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# Multitude

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Spinoza's 'multitude', while a key concept of his political philosophy, allows us to better understand Spinoza's work both in its historical context and as a systematic unity. In this piece, I will propose that we understand Spinoza's concept of the 'multitude' in the context of the development of his political thought, in particular his reading and interpretation of Thomas Hobbes, for whom 'multitude' was indeed a technical term. I will show that Spinoza develops his own notion of multitude as an interpretive extension of Hobbes's concept. Spinoza's notion of 'multitude' is shaped by the new answers he gives to the Hobbesian questions about the human power, human emotion, and the metaphysical-political questions of how individuals can become a whole, or a state.

'Multitude' in recent years has come to stand in as a keyword for 'Spinoza's radical democratic thought'. Indeed, no contemporary account of Spinoza's political theory or the concept of multitude would be complete without a discussion of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's philosophical-political extension of Spinoza's theory of multitude. I will propose that their notion of 'multitude' is indeed an interpretive extension of and therefore not a definition of Spinoza's notion of multitude. For Hardt and Negri, the 'multitude' is a revolutionary concept, which takes the radical power of human individuals as such as a counter to the weight of political institutions.<sup>1</sup> However, Hardt and Negri's somewhat rosy understanding of Spinoza's concept of the multitude has been a useful counterbalance to those accounts which ignore Spinoza's arguments about the importance of the multitude and instead focus on his hatred of and contempt for the '*vulgus*', or the masses. The *locus classicus* for identifying Spinoza as one who feared the masses is Leo Strauss's arguments in favour of this position, as part of Strauss's larger theory that political philosophy is a manual for the elite.<sup>2</sup> However, this Straussian notion emerges in the secondary literature on Spinoza's political philosophy, most notably in the work of Raia Prokhovnik, Steven Smith, and to a certain extent in the proposal by Etienne Balibar. Prokhovnik, along with luminaries such as Alexandre

Matheron, argues that Spinoza ultimately rejects democracy in his final work, and thus that he either embraces the model of aristocratic government as the best solution to the problem of the ignorant and violent multitude, or leaves us with an essential tension between reason and democracy.<sup>3</sup> Smith similarly argues that Spinoza rejects democracy in favour of a kind of philosophical 'clerisy'.<sup>4</sup> Balibar's argument is more nuanced, and he argues that Spinoza's fear of the masses and arguments in favour of democracy are in tension, and thus that Spinoza's worries about the fickle masses pervade and subtly undermine his arguments in favour of democratic government. These authors are not wrong, and indeed we can find ample evidence in Spinoza that suggests that he has little to no confidence in 'the people', who he calls the '*vulgus*'. The real meaning of the 'multitude' in Spinoza's thought is rather more complicated than 'Multitude = good' or 'Multitude = *vulgus* = bad', and a great deal more interesting. Exploring Spinoza's concept of the 'multitude', while a key concept of his political philosophy, allows us to better understand Spinoza's work both in its historical context and as a systematic unity.

Behind the views that Spinoza was either afraid of the multitude or sanguine about their possible power lies the question of democracy. If Spinoza loved the multitude, then his championing of democracy is clear. If Spinoza detested and feared the multitude, then he cannot be the kind of democrat that he claims. These questions are intertwined. Spinoza's changing view of the multitude reflects his changing view of democracy and what it requires to succeed.

In the (I) first section of this chapter, I will argue that Spinoza's attitude toward the multitude changes over time, but that this is not the simple move from love to fear of the multitude as has been proposed by some scholars.<sup>5</sup> I will trace this change in attitude through Spinoza's works, from the *TIE* to the *TP*. I will propose that his concern with events in the United Provinces led Spinoza to shift his project from the *Ethics*, in order to write a treatise on politics, what became the *TTP*. During this time Spinoza turned to Hobbes as a source of political wisdom. (II) In the second section of this chapter, I will argue that this reading of Hobbes transformed Spinoza's philosophical project, specifically leading him to reassess his theory of the passions and to develop his new concept of *conatus* or power. In the final section of this paper (III), I will show how Spinoza's new theory of power yielded his mature theory of the 'multitude', as something neither to be feared nor loved, but to be understood in the aim of creating peaceful and flourishing democratic states and institutions.

