


ISTANBUL BILGI UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS  
PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL THOUGHT MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

RETHINKING SEXUAL DIFFERENCE WITH SPINOZA



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İSTANBUL  
2020

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Spinoza ile Cinsel Farkı Yeniden Düşünmek

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Date of Thesis Approval : 17.06.2020

Number of Pages : 106

Anahtar Kelimeler (Türkçe)

- 1) Spinoza
- 2) Cinsel Fark
- 3) Toplumsal Cinsiyet
- 4) Feminist Felsefe
- 5) Etik-Politik

Anahtar Kelimeler (İngilizce)

- 1) Spinoza
- 2) Sexual Difference
- 3) Gender
- 4) Feminist Philosophy
- 5) Ethico-Politi

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## PREFACE

First and foremost I am deeply grateful to my dissertation director Ass. Prof. Dr. Zeynep Talay Turner, for her rigorous guidance. She has provided encouragement throughout the entire of my dissertation. It was fascinating for me to follow her lectures and listen to her criticisms. I offer my endless gratitude to her as she relieved my hesitations by encouraging me and still continues to encourage me.

Secondly, I would also like to extend my gratitude to Ferda Keskin. As many people are inspired, Ferda Keskin's seminars and critical comments have always offered me new perspectives. Whenever I need a critical vision, particularly in first chapter of my thesis, he has guided me modestly. Furthermore, I am grateful for the valuable criticism of Eylem Canaslan, who honored me by reading the first chapter of the thesis and sharing her ideas. Undoubtedly, a large part of this thesis has benefited from her doctoral dissertation, which she wrote delicately.

I would like to express my gratitude to Özge Ejder Johnson and Çiğdem Yazıcı, who have contributed to my academic interest in feminist philosophy thanks to the lectures they have given. Of course, this study would be incomplete without their lectures that broadened my horizons. On the other hand, I would like to thank Öznur Karakaş for directing me by sincerely answering when I consulted her about the literature before I started writing the thesis.

As in all part of my life, I would like to present my heartfelt love and thanks to my dear friend Seda Ekici, who supported me throughout period of my thesis. Likewise, thanks to my dear friend Çiğdem Kaplan for her beautiful friendship. I would also like to state that I am happy because this thesis leads to such a beautiful friendship.

Finally, I would like to extend my special thanks to dear Tuncay Şur, who encouraged me to do a master's degree even though I had no intention. In this study, the patience, support and care he has bestowed are so unique and deep that they cannot be put into words. He not only encouraged me, but he was also excited with me, worried together with me, in short, he always helped *increase my power*, as I wrote the thesis. In the *affective commonality* that we have built together, for his kindness, altruism, interest and unconditional love, I can only say "so glad I know you"...

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis aims to read the philosophy of Spinoza with sexual difference feminism. Spinoza's philosophy has been found useful for some of the contemporary feminist philosophers in the face of modern philosophy, which has kept the agenda of feminist philosophy for many years, and the studies that incorporated Spinoza's philosophy into a practice of re-reading from a feminist perspective have gained a certain momentum. Although he formed his philosophy in a critical period such as the 17th century, Spinoza, who has been considered as a useful moment for feminist philosophy, maintains his actuality in the face of the problematics of modern philosophy which has been the target of many criticisms for many years and inspires new discussions in this field. Spinoza inspired many philosophers in France in the 1960s in terms of both metaphysical and political ideas and managed to attract the attention of feminists with his own originality. In this context, the thesis aims to examine the encounter between sexual difference feminism and Spinoza's philosophy by considering the tensions and positive aspects of this encounter.

**Keywords:** Spinoza, Sexual Difference, Gender, Feminist Philosophy, Ethico-Politics

## ÖZET

Bu tez konusunun amacı Spinoza felsefesini cinsel fark feminizmi ile birlikte okumaktır. Spinoza felsefesi, feminist felsefenin gündemini uzun yıllar boyunca meşgul eden modern felsefe karşısında çağdaş feminist felsefecilerin bir kısmı için kullanışlı bulunmuş, Spinoza felsefesini feminist bir perspektiften yeniden okuma pratiğine dâhil eden çalışmalar belli bir ivme kazanmıştır. 17. yy gibi erken bir dönemde, çeşitli alanlardan yöneltilen eleştirilerin hedefi olmuş modern felsefenin problematikleri karşısında kullanışlı bir uğrak olarak değerlendirilen Spinoza felsefesi, feminist çalışmalar için güncelliğini korumakta ve bu alanda yeni tartışmalara vesile olmaktadır. Spinoza hem metafizik hem de politik fikirleri bakımından 1960'lar Fransa'sında pek çok düşünüre ilham vermiş, bunun yanı sıra kendi özgünlüğü ile feministlerin de dikkatini çekmeyi başarmıştır. Bu bağlamda tez, özel olarak cinsel fark feminizmi ile Spinoza felsefesinin karşılaşmasını, bu karşılaşmanın gerilimlerini ve olumlu yönlerini göz önünde bulundurmak suretiyle incelemeyi hedefliyor.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Spinoza, Cinsel Fark, Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Feminist Felsefe, Etik-Politik

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most effective criticisms toward the understanding of rationality, which was seeded in the early modern period and has maintained its impact until today, the monolithic structure of imagining a subject with humanistic free will, the concept of nature thought through mechanical and domination parameters, and the derogation of the body, which has become a crystallized reflex in the general history of Western philosophy comes from the feminist theory. Descartes, the pioneer of modern philosophy, was the philosopher who had the biggest share from these criticisms. Considering the mind and body as entirely separate realities in his philosophical system, Descartes defines the subject by thought (*res cogitans*) and builds his epistemology with reference to his own mind. Since thinking subject is isolated from the body and its sensations, the subject is considered as sex-neutral and universal. The idea of the modern subject, defined by thought and will, on the one hand, inspired the liberal humanist tradition and social contract theories; on the other hand, it was one of the fundamental concepts of Kant's "transcendent subject" and the tradition of phenomenology.

The mind and body dualism, which are sharply separated from each other with the concept of substance in Cartesianism, is followed by the binary oppositions such as mind/emotion, culture/nature, subject/object, self/other. Eventually, the nexuses between these concepts begin to form a hierarchical relationship. The critiques of feminist philosophers arrive on the scene right here. Mind and the other first terms associated with it are identified with the man, whereas body and all the attributes related to it are identified with the woman. The most powerful block of these criticisms came from the poststructuralist feminism known as "French feminism" that emerged in the 1970s. The movement, also known as "sexual difference feminism", focuses on developing new theories of subjectivity by deciphering masculine bias of the concept of the "modern subject" and revealing the nature of sexual difference within traditional sets of ideas. According to Luce Irigaray, one of the most renowned sexual difference feminists, the tradition of Western philosophy has reduced sexual difference to one through these dichotomous thinking models and failed to create a time and space that opens up to female sexual difference. For this reason, sexual difference feminism challenges the allegedly universal and neutral idea of reason, which is the basis of one-sexed (male) subject.

The distinction between mind and body entailed the distinction between sex and gender and it paved the way for an understanding of sex as a given constant, and gender as a whole of social and psychic rules learned in culture. Within the context of equality struggles, the feminist movement has accepted this distinction for a very long time and has fought against gender roles by saying, “biology is not fate”. Sexual difference feminists state that this way of thinking invests in the Cartesian dualist thinking model and offers a nostalgic commitment to the belief that gender roles can be abandoned voluntarily. According to sexual difference feminism, it is not possible to think of bodies as biologically given and isolated from culture, or to consider gender as a mere social construction. By inviting feminists to rethink the difference through the embodiment of sexual difference, they oppose the idea that the body is a permanent constant that is ahistorical and separated from cultural codes. In this respect, the main purpose of sexual difference feminism is to (re)think the body as a carrier of the socio-symbolic signifying system and a “lived body” with other bodies instead of insisting on an ontological difference or an anatomical body.

In the face of problematics of modern philosophy, some of the contemporary feminist philosophers offered to return to Spinoza and found his philosophical system useful in many ways. Spinoza did not say much about women in general; he only repeated the misogynistic discourses of his time. In general, it is symptomatic in the history of philosophy that the more universalistic expressions a philosopher uses in the metaphysical sense, the more he uses surprisingly exclusionist discourses in his political philosophy. Considering the intellectual atmosphere of the 17th century, Spinoza is an exceptional figure, especially in this regard. Although he has brought forward the relational determination of singular beings instead of an ideal universal in his system, he surprises his reader by excluding women from political participation as a “class” in his politics. Yet this is not the main point that contemporary feminist philosophers are interested in, but that his metaphysical system has offered a non-hierarchical ontology, thereby providing a new intellectual resource in the face of universal and “sexless” subjects that are often criticized by sexual difference feminists. In summary, the main points of Spinoza's philosophy that attract feminists' attention are as follows: the monist and immanent substance thought, the unity of the mind/body, the rejection of free will, the anti-essentialist understanding of individuation, the affect/affection theory, the anti-humanist ontology and the anti-anthropomorphic God or Nature model.

Based on the framework given above, the subject of this thesis is to outline the encounter between feminist theory and Spinoza's philosophy and to reveal both positive and negative

aspects of this encounter. The pioneering studies that included Spinoza in feminist re-reading were conducted by Australian feminist thinkers Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens. As the interest in these studies gained momentum, the interest of feminist philosophers in Spinoza's system has increased recently. Currently, Turkey is one of the richest countries in terms of Spinoza studies. However, despite of the growing interest in Spinoza's philosophy, studies that read his system from a feminist perspective are, unfortunately, very small in number. This thesis, in this regard, aims to contribute to rich studies of Spinoza in Turkey.

The first chapter of the thesis aims to demonstrate the main lines of Spinoza's philosophy. The first subsections of the first chapter refer primarily to the *Ethics* in order to analyze Spinoza's metaphysics, and the last subsection is based on the *Theological-Political Treatise* and mainly the *Political Treatise* to explain his political philosophy. First, I will explain Spinoza's substance-attribute-modus conceptualization. In this title, I will also explain the philosophical method of Spinoza, and will analyse the distinctive aspects of his understanding of God in detail. Next, I will show the relationship between mind and body, the distinction between types of knowledge and the theory of affect/affection, respectively. In the last subsection, I will explain Spinoza's ideas within the context of political philosophy by focalizing concepts such as common notions, multitude, democracy, rights and power.

The second chapter of thesis begins with criticisms that Luce Irigaray, one of the most significant figures of sexual difference feminism, brought against the history of psychoanalysis and philosophy. Subsequently, I will focus on current debates revolving around sexual difference feminism and the critique of the sex/gender distinction. In this part, I will include ideas from philosophers such as Rosi Braidotti, Judith Butler, Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens. In the next subsection, I will examine Descartes' philosophy in detail, and will discuss the criticism of feminist philosophers such as Genevieve Lloyd, Susan Bordo, Susan James and Val Plumwood on the topics of masculinization of thought, the narcissistic image of individuality, and the domination of nature. Next, I will scrutinize Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd's studies that reformulate sexual difference through Spinozist mind/body unity, power, capacity and the notion of difference.

According to Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens, Spinozist perspective offers an opportunity to think about the sexual difference with both body and mind. In this way, the body, which is deemed worthless by modern rationality, can be placed in a non-hierarchical ontology. Moreover, given Spinoza's theory of imagination and his rejection of free will, it becomes apparent that sexual imaginaries about bodies cannot be simply abandoned. For Moira Gatens,

these sexual imaginaries are in complicity with the political body metaphor of the 17th-century political theory. Sexual imaginaries about women have been “embodied” historically, culturally and socio-politically in each moment of everyday life. The body is experienced precisely by these "embodied" sexual imaginaries. For Spinoza, since the individual is not an isolated entity with innate reason, bodies are the bearer of traces of these imaginaries, according to variations of the *capacity to affect* and *be affected*. In this regard, the body is always considered as a body in the community, together with other bodies. Along with sexual imaginaries, women's bodies are experienced as restricted in terms of power and capacity in the Spinozist context. In order to distribute and reconstruct the bricolages created by these imaginaries, it is necessary to examine the *affective* history of the bodies and the genealogy of sexual imaginaries. Unlike the perspectives that suggest abstract equality of mind, Spinoza's idea of the unity of mind/body is considered quite useful by Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens to study how sexual difference is perceived. The philosophy of Spinoza is a metaphysical, ontological and ethico-political study on the common ground of difference, instead of neutralization of this difference. Both thinkers, unlike the liberal egalitarian feminist tradition, have attempted to look for traces of difference in such metaphysical, ontological and ethico-political line.

Another scholar that contributes to the discussions of the contemporary feminist philosophy from a Spinozist perspective is Hasana Sharp. Sharp, by drawing on Spinoza's system, develops “the politics of imperceptibility” proposed by Elizabeth Grosz as an alternative to recognition and representation-oriented politics. In this review, she proposes Spinoza's naturalism and the idea of “composition” against Hegel, a philosopher of recognition, and neo-Hegelian thinkers who develop his political rhetoric through recognition/representation politics. In this discussion, the point that inspired Sharp in the same context is Spinoza's anti-humanism and anti-anthropocentrism. In this respect, Sharp considers the necessary theoretical framework for a new ontology together with Spinoza. The question of how sexual difference can be conceptualized from an anti-recognition framework seems to be answered satisfactorily with Sharp's investigation.

According to Luce Irigaray, another philosopher who engaged in dialogue with Spinoza, Spinoza made a distinction between mind and body, as often seen in the tradition of philosophy, by canceling causality between mind and body. In the eyes of Irigaray, the woman is again identified with the body and the man with the mind. For Irigaray, the God of Spinoza has its place as an “envelope”, while the woman was displaced by being considered

as a place of birth and erotic desire of the man. In such system, the woman could not be the cause of herself or have her own envelope. For this reason, the ethics of sexual difference is not possible in Spinoza's system. In this subsection of the study, I will take advantage of the ideas of names such as Sarah Donovan, Heidi Ravven, Alexandre Matheron and David West to prove that Irigaray's criticism is unfair. In this section, I will also try to answer questions about how an ethical relationship between sexes can be evaluated within the Spinozist framework.

In the third chapter of this thesis, I will specify Spinoza's ideas about women. I will sort out Spinoza's reasons for excluding women from the political body and will clarify the problematics of his political philosophy. In this section, I will use the method of the “immanent criticism”, proposed by Eylem Canaslan, and will proof the inconsistencies of Spinoza’s ideas about women with his own system. In this section, which is divided into two subtitles, Spinoza's decision to exclude women from political freedom is explained first by the logical contradictions with his ideas in *Ethics*, and then inconsistencies with his direct political ideas. In the first part, I will discuss the ideas of the following thinkers: Beth Lord, Genevieve Lloyd, Hasana Sharp, Margaret Gullan-Whur, and in the second part, I will focus on the ideas of Eylem Canaslan and Moira Gatens. In this part of the thesis, I will argue that Spinoza repeats patriarchal discourses. In this context, I will argue that the perspectives legitimizing Spinoza's ideas about women are unverifiable and that Spinoza's misogynist ideas contradict his own system.

In the conclusion of the thesis, it has been claimed that Spinoza's metaphysics has made substantial contributions to feminist theory, and that his exclusionary ideas in the context of politics can be resolved by both metaphysical and ethical-political arguments. To examine the sexual difference, the philosophy of Spinoza can be put in opposition to the canonical texts that cannot go beyond abstract equality discourses. Considering that the modern subject standardizes the default man, reduces two to one, and this ‘one’ always represents the man, it can easily be said that equality discourses tend to hide how the sexual difference is built. Spinoza may seem like a very early figure to refer to in the face of such danger. However, on the contrary, it is also possible to think of Spinoza as a timely intervention. As a matter of fact, as Moira Gatens said, feminist philosophy should be able to engage in dialogues with philosophers without being in a transferential position (2018, p. 109). In this respect, it is possible to engage in a dialogue with Spinoza concerning the embodied state of the power we have. Thus, Spinoza’s mistake, very typical of the mind-set of 17<sup>th</sup> century, can be ignored if

we take into consideration that he opened the door for many different ideas. Undoubtedly, this can be possible only by exposing the mistake, not by justifying it. In the context of criticism of the ideals of equality, this reaction can be regarded as contradictory. However, the main contradiction arises if the mistake is covered up. Spinoza is neither the addressee of the mistakes caused by the social contract theories of his time nor the guarantor of the universalist dream of the Enlightenment tradition. If Spinoza is not criticized by Spinoza, the philosopher's entire originality would be canceled from the beginning.



## CHAPTER 1: SPINOZA'S PHILOSOPHY

### 1.1. Starting Point for Ethics: Substance-God *or* Nature

As it is widely known, Spinoza writes the *Ethics* with the geometric method (*more geometrico*) and starts explaining his system of thought by giving definitions. The definitions are followed by axioms, propositions, demonstrations, lemmas, postulates, conclusions, and his explanatory remarks and interpretations. In this respect, the idea of the “starting point” in the title of this chapter aims to emphasize two important points. The first is to refer to the interpretation that understands Spinoza's system as a decentralized sphere and/or a sphere where the center is everywhere, in terms of its importance as an anti-hierarchical ontology. (Tatian, 2017, p. 72). The second is to remind Spinoza's loyalty to Euclidean geometry until the end of the book, and the reason for starting his own system with definitions, which is to access the most reliable knowledge of concepts such as God, nature, human, freedom, as safely as forming a line by connecting the points. On the other hand, even though the first part of Spinoza's *Ethics* was entitled “Of God”, the system had to leave behind five definitions (God was first given in the sixth definition) and nine propositions (God was first given in the tenth proposition) until the definition of God. The first definition relates to self-causation (*causa sui*), the first proposition to the ontological priority of the substance. The most important reason for this is the principle that causes should be known properly in order to understand effects. In this respect, understanding things that exist in this world requires understanding what causes them, that is, knowing God. Therefore, in order to know God, a precise definition of God should be given. According to Spinoza, contrary to what the Scholastic tradition claims, God is comprehensible, it can be defined and conceived —by and through itself.

As stated in EIP8S2<sup>1</sup>, the main criteria that a definition should meet for Spinoza are ultimately as follows: (i) A definition should involve only the nature of what it describes (*involvere*). Accordingly, what is defined should be explained not by the properties of that thing, but by the essence of that thing. As a matter of fact, the definition that reveals the essence of the thing already involves the properties, but the opposite is not possible. (ii) A definition does not indicate the number of what is defined. As an example of this principle, Spinoza shows

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<sup>1</sup> References to the *Ethics* throughout the study will be given in parallel with the order in the book. Abbreviations to be used here are as follows: D: Definition, A: Axiom, Ex: Explanation, P: Proposition, Dem: Demonstration, C: Conclusion, S: Note, L: Lemma, Pos: Postulate, Prae: Preface, App: Appendix, Def.Aff.: Definition of Affects. For example, EIP8S2 refers to *Ethics* Chapter 1, Proposition 8, Note 2. or EID3 stands for *Ethics*, Part 1, Definition 3.

that the definition of the triangle does not include or give a certain number of triangles, but only gives its own simple nature. (iii) There is nothing without cause. And finally (iv) the reason for the existence of something must be “either in its essential nature and definition or outside it”. According to this condition, the definition should express the active cause of what is defined. In other words, the active cause is either inherent or non-inherent in that thing.<sup>2</sup>

Spinoza, based on the theory of definition listed above, gives eight definitions on which he builds his entire system. The starting point is given as *Causa Sui*, which means something that produces its own cause (EID1). Producing its own cause denotes that its existence is not dependent on anything other than itself. In this definition, according to Spinoza, *causa sui* entails that the essence necessarily results in existence. The emphasis on the necessity of existence relates to God's ontological proof. The second definition is about the conditions under which anything can be described as finite. A thing is called finite if it is bounded by anything of the same nature (EID2). This definition is given to guarantee the uniqueness of God. *Causa sui* is called *substance* in the third definition and *God* in the sixth definition.

In the third definition, substance is defined as “what is in itself and is conceived through itself, i.e., that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed” (EID3). If the substance is conceived through itself, then it means that it bears the cause for its existence. Thus, if it is the cause of itself, it is the cause of all other existing things. The only entity holding this power is God. In the sixth definition, God is defined as follows: “By God I understand a being absolutely infinite; i.e., a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence” (EID6). But this does not mean that God is creator. The idea of the creator God means as if the essence of God is deficient, the reason for this meaning is the understanding of anthropomorphic God (EIP17S). However, for Spinoza, God is not a creator; is *active*. Things necessarily derive from its essence, not voluntarily. For this reason, God is the *active cause* of everything.

As can be seen, Spinoza remains true to his own theory of definition; God’s simple nature and “it’s constituent” elements are included in its definition. (Canaslan, 2019, p. 53) While the constituent elements are mentioned as attributes; all the other existing things are called modes, which are the modifications of these attributes. Hence, in order to understand

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<sup>2</sup> For a general course of the changes that Spinoza's definition theory has undergone, see. (Canaslan, 2019, pp. 49-55).

Spinoza's God and Nature, it is essential to examine the attributes and modes in the description.

### 1.1.1. Attributes of God

Spinoza puts the definition of the attribute in fourth place by saying “By attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of substance, as constituting its essence” (EID4). Based on this definition and the definition of God above, it can be said that the relationship between attributes and God corresponds to a state of activity. As Hadi Rizk points out, “attributes form the substance and are formed by the substance” in Spinoza's system (2012, p. 60). The activity in question refers to God’s power of being infinitely active. In this respect, God is the cause of attributes as well as itself. On the other hand, attributes are infinite just like God and they express the reality of God (EIP9 and EIP10S). Each attribute expresses an aspect of God's infinite essence. However, the way of expressing this reality varies in each attribute. In other words, there is a difference between the way one attribute explains the existence of God and the way another attribute expresses God. While God is absolutely infinite, attributes should be understood as “infinite in its own kind” (EID6). Therefore, the infinity of God and the infinity of an attribute are two different veins. None of the infinite attributes can be connected to the other. All attributes are attached to God. Thus, Spinoza's monist position becomes clear. This position is preserved in his ontology, epistemology, ethics and politics.

Spinoza states that God has an infinite number of attributes and that we can only know two of them: Thought (*res cogitans*) and Extension (*res extensa*). We can know God, ourselves, and everything else through these attributes. If these attributes express the eternal essence of God, then according to Spinoza, God is a thinking thing and an extended thing (EIIP1-2). Spinoza proves the ontological determination of the substance or God by starting with *causa sui* and continuing with the theory of attributes. Claiming the nonexistence of God contradicts its infinite essence. The theory of attributes is related to the way we understand this necessity. As Deleuze puts it, attributes connect the essence and the substance as expressions, and there is an immanent and intellectually conceivable relationship between the two (2005, p. 98).

As stated previously, the existence of an infinite number of attributes does not necessarily mean the plurality of substances. There is a direct proportion between the attributes of a thing and the essence of that thing. It can be said that as the variety of attributes increases, the degree of reality increases. In the letter he wrote to Simon de Vries, Spinoza explains this correlation as follows: “the more reality or being a being has, the more attributes must be

attributed to it” (Letter 9). In this respect, the fact that the “absolutely infinite” God has infinite attributes does not pose a contradiction. We grasp the same God through the attribute of thought and extension. Moreover, the fact that the infinite variety of attributes points to a single substance also guarantees the indivisibility of the substance. There is no gap in nature where the substance can be divided. Also, the divisibility of a substance requires at least two substances, which is impossible. Supposing that the substance is divided and two substances with different attributes appear, any attribute of one of the substances that come out by division must be present in the other substance. It should be remembered that the substance has an infinite number of attributes by definition. For this reason, this is nonsensical since there cannot be two substances with the same attribute (EIP5). Or, as previously shown in its definition, since the substance is “absolutely infinite” with infinite attributes, there cannot be two infinities at the same time. In this case, the absolute infinity of the substance turns into the finiteness, which is not possible for the substance. By this way, Spinoza rejects both the idea that there is a gap in nature, and the idea of *ex nihilo* creation. Thus, everything that can be conceived through the attributes of thought or extension is a part of God. As Spinoza said, “Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God” (EIP15). For this reason, God is the *immanent cause* of things.

### **1.1.2. Modes of God**

So far, the relationship between attributes and God has been discussed. God is self-determined and defined only by reference to itself. But modes need another concept to be grasped. In this respect, the “another concept” here is undoubtedly God, because as Spinoza says, “A substance, is prior in nature to its affections” (EIP1). Spinoza's definition of modes is as follows: “By mode, I understand the affections of a substance, or that which is in another through which it is also conceived” (EID5). In other words, everything that exists in nature can be conceived through the attributes of God, in relation to its existence. For example, if a mode is an extended thing, then it is under the attribute of extension.

Spinoza divides all modes into two types; infinite and finite. He also divides them into two as immediate modes and mediate modes. In his sixty-fourth letter to Schuller, Spinoza states that immediate infinite modes are “absolutely infinite intellect” under thought, and “motion and rest” under extension (Letter 64). These are immediate modes of infinite attributes. In other words, these modes follow directly from the absolute nature of substance. Some of the mediate modes are linked to infinite attributes through these immediate modes. Therefore,

mediate modes are divided into two as finite and infinite. Spinoza explains the mediate infinite mode conceived under the attribute of extension by saying that “the face of the whole universe” remains the same despite all change (Letter 64). In addition to this, Spinoza does not give an example of mediate infinite modes based on the attribute of thought. According to Eylem Canaslan, an example of the mode mentioned can be “a combined idea of the face of the whole universe” (2019, p. 151). Since everything depends on a single substance in the view of Spinoza, as will be explained soon, everything that applies to the attribute of extension applies to the attribute of thought.

The finite types of mediate modes are represented as finite and determinated singular things. They are formed by modifying any attribute of God with a “finite and determinate modification” (EIP28Dem). There is a difference between the way these modes connect to God and the way others connect to God. Infinite modes are the way of God to express itself infinitely in accordance with its own nature. These singular things are also in God, but they express an attribute of God in a limited and finite manner. Therefore, the duration of these singular things has not been determined. Regarding the duration of a thing, Spinoza states that “[d]uration is an indefinite continuation of existing” (EIID5). In other words, the existence of singular things is necessary based on God, but their dissolution is contingent. In summary, God is the cause of the immediate infinite modes, the mediate infinite modes that are linked to these modes, and finally the mediate finite modes below them. Each of these is an expression of God's self-activation. Hence, God is both an *active* and *immanent* cause.

The singular modes that are connected to the attribute of thought are singular ideas, and those that are connected to the attribute of the extension are singular objects. In the second part of *Ethics*, Spinoza begins to investigate specifically these singular things. But before coming to this section, he opens a parenthesis to explain the necessity and the determination of the modes. The reason for this parenthesis is to clarify the relationship between God, attributes, and modes through two basic concepts: *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata*. What is called *Natura Naturans* are the attributes expressing God or eternal and infinite essence of God. *Natura Naturata*, on the other hand, is everything that is the modality of an attribute of God (EIP29S). The world we know is made of “everything” in this second definition. Apart from that, Spinoza points out that substance or God is also Nature. It is necessary to read the mentioned parenthesis of Spinoza and the phrase “Everything is in God” within this context. Spinoza explains clearly the equivalence between God and Nature in Chapter 4 of the *Ethics*: “God or Nature (*Deus sive Natura*)” (EIVPrae). The point where Spinoza's naturalism

becomes most obvious is in this equivalence. Therefore, as Tatian puts it, it is certain that if *Ethics* was rewritten using the word Nature instead of God, there would have been no contradiction (2017, p. 57).

### **1.1.3. A Number of Prejudices About God or Nature**

Just before finishing the first part of *Ethics*, Spinoza explains some prejudices about God that have existed up until that time and eliminates them with reference to notions such as the necessity, the immanent cause and the active cause that he emphasized from the beginning of the book. As stated by Spinoza, the illusions such as free will, teleological causation, the idea of the creator God were the best known prejudices. Over time, these prejudices had become superstitions and prevented people from reasoning about themselves and the events happening in the world (EIApp). It is clear that the first chapter is about the proof of God, and the ontological, epistemological, ethical and political explanations of the human being described in the next chapters depend on the first chapter, that is, on God. In this regard, Spinoza eliminates the false assumptions about God, being and causation. The reason for his critical and cautious approach to these superstitions is that the anthropomorphic image of God and providentialism had been so deeply ingrained that they could not have been underestimated throughout history. However, when Spinoza proclaims that God can be conceived by everyone, he brings God from the sky down to earth. On the other hand, according to Spinoza, people's understandings of teleological and creator God caused the acceptance of concepts such as good, evil, incompleteness, completeness, confusion, order as if they were universal ideas. The reason why Spinoza was excommunicated from the Jewish community at a young age is just because of criticizing such permanent ideas about God and the order of the universe.

