



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

A NEO-CONFUCIAN APPROACH TO A
PUZZLE CONCERNING SPINOZA'S
DOCTRINE OF THE INTELLECTUAL
LOVE OF GOD

by

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Abstract

In the last part of *Ethics* Spinoza introduces the doctrine of the intellectual love of God, along with the doctrine of the eternity of the mind and the doctrine of intuitive knowledge. According to the doctrine of the intellectual love of God, God loves himself with an infinite intellectual love. This doctrine has raised one of the most discussed puzzles in Spinoza scholarship: How can God have intellectual love if, as Spinoza says, God is Nature itself?

After examining existing approaches to the puzzle and revealing their failures, I will propose an alternative approach to the puzzle. I will compare Spinoza's philosophy with Neo-Confucian (especially Wan Yang-Ming's) philosophy and argue that we can develop a new approach to the puzzle by appealing to the comparison. I will argue that Spinoza's three doctrines stress three distinct aspects of the same thought which form an organic unity: (i) the metaphysical aspect, which is concerned with the eternity of the mind, (ii) the epistemological aspect, which is concerned with intuitive knowledge and (iii) the ethical aspect, which is concerned with the intellectual love of God. I conclude that the intellectual love of God can be properly understood from different perspectives. From God's perspective it is understood as the creative power of God. From an individual's perspective it is understood as the essence of this very individual. Moreover, once we combine these two perspectives we can reach what I consider to be the correct interpretation of Spinoza's view: Given that intuitive knowledge and action are one and the same the

intellectual love of God should be comprehended not only as man's final fulfillment of freedom through intuitive knowledge, but also as man's self-cultivation in practice. I maintain that a free man who the intellectual love of God leads us to become is equivalent to a Neo-Confucian sage.

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Abbreviations for Spinoza's Works

Following *Spinoza's Complete Works* (Spinoza, 2002)

TIE *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*

KV *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being*

PPC *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*

CM *Metaphysical Thoughts*

TTP *Theological-Political Treatise*

TP *Political Treatise*

Chapter 1

Introduction

In this Chapter, I will provide an overview of this PhD thesis. In Section 1.1, I introduce a puzzle concerning Spinoza's doctrine of the intellectual love of God and explain why we should be concerned with it. In Section 1.2, I examine the main existing approaches to the puzzle and reveal their failures. I propose an alternative approach to the puzzle through a comparative study of Spinoza and Neo-Confucianism. In Section 1.3, I investigate the relationship between Spinoza and traditional Chinese thought, and explore the relevant literature. In Section 1.4, I focus on the relationship between Spinoza and Wang Yang-ming (王阳明¹, 1472-1529²) in particular, and reveal that many important concepts and thoughts that they each hold have parallels in the other's thought. This parallelism supports a fresh way of thinking about the puzzle, and helps us to finally resolve it. In Section 1.5, I introduce the structure of this thesis, and the relationships between the chapters.

¹ Upon formally introducing important concepts, historical figures, and books in Chinese philosophy, their corresponding Simplified Chinese characters will be introduced, so as to help the reader who has knowledge of Chinese to understand them quickly. Except for specific demonstration, all the translations of these concepts, historical figures, and books follow from Chan (1963) --- *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*.

² The ancient Chinese dynasties, historical figures, and important historical events will be dated for their first occurrence in this thesis, and all these dates are cited from Chan (1963).

1.1 A Puzzle

In the last part of his *magnum opus*, *Ethics*, Spinoza made the following statement in E5p20 Scholium³:

I have completed all that concerns this present life... it is now time to pass on to those matters that concern the duration of the mind without respect to the body.

(Spinoza, 2002, p. 373)⁴

Spinoza then introduced his last three doctrines one by one from E5p21 in the rest of his *Ethics*: (i) The eternity of the mind. He held that '[t]he human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed along with the body, but something of it remains, which is eternal' in E5p23 (p. 374); (ii) Intuitive knowledge as the third kind of knowledge, where 'the highest virtue of the mind... is to understand things by this third kind of knowledge' in E5p25 Proof (p. 375); (iii) The intellectual love of God (*Amor Dei Intellectualis*, henceforth, the *Amor*⁵). He tells us that 'God loves himself with an infinite intellectual

³ Here E refers to the book of *Ethics*, 5 refers to Chapter 5, p20 refers to the 20st proposition, and Scholium refers to its scholium. Similarly, there are also some other direct references, such as Proof, Corollary, Lemma, Definition, Axiom, Appendix, Preface, and so on. This reference rule will be followed throughout this thesis.

⁴ Here the reference is *Spinoza's Complete Works* (Spinoza, 2002), translated by Samuel Shirley and edited by Michael L. Morgan. In order to be concise, only the page will be referenced when Spinoza's words are cited hereafter. Unless another reference is given, the whole thesis will follow this pattern of reference.

⁵ Maxwell (1990) introduced this abbreviation. In order to be concise, I will follow it in this thesis.

love' in E5p35 (p. 378).

However, the last three doctrines seem to contradict the basic thoughts of Spinoza's philosophy. The doctrine of the eternity of the mind seems to conflict with Spinoza's theory of isomorphism. According to his theory of isomorphism between the mind and the body, it seems impossible to discuss any problem concerning the mind without respect to the body. Moreover, it is *prima facie* puzzling to see that Spinoza, as a rationalist, puts intuitive knowledge in a privileged position in his epistemology. Furthermore, how can God have intellectual love if, as Spinoza says, God is Nature itself? It is clear that Spinoza's thoughts in his last three doctrines are very puzzling.

As a result, how exactly the last three doctrines are to be understood has become one of the most hotly debated issues among Spinoza scholars. Broad (1930) claims that these three doctrines are 'not consistent with the rest' of Spinoza's philosophy (Broad, 1930, p. 16). Bennett, who has studied Spinoza for more than 25 years, asserts directly that 'after three centuries of failure to profit from it, the time has come to admit that this part of the *Ethics* has nothing to teach us and is pretty certainly worthless' (Bennett, 1984, p. 372). By contrast, Pollock claims that the last three doctrines are consistent with Spinoza's basic metaphysical framework (Pollock, 1880, pp. 279-8). Hampshire (1951) also argues that the last three doctrines are coherent with Spinoza's whole philosophy. Yovel (1990) asserts that without the last three doctrines, and in particular without the third kind of knowledge, Spinoza 'would be as lame throughout as Plato would be without the Ideas' (Yovel, 1990, pp. 158-9).

Even if I cannot agree with the above opinions of Broad (1930) and Bennett (1984),

their critique highlights the complexity and significant value of the puzzle in the study of Spinoza. There are multiple reasons that explain why this puzzle is provocative. First of all, the aforementioned contradiction between the last three doctrines and the rest of Spinoza's philosophy seems obvious. However, it is hard to swallow the opinion that part of the conclusion is incoherent with the rest of a great work in the history of philosophy, such as the *Ethics*. Secondly, as the above quotation shows, I believe that Spinoza was aware of the impact of the last three doctrines, so it seems unreasonable to assert that they "pretty certainly" disaccord with the rest of his philosophy. Last but not least, the last doctrine, the *Amor*, is ignored within the current research of the three doctrines.

To say that the *Amor* is ignored is also to say that the ethical aspect of the last three doctrines is ignored in the current study of Spinoza. This ignorance is not merely occasional. According to the orthodox interpretation of Spinoza in our contemporary circle of philosophy, the principal controversy seems always to be his identification of God with Nature. Then, the second controversy seems to focus on his understanding of freedom: his commitment to determinism and his endeavor to nevertheless defend the freedom of mankind. The third controversy seems to refer to his epistemology: as one of the main rationalists, his proposal of the third kind of knowledge, intuitive knowledge, above the second kind, reason, has raised concerns. For these, Spinoza has been labeled a unique ontological master, an advocate of psychotherapy, an epistemological mystic, and, of course, one of the main rationalists, alongside Descartes and Leibniz.

As such, it seems that not only has the *Amor* been ignored, but also his whole ethical theory has been forgotten. Curley (1973a) observes this basic fact and he claims that when ethical theory is discussed in our era, the relevant books or papers seem always to refer ‘to Mill or Kant, to Plato or Aristotle, to Hobbes or Butler, to Hume or St. Thomas, but not to Spinoza’ (Curley, 1973a, p. 354). It is fairly common to find his geometrical method, his metaphysics, his epistemology, his psychology, and his political philosophy, but not his ethical philosophy, occupying the main space of the monographs, collected papers and general books about Spinoza. As an endeavor to correct the above imbalance, my thesis will focus on Spinoza’s last doctrine, the *Amor*.

I am not alone on this point, and a few philosophers have challenged the tradition above. Roth claims that Spinoza ‘is primarily a moralist’ (Roth, 1929, p. 43). Broad argues that Spinoza’s ‘ultimate and explicit aim’ is ethical (Broad, 1930, p. 15). Curley believes that we will achieve much if we ‘take a fresh look at’ his ethical theory (Curley, 1973a, p. 354). Garrett concludes that ‘Spinoza’s ethical theory has greater resources, and is of greater plausibility and philosophical interest, than is sometimes supposed’ (Garrett, 1990, p. 237). I agree with these opinions. Moreover, I believe that the title of Spinoza’s main work, *Ethics*, itself implies this point. Furthermore, when Spinoza’s last three doctrines in the *Ethics* are taken seriously, it seems to me that there is no reason not to agree with the above opinions, and it will be revealed in this thesis that Spinoza’s last doctrine, and its ethical focus, should be placed at the core of his whole philosophy.

To summarize, in the last part of the *Ethics* Spinoza introduces the doctrine of the *Amor*, along with the doctrine of the eternity of the mind and the doctrine of intuitive

knowledge. These three doctrines are very puzzling, and have raised one of the most discussed puzzles in Spinoza scholarship. Relatively speaking, the doctrine of the *Amor* has been ignored among Spinoza scholars. Even worse than this, Spinoza's whole ethical theory has been almost forgotten. I think that Spinoza's last three doctrines should be taken seriously, and that his theory of ethics provides enough value to warrant another investigation. My thesis will focus on the doctrine of the *Amor*, and highlight its value in the philosophy of ethics.

1.2 My Approach to the Puzzle

The issue now, then, concerns how the puzzle is to be properly understood, and especially how the doctrine of the *Amor* is to be properly understood, if we cannot accept a hasty conclusion explicitly denying both the doctrine of the *Amor* and the other two doctrines. Several approaches have been proposed. The first approach is the so-called ‘religious approach’. This approach stems from Spinoza’s Jewish background and a heavy religious element in the context of the latter part of Part 5 in the *Ethics*. Broad hints at this move, as he suggests that the final doctrines are the ‘philosophic expression of certain religious and mystical experiences which Spinoza and many others have enjoyed and which seem supremely important to those who have had them’ (Broad, 1930, p. 15). In short, Broad is proposing mysticism. However, it seems ironic to pursue mysticism in order to interpret the thought of Spinoza when he is considered one of the greatest rationalists. Spinoza’s use of the geometrical method seems to imply his denial of mysticism. Furthermore, most of us will not be satisfied with the approach of mysticism alone, as it cannot provide us with a detailed answer. To say something is mysterious is equal to saying that it cannot be explained.

The second approach is the so-called ‘reformulated approach’. Some scholars note the obvious inconsistency in the standard formula when Spinoza uses it to denote different kinds of love in his *Ethics*. They, then, propose some alternative formulae to replace Spinoza’s standard formula. According to this approach, the main thought in the *Amor* is considered to be consistent with the rest of the *Ethics*, but at the same time its formula needs to be adjusted. In other words, they believe that Spinoza made some

mistakes in the last part of the *Ethics*, an opinion I will oppose in this thesis.

The third approach is the so-called ‘epistemological approach’. There are still some scholars who detect the rigid connection between the doctrine of the intuitive knowledge and the doctrine of the *Amor*. They claim that the *Amor* will be in accordance with the rest of the *Ethics* only when the relationship between the *Amor* and the knowledge of intuition is explained in the correct way. However, they have not successfully integrated the doctrine of the eternity of the mind into their explanation. At the same time, the puzzles in both the doctrine of intuitive knowledge and the doctrine of the eternity of the mind were not dealt with properly.

To summarize, as stated in the previous section, all of these approaches have been refuted strongly by Bennett (1984) and other opponents in different ways. In Chapter 2, I will examine these approaches fully and reveal that no single approach has been widely accepted. After examining the existing approaches to the puzzle and revealing their failures, I will propose an alternative approach. This alternative approach stems from mainstream traditional Chinese thought: Confucianism in general and Neo-Confucianism specifically. I will label my approach the ‘Neo-Confucian approach’ since this is a comparative study between Spinoza and Neo-Confucianism.

1.3 Spinoza and Traditional Chinese Thought

The relationship between Spinoza and traditional Chinese thought is not a new issue. Here the use of the term ‘Chinese thought’ rather than ‘Chinese philosophy’ is not accidental. The term ‘philosophy’ itself was introduced for the first time into China from Japan just one century ago (Allinson, 1991, p. 24), and its embodiment of a particular kind of research method, and its concern for certain Western philosophical content, is radically different from traditional Chinese thought. Therefore, whether or not there is a true ‘philosophy’ in traditional China is also a debated issue. This becomes a difficulty when we talk about the issue of the relationship between Spinoza and Chinese philosophy. Let us put this issue aside for now: the philosophical character of Confucianism, and especially Neo-Confucianism, will be amply demonstrated to the reader throughout this thesis. For our current purposes, it is enough for us to say that the issue at hand is the relationship between Spinoza and traditional Chinese thought in a general sense, and also the relationship between Spinoza’s philosophy and Neo-Confucian philosophy in a specific sense⁶.

As the dispute concerning Spinoza’s radical thought arose alongside the publication

⁶ For this reason, I will use the term ‘thought’ and the term ‘philosophy’ interchangeably in the rest of this thesis. Their meanings should be understood according to the context in which they occur. In order to be concise, sometimes I will use the word ‘Spinoza’ to refer to Spinoza’s philosophy. It is noteworthy that the words ‘Confucianism’, ‘Neo-Confucianism’, ‘Taoism’, ‘Buddhism’, and so on, should be mainly understood as ‘the philosophy of Confucianism’, ‘the philosophy of Neo-Confucianism’, ‘the philosophy of Taoism’, ‘the philosophy of Buddhism’, and so on in this thesis, even though they themselves have much richer connotations, such as, religious, social, and literary meanings.

of his writings, the issue of associating Spinoza with traditional Chinese thought occurred. This association is primarily due to their sharing a pantheistic character. While the pantheistic character seems always to be a foundational feature of traditional Chinese thought, the term ‘pantheism’ itself was first coined to describe Spinoza’s thought that ‘Nature is God’ in the seventeenth century. Leibniz, Bayle and Malebranche also made some similar comments⁷. However, the research of Lai (1985) and Weststeijn (2007) also reveals that these associations between Spinoza and traditional Chinese thought was ‘based on nothing more than a superficial knowledge of oriental philosophy’ in its early stage (Weststeijn, 2007, p. 539). We can consider this early stage, which lasted until the end of nineteenth-century, as the first stage of the research concerning the issue of the relationship between Spinoza and traditional Chinese thought. In this first stage, it was only thinkers in the West making the association based on their limited knowledge of traditional Chinese thought: there seems to have been no voice associating Spinoza with traditional Chinese thought from the East due to historical reasons.

Once the term ‘philosophy’ was accepted and began to prevail in the early decades of the twentieth century in China, the relationship between Spinoza and traditional Chinese thought became the concern of some Chinese thinkers. Therefore, the subsequent period can be considered as the second stage of the issue’s research. In the second stage, there were two factors that differed from the first stage: the first one was that some Chinese thinkers joined the research community; the second one was that

⁷ See Lai (1985), Perkins (2004), Israel (2007), Weststeijn (2007), and Meynard (2011).

some basic traditional Chinese literature had been systematically translated into Western languages. Consequently, Western scholars could also research traditional Chinese thought based on the original texts rather than superficial comments. Based on these two factors, research of the issue could now be carried out in detail.

It is noteworthy that, when the issue of associating Spinoza with traditional Chinese thought occurred, the problem of whether or not traditional Chinese thought had any direct influence on the development of Spinoza's thought also arose. In other words, the question is whether or not Spinoza's philosophy has any direct sources in traditional Chinese thought. There are up until now two papers discussing this possibility. Maverick (1939)⁸ claims a possible Chinese source of Spinoza's thought⁹. However, Lai (1985) refutes the possibility. Contrary to Jewish, Christian and Cartesian philosophy, which directly influenced the development of Spinoza's thought, there are no contextual clues referring to traditional Chinese thought among Spinoza's writings

⁸ It is not an English piece, and Yuen-Ting Lai (1985) interprets its argument as follows:

Father Nicholas Trigault's account of China in his *De Christiana Expeditione apud Sinas* (Augsburg, 1615) was reproduced in a book by a fellow resident of Amsterdam, Bernard Varen or Varenius (b.1615) in a crucial year when Spinoza first contemplated leaving the Synagogue, in 1649, and that this could have been a source of Spinoza's religious thought. The book in question is *Descriptio Regni Iapoiniae cum quibusdam affinis materiae, ex variis auctoribus collecta, et in ordinem redacta* (Amsterdam, 1649). See Maverick 1939, 419, Maverick's argument is weak. Apart from the lack of evidence that Spinoza had ever read Varen's book, his excommunication occurred seven years later (1656). (Lai, 1985, p. 152 in Note 6)

⁹ Due to the language limit, the literature referred to in this thesis is limited to English texts (or texts that have been translated into English) except for a small number of supplemental Chinese texts. Most of the Chinese texts that are referred to here will use these versions that have been translated into English. My own translation will be provided if a Chinese text has not yet been translated into English.

and letters. Even if the possibility exists, it remains extremely remote absent the unearthing of some significant new facts. Therefore, for our current purposes, I will maintain a neutral opinion on the possibility since this problem does not affect my overall argument¹⁰. I will not discuss this problem further in this thesis.

At the same time, due to historical reasons, it makes no sense to ask the opposite question of whether Spinoza's philosophy carried any direct influence on the development of traditional Chinese thought. Our main concern regarding the relationship between Spinoza and traditional Chinese thought, then, will not be their direct affecting of each other, but rather a comparative study concerning their similarities and differences. Further, given that my thesis focuses on a puzzle on the Spinoza side, and will propose a Neo-Confucian approach to solve this puzzle, my comparative study will emphasise their similarities, and their differences will be briefly touched upon only if necessary.

However, even if we restrict our focus to the similarities of content, the situation is still not ideal due to the fact that the literature concerning this kind of research has until now been lacking, at least in the English-speaking world. Briefly speaking, there are three approaches to the relationship within the literature. The first approach observes the similarity between Spinoza's philosophy and Taoism in traditional Chinese thought due to the aforementioned pantheistic character. It is obvious that Nature has been explicitly considered as the Ultimate Reality since 500 B.C. in Chinese Taoism, and this is, of course, a kind of pantheism. Hu, a representative of modern Chinese scholars,

¹⁰ Weststeijn (2007) also holds a neutral opinion on the possibility.

presented a paper to emphasise the similarity between Spinoza and Taoism in a seminar in Beijing in 1915 (Hu, 1978). The core content in Hu's paper is introductory and focuses on their pantheistic character. Unfortunately, the paper is very short, at only three pages. Levine (2002) systemically investigates the pantheistic character of Spinozism as well as Taoism, but his topic is the pantheism itself rather than the relationship between Spinozism and Taoism. Further literature is lacking.

The second approach is to consider Spinoza from the perspective of Buddhism. Melamed argues that Spinoza is a Buddhist (Melamed, 1933). Wienpahl (1971) wrote a paper entitled 'Chán Buddhism, western thought, and the concept of substance'. Following this, Wetlesen (1978a) published a paper entitled 'Body awareness as a gateway to eternity: a note on the mysticism of Spinoza and its affinity to Buddhist meditation'. Naess (1978) also published the paper 'Through Spinoza to Mahāyāna Buddhism or Through Mahāyāna Buddhism to Spinoza?'. Hartshorne agrees with this approach and claims further that the *Hua-yen* school (华严宗) of Mahāyāna Buddhism is apparently similar to Spinoza's pantheism in the sense that they both propose that everything is One (Hartshorne, 1978, p. 404). However, Liu criticizes this opinion, and queries the issue as follows:

Would Hua-yen ever start with a definition of "Substance" and use a deductive method to develop a whole metaphysical system? On what ground can Hartshorne attribute eternalism to Hua-yen, a Buddhist school which took dependent origination and Śūnyatā seriously?... Can Spinoza ever say that Substance is also

nonbeing? (Liu, 1978, p. 415).

Unfortunately, Hartshorne (1978) and Liu (1978) offer a general discussion about the relationship between Eastern philosophy and Western Philosophy, and Spinoza is not their core topic. Wienpahl (1979) emphasizes the similar notion of Egolessness between Spinoza and Buddhism. However, it is clear that Liu's criticism can also apply to this view. The fundamental opposition in their ontologies prevents further development of this approach.

The third approach focuses on the relationship between Spinoza and Confucianism. Bruce (1923), in his PhD paper 'Chu Hsi [朱熹, 1130-1200] and His Masters: An Introduction to Chu Hsi and the Sung School of Chinese Philosophy', argues that 'the *Great Ultimate* [太极] in Chu Hsi's philosophy, with the two material forces of *Yin* [阴] and *Yang* [阳], is similar to God, being both *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*, in Spinoza's philosophy' (Chan, 1976, p. 570). Graf (1949), in his paper 'Chu Hsi and Spinoza', argues that Chu Hsi's Heaven (*Tian*, 天) could be identical with Spinoza's God and that *Jen* (仁) in Chu Hsi's philosophy is also identical with Spinoza's doctrine of the *Amor* (*ibid.*)¹¹. This is the first contextual clue in the literature, in which Spinoza's doctrine of the *Amor* is considered to be identical with the concept of *Jen* in Confucianism. Liu also confirms that 'there is some justification to compare Neo-

¹¹ As Bruce (1923) is not accessible now and Graf (1949) is not available in either an English or Chinese version, I cite Chan's (1976) explanation here.

Confucian philosophy with panentheism¹², (Liu, 1978, p. 416).

To summarize, research into the relationship between Spinoza and traditional Chinese thought in the last one hundred years has referred to three core parts of traditional Chinese thought: Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. However, what has been said shows that the research up until now has been introductory and superficial, and further research is needed. Moreover, comparatively speaking, the relationship between Spinoza and Neo-Confucianism has not been paid enough attention, given that Neo-Confucianism has been at the center of mainstream traditional Chinese thought since the Song Dynasty (960 - 1279). Therefore, this thesis is intended to study the relationship between Spinoza and Neo-Confucianism in detail.

¹² For my purposes, I will not make a distinction between pantheism and panentheism in this thesis.

1.4 Spinoza and Neo-Confucianism

There are two main representatives of Neo-Confucianism. The first main representative is Chu Hsi (Chu, hereafter). To investigate the relationship between Spinoza and Neo-Confucianism, we must first investigate the relationship between Spinoza and Chu. Chu is commonly recognized as the third greatest Confucian following Confucius (孔子, 551 - 479 B.C.) and Mencius (孟子, 372 - 289 B.C.), and his philosophy has since the thirteenth century dominated the intellectual life not only of China but also of Southeast Asia, Korea, and Japan¹³. Chu achieved multiple successes. Firstly, he was the great synthesiser of the Neo-Confucian movement. There are five important figures who pushed the Neo-Confucian movement in the Northern Song Dynasty (960 – 1126), and were honored as the Five Masters of the Northern Song Dynasty (Chan, 1963, p. 518). These were Shao Yung (邵雍, 1011 - 1077), Chou Tun-I (周敦颐, 1017 - 1073), Chang Tsai (张载, 1020 – 1077), Ch'eng Hao (程颢, 1032 - 1085), and Ch'eng I (程颐, 1033 - 1107)¹⁴. Chu systematically edited the literature of the Five Masters. It is quite possible that we would not know the thoughts of the Five Masters today if Chu's editing works had not been carried out. Moreover, he established the orthodox line of transmission of Confucianism from Confucius through Mencius, Chou Tun-I, Chang Tsai and Ch'eng Hao and Ch'eng I (Chan, 1963, p. 589; Yao, 2000, p. 105). The

¹³ Except the philosophy of Wang Yang-ming overtook it for around 150 years during the late stage of the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644), and I will touch upon this point in due course.

¹⁴ Ch'eng Hao is the brother of Ch'eng I, and the two Ch'eng brothers are the nephews of Chang Tsai, the students of Chou Tun-I, and the friends of Shao Yung.

thoughts of Mencius, Chou Tun-I, Chang Tsai and Ch'eng Hao and Ch'eng I were emphasized through this line, but it has been criticized by modern scholars such as Fung (1953), Chan (1963), and Yao (2000), for ignoring Hsun Tzu (荀子, 298-238 B.C.) in the classical era and Shao Yung in the Neo-Confucian era. However, the main figures in the line are recognized universally in scholars' circles. Confucianism as a continuing, complete system of civilization was set up through the orthodox line of transmission. Secondly, Chu edited and commented upon the Four Books: the *Analects* (论语), the *Book of Mencius* (孟子), the *Great Learning* (大学), and the *Doctrine of the Mean* (中庸), thus identifying them as the core scriptures of Neo-Confucianism. Chu's commentaries upon the Four Books became the orthodox answers in the civil service examinations, through which the officials of every dynasty thereafter were chosen. The entire intellectual class in every dynasty thereafter had to learn, and even fluently recite, Chu's commentaries upon the Four Books¹⁵. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the concept of *Li* (理) became mature in Chu's hands, and was raised up as the core concept of Neo-Confucianism. Neo-Confucianism as rationalism was finally established.

Among the third approach in Section 1.3, we observed that the relationship between Spinoza's philosophy and Chu's thoughts had been touched upon in the literature, and some important conclusions had been outlined, such as that the *Great Ultimate* is similar to God, *Tian* is identical with God, and *Jen* is identical with the *Amor* (Bruce, 1923; Graf, 1949). These conclusions are very helpful for us when investigating the

¹⁵ This seems to be similar to the way in which every Christian philosophy in the Middle Ages had to follow Aristotle's philosophy.

relationship between Spinoza and Neo-Confucianism. However, we also observed that an examination of the relationship between Chu's most important concept, *Li*, and Spinoza's relevant thought does not unfold in their research. I will explore this point further through a comparison of the metaphysical frameworks of Spinoza and Neo-Confucianism in Chapter 3.

The second main representative of Neo-Confucianism is Wang Yang-ming (Wang, hereafter). Wang had the given name *Shou-Jen* (literally meaning 'to remain *Jen*'). He is considered the last peak of Confucianism in Chinese history. It seems to be generally agreed that he was the last sage in Chinese history because, even setting his academic achievements aside, he was both a successful military general and an outstanding statesman. Wang's importance in the development of Confucianism is perhaps surpassed only by Confucius, Mencius, and Chu (Kim, 1996, p. 189; Van Norden, 2014). Wang's tablet was placed in the Confucian Temple in 1584, and this is the highest honor an intellect can receive in Chinese history since Confucius. Contrastingly, whereas Spinoza wrote his masterpiece *Ethics* himself, Wang's masterpiece, *Ch'uan-hsi Lu* (传习录, *Instructions for Practical Living*)¹⁶, was collected and compiled by his disciples.

¹⁶ When Wang's thought is explored, the main resource is his *Instructions for Practical Living* (*Ch'uan-hsi Lu*). We currently have two English translation versions of *Ch'uan-hsi Lu*. The first one was by Frederick Goodrich Henke in 1916, and he named his translation *The Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming*. Henke was an American missionary, and was teaching at the University of Nanking in China in the 1910s. The second one was by Wing-tsit Chan (Chan, 1963; Wang, 1963). Chan (1963) (also Wang, 1963) corrects some errors in Wang (1916) and absorbs some new research results. I will mainly use Chan's translation in the main body, and support Henke's translation as a comparative version in the footnotes if necessary, except in several cases in which I believe that Henke's translation is more accurate.

On this point it is similar to Confucius' *Analects*. Therefore, it seems more reasonable to call Wang, like Confucius, a teacher rather than a philosopher¹⁷.

In the history of Confucianism, Wang is chiefly a radical reformer. In contrast to Chu's School of *Li*, in which *Li* is considered to be a chief ontological substance prevalent throughout the universe (its slogan is that '*Tian is Li*'), the School of the Mind (mind-and-heart¹⁸, 心) developed this core notion further, reaching its mature stage through Wang's proposals¹⁹, and claimed that there is nothing under *Tian* external to the mind, (its corresponding slogan is that '*The Mind is Li*'). The external, objective *Li* is changed into the immanent subjective mind, and then the objectivity and the subjectivity of *Li* are united seamlessly in the hands of Wang.

In Wang's philosophy, there are two main doctrines. The first one is the doctrine of *Liang-chih* (良知), in its literal meaning this is 'intuitive knowledge' but in different contexts the term can be translated into three different meanings: innate knowledge, intuitive knowledge, and intuitive knowledge of good (Wang, 1916; Cady, 1928). All three of these meanings are united in the doctrine of *Liang-chih*. According to Wang's

¹⁷ However, it should be noted that Wang wrote his paper '*Inquiry on the Great Learning*' by himself, and the paper 'embodies his basic teachings and represents his final conclusions' (Wang, 1963, p. 271, cited in Wienpahl, 1974, p. 200).

¹⁸ When we use the term 'the mind' in Chinese ancient thought we are in fact always referring to the conception of the mind-and-heart, which is relevant to not only the mind but also the heart. This is different to the Cartesian conception of the mind in Western thought. Literature further pursuing this point includes as De Bary (1986).

¹⁹ For this reason, sometimes the School of the Mind is also known as Wang's School.

doctrine of *Liang-chih*, man's mind is the key to the whole world²⁰, and 'it is the abyss', in which *Liang-chih* as '[the] original substance of the mind contains everything' (Chan, 1963, p. 199)²¹. To say that *The Mind is Li* is in fact to say that *Liang-chih* is *Li*, and as such Wang's *Liang-chih* has its meaning of metaphysical aspect. For Wang, *Liang-chih* is to know 'without any cogitation' (Cady, 1928, p. 263), and it is similar to the term 'intuitive knowledge' in Spinoza's epistemology. As such, Wang's *Liang-chih* has its meaning of epistemological aspect as well. Wang's doctrine of *Liang-chih* is a further development of Mencius's doctrine of the Goodness of Human Nature, according to which human nature is considered as potential goodness. As such, Wang's *Liang-chih* also has an ethical meaning. In short, the doctrine of *Liang-chih* is the core of Wang's philosophy and it has a metaphysical aspect, an epistemological aspect, and an ethical aspect.

Wang's second main doctrine is that of *Chih-hsing Ho-I* (知行合一), the unity of knowledge and action. Van Norden asserts that the doctrine of *Chih-hsing Ho-I* is Wang's most distinctive and well-known doctrine (Van Norden, 2014). According to Wang, knowledge not put into practice is not real knowledge, and action

²⁰ Given the term 'man' is used both in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Chan, 1963), and *Spinoza's Complete Works* (Spinoza, 2002) as the same as the term 'human being'. I will follow this established usage, and it has no particular gender implication in this thesis.

²¹ Chan (1963) --- *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*--- is one of the most important source books for Chinese philosophy, and its status is established in the study of Chinese philosophy. In this thesis, all the quotations about Chinese ancient philosophers are cited from this book except when another reference is given.

unaccompanied by even the slightest bit of knowledge is blind, and as such is not successful action. Knowing is acting and acting is knowing: knowledge and action are unified. It is Wang's conclusion that the essence of knowledge and action is the same. Wang's philosophy inspires me to have a fresh look at the puzzle of the *Amor*.

Wienpahl (1969) establishes a direct link between the philosophies of Spinoza and Wang. Wienpahl, a professor of philosophy and, at the same time, a translator of Spinoza, claims that the similarity is certainly 'striking and crucial', and 'the teachings of Wang and Spinoza are almost identical' (Wienpahl, 1969, p. 19)²². He argues that Spinoza's doctrine of intuitive knowledge and Wang's doctrine of *Chih-hsing Ho-I* are similar. Wienpahl also compares Wang's thought of *Jen* with Spinoza's doctrine of the *Amor* in the paper's last part (Wienpahl, 1969, p. 27).

Wienpahl's insight is special in two ways. Firstly, according to my investigation of the English literature, Wienpahl is the first person to have established a direct link between the philosophies of Spinoza and Wang. Secondly, Wienpahl is the first person to claim that Spinoza's intuitive knowledge is also a kind of knowledge of acting. Unfortunately, this paper has only nine pages and the main arguments do not unfold sufficiently. However, Wienpahl's insight enhanced my interest in studying the relationship between the philosophies of Spinoza and Wang.

To summarize, I will reveal that Spinoza's philosophy is remarkably similar to Neo-Confucianism, and Wang's philosophy in particular, and I will consider the similarity

²² It is not clear why Wienpahl does not mention this point in his monograph on Spinoza (Wienpahl, 1979).

here as a parallelism between them. The aim in this thesis is to provide a comprehensive comparative piece of research on Spinoza's philosophy and Neo-Confucianism, with particular emphasis on Wang's philosophy. The parallelism will help us to resolve the puzzle in Spinoza's last three doctrines in the *Ethics*, especially the puzzle of the doctrine of the *Amor*. I conclude that the *Amor* can be properly understood from different perspectives. From God's perspective it is understood as the creative power of God. From an individual's perspective it is understood as the essence of that very individual. Moreover, once we combine these two perspectives we can reach what I consider to be the correct interpretation of Spinoza's view: given that intuitive knowledge and action are one and the same, the *Amor* should be comprehended not only as man's final fulfilment of freedom through intuitive knowledge, but also as man's self-cultivation in practice. I maintain that a free man, as Spinoza endeavors to become, is equivalent to a Neo-Confucian sage.

1.5 The Structure of the Thesis

In this thesis I focus on Spinoza's last three doctrines in his *Ethics*, especially the doctrine of the *Amor*. My aim is to resolve the puzzle of the doctrine of the *Amor*. With this aim in mind, I will employ a problem-oriented structure organized in the following way. In Chapter 2, I will explore the puzzle and investigate existing approaches. Then, I will analyse the related problems from Chapter 3 to Chapter 7. Finally, I will provide a systematic solution for the puzzle in Chapter 8.

Since this is a project of comparative research, in this thesis I try to find some insights in Neo-Confucianism, especially in Wang's philosophy, which help us to find a suitable solution to the puzzle. I observed that Wang's doctrine of *Liang-chih* is impressive. As we saw in Section 1.4, the doctrine of *Liang-chih* has a metaphysical aspect, an epistemological aspect, and an ethical aspect. This point leads me to realize that Spinoza's last three doctrines have the same character. Through the investigation in Chapter 2, I will reveal that it is not possible for us to resolve the puzzle if we focus on the doctrine of the *Amor* alone: the doctrine of the eternity of the mind and the doctrine of intuitive knowledge should be taken into account in our explanation. Therefore, I will argue that they stress three distinct aspects of the same thought which form an organic unity: (i) the metaphysical aspect, which is concerned with the eternity of the mind, (ii) the epistemological aspect, which is concerned with intuitive knowledge and (iii) the ethical aspect, which is concerned with the *Amor*. This organic unity forces us to realize that the puzzle of the *Amor* could not be resolved if both the puzzle of the eternity of the mind and the puzzle of intuitive knowledge remain unresolved. This

organic unity also gives us hope of success in a comparative study concerning all three aspects (metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics).

Through the comparison, the parallelism between Spinoza's philosophy and Neo-Confucianism will be revealed with all three aspects. Firstly, I will focus on the metaphysical aspect in Chapters 3 and 4. In Chapter 3, I will argue that the metaphysical frameworks and the main concepts of Spinoza's philosophy and Neo-Confucianism are parallel. In Chapter 4, I will explore the puzzle of Spinoza's doctrine of the eternity of the mind in detail and argue that the parallelism of the metaphysical aspect is supported as a way of approaching this puzzle. Secondly, I will focus on the epistemological aspect in Chapters 5 and 6. In Chapter 5, I will argue that Spinoza's doctrine of intuitive knowledge and Wang's doctrine of *Liang-chih* are parallel. In Chapter 6, I will explore a puzzle of Spinoza's doctrine of intuitive knowledge in detail and argue that the parallelism of the epistemological aspect is supported as a way of approaching this puzzle. Thirdly, I will focus on the ethical aspect in Chapters 7 and 8. In Chapter 7, I will argue that Spinoza's doctrine of the *Amor* and the Neo-Confucian doctrine of *Jen* are parallel. In Chapter 8, I will combine all of the above thoughts, and resolve the puzzle of the *Amor*.

Given the nature of comparative research, I will need to discuss both Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza's philosophy. However, I will not give them equal weight in every section. My focus is on the puzzle in Spinoza's philosophy and my investigation and critique are intended mainly for Spinoza scholars. This will be evident in Chapters 2, 4, 6 and 8. By contrast, with respect to Neo-Confucianism, I will follow

the orthodox conclusions of scholars of Neo-Confucianism, except for my denial of Wang as an idealist in Chapter 5. This will be evident in Chapters 3, 5, and 7. In other words, my writing will be critical with respect to Spinoza scholarship but merely introductory with respect to Neo-Confucianism scholarship.

Moreover, I assume that my readers are mainly Anglo-Americans, and therefore more familiar with Spinoza than with Neo-Confucianism. With respect to Spinoza, I will not introduce his thoughts in detail and shall only focus on the issues that I believe are relevant to my arguments. Contrastingly, with respect to Neo-Confucianism, I will need to introduce the basic concepts and main thoughts in detail. In other words, with respect to Spinoza my discussion is specific. With respect to Neo-Confucianism, my discussion is systematic.

Several issues need to be emphasized here. Firstly, one of my main arguments is that Spinoza's philosophy and Neo-Confucianism are parallel. The conception of parallelism itself needs some further explanation. On the one hand, my claim is much stronger than merely that they are similar. Due to the same pantheistic framework, at one point or another, it is not difficult to argue that Spinoza's philosophy is similar to some Chinese thoughts. But, as I claimed in Section 1.3, these opinions are superficial. On the other hand, I do not agree with some scholars who claim, to varying degrees, that they are the *same* as each other. These opinions are too strong. I do not think that there is any major concept or thought that is exactly the same in Spinoza's philosophy and Neo-Confucianism, given that they were developed in two totally different civilizations, and that there is no evidence to show that Spinoza ever borrowed Chinese

ideas. My position is in the middle of these. Further, by ‘parallelism’ I do not merely mean that there are *some* similarities between them, but that their metaphysical frameworks considered as wholes, and their main concepts (including epistemological aspects and ethical aspects), are stunningly similar.

Secondly, I need to clarify at this beginning stage that, when I talk of parallelism, I am not simply borrowing thoughts from Neo-Confucianism in order to explain the puzzles in Spinoza’s doctrines. What I am arguing is that the parallelism between them helps us to find some internal resources in Spinoza’s philosophy itself, and that the puzzle will be resolved by properly using these internal resources. Of course, I also do not borrow any thoughts in Spinoza’s philosophy to resolve the possible problems in Neo-Confucianism. Put simply, we cannot cross the two sides of the parallelism, and borrow elements of a doctrine on one side to resolve problems on the other.

Thirdly, this is a comparative piece of research focusing on Spinoza’s philosophy and Neo-Confucianism in detail (and Wang’s philosophy in particular). With respect to Neo-Confucianism, I will focus on the philosophies of Chu and Wang. It is easy for us to consider Wang’s philosophy as being in opposition to Chu’s philosophy at its every aspect given that Wang seems to be a rival of Chu. However, this is not the case. Wang agrees with Chu on the metaphysical aspect of his theory²³, opposes him with regard to the epistemological methods, and in fact inherits Chu’s views on the ethical aspect. We will see that Chu’s thought is at the core of the metaphysical framework of Neo-

²³ Tien also confirms that ‘Wang’s theory of the relation between *Li* and matter-energy [*Ch’i*] hold much in common with the metaphysics of other prominent Neo-Confucians, such as Zhu Xi [Chu Hsi]’ (Tien, 2010, p. 30).

Confucianism. In Chapters 3 and 4, I will, then, refer to Chu's metaphysical thought and not touch on Wang. Wang's perceived status as the rival of Chu is chiefly due to his radical epistemological thought. In Chapter 5, I will introduce their opposing thoughts. In Chapter 6, I will resolve a puzzle concerning Spinoza's intuitive knowledge chiefly through the inspiration of Wang's doctrine of intuitive knowledge. With respect to the ethical aspect, Wang develops the Confucian doctrine of *Jen* following Chu's contribution. In Chapters 7 and 8, I will refer to the thoughts of both Chu and Wang.

Fourthly, Spinoza's *Ethics* is the final criterion when assessing Spinoza's philosophy as a whole, since Spinoza's thought undergoes a process of development from an immature to a mature stage. The *Ethics* was revised in the last stage of his life and is his most important masterpiece. I will use Samuel Shirley's translation of the *Ethics* in 2002 (*Spinoza's Complete Works*, 2002) in the main body of the text. The translation of the *Ethics* itself is also a largely disputed issue, and I will support Elwes' translation of 1951 as a comparative version in the footnotes when necessary, given that Elwes' translation is both classic and popular.

Finally, I will not argue as to whether or not Spinoza's three doctrines are coherent within the whole framework of his *Ethics* with respect to his geometrical argument style. In other words, I will not consider whether or not every proposition and its relevant explanations, to which the last three doctrines are related, are right in the geometrical argument style. Rather, I will insist on their internal coherence. I have good reasons to support this choice. Firstly, as was previously mentioned, Spinoza himself was aware

of the uniqueness of his last doctrines when considered in the context of his whole framework. There are many contextual clues showing that the whole of the *Ethics* is organic, such as what the title of the book indicates, the third kind of knowledge introduced in Part two, the definition of eternity in Part one, etc. Secondly, in Section 1.1, it was shown that many scholars agree that his last three doctrines are coherent. Finally, it is not necessary for us to argue over the soundness of Spinoza's every argument nowadays given that Spinoza is in any case agreed to be a giant in the history of philosophy. It is my core task to understand Spinoza's philosophy better through a comparison with Neo-Confucianism. I believe these reasons are sufficient for my current purpose.

To summarize, Chapter 1 is an introduction. Chapter 2 explores the puzzle of the doctrine of the *Amor* and investigates the existing approaches. In Chapter 3 I argue that Spinoza's philosophy and Neo-Confucianism are parallel in their metaphysical aspect. Chapter 4 explores the puzzle of Spinoza's doctrine of the eternity of the mind, and resolves this puzzle through the parallelism of the metaphysical aspect. In Chapter 5 I argue that Spinoza's doctrine of intuitive knowledge and Wang's doctrine of *Liang-chih* are parallel. Chapter 6 explores a puzzle of Spinoza's doctrine of intuitive knowledge, and resolves this puzzle through the parallelism of the epistemological aspect. In Chapter 7 I argue that Spinoza's doctrine of the *Amor* and the Neo-Confucian doctrine of *Jen* are parallel. Chapter 8 resolves the puzzle of the *Amor*. Chapter 9 summarizes my whole thesis.

Chapter 2

The Puzzle and its Existing Approaches

Spinoza's final doctrine in the *Ethics*, the *Amor*, is enigmatic and puzzling. Nadler notes that it is 'disjointed, impenetrable, and frustrating' for Spinoza scholars (Nadler, 2017, p. 1). Moreover, Maxwell concludes that the *Amor* has been almost totally neglected in Spinoza studies (Maxwell, 1990, p. 133). In this chapter, I will explore the puzzle entailed by Spinoza's doctrine of the *Amor*, and investigate existing approaches to the puzzle. In Section 2.1, I will explore the puzzle itself. In Section 2.2, I will analyze the main approaches proposed by Spinoza scholars and investigate their advantages and disadvantages.

2.1 The Puzzle of the Doctrine of the *Amor*

According to my reading of Spinoza, the puzzle of the *Amor* has three levels, and we cannot understand the *Amor* properly until all three levels have been sufficiently explored.

2.1.1 *The Problem of Cause*

The shallowest level of the puzzle concerns the obvious contradictions within Spinoza's discussion of his concept of love. It is a near-unanimous conclusion among Spinoza scholars that Spinoza lists three kinds of love in the *Ethics*: passionate love, our love towards God and the *Amor*. In order to explore these contradictions, let us discuss the three kinds of love one by one.

(i) Passionate Love

In the *Ethics*, Spinoza does not give a formal definition for the term until Definition 6 in the end section of Part 3 as follows:

Love is *pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause*. (E3 Definition 6, p. 312, my italics)²⁴

In this definition, the term ‘pleasure’ is placed at the core. We can find the formal definition of the concept of pleasure in E3 Definition 3 as follows:

Pleasure is man’s *transition* of the mind to a state of greater perfection (E3 Definition 3, p. 311, my italics)

Since pleasure is the transition to a state of greater perfection, love is also the transition

²⁴ The term is also defined in a quotational style in E3p13 Scholium as follows:

Love is merely “pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause,” and hatred is merely “pain accompanied by the idea of an external cause.” (E3p13 Scholium, p. 286)

Obviously, Spinoza’s quotation in E3p13 Scholium from E3 Definition 6 is accurate. The structure of Part 3 in the *Ethics* is unusual, and in the end of Part 3, as a separate section, Spinoza summarizes every kind of emotion (including the concept of emotion itself) that he has discussed in the main section of Part 3. This is why every kind of emotion has two sets of definitions; one in a quotational style in the main text and another in the formal style in the end section of Part 3.

to a state of greater perfection. In fact, Spinoza has touched on the concept of pleasure in E3p11 Scholium as follows:

We see then that the mind can undergo considerable changes, and can pass now to a state of greater perfection, now to one of less perfection, and it is these passive transitions [*passiones*] that explicate for us the emotions of Pleasure [*laetitia*] and Pain [*tristitia*]. So *in what follows I shall understand* by pleasure “the *passive* transition of the mind to a state of greater perfection” (E3p11 Scholium, pp. 284-5, my italics)

As with the definition of the concept of love, here the definition of the concept of pleasure is directly quoted. It is noteworthy that, in contrast to the definition of the concept of love, Spinoza’s quotation in E3p11 Scholium is not accurate. The term ‘transition’ in E3 Definition 3 is changed into the term ‘passive transition’ in E3p11 Scholium. To comprehend the discrepancy between them we should note the qualifier, ‘in what follows I shall understand’, in E3p11 Scholium. This qualifier implies that the definition of the concept of pleasure in E3p11 Scholium can only be used in a limited scope. Spinoza draws the terminating line of the scope in E3p58 as follows:

Besides the pleasure and desire that are *passive* emotions, there are other emotions of pleasure and desire that are related to us insofar as we are *active*. (E3p58, p. 309, my italics)

In other words, from E3p13 Scholium until E3p58, Spinoza focuses on the passive kind of love rather than considering all of the kinds of love. This kind of love is the so-called 'passionate love' and its definition could be rephrased as follows:

Passionate love is the passive transition of the mind to a state of greater perfection, accompanied by the idea of an external cause.

To follow E3p58, it is clear that, apart from passionate love, there is also active love that is the active transition of the mind to a state of greater perfection. Correspondingly, the formal definition of the concept of love in E3 Definition 6 could be rephrased as follows:

Love is the transition of the mind to a state of greater perfection, accompanied by the idea of an external cause.

This could be considered Spinoza's standard definition of the concept of love in his *Ethics*, and it encompasses both passionate love, and active love. This definition has two features. Firstly, Spinoza recognizes the feature of pleasure, the transition of the mind from a state of lesser perfection to a state of greater perfection. Secondly, Spinoza emphasizes the cause, and here it is an external cause. Therefore, the formula is the combination of these two features. To put the formula simply, it follows the pattern of

‘transition + cause’. We will see that Spinoza repeatedly presents this formula in due course.

In short, for Spinoza, love is considered to be a kind of pleasure. Spinoza emphasizes the essence of pleasure as a transition of the mind from a state of lesser perfection to a state of greater perfection. At the same time, Spinoza’s formula of love also requires that the lover has the idea of an external cause in the mind. Therefore, Spinoza’s standard formula of love has the pattern of ‘transition + cause’. In the *Ethics*, the first kind of love that is discussed is passionate love, which is passive. It is also possible for the formula to contain active love however, and I will discuss this point in the next section.

(ii) Our Love towards God

Our love towards God is an example of active love in the *Ethics*. Spinoza’s discussion of the concept of our love towards God will help us to further comprehend his theory of love. Spinoza introduces the concept of our love towards God as follows:

He who clearly and distinctly understands himself and his emotions loves God, and the more so the more he understands himself and his emotions (E5p15, p. 371).

Here Spinoza emphasizes that, in our love towards God, the lover has a clear and distinct understanding of himself and his emotions or, in other words, has an adequate idea of our love towards God. From the epistemological perspective: once the love

occurs, the lover has the second kind of knowledge, i.e. reason. Therefore, it is legitimate to say that our love towards God is a special case of rational love. As such, a general and special relationship between rational love and our love towards God is established.

In Spinoza's discussion of the concept of our love towards God, he does not define it again, but rather quotes the definition of love as follows:

He who clearly and distinctly understands himself and his emotions feels *pleasure* (Pr. 53, III) accompanied by the idea of God (preceding Pr.). So (*Def. of Emotions* 6) he loves God, and, by the same reasoning, the more so the more he understands himself and his emotions (5P15 Proof, p. 371, my italics).

Here Spinoza is referring to the definition of the concept of love itself (E3 Definition 6). This is the second time that Spinoza formally uses the definition of love in the *Ethics*²⁵. Therefore, the formula of our love towards God could be rephrased simply as follows:

Our love towards God is the active transition of the mind to a state of greater perfection, accompanied by the idea of God.

²⁵ His first discussion of the definition of love is in E3p13 Scholium (see Footnote 24).

Here the formula still follows the pattern of ‘transition + cause’. Spinoza’s standard formula of the concept of love, E3 Definition 6, seems to reconcile the concept of passionate love with our love towards God that is a special kind of rational love. So far, so good.

However, a problem emerges under a careful reading. Notice that the term ‘the idea of an external cause’ in the formula of the concept of love has been replaced by the term ‘the idea of God’ in the formula of the concept of our love towards God. Is it legitimate here for Spinoza to repeat the definition of love even if the formula has been changed slightly? Spinoza seems to imply that it is legitimate since he repeatedly refers to E3 Definition 6. However, is the idea of God capable of being an external cause? The answer seems to be ‘no’, since Spinoza’s God is not a transcendent God but an immanent God. As an immanent God, the idea of God cannot be considered an external cause. Indeed, Spinoza never claims that God is an external cause in his discussion of our love towards God. Obviously, Spinoza’s metaphysics seems not to allow him to say so.

In short, rational love has its corresponding knowledge: reason, knowledge of the second kind, whereas passionate love has its corresponding knowledge: imagination, knowledge of the first kind. Our love towards God is an example of rational love. Spinoza repeats his definition of the concept of love in his discussion of the concept of our love towards God. Spinoza’s standard formula seems to reconcile passionate love and rational love (and its specific example, our love towards God). However, a problem seems to arise once it is observed that Spinoza’s God is not transcendent but immanent,

and his God cannot be considered an external cause. This problem is subtle, and it has not been discussed as an independent topic in the related literature until now. However, once the topic of the *Amor* is introduced, this problem will be highlighted. I will explore this point further in the next section.

(iii) The *Amor*

Spinoza gives an explicit definition of the concept of the *Amor* as soon as he engages the topic as follows:

From the third kind of knowledge there necessarily arises the intellectual love of God [*Amor Dei Intellectualis*]. For from this kind of knowledge there arises (preceding Pr.) pleasure accompanied by *the idea of God as cause*, that is (*Def. of the Emotions 6*), the love of God not in so far as we imagine him as present (Pr.29, V), but in so far as we understand God to be eternal. And this is what I call the intellectual love of God. (E5p32 Corollary, p. 377, my italics)

Here, Spinoza emphasizes the necessary connection between the *Amor* and intuitive knowledge. From an epistemological perspective: once intuitive knowledge occurs, the *Amor* arises necessarily. Again, Spinoza is referring to the definition of the concept of love itself (E3 Definition 6), and this is the third time that Spinoza uses the formula of the concept of love directly in the *Ethics*. The formula of the *Amor* could be rephrased simply as follows:

The *Amor* is the active transition of the mind to a state of greater perfection accompanied by the idea of God as cause.

This formula, which Spinoza gives in E5p32 Corollary, still seems to follow the pattern of ‘transition + cause’. However, it is worth noting that a subtle change has occurred in Spinoza’s explanation: the term ‘the idea of an external cause’ in the definition of the concept of love has been replaced by the term ‘the idea of God as cause’ in Spinoza’s explanation of the *Amor*. This subtle change reveals that Spinoza himself is conscious of the problem that we raised in the previous section, i.e. that his immanent God cannot be considered an external cause. Therefore, Spinoza changes it to ‘*the idea of God as cause*’. Now the problem is this: why does Spinoza repeat the quotation of the definition of love even though he is conscious of the contradiction? In order to be concise, let us label this *the problem of cause*.

To summarize, the formulae for the three kinds of love are as follows:

- I. Passionate love is the passive transition of the mind to a state of greater perfection, accompanied by the idea of an external cause.
- II. Our love towards God is the active transition of the mind to a state of greater perfection, accompanied by the idea of God.
- III. The *Amor* is the active transition of the mind to a state of greater perfection accompanied by the idea of God as cause.

The below table will help us understand *the problem of cause* better:

Love	Transition	Cause
Standard definition of love	Transition	The idea of an external cause
Passionate love	Passive transition	The idea of an external cause
Our love towards God	Active transition	The idea of God
The <i>Amor</i>	Active transition	The idea of God as cause

Table 1 A comparison of the formulae of Spinoza's three kinds of love.

Spinoza insists that these formulae are the same as the standard formula of the concept of love in E3 Emotion 6. However, when compared to Spinoza's standard formula in E3 Emotion 6, we see that the second part of the pattern of 'transition + cause' has been changed in a subtle way. The reason for this is that Spinoza's God is an immanent God, and as such cannot be considered an external cause. When our love towards God is discussed, the change seems imperceptible. However, once the *Amor* is discussed, the change is highlighted immediately. This is *the problem of cause*.

2.1.2 The Problem of Transition

The problem of cause is the shallowest level of the puzzle. Let us temporarily leave it and continue on to explore the next level of the puzzle. Spinoza focuses on the discussion of his last doctrine, the *Amor*, from E5p32 Corollary to E5p40 in the last

part of the *Ethics*. However, his discussion incurs a new and bigger problem. The *Amor* is, in fact, an umbrella word. With respect to the viewpoint of God, it refers to both the love of God (the divine *Amor*, hereafter)²⁶, and its sub-type, the love of God towards men (the divine *Amor* towards men, hereafter). With respect to the viewpoint of men, it refers to the mind's intellectual love towards God (the human *Amor*, hereafter). We now need to explore these notions.

(i) The Divine *Amor*

Spinoza claims that 'God loves himself with an infinite intellectual love' in E5p35: this is Spinoza's concept of the divine *Amor* (E5p35, p. 378). It is noteworthy that Spinoza gave us a new definition in its proof as follows:

God is absolutely infinite (Def. 6, I); that is (Def. 6, II), *God's nature enjoys infinite perfection*, accompanied (Pr. 3, II) by the idea of *itself*, that is (Pr.11, and Def. 1, I), by the idea of *its own cause*; and that is what, in Cor. Pr.32. V, we declared to be intellectual love. (E5p35 Proof, p. 378, my italics)

Here the divine *Amor* refers to the intellectual love in E5p32 Corollary, in which the *Amor* is defined. In other words, Spinoza believes that the divine *Amor* is identical with the *Amor*.

²⁶ Maxwell (1990) introduces a set of neat terminologies: the human *Amor* and the divine *Amor* (Maxwell, 1990, p. 148).

However, to compare the previous pattern of 'transition + cause' of the formula of the concept of love, we find that Spinoza changes the first part of the pattern of the formula to 'God's nature enjoys infinite perfection'. Therefore, the formula could be rephrased simply as follows:

The divine *Amor* is God's nature enjoying infinite perfection, accompanied by the idea of God as his own cause.

Put simply, the formula of the divine *Amor* becomes the pattern of 'perfection + cause'. The reason for Spinoza's changing his formula for the divine *Amor* is not difficult to uncover. According to Spinoza, pleasure is a transforming process from lesser to greater perfection. However, God enjoys infinite perfection (we will explore this point in Section 3.1.2). In other words, God always enjoys the highest perfection rather than undergoing a transforming process from lesser to greater perfection. This is why Spinoza cannot continue to use the term 'pleasure' in the definition of the divine *Amor*. The problem is now as follows: why does Spinoza still insist that the divine *Amor* is identical with the *Amor* when he is conscious of the fact that his formula of the *Amor* cannot be reconciled with the concept of the divine *Amor*? In order to be concise, let us label this *the problem of transition*.

(ii) The Human *Amor*

Following his definition of the divine *Amor*, Spinoza immediately introduces another

kind of love, the human *Amor*, in E5p36 Proof as follows:

This, the mind's love, must be related to the active nature of the mind (Cor. Pr. 32, V and Pr. 3, III), and is therefore *an activity whereby the mind regards itself, accompanied by the idea of God as cause* (Pr.32, V and Cor.); this is (Cor. Pr. 25, I and Cor. Pr. 11, II), *an activity whereby God, insofar as he can be explicated through the human mind, regards himself, accompanied by the idea of himself* (E5p36 Proof, p. 378, my italics).

Here we see that Spinoza still manages to follow the pattern of the standard formula. This is the fifth time that Spinoza refers to the definition of the concept of love in the *Ethics*. He defines the human *Amor* in two ways.

