

# Spinoza: Desire and Supreme Good, from Philosophizing to Wise

Alla Marcellin Konin<sup>1</sup>, N'Dré Sam Beugre<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Département de Philosophie, Université Felix Houphouët Boigny, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

<sup>2</sup>Département de Philosophie, Institut de Recherches et d'études Philosophiques, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

## Email address:

kroumarcellin@yahoo.fr (Alla Marcellin Konin), Smlbeugre@gmail.com (N'Dré Sam Beugre)

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**Abstract:** If Spinoza is a thinker very present in the Faculties of Philosophy, on the other hand, he is presented as one of the great forgotten of the humanist programs of secondary education. Contrary to what happened with other philosophers, who had more chance of spreading in non-specialized contexts (we can cite Nietzsche, Pascal, Plato or Schopenhauer as obvious examples), Spinoza is generally considered a excessively systematic author, and complex, whose works would have been written for a small group of scholars. Nothing could be further from the truth. Spinoza's life was full of completely surprising events, from his estrangement from the Jewish community (which repudiated him in a strict and disagreeable way), through his dalliances with heterodox currents which gradually grew in power, until his meeting with Leibniz and his intrepid travels. from one part of his native Holland to another. In this article, we examine the concept of desire in Spinoza's philosophy and its connection to the philosopher's decision to find the greater good. Since the greatest good, in turn, is nothing but its own enjoyment, we conclude that ignoring its existence, seeking it, and living it are, respectively, the conditions of the vulgar, the philosopher, and the wise, as what happened in the Garden of Epicurus.

**Keywords:** Desire, Supreme Good, Decision, Joy, Sadness

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## 1. Introduction

When Spinoza wonders about the supreme good, he summarizes the problem as follows: "our happiness and our misfortune reside in a single point: to what quality of objects do we adhere by love? [1] And he answers it thus: "the love of an eternal and infinite thing nourishes the soul only with joy, exempt from all pain, which one must greatly desire and seek with all might" [2] Shortly after, he declares the fragility of your will in the face of the power necessary to achieve such happiness: "It is not without reason that I use these words: if I could seriously deliberate" (idem). It is therefore not the simple fact of wanting it to be "very desirable" to find it, since it takes all the strength to do so. What is desired, in short, we can then deduce, is an "eternal and infinite thing", inaccessible by the means of the will and difficult to find.

What we say later will be based on the first ten paragraphs of the *Treatise on Reform and Understanding (TRE)*. In these paragraphs, Spinoza recounts how he set out to seek true

knowledge. He wonders about a new way of life, which is presented as a real good: "I decided to ask if there was an object that was a real good" [3]. This good is then described as "uncertain", the pursuit of which would imply "missing a certain thing" [4]. Describing himself as uneasy about whether he would actually arrive at this new way of life "or at least be sure of it" [5], he states that "without changing the previous order and conduct of my existence" (idem), that is to say of his own life as an individual named Baruch Spinoza, he confesses "I tried several times without success" (TRE, italics added). In short, he describes that, in his personal history, he decided to look for a good that would have more value than the goods he had enjoyed until then, and that, without giving up the "commodities that are taken from honor and wealth (TRE, §2), found his attempts to find this much frustrated. He also saw sadness arise in him because of this frustration, because "if at any time we are frustrated in our hope, then extreme sadness arises" [6]. Seeing himself continually frustrated, that is to say sad, in the hope of obtaining such goods, Spinoza decided, as his account indicates, that he placed his hope in another good,

which could not cause such frustration again. And he describes this quest as a matter of life and death:

I saw myself, indeed, in extreme danger and obliged to seek with all my strength a remedy, even uncertain, just like a patient who has a mortal affection, who sees imminent death if he does not use a remedy, and is obliged to look for him, even if he is uncertain, because all his hope is in him [7].

