BODY ESSENCE AND MIND ETERNITY IN SPINOZA

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Spinoza says at the end of VP20S: "So now it is time for me to proceed to those things that pertain to the duration of the mind without relation to the body." Obviously he intended the remainder of the Ethics to be a superlatively upbeat ending. This is where at last we are to be told how to discover and attain what will enable us to enjoy continuous, supreme, and unending happiness, which he says (in TDIE) he sought. *Literally* continuous, *literally* supreme, *literally* unending, *literal* happiness.

No one who reads these dozen pages can fail to perceive that they are, in their author's eye, the joyous capstone to his chief work. *Even if* the mind perished utterly with the body, the life of reason would still be the best life, as has been shown; but how much more there is besides! (VP41 - exactly parallel to Plato's *Republic* 621 to end.) The wise man "never ceases to be" (*nunquam esse desinit*) "but always (semper) possesses true contentment of the soul (vera animi acquiescentia)" (VP42S fifth sentence from end of the book).

Few of his commentators have shared Spinoza's euphoria. For what is said here seems to stand in glaring contradiction to the sovran teaching of IIP7 that the human mind and the human body are "one and the same thing" (though "expressed in two ways"). Attempts to deal with this embarrassment take three main forms, which, crudely put, are the contentions that Spinoza meant what he said (and so contradicted himself); that he meant what he said, but didn't say all that he meant; and that he didn't mean what he said.

The first of these, the simple and straightforward reading of Spinoza as claiming that not the whole mind, but an important part of it, survives bodily death intact - that for example part of Spinoza's mind was still around in 1678, and is today - has been adopted in recent times, most notably by Jonathan Bennett, who faces, indeed emphasizes, the consequence - as it appears to him - that at the end of his chief work Spinoza, for unfathomable reasons, abandoned his hitherto so carefully crafted philosophy and began to write "pretty certainly worthless" "nonsense," "rubbish which causes others to write rubbish" (Bennett (1984), 372 ff.). And many Spinozists must have felt that such shocking strictures are not to be gainsaid if Spinoza indeed meant what he said, reading Latin words such as *semper, remanet, and ante* in their usual senses; which is why they have striven to interpret the passages in other ways.

I think, however, that if we attend carefully to what Spinoza said, a reading will emerge that is consistent with what has gone before - perhaps is even entailed by it - and that presents an intelligible and non-trivial doctrine, which I shall attempt to expound. Whether it is true or plausible is another matter, which I shall not ponder in this paper.
The remainder of the *Ethics*, about six percent of the whole, consists of twenty-two propositions, twelve scholia, and four corollaries. I venture to summarize this doctrine concerning the duration of the mind without relation to the body as follows:

1. Imagination (which includes sensation) and memory do not survive the body (VP21).
2. But, since there is in God an idea expressing the essence of the body under form of eternity (VP22), the mind is not absolutely destroyed when the body is; something of it remains (remaner) that is eternal. This is the idea of the essence of the body; it pertains to the essence of the mind (VP23).
3. We do not remember that we existed before the body. Nevertheless we "feel and experience" (sentimus experimurque) that we are eternal (VP23S).
4. The formal cause of the third kind of knowledge (viz. scientia intuitiva) is the mind "in so far as the mind is eternal" (VP31).
5. Intellectual love of God, arising from the third kind of knowledge, is eternal (VP33), i.e., without beginning, as well as without end (VP33S).
6. Passive affects, on the other hand, exist only while the body endures (VP34). Therefore intellectual love of God ("gladness accompanied by the idea of God as cause, that is, the love of God not insofar as we imagine him as present but insofar as we understand God to be eternal" - VP32C) is the only eternal love (VP34S).
7. This intellectual love is "part of the infinite love wherewith God loves himself." (VP36) It is our "salvation or blessedness or freedom, ... called glory in the Holy Scriptures, and rightly so" (VP36S). It is indestructible (VP37).
8. "The greater the number of things the mind knows by the second and third kinds of knowledge, the greater is the part of it that survives" (VP38).
9. "He whose body is capable of the greatest amount of activity has a mind whose greatest part is eternal" (VP39).
10. We endeavor to arrange things in this life so that "everything relating to memory or imagination should be of scarcely any importance in comparison with the intellect" (VP39S).
11. The part of the mind that survives - viz. the intellect - is more perfect than the rest (VP40S).
12. All the intellects together "constitute the eternal and infinite intellect of God" (VP40S).
13. Salvation is a goal that is difficult but not impossible of attainment (VP42S).

In a nutshell, only while the body exists can we imagine (have sensations) and remember. But both before birth and after death a part of the mind, viz. the intellect, exists eternally. The contents of the intellect are rational and intuitive knowledge and the intellectual love of God. The repertoire of the intellect can be augmented while the body exists; thereby salvation, which involves eternal joy, is attainable.

I shall now expound, in the same order, what I take to be Spinoza's meaning.