

# AUTONOMY AND INTERRELATEDNESS: SPINOZA, HUME, AND VASUBANDHU

by Winnifred A. Tomm

*Abstract.* If reason and emotion are taken as inseparable foundational components of human nature, then all knowledge must be characterized by both objective description and subjective, felt experience. If that is the case, then it is impossible for autonomy to be described in terms of rational knowledge, independent of affective response. Accordingly, autonomy and interdependence are mutually inclusive terms. Following the assumption that reason and emotion are integrally related in human understanding, morality can be explained by reference to both rational principles and emotive, unreflected experience. Spinoza, Hume, and Vasubandhu provide three different but compatible views of moral development based on their views of the mutually informing effect of reason and emotion on motivation for action. In contrast to Kant, they describe the morally autonomous person as one who is directed by personal interests shaped by a consciousness of the context of emerging interrelated conditions. It is a context in which individual self-expression is a function of receptivity and responsiveness to the expression of others.

*Keywords:* emotion; Hume; morality; reason; Spinoza; Vasubandhu.

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Autonomy of the will for many people means independence and is considered a necessary condition for freedom. Immanuel Kant was particularly concerned to delineate the nature and importance of the autonomous, rational will. His formula for autonomy is this: "the idea of the will of every rational being as a will that legislates universal law"

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(Kant 1981, sec. 431). The focus is on identification of the individual will with the categorical imperative: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (Kant 1981, sec. 421). Universal laws are laws of nature; that is, they determine the existence of things as we experience them. Duty is determined by universal moral laws and therefore becomes an imperative. Kant's natural law of duty is stated in the following way: "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature" (Kant 1981, sec. 421). One's ultimate duty is to shape one's will so that it is identical with the universal categorical imperative.

The ideal community is the "kingdom of ends," a "systematic union of different rational beings through common laws" (Kant 1981, sec. 433). The autonomous person has a free, unconditional will which is not based on interest but rather upon principle. The autonomous will is contrasted with the heteronomous will, which is characterized by self-interest or the self-interest of others. Heteronomy is the "source of all spurious principles of morality" (Kant 1981, sec. 441). The principle of autonomy, on the other hand, is this: "Always choose in such a way that in the same volition the maxims of the choice are at the same time present as universal law" (Kant 1981, sec. 440).

It is clear that in Kant's account of autonomy reason holds the central position. The "kingdom of ends" is possible only through exercise of the rational will of all individuals. Each person must be both the legislator and executor of his or her own universal laws in accord with the categorical imperative. In this view, autonomy is tied to independence. One determines one's own freedom through rational means. Compassion toward others derives from acknowledging them as rationally autonomous persons. Kant's ethics are intended to answer the question that puzzled him, namely, how can one spontaneously respond to the command to love one's neighbor? One does that when one is at the same time legislating the universal imperative and spontaneously obeying it; one's rational will is united with the universal rational will.

Today there is a great deal of reaction against Kant's view of autonomy, especially from feminists.<sup>1</sup> What is wrong in his account? Fundamentally, he separated reason from emotion and explained ethics ultimately in terms of reason alone. That metaphysical separation has two major unfortunate consequences. First, his epistemology is distorted, acknowledging only one criterion of knowledge—analytic or descriptive—and ignoring the other criterion, felt experience, which is fundamental to desire and intrinsic to interest. Because interest largely determines one's object of awareness, and the object of awareness constitutes the topic of knowledge, it follows that knowledge requires

felt experience. Objective description is necessarily secondary to the primary subjective experience from which desire and interest arise. Separating moral, rational principle from personal, emotive interest is therefore separation of the two necessarily connected components of moral knowledge.

A second consequence of the separation of reason and emotion in his metaphysics of human nature is that it disallows the possibility for women to be autonomous persons. According to Kant, the reason is that women do not have the rational ability to act in light of universal principles. Their understanding is of a different kind than that of men. In his article "Of the Distinction of the Beautiful and Sublime in the Interrelations of the Two Sexes," Kant says:

The fair sex has just as much understanding as the male, but it is a *beautiful understanding*, whereas ours should be a *deep understanding*, an expression that signifies identity with the sublime. . . .

Deep meditation and a long-sustained reflection are noble but difficult, and do not well befit a person in whom unconstrained charms should show nothing else than a beautiful nature. Laborious learning or painful pondering, even if a woman should greatly succeed in it, destroy the merits that are proper to her sex, and because of their rarity they can make of her an object of cold admiration; but at the same time they will weaken the charms with which she exercises her great power over the other sex. . . .

[Women know] nothing of duty, nothing of compulsion, nothing of obligation. . . . I hardly believe that the fair sex is capable of principles, and I hope by that not to offend, for these are also extremely rare in the male. But in place of it Providence has put in their breast kind and benevolent sensations, a fine feeling for propriety, and a complaisant soul (Kant 1983, 194-96).

