



The Philosophy of Spinoza

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Benedictus (originally Baruch) de Spinoza sprang from a Jewish family of Portugal or Spain, which had fled to Holland to escape persecution at home. He was born in Amsterdam in 1632; taught by the Rabbin Morteira, and, in Latin, by Van den Ende, a free-thinking physician who had enjoyed a philological training; and expelled by anathema from the Jewish communion, 1656, on account of heretical views. During the next four years he found refuge at a friend's house in the country near Amsterdam, after which he lived in Rhynsburg, and from 1664 in Voorburg, moving thence, in 1669, to The Hague, where he died in 1677. Spinoza lived in retirement and had few wants; he supported himself by grinding optical glasses; and, in 1673, declined the professorship at Heidelberg offered him by Karl Ludwig, the Elector Palatine, because of his love of quiet, and on account of the uncertainty of the freedom of thought which the Elector had assured him. Spinoza himself made but two treatises public: his dictations on the first and second parts of Descartes's *Principia Philosophiae*, which had been composed for a private pupil, with an appendix, *Cogitata Metaphysica*, 1663, and the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, published anonymously in 1670, in defense of liberty of thought and the right to unprejudiced criticism of the biblical writings. The principles expressed in the latter work were condemned by all parties as sacrilegious and atheistic, and awakened concern even in the minds of his friends. When, in 1675, Spinoza journeyed to Amsterdam with the intention of giving his chief work, the *Ethics*, to the press, the clergy and the followers of Descartes applied to the government to forbid its issue. Soon after Spinoza's death it was published in the *Opera Posthuma*, 1677, which were issued under the care of Hermann Schuller, with a preface by Spinoza's friend, the physician Ludwig Meyer, and which contained, besides the chief work, three incomplete treatises (*Tractatus Politicus*, *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*, *Compendium Grammatices Linguae Hebraeae*) and a collection of Letters by and to Spinoza. The *Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata*, in five parts, treats (1) of God, (2) of the nature and origin of the mind, (3) of the nature and origin of the emotions, (4) of human bondage or the strength of the passions, (5) of the power of the reason or human freedom. It has become known within recent times that Spinoza made a very early sketch of the system developed in the *Ethics*, the *Tractatus Brevis de Deo et Homine ejusque Felicitate*, of which a Dutch translation in two copies was discovered, though not the original Latin text...

We shall consider Spinoza's system as a completed whole as it is given in the *Ethics*; for although it is interesting for the investigator to trace out the development of his thinking by comparing this chief work with its forerunner (that *Tractatus Brevis* "concerning God, man, and the happiness of the latter," whose dialogistical portions we may surmise to have been the earliest sketch of the Spinozistic position, and which was followed by the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*) such a procedure is not equally valuable for the student. In regard to Spinoza's relations to other thinkers it cannot be doubted, since Freudenthal's[1] proof, that he was dependent to a large degree on the predominant philosophy of the schools, *i.e.* on the later Scholasticism..., and from Giordano Bruno. In opposition to this Kuno Fischer has defended,

and in the main successfully, the proposition that Spinoza reached, and must have reached, his fundamental pantheism by his own reflection as a development of Descartes's principles. The traces of his early Talmudic education, which have been noticed in Spinoza's works, prove no dependence of his leading ideas on Jewish theology. His pantheism is distinguished from that of the Cabalists by its rejection of the doctrine of emanation, and from Bruno's, which nevertheless may have influenced him, by its anti-teleological character. When with Greek philosophers, Jewish theologians, and the Apostle Paul he teaches the immanence of God (*Epist. 21*), when with Maimonides and Crescas he teaches love to God as the principal of morality, and with the latter of these, determinism also, it is not a necessary consequence that he derived these theories from them. That which most of all separates him from the mediaeval scholastics of his own people, is his rationalistic conviction that God can be known. His agreement with them comes out most clearly in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. But even here it holds only in regard to undertaking a general criticism of the Scriptures and to their figurative interpretation, while, on the other hand, the demand for a special historical criticism, and the object which with Spinoza was the basis of the investigation as a whole, were foreign to mediaeval Judaism—in fact, entirely modern and original. This object was to make science independent of religion, whose records and doctrines are to edify the mind and to improve the character, not to instruct the understanding. "Spinoza could not have learned the complete separation of religion and science from Jewish literature; this was a tendency which sprang from the spirit of his own time" (Windelband, *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, vol. i. p. 194).

The logical presuppositions of Spinoza's philosophy lie in the fundamental ideas of Descartes, which Spinoza accentuates, transforms, and adopts. Three pairs of thoughts captivate him and incite him to think them through: first, the rationalistic belief in the power of the human spirit to possess itself of the truth by pure thought, together with confidence in the omnipotence of the mathematical method; second, the concept of substance, together with the dualism of extension and thought; finally, the fundamental mechanical position, together with the impossibility of interaction between matter and spirit, held in common with the occasionalists, but reached independently of them. Whatever new elements are added (*e. g.*, the transformation of the Deity from a mere aid to knowledge into its most important, nay, its only object; as, also, the enthusiastic, directly mystical devotion to the all-embracing world-ground) are of an essentially emotional nature, and to be referred less to historical influences than to the individuality of the thinker. The divergences from his predecessors, however, especially the extension of mechanism to mental phenomena and the denial of the freedom of the will, inseparable from this, result simply from the more consistent application of Cartesian principles. Spinoza is not an inventive, impulsive spirit, like Descartes and Leibnitz, but a systematic one; his strength does not lie in brilliant inspirations, but in the power of resolutely thinking a thing through; not in flashes of thought, but in strictly closed circles of thought. He develops, but with genius, and to the end. Nevertheless this consecutiveness of Spinoza, the praises of which have been unceasingly sung by generations since his day, has its limits. It holds for the unwavering development of certain principles derived from Descartes, but not with equal strictness for the inter-connection of the several lines of thought followed out separately. His very custom of developing a principle straight on to its ultimate consequences, without regard to the needs of the heart or to logical demands from other directions, make it impossible for the results of the various lines of thought to be themselves in harmony; his vertical consistency prevents horizontal consistency. If the original tendencies come into conflict (the consciously held theoretical principles into conflict with one another, or with hidden aesthetic or moral principles), either one gains the victory over the other or both insist on their claims; thus we have inconsistencies in the one case, and contradictions in the other (examples of which have been shown by Volkelt in his