As we have seen, in Spinoza's own terms, seeking this good implies nurturing the hope of it and, at the same time, no longer expecting other goods to no longer be able to frustrate it. That is, to expect no more, honor and wealth, as well as goods related to sensual pleasures, that they are sufficient or capable of satisfying your request. We therefore use the term "satisfaction", without any opposition to the Spinozian text, insofar as we designate by it the opposite of frustration. In other words, those who are not frustrated are satisfied and vice versa. Thus, those whose hope is not frustrated see their hope satisfied. One could, instead of the word "satisfaction", use the word "realization", because, according to Spinoza, "Hope is an uncertain joy which comes from the idea of a future or past thing whose event leaves some doubt" (Eth. III, definition of affections 12). However, we decided to keep "satisfaction" because it involves the relationship between hope and desire, which we will explain below. From what Spinoza says, "there are no less examples of men who, to win or retain honor, have suffered miserably" (TRE, § 8), the frustration comes from the inability to realize the expected good or to hold the asset which one currently enjoys, which in both cases implies a present or future loss of this asset. Hope, as an affect of the spirit, is a form of joy ("unstable joy") and, therefore, a form of variation of desire, because, being joy "the passage of man from a lesser to a greater perfection" [8], and that "desire is the very essence of man" [9], then hope, as a form of joy, is a way of shifting the desire from a lesser to a greater perfection. Having established that hope is a variation of desire, we can say, without going against Spinoza's remarks, that the non-realization of hope is a frustration of desire. Thus, all desire implies a search for its object or for satisfaction, and, in the case of an eternal and infinite thing, this "must be greatly desired and sought with all its might" [10].

But why is Spinoza looking for an eternal and infinite thing and not a temporal and finite thing? This is because Spinoza's anxiety is linked to the goods commonly desired by men: "After experience has taught me that everything that happens most often in ordinary life is vain and futile [...] there was some object that was a real good" (Treatise on Reform and Understanding, §2). However, the objects of "ordinary life" are "those things that occur most in life" (TRE, §3) and can be summed up "from what can be deduced from their works, in these three: wealth, honor and concupiscence" (ibid.).

Everything that is finite and temporal is insufficient to satisfy Spinoza's desire. This, says Spinoza, he perceives through a dissatisfaction that comes from "experience" and "from his works", that is, he perceives that all that exists other than finite and temporal is only a variation of all that he himself had already experienced, object of desire satisfaction and, therefore, finds that none of this type of object is capable of

satisfying his own. It follows that he desires something which cannot be finite (infinity); and which cannot be temporal (the eternal). However, desiring a does not seem to be a contradiction: how can one desire what is not it? Would it be a desire for nothing? Impossible, because all desire is desire for something, and Spinoza recognizes this, which is attested by his own words: it is "an eternal and infinite thing", that is to say something positive, affirmative, of real.

## 2. Existence: The Possibility of Encountering

Ordinary things, on the other hand, don't seem to be so affirmative and existent, because they're related to dissatisfaction and that's a symptom of something we had before and don't have anymore, that's ie that did not last long enough. In *Metaphysical Thoughts (PM)*, he says that duration "is the attribute under which we conceive the existence of created things as they persevere in their actual existence" (Chapter IV, p. 275). In *Ethics III*, prop. 7, he says: "The effort by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but its actual essence." As an attribute of a particular thing, the duration of a thing is therefore precisely how long that thing, in its total existence, has persevered in its present essence. Moreover, as he always claims that the effort of perseverance is his very essence, what would define the thing would therefore be his own effort, which, as far as its existence is concerned, is the very duration of the thing. We can therefore conclude that duration is the very existence of the thing and that time is a measure of it: "To now determine the duration of a thing, we compare it to the duration of things which have an invariable and determined movement., and this comparison calls it time itself" [11], and yet, "it is a way of thinking which serves to explain duration" (idem). Time, as a measure of duration, has no proper reality, it does not exist, what exists is the thing measured, duration. This is why, in *Ethics III*, prop. 8, he says: "The effort by which each thing strives to persevere in its being does not engage a finite time, but an indefinite time." "Does not imply" means: time does not belong, it is not immanent, interior to the effort of perseverance, it is exterior to it (that is to say, time measured by something exterior), and the reason is in the proof of this very proposition:

Indeed, if it were a question of a limited time, which determined the duration of the thing, it would then result exclusively from the very power by which the thing exists, that after this limited time, it could no longer exist, to be destroyed... But that's absurd. [...] it will continue, by virtue of the same power by which it now exists, to exist indefinitely, provided it is not destroyed by any external cause. (Eth. III, prop. 8, dem.).

