ACCESS: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN EDUCATION
2018, VOL. 39, NO. 1, 6–16
https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2017.1384722

ACCESS

Honors and theater: Spinoza's pedagogical experience and his relation to F. Van den Enden

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ABSTRACT

Franciscus Van den Enden (1602–1674) is commonly considered as the man who taught Latin to B. de Spinoza (1632–1677). It is unknown if he actually taught him something else, but we do know he used a pedagogy of his own and made the young philosopher aware of the importance of pedagogical issues. The present article helps to document their relationship from a historical and theoretical perspective, by clarifying Van den Enden's ideas on a most debated subject: the use of honorary titles to distinguish pupils in the classroom. In particular, it shows how the rejection by Van den Enden of titles commonly used in Jesuits schools finds echoes in Spinoza's philosophy. At the same time, the article argues that through their common participation in theatrical plays, Van den Enden and Spinoza shared a pedagogical experience that helped to overcome the problems linked to the introduction of a hierarchy, not theoretically, but *in practice*.

KEYWORDS

Spinoza; Van den Enden; honorary titles; theater; affects

ARTICLE HISTORY

First published in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 2018, Vol. 50, No. 9, 809–818

Introduction

Spinoza's proximity to Franciscus Van den Enden's private school, which he attended first as a student and then as a teacher, put him in direct contact with the educational problems of his time. Leaving aside Spinoza's views about education as a tool of governance, this article studies an issue the two men approached in their philosophical publications regarding a specific pedagogical problem: the use of honors and its impact on pupils. Van den Enden and Spinoza both conceptualized and used new emotional methods, intending to avoid the exercise of honorary titles and hierarchies in the classroom.

The honors are indeed among the pet peeves of XVIIth century philosophers; they are what the wise men learn to despise and break from. The tirades about their vanity spanned all the way to Spinoza's opening paragraphs in the *Treatise of the Emendation of the Intellect*:

> For most things which present themselves in life, and which, to judge from their actions, men think to be the highest good, may be reduced to these three: wealth, honor, and sensual pleasure. The mind is so distracted by these three that it cannot give the slightest thought to any other good. (TdIE, 3)

However, Spinoza's contemporary school system and especially the famous Jesuit pedagogy known as *Ratio Studiorum*, continues to lean on a regular distribution of signs of recognition and even honorary titles:

> Each month, advocates the *Ratio Studiorum*, or at least every other month, officials of the camps are to be chosen and, if it seems good, rewarded too, unless in some places this seems unnecessary

> in rhetoric class. As a test for choice of officers, the pupils shall write in prose or, if it seems better in the higher classes, in verse or in Greek, during
>
> an entire class period. (…) Those who write the best theme will be chosen chief magistrates. Those who are next highest will likewise receive positions of honor in the order of merit. To give the election an air of erudition, the titles of the officials may be taken from political or military offices in Greece or Rome. The class should be divided into two fairly equal camps to stimulate rivalry. Each camp shall have its officers opposed by those of the rival camp and each pupil shall have his rival. The chief officers of each camp should have the seats of honor.[1] (Farrell, 1970, p. 69)

Van den Enden and Spinoza both agree that there is a contradiction between the contempt of honors among philosophers and their widespread use at school. Why do school masters teach children to seek what the wise men despise?

By considering Spinoza alongside his Latin teacher, this article intends to fulfill three aims. First of all, it will give a brief summary of the historical context of Spinoza's and Van den Enden's personal and intellectual relationship. This historical account of Spinoza's education allows us to bear in mind, while commenting on his philosophical views, what were the specific terms and problems the pedagogues of his time, including his own teacher and friend, were confronting. As an example of these historically determined issues, we will then consider how the two authors perceive the effects of honorary titles on a human group and especially on children. Eventually, we will see how the use of theater that Van den Enden borrowed from the Jesuits and practiced with Spinoza can bypass the different emotional problems that make the children 'unsteady'.[2] We will thus emphasize that the performances given by the two men provide *practical answers* to pedagogical issues. Setting aside the esthetics of drama in itself, it will appear that the use of theater plays a major role in both Spinoza's and Van den Enden's teaching experience. For both of them, it gives way to a collective practice of feeling and thinking.