The first way in which he defines it is as an activity whereby the mind regards itself, accompanied by the idea of God as cause. This manner of defining it mainly refers back to E5p32, in which Spinoza discusses the relationship between the third kind of knowledge and the *Amor*, and E3p3, in which Spinoza believes that '[the] active states...of the mind arise only from adequate ideas' (E3p3, p. 282). Therefore, this is mainly an epistemological way of defining it. In this way, a man is the lover and God is the beloved. God as the cause seems to be an external cause of the human *Amor* since God is the beloved in the human *Amor*. However, 'the mind' here refers to adequate ideas, and this is intuitive knowledge that 'proceeds from the adequate idea of certain of God's attributes to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things' (E5p25 Proof,

p. 375). It is not the passive, inadequate, and temporary ideas, but active, adequate and eternal under the form of eternity. Given that the mind is under the form of eternity, God is not an external cause but an immanent cause. Therefore, the formula of the human *Amor* could be rephrased simply as follows:

The human *Amor* is an activity whereby the mind regards itself, accompanied by the idea of God as cause.

Put simply, here the formula becomes the pattern of ‘activity + cause’. This formula is in terms of the epistemological viewpoint of the human mind, and reveals that the human *Amor* is one part of the divine *Amor*.

The second way of defining it is as an activity whereby God explicates himself through the human mind. This way refers to E1p25 Corollary, in which particular things ‘are nothing but affections of the attributes of God’, and E2p11 Corollary as follows:

Hence it follows that the human mind is part of the infinite intellect of God; and therefore when we say that the human mind perceives this or that, we are saying nothing but ... God ... has this or that idea. (E2p11 Corollary, p. 250)

Here Spinoza is referring to his God-Attribute-Mode metaphysics. We will explore this point further in Section 3.1.2. As such, the second way is mainly ontological. Since the mind is part of the infinite intellect of God under the form of eternity, the human *Amor*

could also be rephrased simply as follows:

The human *Amor* is an activity whereby God, insofar as he can be explicated through the human mind, regards himself, accompanied by the idea of God as cause.

This formula is in terms of the ontological viewpoint of God and reveals that one part of the divine *Amor* is the human *Amor*. This formula is structurally the same as the formula in the first way above, the pattern of ‘activity + cause’. Upon embracing the third kind of knowledge, the mind does not experience a transforming process from lesser to greater perfection, but is instead anchored in the state of perfection.

In short, both ways emphasize the human *Amor* as an activity. In other words, even if Spinoza wants to follow the standard pattern, he is forced to change his formula here and replace the term ‘transition’ with the term ‘activity’.

(iii) The Divine *Amor* towards Men

The discussion above reveals that the human *Amor* is a part of the divine *Amor*. A further question is whether or not this part of the divine *Amor* could have another name in terms of the viewpoint of God. Spinoza engages immediately with this question in the corollary of 5P36 as follows:

Hence it follows that God, insofar as he loves himself, loves mankind, and consequently, that the love of God towards men [the divine *Amor* towards men]

and the mind's intellectual love towards God [the human *Amor*] are one and the same. (5P36 Corollary, p. 378)

Here we see that there is another name, and this name is the divine *Amor* towards men. Spinoza emphasizes that the divine *Amor* towards men and the human *Amor* are one and the same. The reason for this is that particular things, including men, are nothing but the modes of the attributes of God. As such, that God loves himself means that God loves particular things, including men, at the same time. The difference is that in the divine *Amor* towards men the lover is God and the beloved is men whereas, in the human *Amor*, the lover is the man and the beloved is God. In other words, the difference is only due to differing viewpoints. Therefore, the formula of the divine *Amor* towards men could be rephrased using the same formula for the human *Amor*, only now in terms of the viewpoint of God:

The divine *Amor* towards men is an activity whereby God, insofar as he can be explicated through the human mind, regards himself, accompanied by the idea of God as cause.

Here we see that the formula still follows the pattern of 'activity + cause'.

In short, the divine *Amor*, the human *Amor* and the divine *Amor* towards men all belong to the *Amor*. Listing their formulae below will help us to highlight *the problem of transition*:

- I. The divine *Amor* is God's nature enjoying infinite perfection, accompanied by the idea of God as his own cause.
- II. The human *Amor* is an activity whereby the mind regards itself, accompanied by the idea of God as cause, or is an activity whereby God, insofar as he can be explicated through the human mind, regards himself, accompanied by the idea of God as cause.
- III. The divine *Amor* towards men is an activity whereby God, insofar as he can be explicated through the human mind, regards himself, accompanied by the idea of God as cause.

The below table will help us understand these formulae better:

Love	Transition	Cause
Standard definition of love	Transition	The idea of an external cause
The divine <i>Amor</i>	Perfection	The idea of God as his own cause
The human <i>Amor</i>	Activity	The idea of God as cause
The divine <i>Amor</i> towards men	Activity	The idea of God as cause

Table 2 A comparison of the formulae of the *Amor*.

Now we see that the first part of the pattern of 'transition + cause' has been incrementally changed in a surprising way. The pattern in the concept of the divine *Amor* is 'perfection + cause'; in the human *Amor* and the divine *Amor* towards men the

pattern is ‘activity + cause’. This is *the problem of transition*.

In short, Spinoza struggles to use one formula to define all of the different kinds of love. He refers to the definition of the concept of love, E3 Emotions 6, in the definitions of the concepts of our love towards God and the *Amor*. However, he seems to fail to reconcile all of the different kinds of love into one single formula. With respect to our love towards God, the failure exists in the second part of the pattern of ‘transition + cause’: this is *the problem of cause*. When the *Amor* and its several variations as the divine *Amor*, the human *Amor*, and the divine *Amor* towards men are brought into the discussion, Spinoza is forced to change his formula correspondingly. They raise both *the problem of cause* and *the problem of transition*.

2.1.3 *The Problem of Nature*

In this section, let us explore the deepest level of the puzzle of the *Amor*. Given that Spinoza’s God is non-personal, and Nature is his other name, the deepest level is how the *Amor* makes sense in nature. Spinoza’s attitude is clear, and there is no space for a compromising anthropomorphism in his philosophy. Spinoza explicitly announces as much as follows:

Strictly speaking, God does not love or hate anyone. For God (preceding Pr.) is not affected with any emotions of pleasure or pain, and consequently (*Def of Emotions 6 and 7*) he neither loves nor hates anyone. (E5p17 Corollary, p. 371, my italics)

It is worth noting that Spinoza emphasizes the qualifier “strictly speaking” here. According to Spinoza, ‘God is without passive emotions’ because God’s ideas are always true and adequate (E5p17, p. 371). Therefore, God does not love anyone through passive emotions. Does Spinoza insinuate that God loves men through active emotions then? Spinoza answered this question in the same place as follows:

Again, God cannot pass to a state of greater or less perfection (Cor.2, Pr. 20, I), and so (Def. of Emotions 2 and 3) he is not affected with any emotion of pleasure or pain. (E5p17 Proof, p. 371, my italics)

Spinoza emphasizes the qualifier “again” here because he is concerned that the reader will misunderstand his view and believe that God loves men through active emotions. God always enjoys the highest perfection, and the state of his perfection remains unchangeable forever. Since pleasure is a transition from lesser to greater perfection, it is not possible for God to have the emotion of active pleasure. Therefore, it is also not possible for God to love men through active emotions. Clearly, this point helps us to clarify *the problem of transition* in another way.

Furthermore, Spinoza reinforces his view through E5p19, in which we are told ‘He who loves God cannot endeavor that God should love him in return’ (E5p19, p. 372). Here, Spinoza emphasizes the claim that God does not love anyone through either passive or active emotions. Since God does not love anyone, man should not have any expectation that God will love him in return.

However, as shown in Section 2.1.2, it is true that Spinoza has the concept of the divine *Amor* in mind, and believes that God loves himself with an infinite intellectual love in E5p35. According to Spinoza, this kind of love is precisely what he has defined in E5p32 Corollary, that is, the *Amor* (E5p35 Proof, p. 378). Is it legitimate for Spinoza to employ the concept of the divine *Amor* given that his God is not a personal God? What is the nature of the *Amor*? This is the deepest level of the puzzle in Spinoza's doctrine of the *Amor*. In order to be concise, let us label this *the problem of nature*.

To summarize, Spinoza's last doctrine in the *Ethics*, the *Amor*, is puzzling. According to our analysis, there are three different levels of the puzzle of the doctrine of the *Amor*, and three problems arise from them respectively. These are *the problem of cause* on the shallowest level, *the problem of transition* on a deeper level, and *the problem of nature* on the deepest level. These problems are intertwined, and composed the puzzle of the doctrine of the *Amor*, which creates huge confusion and difficulty for Spinoza scholars. In order to overcome the puzzle, many approaches have been proposed. I will investigate these existing approaches in the next section.

2.2 The Existing Approaches

Spinoza scholars have offered a variety of approaches to the puzzle. The simplest approach is to directly deny the doctrine of the *Amor* since some scholars believe that it entails too many errors and confusions. For example, Bennett employs a particularly harsh tone when he claims that it is nothing but ‘rubbish which causes others to write rubbish’ (Bennett, 1984, p. 374).

Some other scholars note a heavy religious element in the context of the latter part of Part 5 in the *Ethics*, and they believe that Spinoza falls into the traditional mode of religion, through which he either wants to compromise with the mainstream society in which he lived or to express his own religious experience. In what follows, I will refer to this as the ‘religious approach’ to the puzzle. Some scholars note the obvious inconsistency when Spinoza uses his standard formula to denote different kinds of love. They, then, propose some alternative formulae to replace Spinoza’s standard formula. In what follows, I will call this the ‘reformulated approach’. There are also other scholars who note the connection between the doctrine of intuitive knowledge and the doctrine of the *Amor*, and believe that the *Amor* will be coherent with the rest of the *Ethics* when the relationship between the *Amor* and intuitive knowledge is somehow explained correctly. In what follows, I will call this the ‘epistemological approach’. We will now investigate these approaches one by one.

2.2.1 The Religious Approach

It is a basic fact that many religious terms, such as eternity, salvation, blessedness, the

love of God, the grace of God, and the Holy Scriptures, are heavily employed in the last part of the *Ethics*. Melamed observed that it was traditional for at least some great medieval philosophers, such as Maimonides and Averroes, to change their tone in the concluding part of their masterpieces, in order to provide relief to the masses having suffered through their radical thoughts (Melamed, forthcoming, p. 6). Spinoza claims that the masses ‘will give a more favorable hearing to the truth’ if we speak ‘as far as possible to their level of understanding’ (*TIE*, p. 6). In other words, Spinoza believes that sometimes it is necessary to be flexible in one’s writing style in order to attract the masses to sound but radical thoughts. In the *TTP*, in order to establish a more rational and orderly society, Spinoza proposes that the masses should be persuaded to be obedient to some basic dogmas, such as ‘the love of God’, even if these dogmas themselves are not the exact truth (*TTP*, p. 519). For example, when his landlady inquires whether or not she can be saved through her religion, Spinoza confirms that ‘[y]our Religion is a good one, you need not look for another, nor doubt that you may be saved in it’ (Colerus, 1880, p. 403). Cook (1999) explores Spinoza’s real position in the answer to his landlady, and confirms that Spinoza does not commit himself to the truth of his landlady’s Christian faith. If Spinoza follows this pattern and has the purpose of appeasing the masses in mind, the heavy religious tone seems to make sense in the last part of his *Ethics* even if it turns out that this part is not coherent with the rest of the *Ethics*. This is the religious approach to the puzzle of the *Amor*.

Some scholars argue for the religious approach from a different direction, and propose that the heavy religious tone derives from Spinoza’s own religious experiences,

and that the *Amor* is a philosophical expression of these kinds of experiences. Pollock claims that there is a heavy influence of oriental mysticism on the doctrine of the *Amor* (Pollock, 1880, p. 298). Melamed goes further and argues that Spinoza has ‘a Buddhistic outlook upon life’, an opinion I reject in this thesis (Melamed, 1933, p. 2). Broad believes these kinds of experiences ‘which Spinoza and many others have enjoyed and which seem supremely important to those who have had them’ (Broad, 1930, p. 15) explain the religious tone.

Still other scholars, such as Harvey (2014), trace the root of the *Amor* back to Maimonides, or even to Aristotle. ‘In Aristotle the idea is problematic, and remains so in Maimonides and Spinoza’, Harvey argues, ‘[if] it seems more problematic in Spinoza, it is only because he exerted the greatest effort to make philosophic sense of it’ (Harvey, 2014, p. 106).

In short, the religious approach accepts that the doctrine of the *Amor* has meaning and value in itself but denies that the doctrine is coherent with the rest of the *Ethics*. The religious approach highlights the religious element in the doctrine of the *Amor*, and it also emphasizes the huge influence of established religion on both Spinoza’s life and his philosophy. However, it fails to catch the subtle and crucial meaning of the doctrine of the *Amor*. In this thesis, I will argue that the doctrine of the *Amor* is coherent with the rest of the *Ethics*, and I will show that the religious approach fails to note the integrality of Spinoza’s philosophy of ethics, in which the doctrine of the *Amor* is at the core.

2.2.2 The Reformulated Approach

By contrast to the religious approach, some scholars choose the ‘reformulated’ approach towards the puzzle of the *Amor*. According to this approach, the main thought in the *Amor* is indeed consistent with the rest of the *Ethics*, but at the same time its formula needs to be emended.

Melamed (forthcoming) systematically investigates Spinoza’s formula of the concept of love, and finds that the formula cannot accommodate the concept of the *Amor*. As a replacement, Melamed notes that Spinoza has another concept, self-contentment (*acquiescentia in se ipse*)²⁷, ‘which is quite close to’ the *Amor* (Melamed, forthcoming, p. 15). Melamed proposes that the *Amor*, as a technical term, should be replaced by *acquiescentia in se ipse*. Melamed cites the following passage from E3p30 Scholium as evidence:

Since love (Sch. Pr. 13, III) is pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause, and hate is pain also accompanied by the idea of an external cause, this pleasure and this pain are species of love and hatred. But as love and hatred have reference to external objects, we shall assign different names to these emotions.

The pleasure that is accompanied by an external cause²⁸ we shall call Honor

²⁷ It is called ‘self-esteem’ in Curley’s translation (Spinoza, 1985), and ‘self-complacency’ in Elwes’ translation (Spinoza, 1951).

²⁸ It is an internal cause in Curley’s translation, and Curley has a special note going into detail about this point (Spinoza, 1985, p. 511).

[*gloria*], and the pain that is its opposite we shall call Shame [*puer*]; but be it understood that this is when the pleasure or pain arises from a man's belief that he is praised or blamed. Otherwise, the pleasure that is accompanied by the idea of an internal cause I shall call Self-contentment [*acquiescentia in se ipse*], and the pain that is its opposite I shall call Repentance [*paenitentia*]. (E3p30 Scholium, p. 294)²⁹

What attracts Melamed in the quotation above is the last sentence, in which Spinoza calls the pleasure accompanied by the idea of an internal cause self-contentment (*acquiescentia in se ipse*). It is clear, Melamed believes, that the pleasure accompanied by the idea of an internal cause 'is *precisely*' what the *Amor* is (Melamed, forthcoming, p. 17, italics in original). Melamed, then, concludes that 'while writing the third part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza was keen on calling this affect "*Acquiescentia in se ipse*"; only when he turned to develop the last section of part five did he attach the additional title of "intellectual love" to it' (*ibid.*). Melamed conjectures that either Spinoza's Collegiant³⁰ friends compelled him to employ the title of the *Amor* rather than

²⁹ Cf. 'As love (III. xiii.) is pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause, and hatred is pain accompanied by the idea of an external cause; the pleasure and pain in question will be a species of love and hatred. But, as the terms love and hatred are used in reference to external objects, we will employ other names for the emotions now under discussion: pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause¹ we will style *Honour*, and the emotion contrary thereto we will style *Shame*: I mean in such cases as where pleasure or pain arises from a man's belief, that he is being praised or blamed: otherwise pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause¹ is called *self-complacency*, and its contrary pain is called *repentance*.' (Spinoza, 1951, pp. 150-1)

³⁰ The Collegiants refers to a group of people, including Spinoza, who embraced radical theology and formed an informal religious college in Rijnsburg since 1619 (Van Bunge, 2008, p. 62).

acquiescentia in se ipse or Spinoza himself saw that both love and the *Amor* ‘are kinds of Joy [pleasure] accompanied by the idea of an object [an external object or an internal object] as its cause’ (*ibid.*). Melamed is right to note that an external cause, which is applied in the formula of the concept of love, has been changed into an internal cause when *acquiescentia in se ipse* is discussed, and *the problem of cause*, then, seems to have been resolved once the concept of the *Amor* is replaced by the concept of *acquiescentia in se ipse*.

The crucial point of Melamed’s argument is that in the quotation above he reads Honor (or Shame) as an emotion accompanied by an inadequate idea (which belongs to the knowledge of imagination) and, in contrast, *acquiescentia in se ipse* as an emotion not accompanied by an inadequate idea. Melamed’s suggestion here is that *acquiescentia in se ipse* is an emotion accompanied by an adequate idea, which belongs to intuitive knowledge only. However, what I understand throughout Spinoza’s discussion of the conception of *acquiescentia in se ipse* is in opposition to Melamed’s claim. Firstly, Spinoza tells us that *acquiescentia in se ipse* ‘can arise from reason’, and that the idea accompanying *acquiescentia in se ipse* does not belong exclusively to intuitive knowledge, but to rational knowledge also (E4p52, p. 347). Moreover, Spinoza also defines *acquiescentia in se ipse* as the ‘pleasure accompanied by the idea of some deed which *we think we have done from free decision of the mind*’ in his explanation of its definition (E3 Definition 25&26 Explication, p. 315, my italics). According to Spinoza’s metaphysics, the idea that we can act from a free decision of the mind is not right, and only imagined. Furthermore, Spinoza believes that the mind can feel pleasure

once it ‘imagines itself and its power of activity’ (E3p53, p. 305). The reason is that ‘the more a man imagines he is praised by others, the more this pleasure is fostered’ (E3p53 Corollary, p. 306). In other words, it is also possible that the idea that *acquiescentia in se ipse* involves may belong to the knowledge of imagination. In short, E3p53 and its Corollary, E3 Definition 25&26, E4p52 and its Proof & Scholium all go against Melamed’s understanding. Therefore, Melamed’s argument is based on a misunderstanding of Spinoza’s concept of *acquiescentia in se ipse*.

Similarly, Rutherford (1999) also observes the importance of the concept of *acquiescentia in se ipse*. However, Rutherford sees the concept of *acquiescentia animi*, not *acquiescentia in se ipse*, as having a connection to the concept of the *Amor*. In the *Ethics*, the most important passage that supports Rutherford’s understanding is in E5p36 Scholium as follows:

From this we clearly understand in what our salvation or blessedness or Freedom consists, namely, in the constant and eternal love towards God, that is, in God’s love towards men. This love or blessedness is called Glory in the Holy Scriptures, and rightly so. For whether this love is related to God or to the mind, it can properly be called spiritual contentment [*animi acquiescentia*]³¹, which in reality cannot be distinguished from glory (Def. of Emotion 25 and 30). For insofar as it is related

³¹ Rutherford seems to consider *animi acquiescentia* to be the same as *acquiescentia animi*. According to the present context, Rutherford is right: *summa acquiescentia* should be understood as being the same as *acquiescentia animi*. I am, however, unsure on this point given that I do not have knowledge of Latin.

to God, it is (Pr. 35, V) pleasure (if we may still use this term) accompanied by the idea of himself, and this is also the case insofar as it is related to the mind (Pr. 27, V). (E5p36 Scholium, pp. 378-9)³²

Here Spinoza is discussing the *Amor* and clearly claims that it can properly be called spiritual contentment (*acquiescentia animi*). In fact, Spinoza reveals a similar view in Part 4 as follows:

Therefore it is of the first importance in life to perfect the intellect, or reason, as far as we can, and the highest happiness or blessedness for mankind consists in this alone. For blessedness is nothing other than that spiritual contentment³³ [*acquiescentia animi*] that arises from the intuitive knowledge of God. (E4 Appendix 4, p. 358)

³² Cf. 'From this we clearly understand wherein our salvation, or blessedness, or Freedom, consists, viz. in a constant and eternal Love of God, or in God's Love for men. And this Love, or blessedness, is called Glory in the Sacred Scriptures—not without reason. For whether this Love is related to God or to the Mind, it can rightly be called satisfaction of mind [*animi acquiescentia*], which is really not distinguished from Glory (by Defs. Aff. XXV and XXX). For insofar as it is related to God (by P35), it is Joy (if I may still be permitted to use this term), accompanied by the idea of himself [as cause]. And similarly insofar as it is related to the Mind (by P27)'. (Spinoza, 1985, p. 612)

³³ Shirley is mistaken in translating the term here as 'self-contentment' (it is also not in accordance with his translation in E5p36 Scholium in which it is spiritual contentment). I have corrected it with some further support from the translations of Curley (Spinoza, 1985, p. 588), Elwes (Spinoza, 1951, p. 237) and Rutherford (1999).

We see that Spinoza's thoughts in E5p36 Scholium are in accordance with his thoughts in E4 Appendix 4³⁴. Therefore, Rutherford (1999) is right, and it is *acquiescentia animi*, rather than *acquiescentia in se ipse*, that would be a better replacement for the *Amor* if Spinoza's puzzle could be resolved in this way.

Rutherford (1999) helps to clarify Spinoza's concept of *acquiescentia animi*. However, his paper does not focus on the doctrine of the *Amor*, and he does not investigate the relationship between the concept of *acquiescentia animi* and the concept of love any further. Now suppose that we blend Rutherford's argument and Melamed's approach together and accept the concept of *acquiescentia animi* as a replacement for the concept of the *Amor*. At this point, *the problem of cause* for the *Amor* seems to disappear since that which appears in the concept of *acquiescentia animi* is an internal cause rather than an external cause.

The remaining question now concerns whether or not Spinoza's puzzle of the *Amor* could be resolved when we combine the approaches of Rutherford (1999) and Melamed (forthcoming). The answer is still 'no'. As was discussed in Section 2.1, the formula aspect of the puzzle consists not only in *the problem of cause* but also *the problem of transition*. A further investigation will reveal that the concept of *acquiescentia animi* has these problems in a similar fashion to the concept of the *Amor*.

Spinoza establishes the connection of the concept of *acquiescentia animi* with

³⁴ This passage seems to be contradictory: while blessedness is considered as consisting in the perfection of reason in the first sentence, in the second sentence it is identical with *acquiescentia animi* which consists in intuitive knowledge. The only possible solution here is that, for Spinoza, reason in its perfect degree is identical with intuition. Let us put this issue aside as it is not related to our topic here.

intuitive knowledge in E5p27, and claims that ‘[t]herefore (Def. of Emotion 25), from this kind of knowledge there arises the highest possible contentment [*summa acquiescentia*]’ (E5p27 Proof, p. 375). However, Spinoza still refers its definition to the definition of Emotion 25, i.e. *acquiescentia in se ipse*. One way to make sense of Spinoza’s claim here is to consider *acquiescentia in se ipse* as an umbrella term, under which one kind of *acquiescentia in se ipse* is accompanied by the inadequate idea that belongs to the knowledge of imagination. Another kind is accompanied by the adequate idea that belongs to rational knowledge. The third kind is accompanied by the adequate idea that belongs to intuitive knowledge, and this kind has the replacement name, *summa acquiescentia*³⁵. Spinoza also uses one formula to define three kinds of *acquiescentia in se ipse*. Therefore, the concept of *acquiescentia in se ipse* has its own problem, which is similar to the problem facing the *Amor*. In the definition of Emotion 25, Spinoza says that *acquiescentia in se ipse* ‘is pleasure arising from a man’s contemplation of himself and his power of activity’. Like the situation in the concept of love, the concept of pleasure is also at the core of the definition of *acquiescentia in se ipse*. As a kind of pleasure, it always involves a transition from a less perfect state to a more perfect state. However, *acquiescentia animi* refers to the highest state of contentment rather than to a transition from a less perfect state to a more perfect state. This is *the problem of transition* in the concept of *acquiescentia in se ipse*. Therefore, the problem in the formula of the concept of love also exists in the concept of

³⁵ Or *acquiescentia animi*, see Footnote 31 and Footnote 33.

acquiescentia in se ipse.

Therefore, neither Rutherford (1999) nor Melamed (forthcoming), nor even the combination of their views, can resolve both *the problem of cause* and *the problem of transition*. However, their efforts once again highlight both *the problem of cause* and *the problem of transition*³⁶.

In contrast to Melamed's (forthcoming) proposal of an alternative technical term, Maxwell (1990) proposes an emendation of the formula of love. Maxwell confirms that *the problem of cause* cannot be resolved in its original formula. According to the original formula in E3 Definition 6, love is pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause. For Spinoza, an idea of an external cause is only an inadequate idea whereas the *Amor* generated by the idea of God involves a wholly adequate idea. Maxwell believes that it is not possible for the idea of God to be considered an external cause. The original formula must be amended since Spinoza cites it to define the *Amor* 'directly in E5p15 Proof, E5p17 Corollary, E5p32 Corollary and indirectly in other proofs using these' (Maxwell, 1990, p. 155). The correct formula for the *Amor* (and also, Maxwell implies, for our love towards God) should be pleasure accompanied by 'the idea of an internal [proximate] cause', and Maxwell contends that 'Spinoza would necessarily agree at once' (*ibid.*). Maxwell believes that the reason for Spinoza's failure to amend his formula of love is due to the fact that the whole of Part 3 in the *Ethics* focuses mainly on passive emotions and, as such, 'Spinoza understandably concentrates

³⁶ Their efforts also reveal that the concept of love seems to have the concept of *acquiescentia in se ipse* as its counterpart in the *Ethics*. If it has an alternative counterpart, why does Spinoza insist on using the concept of the *Amor* alone? I will answer this question in Chapter 7.

on definition by external cause' when the formula of love is introduced (Maxwell, 1990, p. 156). Hoos also claims that Maxwell's emendation of the formula of love 'turns out to be helpful' (Hoos, 2000, p. 217).

Maxwell (1990) also tackles *the problem of transition*. According to Maxwell, *the problem of transition* itself is not a real problem owing to the fact that both the human *Amor* and the divine *Amor* involve a transition from lesser to greater perfection (Maxwell, 1990, p. 153). It is worth noting that the main reason in support of Maxwell's argument is once again the concept of *acquiescentia in se ipse*. Maxwell notes that, in E5p32 Proof, it is claimed that the highest possible contentment of mind [*summa acquiescentia*] that refers to E5p27, arises from intuitive knowledge, and he translates *summa acquiescentia* as 'the supreme mental acquiescence' (*ibid.*). Maxwell considers *summa acquiescentia* to be the same as *acquiescentia in se ipse*, which he translates as self-acquiescence, since Spinoza seems to imply this point in E5p27 Proof, as cited above³⁷. According to the definition in E3 Definition 25, self-acquiescence is 'pleasure arising from contemplation' and pleasure, according to its definition, is always a transition from a lesser to a greater perfection. In other words, self-acquiescence involves a transition from a lesser to a greater perfection. On the one hand, this self-acquiescence is accompanied by the idea of the mind itself in E5p27 Proof, which Maxwell believes refers to the human *Amor*, and on the other hand, it is accompanied by the idea of God as cause in E5p30, which Maxwell believes refers to the divine *Amor*

³⁷ 'Therefore (Def. of Emotion 25), from this kind of knowledge there arises the highest possible contentment [*summa acquiescentia*]' (E5p27 Proof, p. 375).

(*ibid.*). Therefore, it seems natural to say that both the human *Amor* and the divine *Amor* involve a transition from a lesser to a greater perfection, and that it is an ‘error to deny a transition in this self-acquiescence and thus in the *Amor* itself (5p32Cor)’ (*ibid.*). This is a brief overview of Maxwell’s argument against *the problem of transition*. In short, Maxwell believes that *the problem of transition*, in fact, does not exist.

According to my reading, our critique of Melamed (forthcoming) above can also be employed against Maxwell: he also confuses *acquiescentia in se ipse* with *summa acquiescentia*, a problem that has been explored clearly by Rutherford (1999). Therefore, Maxwell’s argument against *the problem of transition* should be rebutted in the same way.

To summarize, Melamed (forthcoming), and Maxwell (1990) all employ a reformulated approach to the puzzle of the *Amor*, and they also note a connection between the concept of *acquiescentia in se ipse* and the concept of the *Amor*. Unfortunately, both Melamed (forthcoming) and Maxwell (1990) conflate *acquiescentia in se ipse* and *summa acquiescentia*. Rutherford (1999) is right to make the distinction between them, but his approach cannot resolve *the problem of transition*. Moreover, we found that the concept of *acquiescentia* suffers from the same difficulty confronting the *Amor*. Therefore, Maxwell’s (1990) claim that *the problem of transition* does not exist is false: *the problem of transition* remains. Furthermore, none of the above touch upon *the problem of nature*. The reformulated approach is, however, useful in its highlighting of both *the problem of cause* and *the problem of transition*.

2.2.3 The Epistemological Approach

Some scholars propose to resolve the puzzle by making use of the close connection between Spinoza's concept of love and Spinoza's epistemology. They observe a basic correspondence between the three kinds of knowledge and the three kinds of love in Spinoza's thought, and they argue that the puzzle is resolvable through clarification of the relationship between the concept of love and Spinoza's epistemology. In other words, they claim that the puzzle can be fully resolved if we pay attention not only to the concept of love itself, but also to its relationship with the three kinds of knowledge. This is the basic idea of the epistemological approach.

Rice notes that '[n]one has done much to connect' the *Amor* with its corresponding knowledge (Rice, 2002, p. 93). Rice believes that a right understanding of the essence of knowledge is the foundation for properly understanding the *Amor* given that Spinoza himself establishes a close connection between them in E2 Axioms 3. In E2 Axioms 3, Spinoza says that it is not possible for an individual to have any emotion unless the individual has the idea of an object that the emotion involves. Spinoza is obviously confident in this thought given that he considers it an axiom. According to Spinoza's epistemology, which will be explored further in Chapter 5, to say that an individual has the idea of an object is to say that the individual has knowledge of the object since, for Spinoza, 'knowledge' is another name for 'cognition'. In the case of passionate love, love is pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause. Due to the idea of the external cause, a parallel cognitive state of imagination arises in the mind of the lover. As with the knowledge of imagination this is an inadequate idea, and accordingly our

passionate love ‘is not self-determined but passive’ (Rice, 2002, p. 95). The pleasure that we experience in our passionate love is passive, not active. Therefore, passionate love is often immoderate and obsessive, and may damage our health. However, even if imagination, as the first kind of knowledge, is inadequate it is not necessarily false and wholly negative. Similarly, the pleasure that we experience in our passionate love ‘is not in itself bad, but good’ since it is a transition from a less perfect state to a greater one, in which our power is increased (E4p41, p. 343). Moreover, in a few situations, passionate love can lead us to act in a kind and tolerant way (Rice, 2002, p. 96). Therefore, in the case of passionate love, the essence and core feature of the first kind of knowledge, imagination, shapes the essence and core feature of passionate love. This conclusion can also be extended to our love towards God and the *Amor*.

When the first kind of knowledge, imagination, is transformed into the second kind of knowledge, reason, obsessively passionate love disappears. However, properly passionate love is transformed into rational love, just as Rice concluded: rational love ‘arises not from elimination of sensory love but rather in the rational understanding and control of it’ (Rice, 2002, p. 97). The pleasure in rational love is no longer passive: it is an active transition from a less perfect state to a greater perfect state. As the highest type of rational love, our love towards God comes about when we have rational knowledge of the idea of God. According to E5p19, Rice confirms that it is justifiable to claim that ‘a person who loves God cannot endeavor [that] God should reciprocate or love him in return’ otherwise this would entail that ‘God’s essence should be other than it is’ (Rice, 2002, p. 98). In other words, it is justifiable to claim that the notion of

divine love is in no sense at the level of reason.

Turning to the case of the *Amor*, Rice considers this as a kind of love that is completely different from our love towards God. Our love towards God and the *Amor* are different from each other due to the difference between the genitive subject and object (Rice, 2002, p. 100). Rice believes that the difference ‘between the idea of Peter which is *Peter’s mind* and the idea of Peter which is in *Paul’s mind*’, which will be discussed in Chapter 6, gives us a good way to explain the difference between our love towards God, which is not reciprocated, and the *Amor*, which is reciprocated (*ibid.*). With respect to the sub-types of the *Amor*, by E5p36 Rice agrees that the subjective, which is the human *Amor*, is identical with the objective, which is the divine *Amor* towards men, because the *Amor* is immanent. The *Amor*, as immanent love, is justified through intuitive knowledge, which is immanent knowledge, in which an adequate knowledge of an individual ‘is a part or expression of that very attribute’ (*ibid.*).

Rice is right to note the rigid connection between Spinoza’s concept of love and his theory of knowledge, and Spinoza’s three kinds of knowledge are one of the keys to understanding Spinoza’s three kinds of love. What Rice emphasizes is that the incoherence among the concepts of Spinoza’s three kinds of love is justified because their corresponding three kinds of knowledge are different from each other. What Rice does not touch upon is why Spinoza tries to use a standard formula to define all three kinds of love, which Rice believes to differ in nature from each other. Rice does not analyze both *the problem of cause* and *the problem of transition* in detail. Moreover, Rice only explains the *Amor* at the level of epistemology and does not touch upon its

meaning at the level of ontology. Rice does not analyze how the *Amor* should be understood when Spinoza claims that God loves himself with infinite intellectual love in E5p35. In other words, Rice does not tell us what the nature of the *Amor* is, and this is *the problem of nature*.

Nadler (2017) also proposes a similar epistemological approach. However, according to Nadler, Rice is wrong to separate our love towards God from the *Amor* completely. Rice believes that such a separation is similar to the division between the idea of Peter, which is Peter's mind, and the idea of Peter in Paul's mind. Nadler notes that by E5p20 Scholium 'there is a sense in which both the ordinary love of God [our love towards God] and the intellectual love of God [the *Amor*] are one and the same' (Nadler, 2017, p. 18). Nadler notes that Spinoza implies this point as follows:

[W]e may conclude that this love towards God is the most constant of all emotions, and insofar as it is related to the body it cannot be destroyed except together with the body. As to its nature insofar as it is related solely to the mind, this we shall examine later on. (E5p20 Scholium, p. 372)

What Spinoza examines after E5p20 is his last three doctrines: the eternity of the mind, intuitive knowledge and the *Amor*. Here Spinoza's thought is clear. Our love towards God can be destroyed together with the body and is, therefore, not eternal. However, Spinoza is implying that the nature of our love towards God is the kind of love that is eternal, which relates solely to the mind, and will be discussed after E5p20. This should

refer to the *Amor*. In other words, Spinoza seems to consider the *Amor* as the nature of our love towards God in E5p20 Scholium, and this is a new dimension with which we can consider the relationship between our love towards God and the *Amor*. Nadler's insight reveals that remaining at the level of epistemology will not by itself be enough to provide a solution to the puzzle of the *Amor*: the doctrine of the eternity of the mind must also be considered.

At the same time, Nadler, like other scholars who propose the epistemological approach, fails to take either *the problem of cause* or *the problem of transition* seriously. He concedes that his approach does not resolve all of the problems by admitting that 'certainly some vagueness' exists in Spinoza's concept of the *Amor* (Nadler, 2017, p. 17). Nadler ultimately believes that the *Amor* 'is simply to have a deep intellectual understanding of oneself and of one's place in Nature', and is 'nothing more than to experience the highest form of knowledge available to human beings' (Nadler, 2017, p. 22). Hoos (2000) also proposes a similar approach, and he also concedes that *the problem of transition* is merely 'due to the lack of another term' (Hoos, 2000, p. 219)

In short, Hoos (2000) and Nadler (2017) propose the epistemological approach but confess that the puzzle cannot be resolved by considering Spinoza's epistemology alone. To one extent or another, they bring the doctrine of the eternity of the mind into their explanation. However, this approach does not tell us how the *Amor* should be understood in the first place given that Spinoza's God is not a personal God and is identical with Nature. In other words, *the problem of nature* is not properly resolved. At the same time, these scholars do not take *the problem of cause* and *the problem of*

transition seriously due to the belief that the difference between the three kinds of knowledge is enough to explain the incoherence in the definitions of Spinoza's concepts of love.

To summarize, now we see that the religious approach, the reformulated approach, and the epistemological approach each have their own advantages and disadvantages. The religious approach highlights the religious element in the doctrine of the *Amor* and tries to explain the doctrine of the *Amor* within itself. To some degree, they admit that the doctrine of the *Amor* is incoherent with the rest of the *Ethics*. This means that they fail to note the integrated nature of Spinoza's philosophy.

The reformulated approach accepts a coherence between the doctrine of the *Amor* and the rest of the *Ethics*, and also claims that Spinoza's formulae of the concepts of love are incoherent. This approach, then, highlights both *the problem of cause* and *the problem of transition*. It tries to resolve either *the problem of cause* or *the problem of transition* by amending Spinoza's own formula. Our investigation revealed that, firstly, the reformulated approach does not resolve either *the problem of cause* or *the problem of transition* completely. Secondly, their emendation incurs some similar problems which the *Amor* has. Thirdly, this approach does not touch upon *the problem of nature*.

The epistemological approach proposes that the formula aspect of the puzzle can be resolved when Spinoza's epistemology is included in the explanation. As such, this approach highlights both the importance of the doctrine of intuitive knowledge and even the doctrine of the eternity of the mind. However, this approach does not explain

either *the problem of cause* or *the problem of transition* properly. Moreover, *the problem of nature* is also not properly resolved. Furthermore, even though these scholars acknowledge that the doctrine of the eternity of the mind should be taken into account to some degree in the explanation, they fail to deal with either the puzzle of the doctrine of intuitive knowledge or the puzzle of the doctrine of the eternity of the mind as puzzles of their own.

Finally, none of these approaches touch much upon *the problem of nature*, and none of them answer the problem of how the *Amor* is to be understood within the pantheistic framework. If the doctrine of intuitive knowledge is to be included in the explanation, the puzzle of the doctrine of intuitive knowledge itself should be resolved in advance. In the same way, if the doctrine of the eternity of the mind is to be included in the explanation, the puzzle of the doctrine of the eternity of the mind itself should be resolved in advance. A successful approach needs not only to incorporate all of the advantages that the above approaches introduce, it must answer *the problem of cause*, *the problem of transition*, and *the problem of nature* properly, while also resolving the puzzle of the doctrine of the eternity of the mind and the puzzle of the doctrine of intuitive knowledge. A Neo-Confucian approach, I believe, can satisfy these requirements.

Chapter 3

The Parallel between the Neo-Confucians' and Spinoza's Metaphysics

In Chapter 3, I will explore the metaphysics of both Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza and their core concepts. I will argue that there is a parallelism between them. In Section 3.1, I will explore the concept of *Tian* as the Ultimate Reality of Confucianism. In Section 3.2, I will introduce the basic framework of Neo-Confucian metaphysics. In Section 3.3, I will focus on its naturalistic dimension. In Section 3.4, I will focus on the concept of *Li* as the core concept of Neo-Confucianism and I will then clearly reveal Neo-Confucianism as rationalism. In Section 3.5, the two realms in the Ultimate Reality of Confucianism and their unity will be highlighted. In a parallel fashion, I will explore Spinoza's metaphysics and its core concepts in every section.

3.1 The Parallel between the Concept of *Tian* and the Concept of God

3.1.1 The Concept of *Tian* in Confucianism

The only concept in Confucianism that is comparable to the concept of God in the West is *Tian*. *Tian* had been considered as Ultimate Reality since the beginning stage of the Zhou Dynasty (1111 - 249 B.C.). This thought was inherited by Confucius and all Confucians thereafter. Confucians have continually developed the connotations of the concept of *Tian*.

A popular translation of *Tian* into English is the term ‘Heaven’³⁸, and another English term ‘Nature’ is also often used to refer to it (Yang, 2008, p. 562). Occasionally, it has also been translated as the English term ‘Sky’ (Mou, 2009, p. 145). I will use the term ‘*Tian*’ rather than any translated term in this thesis since any translation will lead us to emphasize one aspect of its meaning and in so doing lose sight of the other aspects of its meaning. Other scholars who have made the same decision include Yang (2008) and Mou (2009).

The concept of *Tian* was linked closely with the origin of the character of *Tian* in ancient China. The character of *Tian* appeared in its original written form in the Oracle Bone (甲骨文), which is the oldest written character system to have been found in China. The character system of the Oracle Bone matured during the time of the Shang Dynasty (1751 - 1112 B.C.), and was written on animal bones or turtle shells. The inscription onto turtle shells was considered to hold divine power to some degree as the people of the Shang Dynasty believed that such shells could foretell the intentions of their gods. One of the main uses of the Oracle Bone was for the divination of the royal house of the Shang Dynasty. Ultimately, these divinations formed the first classical scripture in the *Book of Changes* (易经), which shaped the pantheistic framework of Chinese philosophy and became its cornerstone. Scholars do not have a consensus on the origin and development of the Chinese character of *Tian*. A possible explanation for the character of *Tian* is that it can be analyzed into the combination of two more basic

³⁸ Two scholars, Fung (1953) and Chan (1963), who are very popular in the scholars’ circle of Confucianism in the twentieth century, use the translated term ‘Heaven’.

characters: ‘one’ (一) and ‘man’ (人) respectively. The combination has a literal meaning of ‘Great Man’ which means the ruler living in Heaven (Yao, 2000, p. 141). That is to say, its literal meaning embodies an element of transcendence. Therefore, the transcendental dimension of the concept of *Tian* has its etymological root in the oldest Chinese written character system.

Scholars tend to believe that the rising of the concept of *Tian* was due to the replacement of the Shang Dynasty by the Zhou Dynasty (Yao, 2000, p. 143; Yang, 2008, p. 562). The Supreme Deity of the Shang Dynasty was *Ti* (帝, Lord) or *ShangTi* (上帝, Ultimate Lord) whereas the tribe deity of the Zhou tribe was a natural deity, ‘*Tian*’, when the Zhou tribe was still under the government of the Shang Dynasty. The Supreme Deity of the Shang Dynasty, *ShangTi*, was a personal god, and scholars believe that it may have been the ancestor god of the Shang Dynasty (Yang, 2008, p. 562). Chan believes that *ShangTi* was ‘the supreme anthropomorphic deity who sent blessings or calamities, gave protection in battles, sanctioned undertakings, and passed on the appointment or dismissal of offices’ (Chan, 1963, p. 4). Conversely, *Tian*, as the tribe deity of the Zhou tribe, has a non-personal meaning linking to the natural sky. Eno (1990) guesses that *Tian* refers to the natural destination of the ashes caused by cremation during a sacrifice (Yao, 2000, p. 142). The governors of the Zhou Dynasty realized that it would be important to combine the concept of *ShangTi* and the concept of *Tian* after the Zhou Dynasty replaced the reign of the Shang Dynasty. Therefore, a new title combining the concept of *ShangTi* and the concept of *Tian* for Supreme Deity, *HuangTianShangTi* (皇天上帝), which literally means the imperial *Tian*: the highest

Ruler, emerged. Consequently, the concept of *Tian* inherited the more personal character of the concept of *ShangTi*, and its transcendental dimension was developed thereafter. It is noteworthy that *the Master of Tian* (天主) is precisely the Chinese term that was chosen to refer to the God of Catholicism when it was translated into Chinese by the early Catholic missionaries in the Ming Dynasty, whereas *ShangTi*, as a rival, is precisely the Chinese term that was chosen to refer to the God of Protestantism when it was translated into Chinese by the later Protestant missionaries. Nowadays, the concept of the Christian God in China hinges mainly on the concept of *ShangTi*, and this is due to the larger influence of Protestantism in modern times. However, Catholics in China still retain their own original usage and continue to use the term the Master of *Tian*. In short, the concept of *Tian* was dominated by its transcendental dimension in the pre-Confucius era and the classical era of Confucianism.

The concept of *Tian* continued to develop thereafter. Its naturalistic and rationalistic dimensions arose in succession, and dominated the concept in the era of Neo-Confucianism. In summary, Neo-Confucianism is a pantheistic monism, and is immanent rather than transcendent³⁹. Therefore, the concept of *Tian* is complicated and its meaning is very rich and multidimensional (*ibid.*). With the help of written evidence, we now know that the concept of *Tian* has a history of nearly 4000 years, and that its meaning underwent a process of continued development. Therefore, the concept of *Tian* cannot be defined in a clear-cut way. This is not to say that it is a discursive concept.

³⁹ However, the transcendental dimension of *Tian* did not disappear entirely and remained an important dimension.

On the contrary, its different dimensions are correlative with each other, and they were combined into a unified concept in Confucianism. When the Neo-Confucian movement was arising in the Song Dynasty (960 - 1279), Ch'eng I, one of the representatives of the Neo-Confucian movement, emphasized its unity as follows:

Spoken of as one, Heaven is the Way (*Tao* [道]). This is the meaning when it is said that "Heaven will not be in opposition." Spoken of in its different aspects, it is called heaven with respect to its physical body, the Lord (*Ti*) with respect to its being master, negative and positive spiritual forces with respect to its operation, spirit (*Shen* [神]) with respect to its wonderful functioning, and *Ch'ien* [乾] with respect to its nature and feelings. *Ch'ien* is the beginning of all things. Therefore it is Heaven, yang, father, and ruler. (Chan, 1963, p. 570; slightly different citation in Yao, 2000, p. 142)⁴⁰

Here Chan's translation uses the term 'Heaven' to refer to the term '*Tian*'. Ch'eng I explained *Tian*'s physical aspect, transcendent aspect, operative aspect, functional aspect, and natural and feeling aspect as unified under the concept of *Tian*. All of these aspects had been developed before Ch'eng I, and were developed further by other Neo-Confucians following Ch'eng I.

⁴⁰ Cf. 'Referring to its form, it is called heaven; considered as ruler or lord, it is called Shang-ti (God); viewed as functioning, it is called fate; as given to men, it is called disposition; as controlling the body, it is called mind' (Wang, 1916, p. 83).

While Chan's translation uses the expression 'different aspects' to refer to the richness of the concept of *Tian*, I will use the expression 'different dimensions' in this thesis⁴¹. I believe the term 'dimension' emphasizes the considerable richness of the concept of *Tian*, and is more suitable for expressing its rich connotations. Following the development of Neo-Confucianism, I will investigate its main dimensions in this thesis. This investigation will help us to map out the basic framework of Neo-Confucianism. I will focus on three of the dimensions⁴² of the concept of *Tian*: its naturalistic dimension, its rationalistic dimension, and its idealistic dimension.

3.1.2. The Concept of God in Spinoza

God is, and always is, the Ultimate Reality of Spinoza's philosophy throughout his works, and this is the reason that he has been famously described as 'a God-intoxicated man' by Novalis (Sprigge, 2006, p. 26). One of the most controversial aspects of Spinoza's philosophy is his radical conception of God. Spinoza's philosophy in his *Ethics* begins with his deliberation concerning a new definition of God. The definition of God and his⁴³ main characteristics constitute the main content of the first chapter of Spinoza's *Ethics*.

⁴¹ Yao (2000) uses the same expression 'different dimensions'.

⁴² The reason for choosing these three dimensions is that they shaped the basic framework of Neo-Confucianism. This does not imply that the concept of *Tian* does not have other dimensions or that such other dimensions are not important. On the contrary, certain dimensions, such as its transcendental and mystical dimensions, are important and have a huge influence on daily life in China. I will push these dimensions aside since they do not relate directly to the topic of this thesis.

⁴³ Here it is convenient to use this term to refer to God, but this should not be taken to imply that God

(i) God as the Absolutely Perfect Being

In his *Ethics* one term that Spinoza often uses to describe God is the term ‘perfection’, and Spinoza’s God is a perfect being. On the one hand, it is noteworthy that the term ‘perfection’ and its antonymous term ‘imperfection’ are often used together in the *Ethics*, with the former used to describe God and the latter his modifications. On the other hand, according to Spinoza, God has the highest perfection. He claims that God embodies ‘absolute perfection’ (E1p11 Scholium, p. 223), ‘consummate perfection’ (E1p15 Scholium, p. 225), ‘supreme perfection’ (E1p33 Scholium2, p. 225), and ‘infinite perfection’ (E5p35 Proof, p. 378). It is clear for Spinoza that the conception of the absolute has the same meaning as the conception of the consummate, the supreme, and the infinite since they are used interchangeably. Spinoza did not directly provide a definition of the term ‘absolute perfection’, but he made a special explanation for the ‘absolutely infinite’ in the explanation for the definition of God, in which he claims that ‘by God I mean an absolutely infinite being’ (E1Definition 6, p. 217), as follows:

I say “absolutely infinite”, not “infinite in its kind”. For if a thing is only infinite in its kind, one may deny that it has infinite attributes. But if a thing is absolutely infinite, whatever expresses essence and does not involve any negation belongs to its essence. (E1 Definition 6, p. 217)

has a gender. This usage is employed throughout this thesis.

Following the same logic here, we can use the term ‘absolutely perfect’, but not ‘perfect in its kind’, to describe God. The conception of absolute perfection, which does not involve any negation, belongs to the essence of God. In other words, the conception of the absolute cannot be used to refer to anything except God himself and his equivalent concepts (Nature, absolute perfection, absolute infinity, absolute reality, absolute existence, absolute freedom...etc.). As a modification of God, any individual thing could not be absolutely perfect.

However, through the distinction between the ‘absolutely perfect’ and the ‘perfect in its kind’, it is also possible for Spinoza to use the term ‘perfect’ to refer to an individual thing. According to Spinoza, every individual thing is always imperfect in comparison to God, but should also be considered as being perfect in itself. For example, the common people always consider a blind man imperfect, but Spinoza claims that the blind man should be considered perfect in himself since ‘God’s intellect and will has assigned [such a lot] to him’ (Letter 21, p. 824)⁴⁴.

Moreover, Spinoza provides a formal definition of the term ‘perfection’. In the definitions at the beginning of Part 2, Spinoza states directly that ‘[by] reality and perfection I mean the same thing’ (E2 Definition 6, p. 244). Therefore, God is absolute reality since he is absolute perfection. To say God has absolute reality is to

⁴⁴ This refers to Spinoza’s correspondence with his friends, which has been edited into *Spinoza’s Complete Works* (Spinoza, 2002).

say that God himself is identical with Ultimate Reality, and this is why Spinoza defines God as the absolutely infinite being, or absolute existence.

Spinoza firmly believes that it is an eternal truth that ‘nothing comes from nothing’ (Letter 10, p. 783). Letter 10 was written in 1663 when he was only 31 years old. This reveals that, as one of the basic creeds in his *Ethics*, the notion of the absolute reality had been formed in the early stages of his philosophical career. From this basic creed, it is natural to conclude that any existence has positive value since to ‘be able to not exist is weakness; on the other hand, to be able to exist is power, as is self-evident’ (E1p11 A Third Proof, p. 222)⁴⁵. Therefore, Spinoza believes that any existence is either God himself or in God, and God is absolute existence itself.

In short, God, as the perfect being, has the absolute reality, and he is Ultimate Reality itself. To say that God is Ultimate Reality itself is also to say that God has the highest or absolute perfection.

(ii) God as the Self-caused Being

In Spinoza’s *KV*, written in 1662 when he was 30 years old, his basic understanding of the *a priori* and *a posteriori* arguments for the existence of God was developed as follows:

⁴⁵ Here we see one of the biggest differences between Spinoza’s philosophy and Buddhism. Buddhism advocates that Ultimate Reality is nothingness whereas Spinoza endows it with the highest value. Therefore, it is wrong to say that Spinoza is a Buddhist, such as Melamed (1933) has argued.

[We] can prove both *a priori* and *a posteriori* that God exists. Better, indeed, *a priori*. For things which are proved in the latter way [*a posteriori*] must be proved through their external causes, which is a manifest imperfection in them, inasmuch as they cannot make themselves known through themselves, but only through external causes. God, however, who is the first cause of all things, and also the cause of himself [*causa sui*], makes himself known through himself. Hence one need not attach much importance to the saying of Thomas Aquinas, namely, that God could not be proved *a priori* because he, forsooth, has no cause. (*KV*, p. 40, cited in Douglas, 2015, p. 91)

For the existence of God, an *a priori* argument is always better than any *a posteriori* argument, according to Spinoza. Moreover, Spinoza firmly believes that it is possible for humans to have *a priori* knowledge of God because God makes himself known through himself. Spinoza's view concerning how God makes himself known through himself is not completely unfolded in the *KV*, and in fact is not revealed in its entire meaning until the completion of his *Ethics*. However, Spinoza's criticism of St. Thomas gives us an important clue as to how we can better comprehend his real view. Douglas (2015) provides a good interpretation of this clue through his historical research into the intellectual context of the early modern era.

Firstly, Douglas (2015) investigates the special meaning of the concepts of *a priori* and *a posteriori* in the early modern era. According to Douglas (2015), in the early modern era the terms *a priori* and *a posteriori* had different senses from what they have nowadays (Douglas, 2015, p. 87). The original meanings had to do with the relationship between cause and effect. To say an argument is *a priori* is to say that it

reveals the reason from cause to effect, whereas to say an argument is *a posteriori* is to say that it reveals the reason from effect to cause. Spinoza noted that there is an ancient saying that ‘true science proceeds from cause to effect’ (*TIE*, p. 24). An argument for proving the existence of God from the cause is *a priori*, whereas an argument for proving the existence of God from the effect is *a posteriori*. Therefore, owing to their implications concerning the relationship between cause and effect, Spinoza’s *a priori* and *a posteriori* arguments have different senses from their current usages in philosophy.

Secondly, Douglas (2015) briefly investigates the historical development of the conception of God as self-caused. God as a self-caused entity has a negative meaning in traditional theology. To say that the existence of God is self-caused is, in fact, to say that the existence of God lacks a cause (Douglas, 2015, p. 88). It was St. Thomas who first made a decisive distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* proofs for the existence of God, and furthermore St. Thomas believed that it is impossible for us to know any *a priori* proof for the existence of God (Douglas, 2015, p. 87). However, God as self-caused is endowed with a positive sense in Descartes’ philosophy. It was then possible for Descartes and other philosophers thereafter to give an *a priori* proof for the existence of God. The thought that God as self-caused has to possess ‘*every perfection*’ is stated in Descartes’ *Meditations* (Douglas, 2015, p. 88, my italics). According to Douglas’ reading, Descartes implies that our knowledge of God is *a priori*. Douglas’ investigation directly echoes Spinoza’s criticism towards St. Thomas in the above citation. Spinoza takes up this thought of Descartes’ in earnest⁴⁶. It is also

⁴⁶ Spinoza has his ontological argument for God’s existence in mind, and he told his friend that ‘the

possible that Descartes' notion of 'every perfection' had a direct influence upon Spinoza's notion of God as absolute perfection. It is noteworthy that the definition of the concept of the self-caused was written at the very beginning of Spinoza's *Ethics*. This reveals the extreme importance of the concept of the self-caused to Spinoza's philosophy.

Douglas (2015)⁴⁷ does not discuss Spinoza's development of the thought of God as self-caused in the positive sense. Spinoza not only accepts Descartes' thought of God as self-caused in a positive sense, but also absorbs it into his basic framework of philosophy and endows it with a new connotation. According to Spinoza, on the one hand, God as self-caused means that 'whose essence involves existence or that whose nature can be conceived only as existing' (E1Definition 1, p. 217). On the other hand, God as self-caused means that he is the efficient cause of the sensible realm⁴⁸. The concept of the efficient cause is one of the key concepts in Spinoza's philosophy. Spinoza claims that 'God is the efficient cause not only of the existence of things but also of their essence' (E1p25, p. 232). The concept of the efficient cause here can be

existence of God follows most clearly and forcefully from the idea of him' (Letter 40, p. 865). It is not my aim to discuss Spinoza's ontological argument in this thesis. For Spinoza's ontological argument, see Earle (1951), Jarrett (1976), Garrett (1979), and Friedman (1982).

⁴⁷ St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033 - 1109) had introduced the so-called ontological argument in his *Proslogion*, which was written between 1077 and 1078, and Douglas (2015) does not investigate its relationship with Spinoza's ontological argument. Nowadays it is not clear whether Spinoza's ontological argument for God's existence has any direct links with Anselm's or not.

⁴⁸ For our current purposes, let us borrow this Platonic term, but it cannot be strictly understood in the Platonic sense. We will see that both Spinoza and Neo-Confucians have their own corresponding terms.

interpreted from several perspectives. Firstly, Spinoza once told his friend that ‘an efficient cause can be internal as well as external’ (Letter 60, p. 913). God as an external efficient cause introduces things into existence⁴⁹. God as an internal efficient cause endows things with their essence. Moreover, Spinoza claims that ‘God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things’ (E1p18, p. 229). To exist as a thing is to exist within God - not without God. Finally, Spinoza also claims that the existence and essence of things are inferred by each other (E1p25 Scholium, p. 232). We should take care to note that Spinoza does not conclude that the existence and essence of an individual thing are one and the same, even though he does indeed claim that ‘God’s existence and his essence are one and the same’ (E1p20, p. 230). A question arises here: which aspect(s) of the existence and essence of things are inferred by each other and which aspect(s) of the existence and essence of things are different from each other? We will consider this question in due course.