The illusion of the final cause is the prejudice that God created everything for a purpose, and therefore, people act purposively in the world. Spinoza states that it is because people believe that everything in nature exists to serve them. According to this illusion, because of their ignorance about causes, they believe in freewill and they assume that their choices are for their own benefits. For Spinoza, people tend to believe in such illusions for the reason that they are not aware of the underlying causes of the actions. Since they know that they do not have the source to meet their own needs and desires, they imagine a figure of God who creates nature at their service. Thus, by attributing all qualities in nature to God, they pledge allegiance to God. As a result of this belief, religious doctrines consisting of various forms of

worship emerged. Nevertheless, according to Spinoza, while these doctrines aim to discover the final cause and to organize everything accordingly, they cause the diversification of the current prejudices. People interpret natural disasters as God's punishment for human sin. For Spinoza, mathematics has helped humankind to eliminate these fallacies and prejudices and to define things by their essence. Therefore, it is essential to examine things and events not by praising or vilifying them, but by reason to achieve their essential truth.

According to Spinoza, the idea that God created everything voluntarily for a purpose causes human actions to be categorized as good and bad. In other words, people believe that nature is a collection of tools to serve their desires and interests, believing that things that are compatible with their desires and interests are good and incompatible ones are bad. They believe the good serves the purpose of God and the bad damages this purpose. Thus, they made a mistake by likening God to a king who rewards good with the satisfaction of their interests and desires and punishes evil with natural disasters. This illusion related to good and evil, likewise applies to all abstract concepts such as order, confusion, incompleteness, completeness, beauty and ugliness. As a result, Spinoza considers the problematics of the tradition of theology, namely God's grace, sin, absolute free will, as fallacies that result from ignorance and anti-intellectualism.

Another illusion caused by stable ignorance of causes is based on the belief that man has free will<sup>3</sup>. Throughout history, people have thought that they are free to choose what is useful to them. However, for Spinoza, freedom should be defined in relation to necessity, not free will. In his letter to Schuller, he explains it as follows: "I say that a thing is free if it exists and acts solely from the necessity of its own nature, and compelled (*coactus*) if it is determined by something else to exist and produce effects in a certain and determinate way[...] You see, then, that I place freedom not in a free decree, but in a free necessity" (Letter 58). As can be understood from the quote, God is free in accordance with the principle of self-determination, as a cause of itself. It is determined only by itself. On the other hand, because human beings do not have their cause in themselves, they are not free but determined beings. As their nature is determined, they are determined to take some actions, to desire some things. They are determined, but not by themselves, but by God. Therefore, they cannot claim that they are free from birth or that God acts according to free will. Moreover, claiming that God acts according to free will or for the sake of a purpose damages God's perfection. However, God is the

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<sup>3</sup> Descartes is the person that Spinoza confronts in dealing with this bias. As explained in the following section, the source of the error for Descartes is an inconsistency between will and understanding.

absolutely infinite, essentially necessary and unique, and the most competent being by its self-determination.

Another issue that Spinoza draws attention before finishing the first part is ignorance about the human body. One of the reasons why people believe in the above-mentioned superstitions is their ignorance of the way the body is affected. People are generally inclined to doubt the perfection of God or Nature and its modes because of their *imagination*. Spinoza's solution is simple: Perfection is a matter of power. Absolutely infinite God has infinite power (thus, it is the ultimate being), and one can increase her/his own power as a finite singular being - but only by knowing the laws of his/her body. So much so that only through this knowledge can a person increase his/her degree of excellence. Therefore, to understand how to develop this skill, one has to look at what the mind and body mean in the Spinozist system.

## **1.2. Mind and Body**

In the beginning of the second part, Spinoza states that the main subject he intends to focus on is the human mind (*mens*). As a matter of fact, it is impossible to examine the infinite variety of existents that emerge from the infinite essence of God one by one. As this section proves, a philosophical investigation of the mind requires an investigation of the body. In this regard, seven definitions given at the beginning of this section are related to body, essence, idea, adequate idea, duration, reality, and finally singular things, respectively. After giving these definitions, he presents five axioms about the human being to answer the following questions: “what is human?”, and “what kind of relationship is there between the human being and God *or* Nature?” and then he starts to answer these questions meticulously with propositions. As Beth Lord puts it, the phrase of “origin” in the title of the second part (“On the Nature and the Origin of the Mind”) refers to the causal context of the mind, in other words, to God *or* Nature (2010, p .49). According to Spinoza, an investigation of the finite mind, that is, the human mind, in terms of *origin* requires the knowledge of the human body. Because (i) “[m]an thinks” and (ii) “[w]e feel that a certain body is affected in many ways” (EIIA2-4). As the body's knowledge is epistemologically necessary, the differences between the types of knowledge vary in terms of the mind's relationship with the body. In this regard, the second part is the section where Spinoza's epistemology, rationality, and ontology are clarified. As stated previously, thought and extension are two of God's infinite attributes known to us. Modes are connected to God through attributes. In this context, for Spinoza, a “man” should be considered as a thinking being under the attribute of thought, and as an extended being

under the attribute of extension. Since God is a thinking being, it is the cause of the human mind and an idea. Likewise, God, an extended being, is the cause of the human body and its interaction. As can be seen, there is no causal relationship between mind and body. There is a causality between the mind and the attribute of thought, and between the body and the attribute of extension. For Spinoza, “[t]hings that have nothing in common with one another also cannot be understood through one another, or the concept of the one does not involve the concept of the other” (EIA5). Therefore, mind and body are things that have their own laws. Just as there is no causality between the attributes of thought and extension as they are “infinite in their own kind”, there is no causality between mind and body for the same reason. Thus, just as attributes are “infinite in their own kind”, mind and body are similarly defined as “finite in their own kind” (EID2).

Modes are connected to God *in the same way*, even though each one is linked to other attributes. That is why the relationship between them has been called “parallelism” (Deleuze, 1990, p. 107). Although the doctrine of “parallelism” does not belong to Spinoza, it is used to indicate that singular things are connected to the same substance in the same way. In fact, Spinoza seems to support this doctrine in the following words: “The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things” (EIIP7).

In order to clarify what Spinoza means when he says “man thinks”, one should look at his definition of ideas: “By idea I understand a concept of the Mind that the Mind forms because it is a thinking thing” (EIID3). The “thinking thing” mentioned in the definition refers not to any human mind, but the mind of God as a thinking thing (Lord, 2010, p.50). Because of the eternal thinking capacity, God is a thinking thing. But “man” is not a thinking being like God. The attribute and activity of thinking absolutely belong to God, and partially to the limited and finite human mind. Because of this, there is a difference in their degree of reality:

For the more things a thinking being can think, the more reality, or perfection, we conceive it to contain. Therefore, a being that can think infinitely many things in infinitely many ways is necessarily infinite in its power of thinking. So since we can conceive an infinite Being by attending to thought alone, Thought is necessarily one of God's infinite attributes, as we maintained (EIIP1S).

As can be understood from the quote, there is a relationship between the degree of reality and ideas we have. In other words, the presence of an idea determines the degree of reality. For the human being, an idea requires the presence of the body, which is under the attribute of extension. As Spinoza says: “[t]he object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body, or a certain mode of Extension which actually exists, and nothing else” (EIIP13). A singular

idea is always the idea of a singular object. The order of the two axioms in the second part “man thinks” and “we feel that a certain body is affected in many ways” are not coincidental<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, whatever happens to the body ultimately corresponds to an idea in the human mind. The limitedness of the human mind results from the fact that its object is the body. In other words, due to parallelism, the limited structure of the body expresses the limited structure of the mind in the same way. Thus, one has an idea through her/his body and can only know two attributes of God. If the object of the idea contained something other than the body, then s/he would know another attribute of God corresponding to that thing. Apart from that, for Spinoza, the mind does not passively records what happens to the body. Nor, conversely, the body is under the determination of the mind. The body is the object of an idea, not the cause. In this regard, the symmetry between them is provided on the occasion that the causality of the substance is equally valid for both.

Reality depends on the comprehension of the actually existing body by the owner of that body. If the human being wants to become competent, s/he should develop this ability and have as many ideas as possible about her/his body. In other words, the diversity of my opinion about my body is in direct proportion to my reality. In this case, to say that I do not have at least one idea of my body means that I do not exist. Therefore, if I have no idea about my body, then I have no reality. To increase my competence, I need to grasp my ideas correctly, that is, the affections of my body. That is why Spinoza first tells us to look at what the body is and what kind of laws it has. Because only in this way can we know the unity of mind and body clearly and distinctly (EIIIP13S). Besides, the degree of reality that depends on the idea in mind varies compared to other minds. In other words, there is a difference between the reality of an idea and that of another, just as between objects. So again, we must first examine what the body is, because in this way we can understand the simple nature of the human mind and that it is more competent than other minds (EIIIP13S).

There is a difference between the degrees of competence. However, according to Spinoza, the competence does not create a hierarchy between singular beings. The reality of every single being has its own nature. Since the human body and mind are more complex than other bodies and minds, their capacity to express God is higher (EIIIPost1). The mind is not only a human qualification but rather a quality found in all existing things because God has ideas about them. Differences in the degree of reality of these beings are the determinant of the

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<sup>4</sup> This is another critical issue that Spinoza is moving away from Descartes. Descartes believed that truth would be obtained clearly and distinctly by eliminating all bodily influences in the reasoning activity.

differences between their minds. For example, there is a difference in degree between the reality of an inanimate object and that of the living thing. Every single thing has a mind different from anything else according to the capacity of the body to affect and be affected. Therefore, there is a difference between the capacity of a tree and the capacity of the human being in terms of reality. The difference between them varies in the way they express God's infinite essence. In other words, the way the tree expresses the essence of God is idiosyncratic, and so is the human's. However, the capacity differences between people do not create a hierarchical ontology. As Beth Lord exemplifies, a disabled person has different body and mind capacities, and accordingly his/her capacity to affect and be affected is different and as singular as other people (2010, p. 64).

An investigation into the nature of the body begins with a cautious analysis of objects. What is an object? The axioms, definitions, lemmas, and postulates between the 13th and 14th propositions are written in response to this question. Based on the mode of motion and rest, the laws of the body are explained in a physicalist style. As mentioned before, there could be no gap in nature in any way for Spinoza. In this respect, each object differs from other objects in terms of the proportion of motion and rest, and it can be just another object, not the gap, which determines movement and immobility (EIIIL1-2). In this case, the motion or immobility of the object is stable in the absence of a second determining object. That is, the simple nature of an object in motion does not contain immobility, and vice versa. Only another object can stop a moving object, and only another object can move a stationary object.

The combined body or individual is a miscellaneous object that has a completely different nature than the parts that are formed by the combination of at least two objects by transmitting their movements to each other (definition after EIIIL3). Simple objects with these different qualities combine with a certain degree of motion to harmonize each other. If the stabilization of the "entire face of the universe", which corresponds to the immediate infinite modes, is remembered, it is impossible for an essential change to occur with the change of the parts of a combined individual. In other words, after a new object emerges when the body combines the proportion of motion and rest with another object, it continues to be the combined object as long as the combination proportion is preserved. The parts may show some changes, their movements may speed up or slow down, their motion routes may change. The important thing is to maintain the fundamental proportion of motion and rest. Therefore, the combined object continues to maintain its essence, that is, to unite with objects which have a harmonious proportion with it. Spinoza furthers from the definition of this unified body or individual and

likens Nature to an individual made up of different individuals. Just as in the unified body, although parts of nature undergo certain modifications, its integrity remains stable. This movement has a commitment to the law of motion and rest, with the combination of simple objects, the combination of unified objects with other unified objects, and this mobility continues forever. This is how the link between singular things and the stability of the entire face of the universe is established. As it can be seen, the movement direction of the web between the whole face of the universe and the singular things is not vertical but horizontal. In other words, the entire face of the universe is not a transcendental mode that determines singular things, it is the stability that occurs as a result of interaction and harmony between components (Canaslan, 2019, p. 154).

The human body is an extended mode, which consists of a combination of certain organs. Since every part of this composition has a different nature, the human body also has a complex nature (EIIPost1). The connection and harmony between these parts occur as a result of preserving a certain proportion of motion and rest. For example, although our body changes over time, it remains the same as a whole, unless any part is disrupted. Each part of our body continues its actions in the same way it interacts with other parts (EIIIL7). On the other hand, each of these parts of the human body is affected differently because they have a different nature. This is one reason why Spinoza says “We feel that a certain body is affected in many ways”. The body is affected in different ways because just as its parts have different characters, external bodies that affect these parts also have different properties. In addition, the human body is also able to affect objects other than itself: “The human Body can move and dispose external bodies in a great many ways” (EIIPost6). Complexity in the human body entails complexity in the mind. If the object of an idea is the body and the body has a complex structure, then the mind has a complex structure similarly. The mind has both the complex ideas of the body and the ideas of different objects affecting the body. So there is a direct proportion between the mind's perception capacity and the body's capacity to be affected. The mind perceives as the body is affected. The complexity of the body's capacity to be affected and the mind's perception capacity is an indication that the human mind is competent from other minds. However, this does not mean a value judgment, there is a difference in capacity due to physical and mental complexity (Lord, 2010, p. 60). Likewise, the difference between the reality of the human and the reality of God is explained in this way. Because of the structure of the body, the ability of a tree to perceive is weaker compared to the human's and so is the human's compared to God's. If there were a body more complex

than the human body in the world, then its perception capacity would be higher than the human mind (Lord, 2010, p. 63).

Since the human body is affected in different ways for Spinoza, the mind has the idea of both the body and the body by which it is affected (EIIIP16). For example, when we listen to music, the content of the idea that occurs in our minds is related to both our body and the music. But the main point Spinoza makes is that we have the idea of this music as it affects us, not the idea of the simple nature of this music. In other words, without our body, we cannot have an idea of the music we listen to, the object we see, the objects we touch etc. As such, Spinozian epistemology cannot be based on a foundation isolated from the body. On the other hand, the fact that the mind obtains knowledge about itself depends on the affection of the body. The mind knows itself as it perceives affections of the body, so we can have both the idea of the body and the idea of the idea (EIIIP21S). To be able to doubt the existence of the body (doubting is thinking activity<sup>5</sup>), we still need an existing body, but this assumption poses an epistemic and ontological contradiction. The necessity of the idea affirming “the existence of X” to doubt “the existence of X” cancels the claim regarding the ambiguity of “the existence of X” in the first place. We have to say “there is X” to say “there is no X”, which is cacophony. In addition, because the idea of any object that interacts with our body reflects how our body is affected by that object, the affections give an idea of the structure of our own body, not the external object (EII16C2). Therefore, the affections of the body do not tell us about the essential nature of things. Based on this, Spinoza makes a distinction between types of knowledge, taking into account the capacity of the body to be affected. In the next section, Spinoza’s categorization of the differences between these types of knowledge will be explained.

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<sup>5</sup> It is unreasonable for Spinoza that Descartes determined the starting point with hyperbolic suspicion. If it is wanted to obtain clear and distinct knowledge, the method is to start by accepting from the beginning that we have a given true idea. According to Spinoza, the mind's understanding of itself, other singular beings, and Nature as a whole are based on this postulate. The aforementioned true idea relates to the comprehension of God as an immanent cause. God is the immanent cause of all things as well as the immanent cause of ideas. As such, all ideas in God are true (EIIIP36C). As a mode of God, we have true ideas given. Thus, for Spinoza, in this context, a skeptical may be someone confused by the influence of another idea. In this respect, it is impossible for us to doubt the knowledge of our existence. Spinoza expresses this precisely in his work *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*: “From this it follows that, if there is a God, or something omniscient, he can feign nothing at all. For as far as we are concerned, after I know I exist, I cannot feign either that I exist or that I do not exist” (1985, p. 24). As can be seen, Spinoza's philosophical investigation is not the denial of the existence or the suspicion of existence; on the contrary, it starts from an affirmation of existence.

### 1.3. The Three Kinds of Knowledge

According to Spinoza there are three kinds of knowledge: the first, second, and third kind of knowledge. The clarity and distinctiveness of the knowledge vary depending on how the experience is received. The essence of the human being necessarily has an idea that affirms its existence. If God has infinite understanding and the human being is a mode of God through the attribute of thinking, then the human mind is part of God's infinite intellect. In this respect, s/he has a clear and distinct idea that affirms her/his body ontologically. Nevertheless, it is impossible to have the correct idea of the laws of the body as a priori. Since our body is necessarily in contact with objects, it empirically affects or is affected. In this respect, the mind knows both the body and the object affecting it in a multifaceted way. Thus, while the essence of the body is perceived by the human mind provided that it is part of the infinite intellect, the perception of the states of the body carries the effects of the limited structure of the human mind (Lord, 2010, p. 72).

Spinoza calls indistinct or ambiguous ideas on things as *inadequate*. On the other hand, clear and distinct ones are called *adequate* ideas. The definition of the adequate idea is given at the beginning of the second section as follows: "By adequate idea I understand an idea which, insofar as it is considered in itself, without relation to an object, has all the properties, or intrinsic denominations of a true idea" (EIID4). The true ideas mentioned are found in God's infinite intellect. An adequate idea is obtained by knowing actively in accordance with the thinking activity. Being independent of its object means that an adequate idea is not exposed to any effect and; therefore, it can establish the certainty of the idea. In this line of thinking, it can be said that knowing something adequately is knowing that thing with cause or through its cause, not effect. The fact that a person knows without being affected means that s/he is active in determining her/his own action. Inadequate idea lacks the knowledge of causes because it expresses to know things based on their effects. And for the same reason, the mind is not active but passive in this type of knowledge. However, inadequate knowledge does not result from the lack or inability of the mind. The mind necessarily has adequate ideas through the attribute of thought, and inadequate ideas due to its limited nature. In other words, "the adequacy of ideas depends on being connected to God, and the inadequacy of ideas depends on being connected to the individual mind" (Zelyüt, 2011, p. 36). The important point is to turn our inadequate ideas into adequate ideas, to be active, and to have knowledge of the causes. In this respect, Spinoza's method aims to derive correct ideas in a deductive way from an adequate idea that is given to the human being. The given true idea is the reflective

knowledge of God or “the most perfect Being” (Spinoza, 1985, p. 19). It is necessary to proceed in a deductive way through this idea and produce each idea in accordance with the law of God or Nature. However, due to its limited nature, one cannot realize this idea at first because it is an entity that feels the body as affected and, for this reason, has inadequate ideas. In this context, although the bodily structure of the human being seems to be the source of the error, the situation is actually the opposite. Without the affections of the body and, due to this, the mind's inadequate ideas, it is not possible to reach the given adequate idea. For all these reasons, Spinoza's system differs from the usual forms of rationality. At this point, Deleuze describes Spinoza's philosophy as follows:

One of the paradoxes in Spinoza –and this is not the sole instance in which we will see it at work- is to have rediscovered the concrete force of empiricism in applying it in support of a new rationalism, one of the most rigorous versions ever conceived. Spinoza asks: How do we come to form and produce adequate ideas, when we necessarily have so many inadequate ones which divert our power and cut us off from what we might achieve? (Deleuze, 1990, p. 149)

As Deleuze stated in the quote, the important thing is to obtain adequate ideas. For this, it is necessary to start from the imagination corresponding to inadequate knowledge. First of all, knowledge acquired according to the limited nature of the mind is imaginative for Spinoza. This knowledge is based on experience; it is as a result of knowing the state of our bodies not by their causes but by their effects. In other words, imagination is the knowledge that we receive things only by their effects, not by their cause. We have the knowledge of the effect of a thing on our body; therefore, this knowledge is not independent from the interaction of our body with that thing. Since the body has a complex nature, the imagination is the expression of ambiguous ideas, not clear and distinct ideas. Also, since the nature of the affecting object is complex, the way the body is affected is variable, not constant. Therefore, empirical knowledge of our sensory experience corresponds to this type of knowledge.

Imagination affirms the existence of an object that affects the body until it is thought to the contrary (EIIP17). Even if the current interaction of the object with the body disappears, the human mind produces similar ideas about that object. Therefore, even if the experience ends, the imagination is mentally represented again in memory. From that moment on, unless we have the opposite idea, that effect of the object takes its place in our memory and is recalled by imagination. Spinoza gives an example to clarify this situation: Our body is affected by the sight of the sun and feeling of its warmth. Based on this experience, we get a wrong idea of the distance between the sun and the earth, because we feel that the sun is close. Even if we learn the real distance of the sun; when we imagine it, we dream about it as something close

to the earth. Because the sun affects us not in terms of its real proximity, but in terms of the the proximity we feel. Knowledge of the real distance does not change our imagination, the only thing that will change it is that the sun affects us at that moment in such a way that we know its real distance (EIIP17S). In other words, if the sun affects us in a way that denies the distance based on experience, then we can get the true idea. But as Spinoza said, in this case, this idea would not be imagination or imagination would have the advantage of the nature of the mind, not its deficiency (EIIP17S). As a result, imagination is the coincidental knowledge that we acquire according to how our senses are affected. The second kind of knowledge eliminates the inadequacy of imagination.

The second kind of knowledge, for Spinoza, is the knowledge of *common notions*. This type of knowledge is also called rational knowledge. In this type, as the name suggests, we begin to see commonalities in things and we get out of the state of passivity. In this state, rational knowledge is the sum of the ideas in which the mind articulates the common properties of things. That means rational knowledge can never be obtained from a single thing because understanding common properties means the comparison of at least two things. From this point of view, it requires that the body *encounters* other bodies and, *in parallel*, the mind encounters other minds. The mind, which has the idea of the body, receives adequate ideas about other objects that it perceives the same properties. Spinoza says there are common properties in things: “All bodies agree in certain things” (EIIL2). The reason for this is that objects are modes of the same attribute as they are extended things. Secondly, under the law of motion and rest, all objects are either motionless or mobile. These are the top common properties that surround everything - extension and motion and rest. Because of the doctrine of parallelism, commonalities of objects also means commonalities of ideas. If the human body is affected by an external body with any qualification, and this qualification is common both for the external body and the human body, then the human being acquires an adequate knowledge of that qualification. Common properties of objects can be conceived in terms of extension and motion and rest. Nonetheless, these commonalities cannot be the essence of a singular thing (EIIP37).

Spinoza concludes that to find out common properties and adequate ideas, there must be encounters in harmony. The more common properties we have in the objects we interact with, and the more we relate to the objects we have in common, the more our rational knowledge will increase (EIIP39S). In this respect, the role of common notions in social organization is very central. As a result, although the imaginative knowledge based on experience is the

source of the error, the knowledge of experience is essential for the possibility of rational knowledge. Therefore, the second kind of knowledge eliminates the imaginative contingency by realizing the necessity in things. It is an activity of discovery, calculation, and comprehension through the understanding of commonalities. In this respect, the mind is not given, as Deleuze puts it, or people are not born wise (2005, p. 90). But the mind derives axioms in a deductive way under common notions and therefore has the opportunity to become active and to organize commonalities.

The third kind of knowledge is intuitive knowledge, which corresponds to intellect. In this type of knowledge, there is no need for any mediation to realize something, as in the first and second type of knowledges. Knowledge of the essence of singular things can only be obtained through intuitive knowledge. However, just as imagination is necessary for rational knowledge, rational knowledge is also essential for intuitive knowledge. As stated in the paragraph on adequate ideas, we have the intellectual or reflexive knowledge of God, "the most competent Being". From this point of view, it can be noticed that God's immanency is emphasized one more time. Spinoza links the conditions of the third kind of knowledge to the knowledge of the singular essences, by saying "[t]he more we understand singular things, the more we understand God" (EVP24). In other words, God or Nature is not unknown or inaccessible, but immanent to all modes in Nature through attributes. Intuitive knowledge is to know this immanence perfectly. As claimed by Spinoza, intuitive knowledge "proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things" (EII40S2).

The mind completely relinquishes superstitions and anthropomorphic image of God mentioned in the first part thanks to the third type of knowledge. In connection with this, in Chapter V, freedom is conceptualized as the "intellectual love of God". If a person has intellectual love to God or Nature, s/he becomes free and obtains "beatitudo" (*blessedness*). Spinoza encourages the reader to be cautious and patient until this stage. This path, as stated in the last paragraph, "is hard, rare, but still, it can be found" (EVP42S). Until the final chapter, Spinoza maps a trajectory showing the conditions under which the *beatitudo* would be achieved. When he comes to the third part, to establish adequate ideas, he focuses on the affections that cause the various affects; the source of inadequate ideas. According to him, it is necessary to relinquish inadequate knowledge and prejudices to reach the beatitudo. For this to become possible, we need to examine the affections and the affects.

#### 1.4. Affects, Affections and Desire

In the third part, Spinoza maintains his physicalist style and examines the feelings of the human body. His purpose is to explain feelings based on the laws of nature. He utters that thinkers who analyze human nature independently of the laws of nature have understood the human being as “a kingdom within a kingdom” (*imperium in imperio*) (EIIIPrae). However, all actions of human beings are determined by the law of nature and their weaknesses depend on it, not on their free will. The naturalistic attitude in previous chapters continues in this chapter as well. Likewise, he remains true to the geometric method as in the previous sections. He says, “I shall consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a Question of lines, planes, and bodies” (EIIIPrae).

The classification of Spinoza's types of knowledge is closely related to its affect theory. According to Spinoza, every affection of the body has two aspects in terms of increasing or decreasing the acting power of the body and then the thinking power of the mind. Active affects are felt when action and thinking power increase and passive affects are felt when they decrease. Each affect accompanies the idea of affection, as stated in the definition: “By affect [*affectus*] I understand affections of the Body by which the Body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections” (EIIIDef.3). Although Spinoza limits the expression of “power” to the body in this definition, it is necessary to remember the position of the mind in the same context. Just as the body has the power to act, the mind has the power to think in parallel with the body. The increase or decrease in one of these powers occurs in parallel with the other. Affect is action to the extent that it increases the power, and passion to the extent that it diminishes this power.

For Spinoza, the mind is in cooperation with the body in all conditions, both in terms of his epistemology and affect theory. This is one of the most important points where Spinoza disagrees with the Cartesian tradition. In his work, *Passions of The Soul*, Descartes describes affects as bodily phenomena with regard to their non-rational nature. The content of these phenomena disrupts the activity of reasoning. Descartes, like Spinoza, makes a distinction between active and passive affects. However, the point where the two philosophers diverge in this regard is the reflections of these forms of affects in the mind and body. For Descartes, an active affect in the body corresponds to a “passion in the soul”(2013, art. 2). The foundations of the cross-regulation of active and passive affects are based on Descartes' understanding of

substance. According to this, thought and extension are considered as two separate substances (2007). In line with this acceptance, our mind must eliminate everything bodily in reasoning activity and reach the truth with clear and distinct ideas of the mind. It is clear that, for Descartes, the foundations of epistemology become reliable when they removed from the ontological ones. In this case, mental activity is only guaranteed by the negation of the body. Contrary to this, for Spinoza, there can be no cross-relationship of the affects on the mind and body. Spinoza, like Descartes, distinguishes active and passive feelings and puts emphasis on the importance of clear and distinct ideas. But for Spinoza, the action of the body simultaneously means the action of the mind, and vice versa (EIIIP2S). Therefore, a clear and distinct idea is not obtained through the negation of the body, but through the affirmation of the body's capacity to be active. Whether it is active or passive, affect is not just physical or just mental, but both physical and mental. In this respect, increasing the power of action and thinking requires modification of passion towards action. Although the two philosophers are very close in terms of terminology, they disagree with each other philosophically. As claimed by Deleuze, the reason for this terminological rapprochement is that Spinoza uses the Cartesian philosophy as an instrument and uses it as philosophical rhetoric to be understandable (2005, p. 15). So what does Spinoza mean when he says “power”?

