosophical theories that, together with ethics, form a cohesive philosophical system. Similarly, the Cynics ‘do away with the subjects of Logic and Physics and devote their whole attention to Ethics’ (DL VI.103), in terms of living

¹⁹ For a full discussion of this structural feature of eudaimonism, in general and in the context of specific eudaimonisms, see Annas (1993).

²⁰ I here distinguish between the ‘philosophical’ Socrates and the ‘historical’ Socrates. The historical Socrates, who was a real person living in Athens, did not write anything, making it difficult for scholars to be certain of his philosophical views. The philosophical Socrates represents the figure depicted most notably in Plato’s early dialogues, with most scholars agreeing that Plato sought to represent Socrates’s actual philosophical methodology and views in these dialogues. We, of course, cannot know for sure, but because this Platonic conception of Socrates has been so influential historically, I will treat it here as more-or-less accurate.

according to virtue as that which constitutes the happy life (104). Like Socratic philosophy, Cynic philosophy is mainly ethical, with no reliance on other complete philosophical areas of inquiry.²¹

In contrast, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics are all strong eudaimonists. They offer theoretical conclusions in metaphysics, physics, epistemology, and/or psychology that work cohesively together with their ethical principles to facilitate the achievement and maintenance of the happy life. In Plato happiness is closely linked to his metaphysical theory of Forms through knowledge of the Form of the Good or Beauty (*Timaeus* 90b–d; *Republic* V–VII; *Symposium* 204a–205a; 210e–211e) and his tripartite conception of the soul (*Republic* IV), in particular the importance of having a rationally balanced (i.e., just) soul (IX). Aristotle considers contemplating scientific (i.e., eternal) truths the highest happiness (*NE* X.7–8), and his account of happiness crucially draws on his theory of the rational and non-rational aspects of the human soul (I.7, 13; see also Aristotle 1984). Epicurus links philosophical study to happiness (*LM* ~122) and asserts that the only ‘goal’ of understanding nature is ‘freedom from disturbance’ (*LP* ~85).²² From this foundation, he establishes ‘sense-perceptions and feelings’ (*LH* ~38) as the epistemological criteria of truth in metaphysical (namely, atomistic and non-providential) and ethical (namely, hedonistic) analyses (~63–66; *LM* ~128; *LH* ~76–77, 81; *PD* ~I).²³ Stoicism relies on its deterministic metaphysics and epistemological analyses of the mechanisms of emotion in order to combat suffering and cultivate happiness. Emotions involve ethical judgments about impressions, and passions are harmful emotions that involve erroneous judgments concerning these impressions, in particular ascribing eudaimonistic value to impressions concerning things outside one’s control (*DL* VII.110–11; *TD* IV.vii.11,14; *HB* 1.1–4). Virtue, and in turn happiness, involves making rational ethical judgments, which embrace the providential necessity of all natural phenomena and ascribe eudaimonistic value only to what is in one’s control, that is to say, one’s faculty of reasoning in itself (*L&S* 63D; *DL* VII.88, 138). Each of the abovementioned ethical philosophies, despite their differences, relies formally on an overall philosophical system that appeals to more than ethical doctrines in its conception of happiness. Moreover, the happy person, in each eudaimonistic framework, also relies on understanding how these ethical and non-ethical philosophical truths relate to each other for their flourishing.²⁴ Consequently, while all eudaimonists are committed to (a), (b), (c), and (d) as formal features of happiness, strong eudaimonists are also committed to the further claim that (e) happiness is necessarily and intimately connected to other philosophical areas of knowledge.

3. SPINOZISM AS STRONG EUDAIMONISM

3.1 THE BEGINNINGS OF SPINOZA’S PHILOSOPHY: *TREATISE ON THE EMENDATION OF THE INTELLECT*

Happiness is a consistent and important theme in Spinoza’s corpus. The *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, possibly his earliest work, begins with a discussion of his search for the ‘supreme good’ and the ‘true good.’ The ‘supreme good’ or ‘highest good’ (*summum bonum*) is described

²¹ It should be clarified, however, that weak eudaimonists like Socrates and the Cynics only lack non-ethical theories. They still adhere to the naturalistic feature of eudaimonism because their respective ethical theories involve certain assumptions about reality or nature, but they do not concern themselves with developing philosophical theories about such things. Socrates seems to consider the soul a distinct entity from the body (*Apology* 30ba–b), and the Cynics are concerned with living a simple life according to what they take to be our basic natural needs (*DL* VI.104), but Socrates (excluding his role as a representative of Plato’s own views) does not trouble himself with outlining a complete theory of the soul (and its place in reality) and the Cynics show little interest in fully explaining reality in general or human nature in particular.

²² ‘*LP*’ refers to Letter to Pythocles in Epicurus (1994).

²³ ‘*LH*’ refers to Letter to Herodotus and ‘*PD*’ refers to Principal Doctrines, both of which are found in Epicurus (1994).

²⁴ As an anonymous reviewer rightly points out, it does not necessarily follow from the dependence of ethical truths on non-ethical truths that one would need to have philosophical knowledge of these non-ethical truths to be happy. The abovementioned philosophers whom I classify as ‘strong eudaimonists,’ however, are committed to the additional claim that knowledge of the relationship between these non-ethical and ethical truths is necessary for being *eudaimon*. As we will see in Section 3, Spinoza is also committed to this claim, with his account of being happy requiring understanding of his other non-ethical philosophical doctrines (in particular, those concerning the nature of God, determinism, and the conatus as an essential self-affirmative force).

as that which is 'good in itself and the ultimate end to which everything is directed' (~5/G II 6). It is intrinsically good and the fundamental source of all value, because all our endeavours are for its sake. Spinoza identifies this good with the 'highest happiness' (~2), and describes it as a 'permanent good' (~6) that constitutes a life of 'continuous and supreme joy to all eternity' (~1). The supreme good is therefore also a stable good. Once obtained, one enjoys consistent happiness that cannot be interrupted or truly taken away. A 'true good,' in turn, is whatever serves as a genuine 'means' towards achieving this supreme good (~13).