Spinoza and Van den Enden: Disciples without masters

B. de Spinoza was born on 24 November 1632 in the Jewish community of Amsterdam (for biographical data, see Gullan-Whur, 1998; Nadler, 1999; Rovere, 2017). Before meeting Van den Enden, he followed the courses provided by the Jewish school, named *Talmud Torah*. There he received what would be deemed, by the standards of the day, an excellent education, since the lack of an established tradition at the local schools allowed teachers of various origins (Venice, Levant, North Africa) to freely borrow pedagogical ideas from all sources. From the Muslim world, they imported the use of a public library. They were also inspired by the Jesuit's conception of knowledge as skills—reading, expressing, analyzing, and so on. From the Calvinists, they borrowed the complementary private lessons model (so-called 'Latin schools'), where students, alone with the teacher, would go deeper on common core topics or study subjects chosen by them. Finally, the *Talmud Torah* school innovated with one remarkable originality: it was completely free of charge.

However, like his brother Isaac before him, B. de Spinoza was withdrawn from this school no later than the end of his fifth year (Nadler, 1999, p. 72). This is not surprising because most merchants did not allow their children beyond this stage; they would rather have them train on the job for their future profession.

While working with his father, Spinoza seems to have made friends early with several 'Christians without a church' (Fix, 1991; Kolakowski, 1969)[3]—including Jarig Jellesz, Pieter Balling, and the brothers Isaac and Simon de Vries (Nadler, 1999, p. 107). When the young adult, perhaps encouraged by Balling, considered it essential to learn Latin—somewhere between the end of the 1640s and 1656—he turned to Franciscus Van den Enden.

Born in 1602 in the catholic community of the Southern Low Countries, Van den Enden was the son of a shoemaker. He was educated with the support of the Jesuits and became a teacher himself in the Society of Jesus. From 1619 to 1633, he taught grammar and rhetoric in the Flanders. We do

not really know why he had to leave the Society, but Omero Proietti showed that during the Eighty Years War (1568–1648), the Jesuits were fervently debating the 'monarchomachs' theory, defending the possibility of opposing the unjust kings on behalf of the higher authority of the Pope (Proietti, 2010, p. 39). Whether Van den Enden did defend these ideas or not, he left his companions on the 15 May 1633, 'with their friendship and consent' (Klever, 2007, p. 59), according to his testimony.

Practicing medicine, having a taste for chemistry and being exceptionally gifted in ancient and modern languages, the thirty-two year old opened an art shop in Amsterdam with the ambition to expand the business that his brother, Martin Van der Enden, managed in Antwerp (Proietti, 2010, p. 62). It is unknown if he was already offering private lessons at that time or if he only accepted students after the bankruptcy of his shop, in July 1652.

The school he opened after the bankruptcy quickly became successful, as Van den Enden had numerous connections among high society (Proietti, 2010, p. 72). It is unknown when exactly Spinoza started to see him; what we know is that from 1656 at least, Spinoza started to write his first notes on the *Treatise of the Emendation of the Intellect* in a very sophisticated Latin language (Mignini, 2009, p. 41).

The most fascinating question—what did Van den Enden actually teach Spinoza, and how?—has firmly divided scholars. The problem is very difficult to solve because in the decade 1652–1662 both Spinoza and Van den Enden underwent dramatic changes. Wim Klever considers Spinoza's Latin teacher to be an 'atheistic master' (Klever, 2007, p. 216), a 'proto-Spinoza' (Klever, 1992, p. 7) who would have been responsible for the young man becoming a Cartesian, and would have written major political propositions before him (Klever, 2007, p. 4). On the contrary, Omero Proietti considers Van den Enden's teaching, and especially his theatrical play *Philedonius*, typical of some Jesuit movements, and 'loyal to the Counter-Reform' (Proietti, 2010, p. 57).

These different interpretations might be due to a time gap. Proietti bases his claims on documents dating back from the 1640s, when Van den Enden was quite involved in defending Catholicism and joined the *Congregación de los Esclavos del Dulcísimo Nombre de María* (Proietti, 2010, p. 21), a society whose creator, Father Bartolomé de los Ríos y Alarcón, was a well-known monarchomach. Many sources testify that around 1660 he experienced a sharp break with the Church institution and doctrine. The poems written by his pupil Pieter Rixtel, around 1662, sing the enchantments of an openly pantheistic teaching (see Klever, 2007, p. 14). Furthermore, the two books later published by Van den Enden, *Kort Verhael van Nieuw Nederland* (*Short Report on New Nederland*, 1662) and *Vrye Politijke Stellingen* (*Free Political Propositions*, 1665), express strongly anti-clerical positions. A dramatic volte-face in Van den Enden's itinerary from his strong commitment to the Catholic community in his youth, to his anti-clerical posture in his later years, thus appears to have occurred. Nonetheless, as Frank Mertens has emphasized, Van den Enden was neither part of the mainstream of the Roman Catholic Church nor a strict Cartesian.[4]