In short, the concept of the self-caused refers to God himself, and the concept of the efficient cause refers to things in the sensible realm. However, the concept of the efficient cause follows from the concept of the self-caused, and it embodies one of the connotations of the concept of the self-caused since all things are within God, not without God. It is clear here that Spinoza indeed separates God, as a whole, into two different realms: the self-caused realm of God himself and the sensible realm of

⁴⁹ For Spinoza, when we say that God is an external efficient cause, this does not mean that God, who stands outside of Nature, creates a thing from nothing, rather that other relevant things, as modes of God, bring a thing into existence in the infinite causal network in the sensible realm.

which God is the efficient cause, through the thought that God is self-caused in a positive sense.

(iii) God as a Living Being

So far, we can say that Spinoza's God is a self-caused absolute existent. We now need to explore the issue of how God can be comprehended as absolute existence. Spinoza claims that God alone is a free agent because God is 'constrained by none' (E1p17, p. 227). Following this logic, we are led to conclude that one of the important characteristics of the existence of God is that if it is possible for something to exist, it does exist. This means that any potency to exist in God is actualised. According to Spinoza, it is completely wrong to say that God chose to create some things and not to create other things by exercising his absolute will. It seems legitimate for us to say that God has created everything. Contrastingly, some may worry that if God were to create all possible things then he would seem to exhaust his infinite potency, and 'render himself imperfection' (E1p17 Scholium, p. 228). The concern is that once God creates everything that is possible he 'would not have been able to create anything more' (*ibid.*). Spinoza considers this notion to be completely absurd and 'inconsistent with God's omnipotence' (E1p17 Scholium, p. 229). According to Spinoza, since God is absolute existence itself, it is necessary that his omnipotence 'has from eternity been actual and will remain for eternity in the same actuality', using his favorite analogy, 'just as from the nature of a triangle it follows from eternity to eternity that

its three angles are equal to two right angles' (E1p17 Scholium, p. 228)⁵⁰. If it is possible for anything that might possibly exist to remain inexistent, then it seems that we can conceive of a greater reality than the so-called ultimate reality that has been created. Therefore, the so-called ultimate reality would not be Ultimate Reality. Since God himself is identical with the so-called ultimate reality, this would mean that a greater God is conceivable. This is absurd. As absolute existence, it is impossible that anything more can be brought into existence, and it is also impossible that any possibly existent things remain inexistent. This is one of the meanings of God as absolute existence.

Spinoza's religious background provides us two clues with which to further comprehend the concept of God as absolute existence. The first clue comes from the name of God in Hebrew Scripture. According to Hebrew Scripture, God is 'I AM WHO I AM', and 'I AM' had sent Moses to the Israelites (Exodus 3:14 NIV). This thought was echoed by Jesus in the Gospel of John: 'before Abraham was born, I am', Jesus claimed (John 8:58 NIV). Therefore, God as absolute existence is one of the basic thoughts of Scripture, and Spinoza grew up under the influence of this thought.

The second clue is Spinoza's knowledge of Hebrew grammar itself. Spinoza believed that a certain amount of linguistic knowledge was a necessary foundation for a correct interpretation of the *Bible*. Spinoza was a master of Hebrew Grammar, but

⁵⁰ Spinoza's concept of eternity has a different meaning from its common meaning as being everlasting in time. I will discuss this point in due course. However, the way in which the concept is understood here does not affect our comprehension of Spinoza's opinion.

he confessed that he did not have a sufficient knowledge of Greek. This is the reason for his very long interpretation of the *Old Testament* in contrast to his very short interpretation of the *New Testament* (*TTP*, p. 498). For the same reason, Spinoza began to write the book ‘*Hebrew Grammar*’ in the later stages of his life, with the hope of helping others to comprehend the *Old Testament* better through a knowledge of Hebrew Grammar. In a chapter entitled “Of the life of God” in the *CM*, Spinoza states that God’s life should be comprehended as follows:

Therefore by life we for our part understand the force through which things persevere in their own being. And because that force is different from the things themselves, we quite properly say that things themselves have life. But the force whereby God perseveres in his own being is nothing but his essence, so that those speak best who call God ‘life’. There are some theologians who hold the opinion that it is for this reason -- that God is life and is not distinct from life -- that the Jews when they swore an oath used to say “by the living Jehovah”, and not “by the life of Jehovah”, as Joseph, when swearing by Pharaoh’s life, said “by the life of Pharaoh.” (*CM*, p. 197)

This book was published in 1663, and the thoughts embodied in the passage above are very rich⁵¹. The example in the last sentence above is from Genesis 42: 15-16.

⁵¹ The concept of a force through which things persevere in their own being was developed into the concept of *conatus* in the *Ethics*, and I will explore this in Chapter 8.

Spinoza claims that in Hebrew there is a kind of infinitive noun ‘which would express an action related to the active mood or to *the imminent cause* ... which...means... *causing oneself* to do something (*Hebrew Grammar*, p. 629, my italics). The term of God as an infinitive noun in Hebrew has the same role as verbs in other languages. When we say that life is the essence of God, we are saying, in fact, that God is life itself and that God himself is life. As an infinitive noun, a living God also means that God is self-caused and that God is the imminent cause of everything. Therefore, the concept of being self-caused has the implication of the imminent cause in Hebrew Grammar itself. Therefore, it seems possible that Spinoza acquired his inspiration for the view of God as the imminent cause of things from his knowledge of Hebrew Grammar given that he ‘deserves to be called a philologist and a grammatical scholar’ of Hebrew (Morgan, 2002, p. 584).

In short, as Ultimate Reality, Spinoza’s God is absolutely perfect existence itself. Spinoza claims that the reality of God and his perfection mean the same thing. God is existence itself, and its nature and its existence are one and the same. Spinoza’s God is also self-caused existence in the positive sense meaning that God himself is the cause of his existence rather than in the negative sense, meaning that God’s existence lacks a cause and thus that God’s existence cannot be proved *a priori*. God as self-caused existence is suggested by Spinoza’s religious background and his knowledge of Hebrew grammar. As the absolutely perfect existence, Spinoza’s God is omnipresent, which means that any potency to exist in God has been actualised.

Therefore, it seems reasonable for us to say that, for Spinoza, God is existence, and existence is God.

3.1.3 The Parallel between the Concept of *Tian* and the Concept of God

When I say *Tian*, as the Ultimate Reality of Neo-Confucianism, is parallel to Spinoza's God, I mean that there is both a parallel between the basic metaphysical frameworks of Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza, and a parallel between *Tian*'s naturalistic, rationalistic, and idealistic dimensions, and the corresponding dimensions of Spinoza's God. I will reveal the parallel between the basic metaphysical frameworks in Section 3.2. I will explore the Neo-Confucian naturalistic dimension in Section 3.3. I will then argue that its rationalistic dimension is the dominant dimension in Section 3.4.

In a parallel way, as Ultimate Reality, Spinoza's God also has its naturalistic, rationalistic, and idealistic dimensions. In what follows, I will explore its naturalistic dimension in Section 3.3 and argue that we need to understand the naturalistic dimension properly, given that it seems to have been overly emphasized in previous scholarship. In Section 3.4, I will argue that the rationalistic dimension is the dominant dimension.

The Neo-Confucian idealistic dimension will be discussed in Chapter 5. It is worth bearing in mind at this beginning stage that, in contrast to mainstream opinion that considers the idealistic dimension as a rival of the rationalistic dimension, such as in Fung (1953), Chan (1963), Yao (2000), etc., I will argue that, rather than being a rival of the rationalistic dimension, the idealistic dimension exists as an idealistic approach

toward the epistemology of Neo-Confucian rationalism. I will argue that this *idealistic* approach is, in fact, the rival of the *empirical* approach towards the epistemology of Neo-Confucian rationalism.

In a parallel way, I will discuss Spinoza's idealistic dimension in Chapter 5, and argue that Spinoza also has an idealistic approach towards his epistemology. In other words, when I say that Spinoza's God has its idealistic dimension, I mean that Spinoza employs an idealistic approach towards his epistemology.

3.2. The Parallel in the Basic Metaphysical Frameworks

3.2.1. The Basic Metaphysical Framework of Neo-Confucianism

As shown in Section 3.1.1, classical Confucians focused on religious, ideological and ethical discourses, but the philosophical foundation of such discourses was crude and unstable. The instability became obvious when Buddhism was introduced into China and rose in popularity from the Later Han Dynasty (25 - 220). The development of Buddhism was so successful that it became the dominant ideology in the hands of several emperors of the Tang Dynasty (618 - 907). At the same time, Taoism, rather than Confucianism, became the main rival of Buddhism during the development of Buddhism. Arguably, one of the reasons for Buddhism and Taoism overtaking Confucianism was their deeper philosophical foundations.

In order to defend Confucianism as the dominant state ideology and confront the challenge of Buddhism and Taoism, Confucians needed to set up a firm philosophical foundation. A new movement was urgently needed. This movement did indeed appear, and produced a great fruit: Neo-Confucianism. During this great movement, the Neo-Confucian basic framework of metaphysics, its naturalistic and rationalistic dimensions, and its idealistic approach towards epistemology, were developed in succession. Neo-Confucianism arose during the Song Dynasty, overtook its Buddhist and Taoist rivals, and remained dominant throughout subsequent Chinese history⁵².

⁵² Two points should be noted here. The first point is that Neo-Confucianism made use of many of the insights of Buddhism and Taoism in the process of its own development. The second point is that since Neo-Confucianism became dominant in Chinese society, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism now

Chou Tun-I was the forerunner of the Neo-Confucian movement. One of his main contributions was to lay down the Neo-Confucian basic framework of metaphysics in a short treatise, the *T'ai-chi-t'u Shuo* (太极图说, which literally means *the Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate*⁵³, 太极图). The treatise does not extend beyond 250 Chinese characters, but within it the metaphysics of Neo-Confucianism is outlined. Some basic ideas in this treatise had been scattered in the scriptures of classical Confucianism, especially in the *Book of Changes*. Furthermore, some scholars believe that Chou borrowed a similar diagram from Taoism to aid him in conceiving his own diagram. However, Chou was the first person in history to combine these basic ideas into a system and establish a holistic metaphysics within a brief framework for Neo-Confucianism.

According to Chou's treatise, the main metaphysical concepts of Neo-Confucianism

occupy Chinese daily life in a harmonious and complimentary way even though their basic doctrines conflict with each other. It is not unusual for someone to be not only a Confucian but also a Taoist - and at the same time a Buddhist. Just as Kūng and Ching (1993) depict, an official can be a standard Confucian in his office, but at the same time read the classics of Taoism and Buddhism when he is at home. He might have many Taoist and Buddhist friends, and he might often visit their temples in the holidays, or practice Taoist and Buddhist meditation at home. His wife is often a lay Buddhist who stays at home, and has a family hall for worshipping the Buddha. It is possible for her to worship at a temple of Confucius when hoping for her son to be successful in the state examination, for example, and at the same time it is also possible for her to worship at a Taoist temple when hoping for the longevity of the elders at home. If necessary, she might go to a Buddhist temple and pray for an early conception of a child (Kūng and Ching, 1993, p. 225, cited in Lee, 2011, p. 232). Yao names this phenomenon as the 'unity of three doctrines' in Chinese society (Yao, 2000, pp. 224-9)

⁵³ Chou Tun-I uses a diagram named the *Diagram of the Great Ultimate* to discuss the Neo-Confucian basic framework of metaphysics. The introduction of the diagram is one of the key steps in the history of the development of Neo-Confucianism. Anyone interested in the diagram itself should consult Wang, R. (2005). Here I will not pursue this diagram since it is not directly relevant to my thesis.

can be listed in the two tables as below:

Ultimate Reality / <i>Tian</i> (天)	
The essential realm	The functional realm
The <i>Great Ultimate</i> (太极)	The myriad things (万物)

Table 3 The Two Neo-Confucian Realms of Ultimate Reality.

Ultimate Reality / <i>Tian</i> (天)	
The bodily aspect	The mental aspect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ch'i</i> (气) • <i>Yin</i> and <i>Yang</i> (阴阳) / <i>Five Elements</i> (五行) • physical form (形体) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Li</i> (理) • The <i>Li</i> of <i>Tian</i> (天理) • The <i>Li</i> of a thing (事理)

Table 4 The Two Neo-Confucian Aspects of Ultimate Reality.

Firstly, *Tian*, as the Ultimate Reality of Neo-Confucianism, can be considered to have two realms: the essential realm and the functional realm. Briefly speaking, the essential realm focuses on the essence of *Tian*, and the concept of the *Great Ultimate* (太极) mainly refers to this realm. The concept of the *Great Ultimate* is one of the core concepts of Neo-Confucianism. The *Great Ultimate* is both the origin of the universe and its essence. The functional realm focuses on the sensible realm, and mainly refers

to the production and reproduction of the myriad things (万物). I will explore the two realms further in Section 3.5.

Moreover, *Tian* can also be considered to have two aspects: the bodily aspect and the mental aspect. The bodily aspect mainly refers to the concepts of *Ch'i* (气), *Yin* and *Yang* (阴阳) and the *Five Elements* (五行), and the physical form of a thing (形体). I will explore these in Section 3.3. The mental aspect mainly refers to the concepts of *Li* (理), the *Li* of *Tian* (天理) and the *Li* of a thing (事理). I will explore these in Section 3.4.

Chou's basic framework and its main concepts are followed by all Confucians (Chan, 1963, p. 464). However, different Confucians have different understandings of these key concepts and their relationships to one another, and various doctrines have subsequently been developed. In line with these competing doctrines, different dimensions were developed and further extended. Among these doctrines, the naturalistic and rationalistic dimensions of *Tian*, and its idealistic approach towards epistemology, were particularly important. Following the order of Neo-Confucian development, the bodily aspect will be discussed through its naturalistic dimension, and the mental aspect will be discussed through its rationalistic dimension. Its idealistic approach towards epistemology will be discussed in Chapter 5.

3.2.2 The Basic Metaphysical Framework of Spinoza

Spinoza lists the core concepts of his metaphysics in the beginning of his *Ethics* as substance, attribute, and mode (Shein, Fall 2013), and they can be summarized by the below table:

Ultimate Reality / God (Substance)	
The bodily aspect	The mental aspect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension (Attribute) • Motion and Rest (Infinite mode) • The body (Finite mode) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thought (Attribute) • The idea of God (Infinite mode) • The idea of a thing (Finite mode)

Table 5 The Main Concepts of Spinoza's Metaphysics.

(i) An Attribute Expresses the Eternal and Infinite Essence of God

Spinoza explicitly tells us that God is not only 'a thinking thing' (E2p1, p. 245), but also 'an extended thing' (E2p2, p. 245) in the beginning of the second part of his *Ethics*. Furthermore, since God is the only substance, then 'thinking substance and extended substance are one and the same substance': the thinking substance when comprehended under the attribute of Thought, and the extended substance when comprehended under the attribute of Extension (E2p7 Scholium, p. 247). Here one of the core concepts of Spinoza's metaphysics, the concept of attribute, is heavily involved. According to Spinoza's definition, an 'attribute' refers to that which 'the intellect perceives of

substance as constituting its essence' (E1Definition 4, p. 217). There are several important issues in Spinoza's theory of attributes.

Firstly, God has infinite attributes. In Spinoza's formal definition of his concept of God, the concept of 'attribute' has a core role since Spinoza believes that God, as the only substance, consists 'of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence' (E1Definition 6, p. 217). As an attribute constitutes God's essence, to say God has infinite attributes is to say that God has infinite essences. However, according to Spinoza, God's essence and his existence are one and the same (E1p20, p. 230). It does not seem to make sense to say that God has infinite existences in the sense of quantity, for instance as suggested by multiverse theory, because God as absolute existence is always one and absolute existence cannot be divided in Spinoza's philosophy. Another possible explanation is that God, as absolute existence, has infinite aspects, or infinite ways of being, and that every aspect of existence is embodied by one of God's attributes. Spinoza believes that the more reality a thing has, the more attributes it has (E1p9, p. 221). As such, God has infinite attributes since God has infinite reality.

Secondly, people can only access the attribute of Thought and the attribute of Extension⁵⁴ among God's infinite attributes. What people are familiar with is God's

⁵⁴ Some scholars claim that it is not God who has these attributes, but that the human mind invents the attributes referenced in Spinoza's philosophy (Shein, Fall 2013). In other words, what the intellect perceives in the definition of 'attribute' above is to be perceived by the human mind (Wolfson, 1934a, p. 146). This opinion could be called the subjectivist interpretation. One of the main reasons for supporting the subjectivist interpretation is that such scholars believe that the essence of God is simple and that any multiplicity implied by such attributes 'is merely apparent but not real' (Shein, Fall 2013). However, this subjectivist interpretation faces considerable difficulties. Firstly, it seems impossible for

attribute of Extension, and it is easy for them to believe that external objects exist because they can get in touch with these objects through their sense organs. They can see, listen, smell, taste, and touch these external objects. What the common people are not familiar with is God's attribute of Thought. This is not to say that the common people are unfamiliar with their own minds or do not believe that others have similar minds. Rather, the common people cannot consider these things under the attribute of Thought as one real expression of existence. For example, there is a popular analogy that the human mind is like a mirror, and what is in the mirror is just the reflection of objects outside, but the reflection in the mirror does not itself exist⁵⁵. Similarly, the common people also cannot believe that the existence of these things under the attribute of Thought is the same as the existence of external objects. In contrast, Spinoza believes that the existence of these things under the attribute of Thought is the same as the existence of external objects or, to use Spinoza's terminology, the existence of these things under the attribute of Extension⁵⁶. Moreover, it is impossible for humans to

a finite human mind to know God as infinite existence. Secondly, God could not have infinite attributes if such attributes were invented by the human mind, given Spinoza's view that men can only access two attributes. For these reasons, Shein concludes that the subjectivist interpretation 'has fallen out of favor' (Shein, Fall 2013). Contrastingly, other scholars believe that what the intellect perceives is to be discovered by the human mind, and this opinion could be called the interpretation of objectivism. I follow the interpretation of objectivism in this thesis.

⁵⁵ We will see that Neo-Confucians also like to use this analogy, but with a different meaning.

⁵⁶ But, to say that the existence of these things under the attribute of Thought is the same as the existence of external objects is not to say that whatever a person has in mind always exists in reality. According to Spinoza, it is only to say that whatever God has in his mind always exists. Spinoza claims that only some of the ideas in a human mind have their corresponding objects without, and Spinoza allows the existence of the ideas of nonexistent individual things in E2p8 (p. 248).

comprehend other aspects of God's existence or, to use Spinoza's terminology, other expressions of God's existence, even if one accepts that the existence of the mind is the same as the existence of the body⁵⁷.

Thirdly, Spinoza believes that different attributes are really distinct from each other even if they belong to the same substance (E1p10 Scholium, p. 221). Therefore, on the one hand, each attribute must be conceived through itself (E1p10, p. 221), and on the other hand, the modes of any attribute involve the conception of their own attribute, and do not involve any conception of other attributes (E2p6, p. 246). In other words, the modes of different attributes are completely insulated from each other. It is impossible to have mutual cause and effect among different attributes. Ideas, as modes of the attribute of Thought, do not affect bodies, as modes of the attribute of Extension, and vice versa. Put simply, the mind does not affect the body, and the body does not affect the mind.

This thought originated with Descartes. The mind and the body are two distinct substances in Descartes' philosophy, and either can exist without the other. Spinoza transfers the concept of 'substance' in Descartes' philosophy into the concept of 'attribute' in his own philosophy. Similar to Descartes' conception of distinct substances, Spinoza defends a conception of distinct attributes. In contrast to Descartes' conception

⁵⁷ There is a substantial gap between the two attributes that humans know and the infinite attributes that God has. The issue of this gap has been responsible for a longstanding undercurrent of interpreting Spinoza's philosophy as some form of mysticism in the history of philosophy. I do not agree with the explanation of any kind of mysticism, but I propose that the gap provides good evidence to prove the transcendence of Spinoza's God.

of the interaction between the mind and the body in the pineal gland of the brain, Spinoza completely rules out the possibility of interaction, claiming that ‘[the] body cannot determine the mind to think, nor can the mind determine the body to motion or rest’ (E3p2, p. 279). Shein applies the phrase ‘cross attribute explanations’ for such interaction; for instance, if I were to explain my physical behavior of writing my thesis by reference to my mental desire to finish my thesis (Shein, Fall 2013). In contrast, according to Spinoza’s theory of attributes, my behavior of writing could be explained purely physically by antecedent physical behavior, and this antecedent physical behavior could be explained purely physically by *its* antecedent physical behavior, and so on *ad infinitum*. In the same situation, my desire to finish my thesis in my mind could be explained purely mentally by antecedent mental desires. For example, I want to finish my study early, and this antecedent mental desire could be explained purely mentally by its antecedent mental desire, and so on *ad infinitum*. Della Rocca refers to this as ‘a conceptual barrier’ given that the modes of one attribute can be conceived of without the aid of the modes of the other attribute (Della Rocca, 1996, pp. 9-17).

Finally, Spinoza believes that different attributes are isomorphic⁵⁸. The relationship

⁵⁸ Some scholars refer to this as Spinoza’s parallelism. This so-called parallelism between the mind and the body in the literature relevant to the study of Spinoza should be distinguished carefully from my main argument in this thesis, the parallel between Spinoza’s philosophy and Neo-Confucianism. For this distinction, I will always use the term ‘isomorphic’ in place of the term ‘parallel’ when referring to the relationship between the mind and the body in Spinoza’s philosophy. Although the term ‘parallelism’ is popular in the literature relevant to the study of Spinoza, there are still many scholars who use the term ‘isomorphism’, such as Rosen (1968), Friedman (1974), Friedman (1983), Bennett (1990), and Levin (2013).

between the mind and the body poses a real puzzle for Cartesian dualism due to their real distinction. In his philosophy, Spinoza has better theoretical resources to deal with the similar problem, since the attribute of Thought and the attribute of Extension belong to the same substance. However, Spinoza still needs to give us a further answer since he insists on the conceptual barrier, the impossibility of cross attribute explanation, whereas common sense seems to tell us that the mind and the body always act simultaneously. Spinoza's answer is the isomorphism of the mind and the body given his claim that '[the] order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things' (E2p7, p. 247).

In short, God has infinite attributes but men only access the attributes of Thought and Extension. All attributes are distinct from one another and it is impossible to have a cross attribute explanation. However, all attributes are also isomorphic. Therefore, Shein claims that attributes 'are at the very heart of Spinoza's metaphysics' (Shein, Fall 2013). It makes the doctrine of one substance with varieties of reality possible. Moreover, it is an elegant solution to the Cartesian puzzle of the relationship between the mind and the body⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ Nowadays the so-called relationship between the mind and the body is a usage in the philosophy of mind due to the influence of Cartesian dualism. However, according to Spinoza, this ought to be recognised as the isomorphism of the mode of the attribute of Thought and the mode of the attribute of Extension (or the isomorphism of the attribute of Thought and the attribute of Extension – to put it roughly). It should be noted that this is not an isomorphism of the mind and the body in Spinoza's terminology.

(ii) A Mode as an Affection of God

According to Spinoza's definition, the concept of a mode refers to 'the affections of substance' (E1 Definition 5, p. 217). What is meant by 'the affections' in Spinoza's mind is that 'which is in something else and is conceived through something else' (*ibid.*). If we look back at the concept of substance, it will be easier for us to comprehend the concept of a mode given that Spinoza defines them in opposing manners. In contrast to the concept of a mode, the concept of substance means that which 'is in itself and is conceived through itself' (E1 Definition 3, p. 217). In other words, the conception of a mode depends on the conception of substance, but the conception of substance does not depend on any other conception. According to Spinoza, there are two kinds of modes. There are infinite modes, such as Motion and Rest in the attribute of Extension, and finite modes, such as a human body.

The term 'idea' has a special role in Spinoza's philosophy, and has a different sense from how the term is used nowadays. By 'idea' Spinoza means 'a conception of the Mind which the Mind forms because it is a thinking thing' (E2 Definition 3, p. 244). Spinoza does not provide a clear definition of the concept of the mind even though it is one of the core topics in the *Ethics*, and this implies that Spinoza accepts its normal usage. As a conception of the mind, the concept of an idea is familiar to us. Pollock also observed that 'Spinoza's *idea* seems equivalent to what we now call a concept' (Pollock, 1880, p.146, italics in original). What we are not familiar with is Spinoza's notion that an idea is a mode of the attribute of Thought: on this understanding, an idea is a mode of the mind. According to E2p7, the order of, and connection between, the modes of

the attribute of Thought are the same as the order of, and connection between, the modes of the attribute of Extension, or any other attribute. In Spinoza's terminology a mode of the attribute of Extension is the body, owing to the fact that by 'body' Spinoza means 'a mode that expresses in a definite and determinate way God's essence insofar as he is considered as an extended thing' (E2 Definition 1, p. 244). Therefore, the isomorphism of the attribute of Thought and the attribute of Extension exists between the idea and the body in Spinoza's philosophy, rather than between the mind and the body as in Descartes' philosophy. In other words, the relationship between the mind and the body in Descartes' philosophy became the relationship between the idea and the body in Spinoza's. We should bear this important distinction in mind. Furthermore, the isomorphism of the idea and the body does not imply that the idea of a mode and the mode of Extension are two modes of God. Rather, that they are the same mode - just like a single coin with two different sides or a person with two different names.

A further question concerns the nature of the relationship between the mind and the idea in Spinoza's philosophy. On the one hand, as the mode of the attribute of Thought, Spinoza considers an idea to be an instantiation of the mind in a special way. Therefore, it is right to say that an idea is the smallest unit of a mind, and such a mind could loosely be considered the collection of all of its ideas. On the other hand, the relationship between the mind and the idea is not quantitative, because it is also possible for a single idea to incorporate many different ideas simultaneously.

It is now time to highlight a crucial point. As a linguistic habit, the mode of the attribute of Thought and the mode of the attribute of Extension are often loosely referred

to as the mind and the body respectively. With respect to God himself, Spinoza never uses the term 'the mind of God' or its other variants in his *Ethics*. For Spinoza, one similar usage is the term 'the idea of God' in the context of the *Ethics*. However, given that an idea is a conception of the mind, it is not possible for us to completely abolish the concept of mind when referring to God. Moreover, in the same way that Spinoza tries to avoid using the term 'the mind of God', he also tries to avoid using the term 'the body of God'. As alternatives, Spinoza uses other terms to refer to what God's attribute of Extension is referring to, such as, 'God is an extended thing' (E2p2, p. 245), God's 'being the object of his own idea' (E2p5 Proof, p. 246), 'the things understood by God' (E2p7, p. 247). The reason that Spinoza tries to avoid using the terms 'the mind of God' and 'the body of God' is perhaps owed to his criticism of anthropomorphism: Spinoza does not want to mislead his readers into supposing that God is similar to human beings. From a logical perspective, and in a similar fashion to the case of the concept of 'the mind of God' being used to mean 'the idea of God', it is also legitimate for us to use the term 'the body of God' to mean God as an extended thing. In other words, it is convenient for us to use the term 'the body of God' to loosely refer to God as an extended thing. I will continue to use the terms 'the mind of God' and 'the body of God' in relevant contexts, but their meanings should be comprehended as 'the idea of God' and 'God as an extended thing' respectively.

In short, a mode is an affection of God. It is both in God and conceived through God. There are two kinds of modes: infinite mode and finite mode. An idea is a mode of the attribute of Thought, and its relationship with the mind is of a special kind for Spinoza.

The isomorphism of the attribute of Thought and the attribute of Extension is, in fact, the isomorphism of the idea and the mode of the body in Spinoza’s philosophy, rather than the isomorphism of the mind and the body in Descartes’ philosophy.

3.2.3 The Parallel in the Basic Metaphysical Frameworks

Now it is the time to reveal the parallel in the basic metaphysical frameworks of between Spinoza and Neo-Confucianism. The tables below reveal the parallel structure clearly:

Neo-Confucianism	Spinoza
Ultimate Reality / <i>Tian</i> (天)	Ultimate Reality / God (substance)
The essential realm (The <i>Great Ultimate</i>)	<i>Natura naturans</i> (The intellect of God)
The functional realm (The myriad things)	<i>Natura naturata</i> (Individual things)

Table 6 A Comparison of the Two Realms.

Neo-Confucianism	Spinoza
<i>Ch'i</i> (气)	Extension (Attribute)
<i>Yin and Yang</i> (阴阳) / <i>Five Elements</i> (五行)	Motion and Rest (Infinite mode)
physical form (形体)	The body (Finite mode)

Table 7 A Comparison of the Bodily Aspect.

Neo-Confucianism	Spinoza
<i>Li</i> (理)	Thought (Attribute)
The <i>Li</i> of <i>Tian</i> (天理)	The idea of God (Infinite mode)
The <i>Li</i> of a thing (事理)	The idea of a thing (Finite mode)

Table 8 A Comparison of the Mental Aspect.

As a summary, the tables above list the metaphysical frameworks of both the Neo-Confucians and Spinoza, and the main concepts within those frameworks. The table reveals the stunning parallel between them in a visual style. In what follows, I will explain these parallels in detail.

Tian, as the Ultimate Reality of Neo-Confucianism, can be considered to have two realms: the essential realm and the functional realm. God, as the Ultimate Reality of Spinoza, can also be considered to have two realms: *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. I will explore the two realms further in Section 3.5.

Tian can also be considered to have two aspects: the bodily aspect and the mental aspect. In a parallel way, God also has its bodily aspect and mental aspect. The parallels concerning the bodily aspect will be revealed in detail in Section 3.3, and the parallels concerning the mental aspect will be revealed in detail in Section 3.4.

The concept of the *Great Ultimate* in Neo-Confucianism, and the concept of the intellect of God in Spinoza, need to be explained further here. The concept of the *Great Ultimate* is at the very heart of Neo-Confucian metaphysics. In Neo-Confucianism, the

Great Ultimate is both the essence of *Tian* and the essence of everything. Chu says that '[w]ith respect to heaven and earth, there is the *Great Ultimate* in them. With respect to the myriad things, there is the *Great Ultimate* in each and every one of them' (Chan, 1963, p. 638).

Moreover, Neo-Confucians are divided into different schools concerning how the concept of the *Great Ultimate* is to be comprehended. Naturalistic Neo-Confucians believe that the *Great Ultimate* is nothing other than *Ch'i*. For example, as will be revealed in Section 3.3, Chang Tsai, as a representative of the naturalistic dimension of Neo-Confucianism, claims that the *Great Ultimate* is identical with *Ch'i*. By contrast, rationalistic Neo-Confucians believe that the *Great Ultimate* is nothing other than *Li*. Chu, as a representative of the rationalistic dimension of Neo-Confucianism, accepted Chou Tun-I's whole metaphysical framework. At the same time, Chu developed the concept of the *Great Ultimate* through his theory of *Li*. According to Chu, '[the] *Great Ultimate* is nothing other than principle [*Li*]' (*ibid.*). This thought is recognized by scholars as the central point of Chu's entire philosophy (*ibid.*). This is the main reason for Chu being recognized as a rationalist - whereas Chang is recognized as a naturalist. The idealistic Neo-Confucians believe that the mind is identical with both *Li* and the *Great Ultimate*, which will be explored in Chapter 5.

In a parallel way, the concept of the intellect of God is at the very heart of Spinoza's metaphysical framework. Spinoza does not provide a conclusive definition of the term 'intellect' itself in his *Ethics*, however it occurs directly in the definition of 'attribute' at the beginning of his *Ethics*. In E1Definition 4, he states that an attribute is that which

the intellect perceives of substance as constituting the essence of substance. Furthermore, it is used throughout his *Ethics*. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that Spinoza's usage of the term 'intellect' is not *ad hoc*. Spinoza touches on the concept of the intellect of God in E1p16, and he discusses it in the Scholium of E1p17 as follows:

If intellect does pertain to the divine nature, it cannot, like man's intellect, be posterior to (as most thinkers hold), or simultaneous with the objects of understanding, since God is prior in causality to all things (Cor. 1 Pr. 16). On the contrary, the truth and formal essence of things is what it is because it exists as such in the intellect of God as an object of thought. Therefore, the intellect of God, insofar as it is conceived as constituting God's essence, is in actual fact the cause of things, in respect both of their essence and their existence. This seems to have been recognized also by those who have asserted that *God's intellect, will, and power, are one and the same*. Since therefore *the intellect of God is the one and only cause of things, both of their essence and their existence*, as we have shown, it must necessarily be different from them both in respect of essence and existence. For that which is caused differs from its cause precisely in what it has from its cause. (E1p17 Scholium, p. 229, my italics)

Here Spinoza emphasizes that God's essence and the essence of things and their existence are constituted by the intellect of God, but also that God's intellect, will, and power, are one and the same. Spinoza repeats this pivotal conclusion in Scholium of

E2p7, in which he suggests that this truth seems to have been glimpsed by some of the Hebrews⁶⁰, who held that God, God's intellect, and the things understood by God are one and the same. Therefore, God, God's intellect, God's will, God's power, and the things understood by God, are all identical to each other in Spinoza's metaphysics. Moreover, as we will see in Section 3.4, Spinoza establishes the identity of the concept of the intellect of God and the concept of the idea of God.

To summarize, God is considered to be the Ultimate Reality of Spinoza's philosophy, whereas *Tian* is considered to be the Ultimate Reality of Neo-Confucianism. The concept of the *Great Ultimate* is at the very heart of the metaphysics of Neo-Confucianism and, in a parallel way, the concept of the intellect of God is at the very heart of the metaphysics of Spinoza. The *Great Ultimate* is considered to be the essence of *Tian*, and the essence of the myriad things and the cause of their existence. In a parallel way, the intellect of God is considered to be the essence of God, and the essence of particular things and the cause of their existence. Therefore, the *Great Ultimate* in Neo-Confucianism and the intellect of God in Spinoza are parallel.

⁶⁰ Morgan (2002) suggests that this refers most likely to Moses Maimonides (Morgan, 2002, p. 247).

3.3 The Parallel in the Bodily Aspect

3.3.1 The Naturalistic Dimension in Neo-Confucianism

Neo-Confucians have a special term ‘*Ch’i*’ to refer to one basic substance⁶¹, out of which all things in the universe were made. *Ch’i* is the fundamental entity of the universe. It is a difficult task to find a suitable English term to translate this since it embodies a unique thought that seems not to have been conceived of in Western culture⁶². *Ch’i* as an everyday word has a normal meaning which refers to air, vapor, gas, etc. The meaning of *Ch’i* in philosophy is completely removed from its everyday meaning, but it is possible that the development of this concept has its etymological root in the invisibility of air and its tremendous variability. At the same time, *Ch’i* as it is used in Chinese medicine refers to the breath of humans. When a man takes his last breath, we say that he loses his *Ch’i*, and dies at that moment. From this usage, some scholars have translated it into the term ‘vital force’. Some scholars consider it as an energy-like or force-like matter owing to its active aspect.

Fung (1953) translates it into the English term ‘Ether’ while Chan (1963) translates it into the English term ‘material force’. The translations of Fung and Chan are also liable to distort its real meaning since Fung’s translation may easily lead to an Aristotelian reading, and Chan’s translation may easily lead to a materialist reading.

⁶¹ It is noteworthy that Spinoza uses the term ‘substance’ in a different style, which refers to God himself.

⁶² Chan has a detailed discussion of its translation in his appendix (Chan, 1963, p. 784).

Neither of them succeeded in interpreting the entire meaning of the concept. Yao (2000) uses a simplified Chinese term ‘Qi’ to refer to it.

Ch’i as a concept of philosophy had been adopted in the *Book of Changes*, in which things were claimed to be produced through the combination of Essence and *Ch’i* (Chan, 1963, p.265). However, the popular concept of *Ch’i* links to the development of the naturalistic trend in Confucianism.

In classical Confucianism, *Tian*’s naturalistic dimension emerged since *Tian* is often identified as Nature. The English term ‘Nature’ has its corresponding Chinese term ‘*Ziran* (自然)’, which literally means the ‘self-so’ (a thing coming into being both without any external cause and without any purpose) (Callahan, 1989, p. 171). The term was first coined by the founder of Taoism, Lao Tzu (老子, 6th B.C. or 4th B.C.⁶³), in his *Tao-Te Ching* (道德经). Therefore, the concept of Nature became one of the core concepts of Taoism, much like the concept of *Tian* in Confucianism. According to Taoism, the concept of Nature has special philosophical implications. The first implication is that there is no creator outside Nature: the existence of Nature does not have an external cause⁶⁴. The second implication is that the existence of Nature does

⁶³ Here the question mark denotes that we cannot know the actual date since the relevant historical evidence has been lost, and it is followed throughout this thesis.

⁶⁴ The creation myth of Pangu (盘古) is found in ancient Chinese literature. According to this myth, Pangu seems to be the creator of all. In contrast with the Biblical Genesis, Pangu seems to be more similar to humankind than to any god. This seems to imply that it was humankind, rather than a god, who created the universe. However, scholars have not taken the Pangu creation myth seriously in philosophy since the classical era.

not have a final cause. The third implication is that Nature existed in the infinite⁶⁵ past and will continue to exist into the infinite future.

In short, the concept of Nature was used by Taoism to refer to the state of as-it-is-ness, that is, the state of Tao. The essence of Tao is as it is, and any artificial effort, or the efforts of gods, does not belong to the state of the Tao. The term ‘Nature’ is borrowed by Confucianism to refer to the universe itself. At the same time, the above implications of the concept of Nature in Taoism were also shared by most Confucians. The concept of *Tian* and the concept of Nature were often used interchangeably in the Confucian literature.

Confucius once sighed, ‘What does *Tian* ever say? Yet there are the four seasons going round and there are the hundred things coming into being. What does *Tian* ever say?’ in the *Analects* 17:19 (Chan, 1963, p. 47)⁶⁶. Confucius seems to suggest that *Tian* always runs its course following its own principle. In the hands of Hsun Tzu, the naturalistic explanation of *Tian* became the dominant trend. He stated the following naturalistic thought:

⁶⁵ The conception of infinity here should be comprehended as ‘everlasting in time’ – as opposed to Spinoza’s concept of infinity.

⁶⁶ As one of the most important classics of Confucianism, the *Analects* was written by Confucius’ disciples - or the disciples of his disciples - after Confucius’ death. It was written in the form of daily dialogues between Confucius and his disciples and, also, among his disciples. Accurately speaking, it was edited, rather than written, since it is a recording of those dialogues. These dialogues happened on a daily basis: the style is utterly different from the Platonic style. In this thesis all citations from the *Analects* are taken from Chan (1963).

Nature (T'ien [*Tian*], Heaven) operates with constant regularity.... If the foundations of living (i.e., agriculture and sericulture) are strengthened and are economically used, then Nature cannot bring impoverishment. If people's nourishment is sufficient and their labor in keeping with the seasons, then Nature cannot inflict sickness. If the Way is cultivated without deviation, then Nature cannot cause misfortune. ... this is how the Way works'. (Chan, 1963, pp. 116-7)

Such a thought is so clearly naturalistic that Chan feels that the term '*Tian*' itself 'has to be translated as Nature rather than as Heaven' (Chan, 1963, p. 117). It should be noted here that the special terminology 'the way of *Tian*' (*Tiantao*, 天道) was introduced to refer to *Tian*'s own principle. This terminology was accepted by all Confucians thereafter. According to Hsun Tzu, the thought of *Tian* following its own principle is the way of *Tian*. The conception of the way of *Tian* here is very similar to the concept of the law of Nature in Western philosophy. Therefore, Hsun Tzu was considered to be the founder of naturalism in Confucianism (Chan, 1963, p. 115).

The naturalistic form of explanation approached maturity in the hands of Wang Ch'ung (王充, 27-100?). Wang Ch'ung denied that the universe is in any way teleological. The way of *Tian* is 'of spontaneity', which means that the myriad things outflow in their own course, and 'non-activity', which means *Tian* lacks any purpose and the myriad things are created in their own course (Fung, 1953, p. 152). Wang Ch'ung's thought is very close to Taoist naturalism.

Wang Ch'ung claimed that the life of a man is tied to his *Ch'i* and that he dies once

his *Ch'i* is gone. The death of a man is like the extinction of fire. No souls or ghosts or any other kind of spiritual entities exist. He argued against any mysterious or fantastical explanation of Nature (Chan, 1963, p. 292). His thinking is very materialistic on this point. These kinds of thoughts became the basic resource in the development of the naturalistic trend of Neo-Confucianism.

This naturalistic trend was extended even further into the naturalistic dimension by Neo-Confucianism, especially in the hands of Chang Tsai. Wang Ch'ung used the concept of *Ch'i* at the level of matter, but not at the level of ontology. It was Chang Tsai who first raised this concept up to the level of ontology. According to Chang, *Ch'i* is identical with the *Great Ultimate* (Chan, 1963, p. 495). *Ch'i*, as the *Great Ultimate* itself, exists without any form (Yao, 2000, p. 102). Chang says that the active aspect (*Yang*) and the passive aspect (*Yin*) of *Ch'i* are generated through the movement of the *Great Ultimate* as *Ch'i* - whereas Chou Tun-I seems to say that the active *Ch'i* (*Yang*) and the passive *Ch'i* (*Yin*) are generated through the movement of the *Great Ultimate*, but that the *Great Ultimate* is not itself *Ch'i*. According to Chang, *Yin and Yang* are two aspects of *Ch'i*, and they are fundamentally identical (Chan, 1963, p. 495). In contrast, *Yin and Yang* are two kinds of *Ch'i* in Chou's explanation. Chang considered the *Five Elements* as the five basic forces of *Ch'i*. The myriad things are generated through the integration of *Ch'i*, and disappear because of the disintegration of *Ch'i*. However, the *Ch'i* that constitutes a thing is not eliminated when the thing itself is destroyed: the *Ch'i* returns to its original state upon such disintegration.

In brief, Chang and his followers established a whole system of philosophy to explain

the nature of the universe, the nature of man, the possibility of morality, and so on, under a naturalistic pattern through the identification of *Ch'i* with the *Great Ultimate*. This is the naturalistic dimension of the concept of *Tian*. It was the first dimension to become dominant in Neo-Confucianism after the basic Neo-Confucian framework of metaphysics was established. Even though the naturalistic dimension lost its dominant place when the rationalistic dimension was established, the thought that *Tian* is identical with Nature remained, and a pantheistic monism was accepted by all Neo-Confucians thereafter.

3.3.2 The Naturalistic Dimension in Spinoza

In comparison with the other dimensions, the naturalistic dimension of Spinoza's God is more remarkable. Spinoza is also the most important philosopher who directly defines God as Nature. Of all of Spinoza's terminologies, it is not controversial to say that the term 'God or Nature (*Deus sive Natura*)' is the most popular. The conjunction word 'or' in this term does not mean a relationship of choice, but rather the relationship of identity. Therefore, it is better for us to read the term 'God or Nature' 'God, that is, Nature', or 'God, in other words, Nature'.

The relationship of identity between God and Nature is a logical conclusion from Spinoza's theory of one substance, which was developed in the first part of his *Ethics*. God is the sole substance and whatever is, is in God (E1p15, p. 224). As was revealed in Section 3.1, God is the absolute reality and Nature is his other name. With respect to Spinoza's philosophy, I will not pursue its naturalistic dimension further as it seems to

be an axiom.

However, it should also be noted that the naturalistic dimension is not the dominant dimension for Spinoza. Spinoza is often categorised as a naturalist, however Douglas (2015) has argued convincingly against this popular categorisation. I will not engage in the argument in this thesis as Douglas (2015) has already helped us to clarify this issue. My conclusion here is that Spinoza's philosophy has its naturalistic dimension but is not naturalism.

3.3.3 The Parallel in the Bodily Aspect

What I should concede here is that I cannot argue that every part of the bodily aspect between Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza is parallel with the other. For example, we cannot find a concept in Spinoza that is parallel to the concept of the *Five Elements* in Neo-Confucianism. What I am arguing here is that the bodily aspect as a whole, and its core concepts, are all parallel to each other. Table 7 clearly reveals the parallels in the bodily aspect as a whole:

Neo-Confucianism	Spinoza
<i>Ch'i</i> (气)	Extension (Attribute)
<i>Yin and Yang</i> (阴阳) / <i>Five Elements</i> (五行)	Motion and Rest (Infinite mode)
physical form (形体)	The body (Finite mode)

Table 7 A Comparison of the Bodily Aspect.

With respect to the bodily aspect as a whole, they both have the naturalistic dimension as the important dimension of Ultimate Reality. *Tian* in Neo-Confucianism and God in Spinoza are identical with Nature in their own ways⁶⁷. We saw that *Tian* is identical with Nature in Section 3.3.1. In a parallel way, it is self-evident that God is identical with Nature in Spinoza.

With respect to the main concepts, there are three concepts referring to the bodily aspect of the metaphysical framework in Table 7: the concept of *Ch'i*, the concept of *Yin* and *Yang* (the *Five Elements* also), and the concept of physical form in Neo-Confucianism, and the concept of the attribute of Extension, the concept of Motion and Rest, and the concept of the body in Spinoza. Firstly, the parallel between the concept of physical form in Neo-Confucianism and the concept of the body in Spinoza is obvious since they are both referring to the bodily aspect of the same sensible realm, and thus it is not necessary to explain this point further. Secondly, according to Neo-Confucianism, *Yang* is motion and *Yin* is rest. The parallel between the concept of *Yin* and *Yang* in Neo-Confucianism and the concept of Motion and Rest in Spinoza seems, then, obvious. The detailed relationship between them is an interesting topic, which is deserving of further development in an independent paper. But it is beyond the scope of this thesis, and I will not pursue it further here.

Finally, here my main task is to clarify the parallel between the concept of *Ch'i* in Neo-Confucianism and the concept of the attribute of Extension in Spinoza. The

⁶⁷ In other words, the concept of Nature in Confucianism is not the same as the concept of Nature in Spinoza. Prof. Yujin Nagasawa reminded me of this point.

concept of *Ch'i* and the concept of the attribute of Extension are, of course, different given that Spinoza's theory of attributes has no place in Neo-Confucianism and *Ch'i*, considered to be an independent entity, has no place in Spinoza. The parallel between them is mainly due to the way in which the bodily aspect of existence is established in both Neo-Confucianism and in Spinoza. *Ch'i* is the foundation of the bodily aspect of existence in Neo-Confucianism. No *Ch'i*, no physical form. Extension is also the foundation of the bodily aspect of existence in Spinoza: no Extension, no mode of the attribute of Extension, and therefore no body. Furthermore, this point can be further understood by viewing their shared denial of atomism.

According to atomism, the smallest elementary particles exist at the most fundamental layer of the universe and all macroscopic bodies are made up of different combinations of these elementary particles. Atomism had existed as a theory since ancient Greece, but it became very popular in Spinoza's era due to the development of atomic physics. However, atomism is denied by both Neo-Confucians and Spinoza. They also do not believe that the body is made out of atom-like particles.

Neo-Confucians consider *Ch'i* to be the basic substance, out of which the myriad things of the universe are constituted. However, *Ch'i* cannot be supposed to be just another name for Democritus' atoms. The basic thought of atomism seems to penetrate the whole of Western philosophy but seems absent in ancient China. *Ch'i* cannot be conceived of as the smallest particle in any way because *Ch'i* is considered to have no form. According to Chang Tsai, *Ch'i* itself has no physical form (Chan, 1963, p. 501). The physical form emerges through the integration of *Ch'i*. *Ch'i* penetrates throughout

the universe because it is itself clear (Chan, 1963, p. 504). As the representative of the naturalistic dimension of Neo-Confucianism, Chang Tsai believes that once the physical form disappears through the disintegration of *Ch'i*, *Ch'i* itself still remains in existence and returns to its original status. In other words, according to the naturalistic Neo-Confucians, *Ch'i* is not extinguished but is instead recycled. By contrast, according to the rationalistic Neo-Confucians, *Ch'i* is extinguished when the physical form disappears. Ch'eng I claims that it is impossible for *Ch'i* to return to its source because '[the] universe is like a vast furnace', and everything 'will be burned to the last and no more' (Chan, 1963, p. 558). There is no space for atomism in any of these Neo-Confucian theories.

In a parallel way, the body in Spinoza's philosophy is just a mode of the attribute of Extension, and all bodies, then, 'agree in certain respects' (E2p13 Lemma 2, p. 252). Spinoza claims that '[bodies] are distinguished from one another in respect of motion-and-rest, quickness and slowness, and not in respect of substance' (E2p13 Lemma 1, p. 252). This thought is astonishingly similar to the notion of *Ch'i* in Neo-Confucianism as detailed above, where physical forms emerge through the integration of *Ch'i* to different degrees whilst also originating from *Ch'i* itself. Spinoza did not directly criticize atomism in the *Ethics*. However, his critique of atomism is boldly displayed in the following letter:

The authority of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates carries little weight with me. I should have been surprised if you had produced Epicurus, Democritus, Lucretius or one of the Atomists or defenders of the atoms. (Letter 56, p. 905)

As the editor of *Spinoza's Complete Works*, Morgan notes that atomism was 'held in favor by seventeenth-century scientists' (Morgan, 2002, p. 905 in a footnote). It is amazing that Spinoza, as a man of the seventeenth-century, stood alone against atomism based upon his own metaphysics.

To summarize, the bodily aspects of the metaphysics of Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza are parallel since they both have the naturalistic dimension as an important dimension. At the same time, neither of them could be called naturalism. Moreover, we have confirmed the parallels between their corresponding concepts, i.e. the concept of *Ch'i* in Neo-Confucianism and the concept of the attribute of Extension in Spinoza, the concept of *Yin* and *Yang* and the concept of Motion and Rest, and the concept of physical form and the concept of the body. Furthermore, Neo-Confucians and Spinoza both deny atomism.

3.4 The Parallel in the Mental Aspect

3.4.1 The Rationalistic Dimension in Neo-Confucianism

(i) The Concept of *Li*

In Neo-Confucianism, the concept of *Ch'i* has an opposite concept: *Li*. The development of the concept of *Li* was so successful that Neo-Confucianism is sometimes known as the doctrine of *Li*. For this reason, it is suitable for us to say that the concept of *Li* is the most central concept in Neo-Confucianism. Similar to the term *Ch'i*, it is not easy to find a corresponding English term for translating the term *Li*. Wang (1916), Bruce (1923), Warren (1924), and Bodde (1942) use the term 'law' to refer to it. However, the concept of law in Western philosophy is not suitable for expressing the dynamic character of the concept of *Li*. Moreover, the concept of *Li* still has many other characteristics.

Fung (1953)⁶⁸, Chan (1963), and Yao (2000) use the term 'principle' for it. It is interesting to note that Wang (1916), Bruce (1923), Warren (1924), and Bodde (1942), who use the term 'law', are all Western scholars whereas Fung (1953), Chan (1963), and Yao (2000), who use the term 'principle', are all Chinese scholars. Chinese scholars seem to believe that the universal character of the concept of law is not suitable for expressing the individual character of the concept of *Li*. However, the term 'principle'

⁶⁸ Fung (1953) claims that the term 'Reason' was once used to refer to the translation of the concept of *Li* by some Western scholars, but no reference was given in his book (Fung, 1953, p. 500).

also seems unsuitable for expressing the meaning of *Li*'s nonrepetitive and natural unfolding that occurs not only in the dimension of space but also in the dimension of time. Therefore, as with the concept of *Ch'i*, I will use its English pronounced term '*Li*' in this thesis.

The concept of *Li* may have originated from the observation of the grain of natural objects, such as a piece of wood, a stone, or a jade (Yao, 2000, p. 106). The quality of the grain of these items decides their value, and a beautiful pattern of grain is vital for decent wood furniture or a precious piece of jade. The beauty of the grain is twofold. On the one hand, the grain is not totally unordered but embodies some orderly pattern, and this orderly pattern forms the basis of its beauty. On the other hand, this orderly pattern is natural, not man-made. Therefore, this orderly pattern is not artificial, fixed or dead, but dynamic and alive.

Moreover, the use of the concept of *Li* in the hands of the Neo-Confucians was extended beyond natural objects. It is believed that every natural phenomenon has its own *Li*, such as waves. It is necessary for a surfer to learn the *Li* of waves in order to surf successfully. It is a vital skill for a sailor to know the *Li* of the waves on the sea. The *Li* of waves is the dynamic pattern unfolding not only in the dimension of space but also in the dimension of time.

Furthermore, it is believed that every event or affair has its own *Li*. For example, a birthday party needs to be well-organized in its own way. At the same time, in Chinese the term *Li* is also used as a verb to express the meaning of forming an orderly environment. One of its usages in Spoken Chinese is 'to do housework'. The housework

consists not only in cleaning the house but also in restoring the orderly arrangement of furniture, toys, personal belongings, and other items. However, the orderly arrangement does not fix every item in a dead and unchanging position. In other words, an orderly arrangement still has the potential to be rearranged into a better order. As a verb, the term *Li* is also often used to refer to the operation of government. It is always possible for a government to improve its operation even though its current administration may be very successful. Ziporyn (2008) also observed that *Li* as a verb refers to some human activities with purpose in the classic era. Therefore, the concept of *Li* embodies the idea of potential improvement.

Needham claims that the concept of *Li* is a ‘dynamic pattern as embodied in all living things, and in human relationships and in the highest human values’, and insists on using the term ‘organism’ to express such a dynamic pattern (Needham, 1951, p. 209). Needham here correctly emphasizes the holistic character of the concept of *Li*. However, the concept of *Li* applies not only at the level of physics but also at the level of metaphysics in Neo-Confucianism (Chan, 1963, p. 637).

In Neo-Confucianism, the concept of *Li* was developed mainly by the Two Ch’eng brothers, Ch’eng Hao, and Ch’eng I. Among the Five Masters of the Northern Song Dynasty, the concept of *Li* was touched ‘only sketchily’ by Chou Tun-I, Shao Yung and Chang Tsai, and it was in the hands of the Ch’eng brothers that the concept of *Li* arose as the most crucial concept of Neo-Confucianism (Fung, 1953, p. 501). In particular, it was mainly due to the deliberation of the younger brother, Ch’eng I, that the concept of *Li* was developed.

For Ch'eng Hao, the *Li* of a thing is the natural way it is and the *Li* does not 'conform to any (artificial) arrangement' (Fung, 1953, p. 505). In other words, Ch'eng Hao considered the concept of *Li* as 'the natural or spontaneous tendency' of each of the myriad things (*ibid.*). It is not artificial and is independent of human deliberation. Moreover, it is due to Ch'eng Hao that the concept of the *Li* of *Tian*⁶⁹ was first introduced (Fung, 1953, p. 506)⁷⁰. Ch'eng Hao himself was very proud of this point (Fung, 1953, p. 506; Chan, 1963, p. 520). The concept of the *Li* of *Tian* is the combination of the concept of *Tian* and the concept of *Li*, and it firstly expresses the universal character of the concept of *Li*⁷¹. Eventually, the concept of the *Li* of *Tian* became used in Neo-Confucianism.

Ch'eng I paid more attention to the concept of *Li* than his brother, Ch'eng Hao. Ch'eng I set out three core characteristics of the concept of *Li*. Firstly, it is eternal and unchangeable. It is believed that '[all] the Principles [*Li*⁷²] are pervasively present'

⁶⁹ In Fung (1953), Chan (1963), and Yao (2000) it is called 'Heavenly Principle'.

⁷⁰ However, the term the *Li* of *Tian* (天理) had already appeared in *the Book of Rites*, one of the scriptures in classical Confucianism, meaning that *Tian* distributes *Li* upon humankind, and lacking the connotation of universal character. (Chan, 1963, p. 520)

⁷¹ At this point, the concept of the *Li* of *Tian* has been understood to have a similar meaning to the concept of Natural Law in Western philosophy (Hu, 1953, pp. 119-153; Chan, 1963, p. 519).

⁷² If we follow English grammar, here we seem to be forced to use its plural, *Lis*. However, as our discussion of the concept of *Li* itself unfolds in due course we will see that, on the one hand, *Li* is One, and is identical with the *Great Ultimate* (and, further, that the *Great Ultimate* somehow exists in every individual thing in its entirety); and on the other hand, that every individual thing is considered as having its own *Li*. According to Chu, the particular *Li* of a thing is different to the particular *Li* of another thing. For the latter reason, in practice, scholars often use the word 'principles' to endorse its plural, when *Li* is translated into the word 'principle'. However, it is not common to use the plural '*Lis*'

(Fung, 1953, p. 503). Secondly, everything has its *Li* as the reason for its existence. Ch'eng I stated that '[when] anything exists, there must be a pattern for it' (Fung, 1953, p. 503)⁷³. Finally, *Li* is one but 'its manifestations are many' (Chan, 1963, p. 521). Ch'eng I states that *Li* is 'vast, and without divisions, yet within it ... the myriad phenomena (of the universe) are all contained.' (Fung, 1953, p. 503). Again, Ch'eng I states:

As to this Principle [*Li*], 'the loving see it and call it love (*jen* [*Jen*]). The wise see it and call it wisdom. The common people use it daily, yet without realizing it. This is why the Way of the Superior Man is seen by few' (Fung, 1953, p. 502).

The excerpt in the above citation is taken from the *Book of Changes*, and is very well-known in Chinese history. In the era of classical Confucianism, the term 'it' in the excerpt is considered to refer to the concept of *Tao*. However, Ch'eng I believes that the concept of *Li* can also be paraphrased by this excerpt.

A remaining problem is that Ch'eng I did not give further explanation as to how the

when the term '*Li*' is used directly. I only note that Ziporyn uses the word '*Lis*' in a relevant context (Ziporyn, 2008, p. 48). Following the established usage, I will use only the word '*Li*' throughout my thesis, but its meaning should be comprehended accordant with its context.

⁷³ Fung claims that the concept of *Li* here is similar to the concept of the Platonic idea or form in ancient Greece (Fung, 1953, p. 507). However, both Chang (1957) and Chan (1963) disagree with this comparison (Chang, 1957, pp. 192-4; Chan, 1963, pp. 544-5). It is not my aim to engage with this debate here, but their arguments reveal that *Li* is considered the essence or internal cause of everything, through which everything comes into existence in time and space.

myriad things as phenomena in the universe are produced through *Li* as One. This problem was not dealt with until Chu emerged as the greatest Neo-Confucian.