In his search, Spinoza laments the 'hollowness and futility' (~1) of goods like sensual pleasure, wealth, and honour, which are common candidates for the highest good among most people (~3, 5). He argues that these apparent goods often lead to suffering and self-destruction. Sensual pleasure, wealth, and honour are ultimately transient goods, because we cannot be confident that we can keep them in our possession, which causes us despair when we lose access to such things, which is frequently the case. This transience also promotes obsession with the acquisition of these common goods, to the neglect of other (potentially more valuable) goods, and self-destructive excess (~4–10). Spinoza concludes, then, that sensual pleasure, wealth, and honour do not in themselves constitute the supreme good.

Although we do not receive an argument for it in the *TIE*, Spinoza nonetheless gives us a description of what he considers the supreme good to be. This conception of the good is grounded in an ideal conception of human nature (~12–13), with the supreme good being equated with 'the highest human perfection' (~16) in general and 'knowledge of the union which the mind has with the whole of Nature' in particular (~13). The ultimate end upon which all other things in life are valued and pursued, and the ultimate expression of human nature, is rational understanding of one's place as a mind in the natural world. A true good is anything that is conducive to promoting one's progress towards this natural and rational ideal. According to Spinoza, while sensual pleasure, wealth, and honour per se are unsuitable as constituents of the supreme good, insofar as they serve as means to acquiring understanding of one's union with Nature, they can nevertheless be considered genuine goods (~11). These traditional goods are therefore valuable, but their value is derived from their role in promoting rationality.

Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect (*Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*) begins with this discussion of the supreme good as rational understanding in order to motivate its overall project: *emending the intellect* (G II 3). Following his discussion of the supreme good, Spinoza outlines what he takes to be the necessary means to obtaining knowledge of the mind's union with Nature. These means are knowledge of Nature, education, medicine, mechanics, and any other science deemed conducive to this end, as well as a society that promotes the acquisition of such knowledge (~14–15). Happiness is then achieved through natural, scientific understanding. A healthy mind is the core theme of the *TIE*, because a mind riddled with erroneous beliefs and the emotional disturbances that follow from these beliefs (as seen above in the discussion of common goods) is in no position to obtain proper knowledge of Nature, and thus happiness. The mind is unhealthy, in other words, when it reasons poorly. In light of this, Spinoza asserts that 'our first consideration must be to devise a method of emending the intellect and of purifying it ... so that it may succeed in understanding things without error and as well as possible' (~16). We must first improve the mind's reasoning so that it is free of false beliefs and effectively disposed towards truth. In order to promote the mind's health in this way, we must be able to distinguish between truth and falsity, and understand epistemic strategies that reliably lead to grasping truths. The purpose of this treatise is then epistemological and therapeutic: by understanding the nature of truth/falsity and knowledge/ignorance we are able to free the mind of the disturbances of false beliefs and successfully acquire scientific understanding that promotes its health and happiness through proper intellectual activity. For our purposes, we need not delve into the precise details of Spinoza's epistemological analysis in this text.²⁵ What matters is that we have seen that Spinoza has an epistemological project that is fundamentally motivated by an ethical concern with obtaining happiness as the supreme good.

25 For discussion of the *TIE*'s epistemological framework, see A. Garrett (2003: chap. 3) and Sangiacomo (2019: chap. 1).

This conception of the supreme good largely agrees with the account of eudaimonism outlined in Section 2. Spinoza's discussion of discovering the supreme good in order to protect himself from suffering and to promote happiness shows a fundamental ethical concern with well-being. The description of happiness as 'a continuous and supreme joy to all eternity' moreover tells us that he is concerned with a condition of well-being that is (c) stable, and not transient or intermittent (*TIE* ~1). Spinoza's critique of the value of the common goods of sensual pleasure, wealth, and honour, coupled with his assertion that he is looking for true goods that will lead to the supreme good, implies that this condition is also not merely subjective, namely because one's ethical beliefs can be mistaken, and thus these beliefs are *insufficient* to guarantee that one is indeed happy. With that said, there is (b) a *necessary* subjective dimension here, since the mind cannot enjoy the supreme good if it does not also know and feel that it possesses this good. Spinoza claims that we tend to think of at least one of these common goods as the supreme good, but when we actually attend to the consequences of pursuing these things for their own sake, we discover that they usually bring suffering of some kind. He concludes that such things are good as means to happiness, but none of them constitute the ultimate good itself. What we believe and feel to be good is not necessarily good, or good in quite the way we thought it was, because there is a standard by which things can be said to be truly or falsely good. This standard thus has truth value.

Admittedly, Spinoza seems to appeal to an ideal of human nature that he concedes is based on a confused and abstracted conception of what it is to be human (~12–13). According to Kisner (2011: 75), Spinoza is departing from the ancients here, because where the latter denies that we can base the highest good on a genuine naturalistic foundation, the ancients in contrast thought they could indeed derive this good from understanding nature as it is. Spinoza's account of the highest good in the *TIE* may then weaken his eudaimonism to some degree. With that said this ideal is still based on a real natural feature that is common and distinctive among humans, namely the capacity for reason. Furthermore, the rational understanding that Spinoza links happiness with is scientific knowledge of Nature. A human being may not be able to become the perfectly rational being embodied by the ideal, but this ideal does serve as an objective standard by virtue of its appeal to the natural and universal capacity of human beings to understand themselves and Nature. Spinoza's conception of happiness here is therefore at least roughly (a) derived from universal and naturalistic considerations that are not strongly subjective. And as we will see in what follows, Spinoza's ethical commitment to naturalistic considerations (and in turn eudaimonism) grows stronger and more solid in the *Ethics*, which presents his mature moral philosophy.

The *TIE*'s ethical framework also (d) meets all of Aristotle's criteria for the highest good. Spinoza is explicit that his supreme good is pursued for its own sake (1) and that everything else of value, that is whatever is considered a true good (e.g., sensual pleasure, wealth, or honour), is ultimately valued for the sake of obtaining this ultimate end qua happiness (2) (3). Because of its stability and foundation as the source of all value, we can also say that Spinoza's supreme good is complete (4) and self-sufficient (5), because it is never a means to anything else and represents a fulfilling life as human perfection itself. We can also, despite the limited epistemological focus of this treatise, see Spinoza leaning towards (e) a strong eudaimonism, with his comments about the ethical importance of understanding truth and falsity for the sake of scientifically understanding the natural world in various unified ways. He does not provide us with a complete philosophical system here, but indicates his ultimate intent to do so. Moreover, given Spinoza's ethical motivation for his epistemological project and his conception of happiness, we can reasonably say that this potential philosophical system overall will also be aimed at happiness.