Kant's separation of reason and emotion in his metaphysics of human nature led him to devalue felt, subjective experience and to provide different theories of ethics for men and women. In his view men are potentially and sometimes actually rational beings, whereas women are and ought to be only beings of feelings and subjected to male rational authority. The consequence of that is, as we have experienced empirically, the attempt on the part of some men to dominate women through the exercise of rational argument and for some women to dominate men through the exercise of feminine charms. Which ever way one looks at it (from the point of view of men or of women), the relation of the sexes has largely been characterized by a power struggle. The notion of empowerment through interdependence does not obviously arise from Kant's account of autonomy. The superiority of rational analysis overrides the value of inclusive emotive experiences. Autonomy as Kant has described it is not compatible with a holistic account of human nature and is not conducive with egalitarian ethics. Because autonomy has become associated exclusively with the exercise of rational principles (which are deemed male), the term is

sometimes thought to be incompatible with the notion of interdependency.

A striking and attractive feature of Kant's notion of autonomy is the emphasis he places upon treating individuals as ends in themselves rather than as means to ends. He focuses on respect for the other regardless of self-interest. He also brings into relief the value of the individual in relation to the interests of the community. These aspects of his ethics are strongly resonant with an ethics in which autonomy and interdependency are inseparable. A significant inconsistency within his account of autonomy, however, is this: on the one hand, he claims that one ought to have respect for another and, on the other hand, one is not to take the self-interests of the other into consideration when applying the categorical imperative. It is difficult to understand how one can regard another person as an end in himself or herself without also considering the personal desires and interests of the person. If one recognizes the subjective experience of another, it is in large part because of a form of sympathetic emotive response in oneself to the other. Although Kant's focus on respect for another as an end rather than a means is laudable, his separation of cognition and affect renders his account of autonomy inconsistent.

In this paper I wish to argue that autonomy and interdependence are essentially tied to each other. The way I shall argue it is through reference to the philosophies of Baruch Spinoza, David Hume, and Vasubandhu (a fifth-century Yogācāra Indian Buddhist) expressed in their major writings (Spinoza 1982; Hume 1978; Vasubandhu 1933).<sup>2</sup> My basic argument is that if reason and emotion are taken as inseparable foundational components of human nature, then all knowledge must be characterized by both objective description and subjective felt experience. If that is the case, it is impossible for autonomy to be described in terms of rational knowledge independent of affective response. Affective response requires connectedness, which depends upon interdependence. Thus, autonomy and interdependence are mutually inclusive terms.

Spinoza, Hume, and Vasubandhu each have an explicit account of the integration of reason and emotion in their theories of self-determination in which moral responsibility is stressed and free will in the sense of undetermined or uncaused will is denied. An important implication of this essay is that the same theory of morality can be developed from a religious metaphysics as from an empirical, naturalistic account of the nature of reality. Spinoza, Hume, and Vasubandhu each represent a different tradition (rationalist, empiricist, and Yogācāra—which is a combination of rationalism and empiricism); therefore, a discussion including the three of them provides a com-

prehensive account of the inclusiveness of autonomy and interdependency. Each view has an informing effect upon the other. Many barriers among the three traditions dissolve through analysis of their accounts of moral development by reference to their views concerning the causal connection between reason and emotion. Because they tie reason and emotion together in their accounts of self-determination, there is in principle no basis for different accounts of morality for men and women.<sup>3</sup> All three philosophers reject the notion of an independent rational will in their theories of moral development. They all have a form of determinism that is compatible with freedom of self-expression, that is, autonomy. In other words, they are compatibilists.

Discussion of their compatibilism will proceed under the following five topics: metaphysics, epistemology, motivation, self, and freedom. In each section the philosopher which most clearly provides the basis for discussion will be presented first; therefore, the order of presentation of the three philosophers' views varies among the sections.

#### METAPHYSICS

By metaphysics I mean the topic which covers views about what exists.<sup>4</sup> A metaphysical framework, then, refers to a particular view of reality that is presupposed by a theory of knowledge, which describes the method of knowing what there is to know.

*Spinoza.* Spinoza's metaphysical framework involves a pantheistic view of reality. God is reality. Reality is known in terms of thought or extension (mental and physical). Mind and body are essentially connected and are only nominally separate. In his famous parallelism thesis (Spinoza 1982, pt. 2, pr. 7) Spinoza states that "the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things." In his mode-identity thesis (Spinoza 1982, pt. 2, pr. 7, sch.) he claims that "a mode of Extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing expressed in two ways. His substance-identity thesis (Spinoza 1982, pt. 2, pr. 7, sch.) is stated in this way: "thinking substance and extended substance are one and the same substance, comprehended now under this attribute, now under that." In his substance-identity thesis thought and extension are described as different modes or expressions of activity.<sup>5</sup> Spinoza understands substance to be dynamic matter which involves patterns of qualitative variety rather than fixed forms. Because there is no metaphysical separation of the material and immaterial aspects of nature there is no dualism of mind and body in human nature. Thus, in Spinoza's ontology of being there is no separation of ideas and sensations.

*Hume.* Hume's metaphysics is very different from Spinoza's. Indeed, he denied the possibility of having a theory of metaphysics, although he makes certain metaphysical assumptions concerning human nature which will be discussed in the section on the self. In Hume's view the study of what there is amounts to a study of perceptions. Perceptions are either ideas or sensations: "Since all our perceptions are different from each other, and from every thing else in the universe, they are also distinct and separable, and may be consider'd as separately existent, and may exist separately, and have no need of any thing else to support their existence (Hume 1978, bk. 1, pt. 4, sec. 5).