### From the *Vulgus* to the Multitude

Both those who argue that the concept 'multitude' in Spinoza is either revolutionary or reactionary have some merit. One can find in Spinoza both kind and unkind words for what he alternately calls the '*vulgus*' or the multitude. In this section, I propose that we find alternating attitudes in Spinoza toward the multitude for the simple reason that his views about the multitude change over time. This change, however, is not so simple, and involves both the development of his work and historical events that shaped that development.<sup>6</sup> I will propose the following narrative: in his youth, Spinoza is full of hope for the transformation of the common people. This hope turns to fear in the wake of the regular riots taking place in the mid-1660s in Amsterdam and throughout the United Provinces. As Spinoza turns to politics in the mid-1660s, fear turns to resignation and then understanding, or rather, the project to understand the affects of the people in order to develop peaceful governing institutions.

Spinoza's use of the term '*vulgus*' predates his use of 'multitude', and always has a negative connotation. In the *Ethics*, Spinoza argues that the *vulgus* is 'terrifying if unafraid' (EIVP54 Sch). Since this same *vulgus* is nearly always afraid, they are always terrifying. In the Preface to the *TTP* Spinoza specifically prohibits those of the common run of man to read this work, arguing that they will be unable to understand it, given their passions and imagination. Yet, the *TTP* is taken as Spinoza's most positive view about democracy. He refers to democracy as the 'most natural' and 'best' form of state (*TTP* XVI); and he argues that it is the variety of *civitas* most likely to yield freedom and peace, the purpose of the state (*TTP* XX). Many have puzzled over this tension. If Spinoza is so afraid of the terrifying '*vulgus*' how can he ever expect to wrangle from these masses anything like the 'best' state, which, *qua* democracy, will be governed by this same mass?

Democracy requires the people, the masses, the *vulgus*. However, this *vulgus* must somehow become unafraid. At this point in his development—between the early version of the *Ethics* and its later five-part form—Spinoza has not yet developed his mature theory of the affects. He has not yet developed his theory of how the affects can become 'active', and thus how an individual, and indeed a 'multitude', can become if not 'unafraid', then certainly less afraid, that is, ruled less by fear. Spinoza's mature political theory, laid out in the *TP*, makes use of the theory of affects and power that Spinoza completes in the *Ethics*. It is where he turns 'multitude' into a technical term, and where his arguments for democracy shift. Democracy in the *TP* is no longer the 'freest' or 'most natural'—those virtues assigned to this form of govern-

ment in the *TTP*. Rather, in the *TP*, Spinoza's later work on politics, democracy is the 'most absolute', and 'best' form of state, in that it has the most natural right and thus the most power of any form of *civitas* (*TP* XI, 1). He no longer argues that the purpose of the state is freedom, and that the best state for achieving this freedom is democracy. Rather, he proposes that the aim of the state is comfort and security (*TP* V, 2), requiring the state to have absolute power.

This turn toward 'security' and 'absolute' states has led many to argue that Spinoza, in his last work, rejected democracy. I will propose that this development from the *TTP* to the *TP* is not a rejection of democracy, but rather a development in Spinoza's theory of power, which ultimately yields his mature theory of the multitude. What we see in *TTP* is a moment of transition in Spinoza's thought. However, it is not the first moment of such transition. To understand Spinoza's complicated relationship with the *vulgus-cum-multitudo* we need to return to his earliest work, the *TIE*.

#### *Solicitude and Hope for the Improvement of the Vulgus*

In the *TIE*, Spinoza seeks to understand what is best to pursue in human life. He sets aside the pursuits of the common life, and begins his inquiry. He resolves that the highest pursuit of human life is the knowledge and love of God. Thus, Spinoza seeks to leave common life behind, or so it would seem. Although he rejects the pursuit of riches and the other things that occupy the '*vulgus*' (*TIE* 7, 17), Spinoza returns to them after his recognition of the highest human end. When he does so, his attitude is not one of contempt, but rather of solicitude. Throughout the *TIE*, Spinoza refers to the common people as the '*vulgus*'; however he seeks not to avoid them, but rather to bring them with him on the journey to the highest end. He realizes that they will not necessarily find the aim of loving God as clearly appealing as he does, so he devises a strategy to, as we might say today, build the capacity of the common people.