maiden work, *Pantheismus und Individualismus im Systeme Spinozas*, 1872). Science demands unified comprehension of the given, and seeks the smallest number of principles possible; but her concepts prove too narrow vessels for the rich plenitude of reality. He who asks from philosophy more than mere special inquiries finds himself confronted by two possibilities: first, starting from one standpoint, or a few such, he may follow a direct course without looking to right or left, at the risk that in his thought-calculus great spheres of life will be wholly left out of view, or, at least, will not receive due consideration; or, second, beginning from many points of departure and ascending along converging lines, he may seek a unifying conclusion. In Spinoza we possess the most brilliant example of the former one-sided, logically consecutive power of (also, no doubt, violence in) thought, while Leibnitz furnishes the type of the many-sided, harmonistic thinking. The fact that even the rigorous Spinoza is not infrequently forced out of the strict line of consistency, proves that the man was more many-sided than the thinker would have allowed himself to be.

To begin with the formal side of Spinozism: the rationalism of Descartes is heightened by Spinoza into the imposing confidence that absolutely everything is cognizable by the reason, that the intellect is able by its pure concepts and intuitions entirely to exhaust the multiform world of reality, to follow it with its light into its last refuge. Spinoza is just as much in earnest in regard to the typical character of mathematics. Descartes (with the exception of an example asked for in the second of the Objections, and given as an appendix to the *Meditations*, in which he endeavors to demonstrate the existence of God and the distinction of body and spirit on the synthetic Euclidean method), had availed himself of the analytic form of presentation, on the ground that, though less cogent, it is more suited for instruction since it shows the way by which the matter has been discovered. Spinoza, on the other hand, rigorously carried out the geometrical method, even in externals. He begins with definitions, adds to these axioms (or postulates), follows with propositions or theorems as the chief thing, finally with demonstrations or proofs, which derive the later propositions from the earlier, and these in turn from the self-evident axioms. To these four principal parts are further added as less essential, deductions or corollaries immediately resulting from the theorems, and the more detailed expositions of the demonstrations or scholia. Besides these, some longer discussions are given in the form of remarks, introductions, and appendices.

If everything is to be cognizable through mathematics, then everything must take place necessarily; even the thoughts, resolutions, and actions of man cannot be free in the sense that they might have happened otherwise. Thus there is an evident methodological motive at work for the extension of mechanism to all becoming, even spiritual becoming. But there are metaphysical reasons also. Descartes had naïvely solved the anthropological problem by the answer that the interaction of mind and body is incomprehensible but actual. The occasionalists had hesitatingly questioned these conclusions a little, the incomprehensibility as well as the actuality, only at last to leave them intact. For the explanation that there is a real influence of body on mind and *vice versa*, though not an immediate but an occasional one, one mediated by the divine will, is scarcely more than a confession that the matter is inexplicable. Spinoza, who admits neither the incognizability of anything real, nor any supernatural interferences, roundly denies both. There is no intercourse between body and soul; yet that which is erroneously considered such is both actually present and explicable. The assumed interaction is as unnecessary as it is impossible. Body and soul do not need to act on one another, because they are not two in kind at all, but constitute one being which may be looked at from two different sides. This is called body when considered under its attribute of extension, and spirit when considered under its attribute of thought. It is quite impossible for two substances to affect each other, because by their reciprocal influence, nay, by their very duality, they would lose their independence,

and, with this, their substantiality. There is no plurality of substances, but only one, the infinite, the divine substance. Here we reach the center of the system. There is but one becoming and but one independent, substantial being. Material and spiritual becoming form merely the two sides of one and the same necessary world-process; particular extended beings and particular thinking beings are nothing but the changeable and transitory states (*modi*) of the enduring, eternal, unified world-ground. “Necessity in becoming and unity of being,” mechanism and pantheism—these are the controlling conceptions in Spinoza’s doctrine. Multiplicity, the self-dependence of particular things, free choice, ends, development, all this is illusion and error.

(a) Substance, Attributes, and Modes.—There is but one substance, and this is infinite (I. *prop.* 10, *schol.*; *prop.* 14, *cor.* 1). Why, then, only one and why infinite? With Spinoza as with Descartes independence is the essence of substantiality. This is expressed in the third definition: “By substance I understand that which is in itself and is conceived by means of itself, *i.e.*, that the conception of which can be formed without the aid of the conception of any other thing.” *Per substantiam intelligo id, quod in se est et per se concipitur; hoc est id, cujus conceptus non indiget conceptu alterius rei, a quo formari debeat.* An absolutely self-dependent being can neither be limited (since, in respect to its limits, it would be dependent on the limiting being), nor occur more than once in the world. Infinity follows from its self-dependence, and its uniqueness from its infinity.