In his view, we never have a perception of the cause of our perceptions because all our perceptions are fundamentally sensory experiences. We do not sense the cause of the sensation; we only experience the sensation. The sensation and ideas of the sensation are the only reality that we can discuss.

*Vasubandhu.* Vasubandhu, like Hume, does not have an explicit metaphysical doctrine, as does Spinoza—whose metaphysics involve a set of axioms from which necessary truths are derived. Yet, unlike Hume, Vasubandhu claims that there are metaphysical truths (based on scripture) which are independent of normal perceptions. Reality is a process of interrelated conditions which cannot be adequately described by categorical thought. Vasubandhu's metaphysics closely resembles that of Spinoza. It is discussed in terms of the doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda*.

The doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda* (Tibetan: *rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba*) is about the interdependent origination of all psychosocial phenomena.<sup>6</sup> Interdependent origination is perceived in three ways which are referred to as the three natures of reality (*trisvabhāva*): the imputed (*parikalpita*), the dependent (*paratantra*), and the completely perfected (*pariniṣpanna*) (Nagao 1978, 71). The imputed nature of reality is the conceptualized view of reality in which material objects are imputed to have an enduring reality which they do not have. The dependent or relative view of nature means that one understands the relational nature of existing conditions according to the level of one's insight. The way in which we perceive things affects the nature of the things we perceive. Ultimate reality is experienced nondiscursively and is wholly subjective awareness of the ongoing process of interrelatedness.

The process of emergence or *pratītyasamutpāda* is understood by reference to the transformation (*gyur ba*) of perceptual-cognition (*rnam par shes pa*). Objectified reality (*phyi rol gyi don*) is understood to exist as such because of mistakenly objectifying and categorizing the dynamic process of reality. *Śūnyatā* or Being refers to the dynamic

relation of conditions which exist, of which our perceptions and cognitions are part (see Guenther 1983). It is without an immutable, underlying substantial nature. Perceptions and cognitions are causally related to objects of perceptions. The dichotomy between objective and subjective reality is the result of mistaken conceptualization and categorization. In this holistic account all scientific endeavor involves the subjective component supplied by perceptions concerning the selection, interpretation, and communication of research data. The notion of wholly objective science reflects a lack of attention to the intercausality of existing conditions.

Reality, then, is determined in part by our perceptions of it. Yet just as our perceptions influence what we perceive, so they are influenced by the objects they perceive. The correspondence between our perceptions and the objects of perceptions forms the basis of knowledge. In the three views represented, all knowledge is personal knowledge as opposed to subjective or objective knowledge.

#### EPISTEMOLOGY

*Spinoza.* Spinoza claims that there are three ways of knowing: imagination (*imagination*), reason (*ratio*), and intuition (*scientia intuitiva*) (Spinoza 1982, pr. 40, sch. 2). The first kind is confused knowledge and is the cause of error and unhappiness. It consists of projections of the imagination which are distortions of the character of intercausality. Excessive efficient causation is attributed to oneself or others, which results in overattachment or repulsion. The second way of knowing, logical reasoning, involves knowledge of universal principles of causation and is characteristic of impersonal, discursive knowledge. Understanding causal principles enables one to go beyond the principles to apprehend metaphysical interdependent causality. The third way of knowing, intuition, consists of knowing the essence of things under a form of eternity (*sub specie aeternitatis*) (Spinoza 1982, pt. 5, pr. 22). Autonomous thinking is found in the second and third ways, with more complete autonomy in the third. True self-expression (complete understanding) requires intuitive knowledge of the essential eternal identity of oneself and God, that is, the eternal process of becoming.

*Vasubandhu.* Vasubandhu's truth criterion is "nonconceptual awareness" characteristic of the Buddha (Vasubandhu 1933, vs. 29-30). The distinction between subjective and objective knowledge is merely a function of the labelling process (Vasubandhu 1933, vs. 1a,b).

Both Spinoza and Vasubandhu claim that it is a misunderstanding of the relational nature of reality that leads one to attribute inappropriate causal power to any one thing. Both stress the importance of develop-

ing greater insight into the relational nature of reality in order to overcome ignorance or interdependency, particularly personal interdependency.

Vasubandhu emphasizes the development of single-mindedness through disciplined study of Buddhist scriptures and rigorous meditative practices to the point that there is no further need of the scriptures. Spinoza emphasizes the role of rational thought in overcoming particularized thinking. Particularized thinking in both accounts is concomitant with self-doubt, which invariably is rooted in expectations of oneself that cannot be fulfilled because the expectations depend excessively upon self-reliance (Vasubandhu 1933, vs. 6b; Spinoza 1982, pt. 2, pr. 49, sch.). Clear awareness (*'rigs pa*), on the other hand, is characterized by certainty.<sup>7</sup> This kind of insight has the function of undermining doubt because certainty is attained when the essential nature of reality is understood.<sup>8</sup> Awareness of intercausality reduces the focus on the self and places it in the relational context.

*Hume.* For Hume there is no knowledge of causal relations; there is only probability (Hume 1978, bk. 1, pt. 3). Probability is based on opinion or belief, which is “most accurately defin’d [as] A LIVELY IDEA RELATED TO OR ASSOCIATED WITH A PRESENT IMPRESSION” (Hume 1978, sec. 8, 96).