Now, if what the thing is is precisely its effort, the power of its effort cannot be directed in such a way that this effort leads to frustration (the non-encounter with the object). Without the object, there is no effort for the object, and without effort, there is no subject who makes an effort, because the one who makes an effort makes an effort for something, and not for a

“non-thing”. Thus, the search for the object is internal to the agent, and since its object cannot be a non-thing, then the agent's motivation cannot be either destruction or self-destruction, because destroying something is a form of denial of the existence of something. On the contrary, desire is always affirmative, it seeks to affirm its object, never to deny it. Therefore, the power of desire is the degree of effort to last, it is the quantity of perseverance of a thing conceived by the duration of its effort to satisfy itself: it tends towards something; and the longer it persists, the more powerful the effort; the greater the power of duration, the stronger the perseverance of the effort. As this effort is not directed towards the void, the possibility of encountering the object is always the condition of the continuity of the duration of the actual existence of the one who desires, since the actual existence of a particular man is defined exclusively by desire. The time of existence of this man, his lifespan, is therefore, without being determined by his essence, closely related to the effective existence of the possibility of satisfying his desire. We can understand it from what Spinoza says about suicide.

No one therefore, unless he is dominated by external causes contrary to his nature, neglects to desire what is useful to him, that is to say, to preserve his being. By this I mean that it is not by the necessity of his nature, but under the compulsion of external causes, that someone refuses to eat or commits suicide, which can happen in many ways. Thus, someone commits suicide under the duress of another, who twists his right hand, which happened to be holding a sword, forcing him to direct it against his own heart. Or, if he is obliged, like Seneca, by the mandate of a tyrant, to open his veins, because he wants to avoid, by a lesser evil, a greater evil. Or, finally, because causes Occult exteriors dispose his imagination and affect his body in such a way that it assumes a second nature, unlike the first, a nature the idea of which cannot exist in the mind. That man, however, by the necessity of his nature, strives not to exist or to acquire another form, is something as impossible as to make something out of nothing, like any other who, with the slightest reflection, can see it. (Cf. *Eth. IV*, prop. 20).

The possibility of satisfaction of desire is the relationship between desire and external causes. We understand the external causes of which Spinoza speaks as all that exists and is different from the desiring individual and which acts on him in the opposite direction, that is to say that if the desire acts from the inside out, the external things which surround him act, in relation to him, him, from the outside towards the interior. The exterior and the interior are therefore only relative references in the field of action of particular beings, so that the contrariety does not exist in the absolute and, therefore, can always be transformed into convergence, because “It is utterly impossible that we do not need it to be outside of us to maintain our being, and that we live so that we have no intercourse with things that are outside of us” (*Eth. IV*, prop. 18). The suicidal person, whether for real or imaginary reasons, finds himself in such a relation of opposition to everything that is exterior to him that he no longer conceives of existing means exterior to him that allow him to preserve

his being. He no longer recognizes any possibility of wish fulfillment. The need for real things which desire can be satisfied is such that in their complete absence he is forced to take his own life, for the means of preservation are only the objects of desire. Suicide is therefore always an action contrary to each particular nature, because perseverance in one's being is inherent in each individual, equally present in all existing beings, by reason of the very nature of Nature's power to be.

Particular beings, finite and limited, do not exist without being exchanged among themselves, so that the finitude and limitation inherent in each human being are not understood as deficiencies or defects, on the contrary, given the nature of each individual being, the possibility of interaction is an affirmation of its very nature, so that “surely our intelligence would be more imperfect if the spirit existed alone and understood nothing but itself” [12]. From this point of view, a desire that has no external “target” whatsoever is inconceivable. The meeting or the exchange is consummated in the convergence between powers (at first perhaps contrary) who identify when they want the same common object. Desires, according to Spinoza, can be understood in two ways:

As actions or as passions. As actions we find the desires which flow from our nature, so as to be understood only by it, are those which relate to the mind, insofar as it is conceived as consisting of adequate ideas. (Cf. *Eth. IV*, Appendix, Chap. 2).

