

12 Spinoza, religion, and recognition

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Introduction

In this chapter, I will show how Benedict Spinoza contributes to the debates on recognition by providing two intertwined elements: the mechanisms through which individual recognition is achieved and sought and the consequences of these individual processes in the collective. Spinoza proposes that human emotions yield the phenomenon of recognition, which creates both individual and collective identities. These identities can be either empowering and inclusive, or disempowering and exclusionary, but the mechanisms for both are the same.

I will begin by situating Spinoza in the contemporary literature on recognition. Spinoza contributes to – and indeed, is an important source of – what is sometimes called the ‘pessimistic’ or negative theory of recognition.¹ This school, typified by the work of Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, and Louis Althusser, proposes that becoming a subject in a social or political order requires conformity to existing social norms. This conception of recognition as ‘interpellation’ is seen as negative or pessimistic because the conditions of being recognized as a person require that one submit to the normative expectations of another, normally a more powerful individual or collective. Those who cannot conform are ‘misrecognized’, or seen as less than human, or at least not capable of full participation in the social or political order.² This process of coming to conform is sometimes called ‘subjectivization’, and I will refer to it as such. Harms of misrecognition are catalogued by several political theorists, and include effects such as marginalization, political exclusion, low social status, powerlessness, stereotyping, bias, etc.³ The work of recognition theorists in the 1990s was in part an effort to recognize these misrecognitions as issues of justice.

Spinoza contributes two elements to the pre-history of this approach to recognition. First, he argues that becoming a self requires mediation through the social, and second, he explains the mechanism of subjectivization – the affects and imagination. In outlining Spinoza’s naturalistic approach to explaining the mechanism of recognition, I hope to show both how Spinoza contributed to recognition theory and how a Spinozist approach can continue to offer insights into what he saw as the mechanism by which both subjects are created and the social world is formed. The emotions and desires, for Spinoza, are what motivate us to become part of

social life, to join with others and to make their desires ours. This process, like the affects themselves, can be both harmful and empowering. For Spinoza, the very process of recognition itself is neither necessarily good nor necessarily bad – it is simply how human societies function. Thus, we can understand Spinoza as offering an explanatory and descriptive account of how recognition works and can place him squarely on the side of those for whom recognition is constantly functioning – at least as long as there are humans with emotions like ours.

Spinoza prefigures the post-structuralist and Critical Theory notion of recognition as interpellation – the way in which the subject becomes recognizable only on the terms in which the social regime allows. The social calls to us, either as policeman or lover, and we can answer only by making ourselves into something recognizable, acceptable. It may be a happy accident that the social calls to us as we are, or the process of subjectivization might be so complete that we do not doubt or reject the social identities available to us within our culture, but for Spinoza this is unlikely. Not just in his case, but in the case of all individuals, whose diversity of affect, belief, and desire he takes to be basic.⁴ The crucial recognition tension that Spinoza focuses on is not the notion of recognition of minority groups as such – as critical theorists may – but particularly the tension between the sage and the social.

The central tension is as follows: the sage, the free individual, recognizes humans as part of nature, or God, and seeks to understand humans and the world naturalistically.⁵ The only norm of the sage is to understand – whatever yields knowledge ought to be pursued. This norm puts the sage in tension with her society – which seeks riches, glory, or other ephemeral goods. Yet, the sage cannot reject society completely – the sage needs society.⁶ So, the sage – in this case, Spinoza – takes up the challenge of trying to understand the mechanisms of social affiliation, power, and identity.

For Spinoza, we are inherently social beings insofar as we have human affects, desires, and imagination. These three elements ‘create’ the socialized individual. However, the form this socialized being takes, and indeed the degree of ‘sociability’ depends on many factors, and is not guaranteed to yield peace. Human affects, desires, and imagination are unstable, imperfect and even dangerous – they do not automatically create social harmony. While shared norms and collective identities can yield social unity, the inherent diversity of human emotions, beliefs and desires troubles the idea of a stable unity. Thus, collective identities are inherently unstable. This gives rise not just to problems of recognition and misrecognition, but also to problems of community dissolution. So, for Spinoza, we must find a way to unify a diverse group of individuals in some way, which is both stable and inclusive. I will show that some collective identities are better than others for Spinoza.