According to Spinoza, all singular things, as *part of nature*, endeavor to persevere in their existence (EIIIP6). The existence of singular things does not involve necessity like God's, that is why their existence is not persevered. Therefore, even if singular things express the power of God partially, they have to make a certain effort against the possibility of dissolution. If so, the possibility of dissolution is external. The effort to exist belongs to the essence of all singular things, and Spinoza calls this effort *conatus*. In a living being, *conatus* occurs as an effort to exist in being, and in an inanimate being, it appears as resistance (Zelyüt, 2011, p. 72). The human being, of course, has *conatus* as a singular being. But when the human essence is more specifically investigated, *conatus* is called “appetite” for both mental and physical effort (EIIIP9S). This definition leaves its place to *desire*, after its combination with consciousness. Desire is, for Spinoza, “the essence of the human being”: “Desire is man's very essence, insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something” (EIIIDef.Aff.1). Although there is a difference between them in terms of consciousness, there is actually no sharp difference between desire and appetite. Desire is the consciousness of the appetite, which involves the effort to persevere its being. Spinoza's definition of desire causes a ground-breaking change in the concepts of good and evil. If the

desire is determined according to the principle of conatus, then everything we consider good or evil has to be rearranged according to this principle. After all, the objects of desire are determined not by will, but by the principle of conatus. Our desire for an object does not stem from our opinion of its goodness. As Spinoza declares it, we consider that thing as good, since we already desire that thing (EIIIP9S). Desire is not determined by the final cause. Spinoza's way of describing the concepts of good and evil is an indication of his anti-teleological perspective. In this respect, he obviously rejects the conceptual heritage of a deep-rooted tradition.

Spinoza defines desire, joy, and sadness as essential affects. While joy is flourishing us by supporting our ontological principle, sadness, in contrast with joy, diminishes our power of existence. The affects that increase or support our power of acting are joyful, and that reduce or prevent this power cause sadness. Basically, whether it is a joyful or sad feeling, every affect is a modification of desire. In this case, joy and sadness occur as increases and decreases of desire. In other words, desire is felt in the form of joy as one's power increases, and sadness as power decreases. All the remaining affects are classified as variations of joy or sadness. For example, “[h]ate is sadness, accompanied by the idea of an external cause” (EIIIDef.Aff.7). That is, hate is a variation of a sad affect, which prevents us from being active.

In Spinoza's classification of affects, sadness and its variations are unlikely to be active. Sadness is a passion in all circumstances. It is a passion that we are exposed to and reduces our power. On the other hand, joy and its derivatives are, in some cases, passive and active in others. Thus, joy can be a passion or an action. For an affect to be active, we must be the cause of affection. That is to say, if the cause of affection is only in ourselves, we become the cause for that affection and the affect that follows. On the contrary, if we are not the only cause for that affection, then we are the inadequate cause of an affect that occurs on us. While the adequate cause is based entirely on our nature, inadequate cause based on our nature partially (EIID2). Passions are the affects that we cause inadequately. Although joy increases our ability to act and think, it is a passion when we are not the only cause. According to Spinoza, people often feel joy as a passion throughout their life, because as bodily beings, they are affected in various ways by laws of nature. Parallel to the diversity of affections, there is a multitude of ideas in mind. As stated above, the mind perceives the affections of the body; thus, consciousness is the consciousness of the body (EIIIP14Dem). Whether we are the only reason for the affects determines the kind of knowledge we have. As expressed in the

beginning of this chapter, the close link between the theory of knowledge and the theory of affect is precisely related to the determination mentioned. If the reflection on the affections and affects are based on an external cause, then the first kind of knowledge is in question. It is the same thing that a human mind is filled mainly with the first kind of knowledge and its affective cluster is full of passions. As mentioned, the first kind of knowledge is the knowledge of affection and is also known as imagination. Spinoza says, “imagination is an idea which indicates the present constitution of the human body more than the nature of an external body –not distinctly, of course, but confusedly” (EIVP1S). Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that the first kind of knowledge is the passion at the same time.

For Spinoza, passions are malignant in terms of making us passive, diminishing our ability to act and think. However, contrary to common understanding that thought is the power to suppress or discipline passions, Spinoza thinks that the human body is necessarily subject to passions since birth. But a passion is a passion as long as it is not understood. By understanding our passions, we achieve the power to turn them into action or an active affect. This power is essentially our one and only power over passions. In the words of Tatian, “The power of thought over passions is not a force of oppression, but a power of understanding” (2017, p. 68). Spinoza constitutes a commonality between passions and reason through the power of understanding. Thus arise two questions: how is it possible to grasp a passion, or how can we achieve active affects?

As stated, a sad passion is accompanied by a sad idea in all circumstances. When we feel sad, our ability to understand is disrupted, and we begin to know things not by their cause, but by their effects. For this reason, Spinoza focuses on other passions like joy and its derivatives. Because joyful passions support our power of existence, and simultaneously, we obtain a corresponding idea. The mind's endeavour is to obtain these ideas and to understand what supports the power of its activity. (EIIIP54). This effort is to understand the nature of the body and to grasp what is useful for it. In this system, ethics does not act with motives such as punishment or discipline, because the aim is to investigate the capacity of the body and determine the extent of its limit. In this line of thinking, the rational form that passions will acquire allows expressing the actual activation of the body infinitely. So the ability to understand is not about the negation of the body, but about understanding its own laws, as *part of nature*. In this way, a joyful passion begins to turn into an active affect looking regarding its of benefit. Undoubtedly, to protect self-benefit, people have to learn specific laws of the body. However, if a body is isolated or retires into its own shell, it is impossible to

learn *what a body can do* (EIIIP2S). Therefore, it is necessary for a body to act and to interact with other bodies. A harmony caught as a result of encounters/interactions supports the principle of self-benefit. In other words, the power of action increases as a person finds a commonality or harmony with his/her encounters. Subsequently, if the increase in power of thinking includes an idea of harmony, passion turns into action. From this point on, common notions, mentioned in the second kind of knowledge, become functional.

Harmonious encounters are the basis for our transition from imagination to rational knowledge. In this case, the mind has not only the idea of harmonious affection but also the idea of this idea. Spinoza explains this as follows: “We have shown that the mind is united to the body from the fact that the body is the object of the mind; and so by the same reasoning the idea of the mind must be united with its own object, i.e., with the mind itself, in the same way as the mind is united with the body” (EIIIP21Dem). The unity of the mind and its object (body) with regard to their similarity in order and connection makes it possible for the mind to unite with its own idea. Turning an idea into an object of thought is an action of the mind. Thus, we can also have the idea of an idea; in parallel, we can make the idea a “thing” (Zelyüt, 2011, p. 79). In this way, the mind will be the adequate cause of affection and passion will turn into activity. As a result, passion turns into action through an increase in ability to self-affection. From this point on, people take action by understanding, not conditionally.

Harmonious relationships, which are the precondition for self-affection, are based on the motto “all bodies agree in certain things”. Accordingly, common notions are obtained by increasing harmonious relationships rather than an ascetic life. Harmony, then, requires at least two objects to interact. Specifically, considering humans, it requires to contact another person. “Agreement” is achieved through maintaining our proportion of motion and rest, which is unique to us. The idea of objects overlapping with the body also increases the power of thinking. From this point of view, for Spinoza, common notions are not stable or apriori; on the contrary, it is *relational*. What is useful for one person can be harmful to someone else. The characteristic nature of individual desire within the movement of individualization cannot be suppressed. Desire is ultimately the effort of the human being to exist, and this effort varies according to the temperament (*ingenium*) of each person. Each singular essence acquires singularity within commonalities, in accordance with its idiosyncratic character.

As mentioned repeatedly before, for Spinoza, it is certain that sadness cannot turn into action. However, the transformation of joyful passions into active affect gives the opportunity to

functionalize the same understanding ability for sadness. Just as the mind conceives common notions for harmonious relationships, it can function in the same way when it comes to sadness. When it comes to bad encounters, the mind can grasp what is harmful for itself in the same way. As Hadi Rizk puts it, the strategy of Spinozian ethics is based on resistance against sad passions with joy, and organizing alliances that strengthen this joy (2012, p. 248). Ultimately, virtue manifests itself in the guarantee of these alliances. In other words, a life in which sadness is overcome is a virtuous life. Consequently, it is easy to understand why Spinoza says, “joy is always good” (EIVP42). The more we are active participants of this life and leave our conditioned states, the more our ability to act and think increases. In fact, virtue is neither more nor less than this power. Spinoza states that virtue and power are the same things: “By virtue and power, I understand the same thing, i.e., virtue, in so far it is related to man, is the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as he has the power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone” (EIVD8). Following this, *beatitudo* is not the reward of such life, but this life itself, that is, virtue itself (EIVP42). A virtuous life is a blessedness as a life in which we increase our power under the guidance of reason, understand things according to their causes, and be causes of our actions. In that respect, blessedness is related to the mind's and body's perfection in which we understand things in a way that is flourishing our power to think and act. Blessedness, as Spinoza understands, is our greatest perfection.

A virtuous person's self-benefit principle may raise the question of selfishness. It may be thought that the person who pursues her/his own benefit will lead to the harm of someone else for this cause. However, according to Spinoza, the boundaries of a harmonious relationship cannot be fixed with the subject; on the contrary, a relationship is beneficial to the extent that it is compatible with each component. Thus, selfishness is conceptualized as incompetence in advance: A selfish person cannot be virtuous or powerful. First of all, a virtuous person lives by observing the principle of conatus according to the laws of nature. The best effort of a virtuous person is to support the ontological principle in the determination of the mind, to preserve it. Indeed, this effort is the “first and only foundation of virtue” (EIVP22C). Nonetheless, this effort exists in the virtuous person who looks for her/his own good as well as in a selfish person. More specifically, the conatus principle applies equally to all singular things. As a matter of fact, the difference between a selfish person and a virtuous person is not explained by the principle of conatus. Deleuze describes this difference explicitly:

There is in Nature neither Good nor Evil, there is no moral opposition, but there is an ethical difference. This ethical difference appears in various equivalent forms: that between the reasonable man and the foolish, the wise and the ignorant, free man and slave, strong and weak. And wisdom or reason have in fact no other content but strength, freedom. This ethical difference does not relate to conatus, since fools and the weak, no less than reasonable men and the strong, strive to persevere in their being. *It relates to the kind of affections that determine our conatus* (1990, p. 261).

As the quote suggests, the selfish person has conatus, even if he is weak or ignorant. Contrary to common belief, the selfish person is ignorant of what is useful to her/him. By contrast, in a harmonious relationship, insofar as the virtuous person demands something useful, s/he demands that thing for someone else too. In such a relationship, singular beings come together with their minds and bodies “as if they form one mind and one body” (EIVP18S). In this union, the singular benefit leaves its place to the common good. As far as it can form “almost one mind and one body,” the best thing for a human being is again a human being. In other words, for Spinoza, “there is nothing more useful to man than man” (EIVP18S). Consequently, the selfish person is a person who is deprived of such unification and whose affectional diversity is limited. From this point of view, a selfish person is isolated and unaware of common notions (Canaslan, 2019, p. 170-1). S/he is under the determination of passions rather than an active affect. Contrary to this, the virtuous person opens up to the world, establishes commonalities and unites with different powers. This is why common notions are not a priori but relational. As Canaslan puts it, “reason and virtue are not the first given state of human essence, but a communal goal that can be achieved together” (2019, p. 174). Then, under what condition a selfish person and a virtuous person live together? Is it their reason or their passion? Of course, these are the questions to be answered in Spinoza's politics.

### **1.5. Reason, Freedom and Democracy**

Spinoza presents his arguments of political philosophy in two works: *Theological-Political Treatise*, and *Political Treatise*<sup>6</sup>, which is an incomplete study. First of all, it should be noted that the political anthropology of these two works is based on *Ethics*. The main question is that under which conditions the maintenance of the common advantage is achieved in relation to common notions. This investigation prompts Spinoza to distinguish between civil

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<sup>6</sup> Starting from this title, TTP will be used when referring to the *Theological-Political Treatise*; TP will be used when referring to the *Political Treatise*. References to TTP will be indicated by chapter and paragraph number, and references to TP will be indicated by chapter and paragraph number. For example, TP II, § 5, means Chapter 2, Paragraph 5, in the *Political Treatise*.

rights/natural rights and natural law/civil law, which were among the favored concept pairs in his epoch. However, these distinctions are quite different from the conceptualization of his contemporary Hobbes. In particular, the sixteenth chapter of TTP, and each title until the sixth chapter of TP presents these distinctions in relation to the notions of affect-affection and desire described in *Ethics*. In this case, it would not be wrong to say that Spinoza builds his political philosophy on the principle of conatus in its simplest form. To illustrate, he states in TP, “I’ve demonstrated them from the universal striving all men have to preserve themselves, a striving in all men, whether they’re wise or ignorant” (TP III, §18). Therefore, Spinoza's naturalistic attitude in the metaphysical context also determines his political horizon. As stated in *Ethics*, people generally live according to the conditioning of passions, not under the guidance of the reason. The reason for this is the corporeality of human beings. Both the laws of their bodies and the laws of nature necessitate people to be affected in certain ways (EIVP4). Therefore, they have inadequate ideas rather than common notions. A life conditioned by passions, for Spinoza, is determined as the destructive treatment of natural rights:

Everyone exists by the highest right of nature, and consequently everyone, by the highest right of nature, does those things that follow from the necessity of his own nature. So everyone, by the highest right of nature, judges what is good and what is evil, considers his own advantage according to his own temperament [*ingenium*], avenges himself, and strives to preserve what he loves and destroys what he hates. If men lived according to the guidance of reason, everyone would possess this right his without any injury to anyone else. But because they are subject to the affects, which far surpass man’s power, or virtue, they are often drawn in different directions, and are contrary to one another, while they require one another's aid (EIVP37S2).

When the universal aspect of the conatus is considered, it is clear that both a conditioned person and an active person are after self-benefit. The difference between the two is that the first one does it owing to his/her own temperament, while the second does it according to common notions. As noted in the previous section, these common notions are not a priori, but relational, and therefore depend on people's ability to act and think. When everyone lives according to their own temperament and random determination of their own power, some people’s desires may be destructive rather than beneficial to others. Even so, people are still in social unity by nature. People live in a community even if they do not have active affects. The reason for this is that despite the infinite diversity of their temperaments, people live together owing to their power of striving to exist. Passions like hope, fear, and anger bring people together naturally. The origin of these passions is the natural desire for security. In the

commonalities where there is no political power, people use their power according to their own temperament. Therefore, in the absence of civil law, there is no place for concepts based on moral principles such as sin or good deed (TTP, XVI, §6 and TP II, §18). These and similar other concepts can only be called disobedience provided that they are in civil condition (EIVP37S2).

According to Spinoza, the state of nature is the situation in which the power of God or Nature is dominant and humans, as a singular expression of this power, live by desire, not by reason. In this case, just as nature's power is the natural right, human power is also equivalent to its own right (*jus sive potentia*). There is a co-necessity between natural right and power in terms of existence. He expresses the equivalence between them as follows:

So the natural right of the whole of nature, and as a result, of each individual, extends as far as its power does. Hence, whatever each man does according to the laws of his nature, he does with the supreme right of nature. He has as much right over nature as he has power (TP II, §4).

As can be understood from the passage, the natural right of an individual is determined in accordance with his/her power. However, since human beings live in nature with other singular beings, this power is limited. The power of the human is limited because it is a finite being and encounters other beings. Hence, it cannot be claimed that there is power equality between singular beings. Balibar claims that these limits should be viewed as connections rather than oppositeness under the concepts of independence/dependence. (2016, p. 81) In other words, people's acting according to their own temperament takes place thanks to their dependence on other individual beings. Therefore, human beings have the possibility of individualization thanks to the limits of their own power. As long as it is understood as a dependency of the same type, being under a political power gives us the basis for our individualization (Balibar, 2016, p. 82). On the other hand, it is not possible for them to maintain their current power within the boundaries in question, and to continue their lives without the help of someone else. For this reason, a person has to unite her/his own power with other's power and live together. Antonio Negri states that this unification should be understood as a transition to sociality in the sense of "integration of existence" that arises in the determination of fear of loneliness (2011, p. 28). In fact, according to Spinoza, a situation without this transition is not possible in practice. In other words, although it is theoretically possible for people to pursue their own interests only by their own power, in practice, it is unfeasible (TP II, §15). In this case, it is impossible to say that Spinoza is a social-contract theorist like Hobbes:

For Spinoza, “the state of nature” is an abstraction, and there has never been a “moment of transition” in which people can survive using their natural rights on their own and then realize its harms and establish a society. The transition from the natural state to the civil state is not historical but a theoretical transition (Canaslan, 2019, p. 180).

For Hobbes, the individual's right in the state of nature is unlimited. As he stated in *Leviathan*, even though people encounter some obstacles in the natural condition, they have the freedom to do everything precisely for this reason. For this reason, he distinguishes law (*jus*) from right (*lex*) in parallel with the difference between obligation and freedom (2007, p. 96). The transfer of the right takes place in the form of giving up freedom. More precisely, the freedom of people to do whatever they want is transferred to a third person, i.e. the sovereign. According to Spinoza, the unlimited use of natural rights is impossible, precisely because of other singular beings. Therefore, the state of nature is not freedom, but is a state of bondage resulting from power inequality at the most. For Spinoza, in the state of nature, people theoretically have the power to survive. When the power of other assets is considered, there is no guarantee of the use of this power in practice. Because another entity that possesses more the power than that person can limit the use of this power (EIVA1). The power's limitation under the determination of the laws of nature is not freedom, but a form of impotence or slavery. In the state of nature, people are faced with the possibility of not being able to use their natural rights. From this point of view, right or power has a contingent character in the state of nature and, therefore, may turn into a form of weakness in practical life. In the state of nature, people are theoretically their own masters, but they may practically be slaves to others. In this case, even if they want what is good for them, they can harm themselves and others. According to Spinoza, history is full of examples of this situation. Then, how is it possible for people to live in a society of peace and security while preserving the common good?

According to Spinoza, if a person makes decisions based on the common will, not on her/his own temperament, the basis of political organization is determined. If people give up their right to determine personal goods and bads and seek revenge, peace and security can be provided. The basis of the political commonalities in question is stated in the continuation of the passage quoted from Ethics at the entrance of this title:

No affect can be restrained except by an affect stronger than and contrary to the affect to be restrained, and everyone refrains from doing harm out of timidity regarding a greater harm. By this law, therefore, Society can be maintained, provided it appropriates to itself the right everyone has of avenging himself, and of judging concerning good and evil (EIVP37S2).

The multitude that comes together with this law has a common power in accordance with common rights. Spinoza can be considered as a social-contract theorist because of his ideas about giving up the natural right in the passage. But, as Alexandre Matheron pointed out, “giving up” certain rights is not absolute, but instantaneous: “It is us who decide to give our own powers to someone else's use because we desire it. But this transfer is so voluntary that it ceases to be the transfer [...] We at the time of t1, then at the time of t2, etc. decide to obey; nothing compels us irreversibly” (Cited. Rizk, 2012, p. 209). Undoubtedly, it is not possible to say that there is no normative content of natural necessity from this point on. In any case, natural obligation or the law of nature is the norm of natural rights and civil rights. This is the most striking point where Spinoza differs from social-contract theorists. In his famous letter to Jarig Jelles, he clearly states the difference between Hobbes and himself: “I always preserve the natural right entirely and argue that the superior sovereign in a state has a right over a citizen only to the extent of its power. Also, in the state of nature, this is always the case” (2014, p. 268).

The same tonality is found in both TTP and TP<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, the equivalence between power and right is emphasized similarly in terms of the sovereign-multitude relationship. The determination of the civil right is actualized by the vectorial variations of the conatus, not by the reason. In this case, giving up the natural right does not happen in an absolute sense. Similar to the fact that the natural right is only possible theoretically, the absolute transfer of the natural right is also possible in theory, not in practice. That's why the right of the sovereign is limited, just like the power of a human being bounded by other singular beings. These boundaries can become volatile when people do not agree on acting as “one mind and one body”.

From Spinoza's point of view, it was previously stated that we could not wholly transfer our natural right, but we can partially (the right to make decisions, to take revenge according to temperament) transfer our ways of using it. We cannot transfer our power of existence, i.e. effort to persevere in our being. According to Spinoza, one of the other non-transferable rights is the freedom of thought and expression (TTP XX, §1 and TPIII, §3). A person may stop doing certain actions, but cannot give up the right to reason and to judge. However, this right has certain limitations. Although the person has the right to object to something and express this objection, s/he has to obey the law in question. The violation of the law destroys peace, and according to the principle of choosing the more beneficial of the two options, the person

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<sup>7</sup> See. For example; TP III, §3 and TTP XVII, §1.

decides to comply with the law, whether s/he is under the guidance of the reason or passion. If the continuation of political organization is, in any case, dependent on choosing the most beneficial, it is the most reasonable choice to comply with the law (TP III, §6). Therefore, the reason for obedience is again the citizen himself/herself, whether s/he is under the guidance of passion (for example, fear or hope) or reason (principle of the common good).

The right of the sovereign is defined by the power of the multitude (TP III, §2). So, what does Spinoza understand from the power of the multitude that harmonized “as one mind and one body”? First of all, just as a singular being pursues its own good based on the ontological principle, the multitude is after its own advantage, that is, the common good. The common good, as stated in the *Ethics*, is related to the multitude’s being active, in parallel with the increase in the individual’s power of action and thinking. The content of common notions, which is for everyone’s benefit, is also valid for the dynamism of the multitude. As explained in the previous section, common notions depend on the organization of harmonious commonalities. These harmonious commonalities mean that the multitude is united under the determination of passions, “as if it were one mind and one body.” For example, the individual’s singular fear, which is possible in theory but practically impossible, becomes the fear of all parts in the multitude. The constitutive principle of common life is, therefore, passion, not reason. That is why Spinoza is clearly distant from philosophers who praise human nature or vilify human nature. Both approaches are the result of belief in various superstitions mentioned in the first chapter. Therefore, the passionate nature of human beings, which is described pejoratively, is nothing more than a manifestation of the laws of physics. For the same reason, people can join their forces by helping each other for their self-benefit, because people always need the help of those who are stronger than themselves.

Power inequality in the state of nature is eliminated by the desire for security, and the desire to increase power, and leaves its place to power equality. Power equality does not mean sameness of singularities. With this power equality, the differences between singular individualization are preserved. The fear of loneliness, which Negri describes as an antagonistic pattern, turns into a desire for security of the multitude: “The transition to social life refers not to the waiver of rights, but rather to an advanced step, the integration of existence: a transition from loneliness to multitude, to a community that removes fear in itself and for itself” (2011, p. 28). In this case, the self-benefit of the multitude is to build up harmonious relations. As Canaslan puts it, the common good is not to transfer limited power but to create conditions that will enable the transition to an active state, and this can only be

achieved through the unification of forces (2019, p. 192). This unification movement is not artificial, but natural. As stated previously, for Spinoza, political organization becomes visible in people's most natural form, that is, because of their passions. Therefore, the best government is the one that does not manipulate the passions of the multitude but supports their common power. Because political power that supports the power of the multitude and helps it become rational, increases its own power. Otherwise, the state dissolves, and peace and security are replaced by war. In other words, if the governments make laws that serve the common harm of the multitude, then the public rebellion is inevitable. That is, the right of the community to revolt is always reserved. From this perspective, as Balibar expresses, "the absolute character of sovereignty is a *de facto* reality" (2016, p. 53). The multitude strives to persevere its being in any case, be it ignorant or wise. Under the law of nature, the multitude cannot, in this sense, cease to maintain its right to self-benefit. Thus, any state making detrimental laws is deemed to be self-distributed:

We'll understand these things more clearly if we consider that when we say each person can decide whatever he wishes concerning a thing of which he is the master, this power must be defined not only by the power of the agent, but also by the capacity of what he's acting on. If I say, for example, I can rightly do whatever I wish concerning this table, I surely don't mean that I have the right to do make this table eat grass (TP IV, §4).

As can be understood from the passage, if the political power wants to protect itself, it should not ignore the natural right or violate the limits of this right. The ontological principle should not face civil law. But it should be remembered that the ontological principle is defined not only by being alive but by freedom/virtue/reason/power. A government that knows this situation increases its own power and turns into the most appropriate form of regime. Nonetheless, for Spinoza, regardless of the form of government, the ontological benefit of the multitude should be the determinant limit for all regimes. It should be known that when this limit is violated, it will create outrage and the contract will be suspended (TP IV, §6). More importantly, in cases where these limits are preserved but still an oppressive regime prevails, the absence of war does not indicate that people are in prosperity. For Spinoza, the absence of war does not mean that people are not enslaved. The absence of war does not refer to a good community. In other words, if tyranny is in question and the people have not yet rebelled, it is necessary to understand the state *without war*, rather than the state where peace prevails (TP V, §4). The state of peace and security is not a situation when people are enslaved in this way but a situation when they are liberated by leaving behind their weaknesses in the state of nature.

As mentioned previously, for Spinoza, there is a symmetrical relationship rather than an opposition between freedom and necessity. The widespread prejudice that people do their actions according to their free will comes from their inability to understand the relation of freedom to necessity. People who are unaware of the ontological determination and cannot be the cause of their actions tend to conflict with each other. People are either determined by their passion and act according to an external cause, or they become the cause of their own actions with active affect. The first is a forced action; the second is a free action. From this point of view, the principle that every effect has a cause prevents the association of action without a cause with freedom (Zelyüt, 2011, p. 38). The state becomes its own master as long as it liberates its citizens in second meaning. In TTP, Spinoza explains this as follows:

The end of the Republic, I say, is not to change men from rational beings into beasts or automata, but to enable their minds and bodies to perform their functions safely, to enable them to use their reason freely, and not to clash with one another in hatred, anger or deception, or deal inequitably with one another. So the end of the Republic is really freedom (TTP XX, §12).

According to Spinoza, the best polity to achieve freedom mentioned in the quote is democracy. In the last part of TP, which is incomplete, Spinoza expresses that democracy is a totally absolute regime. Although this part is unfinished, the definition of democracy and the determinations in the previous sections provide sources suitable for predicting the missing text. Many contemporary thinkers have focused on Spinoza's understanding of democracy based on these clues given in the text. In the beginning of the last chapter, Spinoza describes democracy as follows:

From what we said in xi, 2, it's evident that we can conceive different kinds of Democratic state. I don't plan to discuss each one, but only one in which absolutely everyone who is bound only by the laws of his native land, and who is, furthermore, his own master and lives honorably, has the right to vote in the supreme Council and to stand for political offices (TP XI, §3).

Democracy, then, ensures direct and active participation of the multitude in government. In this case, it is impossible to talk about any mediation between state and sociality in democracy, which is the ideal regime. The definition of democracy as the absolute form of government implies the right of the multitude over itself, rather than the absolute right of the sovereign over the multitude. The ground of the multitude to reverse power inequality by living in security, peace and harmony is possible only with a democratic regime. Once the inequality of power ends, the multitude will stretch the limits of its own power and capacity and will be free. This movement is not restricted in democracy and not concretely concluded. The activity of freedom continues indefinitely in a democratic government. However, in this

democracy, some are deprived of equality and freedom: Employees, foreigners, children, slaves, “those who lead a dishonorable life” and women.

In this section, the main lines of the Spinoza philosophy are discussed. In the second chapter, I will examine the general discussion topics of sexual difference feminism, especially around the ideas of Irigaray, and I will concentrate on the ideas of the thinkers who participated in this discussion through a Spinozist lens.



## CHAPTER 2: SEXUAL DIFFERENCE FEMINISM AND SPINOZA

### 2.1. Sexual Difference Theory and Body

Throughout Western philosophical history, the mind is regarded conceptually privileged compared over the body. While the mind and the associated mental abilities are identified with the male, the body and emotions are depicted with secondary, lower qualities and identified with the woman (Beauvoir, 2019, esp. Preface). This conceptualization has turned into a distinct hierarchical model with the modern rationalist subject imagination, and the privileged first term is considered more valuable than the second term, and thus the second term is subordinated by the first. While the modern rationalist male is defined as being free of embodiment, the woman is imagined irrationally as embodied. While the modern subject has been coded with completeness, the woman has been identified with the deficiency.

The mentality associated with the male is viewed as active in terms of its valued qualities, whereas the body identified with the female is regarded as implicitly passive. This two-pole way of thinking has caused similar hierarchical schemes of concepts such as mind-emotion, culture-nature, self-other, transcendent-immanent, subject-object, etc. Philosophy requires overcoming and relinquishing femininity, which is identified with the material, because being the talking subject of knowledge means performing a mental act. According to Elizabeth Grosz, the source of mainstream philosophy is based on “body phobia” (*somatophobia*) in this respect (1994, p. 5). The body, for example, is the prison of the soul in Plato, the formless substance in Aristotle, the source of sin in the Christian tradition. In Cartesian thought, the body is bypassed in the philosophical reasoning, and thus the subject has reliable knowledge as a result of the reflexive method. The specific point in Descartes' method is his understanding of “two substances”, as will be explained in the next section. As Grosz states it, Cartesian dualism thus disconnected natural sciences from social sciences, and physiology from psychology (1994, p. 7).

