



The Philosophy of Spinoza

Alfred Weber

Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza,¹ Spinosa, or Despinoza, was born at Amsterdam, in 1632, of Portuguese Jewish parents, who were, it seems, in good circumstances. In accordance with the wishes of his father he studied theology, but soon showed a decided preference for free philosophical speculation. After being excommunicated by the synagogue, which made unsuccessful attempts to bring him back to the faith of his fathers, he repaired to Rhynsburg, then to Voorburg, and finally to The Hague, where he died, a poor and persecuted man, in 1677. His love of independence led him to decline the Heidelberg professorship of philosophy offered him by Karl Ludwig, the Elector Palatine. He wrote his principal works at The Hague between the years 1660 and 1677. In 1663 he published the treatise entitled: *Renati Descartes principiorum philosophie Pars I. et II. more geometrico demonstrata*, and in 1670, the anonymous work: *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, in which he discusses and gives rationalistic solutions of such problems as inspiration, prophecy, miracles, and free investigation. His chief work, *Ethica more geometrico demonstrata*, and several other less important treatises, were issued after his death under the care of his friend Ludwig Meyer.² His *Tractatus de Deo, homine, ejusque felicitate* was unknown to the philosophical public until 1852.³

Spinozism, as set forth in the *Ethics*, is the logical consequence of the Cartesian definition of substance,⁴ and the consistent application of the method of the French philosopher.⁵ Our author is not content with developing his doctrines by pure deductive reasoning, but also presents them *more geometrico*. From a certain number of definitions he deduces a system whose parts are logically connected with each other. This method of exposition is not an arbitrary form or a provisional framework: it is of a piece with the system, and, one might say, constitutes its permanent skeleton. When Spinoza treats of the world, of man and his passions, as Euclid in his *Elements* treats of lines, planes, and angles, it is because, in principle and in fact, he sets as great a value upon these objects of philosophy as the geometer upon his.⁶ Just as the conclusions of geometry inevitably follow from their axioms, so the moral and physical facts which the philosopher considers follow with absolute necessity from the nature of things, expressed by their definitions; and he no more inquires into their final causes than the geometer asks to what end the three angles of a given triangle are equal to two right angles. It is not his method that leads him to mathematical determinism; on the contrary, he employs it because, from the very outset, he views the world from the geometrical, i.e., deterministic standpoint. He agrees with Descartes, Plato, and Pythagoras that philosophy is the generalization of *mathematics*.

I. Definitions

The fundamental notions of Spinoza's system are substance, attribute, and mode. "By *substance*," he says, "I understand that which exists in itself, and is conceived by itself, i.e., that which does not need the conception of any other thing in order to be conceived."⁷ "By *attribute* I understand that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of the substance."⁸ "By *mode* I understand the modifications of the substance, i.e., that which exists, in and is conceived by something other than itself."⁹

II. Deductions

1. *Theory of Substance*

From the definition of substance it follows: (1) that substance is its own cause;¹⁰ otherwise it would be produced by something other than itself, in which case it would not be a substance; (2) that it is infinite¹¹ (if it were finite, it would be limited by other substances, and consequently depend on them); (3) that it is the only substance;¹² for if there were two substances, they would limit each other and cease to be independent, i.e., they would cease to be substances. Hence there can be only one substance, which depends on nothing, and on which everything depends.¹³ At this point Spinoza deviates from the Cartesian philosophy; but he deviates from it because the system itself invites him to do so. Descartes himself had intimated by his definition of substance that in reality God alone is substance, and that the word *substance* when applied to creatures has not the same meaning as when applied to the infinite Being.¹⁴ But instead of removing the ambiguity, he continued to call finite things *substances*; and in order to distinguish them from God, *created substances*, as though his definition could make a created, relative, and finite substance anything but a substance that is not a substance. Hence we must refrain from applying the term “substance” to things which do not exist by themselves; the term must be reserved for the being which exists in itself and is conceived by itself, i.e., for God. God alone is substance, and substance is God.

Substance being the only being, and not dependent on anything, is absolutely free in the sense that it is determined solely by itself. Its liberty is synonymous with *necessity*, but not with *constraint*.¹⁵ To act necessarily means to determine one’s self; to act under constraint means to be determined, in spite of one’s self, by an external cause. That God should act, and act as he does, is as necessary as it is that the circle should have equal radii. Because a circle is a circle, its radii are equal; because substance is substance, it has modes, but it is free because its own nature and no extraneous cause compels it to modify itself. Absolute freedom excludes both constraint and caprice.¹⁶

Substance is eternal and necessary; or, in the language of the School, its essence implies existence. It cannot be an individual or a person, like the God of religions; for, in that case, it would be a determined being, and all determination is relative negation. It is the common source of all personal existences, without being limited by any of them. *It has neither intellect nor will*:¹⁷ for both presuppose personality. Not being intelligent, it does not act with an end in view; it is the efficient cause of things. “I confess,” says Spinoza, “that the view which subjects all things to the indifferent will of God, and makes them all depend on his caprice (Descartes, the Jesuits, and the Scotists), comes nearer the truth than the view of those who maintain that God acts in all things with a view to the good (*sub ratione boni*). For these latter persons - Plato, for example — seem to set up something outside of God, which does not depend on God, but to which God, in acting, looks as a model, or at which he aims as a goal. This surely is only another way of subjecting God to fate, and is a most absurd view of God, whom we have shown to be the first and only free cause of the essence and the existence of all things.”¹⁸