(ii) Neo-Confucianism as Rationalism

Chu set out his doctrine of *Li* by dealing with three core relationships in the Neo-Confucian basic framework of metaphysics. Firstly, Chu clarified the relationship between the concept of *Li* and the concept of the *Great Ultimate*. According to Chu, '[the] the *Great Ultimate* is nothing other than principle [*Li*]' (Chan, 1963, p. 638). *Li* itself is the *Great Ultimate*, and this thought is recognized as the central point of Chu's whole philosophy by scholars (*ibid.*). This point will be revealed more obviously when we notice that Chang Tsai claims that it is *Ch'i* rather *Li* that should be identified with the *Great Ultimate*. This is the main reason that Chu is recognized as a rationalist whereas Chang Tsai is recognized as a naturalist. The concept of the *Great Ultimate* is the core concept of Chou Tun-I's Diagram of the *Great Ultimate*. Chu accepted Chou Tun-I's whole metaphysical framework in the Diagram of the *Great Ultimate*. Chu developed the thought of the Diagram of the *Great Ultimate* through his theory of *Li*. It is also noteworthy that, according to Chou Tun-I's explanation of the Diagram of the *Great Ultimate*, the *Great Ultimate* directly involves activity and tranquility, through which the myriad things are produced. Chu disagrees with this point and claims that it is the operation of the *Li* that produces the myriad things, and that the *Great Ultimate* itself does not act (Chan, 1963, p. 641). There is a confused point here: on the one hand, Chu claims that it is the *Li* of activity and tranquility that produces the myriad things

whereas the *Great Ultimate* itself remains tranquil, and, on the other hand, he also takes them to be identical. The solution to this problem is that *Li* is immanent and there is necessarily a corresponding *Ch'i* in operation when there is *Li*. To say that the *Li* of activity and tranquility produces the myriad things is in fact to say that its corresponding *Ch'i* produces the myriad things through the *Li* of activity and tranquility (Yang, 2015, pp. 217-221)⁷⁴.

Secondly, Chu clarified the relationship between the concept of *Li* and the concept of *Ch'i*. According to Chu, from the perspective of the myriad things - it is impossible for *Li* and *Ch'i* to be separated at any moment. However, from the perspective of the essential realm, we are forced to recognize that *Li* is prior to *Ch'i*. Chu confirmed that '[there] is principle [*Li*] before there can be material force [*Ch'i*]' (Chan, 1963, p. 637). At the same time, *Li* does not 'cease to exist' even though a thing is gone due to the disintegration of its *Ch'i* (Chan, 1963, p. 638)⁷⁵. The *Li* of a thing is unchangeable in any condition whereas its *Ch'i* undergoes constant change from the moment a thing comes into existence until the moment it ceases to exist. Chu insisted that *Ch'i* is extinguished completely when a thing ceases to exist. This thought is obviously

⁷⁴ Yang (2015) only has a Chinese version.

⁷⁵ An important issue arises here, which is whether or not Chu is a dualist. Yes, and no. Chu seems to be a dualist since Chu considered *Li* and *Ch'i* as 'certainly two different entities' and not identical with each other (Chan, 1963, p. 637). *Li* and *Ch'i* are completely different in many aspects. At the same time, Chu seems to be a monist since *Li* and *Ch'i* 'are merged one with the other and cannot be separated with each in a different place' (*ibid.*). Therefore, Chan asserts that Chu is 'neither a monist nor a dualist, or he is both a monist and a dualist' (Chan, 1963, p. 634).

different from the naturalistic perspective of Chang Tsai, who believed that the *Ch'i* that constitutes a thing returns back to its original state and is not extinguished when the thing is gone. Chu claimed that a thing will never come back even though its *Li* remains eternally, and he said that '[it] is the end once a thing is gone' (Chan, 1963, p. 635).

Moreover, according to the naturalistic Neo-Confucians, *Li* is the characteristic of the production and evolution of the myriad things in the universe, and *Li* is 'inherent in' *Ch'i* (Chan, 1963, p. 504). Therefore, in the relationship between *Li* and *Ch'i*, *Ch'i* is dominant and *Li* is the pattern of the integration and disintegration of *Ch'i*. By contrast, according to rationalistic Neo-Confucians, *Li* is dominant and is identical with the *Great Ultimate*. The integration and disintegration of *Ch'i* is governed by *Li*, and *Li* is unfolded through the integration and disintegration of *Ch'i*. Therefore, according to the rationalistic Neo-Confucians, *Tian* follows its own *Li* and the essence of *Tian* is *Li*. The myriad things flow out from the *Li* of *Tian*. Then, the behavior of the myriad things is governed by the *Li* of *Tian*.

Finally, Chu clarified the relationship between the essential realm and the functional realm. According to Chu, the *Great Ultimate* does not directly involve activity and tranquility. Chu raised the concept of the *Great Ultimate* up to the essential realm, and drew a clear line between the essential realm and the functional realm of Ultimate Reality expressed in Chou Tun-I's whole framework of metaphysics. The question remains as to how the essential realm and the functional realm are unified into the same Ultimate Reality. According to Chu, it is still the concept of *Li* that formulates their

unity. I will explore this point further in Section 3.4.

In brief, Chu compiled Chou Tun-I's thoughts on the *Great Ultimate*, Chang Tsai's thoughts on *Ch'i*, and the Ch'eng brothers' thoughts on *Li* into a systemic philosophy. Chu also developed the Neo-Confucian notion of the essential realm and the functional realm, and united them into one whole, which is *Tian* itself. Chu once confirmed that *Tian* 'has no *personal* consciousness' and its morality, rulings, blessings and evil-doings 'are merely deductions from principle [*Li*]' (Chan, 1963, p. 636, my italics). This citation highlights Chu's refusal to engage in anthropomorphism, and also sets some restrictions on the transcendental dimension of *Tian* to some degree. The rationalistic dimension of *Tian* is, then, prior to its transcendental dimension. At the same time, since everything is merely deduced from *Li*, the rationalistic dimension is also prior to its naturalistic dimension. Therefore, *Li* as the core concept dominates Chu's whole philosophy, and Neo-Confucianism as rationalism was fixed finally in the hands of Chu.

Through the investigation above, we know that Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi had the core roles in the development of this rationalistic dimension. It is also noteworthy that the term '*Li* (理)' itself is at the core of the Chinese translation (理性主义) of the term 'rationalism'⁷⁶. Following this usage, the School of *Li* is considered to be identical with rationalism. This is the reason why rationalistic Neo-Confucianism is known as the Ch'eng-Chu School of *Li* in particular. At the same time, Neo-Confucianism as a whole is also known as the School of *Li* in general due to the dominance of the rationalistic

⁷⁶ Prof. Yujin Nagasawa reminded me of this important connection. For a Chinese person, it is very easy to forget this connection, just as a fish might forget that it is swimming in water.

dimension in Neo-Confucianism.

3.4.2 The Rationalistic Dimension in Spinoza

(i) The Concept of the Idea of God

Before discussing the concept of the idea of God, we should firstly take care to distinguish Spinoza's use of this notion from our modern understanding, in which it is commonly considered to be the same as the conception of God. The concept of the idea of God [*Dei idea*] is a unique piece of terminology in Spinoza's philosophy. Kashap is right to say that it 'must not be understood in such a way as to render God as an anthropomorphic entity believed, therefore, to have ideas which are conceptions of His mind' (Kashap, 1977, p. 57). Spinoza does not give us a clear definition of the concept of the idea of God. He touches on this concept in the first part of his *Ethics*, and considers it to be a unique mode of the attribute of Thought. The idea of God, as an example of something that follows from the absolute nature of God, is used in the proof of Proposition 21, and to support the conclusion that '[a]ll things that follow from the absolute nature of any attribute of God must have existed always, and as infinite; that is, through the said attribute they are eternal and infinite' (E1p21, p. 230). Spinoza's example here is 'the idea of God in Thought' (E1p21 Proof, p. 230)⁷⁷. Clearly, Spinoza views the idea of God as a mode of the attribute of Thought here⁷⁸. However, this mode

⁷⁷ Cf. This is 'the idea of God expressed in the attribute of thought' in the translation by Elwes (Spinoza, 1951).

⁷⁸ Wetlesen concludes that the idea of God is 'the immediate infinite mode under the attribute of

is unique because it follows from the absolute nature of God. Spinoza implies that the idea of God is not only infinite but also eternal (E1p21 Proof, pp. 230-1).

Moreover, Spinoza begins a direct discussion of the concept of the idea of God in the beginning of the second part of the *Ethics*, and considers it as the essence of God. Spinoza argued that '[i]n God there is necessarily the idea both of his essence and of everything that necessarily follows from his essence' (E2p3, p. 245). According to E2p3, on the one hand, there is one idea in God as the essence of God. On the other hand, every individual thing has its idea in God. Here Spinoza seems to say that there are infinite ideas in God since there are infinite individual things. However, Spinoza immediately confirms that the idea of God 'must be one and one only' in E2p3. In other words, as the only idea in God, the idea of God is not only the essence of God but also the idea of an individual thing in God, and they are one and the same. This is the perspective of God himself. At the same time, from the perspective of individual things, the idea of an individual thing in God follows from the idea of God, and the latter is the essence of the former. Therefore, the relationship between the idea of God and the idea of an individual thing in God is a critical pivot for understanding Spinoza's metaphysical system. Spinoza also uses some heavily religious terms to refer to the concept of the idea of God. Wetlesen is right to observe that the idea of God is sometimes called by such names as the eternal Son of God (Letter 73), and the Spirit of Christ (4p68Sch; also Letter 73) (Wetlesen, 1976, p. 42).

Furthermore, the idea of God, as the essence of God, is identical with the intellect of

thinking [Thought]'. (Wetlesen, 1976, p. 42)

God. According to Spinoza, God's 'intellect and will are not distinct from his essence' (E1p33 Scholium 2, p. 237)⁷⁹. It should be noted that in his proof of E2p3, Spinoza seems to touch on the relationship of identity as follows:

For God can ... think infinite things in infinite ways, or (*what is the same thing*, by Pr. 16, I [E1p16]) can form the idea of his own essence [the idea of God] and of everything that necessarily follows from it. (E2p3 Proof, p. 245, my italics)

Here the citation gives us another important reference to E1p16. In E1p16, Spinoza has said that 'God is the efficient cause of all things that can come within the scope of the *infinite intellect*' (E1p16 Corollary, p. 227, my italics). Spinoza is telling us that the intellect of God and the idea of God are the same thing. Once the relationship of identity is established, the attribute of Thought becomes dominant among all attributes of God since the idea of God is a mode of the attribute of Thought. Let us bear this point in mind.

In short, the idea of God has several important characteristics as follows: (1) it is infinite; (2) it is eternal; (3) it is one and one only; (4) it is identical with the intellect of God; (5) it is the idea of an individual thing in God, and its essence also. Therefore, the concept of the idea of God is the backbone supporting Spinoza's philosophy as rationalism.

⁷⁹ Cf. 'God's intellect, and God's will, and God's essence are identical' (Spinoza, 1951).

(ii) Spinoza as a Rationalist

It is the orthodox view to consider Spinoza as a rationalist, along the same line as Descartes and Leibniz. What I will do here is to explore the metaphysical aspect of his rationalism, or metaphysical rationalism⁸⁰. Since this is the orthodox view, I will not pursue this point too much in this thesis. For our purposes, three points below are important.

Firstly, from the perspective of methodology, the *Ethics* itself is a unique deductive system⁸¹. The first impression that a reader of Spinoza's *Ethics* encounters is the style of pure contemplation. All of its first Part is given to the purely metaphysical contemplation of the conception of God and its nature. It seems difficult for us to find any empirical fact in the contemplation of Chapter 1 of the *Ethics*⁸². This impression is enforced further by its written style, which borrows heavily from Euclid's geometrical method throughout the *Ethics*. Spinoza believed strongly in the truth of Euclid's geometry. This was the reason for his choosing to write the *Ethics* in line with Euclid's geometrical method. The book is mainly composed of definitions,

⁸⁰ According to Dasgupta, a metaphysical rationalist is 'someone who endorses the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR), the principle that everything has an explanation' (Dasgupta, 2016, p. 379). Dasgupta (2016) considers Spinoza as the model representative of metaphysical rationalism.

⁸¹ Many scholars have argued that Spinoza's deductive approach is not always successful in the *Ethics*. I put this issue away in this thesis given that at least Spinoza himself believed in this deductive methodology.

⁸² Except for the Appendix, in which Spinoza focusses on his criticism of anthropomorphism.

axioms, propositions and their corollaries. Spinoza starts from some premises that he takes to be self-evident, and then through a deductive⁸³ approach he reaches his conclusions. This style is unique among the great works in the history of philosophy. Every one of the definitions, axioms, propositions, and their corollaries is one part of his philosophy. Consequently, we cannot grasp the overview of his philosophy if we just stick to some of these definitions, axioms, propositions, and their corollaries - just like a blind man cannot know an elephant by touching just some part of the elephant. This causes huge difficulties for a reader wishing to grasp the whole of Spinoza's thoughts in the *Ethics*.

Spinoza's favoring Euclid's geometrical method has its root in his metaphysics of rationalism. Because Spinoza firmly believes that Ultimate Reality is rational, he believes that the essence of God and the essence of an individual thing, as a mode of God, can be presented accurately through Euclid's geometrical method. This leads us to the second point: Spinoza believes that God's will necessarily follows from the laws of his own nature. According to Spinoza, God is absolute existence, which means that anything that is possible to exist does exist. If anything that is possible to exist does exist, does this mean that God would create a thing by a fabricated will, for instance, a square circle?⁸⁴ Does it mean that some feigned things, such as unicorns, winged

⁸³ Some scholars believe that Spinoza's methodology is not deductive but rather holistic, such as Schliesser (2017). My opinion is that it is both holistic and deductive, and that the deductive approach and the holistic approach do not conflict with each other.

⁸⁴ Spinoza touches upon this issue in the *TIE* (p. 24).

horses, flying pigs, etc., also exist? The answer is, of course, 'No'. According to Spinoza, the absolute free will that the 'crowds' habitually assign to God does not pertain to God. An absolute free will is an illusion when it means doing whatever the crowds desire to do. This is the kind of anthropomorphism that Spinoza completely objected to. God has only the freedom of necessity rather than the freedom of will that the crowds imagine. If we must assign the term 'will' to God for the convenience of discussion, then will and intellect 'are one and the same' (E1p17 Scholium, p. 229; E2p49, p. 273). Spinoza told his friend that it is absurd to say that God's will is different from his essence and his intellect (Letter 56, p. 904). According to Spinoza, even if God is constrained by nothing else, his action still necessarily follows 'from the laws of his own nature' (E1p17, p. 227). To say God has the freedom of necessity is also to say that God is subjected to the necessity of his own nature, otherwise God would be mutable and thus imperfect.

The further question is what the necessity of God's own nature is. If God's own nature is not accessible to us, it remains impossible for us to confirm whether a thing does exist or not. This problem has been an important and highly debated topic. However, Spinoza actually did not run into this problem. This leads us to the final point, which is that Spinoza believes that God's nature can be apprehended by the intellect. Spinoza gave us a clear standard for the existence of a thing. The standard is that it must be 'within the scope of [God's] infinite intellect' when 'infinite things in infinite ways [modis]' come into existence by the necessity of the divine nature of God (E1p16, p. 227). All things which can fall within the sphere of the infinite intellect do exist.

Moreover, Spinoza firmly believes that ‘God’s infinite essence and his eternity are known to all’ (E2p47 Scholium, p. 271).

Spinoza told his friend that ‘[we] cannot imagine God, but we can apprehend [God] by the intellect’ (Letter 56, p. 905). This is why Spinoza confirms to his friend that he has ‘as clear an idea of God as of a triangle’ but denies that he has ‘as clear a mental image of God as of a triangle’ (*ibid.*). Furthermore, according to Spinoza, our human intellect is one part of the intellect of God. Thus, when we say that a thing exists or does not exist, an adequate reason or cause in our human intellect must be assigned to it. For instance, we can be assured of the nonexistence of a square circle because the concept is self-contradictory, and therefore its existence is impossible (*TIE*, p. 24). In other words, if a thing does not exist there must be an adequate reason or cause ‘which prevents it from existence, or which annuls its existence’ (E1p11, p. 222). It is impossible for Spinoza to confirm that a ghost exists because we do not have ‘any intelligible property’ of a ghost; as he told his friend directly, who was arguing for the existence of ghosts, in saying that a ghost is made of a ‘very tenuous, rarefied and subtle substance, you seem to be speaking of spiders’ webs, air or mist’ (Letter 56, p. 905). We can also be assured of the nonexistence of unicorns because we cannot form a clear and distinct idea of a unicorn in our mind and thus the idea of a unicorn is not intellectual. I will not pursue this issue further since this point has become an epistemological issue.

In short, Ultimate Reality is rational, and can be expressed through a deductive system. God as Ultimate Reality follows from the laws of his own nature, and God’s

will is also his intellect. The intellect of God is endowed in the human intellect. Spinoza's opposition to anthropomorphism stands against human imagination but sits alongside a belief in the human intellect. Therefore, it is entirely correct to say that Spinoza is one of the best representatives of metaphysical rationalism.

3.4.3 The Parallel in the Mental Aspect

As with the parallel in the bodily aspect, what I should concede here is that I cannot argue that every part of the mental aspect between Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza is parallel with the other. For example, of course, the concept of *Li* in Neo-Confucianism and the concept of the idea of God in Spinoza are different from each other since Spinoza's theory of attributes has no analogue in Neo-Confucianism. At the same time, *Li* in Neo-Confucianism is considered an independent entity which has no analogue in Spinoza. What I am arguing here is that the mental aspects as wholes, and their core concepts, are all parallel to each other. Table 8 clearly reveals the parallels in the mental aspect as a whole, and their core concepts:

Neo-Confucianism	Spinoza
<i>Li</i> (理)	Thought (Attribute)
The <i>Li</i> of <i>Tian</i> (天理)	The idea of God (Infinite mode)
The <i>Li</i> of a thing (事理)	The idea of a thing (Finite mode)

Table 8 A Comparison of the Mental Aspect.

Firstly, with respect to the mental aspects as wholes, they both have the rationalistic

dimension as the dominant dimension. In other words, the mental aspect became the dominant aspect in both Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza.

Secondly, with respect to the main concepts, there are three concepts referring to the mental aspects of each metaphysical framework. These are the concept of *Li*, the concept of the *Li* of *Tian*, and the concept of the *Li* of a thing in Neo-Confucianism, and the concept of the attribute of Thought, the concept of the idea of God, and the concept of the idea of an individual thing in Spinoza. Therefore, the structure of their core concepts is parallel. The parallel between the concept of the *Li* of *Tian* in Neo-Confucianism and the concept of the idea of God in Spinoza is due firstly to the fact that these concepts form the backbone of the mental aspect in both theories.

Finally, they are also parallel due to the fact that the relationship between their mental aspects and their bodily aspects is the same. In the terminology of Neo-Confucianism, *Ch'i* and *Li* 'are certainly two different entities' (Chan, 1963, p. 637). However, they are never separable from each other so long as the thing retains its existence. According to Chu, it is impossible for *Li* and *Ch'i* to be separated at any moment in the functional realm. Chu claimed that 'there has never been any material force [*Ch'i*] without principle [*Li*] or principle [*Li*] without material force [*Ch'i*]' (Chan, 1963, p. 634). In a parallel way, as was discussed in section 3.1, the isomorphism of the attribute of Thought and the attribute of Extension is one of the most significant characteristics of Spinoza's philosophy.

To summarize, the mental aspects of the metaphysics of both Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza are parallel since both Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza have the rationalistic

dimension as the dominant dimension. Moreover, they are parallel due to the parallels between the concept of the *Li of Tian* in Neo-Confucianism and the concept of the idea of God in Spinoza. Furthermore, they are parallel in their view of the relationship between their mental aspects and their bodily aspects, which is the same for both (albeit in their own ways). In the next section, we will find that their two realms of Ultimate Reality are also unified through the concept of the *Li of Tian* in Neo-Confucianism and the concept of the idea of God in Spinoza.

3.5 The Parallel in the Perspectives of the Two Realms

3.5.1 The Essential Realm and the Functional Realm in Neo-Confucianism

To say that there is an essential realm and a functional realm in Neo-Confucianism is, in fact, an explanation using the language of Western philosophy. There are two corresponding terms to refer to these realms in Chinese thought (Chan, 1963, p. 791). Neo-Confucians use the term '*Ti*' or '*BenTi*' (体 or 本体) to refer to the essential realm, and sometimes it is translated into the English term 'essence'⁸⁵. Another term '*Yung*' (用) is used to refer to the functional realm, which sometimes is translated into the English term 'operation', but its best translation in English is the term 'function'. According to Chu, there is not only *Ti* [the essential realm] but also *Yung* [the functional realm] of Ultimate Reality expressed in Chou Tun-I's whole framework of metaphysics.

There is a similar issue that was discussed in classical Confucianism, in which it was called the relationship between the *Way (Tao)* that is above the body (*Xing-er-Shang*, 形而上) and the *Instrument (器)* that refers to the body (*Xing-er-Xia*, 形而下). The former is referring the realm beyond physics. That is the reason that metaphysics in China is also sometimes known as the theory of *Xing-er-Shang* (形而上学). The latter refers to the realm of physics. The relationship between the *Way* and the *Instrument* was not unfolded in any systematic way in classical Confucianism. The relationship between the essential realm and the functional realm in Neo-Confucianism is, then, a systematic development of the relationship between the *Way* and the *Instrument* in

⁸⁵ Maybe its best translation in English is the term 'substance', but it is noteworthy that Spinoza uses the term 'substance' in a different style, which refers to God himself.

classical Confucianism.

What is the relationship between the essential realm and the functional realm? Firstly, they are referring to the same Ultimate Reality that is *Tian* in Neo-Confucianism. With respect to its essential realm, the *Great Ultimate* is the original substance of the entire universe. The *Great Ultimate* is the true source of all transformations and changes in the universe. With respect to its functional realm, the functioning of the *Great Ultimate*, as fundamental and unceasing, comes forth forever. In other words, the sensible realm emanates from the *Great Ultimate*. The *Great Ultimate* is the immanent cause of Reality. By function we mean the operation of the original substance, or the *Great Ultimate*, and its creative force is strong and never exhausted, arising up anew again and again, whose transformation results in many manifestations.

Moreover, the function is fulfilled through the integration or disintegration of *Ch'i* under the governance of its *Li*. It is the *Li* of *Tian* which unifies the essential realm and the functional realm. For Chu, the *Li* of *Tian* means the *Great Ultimate*, and the *Li* of the individual things means the *Great Ultimate* endowed in the myriad things. The *Great Ultimate* is One and the manifestations of the *Great Ultimate* are Many (Chan, 1963, p. 639). This is the thought that the *Li* of *Tian*, or the *Great Ultimate*, is One and its manifestations are Many. This thought probes the classical philosophical relationship between the One and the Many.

To understand Chu's thoughts on the relationship between the One and the Many, it is important firstly to remember that this is not the relationship between the whole and its parts. Chu denied that the myriad things partake of the *Great Ultimate* in the sense

of every individual thing as its part, with the *Great Ultimate* then split into infinite parts. Rather the *Great Ultimate* is One and cannot be split. Chu argued that everything is endowed with the *Great Ultimate* in its entirety somehow, and that the embodied *Great Ultimate* is the *Li* of a thing. A popular metaphor is that the *Great Ultimate* as the One is like the moon in the sky where its manifestations, as the Many, are like the moons that can be found in infinite rivers and lakes. Every moon found in every river or lake is always a complete moon, not a part of the moon (Fung, 1953, p. 541; Chan, 1963, p. 638; Yao, 2000, p. 106). Fung (1953) claims that Chu's metaphor found its inspiration in Buddhism, and Chan (1963) agrees with this point (Fung, 1953, pp. 541-2; Chan, 1963, p. 639). Yang (2015) criticizes this metaphor as misleading because the moon in a river or a lake is only the reflection of the moon in the sky, and it is not the real moon itself (Yang, 2015, pp. 225-6). This metaphor seems to imply that the *Li* of *Tian*, the *Great Ultimate* in an individual thing as its essence, is empty. Yang argues that this metaphor is only suitable for some schools of Buddhism but is not suitable for Neo-Confucianism. A better metaphor, which can be found in Chu's literature, is that the *Great Ultimate* is like the internal essence of a seed, from which hundreds of seeds will be produced when it is planted. Millions of seeds will then be produced when these hundreds of seeds are planted again, and so on *ad infinitum*. The internal essence of the first seed and the internal essence of the infinite consequential seeds are of one nature. In a similar way, every concrete thing 'has within it the *Great Ultimate*' in its entirety somehow, and this is the *Li* of the concrete thing (Chan, 1963, p. 639). This is the reason why it is wrong to say that the relationship between the One and the Many is the

relationship between the whole and its parts.

However, it is also incorrect to say that the *Li* of *Tian* as the *Great Ultimate*, in the essential realm, and *Li* as the internal essence of concrete things, in the functional realm, are identical with one another⁸⁶. But Fung (1953) and Chan (1963) explain that it seems right for Chu to say that everything has the *Li* of all things, but the *Li* of all things is ‘not equivalent to the actual physical things themselves or even to the existence *in potentia* of these things’ (Fung, 1953, p. 542; Chan, 1963, p. 639). Here the interpretation of Fung (1953) and Chan (1963) is not very clear. What I take from this is that the *Li* of all things is nothing but the *Li* of *Tian*, which is the original essence of all things. Every concrete thing, as a function or expression of the *Great Ultimate*, is endowed with its own *Li* when the *Li* of *Tian* is unfolded in a particular area of space-time.

In short, there are the essential realm and the functional realm in the framework of the metaphysics of Neo-Confucianism. They are referring to the same Ultimate Reality. They are unified through the *Li* of *Tian*. The relationship between the essential realm and the functional realm is, in fact, the relationship between the One and the Many. This relationship is neither quantitative nor qualitative. It is an active relationship embodied in the process of moving from the substance to its unfolding function (Yang, 2015, pp. 225-6).

⁸⁶ The *Hua-yen* school of Buddhism holds a similar thought, but not Neo-Confucianism. Fung (1953) summarizes the *Hua-yen* school’s thought as so: ‘within any given individual concrete object, all other concrete objects are actually present’ (Fung, 1953, p. 541). The *Tian-tai* School (天台宗) of Buddhism also has a similar thought, according to which everything has within itself the Absolute in its totality, i.e. that everything ‘has within itself the nature pertaining to all other things’ (*ibid.*).

3.5.2 *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata* in Spinoza

After finishing his proof of Proposition 29 in Part One of his *Ethics*, it seems odd that Spinoza introduces a pair of concepts using a special style of oral presentation as follows:

Before I go any further, I wish to explain *at this point* what we must understand by “*Natura naturans*” and “*Natura naturata*.” I should perhaps say not “explain,” but “remind the reader,” for I consider that it is already clear from what has gone before that by “*Natura naturans*” we must understand that which is in itself and is conceived through itself; that is, the attributes of substance that express eternal and infinite essence; or (Cor. 1 Pr.14, and Cor.2 Pr.17), God insofar as he is considered a free cause. By *Natura naturata* I understand all that follows from the necessity of God’s nature, that is, from the necessity of each one of God’s attributes; or all the modes of God’s attributes insofar as they are considered as things which are in God and can neither be nor be conceived without God. (E1p29 Scholium, p. 234)

Here Spinoza emphasizes two points. The first point is that it is necessary for us to comprehend Proposition 29 and its proof through a pair of concepts: *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. The second point is that Spinoza’s purpose in the definitions of both *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* is not to explain them but to remind the reader of them.

What Spinoza is saying is that the concept of *Natura naturans* refers to the attributes

of God, or God himself when he is considered a free cause, and that the concept of *Natura naturata* is referring to the modes of God's attributes. Therefore, the concept of *Natura naturans* and the concept of *Natura naturata* refer to two different realms of the same substance, God. They are the realm of attributes⁸⁷ and the realm of modes, respectively. Therefore, they could be called the realm of *Natura naturans* and the realm of *Natura naturata*, or simply put, *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. In other words, behind Spinoza's substance-attribute-mode metaphysical framework, there are two different realms: *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*.

Following this point, the pair of concepts, *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*, does not seem very different from the pair of the concepts, attribute and mode. Moreover, an attentive reading reveals that the pair of concepts occurs only in two propositions (E1p29 and E1p31) of the *Ethics*, and there is no direct reference to them in the rest of the book. Thus, this pair of concepts seems to be redundant for Spinoza's system of philosophy. Why does Spinoza introduce them if they are redundant? Why does Spinoza feel the need to remind the reader of these concepts rather than explain them in the citation above?

One tentative answer is that Spinoza believes that it is easier for the reader to comprehend his philosophy through this pair of concepts. Maybe the pair of concepts

⁸⁷ It is also noteworthy that *Natura naturans* also refers to God himself when he is considered a free cause (without reference to God's attributes). I believe that Spinoza was talking about the same thing when he listed 'God's attributes' and 'God himself when God is considered a free cause' together since Spinoza used the conjunctive term 'or' here. Therefore, it is not necessary for us to become trapped in this issue here.

was commonly known in his era. Spinoza wishes for people to comprehend his concepts of both attribute and mode better through a comparison with their familiar conceptions⁸⁸.

The pair of terms '*Natura naturans*' and '*Natura naturata*' is not Spinoza's own terminology. They are medieval terms (Harley, 1995, p. 329), and Thomas Hobbes also used them (Condren, 2002). Spinoza invents an alternative pair of terminologies, that is, *sub specie aeternitatis* and *sub specie temporis*. As a Latin term, *sub specie aeternitatis*, first occurring in E5p22, is translated into the term 'under the form of eternity' by Elwes (Spinoza, 1951), and 'under a form of eternity' by Shirley (Spinoza, 2002). Nadler considers it to mean under the 'aspect' of eternity (Nadler, Fall 2016). Since the philosophical term 'under the form of eternity' has become so popular I will use it throughout this thesis. Its preliminary form, *sub quadam specie aeternitatis*, is introduced in Corollary 2 of E2p44, and this Latin terminology literally means 'in the light of eternity'. Spinoza claims that '[it] is in the nature of reason to regard things as necessary, not as contingent' (E2p44 the Proof of Corollary 2, p. 270). For Spinoza, everything is determined under the light of eternity⁸⁹. Therefore, the term *sub specie*

⁸⁸ Spinoza introduced the pair of concepts, *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*, in his *KV* that was written around 1662, and was considered the draft of his later *Ethics* (*KV*, p. 58). However, it is also clear that Spinoza's thoughts on the concepts of *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* underwent significant change from the *KV* to the *Ethics*.

⁸⁹ This thought is echoed in E4p62, in which Spinoza claims that 'insofar as the mind conceives things according to the dictates of reason, it is affected in the same way, whether the idea be of a thing *future, past, or present*' (E4p62 Proof, p. 352, my italics). Spinoza seems to imply here that the concept of eternity means the everlasting of time from the past, through the present, into the future. How this thought in E4p62 should be comprehended is linked to Spinoza's epistemology and will be discussed in Part Three.

aeternitatis also corresponds to the term *Natura naturans* when it is referring to God himself when God is considered as a free cause.

Spinoza claims that the concept of eternity cannot ‘be defined by time, or be in any way related to time’ when he formally introduces the concept, *sub specie aeternitatis* (E5p23 Scholium, p. 374). The concept ‘eternity’ here is not the same as the concept ‘everlasting’, or the common concept ‘immortality’ in the sense of never dying. What can be related to time or defined by time is referred to by another terminology *sub specie temporis*: under the form of time. The terminology *sub specie temporis* means to explicate through duration or, using Spinoza’s terminology, ‘from the point of view of duration’⁹⁰ (*ibid.*). Spinoza provides a clear definition of duration as ‘the indefinite continuance of existing’ (E2 Definition 5, p. 244). The concept of duration must refer to *Natura naturata* or, using Spinoza’s phraseology, the modes of the attributes of God given that it is referring to indefinite existence⁹¹. It is our common pattern of thinking to consider everything under the form of time. Under the form of time there is birth, growing up, and death, and there is the past, the present, and the future.

Therefore, it seems legitimate to say that *Natura naturans* is identical with *sub specie aeternitatis* and *Natura naturata* with *sub specie temporis*. Spinoza states the following:

⁹⁰ Cf. ‘under the category of duration’ (Spinoza, 1951).

⁹¹ The concept of time itself is ‘a mode of thinking serving to explicate duration’ (*CM*, p. 186), and he believes that the cause-effect network of individual things has no beginning and no end, and ‘*so ad infinitum*’ (E2p9, p. 249). Therefore, in Spinoza’s philosophy, time is everlasting even if it is only a mode of thinking. That is to say, the concept, *sub specie temporis*, does not only mean under the form of a limited duration as an everlasting duration is also possible.

We conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them as related to a fixed time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature. Now the things that are conceived as true or real in this second way, we conceive under a form of eternity, and their ideas involve the eternal and infinite essence of God, as we demonstrated in Pr. 45, II. See also its Scholium. (E5p29 Scholium, p. 376)

Here Spinoza clearly states his own perspectives: *sub specie aeternitatis* [under the form of eternity] and *sub specie temporis* [under the form of time].

A small difference that can be discerned between them is that the pair of concepts, *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*, seems to imply that there are two divided realms of Ultimate Reality, whereas the pair of concepts, *sub specie aeternitatis* and *sub specie temporis*, seems to imply that there are two perspectives towards the same Ultimate Reality. Perhaps Spinoza felt that it was important to emphasize the unity of Ultimate Reality rather than its two divided realms. This is a possible reason for Spinoza mentioning the former but eventually replacing them with the latter⁹².

When we consider how the *Ethics* unfolds as a deductive system, it is easy to conclude that Spinoza's philosophy always focuses on the realm of *Natura naturans*,

⁹² Cf. '[W]e distinguish two inseparable complementary aspects within the concrete total being of God or Nature; if we distinguish God as self-creating from God as self-created, *Natura Naturans* from *Natura Naturata*; and if we identify the first with God's 'essence' and the second with his 'existence'" (Joachim, 1940, p. 40)

i.e. it seems natural for us to suppose that Spinoza always delineates his philosophy within the realm of *Natura naturans*. However, this impression comes from just one part of the whole story found at the beginning of Spinoza's *Ethics*. In fact, he switches to the realm of *Natura naturata* in Part Three and Part Four when he focuses on the topic of the nature and power of human emotion. His perspectives are combined in Part Two and Part Five. The key switching points are Proposition 10 in Part Two, and Proposition 21 in Part Five. In the whole framework of his *Ethics*, Spinoza's general perspective undergoes a switching process from the realm of *Natura naturans* to the realm of *Natura naturata*, ending with their combination in the last stage of Part Five. Wetlesen argues that 'the temporal dimension [*Natura naturata*] is predominant' in the context of Parts Two and Three of the *Ethics* (Wetlesen, 1976, p. 77). While I agree with Wetlesen's opinion that Spinoza's perspective of *Natura naturata* is predominant in Part Three, my opinion is that Spinoza's perspectives are combined in Part Two. Thus, I completely agree with Wetlesen's below conclusion:

It reminds us also that when we interpret 2p13, we should not omit the eternal dimension [*Natura naturans*] from the essence of the mind; and it reminds us that when we interpret 5p29Dem, we should not omit the temporal dimension [*Natura naturata*]. (Wetlesen, 1976, p. 79)

Wetlesen should also agree with my conclusion that Spinoza's perspectives are combined in Part Five because he argues that '[the] essence of the mind is constituted through the power of conceiving things from the viewpoint of eternity [*Natura*

naturans], as well as from the viewpoint of time [*Natura naturata*]' (Wetlesen, 1976, p. 80). Joachim nicely summarizes Spinoza's aim as being 'to conceive the Whole both as an eternal changeless Individual and as enduring, perpetually changing, and comprising an infinite variety of parts---i.e. we are to reconcile these Opposites, to hold them intelligibly together in our thought' (Joachim, 1940, p. 79).

In brief, Spinoza uses his own terminology, *sub specie aeternitatis* and *sub specie temporis*, to replace the old terminology, *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*, from Part Two of his *Ethics* onwards. His phraseology *sub specie aeternitatis* became commonly used in the history of philosophy, and this fact demonstrates the huge influence of Spinoza's philosophy. I will deploy them respectively in suitable contexts in this thesis. However, the above investigation of the *sub specie aeternitatis* and *sub specie temporis* pairing makes Spinoza's distinct perspective clearer for us. Spinoza himself develops his philosophy by frequently switching perspective throughout the book.

3.5.3. The Parallel in the Perspectives of the Two Realms

In this section, I will reveal the parallel in the perspectives of the two realms between Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza. Table 9 clearly reveals the parallel in the perspectives of the two realms as a whole, and their core concepts:

Neo-Confucianism	Spinoza
<i>BenTi</i> (本体) (The essential realm)	<i>sub specie aeternitatis</i> (<i>Natura naturans</i>)
<i>Yong</i> (用) (The functional realm)	<i>sub specie temporis</i> (<i>Natura naturata</i>)

Table 9 A Comparison of the perspectives of the two realms.

Firstly, for both the Neo-Confucians and Spinoza Ultimate Reality has two realms. One realm is the essential realm in Neo-Confucianism and the realm of *Natura naturans* in Spinoza. The essential realm / *Natura naturans* is the realm of Ultimate Reality under the form of Oneness, or wholeness, or eternity, or essence. The other realm is the functional realm in Neo-Confucianism and the realm of *Natura naturata* in Spinoza. The functional realm / *Natura naturata* is the realm of Ultimate Reality under the form of Manyness, or individuals, or time, or the sensible realm. As such, there are two perspectives corresponding to the two realms respectively. There is the perspective of *BenTi* in Neo-Confucianism and the perspective of *sub specie aeternitatis* in Spinoza, and they are parallel with each other. There is also the perspective of *Yong* in Neo-Confucianism and the perspective of *sub specie temporis* in Spinoza, and they are parallel with each other also.

Secondly, the two realms for each of the Neo-Confucians and Spinoza are unified into the same Ultimate Reality. The Ultimate Reality in the essential realm is not different from the Ultimate Reality in the functional realm. In Neo-Confucianism, the essential realm is the *Great Ultimate*. However, the *Great Ultimate* is not an independently existing being outside the universe, ‘but a general name for the principles

[*Li*] of heaven and earth and the myriad things' (Chan, 1963, p. 638). Furthermore, Chu claims that the *Great Ultimate* had no such name originally, but it is the *Great Ultimate* once 'all principles [*Li*] of heaven and earth and the myriad things are put together' (Chan, 1963, p. 641). That is to say, the same Ultimate Reality is the *Great Ultimate* in the essential realm, and the same Ultimate Reality is also the sensible world in the functional realm. The essential realm and the functional realm are one and the same, and they refer to the same Ultimate Reality.

In a parallel way, Spinoza's theory of one-substance is at the heart of his metaphysics. God is not a substance outside Nature; instead God is Nature itself. This is why Spinoza's philosophy is known as pantheism. Spinoza asserts that God, the intellect of God, and the things understood by God are one and the same. It is the intellect of God, or the attributes of God, or in the realm of *Natura naturans*, and it is also the sensible realm, or the modes of God, or in the realm of *Natura naturata*. *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* are one and the same.

As such, there is a combined perspective towards Ultimate Reality both in Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza since the two realms of the Ultimate Reality are one and the same.

Finally, in Neo-Confucianism, the essential realm and the functional realm are also unified through the mental aspect. The relationship between the essential realm and the functional realm is, in fact, the relationship between the One and the Many. In Section 3.5.1 we concluded that the essential realm and the functional realm are unified through the *Li* of *Tian* in Neo-Confucianism. This relationship is neither quantitative nor

qualitative (when ‘qualitative’ is taken to imply a static situation). It is a dynamic relationship embodied in the process from the substance to its unfolding function.

In a parallel way, behind Spinoza’s two realms of *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*, there is the same philosophical relationship between the One and the Many. Spinoza, in fact, dealt with this relationship using the conceptions of *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. The former is the One whereas the latter is the Many. The former is unchangeable whereas the latter is active.

Spinoza unifies the realm of *Natura naturans* with the realm of *Natura naturata* through his concept of the idea of God. Spinoza claims that infinite things follow from the idea of God in infinite ways in E2p3. This proposition seems to be comprehensible in two different ways. The first way is to say that everything follows from the idea of God in infinite ways. In other words, everything has infinite possibilities. The second way is to say that everything follows from the idea of God in a definite way and, as the whole, infinite ways are expressed through infinite things following from the idea of God. According to Spinoza’s determinism, the second way is correct. Therefore, it is reasonable for us to say that this proposition claims that everything is a definite way to express the idea of God. According to Spinoza, the essence of a thing is the idea of a thing in God. On the one hand, as the essence of a thing, the idea of a thing in God can be said to be the same as the idea of God in the essential realm. Therefore, everything is God in the essential realm, and the idea of a thing and the idea of God is one and the same⁹³. On the other hand, the idea of a thing is only one expression of the idea of God

⁹³ Wetlesen claims that the ‘whole is reflected in each part, and each part in each other part’ (Wetlesen,

in the functional realm. Therefore, each thing is one way, or one expression, or one function, of God's existence in the functional realm. Therefore, the relationship between the idea of a thing in God and the idea of God is also not quantitative, and not qualitative. For Spinoza, it is a dynamic relationship embodied in the process of God's self-caused existence.

As such, the combined perspective towards the Ultimate Reality of Neo-Confucianism is chiefly related to the concept of *Li* of *Tian*, and the combined perspective towards the Ultimate Reality of Spinoza is chiefly related to the concept of the idea of God.

To summarize, for both the Neo-Confucians and Spinoza Ultimate Reality has two realms. The two realms are also unified into the same Ultimate Reality. Furthermore, it is the mental aspect, i.e. the *Li* of *Tian* in Neo-Confucianism and the idea of God in Spinoza, that unifies the two realms into the same Ultimate Reality. As such, there are two different perspectives corresponding to the two realms. There is the perspective of *BenTi* in Neo-Confucianism and the perspective of *sub specie aeternitatis* in Spinoza, and they are parallel with each other. There is also the perspective of *Yong* in Neo-Confucianism and the perspective of *sub specie temporis* in Spinoza, and they are parallel with each other also. Furthermore, given that the two realms are one and the same, there is a combined perspective towards Ultimate Reality both in Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza. The concept of *Li* of *Tian* is at the core of the combined

1976, p. 65). Here I agree with Wetlesen for the former part, but do not agree with him for the latter part, which implies 'all things in all things', a reading of Buddhism. See Footnote 86.

perspective of Neo-Confucianism, and the concept of the idea of God is at the core of the combined perspective of Spinoza. In order to best understand Spinoza's *Ethics*, it is crucial for us to follow Spinoza's written perspective and switch our own perspective correspondingly.

Chapter 4

The Neo-Confucian Approach towards Understanding the Doctrine of the Eternity of the Mind

In the previous chapter, I argued that the metaphysics of Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza are in many ways parallel. This parallelism can help us better comprehend Spinoza's philosophy; I label this a "Neo-Confucian approach". In this chapter I will discuss the puzzle of Spinoza's doctrine of the eternity of the mind in detail, and set out the Neo-Confucian approach toward comprehending the doctrine.

4.1 The Puzzle of the Doctrine of the Eternity of the Mind

In the last part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza claims that the mind is in some sense eternal. In E5p23, Spinoza boldly asserts that '[the] human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed along with body, but something of it remains, which is eternal' (E5p23, p. 374). Two important problems arise during Spinoza's discussion of his doctrine of the eternity of the mind.

Firstly, Spinoza emphasizes the fact that the body could be destroyed whereas the mind is eternal in E5p23. This thought seems to be close to immortality as conceived by mainstream religions. However, this thought seems to conflict with the basic creed of the isomorphism between the mind and the body, developed by Spinoza in E2p7 Scholium, in which he claims that 'a mode of Extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, expressed in two ways' (p. 247). What we have seen in Chapter 3 is that the idea of a mode and the mode of Extension are not two modes of God: they

are one and the same. Why, then, does Spinoza claim that the mind cannot be absolutely destroyed along with the body? In other words, how can the doctrine of the eternity of the mind be reconciled with the creed of the isomorphism between the mind and the body? This could be called *the problem of isomorphism*.

Secondly, Spinoza makes some puzzling statements in his discussion of the doctrine of the eternity of the mind. In his definition of the concept of eternity, Spinoza asserts that eternity ‘cannot be explicated through duration or time, even if duration be conceived as without beginning and end’ (E1 Definition 8 Explication, p. 217). He repeats that eternal existence ‘cannot be defined by time, that is, cannot be explicated through duration’ in E5p23 Scholium (p. 374). In these statements, three conceptions, eternity, duration and time, are entangled with each other. Here, the concept of duration is identical to the concept of time, which contrasts with the concept of eternity. Spinoza defines duration as ‘the indefinite continuance of existing’ in E2 Definition 4 (p. 244). According to Spinoza, the indefinite continuance of existing ‘can in no wise be determined through the nature of the existing thing, nor again by the thing’s efficient cause’ (E2 Definition 5 Explication, p. 244). At our current stage, Spinoza’s explication seems not to shed much light on the concept of duration. It seems that Spinoza’s indefinite existence should be comprehended as contingent existence, and he distinguishes it from the existence that the essence⁹⁴ of a thing holds. What we know is that Spinoza already uses the essence of a thing as an instance of the eternal thing in

⁹⁴ For Spinoza, ‘the nature of a thing’ is synonymous with ‘the essence of a thing’.

his definition of the concept of eternity (E1 Definition 8 Explication, p. 217). In other words, Spinoza emphasizes again that the conception of duration is not relevant to the concept of eternity, even though it means everlasting in the sense of being without beginning and end. However, before commencing the discussion of his last three doctrines, Spinoza reminds us that he will be concerned with ‘the *duration* of the mind without respect to the body’ (E5p20 Scholium, p. 373, my italics). If this statement is taken seriously then Spinoza’s arguments in the last three doctrines should be considered relevant to the duration of the mind. How should we understand the notion that the mind’s eternity is relevant to the duration of the mind? Moreover, Spinoza asserts that ‘we *feel* and *experience* that we are eternal’ in E5p23 Scholium (p. 374, my italics). Such feeling and experience must occur when the body remains alive given that Spinoza denies the notion of the soul. How can we have the experience of eternity when eternity cannot be explicated through duration? These statements seem to conflict with one another. This could be called *the problem of duration*.

In short, Spinoza’s doctrine of the eternity of the mind entails *the problem of isomorphism* and *the problem of duration*, and these two problems are entangled with each other⁹⁵. This is the puzzle of Spinoza’s doctrine of the eternity of the mind. Any

⁹⁵ Some scholars have highlighted another problem. According to Spinoza’s definition in the earlier part of the *Ethics*, the concept of eternity seems to be a concept that should be ascribed to God alone because it is ‘existence itself insofar as it is conceived as necessarily following solely from the definition of an eternal thing’ (E1 Definition 8, p. 217). Here the concept of eternity is ascribed to a thing whose existence and essence cannot be separated, and God, having necessary existence, is the only such thing. God’s essence is identical with God’s existence. By contrast, a mode, such as a man, seems not to have the

successful approach towards the puzzle should solve both problems, rather than only one of them. Some scholars claim that this is just another case of Spinoza's rigmorole (as with the criticisms of his doctrine of the *Amor* explored in Chapter 2). Other scholars suggest that the problem arises from Spinoza's use of ambiguous religious language as a tactical concession towards established religious tradition. There are also a few scholars who believe that the issue is an expression of some mystical experience hidden in Spinoza's subconscious. For example, Hubbeling claims that there is a mystical structure in Spinoza's philosophy (Hubbeling, 1978, p. 323), and Wetlesen argues that there is a mystical experience at the bottom of Spinoza's philosophy (Wetlesen, 1978a, p. 493). However, once the full importance of the doctrine of the eternity of the mind is emphasized, it is difficult for us to swallow these tentative views. It is clear that the latter two opinions are also examples of the religious approach, which was introduced in Chapter 2, and will not be pursued further here. I will investigate some specific approaches towards the puzzle of the mind's eternity later in this chapter.

Before these specific approaches are investigated, a pair of concepts concerning the

quality of eternity since Spinoza believes that the 'essence of man does not involve necessary existence' (E2 Axiom 1, p. 244). We saw in Chapter 3 that the existence of an individual thing is always distinct from its essence. In other words, a mode's essence is distinct from its existence. Following this logic, it seems difficult for Spinoza to ascribe the concept of eternity to an individual. Is the mind's eternity, then, possible? This could be coined 'the problem of possibility for Spinoza's doctrine of the eternity of the mind'. I do not believe that this problem is serious since the essence of a thing was already used as an instance of the eternal thing in Spinoza's definition of the concept of eternity (E1 Definition 8 Explication, p. 217).

notion of eternity must be introduced. Wolfson suggests that there are two ways to explain the concept of eternity in the history of western philosophy: the so-called Platonic way and the so-called Aristotelian way, and they both influenced Spinoza's thought of eternity (Wolfson, 1934a, p. 358). The Platonic eternity is timeless, or is unrelated to the temporal dimension, with examples including the eternity of numbers, geometric figures, and Platonic Forms. Spinoza seems to bear the conception of the Platonic eternity in mind when, in E1 Definition 8 Explication, he emphasizes the point that eternity cannot be explicated through duration or time, even if duration is conceived as without beginning and end. The Aristotelian eternity is identical to everlasting time, and it is sometimes also known as sempiternity. Spinoza seems to bear the conception of sempiternity in mind when he reminds us, in E5p20 Scholium, that his last three doctrines concern the duration of the mind without respect to the body. Scholars who take the puzzle of Spinoza's doctrine of the eternity of the mind seriously are divided regarding their preferred choice between the Platonic eternity and the Aristotelian eternity.

Pollock claims that 'Spinoza's eternal life is not a continuance of existence but a manner of existence', and it 'can be realized here and now as much as at any other time and place' (Pollock, 1888, p. 291). Here, eternity is considered to be antithetical to temporal passage, and Pollock makes use of the Platonic way of explaining Spinoza's doctrine of the eternity of the mind. In the *TIE*, Spinoza believes that the highest good in life is 'the knowledge of the union which the mind has with the whole of nature' (*TIE*, p. 6). Following from this thought, Hampshire argues that upon acquiring genuine

knowledge of the mind's eternity, the individuality of a man 'as a particular thing disappears', and the mind 'becomes so far united with God or Nature' (Hampshire, 1951, p. 132). Hampshire seems to imply that the mind's eternity refers to the eternity of God alone, given that the mind has united with God. What is eternal is not an individual thing (the individual itself has disappeared), but God himself. Fditi also claims that '[m]an can love God only insofar as, in intellectual love, his own being is absorbed into God (Fditi, 1979, p. 441). In a similar manner to Pollock, Hampshire and Fditi seem to take the Platonic way since they believe that God alone is eternal.

Hampshire and Fditi are right to notice that the mind's eternity somehow involves union with God, but they are wrong to say that individuality disappears when such a union is realized. According to Spinoza, the knowledge of the mind's eternity is intuitive knowledge, which refers not only to knowledge of God, but also to knowledge of particular things (E5p36 Scholium, p.379). This point will be explored further in Chapter 5. Furthermore, how would it be possible for Spinoza to say that we feel and experience that we are eternal, if the individuality of a man as a particular thing disappears upon such union?

Contrary to the Platonic reading, Kneale (1973) proposes the Aristotelian reading. Spinoza's pantheistic framework of metaphysics is a good foundation for Kneale to emphasize his Aristotelian reading. Moreover, Kneale reminds us that Spinoza says, 'although we have no recollection of having existed before the body, we nevertheless sense that our mind... is eternal' in E5p23 Scholium (p. 374). Spinoza also urges that 'we should consider the mind as if it were now beginning to be and were now beginning

to understand things under a form of eternity' in E5p31 Scholium (p. 377). Kneale believes that the tone behind these statements suggests that the mind's eternity 'entails the pre-existence as well as the post-existence of the human mind' (Kneale, 1973, p. 239). If the mind's eternity entails its existence prior to that of the body, Spinoza's concept of eternity should be identical to everlasting time since the body only exists for a particular duration. However, Kneale knows that his Aristotelian reading is difficult to reconcile with some of Spinoza's more Platonic statements. Kneale's tactic is to deny the coherence of Spinoza's system and assert that no approach 'is consistent with *everything* that Spinoza says', further claiming that Spinoza 'changed his mind about the relation between eternity and duration' (Kneale, 1973, p. 238, italics in original). In short, Kneale's approach does not deal with all of the problems entailed by Spinoza's doctrine of the eternity of the mind. Moreover, Kneale concludes that Spinoza's thought entails 'the doctrine of universal salvation', which means that salvation is available for everyone (Kneale, 1973, p. 240). Kneale's approach is necessarily wrong if this stunning conclusion is in fact the logical consequence of his approach, since it is Spinoza's final conclusion that only the wise 'never cease to be' whereas the ignorant 'cease to be at all' (E5p42 Scholium, p. 382).

Donagan (1973) shares much with Kneale's Aristotelian reading. At the same time, Donagan also tries to take some of Spinoza's Platonic statements seriously. Donagan argues that Spinoza's Platonic statements are only valid *sub specie aeternitatis*, instead of asserting that Spinoza changed his mind during his writing process (Donagan, 1973, p. 247). In other words, Donagan introduces the different perspectives of *sub specie*

aeternitatis and *sub specie temporis* to deal with *the problem of duration*. According to Donagan, Spinoza's Platonic statements are only valid *sub specie aeternitatis*, and his Aristotelian statements are only valid *sub specie temporis*.

Moreover, Donagan also deals with *the problem of isomorphism* in detail through a pair of concepts: formal essence and actual essence. Spinoza introduces the concept of formal essence in E2p8, and he fine-tunes it again in E5p23 Proof as '[in] God there is necessarily a conception, or idea, which expresses the essence of the human body' (p. 374). In other words, the formal essence of the mind is nothing but the idea of the body in God. This formal essence of the mind is eternal since it is an idea in God. Donagan finds that in E2p8 Spinoza introduces a special conception; the idea of a nonexisting individual thing, which could be considered as an instance of something whose existence is irrelevant to the body. Spinoza claims that '[the] ideas of nonexisting individual things or modes must be comprehended in the infinite idea of God in the same way as the formal essences of individual things or modes are contained in the attributes of God' (E2p8, p. 248). The formal essence is the eternal part of the mind because the idea of the formal essence in God is the same as the ideas of nonexisting individual things in men.

With respect to the concept of actual essence, Spinoza tells us, in E3p7, that every individual thing endeavors to unfold its existence in temporal passage, which is its actual essence. This actual essence is its *conatus*, which is one of the most important concepts of Spinoza's philosophy⁹⁶. Donagan finds that the eternal part of the mind is

⁹⁶ I will deal with this concept further in Chapter 8.

its formal essence because ‘the idea of its formal essence is part of the idea of its actual essence’ (Donagan, 1973, p. 251). As such, the mind is eternal in the sense that its formal essence is eternal. The mind and the body are isomorphic when the formal essence is considered as one part of the actual essence. The formal essence, as one part of the mind, is eternal, and this is similar to the case of the ideas of nonexistent individual things. This is Donagan’s answer to *the problem of isomorphism*.

To summarize, Donagan’s approach answers *the problem of duration* to some degree since he shows that Spinoza’s Platonic statements are only valid *sub specie aeternitatis*, and that his Aristotelian statements are only valid *sub specie temporis*. However, Donagan does not clarify why Spinoza asserts that we can feel and experience the eternal. Donagan is right to notice that Spinoza’s notion of the ideas of nonexistent individual things sheds light on his doctrine of the eternity of the mind. However, using the notion of a nonexistent individual thing to prove the eternity of the mind seems to abuse this notion. For Spinoza, the idea of a nonexistent individual thing is an idea in the way of knowledge of the second kind, reason, which is abstract knowledge, and it exists only in the human mind, not in God. This kind of idea itself is not eternal. Furthermore, Donagan’s approach also fails to give us much insight into the relationship between Spinoza’s doctrine of the eternity of the mind and his doctrine of intuitive knowledge or his doctrine of the *Amor*.

So far, I have not found a persuasive approach dealing with all of the problems associated with the puzzle of Spinoza’s doctrine of the eternity of the mind. What I will try to establish in the next section is a Neo-Confucian approach. I believe that, once the

parallel relationship is set up between Neo-Confucian and Spinozian metaphysics, the puzzle of Spinoza's doctrine of the eternity of the mind can be understood through the Neo-Confucian concept of *Li*.

4.2 The Neo-Confucian Approach

At first glance, there seems to be a similar puzzle in Neo-Confucianism. On the one hand, *Li* and *Ch'i* are never separable from each other. According to Chu, there has never been any *Ch'i* without *Li* or *Li* without *Ch'i*. On the other hand, it is also a truism in Neo-Confucian rationalism that *Li* is eternal whereas *Ch'i* is mortal. So, how do Neo-Confucians deal with this puzzle? Three points in Neo-Confucianism should be emphasized here.

Firstly, *Li* and *Ch'i* are not identical to each other. *Li* and *Ch'i* 'are certainly two different entities' in Chu's thought (Chan, 1963, p. 637). They are not identical to each other even if they are not separate from each other when considered from the perspective of the functional realm. Once the conclusion that they are not identical to each other emerges, it is possible for us to say that the *Li* of a thing is eternal whereas its physical body is mortal.