Spinoza on recognition

When we think of Spinoza, we think perhaps of a god-intoxicated man, a rationalist, determinist, a metaphysician who strangely argues that we are mere modes of

God. As such, it will be surprising to learn that this determinist man was in fact obsessed with understanding the mechanisms of the emotions and how they create social life, to the end of trying to build political states which can best organize these mechanisms to yield a maximally powerful state with maximally empowered individuals. However, it is perhaps an accident of biography that gives us Spinoza the social theorist. As a young man, Spinoza studied Descartes in Amsterdam, and found himself increasingly at odds with the Jewish community of which he was a part. At the age of 26, he was excommunicated, ostracized from his community.

The reasons for this *cherem*, as it is called, are debated hotly by historians and philosophers alike – whether Spinoza went outside the community for a lawsuit, whether he refused to countenance the God of Abraham, whether he was some annoying 20-something who wouldn’t stop talking about Descartes – or perhaps all three.⁷ But what is clear, particularly from the *Theological Political Treatise* (henceforth abbreviated *TTP*) wherein Spinoza defends his decision to leave the community of his birth, is that Spinoza refused the social norms of his community and refused recognition in that community for his own reasons, primarily related to his identification with the new philosophy and republicanism developing in Amsterdam at the time. As a Jew, however, Spinoza could not genuinely be part of that community, either.⁸

As a result, he bore the costs and burdens of being first a dissenter and then an outsider. As such, he was acutely aware of the power one loses when one abandons or is rejected from one’s community, yet he stood by his decision, arguing that the rocky road to reason would not be possible in that society, and that the terms of social recognition offered by the Jewish community of Amsterdam were too high, since they meant abandoning his philosophical path.

Spinoza studied society as an outsider – with an eye toward reform. Although the outsider’s life can be difficult, it offers a clearer view of the norms and practices that insiders take up as natural, normal, and ‘good’. Spinoza disagreed, but he was sensitive to the ways in which the process through which we become social beings shapes our emotions, desires, and beliefs in such a way that rejecting the norms of the community means losing an aspect of ourselves. Such rejection is difficult. Beyond the loss of social power one suffers from dissenting from one’s community, one also loses the bonds of affiliation and the connection with those norms, practices and beliefs which one still aligns oneself. So, we find in Spinoza a curious insight into the role of society: he argues that the free man, the philosopher, the sage, needs society. But that society needs to change if the free individual is to become welcome.

Spinoza, however, was no social critic, but rather a social scientist who thought the key to political stability and individual flourishing can only be achieved through the design of social and political institutions. For Spinoza, if we can understand the mechanisms that create affiliation to, for example, harmful norms and practices, we can then intervene into this process by creating social and political institutions to reform individual emotions and beliefs by creating new and better collective identities.

Affects, desires and imagination: the mechanisms of recognition

For Spinoza, emotions, desires, and imagination create the social world. We are bound to and divided from those around us through our affects – love, hate, contempt, joy, fear, etc. He insisted that to understand our social attachments and conflicts, we must first understand these affects. Affects are the mechanisms, or better, the *motions* of social life. To understand the social, Spinoza investigates the affects, their variety, their power, and their power over us. Spinoza divides the affects into two types: passive and active. Active affects, like joy, are defined as affects that express an increase in our power.⁹ Passive affects, like sadness or pain, express a decrease in our power.¹⁰

While there is much to say about the notion of power in Spinoza, for present purposes I will offer an attenuated explanation. For Spinoza, each individual has a degree of power of acting and thinking called ‘conatus’.¹¹ This ‘conatus’ is the power we have as parts of nature or modes of substance.¹² Whatever increases our power of acting and thinking is ‘good’, and whatever decreases this power is ‘bad’.¹³ Our individual power is not just affected by our affects, but also how we understand these affects, their causes and their value to us, and finally, how they shape our desires and our conceptions of ourselves. These various dimensions of human power work together. That is, our joy may increase our power, allowing us to think more clearly about what causes our joy in the long term, and thus allow us greater power to bring about joy in future. If we experience joy, but misidentify the cause of this joy, we risk the potential enervation of our power, and indeed a false conception of what it is that gives us joy, and thus leave us desiring something that does not yield joy.