Pioneers of poststructuralist French feminism such as Julia Kristeva, H el ene Cixous and Luce Irigaray criticized this dualist thinking system and the asymmetric relations in subject theory and introduced new perspectives for alternative forms of subjectivity. The common criticism made by these philosophers is that the Western tradition is formed around a *phallogocentric* discourse. Indeed, the dominant subject of Western philosophy is Western, white, middle-class, heterosexual and male. The main characteristic of this tradition is that its understanding of rationality excludes all other “others” of this dominant subject. In this respect, it has been

the focus of criticism of many different disciplines in contemporary critical thinking. In general, French feminism has re-examined the concepts of Western tradition in specific areas such as psychoanalysis, philosophy, science, literature, and mythology. As a result, it has named this whole tradition entirely as the adventure of one subject (male). For these thinkers, the close link between the dominant narrative of subjectivity in the history of philosophy and psychoanalytic theory requires establishing an alliance with two disciplines in certain respects and reassessing the useful aspects of this alliance in the formation of the new subject theory. For this reason, it is necessary to re-read all the narratives that fix one-sexed identity (male) as active and complete, the other (female) passive and incomplete in Western culture with a new strategy. The distinctive point of the aforementioned feminist re-reading practice is that they develop a new understanding of difference by turning the pejorative meaning of bodily qualities upside down in order to investigate the possibilities of new ethics, which provides a sphere of sexual difference. In this part of the study, the outline of sexual difference feminism and its effects on contemporary feminist theorists will be discussed based on the works of Luce Irigaray, the founder of the concept of sexual difference. At the end of this section, an introduction to the ways Spinozist feminists understand the concept of sexual difference will be given. In the next section, how Spinoza's philosophy relates to contemporary feminist thought will be examined.

In her work *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Irigaray, inspired by Heidegger, claims that the vital question of the age is the sexual difference (1993, p. 5). According to her, there is no ethical, ontological, political, or epistemological commitment to the sexual difference in any of these spheres, whether in philosophy or psychoanalysis or any other discipline. For Irigaray, Western culture has absorbed the feminine imaginary or sexual difference as “the Other of the economy of Sameness” (1985, p.74). For this reason, it is necessary to refer to the female as “the other of the Other” in order to develop an alternative theory of subjectivity that allows the articulation of sexual difference. Throughout her professional career as psychoanalyst and linguist, Irigaray was impressed by the ideas of the famous French psychoanalyst Lacan. Though she followed Lacan for some years while developing her own method in her studies on psycho-sexual development; in her later studies, she criticized him strongly. In this regard, although it is not the central theme of this present study, it is necessary to give brief information on Lacanian philosophy.

Basically, the earlier psychoanalytic analytic understanding that female sexuality is passive and incomplete can be found in Freud's researches. According to Freud, an infant's awareness

of his/her own sexuality occurs through the forms of sexual arousal in three phases, oral, anal, and phallic. However, the decisive moment here is the “Oedipus complex” that takes place in the phallic stage. A boy whose sexual impulses are directed to his mother recognizes the power of his father with the fear of castration and becomes a man. The sexual impulses of the girl turn to her father first, and to other men after puberty due to the envy of the penis (Stone, 2015, p. 159-160). As a result, the penis envy, for a girl, causes a passive and incomplete sexuality perception in adulthood. For Freud, it is clear that the psychosexual development of both sexes depends on the anatomical difference and, in all respects, results in the abandonment of the mother.

The sexual identity is acquired at the Oedipal stage for Freud; however, for Lacan, it is acquired at the mirror stage. Lacan forms his terminology under the influence of Hegel, L. Strauss, and F. Saussure and departs from Freudian theory on psychosexual development in some respects. First of all, according to Lacan, sexual identity depends not only on an anatomical determination as Freud claims but on the language. Therefore, language has a central role in the formation of sexual identity. Acquisition of this identity occurs by realizing the *Real*, *Imaginary*, and *Symbolic* stages, respectively. The “Real” stage is the pre-oedipal phase. At this stage, there is no self-perception; that is, no distinction occurs between the self and the other. Accordingly, the infant entirely depends on the mother between 0-6 months at the “real” stage and this stage lacks a world of meaning. The starting point of the selfhood is determined in the mirror stage. In the imaginary stage, which takes place between 6-18 months, an infant sees his/her image in the mirror for the first time. The infant identifies herself/himself with this image and acquires a perception of herself/himself (Stone, 2015, p. 173-4). However, this is a false identification because the infant does not have such completeness as seen in the mirror, but only its image. The moment s/he realizes this, s/he desires to have a satisfying perception of himself/herself.

The desire to close the distance between the image of the self and selfhood occurs simultaneously with his/her entrance into the Symbolic order. In the symbolic order, the child enters the language system and recognizes the father's law. This is because the language expresses the “Father's Name” in the symbolic order (Stone, 2015, p. 175). In contrast to Freud's anatomical basis, Lacan's association the Oedipus complex with the symbolic order is the most crucial difference between two psychoanalysts. However, the formation of subjectivity for both of them requires an end to the organic relationship with the mother. According to Lacan, a child is in a world where the father's law is decisive when s/he starts

using the language. In this area, the master signifier is the “phallus” and, therefore, it is the identifier in the formation of sexual identity. In the symbolic order, which has a phallogocentric structure, the sexual difference becomes clear. However, since the speaking subject acquires a sexual identity through the “phallus”, the female body belongs to the pre-linguistic stage, as silent and passive, and devoid of desire (Stone, 2015, p. 180). Since the master signifier is “phallus” in the symbolic order, sexual identity acquisition or the formation of the subject results in the absorption of sexual difference culturally, historically, and socially. In this respect, in the symbolic system, there are children and mothers who have gained selfhood as mediated by the law of the father, and father. Therefore, when Lacan says “*la femme n'existe pas*” (there is no woman), he deciphers the sexual indifference rather than the sexual difference in the symbolic system (Direk, 2018, p. 156). The child, who entered the social life in the symbolic order and accepted the father's law, necessarily leaves the mother behind. For both Freud and Lacan, the mother is a figure that has been abandoned and suppressed in the Oedipal phase. If the child does not accept the father's law and maintains an organic relationship with the mother, the risk of psychosis arises as a result (Direk, 2018, p. 155).

For Irigaray, the greatest source of erasing the female subjectivity is based on the suppression of the mother's voice. On the other hand, while psychoanalytic theory positions the mother in a pre-linguistic phase, it also denies the difference between a woman and a mother and therefore reduces femininity to motherhood (Stone, 2015, p. 184). According to her, the suppressed voice of the mother whispers from the cracks of Western culture and makes the impacts of her own culture felt vaguely. By pursuing these voices, Irigaray, starting from the female body, investigates the possibilities of the female symbolic, that is, to develop a new “morpho-logique”<sup>8</sup>. She cancels the pejorative, incomplete, and passive representation of the mother. The main project is to follow a new morphology related to the mother-daughter relationship, an ontology in collaboration with ethics of difference, a female imaginary composed only of references to the feminine parameters. For these reasons, the point that Irigaray draws attention is not the biological body, but the morphological body. The morphological body includes the biological body, but it cannot be reduced to it. In this respect, it is difficult to claim that Irigaray is a strict essentialist. In effect, essentialism is based on postulating a stable, monophonic, and completed image of the body in the meaning system. However, for Irigaray, the body is not biologically or anatomically given; it is a

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<sup>8</sup> Irigaray uses the concept of morphology, translated as formal-logic, to emphasize the relationship between body and symbolic order. Establishing a female morphology requires the female body to find a place for itself in the symbolic order. See. (Irigaray, 2006, p. 62)

carrier of some socially, culturally, and historically constructed meanings or values (Grosz, 1989, p. 112). Therefore, for Irigaray, essentialism should be considered as a strategic project. She seeks for discursive opportunities in which the female body will gain a new meaning in the symbolic system. However, these possibilities do not turn into an identity defense fixed in a certain rhythm. Feminine morphology is fluid for Irigaray and has the capacity to preserve the content of difference. Culture and policy that respect the sexual difference can open up to other differences. The laws of the symbolic order, then, have a variable character that ceases to be stable, immutable, and imperative. Contrary to what Lacan claims, according to Irigaray, the new cultural sources can be created in the symbolic order in which both sexes can define their selfhood.

As Irigaray claims, female sexuality is fixed passively, since it is defined by reference to masculine parameters (1985, p. 23). In this case, too, the symbolic order has a monolithic content based on sexual indifference, not sexual difference. From this point of view, psychoanalysis has both decoded and nurtured the discourse adopted by the patriarchal culture. As Freud puts it, the deficiency caused by the penis envy is eliminated by childbirth, and thus women experience themselves as complete (Irigaray, 1985, p. 87). For Irigaray, the female body has the opportunity to experience autoerotism without any need for mediation (penis). However, when considered for men, an autoerotic act, a transition from passive to active, is, in any case, necessarily in need of mediation (a hand, a woman, or language). (1985, p. 24). That's why women's autoerotism is different from men's. The woman has *two lips* that can *touch* each other without any mediation and cannot be reduced to a single organ (p. 24). Contrary to what Freud claims, the female erogenous zone is not passive, but spontaneously active. Irigaray uses this activity for the morphology of a female imaginary that is to be redefined. In other words, Irigaray intends to move its positive content into the conceptual arena as an alternative to the negative definition of the female body in the current symbolic system. Irigaray, who thinks that the speaking woman can exit from the phallic economy by this way, expresses that female sexuality is in a polymorphic and unstable structure. In her words:

Perhaps it is time to return that repressed entity, the female imaginary. So woman does not have a sex organ? She has at least two of them. But they are not identifiable as ones. Indeed, she has many more. Her sexuality, always at least doubles, goes even further: it is *plural* (1985, p. 28).

The female body, imagined in a polymorphic form, only refers to itself in the position of the talking subject. "Speaking as a woman" (*parler-femme*) is a disturbing or jarring act against

accepted subjects. Accordingly, it emphasizes the multifaced and unstable feminine difference of autoerotism against the single and stable discursive syntax of the phallic economy. The tactic to be used in doing this is *mimetic*: “One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus begin to thwart it” (1985, p. 76).

Irigaray states that the hierarchised images of male and female bodies depicted in psychoanalytic theory can also be found in Western philosophy. According to her, even though philosophers claim that they built their philosophical systems on a universal subject discourse, many of them reduced the sexual difference to the sameness and two to one. The phallus, considered as the master signifier of psychoanalytic theory, transforms the female imaginary into an ambiguous representation in the philosophical conceptualization too. According to Irigaray, the way the female body is represented culturally and socially and the way it is described philosophically and symbolically is isomorphic. In other words, a pejorative representation of the female body in the symbolic order is in similar forms with its philosophical and socio-cultural representation. However, this isomorphism refers to the determination of the male subject as the dominant sex, not the organic relationship between male anatomy and male domination, as Grosz puts it (1989, p. 112). For this reason, Irigaray uses psychoanalysis while criticizing the phallogocentric acceptance in all disciplines, especially in the psychoanalytic theory and the history of philosophy (Grosz, 1989, p. 114). As stated by Irigaray, the history of philosophy has reduced the difference between the two sexes to one, thus, leaving no place for women. For this reason, she attempts to re-read the history of philosophy with the question of sexual difference. For Irigaray, the philosophical literature in which sexual difference is excluded cannot be left behind if it is to develop a new form of ethics or thinking. Therefore, Irigaray argues that the history of philosophy should be disturbed:

Unless we agree naively –or perhaps strategically- to limit ourselves to some narrow sphere, some marginal area that would leave intact the discourse that lays down the law to all the others: philosophical discourse. The philosophical order is indeed the one that has to be questioned, and *disturbed*, inasmuch as it covers over sexual difference (1985, p. 159).

As stated in the quote, philosophy never included the question of sexual difference; thus, to create a new culture, it is necessary to re-read the history of philosophy by the mimetic method. Irigaray, in her work *Speculum of the Other Women*, focuses on Plato's famous allegory of the cave by considering the sexual difference, which is the “most important

question of the age", for this cause. According to Irigaray's re-reading of the allegory, the narrative of the ignorant prisoners trapped in the cave and the people chasing the truth by leaving the cave gives clues as to how male and female bodies were received throughout the entire metaphysical history. Allegory is read as a mother's womb narrative using concept pairs such as dark/light, inside/outside, sensual world/intelligible world (Irigaray, 1985, p. 246). The cave is the sensual world of the illusions and falsity that the wise man must leave. While the outside of the cave, which is the place of the truth, is depicted as bright, the interior of the cave (mother's womb) is symbolized as a representation of the dark doxalogical world. The introduction of language requires the mother to be left behind, just as the wise man did when leaving the cave. In the allegory, the illusion is identified with the female, and wisdom with the male (Stone, 2015, p. 188). The relationship between inside and outside is sharply separated. The reflection of this in social life is the conceptualization of the female as the *maternal* one. Masculine coding, on the other hand, gains rational content, and it is completely separated from the corporeality. For Irigaray, this dual opposition, which dominates the Western philosophical tradition, has abolished the permeability between the concept pairs and symbolized the masculine, primary and more valuable; the feminine, secondary and lower. According to Irigaray, this permeability should be re-established, and the relationship between the spiritual and the bodily must be established with love as the mediator (Direk, 2018, p. 163).

The asymmetrical distinction between intellectuality and corporeality, dominating the mainstream Western tradition, is the constituent element of the sex/gender distinction. Accordingly, while gender is a set of social and culturally constructed norms, sex is conceptualized as a natural, biological constant in which these norms are passively recorded, and normative behaviors are performed. Simone de Beauvoir's emphasis on the mentioned social norms that imprisons women in immanence and that are the origin of inequality between the sexes is one of the most well-known examples of gender criticism in the sex/gender distinction (2019). With gender criticism, prejudices have been brought to daylight, such as the one that there is a necessary relationship between gender and the sexed body. This is where a motto such as "Biology is not fate" grounds. However, Irigaray finds Beauvoir's demand for equality to eliminate the mentioned social inequality inadequate and dangerous. According to Irigaray, Beauvoir recommends the damping of the difference, when she calls for transcendency for the sake of equality. However, it is crucial, for Irigaray, to open the door to the possible horizon of at least two-sexed culture. From this point of view,

giving up the immanence connected with materiality for spiritualization cannot go beyond repeating the current one-sexed thinking patterns. Irigaray explains this situation by saying, “The exploitation of women results from sexual difference; the solution will also be in sexual difference” (2006, p. 10).

For Rosi Braidotti, Irigaray's analysis focusing on female embodiment expands to differences such as race, class, age, sexual preference, ethnicity, starting from the sexual difference. As stated by Braidotti, “matter is always already sexed, even before it is captured by the binary code of the gender system” (2019, p. 31). Seen in this light, the body has material content before it enters the language. However, subjectivation enters a social and symbolic interaction together with this materiality. Therefore, an embodied or sexed subjectivity should be considered in the process. In the symbolic system, the sexual difference is erased by blocking access to the mother's body. In this respect, the theory of subjectivity, which is stripped of the determinism of phallogocentrism, offers an ethical commitment not to deny the difference, but to re-systematize the difference in an affirmative sense. When it comes to women, maintaining this difference guarantees the woman's unstable, unsettled, and plural existence as an embodied subject, contrary to what the essentialist criticism claims. Braidotti states that this is an affirmative an-Oedipal theory of subjectivity rather than the Oedipal subjectivity theory (p. 71). For Braidotti, being a subject means, in any case, to be sexed. She states that she sees embodiment, not as a biologically stable process, but as “a play of forces, a surface of intensities; pure simulacra without originals” (p. 66). The sexual difference, on the other hand, creates the possibility of rethinking the fully embodied female subjectivity with the mentioned forces and cultural mediations. According to Braidotti, this rethinking opens up to a female genealogy project in which Irigaray values the maternal forces (in respect of the body and mother), and in this project, the female embodiment may have the possibility of actualization as a “virtual reality” (p.72).

Judith Butler is another philosopher who criticizes the sex/gender distinction. According to her, this distinction, first of all, remains in the heterosexual matrix, accepting a binary-gender model. Butler thinks that understanding gender as a culturally constituted set of norms injected into a “given” sex means accepting the pre-discursive reality of sex (2018, p. 52). For Butler, such acceptance has a danger of reproducing existing power relations. For this reason, Butler argues that sex is built through the performance of certain gender roles. For her, accepting sex as a priori and attributing an essence to it means that it is a pre-discursive reality. However, according to Butler, sex is a “socially constructed” thing based on the

repetition of certain social practices. “Sex, by definition, actually exists because it is always gender” (p. 54). From this point of view, Butler thinks that the criticism of phallogocentrism and the question of sexual difference that Irigaray brings to the conceptual arena, on the one hand, exposes the “masculinist signifying economy”, but it also threatens to globalize the forms of oppression (p. 61). In other words, Irigaray helps us to diagnose the absence of female sex and female subjectivity in the symbolic order. But more importantly for Butler, while defining the female sex as “not-one”, she reduced the forms of oppression to one by analyzing the symbolic order as the “closure, which is one”, and she did not observe the other differences in the asymmetric structure of subjectivity. This is an indication that the category of "women" does not involve women with different oppression experiences. For this reason, Butler also shares the same criticism of “essentialism” directed by Monique Wittig to Irigaray and thinks that Wittig has opened a space for new gender identities. While analyzing the relationship of sex with discourse, Butler makes particular use of Foucault's views and reverses the temporal relationship between sex and gender. Sex is produced through the material repetitions of gender.

Rosi Braidotti thinks that this perspective, which she calls “anti-essentialism”, in one aspect that sacrifices sexual difference very quickly, and offers to insist on the contemplation of sexual difference (2017, p. 193). According to Braidotti, the reason for the accusation of essentialism or the misunderstanding of French feminism was the discussions of sexuality-pornography-prostitution, which was the focus of US feminism in the 1980s. Since sexuality is a subject discussed in this discussion with negative content, Braidotti thinks that US feminism is biased towards issues such as sexuality, psychoanalysis, female subject, and female desire, which was focused on by French feminism (2019, p. 81). Indeed, the negation of Irigaray's project in an atmosphere where sexuality is negatively discussed is one of the predictable results. Wittig's accusation of Irigaray for being essentialist is based on finding similarities between the Lacanian signifier Phallus and the Irigaray's signifier of Woman. Instead, she proposes “lesbianism” as the concept that marks the female sexuality. But Braidotti criticizes Wittig's proposal for being a new form of normative restriction. On the other hand, Braidotti states that Butler's objection to the sex/gender distinction has evolved in favor of gender. What is dangerous here is that the performative repetitions are attributed to being “subversive practices” without any foundation. To put it another way, gender-related performances do not have any subversive or transformative aspects, according to Braidotti (2019, p. 95). Braidotti does not intend to ignore the effect of heterosexuality on the formation

of subjectivity. Her purpose is mostly related to the primitive and undeniable characteristic of sexual difference. In other words, according to Braidotti, any performative act cannot erase the sexual difference (2019, p. 108). This difference is enfolded, embodied, “embedded in the body” in unpredictable ways. The question turns into an investigation of what sex can do, rather than what can be done with gender. In this regard, Braidotti thinks that we should pay attention to the question, which Deleuze quotes from Spinoza: “What can a body do?” (2019, p. 111).

The critique of sex/gender distinction has been criticized impressively by another sexual difference feminist, Moira Gatens. According to Gatens, it is an erroneous approach to criticize sexual difference feminists who are in favor of cancelling this distinction on essentialist grounds. Those who accept the distinction between sex/gender tend to neutralize the sexual difference. But, as Gatens puts it, neither the mind can be conceptualized as a passive “tabula rasa” to record some codes of social behavior, nor the body is conceived as a passive “mediator” of this record. (1996, p. 4). Feminists who approve this distinction make two kinds of mistakes by confirming the common idea that there is a distinction between mind and body. The first mistake is firmly linked to the common belief that gender roles can be changed in favor of the equality of women by drawing inspiration from social psychology. The second mistake is to confirm a sexless body image, which is accepted due to the negation of the fact that there are “at least two types of bodies”. Gatens, in her book called *Imaginary Bodies*, expresses her objection to this with the following words: “Concerning the neutrality of the body, there are at least two kinds of bodies: the male body and the female body” (p. 8). Moira Gatens resolves the problem of mind-body dualism, which is connected to the idea that there is a distinction between sex/gender, with the help of Spinozism. She offers to take advantage of Spinoza's notion of the body for an embodied epistemology, ontology, and ethics-politics. As Gatens points out, the sexual difference does not refer to a neutral body, but a “lived, the animate body –the *situated* body” (1996, p. 11). Therefore, the permeability between sex/gender cannot be understood without questioning the place of a body in the signification system and without genealogical analysis of sexed images. The key concept in this study is the imaginative body perception of each society. The idea of the *imaginary body* involves that the image that the person has about his/her own body is necessarily affected by certain socially generated images. In this case, the female imaginary is, of course, a matter to be considered together with the *social imaginary*. Having a body image that is exempt from cultural codes may be possible in an isolated life, but it is also impossible for a person to have

their own image in such a life. For this reason, the imaginary body is formed together with the *social imaginaries* and in the process. At this point, Gatens focuses on the possibility of the feminist philosophy of the body by thinking of subjectivity with Spinoza's concepts such as power, capacity, and difference. Gatens, like Irigaray, agrees that social and cultural forms of meaning are effective in the emergence of body image (Stone, 2015, p. 193).

Genevieve Lloyd is another name who thinks that the history of Western philosophy is home to the current sources of body-mind dualism that appears in the distinction between men and women. According to Lloyd, the way the reason is represented in philosophical texts has a significant effect on how we perceive ourselves as men or women today. Lloyd, like Irigaray, rejects the common acceptance that knowledge is sexless by exposing the masculine character of reason in the history of philosophy. In this regard, she expresses that the interest of sexual difference theory on the subject of embodiment overlaps with the focus of her own investigation (Lloyd, 2015, p. 15). According to Lloyd, this investigation confronts two names; Descartes and Spinoza. Lloyd, like Gatens, thinks that the symbolic basis of the distinction between sex/gender is on the dual opposition of Cartesian philosophy. In this regard, the critical attitude of both thinkers about the asymmetric link between rationality and embodiment reminds Irigaray's insistence on sexual difference. As Rosi Braidotti stated, Irigaray attacks the “complicity” between rationality and masculinity (2017, p. 131). Consequently, the sexual difference feminism has provided a space for criticism of the dichotomies rooted in almost all of the philosophical tradition.

## **2.2. Spinoza’s Anti-dualistic Perspective: Rejection of the Mind/Body Distinction**

### **2.2.1. Dichotomous Axis of the Cartesian Tradition**

Descartes is undoubtedly the most central name in which feminist theory criticizes the subject. With Descartes’ philosophy, the first nuances of the understanding of the modern subject, teleology, and free will gain serious momentum. For this reason, it is necessary to examine the main points of the Cartesian philosophy. First of all, the method Descartes uses when starting his metaphysical system is hyperbolic suspicion (1996). In order to obtain clear and distinct ideas, he doubts the truth of everything he knows. Descartes builds the metaphysical system on clear and distinct ideas, accessed as a result of systematic suspicion. After systematically doubting the truth of all beliefs to create these blocks of knowledge, he notices that all ideas he has, including the material world and God, are unreliable. But at the

same time, he realizes that he cannot doubt himself as a suspicious entity. Because doubting is a thinking activity, he guarantees his own existence through the activity of thought. In other words, it is a contradiction to doubt that he thinks as a thinking entity. As he expresses in *Meditations*, thinking activity becomes proof of existence: “I am a thing which is real and which truly exist. But what kind of a thing? As I have just said –a thinking thing” (1996, p. 18). Accordingly, Descartes is a solipsist because he makes ontological proof with reference to himself (self-referential). By proving his existence, he classifies each existing thing as uncertain. In the next stage, he says that the idea of infinity in his mind is an idea that proves the existence of God. In the sixth meditation, in order to prove the existence of material things, he declares that God cannot be a deceptive being. Accordingly, since God is such a perfect being that he cannot be deceptive, the material world cannot be an object of illusion (1996, p. 55-56). The soul and the body are defined as two separate substances, but Descartes bases the essence on thought, not on the body: “It is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it” (p. 54). As such, the mind is considered to be given in the essence of the subject in a priori form. The subject has become the sole reference of the certainty of everything, including itself. On the other hand, a sharp distinction begins to become clear between subject/object, nature/culture, mind/emotion, as the soul and body are two substances.

Sensory data or physical influences should be excluded from the reasoning activity to reach the most reliable information. It is the mantra of Descartes' philosophical method. Accordingly, if the mind to achieve clear and distinct ideas, the sensory data should not be trusted. To reach the truth, the mind must break complex ideas into simpler parts, the clarity and certainty in these parts must be proven, and these parts must be correctly ordered. Only clear and distinct ideas should be recognized as true. The reason for the mistake is explained in the fourth meditation concerning the relationship between will and intellect. Since the will is wider than the boundaries of intellect, before making sure of the certainty of an idea in intellect, it makes a mistake by choosing the wrong, not the right (Descartes, 1996, p. 41). Therefore, the will must be disciplined to obtain true knowledge. Thanks to a disciplined will, the subject can make the right *judgments*, both morally and epistemologically. Inadequate or ambiguous ideas are objects of passion that come from the sensory perception originating from the body. The judgments of the true knowledge then also include the virtue of controlling the body. Descartes expresses that everything unreliable in the mind belongs to the body (2013, Art. 47). The idea of controlling the body extends to the idea of controlling the

nature. The idea that the mind is privileged over and superior to the body and nature depends entirely on this ability to control and autonomous will.

Natural abilities such as sensation, imagining, remembering, perceiving, intellection, and willing are modes of thought. But only two of them represent the actualization of thought: intellection and willing. However, whether they are bodily or mentally, these abilities belong only to human beings because they are conscious thinking activities, animals cannot think because they do not have consciousness (James, 1997, p. 88). Also, there is an inverse proportion between the soul and the body in terms of being active and passive. The passion of the soul corresponds to the action of the body; the passion of the body corresponds to the action of the soul (Descartes, 2013, Art. 2). The action of the soul comes from the fact that it is the evidence of the thought it has. If thoughts are only related to the abilities of the soul, they are active thoughts of *volition*; in other cases, they occur as thoughts of passion as a result of their functionalization through objects outside the soul.

Therefore, volition, the action of the soul, represents the narcissistic structure of the mind in terms of its autonomous structure for Susan James (James, 1997, p. 204). Active/passive duality is conceptualized in parallel with self/other distinction. The subject, who thinks isolated from the world, decides the reliability of the ideas, and also realizes that he is thinking and judging these ideas. Therefore, there is a definition of the atomistic individual, not relational, depending on self-control and self-satisfaction. Undoubtedly, such an individual image has inevitably had ethical and political manifestations. The thinking subject of Descartes is the central concept of the liberal humanist tradition and phenomenological tradition. The emphasis on one's free will caused the development of an apriori moral and legal system and inspired the liberal theory of politics. On the other hand, by proving the existence of the material world in a self-referential way, it reduced the criterion of the true knowledge or mind to consciousness. Accordingly, matter-oriented proving was canceled, and a self-oriented proving model became functional. For this reason, Descartes is considered to be the predecessor of leading names in phenomenology, such as Kant and Husserl.

Australian eco-feminist philosopher Val Plumwood is another name that draws attention to the asymmetrical relationship between binary concepts in Western philosophy in her work *Feminism and Mastery of Nature*. For Plumwood, these opposing concepts have caused nature, together with the female body, to be seen as worthless, inferior, secondary. According to Plumwood, the human/nature form of this goes back to the rationality of Greek culture. For example, the Platonic mind not only has a masculine character in the face of the feminine; it

also represents the master identity against nature, animals, and slaves (1993, p. 72). In Cartesian philosophy, the relationship between human/nature undergoes a hyper-division. In addition, there is a sharp distinction between human/animal, as Descartes clearly defines animals as unconscious. Plumwood bases the distinctive difference between Plato and Descartes on that Plato has no emphasis on the idea that people should control nature (1993, p. 109). However, Descartes' mechanism builds a subject that seeks to be the master of nature. There is a subject that is self-sufficient and does not need anyone else to be free. The Cartesian tradition has advocated hierarchical solipsism based on humanism because it grants a privilege to the (male) human in human/non-human or human/animal dualism.