Over that same period, young Spinoza was also experiencing significant changes. Despite his original weakness in Latin, he quickly developed a passion for Cartesian philosophy and became a specialist discussed by Leiden's leading lights. In 1659, he took part in the controversy that disturbed the University, before and after Florentius Schuyl published for the first time Descartes' treatise *De Homine*.[5] Moreover, letting go the biblical criticism which seems to have been his first passion,[6] the young philosopher eventually mastered Latin and contemporary philosophy; and in the early 1660s, he became a professional Cartesian mathematics teacher (Israel, 2007, p. 47).

The relationship between the two men was thus a pedagogical one, but the scant sources we have compel us to a great caution. Van den Enden and Spinoza knew each other in the 1650s or 1660s, and the former Jesuit taught Latin to the young man; and that is all that can be inferred from the sources.[7] Yet, the intensity of their intellectual exchange can be estimated from the veiled references many of their texts contain from the other's doctrine. Didn't Spinoza clearly recognize, in *Treatise of the Emendation of the Intellect*, the need to rethink pedagogy? If someone, writes Spinoza, wants to achieve the 'perfection of human nature', then 'attention must be paid to Moral Philosophy

and to Instruction concerning the Education of children' (TdIE, 15). The young Spinoza not only knew about the existence of a pedagogical debate, but also considered the issue consubstantial to his own philosophical project.

In return, when Van den Enden sketched in the appendix of the *Kort Verhael van Nieuw Nederland* what a truly democratic education should be, he suggested a distinction between three kinds of knowledge—imagination, belief, clear knowledge—to be taught to students in the smaller classes (Klever, 2007, p. 196); this distinction is similar to the one Spinoza developed in his own philosophical writings.

All in all, there is little doubt that the teacher made his pupil sensitive to pedagogical issues and that the young philosopher contributed in the evolution of the master's thinking.

The honors theory

Before we consider the observations contained in Van den Enden's and Spinoza's independent works about the causes and effects of hierarchical titles and awards, it seems appropriate to consider several points. First of all, it is unknown what exactly was the method Van den Enden used in his Amsterdam school, and especially how different it was from the Jesuit educational system named *Ratio Studiorum*. Secondly, it is uncertain whether Van den Enden theorized in his political essays the kind of practice he engaged in during the previous decade. Thirdly, Spinoza never specifically studied what he calls 'the Education of children'. Moreover, when speaking of children, Spinoza often evokes the trust or love that exists between father and son, but he never mentions the teacher (see Curley, 2016, passim); this silence can perhaps be explained as we will see below.

Given these points, one thing remains clear: both authors loudly reject the use of titles and honors in a classroom. In the *Vrye Politijke Stellingen*, where Van den Enden directly defends democracy, he con- siders that a rational education should be supported by a fundamental truth: the equal freedom of all.

> The natural even equal freedom, has to be most clearly induced and made known to every man and member of an assembly of people. (Klever, 2007, p. 140)

This principle—'evengelijkheit', translated by Klever as 'evenequality' (*sic*)—is the foundation from which all rules must be drawn: educating citizens-to-be involves making them aware of that funda- mental democratic truth. Nonetheless, the purpose is not to teach them their own equality as a meta- physical principle, for such truth is deeply implanted in each of them. According to Van den Enden, it is not knowledge acquired from the outside, since everyone already has an intimate sense of his or her own freedom. The teacher's aim is to help individuals and groups evolve without interfering with their equality, and to strengthen it in each of them, so that all may be mindful that freedom is common to all.

The function of education is therefore minimal, because it is not so much about correcting or improving nature as preserving it. Thus, the model of a successful education is that everyone should remain 'unprejudiced and unshortened in his natural even equal freedom' (Klever, 2007, p. 142). From this point of view, the skills education should develop are various ways of exploring human possibilities, and their common condition and ultimate goal is the conservation of natural freedom. In contrast, this principle logically leads to the rejection of hierarchy in the classroom. However, while we might expect Van den Enden to reject honorary titles, his proposition goes much further.