Though Spinoza calls God the cause of the universe, he takes the word “cause” in a very different sense from its usual meaning. His idea of cause is identical with his notion of substance; his conception of effect, with that of accident, mode, modification. God, according to him, is the cause of the universe as the apple is the cause of its red color, as milk is the cause of whiteness, sweetness, and liquidness, and not as the father is the cause of the child’s existence, or even as the sun is the cause of heat. The father is the external and transient cause of his son, who has a separate existence of his own. So, too heat, though connected with the sun, has an existence apart from the star producing it: it exists alongside of and outside of the sun. The case is not the same with God as related to the world; he is not its transcendent and transient cause, but the *immanent* cause;¹⁹ i.e., if we understand Spinoza correctly, God is not the cause of the world in the proper and usual sense of the term, a cause acting from without and creating it once for all, but the permanent substratum of things, the innermost substance of the universe.²⁰ God

is neither the temporal creator of the world, as dualism and Christianity conceive him, nor even its *father*, as Cabalistic and Gnostic speculation assumes; *he is the universe itself, considered SUB SPECIE ÆTERNITATIS*, the eternal universe. The words *God* and *universe* designate one and the same thing: Nature, which is both the source of all beings (*natura naturans sive Deus*) and the totality of these beings considered as its effects (*natura naturata*).

In short, Spinoza is neither an acosmist nor an atheist, but a cosmotheist or pantheist in the strict sense of the word; that is to say, his cosmos is God himself, and his God the cosmical substance.

2. Theory of Attributes

Substance consists of infinite attributes, each of which expresses in its way the essence of God.²¹ The human intellect knows two of these: extension and thought. The cosmic substance is an extended and thinking thing;²² it forms both the substance of all bodies, or matter, and the substance of all minds. Matter and mind are not two opposite substances, as in Cartesianism; they are two different ways of conceiving one and the same substance, two different names for one and the same thing. Each of the attributes of the substance is *relatively* infinite. The substance is *absolutely* infinite in the sense that there is nothing beyond it: the attribute is only relatively infinite, that is, after its kind.²³ Extension is infinite as such, and thought is infinite as such; but neither extension nor thought is absolutely infinite, for alongside of extension there is thought, and alongside of thought there is extension, not counting such attributes of substance as are unknown to us. Substance as such is the sum of all existing things; extension, though infinite as extension, does not contain all existences in itself, since there are, in addition to it, infinite thought and the minds constituted by it; nor does thought embrace the totality of beings, since there are, besides, extension and bodies.

It seems difficult, at first sight, to reconcile the theory of substance with the theory of attributes. According to the former, substance is *ens absolute indeterminatum*; according to the latter, it has attributes and even an infinity of attributes. Hence, Spinoza's God seems to be both an unqualified being and an infinitely-qualified being. It has been suggested that Spinoza, like the Neo-Platonic philosophers and the Jewish theologians who do not apply attributes to God, may have meant by attributes, not qualities inherent in God, the supra-rational, incomprehensible, and indefinable being, but the different ways according to which the understanding conceives God, i.e., purely subjective and human ways of thinking and speaking. An attribute would then mean: what the human understanding *attributes*, ascribes, and, as it were, adds to God, and not what is really and objectively (or as Spinoza would say, formally) in God; and substance would be conceived as an extended and thinking thing, without really being so. Spinoza's definition of attribute (*id quod intellectus de substantia percipit TANQUAM ejusdem essentiam constituens*) is more favorable to this interpretation than one would suppose. In our opinion it signifies: that which the intellect perceives of substance *as constituting* the essence of it; but it might also mean: that which the intellect perceives of substance *as though it constituted* its essence.²⁴ However, if the second interpretation were the correct one, Spinoza could not have said that the substance is an extended and thinking thing, nor, above all, that we have an adequate idea of it. Besides, it is wholly unnecessary to translate the passage in the subjectivistic and "non-attributistic" sense, simply in order to reconcile the seemingly contradictory theses of Spinoza. In fact, the contradiction is purely imaginary and arises from a misconception. The celebrated *determinatio negotio est*²⁵ does not signify: determination is negation, but: limitation is negation. By calling God *ens absolute indeterminatum*, Spinoza does not mean to say that God is an absolutely indeterminate being, or non-being, or negative being, but, on the contrary, that he has absolutely *unlimited* attributes, or absolutely *infinite* perfections, — that he is a positive, concrete, most real being, the being who unites in himself all possible attributes and possesses them without limitation.

Spinoza evidently intended to forestall the objections of the non-attributists²⁶ by ascribing to God *infinite attributa*, which seems to mean both *infinite attributes* and an *infinity of attributes*.