Susan Bordo states that, with a psychoanalytic reading of Cartesian philosophy, modern philosophy can be delineated as a kind of “anxiety over separation” (1986, p. 441). According to Bordo, when Descartes doubted everything that existed, he was sharply separated from the material world and needed God to prove its existence. He left the physical world behind him in the name of reasoning activity, just as a child leaving his mother behind in the process of individuation. The father to be reunited is God because the mother represents the material world left behind. For Bordo, although the Medieval and Renaissance depictions bestow feminine qualities upon nature, these periods do not fully reflect the mood of Cartesianism as there is no such distinction between the self and the world, human and nature (1986, p. 446). However, for Descartes, the ground of the error arises from not being able to make this distinction successfully, and not being able to separate maternal from the or sensory one. For this reason, according to Bordo, the 17th-century philosophy is exactly a period when “thought becomes masculine”. The key concept of this masculinization has been detachment: “Its key term is *detachment*: from the emotional life, from the particularities of time and place, from personal quirks, prejudices, and interests, and most centrally, from the object itself” (1986, p. 451). Bordo's reading of Cartesianism from a psychoanalytic aspect supports Irigaray's view that Western culture suppresses the mother's voice. The Cartesian tradition has defined the subject of objective knowledge on a phallogocentric discourse.

According to Genevieve Lloyd, the masculinity of the reason has a deeper history. She reads almost all of the history of Western philosophy as the history of the mind, which is left the female behind, as Bordo did. According to Lloyd, Descartes separates the mind and body sharply from each other and, simultaneously, builds a metaphysics where the soul is sexless. The elimination of bodily qualities in the reasoning activity creates the belief that the mind offers equal access for both men and women. Accordingly, both women and men can access

true knowledge as long as they apply the correct method. However, there is implicit cooperation between the sexlessness of the soul and the masculinity of the mind, as stated by Lloyd (2015, p. 16). Historically established mind-body symbolization has a basis that identifies the first with the man and the second with the woman in a hierarchical way. While the bodily sex difference represents the female, the sexless mind is conceptualized due to this representation itself. In other words, the sexlessness of the soul arises precisely from the gap between woman and rationality. The irrationality of the woman is the postulate required for the so-called neutral mind to be formed. The formation of masculine rationality depends on the presupposition of female irrationality. As such, the problem is not that rationality does not involve women, but rationality is defined by establishing it against the sexual difference: “Rationality is understood as overcoming femininity. And 'femininity' itself has emerged and shaped partly within this structure” (2015, p. 141). According to Lloyd, Descartes' sexless soul takes on a dominating character in the face of the sexual difference. Although the Cartesian subject seems sexually neutral, it is essentially male. Lloyd pursues the sexual difference in Descartes' metaphysics, just like Irigaray. As a result of this investigation, the progressive methodology of reason leaves the female embodiment behind.

### **2.2.2. Spinozist Lens: Beyond Dualism**

The challenge of contemporary feminist philosophers to the rationality of the Cartesian tradition has contributed to the feminist literature and paved the way for them to develop the alternative subject, politics, ethics, and knowledge models. While some of these philosophers dealing with the ground of redefinition of the body, which was imagined as unvalued in the Western philosophical tradition through a non-hierarchical analysis, they considered the philosophy of Spinoza as a useful moment in this direction. What does it mean to think of feminist theory together with Spinoza today, although he is obviously not a proto-feminist philosopher? Considering Descartes' emphasis on an equal use of reason without discrimination, what are the reasons why some feminists prefer Spinoza philosophy? Indeed, considering that he advocates women's pedagogical equality by believing that they can improve their intellectual skills, it can be said Descartes was a proto-feminist of his time (Lloyd, 2015, p. 73). However, as Irigaray has stated, when the questions that whom and how the equality will be provided are considered, the problem is reconstructed from another perspective, since it changes direction towards keeping the difference. In other words, the ideals of equality on the basis of “neutral” human models tend to hide the hierarchical polarization of the philosophical, political, social, and cultural aspects of dualist

symbolization. For this reason, many of the equality feminisms that are based on the principle of equality of mind indirectly adopt the Descartes' dualist understanding and endorse the mechanical worldview that holds the masculine content of controlling nature/body.<sup>9</sup>

Thinking feminism with Spinoza, who is a philosopher that places the powers, affective-actual capacities, desires, and the relational determination of the individual essences at the center of the system, has provided a favorable examination opportunity for feminists of sexual difference. For this reason, although Spinoza repeats the misogynist rhetoric of his time in his works; feminist philosophy, as Elizabeth Grosz points out, may ally with Spinoza with intend to take advantage of his philosophical views in order not to be in a pure negation. She says,

Criticism always affirms the priority of the criticized; It ironically produces what it wants to problematize. But beyond that, criticism is a negative practice [...] And if feminist theories are only a critique of patriarchal discourse, this will be the future for feminists that they will be encounter forever (Grosz, 2009, p. 143).

Thinking feminist theory together with Spinoza, then, means being aware of the prejudices the had about women and taking advantage of the conceptual devices of his system. Moreover, it is possible with all the canonical texts in the history of philosophy to establish new dialogues in a way that even philosophers would not have guessed. Luce Irigaray, for example, pulls Descartes' concept of “wonder” out of his system precisely in this way and defines it as the basic emotion for the construction of an ethical relationship or eros ethics between the two sexes (1993, p. 12).

The most crucial reason for Spinoza to be an attractive figure for contemporary feminist thinkers is his rejection of dualism, which was particularly sharp in the Cartesian tradition and crystallized in other forms in the whole Western philosophical tradition. As explained in the first part of the study, for Spinoza, mind, and body are not separate substances, but two different modes of God or Nature, which is a single substance. Both express a unique reality in their own way. The relationship between these two modes has not been established as a result of causality. Moreover, the constitutive idea of the mind corresponds to an affection of the body. The capacity of the mind depends on the reflexive thinking of the body. For this reason, unlike the Cartesian philosophy, it is impossible for the mind to transcend the body in Spinoza's metaphysics. According to Genevieve Lloyd, as she stated in her work *Part of Nature*, the sexual difference cannot “reach” the Cartesian mind for precisely this reason (1994, p. 161). Moreover, there is an understanding of rationality that absorbs not only sexual differences but also material differences such as race, sexual preference, ethnicity, age, and

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<sup>9</sup> For a detailed review of the feminists mentioned, see. (Gatens, 1991)

class. However, in Spinoza's philosophy, the fusion of the mind and the body makes it possible for the sexual difference to “reach” the mind, according to Lloyd (p. 161). But this does not simply mean to base gender norms on a biological ground. In other words, Lloyd's claim is not that biological sex is the cause of gender. Lloyd thinks that consideration of the relationship between mind and body in this way, that is, making a sex/gender distinction, is a characteristic feature of the Cartesian philosophy. The sexual difference is both physical and mental. Spinoza's rejection of a causal relationship between mind and body gives a new form to the problem of essentialism which is a subject of debate among feminists. By asking the question, “Where does biological sex end, and where does gender begin?” Lloyd offers consideration of both aspects of sexual difference together (1989, p. 15).

According to Lloyd, affirming the powers and desires of the body for Spinoza means having its idea. But neither body is the cause of this idea, nor mind is the reason for the body's powers and desires. Therefore, different bodies in terms of sex mean different ideas, different minds (1989, p. 21). More specifically, for Spinoza, the difference between different bodies is not reduced to one. In terms of powers and desires, the female body has the same qualities as the male bodies in some aspects and different attributes in some (1994, p. 162). The difference is always maintained in terms of capacity, between different sexes and among members of the same sex. Increasing the capacity of a body depends on how the social body in which it lives is organized. Investigating what the bodies can do requires looking at the causal history of the current state of bodies in the network of power relations. As stated in the first part of the study, for Spinoza, causes come before effects, and rational knowledge is knowledge of causes. For this reason, it is not possible to overcome the embodied differences with an abstract will. As Lloyd states,

Differences between male and female experience of the shared social world will make for differences in mind and self-consciousness. In this way, a Spinozistic theory of the mind, in contrast to the Cartesian, can be seen as taking seriously both sex differences and power. Sex differences for Spinoza apply to minds no less than to bodies. But that does not involve the affirmation of any male or female content, existing independently operations of power (1989, p. 21).

As it can be understood from the quote, there is no given body, on the contrary all bodies are social. A body in the community has traces of its affective history. The power and capacity of the female body reflect the cultural and symbolic meanings that the female body lives. Therefore, the place and representation of the female body in the political body and social organization affect the way that the woman affirms her own power and desire, that is, her image of her body, and simultaneously her mind. In this respect, in a society, the meaning of

the concepts of body, power, and difference should be examined when it comes to women. Moira Gatens, in her work *Imaginary Bodies*, first presents a historical course of the relationship between the political body/community and the bodies of men and women while making this analysis,.

Gatens agrees with Irigaray's criticism that Western culture reduces the difference to one. Both psychoanalysis and Western metaphysics have a history of a single body, a single-sex. According to Gatens, the feminine writing project of French feminism (*écriture féminine*) has had a considerable effect in deciphering the monolithic content of psychoanalytic and philosophical discourse. The main purpose of this tradition is not to essentialize the female body, but to challenge its pejorative representation in the theory of subjectivity and create an alternative discourse (Gatens, 1996, p. 72). Sexual difference feminism, as opposed to insistence on an ontological sexual difference, focuses on how and for what intentions this difference is built. However, to understand how images about bodies differ in different societies, it is necessary to accept that there is more than one social imaginary rather than a single social imaginary (1996, p. ix). Therefore, when thinking about the sociopolitical positions of women, it is not enough to focus only on sexual imaginary under a purely psychoanalytic perspective. It is necessary to diagnose the different effects of these imaginaries on women's legal, economic, political, and ethical status. For Gatens, the constitutive role of the first type of knowledge, which Spinoza calls imagination, in the political organization becomes functional in the investigation of the relationship between women's current sociopolitical position and sexual imaginary about them.

Moira Gatens evaluates the traditional conceptualization of the female body in relation to its exclusion from political participation. According to Gatens, the female body is not deemed appropriate for political participation, as it is defined by emotions, nature, uncontrolled, and disorder in Western culture. But more importantly, for Gatens, the current political organization is arranged to exclude women (1996, p. 51). The notion of the political body, which is central in modern political philosophy, is an important starting point for Gatens to analyze the current status of groups that are not included in this body. The contract theory was developed among rational individuals to protect men, it adheres to a single citizen (male) and a single mind (male) model. Women defined by their body, not by their mind, are confined to a restricted area, and their active access to the public sphere is prevented in order to meet the state's need for reproduction. Undoubtedly, this restriction is the starting point of feminists' struggles for equal access to the public space, based on the culture/nature distinction

following the mind/body separation. But Gatens criticizes this perspective, which accepts the body/culture distinction, as in her critique of sex/gender distinction. The body, for Gatens, is not a site of an immutable, isolated, and ahistorical essence that traces of culture are recorded. At this point, by resorting to Foucault's concept of power, she reverses the distinction by this question: "How does culture construct the body so that it is understood as biological given?" (1996, p. 52).

According to Gatens, since Foucault emphasizes the productive aspect of power rather than the oppressive side, he offers a more satisfying resource against the inadequacy of analysis of the female body in both the Marxist and liberal traditions. Because both Marxist and liberal feminist theory has defined bodies as a given essence, adhering to the tradition of dualist conceptualization of sexual difference. The Foucauldian approach, for Gatens, is more useful because it points to the question of how certain discourses and practices constitute certain types of bodies with certain powers and capacities (1996, p. 70). This approach allows examining the pattern between power relationships and the historical specificity of the body. In the case of women, genealogical analysis of images about their bodies is one of the ways that should not be bypassed to increase their current power and capacity. Gatens, with a similar approach to the interpretive methodology of Irigaray and Bordo, states that the political body makes the mother's body invisible. As stated by her, there is an implicit alliance between modern political theory and masculinity. By using a psychoanalytic method, she displays the unconscious symptoms of culture with examples of motherless male heroes in different disciplines. The narrative of bestowed immortality on the motherless male citizens of Athens, which is established by Athena, who is motherless, also is one of them. Gatens recalls: Was Athena really without a mother? Wasn't Athena born after Zeus swallowed her pregnant wife? (1996, p. 22-23). For her, the effect of these narratives on modern political theories should not be underestimated. Analyzing their dominant sexual imaginaries paves the way, as Gatens puts it, for uncovering the effects they have on our political present and our political future.

For example, Hobbes' Leviathan is one of the births without mother. Seyla Benhabib states that in Leviathan, the individual is thought of as an autonomous, self-sufficient man. She says, "In the beginning man was alone [...] The female, the mother of whom every individual is born, is now replaced by the earth. The denial of being born of woman frees the male ego from the most natural basic bond of dependence" (1987, p. 84). For Benhabib, the autonomy of the individual in contract theories always corresponds to the autonomy of the man, and this

narrative creates a narcissistic individual image. In parallel with the modern political theory, modern moral theory creates a “generalized other” with universal criteria. The relationship with the other in this position abstracts it and erases its specific differences, assuming formal equality. The subject of modern moral theory is considered as “disembedded” and “disembodied” (p. 81). In contrast, if the relationship with the other is actualized from the “concrete other” position, actors of the relationship complement each other with their embedded and embodied characteristics. The position of “the generalized other” prevails in social contract theories, and according to Benhabib, the moral feelings of this position are respect, duty, merit, and dignity (p. 87).

In modern political theories, political society emerges when isolated men come together to sign a contract and transfer their rights to Leviathan. Leviathan appears as an “artificial man” established with the mind and responsible for protecting smart men. According to Gatens, those who are excluded from the political body are defined by their bodies, especially by their sexes when it comes to women, as those who cannot undertake necessary sacrifices. Besides, emotions that are accepted as the symptoms of the female embodiment are excluded from the political imagination. Because being a part or founder of the political body requires reason and sacrifice (1996, p. 23). Women cannot find their own place or language in the political body because they are imagined in society without these qualifications. In this respect, their legal, political, and economic status is limited to the domestic area. Besides, slaves, foreigners, workers, and children are also excluded for similar reasons (p. 25). The participation of these groups in the political body is possible when they meet the accepted criteria. From this point on, they become absorbed actors of the “artificial man” image, which is claimed to be “neutral”. After all, the price of being represented in the political body is neutralization of the embodied difference both metaphorically and literally. Metaphoric neutralization is based on the etymological origin of the anthropomorphic content of the “artificial man” image, meaning “anthropos”, that is, “man” (p. 23). The political body image cannot be neutral for this reason. Neutralizing ideals of egalitarian demands for being an active member of the public sphere or for recognition/acceptance are futile. Ideals of equality is a “dream of men” based on seventeenth-century politics, according to Gatens, because it implicitly invests in the neutral body image (p. 26). There is no place in this dream for the embodied difference. The real political implications of this image are in the form of being accused of “unintelligibility” or “not knowing what they are saying” when it comes to women speaking. She explains this clearly:

If woman speaks from her body, with her voice, who can hear? Who can decipher the language of a hysteric, the wails of a hyena, the jabbering of a savage –apart from other hysterics, hyenas and savages? Our political vocabulary is so limited that it is not possible to ask, within its parameters, to raise the kinds of questions that would allow the articulation of the bodily difference: It will not tolerate an embodied speech (p. 26).

Gatens focuses on *intrasexual* and *intersexual* ethical relations to expand the boundaries of vocabulary, such as Irigaray (p. 39). Her purpose is to depolarize political limitations along with ethics. Since sexual imaginary has a social and historical structure, it is essential to consider them as the modalities of collective life. Thus, the question is: Through which imaginaries the mechanisms that increase the power of some bodies and decrease others' become functionalized in a society? For Spinoza, if the equivalence of the notions of virtue, power and right is considered, ethics is now a political ethic that opens the door to the multi-dimensional actualization of embodied difference rather than an abstract, neutral, fixed and universal ethic. For this reason, Gatens offers to look for sources of ethico-politics that can be envisioned in this way in Spinoza's system.

Spinoza's objection to mind/body separation has similarities with the fundamental points of Moira Gatens's objection to sex/gender separation. As stated in the previous section, Gatens says that the body should be thought of as a living process, otherwise, according to her, it will be a mistake to see sex as a given fixed body, and gender as a whole of psychic rules. Parallel with this, for Spinoza, the body is not a passive machine under the command of the mind. At this point, Gatens says the following words for the philosophy of Spinoza:

The Spinozist view does not lend itself to an understanding of sexual difference in terms of a consciousness/body or sex/gender distinction. For Spinoza the body is not part of passive nature ruled over by an active mind but rather the body is the ground of human action. The mind is constituted by the affirmation of the actual existence of the body, and reason is active and embodied precisely because it is the affirmation of a *particular* bodily existence. Activity itself cannot be related especially to body, mind, nature or culture, but rather to an understanding of the possibilities of one's participation in one's situation as opposed to the passive 'living' of one's social, political or even brute existence. This active understanding does not, and could not, amount to the mental domination of a body-machine, since thought is dependent for its activity on the character of body and the manner in which, and the context in which, it recreates itself (1996, p. 57).

In such metaphysics, knowledge ceases to be something acquired on the condition that the body is immobilized. Since the body affects and is affected by its nature, it is not defined by a given mind or free will; it is defined by its emotions, whether active or passive. For this reason, one body has similarities with other bodies as well as differences. As Genevieve Lloyd said, the female body and the male body are sometimes affected in the same way,

sometimes differently. (1994, p. 162). Each body has ideas of the embodied effects of its culture. Essentially, a body is not temporally and spatially constant, even in itself. Since it is open to affect and be affected at any moment, it does not have an unchanging, self-sufficient, isolated nature. The nature of the body may be precisely complex modifications of this capacity to affect and be affected. These modifications may differ depending on the increase or decrease of the power of acting and thinking. For this reason, Spinoza's ethical understanding is not universal, monophonic, or unidimensional. Also, the differences between bodies do not fit in binary-polarization.

According to Gatens, Spinoza's definition of mind and body as different expressions of the same reality implies that the body should always be considered in relation to the environment or society in which he/she lives. In her work *Collective Imaginings*, in collaboration with Genevieve Lloyd, she focuses on the concept of "ethology"<sup>10</sup> that Deleuze used for the philosophy of Spinoza. Accordingly, ethology allows thinking about the power of the individual within his/her context. In this context, the individual gets close to things that are compatible with his/her self-benefit; otherwise, s/he moves away. As Gatens points out, ethology gives the opportunity to replace the notion of a universal good with an understanding of the dynamic body, to think of the individual with the "transindividual"<sup>11</sup> networks, that is, with other bodies, and finally to analyze under what conditions the bodies form harmonious combinations (Gatens & Lloyd, 1999, pp. 100-102). The critical concept that applies to all three possibilities is imagination. As stated in the first chapter, the constitutive element of political organization for Spinoza is that human is a passionate being, and this passionate determination corresponds to the imagination. A society connected to common notions is possible with understanding this imagination and reaching their adequate ideas. Imagination is not destroyed; it is converted into adequate ideas. Indeed, this transformation involves a transformation in our desires, power, entire life, as well as in our way of knowing. It is, therefore, inconsistent to think of Spinoza's politics separately from his metaphysics, epistemology, and ontology. Thus, for Spinoza, the problem of knowledge is also the problem of existence; this is the ground of the embodiment of knowledge (Gatens & Lloyd, 1999, p. 104).

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<sup>10</sup> According to Deleuze, ethics is tangible *ethology*, as Spinoza defines all beings according to their power to affect and be affected, rather than the abstract free will of a moral theory. See. (Deleuze, 2005, p. 34)

<sup>11</sup> The concept of *transindividuality* used by Balibar in the context of Spinoza's philosophy, and it expresses that the individual and the multitude are reciprocally determined, and the individual should be considered according to the networks and encounters within this multitude. See. (Gatens & Lloyd, 1999, esp. Part I, Chapter 3.)

Gatens warns that the term “embodiment” refers not to the individuality of the body in Spinozist perspective but to its “*total affective context*” (1996, p. 131). Otherwise, a mistake, such as leaving Spinoza in the shadow of the liberal humanist tradition, can easily be made. The relationship between individuals and multitude then cannot be reduced to any of them. Imagination is the first moment of both individualization and sociality. For this reason, according to Gatens, Spinoza's system stands out from both the liberal tradition and the communitarian tradition (Gatens & Lloyd, 1999, p. 121).

In her article, “Autonomy and Relational Individual”, Aurelia Armstrong finds Spinoza's understanding of individuation quite inspiring for the definition of a non-atomistic individual. Spinoza has developed a *relational ontology* by thinking of the individual with the multitude. Concerning the 32nd letter Spinoza wrote to Oldenburg, Armstrong draws attention to the analogy he made between the worm in blood and the place of the human in nature to explain the relationship between part and whole (2009, p. 50). According to this analogy, when the worm in the blood looks at parts, it grasps them as a whole, but when it focuses on the blood, it grasps the blood as a whole. Apart from this, if the worm looks at both of the parts in the blood and the blood from a broader point of view, it actually sees the interaction between the blood and “external causes” and this time grasps the blood as a part (Letter 32). According to Armstrong, this analogy offers two perspectives on the relationship between self and other. From the point of view of the part, there is no connection between myself and the other. From the perspective of the whole, we tend to think of ourselves as free. Since both perspectives are a partial understanding of reality, they are the basis of conflict and antagonism, not commonalities (Armstrong, 2009, p. 51). To realize the interrelationship between the two, we need to know “external causes”. Accordingly, I have to grasp myself not only as a part that cannot be separated from the whole but also as a part that cannot be separated from other parts of the whole. According to Armstrong, Spinoza's proposal is “psychophysical parallelism”, based on the understanding of mind/body unity beyond the polarity of individualism and holism (2009, p. 54).

For Armstrong, in Spinoza's philosophy, identity is explained according to the individual's causal context and affective history. The equivalence between the body's capacity to affect and be affected and the mind's capacity to think allows us to build a relational autonomy by thinking ourselves in social networks. As we enter into harmonious relationships, we become autonomous, and as we become autonomous, we begin to engage in harmonious relationships. Naturally, this means knowing the causes of our affects and overcoming sad passions with

joyful ones, as mentioned earlier. Inspired by Balibar, Armstrong emphasizes that the concepts of collectivity and autonomy should be considered in the Spinozist system not in opposition but in relation to each other. From this perspective, the idea of relational autonomy offers quite rich resources for feminist autonomy discussions, according to Armstrong (2009, p. 61).

Gatens claims that it is impossible to speak of a moral or political a priori equality among people in his philosophy since Spinoza thinks that each individual is different in terms of desire, power, and capacity. Significantly, Spinoza asserts that common notions are useful conditions for people to become free with their differences, not for them to become the same. The key concept here is not to be standardized but to have become in common. For this reason, there is no room for solipsist nuances in his philosophy. Through common notions, it becomes clear that how and under which laws we, as *parts of nature*, are determined in communities. In this way, the idea of individual freedom is overcome with the idea of relational freedom, as Armstrong has stated. As a matter of fact, it is now clear that women's freedom cannot be achieved simply by being political actors in these conditions. It should be noted that many sexual imaginaries that cause the exclusion of women from the public sphere continue their embodied effects in political and legal institutions (Gatens, 1996, p. 141). That's why Gatens and Lloyd pay attention to the notion of legal, political, and ethical *responsibility*.

Since Spinoza clearly rejects both the free will of Descartes and Hobbes' assumption of the rational individual living alone in the state of nature, the *obligation* of the state to support *all individual's* desires to persevere in being has more actual content in his system. When someone makes a mistake, for Descartes, this is simply seen as one's own fault because of free will. The responsibility of the error is considered to belong entirely to the Cartesian subject (Gatens, 1996, p. 109). For Hobbes, the state does not have to comply with terms of the contract made according to the decision of isolated individuals, because the contract is based on an agreement among individuals, not between Leviathan and individuals. The continuation of the state is provided by citizens' fear of returning to their chaotic, insecure situations in the state of nature (Hobbes, 2007). Chaotic environment of the state of nature disappears with the guarantee of civil society. In this respect, according to Gatens, Hobbes' political philosophy creates two separate planes: the state of nature and the civil state; first represents the immanent plane, and the second represents the transcendental plane (2000, p. 60).

Spinoza, as stated in the first chapter, keeps his distance from Hobbes since he refuses to transfer the natural right. In the eyes of Spinoza, the sovereign is like a single individual trying to increase his/her own power. Just as someone should know the laws of her/his body to increase her/his power, if the state wants to increase its power, it should increase the power of citizens. Conatus principle determines the desire and actions of the state as well as the individual. When the individual and the state simultaneously understand this basic natural law adequately, freedom corresponding to the conception of necessity is possible for both the state and the citizens. For this reason, according to Gatens, Hobbes is a thinker of the “juridical” tradition, while Spinoza is the philosopher of the “anti-juridical” tradition (2000, p. 60). In such a state, when a person commits a bad action, responsibility could not be attributed to the individual. As Gatens points out, on Spinoza’s account, “[b]ad government is also ‘responsible’ for bad citizens” (1996, p. 115). The aim of the sovereign cannot be purely life safety or protection of private property. As quoted from TTP in the first chapter, “The real purpose of the state is freedom” (TTP, XX, §12). A state of fear-driven citizens cannot be considered to have increased its own power; quite the contrary, this is a sign of weakness for the state.

According to Gatens and Lloyd, the notion of responsibility forces both state and multitude to look past, since, in the Spinozist system, bodies are defined as carriers of social imaginaries and individuals' bad actions cannot be reduced to personal will. In that respect, responsibility takes on the form of confrontation rather than accusation or punishment. But what the two thinkers mean by saying returning to the past is not only to think about past actions and face up to them but also to think about who we are now through this confrontation. In other words, taking responsibility is not a retrospective act that we do by learning what we have done in the past, but it is the responsibility of thinking about “who we are and what we will be” (Gatens & Lloyd, 1999, p. 72). Inspired by Hannah Arendt, they state that the notion of responsibility can always be a valid notion for people who live with others. Therefore, according to Arendt, only immigrants and stateless persons are exempt from responsibility (Gatens & Lloyd, 1999, p. 75).

As it has been mentioned many times, for Spinoza, people are considered to be the bearer of historical and cultural traces because of being a bodily entity determined to act in accordance with the law of nature. The traces mentioned are past affective modifications; the present body is something that has affected and been affected in various ways. Therefore, considering the notion of responsibility from a Spinozist position implies the actualization of memory and

imagination as well (Gatens & Lloyd, 1999, p. 81). The capacity to affect and be affected, as long as it is a physical being, means, *in a sense*<sup>12</sup>, an undetermined future that awaits it. Self is a collective process, as it is established with reference to others, not to itself. In that respect, the boundary between “inside”/ “outside”, culture/nature, self/other is erased through the idea of mind/body unity. My selfhood carries parts from the other's individuality, and *vica versa*. But here, individualization cannot be assimilated in collectivity or, likewise, collectivity cannot be reduced to individualization. For this reason, Spinoza's philosophy eliminates all dualisms; ontologically, politically and epistemologically. Individualization and sociality have a network in the form of *interdependence*. The reason for Gatens and Lloyd's finding the transindividual understanding of the self as useful for responsibility by referring to Balibar is related to this idea of interdependency. In this context, where the self is not understood as a substance, responsibility becomes a collective responsibility: “Subjectivity expands when we take on such responsibilities. We became something different through the expansion of possibilities involved in a sociability which necessarily involves the past” (Gatens & Lloyd, 1999, p. 82).