As an empiricist Hume claims that our perceptions are the source of our ideas about the world: “all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv’d from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent” (Hume 1978, pt. 1, sec. 1, 4). Simple ideas are united by association through resemblance, contiguity in time or place, and cause and effect (Hume 1978, pt. 1, sec. 4, 11). Of these three the relation of cause and effect is the most important: “’Tis sufficient to observe, that there is no relation, which produces a stronger connexion in the fancy, and makes one idea more readily recall another, than the relation of cause and effect betwixt their objects” (Hume 1978, pt. 1, sec. 4, 11).

For Hume our understanding of causation is due to observation and inference. Inference is understood in reference to the association of ideas. The relation of ideas corresponds with the relation of objects as they are observed. Efficient causation is attributed to objects in the same way as it is attributed to perceptions: both are due to imaginative association of ideas, based on related impressions. Hume claims that we can only observe repeated occurrences of constant conjunction of objects or events; we cannot establish a rational basis for causal necessity.

He shares with Spinoza and Vasubandhu the view that everything can be causally explained. Causation involves a form of determinism



which is explained by giving an account of causal conditions. In Spinoza's case that explanation involves true and adequate ideas; for Vasubandhu it involves intuiting interdependent origination of causal conditions; and for Hume it is providing an account of impressions. For all three thinkers determinism is self-determinism through the development of greater awareness of causal relations and one's place in the network of intercausality. One's actions are motivated by one's epistemology which requires both criteria of knowledge: felt experience and cognitive analysis.

#### MOTIVATION

Motivation is understood here to mean the inclination to act. For all three philosophers motivation for behavior is explained by reference primarily to desire. In none of the views is the will seen as the motivator of action and yet all three are primarily concerned with ethical or moral conduct. They affirm that reason and emotion are causally related so that action is a result of the inclusiveness of the two components.

*Hume.* Hume's theory of motivation for action is found in his theory of the passions (Hume 1978, bk. 2). We are motivated by our desire to pursue pleasure and to avoid pain, and reason only serves to make the connection between our desires and their objects. Thus, Hume's famous dictum is: "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (Hume 1978, pt. 3, sec. 3, 415).

Passions cannot be opposed to reason according to Hume because they have no relation to truth; they are simple impressions. There can be no unreasonable passions, only bad judgments. Direct passions arise from the raw sensations of good and evil and indirect passions arise from those sensations plus principles of the relation between impressions and ideas. Examples of direct passions are desire and aversion, grief and joy, hope and fear, as well as volition (Hume 1978, pt. 3, sec. 3, 438). The mind has an "original instinct" which inclines it toward the good and away from evil (Hume 1978, pt. 3, sec. 3, 439). This is the basis for Hume's doctrine of sympathy. We are naturally inclined to have compassion for others and our sense of duty presupposes that natural inclination.

The indirect passions which Hume discusses at length are pride and humility, which have the self as their object. He claims that there is a logically necessary relation between the concepts of pride and humility and the concept of self (Hume 1978, pt. 1, sec. 1, 276). In making that claim Hume is asserting a metaphysical truth about the nature of the self. That claim is inconsistent with his earlier claim that we can say

nothing about anything of which we do not have a sensation. It is largely because of Hume's inconsistencies that his empiricism is compatible (to the extent that it is) with Spinoza's rationalism.

Passions lead to action when volition is involved. He denies that the will is the undetermined cause of purposive action and that volition is the exercise of the will, the faculty of rational causality, which constitutes the act of choosing. In his view desire regulates the will and, when united with judgment, accounts for choice. Although Hume stresses the motivating quality of emotion and the passive nature of reason, he acknowledges the influence of reason on volition, a direct passion. He says, "did impressions alone influence the will, we should every moment of our lives be subject to the greatest calamities" (Hume 1978, bk. 1, pt. 3, sec. 10, 119).

His doctrine of the calm passions counterbalances his emphasis on the impact of the emotions on behavior. Calm passions are those with low felt intensity and are contrasted with violent emotions with high felt intensity. Both kinds of emotions have high motivational capacity but are experienced differently. Calm passions are more like beliefs in their felt intensity but have the motivational quality which beliefs (i.e., ideas) cannot have. He claims that we confuse a strong calm passion with belief when we say that reason motivates the will. The will is understood in terms of calm passions which, along with violent passions, determine our behavior. Good will is motivated by calm passions.

The will is never free from a prior desire: "as the desire of showing our liberty is the sole motive of our actions, we can never free ourselves from the bonds of necessity. We may imagine we feel a liberty within ourselves, but a spectator can commonly infer our actions from our motives and character, and even where he cannot, he concludes in general, that he might, were he perfectly acquainted with every circumstance of our situation and temper, and the most secret springs of our complexion and disposition" (Hume 1978, pt. 3, sec. 2, 408-9). Hume's soft determinism also applies to mental and physical acts. All effects are to be explained by reference to prior causes. There is no allowance for an uncaused will. Hume's determinism is "soft" because he denies logical causality (except inconsistently in his account of indirect passions, such as pride and humility); it allows only for imputed causality due to inference based on observation.