3.2 SPINOZA'S PHILOSOPHY AS A WHOLE: THE *SHORT TREATISE* AND THE *ETHICS*

In his later works, the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics*, Spinoza indeed focuses on happiness as the highest good in relation to his philosophy as a whole. Both texts elucidate Spinoza's main metaphysical, epistemological, psychological, and ethical views, and indicate from their title the ethical focus of their philosophical content. I do not wish to imply, however, that the *TIE*, the *ST*, and the *Ethics* espouse precisely the same philosophical views. Spinoza's metaphysical (e.g., on the

relationship between mind and body) and ethical (e.g., on the value of passions) views arguably undergo significant changes. I am merely emphasizing here core ideas that these texts share in an eudaimonistic context.²⁶ Spinoza argues in both later texts that God is the ultimate and immanent cause of everything (*ST* I.II; *E* IP15, 17), God is synonymous with Nature (*ST* I.X, App. 1P1VC; *E* I29S; IVPref.), experiential ideas can be false while ideas derived from reasoning or immediate rational conception are always true (*ST* II.I–2; *E* IIP40–44), experiential ideas give rise to harmful passions and rational ideas good emotions (*ST* II.I–IV; *E* IIIP1, IVApp.2–3), and the highest happiness, as the highest good, consists in intellectual love of God qua Nature (*ST* II.XVIII–XIX; *E* VP42Proof).

The title of the *ST* describes one of its main themes to be the ‘well-being’ (*welstand*) of ‘man’ (*G* I 11). In an alternative manuscript version of this treatise, we find said commitment emphasized with the title *Ethica or Moral Science* (Morgan 2002: 34). This title indicates that the guiding theme of this work on Spinoza’s overall philosophy is ethics or moral philosophy, and the content of the text shows that this moral science is concerned with well-being. We can also see, namely from those points outlined above, that this science of well-being is concerned with happiness, and that (a) and (e) Spinoza’s metaphysics, epistemology, and psychology play integral roles in explaining the nature and achievement of happiness. Since happiness consists in intellectual knowledge and love of God, metaphysical understanding of God as both the cause of everything and (in some sense) synonymous with Nature becomes crucial, which links back to the ethical importance of natural knowledge posited in the *TIE*.²⁷ Spinoza’s epistemology tells us that this understanding of God qua Nature is associated with reasoned and immediately conceivable ideas, in particular the latter as the highest and most precise form of knowledge (*ST* II.II), and not experiential ideas per se, because the latter do not offer clear and distinct apprehension of truth. Psychologically, we are shown that there is an essential connection between one’s beliefs qua ideas and their emotional states, which leads into a discussion of the harmfulness of passions (which arise from experiential ideas) and the ethical importance of rational ideas as the source of good emotions that promote the achievement of intellectual love of God, (c) an ‘eternal,’ and thus stable, condition of supreme happiness (II.XVIII). This supreme happiness, as ‘the knowledge and love of God’ is, in turn, described as ‘the highest good,’ in the sense that once we are ‘united’ with God in this way ‘we are compelled to stop [our pursuit] and rest here,’ since ‘outside of [knowing God], there is nothing that can give us any happiness’ (II.XXVI). Intellectual love of God qua happiness, in other words, functions as (d) the ultimate ethical end and an exclusively intrinsic good.

The *Ethics* retains the eudaimonistic aims of the *TIE* and the *ST*. Like the *ST*, the main title of this treatise, *Ethics* (*Ethica*), conveys the guiding ethical focus of Spinoza’s presentation of his overall philosophy (*G* II 43). He begins by metaphysically establishing God as the only substance and everything else (including human beings) as modes of substance. Epistemologically, the experiential ideas mentioned previously are identified with the first kind of knowledge (*cognitio*) and are classified as ‘inadequate’ (IIP11C) by virtue of representing things in a ‘fragmentary (*mutilate*) and confused manner’ (IIP40S2/*G* II 122), while reasoned and immediately conceivable ideas are classified as ‘adequate’ and identified as the second kind of knowledge (reason) and the third kind of knowledge (intuition) respectively (IIP40S2/*G* II 122), both of which express certainty (IIP36).²⁸ Ontologically and psychologically, Spinoza argues that all existing things possess a *conatus*, that is an essential striving to express and preserve their existence (IIP6–7), which in human beings amounts to the expression of the body’s causal power to maintain the ratio of motion and rest amongst its constituent parts through physical activities (IVP38–39) and the mind’s causal power to maintain its existence through intellectual activities (IIIP9; IVP26).²⁹

26 For discussion of how Spinoza’s philosophical views may have evolved throughout these texts, see Jaquet (2018: chap. 3) and Sangiacomo (2019: chaps. 1–2, 4–5).

27 See Spinoza’s distinction between *natura naturans* (*ST* I.VIII) and *natura naturata* (I.IX). See also *E* IP29S.

28 While there is a growing trend in the literature to translate *cognitio* more generally as ‘cognition,’ I will retain the traditional translation of ‘knowledge’ in order to emphasize that, while the first kind of *cognitio* is the only source of error and falsity (IIP41), it nevertheless grasps truth in its content (albeit only partially) and is thus not inherently false (IIP17S, 32–33, 35).

29 For discussion of what Spinoza means by the verb ‘to express’ (*exprimere*), see Deleuze (1990) and Lin (2004: 29ff.).

This conatus can be strengthened or weakened, meaning the body or mind can have more or less causal power to express its existence (IIIP57). Insofar as the conatus has causal power (i.e., it is the sufficient cause of self-directed or world-directed effects) it is considered an adequate cause or active, and insofar as it lacks causal power (i.e., it is only a partial cause of effects) the conatus is considered an inadequate cause or passive (IIIDef. 1–2). The mind is active when it possesses adequate ideas and passive when it possesses inadequate ideas (IIIP1). Emotions, which represent the strengthening (pleasant emotions) or weakening (painful emotions) of the conatus, involve ethical judgments (IIIDef.3; IVP8). Inadequate ideas reflect vague judgments that can be true or false, which are linked to passive emotions (passions) that, either in themselves or circumstantially, lead to the strengthening or weakening of the conatus's activity. Adequate ideas, conversely, reflect certainly true judgments, and are associated with active emotions that always promote the well-being of the conatus.