Gatens asserts that one of the issues that needs serious attention is the sexual difference as a sociopolitical and historical problem.<sup>13</sup> Gatens asks the following question as an example to deepen the issue: When it comes to femicide or violence against women, should it be the responsibility of the perpetrator or the government? According to Gatens, Spinoza helps us develop an embodied sense of responsibility in such an investigation. For Spinoza, if a democratic government is a government that increases the power and capacity of its citizens, the laws should be arranged to serve the same purpose as ideas affirmed by this state. Thus, the responsibility is not limited to the perpetrator that should be punished. In this way, it is easier to focus on “social and structural causes” that make such actions possible rather than punishing the perpetrator (Gatens, 1996, p. 118). These social and structural reasons are the form of fragile relationships between women and the political body, and its institutional assemblages<sup>14</sup>. For this relationship to be clarified, it is necessary to work on the genealogy of sexual and social imaginations. Understanding what we are and thinking about what we can be in the future requires such an ethical effort. In this way, it is possible to think about the

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<sup>12</sup> The undetermined future is used in a limited sense. As quoted in the first part, for Spinoza, waiting for people to turn into an entity that does not comply with their own laws of nature is the same as “waiting for a table to eat grass”. Spinozist notion of responsibility is, of course, explained by considering its naturalism.

<sup>13</sup> For Gatens, the issues of race and ethnicity are other significant problems that should be taken into account in the same context. In the last chapter of the *Collective Imaginings*, there is a detailed examination of these issues.

<sup>14</sup> The comments that Spinoza's reason for excluding women from political participation is under the influence of such imaginaries and objections to these comments will be examined in the last section of this chapter.

effects of the fragile link between being a woman and being a citizen on the historical, cultural, political, and social practices. Therefore, if we only focus our attention on the perpetrator, it is not possible to face masculine imaginaries about women, and these images continue to determine our future status politically and socially. The vital importance of collective imaginaries is this effect on how the future will be lived.

Gatens reminds the power of imagination again with reference to *Ethics*. For her, “equivalence between modes of knowing and modes of being” reveals that the dominant imaginaries cannot be eliminated simply. In this case, the presentation of criminals as a “aberrant individual” or “monster”, according to Gatens, is symptoms of ignorance about the civil body. (1996, p. 120-121). These people, who accept this, do not face up with sexual imaginaries embedded in the civil body, but often invest consciously or unconsciously in these imaginaries. The basic element that contributes to ignorance about the civil body is sad passions that develop after such acts of violence. Remembering that sad passions diminish the ability to act and think, the fact that the crowd acts with the determination of sad passions (hatred, fear, anger, etc.) in such actions leaves the responsibility of the state to the shoulders of the perpetrator (Gatens, 1996, p. 121).

As a result, the main purpose of both Gatens and Lloyd is to rethink sexed bodies with the idea of Spinoza's mind/body unity, against the strict rationalism that has often been encountered in the history of philosophy. For both, subjectivity is considered not only in terms of consciousness but in conjunction with the dynamism of embodiment. The ground of this dynamism is based on the increase and decrease of the powers of body - since it is always a social body. Thus, for both thinkers, the body is something that must be considered within the network of bodies, depending on the power relations. Women's bodies are experienced in this network with limited powers and affects. As a matter of fact, sexual difference includes a physical difference as well as a mental reflection (Lloyd, 1994, p. 166). For this reason, behaviorist models or social psychology cannot provide a useful method for dismantling these experiences. This approach is an attitude inevitably adopted by feminists who have made the mistake of making sex/ gender distinction, according to Gatens and Lloyd. With Spinoza's monist and immanent ontology, “sex is particular extensive 'organization' of the material powers and capacities of a body, whereas gender would amount to the affective powers and affects of such a body” (Gatens, 1996, p. 149).

### **2.3. From the Denaturalization and Recognition to the Renaturalization and Imperceptibility**

Another important name that uses the philosophy of Spinoza as a useful resource for feminist theory is Hasana Sharp. Sharp, in her work *Spinoza and The Politics of Renaturalization*, puts Spinoza's anti-humanist philosophy as an alternative model against subject-centered liberal humanism (Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Kant) and the intersubjectivity theory of the neo-Hegelian tradition, which has a substantial influence on feminist theory. In this respect, Sharp points out his “anti-anthropocentric” perspective and his objection to “human exceptionalism”, as the reasons for her focus on Spinoza (2011, p. 4). As explained in the first part of the thesis, Spinoza criticized all narratives that see humans as “a kingdom within a kingdom”. Starting from here, Sharp would like to develop the “politics of imperceptibility” proposed by Elizabeth Grosz as an alternative to a recognition/representation centered model for feminist and anti-racist politics, along with Spinoza's anti-humanist naturalism. The central claim of her review is that “philanthropic posthumanism”, which he calls a collective project, can be based on Spinozist naturalism (2011, p. 4).

Another point that Sharp draws attention is that the critical theory has gained enough momentum in terms of its effort to denaturalize all phenomena that seem as if they were natural. This tradition, roughly, is named as social constructivism, has contributed significantly to the literature by identifying how historically given norms about issues such as sex, gender, sexuality, race, class, ethnicity are arranged historically, culturally and symbolically. When it comes to contemporary feminist theory debates, the most famous name of this tradition is undoubtedly Judith Butler. As stated in the previous section of the thesis, Butler stated, with reference to Foucault, that the sex that seemed natural is constructed through performative repetitions and claimed that sex is constructed based on historical and discursive practices.

In the simplest terms, the general feature of denaturalization studies has been to decipher all oppressive contents of naturalization underlying behind the definition of the allegedly universal “subject”. Appreciating the contributions of these studies, Elizabeth Grosz expresses that she distinguishes herself from social constructivist theorists with the following words: “denaturalizing is important. But it is not my project. We have, by now, been denaturalized as much as we need to be. What I’m much interested in [is a] sort of renaturalizing that has been taken away, redynamizing a certain kind of nature” (Cited. Sharp, 2011, p. 174). Influenced by Elizabeth Grosz, Sharp sees fit to use the term “renaturalization” with Spinozist

perspective, against naturalist ideologies that social constructivists criticize a lot. In this respect, she argues that Spinoza's ontology, which sees all singular beings as part of nature, should be used for vitalist assemblages that can be re-envisioned with human and nonhuman beings. Thus, since the concept of Spinozist conatus takes into account mutual affective transformation capacity of all individual beings, politics revolves around all singularities that have the capacity to affect and be affected, not on free, voluntary, rational individuals. In other words, according to Sharp, Spinoza supports an ethical-political line, i.e., a politics of affect, that takes care of affects of human and nonhuman singulars against “subject” centered democracy of recognition/ representation politics. Sharp elaborates on the theoretical foundations of vitalist assemblages considered with such politics, by developing Grosz's understanding of “imperceptibility” and the concept of “impersonality” with regard to Spinozist thought. For this reason, it is necessary to mention Elizabeth Grosz's views on the politics of imperceptibility before proceeding to Sharp's analysis.

Elizabeth Grosz wrote her essay, “A Politics of Imperceptibility”, in response to Drucilla Cornell and Sara Murphy's proposal for “ethics of identification”, which they conceptualized for a multicultural and anti-racist politics of recognition. Accordingly, Cornell and Murphy state that their purpose is to cut the link between “authenticity” and demand for cultural and political recognition of minor identities (Cornell & Murphy, 2002, p. 420). Because demand for recognition based on the concept of “authenticity” means recognition of an identity that already exists, which is not open to alteration. In other words, as long as it is understood as recognition of a given identity, demand for recognition of minor identities means accepting European centrist cultural imperialism. Instead, they demand an ethical recognition that “recognizes everyone's equal dignity” and is open to alteration (Cornell & Murphy, 2002, p. 420). In this way, the other can obtain the right to be recognized as a subject in cultural and political terms, without being a carrier of a given identity or accepted stereotype qualities. According to Elizabeth Grosz, the debate of two thinkers is a project whose roots are based on Hegel's philosophy, under the influence of modern identity policies (Grosz, 2002, p. 465).

As it is known, with Hegel's famous master-slave dialectic, the theory of subjectivity has left monadic humanism behind and evolved into an intersubjective form (Hegel, 2018). Self-consciousness requires the presence of others, and in this dialectic, desire emerges as a desire to be recognized. The critical point here is the abandonment of the understandings that lasted until Kant, such as the idea that the subject was established with reference to its own mind. But for Hegel, the movement of individualization takes place in the ethical world (*Sittlichkeit*)

with and through other consciousnesses. Subjectification is the movement of discovering the self through the practice of sublating the other's otherness (*aufhebung*) and integrating it into the self. Thus, the act of sublation both displaces and protects the other — but in a new form. The subject sees its reflection in the other and returns to itself by internalizing other's otherness (Grosz, 2002, p. 465).

As can be seen, desire appears as a negation in the dialectical movement. In order for it to be possible to return to or identify with itself, there must be the other or the difference to be negated. Grosz rejects the Hegelian model of recognition because of the danger that other or difference is reduced to already existing identities. If the Hegelian recognition movement is taken as reference, demand for recognition of minor identities results in their inclusion in the macro-categories. There is only room for similarities and identifications in such macro-categories, according to Grosz. She describes this danger with following words: “Identity comes only as a result of a dual motion of internalization, or introjection of otherness, and the projection onto other of some fundamental similarity or identification with the subject” (2002, p. 465). In this framework, according to Grosz, those who are not understandable or unrecognizable have two options. They either fall within the limits of intelligibility or push the boundaries of intelligibility. Grosz finds both options dangerous because they are firmly attached to the production of subjectivity dominated by the identification regime.

Apart from Cornell and Murphy, Butler is another significant theorist who has determined her political rhetoric within the framework of Hegelian politics of recognition. Grosz positions Butler as the thinker of performative identities that invests in recognition of desire. By asking which subjects the category of “Women” points, Butler tries to expand boundaries of this category in such a way that unrecognized bodies, sexualities, and genders are recognized. As Hannah Stark put it, in Butler's work, gender is always in trouble with unrecognized sexual identities (2019, p. 98). According to Butler's opinion, the performer gains subjectivity depending on the presence of at least one audience and its approval. In this case, Butler adopts Hegelian intersubjectivity thesis and the negative power of desire to put the limits of intelligibility or recognition as “human”. Moreover, Butler reads Spinoza's concepts of conatus and desire within the framework of Hegel's conceptualization of desire and recognition. In response to Rosi Braidotti, who is feminist of affirmation ethics and criticizes her on the concept of negative desire, she tells that “Spinoza's conatus is at the center of her work” (Cited. Sharp, 2011, p. 119).

According to Rosi Braidotti, when Butler emphasizes desire as negation, desire automatically occurs as the psychic guarantor of loss, mourning, melancholy. Braidotti finds it problematic to think the subjectivity together with such negativity. She proposes to think desire as a productive concept by following Spinoza and Deleuze: “What if the 'stabilizer' of the psychic milieu is not a discourse of melancholy based on debt and loss, but an over-flowing desire itself? I think this Spinozist approach has more to say on this subject” (Braidotti, 2019, p. 121). According to Sharp, even though Butler argues that she follows Spinoza in her later works, her mistake is that she missed the naturalism and anti-humanism of Spinoza. Although individualization requires a relational process for both, Hegel is a philosopher of recognition/representation, while Spinoza is a philosopher of renaturalization/composition (Sharp, 2011, p. 121). Moreover, as Deleuze often expresses, desire implies negation for Hegel and affirmation for Spinoza (Deleuze, 2005, p. 19).

Instead of Hegelian subjectivity, which is focused on recognition, intelligibility or acceptance, Elizabeth Grosz proposes to think the subject together with forces, energies and actions according to being physically active and passive, inspired by Deleuze and Nietzsche (2002, p. 468). In this way, by declaring total rejection of intelligibility, she announces her politics of imperceptibility as the herald of new forces, actions, in short, any forms of "becoming" that indicate what we do, not what we are. Undoubtedly, it is a futile effort to search for any subject behind actions and forces in such a project. Grosz conveys Nietzsche's ideas, which undermine the position of the modern subject, in these words: “It is belief in the living and thinking as the only effective force –in will, in intention- it is belief that every event is a deed, that every deed presupposes a doer, it is belief in the ‘subject’. Is this belief in the concept of subject and attribute not a great stupidity?” (Cited. Grosz, 2002, p. 467). From that perspective, in the Nietzschean sense, there is no difference between subject and other; that is, there is no subject of action (Grosz, 2005, p. 86). However, the idea that actions are done according to a purpose is also an illusion. The hierarchical reciprocity between subject and other is, in that case, displaced by active forces that always disturb regimes of intelligibility. In this project, which is no longer subject-centered, the powers and energies of human and non-human, organic and inorganic beings should be considered within "impersonal" networks. Within these networks, individualization occurs without individuals; the singularity is conceptualized without identity (Grosz, 2002, p. 469).

In her book, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power*, Grosz states that she sees the politics of imperceptibility as a useful project for the future of sexual difference with a feminist

perspective. It was previously stated that Irigaray's polymorphic and unstable female-morphology has to be understood as virtual, as it has never been realized and has not found a place-time. Accordingly, in Western culture, the subject implicitly coincided with the masculinized representation of the phallogocentric economy. In that respect, being included in the definition of "human", which has been put forward by many feminists that it is not "neutral", is not the visibility of sexual difference; on the contrary, it causes the difference to be erased. Recognition as "human" always means being recognized as a man when it comes to women (Grosz, 2005, p. 187). For this reason, it is a futile effort to think of intellectual resources that allow the culture of sexual difference with concepts that already exist. Irigaray's call for a new morphology was aimed at investment in developing modes of thought necessary for sexual difference not to become the same or immobilized. According to Grosz, the future imagination of feminist politics should not be focused on recognition since recognition-oriented politics cause the erasure of individuals or groups that deviate from networks of intelligibility by taking pre-accepted values as criteria (p. 168). This perspective provides a nostalgic loyalty to past identities or similarities, rather than understanding the complexity of difference, the grammar of polymorphism. For this reason, the imperceptibility policy embodies the space and time needed by sexual difference, new ways of thinking, the possibility of creating new epistemologies and new ontologies. Grosz expresses this situation as follows:

Instead of a politics of recognition, in which subjugated groups and minorities strive for a validated and affirmed place in public life, feminist politics should, I believe, now consider the affirmation of a politics of *imperceptibility*, leaving its traces and effects everywhere but never being able to be identified with a person, group, or organization. It is not a politics of visibility, of recognition and of self-validation, but a process of self-marking that constitutes oneself in the very model of that which oppresses and opposes the subject. The imperceptible is that which the inhuman musters, that which the human can sometimes liberate from its own orbit but not control or name as its own: it is that which is unleashed by the force of events, by unexpected impacts, surprising encounters (2005, p. 194).

By following Grosz, Hasana Sharp considers thinking about the networks of the imperceptible and impersonal relationship as a very effective method of putting aside humanism. But Sharp thinks this possibility not with Nietzsche like Grosz, but with Spinoza. She brings a new breath to Grosz's suggestion, with Spinoza's taxonomy of affects. Sharp's overall aim is to follow negative reflections of politics of recognition in everyday life and to discuss possibilities of transforming these reflections, which completely effect political and cultural life, with Spinoza. In this way, it may be possible to find a solution to the affective motivation

that directs the excluded other to the desire to be recognized. For Sharp, it is easier to consider Grosz's proposal together with Spinoza rather than Nietzsche. She says that compared to Nietzsche, Spinoza is less suspicious of collective power, which is more beneficial for feminism (2011, p. 170). After elaborating on Grosz's ideas, Sharp examines the politics of imperceptibility, centering on Spinoza's critique of anthropocentrism.

First of all, according to Sharp, there is an affect of self-hatred in the disadvantageous individuals/groups that causes psychic and physical harm along with not being accepted as "human". The hatred of oppressed or excluded groups turns not only towards recognizers but also towards themselves (p. 155). For this reason, although being recognized as a person or group is at the center of postcolonial and feminist theories, the acquisition of self-esteem or self-love is one of the main discussion topics of these areas. With reference to Malcolm X and Franz Fanon, she states that the struggles for recognition mean not only getting rid of the master but also of the internalized master's gaze, that is, the hatred s/he reflects on him/her (p. 157). As far as women are concerned, psychic and physical effects such as anorexia, bulimia, aesthetic surgery, finding themselves unsuccessful or worthless are variations of self-hatred. The hates of women often turn both toward patriarchy and themselves.

Sharp examines the causes of self-hatred with the thought of Spinoza's definition of imitation of affects. In *Ethics* the famous proposition on how we imitate an affect is as follows: "If we imagine a thing like us, toward which we have had no affect, to be affected with some affect, we are thereby affected with a like affect" (EIIIP27). Hence, hatred arises in us against what grieves a being that looks like us. But more importantly, we imitate the hatred of people that we think they hate us in a way that we hate ourselves. In other words, we imitate the hate of people who hate us by directing them to ourselves. Hate, as described in the first section, is a passion that reduces our strength and capacity. For this reason, it does not mean that we are active, but that we are passive. For Spinoza, man is bound by the laws of nature and other singular beings determined by these laws of nature. It should also be remembered that there is no contrast between this imperative and freedom. That's why we have the power to transform sad passions. According to Sharp, if human beings are necessarily subjected to passions, and as one of the sad passions, hatred causes a decrease in power, then, the question should be how hatred will be cured. She tells us: "The question for the politics of renaturalization becomes: how do we address hatred among us? In particular, how do we exorcise the self-hatred that follows from imitating the affects of the hateful other?" (p. 171). For this reason, according to Sharp, the struggle of excluded or oppressed people or groups with regard to the

politics of recognition/representation cannot provide a solution for the elimination the self-hatred. For example, recognition focus on “everyone's equal dignity”, as Cornell and Murphy emphasize. In this case, the person wants to be recognized that s/he is not worthless in terms of moral, social, cultural, sexual, etc. The conclusion from here is that the pre-determiner of our affections is another person/authority, not ourselves. In other words, we try to gain self-esteem through the recognizer that causes our self-hatred.

Sharp thinks that Spinoza's definition of self-esteem (*acquiescentia*) can respond to this impasse. This affect, also called self-satisfaction, means concentration of ‘man’ on himself and his power of action, and this feeling is one of the variations of joy (EIVP52 and IIP55S). As a sensation that is under the determination of the reason, its cause is within us perfectly, not outside. For Spinoza, the acquisition of self-esteem does not need a world called the “second nature” roughly because the human being is not “a kingdom within a kingdom” and is under the determination of the law of nature. In other words, for Spinoza, since the human being is part of nature - like all other individual beings - the individual cannot abandon the law of nature or “his/her naturalness” in order to feel self-esteem. According to Sharp, although the politics of recognition seems to be trying to eliminate the destructive effects of hate, it is the producer of this hate most of the time. She says, “To put my claim in the strongest possible terms, if Spinoza is right, the politics of recognition is a self-hatred endeavor. To insist that we are other than we are, and to judge ourselves and others by spiritual standard that can nowhere be met, invites mockery and contempt” (p. 173).

In the Hegelian intersubjective individualization, the human/nature distinction continues because being a “person” within the “human” category always amount to transcend the nature (Sharp, 2011, p. 163). For example, being a human for Hegel means gaining “personality” by acting voluntarily in the ethical world. When a person is thrown out of a community, ‘he’ loses his “personality” morally and legally and loses his singularity. Afterward, he becomes a “thing”; in other words, there is no difference between an animal and an individual who has turned into “thing”. For this reason, according to Hegel's claim, freedom is only possible within the boundaries of the ethical world. Thus, according to Hegel's humanism, the human is conceptualized as an exceptional and distinct being, whose agency is most valuable from the rest of nature. According to Spinoza, who offers an utterly opposite framework, sad passions arise from the fact that one sees himself/herself as an exception and superior to nature. As stated by Sharp, in the eye of Spinoza, in such a situation, understanding ourselves as opposed to nature and hating ourselves means the same thing (p. 174).

For all these reasons, Sharp states that it is necessary to replace famous motto "the personal is political" with "the impersonal is political" in contrast to Butler's emphasizing that her all work is about the "human question" (p. 13). In this regard, she thinks that the therapy of hatred and similar sad passions towards ourselves is possible only by knowing ourselves and all the other entities, with the affect of joy (p. 175). Commonality, for Spinoza, means assemble within joy, not hate. Significantly, it has been stated in *Ethics* that wisdom, virtue, power or reason cannot be thought together with sad passions such as hate, jealousy, anger, etc. As mentioned earlier, these listed affects have nothing to do with free will. According to Spinoza, if we conceive ourselves as part of nature, we can learn "to hate no one, to disesteem no one, to mock no one, to be angry at no one, to envy no one" (EIIIP49S). Spinoza's naturalism is, therefore, a highly productive starting point for a new ontology and politics of renaturalization, given Grosz's suggestion of the politics of imperceptibility. What Hasana Sharp calls "philanthropic posthumanism" is based on Spinoza's breaking from the usual context of the humanist tradition in this way. Thus, it is possible for people to turn sad passions, especially hate, with joy and/or love, and to overcome the exceptionalism of the humanist tradition. Moreover, this makes it easier to get rid of the masculinist normative ideals of the humanist tradition. As explained in the previous section, there is an absolute alliance between humanism and masculinity. In this sense, the sexual difference has always been captured in the humanist tradition. Sharp's reading of Spinoza opens a new door that will disrupt this "capture". The encounters between humans and nonhumans, between humans and other people, between organic and inorganic organisms, begin to take place in the horizontal plane, not vertical. This is why Sharp describes Spinoza not as a recognition philosopher, but rather as a renaturalization/composition philosopher. For Sharp, Spinoza literally lays out the possibilities of a new ontology required for "symbiosis" (p. 192).

According to Sharp, when Spinoza says that the best useful thing for man is again man, unlike Hobbes, this does not mean that people are abusing each other or benefiting from each other in an instrumental sense (*Utility*). (p. 102). In this sense, it means that the capacity to affect and be affected must be understood in a *transindividual* relationality. In other words, the basis of my individualization depends on the increase of my power to affect and be affected. Therefore, all human/non-human singularities that will affect me are essential for me to flourish, to affect, to know appropriately, etc. This strategy, also known as relational ontology, abandons the monadic or atomic individual model. Thus, benefit implies the possibility of establishing harmonious relations in such an ontology through common notions.

This benefit is sometimes achieved through interaction with a person, sometimes with a flower, sometimes with good music, sometimes with a dog, etc. The important thing is to increase my power, maintaining my characteristic proportion of motion and rest. Sharp thinks that the concept of “human” in the context of benefit and the idea of “human nature”, which Spinoza frequently expresses, is, therefore, a rhetorical use (p. 87). Since the essence of every single being is determined by conatus, the human cannot have any superiority. So the understanding of a renaturalized “person” cancels all anthropocentric hierarchies, thereby heading towards positioning in posthumanist thought.

The project of imperceptibility of Grosz and Sharp can be interpreted as difficult to implement in everyday life for feminist and anti-racist policies today. According to Sharp, however, the aim of both Spinoza and Grosz is to bring a new breath to intellectually familiar ways of thinking (Sharp, 2011, p. 179). They both discussed power, energy, might, and desire with reference to bodily frequencies. For Spinoza, if the "equivalence between modes of knowing and modes of being", which is discussed in the previous section, is remembered, the new form brought by the two thinkers into “modes of knowing” can transform the socio-symbolic, cultural and political influences that affect our “becoming” forms. Sharp's conceptualization of renaturalization, inspired by Spinoza and Grosz, provides a theoretical framework for a new ontology, a new metaphysics, which will allow leaving behind the ideals of equality and to think from another axis for the future of sexual difference feminism.

This project, as Irigaray puts it, can enable us to establish the new vitalist assemblies required for “production of a new age of thought, art, poetry, and language: a creation of a new poetics” (Irigaray, 1993, p. 5). In this respect, Sharp's project also avoids viewing ideas as transcendent or humane, taking into account their power and dynamism, like Grosz and Spinoza. Ideas are as vibrant, dynamic, variable and transformative as bodies, because, in the eyes of Spinoza, the action of the mind means the action of the body. For this reason, Sharp emphasizes the importance of renaturalizing ideas by saying, “the 'conditions' of freedom and servitude are as ideal as they are corporeal” (p. 69).

#### **2.4. Spinoza’s God as an “Envelope”**

It was announced earlier in the study that Irigaray declared the question of sexual difference as the most important question of the age. Irigaray's work aims to clarify that the culture of sexual difference has not been experienced in any period of history and to reveal the morphology of the female imaginary with mimetic repetitions for the future of the culture of

sexual difference. In this way, by bringing out the role of “suppressed female” in Western culture, she brings the grammar of the sexual difference to the philosophical scene against the monolithic syntax of the Same. In her work, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, she thinks about how an ethical relationship between two sexes is possible. According to her, the relationship between two sexes remained under the determination of the mentioned phallic symbolic, and this caused females to make sense of their desires and sexualities through negative poles by reducing the sexual difference to the logic of the Same or One. Since woman is marked as lack and passivity in patriarchal symbolic order compared to man, she cannot find her own time and place in her relationship with the world. She is a place but not for herself, but another.

Irigaray has elaborated that mythological and theological narratives in philosophical texts repeat traditional patterns of the symbolic system. According to her, God, who represents the father, creates space first and then time (1993, p. 6). Recalling Aristotle's distinction between matter and form, she reminds that matter and space are identified with women, form and time with men. The symbolization of the woman in this way causes her detachment from the divine. The female body is symbolized and experienced as a place for both birth and erotic desire of the man. Thus, in the relationship established with man, the woman cannot have a mediation to return to herself (p. 9). This makes the movement of desire one-way. A male subject returns from this relationship to himself, by affirming himself. Starting from here, Irigaray states that a woman is always a place for the other, not for herself, that she experiences herself in this way. A woman is someone else's place as a “thing” and as an “envelope”<sup>15</sup>. Besides, the relationship of love between man and woman is reduced to a purpose, that is, to the child. According to Irigaray, it is the separation between the soul and the body that causes the woman not to have a place for herself, that is, the erasure of the sexual difference (Direk, 2018, p. 163). All narratives that maintain the distinction between the space and time, matter and form stated above have invested in the suppression of female in the entire Western culture. Therefore, for the construction of another future, the opposition between matter and form, space and time, sensory and transcendental must be reconsidered.

According to Irigaray, for an ethical relationship, there is a need for an “interval” that will allow both sexes to return to themselves (1993, p. 12). Interval gives the place that the female

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<sup>15</sup> The concepts of spatiality and envelope have a different context of a discussion around Plato's notion of “Chora”. In *Timaeus*, which is Plato's work to explain the question of genesis, “Chora” is depicted with female qualities as the condition of existence. But, as Derrida argue, although it is depicted with these qualities, it does not have any name or identity. In this discussion, envelope and spatiality are more conceptualized as ambiguity. For this discussion, see. (Grosz, 1995).

does not own back. The female will then have a chance to become an envelope for herself. As stated in the introduction, the construction of such new ethics requires a complete reassessment of the relationship between “subject and discourse, subject and world, subject and cosmos, microcosm and macrocosm” (p. 6). The main purpose of this review is to redefine the world, to produce new values, and to constitute an eros ethic that is open to sexual difference in the encounter of the two sexes. Irigaray states that such a project should be taken seriously and states that it is necessary to make a radical change in the way we perceive and interpret desire, time and space (p. 7).

Irigaray seeks for traces of the question of sexual difference, as described above, in the section of “The Envelope” written on Spinoza, by quoting Spinoza's definition of God. According to Irigaray, Spinoza's God is an “envelope” as an infinite-eternal God with a place of its own (p. 83). It essentially has its own envelope, as its essence requires its existence or it cannot be thought that it does not exist. But more importantly, as mentioned above, because the woman is an envelope for the man, not for herself, the man is in a closer relationship with God. For this reason, the existence of the man depends on the presence of the woman. The woman loses the opportunity to be her own cause by giving her own extension, that is, her own place to the man. Therefore, the existence of the woman is more incidental than the man. Man, on the other hand, has the opportunity to reach the stage of necessity in a Spinozist sense. This means that he is closer to freedom than woman. Again, for Spinoza, there is not a contrast between freedom and necessity, but symmetry. A woman as space is the “apriori condition” of the temporal and spatial existence of the man (p. 85). In short, the female body is taken into possession as the reason for the presence of the male. Irigaray asks how sexual difference is possible in such metaphysics.