This then is the end for which I strive, to acquire the nature I have described and to endeavor that many should acquire it along with me. [...] To bring this about, it is necessary: [...] 2) to establish such a social order as will enable as many as possible to reach this goal with the greatest possible ease and assurance. 3) Furthermore, attention must be paid to moral philosophy, and likewise the theory of the education of children, and since health is of no little importance in attaining this end, 4) the whole science of medicine must be elaborated [...] (*TIE* 14–15)

Spinoza argues that this development of the science of medicine, education and the establishment of a peaceful social order that will enhance the power of the common people is done both for its own sake

and because, 'in this way they will give a more favorable hearing to the truth' (*TIE* 17-18). So, although Spinoza is using the term '*vulgus*', he does not despise the common people. Rather, he sees them as in need of development of body and mind. His early attitude toward the common people, however, is about to change.

### *From Solitude to Fear*

The move from solicitude toward the *vulgus* to fear of them requires a brief biographical and historical narrative. In the 1660s<sup>7</sup> in the towns of the United Provinces, a rash of riots transformed what had been a tense but real 'toleration' and 'new freedom' into a series of street fights between the two major factions of the day—the Orangist-Calvinist party and the supporters of the Republican De Witts. Spinoza believed these riots to be caused by Calvinist ministers whipping their congregations into a frenzy of fear and hatred (*Ep* 30).

These riots, and the war with England that gave the Calvinist ministers a new fear to manipulate among the common people, led Spinoza to set aside his work on the *Ethics* in order to focus on a new work on politics.<sup>8</sup> This new work was what would become the *TTP*. In his letter to Oldenburg in 1665, Spinoza sets out his reasons for writing. He seeks to counter what he calls, 'The prejudices of theologians', he continues, 'For I know that these are the main obstacles which prevent men from giving their minds to philosophy. So, I apply myself to exposing such prejudices and removing them from the minds of sensible people'. He goes on to propose that he will argue for the freedom to philosophize, 'This I want to vindicate completely, for here it is in every way suppressed by the excessive authority and egotism of the preachers'.

It is in the *TTP* that we find some of the least kind discussions of the *vulgus* in Spinoza's work.<sup>9</sup> Yes, Spinoza now feared and perhaps detested the *vulgus*, the mob, the common people. He fears their fear and its destructive power. However, as Balibar argues, they have become a problem for Spinoza—an intellectual problem—that he seeks to solve in the *TTP*.<sup>10</sup> The question is now, given the destructive power of the mob, what can one do? How can this fear be managed? Are there ways to diminish the mob's fear and thus make them less terrifying? It is this moment which is of primary importance to us in seeking to understand Spinoza's changing attitude toward the people and his transition to the use of the term 'multitude' as a technical term in his political philosophy. It is in this moment, when he seeks counsel for understanding how the masses can be subdued, that he turns to Hobbes.

There has been some speculation in Spinoza studies about what of Hobbes he could have and did read.<sup>11</sup> I have argued elsewhere that there are clear signs that Spinoza read the *Opera* of Hobbes published in Amsterdam in 1668, and that previously he had access to Hobbes's *De Cive*.<sup>12</sup> For our purposes, Spinoza's reading of *De Cive* is the matter at hand. For in *De Cive*, Spinoza finds a technical term that he will make his own, with important changes. This is Hobbes's concept of 'multitude'.

### *From Fear to Resignation*

Scholars have argued that the murder of the De Witts in the streets of the Hague in 1672, blocks from Spinoza's house, turned him from democracy and made him afraid of the common people.<sup>13</sup> They have used this to understand Spinoza's change of language between the *TTP* and the *TP*. They worry that in this moment Spinoza came to reject democracy. However, what I hope to have shown is that Spinoza was already afraid of the masses. The change between his attitude toward them and toward democracy is real, but it is not a move away from democracy, but rather a new understanding of the way that democratic institutions can be used to increase the power of the multitude, that is, to diminish their fear and thus to strengthen the state. The change that is most important for our purposes is how Spinoza's understanding of the masses changes between the writing of the *TTP* and the *TP*—not because Spinoza abandoned democracy, but rather because he now understood it in terms of the power of the multitude.

