

SPINOZA'S PASSIONATE POLITICS

Tammy Nyden (nydenbul@grinnell.edu)
Grinnell College

Passion & Body in Spinoza Workshop, University of Leiden, The Netherlands, July 2008

I. Introduction

In recent years, scholars that have traditionally focused on Spinoza's metaphysics and epistemology have been giving more attention to both his treatment of the passions and to his political writings. This is appropriate as Spinoza was a systematic thinker and an understanding of the connections between these aspects of his system will help us better understand Spinoza's system as a whole. Even with these changes, there still is an unbalanced focus on Books I and II of the *Ethics* within in the English-language literature. Somehow, one gets the sense that Spinoza's writings on human affects and politics are considered philosophically less important or interesting. Perhaps these aspects of his system have been given as much attention because they focus on the inadequate first kind of knowledge, and it was assumed that Spinoza did not take it as seriously as reason and intuition. In any case, this neglect was unfortunate because Spinoza, like most of his seventeenth-century contemporaries, does take the passions seriously and considers any study of ethics or politics to require their careful analysis.¹

The need for such analysis must be understood within the context of the rejection of the Aristotelian system and the need to re-conceptualize the passions, the soul, and the

¹ Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, 2.

relation between them.² Just as early modern philosophers sought a unity of understanding within the physical world in terms of mechanistic science, where the fundamental components were size, shape, and motion; they also sought a unity of understanding of the passions – trying to identify the primary emotions and define the more complex passions in terms of them. My point is that it is normal in Spinoza’s time to think an in-depth treatment of the passions necessary and philosophically relevant. Any neglect towards these subjects in current Spinoza scholarship is more of a reflection of contemporary philosophical discomfort with such topics than of seventeenth-century reality.

That Spinoza sees the passions as relevant to politics is a sign of his times in general, but *how* he makes that connection is distinctive to a particular political movement in which he was involved: Dutch Radical Cartesianism. Dutch Radical Cartesianism combined the ideas of Descartes and Hobbes to argue in favor of republicanism of a democratic ilk. From Descartes, Radical Cartesians derived a commitment to understanding the psychology of the passions and the conviction that the passions can and ought to be modified with reason. From Hobbes they derived the idea that all things act in their self-interest, striving to persevere in their being. However, unlike Descartes, they did not always think that reason could completely overcome the passions and, unlike Hobbes, they understood self-preservation as something much more than mere physical survival. Further, they derived from Hobbes the idea that the most secure state is an absolute one (in the sense that it does not contain mixed government). However, they saw democracy, not monarchy, as the most absolute state.

² Susan James, 22.

In the following, I will give a brief overview of some of the Radical Cartesian assumptions about human nature, the passions, and their role in politics. I will discuss these ideas as they appeared in works published before Spinoza wrote his political works and of which he would have been intimately familiar. Next, I will look at Spinoza's own treatment of the passions in Politics. Finally, I will show how Book III of the *Ethics* provides the psychology needed to ground this political theory. In the end, I hope to shed light on some of the connections between Spinoza's theory of the passions and his politics.

II. Radical Cartesian Politics: Passions and Their Role in Politics

Lambertus van Velthuysen

Lambertus Van Velthuysen (1622-1685) was a physician, Utrecht politician, and a devout Calvinist. Like many Radical Cartesians, he came by Cartesianism through Adriaan Heereboord (1614-1661) his professor at Leiden. This fact is important to note because Heereboord passed onto his students a Cartesianism that we would not recognize today. At the University of Leiden, professors were required to teach Aristotle and those that taught Descartes' philosophy presented it as a logical extension of Aristotelianism and combined it with the ideas of other modern philosophers. This attempt, known as the *philosophia novantiqua*, was in keeping with the neo-Aristotelianism of Heereboord's teacher, Franco Burgersdijk, who took an eclectic approach to philosophy and presented the possibility of a non-Scholastic interpretation of Aristotle.³

The *philosophia novantiqua* held that humans are born as a bundle of passions, which are not yet under the command of reason. These passions are a gift from God in

³ Tammy Nyden-Bullock, *Spinoza's Radical Cartesian Mind*, Continuum Press, 2007. (from chapter 2)

that they are the child's only means of survival. They move the child to seek out what his bodily survival requires. This tradition therefore does not deride the passions, but rather focuses on how they are to be nurtured by parents, teachers, and the state. Through experience, education, and the development of reason, the child learns how to use her passions in order to attain her goals. On this view, the passions will never be completely overcome or subdued with reason, nor should they be, for passions are necessary to drive humans to action.⁴ Reason's role then, is not to destroy the passions, but help guide and balance them for the individual's wellbeing.