In the eye of Irigaray, the “interval” required for an ethical relationship to be established between the two sexes cannot be possible in Spinoza's metaphysics. For the interval to be possible, there must be “two bodies and two thoughts”, and there must be a relationship between these two (p. 86). However, in Spinoza's metaphysics, there is no causality between thought and body, that is, they are explained not by each other, but by their own simple nature. The interval that Irigaray finds necessary, in Spinoza's parallelism, is in the wrong place, that is, between thought and body. For this reason, Irigaray thinks that Spinoza's monism causes a distinction between thought and body, which is frequently seen in the history of philosophy. The woman is again identified with the body, and the man is identified with the discourse and thought (p. 87). Therefore, the relationship between the sexes is far

from being what Irigaray understands from an ethical relationship. The traditional distinction between spirituality and corporeality continues to exist. She objects to Spinoza's distinction between thought and body as follows: "The two sexes would penetrate each other by means of theft or a rape, a more or less mechanical encounter whose goal would be to produce a child. To produce a body? Or just body? As long as our thinking is unable to limit the body, or vice versa, no sex act is possible. Nor any thought, any imaginary or symbolic of the flesh" (p. 87).

Irigaray then draws attention to the relationship between God of Spinoza and man. Irigaray focuses on the fact that those who produce these concepts are also man, while God is grasped through itself and is identified without the need for any other concept because it has self-determination. The definition of God can be applied neither to any other substance nor to another mode, because, for Spinoza, the substance is unique. But the maker or inventor of the concepts required for its definition is paradoxically male, not itself. Since the female cannot find her own place in discourse and thought, definitions cannot come from women. Therefore, the woman is not able to produce concepts about her own spirituality. Irigaray describes the cycle between God and man as follows: "But the relation of man to God, of God to man, often seems circular: a man defines God who in turn determines man" (p. 88). She then focuses on Spinoza's distinction between concept and perception. In his definition in *Ethics*, Spinoza, after naming the idea as a "mental concept", he explains why he prefers the concept rather than perception as follows: "I say concept rather than perception because the word perception indicates that the mind is acted on by the object. But concept seems to express an action of the mind" (EIID3Ex). According to Irigaray, the female cannot grasp an idea actively, but she perceives an idea passively, since she is represented as devoid of concept as a result of her detachment from discourse and thought. As explained at the beginning of this chapter, the definition of the female as passive is a view that also dominates the tradition of psychoanalysis. Similarly, within the rationality of Spinoza, the woman is represented passively, and her relationship with the mind is at the level of perception (p. 92).

The question Irigaray asks before finishing her investigation is this: If the woman is passive and the man is active, is a commonality between the two possible? She answers this question by saying that if both sexes have both perception and active understanding, i.e., concept, a commonality between the two sexes can be possible (p. 93). Both sexes must have the capacity to be both active and passive. Thus, both sexes are able to become an "envelope" for themselves, each can become "in self, for self, and for the other" (p. 93). However, there is a need for an interval, a mediator, as mentioned earlier. Irigaray asks if this interval or mediator

can be God, for Spinoza. According to her, God is the necessary mediator to ensure an ethical relationship between two sexes (p. 93). Thus, the female, as an "envelope" for herself, can get rid of being incidental and have the opportunity to exist by necessity, which corresponds to her possibility of freedom. God's conceptualization as a mediator can eliminate the distance between spirituality and female corporeality. Thus, it is easier to symbolize the sensible and the transcendent in the same plane to establish a "feminine divine". In other words, through the spirituality that Irigaray calls "sensible transcendental", a door is opened to an embodied divinity. That is, embodiment and divinity can be considered together. Thinking of a "divine" that expands towards the sensible, in conjunction with "sensible transcendental", interrupts the subject's customary transcendence or authoritarian rationality. As the transcendence is considered together with material contents, "feminine divine" helps us to change our current space-time perception, the way we relate to the world, our current material conditions, as stated in the introduction of this article. For this reason, Irigaray thinks that any contemplation on sexual difference must necessarily include God (p. 93).

According to Sarah Donovan, Irigaray fails to notice the close relationship between her own work and the Spinoza's metaphysics, since she focuses on only one part of Spinoza's book. Taking into account the quotations Irigaray cites to criticize, it can be said that she focuses only on the first part of the *Ethics*. In her article, "Re-reading Irigaray's Spinoza", Donovan tries to prove how two thinkers' projects are similar. First of all, according to Donovan, both Spinoza and Irigaray try to overcome the dualist thinking model, change the status of the body in the history of philosophy and alter the image of God that is in the Judeo-Christian tradition (2009, p. 166). Also, Donovan thinks there are similarities between Irigaray's imaginary/symbolic distinction and Spinoza's imagination/reason distinction (p. 174). Both thinkers considered the continuity between these couples. The connection of the Irigaray's symbolic to the imaginary and the Spinoza's mind to the imagination has not been broken. In the previous section, Moira Gatens' combination of Spinoza's imagination theory with Irigaray's imaginary theory can be shown as an example of this partnership. Gatens uses the method of Spinoza and Irigaray to decipher the masculine bias of the modern political body.

Irigaray criticized Spinoza's cancellation of the causality between mind and body for separating the mind from the body. As explained in the previous chapters of this study, although Spinoza cancels the causality between mind and body, he builds the theory of knowledge, ontology, and theory of politics through the unity of these two concepts. Rational acquisition of knowledge or concept is, in any case, affective knowledge of the body. Spinoza

functionalizes the union of the two, by rejecting causality between mind and body. Moreover, it is not possible to divide modes into mind and body as God cannot be divided in any way, in terms of both extended and thinking substance (Donovan, 2009, p. 172). Therefore, the metaphysics of Spinoza differs from the Cartesian metaphysics in these respects. The real addressee of Irigaray's criticisms on the philosophy of Spinoza seems to be Cartesianism or predominantly Christian doctrine. According to Donovan, both Spinoza and Irigaray support the idea of an extended God, and, in this respect, they challenge Cartesian metaphysics and subsequently, the image of Christian God (p. 173).

In fact, Irigaray's work on "sensible transcendental" has some similarities with Spinoza's immanent God. According to Braidotti, Irigaray's metaphysical project "aims at materializing the a priori conditions necessary to make changes in both our symbolic and material conditions" (2019, p. 130). In other words, with the "sensible transcendental" that will enable the "feminine divine", the woman becomes the a priori condition of her own existence, not the existence of the man. The metaphysics that Irigaray offers to change our perception of space-time, thus includes both transcendence and immanence. As Braidotti puts it, "there is no bodily materialism without transcendence, and no female embodied subject without incorporeality" (p. 130). From this point of view, Spinoza's naturalist attitude about God, the idea of the immanent God, or the understanding of God as Nature seems to match Irigaray's metaphysical framework. The image of God for both thinkers challenges the image of the transcendent God of Christianity. Heidi Morrison Ravven, for example, interprets Spinoza as a figure opposed to Christian tradition. According to her, Spinoza goes beyond the boundaries of the Medieval Christian tradition by combining Medieval Judeo-Islamic naturalism with Aristotelian-Stoic determinism (Ravven, 2009, p. 130). Ravven says that like Spinoza, Judeo-Islamic theologies have been suppressed by dogmatic theology of Christianity for a long time, precisely because of their naturalist attitudes. In the philosophy of Spinoza, there is a naturalist ethic and a naturalist theologico-politics since singular beings and God do not have free will. According to Ravven, therefore, in Spinoza's system, the selfhood finds an opportunity to be conceived through a neuroscientific examination of emotions (p. 137).

If Irigaray and Spinoza are in common in some ways, as Donovan claims, how can Irigaray's question about the relationship between the two sexes be addressed? Does Spinoza's metaphysics, as Irigaray says, reduce the love affair between two sexes to the product, i.e., the child? How can sexuality and desire be considered in the philosophy of Spinoza? As it is known, Spinoza does not speak much about sexuality, love or sexual desire. In the section

where he examines affects in *Ethics*, it is possible to find a few suggestions on love, beauty, lust, and the political effects of the woman-man relationship in political philosophy. In his work titled “Spinoza and Sexuality”, Alexandre Matheron discusses sexuality in Spinoza based on the relationship between lust, desire and love.

Spinoza defines lust in *Ethics* as “a desire and love for sexual intercourse” (EIIIDef.Aff.48). As claimed by Matheron, sexuality in the eyes of Spinoza means a joy that causes an increase in power in human, through lust for someone. Moreover, since there is no reference to any sex in the definition, according to Matheron, although Spinoza does not explicitly state it, there is the possibility of revoking the normative standards of sexuality based on this definition. Matheron describes this situation that needs serious attention as follows: “If the starting point is so undetermined, and if any affection whatever can be derived from object to object according to chance encounters then we glimpse the infinite diversity of sexual behaviors conceivable and therefore included in the order of nature” (2009, p. 94). In terms of the body's desire to unite with another body, lust is a joyful passion that is compatible with the principle of conatus to the extent that it increases the person's capacity to act and think. In the words of Matheron, this passion is cumulative to the extent that it supports our individual essence, namely our conatus, and can turn into a permanent joy (p. 91). But when lust becomes immoderate, it turns into obsession and carries the danger of turning into a sad passion rather than joy. Lust is not a passion that we find its cause in ourselves, as in an active affect. When it is felt as an immoderate desire, it reduces the power of thinking of the mind, because immoderate passions stuck on a single object (EIVP44S). Therefore, the probability of the love affair between the two sexes to turn into a destructive relationship due to jealousy, ambition, anger, etc. passions is the same as the possibility of increasing power in humans. According to Spinoza, while sexual desire reduces individual power due to its immoderate or obsessive aspect, it also causes competition, conflict and dissonance among men.<sup>16</sup> Matheron summarizes this situation in one sentence: “The sexual drama, essentially, is played out between males” (2009, p. 97).

How can ethics of eros be considered if love causes sad passions at the same rate as joyful passions? For Spinoza, the problem is the notion of passion that lies in the heart of love. So what does love mean as an active affect? According to Spinoza, as long as the parties of the relationship mutually increase each other's power, love is an active affect in any case. In this

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<sup>16</sup> According to Matheron, the reason for Spinoza to write sexual relationships, desires or love from the point of view of men is that women are seen as historically, socially and culturally worthless. See (Matheron, 2009, p. 97). The implications of this situation in Spinoza's political philosophy will be discussed in the next section.

case, the person is determined not only with his/her libidinal impulses but with an active joy, aware that his/her nature is compatible with the other. Matheron warns us not to fall into the illusion that Spinoza's proposal is ordinary:

Nothing is more banal or finally more repressive, it will be said, than to declare that the sexual life is good on the condition that it is regulated by reason: who has not proclaimed this and with well-known practical consequences? Spinoza in no way constitutes this tradition. According to him, free men and women set themselves the fundamental goal of knowledge and the diffusion of truth. To this double end, they search at the same time for what ensures the parallel development of their physical and mental capacities and what supports harmony (Matheron, 2009, p. 103).

David West places Spinoza beyond two deep-rooted traditions of sexuality: idealism and hedonism. In his article, "Reason, Sexuality, and the Self in Spinoza", he states that the idealist tradition has a history starting with Plato and continuing with Christianity and preserving its influence until today, and hedonist tradition involves Epicure, Lucretius, Bacon, Hobbes, Bentham (West, 2009, p. 108). The overall aim of the idealist tradition is to suppress bodily pleasures as much as possible for the immortality of the soul and to purify from everything bestowed by senses. West describes this theory as "ascetic idealism" by referring to Nietzsche (p. 108). The hedonist tradition entirely contradicts this idea. Bodily pleasures should not be viewed as "forbidden" or "sin", but effort should be encouraged for its acquisition. Contrary to the idealist tradition, reason is regarded as an apparatus necessary for the satisfaction of pleasure. Even though Spinoza seems to be closer to the hedonist tradition, he gives an essential warning to this tradition about the emergence of pleasure as passion. If our pleasures are at passionate level, we should not suppress them but we should understand them. If reason has any domination over passions, as said in the first part, we should not suppress them, we need to understand them. As long as sexuality causes active joy, it can be considered as an increase in both mental and physical capacity. Besides, as explained in the first section, Spinoza rejected all teleological interpretations of God or Nature. According to West, the main purpose of sexual intercourse, therefore, cannot be child-oriented since there is no telos in Spinoza's system. Given sexual performance in that respect, West states that it may lead us to abandon reproduction oriented schemes (p. 118). Bearing that in mind, West agrees with Matheron that it is possible to overcome the dominant normativity of sexuality in Spinoza's philosophy. Owing to the anti-teleological perspective, the place of sexuality in the heteronormative system expands to open up to different bricolages of erotic desire.

As a result, Irigaray's criticism of Spinoza can be summarized as follows: First, the image of God prevents the woman from having her own "envelope". Second, Spinoza adheres to traditional dualism by removing the causality between thought and body. From such perspective, love can be perceived as a reproductive strategy. Third, Spinoza's metaphysics does not allow the emergence of "feminine divine" by cutting the link between God and woman. For this, it is necessary to construct a "sensible transcendental" metaphysics instead of a transcendental image of God. If the interpretations of Donovan, Ravven, Matheron and West mentioned in this section are taken into consideration, it is possible to consider Irigaray and Spinoza through some similarities, as Donovan stated. In general, Irigaray's investigation about the ethics of eros seems to be compatible with Spinoza's idea of "love that mutually liberates minds". However, it should be reminded that the focus of Irigaray should be considered as a metaphysical discussion in this reading. For this reason, this section aimed to compare Irigaray to Spinoza by staying in the metaphysical context of the possibility of an ethical relationship between sexes.

On the other hand, the questions about historical and political conditions that determine the love affair certainly directs our gaze from metaphysics to a political debate. Spinoza's presentation of lust as one of the reasons for women's exclusion from politics, in this context, would have caused a heated discussion that undoubtedly pits Irigaray against Spinoza. Indeed, contemporary feminist philosophers have challenged Spinozist thought because of his arguments about women in politics even though Irigaray does not do so. As it will be discussed in the next chapter, some evaluated this situation as an inconsistency between Spinoza's politics and metaphysics, while some argued the opposite. Although Gatens appreciates the work carried out on love affair in Spinoza's system, she invites us to study the patriarchal system in which women's power and capacity are limited (Gatens, 1996, p. 133). Undoubtedly, the sociopolitical context in which women live affects the love affair that occurs as the "mental freedom" of the two sexes. For this reason, how Spinoza's democracy responds to sexual difference should be examined carefully. Chapter 3 will examine Spinoza's ideas about women in a political context.

### CHAPTER 3: IN SPITE OF SPINOZA: SEXUAL DIFFERENCE IN DEMOCRACY

The outline of Spinoza's political philosophy has already been sketched in the first part. As stated, the most appropriate form of government for Spinoza was democracy, and the founding motto of democracy was that multitude had a direct say in government. In order to maintain the strength of a democratic government and to establish its safety, it was also necessary to build harmony and peace among its citizens. Concordantly, increasing the power and capacity of each citizen as possible was one of the primary responsibilities of a democratic government. In this context, one issue that the Spinozist feminist thinkers discuss frequently is that Spinoza does not include women in this multitude and does not describe them as citizens. According to Spinoza, women are not *sui juris* of democracy; that is, they do not belong to the group that have the adequacy of their own right. Since they are “under the power of their husbands” (TP XI, §3), they lack the competence to pursue their own good, which is a right that a rational individual should have. This is one reason why Spinoza excludes women and employees, children, foreigners, who are at the service of someone else from political participation. They depend on someone else's power, not their own. Therefore, their opinions on a subject reflect the opinions of the people they depend on, not theirs. For this reason, participation in government may cause social injustices, according to Spinoza. One can say that the principal criteria to be an active participant in government depend on the distinction between being dependent/independent for Spinoza. What is unusual here is that Spinoza, again, has to explain the reason for the exclusion of women compared to other groups excluded from citizenship. Indeed, in the famous passage of Chapter 11 in *Political Treatise*, which is an incomplete book, he explained the reasons why women could not participate in the government:

But perhaps someone will ask whether women are under the power of their husbands by nature or by custom [*instituto*]? If this has happened only by custom, then no reason compels us to exclude women from rule. But if we consult experience, we'll see that this occurs only because of their weakness. Wherever we find men and women [living together], they have never ruled together. What we see is that there the men rule and the women are ruled, and that in this way both sexes live in harmony. On the other hand, the Amazons, who according the tradition once ruled, did not allow men to remain on their soil, but raised only the females, and killed the males they bore. If women were by nature equal to men, both in strength of character and in native intelligence –in which the greatest human power, and consequently right, consists– surely among so many and such diverse nations we would find some where each sex ruled equally, and others where men were ruled by women, and so educated that they could do less with

their native intelligence. But since this has not happened anywhere, we can say without reservation that women do not, *by nature*, have a right equal to men's, but that they necessarily submit to men. So it cannot happen that each sex rule equally, much less that men are ruled by women. (TP XI, §4, emphasizes is added).

As can be understood from the quote, Spinoza unexceptedly accepts the difference in nature between women and men as a vital capacity difference and interprets this difference as an barrier against women's being accepted as citizens. Considering the speculative prejudices of the 17th century political philosophy about women, this can be expected. It can even be said that Spinoza thinks so because of the bias of his period against women. Because when the general atmosphere of the 17th century thought background is taken into consideration, the image of the woman whose access to the public area is blocked is a very common phenomenon that goes back to Ancient Greece. However, the ending of *Political Treatise*, to say at the least, disrupts all harmony considering Spinoza's metaphysics, epistemology, ontology, and ethics, which allow hierarchy neither between sexes nor among the species of existence by defining each singular being as an expression of God's power of its kind. It is an unexpected that a philosopher who invites such multitude to think through commonality suddenly categorizes women's nature as categorically weak or inadequate. The problem is not that Spinoza refers to the context in which women are involved, but his insistence that this context should not change *forever*. While democracy is heralded as a regime in which multitude acts as a whole, women who make up half of the community are banned from increasing their power and freedom. Moreover, not only democracy but also monarchic and aristocratic regimes should make as many citizens as possible an actor of the political body. Therefore, Spinoza's approach towards women are in contrast not only with his comprehensiveness in *Ethics*, but also with his comprehensiveness in his political philosophy. For all these reasons, Hasana Sharp and Margaret Gullan-Wuhr call the last page of the *Political Treatise* "the black page" (Gullan-Whur, 2002; Sharp, 2012).

Another reason why Spinoza excludes women from the political sphere is the passion of men, that is lust for women. As described in the previous chapter with reference to Matheron, Spinoza considers lust as dangerous, because it can cause sad passions. This danger, as quoted, is estimated from the appearance of "competition among men" and the harm it will cause to social harmony and peace. Spinoza, as Matheron said, depicted lust through the eyes of men, and positioned women as objects of men's sexual desire. Jealousy caused by lust derives from the possibility of women's possible relationships. In this connection, in some proposals, women are referred as "prostitutes" as objects of sexual desire (EIIIP35S, IVP71S).

Spinoza also uses other sexist remarks about women, although he does not indicate the reasons for not being the actors of political participation; “unmanly compassion” (EIVP37S1 and EIIP49S), “prostitute” (TP VIII, §47), “the inconstancy and deceptiveness of women” (EVP10S). The projection of lust in democracy results in the exclusion of women from the public sphere. Spinoza states as follows;

Furthermore, if we consider human affects, namely, that for the most part men love women only from an affect of lust, and that they judge their native intelligence and wisdom greater the more beautiful they are, and furthermore, that men find it intolerable that the women they love should favor others in some way, etc., we’ll have no difficulty seeing that men and women can’t rule equally without great harm to the peace. But enough of these matters (TP XI, §4).

As one can see, in Spinoza's thought, the reason why democracy does not involve women is the obsessive passion of men. As Matheron highlighted in the previous headline, since the individual damage of lust was passion, it was highly likely to return from joy to sad. But this passion emerges as a social and political problem as soon as it turns into a passion like jealousy and anger, which causes a competition. As Matheron said, this issue is staged “among men” again, as Spinoza writes from men's perspective (2009, p. 97). In this case, it is obvious that there is a contradiction between the “natural weakness” of women and the passionate “weakness” of men. In the previous quotation, he states that the mental abilities of women are naturally weak compared to men, while at the end of the same paragraph he announces that it is men, the bearers of the passions, who will harm social harmony and peace. If we take *Ethics* as a reference, a virtuous or powerful person is the person who understands their passions and gathers them under the umbrella of active joy following the guidance of reason. The best government is the government that will promote the transformation of passions into active joy. Such an *imperium* trains its citizen to grasp the causal background of their actions. It makes them actors of collective harmony and peace. In this way, the multitude grasps such a commonality that it seems to be united to form almost a single mind and a single body (EIVP18S). So to speak, in Spinoza's *Political Treatise*, women paid off the cost of men's immoderate lust. Apart from this, another remarkable aspect of Spinoza's determination here is that the “woman problem” that the feminist literature discusses frequently, in fact, declared that it is actually an “problem of masculinity” –even if this is not his intention.

### 3.1. Return to the Ethics

Feminists who think that Spinoza's discussion of political freedom is generally consistent with the Spinozist system in terms of sexual difference argue that it is necessary to return to *Ethics* to confirm this consistency. The most well-known figure of this claim is Genevieve Lloyd with her discussion in *Part of Nature*. According to Lloyd, while Spinoza insists that women are weak, he refers to the social body which also includes women's bodies. In this way, according to Lloyd, Spinoza seems to demonstrate a historical and socio-political reality because it is an unquestionable fact that women experience their power and capacity in both historically and sociopolitically restricted way. Spinoza formulated this fact in various ways in his epistemology, ontology and politics. If the social and political areas in which women take part are designed in a way that enhances their power, women's political freedom also increases. Therefore, according to Lloyd, thanks to the Spinozist mind/body definition, it becomes easier for us to understand the dysfunction of an abstract imagination independent of power relations. In the Spinozist system, minds reflect the way bodies are experienced in power relations (Lloyd, 1994, p. 165). From this point of view, when Spinoza says that women are weak compared to men, he seems to have made the genealogy of the status of femininity in the social organization. Thus, he presented not only the natural weakness of women but a cumulative reality in a historical and socio-political sense without falling into essentialist paradigms. Since Lloyd's ideas developed on the basis of Spinoza's philosophy are explained in the previous chapters, this chapter will focus more on the work of Beth Lord, who shares the same opinions with her concerning the extent of this title.

Based on the arguments in *Ethics*, Beth Lord thinks that Spinoza, in the same vein with Lloyd, does not have a constant truth about women, but a critical perspective on their historical and social situation (Lord, 2011, p. 1087). Although Lord arrives at the same conclusion as Lloyd, Lord's arguments are different in many ways. She scrutinizes the allegations made directly in the *Political Treatise* and compares them with the arguments in *Ethics*. The impetus behind Lord's examination is that Spinoza did not abandon the theoretical assumptions he proposed regarding human nature in his political philosophy. That is to say, Spinoza's theoretical acceptances are valid for his social practices. One can clearly see in Spinoza's naturalistic attitude in *Ethics* as well as in his politics. At the beginning of the *Political Treatise*, regarding political philosophy, Spinoza thinks that philosophers mostly write "satire instead of ethics" since they do not consider "what is" as "it is" but rather as "they want it to be" (TP I, §1). Philosophers lack the ability to rule because they do not pay attention to "what is

currently happening” or experience. In contrast, “politicians” are more inclined to dealing with people “as they are” by taking the criterion of experience as opposed to philosophers (TP I, §2). Undoubtedly, for Spinoza, people’s “state of being” is the state of being subject to passions, and the state of desiring to increase their power in order to persevere in their existence. Sovereigns must rule people taking this fact into consideration not by turning a blind eye to this fact. Spinoza's approach here is reminiscent of Machiavelli, whose name is mentioned in the book.

According to Lord, with this emphasis on collective experience or history, Spinoza draws our attention to the kind of sexual imaginaries that are culturally received. In this respect, Lord agrees with Gatens and Lloyd on the contribution of the Spinozist imagination theory to the feminist literature (Lord, 2011, p. 1090). Spinoza gives the necessary theoretical framework for understanding that individual or collective imaginaries cannot be abandoned voluntarily, and how they appear invisibly in our daily life. This demonstrates that these imaginations are deep and embodied and that their changes and transformations are not possible by the abstract ideals of equality. For this reason, by drawing attention to Spinoza’s distinction between true and imaginary knowledge, she thinks that the concept of “natural” used in the *Political Treatise* based on the weakness of women corresponds to Spinozist imagination:

Because of the distinction between what is real but imaginary, the fact that the gendered power relation is real and natural does not mean, for Spinoza, that it is an absolute truth embedded in our essence as human beings [...] Spinoza does not even intend us to understand his statements about women as true. His remarks about women form part of a fiction, and as such, they are valid only insofar as they cohere with a system of images that is, as a whole, neither true nor false (Lord, 2011, p. 1090).

Lord's argument here is that Spinoza's arguments about the situation of women refer to inadequate knowledge, not adequate one. In other words, his knowledge about women is deficient and blurred. Since imagination is the knowledge of experience and affection, inadequate knowledge about women is also an expression of their historical and experiential affective reality. Afterwards, she discusses the methodological difference between *Ethics* and *Political Treatise*. According to Lord, *Ethics* was written by the second kind of knowledge, that is, by reason, while *Political Treatise* was written by the first kind of knowledge, namely by imagination (Lord, 2011, p. 1093). In this case, the *Political Treatise* reflects Spinoza's imaginary knowledge, instead of a constant truth about women. However, it should be emphasized once more that according to Lord, Spinoza does not dictate or impose this imaginary knowledge on his reader. *Ethics* is where he invites his reader to access adequate

knowledge of the causal context of things. For this very reason, Lord recommends that the ideas in *Ethics* should be scrutinized. Feminists should pay attention to Spinoza's ideas of about women in *Ethics*, not in *Political Treatise*.

Lord agrees with many feminists that the Spinozist mind/body unity approach offers a perspective that includes different bodies and, accordingly, different minds. Spinoza places the capacity difference of bodies and minds on a horizontal plane, not a vertical one; therefore, their freedom, virtue, and blessedness also bear traces of their unique conditions or capacities. But, as Lloyd states, there are differences as well as connections between bodies. Just as the different parts of our body form a single body, different bodies express different aspects of a single nature. As explained in the first part, what distinguishes one body from the other is the characteristic proportion of its motion and rest. With this proportion (both mental and physical), one can find more connections with other similar beings (Lord, 2011, p. 1098). The political philosophy of Spinoza is theorized on the current parameters of this commonality. Rather than the differences between women's bodies and men's bodies, commonalities constitute the social body. Lord, draws attention to the argument (in the 4th chapter of Spinoza) that Adam and Eve naturally are naturally compatible with each other; "The man having found a wife who agreed completely with his nature, he knew that there could be nothing in nature more useful to him than she was" (EIVP68S). If Eve is the most compatible being with the nature of Adam, then Spinoza has assumed commonality, not a categorical distinction between man and woman. In this line of thinking, the possibilities of their freedom and being virtuous are equal, even if not the same. However, Spinoza sees a different picture when he looks at the experience. According to Lord, Spinoza demonstrates women's inability of being independent through their dependence on their husbands and draws attention to women's economical dependence in the house (2011, p. 1102). In other words, Spinoza stated that both men and women have the opportunity to become free members of a rational community theoretically, but women are practically deprived of this opportunity when he examines the prevailing marriage patterns. Women cannot achieve their political freedom because they are not economically independent. Increasing their natural power depends on an external reason, their husbands. This is what Spinoza means of "natural weakness" for women.

Hasana Sharp is another name who focuses on Spinoza's creation narrative in her article entitled "Eve's Perfection" in the same context. Nevertheless, Sharp states that Eve, described in this narrative, contradicts the claims that legitimize the inequality in *Political Treatise*. In

this respect, Sharp's ideas are not in parallel with Lloyd and Lord's ideas. According to Sharp, at the end of the creation narrative, Eve's "natural weakness" is revealed, rather than Adam's perfection. Because Adam emulated brute animals (EIVP68S), not Eve, and preferred what was dangerous for him. For Sharp, slavery has resulted from the Adam's incapability, that's why he should be held responsible for slavery. In that sense, according to Sharp, Spinoza has abandoned the traditional creation narrative (2012, p. 561). As claimed by Sharp, this story shares similarities with the story of women who cannot be *sui juris* in the *Political Treatise*. Just as women "under the authority of their husbands" tend to choose what is good for the person (men) rather than what is good for herself, Adam chose to imitate "brute animals" that are incompatible with his nature, not what is good for him. To put it more precisely, Adam could not pursue his own benefit, just like the women described in the *Political Treatise*. Regarding Spinoza's heterodox interpretation of creation, Sharp states: "we can observe that the key problem he identifies in his account of the Garden of Eden is man's failure to grasp in woman the true conditions of human freedom, which Spinoza explicitly links to his inability to practice virtue, or 'desire for other men the good he desires for himself' (p. 575).