The conatus itself serves as the (a) naturalistic and universalizable foundation of Spinoza's ethical framework.^{30,31} That which is good (i.e., useful) is what promotes the (physical or intellectual) activity of the conatus, while that which is bad (i.e., harmful) is what undermines its activity or increases its passivity (IVP8Proof). Pleasure (*laetitia*), because it represents the promotion of the conatus's activity, is in itself good.³² Pain (*tristitia*), because it represents the frustration of this activity, is in itself bad (IVP41). Spinoza identifies virtue with the conatus qua adequate cause (IVDef. 8, P18S), on the grounds that, because the conatus is one's essence or nature, there is no other coherent foundation for virtue than this self-affirmative striving (IVP22).³³ In line with this reasoning, virtue is intrinsically good. Spinoza says that virtue 'should be sought for its own sake' and 'there is nothing preferable to it or more to our advantage, for the sake of which it should be sought' (IVP18S). Virtue, in this context, is intrinsically valuable because the fundamental importance or usefulness of the conatus's self-affirmative activity is not derived from some other independent end—nothing is more important or useful to the conatus (as an active being) than itself. As a result, virtue is not simply an end in itself, it also cannot (and should not) ever be a means (i.e., instrumentally valuable) to some other end. Spinoza, in turn, asserts that 'happiness consists in a man's being able to preserve his own being,' that is virtue (IVP18S; see also IIP49S). In other words, to be happy is to be virtuous qua adequate cause. Since virtue is the ultimate ethical end, and equated with happiness, happiness is the ultimate end.

30 There is rich debate over whether Spinoza is committed to a realist or anti-realist conception of human nature. For realist readings of Spinoza's account of human nature, see Martin (2008) and Soyarslan (2013: 31–35). For anti-realist readings, see Hübner (2014) and Sharp (2011: chap. 3). For a middleground position between realism and anti-realism, see Sangiacomo (2019: chap. 4). I argue that either interpretation is compatible with an eudaimonistic reading, because, as we saw in Sections 1 and 2.1 with Socrates, the Cynics, and Epicurus, eudaimonism has not historically required a complete or essentialist account of human nature. Eudaimonism only requires a clear naturalistic foundation, which the conatus here provides. At the very least, Spinoza is not, on these grounds, less of an eudaimonist than Socrates, the Cynics, or Epicurus.

31 For further evidence of Spinoza's commitment to a naturalistic standard in the domain of ethics, see Letter 22. Here Spinoza argues that, if one's nature was (counterfactually) inherently self-destructive (in this case, disposed towards hanging), it would therefore be virtuous, and thus good, to end one's life (834/G IV 152).

32 Curley (1985: 642) translates *laetitia* as 'joy,' arguing that this English term 'is more suggestive of the overall sense of well-being that ... Spinoza has in mind.' He applies the term 'pleasure' to a subspecies of *laetitia*: *titillatio*. As Curley's translation is (rightly) the dominant translation in the English literature, joy is the usual term for this emotion. However, Wolfson points out that *laetitia* is one of many common Latin translations of the Greek term *hedone* (1934: 206). Consequently, the translation of 'pleasure' is not without precedent. For my own part, while Curley's reasoning has merit, I find that 'pleasure' more accurately connotes the *primary* nature of this emotion than 'joy.' With that said, I advise the reader to focus more on what Spinoza means by the terms he uses, and less on the connotations that we may or may not attach to them. Spinoza himself says his intention is merely to use terms that closely approximate what he has in mind, not to strictly follow the common meanings of terms (E IIIDef. Aff.20Expl.). Whether we call it pleasure or joy, what matters is that there is a fundamental emotion of enjoyment which constitutes the promotion of one's natural power.

33 I am here using the term 'affirmative' loosely in an attribute-inclusive sense to connote the positive, self-expressive or self-preservative nature of the conatus as one's essence. Spinoza uses 'affirmation' (*affirmatio*) in a more technical sense to refer to the positive volitional power of an idea insofar as it assents to its content (E IIP49/G II 130). My looser use of 'affirmative' includes this technical, Thought-oriented, sense of 'affirmation,' but is not restricted to the attribute of Thought, since God and individuals qua modes of God manifest their power through the attribute of Extension, as well (in fact, God manifests or 'affirms' Its power through infinitely many attributes, of which Thought and Extension are only two [IDef.6, P8–10]). If the reader prefers, for any instance where I use the term 'self-affirmative,' substitute it with 'self-expressive' or 'self-preservative.'

Blessedness, the highest happiness (IVApp.4), is said to consist in intellectual love of God through adequate intuitive knowledge (VP42), with Spinoza arguing that said knowledge represents the ‘highest virtue’ and the ‘highest good’ of the mind (IVP28). There is, in other words, no higher expression of intellectual activity, and nothing more valuable to one’s natural, self-affirmative striving, than knowing God qua Nature, the ultimate immanent cause of all being. Other potential goods, like food, fragrances, fashion, athletics, art, etc., are ultimately pursued for the sake of promoting one’s natural physical and intellectual activity, because they enable one’s body to express ‘all of the functions that follow from its ... nature’ and one’s mind ‘to be equally capable of simultaneously understanding many things [namely, as modes of God/Nature]’ (IVP45S). Other goods then derive their value from the well-being of the conatus, in particular their capacity to promote its adequate causality in the form of intuitive knowledge. Finally, Spinoza argues that blessedness represents an eternal condition of the mind, namely through intuitively understanding its own essence, and the essence of the body, as eternal truths that follow from God’s eternal nature (VP31, P37Proof). By virtue of this eternal feature, Spinoza asserts that ‘[t]here is nothing ... which is contrary to this intellectual love, or which can destroy it’ (VP37). Blessedness qua highest good represents a stable condition. This point is further reinforced by Spinoza’s emphasis on happiness in terms of being ‘able to pass the whole of one’s life with a healthy [i.e., active] mind’ (VP39S). Blessedness is then neither intermittent (because the mind is able to consistently express its understanding) nor impermanent (because of the nature of adequate intuitive knowledge and the eternal aspect of the mind); rather, it pertains to (c) the stable structure of one’s life as a whole.