It is from this particularly Dutch form of Cartesianism that Van Velthuysen begins, and as a Radical Cartesian, he mixes it with a fair share of Hobbes. Like Hobbes, Van Velthuysen thinks the principle drive in humans is self-preservation. However, Van Velthuysen understands the drive of self-preservation to be a moral duty proscribed by God through natural law. He builds a moral psychology that details the natural inclinations of self-preservation and our rights stemming from it. On his view, God has united the human soul and body so that the passions naturally preserve the union. When the animal spirits move in a way that is contrary to the well-being of the mind-body union, the soul feels pain. Likewise, the soul feels pleasure when the animal spirits move in a way consistent with the preservation of the union.⁵ In this way, Van Velthuysen reduces all of the passions to two: pain and pleasure. God has linked each passion with a proper object so that humans have not only a natural drive to preserve themselves, but also a natural means to do so. Such natural passions are universal and with the guidance of reason, they form the basis of morality.

⁴ Blom, *Causality and Morality in Politics*, p. 177.

⁵ Van Velthusyen, *Des principes du juste et du convenable*, p. 87.

Before moving on, there are three things to point out here: 1) Van Velthuysen intimately connects human passions with an inherent natural drive to self-preservation. 2) He claims that all passions ultimately stem from two simples: pain and pleasure. 3) However, he does not explain how the other passions derive from pain or pleasure, nor does he give a philosophical account of self-preservation.

The De La Court Brothers

Like Van Velthuysen, the De la Court brothers, Johan (1622-1660) and Pieter (1618-1685), were trained in the *Philosophia novantiqua* tradition by Heereboord at the University of Leiden. These two businessmen were members of the States-Party and strong supporters of De Witt's republican regime. Johan came to oppose the Aristotelianism and humanist political tradition taught in the universities and offered an alternative approach, which argued for democracy based on arguments strongly influenced by Hobbes, Descartes, and Machiavelli. Johan died young and Pieter later edited and published his writings, turning Johan's theoretical treatises into political pamphlets, which spoke to the people, often through fables, historical examples, and maxims.⁶ It is difficult to separate the ideas of the two brothers and I follow the convention of most scholars who tend to treat them as one voice.

Their writings represent a new approach in Dutch political theory, which does not appeal to classical authorities, but rather on an understanding of human nature that, like Van Velthuysen's writings, combined elements from Hobbes' and Descartes' philosophies. It is important to note that their writings were not systematic, nor

⁶ Velema, W.R.E. (2002), "That a Republic is Better than a Monarchy" Anti-Monarchism in Early Modern Dutch Political Thought,' in: *Republicanism: A Shared European History*, Martin van Gelderen (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 14.

theoretical. Their aim was of a practical not philosophical nature. They wanted to justify De Witt's regime and to make policy recommendations for further reform.⁷ That said, their writings present all of the major political doctrines found in Spinoza's political writings.

The De la Courts argue against monarchy by arguing that a life of a monarch leaves him necessarily corrupt given the nature of human passions. They argue against the established view that a monarch, when raised from birth with a proper education for ruling, will be instilled with political virtues. They, like Van Velthuysen, argue that the passions are universal, and therefore affect all classes the same. Further, the life of a monarch is one that makes it particularly difficult to cultivate the reason needed to keep the passions in balance. That life, rather, encourages the dominance of the passions.