Subsequently, Lord thinks that in the final sentences of the *Political Treatise*, when Spinoza discusses the male sexual desire for women, men are the target of his criticism. What Spinoza actually means is that social harmony and peace are impossible unless men change their attitudes towards women. In other words, according to the Lord, Spinoza's warning is not for women but men who have passionate determination. Spinoza basically states that men must overcome these passions (2011, p. 1103). Men are responsible for the amelioration and transformation of their sad passions such as jealousy, anger, and hate caused by lust. In this respect, Spinoza did not attempt to substantiate women's essential weakness. According to Lord, Spinoza's mistake is that he observed all this but ignored the possibility of changing the conditions that made them possible. Spinoza is well conscious about both the socioeconomic conditions in which women live and the negative collective imaginations about them, yet he has not been able to predict that they can change (p. 1103).

First and foremost, both Lloyd and Lord discuss Spinoza's ideas in the *Political Treaties* with reference to *Ethics*. However for both, Spinoza explained sexual differences by referring to experiences, history, current social organizations. Lloyd and Lord both state that Spinoza does not defend an idea that contradicts this ontology, on the basis of an anti-hierarchical ontology in *Ethics*, in *Political Treaties*. This is all to say, Spinoza has already given the opportunity for both men and women for freedom, even if in different forms, in *Ethics*, therefore, one can

say that *Political Treatise* is consistent with *Ethics* in this regard. The “natural weakness” of women is not an essential difference, but a description that refers to their experiences as a social body. Thus, in both of his works, Spinoza clarified the differences between men and women based on their power relations with the social organization. These differences between women and men are not categorical, but hypothetical differences in terms of capacity (Lord, 2011, p. 1104). Unquestionably, considering the metaphysics, ontology, ethics, and epistemology of Spinoza, both thinkers’ approaches are quite precise. As a matter of fact, the theoretical structure that forms the theoretical framework of this thesis is based on there. On the other hand, both philosophers did not accept Spinoza's mistake, though in different ways. First of all, the arguments that both developed to place Spinoza in a consistent conceptual position are favorable for other groups that are excluded from the political body, particularly, employees, children, foreigners etc., but not for women, according to the *Political Treatise*. Because Spinoza does not return to the beginning and start a distinct discussion about their “nature”. It is not possible to accept Beth Lord's explanation that the concept of "natural" in the expression of “natural weakness of women” refers to the imagination, not the truth. Because, Lord develops this explanation based on the methodological distinction between *Ethics* and *Political Treatise*. However, while discussing the slavery and the conditions of people’s freedom in *Ethics*, he focused on the freedom of people and the treatment of passions at the level of subjectivation and remains faithful to this goal by focusing on the freedom of the multitude in the *Political Treaties*. Moreover, the concept of “natural” in the *Political Treatise* completely overlap the concept of “natural” used in *Ethics*. In this case, if one can say that the content of the concept of “natural” in the last paragraph of the *Political Treatise* does not mean the essence of women, but the imaginary knowledge about them, then one has to cancel all uses of this concept in *Ethics*. Spinoza describes what he meant by the concept of human nature and how to examine it at the beginning of the *Political Treatise*;

So, when I applied my mind to politics, I didn’t intend to advance anything new or unheard of, but only to demonstrate the things which agree best with practice, in a certain and indubitable way, and to deduce them from the condition of *human nature*. To investigate the matter pertaining to this science with the same freedom of spirit we’re accustomed to use in investigating mathematical subjects, I took great pains not to laugh at human actions, or mourn them, or curse them, but only to understand them. So I’ve contemplated human affects – like love, hate, anger, envy, love of esteem, compassion, and the other emotions – *not as vices of human nature, but as properties which pertain to it in the same way heat, cold, storms, thunder, etc., pertain to the nature of the air* (Emphasizes are added, TP I, §4).

As it is seen, Spinoza maintains his naturalist approach in *Ethics*. In this case, the “natural weakness” of women is as “natural” as the natural storm for Spinoza in the *Political Treatise*. Indeed, Spinoza emphasizes the same tonality about the method before beginning to examine the affects in *Ethics*, by saying “I will approach human actions and desires as if I talk about geometric lines, planes, and objects”. Even though freedom, virtue, and reason are not presented in the *Political Treatise* in the form of definitions, propositions, and demonstrations, he pursues a rational community by taking experience as a point of departure as in *Ethics*. The rejection of innate reason anthropologically in *Ethics* and the rejection of the idea of innate citizenship in *Political Treatise* (TP V, §2) can be considered in parallel with the historical and sociopolitical context of freedom. Despite of this, men are born as *de facto* members of power in a democratic government. Consequently, when it comes to governance, Spinoza's acceptance of “woman's natural weakness” is completely contradictory to his philosophy. Reyda Ergün, similarly explains Spinoza's inconsistency as follows: “Spinoza does not answer the question of why women are under the authority of men in the civil state, within the framework of the social context. On the contrary, he argues that it is the natural lack of equality between women and men that causes this social context” (Ergün, 2014, p. 26). In other words, Spinoza considers the situation of women not as an effect of social and historical conditions, but as a cause. In a similar vein, he evaluates the state of womanhood as a cause, not an effect. For Eylem Canaslan, it is not Spinoza but Hobbes who discusses women's citizenship by referring to their social and historical conditions (2019, p. 230). According to Hobbes, since the political power has always been established and ruled by men, the “weakness” of women compared to men is not because of their nature, but because the political body is organized in this way. Canaslan states that Spinoza is probably aware of Hobbes' ideas. Nevertheless, he does not give up defending patriarchal ideology (p. 230).

In this case, although Spinoza describes male sexual desire as a danger due to the struggle between men, his solution is far from objectivity. As Lord stated, Spinoza does not give any message to men about sexual desire. Because male sexual desire is presented as a cause for women's exclusion from the political sphere within the scope of the excuses for women's “natural weakness”. For all these reasons, when Lord says that Spinoza's only mistake is ignoring the possibility of changing the conditions of women, she makes a connection between a correct result and a false anaphora. When Spinoza calls it “natural weakness”, especially in the discussion of the most libertarian regime, he immediately prevents the possibility of change anyway.

Gullan-Whur describes Spinoza's conflicting claims about women between *Political Treatise* and *Ethics* as follows: "However, I contend that neither the validity of Spinoza's syllogism nor its conclusion's potential for testing can rescue Spinoza from contradicting the metaphysical basis of Ethics. If the 'black page' claim is accepted then Spinoza the political pragmatist has proved the Spinoza of Ethics wrong" (Gullan-Whur, 2002, p. 97). Gullan-Whur thinks that Spinoza has made some inconsistent inferences even when he refers to the experience of saying that women are weak. For instance, Spinoza was well aware that Descartes conducted intellectual discussions with many women and that women were educated in the field of philosophy. In addition, Spinoza took Latin and Greek lessons from his teacher, Franciscus van den Enden's daughter, Clara Maira van den Enden (Gullan-Whur, 2002, p. 92). However, Spinoza was mistaken in uttering that women never had political power in history. For example, he had enough knowledge about the queens of Spain and England (Canaslan, 2019, p. 230). Moreover, the fact that Christina, the Queen of Sweden, never married, proves how far Spinoza's arguments from objectivity and how he resorted to experience (Sharp, 2012, p. 566, fn. 8).

As a result, it is an appropriate approach to defend Spinoza in *Ethics* against Spinoza in *Political Treatise* on women's intellectual skills and freedom. However, it is crucial to accept the philosopher's mistake and to affirm his bright ideas that will contribute philosophically to the feminist theory "despite" of this mistake. In other words, when it comes to *Political Treatise* it is necessary to admit that "he chose the wrong way though he knows the truth" like the people "who pursue the evil, even though they know what good is<sup>17</sup>". Neither in *Ethics* nor in the *Political Treatise*, both men and women are defined as a naturally intelligent or innate free being. If this was the case, the state would not be necessary for people, according to Spinoza. However, in both of the mentioned studies, while the human being is presented as an entity capable of being liberated with and by other people, of understanding their passions at a rational level; women are deprived of this opportunity *forever* in the *Political Treatise*.

### **3.2. Return to the Politics**

As stated in the introduction of this title, Spinoza's exclusion of women from the political participation is an approach that contradicts not only with his metaphysics but also his politics. As pointed out in the previous chapter, it is possible to solve Spinoza's political impasses about women based on ontological principles in *Ethics*. The principal discussion of

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<sup>17</sup> Spinoza's quote from Ovidius in *Ethics*. See. EIIIP2Dem ve EIVPrae.

this thesis is the contribution of Spinoza's understanding of anti-essentialist, anti-hierarchical, anti-humanist existence, and the rejection of mind/body dualism in his metaphysics, to feminist studies. In the first chapter, it has already been said that Spinoza's metaphysics, ontology, and political philosophy should be read in relation to each other. From this perspective, it is possible to criticize Spinoza directly through his political arguments. For example, Canaslan found it appropriate to introduce "immanent criticism" within the boundaries of the *Political Treatise* (2019, p. 230-1).

First and foremost, in *Political Treatise*, although Spinoza did not give enough explanation, he defends democracy as the right form of government. However, the main purpose of the book is to explain what certain forms of governments such as monarchy and aristocracy should do to prevent tyranny as well as under which conditions these regimes can turn into tyranny. Accordingly, as the quantity of people holding political power decreases, regardless of the form of the government, the possibility of that state to turn into tyranny increases. Thus, for Spinoza, the reason for the dissolution of a state is empowerment of "the strongest" ones, (TP VIII, §12). The distribution of power should then be organized in a manner which involves the multitude as much as possible. Canaslan summarizes this situation as follows:

According to Spinoza, an *imperium* is exposed to the risk of destabilization and fragility in proportion to the groups left out of the channels of expression. Indignation created by inequality is an important political concept in Spinoza. Inequalities produced by an *imperium* return and create conflicts that undermine it. Any group left outside, not considered equal citizens, poses a threat to the *imperium*. The indignance that excluded groups feel is only ceases to be a threat when they are politically involved and are provided with channels to express themselves. In fact, according to the political thought of Spinoza, this comprehensiveness is the only source that strengthens the *imperium*. It is precisely for this reason that democracy, which covers the multitude and even tends to cover the whole, is the most perfect type of *imperium* (Canaslan, 2019, p. 231).

As it can be understood from the quotation, Spinoza's exclusion of women who make up half of the society, by saying that this is the "nature", causes a conflict which is difficult to understand in his own political philosophy. As stated, as the number of people who share political power decreases, the rate of indignation increases. Thus, as exclusion from political participation quantitatively increases, the most ideal form of government, democracy, is likely to turn into tyranny. In other respects, it has been said in the previous chapter that Spinoza was informed of about the government models in which women are in power. At the beginning of the *Political Treatise*, he said he refrained himself from proposing a new form of government that was not based on experience or history and stated that he was to refer to

existing “kinds of State” (TP I, §3). Hence, it can be said that Spinoza perhaps deliberately disregarded the forms of government that women were allowed to be in power from “known city-states”. While Spinoza refers to experience and history as another reason to exclude women's dependence on their husbands, he arrives at an inconsistent conclusion, at least in terms of the definition of democracy. As stated beforehand, it is quite unusual that a philosopher who says “the real purpose of the state is freedom” (TTP XX, §12) offers a state model that is not free and does not take responsibility for women who cannot think of their own good. As stated by Moira Gatens, it is no longer possible for love affair to be lived in the form of freedom. (2018, p. 223). If freedom requires a well-organized social system, laws and a state regulated to increase the power of citizens, women's slavery is definitely a political problem. On the other hand, the conversion of sad passions into active affects by the hand of the state is also included in this responsibility for liberation. Then, the sexual desires of men who risk social harmony and peace should be the responsibility of the state's social and political institutions, not the responsibility of women. At this point, however, Spinoza's attitude is to throw women out of the political body once again.

If Irigaray's critique of “envelope” was focused not on Spinoza's metaphysics, but his political ideas, which contains his contradictory statements on women, there would not be any objection. In a state where women are excluded from the political body and in a relationship in which they depend on their husbands, it is very challenging for them to have their own space and time both inside and outside the house. According to Irigaray, to put it in Spinozist terminology, women become the cause of men who carry the cause of their action, rather than being the cause of their action: “the maternal-feminine exist necessarily as the cause of self-cause of man. But not for self” (Irigaray, 1993, p. 84-5). If a man tends to engage in conflict with other men because of his sexual desire for a woman, he will try to keep the woman out of sight because of his obsessive passions. Because he is afraid of losing her, as he imagines her with another man and grieves himself. This is the risk of psychosis caused by imitation of affects in ethical relationships between sexes. The solution that the man finds to overcome his delusions is to keep the woman in a place he constructed. Thus, the woman is compelled to be a place for the male sexual desire and to lead a poor life in a place constructed by him. Unquestionably, Spinoza does not explain the dangerous aspects of sexual desire or lust in this way, his main purpose is to maintain social harmony and peace. As stated by Gullan-Wuhr, he deciphered the problematic aspects of men's attitudes towards women and developed a pragmatist attitude. The ignorance of men about their passions causes women to

be destitute of freedom for the stability of peace. At this point, Gatens brightly asks the question:

Men have all sorts of passions about all sorts of things that the body politic is not obliged to consider. Men may be greedy, querulous, ambitious, and so on, and all of which may lead to upsetting the peace. However, in none of these cases does Spinoza consider it appropriate for the political realm to accommodate such passions. On the contrary, if men cannot be the masters of their own passions then laws and the power of political society will be their master for them. Why is the 'lust' of men for women exempted from the standard political solution to the fact that passions divide men, pull them in contrary directions and make them enemies to one another? (Gatens, 1996, p. 134).

Considering that Spinoza attributes a liberating role to love affair between the different sexes, however, it is clear that such love is impossible in an already determined community where one side is not and cannot be free. Because women's political status cannot reach beyond being a wife or a mother and this ensures identification of her through the mission of reproduction. The typical position for women to influence and to be influenced is outside the political body. The relationship between women and men, who are active participants in the public sphere, will naturally tend to occur in the form of addiction. Thus, Spinoza remained within the boundaries of the masculine political body conceptions of the social contract theorists in the matter of women, by substituting traditional patriarchal discourses in which the subject of the right or power appeared as men. To put it more clearly, the fragile link between women and citizenship continues distinctly in Spinoza's political ideas. The irresponsible attitudes of the state and its institutions towards men's problematic sexual desires constitute impediments to justice in the cases of sexual violence against women. Spinoza's temporary solution causes quite a danger to women. Moira Gatens investigates this problem through facts involving rape cases. It is obvious that the tendency of laws and judges to make decisions that alleviate the perpetrator's crime in rape or sexual violence cases against women is directly associated with the fact that they are the carriers of these sexual imageries that legitimize sexual desire of men whether consciously or unconsciously. A state that has not been held responsible for amelioration of men's sexual passions is an embodied example of sexual imaginary about women who face the devastating effects of this desire and imaginary. Taking inspiration from Moira Gatens, it's quite possible to carry out such discussion on sexual violence against women in Turkey's case. The most striking example is good conduct abatement which is exercised to perpetrators in cases of sexual violence against women in Turkey. The good conduct abatement is associated with factors such as woman's

virginity, her clothes, her place, the time of the day, etc. As a result, while the woman is brought into disrepute, the sexual assault of men is legitimized. This process takes a new form via media: media reproduces existing pejorative sexual imaginary of women with a narrative that legitimizes the perpetrator and his action. It is so much so that the intentions, actions, clothes, behaviors of women who are attacked are questioned more by the public opinion than the act of perpetrators or criminals. In a different political-social atmosphere, for example, when the level of social sensitivity is high and "politics of affects" predominates, the perpetrator is declared as "scapegoat" but the structural problems behind sexual assaults are not discussed. On the other hand, in these cases, the state does not take any responsibility for the aggressive sexual passions of men and does not provide the necessary security for women who are exposed to sexual violence that takes place at the same time. To put it more clearly, the state's dual attitude takes place almost simultaneously. Women who are not protected by the state have to make their own self-defense, however, of course, the proportion of women can defend themselves is not high enough to "create social unrest" in the Spinozist sense. The femicide, presented as "honor killings" by the media, shows how strong the cooperation between the political body and the male body is while proving how fragile the status of women as citizens. It is so much so that it is almost impossible to create reliable sources of information about femicide due to bias of the media. To provide statistical data of femicides in Turkey and to commemorate them, a digital database called "Counter-Memorial/Anıt Sayaç<sup>18</sup>" is created.

It is obviously shown that Spinoza's sexist ideas about lust and his preference of such discourse that claim "natural weakness" of women have an insignificant effect on women's everyday life. It is an unquestionable fact that Spinoza's ideas about "commonality" in an ethical and political context cannot be achieved with such an exclusivist and dangerous discourse. It is precisely for this reason that one must criticize his mistake by his ideas of liberation in metaphysical and political sense. As Canaslan puts it, "The magnitude of liberatory philosophies does not arise from the fact that they answered all questions, cleared all the conceptual roughness, had no inconsistency" (2019, p. 231). To summarize, Spinoza's philosophy provides the theoretical framework necessary to criticize the problematic aspects of his ideas about women. For this reason, instead of rejecting Spinoza's misogynist rhetoric and drawing him to a legitimate plane, it is necessary to confront his mistake and use his emancipatory ideas against the aforementioned inconsistency.

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<sup>18</sup> See. <http://anitsayac.com/> (Access: 01.05.2020).

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the relationship between Spinoza's system and feminist theory, especially around the question of sexual difference. In this context, the thesis focuses on the critics of sexual difference feminism on the issues of modern philosophy, especially Cartesianism. First of all, the most outstanding contribution of feminists to the criticism directed to modern subject theory from different perspectives was that they have revealed that this subject, who was born out of the concept of dualist existence, is not sexless and genderless. As soon as the modern rational subject separated mind from body, it closed the doors for all possibilities of sexual difference. While this doctrine defends the universality of the mind, it appears as a representation of a single-sex in socio-symbolic terms. In this respect, the way that modern philosophy positions sexual difference can be regarded as sex-blindness, which is left under the determination of a single-sex. Therefore, the concept of modern "human" or "subject" takes the default man as center, marking what remains on the periphery of this center as worthless, negative and incomplete. Woman is one of the worthless ones who represent the body by staying in this periphery. The patriarchal system constructs the sexual difference as a given ontological difference and compresses the difference between two sexes to dualist signifying system, thereby naturalizing various forms of oppression. The projection of this naturalization on modern political theory has resulted in the restriction of women to the private sphere, and their political status has been determined through the context of reproductive labor. In this respect, the way sexual difference is symbolized in Western culture is entirely consistent with its form in political theory. In social contract theories, the relationship of the political body with masculinity is similar to the alliance between rationality and masculinity. The problem, as Gatens explained meticulously, is not that today women are accepted as citizens and have equal rights, but that these sexual imaginaries from the past remain implicitly alive and that it is still necessary for us to work on the genealogy of these imaginaries. In other words, the effects of symbolizations or ways of thinking that have been established in the past, still have a very strong *affect* on our ways of understanding and experiencing ourselves today.

The thesis concludes that Spinoza's system can be a useful moment in such discussions. Spinoza's philosophy has provided the necessary theoretical scheme in the face of modern philosophy, which contemporary philosophy criticizes in many ways. The idea of reading Spinoza with a feminist perspective, which was examined within the scope of this thesis, was

precisely inspired by this timely intervention of philosopher. First, the idea of Spinoza's mind/body unity offers a substantial repertoire for the criticism of dualist thinking models. According to this, since there is no idea in Spinoza's philosophy that the mind negates the body, there is no room for the concept of a priori mind and the idea of a sexless subject. By describing human beings as beings exposed to passions under the laws of nature, Spinoza analyzed the role of affects, which are considered as malignant, on individualization, as early as the 17th-century. Spinoza's *conatus* thought unites all singular beings in a non-hierarchical ontology and he warns his reader that they should understand all singularities in their affective context. This affective context means that we have to think of the body with its environment, its network of relationships, the current configurations of power relations. Therefore, it is impossible to find any scheme showing that any sex as a "class" is essentially more competent and stronger. However, since individuation always occurs in a culture, a community, a political organization, some bodies live in a network that increases their power, and others live in the opposite position. When it comes to the female body, their experiences fall under the second category.

Spinoza's theory of mind/body unity is in line with the theoretical framework of the critique of sexual difference feminists on sex/gender distinction. Feminists who accept this distinction, on the one hand, assign an essence to the body; on the other hand, adopt the traditional belief that free will exists. Thus, this distinction implicitly creates a perception as if women can abandon their gender roles and access their "real identity" at any time. According to feminists of sexual difference, our bodies are not fixed objects that can be experienced in other ways at any time. Spinoza's theory of individuation, which Balibar defines as an "interdependence" process, is useful for deciphering the misconception about this issue. Bodies are under the determination of the social, cultural and symbolic forms in which they live because of their encounters with other bodies at any moment. In conjunction with Spinoza's common notions, every body has some similarities with and some differences from other bodies in some respects, as Lloyd stated. These differences, according to Spinoza, are the embodiment of the power we have. In Spinoza's system, there cannot be a sex/gender distinction, since the embodied state of power also corresponds to the competence of mind. Undoubtedly, this is not to say that sex causes gender, as Gatens and Lloyd said. This invites us to see the nexus between ideas or reflections of the affections of the body, which correspond to the imagination. Therefore, the sex/gender distinction developed due to Cartesian illusion of an active mind/passive body loses its validity. When the abovementioned ideas of Gatens are

considered; in the Spinozist system, “sex is particular extensive 'organization' of the material powers and capacities of a body, whereas gender would amount to the affective powers and affects of such a body. On this reading of the sex/gender distinction, gender is both a power and an affect of a certain modification of the attribute of extension” (1996, p. 149).

Spinoza's anti-humanist perspective is another point that allows an alliance against the categories of “human” and “subject”, which are frequently criticized by sexual difference feminists. If the present “human” and “subject” categories represent the default man, sexual difference feminism refuses to be integrated into this representation. This subject concept cannot involve the female sexual difference by preserving it; on the contrary, it “captures” this difference. This is where egalitarian feminists make the mistake. According to the feminism of difference, the demands of egalitarian feminists for freedom, equal rights, etc., means in a sense that they abandon themselves and turn into “acceptable subjects”. That is why Irigaray defines the female difference as a “polymorphic” and “non-captured” difference by denominating sex as a thing, “which is not one”. Irigaray’s aim is to disturb the monolithic implications of Uniqueness/Sameness. By uttering that “man is not a kingdom within the kingdom”, Spinoza destabilized the subject in question and shifted his perspective from anthropocentrism to anti-humanism. Sharp's proposal of Grosz' “politics of imperceptibility”, based on Spinoza, is therefore quite useful for sexual difference feminism. In this way, self-hatred caused by the recognition/representation model is ameliorated by the Spinozist affirmative desire. In terms of sexual difference, the paradox of recognition/representation politics is that when it is considered in a context based on recognizing sexes, it leads to sex-blindness. Recognition, as Sharp puts it, necessitates that we have to negate what we are now; that is, we have to deny what we are.

For Spinoza, if the individual has an essence, perhaps this should be understood precisely as the “lack of essence” compared to the parameters of recognition/representation. In the face of the privileged and assimilating powers (*potestas*) of recognized/represented positions, a Spinozist, perhaps, should know herself/ himself as an affective power (*potentia*) “by not recognizing” the recognizer and acceptable stereotypes. Thus, instead of the negation that recognition/representation entails, sexual difference finds a way of being an affirmative force. When Spinoza says there is an equivalence between knowing-being and right-power, perhaps he guides us to think it through. In this respect, the Spinozist version of Sharp's “imperceptibility” leads us to act and to affect. In this way, Spinozist anti-humanism provides the theoretical framework to create new bricolages for ourselves. Thus, the sexual difference

remains as a productive and dynamic difference that cannot be represented/recognized by traditional gestures and patterns. In short, sexual difference remains as it is without being captured.

Considering the eco-feminist critique of the possessive-mechanical conceptions of nature, Spinoza's God or Nature, which is systematized as a monist and immanent substance, takes our understanding of culture/nature to a completely different level. According to Spinoza, God or Nature is understood not as something we can dominate, but as a whole that we are *part of* (Lloyd, 1994). In this case, we, not as owners of nature but as nature itself, try to persevere in our existence with our unique rate of motion and rest, just as other components of nature do. Therefore, nature/culture distinction cannot be valid in Spinoza's system. The Conatus principle and the monist conception, in this respect, mean that we should understand each singularity as an entity with different degrees of competence, only according to the variations of this rate of motion and rest. Nevertheless, since this route has already delivered the dignity of every single being due to the equivalence between reality and perfection, now nature is us or we are nature. For example, the famous anecdote that Spinoza admires the flies in the spider web summarizes this situation. According to the narrative, Spinoza threw flies into the spider web and admired their efforts (Deleuze, 2005, p. 19). Accordingly, humans and all non-human beings are things that express different degrees of this effort. In other words, human is not inherently superior to other living beings of nature. On the contrary, man is, in a sense, a fly in the spider web, it is nature itself, defending itself as "nature" just like the fly does. Spinoza's anti-anthropocentrism renders human-centric ontology dysfunctional. As Sharp said, Spinoza is, therefore, a literally "symbiosis" philosopher (Sharp, 2011, p. 192). Sharp's posthumanist reading of Spinoza, today, in the time of coronavirus outbreak, is a very stimulating project to review a new ontology, the relationship between human and nonhuman.<sup>19</sup>

In the context of Irigaray's reading of Spinoza discussed in the second part of the thesis, it is concluded that there are similarities between two thinkers. In this respect, Irigaray's criticism of Spinoza is unfair in a metaphysical framework. As Donovan points out, both thinkers are reactive and cautious against dualist ontologies. The "sensible transcendental" metaphysics conceptualized by Irigaray's discussion of sexual difference ethics bears similarities with Spinoza's monist and immanent God. If the sexual difference is to create a time and space of

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<sup>19</sup> Thanks to my advisor Zeynep Talay Turner who drew my attention to the issue over the current pandemic event (Covid-19) while writing this part of the thesis.

its own, according to Irigaray, it must necessarily be opened to a metaphysical debate. Western culture, which marked woman with the body and maternity, has closed all doors to the “feminine divine”. In other words, the nexus between woman and divinity has been broken. Therefore, a “sensible transcendental” metaphysics is needed for a new “feminine divine”. There is a common ground between Irigaray's project and Spinoza's God since God is also Nature, that is, an immanent God. Contrary to what Irigaray said, Spinoza does not separate mind and body but defines them as two different aspects of a single reality. In this respect, woman, in the metaphysics of Spinoza, as Irigaray says, the woman is not “apriori condition” of man's existence, but the apriori condition of her own existence. That is, the woman has the opportunity to be her own envelope, not the envelope of the man or birth. In such system, the love affair between sexes gives the “interval” that Irigaray demands. Love, for Spinoza, creates an active sense of joy to the extent that each increases the power and capacity of each other, and it is experienced in a form that “liberates the mind”.

In the last part of the thesis, it is claimed that Spinoza's political ideas should be overcome by turning to Spinoza again. In this section, without taking his ideas on a legitimate basis, it is tried to be proved that Spinoza contradicts his own system. For this reason, instead of justifying Spinoza's patriarchal ideas, it is necessary to expose these ideas. While Spinoza excluded women from political participation, he opposed both his ideas in *Ethics* and his political ideas in TP and TTP, by considering women as weak “by nature”. On the other hand, while presenting the rationale for this, Spinoza was not able to take an objective attitude in the places where he resorts to the experience. Even while listing grounds of the exclusion, Spinoza could not apply his own method properly. In other words, he aimed to legitimize his subjective ideas when he resorted to experience. However, again, Spinoza's ideas examined throughout this thesis are substantial enough for us to neglect Spinoza's “fault”. Nancy Tuana says that, first of all, we need to ask the following question to read a philosopher from a feminist perspective:

A question we must keep in front of us during this process of re-reading is whether a philosopher's socially inherited prejudices concerning woman's nature and role are independent of her or his larger philosophical framework. In asking this question attention must be paid to the ways in which the definitions of central philosophical concepts implicitly include or exclude gendered traits (Tuana, 2009, p. ix).

The examinations made throughout this thesis have shown that, considering Tuana's question, the encounter between Spinoza and feminist theory is a “joyful, active, empowering” encounter.

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