Spinoza had come to understand, indeed had become resigned to the fact that, however ignorant, however weak the common people were, their weakness could be manipulated by pernicious social and political forces. A mass of weak, fearful creatures could become dangerous not only to themselves, but also to the peace of the state and any hope for the kind of flourishing necessary for the pursuit of *amor dei intellectualis*, which Spinoza sought. Thus, Spinoza changes the focus of his project, from individual empowerment to collective, from individual affects and desires to those of the masses. These masses could not be ignored; they needed to be understood.

### **Hobbes and the Multitude**

When Spinoza set aside the tripartite version of the *Ethics* in the mid-1660s and turned to writing about politics, and in particular to the emotions of the masses, he reads Hobbes.<sup>14</sup> In Hobbes, Spinoza finds a thinker who from the basis of a materialist theory of the human emotions and desires yields a theory of the state. Reading Hobbes at

this crucial period in his development changed at least two things in Spinoza's thought: first, it offered a mechanism to explain what Spinoza had earlier called the 'enervating passions' — fear, sadness, and anger which were based on experience. I have argued elsewhere that after reading *De Cive* Spinoza's earlier intellectualist theory of the emotions becomes increasingly material.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Spinoza's theory of the affects as we know it in the final five-part *Ethics* begins to take shape. Second, this reading of Hobbes offered Spinoza a new way to think about the power of the affects of the many, of the common people, of what he will henceforth understand as the multitude. Before his 1660s reading of Hobbes, Spinoza does not use the term 'multitude'. Rather, he uses alternating terms, the most common is '*vulgus*'.<sup>16</sup> Although 'multitude' does not appear in the *TTP*, several elements that will later characterize Spinoza's theory of the multitude do, most importantly his notion that each individual has an irreducible degree of power and will, and that no contract or transfer can reduce a group of individuals to one sovereign (*TTP* XVII).

Hobbes, very famously, defines multitude in a note to *De Cive*.<sup>17</sup> Hobbes's conception of the multitude as a collection of disconnected individuals, rather than a 'people', 'nation', or even as groups allied by family ties has been taken to be one of Hobbes's central contributions to modern political thought.<sup>18</sup> Its novelty consists in Hobbes's rejection of the idea of natural peoples, or the idea of humans as *zoon politikon*, who join societies naturally.

### *Hobbes's Multitude*

Although 'multitude' was in wide use in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, Hobbes developed it into a technical term in *De Cive*.<sup>19</sup> There, Hobbes defined a 'multitude' as a group of individuals who were not linked by any previous social tie or natural alliances.<sup>20</sup> Individuals in Hobbes's multitude do not share religion, values, and they have no essential hierarchy. The individuals in Hobbes's multitude are equals.<sup>21</sup> This development in political thought—taking aggregates of individuals as equals—is not generally what Hobbes is known for *now*, but in the political-philosophical context of the post-Reformation and Wars of Religion this is what Hobbes was known for *then*, and what philosophers like Spinoza found so interesting in Hobbes's work.

Hobbes used this notion of the multitude as an alternative to the notion of a 'people'. For numerous political theorists in Hobbes's time, including Grotius, an essential precondition for political order was the notion of a pre-political 'people', unified by blood, history, or religion. Hobbes lumped these political theorists together as 'Aristotelians' and

argued that this notion of a necessary pre-political people and the theory of natural sociability on which it rested were both false.<sup>22</sup>

If such social unity were enough to create orderly states, Hobbes argued, then the civil wars and religious wars of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century were inexplicable. The same passions that bring people together tear them apart. The same phenomena that unify groups, e.g. religion, family, history, can turn quickly into the basis of war and sectarian violence. For political order to be stable, human diversity of passions and interests had to be taken as primary, and order built out of merely human passionate individuals, eschewing reliance on the notion of preformed unified peoples. So, Hobbes begins his quest for a theory of stable political order by assuming nothing but disconnected individual humans and their passions, the aggregation of which he called 'multitude'.

Spinoza followed Hobbes in this usage. Spinoza was critical of the notion of natural sociability, and sceptical that such sociability was sufficient for founding a stable political order. The foundations of natural sociability, for Spinoza, were human emotions (*TP II*, 15). Emotions, though they could bring people together, could also tear them apart. These emotions both create the social world, and also destroy it. For Spinoza, every passion has two sides, a constructive and destructive side; a multitude ruled by passions has both a potential for democratic empowerment as well as a potential for chaos. In order to create a stable foundation for political order, these emotions of the multitude had to be explored and understood, and institutions created to coordinate them and through them the individuals in the multitude.