Substance is the being which is dependent on nothing and on which everything depends; which, itself uncaused, effects all else; which presupposes nothing, but itself constitutes the presupposition of all that is: it is pure being, primal being, the cause of itself and of all. Thus in Spinoza the being which is without presuppositions is brought into the most intimate relation with the fullness of multiform existence, not coldly and abstractly exalted above it, as by the ancient Eleatics. Substance is the being in (not above) things, that in them which constitutes their reality, which supports and produces them. As the cause of all things Spinoza calls it God, although he is conscious that he understands by the term something quite different from the Christians. God does not mean for him a transcendent, personal spirit, but only the *ens absolute infinitum* (*def. sexta*), the essential heart of things: *Deus sive substantia*.

How do things proceed from God? Neither by creation nor by emanation. He does not put them forth from himself, they do not tear themselves free from him, but they follow out of the necessary nature of God, as it follows from the nature of the triangle that the sum of its angles is equal to two right angles (I. *prop.* 17, *schol.*). They do not come out from him, but remain in him; just this fact that they are in another, in God, constitutes their lack of self-dependence (I. *prop.* 18, *dem.*: *nulla res, quae extra Deum in se sit*). God is their inner, indwelling cause (*causa immanens, non vero transiens*.—I. *prop.* 18), is not a transcendent creator, but *natura naturans*, over against the sum of finite beings, *natura naturata* (I. *prop.* 29, *schol.*): *Deus sive natura*.

Since nothing exists out of God, his actions do not follow from external necessity, are not constrained, but he is free cause, free in the sense that he does nothing except that toward which his own nature impels him, that he acts in accordance with the laws of his being (*def. septima: ea res libera dicitur, quae ex sola suae naturae necessitate existit et a se sola ad agendum determinatur; Epist.* 26). This inner necessitation is so little a defect that its direct opposite, undetermined choice and inconstancy, must rather be excluded from God as an imperfection. Freedom and (inner) necessity are identical; and antithetical, on the one side, to undetermined choice and, on the other, to (external) compulsion. Action in view of ends must also be denied of the infinite; to think of God as acting in order to the good is to make him dependent on something external to him (an aim) and lacking in that which is to be attained by the action. With God the ground of his action is the same as the ground of his existence; God’s power

and his essence coincide (I. *prop.* 34: *Dei potentia est ipsa ipsius essentia*). He is the cause of himself (*def. prima: per causam sui intelligo id, cujus essentia involvit existentiam, sive id, cujus natura non potest concipi nisi existens*); it would be a contradiction to hold that being was not, that God, or substance, did not exist; he cannot be thought otherwise than as existing; his concept includes his existence. To be self-caused means to exist necessarily (I. *prop.* 7). The same thing is denoted by the predicate eternal, which, according to the eighth definition, denotes “existence itself, in so far as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the mere definition of the eternal thing.”

The infinite substance stands related to finite, individual things, not only as the independent to the dependent, as the cause to the caused, as the one to the many, and the whole to the parts, but also as the universal to the particular, the indeterminate to the determinate. From infinite being as pure affirmation (I. *prop.* 8, *schol.* I: *absoluta affirmatio*) everything which contains a limitation or negation, and this includes every particular determination, must be kept at a distance: *determinatio negatio est* (*Epist.* 50 and 41: a determination denotes nothing positive, but a deprivation, a lack of existence; relates not to the being but to the non-being of the thing). A determination states that which distinguishes one thing from another, hence what it is *not*, expresses a limitation of it. Consequently God, who is free from every negation and limitation, is to be conceived as the absolutely indeterminate. The results thus far reached run: *Substantia una infinita—Deus sive natura—causa sui (aeterna) et rerum (immanens)—libera necessitas—non determinata*. Or more briefly: Substance = God = nature. The equation of God and substance had been announced by Descartes, but not adhered to, while Bruno had approached the equation of God and nature—Spinoza decisively completes both and combines them.

A further remark may be added concerning the relation of God and the world. In calling the infinite at once the permanent essence of things and their producing cause, Spinoza raises a demand which it is not easy to fulfill, the demand to think the existence of things in substance as a following from substance, and their procession from God as a remaining in him. He refers us to mathematics: the things which make up the world are related to God as the properties of a geometrical figure to its concepts, as theorems to the axiom, as the deduction to the principle, which from eternity contains all that follows from it and retains this even while putting it forth. It cannot be doubted that such a view of causality contains error,—it has been characterized as a confusion of *ratio* and *causa*, of logical ground and real cause,—but it is just as certain that Spinoza committed it. He not only compares the dependence of the effect on its cause to the dependence of a derivative principle on that from which it is derived, but fully equates the two; he thinks that in logico-mathematical “consequences” he has grasped the essence of real “effects”: for him the type of all legality, as also of real becoming, was the necessity which governs the sequence of mathematical truths, and which, on the one hand, is even and still, needing no special exertion of volitional energy, while, on the other, it is rigid and unyielding, exalted above all choice. Philosophy had sought the assistance of mathematics because of the clearness and certainty which distinguish the conclusions of the latter, and which she wished to obtain for her own. In excess of zeal she was not content with striving after this ideal of indefectible certitude, but, forgetting the diversity of the two fields, strove to imitate other qualities which are not transferable; instead of learning from mathematics she became subservient to it.

Substance does not affect us by its mere existence, but through an *Attribute*. By attribute is meant, according to the fourth definition, “that which the understanding perceives of substance as constituting the essence of it” (*quod intellectus de substantia percipit, tanquam ejusdem essentiam constituens*). The more reality a substance contains, the more attributes it has;

consequently infinite substance possesses an infinite number, each of which gives expression to its essence, but of which two only fall within our knowledge. Among the innumerable divine attributes the human mind knows those only which it finds in itself, thought and extension. Although man beholds God only as thinking and extended substance, he yet has a clear and complete; an adequate—idea of God. Since each of the two attributes is conceived without the other, hence in itself (*per se*), they are distinct from each other *realiter*, and independent. God is absolutely infinite, the attributes only in their kind (*in suo genere*).