Donald Davidson develops the implications of Hume's compatibilism when he argues that "to know a primary reason why someone acted as he did is to know an intention with which the action was done" (Davidson [1980] 1982, 83). To give the reason is to describe the cause or to "rationalize" the action. He says, "central to the relation between a reason and an action it explains is the idea that the agent

performed the action *because* he had the reason” (Davidson [1980] 1982, 85). Actions are redescribed in terms of their reasons. Basic desire and its associated passions and judgments concerning the object and subject of desire are the reasons why we act as we do.

*Spinoza.* While Hume uses the term passion to discuss emotion, Spinoza distinguishes between passion and emotion. Passion is identified with negativity, that is, pain, which is described as “the passive transition of the mind to a state of less perfection” (Spinoza 1982, pt. 3, pr. 2, sch.). Emotion, on the other hand, is associated with action. He says: “By emotions (*affectus*) I understand the affections of the body by which the body’s power of activity is increased or diminished, assisted or checked, together with the ideas of these affections. Thus, if we can be the adequate cause of one of these affections, then by emotion I understand activity, otherwise passivity” (Spinoza 1982, pt. 3, def. 3). Adequate ideas are concomitant with active emotions and inadequate ideas coexist with passive emotions. When an emotion is adequately understood it ceases to be a passive disruptive emotion and changes in kind to one that is positive and constructive. Motivation for action is explained by reference to active or passive emotion rather than reason or emotion. He states clearly that “. . . each man’s actions are shaped by his emotion . . .” (Spinoza 1982, pt. 3, pr. 2, sch.).

Spinoza’s belief in the inclusiveness of reason and emotion are spelled out in the following claim: “. . . mental decision on the one hand, and the appetite and physical state of the body on the other hand, are simultaneous in nature, or rather, they are one and the same thing which, when considered under the attribute of Thought and explicated through Thought, we call decision, and when considered under the attribute of Extension and deduced from the laws of motion-and-rest, we call a physical state” (Spinoza 1982, pt. 3, pr. 2, sch.). Affections of the body and ideas of the mind are alternative ways of describing actions. Action is equated with thinking, which is coextensive with sensations (affections). Free action is identical with clear thinking, which is manifested ultimately as intuition. Intuitive awareness of intercausality, therefore, is necessary for free action, that is, action. Because freedom and action are equivalent, it is redundant to speak of free action.<sup>9</sup>

The will and the intellect are believed to be identical. He says, “by the ‘will’ I mean the faculty of affirming and denying, and not desire” (Spinoza 1982, pt. 2, pr. 38, sch.). Self-expression is a mode of eternal self-causation and such expression comes through the development of one’s awareness of the essential unity of oneself with God, the eternal natural process of becoming. The governing natural law is the law of

eternal receptivity and responsiveness of developing phenomena. That law becomes the force of intentionality in the consciousness of the free person who has intuitive awareness of the laws of the eternal natural order (*Natura naturans*). Because one is part of the temporal natural order (*Natura naturata*), one is never entirely free. Freedom from passive reaction, however, is the goal of human endeavor. One's moral responsibility is to develop one's understanding of the eternal natural laws and thereby experience the greatest degree of connectedness.

*Vasubandhu.* In Vasubandhu's view the motivation for action is always desire (*'dod pa*) which is determined by interest (*'dun pa*). Unless interest is present, one does not pursue a sensory object. Interest is described as desire with regard to the object as imagined.<sup>10</sup> The object of our interest is related to our level of understanding intercausality.

Emotions (*nyon mongs*) in the conceptual level of understanding are disruptive because one perceives external reality exclusively in terms of its positive or negative effects upon oneself. Herbert Guenther and Leslie Kawamura say that "a [disruptive] emotion [*nyon mongs*] is an ego-centered attitude which makes the mind restless when something occurs" (see Ye Shes rgyal-mtshan 1975, 64). Disruptive emotions occur in relation to egocentricity (*ngar sems*) and objectification (*'jug shes drug*) of sense data, the two fundamental hindrances to effective action. Inappropriate actions are motivated from desires which are tied to wrong assumptions regarding the nature of reality. The basic wrong assumption is that the dynamic interrelated process of reality can be dichotomized into separate individuals and originating causal power attributed to those individuals.

In Vasubandhu's view it is impossible to have an experience that is not emotively toned. One of the constitutive features of consciousness is the emotional coloring (*tshor ba*) of one's consciousness (Vasubandhu 1933, vs. 3c-d). Objects of one's consciousness are either attractive, repulsive, or merely accepted as facts of existence without attraction or repulsion on the part of the observer. As one's reality is characterized more by awareness of interdependent causality, one's emotions become less disruptive. With greater equanimity one makes a greater contribution to the existence of others and thereby promotes increased shared awareness of the intercausality of existing conditions (i.e., *pratītyasamutpāda*). Compassion for others is coextensive with awareness of the intercausality.

For all three philosophers the context of interdependency increasingly shapes one's desires as one becomes more autonomous. Causal power is enhanced through openness to others within the network of

interdependent origination of patterns of changing conditions. Self-determination requires receptivity and responsiveness. There can be no autonomous, rational good will independent of affective interaction, based on self-interest and interest in another, which includes the self-interest of the other.

### SELF

The self in all three views is understood as a process rather than as a thing. There is no distinction between agent and agency.