This is perhaps the most delicate point of Spinoza's philosophy, for it seems that it is precisely in this that he singularly calls actions that which is the highest degree of knowledge susceptible of being attained, in which the spirit would conceive all things from the point of view of eternity. It is perhaps in the actions that we will find this object of eternal and infinite desire of which we spoke just now. Let us leave this point aside for the moment, however, and turn to the other desires, the so-called passions, which “indicate, on the contrary, our impotence and a mutilated knowledge” [13].

### 3. Ethics as Variations of Desire

By the passions, we human beings understand ourselves “as a part of nature, which cannot adequately conceive of itself, apart from other individuals” (*Eth. IV*, Appendix, Chap. 2), so that “the strength and expansion of these desires must be defined not by human power, but by the power of things outside of us” (*Eth. IV*, Appendix, Chap. 2). Thus, all human affections are defined by Spinoza throughout the *Ethics* as variations of desire, and, in the case of the passions, variations of desire defined by external objects. Since joy and sadness, respectively, are the affects of increase and decrease in the power to act, joy and sadness are “desire or appetite itself, in so far as it is increased or diminished, stimulated or restrained by external causes, that is to say, is the very nature of each” [14]. For this reason, all so-called happy affections will be considered good, and those so-called sad, bad. Even if they are passions, the joyful passions denote an increase in the conditions of conservation both of the being who experiences them and of those with whom he lives in community, that is to

say that the joyful passions are also an index of better real conditions for the satisfaction of desire or fulfillment of power, inasmuch as necessarily in the passions one cannot ignore the external objects by which one is affected.

Considering the passions, the mood is always fluctuating, according to the variation of desire and its objects. We can also understand this from a grammatical point of view, insofar as we can say that desire varies in men in kind, in number and in degree: in kind and in species (each man a specimen of the kind human), in discrete quantity (different objects) and in continuous quantity (variation of effort). These variations receive different names depending on whether the desire is an effort more or less effort, whether it is more or less successful - this, of course, from the point of view of the presence or absence of the thing it desires. objectified. This certainly explains why the idea is always an affirmation of its object, why desire affirms the object not because the objectified thing outside it is present, but because of the idea of that thing in the mind, which is an expression of the thing imprinted on his body (the body of the same spirit), "whether or not the man is conscious of his appetite" [15]. But what is wish fulfillment?

We know that desire has an object and that this object can be present or absent from the presence of the desiring subject, and that it does not change the positivity of desire nor its relation to the object. It is the consciousness of the positivity of the objective being of the idea, that is to say of the idea of something as idea, which inaugurates the desire of the object: the object of desire is always posited by desire and desire, in turn, is also always the proposition determined by desire. In relation to the object, Spinoza says "that, if given, the thing is necessarily posited belongs to the essence of a certain thing, and that, if it is withdrawn, the thing is necessarily withdrawn" [16]: it therefore belongs to the essence of human power that desire, if it is given, its object is necessarily posited and that, if desire withdraws, the object is also posited; and conversely "that without which the thing cannot exist" (idem), that is to say that desire is the power which cannot exist without an object, because desire is by definition the power of human action conscious of the relationship to itself with something else of itself. Thus, the reality of desire consists in the affirmation of the thing in the idea as object. The object is posited by the mind and not simply given, so that desire always involves an action by the desiring subject.

When we say "post", we do not mean that the mind creates the object of desire out of nothing, on the contrary, we only mean that, even if the body is affected, what affected it and which becomes the object of desire necessarily, to be an object of desire it must somehow be affirmed by the mind. This is what we can deduce from this axiom: "modes of thought such as love, desire, or any other that we designate under the name of affect of the mind, cannot exist if there is not, in the same individual, the idea of the thing loved, desired, etc. [17]. The "thing loved", that is to say the object of love, or "the thing desired", the object of desire, like the things existing outside the individual, would not be objects. of love or desire if their ideas were not in the mind of the individual. the individual, the same individual who loves them or desires them. In general, as

all joy and sadness, as well as all love and hate and other affections which are forms of joy and sadness, are variations of desire, we can say that any existing thing which is connected with some affect of the mind is an object of desire. The same can be said of all sad affects, since denying a thing is not deprivation of the desire for the thing, since the act of denying is as real as that of affirming, and both are modes of being of the imagination (positivity of the imagination). As Spinoza says, "deprivation is nothing" (Eth. III, def. of affects 3), the negation of one thing being above all the affirmation of another as object of desire and that, in the order of affections, it excludes the first. Basically, nothing is negated properly, only something else is affirmed which excludes the first; denial is a kind of "side effect" of the desiring act, not its absence.