For instance, because an incumbent prince always fears that his successor will want to rule as soon as he is able to do so, he will purposively keep his successor ignorant. Further, even though the courtiers might help the successor because they want to gain his favor, they will try to ensure that he will be a weak ruler so that when he gains power they can control him. These two factors result in the successor being raised in an environment of useless entertainment, intended to distract him from the education he needs to become a strong ruler. This entertainment promotes his lusts and fails to develop his reason. Therefore, the upbringing of a monarch does not cultivate virtue, but vice.⁸

⁷ Prokhovnik, R. (2004), *Spinoza and Republicanism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 97.

⁸ [De la Court, J. and/or P.] V.H. (1662), *Consideratien van Staat, ofte politike weeg-schaal : waar in met veele reedenen, omstandigheden, exempelen, en fabulen wert overwogen; welke forme der regeeringe, in speculatie gebout op de practijk, onder de menschen de beste zy*, 3rd ed., Amsterdam, pp. 59-69; and [De la Court, J. and/or P.] D.C. (1662) *Politieke discoursen handelende in ses onderscheide boeken, van steeden, landen, oorlogen, kerken, regeeringen en zeeden*. 3rd ed., Amsterdam, pp. 145-150; cited in Velema, "That a Republic is Better than a Monarchy", p. 16.

Three problems result from monarchy and the passions of its ruler. First, the prince's base passions and desires will require unlimited wealth in order to be fulfilled. In order to continue with the entertainment with which he has grown accustomed, he will 'suck the country dry' raising taxes and engaging in offensive wars.⁹ Second, the prince will give the majority of the responsibilities to his courtiers so that they do not interfere with his pursuit of lusts. Courtiers gain access to the monarch's ear through flattery and helping him indulge this base passions. In this way, the courtiers end up corrupt as well. In their effort to keep the center of power in the court, they will do what they can to weaken the power of provincial governors and to keep large urban populations in check with armies.¹⁰ Third, succession will always involve bitter struggles, often resulting in war.¹¹

De la Court's main point is that a political system must not be dependant on the virtue on an individual. Instead, there must be strong institutions and policies that force politicians to behave effectively by making the interests of the sovereign necessarily match the common interest of the people. Behind his views about political virtue is the *philosophia novantiqua* approach to the passions that we saw in van Velthuysen. This approach is central to De la Court's understanding of human nature. Humans are vulnerable, needy and weak. Natural drives and strong passions dominate. The strongest human drives are self-love and the desire to further one's own interests, which De la Court characterizes in terms of property, honor, and power.¹² These two drives determine

⁹ De la Court, *Consideratien van Staat*, pp. 70-73 and *Politieke discoursen*, pp. 138-42; cited in Velema, "That a Republic is Better than a Monarchy", pp. 17-18.

¹⁰ De la Court, *Consideratien van Staat*, pp. 86-92 and *Politieke discoursen*, pp. 156; cited in Velema, "That a Republic is Better than a Monarchy", p. 17.

¹¹ De la Court, *Consideratien van Staat*, pp.133-137.

¹² Velema, "That a Republic is Better than a Monarchy", p. 14.

and shape the goals of individuals. The passions, which De la Court sometimes associates with incorrect judgments, can frustrate the attainment of these goals. In order to escape this situation one must have two things, a strong will and reason. The passions can and should be tamed by the development of reason and virtue through education in order to align the passions with our goals. An important general goal of each individual, then, is to develop her reason so as to master passions that would hinder her self-interest. De la Court does not think that passions can be completely controlled or overcome with reason, but that reason is an important means for keeping them in line and thus improving one's life.¹³ Further, reason and virtue do not overcome self-interest, but work with it. It is unrealistic to expect even the most civilized and rational person to rise above selfish passions unless he is literally forced to do so.¹⁴ This concept is central to De la Court's political philosophy. The very purpose of the state is to check the passions with reason.¹⁵ The best state is one where the passions are reined in most tightly.

Van den Enden

Fransiscus van den Enden (1602-1674) had a school where he taught Latin and the new philosophy. We was also involved in political life of Holland and eventually was executed in France in a plot to overthrow the monarchy. He was very much influenced by the writings of De la Court, but did not feel that went far enough in arguing for equality and democracy. Like Van Velthuysen and De la Court, Van den Enden thought that all individuals are driven by passions and self-interest. He used these natural drives to explain human sociability. He said that people have basic needs and a desire for comfort.