This conclusion also leads me to investigate the real relationship between the mind and the body in Spinoza. What I found is that, in a parallel way, the mind and the body are also not identical to each other. Moreover, according to E2p7, in which we are told that the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things, the relevant isomorphism is between the idea and the body, not between the mind and the body. I have investigated *Spinoza's Complete Works* and found that Spinoza never directly states that the mind and the body are isomorphic. What we see is only that the isomorphism between the idea and the body seems to imply the isomorphism between the mind and the body. As shown in Section 3.2, this implication is incorrect. In short,

I found that there is still theoretical room for Spinoza to claim the doctrine of the eternity of the mind.

Secondly, *Li* is dominant. Chu confirmed that there is *Li* before there can be *Ch'i*, and before 'Heaven and Earth came into being, it [*Li*] already was as it is' (Chan, 1963, p. 637). Some Scholars, such as Chan (1963), believe that *Li* has a logical priority over *Ch'i* (Chan, 1963, p. 634). Unfortunately, no one has given us a clear explanation of the meaning of the logical priority here. I believe that this logical priority may be explained in several ways. The first way is that it is *Li* rather than *Ch'i* which is to be identified with the *Great Ultimate*. The second way is that it is *Li* rather than *Ch'i* which unifies the essential realm and the functional realm together. The third way is that *Li* is the immanent cause of things. Things operate, nourish, and develop following their *Li* rather than their *Ch'i*. These are the main conclusions of Neo-Confucian rationalism. Chu explains their relationship through a metaphor: *Li* attaching upon *Ch'i* is similar to a man '[who] sits astride a horse' (Fung, 1953, p. 543). In short, even when *Li* and *Ch'i* are considered in some ways not separate, *Li* is dominant. Following this point, it seems that Chan's (1963) claim that *Li* has a logical priority should be comprehended as a claim about ontological priority. The confirmation of *Li* as the dominant role is the ontological foundation of the doctrine of the eternity of *Li*.

This conclusion led me to investigate whether or not the attribute of Thought is dominant in Spinoza's theory. I found that, in a parallel way, Spinoza's attribute of Thought is the dominant attribute among God's infinite attributes. According to E2p3, infinite things follow from the idea of God in infinite ways. In other words, the origin

of all things is due to the idea of God, which belongs to the scope of the attribute of Thought.

A corresponding question is whether it is also possible for us to say that all things follow from the attribute of Extension in God (or to put simply, the body of God), in just the same way that they follow out from the idea of God; according to Spinoza, God, the idea of God, and the body of God are one and the same. Spinoza does not discuss this question directly in his *Ethics*. However, he tells us boldly that ‘the formal being of things that are not modes of thinking does not follow from the nature of God’ (E2p6 Corollary, p. 246). Spinoza’s claim in this statement has two important implications. The first implication is that the formal being of things, as the modes of the attribute of Extension, does not follow from the nature of God since the bodies of things are not the modes of Thought. In other words, an individual’s body does not follow from the nature of God. Following the same logic, the formal being of things as the modes of any other attribute of God does not follow from the nature of God. Therefore, this leads us to the second important implication: only the ideas of things follow from the nature of God. The essence of things is formed by God as a thinking thing. The existence of things as the modes of the attribute of Extension, i.e. the bodily existence of things, is not the same as the essence of things. What we have seen here is that Spinoza does not consider the attribute of Thought to have the same status as any other attribute, for example Extension. Rather, the attribute of Thought is placed at the core of God’s infinite attributes and the idea of a thing, rather than the mode of any other attribute, is the essence of things. According to Spinoza, the existence of an individual thing and its

essence are inferred by, but differentiated from, each other. Spinoza makes this conclusion by distinguishing the different status of Thought and Extension (or any other attribute).

Spinoza was pressed to answer a similar question in his penultimate letter as follows:

With regard to your question as to whether the variety of things can be demonstrated a priori solely from the conception of Extension, I think I have already made it quite clear that this is impossible. That is why Descartes is wrong in defining matter through Extension; it must necessarily be explicated through an attribute which expresses eternal and infinite essence. (Letter 83, p. 958)

This view should be regarded as representative of Spinoza's mature thought given that his death was to come just seven months after writing this letter. His friend was asking the following: 'I fail to see how from an Attribute considered only by itself, for example, Extension, an infinite variety of bodies can arise', so 'how, from Extension as conceived in your philosophy, the variety of things can be demonstrated *a priori*' (Letter 82, pp. 956-7). Spinoza's answer to his friend is that this is 'impossible'. The essence and variety of things could be defined only through the attribute of Thought. Here Spinoza even goes so far as to criticize the notion of defining matter through Extension in Descartes' philosophy, and argues that it can be explicated only through Thought. To combine his friend's question and Spinoza's answer, it is clear that the status between Thought and Extension or any other attributes does not remain equal, and that Thought

is dominant. In short, I found that Spinoza can argue that something is eternal if it belongs to the scope of the attribute of Thought since Thought is the dominant attribute of God.

Finally, the relationship between *Li* and *Ch'i* is variable depending upon the realm of one's perspective on Ultimate Reality. When we say that *Li* and *Ch'i* are never separable from each other, we are focusing on the perspective of the functional realm. If our perspective turns to the essential realm, it is only *Li* which can be identified with the *Great Ultimate*. Therefore, *Li* and *Ch'i* are separable in the essential realm.

This point inspires in me a new approach towards Spinoza's doctrine of the eternity of the mind. What I see is that, in a parallel way, in Spinoza the relationship between the idea of a thing and its body is also variable depending upon one's perspective on Ultimate Reality.

In the realm of *Natura naturata*, or to use Spinoza's own terminology, under the form of time, the human body and mind are mortal. Spinoza makes this claim clearly, as follows:

Therefore, our mind can be said to endure, and its existence to be defined by a definite period of time, only to the extent that it involves the actual existence of the body, and it is only to that extent that it has the power to determine the existence of things by time and to conceive them from the point of view of duration. (E5p23 Scholium, p. 374)

Spinoza asks us to remember that it is impossible that ‘we existed before the body’ (*ibid.*). It is also impossible for us to exist after the body. There is no soul-like entity existing independently of the human body. Once the body is gone, the human mind is gone simultaneously.

Turning to the realm of *Natura naturans* or, to use Spinoza’s own terminology, under the form of eternity, some scholars have argued that, similarly to the eternity of the mind, the human body will also be eternal because God, God’s intellect, and the things understood by God are one and the same. For instance, Pollock argues that ‘the human mind is in a certain sense eternal... and everything else too’ (Pollock, 1880, p. 291). In other words, as with the mind, the human body is also eternal since every mode is one part of God and God is invariable and eternal.

However, an important premise is ignored in the argument above. According to Spinoza’s definition, *Natura naturans* refers to God and his attributes, and *Natura naturata* refers to God’s modes. Therefore, we cannot discuss the issues that belong to God’s modes in the realm of *Natura naturans* since God’s modes do not belong to this realm. It is a category mistake to claim the eternity of an individual body in the realm of *Natura naturans*, i.e. under the form of eternity. Strictly speaking, we can only say that the idea of an individual thing in God, i.e. the idea of God, is eternal in the realm of *Natura naturans* since the idea of God is identical to the intellect of God. This is the reason that Spinoza claims that the mind is in a certain sense eternal. This conclusion is parallel with the rationalistic Neo-Confucian doctrine in which only *Li* is identical with the *Great Ultimate* and there is no *Ch’i* in the essential realm.

So far, our Neo-Confucian approach has helped to answer *the problem of isomorphism*. However, *the problem of duration* seems to remain. As was discussed in Chapter 3, the concept of duration in Spinoza's philosophy means 'under the form of time', *sub specie temporis*. Spinoza reminds us that he will be concerned with the duration of the mind without respect to the body in E5p20 Scholium. This statement seems to conflict with Spinoza's own discussion since he repeats several times that it is under the form of eternity that he sets out his last three doctrines. This statement also seems to conflict with my approach, which explains the doctrine of the eternity of the mind under the form of eternity. Moreover, in the Scholium of E5p23, Spinoza claims that 'we nevertheless sense that our mind, insofar as it involves the essence of the body under a form of eternity, is eternal' (E5p23 Scholium, p. 374). On the one hand, in this statement Spinoza claims that this conclusion is valid from the perspective of the form of eternity. On the other hand, Spinoza claims that we can somehow sense the eternity of the mind. I have said that we only have pure reflection towards the realm of *Natura naturans*; the problem, then, concerns how we can experience the eternity of the mind, given that it seems that any experience occurs only in the realm of *Natura naturata*, under the form of time. These apparently contradictory statements still have no reasonable explanation.

To deal with the above problem, let us return to Neo-Confucianism again. As we have pointed out, Ultimate Reality itself is unified in Neo-Confucian rationalism. The two realms originate from our different perspectives, through which we observe Ultimate Reality itself. This is the reason why Chu claims that *Li* has a logical priority

to *Ch'i*, and that they are also never separable from each other. This is also the reason why Chu claims that the *Li* of a thing is invariable whereas its *Ch'i* undergoes constant change from the moment the thing comes to exist until it ceases existing. These conclusions originate from the combined perspective of observing Ultimate Reality as the whole.

In a parallel way, I suggest that the combined perspective must be employed in order to explain these apparently contradictory statements⁹⁷. As I pointed out in Section 3.5, for Spinoza Ultimate Reality itself is unified, and Spinoza employs the combined perspective in Chapter 5 in the *Ethics*. In other words, Spinoza states his last three doctrines from the combined perspective. The logic of the doctrine of the eternity of the mind in Spinoza is parallel with the Neo-Confucian doctrine that the *Li* of a thing is eternal. From the combined perspective, these apparently contradictory statements make sense and the doctrine of the eternity of the mind stands up.

Donagan (1973) is right to introduce the different perspectives to deal with *the problem of duration*. He is also right to say that Spinoza's Platonic statements are only valid *sub specie aeternitatis*. However, Donagan is wrong to say that Spinoza's Aristotelian statements are only valid *sub specie temporis*. I have pointed out that the mind and body are mortal *sub specie temporis*. Donagan's approach fails to deal with all of the problems because he fails to realize that there is also a combined perspective in addition to *sub specie temporis* and *sub specie aeternitatis*. Donagan's Aristotelian

⁹⁷ 'If he holds both perspectives at once, he lives in the intersection between time and eternity'.
(Wetlesen, 1976, p. 19)

explanation, in which eternity is identical to an everlasting time, seems to be similar to my explanation of the combined perspective. However, there are three important differences. Firstly, Donagan's approach cannot explain how Spinoza can argue for both the eternity of the mind and the mortality of the mind at the same time. Donagan's approach also cannot explain how Spinoza can legitimately claim that we can feel and experience the eternity of the mind. According to my explanation, Spinoza employs a combined perspective to discuss his doctrine of the eternity of the mind. During the process of his discussion, he employs the perspective of *sub specie temporis* in some places, the perspective of *sub specie aeternitatis* in other places, and the combined perspective in yet other places. Secondly, Donagan's approach does not identify Thought as the dominant attribute in Spinoza's metaphysics. Donagan's approach does not explain how Spinoza can employ different perspectives when discussing the doctrine of the eternity of the mind. In other words, Donagan does not tell us the reason for Spinoza's changing perspective. My approach points out that Thought is the dominant attribute and that the idea of the body, as one part of the mind, is identical to the idea of God *sub specie aeternitatis*. The mind is not separate from the body *sub specie temporis*. From the combined perspective, Spinoza can claim both that the formal essence of the mind is eternal, and that we can feel and experience the eternity of the mind⁹⁸. Thirdly, according to my explanation, even from the different perspectives, Ultimate Reality is one and the same. This means that the formal essence

⁹⁸ Nadler claims that the experience of this kind of eternity of the mind occurs in the present life, neither before birth nor after death (Nadler, 2006, p. 272). That this present life combines with the intuitive knowledge of the eternity is an instantiation of the combined perspective.

and the actual essence of the mind are also one and the same in the ontological sense. The difference between them is purely epistemological. This means that we cannot fully comprehend the doctrine of the eternity of the mind until Spinoza's epistemology is properly explored. This is the reason for my criticism of Donagan's approach: it does not adequately recognize the relationship between Spinoza's doctrine of the eternity of the mind and his doctrine of intuitive knowledge.

To summarize, in this chapter I have presented a Neo-Confucian approach to Spinoza's puzzle of the doctrine of the eternity of the mind. Following the parallelism of the metaphysical frameworks of Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza, the Neo-Confucian doctrine of *Li* led me to investigate Spinoza's doctrine of the eternity of the mind in a new way. I claim that (1) the mind and the body are not identical to each other; Spinoza has theoretical room to claim the doctrine of the eternity of the mind; (2) Thought is the dominant attribute, and Spinoza can argue that the mind is in a certain sense eternal given that it belongs to the scope of the attribute of Thought; (3) the relationship between the mind and the body is variable with respect to the perspective on Ultimate Reality that one adopts. From the combined perspective, it is reasonable to say that that the mind is in a certain sense eternal and the body is mortal for Spinoza, just as one can say that *Li* is eternal whereas *Ch'i* is mortal in Neo-Confucian rationalism. The eternal part of the mind is its formal essence. The formal essence is also its actual essence *sub specie temporis*. The difference between the formal essence and the actual essence is epistemological. Therefore, in the next step, Spinoza's epistemology needs to be brought into our explanation.

Chapter 5

The Parallel Structure between the Doctrines of Intuitive

Knowledge of Wang and Spinoza

In Section 5.1, I will explore the epistemology of Neo-Confucianism. I will focus on Wang's concept of the investigation of things, and his doctrine of intuitive knowledge.

In Section 5.2, I will explore the epistemology of Spinoza and highlight Spinoza's own doctrine of intuitive knowledge. In Section 5.3, I will argue that there is a parallelism between the structures of Wang's doctrine of intuitive knowledge and Spinoza's doctrine of intuitive knowledge.

5.1 The Theory of Knowledge of Neo-Confucianism

The epistemology of Chinese philosophy arrived at its peak in Neo-Confucianism, especially in the hands of Chu and Wang. In Section 5.1.1, I will demonstrate that Chu unfolds his theory of knowledge through his explanation of the concept of the investigation of things. Wang, as Chu's rival, proposes a new explanation of the concept of the investigation of things. Following that, in Section 5.1.2, I will argue that Wang developed an idealistic approach towards Neo-Confucian epistemology through his doctrine of intuitive knowledge. Neither Chu nor Wang focuses entirely on the theory of knowledge itself, and what they bear in mind is that knowledge is the means for moral self-cultivation (Fung, 1953, p. 562). It is important for us to be aware of this point from the beginning.

The starting point of Neo-Confucian epistemology is the *Great Learning*. The *Great Learning* is one of the Four Books, and its original text is one chapter of the *Book of Rites*, one of the Five Classics of classical Confucianism⁹⁹. The *Great Learning* is believed to be the work of *Tseng Tzu* (曾子, 505- c.436 B.C.), one of Confucius' disciples. As such, the basic thought of the *Great Learning* is attributed to the teachings of Confucius himself even though it was written after the death of Confucius. It is a very short¹⁰⁰ but marvelous piece in the history of Chinese philosophy. Chu picked it out from the *Book of Rites*, re-edited it in accordance with his own understanding of the text, and finally promoted it as one of the Four Books. Chu edited and wrote commentaries on the *Great Learning* throughout his career. Chu's commentary itself became one of the core parts of his philosophy. Moreover, Chu's commentary (alongside his commentaries upon the *Analects*, the *Book of Mencius*, and the *Doctrine of the Mean*) became the standard answers in examinations for the state civil service from 1313 until 1905 in China.

5.1.1 The Concept of the Investigation of Things

One of the main thoughts of the epistemology of Neo-Confucianism lies in the concept of the so-called 'Ko-Wu' (格物) in the *Great Learning*. The term 'Ko-Wu' is a combination of the two basic words 'Ko' (格) and 'Wu' (物). In the Chinese grammar,

⁹⁹ De Bary (2009) claims that the Four Books are the *New Testament* of Confucianism where the Five Classics are the *Old Testament* of Confucianism.

¹⁰⁰ The work as a whole is around 1750 words long in the original Chinese, and only around 200 words for its core part.

the former is a verb, and its meaning is variable in different contexts. Chu reads it as 'to investigate', and argues further that 'to investigate' means 'to study thoroughly'. The latter is a noun, and its literal meaning is 'things'. Consequently, Chu interprets the term '*Ko-Wu*' as 'the investigation of things'.

The '*Ko-Wu*' is the first step of moral cultivation in the text of the *Great Learning*. The whole process of moral cultivation has eight steps arrayed in a gradational order; (1) investigating things, (2) extending knowledge, (3) being sincere of will, (4) rectifying the mind, (5) cultivating the self, (6) regulating the family, (7) ordering the state, (8) pacifying the world. Following this gradational order, it is clear that the extension of knowledge (the second step) builds upon the investigation of things (the first step), and that they are two distinct steps. Chu believes that '[when] things are investigated, knowledge is extended' (Chan, 1963, p. 86).

According to Chu, knowledge in the concept of 'the extension of knowledge' refers to the *Li* of things. Chu claims the following:

Only by investigating the thing and arriving at the thing itself can the principle [*Li*] of the thing be known completely. When the principle of the thing is known completely, our knowledge of it is extended and focused. (Huang, 1978, p. 138)

Here it is clear that to investigate things is to study the *Li* of things thoroughly. Knowledge cannot be extended except through investigating things. In other words, the acquisition of knowledge lies in the investigation of things. Chu believes that a

thorough study of the *Li* of things through investigation leads to the extension of knowledge, and that it would not be possible to extend knowledge without such a thorough investigation of things. Therefore, Chu's approach of epistemology is empirical.

As the rival of Chu, Wang is the main representative of the School of the Mind of Neo-Confucianism, and his philosophy represents another, final, peak of Neo-Confucianism. Wang's philosophy became more popular than Chu's orthodox philosophy and dominated China for nearly 150 years after Wang's death (Chan, 1963, p. 654). Wang criticizes Chu's doctrine of the investigation of things as follows:

What Chu Hsi meant by the investigation of things is "to investigate the principle [*Li*] in things to the utmost as we come in contact with them" This means to apply one's mind to each individual thing and look for principle in it. This is to divide the mind and principle into two. To seek for the principle in each individual thing is like looking for the principle of filial piety in parents. If the principle of filial piety is to be sought in parents, then is it actually in my own mind or is it in the person of my parents? If it is actually in the person of my parents, is it true that as soon as the parents pass away the mind will lack the principle of filial piety? What is true here is true of all things and events. From this we know the mistake of dividing the mind and principle into two. (Wang, 1963, pp. 98-9)

Here Wang accuses Chu's doctrine of dividing the mind and *Li* into two and argues that

this is not coherent with the core belief of Neo-Confucianism, i.e. that *Li* is One¹⁰¹. Wang's argument seems persuasive as far as the example of filial piety is concerned¹⁰². However, Wang cannot generalize his argument to all things. Wang's interpretation of Chu's doctrine of the investigation of things is only partly correct. For Chu, *Li* lies not only in things external to the mind but also *in* the mind. In fact, Chu maintains that the *Li* in man's mind and the *Li* in external things are one and the same. For awaking the *Li* in the mind, Chu argues that one should investigate things external to the mind, and this is an empirical approach. It is unfair to accuse Chu of dividing the mind and *Li* into two merely on the basis of Chu's proposal of investigating of things external to the mind and looking for the *Li* of things.

Wang's attack upon Chu's thought is one aspect of his argument. Another aspect of Wang's argument is to establish his own doctrine of the theory of knowledge. Wang's epistemology derives from his new interpretation of the *Great Learning*. Wang's method is to rephrase the concept of 'Ko-Wu' itself in the *Great Learning*. Whereas Chu considers the word 'things' (the Chinese word 'Wu') to refer to things and affairs, which are objective and independent of the mind, Wang considers it to refer to events, in which

¹⁰¹ Also see Huang (1978, p. 143).

¹⁰² Lee (1987) argues that Wang's logic in this argument is flawed. According to Lee (1987), even though the *Li* of filial piety actually does not lie in parents, it is not necessary to conclude that the *Li* of filial piety lies in the mind because it is also possible that the *Li* of filial piety lies elsewhere, such as 'in the Platonic world' (Lee, 1987, p. 32). However, it is a basic fact that the metaphysical framework of Wang (and almost every Neo-Confucian, including Chu) is monistic, and the thought of dualism, such as Platonism, does not have its place in Neo-Confucianism. As such, Lee seems to misunderstand Wang's metaphysics in this criticism.

the mind is involved. An event involves not only the object outside but also the subject inside. Wang himself has his definition of things as follows:

A thing is an event. For every emanation of the will there must be an event corresponding to it. The event to which the will is directed is a thing. (Wang, 1963, p. 279)

Since a thing is defined as an event towards which the will is directed, and the will is one function of the mind, there can be nothing completely external to the mind. This is the meaning of Wang's slogan, '*There is Nothing External to The Mind*'. Wang believes that it is not possible for anything to exist separately from the mind. Here, one of the biggest differences between Chu and his rival, Wang, is revealed. 'Things' are transformed from objective things and affairs, in Chu's concept of the investigation of things, to events, towards which the will is directed and with which the mind is involved, in the hands of Wang.

Wang's new interpretation of the concept of '*Ko-Wu*' is founded on new definitions of not only the word '*Wu*', but also the word '*Ko*'. For Chu, the word '*Ko*' refers to investigation, and this interpretation became orthodox. In contrast, Wang argues that it should refer to rectification as follows:

To investigate is to rectify. It is to rectify that which is incorrect so it can return to its original correctness. To rectify that which is not correct is to get rid of evil, and

to return to correctness is to do good. This is what is meant by investigation. (Wang, 1963, p. 279) ¹⁰³

For Wang, in order to acquire the *Li* it is not necessary to investigate things external to the mind because the mind itself holds the *Li*. The *Li* is embodied *a priori* in the mind in its entirety somehow. The mind knows the *Li* clearly, but it may be blocked or distorted by surplus desires. It is also not necessary, for Wang, to investigate the *Li* in the mind since the *Li* is always there as it is. The method of acquiring the *Li* is nothing more than dispelling surplus desires in order to restore the original state of the mind: this is the meaning of ‘*Ko*’ as rectification. One of Wang’s favorite analogies is that the mind is like a mirror, and surplus desires are like specks of dust stuck on the mirror. What we need to do is to sweep away the dust, and the mirror will be clear. Rectifying the mind is similar to sweeping away dust on a mirror. The *Li* itself will show simultaneously once surplus desires are rectified. Therefore, it is better for Wang to interpret the word ‘*Ko*’ (格) as ‘to rectify’. Wang emphasizes not the investigation of the *Li* in things external to the mind, but the rectification of the surplus desires in the mind.

With the combination of Wang’s new definitions of the two Chinese words ‘*Ko* and ‘*Wu*’, the concept of ‘*Ko-Wu*’ in the hands of Wang means to rectify the mind, in contrast

¹⁰³ Cf. ‘To investigate is to correct [Cheng]. To correct what is incorrect is called restoring correctness; to correct what is incorrect is called dispelling evil; restoring something to correctness is called nourishing it. This is investigation.’ (Huang, 1978, p. 149)

to the orthodox interpretation of the investigation of things in the hands of Chu. Whereas Chu maintains that one extends the knowledge of the *Li* of things by the investigation of things, Wang argues that one reclaims the knowledge of the *Li* of events, which are innate in the mind, by rectifying the surplus desires in the mind.

5.1.2 Wang's Doctrine of Intuitive Knowledge

Chu maintains that to extend knowledge is to attain new knowledge, and that there is a gradual order between the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge. In contrast, since the concept of the investigation of things was interpreted in a new way by Wang, the concept of the extension of knowledge has different implications. In fact, rectifying the mind and extending knowledge are two different aspects of the same thing in Wang's doctrine: they are not two different steps in the gradual order of moral self-cultivation and social and political practices, as Chu proposes. In the example of the mirror, the mirror becomes clear immediately when the dust is swept away. They happen at the same time. As with his concept of the investigation of things, Wang also has a new explanation of the concept of the extension of knowledge. For Wang, extending knowledge is to extend so-called *Liang-chih* to events. *Liang-chih* is the core concept of Wang's philosophy. Wang discusses the concept as follows:

The sense of right and wrong is knowledge possessed by men without deliberation and ability possessed by them without their having acquired it by learning. It is what we call innate knowledge [*Liang-chih*]. This knowledge is inherent in the

human mind whether that of the sages or of the stupid person, for it is the same for the whole world and for all ages. (Wang, 1963, pp. 166-7)

Here the concept of *Liang-chih* refers not only to men's innate knowledge without deliberation but also to men's inborn ability that does not need to be acquired through learning.

The term '*Liang-chih*' consists of two basic Chinese words: *Liang* (良), which has the literal meaning of 'the good' in Chinese, and *Chih* (知), which has the literal meaning of 'knowledge' in Chinese. The term incorporates these literal meanings, i.e. 'the good knowledge'. However, due to its varied applications and rich implications, the term itself cannot be easily translated accurately into English. Since Wang (1916) systematically introduced Wang's philosophy to the Western world, *Liang-chih* has generally been known as 'intuitive knowledge'. Cady (1928) and Fung (1953) followed this translation. However, Wing-tsit Chan, a specialist of the philosophy of Wang, provided a new translation of *Liang-chih* as 'innate knowledge' (Chan, 1960; Chan, 1962; Chan, 1963; Wang, 1963). Thereafter, Chan's new translation became popular due to his huge influence on the study of Wang's philosophy. It is also worth noting that Iki (1961) translates it as 'innate knowledge of the good'. Every translation has its advantages and disadvantages. These advantages and disadvantages will be revealed further in due course. Briefly speaking, the translation 'innate knowledge' highlights the metaphysical commitments of Wang's doctrine of *Liang-chih*. The translation 'intuitive knowledge' highlights its epistemological commitments, and the translation

‘innate knowledge of the good’ highlights its moral commitments.

In this thesis I shall use the translation ‘intuitive knowledge’, and it will be used throughout except in some citations in which other translations have been used in their original texts. My reason for this is that the most important value of Wang’s doctrine of *Liang-chih* lies in its new approach towards the epistemology of Neo-Confucianism, and the term ‘intuitive knowledge’ highlights this approach.

The term ‘*Liang-chih*’ itself was not first used by Wang, but rather by Mencius, who is well-known for proposing the doctrine of the Goodness of Human Nature. According to *Mencius* (7A: 15), ‘[the] ability possessed by men without their having acquired it by learning is innate [intuitive] ability, and the knowledge possessed by them without deliberation is innate [intuitive] knowledge’ (Chan, 1963, p. 80). Here, Mencius emphasizes not only men’s intuitive knowledge without deliberation but also intuitive faculty without learning. As such, for Mencius, intuitive knowledge and intuitive faculty have an intimate relationship and cannot be discussed separately. Wang’s concept of intuitive knowledge inherits both Mencius’ concept of intuitive knowledge and his concept of an intuitive faculty, and combines them into an integrated concept¹⁰⁴.

For Wang, the term ‘*Chih*’ (knowledge) in the doctrine of ‘*Chih-chih*’ (the extension of knowledge) in the *Great Learning* is the same as the term ‘*Liang-chih*’ (intuitive knowledge) in the *Book of Mencius*, and the extension of knowledge should, therefore,

¹⁰⁴ The integration of intuitive knowledge and intuitive faculty further supports us a foundation to understand Wang’s doctrine of the unity of knowledge and action, and I will explore this point in Chapter 8.

be comprehended as the extension of intuitive knowledge to events. In other words, Wang grafts the thoughts of the *Book of Mencius* onto his interpretation of the *Great Learning*, and forms a new doctrine of the extension of knowledge himself (Chan, 1963, p. 656). Wang proposes that the conception of knowledge in the doctrine of the extension of knowledge refers to his concept of intuitive knowledge. This sounds a little bit odd, and some further explanations are needed for us to understand Wang's doctrine of intuitive knowledge.

Firstly, intuitive knowledge is *a priori*. To say that intuitive knowledge is *a priori* is also to say that intuitive knowledge is identical with the *Li* in the mind at the ontological level, and that it belongs to everyone. According to Wang, intuitive knowledge is inherent in the mind of not only the sages but also the stupid people. Intuitive knowledge, as the essence of the mind, is the same for all men throughout the entire world and through all ages. Wang argues that not only adults, but even infants, know to love their parents and to respect their brothers and sisters (Wang, 1963, p. 76). Everyone has intuitive knowledge from birth.

Moreover, intuitive knowledge does not change. In Chu's doctrine of the extension of knowledge, new knowledge will be attained through the investigation of things. By contrast, in Wang's doctrine of the extension of knowledge, knowledge, as intuitive knowledge, is not widened since intuitive knowledge does not change. Wang claims that '[people] cannot add or subtract even an iota from the original substance of innate knowledge [intuitive knowledge]' (Chan, 1963, p. 683)¹⁰⁵. In other words, an

¹⁰⁵ Cf. 'The original nature of the intuitive faculty from the very beginning cannot have the least added

experiential practice could not have any influence on intuitive knowledge itself. In the example of a mirror, whatever we do to sweep out the dust that sticks onto the mirror, the mirror itself does not change. In other words, for Wang, to extend knowledge is not to attain new knowledge, but to reclaim innate knowledge which was already embodied in the mind. The mirror itself is clear, and the action of sweeping away the dust cannot add to its clearness. What we can do is to recover the clearness of the mirror. Wang argues that '[the] extension of knowledge is not what later scholars [Chu and his followers] understand as enriching and widening knowledge' (Chan, 1963, p. 665).

Finally, intuitive knowledge also refers to the knowledge of good and evil at the moral level. With respect to this point, Wang's intuitive knowledge is, in fact, referring to what Mencius meant by our sense of right and wrong as follows:

This innate knowledge of the good [intuitive knowledge] is what Mencius meant when he said, "The sense of right and wrong is common to all men." The sense of right and wrong requires no deliberation to know, nor does it depend on learning to function. This is why it is called innate knowledge [intuitive knowledge] (*ibid.*).

Here, Wang is citing Mencius' account of our sense of right and wrong to interpret his intuitive knowledge¹⁰⁶. According to Mencius, 'a man without the feeling of right and

or taken away from it' (Wang, 1916, p. 237)

¹⁰⁶ It is a Chinese academic tradition to cite classical texts to introduce a new doctrine owing to the fact that classical texts have considerable authority in ancient China.

wrong is not a man.... the feeling of right and wrong is the beginning of wisdom' (Chan, 1963, p. 65). The sense of right and wrong is endowed to every man by *Tian* and it is a part of the original nature of the mind. The sense of right and wrong corresponds to the knowledge of good and evil. In other words, for Mencius, the sense of right and wrong seems to be conscience. That Wang understands his intuitive knowledge as the knowledge of good and evil discloses its moral characteristic. Every man possesses the knowledge of good and evil, even an inferior man because 'although an inferior man may have done all manner of evil, when he sees a superior man he will surely try to disguise this fact, concealing what is evil and displaying what is good in himself' (Chan, 1963, p. 665). Wang's thought of intuitive knowledge as the knowledge of good and evil is summarized in one of his famous *Four Axioms*¹⁰⁷: intuitive knowledge is to know good and evil.

In short, intuitive knowledge is *a priori* and unchangeable. At the moral level, intuitive knowledge refers to the knowledge of good and evil. Wang's doctrine of the extension of knowledge aims not to enrich knowledge itself but rather to extend intuitive knowledge to events.

To summarize, the theory of knowledge of Neo-Confucianism and all its basic

¹⁰⁷ Wang's famous *Four Axioms* (四句教) is one of the best summaries of his philosophy and is as follows:

'In the original substance of the mind there is no distinction between good and evil. When the will becomes active, however, such distinction exists. The faculty of innate knowledge [intuitive knowledge] is to know good and evil. The investigation of things is to do good and remove evil.' (Chan, 1963, pp. 686-7)

concepts, the investigation of things, the extension of knowledge, intuitive knowledge, the knowledge of good and evil, etc., derive from the classical texts of classical Confucianism. At the same time, two rival branches of the theory of knowledge were developed in the hands of the two main representatives of Neo-Confucianism, through their rival interpretations of the concepts of the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge respectively. As the representative of the School of *Li*, Chu advocates an empirical approach, i.e. the extension of knowledge through the investigation of things. It is a gradual process from the investigation of things to the extension of knowledge. Contrastingly, as the representative of the School of the Mind, Wang advocates an idealistic approach, i.e. to investigate things is to rectify the mind, and the extension of knowledge is to extend intuitive knowledge to events. To rectify the mind and to extend intuitive knowledge to events are two aspects of the same thing.

5.2 Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge

Spinoza's discussion of the theory of knowledge is notoriously brief. He did not write a monograph on epistemology¹⁰⁸ and nor did he write a single chapter on epistemology in his *Ethics*. He introduced his theory of knowledge only as a supplemental piece in E2p40 Scholium 2, and through several propositions about intuitive knowledge in Part Five of the *Ethics*. This parsimonious discussion itself, on the one hand, highlights the inherited character of Spinoza's epistemology, which he takes from the Western tradition of epistemology. On the other hand, it reveals that Spinoza's epistemology must be understood in its full context as part of his radical metaphysics and moral philosophy. In Section 5.2.1, I will introduce Spinoza's basic theory of knowledge. In Section 5.2.2, I will focus on his doctrine of intuitive knowledge.

5.2.1 Spinoza's Basic Theory of Knowledge

According to E2p40 Scholium 2, there are three kinds of knowledge: imagination [*opinion vel imagination*]; reason [*ratio*]; and intuition [*scientia intuitiva*] (E2p40 Scholium 2, p. 267). Spinoza provides the following example with which to illustrate them:

Three numbers are given; it is required to find a fourth which is related to the third

¹⁰⁸ Due to the influence of Descartes's *Discourse on Method*, Spinoza's first philosophical piece, the *TIE*, seems to tend to consider epistemology as its main content. Unfortunately, it is unfinished and the *TIE*, in its current short form, mainly focuses on an ethical discourse in the style of autobiography.

as the second to the first. Tradesmen have no hesitation in multiplying the second by the third and dividing the product by the first, either because they have not yet forgotten the rule they learnt without proof from their teachers, or because they have in fact found this correct in the example of very simple numbers, or else from the force of the proof of Proposition 19 of the Seventh Book of Euclid, to wit, the common property of proportionals. But in the example of the given numbers 1, 2, 3, *everybody* can see that the fourth proportional is 6, and all the more clearly because we infer in one single intuition the fourth number from the ratio we see the first number bears to the second (E2p40 Scholium 2, pp. 267-8, my italics)¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. This example in the *TIE* is as follows:

Three numbers are given; a fourth is required, which is to the third as the second to the first. Here tradesmen generally tell us that they know what to do to find the fourth number, for they have not forgotten the procedure which they merely learned without proof from their teachers. Others formulate a universal axiom from their experience with simple numbers when the fourth number is self-evident, as in the case of the numbers 2, 4, 3, 6. Here they find that when the second is multiplied by the third and the product is divided by the first, the answer is 6. Seeing that the same number is produced which they knew to be the proportional number without going through the procedure, they conclude that this procedure is always a good way to find the fourth proportional. But *mathematicians*, because of the force of the demonstration of Proposition 19 of Book 7 of Euclid, know what numbers are proportional to one another from the nature and property of proportion, which tell us that the product of the first and fourth numbers is equal to the product of the second and third. However, they do not see the adequate proportionality of the given numbers, and if they do see it, they see it not by the force of that proposition but intuitively, without going through any procedure. (*TIE*, p. 8, my italics)

It is noteworthy that in the *Ethics*, his mature writing, Spinoza states in his example that everybody can have intuitive knowledge, whereas in the *TIE*, his less mature writing, he states that only mathematicians can have such knowledge in the same example. As such, according to Spinoza's mature opinion, at least some intuitive knowledge is not privileged, and everyone can grasp it.

Spinoza favors this example: it occurs not only in the *Ethics*, which is arguably his most mature work, but also in the *TIE*, his earliest work, and in his *KV*. With this simple mathematical example Spinoza illustrates the differences among his three kinds of knowledge. The first two ways of finding the answer form knowledge of the first kind, imagination. The third way forms knowledge of the second kind, reason. The last way forms knowledge of the third kind, intuition. It is clear in this case that Spinoza's threefold classification of knowledge rests on the method of knowledge being acquired. Knowledge of the first kind is acquired through the experiential method, and knowledge of the second kind is acquired through the rational method. Knowledge of the third kind is acquired through the intuitive method.

Spinoza's threefold classification of knowledge in the *Ethics* has its initial fourfold classification in his *TIE*, in which knowledge of the first kind has two types. One type refers to hearsay, and another type refers to experience (*TIE*, pp. 8-9). Spinoza continued to follow this taxonomy of knowledge in his *KV*. It is interesting to note that in his *Ethics* Spinoza still divided his knowledge of the first kind into two different sub-kinds, in style with the *TIE*. The first type, hearsay, was developed into sign-based knowledge, and the second type, experience, was developed into sense-based knowledge that is 'from casual experience' (E2p40 Scholium 2, p. 267). This treatment reveals that, on the one hand, Spinoza does not forget his initial fourfold classification. On the other hand, Spinoza does not believe that there is any essential difference between the sign-based knowledge and the sense-based knowledge in the *Ethics*. For

convenience, I will consider both types of knowledge of the first kind, imagination, as being experiential knowledge hereafter.

Spinoza's taxonomy of knowledge reveals its characteristic of following the Western tradition of epistemology. The fourfold classification of knowledge has its roots in Plato, and was further developed by Aristotle, and later by various Jewish, Islamic, and Christians philosophers (Wolfson, 1934b, p. 133). However, it is not my purpose here to pursue its historical development. My interest here concerns the inner logic of Spinoza's three kinds of knowledge and the relationship between his epistemology and his metaphysics and moral philosophy.

(i) The Standard of Truth

Before we pursue Spinoza's theory of knowledge further, we should explore Spinoza's standard of truth, which is his criterion for distinguishing truth from falsity. We will see that Spinoza employs an internal standard of truth rather than an external one. In Spinoza's terminology, the smallest unit of the human mind is an idea, and he says that 'by idea I understand a conception of the Mind' (E2 Definition 3, p. 244). Therefore, we can say that Spinoza equates "knowledge" with ideas. Traditionally speaking, the truth of an idea in the mind has been considered to lie in the fact that it corresponds with its external object, a corresponding ideatum. The agreement of an idea with its ideatum was considered to be the so-called external standard of truth. However, Spinoza gave up this external standard, and turned to the so-called internal standard of truth grounded in the intrinsic characteristics of a true idea. Spinoza claims that the truth of

an idea is not related to its external object (or state of affairs) but rather to its intrinsic characteristics (E2 Definition 4, p. 244). In the same place, Spinoza emphasizes that ‘I say “intrinsic” so as to exclude the extrinsic characteristics’ (E2 Definition 4 Explication, p. 244). Once one turns to the internal standard, it seems that there must be some ideas that are *a priori* true themselves, or at least one idea that is *a priori* true, since otherwise the problem of an infinite regress would emerge. That is, the truth of an idea needs to be verified against falsity through the truth of the second idea, and the truth of the second idea needs, further, to be verified against falsity through the truth of the third idea, and so on *ad infinitum*. This kind of skepticism has no place in Spinoza’s philosophy because ‘just as light makes manifest both itself and darkness, so truth is the standard both of itself and falsity’ (E2p43 Scholium, p. 269). According to Spinoza, ‘truth.... needs no sign’ (*TIE*, p. 11). Moreover, ‘truth reveals both itself and the false’ (Letter 76, p. 949). Furthermore, ‘truth is its own standard’ (E2p43 Scholium, p. 269). For Spinoza, a true idea does not need another idea in order to be verified: it is itself the standard of truth. Spinoza’s confidence in the truth of an idea is based on his philosophy of the nature of the human mind, and he argues that ‘[a] true idea in us is one which is adequate in God insofar as he is explicated through the nature of the human mind’ (E2p43 Proof, p. 268). A true idea has its final guarantee from God since the nature of the human mind derives from God. The problem of the nature of the relationship between God and the human mind will be developed in due course.

A further question concerns the “intrinsic characteristics” of a true idea. Spinoza does not explicitly deal with this question in his *Ethics*, but he discusses it in his *CM*. He

claims that there are two intrinsic characteristics of a true idea: '(1) that it is clear and distinct, (2) that it removes all doubt, or, in a word, that it is certain'. (*CM*, p. 187). Here it is reasonable to say that Spinoza had some inspiration from Descartes given that the *CM* was presented as an appendix to the *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*, and that Descartes introduced both clearness and distinctness as the standards of truth in his *Meditation III*.

For Spinoza, a true idea is self-evident. He does not assert that some ideas, or a unique idea, are true and can serve as the foundation of knowledge. Rather, any idea that has the intrinsic characteristics above is always true¹¹⁰.

However, it should be noted that Spinoza has his own metaphysical justification for his use of the internal standard. In Spinoza's metaphysics, God has infinite attributes, but among them man can access only the attributes of Thought and Extension. An idea is a thinking mode of the attribute of Thought of God, and the corresponding bodily mode of the attribute of Extension of God could be loosely called its ideatum. What is unique about Spinoza's metaphysics is that the attribute of Thought and the attribute of Extension insulate one another. Strictly speaking, it is impossible that there be any causal relationship between the mind and the body, not only a physical causal relationship, but also a logical causal relationship. The causal relationship exists only in the inside of an attribute. An idea causes the second idea, and the second idea causes the third idea, and so on *ad infinitum*. In the same way, a bodily mode causes the second bodily mode, and the second bodily mode causes the third bodily mode, and so on *ad*

¹¹⁰ In other words, Spinoza is not a foundationalist in epistemology.

infinitum. In the strictest sense, it is incorrect to claim that there exists a bodily mode ideatum corresponding to an idea of the thinking mode. This is why Spinoza uses the term ‘conception’ rather than ‘perception’ in his formal definition of the concept of idea: he feels that the term ‘perception’ has the implication that ‘the Mind is passive to its object’ (E2 Definitions 3, p. 244). In fact, strictly speaking, the mind does not have any relation to the body. Logically speaking, it would be wrong to try to verify an idea through its so-called ideatum, an external object, and the external standard of truth, therefore, is inappropriate for Spinoza given his core claims and commitments.

In brief, with respect to his theory of knowledge, Spinoza employs the internal standard of truth rather than the external standard. For Spinoza, the basic form of truth is a true idea. Following Descartes, Spinoza also believes that a true idea is clear and distinct. In contrast to Descartes, Spinoza believes that a true idea is the standard both of itself and falsity, and that it does not need to be verified further by another item of true knowledge. As such, a true idea is self-evident, and Cartesian skepticism has no place in Spinoza’s epistemology.

(ii) Imagination and Reason

For Spinoza, a thinking mode and its corresponding bodily mode are one and the same. They are two different aspects of the same thing. Ontologically speaking, an idea itself is its ideatum and an ideatum itself is also its idea. From this perspective, a radical consequence follows: it is impossible to say that a single idea itself is false. For example, with the statement, ‘when we gaze at the sun, we see it as some two hundred feet distant

from us', the error does not come from our conception of seeing the sun as some two hundred feet distant from us, but from the *belief* that the sun exists at such a distance from us (E2p35 Scholium, p. 264). The conception of seeing the sun as some two hundred feet distant from us itself is always true since it itself is a single idea, and this conception is isomorphic to the fact 'that the affection of our body involves the essence of the sun only to the extent that the body is affected by it' (*ibid.*). A single idea by itself is always true. The belief that the sun exists two hundred feet away from us is a *combined* false idea.

Here we arrive at another important taxonomy behind Spinoza's threefold classification of knowledge: the twofold classification of knowledge of inadequate ideas and knowledge of adequate ideas or, put simply, inadequate knowledge and adequate knowledge. Knowledge of the first kind is always of inadequate ideas whereas knowledge of the second and third kinds is always of adequate ideas. The crucial notion, then, concerns the concept of 'adequate' as used in this context. Spinoza does not explicitly answer this question but provides a definition in an indirect way when he refers to 'an adequate cause whose effect can *be clearly and distinctly* perceived through the said cause' (P3 Definitions 1, p. 278, my italics). Here, Spinoza clearly repeats his internal standard of truth.

An inadequate idea is the origin of falsity in Spinoza's epistemology. Consequently, knowledge of the first kind as inadequate knowledge is 'the cause of falsity' whereas knowledge of the second and third kinds as adequate knowledge are 'necessarily true' (E2p41, p. 268). What should be stressed here is that knowledge of the first kind is not

necessarily false: Spinoza's claim in E2p41 is merely that it is the *cause* of falsity. Turning back to the example of gazing at the sun, a man who does not have scientific knowledge of the sun could incorporate the conception in his system of knowledge and believe it to be true that the sun is two hundred feet from him. His conception of seeing the sun as being two hundred feet away is a single idea, and this conception by itself is always true. His conviction that the sun really is two hundred feet away is not a single idea but a combined idea, and this confirmation is false. His mind incorporates these fragmentary and confused ideas. As a result, his knowledge becomes inadequate and falsity follows (E2p35, p. 264). In this kind of situation, he has a tortuous and confused mind. This is why Spinoza claims that knowledge of the first kind is inadequate rather than false.

According to Spinoza, inadequate knowledge often leads to falsity. Consequently, there is a special issue of 'false knowledge' in Spinoza's epistemology. Generally speaking, knowledge is always considered to be true, and the conception of false knowledge is self-contradictory. With respect to this issue, it is worth noting that in his works Spinoza makes use of the original Latin term *cognitio*, and some scholars, such as Bennett (1984) and Garrett (2010), interpret this as 'cognition' instead of 'knowledge'. In any case, the translation as 'knowledge' is popular and well-established among Spinoza scholars. I will put this issue aside, and continually use the term 'knowledge' to refer to the Latin term *cognitio* in this thesis. What we should remember is that false knowledge is possible given Spinoza's terminology. Spinoza's real intention is to show that, on the one hand, knowledge of the first kind in the meaning

of a single idea is always true, but that, on the other hand, it is often the case that the combination of ideas lead to falsity. Therefore, Spinoza views knowledge of the first kind as inadequate rather than false whereas knowledge of the second and third kinds as always being adequate and true.

What is the criteria of truth for the first kind of knowledge given that it can be false? According to Spinoza, knowledge of the second and third kinds can help us to clarify the truth of knowledge of the first kind given that they are always true (E2p42, p. 268). In the above example of a man gazing at the sun, upon gaining scientific knowledge of the sun he will not accept the conception of seeing the sun as being two hundred feet away as a true idea into his system of knowledge, even if it is possible for him to continue seeing it as being closer than it in fact is. Rather, his old inadequate idea will be restored and become an adequate idea.

To turn to knowledge of the second kind, reason, Spinoza formally defines it as being 'common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things' (E2p40 Scholium 2, p. 267). Spinoza directly describes it as 'abstract knowledge' in Part Five (E5p36 Scholium, p. 379). Common notions are those things that 'are common to all things and are equally in the part as in the whole' (E2p38, p. 265). Any idea in the human mind is always a thinking mode, and it is also one and the same mode of a human body involved in the affection between the human body and external bodies, or among different component parts in the human body. The affections between the human body and external bodies, or among different component parts in the human body, whatever these affections are, cannot change the truth of these ideas of common notions because they

are common to all things and are equally in the part as in the whole. For Spinoza, if an idea is the idea of a mode that is common to all things and is equally in the part as in the whole, the idea will always be an adequate idea because there is necessarily a corresponding idea in the idea of God. The corresponding idea in the idea of God guarantees its eternal truth. As known in Chapter 3, there are two kinds of mode in Spinoza's metaphysical system: finite mode and infinite mode. In Spinoza's terminology, those ideas that are common to all things and that are equally in the part as in the whole are the ideas of the 'infinite mode'. Spinoza only lists a few infinite modes in his works, such as motion and rest as an infinite mode in the attribute of Extension. But Spinoza believes that they 'are the basis of our reasoning process' (E2p40 Proof, p. 267). As such, these common notions are the foundation of knowledge of the second kind.

While common notions are common throughout all things, properties are common to a group of things¹¹¹. A property refers to an affection that 'is common and proper to the human body and to any external bodies by which the human body is customarily

¹¹¹ However, Spinoza is a nominalist rather realist in a general sense. We used to talk about these things that are considered as the so-called universals, such as 'man, horse, dog, etc.' in the traditional sense (E2p40 Scholium 1, p. 267). However, Spinoza does not endorse the actual existence of these universals, and considers them as the confused notions that only exist in our mind. The so-called universals are formed only in our mind through enormous similarly affections, and 'not all men form these notions in the same way' (*ibid.*). Moreover, every man has his different image towards these universal, for example 'a different common image of man' (*ibid.*). Spinoza is considering that universals derive from knowledge of the first kind. They are not true, and do not belong to knowledge of the second kind. A universal seems similar to a common notion, but it does not have any place in Spinoza's philosophy. However, Spinoza refuses the truth of the so-called universals, and he is a metaphysical nominalist rather metaphysical realist.

affected, and which is equally in the part as well as in the whole of any of these bodies' (E2p39, p. 265). Spinoza believes that the idea of this affection in the mind is also adequate because there 'will be in God an adequate idea ... both insofar as he has the idea of the human body and insofar as he has ideas of those posited external bodies' (E2p39 Proof, p. 265). As such, knowledge of these ideas is knowledge of the properties of things.

In brief, knowledge of the first kind is inadequate knowledge and often leads to falsity. However, inadequate knowledge is not necessarily false: some instances of it are true, such as in the case of a single idea. In contrast, knowledge of the second kind, reason, and knowledge of the third kind, intuition, are always true, and are called adequate knowledge. Spinoza believes that the truth of knowledge of the first kind needs to be verified by knowledge of the second and third kinds. Common notions lie at the core of reason. From the perspective of metaphysics, they refer to infinite modes. On the one hand, common notions themselves are one form of reason. On the other hand, they are the foundation of reason. At the same time, Spinoza also accepts the concept of property, which refers to the mode in common within a group of things. Here, reason refers to the adequate ideas of the properties of things. The following table will be helpful for understanding Spinoza's epistemology:

1	Imagination	Sign-based	e.g. hearsay	Inadequate knowledge, can be false
		Sense-based	Experience	
2	Reason	Common notions		Adequate knowledge, always true
		the adequate ideas of the properties of things		
3	Intuition	God and his attributes		
		The essence of things		

Table 10 Spinoza's three kinds of knowledge.

5.2.2 Spinoza's Doctrine of Intuitive Knowledge

So far, I have focused on Spinoza's knowledge of the first kind, imagination, and his knowledge of the second kind, reason. In this section, I will turn to Spinoza's knowledge of the third kind, Intuition. Intuitive knowledge has three basic characteristics.

Firstly, intuitive knowledge 'proceeds from an adequate idea of the *formal essence* of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things' (E2p40 Scholium 2, p. 267, my italics). Spinoza repeats this definition almost verbatim and says that intuitive knowledge 'proceeds from the adequate idea of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things' in E5p25 Proof (p. 375). It is noteworthy that he asks us to look back to its definition in E2p40 Scholium 2 when

E5p25 Proof is discussed. This point reveals that Spinoza does not consider his two definitions as being different to each other in nature. In this definition, intuitive knowledge refers not only to God and his attributes, but also to the mode of God, i.e. particular things. Intuitive knowledge combines them together in a special way. This characteristic will be developed further in the next section.

Secondly, intuitive knowledge is the highest graded knowledge. When Spinoza divides knowledge into three kinds in terms of the method of acquired knowledge, he also considers them as three different grades. Consequently, Spinoza's three kinds of knowledge are also known as three grades of knowledge, such as in Joachim (1901), three stages of knowledge, such as in Wolfson (1934b), or three levels of knowledge. To use Spinoza's terminology himself, intuitive knowledge is 'the highest virtue of the mind'. With respect to the concept of virtue, Spinoza has his own understanding: '[by] virtue and power I mean the same thing' (E4 Definitions 8, p. 323). Intuitive knowledge is, then, the highest power of the mind. In turn, from intuitive knowledge 'there arises the highest possible contentment' in the sense of self-contentment (E5p27, p. 375), which Spinoza also labels 'spiritual contentment' (E5p36 Scholium, p. 379). As shown in Chapter 2, the concept of self-contentment is also involved in Spinoza's doctrine of the *Amor*. Therefore, the doctrine of intuitive knowledge can also be considered to connect to the doctrine of the *Amor* through the concept of self-contentment.

Finally, intuitive knowledge is the knowledge of the essence of things. In E5p36, Spinoza clearly states that intuitive knowledge refers to knowledge of particular things and that it is preferable to knowledge of the second kind, i.e. abstract knowledge (E5p36

Scholium, p. 379). What we have discussed is that reason is derived from common notions and the properties of things. Common notions do not 'constitute the essence of any one particular thing' (E2p37, p. 265). Therefore, knowledge of the second kind cannot tell us the essence of things; only intuitive knowledge can do this.

To summarize, on the one hand, Spinoza inherits the mainstream thoughts and the corresponding basic conceptions of epistemology of Western philosophy from Plato onwards. On the other hand, Spinoza gives these traditional thoughts and conceptions new definitions and incorporates them into his own philosophical framework. Spinoza arranges them into an ordered gradation in his theory of knowledge. Imagination, reason, and intuition are Spinoza's three kinds of knowledge. Imagination is inadequate knowledge whereas reason and intuition are adequate knowledge. Intuition is concrete knowledge whereas reason is abstract knowledge. Among them, intuition is privileged in Spinoza's theory of knowledge. It is the highest graded knowledge, from which there arises the highest possible spiritual contentment.

5.3 The Parallel Structure between the Accounts of Intuitive Knowledge of Wang and Spinoza

Spinoza's epistemology seems different, at a glance, from the epistemology of Neo-Confucianism. However, behind the apparent difference there is a parallel structure between the doctrines of intuitive knowledge defended by Wang and Spinoza. In Section 5.3.1, I will show that epistemological rationalism is their common foundation. I will then reveal the parallel structure between them in Section 5.3.2.

5.3.1 The Parallel of Rationalism as the Foundation

With respect to the metaphysical aspect, I have argued that metaphysical rationalism¹¹² is the dominant for both Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza in Chapter 3. With respect to the epistemological aspect, I will further argue that rationalism is also the dominant for them in this section.

With respect to Neo-Confucianism, we should investigate its two main rival branches. We will firstly investigate the School of *Li*. As the representative of the School of *Li*, Chu is, of course, a rationalist. As a rationalist, his epistemology has a deductive side. However, through the employment of an empirical approach and the scientific method¹¹³, Chu's epistemology also has an inductive side. As a result, some scholars,

¹¹² See Footnote 80.

¹¹³ About this point, Chan agrees with Hu who claims that 'Neo-Confucianists had the scientific spirit but not the scientific method' when Chan considers the scientific method as being a specific tradition inherited only from the ancient Greeks (Chan, 1963, p. 611). I cannot accept this view. Chu's research of natural phenomena is remarkable if we read *Chu Tzu Yu-lei* (朱子语类) seriously.

such as Hocking (1936), claim that Chu is an empiricist as well as a rationalist. I will argue, however, that this claim is not compelling. I maintain that Chu is a rationalist rather an empiricist.

Firstly, Chu believes that the *Li* of *Tian* is objective and that all things that derive from the *Li* of *Tian* are also objective. To Chu, the word ‘things’ in the concept of ‘the investigation of things’ refers to the *Li* of both things and affairs. The existence of the things and affairs is objective since the existence of the specific *Li* of both things and affairs is objective. Moreover, even if Chu believes that everything has its specific *Li*, and that empirical knowledge derives from the specific *Li*, Chu is interested in the *Li* of *Tian* that exists behind the specific *Li* of things. Furthermore, the extension of knowledge is not Chu’s final purpose in his doctrine of the investigation of things; it is only an intermediate step towards further Neo-Confucian moral and political purposes, since the eight steps (investigating things, extending knowledge, being sincere of will, rectifying the mind, cultivating the self, regulating the family, ordering the state, pacifying the world) are considered to be a gradationally ordered process. Chu does not shape his theory of knowledge itself into an independent area of philosophy. In short, it is safe to say that Chu is a rationalist embracing the empirical approach but not an empiricist of the modern Western kind (such as David Hume).

Turning to Wang, the case is more complicated, and more exploration is needed. As the representative of the School of the Mind, Wang is considered as a Neo-Confucian idealist by the mainstream scholars of the philosophy of Wang, such as Wang (1916), Cady (1928), Fung (1953), Chan (1963), Wang (1963). However, here I will argue that

he is nevertheless a rationalist rather than an idealist.

The concept of *Li* is the core concept of Neo-Confucianism, and its popular slogan is that '*Tian is Li*'. The School of the Mind completely accepted this basic creed of Neo-Confucianism, and at the same time developed the further slogan '*The Mind is Li*', from which the School of the Mind attains its epithet. If we combine these two slogans, then the mind is in fact identical with *Tian*¹¹⁴. Wang inherits the basic thoughts of the School of the Mind, and has the further slogan that '*There is Nothing External to The Mind*'. This slogan seems to imply that the mind alone exists. As such, Wang is regarded as an idealist¹¹⁵.

An idealistic reading seems to acquire support from the passage below:

Man is the mind of heaven [*Tian*], and earth; mind is the lord and master of heaven, earth, and all things; mind is heaven. In saying 'mind' you have thereby suggested heaven, earth and all things, and have done it in an intimate, simple way (Wang, 1916, p. 425)

Here the mind is considered to be identical with *Tian*, and embraces all things. However, Wang also claims that '[the] mind of man is heaven [*Tian*] and it is the abyss, for there is nothing that does not belong to *the original nature* of the mind (Wang, 1916, p. 154,

¹¹⁴ Cats are animals, and dogs are animals, but cats are not dogs. However, $a = b$, and $c = b$, then $a = c$. These two slogans should be understood in the latter way. Dr. Christopher Bartley reminded me of this point.