We also find that Spinoza’s ethical framework shares with certain eudaimonisms a concern for tranquility. Epicurus, for example, asserts that a core component of happiness is ‘freedom of the soul from [psychological] disturbance [*ataraxia*]’ (LM ~128). Miller (2015: 176) notes that we find a similar emphasis on a lack of psychological disturbance in Spinoza. In his political work, the *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza claims that ‘true happiness [is] solely place[d] in virtue and peace of mind [*tranquillitate animi*]’ (chap. 6/G III 88), and in the *Ethics* we find the intellectual love of God qua happiness similarly linked to ‘complete tranquility of mind [*animum omnimode quietum*]’ (IIP49S/G II 135) and ‘contentment of spirit [*animi acquiescentia*]’ (VP36S, 42S/G II 303). This concern with freedom from disturbance connects well with our abovementioned discussion of the therapeutic epistemological project of the *TIE*. By correcting erroneous beliefs, particularly about the ways in which things are and are not of value in acquiring intuitive knowledge of God/Nature, one removes emotional disturbance and achieves stable pleasure. In other words, a healthy (i.e., rational) mind enjoys tranquility. That Spinoza still has this therapeutic goal in mind in the *Ethics* can be seen in IIPref., where he clarifies that his metaphysical and epistemological arguments are fundamentally focused ‘only [on] those things that can lead us as it were by the hand to the knowledge of the human mind and its utmost blessedness.’³⁴ For Spinoza, the highest happiness consists in intuitive knowledge of God, whose acquisition relies on metaphysical understanding of God qua substance and epistemological understanding of adequate knowledge vs. inadequate knowledge, as well as a number of interconnected ontological, psychological, and ethical arguments concerning the conatus.

Three key areas of misunderstanding that Spinoza seeks to correct our beliefs about, for the therapeutic purpose of promoting happiness, are God, providence, and free will. He criticizes conceptions of God that treat It as transcendent and separate from the world (IP14–15, 18), capable of indeterminate willing and pleasant/painful emotions (IP32–33), or providentially inclined to create the best possible world (IApp.; IVPref.). Since Spinoza identifies happiness with adequate knowledge of God, such erroneous beliefs are opposed to this understanding, and thus also contrary to happiness. In line with these points, it is crucial that we understand that all our actions and the events we experience in our lives are not contingent and are not aimed at some ultimate cosmic moral goal, nor do we please or displease God by our actions (IP16, 29; VP17). We also do not have an indeterminate will, meaning there are always strict reasons internal to our

³⁴ For discussion of the therapeutic value of the *Ethics* itself as a text, see Carlisle (2021: chap. 2) and A. Garrett (2003: chaps. 6–7).

nature or externally-derived from other beings that necessarily lead us to choose and act one way rather than another (IIP48; IIIDef.1–3). It is through adequate knowledge of this deterministic causal framework that we remove harmful passions (e.g., suffering from thinking we or other beings could have acted otherwise) and enhance our knowledge of God and ourselves as modes of God, thereby promoting our happiness (IVApp.32; VP1–10, 20s, 24).

Ultimately, both the *ST* and the *Ethics* (d) adhere to all five of Aristotle's eudaimonistic criteria. Intellectual love of God is identified as the highest good precisely because it is valued in itself (1) as the highest expression of understanding, and more fundamentally the highest virtue of the conatus qua adequate cause. It is also never pursued for the sake of some other thing (3) (4), on the contrary all other things are valued because they promote the conatus (2), and once we have this intellectual love we are not lacking (in kind) anything meaningful that we need to continue to pursue (5).³⁵ Furthermore, this conception of happiness qua highest good is also (e) necessarily related to an overall system of metaphysics, epistemology, psychology, and ethics. Without appealing to Spinoza's arguments about God qua substance, determinism, inadequate vs. adequate causality, and the nature of the conatus, blessedness is incomprehensible. Consequently, there is good reason to see a consistent commitment to a strong eudaimonistic conception of happiness in Spinoza from the *TIE* to the *Ethics*.

4. POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Thus far we have focused on how Spinoza is committed to (a), (c), (d), and (e) as key formal features of eudaimonism. However, an adequate discussion of Spinoza's ethical philosophy must include acknowledgement of certain subjective and relativistic claims that he makes, which may support an unqualified anti-realist reading and undermine the objectivity necessary for an eudaimonistic reading. Firstly, we are consistently told in the *TIE*, the *ST*, and the *Ethics* that good and bad/evil are not intrinsic properties of things: '[A]ll the things which were the source and object of my anxiety held nothing of good and evil in themselves save insofar as the mind was influenced by them' (*TIE* ~1); '[G]ood and evil are only relations ... [they] are neither things nor actions [per se] ... [they] do not exist [per se] in Nature' (*ST* I.X); "'good" and "bad" ... indicate nothing positive in things considered in themselves ... [they] are nothing but modes of thinking, or notions we which we form from comparing things ...' (*E* IVPref.). More precisely, good and bad are defined in terms of usefulness to the subject. Good is described as 'that which we certainly know to be useful to us' (IVDef.1) and bad as 'that which we certainly know to be an obstacle to our attainment of some good' (IVDef.2). Simply put, what is beneficial is good and what is harmful is bad. Related to these points, Spinoza claims that (i) 'we do not endeavor, will, seek after, or desire because we judge a thing to be good. On the contrary, we judge a thing to be good because we endeavor, will, seek after and desire it' (IIIP9S) and (ii) 'one and the same thing can at the same time be good and bad, and also indifferent ... [f]or example, music is good for one who is melancholy, bad for one in mourning, and neither good nor bad for the deaf' (IVPref.). Since good and bad are apparently not intrinsic properties of things, but rather relational properties concerning usefulness and harm, respectively, to the conatus, their source is seemingly found in the subject qua conatus (i), namely in the desires of the subject relative to their current circumstances (ii).