How can the indeterminate possess properties? Are the attributes merely ascribed to substance by the understanding, or do they possess reality apart from the knowing subject? This question has given rise to much debate. According to Hegel and Ed. Erdmann the attributes are something external to substance, something brought into it by the understanding, forms of knowledge present in the beholder alone; substance itself is neither extended nor cogitative, but merely appears to the understanding under these determinations, without which the latter would be unable to cognize it. This “formalistic” interpretation, which, relying on a passage in a letter to De Vries (*Epist.* 27), explains the attributes as mere modes of intellectual apprehension, numbers Kuno Fischer among its opponents. As the one party holds to the first half of the definition, the other places the emphasis on the second half (“that which the *understanding* perceives—as constituting the *essence* of substance”). The attributes are more than mere modes of representation—they are real properties, which substance possesses even apart from an observer, nay, in which it consists; in Spinoza, moreover, “must be conceived” is the equivalent of “to be.” Although this latter “realistic” party undoubtedly has the advantage over the former, which reads into Spinoza a subjectivism foreign to his system, they ought not to forget that the difference in interpretation has for its basis a conflict among the motives which control Spinoza’s thinking. The reference of the attributes to the understanding, given in the definition, is not without significance. It sprang from the wish not to mar the indeterminateness of the absolute by the opposition of the attributes, while, on the other hand, an equally pressing need for the conservation of the immanence of substance forbade a bold transfer of the attributes to the observer. The real opinion of Spinoza is neither so clear and free from contradictions, nor so one-sided, as that which his interpreters ascribe to him. Fischer’s further interpretation of the attributes of God as his “powers” is tenable, so long as by *causa* and *potentia* we understand nothing more than the irresistible, but non-kinetic, force with which an original truth establishes or effects those which follow from it.

As the dualism of extension and thought is reduced from a substantial to an attributive distinction, so individual bodies and minds, motions and thoughts, are degraded a stage further. Individual things lack independence of every sort. The individual is, as a determinate finite thing, burdened with negation and limitation, for every determination includes a negation; that which is truly real in the individual is God. Finite things are *modi* of the infinite substance, mere states, variable states, of God. By themselves they are nothing, since out of God nothing exists. They possess existence only in so far as they are conceived in their connection with the infinite, that is, as transitory forms of the unchangeable substance. They are not in themselves, but in another, in God, and are conceived only in God. They are mere affections of the divine attributes, and must be considered as such.

To the two attributes correspond two classes of modes. The most important modifications of extension are rest and motion. Among the modes of thought are understanding and will. These belong in the sphere of determinate and transitory being and do not hold of the *natura naturans*: God is exalted above all modality, above will and understanding, as above motion and rest. We must not assert of the *natura naturata* (the world as the sum of all modes), as of the *natura naturans*, that its essence involves existence (*I. prop.* 24): we can conceive finite things as non-

existent, as well as existent (*Epist.* 29). This constitutes their “contingency,” which must by no means be interpreted as lawlessness. On the contrary, all that takes place in the world is most rigorously determined; every individual, finite, determinate thing and event is determined to its existence and action by another similarly finite and determinate thing or event, and this cause is, in turn, determined in its existence and action by a further finite mode, and so on to infinity (*I. prop.* 28). Because of this endlessness in the series there is no first or ultimate cause in the phenomenal world; all finite causes are second causes; the primary cause lies within the sphere of the infinite and is God himself. The modes are all subject to the constraint of an unbroken and endless nexus of efficient causes, which leaves room neither for chance, nor choice, nor ends. Nothing can be or happen otherwise than as it is and happens (*I. prop.* 29, 33).

The causal chain appears in two forms: a mode of extension has its producing ground in a second mode of extension; a mode of thought can be caused only by another mode of thought—each individual thing is determined by one of its own kind. The two series proceed side by side, without a member of either ever being able to interfere in the other or to effect anything in it—a motion can never produce anything but other motions, an idea can result only in other ideas; the body can never determine the mind to an idea, nor the soul the body to a movement. Since, however, extension and thought are not two substances, but attributes of one substance, this apparently double causal nexus of two series proceeding in exact correspondence is, in reality, but a single one. (*III. prop.* 2, *schol.*) viewed from different sides. That which represents a chain of motions when seen from the side of extension, bears the aspect of a series of ideas from the side of thought. *Modus extensionis et idea illius modi una eademque est res, sed duobus modis expressa* (*II. prop.* 7, *schol.*; cf. *III. prop.* 2, *schol.*). The soul is nothing but the idea of an actual body, body or motion nothing but the object or event in the sphere of extended actuality corresponding to an idea. No idea exists without something corporeal corresponding to it, no body, without at the same time existing as idea, or being conceived; in other words, everything is both body and spirit, all things are animated (*II. prop.* 13, *schol.*). Thus the famous proposition results; *Ordo et connexio idearum idem est ac ordo et connexio rerum (sive corporum; II. prop.* 7), and in application to man, “the order of the actions and passions of our body is simultaneous in nature with the order of the actions and passions of the mind” (*III. prop.* 2, *schol.*).