¹¹⁵ For example, Liu (1983) claims that Wang is at the very least an objective idealist.

my italics). In other words, when Wang says that the mind is *Tian*, he is saying that the original nature of the mind is the *Li* of *Tian*.

A famous story that is often cited to demonstrate Wang's philosophy as idealistic is as follows:

The Teacher [Wang] was roaming in Nan-chen. A friend pointed to flowering trees on a cliff and said, “[You say] there is nothing under heaven [*Tian*] external to the mind. These flowering trees on the high mountain blossom and drop their blossoms of themselves. What have they to do with my mind?” The Teacher said, “Before you look at these flowers, they and your mind are in the state of silent vacancy. As you come to look at them, their colors at once show up clearly. From this you can know that these flowers are not external to your mind. (Wang, 1963, p. 222¹¹⁶)¹¹⁷

Wang's friend is challenging his slogan that ‘*There is Nothing External to The Mind*’. Wang seems to defend his slogan successfully since his answer is that these flowers are not external to the mind. This answer has the implication that whatever we encounter

¹¹⁶ The same in Chan (1963, p. 685). Also, its Chinese version in Wang (2014, p. 122) (*Wang Yang-ming Ch'uan-chi* [*Wang Yang-ming's Complete Works*], Shanghai Classic Publishing House (王阳明全集 2014, 上海古籍出版社))

¹¹⁷ Cf. [O]ne day with a friend who pointed to the blossoming trees on the mountain and asked, “Since there is nothing in the world outside of the mind, what is the relationship between those blossoming trees deep within the mountain and my mind?” Mr. Wang Yang-ming replied: “Before you had seen those blossoms, those blossoms and your mind belonged to the same void. When you saw the blossoms, you immediately recognized the color of the blossoms. This is knowledge; the blossoms do not exist outside of your mind”. (Huang, 1978, pp. 149-150)

in our daily life is not external to the mind. If so, this is of course a kind of idealism.

Now, let us take a closer look at this story. To face his friend's challenge, Wang concedes that the flowers on the mountain are in a state of silent vacancy before we look upon them. The state of silent vacancy cannot be understood to be nonexistence, otherwise the consequence would be that there is no existence external to the mind given that the flowers in this story can be replaced by any other objective item. The conclusion that there is no existence external to the mind is surely not Wang's intention. In Wang's answer, the mind is also in the state of silent vacancy before the flowers are seen. If the state of the flowers' silent vacancy can be understood as nonexistence, the mind itself should also be understood as being nonexistent. If so, there would be nothing to exist at all before we look at the flowers, and this is absurd. According to Wang's doctrine of the investigation of things, the thing in this story refers not to the flowers on the mountain alone, but to the event in which the flowers are involved. Upon the occurrence of the event, the *Li* of the event of the flowers being seen is revealed in the mind. Or, to use Wang's language, the colors of the flowers show up at once. When Wang claims that these flowers are not external to the mind this is, in fact, to claim that the *Li* of the event of the flowers being seen is not external to the mind. It does not mean that these flowers themselves only exist in the mind. Therefore, the story of the mountain flowers cannot prove that Wang is an idealist.

To return to the example of filial piety, what Wang emphasizes is that the *Li* of filial piety does not lie in parents. However, it is very clear that the fact that the *Li* of filial piety does not lie in parents does not imply in any way that parents themselves do not

exist. The ‘thing’ in this example is referring to the filial piety towards parents rather than parents themselves. What Wang argues is that the *Li* of filial piety does not exist as external to the mind. Therefore, the example of filial piety also cannot prove that Wang is an idealist.

When Wang claims that there is nothing external to the mind, he is claiming that there is no event external to the mind because a thing is an event towards which the will of the mind is directed. In the example of the flowers, what the will of the mind is directed towards is the event of seeing the flowers. In the example of filial piety, what the will of the mind is directed towards are the events involved in taking care of our parents in the appropriate way. Wang is not an idealist in the Berkeleyan sense, where the slogan is that ‘*to be is to be perceived (esse est percipi)*’. What Wang’s slogan really means is that the mind embodies all the *Li* of things, and it does not follow from this that external objects exist necessarily through the mind. It is still possible that external objects exist independently of the mind, and that the *Li* in the mind agrees with the *Li* in the objects outside. It is not right to say that Wang’s position is idealism.

Cartesian skepticism has no analogue in Confucianism. The concept of *Tian* is the core concept of Confucianism, and the *Li* of *Tian* became the core concept of Neo-Confucianism. For Neo-Confucians, *Li* is One and it never changes. As was discussed in Chapter 3, according to the metaphysics of Neo-Confucianism, our universe and all of the things in it are made up of two parts: the unchangeable *Li* and the changeable *Ch’i*. The existence of the *Li* of *Tian* is objective, and the existence of all things that are derived from the *Li* of *Tian* are also objective. This metaphysical framework is accepted

by all Neo-Confucians, and also by Wang. Following this point, Neo-Confucianism has another nickname: The Song-Ming School of the *Li*¹¹⁸. Therefore, it is not possible for Wang to have a position similar to Berkeley's subjective idealism, or Kant's epistemological idealism¹¹⁹. Wang is a rationalist, but we could say that he advocates an idealistic approach in his epistemology.

To conclude, rationalism is the dominant aspect of Neo-Confucianism, not only in its branch of the School of *Li*, but also in its branch of the School of the Mind. With respect to Spinoza's epistemology, in a parallel way, rationalism is also the dominant aspect.

Since it is a matter of orthodox opinion to say that Spinoza is a rationalist, I will not pursue this conclusion too much. I just want to emphasize one important point here. According to Spinoza, intuitive knowledge refers not only to knowledge of the essence of things but also to knowledge of God. This point could be understood in two ways. Firstly, 'knowledge of God' could mean knowledge that God possesses, i.e. 'God's knowledge'. In other words, God's knowledge is intuitive. Men have three kinds of knowledge, but God only has intuitive knowledge. It is impossible for God to have knowledge of the first kind since God's knowledge is always adequate. It is also

¹¹⁸ The School of *Li* in the Song dynasty and Ming dynasty.

¹¹⁹ Briefly speaking, epistemological idealism has two positions. The first position is to say that whatever we know is of a mental nature, and the second position is to say that knowledge itself is of a mental nature. Neither of these positions are to be found in Wang's philosophy. I will not pursue this point any further.

impossible for God to have rational knowledge since ‘God does not know things in abstraction, nor does he formulate general definitions of that sort’ (Letter 19, p. 809). Therefore, God does not have any knowledge other than intuitive knowledge. Spinoza’s God is, then, intellectual. Joachim is right to conclude that ‘[the] Real is the Intelligible and the intelligible the Real...the Real qua Intelligible---the Real as it is in truth---is a single, all-comprehensive, and immanent Substance’ (Joachim, 1940, p. 39). Secondly, ‘knowledge of God’ could mean the knowledge that men have of God or, put simply, men’s knowledge of God. In this way, men’s knowledge of God is also intuitive. I will pursue this point further in the next section.

In brief, when intuitive knowledge refers to the knowledge of God, it can be understood in two ways: on the one hand, God is intellectual and God’s knowledge is intuitive and, on the other hand, men’s knowledge of God is intuitive, and God’s intellect is knowable to us. We see here that Spinoza is one of the most optimistic epistemologists in the history of philosophy. He accepts all three of the basic epistemological methods and believes that God is knowable to men through intuition. Spinoza’s doctrine of intuitive knowledge, and especially his notion of the intuitive knowledge of God, is the foundation with which we can support the view of Spinoza as a rationalist in terms of his epistemology.

To summarize, rationalism is the dominant aspect of the theory of knowledge for both Spinoza and Neo-Confucians. This conclusion is the orthodox position for both Spinoza and the School of *Li* of Neo-Confucianism. Chu, as a representative of the School of *Li*, is not an empiricist, but rather a rationalist who employs an empirical

approach for his theory of knowledge. Arguably, Wang, as a representative of the School of the Mind, is also not an idealist, but rather a rationalist who employs an idealistic approach for his theory of knowledge. Wang's doctrine of intuitive knowledge is the foundation of his theory of knowledge. In a parallel way, Spinoza's doctrine of intuitive knowledge is the foundation of his own theory of knowledge.

5.3.2 The Parallel of Intuitive Knowledge as the Idealistic Approach

In reaching our conclusion that Wang is ultimately a rationalist rather than an idealist, Wang's theory of intuitive knowledge plays no role beyond demonstrating his idealistic approach towards epistemology. For Wang, intuitive knowledge is the original nature of the mind. Wang claims that '[in] heaven and earth, there is but one nature, one *Li*, one intuitive faculty [intuitive knowledge]' (Wang, 1916, p. 440). Here, intuitive knowledge is identical not only with the original nature of the mind, but also with the nature of *Tian* and all things through the concept of *Li*. Wang believes as follows:

[Intuitive knowledge] makes us acquainted with all things. It is spirit, it is Heaven, it is the Supreme Ruler. It is truly the spiritual intelligent substance of heaven and earth, the mysterious wonderful manifestation of man. (Wang, 1916, p. 269)

Since it is the nature of men, intuitive knowledge must be endowed to men *a priori* by *Tian* and possessed innately. From this point, the term 'innate knowledge', which is

proposed by Chan and his followers, will be a better translation for the term *Liang-chih*.

As shown Section 5.1.2, Wang inherits Mencius' belief that human nature is good. Wang believes that the good nature of men is intuitive knowledge. Wang emphasizes this point as follows:

Tung Lo-shih [one disciple of Wang] returned from rambling about. When he saw his Master [Wang], he said, "today I saw a strange thing." The Master asked, "what was it?" He answered, "I saw that all the people on the streets were sages." The Master said, "This is a commonplace thing. Why should it be considered strange?"
(Iki, 1961, p. 33)

Wang is emphasizing that not only a sage but also an ordinary, or even ignorant, person has intuitive knowledge, and thus that is inborn and innate.

Moreover, intuitive knowledge is the nature not only of men but also of all things: everything has intuitive knowledge. Wang's argument is bold:

The innate knowledge [intuitive knowledge] of man is the same as that of plants and trees, tiles and stone. Without the innate knowledge inherent in man, there cannot be plants and trees, tiles and stones. This is not true of them only. Even Heaven and Earth cannot exist without the innate knowledge that is inherent in man. For at bottom Heaven, Earth, the myriad things, and man form one body. The point at which this unity manifests in its most refined and excellent form is the clear

intelligence of the human mind. Wind, rain, dew, thunder, sun and moon, stars, animals and plants, mountains and rivers, earth and stones are essentially of one body with man. It is for this reason that such things as the grains and animals can nourish man and that such things as medicine and minerals can heal diseases. (Chan, 1963, p. 685)¹²⁰

This citation has rich implications. Wang defines his concept of intuitive knowledge as identical to the concept of *Li* of Neo-Confucianism given that (1) the intuitive knowledge of the mind is the intuitive knowledge of *Tian* and all things; (2) intuitive knowledge is the foundation of the existence of *Tian* and all things, since they cannot exist without it; and (3) All things form the great unity due to their intuitive knowledge. Here, Wang inherits the metaphysical framework of Neo-Confucianism, and his concept of intuitive knowledge follows the orthodox concept of the *Li* of Neo-Confucianism¹²¹.

¹²⁰ Cf. ‘The intuitive knowledge of man is the intuitive knowledge of plants and stones. If plants and inanimate objects lack the intuitive knowledge of man, they cannot be plants and inanimate objects.... If heaven and earth lack the intuitive knowledge of good which man has, they cannot exist. But heaven, earth, and all things are ab initio one with man. The point at which this great unity (the absolute) manifests intelligence in its highest and best form is called the little intelligence and cleverness of man’s mind. Wind, rain, dew, thunder, sun, moon, heavenly bodies, animals, plants, mountains, rivers, earth and stones, are of one structure with man. It is for this reason that the grains, animals and other things are able to nourish man’. (Wang, 1916, pp. 168-9)

¹²¹ Moreover, applying the terminology of Western philosophy, Wang is stating his metaphysics in the way of so-called panpsychism. Here Wang’s argument is very naive, but his thought is very clear. All

Furthermore, intuitive knowledge unifies the subjective and the objective. According to Wang's definition of a thing as the event towards which the will of the mind is directed, Wang seems to rebuild an idealistically subjective world in addition to the existentially objective world. On the one hand, he has the bold slogan that there is nothing external to the mind. On the other hand, it should also be noted that the human mind is discussed alongside all other things (such as wind, rain, dew, thunder, sun and moon, stars, animals and plants, mountains and rivers, earth and stones) in the citation above, and that we cannot find any implication that external and objective things could be reduced to the mind itself. In other words, he acknowledges the existence of all external items, such as wind, rain, dew, thunder, sun and moon, stars, animals and plants, mountains and rivers, earth and stones¹²². Therefore, Wang seems to create a gap between his subjective world inside and the objective world outside.

However, the notion of two independent worlds¹²³ has no place in either Wang's

things are essentially of one body with man. Wang does not, of course, mean that all things have the same biological or chemical (or even physical) structure, but rather that they have the same *metaphysical* structure: that is, the dual-aspect structure of the same reality with *Li* and *Ch'i* together. 'No mind, no body; no body, no mind', as Wang believes (Cady, 1928, p. 270). The difference that can be found between men and all other things is not due to differing kinds, but in differences of degree within the same kind. Men's mind manifests the highest and greatest intelligence but all things, even a stone, have intuitive knowledge. Wang seems to try to deal with a common challenge against panpsychism, i.e. whether or not a stone can be said to have a mind or not. Wang could answer that a stone does not have a mind to the same degree we find present as human consciousness but that it does have a mental aspect: its intuitive knowledge, or its *Li*. If this panpsychist interpretation is correct, then a more significant conclusion follows: Wang is not an idealist given that panpsychism is considered a replacement for idealism.

¹²² This point further supports the above conclusion that Wang is not an idealist.

¹²³ Sometimes they are referred to as the 'earthly world' and the 'heavenly world', and sometimes

philosophy in particular, or in Confucianism in general. In fact, there is no gap in Wang's philosophy. Wang's subjective world is also the objective world: they are one and the same. At the level of metaphysics, intuitive knowledge refers to the essence of *Tian* and all things. At the level of epistemology, intuitive knowledge refers to the *Li* of *Tian*, and also the *Li* of things. At the moral level, Wang's intuitive knowledge has the characteristic of action. Intuitive knowledge refers to not only internal intuition, but also practical action. Action in practice must be undertaken in the objective world. It is not possible to carry out practical action anywhere other than in the objective world: what can put in practice in the subjective world alone is meditation at most. This point will be developed further in Chapter 8.

In brief, Wang employs an idealistic approach in his epistemology, in which intuitive knowledge is at the core. With respect to Spinoza's epistemology, I am claiming that, in a parallel way, intuitive knowledge is once again at the core of his approach. This claim can be defended by considering the following three points.

Firstly, we cannot understand *Natura Naturans* through any knowledge except intuitive knowledge. In Spinoza's metaphysics, God and his attributes belong to *Natura Naturans* or, to use Spinoza's own terminology, under the form of eternity. He claims that no experience can help us acquire knowledge of those things whose existence is not different from their essence (Letter 10). For Spinoza, God's existence is not different from his essence. Moreover, Spinoza also claims that the existence of attributes cannot be apprehended through experience. Therefore, *Natura Naturans*

they are referred to as the subjective world and the objective world.

cannot be apprehended through experience. Knowledge of the first kind cannot help us to understand Ultimate Reality under the form of eternity.

If knowledge of the first kind cannot help us to understand *Natura Naturans*, what about knowledge of the second kind, i.e. reason? According to Spinoza, reason refers to knowledge of common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things. He holds all such knowledge to be abstract. Under such a definition of reason, in which common notions refer to infinite modes, the properties of things refer to those properties which are shared by the human body and by its corresponding external object. It is reasonable to say that the 'things' in the conception of 'the properties of things' refers to those things of finite modes. They, then, are referring to the level of modes. Therefore, reason, as knowledge of such modes, belongs to the knowledge of *Natura Naturata*. Since reason refers only to the knowledge of *Natura Naturata*, *Natura Naturans* also cannot be comprehended by reason.

Consequently, knowledge of the third kind, intuition, is the only available knowledge through which we can understand *Natura Naturans*, the Ultimate Reality under the form of eternity. Spinoza confirms that intuitive knowledge 'depends on the mind as its formal cause insofar as the mind is eternal' (E5p31, p. 376). As proof, Spinoza explains further that the mind 'conceives nothing under a form of eternity... except insofar as the mind is eternal' (E5p31 Proof, p. 376). Therefore, the eternity of the mind necessarily involves *Natura Naturans*, i.e. 'under the form of eternity'. In short, *Natura Naturans*, or the Ultimate Reality under the form of eternity, can only be comprehended through intuition. This fact highlights the importance of the intuitive knowledge of

Spinoza's epistemology.

Spinoza elaborates by claiming that intuitive knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things. Here the attributes of God belong to *Natura Naturans*, and knowledge of such must be intuitive knowledge. According to Spinoza, '[the] human mind has an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God' (E2p47, p. 271). As known in Chapter 3, the eternal and infinite essence of God is the idea of God, which is identified as God's intellect. To say that the human mind has an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God is to say that the human mind has the intuitive knowledge of the idea of God. Moreover, 'God's infinite essence and his eternity are known to all' (*ibid.*)¹²⁴. To say that God's infinite essence and his eternity are known to all is also to say that the idea of God is known to all. To say that the idea of God is known to all is to say that men's intuitive knowledge of God is innate and *a priori*¹²⁵.

¹²⁴ Spinoza also claims that 'the human mind is part of the infinite intellect of God' (E2p11 Corollary, p. 250). To say that the human mind is part of the infinite intellect of God is, in a loose way, to say that men's intuitive knowledge is part of God's knowledge.

¹²⁵ Historically, there has been considerable debate on the question of whether or not God is knowable. One dominant opinion is that God is not knowable by us, or that at most God is only partly knowable by us. Spinoza touches directly on this issue in Chapter VII of his *KV*, and he lists three opinions: (1) 'it is impossible to give a true or right definition of God, because.... there can be no definition except *per genus et differentiam*, and as God is not a species of any genus'; (2) 'God cannot be defined, because the definition must describe the thing itself and also positively.... but our knowledge of God cannot be of a positive'; and (3) 'God can never be proved a prior, because he has no cause' (*KV*, p. 56). Spinoza disagrees with these opinions and ultimately rejects them all. Contrastingly, Spinoza is radically optimistic with respect to men's cognitive power.

Secondly, according to its definition, intuitive knowledge also refers to the essence of things. The ‘thing’ that is in the concept of ‘the essence of things’ in the definition of intuitive knowledge must belong to *Natura Naturata*, otherwise the definition would not make sense. Therefore, intuitive knowledge also refers to the essence of things of *Natura Naturata*. I will not continue to pursue this point here given that we have already discussed this in Section 5.2.

Thirdly, in its definition, Spinoza claims that intuitive knowledge is the knowledge which proceeds from the knowledge of *Natura Naturans* to the knowledge of the essence of things of *Natura Naturata*. According to its definition, intuitive knowledge is the knowledge that unifies *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata* in the meaning of metaphysics¹²⁶. Intuitive knowledge is directed from *Natura Naturans* to *Natura Naturata* or, in other words, from God to his modes. In his *TIE*, Spinoza also claims that ‘in fact knowledge of the effect is nothing other than to acquire a more perfect knowledge of the cause’ (*TIE*, p. 25). At the same time, Spinoza makes a special note to emphasize the importance of the knowledge of God himself, and says that ‘we cannot properly understand anything of Nature without at the same time extending our knowledge of the first cause, or God’ (*ibid.*). If we consider God as the cause, and a mode as its effect, then intuitive knowledge is the kind of knowledge that concerns a

¹²⁶ In Chapter 3, I argued that *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata* are unified through the concept of the idea of God in the meaning of metaphysics. A further question is whether intuitive knowledge is identical with the idea of God in the meaning of epistemology. I will explore this point in the next section.

cause and its effect. In short, with respect to epistemology, God and his modes are unified through intuitive knowledge.

To summarize, Wang advocates an idealistic approach towards his epistemology. Wang's doctrine of intuitive knowledge is at the core of his epistemology. In a parallel way, Spinoza advocates an idealistic approach towards his epistemology and intuitive knowledge is also at the core of his own epistemology. Intuitive knowledge is the only knowledge that can help us to understand *Natura Naturans*. Moreover, intuitive knowledge is also the only knowledge that can help us to understand the essence of things of *Natura Naturata*. Furthermore, with respect to epistemology, intuitive knowledge is the knowledge which unifies *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata*.

Chapter 6

The Neo-Confucian Approach towards the Comprehension of Spinoza's Doctrine of Intuitive Knowledge

In Section 6.1, I will explore in detail what I call a puzzle of the doctrine of intuitive knowledge. A Neo-Confucian approach to the puzzle can be developed by appealing to the parallel structure between the Wang's doctrine of intuitive knowledge and Spinoza's doctrine of intuitive knowledge. In Section 6.2, I will argue that the Neo-Confucian approach can help us solve the puzzle.

6.1 A Puzzle of the Doctrine of Intuitive Knowledge

It is *prima facie* puzzling to see that Spinoza, as a rationalist, puts intuitive knowledge in the privileged position of his epistemology. The puzzle is strengthened further by Spinoza's notoriously parsimonious treatment of his theory of knowledge. Spinoza scholars have raised many problems concerning the doctrine of intuitive knowledge. For example, a problem concerning how to understand the relationship between reason and intuition¹²⁷, a problem concerning how many instances of intuitive knowledge

¹²⁷ Curley (1973b), Allison (1987), Wilson (1996), and Soyarslan (2013), argue that Spinoza's distinction between reason and intuition stems from the cognitive object. Whereas reason refers to common notions and adequate ideas of properties of things, intuitive knowledge refers to the essence of a singular thing, which cannot be known through reason. By contrast, some other scholars hold an opposite opinion. Parkinson (1954) and Yovel (1990; also Yovel, 1993) argue that the distinction between reason and intuitive knowledge is only due to the cognitive method, and believe that reason also covers the essence of a singular thing. Sandler (2005) and Nadler (2006) agree with Yovel's opinion.

exist¹²⁸, and a problem concerning whether intuitive knowledge involves any reference¹²⁹. These are problems that Spinoza scholars have disputed. I will not pursue these existing problems since they are not directly related to my focus here. Instead, I will raise a new problem. I believe that it is a crucial problem to tackle so that that we can correctly understand not only of the doctrine of intuitive knowledge itself but also of its relationship with both the doctrine of the eternity of the mind and the doctrine of the *Amor*. Briefly speaking, my problem concerns the possibility of intuitive knowledge, which I will now explore in detail.

In order to introduce this problem in Spinoza's doctrine of intuitive knowledge properly, let us briefly turn to Wang's doctrine. Wang's idealistic approach is founded upon his new explanation of the term 'things' in the concept of the investigation of things. In the hands of Chu, the term 'things' in the concept of the investigation of things refers to things and affairs. In the hands of Wang, this is replaced with a conception of things as the events in which the mind is involved. What I see in my reading of Spinoza's epistemology presents a similar situation that has so far not been noticed in Spinoza scholars.

Knowledge always has its cognitive objects, and the term 'thing', in its traditional usage, seems also to be employed by Spinoza to refer to an external cognitive object. Spinoza repeatedly employs the term 'thing' in his definitions of the three kinds of knowledge. Imagination includes sense-based knowledge in which we sense '*individual*

¹²⁸ See Curley (1973b, p. 54)

¹²⁹ See Curley (1973b, p. 28). By contrast, see Parkinson (1954, p. 184).

objectsin a fragmentary and confused manner' (E2p40 Scholium 2, p. 267, my italics). Imagination also includes sign-based knowledge: 'from having heard or read certain words we call *things* to mind and we form certain ideas of them similar to those through which we imagine *things*' (E2p40 Scholium 2, p. 267, my italics). Reason refers to 'common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of *things*' (E2p40 Scholium 2, p. 267, my italics). Intuition refers to 'the essence of *things*' (E2p40 Scholium 2, p. 267, my italics), or the 'knowledge of particular *things*' (E5p36 Scholium, p. 379, my italics). It might seem right to say that the term 'thing' is used by Spinoza to refer to the cognitive object external to the mind. However, this would be a serious misunderstanding of Spinoza's conception of a 'thing'.

In order to explain the misunderstanding, let us begin with Spinoza's own example as follows:

[The] idea, e.g., of Peter which constitutes the essence of Peter's mind, and on the other hand the idea of Peter which is in another man, say Paul. The former directly explicates the essence of Peter's body, and does not involve existence except as long as Peter exists. The latter indicates the constitution of Paul's body rather than the nature of Peter; and so, while that constitution of Paul's body continues to be, Paul's mind will regard Peter as present to him although Peter may not be in existence. (E2p17 Scholium, p. 257)

According to Spinoza, it is necessary for God to have an idea of Peter, as the essence

of Peter, through which Peter, as a mode of God, comes to exist and sustains its existence. The idea of Peter refers to the essence of Peter's mind, which is also the essence of Peter's body in Spinoza's terminology because they are one and the same. At the same time, another person, such as Paul, could have an idea of Peter when Peter is cognised as his external cognitive object. What Spinoza is arguing here is that Paul's idea of Peter is an affection of Paul's body itself when Peter's body is presented to Paul, rather than Peter's body directly. Even if Paul knows Peter very well: if they are twins for instance, Spinoza argues that Paul's idea of Peter still refers to the constitution of the body of Paul himself rather than Peter's directly. This example reveals that, just as with Wang's terminology, where the term 'things' in the concept of 'the investigation of things' refers to 'events in which the mind is involved', in Spinoza's theory of knowledge the term 'things' refers to similar events rather than to cognitive objects alone. In other words, if we follow Spinoza's terminology then the traditional usage of the term 'things' should be discarded.

In Spinoza's philosophy, the term 'thing' is closely linked with the term 'image'. Spinoza makes a clear definition of the term 'image' as referring to 'those affections of the human body' of which the ideas represent external bodies as present to us, though they do not recall the figure of things (E2p17 Scholium, p. 257). An image is an affection of the human body through which external bodies are presented to us. Spinoza believes that external bodies cannot themselves be presented directly to us in an image, due to the fact that our bodies are themselves always involved in the image. This is why Paul's idea of Peter indicates the constitution of Paul's body rather than the nature of

Peter in the above example.

Moreover, even if an image has its cause in an external cognitive object, it is not necessarily dependent on the existence of the external cognitive object for its existence. If Paul is alive, Paul's idea of Peter could continue to exist even if Peter does not. Therefore, 'the ideas that we have of external bodies indicate the constitution of our own body more than the nature of external bodies' (E2p16 Corollary 2, p. 256).

In short, a 'thing' does not refer directly to an external cognitive object but to a cognitive subject's affection or, in Spinoza's terminology, an image in which the cognitive object is presented and with which the cognitive subject is itself involved. This point is strikingly similar to Wang's definition of the term 'thing' as the event towards which the will is directed. In a similar way, we can consider Spinoza's image as an event in which the cognitive subject and the cognitive object are both involved but whose essence is a modification of the body of the cognitive subject.

Spinoza's thought here has its roots in his metaphysics, i.e. in his thought that there is a special relationship between the mind and the body. An idea in the mind is also the idea of a mode of the body, and they are one and the same. It seems reasonable for us to say that to some degree we know the world through our own bodies in Spinoza's epistemology because 'the human mind perceives the nature of very many bodies along with the nature of its own body' (E2p16 Corollary 2, p. 256). Again, the human mind does not perceive any external body as actually existing except through the ideas of affections of its own body (E2p26, p. 261). In Spinoza's philosophy, the human body is far more complicated than we can imagine. According to Spinoza, any property of a

thing that a human being might encounter has a corresponding counterpart in the human body. Furthermore, the counterpart itself has its own mental counterpart, an idea, that constitutes the essence of the human mind. The potentiality of the human mind and body is, then, tremendous. This is why Spinoza believes that ‘the mind is more capable of perceiving more things adequately in proportion as its body has more things in common with other bodies’ (E2p39 Corollary, p. 266). Again, he claims that ‘whose body is capable of the greatest amount of activity has a mind whose greatest part is eternal’ (E5p39, p. 380). The activity of the body relates directly to the part of the mind that is eternal. Therefore, the body seems to become the gate of the mind (Wetlesen, 1978).

Current works on Spinoza’s epistemology ignore this important foundation, and is misled by Spinoza’s usage of the term ‘thing’ in his definition of the three kinds of knowledge. Fortunately, this misunderstanding does not incur serious problems regarding knowledge of the first and second kinds due to their nature. Knowledge of the first kind, imagination, contains the notion of image in its definition. An individual object does not present itself to our mind directly, but rather is presented to us through our senses and through which we imagine the individual object. To turn to the example of gazing at the sun provided earlier, imagination refers to the conception of seeing the sun as two hundred feet away from us in our mind. To use Spinoza’s terminology, the conception is an image of the body. This idea of the mind has its corresponding mode of the body, which is an affection of our body involving the sun only to the extent that our body is affected by the sun (E2p35 Scholium, p.264). Moreover, knowledge of the

first kind is considered inadequate knowledge in Spinoza's epistemology. It is not necessary for us to accept that the sun is two hundred feet away even if the conception is accepted as imagination. We can accept that, when referring to the sun in this way, imagination does not introduce us to knowledge of the sun in an accurate way.

Turning to knowledge of the second kind, reason, this misunderstanding once again does not incur serious problems. Reason refers to common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things. Common notions refer to those things that are common to all things because 'all bodies agree in certain respects' (E2 lemma 2, p. 252), such as, motion and rest as an infinite mode of the attribute of Extension. Common notions are the same between the cognitive subject and the cognitive object since they are common to all things. Therefore, knowledge of common notions as one part of reason is not affected by the misunderstanding of the concept of a 'thing'.

The concept of the properties of things in the definition of reason needs to be explained further, but the situation is similar. In contrast to common notions that are common to all things, there are some common *between the human body and some external bodies*, not all things. That which is common here is the properties of the external bodies (E2p39 Proof, p. 265). A property is common to the human body as well as to the thing considered as the external cognitive object. Therefore, knowledge of the properties of things as one part of reason is also not affected by the misunderstanding of the concept of a 'thing'.

In brief, with respect to the concept of common notions, the content of knowledge is common between the cognitive subject and the external cognitive object since it is

common to all things. With respect to the concept of the properties of things, the content of knowledge is also common between the human body and the corresponding external bodies. Therefore, the misunderstanding of the concept of a 'thing' itself does not bring serious problems in the case of reason.

So far, what we have seen is that the misunderstanding of the concept of a 'thing' does not affect our comprehension of knowledge of both the first kind and the second kind in Spinoza's epistemology. However, in the case of knowledge of the third kind, the situation is completely different. To return to the example of Paul and Peter, Spinoza tells us that Paul's idea of Peter indicates only the constitution of Paul's body rather than the nature of Peter. My interpretation is that the concept of 'the nature of Peter' in the quotation above is the same as the concept of 'the essence of Peter', given that Spinoza often uses the concept of essence and the concept of nature interchangeably. Therefore, it seems impossible for Paul to have knowledge of the essence of Peter.

What applies to Peter here could also apply to any other external object. As such, it seems impossible for Paul to have any knowledge of the essence of external objects. Turning to the above example of gazing at the sun, it seems impossible for us to have knowledge of the essence of the sun. However, according to Spinoza, intuitive knowledge refers to knowledge of the essence of things. This seems to imply that intuitive knowledge would not be accessible for us. Moreover, the essence of a thing is something that makes the thing what it is, and without which the thing cannot come into existence, or sustain its existence. It is also a general supposition that the essences of things are different from each other, since otherwise they would be the same thing.

In the example of Paul and Peter, Paul's intuitive knowledge of Peter is supposed to be the essence of Peter. Since the essence of Peter is unique, as is the essence of Paul, how could Paul 'have' the essence of Peter given Paul's idea of Peter indicates only the constitution of Paul's body rather than the nature of Peter? In the example of gazing at the sun, the intuitive knowledge is supposed to be the essence of the sun itself. A man, as the cognitive subject, is unique, as is the essence of the sun. How could the man have the essence of the sun? This is what I will call *the problem of possibility*.

Some very radical answers to this problem can be found in an indirect way. Lewis argues that Spinoza denies that 'you will find these [essences] *out there* in things' (Lewis, 2001, p. 250, italics in original). Lewis has two supportive points for his argument. The first point is that matter is infinitely divisible in Spinoza's metaphysics. This point is coherent with Spinoza's denial of atomism, which I discussed in Chapter 3. The second point is that matter is homogeneous in Spinoza's metaphysics. This point is coherent with Spinoza's thought that there is only one substance. A thing is only a mode of the substance and, as such, all things are homogeneous. Lewis concludes that '[the] homogeneity of matter means that there are no different natures inherent within it', and '[the] infinitude of matter means there is no smallest part in which natures can reside' (Lewis, 2001, p. 250). According to Lewis, 'matter' is another name for the extended substance in Spinoza's philosophy. Lewis believes that 'matter *has no nature at all*' in Spinoza's philosophy (Lewis, 2001, p. 249)¹³⁰. My problem concerns how the

¹³⁰ Lewis does not seem to completely deny the possibility that a thing has an essence, but he believes that such an essence is only a perceived construct (Lewis, 2001, p. 249). Here, Lewis is taking a risk in considering Spinoza an idealist, a position that I have rejected. Lewis's argument could be partly right

essences of things may be known and is, therefore, an epistemological issue. Lewis's opinion is that there is no essence of things at all, which has ontological implications. For Spinoza, a thing has its nature due to the fact that in God there is necessarily an idea which expresses the essence of the thing (E5p23 Proof, p. 374). At the very beginning of the *Ethics*, Spinoza's first definition involves the concept of essence when he tells us that '[by] that which is self-caused, I mean that whose essence involves existence, or that whose nature can be conceived only as existing' (E1Definition 1, p. 217)¹³¹. Afterwards, Spinoza uses the concept of essence again and again in his *Ethics*. Without the concept of the essence of things, Spinoza's philosophy would collapse immediately. Therefore, Lewis's opinion should be rejected since it is inconsistent with Spinoza's whole framework of philosophy.

Joachim claims that [to] know the *essence* of a 'single thing' is to recognize that there is no *thing* in question at all (Joachim, 1940, p. 41, italics in original). Joachim's answer is confused to some degree, and he seems to imply that a single thing, as a mode of God, is absorbed into God himself, and that its distinctive character disappears once its essence is known. Here Joachim's position is similar to Hampshire's position on Spinoza's doctrine of the mind's eternity, which I discussed and rejected in Chapter 4. We can also read Joachim's claim in another way: the essence of a single thing cannot

if he were willing to accept my Neo-Confucian approach. Lewis could legitimately claim that the body of a thing which is made out of matter can be said to have no essence itself, since its essence refers to an idea of the thing, which is in the idea of God. This is similar to the Neo-Confucian thought that the *Ch'i* of a thing does not have its own essence: the essence of the thing lies in the *Li* of the thing.

¹³¹ Here, it is worth noting that Spinoza uses the concept of essence and the concept of nature interchangeably, and this point supports my reading of the example of Peter and Paul above.

be understood except on the level of *Natura Naturans*, under the form of eternity. Any mode is God himself under the form of eternity, and its essence, then, is the essence of God. Following this logic, it seems that the essence of all things is the same, and they are the essence of God, i.e. the idea of God, itself. If so, Joachim's answer is not far away from Lewis's answer.

Spinoza emphasizes that the 'more we understand particular things, the more we understand God' (E5p24, p. 374). Here, I read "understanding of particular things" to be "understanding the *essence* of particular things" given that in the proof of E5p24 Spinoza refers to E1p25, in which he emphasizes the point that 'God is the efficient cause not only of the existence of things but also of their *essence*' (E1p25, p. 232, my italics). In the corollary of E1p25, Spinoza tells us that particular things are nothing but 'modes wherein the attributes of God find expression in a definite and determinate way' (*ibid.*). Any mode is always unique in terms of expressing God in its own definite and determinate way, and the essence of a particular thing should be understood as being unique. Spinoza also implies the uniqueness of the essence of a particular thing in E5p24. Otherwise it would not seem to be necessary to understand particular things at the maximal possibility in order to understand God. Therefore, if my understanding of Joachim's claim is right, Joachim's claim should also be rejected. In short, the thought that the essence of things is the same should also be rejected.

To summarize, upon confirmation of the uniqueness of the essence of particular things, *the problem of possibility* reappears. Peter's essence is unique, and Paul's essence is unique. Spinoza claims that Paul's idea of Peter only indicates the

constitution of Paul's body rather than the nature of Peter. The problem, then, is how Paul could have intuitive knowledge of Peter's essence. Lewis (2001) and Joachim (1940) help us to highlight *the problem of possibility* from different perspectives, but they do not help to resolve the issue. A different approach must be proposed.

6.2 The Neo-Confucian Approach

We have revealed that the reason for *the problem of possibility* is, at least in part, due to Spinoza's specific use of the term 'things' in his theory of knowledge, and that this is similar to Wang's specific explanation of the term 'things' in the concept of the investigation of things in Neo-Confucianism. We have also seen that Spinoza's doctrine of intuitive knowledge and Wang's doctrine of intuitive knowledge are in many ways parallel with each other. These observations suggest that it seems possible to develop a Neo-Confucian approach to resolve *the problem of possibility*.

Let us return to the example of Peter and Paul again. The idea of Peter as the essence of Peter exists because in God there is an idea of Peter. The idea of Peter is a mode of the idea of God, and the idea of God incorporates the idea of Peter. What we have seen is that when Paul has intuitive knowledge of Peter, Paul's mind must incorporate the idea of Peter. In the same way, any external object exists because in God there is an idea of the external object, which is derived from the idea of God. Paul's mind must incorporate the idea of the external object when Paul has intuitive knowledge of it. The more intuitive knowledge Paul has, the more Paul's mind is similar to the idea of God. Following this pattern, the mind of Paul becomes more and more similar to the idea of God. A conjectural conclusion is that intuitive knowledge is identical with the idea of God. If this conjecture is compatible with Spinoza's theory of knowledge, *the problem of possibility* will be resolved. This conclusion would probably surprise members of the circle of Spinoza scholars, but a similar conclusion is well-known in Wang's philosophy.

One of the core thoughts in Wang's doctrine is that intuitive knowledge is identical

with the *Li* of *Tian*. I argued in Chapter 3 that the concept of the *Li* of *Tian* in Neo-Confucianism is parallel to the concept of the idea of God in Spinoza's philosophy. The question now concerns whether or not we can also identify Spinoza's intuitive knowledge with the idea of God in Spinoza's epistemology. To answer this question, we must return to Wang's thoughts once more, and understand the real meaning of the identification in Neo-Confucianism.

On the one hand, intuitive knowledge, as the essence of the mind, is identical with the *Li* of *Tian* in Wang's philosophy. In the mirror analogy, which is one of Wang's favorite analogies, the mind is like a mirror, through which all the specific *Li* in the universe can be revealed. All of the specific *Li* are identical with the *Li* of *Tian*. In another analogy, Wang considers the mind to be an abyss, in which any specific *Li* can be reflected. The abyss, then, is another name for the *Li* of *Tian*. Given the intuitive knowledge of a sage is identical with the *Li* of *Tian*, a sage is a man whose mind is enlightened and able to penetrate into the *Li* of *Tian* throughout.

In a parallel way, in my reading of Spinoza's epistemology, intuitive knowledge can be understood as identical with the idea of God. The identification can be comprehended at two different levels: *Natura Naturata* and *Natura Naturans*.

With respect to *Natura Naturans*, I have shown, in Section 5.3.2, that knowledge of God is intuitive knowledge. According to Spinoza's metaphysics, the idea of God is one (E2p4, p. 246) and is God himself (E2p7 Scholium, p. 247). Therefore, intuitive knowledge is identical with the idea of God.

Intuitive knowledge can also be understood to be identical with the idea of God in a

special way with respect to *Natura Naturata*. In the example of Peter and Paul, Paul's intuitive knowledge of Peter refers to the essence of Peter, and the essence of Peter is nothing but an idea of Peter in God. The idea of Peter in God is nothing more than the idea of God itself when the idea of God is expressed in the mode of the idea of Peter. Therefore, Paul's intuitive knowledge of Peter could be said to be identical to the idea of God when the idea of God is expressed in the mode of the idea of Peter. Paul's intuitive knowledge of any other external object could also be said to be identical to the idea of God when the idea of God is expressed in the mode of the idea of the external object. From this perspective, Paul's intuitive knowledge is identical with the idea of God. This conclusion concerning Paul's intuitive knowledge could apply to any other intuitive knowledge. Once we have intuitive knowledge of a thing we, in fact, know God in the way that God is expressed as that thing. We would know God in a great many ways if we had intuitive knowledge of a great many things. Therefore, 'the more we understand particular things, the more we understand God' (E5p24, p. 374). The more we have intuitive knowledge, the more we know God. We know God in a maximal degree once we have intuitive knowledge in a maximal degree. It seems reasonable for us to say that intuitive knowledge is identical with the idea of God. To put it simply, the intuitive knowledge of the mind is identical with the idea of God when the idea of God is expressed in a mode to which intuitive knowledge is directed.

The remaining question is whether the mind's intuitive knowledge can be identical with the idea of God under the unity of *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata*. In Chapter 3, I argued that *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata* are unified through the

idea of God in a metaphysical sense. In Section 5.2.3, I argued that intuitive knowledge is the knowledge that unifies *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata* in an epistemological sense. Therefore, it is natural to conclude that intuitive knowledge is identical with the idea of God.

Spinoza supplies some further proofs of this conclusion. In the *Ethics*, he claims that ‘the essence of our mind consists solely in knowledge [intuitive knowledge], whose principle and basis is God’ (E5p36 Scholium, p. 379). On the front cover of the *TTP*, he quotes a well-known verse of the Bible (1 John 4:13), ‘Through this means we recognise that we remain in God, and God remains in us---that He gave to us from His own Spirit’ (*TTP*, p. 387). The notion that we remain in God is one of the core thoughts of Spinoza’s metaphysics: a man is just a mode of God. The notion that God remains in us is to say, according to traditional theology, that through the Spirit of Jesus, God remains in the mind of the human being. Believing in the concept of a transcendent God, theologians believe that the Holy Spirit is distinct from the human mind even though it is believed that the Holy Spirit often lives in the believer’s mind. In other words, according to orthodox Christianity, the mind cannot be identified with the Holy Spirit. However, Spinoza’s God is an immanent God, and the spirit is nothing but another name for the mind in Spinoza’s philosophy. In the *Ethics*, Spinoza tells us that ‘the spirit of Christ’ is the idea of God (E4p68 Scholium, p. 355). To say that God remains in us is to say that the idea of God remains in us. The idea of God that remains in us is nothing but the mind’s intuitive knowledge: the mind’s intuitive knowledge is,

then, identical with the idea of God¹³².

Again, in the last part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza boldly claims that the wise man is ‘conscious, by virtue of a certain eternal necessity, of himself, of God, and of things’ (E5p42 Scholium, p. 382)¹³³. ‘Conscious, by virtue of a certain eternal necessity’ refers to the mind’s intuitive knowledge: the wise man, then, has intuitive knowledge of himself, of things, and of God. Spinoza is implying that the mind can have intuitive knowledge of itself. The intuitive knowledge of Paul is the essence of Paul that is the idea of Paul in God, which is to say the idea of God expressed in the mode of Paul. Paul will know himself if he has intuitive knowledge of himself, and Paul’s mind will be identical with the idea of God when it is expressed in the mode of Paul. Intuitive knowledge will be the essence of the mind itself if the mind has intuitive knowledge of itself. As the essence of the mind intuitive knowledge is, then, the knowledge of oneself¹³⁴. Since intuitive knowledge is identical with the idea of God, the knowledge of oneself will be the knowledge of God. Unfortunately, Spinoza does not discuss this possibility directly. However, I believe that Spinoza’s philosophy has this implication

¹³² In the *TTP*, there is a hint towards the possibility of the mind’s identity with the idea of God. Spinoza claims that Jesus communicated with God mind-to-mind whereas Moses communicated with God face-to-face. The term mind-to-mind implies that Jesus knows God in the full degree, or that the mind of Jesus is identical with the idea of God. Does Spinoza permit Jesus as an exception because Spinoza believes that Jesus is the Son of God? Spinoza does not make the claim, and he seems to consider Jesus as the wisest man (the wisest sage), rather than God himself.

¹³³ Here the wise man is the same as the sage in Neo-Confucianism. See Section 8.3.3.

¹³⁴ Know thyself.

in the end part of the *Ethics*. In short, under the unity of *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata*, intuitive knowledge can be comprehended as identical with the idea of God in Spinoza's philosophy.

It is noteworthy that the identification cannot be understood as being of an ontological nature. As I have argued, Wang is not an idealist in the same sense as Berkeley, and the identification of intuitive knowledge with the *Li* of *Tian* is not an ontological identification. Intuitive knowledge does not itself decide the existence of external cognitive objects. The existence of external cognitive objects is dependent on the *Li* of *Tian*, not on intuitive knowledge of the mind. To return to the example of the mountain flowers, the existence of the flowers does not derive from the mind's intuitive knowledge. In the example of filial piety, the existence of parents does not derive from the mind's intuitive knowledge. The existence of all things in the universe is derived from the *Li* of *Tian*, and not from intuitive knowledge. Such existence is objective and independent of intuitive knowledge.

In a parallel way, even if such an identification is possible in Spinoza's philosophy, it is also not an ontological identification. According to Spinoza, the mind's intuitive knowledge is the essence of the mind, and at the same time the essence of the body also. The body is always a finite mode of God. The idea of Peter is the essence of Peter's mind, and it is a mode of the idea of God. The idea of Paul is the essence of Paul's mind, and it is another mode of the idea of God. The human mind, as a finite mode of God, cannot be identical with the idea of God in the sense of being infinite. Spinoza's metaphysics has a mode-substance structure, and as such it is impossible for Spinoza

to identify intuitive knowledge with the idea of God in the ontological sense.

To summarize, once we get the conclusion of that the mind's intuitive knowledge is identical with the idea of God, *the problem of possibility*, a puzzle of Spinoza's doctrine of intuitive knowledge, is resolved. However, the identification is epistemological rather than ontological. In short, intuitive knowledge is a traditional concept that Spinoza inherits, but he defines it in a unique way. Spinoza grounds it in his original metaphysics, through which his ethics becomes possible. I will explore the ethical aspect of Spinoza's philosophy in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

The Parallel between the Concept of *Jen* and the Concept of the *Amor*

After investigating the metaphysical aspect in Chapter 3 and 4, and the epistemological aspect in Chapter 5 and 6, it is now time to focus on our topic: the concept of the *Amor*. In Section 7.1, I will show that the concept of *Jen* is at the core of the ethics of Confucianism. In Section 7.2, I will show that the concept of the *Amor* is at the core of Spinoza's ethical philosophy. In Section 7.3, I will conclude that the concept of *Jen* in Confucianism is parallel with the concept of the *Amor* in Spinoza.

7.1 The Concept of *Jen* in Confucianism

The concept of *Jen* is one of the backbone concepts of Confucianism. Its importance has been recognised throughout the development of Confucianism from the classical era through the Neo-Confucian era until modern times. In Section 7.1.1, I will explore the connotations of the Chinese term *Jen*. In Section 7.1.2, I will introduce Confucius' concept of *Jen* given that Confucius himself put the concept of *Jen* at the core of his doctrines. In section 7.1.3, I will investigate the development of the concept of *Jen* from the classical era to the Neo-Confucian era.

7.1.1 The Chinese Term '*Jen*'

The Chinese character of *Jen* (仁) is the combination of two more basic characters, man (人) and two (二). Etymologically speaking, *Jen* embodies the thought of how two men

should treat each other. In other words, as a simple ideogram, the character of *Jen* itself reveals its first important connotation, embodying an ideal ethical norm. With respect to this connotation, *Jen* has been translated as benevolence, perfect virtue, goodness, magnanimity, altruism, man-to-manness ... etc. Moreover, an epigraphic study reveals that the character of *Jen* has an alternative pre-imperial ideogram (忞), which is the combination of two more basic characters, body (身) above with mind/heart (心) below. This alternative ideogram shows its moral connotation, which can be understood in two different ways. The most common understanding is that a man of *Jen* is a man who always has other people in his mind/heart, and that he loves others. With respect to this understanding, *Jen* has been translated as love, universal love, charity...etc. The second interpretation is that a man of *Jen* is a person who pursues not only his material life but also his spiritual life, through which men are distinguished from other animals. As such, the concept of *Jen* is identical with true humanity. It is noteworthy that the character of *Jen* has the same pronunciation as the character of man (人) in Chinese. The same pronunciation seems to support this understanding of the word. With respect to this interpretation, *Jen* has been translated as true manhood, manhood at its best, humanity, human-heartedness, and humaneness. Furthermore, in Chinese medicine there is a usage, 'non-*Jen*', which refers to cases of paralysis. Consequently, the concept of *Jen* represents the healthy feeling of the whole nervous system in which every part of the body is properly involved. It is possible that this usage inspired Neo-Confucians to develop the thought of man forming one body with all things. Last but not least, in Chinese daily life there is another usage: the *Jen* of fruits, which refers to the kernel of

fruits or the seeds of plants. In this usage the concept of *Jen* embodies the power of life.

All of these connotations were incorporated into the concept of *Jen* in Confucianism.

7.1.2 Confucius' Concept of *Jen*

The character '*Jen*' had appeared in the classical scriptures of the pre-Confucius era, but it was Confucius himself who elevated the concept of *Jen* as his central principle (Chan, 1955, p. 195). *Jen* is one of the main topics in the *Analects* and it appears 105 times in this book, in 58 sections out of almost 500 (Yao, 1997, p. 71)¹³⁵. These conversations refer to its essence, meaning, function, implication, and relationship with other concepts. Firstly, *Jen* is the principal virtue: the foundation and unifier of all other virtues. According to Confucius, a man who masters himself and returns to propriety is a man of *Jen* (the *Analects*: XII, 2). Moreover, for Confucius, there is no sense to be made of having propriety without *Jen* (the *Analects*: III, 3). The wise will cultivate *Jen* for its advantage (the *Analects*: IV, 2). The man of *Jen* will be free from evil (the *Analects*: IV, 4), and considers *Jen* to be the highest virtue over all others (the *Analects*: IV, 6). Furthermore, the superior man will never abandon *Jen* (the *Analects*: IV, 5).

There is a central theme running throughout all of Confucius' teachings (the *Analects*: XV, 2). This central thought 'is none other than conscientiousness (*Chung*, 忠) and altruism (*Shu*, 恕)' (the *Analects*: IV, 5). The concept of conscientiousness here means 'to do things sincerely'. According to Confucius, 'A man of humanity [*Jen*], wishing to

¹³⁵ Confucius did not write a treatise to explain the concept of *Jen*. What we know about Confucius' thought of *Jen* today comes mainly from the *Analects*.

establish his own character, also establishes the character of others, and wishing to be prominent himself also help others to be prominent' (the *Analects*: VI, 28). The concept of altruism mainly emphasizes that, 'Do not do unto others what you do not want others to do unto you' (the *Analects*: XII, 2). In other words, a man of *Jen* should refuse to do something that he does not want others to do to him. Therefore, some scholars have proposed conscientiousness as the positive Golden Rule of Confucius, and altruism as the negative Golden Rule of Confucius (Jung, 1966, pp. 182-3; Dy, 1983, p. 433; Yao, 1997, pp. 71-4)¹³⁶. Most scholars agree that Confucius' central theme is the concept of *Jen*, even if this is not stated directly in the *Analects*. Moreover, the concept of conscientiousness and the concept of altruism are considered to be two aspects of the concept of *Jen*: inseparable, like a coin's two sides. They together constitute Confucius' ethics, and the concept of *Jen* is at its center.

It is noteworthy that the Chinese characters *Chung* (忠, conscientiousness) and *Shu* (恕, altruism) both have the character *Hsin* (mind/heart, 心) at the bottom: this seems to imply that there is always the feeling of love towards others. Confucius had this thought in mind. When one of his favorite disciples asked him what *Jen* is on earth, he claimed directly that 'A man of *Jen* loves man' (the *Analects*: XIV, 22). This analect is

¹³⁶ Chan disagrees with this point, arguing that *Shu* could also be considered as the positive Golden Rule insofar as it also refers to the notion of establishing the character of others (Chan, 1963, p. 27). Chan is right to notice this point, and its English translated term 'altruism' embodies this positive meaning. However, in the *Analects* the concept of *Shu* mainly emphasizes the notion of not doing unto others what you do not want others to do unto you, and this notion is, of course, in accordance with the negative Golden Rule. As such, the mainstream opinion is also right. Unfortunately, its established English translated term 'altruism' does not denote this important point, and altruism is easily considered as the positive Golden Rule. Prof. Yujin Nagasawa reminded me of this point.

the basis on which Confucians identify the concept of *Jen* with the concept of love. In the *Analects*, there is a famous story that further clarifies this thought. One day, when Confucius found out that his stable had burned down, “Confucius asked, ‘was any man hurt?’ He did not ask about the horses” (the *Analects*: X, 12).

Confucius’ identification of *Jen* with love has a humanistic basis, and he firmly believed in humanism. On the one hand, when he was mocked by Taoist hermits, Confucius protested directly that ‘[o]ne cannot herd with birds and beasts. If I do not associate with mankind, with whom shall I associate?’ (the *Analects*: XVIII, 6) On the other hand, Confucius said that ‘by nature all men are alike; through practice they have become apart’ (the *Analects*: XVII, 2). Following this point, it is believed that *Jen* as love is shared by all men. As a result of *Jen* becoming considered a universal quality of man, the pursuit and practice of *Jen* became the ultimate goal of Confucius’ sayings. In other words, according to Confucius, an ideal man is the man who becomes a man of *Jen* (the *Analects*: XIX, 6).

Confucius acknowledged that *Jen* is not an easily attainable goal for man’s ethical cultivation. He was reluctant to claim the title of *Jen* for himself, and conceded the following: ‘How dare I claim to be a sage or a man of *Jen*? What I can be described is that I learn unwearyingly and teach others without impatience.’ (the *Analects*: VII, 34). This analect illustrates at least three points. Firstly, it reveals that Confucius regarded *Jen* as a very high ethical goal, almost equal to sagehood. Secondly, it reveals that Confucius always placed himself in a humble position in his self-cultivation. However, Confucians thereafter always considered Confucius as the model of a sage. Finally, it

reveals that Confucius' attitude towards *Jen* seems to imply that *Jen* is not only an ultimate achievement but also an endless practical effort (Yao, 1997, p. 109).

It is noteworthy that Confucius did not give us a clear-cut definition of the concept of *Jen* even though he made it his central theme in the *Analects*. This left a huge space for Confucians thereafter to enrich the connotations of the concept of *Jen*.

7.1.3 The Development of the Concept of *Jen*

When Confucius spoke of the concept of *Jen* he mainly focused on its ethical connotations. He did not answer the question of the origin of *Jen*. Mencius engaged with this question and incorporated it into his doctrine of the Goodness of Human Nature. Mencius claimed that *Jen* is one of man's inborn feelings because 'the feeling of commiseration is the beginning of *Jen*, and all men have this basic feeling (the *Book of Mencius*, 2A: 6; 6A: 6). Here Mencius appealed to men's intuitive feelings of commiseration, and his argument is very simple. Mencius claimed that, if one saw a child who was about to fall into a well, one should have the intuitive feeling of alarm and distress even if one did not have any relationship with the child. This feeling would be a universal and instinctual response that happens in all men (the *Book of Mencius*, 2A: 6).

Moreover, Mencius asserted that *Jen* and three other virtues (righteousness, propriety, and wisdom) are the necessary conditions for a man to be qualified as a man. Mencius believes that 'a man without the feeling of commiseration is not a man; a man without the feeling of shame and dislike is not a man; a man without the feeling of deference

and compliance is not a man; and a man without the feeling of right and wrong is not a man' (*ibid.*). While the feeling of commiseration is the beginning of *Jen*, the feeling of shame and dislike is the beginning of righteousness, the feeling of deference and compliance is the beginning of propriety, and the feeling of right and wrong is the beginning of wisdom (*ibid.*)¹³⁷. As in Confucius, *Jen* was placed in the chief position among these four basic virtues in Mencius' thought. At the same time, these four basic virtues are not separable. One of Mencius' main contributions was to develop the Confucian doctrine of righteousness. He defined the relationship between *Jen* and righteousness as one of inseparability. Mencius claimed that 'Humanity [*Jen*] is the peaceful abode of man and righteousness is his straight path' (the *Book of Mencius*, 4A: 10).

Furthermore, *Jen* was directly identified with man's mind/heart by Mencius, and he said 'Humanity [*Jen*] is man's mind [mind/heart] and righteousness is man's path' (the *Book of Mencius*, 6A: 11). Mencius' thought that *Jen* is man's mind/heart had a huge influence on the development of the concept of *Jen* in Confucianism. Neo-Confucians, especially Chu, further developed this notion.