¹³ Kossman, Political Thought in the Dutch Republic, p. 64.

¹⁴ Velema, "That a Republic is Better than a Monarchy", p. 14.

¹⁵ Mulier, The Myth of Venice, 131.

These come to involve enhanced pleasures that are only available within a community.¹⁶ He thinks that people are equal and free in the state of nature, but they are unable to meet their needs and desires. Therefore, out of self-interest, they form the commonwealth, which Van den Enden defines as an association of people, based on the foundation of equal liberty, which incorporates laws so that each member will not be weakened but strengthened through the common benefit.¹⁷ In joining the common wealth, individuals do not give up their equality. On the contrary, a good commonwealth takes great measures to ensure the equality of its people.

Since each individual is driven by passions and self-interest, care must be taken in the state to ensure that no individual attempts to supersede the will of the people, that is, to create inequality. Public affairs must be arranged so that it is very difficult for any member to profit at the disadvantage of the community.¹⁸ Further, the state must institute countermeasures so that appointed leaders, out of fear of personal harm, will not become arrogant or violent against the will of the people.¹⁹ On penalty of death, laws must forbid people from acting or teaching anything contrary to the equality between citizens and common best as the people's council determines it to be.²⁰

As we look at these examples of Radical Cartesian thinkers, we find many similarities with Spinoza's political views. As noted before, the primary difference between Spinoza and these other thinkers is that Spinoza offers a philosophic system, he

¹⁶ Van Gelderen, M. (2002), 'Aristotelians, Monarchomachs, and Republicans: Sovereignty and *respublica mixta* in Dutch and German Political Thought, 1580-1650,' in Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage Volume 1. M. van Gelderen (ed.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 215; Van den Enden, Vrye Poltijke Stellingen, p. 2.

¹⁷ Van den Enden, Vrye Poltijke Stellingen, p. 5.

¹⁸ Van den Enden, Vrye Poltijke Stellingen, p.16.

¹⁹ Van den Enden, Kort Verhael van Nieuw-Nederlants pp. 31 and 35; Klever, 'A New Source of Spinozism,' p. 624.

²⁰ Klever, The Sphinx, p. 150.

grounds his political views in an epistemology and psychology of the passions. Let us look at that grounding, then finally at Spinoza's politics itself.

III. The Passions in Spinoza's Epistemology

In the *Ethics*, Spinoza tells us that there are three kinds of knowledge: imagination, reason, and intuition. (The passions belong to the first kind of knowledge.) Only imagination consists of inadequate or false ideas²¹ Adequate ideas, on the other hand, are true ideas. Spinoza's notion of adequacy involves two components: completeness and activity.

An idea is inadequate to the extent that it is a partial or incomplete idea. As he tells us in the TIE:

All confusion results from the fact that the mind knows only in part a thing that is a whole, or composed of many things, and does not distinguish the known from the unknown.²²

When one has an inadequate idea of something, it is because one's mind only contains part of the idea of that thing as it is in God, of whom all individuals are part. The idea as it exists in that particular mind is 'mutilated and maimed'²³

Adequate ideas, on the other hand, are complete. A mind has adequate ideas to the extent that it contains the idea *as it is* contained within God. Notice that the terms 'adequate' and 'inadequate' refer to the nature of an idea as it exists in a *particular* mind, that is, whether *that* mind contains that idea completely or partially. The *Ethics* tells us

²¹ E IIP41

²² (TIE 29).

²³ (TIE 32).

that all ideas are adequate in God²⁴ and that ideas are only inadequate insofar as they relate to a singular or finite mind:²⁵

and when we say that God has this or that idea, not only insofar as he constitutes the nature of the human Mind, but insofar as he also has the idea of another thing together with the human Mind, then we say that the human Mind perceives the thing only partially or inadequately.²⁶

These are inadequate ideas in a human mind because that human mind is only a partial cause of them. Ideas outside of that human mind are also a partial cause of such inadequate ideas.²⁷ In this sense, these ideas are passive, that is, have an external cause.