The attempt to solve the problem of the relation between the material and the mental worlds by asserting their thoroughgoing correspondence and substantial identity, was philosophically justifiable and important, though many evident objections obtrude themselves upon us. The required assumption, that there is a mental event corresponding to every bodily one, and *vice versa*, meets with involuntary and easily supported opposition, which Spinoza did nothing to remove. Similarly he omitted to explain how body is related to motion, mind to ideas, and both to actuality. The ascription of a materialistic tendency to Spinoza is not without foundation. Corporeality and reality appear well-nigh identical for him,—the expressions *corpora* and *res* are used synonymously,—so that there remains for minds and ideas only an existence as reflections of the real in the sphere of [an] ideality (whose degree of actuality it is difficult to determine). Moreover, individualistic impulses have been pointed out, which, in part, conflict with the monism which he consciously follows, and, in part, subserve its interests. An example of this is given in the relation of mind and idea: Spinoza treats the soul as a sum of ideas, as consisting in them. An (at least apparently substantial) bond among ideas, an ego, which possesses them, does not exist for him: the Cartesian *cogito* has become an impersonal *cogitatur* or a *Deus cogitat*. In order to the unique substantiality of the infinite, the substantiality of individual spirits must disappear. That which argues for the latter is their I-ness (*Ichheit*), the unity of self-consciousness; it is destroyed, if the mind is a congeries of ideas, a composite of them. Thus in order to relieve itself from the self-dependence of the individual mind, monism

allies itself with a spiritual atomism, the most extreme which can be conceived. The mind is resolved into a mass of individual ideas.

Mention may be made in passing, also, of a strange conception, which is somewhat out of harmony with the rest of the system, and of which, moreover, little use is made. This is the conception of *infinite modes*. As such are cited, *facies totius mundi, motus et quies, intellectus absolute infinitus*. Kuno Fischer's interpretation of this difficult conception may be accepted. It denotes, according to him, the connected sum of the modes, the itself non-finite sum total of the finite—the universe meaning the totality of individual things in general (without reference to their nature as extended or cogitative); rest and motion, the totality of material being; the absolutely infinite understanding, the totality of spiritual being or the ideas. Individual spirits together constitute, as it were, the infinite intellect; our mind is a part of the divine understanding, yet not in such a sense that the whole consists of the parts, but that the part exists only through the whole. When we say, the human mind perceives this or that, it is equivalent to saying that God—not in so far as he is infinite, but as he expresses himself in this human mind and constitutes its essence—has this or that idea (II. *prop.* II, *coroll.*).

The discussion of these three fundamental concepts exhausts all the chief points in Spinoza's doctrine of God. Passing over his doctrine of body (II. between *prop.* 13 and *prop.* 14) we turn at once to his discussion of mind and man.

(b) Anthropology: Cognition and the Passions.—Each thing is at once mind and body, representation and that which is represented, idea and ideate (object). Body and soul are the same being, only considered under different attributes. The human mind is the idea of the human body; it cognizes itself in perceiving the affections of its body; it represents all that takes place in the body, though not all adequately. As man's body is composed of very many bodies, so his soul is composed of very many ideas. To judge of the relation of the human mind to the mind of lower beings, we must consider the superiority of man's body to other bodies; the more complex a body is, and the greater the variety of the affections of which it is capable, the better and more adapted for adequate cognition, the accompanying mind.—A result of the identity of soul and body is that the acts of our will are not free (*Epist.* 62): they are, in fact, determinations of our body, only considered under the attribute of thought, and no more free than this from the constraint of the causal law (III. *prop.* 2, *schol.*).—Since the mind does nothing without at the same time knowing that it does it—since, in other words, its activity is a conscious activity, it is not merely *idea corporis humani*, but also *idea ideae corporis* or *idea mentis*.

All adherents of the Eleatic separation of the one pure being from the manifold and changing world of appearance are compelled to make a like distinction between two kinds and two organs of *knowledge*. The representation of the empirical manifold of separately existing individual things, together with the organ thereof, Spinoza terms *imaginatio*; the faculty of cognizing the true reality, the one, all-embracing substance, he calls *intellectus*. *Imaginatio* (imagination, sensuous representation) is the faculty of inadequate, confused ideas, among which are included abstract conceptions, as well as sensations and memory-images. The objects of perception are the affections of our body; and our perceptions, therefore, are not clear and distinct, because we are not completely acquainted with their causes. In the merely perceptual stage, the mind gains only a confused and mutilated idea of external objects, of the body, and of itself; it is unable to separate that in the perception (*e.g.*, heat) which is due to the external body from that which is due to its own body. An inadequate idea, however, is not in itself an error; it becomes such only when, unconscious of its defectiveness, we take it for complete and true. Prominent examples of erroneous ideas are furnished by general concepts, by the idea of ends, and the idea of the freedom of the will. The more general and abstract an idea, the more inadequate

and indistinct it becomes; and this shows the lack of value in generic concepts, which are formed by the omission of differences. All cognition which is carried on by universals and their symbols, words, yields opinion and imagination merely instead of truth. Quite as valueless and harmful is the idea of ends, with its accompaniments. We think that nature has typical forms hovering before it, which it is seeking to actualize in things; when this intention is apparently fulfilled we speak of things as perfect and beautiful; when it fails, of imperfect and ugly things. Such concepts of value belong in the sphere of fictions. The same is true of the idea of the freedom of the will, which depends on our ignorance of that which constrains us. Apart from the consideration that “the will,” the general conception of which comes under the rubric of unreal abstractions, is in fact merely the sum of the particular volitions, the illusion of freedom, *e.g.*, that we will and act without a cause, arises from the fact that we are conscious of our action (and also of its proximate motives), but not of its (remoter) determining causes. Thus the thirsty child believes it desires its milk of its own free will, and the timid one, that it freely chooses to run away (*Ethica*, III. *prop.* 2, *schol.*; I. *app.*) If the falling stone were conscious, it would, likewise, consider itself free, and its fall the result of an undetermined decision.