A piece of music, according to Spinoza, has no ethical value without appeal to its affective relationship to a subject, meaning ethical categories have a necessary subjective component. In light of IIIP9S, it would seem that the sound of music is indifferent to the (wholly) deaf person because they experience no desire to pursue or avoid it for the sake of the conatus. Conversely, music will only be good to the melancholy person if they desire it as something useful (pleasant) to the conatus and bad to the mourner if they desire to avoid it as something harmful (painful) to the conatus. This example indicates to us not only that the ethical value of some object is

³⁵ I say 'in kind,' because Spinoza grants that we can and should strive to increase the amount of intuitive knowledge we possess, even though there is no greater kind of intellectual activity that we could enjoy (*E* VP30S, 38–40).

necessarily dependent on a subject's desires, but also that it can differ in value because subjects can experience different desires concerning the same object. Spinoza tells us that (1) *distinct subjects* 'can be affected in *different ways* by one and *the same object*' and (2) *one subject* 'can be affected by one and *the same object* in *different ways* at different times' (IIP51, emphasis mine). Distinct subjects can differ in their overall natural constitutions or specific states in a given moment, meaning that a given object may be pleasurable, painful, or ineffective to their respective conatuses, which will in turn shape their individual desires and evaluations concerning that object. The mourner and the deaf person differ in their overall natural constitutions, the former being able to be pleasantly or painfully affected by the sound of music and the latter being entirely unaffected by it. The melancholy person and the mourner differ in specific states in a given moment, the former finding pleasure in the music and the latter pain. However, we could also consider melancholy, mourning, and deafness differing states of one subject. In this case, at one period of time this subject is melancholy, desires to hear music as a form of pleasure, and subsequently considers it good. At another time they may be mournful, and seek to escape the pain music causes them, which leads the subject to consider music bad. At still another time they may no longer have the ability to hear, in which case the subject might have no affective and ethical relationship to musical sounds at all. As a result, we have not only subjective considerations here (by virtue of individual desire and pleasure/pain), but also relativistic considerations because the ethical value of something can differ between both distinct subjects and the particular states of one subject at different times, meaning that there may be nothing that can be universally good or bad. These subjective and relativistic features also raise the question as to whether there is any truth-value or certainty concerning ethics, since subjects, or a subject in themselves overtime, can differ in terms of desires (or the lack thereof). In this context, the truth/falsity of something being good, bad, or indifferent does not appear to be fixed since the goodness or badness of any object may shift based on the subject or the circumstances, and it is not clear that a subject in any given moment could ever be mistaken about their ethical classification of something (in which case, the subjective dimension might also be a sufficient condition). If good and bad cannot be universalized in Spinoza's ethical system, such properties are not intrinsic to Nature, and ethical certainty or truth-value is untenable, then it would seem that this system lacks the necessary naturalism and universality to be eudaimonistic.

These subjective and relativistic points are inescapable, but they are not insurmountable problems for the eudaimonistic reading. An important feature of Spinoza's ethical definitions is the qualification that good is what 'we *certainly* [*certo*] know to be useful' and bad what 'we *certainly* [*certo*] know to be an obstacle' (IVDef.1-2/G II 209, emphases mine). This point about certainty indicates that ethical judgments are not restricted to inadequate knowledge, which pertains to judgments that may be true or false, but also adequate knowledge, judgments whose truth we can clearly and distinctly grasp (IIP41-42). Spinoza, in fact, draws a distinction between mere 'knowledge of good and evil,' which consists in any perception of the conatus being strengthened or weakened, and 'true knowledge of good and evil,' which specifically consists in the mind's adequate understanding of changes to the conatus's physical/intellectual power (IVP8, 14-16, 17). He also argues that '[w]e know nothing to be *certainly* good or evil except what is conducive to understanding or what can hinder understanding' (IVP27, emphasis mine). Finally, when describing the conatus, and the desires that follow from it, Spinoza asserts that everyone 'should seek [their] own advantage (I mean [their] *real* [*revera*] advantage), [and] should aim at whatever *really* [*revera*] leads [someone] towards greater perfection [i.e., a stronger conatus]' (IVP18S/G II 222, emphasis mine). These references to certainty and what is really or truly conducive to the conatus in general (and understanding in particular as an expression of the conatus) indicate that ethical judgments do indeed have truth-value. One can make accurate or erroneous judgments about what is good or bad for them, and can come to know with certainty the truth/falsity of such appraisals. Mere knowledge of good and evil is then related to judgments that may be true or false, whereas true knowledge of good and evil (as adequate knowledge alone) is necessarily true (IVP35Proof).

Establishing this point assists us in reconciling Spinoza's eudaimonism with the subjectivity in his description of ethical value. While Spinoza argues that ethical value is partly based on the desires of the subject, he is not arguing for mere (strong) subjectivity, in the sense that the cognitive content of these desires lacks truth-value, every desire is equally valid ethically, or desire *simpliciter* is both a necessary and sufficient condition in ethical evaluation. One cannot be mistaken about what is good/bad for their well-being in relation to active desires, but these desires have truth-value nonetheless because they follow from adequate ethical knowledge of what is certainly good/bad for the subject's self-preservation and self-empowerment. With passive desires, however, one can be mistaken, because these desires also have truth-value but instead follow from inadequate knowledge. Inadequate knowledge involves a confused and fragmentary experiential idea of something, that may or may not be true in the way that one thinks it is. Inadequate ethical knowledge is then vague understanding of what is good/bad for one's well-being, which leads to vague desires that may or may not track what is actually beneficial to the conatus. For example, I may passively desire to avoid cobblers because I remember being severely beaten by a cobbler. I observe that being beaten weakened my conatus's activity (i.e., caused me pain), which is bad, and the cobbler was the cause of this effect. As a result, I form the judgment that cobblers are bad (because I have no experience of other cobblers that were friendly) with an accompanying desire to avoid them. It would seem that cobblers are now bad for me because I desire to avoid them, but in fact this is not the case. The cobbler who previously harmed me may be bad; however, other cobblers might be kind and helpful, so this desire does not accurately track what is ultimately good for my conatus (i.e., this desire is not sufficient to genuinely indicate that all cobblers are bad). If this desire was connected to adequate understanding that told me all cobblers were hostile (which is, of course, not actually the case), then my desire would necessarily refer to something genuinely good for my well-being, but since my desire is connected to inadequate knowledge it is ethically unreliable.