> In which respect it also would be entirely necessary that in a right even equal freedom observing Republic or Common-Best the highest caution and supervision must be used to avoid and refuse all titles of excellency or degrees of pretended knowledge like the names of Doctors and Professors etc. Because these can cause nothing else than an idle high-conceitedness to the Privileged and Owners, and contempt of all the rest of the otherwise even equal free Citizenship, the notorious ruin of all sane knowledge and the dear even equal freedom. (Klever, 2007, p. 145)

Van den Enden refuses the suggestion that students be distinguished from each other by awarded titles, but he also rejects the habit of employing titles of honor even when addressing the teacher. The text contains a somewhat implicit but simple argument. If the teacher's knowledge is associated with hierarchical prestige, the effect of the association will not be the valuation of knowledge, but the justification of hierarchies. The value of knowledge in itself, and the intellectual pleasures it gives is replaced by distinction and domination. Citizens-to-be may thus develop a contradictory idea about the truth of nature: they learn to consider as superior all prestigious persons. This is how a prejudice with no natural foundation turns out to be the basis of the 'meritocratic' justification of unequal societies. Instead of identifying knowledge as a common good, available for appropriation and sharing, children cease to recognize more skilled others as fellow creatures, considering them as exceptions and ending up having contempt for those without prestige. Van den Enden can thus be situated in a tradition born with Etienne de la Boétie's *Traité de la servitude volontaire*, that goes all the way to Giorgio Agamben. While Agamben's point of view is broader and deals with politics in general, he emphasizes the fact that the 'glory'—that is protocol, ceremonial and general aura—surrounding persons and objects, linked to dominant regimes, is not a secondary effect of their power, but a central means to establish their domination (see Agamben, 2008).[8] Likewise, the use of honorary titles creates unbalanced representations between students, and these representations form citizens unable to remain faithful to equal citizenship, to democratic freedom, and to what Van den Enden considers a 'healthy' knowledge that is devoid of the pathologies that afflict and divide mankind.

> All excessive and most basic passions of humans don't originate from anything else than that they are generally kept in continual ignorance by violent government, various wicked artifices or better trickeries of all kinds of superstition and accordingly wicked education. (Klever, 2007, p. 139)

By maintaining the people in a state of ignorance and superstition, a baleful education throws them into a whirlwind of passions and constant confrontation. On the other hand, a healthy education allows minds to develop harmoniously, because the balance of the passions is naturally ensured by reason. This contrast between two political objectives, one of which is typical of an oppressive regime, the other of a democratic institution that promotes awareness of the common good, suggests that tyrants mold the people they despise. The consideration of human malleability which makes liberty so fragile sheds a new light on the pessimistic or optimistic theories of the human nature developed by Van den Enden's contemporaries: they reveal, according to him, nothing but diverse political wills. When education is poor, it is easy for the 'school pedants' to judge 'the folk or common people to be very dull, resentful, harsh, and cruel by nature and consequently be totally unable to help and be an amicable companion or cohabitant' (Klever, 2007, p. 138). People are not naturally anti-social, but anti-social features are injected into them as a poison by those who want to dominate them by division, impeding their social nature by giving way to their passions.

Thus, malicious teachers may diminish their students or create imbalance between them despite the 'even equal freedom', undermining democracy's deepest foundation. That is why education must be the submitted to specific legislation—to the point that Van den Enden suggested harsh measures.

> Nobody, on forfeit of his life, would ever be permitted to oppose or teach something against the general and even equal freedom. (Klever, 2007, p. 145)

Yet, this violent egalitarian defense does not mean that teachers will be deprived of all authority, nor students of any difference. The rejection of prestige promotes another value: democratic education based on the only worthy authority, the reasons.

> Therefore, in a well-established Republic, concerning all education of adults as well as young persons, one must hold to this indissoluble principle, trail or method, that all teachers of any art or science, apart from all authority, in their instruction have to appear sure and infallible only after reasons. Or at least always by a distinct expression of what they firmly assert and not firmly assert. So that one may always ask them specifically for the proof or the ground of probability of their assertions (…). (Klever, 2007, p. 146)

It is essential here to notice that Van den Enden chooses a plural when talking of 'reasons'. The text does not lionize divine 'Reason' any more than the teacher's authority, for there is no strength in teaching if not on rational grounds, to be presented case-by-case without assuming their validity. Authority and distinction will totally disappear from the class, but they have to be based on particular motives that our common faculty of reasoning makes accessible.