*Hume.* Hume does not separate the mind from the perceptions it has. The mind is its perceptions. Terence Penelhum criticizes Hume's account of the mind and says:

what follows from any form of the science of the mental which, like Hume's, treats thoughts or feelings or volitions as the units of explanation is that the mind of man can have no control over its thoughts, or its feelings, or its volitions. . . . if the course of my mental history is determined by the associative attraction of my perceptions; if they cause one another, then there is no sense to the suggestion that I, the mind or soul that *has* them, can myself exercise any powers over their course. All the mind does is *include* them. The self or ego or soul has nothing to do: it is (and even this is wrong) just the theatre on whose stage mental events happen. So the Humean mental world is a totally deterministic world, and the denial of the independent reality of the self is not an awkward result of Hume's system, as it is often thought to be, but one of its cornerstones (Penelhum 1976, 298).

In identifying the content of awareness with the awareness of the content (see Wilson 1973) Hume describes the self as a process, consisting of perceptions. Does Hume's account of the self have the implication that Penelhum says it does? Is it coherent to talk of moral responsibility if the self is not separated from its actions? I shall argue that it is not incoherent to talk of the self in terms of its actions, and therefore Hume's account of the self does not have the implication that Penelhum says it does.

For Hume the mind, like substance, is an unintelligible notion. We can never have an impression of it and, consequently, we cannot have an idea of it. The identity of the self comes from the dispositional quality of perceptions to form an identity relation between resembling and causally related perceptions (Hume 1978, bk. 1, pt. 4, sec. 6, 260).

In his account of the self Hume does not attempt to show that the self does not exist; rather, he attempts to show that it does not exist in a mysterious way. He would not deny that I have control over my thoughts; only that there really is no "I" apart from my thoughts, and so on. He claims that one has control over one's thoughts, feelings, and so on in that each perception exists in a relational way with other

existing perceptions. The perceptions mutually affect each other so that one's thoughts are tied to one's emotions and sensations, and are formed in a dynamic context of relatedness. There is no control apart from the shaping of perceptions as they integrate into the bundle for the purpose of acting. Self-determination in this case consists in reconciling perceptions. I am that process of interrelated perceptions and, accordingly, I determine the mode of relatedness through the nature of the perceptions which constitute me. Each new perception is influenced by the context in which it exists and it influences the context as it makes its appearance. In this way one's perceptions of another person, for example, are governed by the other impressions which constitute one's consciousness and they, in turn, affect those perceptions. Thus, for Hume, a person is in a constant state of becoming in relation to the context.

*Spinoza.* The self is part of the natural order, which is the temporal manifestation of the eternal order. The eternal order is nondualistic and is the essential nature of the natural order. An individual as part of the natural order is therefore essentially a mode of the eternal emergence of interrelated activities.

The self is defined as the *conatus*, the life preserving force. It is the natural tendency of a person to direct one's activity toward one's own happiness. That is the essential nature of the self. Similar to Hume, Spinoza sees the self as a process of sensations and ideas. It is the force with is intrinsic to them and which directs them toward integration with other selves and things. A person is his or her ideas and affections, and is directed by the appetite for self-preservation. The agent is identified with the agency. The control of the nature of the process of ideas and affections is determined by the level of understanding of the ideas involved. The development of one's understanding of the laws of the eternal process of becoming is one's moral responsibility. In view of that, one has control over one's ideas.

Spinoza claims that it is when people are seeking their own advantage to the highest degree that they are the most useful to the community (Spinoza 1982, pt. 4, pr. 35, cor. 1-2). Seeking one's own advantage means living according to one's desire to know and to be connected, which is equated with the *conatus* (Spinoza 1982, pt. 4, pr. 20, proof; pr. 35, cor. 2). One's virtue lies in one's power to express oneself (Spinoza 1982, pt. 4, pr. 20). Desires change as one's understanding of intercausality changes. As one's awareness increases one realizes that personal autonomy depends on the autonomy of others; that is, one realizes that autonomy and interdependency are mutually inclusive.

*Vasubandhu.* The self (*ālayavijñāna*) is a process of consciousness which is fundamentally basic nondiscursive awareness. Any discursive account of the self is an objectification and is therefore distorted. This understanding of the self is similar to Spinoza's view of the *conatus* as the temporal expression of the eternal process of becoming. One of the five constitutive features of the *ālayavijñāna* is that it is relational (*reg pa*) (Vasubandhu 1933, vs. 3a). By relational Vasubandhu means that there is an inclusive relation between three factors: the sense organ (*dbang po*), the object of awareness (*yul*), and the perceptual process as *vijñāna* (*rnam par shez pa*).<sup>11</sup> The self is determined by the conditions as they interact; therefore, the individual is essentially an aspect of the dynamic process of existing conditions. As a part of the creative process of existence, the individual is self-determining. All entities of reality are in a state of infinite openness (*rnam mkha'*), without the restrictions we project upon them.<sup>12</sup> It can be concluded that the view of the self as an event existing in a relational mode is shared by Hume, Spinoza, and Vasubandhu. They all see the mental phenomena which characterize the self to involve an integral relation between ideas and sensations.