Two degrees are to be distinguished in the true or adequate knowledge of the intellect: rational knowledge attained through inference, and intuitive, self-evident knowledge; the latter has principles for its object, the former that which follows from them. Instead of operating with abstract concepts the reason uses common notions, *notiones communes*. Genera do not exist, but, no doubt, something common to all things. All bodies agree in being extended; all minds and ideas in being modes of thought; all beings whatever in the fact that they are modes of the divine substance and its attributes; “that which is common to all things, and which is equally in the part and in the whole, cannot but be adequately conceived.” The ideas of extension, of thought, and of the eternal and infinite essence of God are adequate ideas. The adequate idea of each individual actual object involves the idea of God, since it can neither exist nor be conceived apart from God, and “all ideas, in so far as they are referred to God, are true.” The ideas of substance and of the attributes are conceived through themselves, or immediately (intuitively) cognized; they are underivative, original, self-evident ideas.

There are thus three kinds, degrees, or faculties of cognition—sensuous or imaginative representation, reason, and immediate intuition. Knowledge of the second and third degrees is necessarily true, and our only means of distinguishing the true from the false. As light reveals itself and darkness, so the truth is the criterion of itself and of error. Every truth is accompanied by certainty, and is its own witness (II. *prop.* 43, *schol.*).—Adequate knowledge does not consider things as individuals, but in their necessary connection and as eternal sequences from the world-ground. The reason perceives things under the form of eternity: *sub specie aeternitatis* (II. *prop.* 44, *cor.* 2).

In his theory of the *emotions*, Spinoza is more dependent on Descartes than anywhere else; but even here he is guided by a successful endeavor after greater rigor and simplicity. He holds his predecessor’s false concept of freedom responsible for the failure of his very acute inquiry. All previous writers on the passions have either derided, or bewailed, or condemned them, instead of investigating their nature. Spinoza will neither denounce nor ridicule human actions and appetites, but endeavor to comprehend them on the basis of natural laws, and to consider them as though the question concerned lines, surfaces, and bodies. He aims not to look on hate, anger, and the rest as flaws, but as necessary, though troublesome, properties of human nature, for which, as really as for heat and cold, thunder and lightning, a causal explanation is requisite.—As a determinate, finite being the mind is dependent in its existence and its activity on other finite things, and is incomprehensible without them; from its involution in the general course of nature the inadequate ideas inevitably follow, and from these the passive

states or emotions; the passions thus belong to human nature, as one subject to limitation and negation.—The destruction of contingent and perishable things is effected by external causes; no one is destroyed by itself; so far as in it lies everything strives to persist in its being (III. *prop.* 4 and 6). The fundamental endeavor after self-preservation constitutes the essence of each thing (III. *prop.* 7). This endeavor (*conatus*) is termed will (*voluntas*) or desire (*cupiditas*) when it is referred to the mind alone, and appetite (*appetitus*) when referred to the mind and body together; desire or volition is conscious appetite (III. *prop.* 9, *schol.*). We call a thing good because we desire it, not desire a thing because we hold it good (cf. Hobbes, p. 75). To desire two further fundamental forms of the emotions are added, pleasure and pain. If a thing increases the power of our body to act, the idea of it increases the power of our soul to think, and is gladly imagined by it. Pleasure (*laetitia*) is the transition of a man to a greater, and pain (*tristitia*) his transition to a lesser perfection.

All other emotions are modifications or combinations of the three original ones, to which Spinoza reduces the six of Descartes (cf. p. 105). In the deduction and description of them his procedure is sometimes aridly systematic, sometimes even forced and artificial, but for the most part ingenious, appropriate, and psychologically acute. Whatever gives us pleasure augments our being, and whatever pains us diminishes it; hence we seek to preserve the causes of pleasurable emotions, and love them, to do away with the causes of painful ones, and hate them. “Love is pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause; hate is pain accompanied by the idea of an external cause.” Since all that furthers or diminishes the being of (the cause of our pleasure) the object of our love, exercises at the same time a like influence on us, we love that which rejoices the object of our love and hate that which disturbs it; its happiness and suffering become ours also. The converse is true of the object of our hate: its good fortune provokes us and its ill fortune pleases us. If we are filled with no emotion toward things like ourselves, we sympathize in their sad or joyous feelings by involuntary imitation. Pity, from which we strive to free ourselves as from every painful affection, inclines us to benevolence or to assistance in the removal of the cause of the misery of others. Envy of those who are fortunate, and commiseration of those who are in trouble, are alike rooted in emulation. Man is by nature inclined to envy and malevolence. Hate easily leads to underestimation, love to overestimation, of the object, and self-love to pride or self-satisfaction, which are much more frequently met with than unfeigned humility. Immoderate desire for honor is termed ambition; if the desire to please others is kept within due bounds it is praised as unpretentiousness, courtesy, modesty (*modestia*). Ambition, luxury, drunkenness, avarice, and lust have no contraries, for temperance, sobriety, and chastity are not emotions (passive states), but denote the power of the soul by which the former are moderated, and which is discussed later under the name *fortitudo*. Self-abasement or humility is a feeling of pain arising from the consideration of our weakness and impotency; its opposite is self-complacency. Either of these may be accompanied by the (erroneous) belief that we have done the saddening or gladdening act of our own free will; in this case the former affection is termed repentance. Hope and fear are inconstant pleasure and pain, arising from the idea of something past or to come, concerning whose coming and whose issue we are still in doubt. There is no hope unmingled with fear, and no fear without hope; for he who still doubts imagines something which excludes the existence of that which is expected. If the cause of doubt is removed, hope is transformed into a feeling of confidence and fear into despair. There are as many kinds of emotions as there are classes among their objects or causes.