We can think of active affects as empowering emotions. When we feel such emotions, our power increases. Depending on the cause of our joy, or the perceived cause of our joy, we may be able to sustain this increased power, or it may decrease. If we love, for example, something infinite, like God or nature, and derive joy from this love, we are more likely than those who love and find joy in the ephemeral to sustain the power given to us by this joy. Affects like joy are not the only way to increase our power. Indeed, sustaining increased power requires that we are better able to understand ourselves and the causes of our desires. Understanding sustains empowerment in a way that emotions – because they are often fleeting – cannot. Affective power, then, conjointly with our ideas about the objects that affect us and our desires toward them, determines our degree of power.

Spinoza proposes that there are as many types of affects as there are objects in the world.¹⁴ Our love, hate, admiration, and contempt vary depending on what we love or hate. Not all of the objects we experience are alike. One group of objects – namely, other humans – influences us in very special ways. We imagine that they, like us, desire things and strive to realize their desires. To the extent that we think that these others are like us, we take up their desires, their likes, and dislikes as our own. Spinoza calls this ‘imitation’ and defines it as “the desire of something

which has been engendered in us from the belief that others similar to ourselves have this same desire”.¹⁵ That is, through ‘imitation’, we endeavour to bring about whatever it is we imagine is conducive to pleasure or which we imagine others like us to desire.¹⁶ This is a process that begins in childhood and is a result of both physiological and psychological facts about humans.¹⁷

This imitation is bolstered by the desire for esteem. Individuals, from their earliest years, seek love and approval.^{18,19} Spinoza writes: “If anyone has done something which he imagines affects others with pleasure, he will be affected with pleasure accompanied by the idea of himself as cause”.²⁰ In general, this process works as follows: we strive to increase our pleasure by bringing about what we desire and what we imagine others desire.²¹ When we do what we believe will bring pleasure to others and are praised, we feel good about ourselves. This ‘esteem’ we receive from others increases our power.²² The more praise we receive, the more our esteem increases. The more our self-esteem increases, the more our power increases. Esteem is a built-in motivator for social conformity, for seeking to please others. Spinoza spends much of Book III of the *Ethics* investigating this motivational force.

Spinoza explains that we, as humans, seek to conform our desires to others if they are like us in some respect; we take up what we imagine to be their desires as desirable. Even if we do not know the individuals in question, we seek, in general, to conform to what we believe are the expectations and values of others. Spinoza is clear about this: “We endeavor to do whatever we imagine men [men for whom we have felt no emotion] to regard with pleasure, and on the other hand we shun doing whatever we imagine men to regard with aversion”.²³ Even for those individuals whom we don’t know or care about, we still aim to act in a way that they would approve and seek to avoid their disapproval. We do not just seek to act in a way that others approve we also seek to align our preferences, values, and desires with theirs. Spinoza explains:

If we imagine that someone loves, desires, or hates something that we love, desire or hate, this very fact will cause us to love, desire or hate the thing more steadfastly. But if we imagine he dislikes what we love, or vice versa, then our feelings will fluctuate.²⁴

Spinoza explains this process as “the imitation of the affects”.²⁵ He explains how this works in great detail in Book III of the *Ethics*. He sets the stage for this discussion by explaining the ways in which the human mind and body can be affected by external objects (E3P2-E3P17). From E3P27–57, he explains how, depending on our orientation towards a particular individual, we may either imitate or reject that individual’s emotions. By ‘orientation’ he means whether we love a thing, hate it, or are indifferent to it. If we love something, we will love whatever we imagine to be pleasing to that individual (E3P19); whereas, if we hate something, we will hate whatever gives it pleasure (E3P23) and love whatever gives it pain (E3P20 – what we might call the *schadenfreude* proposition. Perhaps most importantly, if we are indifferent to other humans, but take them to

be like us, we will act in a way that we imagine will please them.²⁶ This ‘imitation’ of the affects of those around us, for Spinoza, is the foundation of all social life.²⁷ Through this imitation, we become trained as members of the community. We take up the values of others; we come to value what they value and to shape ourselves into the kinds of beings who will merit esteem from those around us, while avoiding blame and negative judgement. Becoming a member of a social group requires valuing those things the group values. This ‘common valuing’ begins in childhood, and is supported by pleasurable rewards for following and punishments for flouting these common values.²⁸

How we act in the world and how we understand the world are influenced by common customs and practices – first of a family, then of a social group. We imitate others and learn from those we wish to please how to act in the world—what is right and wrong, respectable and shameful. We learn how to obtain praise that feeds our self-esteem, increasing our power.²⁹ These affective-imaginative connections can be very powerful. These shared affective-imaginative connections can form the basis of stable communities and can increase the power of those who join them – at least while they conform.