#### FREEDOM

Freedom is synonymous here with both autonomy and interdependence. It is freedom from emotional disturbance and ignorance of causal interrelatedness. Such freedom is based upon the coexistence of expression of one's natural inclination for happiness with knowledge that such expression depends upon affective response to others and receptivity by them. The similarity among the outlooks of Spinoza, Hume, and Vasubandhu is found in their correlation between happiness and ethical behavior and their causal accounts of such behavior in reference to motives which involve only reason and emotion without regard for an uncaused free will. They all maintain that freedom within the context of determinism is possible. None is interested in freedom from causal explanations; rather, they are concerned with freedom from inquietude. For all three philosophers ethical conduct is characteristic of that kind of freedom, and unethical conduct indicates a lack of it.

*Hume.* The reason we think that we are free when in fact our actions can be causally explained is that we do not pay attention to the causally related factors. For example, the determination to establish the existence of free will is motivated by the desire to establish it; but we do not make the connection between the desire for free will and the affirmation of its existence and we do not make the further connection which explains the desire in terms of religious and moral interests,

which include the belief that there can be no moral responsibility *without free will*.

In Hume's view, responsibility requires causal connections between actions and motives. If an action cannot be traced to antecedent conditions concerned with an individual's character, then there is no basis for reward or punishment. Hume says that "moral evidence is nothing but a conclusion concerning the actions of men, deriv'd from the consideration of their motives, temper and situation" (Hume 1978, bk. 2, pt. 3, sec. 1, 404). We praise or blame individuals according to our understanding of their motives and general character.

The two distinguishing features of the happy, autonomous person are greatness of mind and goodness of character. Greatness of mind involves, at least, understanding one's capacities and their application according to one's place in society. Happiness, virtue, and self-satisfaction are inseparable in Hume's account of greatness of mind and goodness of character.

*Spinoza.* Autonomy is equated in Spinoza's view with self-determination. It is impossible to provide a complete analysis of freedom in a causal account of human behavior. Nevertheless, there are sufficient grounds to affirm the possibility of free action in a causal account of behavior if we allow that an agent has causal power. We must admit causal power if we admit that changes in beliefs and desires bring about changes in actions. Spinoza's metaphysical determinism allows for such causal power when his understanding of God or nature is interpreted to refer to a continuously creative situation rather than a completed state of immutability. Spinoza never refers to God as a power that predetermines nature. God is nature and nature is in an eternal process of emergence.

Virtue is the realization of one's essential relatedness to the natural order, thereby allowing for effective self-expression. The inclusive relation between self and God (i.e., self included in God) allows for the self-caused nature of action.

*Vasubandhu.* For Vasubandhu freedom is enlightenment or peace of mind, owing to an understanding of the interdependent origination of all conditions of the natural order. He, like Hume and Spinoza, prescribes development of ethical qualities for individual happiness, and holds that happiness is equated with freedom from emotional disturbance and that freedom from emotional disturbance is coextensive with understanding interdependent causality.

Vasubandhu's account of causal power is found in his discussion of the seeds of potentiality in the *ālayavijñāna*. Each seed contains within it



the potential for an infinite variety of possible developments. At every moment there exists both the demise and the creation of seeds of potentialities. The nature of the developing potential depends on the ideas and sensations of the fading potential. One invariably has freedom of expression because one's expression is determined by one's awareness of causal conditions. Autonomy or liberation is a function of positive emotions which are coextensive with awareness of metaphysical interdependent origination of all causality, including one's own causal power.

According to Hume, Spinoza, and Vasubandhu, an understanding of causal relations is required for freedom and moral responsibility. For Hume causal accounts of human behavior are restricted to an analysis of beliefs and desires in regard to the conventional world. Spinoza and Vasubandhu require apprehension of causal relations concerning the total natural creative process. In all views freedom within the temporal, natural order is limited because of a finite perspective on the causal chain.

#### SPINOZA, HUME, AND VASUBANDHU: SUMMARY

The mutual inclusiveness of reason and emotion in the philosophies of Spinoza, Hume, and Vasubandhu forms the basis for an understanding of human nature in which the notions of *autonomy* and *interdependency* are concomitant with one another. These three philosophers make metaphysical and epistemological assumptions concerning the inclusiveness of reason and emotion that provide the basis for their theories of motivation, of the self, and of freedom. Their compatibilist accounts of free action within the context of determinism are explained in terms of the motives desire and judgment. Desire is the primary motivator and reason directs desire to the appropriate object according to one's understanding of causal interaction. The self can be preserved only within the context of favorable conditions. The favorable conditions need to be recognized and selected. Freedom consists in the ability to accomplish that task. The measure of freedom in these three views is the degree of interconnectedness one experiences as one receives others and is received by them.

Spinoza, Hume, and Vasubandhu are important historical resources for feminists. They each provide from their various traditions a discussion of personal autonomy that requires the inclusiveness of reason and emotion and that, therefore, does not automatically dictate a male ethic of rational principles or a female ethic of affective response.<sup>13</sup> These three philosophers provide a basis for reducing tension between feminist ethics, which emphasize particular principles of emotive response, and Kantian ethics, which separates reason from emotion and

focuses on universal principles. Moral development in the views of Spinoza, Hume, and Vasubandhu requires emotively toned interest accompanied by knowledge of universal principles of intercausality.