The mind forms inadequate or passive ideas, when it perceives things insofar as it is determined externally from random experience.²⁸ The ideas of the affections of body are necessarily inadequate because these ideas involve the nature of the parts making up the human body that interact with external bodies. An adequate idea of such affections must involve adequate ideas of the causes of those parts, i.e., external bodies, and while such ideas are in God, they are external to the human mind.²⁹ This explains why we can only have a confused idea of our body and its parts.³⁰

The existence and duration of a particular human body is caused by the finite bodies external to it. It depends on the common order of nature and the constitution of other finite bodies, not on that body's essence or on God's absolute nature. There are adequate ideas in God of the duration and existence of that particular body, but only insofar as God has adequate or complete ideas of all finite things.³¹

²⁴ (E IIP36d)

²⁵ (E IIP36d):

²⁶

²⁷ (E IIP1d).

²⁸ (E IIP29S).

²⁹ (E IIP28).

³⁰ (E IIP13S)

³¹ (E IIP30d).

A mind does not only perceive the affections of its correlate body, but also the ideas of the ideas of those affections.³² Imagination occurs when the mind perceives bodies external to its correlate body through such reflexive ideas.

When the human Body is affected with a mode that involves the nature of an external body, the human Mind will regard the same external body as actually existing, or as present to it, until the Body is affected by an affect that excludes the existence or presence of that body.³³

Images are the affections of the body whose ideas present the external object as actually existing, whether or not they reproduce external things as they are. The mind imagines when it regards *bodies through the ideas of these affections*.³⁴ We imagine singular things most distinctly and vividly.³⁵ However, the mind can only imagine distinctly at one time as many images as can be formed in the body at the same time. Universals such as ‘dog’ arise because so many images of dogs are formed at one time in the human body that they surpass the power of imagining to the point that the mind cannot imagine slight differences of the singular dogs nor their determinate number. Rather, the mind only imagines distinctly what all dogs agree in insofar as they affect the body. This occurs because the properties common to all dogs most forcefully affect the body. After all, each singular dog has affected the body with these properties. Such universal notions will differ among men as their experiences with dogs will differ. Each person will form universal images according to the dispositions of her own body. Just as we form universal notions from singular things represented to us through random

³² (E IIP22).

³³ (E IIP17).

³⁴ (E IIP17S).

³⁵ (E VP6S).

experience, we also form universal notions from signs.³⁶ That is, we remember things from when we have read or heard certain words, form universals from them, and imagine these universals to be truly existing things.

Spinoza includes also memory in the first type of knowledge. Spinoza defines memory as a certain connection of ideas regarding the nature of things that are outside of the human body, that is to say, memory is a connection that is in the mind according to the order and connection of the affections to that particular body.³⁷

An important point about the first kind of knowledge is that it will differ among differ people because they have different bodies which are and have been affected by different surrounding bodies. This is the distinction that we are concerned with between the first and second type of knowledge. Reason follows from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things³⁸ Common notions are certain ideas that are common to all men. These ideas are of properties that all bodies have—from the whole of nature to each of the finite bodies within it.³⁹

Common notions are common to all people because, since they are ideas of properties that all bodies have, and all minds are ideas of their correlate bodies, all minds necessarily contain ideas of things with these properties. To the extent that the mind is determined internally and regards a number of things at one time, perceiving their agreements, differences, and oppositions, the mind has adequate ideas. This perception of the connection among ideas happens according to the order of the intellect, or reason, which is the same in all people. This is why these notions are ‘common’ notions. They

³⁶ (E IIP40S2).

³⁷ (E IIP18S).

³⁸ (E IIP40S2).