Six points of Van den Enden's educational doctrine can thus be drawn from the *Free Political Propositions*:

1. The 'even equal freedom of all' is a fundamental principle of which education must make every person aware.
2. Education has no other purpose than to preserve this natural truth.
3. Anything that creates imbalance and impedes this equality should be proscribed.
4. Only tyrannical powers impose beliefs that let the passions free and depreciate the people.
5. Opponents to the 'even equal freedom' are utterly dangerous.
6. Any authority or education must be based on specific rationally detailed reasons.

These points can be read as Van den Enden's contribution to the contestation of meritocracy. Where meritocracy justifies social inequality by the difference between people, Van den Enden rejects this inequality in favor of a common good, based on the interdependence of all, and consisting in the possibility, for each individual, to express his or her singularity. He conceives democratic education not as a way to help the youth obtain a normative human nature, but as the development of each person's ability to assert his or her unique participation in the maintenance of a common freedom and welfare. But what impact did these ideas have on Spinoza? Even if we consider Van den Enden's and Spinoza's common views on this issue, it would not help to establish the influence of one on the other. It thus seems more effective to identify a common problem in their texts, and then respect their different developments. In Spinoza's case, the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics* do offer vivid insights about the mechanism of passion denounced by Van den Enden.

In the *Short Treatise*, Spinoza observes that we cannot consider one thing to be better than the other until we establish a comparison between the two (KV II, 4). A comparison is nothing more than a mental act founded by the similarity of two images we have in mind and it thus depends more on our own images than on the things themselves; the differences identified by comparison cannot therefore be considered real, as Spinoza explains in a letter to Wilhelm van Blyenbergh, but only products of the imagination (Ep19).

This imaginary mechanism can cause esteem or contempt concerning others, and pride and humility when referring to ourselves (KV II, viii). In the *Short Treatise*, where Spinoza emphasized that 'everything we do must tend toward advancement and improvement' (KV II, vii, 2), the study of these passions is based on the concept of perfection.

> As far as Legitimate Self-esteem and Humility are concerned, through themselves they show their excellence. For we say that he who has these knows his perfection or imperfection according to its worth. And this, as reason teaches us, is the chief means of attaining our perfection. For if we know our power and perfection accurately, we thereby see clearly what we must do to attain our good end. (…) But [Conceit and Culpable Humility] not only prevent us from attaining our perfection, but lead us to total destruction. (KV II, viii, 7, 9)

Spinoza uses the term 'perfection' in a double sense here. The concept describes a fact—the perfection of what we are at any point of time without taking into account the comparisons we could make—and the representation of a rational purpose—the image of a 'more perfect' human nature, operating more as a motive than as an objective (because no human being could be purely rational: it would be contradictory to his or her definition). The apparent circularity of the sentence

disappears when we consider the difference between an actual perfection (an active power) and a desired perfection (a projection produced by this power, expressed in a desire).

From these remarks, one could infer that a fundamental pedagogical objective is understanding the actual perfection of each student, in order to accomplish what desire imagines as being 'more perfect'. The understanding of an actual perfection refers to the efforts of both the teacher and the student, who might be considered, in this case, as *theoretically* indistinct. They are partners working together on the same inquiry, aiming less to determine the 'potential' of the student (an Aristotelian concept that Spinoza rejects) than to follow the meandering of the desire in its present and future effects. From this perspective, a teacher does not ask herself or himself more questions about his or her student than the student asks himself or herself. Could this serve as a hypothesis to explain the fact that the teacher does not appear as a specific character in Spinoza's writings? One thing is certain, this exploratory work is incompatible with the pursuit of honors according to a mechanism that Spinoza makes explicit in his *Ethics*:

> If we imagine that someone enjoys something that only one can possess, we shall strive to bring it about that he does not possess it. (E IIIP32)

This mechanism, which defines envy,[9] effectively explains the phenomenon described by Van den Enden, according to which tyrannical societies bring imbalance into school and fuel the fire of passions. By diverting students from their quest for perfection and encouraging them to seek honors, their efforts are made antagonistic. Yet, unlike Van den Enden, Spinoza doesn't solve this problem by opposing the human social nature and the distortions introduced by authorities. In his view, the passionate excesses of desire are only natural; they grow through a necessary mechanism that education can only aggravate.