#### 4. The Reality of Desire

It follows that the reality of desire is always active and that its variation is nothing other than the degree of consciousness of its power according to the nature of the thing which is its object. Desire rejects the thing which does not serve it as an object with the same degree of effort with which it seeks the thing which serves it. The variation then makes itself felt in different ways according to the movement of the effort in relation to the thing: of research or rejection, of affirmation or negation (imagination; image); of direction in relation to the variety of things which satisfy the same object (explanation; number); of intensity in the search for or in the rejection by consideration of the determined character of the thing objectively represented (explanation; measurement or continuous magnitude); duration of the movement, whether in the act of seeking or rejecting the thing (explanation; time); and printing the thing in memory as an example of a class of objects (retention, genus, and species). Each of these modalities of variation that Spinoza calls affect, not from the point of view of its causes, but from the point of view of its immediate sensation or consciousness.

Things impossible to exist cannot be the object of a realizable desire, but only of a desire which in consciousness is confused with respect to its object and, for this reason, seems to itself imperfect, incomplete and, ultimately, unattainable. The absent thing is therefore not positively something which desire lacks, since, as we have seen, if the privation is nothing, the private desire lacks nothing from the point of view of its own power, but, on the contrary, the lack is a sadness whose genesis lies in the contempt of one's own desire. The feeling of lack is precisely the opposite of self-satisfaction: "Self-satisfaction is a joy that arises because man considers himself and his power to act" [18].

Which seems to be that whenever you strive for something, the mind's attention is on its object. If the effort in the body manifests itself in the appetite for the thing, in the mind it appears as attention, for attention is nothing but the affirmation of the idea of the thing, the presence of the thing in consciousness. Thus, the more the object varies, the more the attention of the mind varies. Of these three things, wealth,

honor and lust, "each of them distracts the mind, which can think of no other good" [19]. It is exactly as distractors of attention, that is to say distractions, that Spinoza will qualify each of them: "As far as the libido is concerned, the soul is suspended [...] and is prevented as much as possible from considering another good [...], it does not suspend thought, it disturbs and blunts it" (TRE, §5); "honor distracts the mind [...] honor, in short, is a great hindrance" (TRE, § 4, emphasis added); "The pursuit of honor and wealth none the less absorbs the mind; wealth above all" (TRE, §4). However, "with a little more attention, I first recognized that if I would renounce everything and devote myself to the institution of the new life" (Treatise on Reform and Understanding, §10, §6).

The variation of the object of desiring effort, as an object of consciousness, signifies the presence of the object in the idea of a human mind which conceives it. In turn, the idea of having the idea of an object is an idea in which the idea of having the idea of an object objectively exists; in other words, it is to be aware of the object (idea of the object) and to be aware of the effort for the object (idea of the idea of the object). The idea of the idea is the consciousness of the difference between the effort, on the one hand, and the object, on the other hand, insofar as the effort is the actual being of the idea, the propositional, formal act of the idea and the object is the objective being, the goal of the idea. This is possible because "the idea, insofar as it has a formal essence, can be the object of another objective essence" (TRE, §33), because, being the idea "a thing distinct of his idea - it will in itself be something intelligible" [20].

From there we understand that the variation of the object is also a variation of the idea of the object - and even more, the variation is also of the idea that we have of the idea of the object, i.e. effort while one is conscious of it in the mind, i.e. the actual idea of object perception. That is to say, the more the object varies, the more the idea of the object varies, and, with such a fluctuation between the effort and its object, the potency of the effort varies according as the desire is satisfied or not. This means that the variation of objects can occur even if these as external things are not present, and the presence of the idea in consciousness is sufficient, of course, not for the desire to be satisfied, but for it to exist. The question then seems to be, for Spinoza, if there is something which satisfies the desire without this difference between its presence in the idea and its absence as idea. Obviously, if the thing is attainable, the power of desire for it increases as it becomes more present and, on the contrary, the more obstacles there are to reaching it, the more the power of desire diminishes or is held back, without, with it, the desire necessarily disappears. The consciousness of a desire whose strength is not sufficient is, of course, a sad consciousness (as in the case of the suicidal).