³⁹ (E IIP38 and P38C).

are different from the first kind of knowledge, which perceives a connection among certain ideas from the common order of things, i.e., from the order and connection of the affections of the human body. Opinion and imagination differ from person to person because different people have bodies that are affected in different ways. Reason, by its nature, perceives things under a species of eternity.⁴⁰ That is to say, that reason conceives things to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature. It does not perceive things to exist in relation to time and place.⁴¹

Spinoza is very clear that the essence of the human mind is constituted by *both* adequate and inadequate ideas.⁴² While we aspire to adequate ideas, as finite modes we will never rid ourselves completely of inadequate ideas. This view is not so strange when we consider that any human is a finite mode caught up in a web of causal chains. To the extent that an individual is the cause of his or her idea, that is, to the extent that an individual's idea is self-caused, Spinoza idea is an action. To the extent it is caused by something external to the individual, it is a passion. The mind of an individual human is a complex idea made up of many other ideas (of the affects of the body). Some of those affects involve activity, some passivity. While we strive to make mind our consist of a greater percentage of adequate or active ideas, it would be unrealistic for a finite mode to expect to attain 100% activity. (For then it would not be a finite mode) In other words, all humans will always have passions, no matter how much they develop their reason. While reason can complete a partial idea or passion by providing knowledge of its cause, it is not possible for a finite mode to know all of the infinite chain of efficient causality of which it is part, and so some partial ideas will always remain.

⁴⁰ (E IIP44).

⁴¹ (E VP29S

⁴² EIII P9 dem

IV Spinoza's Psychology of the Passions

In part III of the *Ethics*, Spinoza gives the human passions a great deal of attention. He defines them as confused ideas that affirm an increase or decrease in the power of one's particular body.⁴³ There are three primary affects, of which all the passions are composed: joy, sadness, and desire. Joy is "a passion by which the mind passes to a greater perfection." Sadness is the passion by which the mind passes to a lesser perfection.⁴⁴ Desire is the consciousness a human has of the striving of their mind and body to persevere in its being, that is, of its appetites.⁴⁵

Spinoza makes it clear that humans are by nature passionate creatures. As he puts it "...[men] can do nothing less than moderate their appetites,"⁴⁶ and "...decisions of the Mind are nothing but the appetites themselves"⁴⁷ Simply put, appetite is the essence of man.⁴⁸ All human knowledge involves affects.⁴⁹ Spinoza does not claim that affects *per se* that enslave us. An affect is simply "an idea by which the Mind affirms of its Body a greater or lesser force of existing than before."⁵⁰ All knowledge is accordingly "nothing but an affect of Joy or Sadness insofar as we are conscious of it".⁵¹

While all humans share in common the fact that we are self-interested beings that intrinsically strive for our self-preservation, the fact is that our desires will differ because our bodies vary. For this reason, so too will vary the particular things that bring us joy

⁴³ EIII Gen Def. of Affects, page 542.

⁴⁴ EIII P11 dem page 501

⁴⁵ EIII P9schol, page 500.

⁴⁶ EIII dem schol I page 496

⁴⁷ EIIIP2 dem school ii page 496

⁴⁸ EIII P 9 schol, page 500

⁴⁹ EIIp23, EII p19, EIIp26

⁵⁰ (EIVp14dem).

⁵¹ EIVp8

and sadness.⁵² Book III goes through the numerous ways that a particular mind can be affected by its external world, the idea being that by cataloguing the passions in such a unified and geometrical way, one has a better chance of understanding the causes of their ideas and therefore not being held in such bondage to the passions.

The Passions in Spinoza's Politics

The fact that the passions vary among individuals is problematic to the political task uniting various people into one body, for “things of a contrary nature cannot be in the same subject but destroy each other”.⁵³ It is therefore of the utmost importance that the state be set up in such a way as to align and unify the appetites of the people as much as possible. Ideally, this will involve the people having as many adequate ideas as possible, since their desires stemming from reason would be in agreement. Spinoza, however, as we have seen, is not so optimistic. First of all, people are generally dominated by passive affects. Further, reason cannot completely conquer the passions. And while he does allow that the third kind of knowledge, or intuition, can conquer all passions, he believes this kind of knowledge to be extremely rare and therefore no help to politics. The only way to overcome any particular passion then, is by another stronger passion. Therefore, any political theory must be founded on a good understanding of the imagination in general, and the passions in particular. For the task at hand will be modifying the passions of citizens through the use of other stronger passions⁵⁴ (most often hope, wonder, and fear) in such a way as to unite citizens so that they share their

⁵² EIIIP51schol. Page 522 and EIIIP57dem page 528

⁵³ EIII P5 pages 498

⁵⁴ E4P7

main passions in common. In other words, to unite them by making them imagine a common good.