Besides the emotions to be termed “passions” in the strict sense, states of passivity, Spinoza recognizes others which relate to us as active. Only those which are of the nature of pleasure or desire belong to this class of *active* emotions; the painful affections are entirely excluded, since without exception they diminish or arrest the mind’s power to think. The totality of these

nobler impulses is called *fortitudo* (fortitude), and a distinction is made among them between *animositas* (vigor of soul) and *generositas* (magnanimity, noble-mindedness), according as rational desire is directed to the preservation of our own being or to aiding our fellow-men. Presence of mind and temperance are examples of the former, modesty and clemency of the latter. By this bridge, the idea of the active emotions, we may follow Spinoza into the field of ethics.

(c) Practical Philosophy—Spinoza’s theory of ethics is based on the equation of the three concepts, perfection, reality, activity (V. *prop.* 40, *dem.*). The more active a thing is, the more perfect it is and the more reality it possesses. It is active, however, when it is the complete or adequate cause of that which takes place within it or without it; passive when it is not at all the cause of this, or the cause only in part. A cause is termed adequate, when its effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived from it alone. The human mind, as a *modus* of thought, is active when it has adequate ideas; all its passion consists in confused ideas, among which belong the affections produced by external objects. The essence of the mind is thought; volition is not only dependent on cognition, but at bottom identical with it.

Descartes had already made the will the power of affirmation and negation. Spinoza advances a step further: the affirmation cannot be separated from the idea affirmed, it is impossible to conceive a truth without in the same act affirming it, the idea involves its own affirmation. “Will and understanding are one and the same” (II. *prop.* 49, *cor.*). For Spinoza moral activity is entirely resolved into cognitive activity. To the two stages of knowing, *imaginatio* and *intellectus*, correspond two stages of willing—desire, which is ruled by imagination, and volition, which is guided by reason. The passive emotions of sensuous desire are directed to perishable objects, the active, which spring from reason, have an eternal object—the knowledge of the truth, the intuition of God. For reason there are no distinctions of persons,—she brings men into concord and gives them a common end (IV. *prop.* 35-37,40),—and no distinctions of time (IV. *prop.* 62, 66), and in the active emotions, which are always good, no excess (IV. *prop.* 61). The passive emotions arise from confused ideas. They cease to be passions, when the confused ideas of the modifications of the body are transformed into clear ones; as soon as we have clear ideas, we become active and cease to be slaves of desire. We master the emotions by gaining a clear knowledge of them. Now, an idea is clear when we cognize its object not as an individual thing, but in its connection, as a link in the causal chain, as necessary, and as a mode of God. The more the mind conceives things in their necessity, and the emotions in their reference to God, the less it is passively subject to the emotions, the more power it attains over them: “Virtue is power” (IV. *def.* 8; *prop.* 20, *dem.*). It is true, indeed, that one emotion can be conquered only by another stronger one, a passive emotion only by an active one. The active emotion by which knowledge gains this victory over the passions is the joyous consciousness of our power (III. *prop.* 58, 59). Adequate ideas conceive their objects in union with God; thus the pleasure which proceeds from knowledge of, and victory over, the passions is accompanied by the idea of God, and, consequently (according to the definition of love), by *love toward God* (V. *prop.* 15, 32). The knowledge and love of God, together, “intellectual love toward God,” is the highest good and the highest virtue (IV. *prop.* 28). Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself. The intellectual love of man toward God, in which the highest peace of the soul, blessedness, and freedom consist, and in virtue of which (since it, like its object and cause, true knowledge, is eternal), the soul is not included in the destruction of the body (V. *prop.* 23, 33), is a part of the infinite love with which God loves himself, and is one and the same with the love of God to man. The eternal part of the soul is reason, through which it is active; the perishable part is imagination or sensuous representation, through which it is passively affected. We are immortal

only in adequate cognition and in love to God; more of the wise man's soul is immortal than of the fool's.

Spinoza's ethics is intellectualistic—virtue is based on knowledge. It is, moreover, naturalistic—morality is a necessary sequence from human nature; it is a physical product, not a product of freedom; for the acts of the will are determined by ideas, which in their turn are the effects of earlier causes. The foundation of virtue is the effort after self-preservation: How can a man desire to act rightly unless he desires to be (IV. *prop.* 21, 22)? Since reason never enjoins that which is contrary to nature, it of necessity requires every man to love himself, to seek that which is truly useful to him, and to desire all that makes him more perfect. According to the law of nature all that is useful is allowable. The useful is that which increases our power, activity, or perfection, or that which furthers knowledge, for the life of the soul consists in thought (IV. *prop.* 26; *app. cap.* 5). That alone is an evil which restrains man from perfecting the reason and leading a rational life. Virtuous action is equivalent to following the guidance of the reason in self-preservation (IV. *prop.* 24).—Nowhere in Spinoza are fallacies more frequent than in his moral philosophy; nowhere is there a clearer revelation of the insufficiency of his artificially constructed concepts, which, in their undeviating abstractness, are at no point congruent with reality. He is as little true to his purpose to exclude the imperative element, and to confine himself entirely to the explanation of human actions considered as facts, as any philosopher who has adopted a similar aim. He relieves the inconsistency by clothing his injunctions under the ancient ideal of the free wise man. This, in fact, is not the only thing in Spinoza which reminds one of the customs of the Greek moralists. He renews the Platonic idea of a philosophical virtue, and the opinion of Socrates, that right action will result of itself from true insight. Arguing from himself, from his own pure and strong desire for knowledge, to mankind in general, he makes reason the essence of the soul, thought the essence of reason, and holds the direction of the impulse of self-preservation to the perfection of knowledge, which is “the better part of us,” to be the natural one.