## 5. Sadness, a Feeling of Dissatisfaction with Desire

The decrease in power then means that the effort comes up

against an impossibility of advancing, it is hindered, it comes up against an obstacle. Sadness, which "is an act by which man's power to act is diminished or restricted" (Eth. III, definition of affections 3), is the feeling of this impediment, of this restraint. Sadness is therefore the generic name for the feeling of dissatisfaction with desire. The man who varies greatly from the object of desire, therefore, is saddened, while, by deduction, the man whose object of desire (attainable) remains the most, rejoices. It is the attention continually directed towards the same object which advances the effort, but if this object is finite, the object necessarily varies, because it itself does not persevere infinitely in its being and its own power is finite. Therefore, the most desirable object, for which it is most worth striving, must be infinite, because it is not limited by anything else, as well as eternal, because it is not limited by the duration. Only in this way can the power of effort be extended to the maximum, precisely insofar as it ceases to be measured temporally and spatially. Power, when freed from extraneous spatio-temporal measures, is a measure of itself and is on the right path to its realization.

Spinoza comes to the conclusion that, in view of the goal of attaining the highest good, one must renounce the desire for spatio-temporal things, not entirely, of course, since he himself, as a being finite, does not cease to be space-time-temporal, but only insofar as they are not considered as supreme goods: "on the contrary, if we seek them as means, they will not go to the beyond a certain limit and, far from doing harm, they will greatly contribute to the achievement of the end they propose" [21].

What are these goods intended for? Precisely to serve as a means. The importance of these goods lies in their power to signal the true object of desire. Let us remember that Spinoza never said that they were only a source of frustration and sadness, they can also be enjoyed with joy and very satisfying for the mood. However, from their finite nature, from their pleasure, to some extent sadness inevitably follows, for it is their nature that they vary. As long as the effort is directed only at them, it is as if the mind, constantly fluctuating in relation to the idea, never found a focus by which it could affirm itself in a satisfactory manner. The distraction of the intellect is such confusion that the mind does not act in a manner adequate to the satisfaction of desire, and ends up making objects obstacles to its fulfillment.

Now nothing is absolutely an obstacle to desire, and its obstacles are the variations of objects in the intellect, which are the ideas of objects in the mind. The idea of the object being its affirmation in the mind, the idea of the object is itself the movement or effort of desire in the mind; that is to say, in the conception of a thing as an object of desire, what is affirmed is this object in the idea, so that the object of desire is always the objective being of an idea. Only thus can we understand the relationship between, on the one hand, attention and distraction, and, on the other hand, the favoring and hindering of desire, and how the greater good is directly related to an increase in attention, so that The nature of the most desirable thing is not known by experience, but by the idea which objectively contains the thing from which the mind

is stimulated to persevere in his attention to her.

The important thing in all this is that to find the supreme good, Spinoza recognizes as necessary a correction of the intellect, aided by an adequate regulation of experience. If it is only with an infinite and eternal thing as its object that desire can be continuously and durably satisfied to the maximum, it is obvious that it is not in spatio-temporal experience that it must be sought, but in the idea of an eternal and infinite thing, that is to say that this good cannot be a thing to have, it is necessarily a knowledge. The correction of the intellect is therefore the way in which attention progresses as the intellect overcomes the obstacles of desire, discerning what points from what does not point to the greater good. It is the way of adapting ideas to increase the power of effort, and this way is a practice of life, the fruits of which depend on its exercise and the employment of the forces necessary for its execution. It is that, for Spinoza, the path of correction of the intellect – or, why not? that of philosophy – is the way of the satisfaction of desire:

One must therefore devote oneself, above all, to the task of knowing, as far as possible, clearly and distinctly, each affect, so that the mind may thus be determined, by virtue of the affect, to think the things it perceives. clearly and distinctly. Distinctly and in which you will find maximum satisfaction. (Eth. V, prop. 4, scolium).