Through the imitation of the affects, human individuals seek to conform themselves to the desires, expectations, and values of others. However, this process doesn’t determine social order – sociability is far from guaranteed. Indeed, there are many ways in which individual’s desires, affects, and imaginative conceptions of themselves and the world can challenge the group, despite having been shaped by the group. The theory of affects and the imitation of the affects comprise Spinoza’s contribution to recognition theory. These are the mechanisms through which recognition, and indeed, misrecognition operate.

Before delving into Spinoza’s second contribution to recognition theory – his application of the affect theory to the collective – it is worth taking a few moments to see how Spinoza’s ideas clarify a central concept in the ‘negative’ theory of recognition, and why his affect theory is a real contribution to the debate. Alternately called ‘subjectivization’, ‘subjection’, and ‘constitution’, this process whereby we become recognized as persons is always one where we do not determine the meaning of our subjectivity alone, but are rather recognized always on the other’s terms can be seen both as the conditions for the possibility of subjectivity and as the process by which we are subjected to the norms of the social, over which we have very little control.³⁰

The idea of the social constitution of the subject is one that generates consternation for those who question how an individual can ever be a non-subject or who reject the notion that we are not always autonomous subjects, free to determine the meaning of our existence, social or otherwise. There is a sense in which subjectivization is seen as mysterious and troubling, in that it suggests a kind of irrevocable social determination. Although I believe this is a mischaracterization of the notion of subjectivization, I think that only through understanding the mechanism of the “production of the subject-effect”³¹ can we elucidate the notion and further understand the limits of social change and individual freedom in society.

For Spinoza, the structure of human emotions creates the social phenomenon of recognition and subjectivization. We are not free to determine either our own emotions or those of others, and the process by which we take up the emotions, ideas, and desires of others as desirable begins too early for us to avoid understanding ourselves in terms of the identities available within our societies. What it is to be ‘constituted’ by the social is that what we think, what we feel, what we desire, and what we believe acceptable to desire, think, and feel are shaped through the process of the imitation of the affects. To be part of a group is to think, feel, and desire in a manner acceptable to that group. To feel, think, or desire otherwise is to fine oneself in conflict with the group. For Spinoza, such conflicts are always possible, given the general volatility of human emotions.

In Spinoza’s view, to be recognized and approved by a group is pleasurable. Social recognition increases our power through both joy and through the ways in which we can use the power of the group for our own protection and flourishing. However, to be misrecognized by the group brings one empowerment, but with a recognition of its tenuousness. One can only retain this power and pleasure through a pretence. Should one reject the conditions upon which one is recognized, one would lose the power of the group. There is little joy in being required to think, feel, and believe in ways that one does not or cannot. The misrecognized, the misfit, the dissenter, lives with a conflict – to be part of the group is both painful and seemingly necessary. Without the power of the group, the individual not only has very little power, but may consider the power of the group as a threat. Finally, for Spinoza, changing the conditions under which we are recognized requires changing the norms of our society. Changing the norms of our society is not easy – it requires, in a real sense, changing the emotions, ideas and desires of a good number of individuals within our society. This is certainly no easy task. However, it is the project that Spinoza takes up in his political works.

Individual and collective power

For Spinoza, human individuals, considered within the whole of nature, have a relatively small degree of power.³² In the first part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza outlines how an individual can gain more power as they seek joy, and ultimately knowledge of themselves as part of the natural world. However, Spinoza understands that increasing one’s power as an individual alone is not just unlikely but in fact impossible. Alone, individuals are weak and cannot flourish.³³ Only by joining with other humans can we thrive. When individuals join together they have more of the power of nature. The larger the group of human individuals, the more power they can have within nature.³⁴ However, the dynamics of the group – specifically how they are joined together; what norms, practices and collective identity they share – determines whether they are more or less powerful. For Spinoza, a group unified by fear may have some collective power, but less than one unified through love or joy. This follows from the discussion above of the power of the emotions.