Both Hobbes and Spinoza shared the view that the problem of the state was primarily one of coordinating the affects and power of the individuals in the multitude. Hobbes believes this to be solved through the transfer of power and authority from the multitude to the sovereign in the contract scenario. Spinoza was sceptical of Hobbes's contractarian solution. Spinoza argued that individuals never give up their power completely<sup>23</sup> and that Hobbes's use of fear created an unstable basis for political peace.<sup>24</sup> Thus Spinoza undermined the project of solving the problem of the multitude at once – through a legal transfer of right.

Spinoza, although he shares Hobbes's recognition of the problem of coordinating the multitude as a requirement for stable political order and, through such order, human freedom, does not share his solution. What attracted Hobbes to the contract was that at the moment of transfer of power, the 'multitude' of individuals disappeared.<sup>25</sup> They are joined together momentarily as they contract among one another and then disappear at the moment this collective power and right is trans-



ferred and all actions of the sovereign authorized.<sup>26</sup> With Spinoza's rejection of the contract, the multitude of individuals and their potential power for order and disorder remains. The solution to the problem of political order was not to erase the multitude, but to understand it, to understand human emotions both individual and collective and to build institutions and design practices which could best coordinate their emotions and use their power for collective ends.

Spinoza wrote that his view of political order, though similar to that of Hobbes, differed in one respect—he kept the 'state of nature' as a permanent possibility (*Ep* 50). Thus, the multitude of individuals always retains enough power to cause trouble or to use for the power of the collective; and this power cannot be alienated or ignored. Nor, he argued, could individual human power be separated from the idea of individual 'right' or collective 'right'. Underlying Spinoza's rejection of Hobbes's contract and what sets him apart from Hobbes was Spinoza's view that power and right were coextensive (*TTP XVI-XVII*). One cannot transfer right if one cannot transfer power, and individuals cannot transfer their power of acting completely while they remain alive. So, right cannot be fully transferred, and no contract can be secure (*TTP XVII*).

Since the power of the multitude cannot be forever transferred to a sovereign, Spinoza recognized that the power of the sovereign itself was a function of the power of the multitude. To the extent that a sovereign could win over the multitude, to that extent and only to that extent did the sovereign have power and right (*TP III-IV*). Winning over the multitude, however, is not so easy, and required, in Spinoza's view, developing institutions which could organize the passions of the multitude.<sup>27</sup>

Spinoza saw organizing the passions of the multitude as the basic problem of political philosophy, to be solved by the creation of institutions that could order these affects (*TP I, 1*). The passions are volatile and a multitude ruled by them cannot be trusted to achieve peace alone. For Spinoza, the job of the state is to organize the passions of the multitude through the creation of institutions that align the passions of the individuals with the interests of the state. The job of the *best* state is to organize the passions of the multitude in such a way that the power of the multitude is increased, with this increased power accruing to the strength of the state.

Hobbes turns the idea of political community into a problem that must be solved politically, through the artifice of contract and sovereign. While Spinoza takes up Hobbes's conception of multitude, he rejects Hobbes's solution, the contract, as a way to resolve the problem of unifying a large group of disconnected, self-preserving indi-

vidual humans.<sup>28</sup> Spinoza's rejection of Hobbes's contract comes about through Spinoza's taking seriously Hobbes's notion of the multitude, and his view that each of these individuals has a degree of power and will, which, in order to achieve peace, must be joined together. He rejects the idea that mere contract and a supposed transfer of power and can achieve this end. Through rejecting Hobbes's theory of the transfer of power of all the individuals in the multitude to the sovereign, Spinoza begins the development of his own theory both of the multitude and of individual human power.