Or simply: "the supreme satisfaction of the spirit comes from the right principle of life" [22]. That this satisfaction is desire can be verified by prop. 52 of Part IV, which says: "self-satisfaction is, indeed, the greatest thing we can hope for". But, by his definition, "self-satisfaction is a joy that arises because man considers himself and his power to act" [23]. Now since joy, as we have seen, is the definition of desire as it increases, self-satisfaction, the greatest satisfaction which the mind finds as it properly knows it, is self-satisfaction. of desire, as we wanted to show. We thus understand that the satisfaction of the desire for an eternal and infinite object is an action of the mind, insofar as it is capable of forming an adequate idea of the eternal and infinite being, which is God. According to his definition, "by an adequate idea I mean an idea which, considered in itself, without relation to the object, has all the intrinsic properties or denominations of a true idea" (Eth. II, def. 4). As, moreover, "by idea I mean a concept of the mind, which the mind forms because it is a thinking thing" (Eth. II, def. 3), that is to say because the idea is an affirmative or propositional idea in act of the mind, it is precisely when the mind forms adequate ideas that it acts, for "I say that we act when, in us or outside of us, something happens of which we are the adequate cause" (Eth. III, def. 2). And the "adequate cause being that whose effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived by itself" [24], the mind acts when it can itself be uniquely conceived as the adequate cause. of the effects of his action. own actions, actions, and these effects are precisely the own ideas. Just as "the ideas which are suitable for the mind of someone are suitable for God" (Eth. III, prop. 1, dem), since the reality of particular minds has for its sole cause the power of God, like all the rest – what exists, then the supreme satisfaction of

desire is the highest degree of knowledge, called bliss. It is with this reflection that Spinoza concludes the Ethics, which, in our opinion, seems to indicate the very aim of his philosophy. Whereas the ignorant "only let themselves be carried away by lustful appetite" (Eth. V, prop. 42, sc.), that is to say by the desire for things which are only partially affirmed objectively by the mind when he imagines, being Thus, "agitated, in many respects, by external causes, and never enjoying the true satisfaction of the mind" (idem), the wise is he who, on the contrary, finds joy and satisfaction of spirit in knowledge of the highest kind, in which, "conscious of himself, of God, and of things, by virtue of a certain eternal necessity, he never ceases to be, but still enjoys the true satisfaction of the soul" [25].

Given that philosophy, in the common and etymological sense - which we consider that Spinoza shares, at least in its broad lines - is not wisdom, but the love of wisdom, the wise would be the one who, after having traveled the path of philosophy, in reaching the truth, he would leave it behind. For if philosophy is rational knowledge by concepts, and the highest knowledge is intuition, which seems to be more wisdom than a theory of something, then it seems to us that the end of philosophy is its own end., when the philosopher no longer suffers, according to his former condition of lover, from the absence of wisdom, so that he can only enjoy knowledge, leading a life where "his mind is hardly troubled" (Eth. V, prop. 42, sc).

## 6. Conclusion

It is inevitable to hear the echo of the ataraxia of the Greek philosophers, in particular of Epicurus. This is what makes philosophy an eminently practical practice, not of wisdom itself, but of its preparation. Leading a happy and peaceful life, "because the spirit enjoys this divine love or this bliss, it has the power to restrain lustful appetites" (Eth. V, prop. 42, sc.), the wise would distinguish themselves from ignoramus and philosophers, because they suffer, although in different ways. This is how Epicurus distinguished himself from his closest disciples: "Epicurus himself was the leader. Metrodorus, Hermarcos and Polyenos, who followed him in the hierarchy, were the three associated chiefs (Kathegemones). Only Epicurus was called sage (Sophos). The three chiefs were lovers of wisdom". Therefore, the sage is above all one who predominates over himself, and before being the leader of others, he is in fact the leader or the master of himself (autarcia).

The philosophers, the Kathegemones, were "those who guided themselves and others from the master" (idem), that is, in becoming wise they sought to direct their desires according to the teachings, or, which would be even more accurate, according to the master's wise way of life. The desire of the master does not prevail over others, but teaches others to prevail over their own desires, so that they are no longer subject to the disturbances of the soul. In this way, in the works of Spinoza, we could hypothesize that we find in his wisdom, he would never allow himself to be written into the

pages of a book, because true personal happiness cannot be described, it is lived or witnessed, and beyond that there is no greater proof of the value of a philosophy.

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