For individuals, being a part of a group is beneficial – they are able to use the power of the collective to flourish, and to live in ways impossible alone. However, joining a group has its costs. Should an individual come to disagree with the group in some way, the costs are evident. While certain group norms may in fact be disempowering to individual – may cause fear or pain or hatred – if this is required for membership in the group this individual has a kind of power-related math problem to solve. Is it better to live diminished within the group, or to live without it – free from that particular norm or practice, but yet without the strength of the group itself? In the *Political Treatise* (henceforth abbreviated *TP*), Spinoza investigates this kind of mathematical social query – when one disagrees with the group, one finds not just that one might be alone, but also that the full power of the group might be mobilized against them, either to ensure their conformity or to expel them from the group. Dissenters then, have a difficult decision – to seek recognition and community membership on the terms offered, or to accept the consequences of exile.

Ultimately, for Spinoza, complete exile is untenable as a solution to the problems of misrecognition or dissent. The dissenter, for Spinoza, must live in a hidden way, as much as possible, and to seek to avoid arousing the ire of the community while working to improve it from within.

While Spinoza was exiled from the Jewish community, he continued to live in Amsterdam, writing his *Ethics* and political works in the service of trying to understand human society, and its mechanisms, while arguing that the fundamental stumbling block to his own freedom and identity – the religious prohibitions on investigation into the nature world, were unnecessary and indeed harmful as a way to organize and unify a society. In his political works, the *TTP* and the *TP*, Spinoza argued that once we understand how the mechanisms of social life work – that is, once we understand imagination, emotion, and desire and their contagion, then we can theorize political solutions to the problem of coordinating a diverse multitude of individuals in the best way.

Recognition, religion, and the noble lie

How can we unite a disparate group of diverse individuals? This question is not new with Spinoza, but he takes it up, as before him Plato proposed a noble lie might unite a people. Since Plato, theorists of nationalism have written about this practice – both of its utility and its danger. Benedict Anderson writes of “imagined communities” as the basis of national unity, and indeed Spinoza recognizes the importance of imagination in both individual and collective identity.³⁵ So, it should be no surprise that Spinoza’s political theory proposes that to unite a multitude one needs a shared collective identity.³⁶

For Spinoza, religion played this unifying role in the first Hebrew Kingdom, which he discusses at length in the *TTP*.³⁷ The Jews, emerging from slavery, free for the first time to decide their fates and lives, were given a collective identity – one which they took up with awe and love rather than fear and force. This religion of Moses, Spinoza insists, was not just followed through love, which is an

essential dimension of its power, but was also comprehensive – allowing it to shape every aspect of its adherents’ lives and to shape their collective life. The Law of Moses prescribed and proscribed from morning until night, from eating and sleeping to farming and marriage, dress, comportment, worship, and governance. This comprehensive religion gave the Jews not just structure to serve them for their newfound freedom but also marks of individuality as a group.

Religious identity, particularly as set out by the Law of Moses, was as thick a collective identity as one could hope for.³⁸ This ‘thickness’ was, in the early days of the kingdom, its virtue. Not just were the Jews united, but the sheer number of shared practices and beliefs made their degree of agreement (in Spinoza’s view) high. Yet, what was originally a virtue had become – in Spinoza’s time – vicious, for religious doctrines which once serve a people may not always be found to be true. Yet, there is no mechanism in revealed religion for revising revelation. The particular worry in Spinoza’s own time was the rejection of the new science on religious grounds, and attempts to block investigation into the natural world based on the idea that revelation had shown all – or at least the way. Thus, we know Spinoza as a critic of religion. But this criticism is not entirely rejection. Spinoza thought religions, particularly those based on the active affects of love and awe, to be good ways to organize a multitude – though not the best way.

Recognition and collective identity

Lewis Feuer argues that for Spinoza religion is a kind of developmental stage in the freedom of a people.³⁹ First, united by an imaginative conception of themselves, a free people becomes more free by making this imaginative conception of themselves more adequate – allowing their imaginative self-conception to change and develop with the power of its people. Religions, however, are rarely so easily reformed and malleable. Thus, these very strong imaginative agreements or collective identities can succumb to what we might call the dark side of recognition – exclusion, enforced conformity, and rejection of better norms and customs.