The issue of autonomy versus interdependence is associated closely with the paradigm of free will versus determinism. The description of freedom wholly in terms of individualized autonomy does not allow for compatibility between freedom and determinism. When freedom is described in terms of interdependency, however—as it is by Spinoza, Hume, and Vasubandhu—then determinism is perceived as a necessary condition for autonomy. That is to say, autonomy requires receptivity and responsiveness within the context of interrelatedness of determining factors. Felt experience and analytic description are both required for autonomy. The concrete conditions which one perceives determine one's perceptions and are determined by them. Multilateral, rather than unilateral, causality characterizes the process of dynamic interrelatedness. The autonomous person is the compassionate person who knows that the web of interdependency is the only context of personal existence.

#### NOTES

1. For an extended discussion of feminist ethics as a polemic against the "ethics of principle" of Kant, see Noddings (1984). She argues that a discussion of ethics begins with the concrete experience of caring and being cared for; an ethic of principle, such as Kant's which separates principle from interest, is therefore distorted and is largely unhelpful, especially for women who spend much of their time caring for children.

2. The following abbreviations are used throughout the paper: in regard to Spinoza's *Ethics*—pt. = part, pr. = proposition, sch. = scholium, def. = definition, cor. = corollary; in regard to Hume's *Treatise*—bk. = book, pt. = part, sec. = section; in regard to Vasubandhu's *Trimsikā*—vs. = verse; letters a,b,c,d = lines in verse. English translations of Vasubandhu's *Trimsikā* are from a 1984 translation by Winnifred A. Tomm.

3. This is not to say that Spinoza, Hume, and Vasubandhu were not prejudiced against women's rational capacities in the same way that Kant was. Indeed, it would be surprising if they were not, given the general attitudes toward men and women during their respective times. The point I wish to make is that Kant's ethics, although it is highly noble and inspiring, has built into it the separation of reason and emotion. It assumes that reason alone is the basis of universal ethical principles and, further, that reason belongs to men and emotion to women. Spinoza, Hume, and Vasubandhu very likely would have agreed that men demonstrate more reason and women demonstrate more emotion. In fact, Hume explicitly states that "women and children are most subject to pity, as being most guided by that faculty" (Hume 1978, bk. 2, pt. 2). What is observed as a social phenomenon, however, is not to be confused with what is intrinsic to human nature. The accounts of human nature provided by Spinoza, Hume, and Vasubandhu entail the inseparability of reason and emotion; accordingly their moral theories could not (and do not) prescribe a rational basis of virtue which excludes nonrational components, as Kant's moral theory does. Insofar as Kant rejects the subjective, affective component of ethical principles his moral theory must be seen to be deficient.

4. This definition of metaphysics is taken from G. H. R. Parkinson (1976, 24-40).

5. For good discussions of Spinoza's "substance-identity thesis" see Beck (1976, 8-10), Edgar (1976, 86-103), and Bennett (1981, 573-83).

6. In regard to the mind-body relation, as understood within the doctrine of *prāṭhyasamutpāda*, Jacques May (referring to a stanza from the *Samādhirāja-sūtra*) says

“mais si une synthèse in intellectuelle (*saṃjñā*) subtile fonctionne au sein du composé psycho-physique (*nāma-rūpa*) de quelqu'un, la pensée (*citta*), perdant son avidité à l'endroit du composé psycho-physique, devient lumineuse. . . . Le rapport que cette stance établit entre *citta* et *nāma-rūpa* nous remène très près du cercle vicieux *nāma-rūpa—vijñāna* dans la formule archaïque du *pratītya-samutpāda* que donne la *Mahā-nidāna-suttānta*,” in “La Philosophie Bouddhique Idealiste,” *Asiatische Studien* 25 (1971), 273-74. That is, the view that there is nothing but mind means that our understanding of the nature of reality depends basically on the way in which we understand the psycho-physical relation. This applies to both the self and other things.

7. Vasubandhu 1933, p. 32: *rigs pa nges par sems pa las skyes pa ni bsams pa las byung ba'o* |

8. Vasubandhu 1933, p. 33: *'di ni som nyi zlog pa'i las can te / som nyi zlog pa ni shes rab kyi chos rnam rab tu rnam par phye nas nges pa thob pa'i phyir ro* |

9. For an excellent discussion of truth, freedom, and action see Mark (1972, 96-97).

10. Vasubandhu 1933, p. 30: *'dun pa ni bsams pa'i dngos po la 'dod pa ste / ma bsams pa la 'dun pa med pa'i phyir yul so sor nges pa nyid du bstan pa yin no* ||

11. Vasubandhu 1933, pp. 15-16: *dbang po dang yul dang rnam par shes pa gsum nyid gsum mo / de'i rgyu dang 'bras bu'i dngos por dus mnyam du gnas pa ni gsum 'dus pa'o* |

12. Vasubandhu 1933, p. 79: *ji skad du rnam par mi rtoq pa'i ye shes kyi ni chos thams cad nam mkha'i dkyil dang mtshungs par mthong ngo zhes gsungs pa lta bu ste / gzhan gyi dbang gi chos rnam kyi de bzhin nyid tsam mthong ba'i phyir ro* |

13. For an excellent feminist critique of gender-biased philosophical assumptions see Harding and Hintikka (1983).

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