More fundamentally, the ethical difference between passive and active desires resides in their causal relation to the conatus. Passive desires are desires that only partially follow from the subject, because they also involve external influences, the latter of which have no necessary harmony with one's nature or guarantee of providing accurate information about the goodness or badness of things to one's overall physical and intellectual empowerment (IVApp. 30). Active desires, however, follow solely from the self-affirmative striving of the conatus, and thus solely represent what is in harmony with one's nature, thereby providing accurate information about what is of ultimate value to one's empowerment. According to Kisner (2011: 90–93), in light of this fact, there is a sense in which passive desires are not really the subject's desires, since they do not fully follow from the subject. As a result, he argues that Spinoza's subjective moral standard is primarily grounded in active desires, which track moral certainty.³⁶ It is this epistemological and ethical difference between desires that arguably drives Spinoza's therapeutic project to remove harmful inadequate ideas (and thus passive desires) and acquire adequate knowledge (and thus active desires). Passive desires consequently can be false, and are inferior to active desires, the latter of which reliably track what is actually beneficial to the subject because they follow solely from the subject per se. The subject's desires play (b) a necessary role in ethical value, but these desires do not represent a sufficient condition because they are not equal epistemologically or ethically (by virtue of their differing relations to the conatus), and the ethical judgments essentially connected to them have truth-value and admit of certainty. Therefore, the subjective dimension of Spinoza's conception of happiness is compatible with the objectivity necessary for eudaimonism, because this dimension is not strongly subjective.

The relativism in Spinoza's framework is also compatible with eudaimonistic objectivity, because it admits of naturalistic universality. Miller (2015: 157) argues for an important distinction between *circumstantial* relativism and *non-circumstantial* relativism. Some 'good x' is circumstantially relative when it is 'valuable iff x is valuable to [some subject] S, given S's actual or possible

³⁶ This is not to say that passive desires have no moral value, only that this moral value is dictated by their harmony (or lack thereof) with the active desires and ultimate well-being of the conatus.

circumstances,' while *x* is non-circumstantially-relative 'iff *x* is valuable for some subject *S*, irrespective of *S*'s actual or possible circumstances.' In both cases *x* is relatively valuable because its goodness is related to some relevant aspect of *S*. Without appealing to its relationship to *S* qua subject, *x* qua object could not be ethically classified in this context. The abovementioned example of music fits into the category of being circumstantially relatively valuable. Its value is relative to a subject, and that subject's circumstances in a given moment (e.g., their current emotional or mental/physical state). The question is whether every relativistic good in Spinoza's ethical framework is merely circumstantially valuable, or whether there is any ethical object that can be relatively valuable to a subject irrespective of their circumstances, and potentially universalizable to all (or a certain group of) subjects. Miller (2015: 161–62) argues that there is one clear relatively valuable good that is both non-circumstantial and universalizable: adequate knowledge of God. Insofar as all humans can be understood to be capable of acquiring adequate knowledge through the mental aspect of the conatus, they can be said to have access to a stable, active (rather than unstable and passive) good in rationally grasping God qua substance and any given mode of God (particularly themselves). Spinoza declares adequate divine knowledge to be 'the mind's highest good' and 'the mind's highest virtue' (IVP28), going on to argue that it is 'a good that is common to all men and can be possessed by all men in so far as they are of the same [thinking] nature' (IVP36).³⁷ This is because adequate knowledge of God's (namely, thinking and extended) essence is common to all minds in their knowledge of themselves and other beings qua mental and bodily modes (IIP47). Adequate knowledge of God is relatively valuable because of its beneficial relationship to the intellectual power of the conatus, but is not circumstantially relatively valuable because it is always valuable to a subject with a mind and is valuable to every subject with a mind. Alternatively, we might say (contra Miller) that intellectual love of God is a non-relativistic good in Spinoza's ethics, because it is always self-reflexively valuable as an aspect of one's nature per se, rather than a circumstantial or external object of value.³⁸ In either case, this relativistic dimension does not undermine the eudaimonistic objectivity of Spinoza's framework, because intellectual love of God represents either a non-circumstantial, *universal relativistic* good, or a *non-relativistic universal* good, that determines the value of subsequent circumstantial, relativistic goods.

Finally, we must also further clarify how Spinoza's ethical system is objective in the naturalistic sense. Spinoza describes virtue (and by extension happiness) in terms of 'act[ing] from the laws of one's own nature' through the conatus (IVP18S). The virtuous and happy life, in other words, is the life spent expressing or preserving one's natural existence through physical and intellectual activity. Good is based on what is in agreement with one's nature (virtue), and thus (pleasurably) promotes physical/intellectual empowerment, and bad is based on what (painfully) frustrates physical/intellectual empowerment (IVP8Proof, 19, 31). Spinoza may deny that good and bad are intrinsic properties of natural beings, but they are nonetheless *natural* properties, all of which admit of truth-tracking claims/certainty and some of which admit of universal and fixed value in promoting happiness. Similar to the *TIE*, Spinoza presents us with an ethical model of humanity in the form of the free man or human (*homo liber*) who acts only from adequate knowledge in particular and adequate causality in general (IVP67–73/G II 261–65), good being that which is in harmony with this model and bad that which conflicts with it (IVPref.). This model is naturalistic because it is ultimately derived from the conatus, which provides the foundation for what virtue

37 Miller (2015: 199–202) argues that bodily goods are necessary for happiness, but are strictly external goods. In his view, there is no true, intrinsic good of the body for Spinoza that constitutes happiness and serves as the bodily correlate to intuitive knowledge of God (E VP42). Contra Miller, I think that, by virtue of the Doctrine of Parallelism and the Conatus Doctrine, happiness as self-affirmative power must be both intellectual and physical in nature (E IIP7; IIP6–7). Kisner (2011: 78–79) identifies this bodily good with brain activity and James (2014: 147–59) identifies it with the ability to physically act in parallel to one's knowledge (2014: 152–54). Affectively, DeBrabander (2007: 60–62) describes cheerfulness as the bodily correlate to intellectual love of God qua mental pleasure (E IVP42). It seems to me that these three interpretations are compatible with each other, brain activity being a central manifestation of the general physical activity that parallels one's knowledge and cheerfulness being the affective aspect of such physical activity.