Religious institutions in the seventeenth century had, in Spinoza’s view, failed to embrace the demonstrable truths of the new science in favour of clinging to false doctrines in the mistaken view that change might weaken the collective agreement that religion had so long sustained. However, Spinoza insisted that to ignore the new science – and worse, to banish it, to make it illegal – would not save collective agreement, but weaken it. The subtitle of the *TTP* thus reads: “[F]reedom to philosophize may not only be allowed without danger to piety and the stability of the republic but cannot be refused without destroying the peace of the republic and piety itself”.⁴⁰ Religion, once necessary for the peace of collective agreement, would necessarily endanger the same should it fail to recognize the new truths of the new science. Specifically, Spinoza argues that such views in requiring conformity to falsehoods alienate the ‘best’ citizens, and undermine the power of their collective agreement by demanding belief based on fear rather than through love or belief.⁴¹ Yet, Spinoza recognized that it was hardly surprising that an imaginative collective identity should be resistant to change and

challenge. Such imaginative identities, without an in-built mechanism for reform and change, were ultimately sustainable only through fear once they were challenged. Fear, as explained earlier, is a very unstable basis for collective life, and weakens the commonwealth.

For Spinoza, democracy was the only form of state that could sustain reform of the collective identity of a multitude. That is not to say that the collective identity within a democracy would not be imaginative, for it surely would. However, democracies have a built-in mechanism for reform. By being open to all citizens, with collective agreements only good until the next assembly meeting, democracies can be shaped and reshaped by those who participate in it. Democratic assemblies should, in Spinoza's view, be large and inclusive, drawing on the incomplete knowledge of the many to create a better (if not fully adequate) imaginary identity for the whole.

How does a republic unify itself without religion, or another imaginative conception of collective identity? The answer Spinoza gives appears to be is that it cannot. As long as humans congregate, they will need some manner of imaginative group identity to unify them. The question for political philosophers is what the content of the collective identity will be, and what are the emotions to which it will give rise. For Spinoza, collective identities that are based on and give rise to active affects like joy and hope are better than those that employ or result in sadness or hate. Those identities that empower citizens, whether through encouraging active affects or through expanding their knowledge of themselves and the natural world are better than those that do not. Institutions that allow for open discussion of common and individual problems can yield a better collective identity than those that do not. Further, those that unify more are better than those that unify few. These points are Spinoza's systematic proposals for how to best organize an imaginative collective identity in order to yield maximal positive recognition.

Conclusion

What, then, can we take to be Spinoza's contribution to the understanding of recognition and indeed its pre-history? I take Spinoza to be a firm supporter of a naturalistic conception of the social, and to propose and outline an affective mechanism that yields the recognition and misrecognition that shapes social life. From the foundation of his social account of selfhood, he works upward toward the idea of a social or collective self or imaginative self-understanding. These accounts of individual and collective self-identity are both parallel and reciprocal. Collective identity is shaped by the interaction of individuals, and the interaction between their affects and imaginative conception of themselves, which in turn shapes and is shaped by the collective imaginary – yielding the phenomena of recognition and misrecognition. Spinoza's own experience of misrecognition and the struggles of one who dissents from the social consensus gives us a powerful example of this process.

Spinoza's second contribution, as I hope to have shown in the second part of my paper, is the proposal that not all imaginative collective identities are equal – some

are better than others. Those that allow for collective agreement based on more adequate understandings of humans as part of nature and of the natural world itself are better than those which bind the collective to a fixed and perhaps false self-understanding. Although Spinoza does not expect us to have full or complete knowledge of ourselves or the social world – at least, not beyond a few individuals – he does think that some political mechanisms are better at encouraging this kind of adequate understanding than others. Thus, for Spinoza, while a collective religious identity can be a powerful way to coordinate the action of many, it is not the best way to do so.