Chu inherited the thought of *Jen* as man's principal quality from classical Confucianism. Chu claims that '[w]henver and wherever humanity (*Jen*) flows and operates, righteousness will fully be righteousness and propriety and wisdom will fully be propriety and wisdom' (Chan, 1963, pp. 632-3). At the same time, Chu fully incorporated the concept of *Jen* into his doctrine of *Li*. *Jen* takes a core role in Chu's

¹³⁷ This is Mencius' doctrine of Four Beginnings.

thought of One and Many. Chu claimed that ‘Principle [*Li*] is one but its functions differentiate into the many. There are *distinctions in love*’ (Chan, 1955, p. 316, my italics). ‘*Jen* is the principle [*Li*] of love *Jen* makes love.... possible’, and love is the function of *Jen* (Chan, 1963, p. 633). Chu argued that *Jen* is spontaneous, natural, uncalculating, and has nothing in view whereas altruism (Confucius’ concept of *Shu*) is cultivated, effortful, calculating, and has an object in view (*ibid.*). Furthermore, *Jen* is the essence of the eternal process of production and reproduction. Obviously, Chu’ concept of *Jen* was significantly different from the concept of *Jen* in classical Confucianism.

Wang inherits Chu’s thought of the concept of *Jen*. For Wang, if the mind is one then *Jen* is also one. This is the metaphysical foundation of Wang’s notion of the universality of *Jen*. Wang developed this thought through his doctrine of forming one body with all things:

The great man regards Heaven and Earth and the myriad things as one body. He regards the world as one family and the country as one person ... That the great man can regard Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things as one body is not because he deliberately wants to do so, but because it is natural to the humane nature of his mind that he do so ... Therefore when he sees a child about to fall into a well, he cannot help a feeling of alarm and commiseration. This shows that his humanity [*Jen*] forms one body with the child ... when he observes the pitiful cries and frightened appearance of birds and animals about to be slaughtered, he cannot help

feeling an “inability to bear” their suffering. This shows that his humanity forms one body with birds and animals ... when he sees plants broken and destroyed, he cannot help a feeling of pity. This shows that his humanity forms one body with plants ... when he sees tiles and stones shattered and crushed, he cannot help a feeling of regret. This shows that his humanity forms one body with tiles and stones. This means that even the mind of the small man necessarily has the humanity that forms one body with all. (Chan, 1963, pp. 659-660)

Here Wang emphasizes the claim that the great man should form one body with *Tian* and the myriad things. Further, Wang argues that *Jen* is the nature of the mind, and that it prompts one to form a union with *Tian*. This seems to borrow the notion of *Jen* as found in Chinese medicine, in which the notion of *Jen* represents the healthy feeling of the whole nervous system. All parts of the body form an organic and living whole through the nervous system. Similarly, Wang proposes that all things form one body through *Jen*.

To summarize, Confucius placed the concept of *Jen* at the center of his doctrine. *Jen* is the principal virtue, and it unifies the two aspects of Confucius’ ethics: conscientiousness as the positive Golden Rule, and altruism as the negative Golden Rule. A man of *Jen* loves others. *Jen* as love has its basis in Confucius’ humanism. Therefore, the pursuit of *Jen* and its practice became the ultimate goal in the *Analects*. For Mencius, *Jen* originates in the human mind, and is the inborn essence of the mind. *Jen* was identical with man’s mind in the hands of Mencius. Further, Mencius claimed

that *Jen* is man's mind. For Chu, *Jen* is the character of the mind and the *Li* of love. At the same time, Chu believes that love is the function of *Jen*. Wang proposed that the great man forms one body with all things through *Jen*. Then, we see that, accompanying the development of Confucianism, the connotations of the concept of *Jen* were continually developed by subsequent generations of Confucians. Chan concludes that the concept of *Jen* is 'close to the hearts of all Confucianists' (Chan, 1963, p. 591). Sometimes Confucianism is also called the Doctrine of *Jen*, and *Jen* itself became 'the symbol of Confucianism' (Yao, 1997, p. 69) ¹³⁸.

¹³⁸ The concept of *Jen* is also an important concept in other schools, such as Taoism and Buddhism. The discussion of the concept of *Jen* in these schools was due to either the argument against Confucianism or the utilization of the influence of Confucianism to advertise their own thoughts. The former was mainly used by Taoists. For example, it was argued that 'when the greatest *Tao* declined', the doctrine of *Jen* and righteousness arose in *Tao-Te Ching* (Chan, 1963, p. 148). The latter was mainly used by Buddhists to rename all kinds of Buddhist objects, such as the King of *Jen* (the Buddha), *the Sutras of Jen* (the Book of the Buddha), the temple of *Jen*, the pagodas of *Jen*...etc. (Yao, 1997, p. 69).

7.2 The Concept of the *Amor* in Spinoza

7.2.1 The Concept of Love in Spinoza's Related Works

Spinoza's doctrine of love is one of the main threads running through his philosophical career. This point will be revealed clearly through a brief investigation of the development of the concept of love in Spinoza's works.

Nowadays most scholars agree that Spinoza's *TIE* (*Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*) is his first philosophical piece (Morgan, 2002, p. 1). The *TIE* is an unfinished work, which was only published after his death¹³⁹. Morgan proposes that the status of the *TIE* in Spinoza's philosophy is similar to that of *Discourse on Method* in Descartes' philosophy, and it is possible that Descartes' *Discourse on Method* inspired Spinoza's writing of his *TIE* (ibid.). Therefore, it is reasonable for us to consider the *TIE* to be a preface to his *Ethics*. Spinoza tells us the following in the first sentence of the *TIE*:

After experience had taught me that the hollowness and futility of everything that is ordinarily encountered in daily life, and I realised that all the things which were the source and object of my anxiety held nothing of good or evil in themselves save insofar as the mind was influenced by them, I resolved at length to enquire whether

¹³⁹ However, it was always Spinoza's intention to finish the *TIE*, as we are told by the editors of his *Opera Posthuma*, who were Spinoza's best friends and were well familiar with his life and philosophy. This fact tells us that Spinoza does not renounce the basic thoughts in the *TIE*. Some scholars argue that Spinoza did not finish the work due to some internal conflicts between the thoughts in the *TIE* and his mature thought in the *Ethics*. We will put this point aside as it is not related to my topic.

there existed a true good, one which was capable of communicating itself and could alone affect the mind to the exclusion of all else, whether, in fact, there was something whose discovery and acquisition would afford me *a continuous and supreme joy to all eternity*. (*TIE*, p. 3, my italics)

Given that the *TIE* is Spinoza's first philosophical piece, and that this is the first sentence of the *TIE*, the citation above is Spinoza's very first sentence in his philosophical career. Spinoza set up the final goal of his philosophy in the *TIE*. Clearly, the first sentence reveals that Spinoza's goal is developed in a moral context. According to my reading, this first sentence is a foretelling of Spinoza's whole philosophy. Spinoza is seeking not only the truth but also the good, a true good for man's life. Pollock claims that Spinoza's philosophy is a philosophy for the good whereas Descartes' philosophy is a philosophy for the truth (Pollock, 1880, pp. 138-9). All his metaphysics and epistemology are in service of his ethics, in which he focuses on a true good for man's life¹⁴⁰.

Spinoza is an honest man: he confesses his anxiety from the beginning. He tells us that he did not find supreme joy, the highest happiness, in his pursuit of objects that 'can be reduced to these three headings: riches, honour, and sensual pleasure' (*TIE*, p. 4). His reason for failing to find the highest happiness is that every object in the pursuit is uncertain in its own nature (*ibid.*). Now we arrive at the place in which the concept

¹⁴⁰ At this point, Spinoza seems to inherit an Aristotelian happiness theory of ethics to some degree.

of love is first used in Spinoza's philosophy, and he claims that 'all happiness or unhappiness depends solely on the quality of the object to which *we are bound by love*' (*TIE*, p. 5, my italics). In other words, love is at the key position, in which our happiness or unhappiness is decided. Spinoza claims that there would be no strife, no sorrow, no envy, no fear, and no hatred without love (*ibid.*). Spinoza continually claims that all our unhappiness, such as strife, fear, hatred, sorrow, and envy, 'occur in the case of the love of perishable things' whereas all our happiness occurs in the case of the love towards eternal things (*ibid.*). We know the only certain object for Spinoza is God himself. From this we can see that Spinoza has tightly bound the highest happiness, his salvation, and the eternal thing, God, with the concept of love at the very beginning of his philosophical career.

The *TIE* is a good attempt, but it falls short of providing a core brick for a complete building of philosophy. The core brick is metaphysics. Spinoza's *KV* (*Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being*) in 1662 fills in this gap. Its overall structure is very similar to that of the *Ethics* since it 'begins with metaphysics and theology, turns to epistemology and psychology, and ends with ethics and religion' (Morgan, 2002, p. 31). As such, the *KV* can be seen as Spinoza's initial draft of the *Ethics*.

With respect to the concept of love, the first noteworthy point is a title in its contents. Spinoza lists the topic of love and the topic of God's love of man in its sub-titles (*KV*, pp. 35-6). Moreover, Spinoza claims that the relationship between the concept of love and the concept of understanding is brotherly. The love united with God is supremely perfect, and this love is dependent on the perfection of the understanding, in which God,

as the highest object of perfection, is conceived. In short, he brought his epistemology and metaphysics together to support his concept of love in the *KV*. He pointed out that the supremely perfect love is to be united with God. All the core insights in his last three doctrines in the *Ethics* had taken initial shape in the *KV*.

Due to its radical claims, the *KV* was strongly challenged when it was circulated among Spinoza's close friends. It seemed clear that stronger arguments are needed. The research of Cartesian philosophy inspired his thought at this important moment. Spinoza's *PPC* (*Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*) and *CM* (*Metaphysical Thoughts*) in 1663 is the first of the mere two works published before his death. We are told in the preface by its editor, Dr. Lodewijk Meyer, one of Spinoza's best friends, that the main thoughts in the *PPC* belong to Descartes rather than to Spinoza himself except for its appendix, the *CM*, in which Spinoza wrote down his own metaphysics. We will not investigate the thoughts concerning the concept of love in the *PPC* since what is explored there are Descartes' thoughts rather than Spinoza's¹⁴¹.

In the *CM*, two points concerning the concept of love are developed. The first point explores the metaphysics of the unity in which the supreme love is considered as unity with God. The second point is Spinoza's claim that the self-love of God is God's will itself. Spinoza tells us that 'God's will, by which he wills to love himself, follows necessarily from his infinite intellect, by which he understands himself' (*CM*, p. 200).

¹⁴¹ What should be noted in the *PPC* is its geometrical written style. Descartes had used this geometrical style for his *Principles of Philosophy* in 1644. Spinoza was completely convinced by the geometrical written style, and he subsequently used it for his *Ethics*.

To combine the two points together, it is natural for Spinoza in his *Ethics* to draw the conclusion that man's intellectual love towards God, which is the unification with God, and God's self-love, which is God himself in essence, are one and the same. In short, Spinoza's doctrine of the *Amor* had its initial metaphysical foundation in his *CM*.

From 1665, Spinoza's other great work, the *TTP* (*Theological-Political Treatise*), was conceived, and finally published in 1670. The *TTP* is, in fact, the second of the two works that was published before Spinoza's death. The main goal of the *TTP* is not an unfolding of Spinoza's own philosophy but rather a critique of the hermeneutics of Scripture, which was terrifically radical in Spinoza's era. Many scholars believe that *TTP*'s publication was Spinoza's attempt at paving a road for the publication of his *Ethics*. It is generally agreed among scholars that Spinoza's thought in the *TTP* was as mature as his thought in *Ethics*. With regard to our topic, the concept of love in the *TTP* will therefore help us in comprehending its final meaning in *Ethics*. What we can learn from the *TTP* does not concern Spinoza's philosophical thought about the concept of love, but his attitude towards the concept of love as found in Scripture itself. Therefore, Spinoza's explanation of the concept of love in Scripture is a complementary resource for us to understand Spinoza's concept of love in his *Ethics*. As Spinoza's thought in the *TTP* is just as mature as his thought in *Ethics*, the *TTP* can be considered the twin of the *Ethics*. For Spinoza, the *Ethics* is his work of philosophy and the *TTP* is his work of theology.

Spinoza's discussion of the concept of love is very rich in the *TTP*. Briefly speaking, the concept of the knowledge and love of God, a twinned concept of the intellectual

love of God (the *Amor*), was developed in the *TTP*. We also find that the fact that the term ‘knowledge’ and the term ‘love’ have the same Hebrew etyma has an important impact on the final shaping of the doctrine of the intellectual love of God in the *Ethics*. A further investigation of this issue will be carried out in Section 7.2.3.

The *TTP* contains some political theory, but this is not Spinoza’s main concern in the book. Spinoza also acknowledges that it is not enough to express his thoughts on political theory in the *TTP*, and he began to write another book about his political theory, his *TP* in 1675 or 1676 (Morgan, 2002, p. 676). Unfortunately, the *TP* was left unfinished when he died in 1677. Since the *Hebrew Grammar*, which will be discussed in the next section, and the *TP* do not have any direct connection with his concept of love, I will not further explore them here.

In short, Spinoza’s works in which his concept of love is directly involved include the *TIE*, which is analogical to the preface of the *Ethics*, the *KV*, which is analogical to an initial draft of the *Ethics*, the *CM*, an antecedent in the same written style as the *Ethics*, the *TTP*, a theological twin of the *Ethics*, and finally his life’s masterwork, the *Ethics*. Shirley concludes that the *Ethics* is analogical to the great skyscraper of Spinoza’s philosophy for which the other four works are its four entrances (Shirley, 2002, p. XV). This analogy is also suitable when applied to Spinoza’s concept of love: the other four works act as entrances to our understanding of Spinoza’s concept of love in the *Ethics*. As such, it is my conclusion that the doctrine of love is one of the main threads of Spinoza’s philosophy.

7.2.2 The Concept of Love in the *Ethics*

In the *Ethics*, love is firstly considered as a kind of emotion. Spinoza establishes a direct link between the term ‘love’ and the term ‘emotion’ as follows:

Modes of thinking such as love, desire, or whatever emotions are designated by name, do not occur unless there is in the same individual the idea of the thing loved, desired, etc. But the idea can be without any other mode of thinking. (E2 Axioms 3, p. 244)

Here the term ‘love’ is used for the fourth time in the *Ethics*¹⁴². Spinoza’s use of the term ‘love’ here is no different from its use in daily contexts, such as ‘Tom loves Catherine rather than Sara’. Spinoza considers love as a kind of emotion. An investigation of Spinoza’s concept of emotion will also be helpful for our comprehension of the concept of love. Emotion is given a clear definition in the beginning part of Part 3 as follows:

By emotion [*affectus*] I understand the affections of the body by which the body’s power of activity is increased or diminished, assisted or checked, together with the ideas of these affections. Thus, if we can be the adequate cause of one of these affections, then by emotion I understand activity, otherwise passivity. (3 Definition

¹⁴² Prior to that, it was used in E1p31 (p. 234), E1p31 Proof (p. 235), and E1 Appendix (p. 239).

3, p. 278, italics in original).

Here, Spinoza is discussing the essence of emotion. To some degree, the term ‘emotion’ is not a good translation, and it can easily lead to a purely mental reading¹⁴³. Most scholars prefer to use the term ‘affect’ rather than the term ‘emotion’, such as Den Uyl (2008). According to Spinoza, it also refers to the modifications of the body. These affections or modifications are linked to the body’s power and increase or diminish this power¹⁴⁴. This consideration has its roots in Spinoza’s metaphysics of God-Attribute-Mode¹⁴⁵. According to Spinoza’s metaphysics, emotions are modes, and all modes have the attribute of Extension, which Spinoza calls the affections or modifications of the

¹⁴³ Traditionally, emotion has been considered a mental activity and has seemed always to belong to the scope of the mind. Emotion is a part of our mental life, the object of psychology rather than physiology. Helm says that ‘emotions just are responses to objects that combine evaluation, motivation, and a kind of phenomenology’ (Helm, 2017).

¹⁴⁴ Therefore, it seems wrong to say that the whole of Part 3, which is titled ‘Concerning the Origin and Nature of the Emotions’ in the *Ethics*, is devoted only to psychology. According to Spinoza, emotion is also considered a kind of neuro-physiological process. This view is in accordance with the thought of contemporary cognitive neuro-science (de Sousa, Winter 2017).

¹⁴⁵ As shown in Chapter 3, according to Spinoza, an idea is the mode of thinking and the mind is the collection of ideas. In Spinoza’s metaphysics of God-Attribute-Mode, God is the sole substance, and has infinite attributes. Attributes are considered as the intellectual perception of the essence of substance. What man can access among God’s infinite attributes are only two attributes: the attribute of Thought and the attribute of Extension. A mode is a way or manner in which God expresses himself. Therefore, the sensible reality that we experience daily can be considered as a collection of the infinite modes of God rather than anything else. A mode of thinking is an idea and, correspondingly, there exists a mode of the body. This is not to say that this mode of the body and its corresponding mode of thinking are two different modes: they are, in fact, one and the same. Therefore, the notorious riddle of the interaction between the mind and the body in Dualism seems to disappear in Spinoza’s doctrine.

body. At the same time, they also have the attribute of Thought, which Spinoza calls the ideas of the affections or modifications of the body.

Moreover, here emotion is linked directly to the body's power of activity. Sometimes emotion increases the body's power of activity, and sometimes it decreases it. Therefore, there are two primary kinds of emotions in Spinoza's system. The emotion that increases the body's power of activity is named 'pleasure', by which Spinoza means the transition from a less perfect state to a more perfect state. The emotion that decreases the body's power of activity is named 'pain', by which Spinoza means the transition from a more perfect state to a less perfect state. Behind the pair of primary emotions, pleasure and pain, is a more basic kind of emotion known as desire which, according to Spinoza, 'is the very essence of man insofar as his essence is conceived as determined to any action from any given affection of itself' (E3 Definition 1, p. 311). Therefore, desire is another name for human power.

In Spinoza's definition of the concept of emotion he emphasizes that when a kind of emotions occurs, its corresponding idea must also occur. In other words, active emotions correspond to the mind conceiving adequate ideas (E3p58 Proof, p. 309). By contrast, passive emotions correspond to the mind conceiving inadequate ideas. For Spinoza, inadequate ideas belong to knowledge of the first kind, imagination, whereas adequate ideas belong to knowledge of the second kind, reason, and the third kind, intuition. It is here that Spinoza's concept of love establishes the close connection with his epistemology. Given the emotion of pleasure can be divided into passive emotion and active emotion, it implies that there is the passive kind of love, i.e. passionate love,

and, also, the active kind of love, that is our love towards God and the *Amor*.

Traditionally speaking, the concept of love is one of notorious ambiguity in philosophy. It is used to refer to so-called personal love (in the sense that I love my family) rather than the kind of love I have for my pets, or my job, or beautiful natural scenery (such as The Lake District)¹⁴⁶. Such personal love focuses on human beings rather than on other things.

To turn to our topic, we see that Spinoza's concept of love has a very broad meaning, and any object could become the beloved (even a stone). For Spinoza, love, as a kind of emotion, is a form of pleasure whereas hatred is a form of pain. Since they both are expression of power, they can overcome each other. Love can overcome hatred, and hatred can overcome love. At the same time, it is important to know that most of the time our desires, both pleasure and pain, are derived from our passive responses towards the external environment.

In short, in the *Ethics*, Spinoza considered love as a kind of emotion. For Spinoza, emotions are affects rather than a kind of mental activity only as we usually consider them to be. The nature of emotions is the power of activity. With respect to the bodily side, pleasure is the emotion that increases the body's power of activity, and pain is the emotion that decrease the body's power of activity. With respect to the mental side, emotions always have corresponding ideas in the mind. According to Spinoza, passionate love is passive with inadequate ideas in the mind, whereas both our love

¹⁴⁶ See Nygren (1969), Badhwar (2003), Helm (2017).

towards God and the *Amor* are active with adequate ideas in the mind. For Spinoza, the concept of love has a very broad meaning rather than referring narrowly to personal love.

7.2.3 The Concept of the *Amor*

Spinoza's concept of the *Amor* intertwines with his concept of love in his works. Returning to the very first sentence of Spinoza's philosophical career, he tells us that his goal is to find a true good, and that the true good is capable of communicating itself. Spinoza did not clarify the intended meaning of this phrase. Now we know that it was stated that the love of God is also God's self-love in E5p35. Given that, for Spinoza, the true good is God himself, it is reasonable to say that God's self-love in E5p35 is a new explanation of the notion that God is capable of communicating himself. In the same sentence, Spinoza also claims that the true good is a joy, a continuous and supreme joy, which leads us to eternity. All of these notions are embodied in his last doctrine of the *Amor*. Surveying Spinoza's whole philosophical career, it is also clear that the doctrine of the *Amor* as the last doctrine in the *Ethics* is not redundant, but is in fact Spinoza's final goal which he had pursued from the beginning of his philosophical career. In other words, Spinoza's doctrine of the *Amor* was in embryonic form at the very beginning of his philosophical career, and the 'continuous and supreme joy' is the first name of the *Amor*.

The thought of God's self-love was developed further in the *CM*. Spinoza claims that 'God's will, by which he wills to love himself, follows necessarily from his infinite

intellect, by which he understands himself" (*CM*, p. 200). Here, Spinoza is claiming that God's will is identical with God's self-love. As shown in Chapter 3, Spinoza developed his notion of God's will in the *Ethics*, in which he argued that God's will and God's intellect are one. Moreover, according to Spinoza's metaphysics, God's intellect is God himself. Consequently, Spinoza arrived at the conclusion that the essence of God is love in the form of God's self-love. In short, Spinoza's doctrine of the *Amor* had its initial metaphysical foundation in his *CM*.

The *TTP* is Spinoza's critique of the hermeneutics of Scripture, and his attitude towards the concept of love in Scripture is a complementary resource for us to understand his concept of the *Amor* in the *Ethics*. In the *TTP*, three points of relevance to the doctrine of the *Amor* in the *Ethics* deserve to be discussed further here.

Firstly, Spinoza agreed that the essence of Scripture is 'to love God above all, and one's neighbor as oneself', and that 'Scripture can properly be called the Word of God' in respect of this essence (*TTP*, p. 508). Spinoza considered this essence to be an uncorrupted fundamental principle of Scripture, and he further claimed that our salvation is dependent solely on God's grace and must follow this fundamental principle (*TTP*, p. 509). Spinoza repeats this notion in the *Ethics*, claiming that the *Amor* as salvation 'is called grace in the Holy Scripture, and rightly so' (E5p36 Scholium, p. 378). Following this point, Spinoza's concept of the *Amor* seems to be a twin of the concept of the glory of God in the Scripture¹⁴⁷. The concept of glory and the concept of

¹⁴⁷ Therefore, it is my opinion that Spinoza could be called a disciple of Jesus Christ, but he is not a Christian in the traditional meaning.

the love of God are inseparable in Theology. The concept of the love of God (*Amor Dei*) is the backbone of Christian Philosophy, in which the essence of God is identical with love. The thought that God is love has its roots in the *New Testament*, especially in the Gospel of John 3:16¹⁴⁸, 1 John 4:8¹⁴⁹ and Romans 5:8¹⁵⁰. Generally speaking¹⁵¹, ‘glory’ as a theological term means the free and unmerited favour of God that is manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowing of blessings. The free and unmerited favour of God can be explained as the love of God in Christian philosophy. It has also been said that glory is the love of God in action. The relationship between the concept of glory and the concept of the love of God in theology suggests that Spinoza is considering his concept of the *Amor* as a kind of love in action.

Secondly, Spinoza uses the phrase ‘the knowledge and love of God’ to refer to the supreme good in the *TTP*¹⁵². The supreme good is ‘man’s highest happiness and

¹⁴⁸ ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.’ (John 3:16 NIV)

¹⁴⁹ ‘Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.’ (1 John 4:8 NIV)

¹⁵⁰ ‘But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.’ (Romans 5:8 NIV)

¹⁵¹ The issue of glory and love in theology is beyond the scope of this thesis. What I can do here is just to repeat the common conclusion on this issue. According to my own understanding, the *New Testament* reveals the love of God and the *Holy Bible* as a whole reveals the glory of God.

¹⁵² In the *TTP*, this phrase occurs in the following sentences: ‘this eternal covenant involving the knowledge and love of God is universal’ on p. 424, ‘by divine law I mean that which is concerned only with the supreme good, that is, the true knowledge and love of God’ on p. 427, ‘[this]...is the sum of our supreme good and blessedness, to wit, the knowledge and love of God’ on p. 428, ‘he who does good from true knowledge and love of good acts freely and with a steadfast mind’ on p. 432, ‘from miracles men may accept false gods quite as readily as the true God, unless they are well fortified by

blessedness, and the final end and aim of all human action' (*TTP*, p. 428). It is, then, another name for man's salvation. Therefore, the phrase 'the knowledge and love of God' is a twinned term of the intellectual love of God (the *Amor*) in the *TTP*. Wolfson also confirms that the knowledge and love of God is the kindred expression of the intellectual love of God in the *TTP* (Wolfson, 1934b, p. 306). The intellectual love of God is expressed philosophically in the *Ethics*, while the knowledge and love of God is expressed theologically in the *TTP*. As such, Spinoza's explanation of the concept of the knowledge and love of God in the *TTP* should be considered a mirror explanation of the concept of the intellectual love of God in the *Ethics*. Spinoza took two steps to explain this concept in the *TTP*. He explains it in the first step as follows:

[Our] supreme good and perfection depends solely on the knowledge of God ... So the whole of our knowledge, that is, our supreme good, not merely depends on the knowledge of God but consists entirely therein So he who loves above all the intellectual cognition of God, the most perfect Being, and takes especial delight therein, is necessarily most perfect, and partakes most in the highest blessedness.'

(*TTP*, pp. 427-8)

true knowledge and love of God' on p. 449, 'the true knowledge and love of God cannot be subject to anyone's jurisdiction. At the same time, in the *TP*, it occurs in the sentence: the true knowledge and love of God...is also the case with charity towards one's neighbor' on p. 693. Also in Letter 78, it occurs in the sentence: 'he who cannot control his desires...cannot enjoy tranquility of mind and the knowledge and love of God' on pp. 952-3.

Spinoza does not provide an explicit philosophical argument in the citation above. However, the thought in this explanation is coherent with the thought in his *Ethics*. That our knowledge consists entirely in the knowledge of God was unfolded in Part Two of the *Ethics*. Here, Spinoza uses the term ‘intellect’ and the term ‘the intellectual cognition of God’, and this seems to foretell the use of the term ‘intellect’ in the phrase of the intellectual love of God in the *Ethics*. Moreover, blessedness belongs to those who love above all the intellectual cognition of God. Spinoza told his friend that the love of God ‘flows from the knowledge of God’ (Letter 19, p. 810).

As the second step, Spinoza particularly emphasized the notion that “knowledge’ itself may perhaps be ‘love’, since the Hebrew word ‘*Jadah*’ can have both meanings’ (*TTP*, p. 433). Spinoza himself emphasized the importance of this kind of knowledge of philology. Spinoza’s method for biblical hermeneutics follows the basic principle ‘that knowledge of Scripture must be sought only from Scripture’ (*ibid.*). Therefore, Spinoza argued that ‘a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew language’ is needed for us to ‘acquire a completely and assured knowledge of the Holy Bible’ (*ibid.*). For this reason, Spinoza began to write his *Hebrew Grammar* following the publication of the *TTP* in 1670, and for the same reason he confessed that he could not undertake the task of a detailed critique of the *New Testament* since he lacked knowledge of Greek. Spinoza concluded that Solomon’s thought in Scripture is that ‘our intellect and knowledge depend solely on the idea or our understanding of God, and spring from it and are perfected by it’ (*TTP*, p. 434). This is, of course, Spinoza’s own view. Now we know that Spinoza claimed that the *Amor* arises necessarily from intuitive knowledge

in the *Ethics*, and it is possible that the fact that the term ‘knowledge’ and the term ‘love’ have the same Hebrew etyma inspired this thought of Spinoza’s. It is also possible that this same fact forced Spinoza to change the phrase ‘the knowledge and love of God’ in the *TTP* into the phrase ‘the intellectual love of God (the *Amor*)’ in the *Ethics*.

In short, as the *TTP* itself is considered to be the twin of the *Ethics*, it is also reasonable for us to say that the concept of the knowledge and love of God in the *TTP* and the concept of the *Amor* in the *Ethics* are twins. We also found that the fact that the term ‘knowledge’ and the term ‘love’ have the same Hebrew etyma had an important impact on the final shaping of the doctrine of the *Amor* in the *Ethics*.

The term ‘the intellectual love of God’ itself, ‘*Amor Dei Intellectualis*’, is an unusual piece of terminology in the history of philosophy. It is noteworthy that Augustine¹⁵³ used a similar term, ‘*Amor Naturalis*’, i.e. ‘the natural love’, in the medieval era (Wolfson, 1934b, pp. 197-200). Thomas Aquinas distinguished the natural love, which exists even in inanimate objects, from the intellectual, rational, spiritual love (Wolfson, 1934b, pp. 304-5). It is possible that Spinoza took inspiration from Augustine’s terminology ‘*Amor Naturalis*’ to develop his terminology ‘*Amor Dei Intellectualis*’ since he believed that Nature and God are identical with each other. Further, Spinoza himself used the terminology ‘the natural love’ in his *KV*. According to Spinoza, ‘the natural love... prompts everything to preserve its body’ (*KV*, p. 104). This definition

¹⁵³ Augustine (354–430 CE) used the term to refer to the power causing the ‘natural movements upward and downward’ in his book *The City of God*.

reveals that the term ‘the natural love’ is the initial name of the term ‘*conatus*’. This thought, then, gives us an important clue for comprehending the concept of the *Amor* through the concept of *conatus*, which we will explore in due course.

To summarize, we have confirmed that the concept of love is one of the main threads of Spinoza’s philosophy, and that the concept of the *Amor* is at the core of his concept of love. These basic thoughts were developed from his very first philosophical piece, the *TIE*, through the *KV*, the *CM*, and the *TTP*, until their maturation in the *Ethics*. Both Christian theology, especially Augustine’s thought, and Spinoza’s Jewish background have had an important influence on the development of his concept of the *Amor*.

7.3 The Parallel between the Concept of *Jen* and the Concept of the *Amor*

As shown in Section 1.3, Graf (1949) claims that Chu's concept of *Jen* is identical to Spinoza's concept of the *Amor*. I am not yet able to say that they are identical with each other. However, it is clear from what we have explored in Section 7.1 and Section 7.2. that the concept of *Jen* in Confucianism is very similar to the concept of the *Amor* in Spinoza's work.

This similarity is highlighted through several summary points below. Firstly, they both are at the core of their respective ethics. Confucius himself places the concept of *Jen* at the center of the ethics of Confucianism. For Spinoza, the concept of the *Amor* is also at the center of his ethics. In the *Ethics*, the *Amor* is the final goal, but Spinoza had set the goal at the very beginning of his philosophical career. Secondly, they both refer to union with the Ultimate Reality. For Wang, man's highest ethical goal is to form one body with *Tian* and everything, and man can fulfil this goal only through the practice of *Jen*. For Spinoza, the highest happiness consists in union with God. This can only be fulfilled through the *Amor*. Finally, they are both intertwined with the concept of love. Therefore, it is reasonable for us to say that the concept of *Jen* in Confucianism and the concept of the *Amor* are parallel to each other.

Since the parallelism here is very clear, I will not pursue this point further. The parallelism will be further highlighted during our exploration of the puzzle of the doctrine of the *Amor* in the next chapter.

Chapter 8

The Neo-Confucian Approach towards the Puzzle of the Doctrine of the *Amor*

Following the puzzle that we explored in Chapter 2, and our discussion of the parallelism between Spinoza's philosophy and Neo-Confucianism in their three main aspects, in this chapter we are finally ready to resolve the problems (*the problem of nature, the problem of cause, and the problem of transition*) in the puzzle of the doctrine of the *Amor*. In Section 8.1, I will argue that, from the perspective of God, the *Amor* is nothing but the creative power of God. In section 8.2, I will argue that, from the perspective of an individual, the *Amor* is the essence of this very individual. By combining the conclusions of Section 8.1 and Section 8.2, *the problem of nature* will be resolved. In Section 8.3, I will argue that, from the combined perspective, the *Amor* is not only man's final fulfilment of freedom through intuitive knowledge, but also man's self-cultivation in practice. Through this explanation, both *the problem of cause* and *the problem of transition* are fully resolved.

8.1 The *Amor* as the Creative Power of God

In this section, we will focus on the realm of *Natura naturans* in order to analyze *the problem of nature*. In Chapter 2, we saw that *the problem of nature* concerns the nature of the *Amor*: given Spinoza's anti-anthropomorphic rationalism, in which God is not a personal God and Nature is his other name, how can the concept of love be applied to God himself? In fact, Neo-Confucians face a similar problem. On the one hand, as we

saw in Chapter 3, *Tian*, as the Neo-Confucian Ultimate Reality, is impersonal. On the other hand, Confucians believe that *Jen*, as the essence of *Tian*, is love. As such, it is implied that the essence of *Tian* is love. Now, a similar problem arises: how can the notion that the essence of *Tian* is love make sense in Neo-Confucianism?

According to Neo-Confucianism, the universe is a ceaseless process of production and reproduction. *Jen* is the essence of the eternal process of production and reproduction. As shown in Chapter 3, *Tian* is the *Great Ultimate* in the essential realm. The creative power of the *Great Ultimate* is infinite and eternal, and everything comes into existence and sustains its existence through the *Great Ultimate*. For Chu, *Jen* refers to the infinitely creative power of the *Great Ultimate*. Chu says that *Tian* has ‘no other business except to have the mind to produce things’ (Chan, 1963, p. 642-3). Here, the mind of *Tian* is another name for the *Great Ultimate*, and its business is nothing but to create the myriad things. The production and reproduction of the myriad things is due to the *Great Ultimate*. Chu claims that *Jen* is ‘like the ten thousand things being stored and preserved’ in the *Great Ultimate* (Chan, 1963, p. 633). In turn, *Jen* refers to the infinitely creative power of the *Great Ultimate*. In short, *Jen* is the creative power of *Tian* in Neo-Confucianism.

In a parallel way, we find that, for Spinoza, the *Amor* also refers to the creative power of God. The thought is first found in his *CM* as follows:

God’s will, by which he wills to *love himself*, follows necessarily from his infinite intellect, by which he understands himself, but how these three are distinguished

from each another---his essence, his intellect ..., and his will--- this we fail to comprehend ... we clearly and distinctly perceive that *God's intellect and his power and will, whereby he has created, understood, and preserves or loves created things*, are in no way distinct from one another save only in respect of our thought.
(*CM*, p. 200, my italics)

Here Spinoza is saying that God's will is the will of loving himself (the love of God). Furthermore, God's will is to create, understand, and preserve created things, and this is also God's creative power. In other words, the love of God towards created things is the same as the creative power of God, through which God creates, understands and preserves created things. This is a specific way of saying that the love of God is his creative power. Spinoza also asserts that God's will is also his essence, and this is the same as saying that the love of God is the essence of God. Spinoza's *CM* was published in 1663. This fact reveals that Spinoza had the notion of the love of God as his creative power before he developed his doctrine of the *Amor* in his *Ethics*.

Furthermore, Spinoza also claims that God and God's power are one and the same, and tells us as follows:

But the force whereby God perseveres in his own being is nothing but his essence, so that those speak best who call God '*life*'. (*CM*, p. 197, my italics)

Here, Spinoza believes that the concept of life can be applied to God, in other words,

God's life. This point is coherent with the notion that God is a living being, which we saw in Section 3.1.2. The concept of God's life expresses the power through which God perseveres in his own being, and it is identical with God's essence. As such, God's essence, God's power, God's life, and God's love are all one and the same for Spinoza.

To turn to the *Ethics*, as shown in Chapter 3, Spinoza repeatedly claims that God's essence, God's intellect, and God's will are one and the same. At the same time, two points were developed further. The first point, in E5p35, sees Spinoza confirming that the love of God is the divine *Amor*: God loves himself with an infinite intellectual love.

The second point sees Spinoza establishing a firm metaphysical foundation for the *Amor*, centered on the notion of the self-caused. In Section 3.1.2, I pointed out that the notion of the self-caused is at the core of Spinoza's concept of God. The concept of the self-caused is the first definition of the *Ethics*, and Spinoza places it at the very beginning of the *Ethics* (E1 Definitions 1, p. 217). For Spinoza, the self-caused God means the immanent God and, therefore, the creative power of God is the immanent power existing in an individual thing. In his definition of the concept of the *Amor* in E5p35, Spinoza refers back to the concept of the self-caused as follows:

God's nature enjoys infinite perfection, accompanied (Pr. 3, II) by the idea of itself, that is (Pr.11, and *Def. 1, I* [E1 Definitions 1]), by the idea of its own cause; and that is what, in Cor. Pr.32. V, we declared to be intellectual love. (E5P35 Proof, p. 378, my italics)

Here we see that Spinoza closely connects the concept of the *Amor* with his first concept, the concept of the self-caused. In other words, Spinoza founds the concept of the *Amor* upon his concept of the self-caused. Moreover, given that Spinoza's self-caused God is immanent, this is why Spinoza claims that 'God, insofar as he loves himself, loves mankind (the *Amor* towards men)' (E5P35 Corollary, p. 378). Following the same logic, God loves all other things insofar as God is self-caused.

To summarize, Spinoza already had the notion of the love of God as the creative power of God when writing the *CM*, and he also considered the love of God as the essence of God. In the *Ethics*, Spinoza further confirms that the love of God is the *Amor*, and he places the concept of the *Amor* upon the concept of the self-caused. The concept of the self-caused is the metaphysical foundation of the concept of the *Amor* as the creative power of God. According to the concept of the self-caused, the creative power of God is not a transcendental power but an immanent power. This immanent power is embodied in every individual thing. In order to analyse this immanent power, we need to change our perspective to the realm of *Natura naturata* in the next section.

8.2 The *Amor* as the Essence of an Individual Thing

Before we turn to the question of how the *Amor* should be understood in terms of Spinoza's realm of *Natura naturata*, let us first see how *Jen* is understood in terms of the functional realm of Neo-Confucianism. In the functional realm, we change our perspective from the *Great Ultimate* to the 'myriad things'. *Jen*, as the creative power of the *Great Ultimate*, is not limited to the essential realm, and it is also not a creative power outside the functional realm. In other words, it is not a transcendental power outside the functional realm. It is necessarily expressed and unfolded immanently in the myriad things of the functional realm. As shown in Chapter 3, Chu insists that the *Great Ultimate* somehow exists in every individual thing in its entirety. Chu further explains his view as follows:

“The mind of Heaven and Earth is to produce things.” In the production of man and things, they receive the mind of Heaven and Earth as their mind. Therefore, with reference to *the character of the mind*, although it embraces and penetrates all and leaves nothing to be desired, nevertheless, one word will cover of it, namely, *Jen* In discussing the excellence of man's mind, it is said, “*Jen* is man's mind” *In man, it is the mind to love people gently and to benefit things*. (Chan, 1963, pp. 593-5, my italics, cited in Dy, 1983, pp. 437-8)

While ‘the mind of Heaven and Earth’ is another name for the *Great Ultimate*, ‘the mind of’ man and things is another name for the nature of man and things in the

terminology of Neo-Confucianism. The nature of man and things is nothing but their *Li*. Chu is saying that *Jen* is the character of *Li*, and *Jen* embraces and penetrates all things. Further, Chu claims that ‘such things as seeds of grain or the peach and apricot kernels.... they are not dead things...For this reason they are called [*Jen*]...., [*Jen*] implies *the spirit of life*’ (Chan, 1963, p. 633, my italics). When Chu argues that *Jen* penetrates all things, he is implying that not only animals have life: *everything* has life. Here we see that, for Chu, *Jen*, as the character of *Li*, is the power of life in all things. Therefore, Yang argues that the existence of the *Great Ultimate* in its entirety somehow in every individual thing should be understood as the immanent power of the individual thing, like the power of a seed (Yang, 2015, pp. 225-6).

It is noteworthy that, in the last sentence of the citation above, Chu argues that in man, *Jen* is the mind to love others and to benefit other things. This further reveals Chu’s doctrine of *Jen*. For Chu, ‘*Jen* is the principle [*Li*] of love, ... if there is *Jen*, there is love’, and *Jen* ‘makes love ...possible’ (Chan, 1963, p. 633). In other words, with respect to men, *Jen* can also be considered as love, and the concept of *Jen* and the concept of love are united in men.

In short, with respect to the functional realm, *Jen* is the character of *Li*, and this is the power of life. As the power of life, *Jen* exists universally as the immanence in all things. Specifically, with respect to men, *Jen* is love. To conclude, Chu believes that *Jen* is the character of the *Li* of the myriad things, and specifically *Jen* is the *Li* of love in men.

In a parallel way, the *Amor* can also be considered the character of the essence of a

thing and its immanent power in Spinoza. With respect to the realm of *Natura naturata*, as shown in Chapter 4, the essence of the thing refers firstly to its actual essence. Here Spinoza's concept of *conatus* must be taken into account.

The term '*conatus*' originates from the Latin term '*cōnātus*' in Spinoza's manuscripts, and its verb is '*cōnor*'. The verb is usually translated as 'to endeavor' in English, and some translators subsequently translate the term '*cōnātus*' into the English term '*endeavour*'. Spinoza was not the first to use the term, and it has historical roots in ancient Greek¹⁵⁴. It is possible that Spinoza borrowed the term directly from Hobbes¹⁵⁵. At the same time, Spinoza would also have read this term in Descartes' works. Garber concludes that Descartes developed the concept of *conatus* in two important ways (Garber, 1992, pp. 150-4). Firstly, Descartes denounced its

¹⁵⁴ According to Wolfson (1934), its original Greek term '*ὄρμη*' has been used to describe the desire of the soul and the action following this kind of desire in ancient Greek. For example, both Stoics (333–264 BCE) and Peripatetics (c. 335 BCE) used it to describe the impulse of life that 'is directed to self-preservation' (Pollock, 1880, p.132). Diogenes Laertius (c. 235 BCE) denied its application to any kind of plant, and limited its use to animals only. Cicero (106–43 BCE) applied it to refer to the impetus of animals. Once the term was limited to refer to animals only, an alluded connection was building between the *conatus* and other cognitive emotions. Both Aristotle and Laertius seem to allude that men do not desire to something because of believing the good finding in it, but believes the good because of desiring it. The wishing derives from mankind's natural inclination, and the natural inclination of mankind is the *conatus* of mankind (Wolfson, 1934a, p. 204). But Wolfson (1934a) finds that the term has been used to refer to not only animals but also inanimate objects in ancient Greek era (Wolfson, 1934a, p. 202).

¹⁵⁵ Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) believed that it is our instinct to struggle to preserve ourselves in difficult environments. Therefore, all of our mind's cognitive functions are merely variations of a more basic emotion in the mind, i.e. the *conatus* (Bidney, 1940, p. 91). As such, the concept of *conatus* became the core of Hobbes' psychological theory. It is noteworthy that sometimes the *conatus* is equated with the imagination in Hobbes' hands (Schmitter, 2010).

ancient Greek anthropomorphic meaning whereby the term referred to the notion of a soul's struggling for certain ends. Secondly, Descartes proposed a more mechanistic meaning to replace the mysterious meaning that was developed in the medieval era. Descartes believed that everything 'insofar as in it lies, always perseveres in the same state, and when once moved, always continues to move' (Blackwell, 1966, p. 220)¹⁵⁶. According to Descartes, upon creating the material world and bestowing immutable natural laws to it, God would never again interfere in its operation. Therefore, it became possible for mankind to carry out scientific investigations of the material world. Moreover, the material world governed by the immutable natural laws is not necessarily teleological. Descartes' views might well have had a huge influence on Spinoza's concept of *conatus*. Now, we know that Spinoza extended its usage from Descartes' material world to the whole of nature.

In fact, Spinoza had the idea of *conatus* in the early stage of his philosophical career. As shown in Section 7.2.3, in the *KV* Spinoza uses the concept of natural love, which embodies the thought of *conatus*. According to Spinoza, natural love prompts everything to preserve its body, and it 'cannot have any other origin than...the "objective" essence of such body' (*KV*, pp. 104-5, italics in original). Given that it prompts everything to preserve its body, the term 'natural love' is the initial name of the term '*conatus*'. According to my reading, in the *KV* the term 'the objective

¹⁵⁶ This opinion was taken up by Isaac Newton (1642-1727) and formed the first of the three Laws of Motion.

essence' is the initial name of the term 'the formal essence' in the *Ethics*¹⁵⁷. This thought, then, gives us an important clue for comprehending the concept of the *Amor* through the concept of *conatus* given that, as we saw in Section 7.2.3, the term of 'natural love' also has close links with the concept of the *Amor*.

In his *CM*, Spinoza further developed his concept of *conatus* as follows:

It should be noted that if life is also to be attributed to corporeal things, nothing will be devoid of life ... because the word 'life' is commonly used in a wider sense, there is no doubt that it should also be attributed to corporeal things... by life we for our part understand the force through which things persevere *in their own being*. And because that force is different from the things themselves, we quite properly say that things themselves have life. (*CM* II 6, p. 197, my italics)

Here Spinoza claims that by life he means the force through which things persevere in their own being. Spinoza's use of the concept of life in the *CM* should be considered the embryonic form of the concept of *conatus* in his *Ethics*.

Spinoza's concept of *conatus* became mature in his *Ethics*. Spinoza claims that each thing 'endeavors to persist in its own being', and this is its *conatus* (E3p6, p. 283).

Further, Spinoza directly identifies the *conatus* with the actual essence, and claims that

¹⁵⁷ As we know that the *conatus* refers to the actual essence, it seems that Spinoza implies that the formal essence is the origin of the actual essence in the *KV*. This point supports my argument, in Chapter 4, that the formal essence and the actual essence are one and the same at the metaphysical level in the *Ethics*.

the *conatus* 'is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself' (E3p7, p. 283). Spinoza concludes that the *conatus* could be called the power of the thing (E3p7 Proof, p. 283).

The *conatus*, as the expression of God's immanent creation, does not only relate to men but to every mode of God or, in other words, every individual thing. This is why Spinoza claims that 'the mind's intellectual love towards God (the human *Amor*)', or 'the love of God towards men (the divine *Amor* towards men)', 'is part of' the love of God (the divine *Amor*) (E5P36 Proof, p. 378). To compare Spinoza's use of the term 'natural love' in his *KV* and his use of the term *conatus* in his *Ethics*, we see that Spinoza withdrew his use of the term 'love', and replaced it with the term '*conatus*' to refer to the universally immanent power in the universe in the *Ethics*. At the same time, Spinoza only applied the term 'love' to men and God in the *Ethics*. This is very similar to Chu's use of the term 'the spirit of life' to the universal power, when he restricts the term 'love' just to refer to men alone in Neo-Confucianism. This point is revealed clearly through his definition of the relationship between the *conatus* and desire as follows:

When this *conatus* is related to mind alone, it is called Will [*voluntas*]; when it is related to mind and body together, it is called Appetite [*appetitus*], which is therefore nothing else but man's essence... Further, there is no difference between appetite and Desire [*cupiditas*] except that desire is usually related to men insofar as they are conscious of their appetite. (E3p9 Scholium, p. 284)

With respect to men, Spinoza clearly establishes a relationship of identity between

men's essence, *conatus*, and desire. As shown in Section 7.2.2, love is related to pleasure, and pleasure is one kind of desire. Therefore, the *conatus* could be considered as the nature of love in men. In turn, with respect to men, the *Amor* can also be considered as the nature of love. The table below summarizes these related concepts clearly:

	Neo-Confucianism	Spinoza
	<i>Jen</i>	The <i>Amor</i>
The perspective of the essential realm / <i>Natura naturans</i>	The power of the <i>Great Ultimate</i>	The power of God
The perspective of the functional realm / <i>Natura naturata</i>	The spirit of life	<i>Conatus</i>
Men's perspective	Love	Love

Table 11 A comparison of the concept of *Jen* and the concept of the *Amor*.

In short, with respect to *Natura naturata*, the *Amor* is the *conatus* of everything, and the *conatus* is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself. The *conatus* refers to the power of everything coming to exist and sustaining its existence. Therefore, the *conatus* is the expression of God's immanent creative power in *Natura naturata*. With respect to men, the *conatus* is the nature of love.

To summarize, to combine what we have concluded in Section 8.1 and this section, *the problem of nature* could be answered as follows: from God's perspective the *Amor* is understood as the immanently creative power of God; from an individual's perspective the *Amor* is understood as the immanent essence of this very individual, i.e. its *conatus*, and from men's perspective, the *Amor* is the nature of love.

8.3 The *Amor* as Man's Self-cultivation in Practice

In Section 8.1 and Section 8.2, we answer *the problem of nature* through both God's perspective and an individual's perspective. However, until now we have not touched upon *the problem of cause* and *the problem of transition*, which were raised in the puzzle of the doctrine of the *Amor* in Chapter 2. However, as shown in Section 3.4, I have argued that both Neo-Confucians and Spinoza use not only the perspective of the essential realm (*Natura naturans*) and the perspective of the functional realm (*Natura naturata*) respectively, but also a perspective combining these two perspectives: the combined perspective. We saw that the combined perspective is the key to resolving both the puzzle of the doctrine of the eternity of the mind, in Chapter 4, and the puzzle of the doctrine of intuitive knowledge in Chapter 6.

The nature of the combined perspective is expressionistic, by which I mean that the functional realm is the expression of the essential realm. Following the same logic, in this section, I propose that the combined perspective is once again the key to resolving the puzzle of the doctrine of the *Amor*. To borrow Deleuze's term, I will label my solution as an 'expressionistic reading'¹⁵⁸. I will unfold this expressionistic reading in Section 8.3.2. Moreover, I propose that the expression is not static, but dynamic. This is my dynamistic reading. I will unfold this dynamistic reading in Section 8.3.3. However, before we unfold our final discussion, both *the problem of cause* and *the problem of transition* should be further clarified. Now, let us return to the problems

¹⁵⁸ This is a term that Gilles Deleuze (1990) uses to summarize Spinoza's philosophy in his book: *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. I have merely borrowed the term, and I do not refer to Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy in detail since it is not related to my thesis.

themselves.

8.3.1 A Further Clarification of the Puzzle

The problem of cause consists in the fact that, on the one hand, Spinoza changes the cause part in his definition of the three kinds of love and, on the other hand, he still insists that they are coherent with his standard definition of the concept of love. *The problem of cause* is highlighted clearly in Table 1, and it is helpful for us to recall it as follows:

Love	Transition	Cause
Standard definition of love	Transition	The idea of an external cause
Passionate love	Passive transition	The idea of an external cause
Our love towards God	Active transition	The idea of God
The <i>Amor</i>	Active transition	The idea of God as cause

Table 1 A comparison of the formulae of Spinoza's three kinds of love.

In Table 1, we clearly see that the part of cause in the standard pattern, 'transition + cause', in E3 Definition 6, is changed in each step. Given the fact that Spinoza's God is immanent, the essence of *the problem of cause* seems to be that the external cause in the definition of passionate love becomes the internal cause in the latter two kinds of love. To put it simply, this seems to be the problem of the external/internal relationship. In order to further clarify this issue, we need to discuss both our love towards God and

the *Amor* separately.

Our love towards God is accompanied by the idea of God. As shown in Chapter 2, the epistemological approach highlights the importance of taking Spinoza's theory of knowledge into account. The basic idea of the epistemological approach is that the incoherence in the concepts of Spinoza's three kinds of love is justified due to the fact that their corresponding three kinds of knowledge are different from each other. This is on the right track for a solution to the puzzle. To follow the epistemological approach, the knowledge of the idea of God, as the cause of our love towards God, should be considered an example of rational knowledge. As shown in Chapter 5, reason is abstract knowledge that refers to common notions, which are common to all things, or the adequate ideas of the properties of things, which are common between the subject and the object. In the case of our love towards God, the subject is men, and the object is God. Whether the idea of God refers to a common notion or an adequate idea of the properties of things, it is always common between at least the subject, man, and the object, God¹⁵⁹. Man's rational knowledge of the idea of God is abstract: for example, our knowing that God's essence and his existence are one and the same, and that everything is only a mode of God, and that God is infinite and perfect, and so on. Given that it is always common between the subject and the object, man's rational knowledge of the idea of God could be considered either an internal cause or an external cause¹⁶⁰.

¹⁵⁹ Here I believe that man's knowledge of God, the idea of God, through reason, should be considered a common notion in Spinoza's philosophy.

¹⁶⁰ We encountered a similar situation when we discussed the general misunderstanding of the concept of things in Spinoza's epistemology in Section 6.1. Given the commonality between the subject and the object of the knowledge of reason, this does not lead to error.

In other words, it does not matter whether the rational knowledge of the idea of God is considered as an external or internal cause given the fact that man's knowledge of the idea of God is rational¹⁶¹. It is legitimate for Spinoza to consider it as an external cause: this is coherent with his standard definition in E3 Definition 6. In short, with respect to our love towards God, *the problem of cause* is not in fact a real threat.

With respect to the *Amor*, the situation is different given that the knowledge of the idea of God is intuitive. Given that the *Amor* is an umbrella term, covering the divine *Amor*, the human *Amor*, and the divine *Amor* towards men, we need to analyze all of these meanings. In Chapter 2, we saw their formulae listed clearly in Table 2, and it is also helpful for us to recall it as follows:

Love	Transition	Cause
Standard definition of love	Transition	The idea of an external cause
The divine <i>Amor</i>	Perfection	The idea of God as his own cause
The human <i>Amor</i>	Activity	The idea of God as cause
The divine <i>Amor</i> towards men	Activity	The idea of God as cause

Table 2 A comparison of the formulae of the *Amor*.

In Table 2, with respect to the *Amor*, we clearly see there are two kinds of cause: the

¹⁶¹ To hold the abstract knowledge of the idea of God, we, as the subjects, seem to consider ourselves as separate subjects who are independent of the object, God. In this sense it seems better for us to consider it as an external cause. However, I will not pursue this point further here as it does not affect my argument.

idea of God *as his own cause* and the idea of God *as cause*. According to E5p35, the divine *Amor* is nothing but God's self-love, and it is therefore accurate to say that the idea of God is his own cause. With respect to both the divine *Amor* towards men and the human *Amor*, superficially, at least, the subject and the object are not the same. This is why Spinoza cannot consider the idea of God 'as his own cause', rather 'as cause' in his definitions. However, given the nature of intuitive knowledge, there is no distinction between the subject and the object either in the divine *Amor* towards men or in the human *Amor*. For example, consider the situation of the divine *Amor* towards Peter, and Peter's intellectual love towards God (or Peter's human *Amor*). Peter is a mode of God. As shown in Section 6.2, Peter's intuitive knowledge of the idea of God is the idea of Peter in God itself. The idea of Peter in God is nothing more than the idea of God itself when the idea of God is expressed in the mode of Peter. At this point, Peter is God, God is Peter, and they are one and the same. Following this logic, the divine *Amor* towards Peter and Peter's human *Amor* are also one and the same. This is why Spinoza claims that 'the love of God towards men and the mind's intellectual love towards God are one and the same' (E5p36 Corollary, p. 378). The difference between the subject and the object disappear in nature, and the different descriptions between them are just due to different viewpoints.

In short, among the three sub-types of the *Amor*, Spinoza introduces two kinds of cause, the idea of God as his own cause and the idea of God as cause. Given the idea of God as intuitive knowledge, they are the same in nature. Therefore, we can say that the cause in the *Amor* is nothing but the idea of God as his own cause in nature, and this

seems to be incoherent with there being an external cause. *The problem of cause* remains as a real threat to the *Amor*.

So far, we have investigated both our love towards God and the *Amor*, and we have found that *the problem of cause* does not pose a real threat with respect to our love towards God, but is problematic for the *Amor*. We can conclude that there are two kinds of cause among Spinoza's three kinds of love: an external cause for passionate love and our love towards God, and God's own cause for the *Amor*. Now *the problem of cause* demands a defense of the *coherency* between God as his own cause in the definition of the *Amor* and God as an external cause in Spinoza's standard definition of love.

Now let us turn to *the problem of transition*. As known in Section 2.1, according to Spinoza's standard definitions, love is the transition of the mind to a state of greater perfection, but whereas passionate love involves a passive transition, our love towards God involves an active transition. However, as clearly shown in Table 2, the *Amor* does not involve a transition: the notion refers to God's nature enjoying infinite perfection. In other words, it is not a transitional process, but an abidance at the highest stage of perfection because God himself is absolute perfection, and he cannot undergo any change. Put simply, *the problem of transition* seems to be the problem of the process/consequence relationship.

In short, with respect to *the problem of cause*, both passionate love and our love towards God are on one side, and the *Amor* is on the other. This point is similar to the situation for *the problem of transition*. Now we see that both *the problem of cause* and *the problem of transition* are related to the *Amor* and do not pose a real threat towards

either passionate love or our love towards God. We can now summarize the problems through the table below:

	<i>The problem of cause</i>	<i>The problem of transition</i>
Passionate love	O	O
our love towards God	O	O
The <i>Amor</i>	X	X

Table 12 The relationship between *the problem of cause* / *the problem of transition* and Spinoza's three kinds of love.

8.3.2 The Functional/essential Relationship of Love in Spinoza

As shown in Chapter 7, there are three kinds of love in the *Ethics*. Moreover, these three kinds of love seem to be at the same level, i.e. we considered them as having the same status. However, for Spinoza's three kinds of love, this is a misunderstanding. In other words, Spinoza's three kinds of love are not at the same ontological level, and they do not have the same status. As shown in Section 8.3.1, it is clear that Spinoza somehow divides his three kinds of love into two groups: passionate love and our love towards God on one side, and the *Amor* on the other side. Now we have simplified our problems into the relationship between two different groups of love, rather than among three different kinds of love. This simplification provides us with a good foundation for resolving our problems.