### Power, Multitude, and the TP: Spinoza's Mature Theory of the Multitude

As Spinoza turns to Hobbes, specifically concerned with the passions of the multitude, that is, their fear and its destructive potential, he finds Hobbes's material theory of human emotions. Whereas in his earlier works Spinoza had understood the emotions primarily in intellectualist terms, his view changes, as we can see in the final chapters of the *TTP*, in the *Ethics*, and finally in the *TP*. Spinoza had always been concerned with the passions, and in particular with those passions which enervate individual power and which seem immune to reason (*KV* II, 21-22). These passions, Spinoza argued, were based on experience, and could not be overcome merely by true ideas to the contrary or to rational intervention. While Spinoza had been concerned with these for individuals, he now came to understand the importance of such passions in the collective—the *vulgus*. If it was hard for a philosopher to overcome such passions, how much more difficult, then, would it be for a group not actively seeking reason. This new object of research, the passions of the group, of the collective, and his reading of Hobbes transformed not only Spinoza's theory of the passions into his own more material theory of affects, but also led to the introduction of the concepts of *conatus* and *multitude*, drawn directly from Hobbes's uses of these terms.<sup>29</sup>

Although we are concerned with the development of Spinoza's concept of the multitude, I propose that we cannot understand his mature concept of multitude without understanding the role of *conatus* in Spinoza's mature theory of individual and collective power.

In *EIIP*7, Spinoza introduces the notion of *conatus*: 'The *conatus* with which each thing endeavors to persist in its own being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself'. In the demonstration of that same proposition, Spinoza treats *conatus* and the 'power of a thing' as interchangeable. He writes: 'The power of anything, or the *conatus* with which it acts or endeavors to act'. And again, 'the power or *conatus* by which it endeavors to persist in its own being is nothing but the actual

essence of the thing' (EIIIP7 Dem). Thus, we can say that, for Spinoza, *conatus* can be taken to be the power of each individual.

Spinoza writes that the power of an individual can increase or decrease both through increasing its active affects and through making its ideas more adequate. If the individual is affected by passive affects, like fear and sadness, its power decreases (EIIIP11 Sch). If the individual is affected by active affects, its power increases. More adequate ideas increase the power of acting of an individual just as more inadequate ideas diminish the individual's power (EIIIP1, EIIIP9). One's ideas of oneself and the world affect how one understands the world and oneself, and shapes what one seeks—depending on one's ideas, affects, and desires, one's power is increased or decreased.

Here, we see that the power of individuals can increase or decrease, through active affects, like joy, and through the acquisition of more adequate ideas. So, we have an initial answer to Spinoza's earlier questions about how passive affects can be overcome—not necessarily via reason, but through active affects. In the *TP*, Spinoza offers us one more way in which individuals can increase their power, that is, by joining together. In the *TP*, Spinoza writes, 'If two come together and unite their strength, they have jointly more power, and consequently more right over nature than both of them separately, and the more there are that have so joined in alliance, the more right they all collectively possess' (*TP* II, 13).

In the *TP*, Chapter 5 'The Highest Aim of Society', Spinoza outlines what he thinks the relation is between the *good of the state* and the *good of the individual*, and shows how the power of the individual contributes to the power of the state. This notion of joining the power of individuals is consistent with Spinoza's conception of the relation between the power of individuals and the power of Nature. In *TTP* IV, Spinoza writes: 'Individuals, insofar as they are part of the power of Nature, constitute a part of the power of Nature'. Spinoza shows how this is possible in the argument in *TTP* XVI where he argues that the right of Nature is coextensive with its power. However, he makes a further move showing that the power of Nature is a function of the power of its parts.

Nature's right is coextensive with her power. For Nature's power is the very power of God [...] But *since the universal power of Nature as a whole is nothing but the power of all individual things taken together* [E2P13SL5], it follows that each individual thing has the sovereign right to do all that it can do, i.e. the right of the individual is coextensive with its determinate power. (*TTP* XVI, emphasis mine)

From this notion of the relation between the parts of nature and the whole of Nature itself, Spinoza, in the *TP*, makes clear the import for

the power of the multitude. He writes, 'The more there are that combine together, the more right they collectively possess' (*TP* II, 15). Spinoza brings this out explicitly in his most famous writings on the power of the multitude: 'The right [or power] of the state is nothing more than the right of Nature itself and is determined by the power not of each individual but of a multitude which is guided as if by one mind. That is to say, just as each individual in the natural state has as much right as the power he possesses, the same is true for the body and mind of the entire state' (*TP* III, 1). The consequences for political theory and for Spinoza's theory of the multitude are the following: 1. the larger the group, the more powerful the group is likely to be, and 2. the more active affects uniting a group, the more powerful the individuals are likely to be, and 3. the more adequate the ideas that bind the group together, the more powerful the group is likely to be.