Notes

- 1 It is beyond the scope of this chapter to follow the genealogy of the notion of recognition back from Butler to Althusser to Marx to Spinoza. Hasana Sharp in Chapter Four of *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 117–55 argues for this point, although without using the terminology 'negative' or 'pessimistic' recognition.
- 2 Foucault coins the term 'assujettissement' in Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (London: Allen Lane, 1976), which Butler translates as 'subjectivation' Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Butler goes on to use Althusser's concept of 'interpellation' from Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, [1971] (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001); Jacques Lacan, *The Mirror-Stage as Formative of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience*. Translated by Alan Sheridan in *Écrits: A Selection*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1977).
- 3 Iris Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition", *New Left Review* 3 (May–June 2000); Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (New York: Verso, 2003); Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
- 4 I employ the standard abbreviated references to Spinoza's work: for example, E3P11S is a reference to *Ethics*, Book 3, Proposition 11, Scholium. Abbreviations of Spinoza's writings: *E* (*Ethics*), *KV* (*Short Treatise*), *CM* (*Metaphysical Thoughts*), *TdIE* (*Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*), *TTP* (*Theological-Political Treatise*), *TP* (*Political Treatise*); Ep (Letters). Other abbreviations: A (Axiom), P (Proposition), C (Corollary), Pref (Preface), App (Appendix), DefAff (Definition of the Affects), D (Definition), L (Lemma), S, (Scholium). E1, Appendix. All references to Spinoza's work from: Baruch Spinoza, Samuel Shirley, Michael L. Morgan, *Complete Works* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub, 2002.)
- 5 E1, Appendix.
- 6 E4P18S.
- 7 Steven Nadler, *Spinoza's Heresy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) and *Spinoza: A Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
- 8 Henry Oldenburg, in a letter to Robert Boyle dated 10 October 1665, refers to Spinoza as one who "lives in Holland, but no Hollander", in *Correspondence of Robert Boyle*, vol. 2, 550, ed. Michael Hunter, Antonio Clericuzio, and Lawrence M Principe (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2001). (citation thanks to Filip Buyse).
- 9 E3P11S.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 E3P7.
- 12 *TTP*, ch. 4; *TTP*, ch. 16: "The universal power of Nature as a whole is nothing but the power of all individual things taken together [E2P13SL5]", "*universalis potentia*

totius naturae nihil est praeter potentiam omnium individuorum simul, hinc sequitur unumquodque individuum jus summum habere ad omnia, quae potest, sive jus uniuscujusque eo usque se extendere, quo usque ejus determinata potentia se extendit."

- 13 E1, Appendix.
- 14 E3P56.
- 15 E3P27.
- 16 E3P29.
- 17 E3P32S.
- 18 E3P33–34.
- 19 E3P29.
- 20 E3P30.
- 21 We may, of course, be wrong about what others desire. More ahead.
- 22 There is an important difference, for Spinoza, between esteem and what we might think of excess of esteem, e.g., pride, and deficits of esteem, e.g., humility and what Spinoza calls 'self-abasement'. Although Spinoza prizes self-esteem because it enhances individual power (E3P53), he argues that pride, humility, and self-abasement are bad for us, since they are miscalculations of self-esteem. Being prideful, we err by esteeming ourselves too much (E3DefAff 6, 28; E4P48–9); being humble, we err (E3DefAff 26; E4P53) by focusing on our weakness, and thus diminishing our power; in self-abasement, we err by esteeming ourselves too little (E3DefAff 29). Ultimately, for Spinoza, error in estimation of anything, ourselves included, can decrease our power.
- 23 E3P29.
- 24 E3P31.
- 25 E3P27S.
- 26 E3P27
- 27 Alexandre Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*. (Paris: Éditions de minuit, 1969) 150–67.
- 28 E3P32S.
- 29 E2P17S, E3P29, E3P32C, E3P32S, E3P33–4.
- 30 Pierre Macherey (Translated by Stephanie Bundy) "Judith Butler and the Althusserian eory of Subjection", *Décalages* 1, no. 2 (2011–2012); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1990), 10–12.
- 31 Macherey, "Judith Butler", 6.
- 32 TP 2.15.
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 The power of a group of human individuals is not just a function of the number of individuals, but depends on their degree of agreement. A more elaborate discussion of this would be required. I am asserting here only that a larger group of humans working together has the potential for more power than any one individual alone.
- 35 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).
- 36 This has made many argue that Spinoza is the first political theorist of nationalism, e.g., Lewis Samuel Feuer, *Spinoza and the Rise of Liberalism* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1987), and David A. Freeman, "Spinoza on Self-Consciousness and Nationalism", *History of European Ideas* 16, no. 4–6 (January 1993). This is true to some extent – however, in what follows, I will show that while a collective imagined identity is necessary, it is no guarantee of peace.
- 37 TTP, Chs. 18–19.
- 38 Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture", in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
- 39 Feuer, *Spinoza and the Rise of Liberalism*.
- 40 TTP, title page.
- 41 TTP, Ch. 20, §44.

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