Let us now briefly look at how Spinoza deals with some of the Radical Cartesian political themes that we saw earlier. According to Spinoza, humans must come together and form a society in order to survive. Without mutual aid, people would not have the time and skill to support and preserve themselves to the greatest possible extent.⁵⁵ And so people come together by giving up the rights they have in the state of nature and agreeing to obey the laws of the state.

Spinoza claims that if people desired only what is prescribed by true reason, then society would not need any laws:

Nothing would be required to teach men true moral doctrine, and they would then act to their true advantage of their own accord, whole-heartedly and freely. But human nature is far differently constituted. All men do, indeed, seek their own advantage, but by no means from the dictates of sound reason. For the most part the objectives they seek and judge to be beneficial are determined only by fleshy desire, and they are carried away by their emotions, which take no account of the future or of other considerations.⁵⁶

Therefore society needs government and coercion; it needs laws to control and restrain the people's lusts and urges.⁵⁷ The laws must be set up so that, whether they will it or not, people act in the interests of the common welfare.

To the extent that men are subject to the passions, they do not agree in nature and are in fact enemies.⁵⁸ This is the situation in the state of nature. Like Hobbes, Spinoza thinks that people in the state of nature have the right to do whatever they perceive to

⁵⁵ (TTP chap. 5, 438).

⁵⁶ (TTP chap. 5, 438).

⁵⁷ (TTP chap. 5, 438).

⁵⁸ (E IV P32, 561-562 and TP 686).

further their preservation, as long as they have the power to do so.⁵⁹ The problem is that their self-interests will conflict because their desires are based on the passions, not reason. This conflict leads to great uncertainty, causing the passions of hope and fear to have extreme power over them. This is the human bondage – where one is unable to prevent oneself from being swayed by the slightest impulse. The passions pull people in different directions⁶⁰, making humans by nature enemies.⁶¹ A common passion must develop for social order to develop.

Since men, as I have said, are led more by passion than reason, it follows that the multitude is not led by reason, but naturally unites...out of some common passion.”⁶²

Once a group is established the rest is history since the group will surpass individual power.⁶³

People will desire to conform to what they believe will be the dominant sentiment of the time. The psychological basis for this is Spinoza’s doctrine of the imitation of the affects, as discussed in part III of the *Ethics*.⁶⁴ Eventually random association is bound to result in a group that doesn’t hate each other. A common sentiment will be secured given doctrine of imitation and that there is some “common hope, or common fear, or common desire to avenge some common injury.”⁶⁵

As time is running out, let us briefly look at one last example of how Spinoza systematizes Radical Cartesian politics. The main project of the TP is largely to show

⁵⁹ Hobbes, T. (2002), *Leviathan*. Edited by A.P. Martinich. Peterborough, Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press LTD., chapter XIV, p. 98..

⁶⁰ (TTP XVI)

⁶¹ TP II, 14

⁶² TP VI, 1

⁶³TP II, 13, “Passion, state, and Progress: Spinoza and Mandeville on the Nature of the Human Association,” Douglas J. Den Uyl, Page 390

⁶⁴ E3P27 dem

⁶⁵ TP VI, 1, Den Uyl, Page 389

how humans, even when led by passion, may still have fixed and stable laws.⁶⁶ Spinoza's solutions echo's De la Court's concerns here that a state is not to be set up so that it depends on the virtues of its rulers. Rather, it must be set up so as to ensure that virtue of its rulers by uniting the ruler and people together in such a way that they share a common good. A state will only have stability if it is set up in such a way that it does not matter whether its rulers are led by reason or passion.⁶⁷

In conclusion, the passions are an essential part of Spinoza's politics. This connection is characteristic of seventeenth-century political discussions in general, and the particular way Spinoza makes the connection is characteristic of Dutch Radical Cartesian Politics.

⁶⁶ TP VII 2

⁶⁷ (TP 1, 6)