I suggest that we can resolve this problem through the resources that we find in Spinoza's works, but that we also need to amend our way of thinking. To review our process of addressing the puzzle of the doctrine of the eternity of the mind in Chapter 4, and the puzzle of the doctrine of intuitive knowledge in Chapter 6, we can see that we followed a basic pattern whereby we transferred the relationship between the two realms of Ultimate Reality into a functional/essential relationship. In Neo-Confucianism, an individual thing is a functional expression of the *Great Ultimate*, and for Spinoza, an individual thing is a mode of God, and also a functional expression of God. This is the foundation that Gilles Deleuze (1990) adopted to summarize Spinoza's philosophy as expressionism. With respect to resolving both *the problem of cause* and *the problem of transition*, I propose that we need to perform the same transformation.

As shown in Section 7.1, for Neo-Confucianism, *Jen* is the character of the mind and the *Li* of love. In other words, *Jen* is the nature of love. At the same time, love is considered as the functional expression of *Jen*.

In a parallel way, according to my reading of Spinoza, the external/internal relationship, which entails the problem of cause, can be understood as being the functional/essential relationship. If this is an external/internal relationship then I believe that *the problem of cause* will not be resolvable because an internal cause is always opposite to an external cause, but an external cause is in Spinoza's standard definition of love. This leads us into a deadlock given the standard formula that Spinoza insists on using to define the three kinds of love. However, once we see it as the functional/essential relationship rather the static external/internal relationship, *the problem of cause* seems to disappear. Following the same logic, the

process/consequence relationship in *the problem of transition* can also be understood as being the functional/essential relationship. This is the so-called expressionistic reading. Now let us unfold our discussion.

(i) The Element of *Eros* and the Element of *Agape* in Spinoza

Firstly, I propose that we need to go back to the source of Spinoza's concept of love. Spinoza's concept of love has its roots in the tradition of Western philosophy. Helm concludes that the term 'love', which we use today in philosophy, has three etymologies from the ancient Greeks, and they are *Eros*, *Philia*, and *Agape* (Helm, 2017).

For most of us, *Eros* is the most familiar. A typical kind of *Eros* is romantic love. The basic characteristics of *Eros* are also revealed through romantic love: the lover has the passionate desire for union with the beloved, and there are some merits embodied in the beloved, such as the beloved's physical beauty, or spiritual goodness ... etc., through which the lover is attracted. These merits are the reasons why the lover has the passionate desire for union with the beloved. This description of *Eros* has its philosophical roots in Plato's *Symposium*, in which *Eros* was understood not only as a response to bodily beauty in particular, but also 'a response which ought to be developed into a response to the beauty of a person's soul, and ultimately into a response to the form, Beauty' (Helm, 2017). With respect to *Philia*, it has its philosophical roots in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, in which the love of *Philia* seems to be equal with friendship. According to Badhwar (2003), *Philia* can happen 'between parent and child, wife and husband, siblings as well as 'just friends'' (Badhwar, 2003, p. 43). Helm states that *Philia* is directed at 'not just one's friends but also

possibly towards family members, business partners, and one's country at large' (Helm, 2017). As *Philia* also depends on some good qualities embodied in the beloved, on this point it is similar to *Eros*. This leads to a difficulty with distinguishing *Philia* from *Eros* when *Eros* does not refer exclusively to romantic love¹⁶². Nygren argues that *Philia* seems to be a transformation of *Eros* because *Philia* 'is built in the last resort...on self-love', which is a kind of *Eros* (Nygren, 1969, p.186). In other words, *Philia* has its nature in the sense of the self-love of *Eros*. Therefore, Nygren believes that *Philia* could be considered as a kind of *Eros*, and at this point I will follow Nygren in this thesis. Even though there are some differences between *Eros* and *Philia*, they all belong to the Hellenistic tradition¹⁶³. As with Plato's Ideal Realm, Aristotle's Pure Form itself is 'the absolutely Unmoved', and everything in the universe longs for likeness to it in the irreversible upward tendency (Nygren, 1969, p.185).

By contrast, *Agape* refers to a completely different kind of love. For the beloved, it is unconditional. It is not based on the value of the beloved, but rather on some character of the lover himself/herself. Historically, *Agape* was primarily used to name the kind of

¹⁶² One approach to distinguish them is to argue that *Philia* implies equality in some degree between the lover and the beloved whereas *Eros* does not involve this requirement and emphasizes the lover's desire for the merits of the beloved.

¹⁶³ Nygren indicates that the roots of *Eros* are in ancient mystery-piety, maturing in Plato's philosophy, and remodeled in Aristotle's hands, before finally being shaped further in Neoplatonism in the Middle Ages (Nygren, 1969, p. 57). It is noteworthy that Aristotle claimed that the whole process of nature is the movement 'from matter to form, from imperfection to perfection of being, from potentially to actuality', and towards Pure Form finally by 'being loved'. (Nygren, 1969, p. 184). In other words, for Aristotle, the concept of *Eros* had been 'raised to the level of a cosmic force' (*ibid.*).

love that God has towards men in Christianity. Consequently, as one kind of response to God's love towards men, our love towards God, and our love towards our neighbors, also belong to this kind of love¹⁶⁴. It is not necessary for God to seek any merit in men since He is perfect and possesses all merits, and this is the logical foundation of *Agape*. God loves men not because of our merits but rather because love is the essence of God. Due to its unconditional nature, God loves everyone equally, and we should therefore love our neighbors equally. The direction of *Agape* is from the perfect to the imperfect, therefore the merit is created in the beloved through *Agape*. By contrast, *Eros* in Platonism seeks some merits or values which already exist in the beloved. There is a basic tension between Plato's Ideal Realm (perfect Realm) and realistic Realm (imperfect Realm), and men have the potential impulsion to pursue the Ideal Realm since Plato's Ideal kingdom itself cannot fall upon us. Therefore, the direction of *Eros* is from the imperfect to the perfect. For example, the beauty of your lover attracts you, and that is because the beauty of your lover is a shade of the Ideal of Beautifulness. This attraction is rooted in the Ideal of Beautifulness.

In short, it is reasonable for us to conclude that *Eros* moves upward from the realistic Realm to the Ideal Realm whereas *Agape* moves downward from the heavenly Realm to the earthly Realm. *Eros* is an upward endeavor for the unification with the unmoved Ultimate Reality. The character of union is one of the most distinctive feature of *Eros*. *Agape* is a downward creation for embodiment in the earthly world. The character of

¹⁶⁴ Our love towards God is not due to the omniscience, omnipotence, or other characteristics of God, but it follows from love as the essence of God, and through it we follow God and embrace God. For the same reason, we love our neighbors.

creation is one of the biggest characteristics of *Agape*.

(ii) The Functional/essential Relationship of Love in Spinoza

According to my reading, in the development of his concept of love, Spinoza inherits both the thought of *Eros* and the thought of *Agape*. As shown in Section 7.2, he claims, at the beginning of the *TIE*, that men's happiness depends solely on the merits of the object to which we are bound by love and, in the *KV*, he argues that men should endeavor to unite with God through love. Clearly, the conception of love in both the *TIE* and the *KV* belongs to the thought of *Eros*, and his core concern is to emphasize union with God.

However, Spinoza's concept of love undergoes an explicit transformation in the *Ethics*. Given that intuitive knowledge accompanies the *Amor*, let us recall the definition of intuitive knowledge. According to E2p40 Scholium 2, intuitive knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things. This definition is almost a counterpart of the notion of *Agape*, and emphasizes that it is a downward process from God to an individual thing. As such, the concept of the *Amor* is coherent with the thought of *Agape*. The element of *Agape* in the definition of the *Amor* is clearly embodied in the concept of the *Amor* towards men. The *Amor* towards men is an activity whereby God's creative power is immanently embodied in men.

Moreover, Spinoza himself twice directly touched on the issue of the essence of love in the *Ethics*. The first time is as follows:

The definition given by writers who define love as “the lover’s wish to be united with the object of his love” expresses not the essence of love, but a property of it; and since these writers have not sufficiently grasped the essence of love, neither have they succeeded in forming any clear conception of its property. (E3 Definition 6 Explication, p. 312) ¹⁶⁵.

The citation here is Spinoza’s specific explanation for his standard definition of the concept of love in E3 Definition 6. Spinoza is clearly criticizing the notion of *Eros*. Spinoza argues that it does not express the essence of love. But he does not denounce the notion of *Eros* completely and recognizes it as a property of love. Spinoza also argues that a clear conception of this property has not been forthcoming. What is Spinoza’s own conception of this property? I believe that Spinoza is alluding to the transition of the mind to a state of greater perfection. The notion of considering love as the transition from lesser to greater perfection is clearly coherent with the concept of *Eros*.

The second time Spinoza directly addresses the issue is in E5p20 Scholium. As shown in Section 2.2.3, Spinoza touches upon the issue of the essence of love again, and it is helpful for us to cite it again here:

[W]e may conclude that this love towards God is the most constant of all emotions,

¹⁶⁵ It has been pointed out that the writer who Spinoza is alluding to in this passage is Descartes.

and insofar as it is related to the body it cannot be destroyed except together with the body. As to *its nature* insofar as it is related solely to the mind, this we shall examine later on. (E5p20 Scholium, p. 372, my italics)

Nadler is right to claim that the *Amor* can be considered as the nature of our love towards God (Nadler, 2017, p. 18). I want to go a step further. According to my reading, the *Amor* is the nature of both passionate love and our love towards God. Passionate love is the function of the *Amor* when the subject of this love holds knowledge only of the first kind (imagination). Our love towards God is also the function of the *Amor* when the subject of this love holds knowledge of the second kind (reason). This reading has an epistemological foundation given the fact that intuitive knowledge can be considered as the nature of both knowledge as reason and knowledge as imagination. Furthermore, knowledge as reason and knowledge as imagination are the function of intuitive knowledge, a conclusion that we reached in Chapter 6. Further, this reading has a metaphysical foundation given the fact that the formal essence of a thing is the idea of the thing in God, which is a mode of the idea of God. In the previous section, we concluded that, with respect to God's perspective, the *Amor* is nothing but the creative power of God. The creative power of God is nothing but the formal essence of a thing when the thing is considered as a mode of God at the ontological level. With respect to a mode's perspective, the *Amor* is its actual essence, its *conatus*, i.e. its power. When the *conatus* of a thing is restricted to men, Spinoza refers to the *conatus* as love when men have the corresponding knowledge. As shown in Chapter 4, the formal

essence and the actual essence are one and the same at the ontological level. As such, it is legitimate for us to say that the *Amor* is the nature of both passionate love and our love towards God, and both passionate love and our love towards God are the function of the *Amor*.

In short, Spinoza incorporates both the element of *Eros* and the element of *Agape* into his concept of love. Spinoza considers the element of *Eros*, which is embodied in his concept of both passionate love and our love towards God, as a property of love. This is coherent with Spinoza's claim, in E5p19, that the lover who loves God cannot wish that God should love him in return given that the beloved in *Eros* is an unmoved object. At the same time, he considers the element of *Agape*, which is embodied in his concept of the *Amor*, as the nature of love. Given that Spinoza's God is an immanent God, the *Amor* could also be considered an immanent *Agape* due to the lover and the beloved being one and the same in nature. Spinoza is trying to combine the element of *Eros* and the element of *Agape* together into his concept of love. In other words, Spinoza's concept of love is coherent with immanent *Agape* in nature, i.e. the *Amor*, and is also coherent with *Eros* in function, i.e. both passionate love and our love towards God. As such, the *Amor* is the nature of both passionate love and our love towards God, and both passionate love and our love towards God are the functional expression of the *Amor* in practice. This conclusion explains both *the problem of transition* and *the problem of cause* to some degree.

8.3.3 The *Amor* as Man's Self-cultivation in Practice

In Section 8.3.2, I proposed that we need to change our pattern of thought in order to resolve the problems of the puzzle of the *Amor*, and I suggested that we need to transfer both the external/internal relationship of *the problem of cause* and the process/consequence relationship of *the problem of transition* to the functional/essential relationship. This transformation resolves both *the problem of transition* and *the problem of cause* to some degree. However, it does not relieve all of the tension that exists in the puzzle of the *Amor*, and it does not explain how the *Amor*, as the nature of love, is functionally expressed in the realm of *Natura naturata*. In this section, I argue that we need to change our pattern of thought even further. I argue that the functional expression is not static, but dynamic¹⁶⁶. Moreover, this dynamic expression is embodied in two ways: as an upward practical process and, at the same time, as a downward practical process.

(i) The Upward Practical Process

I now want to explore the question of how a free man can arrive at the highest stage of life, i.e. the stage of the *Amor*. At this point, it will be helpful for us to understand Spinoza's doctrine of the *Amor* by seeing how Neo-Confucians deal with a similar problem. In Neo-Confucianism, there is a dispute over whether *Jen* in practice should be considered as graded love or universal love. This dispute is one of the enduring topics in the history of Chinese philosophy, and emerged in the classic era.

¹⁶⁶ Den Uyl has a similar opinion (Den Uyl, 2008, p. 124).

Universal love was proposed by Mo Tzu (墨子, 479 - 438 B.C.), the founder of Moism¹⁶⁷. Moists believe in asceticism and utilitarianism, and propose the doctrine of universal love and the doctrine of non-war. Moist arguments for the doctrine of universal love are mainly established on the belief that the fulfillment of universal love will bring the most benefits to the whole of society.¹⁶⁸

By contrast, Mencius believes that it is impossible for a man to love everyone equally because *Jen*, as love, should start with familial love. Mencius said that '[c]hildren carried in the arms all know to love their parents. As they grow, they all know to respect their elder brothers' (the *Book of Mencius*, 7A: 15). Moreover, Mencius proposed that men should '[t]reat with respect the elders in [their] family, and then extend that respect to include the elders in other families. Treat with tenderness the young in [their] own family, and then extend that tenderness to include the young in other families' (the *Book of Mencius*, 1A: 7).

Even though the Moist doctrine of universal love was fiercely criticized by Mencius, it stimulated the development of the thought of universal love in Confucianism. Han Yu

¹⁶⁷ What we know today about Mo Tzu is very limited. It is possible that Mo Tzu 'was born before Confucius died and died before Mencius was born' (Chan, 1963, p. 212). Moists also believe in the will of *Tian* (天志) rather than the mandate of *Tian* (天命), which Confucius proposed strongly. Moism rather than Taoism was the main rival of Confucianism until the beginning of the Han dynasty (Chan, 1963, p. 211). However, even though Moism was successful as a social movement, as a kind of philosophy it is too shallow (Chan, 1963, p. 212).

¹⁶⁸ Unfortunately, there was almost no scholarly reviving of Moism in Chinese history until the emergence of Christianity in China. Some scholars find the similarity between Moism and Christianity not only in the thought of universal love but also in the thought of the will of *Tian* (correspondingly, the will of God in Christianity). But the resemblance between them is only superficial (*ibid.*).

(韩愈, 768-824), who inspired the revival of Confucianism in the Tang Dynasty, directly declared *Jen* as universal love (Chan, 1963, p. 454).

In the era of Neo-Confucianism, the dispute between graded love and universal love was settled through the theory of the functional/essential relationship. According to Chu, *Jen* should be considered universal love from the perspective of the essential realm, and it should also be considered to be graded love from the perspective of the functional realm in practice.

The notion of graded love has its roots in Confucius himself: according to Confucius, ‘filial piety and brotherly respect are the root of *Jen*’ (the *Analects*: I, 2), and furthermore, ‘[t]o be able to judge of others by what is near in ourselves, this may be the method of achieving *Jen*’ (the *Analects*: VI, 28). If familial love is the root of *Jen*, then this implies that to love others outside of the family constitutes the branches of *Jen*. The analogy of the root and branches became a classical analogy to support the doctrine of graded love in the history of Confucianism. Wang rephrases Confucius’ analogy of the root and branches as follows:

Take a tree, for example. When in the beginning it puts forth a shoot ... After the shoot appears, the trunk grows. After the trunk grows, branches and leaves come and then the process of unceasing production and reproduction has begun. ... With the root the plant will grow. Without it the plant would die ... The love between father and son and between elder and younger brothers is the starting point of the human mental spirit of life ... From here it is extended to humaneness [*Jen*] to all

people and love to all things. (Chan, 1963, p. 676)

Here Wang's argument is a revival of Confucius' analogy of the root and branches in the style of Neo-Confucianism. As with the growth of a tree, *Jen* as love operates in a gradational process in practice. As such, *Jen* should be considered as graded love rather than universal love. The problem with the Moist doctrine of universal love is that it has no starting point. Like a tree that does not sprout, Moist universal love is impossible in practice. The growth of *Jen* is due to the fact that it has a starting point, and is unceasing once there is growth (*ibid.*).

At the same time, Wang does not renounce the thought of universal love. On another occasion he warns that 'root and branches should not be distinguished as two different things', rather they are different parts of the same tree. Similarly, *Jen* is universal in nature (Chan, 1963, p. 663). This point is coherent with Chu's thought.

In short, according to Neo-Confucianism, graded love is the starting point of *Jen*, and this initial stage cannot be skipped in practice, otherwise *Jen* is impossible. In a parallel way, I propose that, even though that the *Amor* is the highest level of love, passionate love is its necessary starting point. It is impossible to arrive at the stage of the *Amor* in practice without the practice of passionate love and our love towards God. The *Amor* is, in fact, a matter of practice. Consequently, passionate love, our love towards God, and the *Amor* form a gradational process in practice. This illustrates that the *Amor* is an upward practical process. The *Amor* as an upward practical process can be better understood through several points below.

Firstly, it is not possible for us to entirely fulfil the *Amor* in our daily life. Given that the human *Amor* and the divine *Amor* are one and the same, this seems to imply that men can have the divine *Amor* completely. However, this is just an ideal conclusion. According to Spinoza's metaphysics, it is impossible for men to completely acquire intuitive knowledge in practice. A man, as a mode of God, always lives in a vast causal network, in which a man is just a tiny piece of the matrix. A man has very limited power, and 'is infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes' (E4 Appendix 32, p. 362). Our power is not extensive enough for us to avoid all of the impact that external things exercise towards us. In other words, the level of intuitive knowledge that a man can manage to acquire is a matter of various degrees: a free man can fulfil whatever he can manage to practice at the maximal degree, whereas an ignorant man can exercise his knowledge only at the lowest degree. As such, no one can have the divine *Amor* completely owing to the fact that 'we do not have absolute power to adapt to our purposes things external to us' (E4 Appendix 32, p. 362). The freedom that we can gain through the *Amor* is relative, not absolute. The *Amor*, for men, is thus a matter of various degrees in practice.

Secondly, even though it is located at the lowest level of Spinoza's classification of love, passionate love is not in itself bad, but good. According to E4p41, passionate love always produces the emotion of pleasure, through which our power is increased. Spinoza further confirms that 'the more we are affected with pleasure, the more we pass to [a] state of greater perfection; that is, the more we necessarily participate in

the divine nature' (E4p45 Scholium, p. 345). Fdti also points out that passionate love, 'in fact, greatly increases the periphery of world-exposure' (Fdti, 1979, p. 441).

Finally, it is incorrect to understand Spinoza's ethics in the stoic way. It was noted that Spinoza warns us that 'the free man who lives among ignorant people tries as far as he can to avoid receiving favors from them' (E4p70, p. 356). Spinoza also confirms that free men are always rare and the common people are always ignorant. As such, a hermit-style life withdrawn from society seems to be the better choice for a free man. It seems that Spinoza also lived like a hermit in his own life. Consequently, Goldstein believes that the fate of free men, 'for Spinoza, is not to become insiders, but rather outsiders' (Goldstein, 2006, p. 186).

However, this stoic explanation is a misunderstanding. Even if Spinoza warns us that the free man should avoid receiving favors from the ignorant as far as he can, in the same proposition he also emphasizes the fact that the ignorant 'are still men, who in time of need can bring human help, than which nothing is more valuable' (E4p70 Scholium, p. 356). Furthermore, '[m]an is a God to man' (E4p35 Scholium, p. 338)¹⁶⁹. Spinoza confirms that 'the principle of seeking our own advantage teaches us to be in close relationship with men' (E4p37 Scholium 1, p. 340). With respect to Spinoza's own situation, his hermit-style life is mainly due to his excommunication: this is passive consequence, not active choice. Even so, he had close relationships with the academic circle of his era, and was one of the memberships of the Collegiants. He had

¹⁶⁹ This is opposed to Thomas Hobbes's view of the condition of man as a condition of war of all against all.

good relationships with his landlord family and the local craftsmen from whom he received services in daily life. Fdti argues that '[o]ne who refuses immersion in affectional love and seeks to contemplate it dispassionately from the perspective of eternity can achieve autonomy only at the cost of impoverishment' (Fdti, 1979, p. 441). Den Uyl argues that 'in the end Spinoza seeks not to ... withdraw us from the world, but exactly the opposite' (Den Uyl, 2008, p. 81).

In short, Spinoza was not a genuine hermit. In the *Ethics* Spinoza recommends an ideal way of life as follows:

Therefore, it is the part of a wise man to make use of things and to take pleasure in them as far as he can (but not to the point of satiety, for that is not taking pleasure). It is, I repeat, the part of a wise man to refresh and invigorate himself in moderation with good food and drink, as also with perfumes, with the beauty of blossoming plants, with dress, music, sporting activities, theaters, and the like, in which every man can indulge without harm to another. Therefore, of all ways of life, this is the best and is to be commended on all accounts. (E4p45 Scholium, p. 345).

Whatever Spinoza is recommending here is clearly opposed to the stoic interpretation of his ethics. A free man, for Spinoza, should actively embrace society rather than turning his back on it.

Now, our explanation of the *Amor* as an upward practical process can help us answer

a specific question: why does Spinoza refuse to formulate the cause in his standard definition in a general way, ‘a cause’, rather than in its specific way, ‘an external cause’? He chooses the general way in his definition of pleasure: he chooses a general word, ‘transition’, to replace the specific word, ‘passive transition’, in order to accommodate both passionate love and our love towards God. It is clear that *the problem of cause* would not emerge if Spinoza were to formulate the cause in his standard definition of the concept of love as ‘a cause’. The *Amor* as an upward practical process provides us with a good reason to explain why Spinoza believed that his standard definition of the concept of love also applied to the *Amor*. I conclude that Spinoza’s purpose was to emphasize the external cause because passionate love is the unavoidable beginning of the development of the *Amor* in practice¹⁷⁰. This conclusion resolves *the problem of cause*.

(ii) The Downward Practical Process

I now want to explore what the life of a free man looks like upon arrival at the stage of the *Amor*. Many scholars propose that the *Amor* should be considered only as a kind of intellectual enlightenment. They find strong contextual evidence as follows:

¹⁷⁰ As shown in Section 2.2.2, Maxwell (1990) believes that when Spinoza developed his doctrine of love in Part 3 of the *Ethics*, the definition is particularly severed from passionate love. However, Spinoza forgot to revise the definition to finally accommodate the *Amor*. I cannot agree with Maxwell on this point. I believe that it is a deliberative choice of Spinoza’s rather than a mistake.

Therefore it is of the first importance in life to perfect the intellect, or reason, as far as we can, and the highest happiness or blessedness for mankind consists in this alone. ... the final goal [of a man] ... is that by which he is brought to an adequate conception of himself and of all things that can fall within the scope of his understanding. (E4 Appendix 4, p. 358)

Here the highest happiness seems to be nothing but the enlightenment of the mind. According to Spinoza, there is no good or evil in nature, and our suffering derives from our surplus passion, which has its roots in our ignorance. Consequently, Spinoza's remedy seems to be an intellectual therapy, and he suggests that we transfer our passive emotion into active emotion through rational knowledge and intuitive knowledge. As such, our freedom seems to depend completely on knowledge. As such, the ideal life seems to be a purely contemplative life. Many scholars have taken this explanation seriously. For example, Yovel considers Spinoza's 'salvation as mental transformation', which is 'the rational philosopher's way of salvation, ... and has no important meaning beyond it' (Yovel, 1990, pp. 169-170). Rutherford (1999) also considers salvation as a state of mind.

I believe that this intellectualistic explanation does not grasp the whole meaning of Spinoza's doctrine of the *Amor*. The *Amor* should be understood as not only a mental joy at its highest level, but also as an activity in practice. In other words, the *Amor* refers to both the highest possible contentment in the mind *and* positive activity in

practice. With respect to this point, it will be helpful for us to become familiar with Wang's doctrines of the unity of knowledge and action.

According to Wang's doctrines of the unity of knowledge and action, knowledge is action and action is knowledge¹⁷¹. Wang argues that 'knowledge is the direction for action and action the effort of knowledge, and that knowledge is the beginning of action and action the completion of knowledge' (Chan, 1963, pp. 669-670). Sometimes Wang argues for his conclusion through experienced facts, for example: '[only] after one has experienced pain can one know pain' (Chan, 1963, p. 669). Sometimes he argues for it through an appeal to man's instinctual reactions, such as men's instinctively loving beautiful colors and hating bad odors, which was discussed in the *Great Learning*. 'Seeing beautiful colors appertains to knowledge, while loving beautiful colors appertains to action', and it is not the case that one first sees it and then makes up his mind to love it, rather than once he sees it he has already loved it (*ibid.*). Wang was the first person to directly identify knowledge with action in the history of Chinese philosophy¹⁷².

¹⁷¹ Wang's knowledge here partly implies knowledge of the know-how variety, such as the knowledge of how to swim which comes from swimming, and the knowledge of archery which comes from the practice of archery (Cady 1928, p. 274). However, for Wang, knowledge is not limited to the know-how variety: there are other forms of knowledge, such as moral knowledge. For example, Wang argues that one could not be considered as having knowledge of filial piety unless one has practiced filial piety towards one's parents (Chan, 1963, p. 669).

¹⁷² The problem of practice is continually emphasized in the theory of knowledge in Confucianism. Chu says that the relationship between knowledge and action is like 'a person who cannot walk without legs although he has eyes, and who cannot see without eyes although he has legs'. Chu believes that

For Wang, to say that knowledge is action is, in fact, to say that intuitive knowledge has the instinctive power to act. Wang believes that knowledge is not dead but active: intuitive knowledge has the power to act in practice. According to Wang, the investigation of things is the way to rectify the mind, and our intuitive knowledge becomes clear and alive through such a rectification of the mind (which, ultimately, gets rid of selfish desires). The clear and alive intuitive knowledge forces us to practice it instinctively. Wang claims that if intuitive knowledge ‘orders us to go or to stop, to live or to die, we must go or stop, live or die. If the world says that we are insane in doing so, we can accept its censure and be at ease, because there is, as stated above, no other road for us to take’ (Iki, 1961, p. 29). To extend intuitive knowledge to things and affairs is the process of action, and conversely the process of action is also the process of practicing our intuitive knowledge of the mind. As such, Wienpahl concludes that ‘knowing about certain things by reading is to be ... a Confucian. Knowing by practice is to be a sage’ (Wienpahl, 1974, p. 215).

In a parallel way, we can see a similar thought in Spinoza. According to Spinoza’s definition, intuitive knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things (E2p40 Scholium 2, p. 267). In this definition, intuitive knowledge clearly refers to a downward process from God to a mode. Moreover, intuitive knowledge has a necessary connection with the *Amor*, since Spinoza claims that ‘from the third kind of knowledge there

‘knowledge comes firstly’ with respect to order and ‘action is more important’ with respect to importance (Chan, 1963, p. 609).

necessarily arises' the *Amor* (E5p32 Corollary, p. 377). As shown in Section 8.2, *sub specie aeternitatis*, the *Amor* is the immanently creative power of God. *Sub specie temporis*, God's immanent power is embodied in every individual thing. The *Amor* is the *conatus*, and the *conatus* is nothing but the actual essence of a thing. Consequently, from the combined perspective, the *Amor* should be understood as a downward fulfilled process of the nature of life, through which the power of God is embodied into a mode as its *conatus*.

Let us return to the example of Peter and Paul again. Paul's intuitive knowledge of Peter refers to the formal nature of Peter. As shown in Chapter 4, this formal nature is also his actual nature. As shown in Section 8.2, Peter's actual nature is his *conatus*. The essence of Peter is God's power as expressed through Peter as a mode of God. God's power as expressed through Peter as a mode of God could be considered to be the divine *Amor* towards Peter. Consequently, when Paul has intuitive knowledge of Peter, he has the divine *Amor* towards Peter which could be named Paul's divine *Amor* towards Peter, and, in this situation, Paul, Peter, and God are fully unified. As such, God is Paul and Paul is God. Given the fact that Peter's essence is the expression of the immanently creative power of God, Paul necessarily endeavors to fully bring about the fulfillment of Peter's essence. How can we understand the process of Peter's essence being completely fulfilled? This process means that Peter's potential essence is completely fulfilled and Peter's actual essence and Peter's formal essence are completely united in practice. Peter finally becomes a free man. How does this process unfold? If Peter is a child of Paul, Paul should provide him the best familial and social environment, support

him in acquiring the best education, and make efforts to ensure that his potential talent is completely fulfilled. If Peter is a friend of Paul, Paul should provide whatever he can to help Peter. Either way, whoever Peter is, Paul should provide Peter with whatever he can and help Peter to fulfill his potential essence.

Paul's divine *Amor* towards Peter is different from his passionate love towards Peter, and his passionate love towards Peter could transfer into an extreme hatred towards Peter. Paul's divine *Amor* towards Peter is also different from his rational love towards Peter. Rational love depends on the common properties between Paul and Peter. With rational love Paul considers Peter as an independent object, and Paul believes that Peter and himself both have their own pursuits. Therefore, Paul is not in a position to love Peter unconditionally and unreservedly. When Paul has the divine *Amor* towards Peter, he loves him unconditionally and unreservedly and is even willing to sacrifice his own life if necessary. In a parallel way, Confucius also emphasized that, a man of *Jen* 'will never seek to live at the expense of injuring the humanity [*Jen*], He would rather sacrifice his life in order to realize humanity' (the *Analects*: XV, 8)

In other words, to acquire intuitive knowledge is to positively act in practice, through which the essence of a thing is completely fulfilled. Put simply, intuitive knowledge is action in practice. I am not alone in drawing this conclusion: Den Uyl argues that, for Spinoza, '[t]o know what is right is not to then do the right but to *be doing* the right, for the knowing and the doing would be simultaneous and coextensive' (Den Uyl, 2008, p. 51, italics in original). It is noteworthy that Den Uyl's conclusion does not come from his exploration of Spinoza's doctrine of intuitive knowledge or the doctrine of the *Amor*,

but rather from Spinoza's general metaphysical and epistemological framework. Den Uyl's insight enhances my conclusion that intuitive knowledge entails positive action in practice. Comparatively speaking, Wang publicly proposes the doctrine of the unity of knowledge and action, but Spinoza does not. However, in Spinoza's doctrine of intuitive knowledge, what I see has the same implication. This implication was expressed in Spinoza's doctrine of the *Amor*. Since the *Amor* necessarily arises from intuitive knowledge, we can consider the *Amor* and intuitive knowledge as two aspects of the same thing: intuitive knowledge illustrates the aspect of knowledge and the *Amor* illustrates the aspect of action in practice. In short, the *Amor* entails the downward practical process.

Finally, we cannot say that a free man only practices the upward process in the beginning stage and the downward process in the final stage. Rather, we should understand the *Amor* as a process in a dialectical way¹⁷³: the upward practical process and the downward practical process are one and the same, and it is a dynamic process. Furthermore, the upward practical explanation could be considered as the perspective of *sub specie temporis* towards the process. The element of *Eros* in his concept of love is embodied in this process. The downward practical explanation could also be considered as the perspective of *sub specie aeternitatis* towards the process. The element of *Agape* in his concept of love is embodied in this process. The dialectical explanation could also be considered as the combined perspective towards the process

¹⁷³ Jonas (1965), Fdti (1979) and Den Uyl (2008) all argue that Spinoza's philosophy should somehow be understood dialectically (Jonas, 1965, p. 56; Fdti, 1979, p. 441; Den Uyl, 2008, p. 125). However, none of them focuses on the doctrine of the *Amor*.

in practice. As such, the element of *Eros* and the element of *Agape* are united. This is another reason to claim that Spinoza incorporates both the element of *Eros* and the element of *Agape* into his concept of love. During this dialectical process, the transition of the mind to a state of greater perfection is its basic characteristic. I conclude that Spinoza's purpose is to emphasize the process of transition, because the *Amor* always unfolds in a dialectical process in practice. This conclusion resolves *the problem of transition*.

To summarize, a free man in daily life always practices a dynamic process in a dialectical way. This is not different from a sage in Neo-Confucianism who practices his self-cultivation in daily life. Tu concludes that Wang's doctrine of the unity of knowledge and action 'denotes the identity of a dynamic process rather than the unity of two static concepts...[s]pecifically it refers to the creative way of how to become a sage.' (Tu, 1973, p. 195). As such, a free man, as Spinoza endeavors to become, is equivalent to a Neo-Confucian sage.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

Research concerning Spinoza's doctrine of the *Amor* has been lacking until now, and this thesis is the first systematical investigation. Here I will summarize our discussion and draw my overall conclusion.

9.1 The Argument for the Parallelism

As a Neo-Confucian approach to the puzzle of the doctrine of the *Amor*, firstly I have proposed that there is a parallel relationship between Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza's philosophy. This parallelism provides us with a firm basis for my Neo-Confucian approach.

The parallelism embodies all of the three main aspects: the metaphysical aspect, the epistemological aspect, and the ethical aspect.

With respect to the metaphysical aspect, the parallelism was revealed in four important ways in Chapter 3. As shown in Section 3.2, the first way refers to the metaphysical frameworks of Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza, and the main concepts within those frameworks. The Ultimate Reality of Neo-Confucianism is *Tian* and the Ultimate Reality of Spinoza is God. They both have two realms and two aspects (the bodily aspect and the mental aspect). Table 6 lists the parallelism of the two realms of Ultimate Reality as follows:

Neo-Confucianism	Spinoza
Ultimate Reality / <i>Tian</i> (天)	Ultimate Reality / God (substance)
The essential realm (The <i>Great Ultimate</i>)	<i>Natura naturans</i> (The intellect of God)
The functional realm (The myriad things)	<i>Natura naturata</i> (Individual things)

Table 6 A Comparison of the Two Realms.

They are both considered to have two realms: the essential realm and the functional realm in Neo-Confucianism, and *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* for Spinoza.

As shown in Section 3.3, the second way refers to the bodily aspect. Table 7 lists the parallelism of the bodily aspect as follows:

Neo-Confucianism	Spinoza
<i>Ch'i</i> (气)	Extension (Attribute)
<i>Yin</i> and <i>Yang</i> (阴阳) / <i>Five Elements</i> (五行)	Motion and Rest (Infinite mode)
physical form (形体)	The body (Finite mode)

Table 7 A Comparison of the Bodily Aspect.

The concept of *Ch'i* in Neo-Confucianism and the concept of the attribute of Extension in Spinoza are parallel since *Tian* and God are both identical with Nature in their own way, and both Neo-Confucians and Spinoza deny the theory of atomism.

As shown in Section 3.4, the third way refers to the mental aspect. Table 8 lists the parallelism of the mental aspect as follows:

Neo-Confucianism	Spinoza
<i>Li</i> (理)	Thought (Attribute)
The <i>Li</i> of <i>Tian</i> (天理)	The idea of God (Infinite mode)
The <i>Li</i> of a thing (事理)	The idea of a thing (Finite mode)

Table 8 A Comparison of the Mental Aspect.

Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza each have the rationalistic dimension as the dominant dimension. Moreover, Neo-Confucians and Spinoza have the same thoughts concerning the isomorphism of the bodily aspect and the mental aspect in the functional realm. Both Neo-Confucians and Spinoza believe that the mental element permeates everything throughout the universe.

In addition to the parallels of contents above, there is also the parallel of perspectives. As shown in Section 3.5, both Neo-Confucians and Spinoza deploy different perspectives in their philosophy. Table 9 lists the parallelism of these perspectives as follows:

Neo-Confucianism	Spinoza
<i>BenTi</i> (本体) (The essential realm)	<i>sub specie aeternitatis</i> (<i>Natura naturans</i>)
<i>Yong</i> (用) (The functional realm)	<i>sub specie temporis</i> (<i>Natura naturata</i>)

Table 9 A Comparison of the perspectives of the two realms.

Neo-Confucians have the perspectives of both *BenTi* and *Yong*, and Spinoza has the perspectives of both *sub specie aeternitatis* and *sub specie temporis*. Both Neo-Confucians and Spinoza deploy these two different perspectives to observe the same Ultimate Reality respectively. Further, they both deploy a combined perspective to observe Ultimate Reality. The combined perspective is the key to understanding the puzzles that we have encountered in all of the three important aspects of this thesis. For Neo-Confucianism, the combined perspective closely links with the concept of the *Li* of *Tian*, and for Spinoza it closely links with the concept of the idea of God.

To turn to the epistemological aspect, as shown in Chapter 5, Wang's concept of intuitive knowledge and Spinoza's concept of intuitive knowledge are parallel. Wang advocates an idealistic approach towards his epistemology. Wang's doctrine of intuitive knowledge is at the core of his epistemology. In a parallel way, Spinoza also advocates an idealistic approach towards his epistemology and intuitive knowledge is also at the core of his own epistemology. To turn to the ethical aspect, as shown in Chapter 7, the Confucian concept of *Jen* and Spinoza's concept of the *Amor* are parallel.

To summarize, the parallelism is impressive. Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza are not merely superficially similar to each other. We observed that their metaphysical aspects (their frameworks of metaphysics and the main concepts within those frameworks), epistemological aspects, and ethical aspects, are all in parallel. However, we should avoid claiming that they are identical to each other as they are not: they were developed in totally different cultures at different times.

9.2 The Puzzle of the Doctrine of the Eternity of the Mind and Its Solution

As shown in Chapter 2, in order to understand the doctrine of the *Amor* we have to fully understand the doctrine of the eternity of the mind and the doctrine of intuitive knowledge. With respect to the doctrine of the eternity of the mind, as shown in Section 4.1, there are two main problems: *the problem of isomorphism* and *the problem of duration*.

Firstly, Spinoza claims that the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things in E2p7, and this has been interpreted as the creed of isomorphism between the mind and the body by Spinoza scholars. In contrast, Spinoza claims, in E5p23, that the mind is in some sense eternal whereas the body can be destroyed. How can the doctrine of the eternity of the mind be reconciled with the notion of isomorphism between the mind and the body? This is *the problem of isomorphism*.

Moreover, Spinoza seems to make some conflicting statements during his discussion of the concept of eternity. Spinoza confirms, in E1 Definition 8 and in E5p23 Scholium, that eternity cannot be explicated through duration or time, even if duration is conceived as without beginning and end. However, before commencing the discussion of his last three doctrines, Spinoza reminds us, in E5p20 Scholium, that he will be concerned with the *duration* of the mind without respect to the body. Moreover, in E5p23 Scholium, Spinoza asserts that we *feel* and *experience* that we are eternal. How can we have the experience of eternity when eternity cannot be explicated through duration? This is *the problem of duration*.

While *the problem of isomorphism* refers to the possibility of the eternity of the mind, *the problem of duration* refers to the nature of that eternity. These two problems are entangled with each other, and constitute the puzzle of Spinoza's doctrine of the eternity of the mind.

I have proposed that, in a similar fashion to the case of *Li* as eternal and *Ch'i* as mortal in Neo-Confucian rationalism, the relationship between the mind and the body in Spinoza's philosophy is variable with respect to the perspective on Ultimate Reality that one adopts. The mind is not separate from the body *sub specie temporis*. What is eternal in mind is the formal essence of a thing *sub specie aeternitatis*. From the combined perspective, the formal essence of the mind is eternal and the body is mortal, and this point answers *the problem of isomorphism*. Moreover, Spinoza employs *sub specie temporis* in some places, and *sub specie aeternitatis* in other places. This is the reason that some conflicting statements occur in the text. This point answers *the problem of duration*. It is reasonable to say both that the mind is eternal and that we can feel and experience the eternity of the mind in terms of the combined perspective.

Ultimate Reality is one and the same, and the formal essence and the actual essence of the mind are one and the same in the ontological sense. This conclusion provides us with an important ontological basis from which to resolve the puzzle of the doctrine of the *Amor*. The difference between the formal essence and the actual essence is purely epistemological.

9.3 The Puzzle of the Doctrine of Intuitive Knowledge and Its Solution

To turn to the epistemological aspect, as shown in Chapter 6, Spinoza's doctrine of intuitive knowledge has *the problem of possibility*. When Spinoza says that a cognitive subject has the knowledge of a 'thing', the 'thing' does not refer directly to an external cognitive object but to an image in which the cognitive object is presented and with which the cognitive subject is itself involved. This is similar to Wang's definition of a 'thing' as the event towards which the will is directed. In a parallel way, Spinoza's defines the 'image' as an event in which the cognitive subject and the cognitive object are both involved but whose essence is a modification of the body of the cognitive subject. If intuitive knowledge refers to the essence of a thing, it refers to the essence of the cognitive subject firstly, rather than to the essence of the cognitive object. In the example of Peter and Paul, Paul's idea of Peter only indicates the constitution of Paul's body rather than the nature of Peter.

In contrast, according to Spinoza, intuitive knowledge refers to knowledge of the essence of the cognitive object. The essence of a thing is that which makes the thing what it is, and without which the thing cannot come into existence. The essences of things are different from each other, since otherwise they would be the same thing. This seems to imply that intuitive knowledge, as the essence of the cognitive object, would not be accessible for the cognitive subject. In the example of Peter and Paul, Peter's essence is unique, and Paul's essence is unique. How could Paul have intuitive knowledge of Peter's essence? This is *the problem of possibility*.

The only way to resolve *the problem of possibility* is to affirm that intuitive

knowledge of the cognitive subject is identical with the idea of God. In a similar fashion to Wang's doctrine that intuitive knowledge is identical with the *Li* of *Tian* in Neo-Confucianism, I have proposed that intuitive knowledge is also identical with the idea of God for Spinoza. *Sub specie aeternitatis*, it is easy to see that intuitive knowledge is identical with the idea of God since God only has intuitive knowledge.

Sub specie temporis, once we have intuitive knowledge of a cognitive object, we, in fact, know God in the way that God is expressed as the cognitive object. We would know God in a great many ways if we possess intuitive knowledge of a great many things. Therefore, the more we understand particular things, the more we understand God. The more we have intuitive knowledge, the more we know God. We know God in a maximal degree when we have intuitive knowledge in a maximal degree. In the example of Peter and Paul, the idea of Peter as the essence of Peter exists because in God there is an idea of Peter. The idea of Peter is a mode of the idea of God, and the idea of God incorporates the idea of Peter. When Paul has intuitive knowledge of Peter, Paul's mind must incorporate the idea of Peter. In the same way, any external object exists because in God there is an idea of the external object, which is derived from the idea of God. Paul's mind must incorporate the idea of the cognitive object when Paul has intuitive knowledge of this cognitive object. The more intuitive knowledge Paul has, the more Paul's mind is similar to the idea of God. Following this pattern, the mind of Paul becomes more and more similar to the idea of God.

From the combined perspective, as shown in Section 3.5, *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata* are unified through the idea of God in a metaphysical sense. As shown

in Section 5.3.2, intuitive knowledge is the knowledge that unifies *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata* in an epistemological sense. Therefore, it is natural to conclude that intuitive knowledge is identical with the idea of God in an epistemological sense. Spinoza believes that we remain in God, and God remains in us. Spinoza's God is an immanent God, and to say that God remains in us is to say that the idea of God remains in us. The idea of God that remains in us is nothing but the mind's intuitive knowledge. If intuitive knowledge is identical with the idea of God, *the problem of possibility* can be dismissed.

Furthermore, intuitive knowledge will be the actual essence of the mind itself if the mind has intuitive knowledge of oneself. As such, intuitive knowledge of the actual essence of the mind is also the formal essence of the mind, and intuitive knowledge is the knowledge that unifies the formal essence and the actual essence of the mind.

9.4 The Puzzle of the Doctrine of the *Amor* and Its Solution

To turn to the ethical aspect, as shown in Chapter 2, there are three problems constituting the puzzle of the doctrine of the *Amor*: *the problem of nature*, *the problem of cause* and *the problem of transition*. Firstly, given Spinoza's anti-anthropomorphic rationalism, in which Spinoza's God is not a personal God and Nature is his other name, there is the problem concerning how the concept of love is applied to God himself. This is *the problem of nature*.

In Section 8.3, I pointed out that, with respect to the perspective of the essential realm, the concept of *Jen* and the concept of the *Amor* have their corresponding concepts: the power of the *Great Ultimate* in Neo-Confucianism and the power of God in Spinoza; with respect to the perspective of the functional realm, the concept of *Jen* and the concept of the *Amor* have their corresponding concepts: the spirit of life in Neo-Confucianism and *conatus* in Spinoza; with respect to men, they all have the corresponding concept: love. Table 11 reveals these parallel clearly:

	Neo-Confucianism	Spinoza
	<i>Jen</i>	The <i>Amor</i>
The perspective of the essential realm / <i>Natura naturans</i>	The power of the <i>Great Ultimate</i>	The power of God
The perspective of the functional realm / <i>Natura naturata</i>	The spirit of life	<i>Conatus</i>
Men's perspective	Love	Love

Table 11 A comparison between the concept of *Jen* and the concept of the *Amor*.

Sub specie aeternitatis, the *Amor* is the creative power of God. Spinoza founds the concept of the *Amor* upon the concept of the self-caused. The concept of the self-caused is the ontological foundation of the concept of the *Amor* as the creative power of God. According to the concept of the self-caused, God's creation is not transcendental but immanent. The creative power of God is not a transcendental power but an immanent power. This immanent power is itself embodied in every individual thing.

Sub specie temporis, the *Amor* is the *conatus* of everything, and the *conatus* is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself. Therefore, the *conatus* is the expression of God's immanent creative power in *Natura naturata*. With respect to men, the *conatus* is the nature of love. As such, *the problem of nature* can be dismissed.

The *conatus* is the actual essence of a thing, and the fact that the *Amor* refers to the

conatus reveals that the *Amor* refers to the unified process of the actual essence and the formal essence in ethical practice. This point further helps us to resolve both *the problem of cause* and *the problem of transition*.

With respect to *the problem of cause*, on the one hand, Spinoza insists on citing his standard definition of the concept of love in the discussion of his three kinds of love; on the other hand, Spinoza changes the causal part in his definitions of the three kinds of love in subtle ways. With respect to *the problem of transition*, on the one hand, love refers to the transition of the mind to a state of greater perfection. On the other hand, the *Amor* does not refer to a transitional process, but to abiding at the highest stage of perfection. After the clarification in Section 8.3.1, both *the problem of cause* and *the problem of transition* threaten the concept of the *Amor*, but they do not pose any threat to the concept of passionate love or our love towards God. This situation is clearly listed in Table 12:

	<i>The problem of cause</i>	<i>The problem of transition</i>
Passionate love	O	O
our love towards God	O	O
The <i>Amor</i>	X	X

Table 12 The relationship between *the problem of cause* / *the problem of transition* and Spinoza's three kinds of love.

According to the table above, it is clear that the nature of both *the problem of cause* and

the problem of transition concerns the relationship between the *Amor* and the other two kinds of love. If this is an external/internal relationship then I believe that *the problem of cause* will not be solvable due to the fact that an internal cause is always opposed by an external cause, which belongs to Spinoza's standard definition of love. This leads us into a deadlock given that Spinoza insists on using his standard formula when defining the three kinds of love. I have proposed that we should change our pattern of thought in order to resolve the two problems above.

As shown in Section 7.1, for Neo-Confucianism, *Jen* is the character of the mind and the *Li* of love. In other words, *Jen* is the nature of love. At the same time, love is considered the functional expression of *Jen*. In a parallel way, according to my reading, for Spinoza, the external/internal relationship, which *the problem of cause* seems to be entailed by, can be understood as being the functional/essential relationship. Once we see it as the functional/essential relationship rather than the external/internal relationship, *the problem of cause* disappears to some degree. Following the same logic, the process/consequence relationship in *the problem of transition* can also be understood as being the functional/essential relationship.

According to my reading in Section 8.3.2, Spinoza incorporates both the element of *Eros* and the element of *Agape* into his concept of love. He considers the element of *Eros*, which is embodied in both his concepts of passionate love and our love towards God, as a property of love. At the same time, he considers the element of *Agape*, which is embodied in his concept of the *Amor*, as the nature of love. Spinoza is trying to combine the element of *Eros* and the element of *Agape* together into his concept of love.

As such, Spinoza's concept of love is coherent with immanent *Agape* in nature, i.e. the *Amor*, and is also coherent with *Eros* in function, i.e. passionate love and our love towards God. In short, the *Amor* is the nature of both passionate love and our love towards God, and both passionate love and our love towards God are the functional expressions of the *Amor*. This conclusion explains both *the problem of transition* and *the problem of cause* to some degree.

Moreover, the functional/essential relationship is unfolding in a dynamic process, and this is my dynamistic reading in Section 8.3.3. Further, this dynamic process unfolds in two ways: in an upward practical process and a downward practical process. According to the upward dynamistic explanation, I conclude that Spinoza's purpose is to emphasize the external cause in the standard definition of the concept of love, because passionate love with an external cause is the unavoidable beginning of the development of the *Amor*. This explanation fully resolves *the problem of cause*. Following this explanation, it is wrong to understand Spinoza's ethics in the stoic way. Spinoza is not attempting to withdraw from society in his ethical theory. This upward dynamistic explanation could be considered as the perspective of *sub specie temporis* towards the process in practice. The element of *Eros* in Spinoza's doctrine of love could be considered to be embodied in this process.

According to the downward dynamistic explanation, Spinoza's intuitive knowledge entails action in practice. As such, the *Amor* is not merely the tranquility of mind. It is wrong to see Spinoza's salvation as mere mental enlightenment. Then, an ideal life is not a purely contemplative life. This downward dynamistic explanation could also be

considered as the perspective of *sub specie aeternitatis* towards the process in practice. The element of *Agape* in Spinoza's doctrine of love could be considered to be embodied in this process.

Further, we should understand this process in the proper dialectical way: the upward practical process and the downward practical process are one and the same, and it is simply the way in which the wise practically pursue the *Amor* in daily life. This dialectical explanation could also be considered as the combined perspective towards the process in practice. Both the elements of *Eros* and *Agape* could be considered to be united in this dialectical process. I conclude that Spinoza's purpose is to emphasize the process of transition, because the *Amor* always unfolds in a dialectical process of daily life, and the wise can always gain a greater perfection in practice through self-cultivation. An ideal life which always abides in the highest happiness is not possible in practice. This explanation fully resolves *the problem of transition*. As such, a free man, as Spinoza endeavors to become, is equivalent to a Neo-Confucian sage.

9.5 Potential Future Research Areas

I hope to have established a new, cross-cultural approach to Spinoza scholarship which bridges his philosophy with Neo-Confucianism. Three potential areas could be further developed in the future.

The first area concerns some specific issues in relation to Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza. For example, the relationship between the Neo-Confucian doctrine of *Yin* and *Yang* and Spinoza's doctrine of Motion and Rest can be explored further. According to Neo-Confucianism, *Yang* is motion and *Yin* is rest. The parallel between the concept of *Yin* and *Yang* and the concept of Motion and Rest is, then, obvious. However, the details of the relationship between them are more complicated. For example, the distinctive ratio of motion and rest could be used as an individual identity, a notion that Spinoza mainly inherits from Descartes. However, a similar notion is absent in Neo-Confucianism. For Confucianism, the doctrine of *Yin* and *Yang* hangs mainly on metaphysics, and its connection with physical science is lacking. Could such comparative research revive the doctrine of *Yin* and *Yang* in the light of modern physical science?

The second area concerns tackling certain topics in Neo-Confucianism by borrowing insights from Spinoza's philosophy. For example, research into Neo-Confucian political philosophy could benefit from incorporating Spinoza's insights concerning democratic societies, which is Spinoza's specialised area. In Neo-Confucianism, there are some resources that could be used as the foundation of the development of a democratic society. Such as, Chu's thought that *Li* is One but its manifestations are

Many implies that everyone is equal in nature. Furthermore, Wang's doctrine of intuitive knowledge entails the possibility of individual liberation, since every individual can make their own decisions following their own intuitive knowledge. However, these thoughts of equality and liberation in Confucianism did not develop into a matured political philosophy of democratic societies. Spinoza developed his political philosophy in his *TP*, and its main spirit is in accordance with modern democratic societies. Given the parallelism between Neo-Confucianism and Spinoza, there is a space for Neo-Confucianism scholars to carry out such comparative research.

The third area concerns tackling certain topics in Spinoza's philosophy with the aid of relevant Neo-Confucian insights. For example, research into Spinoza's moral theory could benefit from incorporating insights from the Neo-Confucian moral theory of self-cultivation, an area which Neo-Confucians have greatly developed. As shown in Chapter 8, Spinoza's ethical theory entails the necessity of self-cultivation. However, Spinoza did not sufficiently unfold his discussion of self-cultivation. Consequently, there exists fertile ground for Spinoza scholars to carry out such comparative research.

Cross-culture comparative research is always difficult, but its fruits are rich. In the beginning of my research, I only had in my mind the similarity between the concept of *Jen* and the concept of the *Amor*. Now in this final stage, I have seen an impressive parallelism of all three main aspects, and I myself am surprised by this result. It seems fitting to use Spinoza's last sentence in his *Ethics* as the end of my thesis: 'All things excellent are as difficult as they are rare' (E5p42 Scholium, p. 382).

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Glossary of Chinese Terms

Ancient Philosophers			
Phonetic Rendering	Chinese (Simplified)	Chinese (Traditional)	Date
Confucius	孔子	孔子	551-479 B.C
Lao Tzu	老子	老子	6 th B.C. or 4 th B.C.?
<i>Tseng Tzu</i>	曾子	曾子	505- c.436 B.C.
Mo Tzu	墨子	墨子	479 -438 B.C.
Mencius	孟子	孟子	372 - 289 B.C
Hsun Tzu	荀子	荀子	298-238 B.C
Wang Ch'ung	王充	王充	27-100?
Han Yu	韩愈	韓愈	768-824
Shao Yung	邵雍	邵雍	1011-1077
Chou Tun-I	周敦頤	周敦頤	1017-1073
Chang Tsai	张载	張載	1020 – 1077
Ch'eng Hao	程灝	程灝	1032-1085
Ch'eng I	程頤	程頤	1033 - 1107
Chu Hsi	朱熹	朱熹	1130-1200
Wang Yang-ming	王阳明	王陽明	1472-1529

Ancient Books		
Books	Chinese (Simplified)	Chinese (Traditional)
<i>The Book of Changes</i>	易经	易經
<i>Tao-Te Ching</i>	道德经	道德經
<i>The Analects</i>	论语	論語
<i>The Book of Mencius</i>	孟子	孟子
<i>The Great Learning</i>	大学	大學
<i>The Doctrine of the Mean</i>	中庸	中庸
<i>The T'ai-chi-t'u Shuo</i>	太极图说	太極圖說
<i>Chu Tzu Yu-lei</i>	朱子语类	朱子語類
<i>Ch'uan-hsi Lu</i>	传习录	傳習錄

Concepts and Others			
Phonetic Rendering	English Rendering (Usage)	Chinese (Simplified)	Chinese (Traditional)
<i>Tian</i>	Heaven	天	天

<i>Ti</i>	Lord	帝	帝
<i>ShangTi</i>	Ultimate Lord	上帝	上帝
<i>HuangTianShangTi</i>	Ultimate Lord	皇天上帝	皇天上帝
<i>Tianzhu</i>	The Master of <i>Tian</i>	天主	天主
<i>Tao</i>	The <i>Way</i>	道	道
<i>Tiantao</i>	The <i>Way</i> of <i>Tian</i>	天道	天道
<i>Tianming</i>	The mandate of <i>Tian</i>	天命	天命
<i>Tianzhi</i>	The Will of <i>Tian</i>	天志	天志
<i>Tianli</i>	The <i>Li</i> of <i>Tian</i>	天理	天理
<i>Ziran</i>	Nature	自然	自然
<i>Ti</i>	Essence	体	體
<i>BenTi</i>	Essence	本体	本體
<i>Yung</i>	Function	用	用
<i>Qi</i>	The <i>Instrument</i>	器	器
<i>Xing-er-Shang</i>	Metaphysics	形而上	形而上
<i>Xing-er-Xia</i>	Physics	形而下	形而下
<i>Taiji</i>	The <i>Great Ultimate</i>	太极	太極
<i>Taiji Tu</i>	The Diagram of the Great Ultimate	太极图	太極圖
<i>Li</i>	Principle	理	理
<i>Shili</i>	The <i>Li</i> of a Thing	事理	事理
<i>Ch'i</i>	Material Force	气	氣
<i>Yin</i>	Rest	阴	陰
<i>Yang</i>	Motion	阳	陽
<i>Wuxing</i>	<i>Five Elements</i>	五行	五行
<i>Xin</i>	The mind (Mind-and-Heart)	心	心
<i>Shen</i>	Spirit	神	神
<i>Ch'ien</i>	<i>Ch'ien</i>	乾	乾
<i>Jen</i>	Love	仁	仁
<i>Yi</i>	Righteousness	义	義
<i>Chung</i>	Conscientiousness	忠	忠
<i>Shu</i>	Altruism	恕	恕
<i>Liang-chih</i>	Intuitive Knowledge	良知	良知
<i>Chih Liang-chih</i>	Extending Intuitive Knowledge	致良知	致良知
<i>Chih-hsing Ho-I</i>	The Unity of Knowledge and Action	知行合一	知行合一
<i>Huayanzong</i>	<i>Hua-Yen School</i>	华严宗	華嚴宗
<i>Tiantazong</i>	<i>Tian-Tai School</i>	天台宗	天台宗
<i>Jiaguwen</i>	The Oracle Bone	甲骨文	甲骨文
<i>Pangu</i>	<i>Pangu</i>	盘古	盤古