There is much more to be said here, but this is the essence of Spinoza's view of the multitude. Each individual in the multitude expresses part of the power of Nature. This power can be increased or decreased. By joining with others, this power increases. The power, then, of a multitude of individuals is a function of two things: their number and their mode of 'agreement', that which unites them. If united by a fiction, an inadequate idea, or through fear, a passive affect, their power is diminished. If united by active affects, like joy, the more their power is increased. Further, the more adequate ideas that shape their collective agreement, the more likely their power — individual and collective — is to be increased. Collective agreements based on religion can be sometimes empowering, if based on joy, but can ultimately be enervating, if the religion in question bars further investigation into the natural world, thus bar the increase of more adequate ideas (*TTP* XX).

How collective agreements come to be more adequate, how individuals interact with others in the multitude, and how harmony in the multitude can be optimally achieved is the subject of Spinoza's final work, the *TP*. He argues here that democracy is the best mode of yielding adequate agreement, but he does not develop in that work the institutions necessary, other than the idea of rather large councils.

Although Spinoza's attitude toward the *vulgus* or the masses changes over time, his mature concept of the multitude marks his recognition of the importance of the emotions of the individuals in the multitude and their manner of organization for individual empowerment and collective flourishing. The multitude and its power becomes, for Spinoza, an essential category of both his political philosophy and metaphysics.

## NOTES

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- 1 Negri and Hardt (2000), (2005); Hardt (1995).
  - 2 Strauss (1997).
  - 3 Prokhovnik (2004); Matheron (1990).
  - 4 Smith (1997).
  - 5 Feuer (1958); Balibar (1993); Prokhovnik (1997); Matheron (1990).
  - 6 The scope of this chapter precludes a detailed analysis of the arguments of Negri and Hardt on the one hand and Strauss, Prokhovnik, and Smith on the other. However, I direct the reader to two excellent pieces on these topics: for a critique of Hardt and Negri's concept of the multitude, Field (2012); and for a critique of Prokhovnik and Smith's conception of the multitude and its democratic potential, Steinberg (2009).
  - 7 Israel (1995); Price (1998).
  - 8 *Ep* 29. See Steenbakkens (2009).
  - 9 *TTP* Pref.
  - 10 Balibar (1998).
  - 11 Sacksteder (1980); Steenbakkens (2009); Akkerman and Steenbakkens (2005).
  - 12 Tucker (2013).
  - 13 Matheron (1994).
  - 14 Matheron (1997) argues that Spinoza was initially attracted by the De La Court's refutations of Hobbes in *La Balance Politique*. Spinoza has a copy of *De Cive* in his library, *Inventaire des biens et meubles délaissés par feu le Seigneur Bénédicte de Spinoza*. Others in Spinoza's circle were certainly reading Hobbes: see Secretan (1987); Blom (1995).
  - 15 Tucker (2013), 20.
  - 16 Balibar (1997).
  - 17 Hobbes (1983), VI.1 note.
  - 18 Hobbes (1983), I.2; see also Skinner (1978), (2009); and Tuck (1993).
  - 19 Hobbes (1983), VI.1 note.
  - 20 Hobbes (1983), I.2; VI.1 note.
  - 21 Hobbes (1983), VI.1 note.
  - 22 Hobbes (1983), I.2.
  - 23 *TTP* XVII; see also Tuck (1979), and James (2012), 253.
  - 24 Against fear, see *TTP* Pref; *EIVP*32 Sch; Lazzeri (1998); and James (2012), 245.
  - 25 Hobbes (1983), II.vii.8.
  - 26 Hobbes (1983), II.v.7-10.
  - 27 Den Uyl (1983), 126.
  - 28 Curley (1992); Matheron (1990), (1997).
  - 29 There is much disagreement on the origin of 'conatus' in Spinoza. While it is often identified as a reworking of Descartes' concept of inertia from physics, I argue that it is derived from Hobbes's biological conception of *conatus* drawn from the Aristotelian notion of the voluntary motions. See Della Rocca (1996b).