All men endeavor after continuance of existence (III. *prop.* 6); why not all after virtue? If all endeavor after it, why do so few reach the goal? Whence the sadly large number of the irrational, the selfish, the vicious? Whence the evil in the world? Vice is as truly an outcome of “nature” as virtue. Virtue is power, vice is weakness; the former is knowledge, the latter ignorance. Whence the powerless natures? Whence defective knowledge? Whence imperfection in general?

The concept of imperfection expresses nothing positive, nothing actual, but merely a defect, an absence of reality. It is nothing but an idea in us, a fiction which arises through the comparison of one thing with another possessing greater reality, or with an abstract generic concept, a pattern, which it seems unable to attain. That concepts of value are not properties of things themselves, but denote only their pleasurable or painful effects on us, is evident from the fact that one and the same thing may be at the same time good, bad, and indifferent: the music which is good for the melancholy man may be bad for the mourner, and neither good nor bad for the deaf. Knowledge of the bad is an abstract, inadequate idea; in God there is no idea of evil. If imperfection and error were something real, it would have to be conceded that God is the author of evil and sin. In reality everything is that which it can be, hence without defect: everything actual is, in itself considered, perfect. Even the fool and the sinner cannot be otherwise than he is; he appears imperfect only when placed beside the wise and the virtuous. Sin is thus only a lesser reality than virtue, evil a lesser good; good and bad, activity and passivity, power and weakness are merely distinctions in degree. But why is not everything absolutely perfect? Why are there lesser degrees of reality? Two answers are given. The first is found only between the lines: the imperfections in the being and action of individual things are grounded in their finitude, particularly in their involution in the chain of causality, in virtue of which they are

acted on from without, and are determined in their action not by their own nature only, but also by external causes. Man sins because he is open to impressions from external things, and only superior natures are strong enough to preserve their rational self-determination in spite of this. The other answer is expressly given at the end of the first part (with an appeal to the sixteenth proposition, that everything which the divine understanding conceives as creatable has actually come into existence). “To those who ask why God did not so create all men that they should be governed only by reason, I reply only: because matter was not lacking to him for the creation of every degree of perfection from highest to lowest; or, more strictly, because the laws of his nature were so ample as so suffice for the production of everything conceivable by an infinite intellect.” All possible degrees of perfection have come into being, including sin and error, which represent the lowest grade. The universe forms a chain of degrees of perfection, of which none must be wanting: particular cases of defect are justified by the perfection of the whole, which would be incomplete without the lowest degree of perfection, vice and wickedness. Here we see Spinoza following a path which Leibnitz was to broaden out into a highway in his *Theodicy*. Both favor the quantitative view of the world, which softens the antitheses, and reduces distinctions of kind to distinctions of degree. Not till Kant was the qualitative view of the world, which had been first brought into ethics by Christianity, restored to its rights. An ethics which denies freedom and evil is nothing but a physics of morals.

In his *theory of the state* Spinoza follows Hobbes pretty closely, but rejects absolutism, and declares democracy, in which each is obedient to self-imposed law, to be the form of government most in accordance with reason. (So in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, while in the later *Tractatus Politicus* he gives the preference to aristocracy.) In accordance with the supreme right of nature each man deems good, and seeks to gain, that which seems to him useful; all things belong to all, each may destroy the objects of his hate. Conflict and insecurity prevail in the state of nature as a result of the sensuous desires and emotions (*homines ex natura hostes*); and they can be done away with only through the establishment of a society, which by punitive laws compels everyone to do, and leave undone, that which the general welfare demands. Strife and breach of faith become sin only in the state; before its formation that alone was wrong which no one had the desire and power to do. Besides this mission, however, of protecting selfish interests by the prevention of aggression, the civil community has a higher one, to subserve the development of reason; it is only in the state that true morality and true freedom are possible, and the wise man will prefer to live in the state, because he finds more freedom there than in isolation. Thus the dislocation of concepts, which is perceptible in Spinoza’s ethics, repeats itself in his politics. First, virtue is based on the impulse of self-preservation and the good is equated with that which is useful to the individual; then, with a transformation of mere utility into “true” utility, the rational moment is brought in (first as practical prudence, next as the impulse after knowledge, and then, with a gradual change of meaning, as moral wisdom), until, finally, in strange contrast to the naturalistic beginning, the Christian idea of virtue as purity, self-denial, love to our neighbors and love to God, is reached. In a similar way “Spinoza conceives the starting point of the state naturalistically, its culmination idealistically.”

The fundamental ideas of the Spinozistic system, and those which render it important, are rationalism, pantheism, the essential identity of the material and spiritual worlds, and the uninterrupted mechanism of becoming. Besides the twisting of ethical concepts just mentioned, we may briefly note the most striking of the other difficulties and contradictions which Spinoza left unexplained. There is a break between his endeavor to exalt the absolute high above the phenomenal world of individual existence, and, at the same time, to bring the former into the closest possible conjunction with the latter, to make it dwell therein—a break between the transcendent and immanent conceptions of the idea of God. No light is vouchsafed on the

relation between primary and secondary causes, between the immediate divine causality and the divine causality mediated through finite causes. The infinity of God is in conflict with his complete cognizability on the part of man; for how is a finite, transitory spirit able to conceive the Infinite and Eternal? How does the human intellect rise above modal limitations to become capable and worthy of the mystical union with God? Reference has been already made to the twofold nature of the attributes (as forms of intellectual apprehension and as real properties of substance) which invites contradictory interpretations.

Falckenberg, Richard. *History of Modern Philosophy: From Nicholas of Cusa to the Present Time*. Trans. A.C. Armstrong. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1893.

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