38 For further discussion of this point, see Youpa (2020: 79n15, 82–112).

and happiness will look like in this ethical framework.³⁹ The conatus consequently serves as an objective standard that harmonizes Spinoza's naturalism, subjectivity, and relativity in a way compatible with, and representative of, strong eudaimonism (but contra unqualified moral anti-realism), through its central role in Spinoza's commitment to (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e) as formal features of happiness.⁴⁰

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper I have shown that Spinoza's moral philosophy belongs to the eudaimonistic tradition. I began by describing eudaimonism as an ethical paradigm that considers happiness in form to be (a) naturally universalizable, (b) partly, but not wholly, dependent on the beliefs/feelings of a subject, (c) structurally stable, and (d) exclusively intrinsically good. I also drew a distinction between weak eudaimonism and strong eudaimonism, the latter (e) representing a conception of happiness that is reliant on an overall philosophical system that appeals to more than ethical doctrines.

We see a consistent thematic commitment to (a), (c), and (d), from the *TIE* to the *Ethics*, through Spinoza's conception of happiness (i.e., intellectual love of God/Nature) as the ultimate end of all ethical considerations and a stable (namely eternal), naturally universalizable good. This eudaimonistic conception of happiness also relies heavily on interconnected metaphysical (e.g., on God/Nature qua substance), epistemological (e.g., on inadequate vs. adequate knowledge), and psychological (e.g., on the conatus and its relation to emotions) doctrines that shape its ethical doctrines (e.g., on good/bad and virtue), thus making it (e) strongly eudaimonistic. While there are certain subjective and relativistic features in Spinoza's ethical philosophy, based on the crucial role of desire in ethical evaluations and the flexible value of many objects in promoting or hindering happiness, these features do not ultimately make Spinoza an unqualified moral anti-realist or undermine a reading of him as an eudaimonist. On the contrary, through the conatus as an essential self-affirmative force, Spinoza provides a naturalistic and universalizable ethical foundation that renders the (active) desires of the subject (b) necessary, but insufficient, for happiness.

This analysis, in turn, provides us with a strong foundation through which to examine Spinoza's engagement with particular ancient and early modern thinkers. While I do not wish to deny many of Spinoza's agreements with the abovementioned philosophers, I also do not think that viewing him as a disciple of a particular ancient philosophical framework is an effective way to understand his philosophy or his engagement with ancient eudaimonists, since he disagrees with these philosophers as often as he agrees (e.g., his rejection of providence contra Plato and the Stoics [*E* IApp.], conception of matter as active contra Aristotle [*IP*16–17; *IIP*1–2], deterministic account of

³⁹ Spinoza's use of an ethical model and his conception of the free human are contentious topics in the literature. Firstly, some scholars argue that the free human is Spinoza's ethical model (e.g., [Nadler 2020: 47–54](#)), while others deny this claim (e.g., [Kisner 2011: 166–77](#)). Secondly, Spinoza's model is understood by some scholars to be naturalistic (e.g., [Youpa 2020: 47–50](#)), with others considering it a non-naturalistic mental construct (e.g., [Jarrett 2014: 58–84](#)). Thirdly, some scholars consider the free human devoid of passions (e.g., [Kisner 2011: 165–67](#)), while others argue that the free human is subject to passions but is the adequate cause of all their actions (e.g., [Nadler 2020: 47–54](#); [Youpa 2020: 133–40](#)). I take the position that (1) the free human is Spinoza's ethical model, (2) this model is naturalistic, and (3) the free human is subject to passions while nonetheless acting only from active emotions (i.e., reason).

⁴⁰ In light of the objective standard provided by the conatus, we might say that there is no genuine (i.e., foundational) moral subjectivism (see [Miller 2005: 168–70](#); [Youpa 2020: 62–72](#)) or moral relativism in Spinoza's ethics (see [Youpa 2020: 40–99](#)). Whether we take these features to be merely apparent or genuine though, there remains in any case sufficient objectivity in Spinoza's system to link it to eudaimonism. As I indicated in the Introduction, I do not think Spinoza can be straightforwardly classified as a moral realist or anti-realist, because the naturalistic and affective dimensions of the conatus seem to bring together aspects of both equally. However, granting this, it may still be legitimate to describe Spinoza as a moral subjectivist or moral relativist. Miller ([2015: 146–47](#)) argues that, in principle, subjectivism and relativism are not restricted to anti-realism (i.e., mind-dependence), but in certain forms can be compatible with realism (i.e., mind-independence). Similarly, non-subjectivism and non-relativism are not restricted to realism, but in certain forms can be compatible with anti-realism. With this possibility in mind, I will say that I tend to agree with Miller and Youpa that Spinoza's ethical framework is not subjective in a traditional or meaningful sense, because he does not consider beliefs/feelings necessary and sufficient in determining ethical value. However, I do think both fail to appreciate that beliefs/feelings nevertheless play a necessary role in determining value. I remain undecided on whether the conatus serves as a relativistic or non-relativistic foundation for ethics.

the universe contra Epicurus [IP29, 33], and allowance for passions to be circumstantially good contra the Stoics [IVP41, App.3]). Instead, I have sought to show in this paper that Spinoza is better understood as an eudaimonist in his own right, which provides a more fruitful framework for understanding his agreements and disagreements with ancient philosophers, in particular his shared commitment with other strong eudaimonists to drawing on the various disciplines of philosophy to promote a happy life as a whole. For example, we might say that Spinoza is adding to this ethical tradition (in content) new metaphysical and scientific ways of understanding the mind and body, through his Substance Monism (minds are thinking modes and bodies are extended modes of God/Nature as the only substance), Parallelism (mind and body are not separate entities, but strictly corresponding aspects of the same underlying thing), and Conatus Doctrine (mind and body are strictly corresponding expressions of God's self-affirmative power), which strongly determine how happiness is ultimately understood and achieved (in this case as, and through, both intellectual and physical empowerment). Section 2's outline of eudaimonism also provides a rich foundation upon which to evaluate the eudaimonistic status of early modern philosophers like Descartes and Leibniz, who share with Spinoza an ethical focus on happiness, but may or may not be committed to (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) in their respective frameworks.

Ultimately, this paper seeks to provide a rich conceptual foundation through which to understand Spinoza's engagement with other moral philosophers, as well as how eudaimonism may have developed positively and negatively after antiquity and the medieval period.⁴¹

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⁴¹ For discussion of how ancient philosophy, particularly as a way of life, differs from medieval, early modern, and contemporary philosophy in general, see Cooper (2012: chap. 1) and Hadot (1995; 2002).

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