> It is clear, therefore, that men are naturally inclined to Hate and Envy. Education itself adds to natural inclination. For parents generally spur their children on to virtue only by the incentive of Honor and Envy. (E IIIP55S)

Van den Enden's naturalistic optimism just is not enough to eradicate harmful passions (envy, jealousy, ambition), because humans are naturally envious. And Spinoza's conception of childhood explains why authorities, even when as well-intentioned as parents (at least theoretically), come to employ this process:

> For we find from experience that children, because their bodies are continually, as it were, in a state of equilibrium, laugh or cry simply because they see others laugh or cry. Moreover, whatever they see others do, they immediately desire to imitate it. (E IIIP32)

The child's world is, according to Spinoza, mainly shaped by imitation, which is how human beings learn to be alike and give expressions and objects to their desires.[10] The parents' mistake lies in the fact that they want to control the objects and ideals with which children identify; they want to emphasize the examples they consider to be best. However, the comparisons they use do not provide good conditions for a proper imitation because they confirm and underline a difference, while desire only imitates what is considered similar (Rovere, 2013, p. 167).

The use of honors does not have quite the same meaning for Van den Enden and Spinoza. For Van den Enden, the contradiction between the principles of wisdom and pedagogical recourses is the result of a political will, and democracy must fight it with all its strength—including by violence. For Spinoza, this problem illustrates the heterogeneity of the human, their passions driving individuals away from the common good despite the fact that everyone's essence and existence is maintained collectively.

Does this dual diagnosis lead the two authors to formulate common or different solutions? Neither Van den Enden nor Spinoza develop a positive theory about class organization. It's rather in their practices—particularly in their use of theater—that one can find ways of overcoming the problem of hierarchy, and helping each student take part in the class, both as an individual and as a collective subject.

An alternative to honors: Theater and affect

In January 1657, Van den Enden and his pupils presented several comedies in the prestigious municipal theater (Bedjaï, 1993, p. 37). The first, staged on 13 January and 27 January, was a play by Van den Enden himself named *Philedonius*[11]; the second, staged on the 16th and the 17th of the same month, was an antique play by Terence, *The Girl from Andros*, where the old Simon, a demanding but caring father, wants to force his son to marry the firstborn daughter of his friend Chremes. By studying the crypto-quotes of the play in Spinoza's writings, Omero Proietti established that Spinoza had played Simon's role. The following year, on 21 May and 22 May, the school performed another of Terence's comedies, *The Eunuch*. This time, according to Proietti, Spinoza played the role of Parmenio while Clara Maria, Van den Enden's oldest daughter, played the beautiful Thais.

These plays deserve detailed attention, but here it is only possible to highlight some key issues. Firstly, Van den Enden's use of theater appears perfectly consistent with the Jesuit tradition. As part of the'*Ratio Studiorum*', theater was practiced as a school activity that served mainly as a learning method for languages and as an opportunity to illustrate moral principles (Demoustier, 1997, p. 25). Van den Enden maintained these functions and included in his play several typical Jesuit themes; but he also changed the theoretical and moral contents, to the point of making theater a substitute for neo-Platonic dialogs, and more specifically an antidote to the students' internalizing of hierarchies.

What is at stake in this learning method is mainly a conception of language. Faithful to the classical rhetoric principles he learned from the Jesuits, Van den Enden knew that mastery of a language is not only a matter of syntax or lexicon. Expressing oneself means moving, interpreting a role, fitting one's voice and attitude to specific situations. Theater is the perfect way to learn this through the body, by what Cicero called the action (*actio*): pupils learn to *act* the language, to incorporate it, in order to be able to express themselves through it. Therefore, it overcomes the dualistic division between body and mind which Van den Enden discussed in the *Free Political Propositions* (Klever, 2007, pp. 141–147), and which is mocked in the *Philedonius* (Proietti, 2010, pp. 272–285).

One of the principal advantages of this embodiment of language lays in the fact that it leaves no student alone with his or her difficulties in speaking. Together, the actors converge on a perfectly clear goal (to perform a show) that requires their collective participation. Despite the age gaps between Van den Enden's students—as far as we know, the youngest actor was seven, while Spinoza was twenty-six (Proietti, 2010, p. 76)—and although there were primary and secondary roles, these differences only helped to ensure the unity of the play. Each participant could experience a certain troupe cohesion, the troupe being—unmistakably—the physical unit that received the final applause from the audience.

It would be very interesting to study the *Philedonius* in detail and see what kind of community Van den Enden's drama encourages. It might also prove thought-provoking to develop Spinoza's theory of the immanent collective body, for the *Ethics* implies that all individual bodies express a single sub- stance common to all, and come to be seen as individuals inasmuch some particular movement unifies and distinguishes one from the others. Therefore, there is no contradiction in considering individuals of several scales, be they formed out of two, three, or forty human beings.[12] From this metaphysical perspective, Spinoza's thought would certainly appear to introduce both a language theory and an affect theory that help us to conceive of collective experience.

However, this is not what the present article pretends to do, for we consider it would be far-fetched and not totally accurate to theoretically over-interpret Spinoza's theater practice, in which Van den Enden initiated him, since the most important part of performing the plays is the performance itself. It would not mean much to state that Spinoza's experience on stage is consistent

with certain metaphysical ideas he developed later—precisely because theater is *not* primarily a theoretical act. On stage, the pupils experienced themselves as a collective body, but at the same time the role each of them had gave them the opportunity to assert their singularity. In particular, it might have allowed a physical experience where represented passions were identified as confrontational patterns, while the satisfaction of performing a show together might have overcome differences between the pupils and unified their affective experience. This, to us, is the most important issue at stake. But this practice aims at making these points more experiential than conceptual or intellectual. To further explore the conceptual implications of theater in this context it would be necessary to rely on several texts by Lodewijk Meyer and Johannes Bouwmeester, Van den Enden and Spinoza's common friends, in which the authors maintain that theater is actually a 'school'(See Bordoli, 2001, as well as Klever, 2000, p. 145). But the proposition, in these terms, no longer belongs to pedagogy: it is a matter of esthetics.

This article has sought to clarify the relationship Spinoza actually had with the school systems of his time, and how he and Van den Enden reacted against the use of honors. This historical research doesn't only explain the context of their thoughts; it helps consider their philosophical positions about hierarchy in the light of what they have actually practiced; and the significance of this practice depends on the precise historical situation when it was performed. Advocating against hierarchies, both men promoted an experience able to transform differences into forms of complementarity. Rather than consider Van den Enden as Spinoza's 'master' and study the 'influence' of the one on the other, one must acknowledge the greatest deed of this teacher: by making the students think without necessarily explaining educational content, by making the actors pronounce sentences without demanding belief in them, he exceeded expert professor status and encouraged freedom of thought. Spinoza, like many others, would be a fruit of this pedagogy.

Notes

1. This is Rule 35, named 'Common rules for the teachers of low classes', according to *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum of 1599*.
2. Spinoza writes: 'we find from experience that children, because their bodies are continually, as it were, in a state of equilibrium, laugh or cry simply because they see others laugh or cry' (EIIIP32S).
3. The expression 'Chrétiens sans Eglise' has been popular ever since the publication of a voluminous study by Kolakowski of the non-confessional movements known as the Second Reform.
4. '[Van den Enden's] "atheist" reputation, observes Frank Mertens, was not widely spread in sources from the 1660s, and was mainly fueled by posthumous comment' (Mertens, 2010).
5. See Spinoza's allusions in his letter to Lodewijk Meyer dated 26th of July 1663, in Rovere, 2010, p. 103.
6. See Spinoza's letter to W. van Blyenbergh from the 28th of January 1665, in Rovere, 2010, p. 159.
7. Colerus, Spinoza's most ancient biographer, says that Van den Enden also taught atheism: 'Cet homme enseignait avec beaucoup de succès et de réputation, de sorte que les plus riches marchands de la ville lui confièrent l'instruction de leurs enfants avant qu'on eût reconnu qu'il montrait à ses disciples autre chose que le latin; car on découvrit enfin qu'il répandait dans l'esprit de ces jeunes gens les premières semences de l'athéisme' Lucas, & Colerus, 2002, p. 10.
8. According to Agamben, the glory surrounding the top levels of a hierarchy aims at hiding the fundamental aimlessness of the Reign, especially when most activities are left to economical movements.
9. Envy is 'nothing but Hate, insofar as it is considered so to dispose a man that he is glad at another's ill fortune and saddened by his good fortune' (E IIIP24S).
10. For a more complete development on this topic, see Rovere, 2010, p. 165 et seq.
11. See the complete edition in Proietti, 2010.

12. Spinoza writes: '(…) we see how a composite Individual can be affected in many ways, and still preserve its nature. (…) If we should now conceive one composed of a number of Individuals of a different nature, we shall find that it can be affected in a great many other ways, and still preserve its nature' (E IIP13S).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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