God is therefore no longer conceived as having separate attributes, which would make him a particular being; he is the being who combines in himself all possible attributes, or the totality of being. Now each divine attribute constitutes a world: extension, the material world; thought, the spiritual world. Hence, we must conclude from the infinite number of divine attributes that there exists an infinite number of worlds besides the two worlds known to us, — worlds which are neither material nor spiritual, and have no relation to space or time, but depend on other conditions of existence absolutely inaccessible to the human understanding.²⁷ This conception opens an immense field to the imagination, without being absolutely contrary to reason. However, it must be added, strictly speaking: *infinita attributa* are boundless attributes rather than innumerable attributes. Had Spinoza been decided on the question as to whether the absolute has attributes other than extension and thought, he would evidently not have employed an ambiguous expression. In fact, his *substance* has extension and thought only, but it has them in infinite degree.

Let us point out another difficulty. Spinoza holds that God has neither intelligence nor will; yet he attributes thought to him, and speaks of the *infinite intelligence* of God. These two assertions seem to contradict each other flatly. But we must remember that according to Jewish and Catholic theology (and Descartes himself), God has not discursive understanding, which needs reasoning and analysis in order to arrive at its ends; they attribute to him intuitive understanding.... We must remember, above all, that Spinoza's God is not the "author of nature," but nature itself. Now there is indeed reason in nature, but it is unconscious. The spider weaves its web without the slightest notion of geometry; the animal organism develops without having the faintest conception of physiology and anatomy. Nature thinks without thinking that it thinks; its thought is unconscious, an instinct, a wonderful foresight which is superior to intelligence, but not intelligence proper. By distinguishing between *cogitatio* and *intellectus*,²⁸ Spinoza foreshadows the Leibnizian distinction between perception and apperception, or conscious perception.

As compared with Cartesianism, Spinozistic metaphysics has the merit of having realized that thought and extension do not necessarily presuppose two opposite substances. Its fruitful notion of their consubstantiality anticipates the concrete spiritualism of Leibniz. The assertion that one and the same substance may be both the subject of thought and the subject of extension is, as Leibniz aptly says, neither materialism nor idealism in the narrow sense of these terms; it combines the truths contained in these extreme theories into a higher synthesis. It is not materialism; for Spinoza does not hold that thought is an *effect* of movement, or to use his own terminology, a "mode of extension." Each attribute, being infinite and absolute after its kind, can be explained by itself alone. Hence, thought cannot be explained by matter and movement (by this thesis he wards off materialism); nor can extension and movement, i. e., matter, be the product of thought (by this thesis he wards off the idealism of Malebranche). But though thought and extension exclude each other in so far as they are attributes, they belong to the same substance; conceived thus, mind and matter are the same thing (*eadem res*).²⁹ These "attributes of substance" are not dependent on each other; matter is not superior and anterior to mind, nor does thought in any way excel extension; one has as much worth as the other, since each is, in the last analysis, the substance itself. This identity of substance, unrecognized by Descartes, explains the agreement between the movements of the body and the "movements" of the soul in man and in animals. Since one and the same substance and, what is still more important, one and the same being manifests itself in the physical order and in the intellectual order, this substance, this being, manifests itself in both spheres according to the same laws, and the two realms are parallel: *ordo idearum idem est ac ordo rerum*.³⁰

3. *Theory of Modes*

The modifications of extension are motion and rest; the modifications of thought are intellect and will. Movement, intellect, and will, i.e., the entire relative world (*natura naturata*) are modes or modifications of substance, or, what amounts to the same, of its attributes. These

modes are infinite, like the attributes which they modify. Movement, intellect, and will, the physical universe and the intellectual universe, have neither beginning nor end. Each one of the infinite modes constitutes an infinite series of finite modes. Movement, i.e., infinitely-modified extension, produces the infinitude of finite modes which we call bodies; intellect and will, becoming infinitely diversified, produce particular and finite minds, intellects, and wills. Bodies and minds (ideas) are neither relative substances, which would be a contradiction in adjecto, nor infinite modes, but changing modes or modifications of the cosmical substance, or, what amounts to the same, of its attributes.³¹

By distinguishing between infinite modes and finite modes, Spinoza means to say that motion is eternal, while the corporeal forms which it constitutes originate and decay, - that intellects and wills have existed for eternities, but that each particular intellect has a limited duration. Bodies or limited extensions are to infinite extension, particular intellects to the infinite intellect, and the particular wills to the eternal will, what our thoughts are to our soul. Just as these exist only for the soul, of which they are temporary modifications, so too this soul, like the body, exists only for the substance, of which it is a momentary modification. Compared with God, souls and bodies are no more substances than our ideas are beings apart from ourselves. In strictly philosophical language, there is only one substantive; everything else is but an adjective. The substance is the absolute, eternal, and necessary cause of itself; the mode is contingent, passing, relative, and merely possible. The substance is necessary, i.e., it exists because it exists; the mode is contingent and merely possible, i.e., it exists because something else exists, and it may be conceived as not existing.

In view of this opposition between immutable substance and modes, we may ask ourselves the question: How much reality do modes possess in Spinoza's system? A mode is inconceivable without a subject or a substance that is modified. Now, the substance is unchangeable, it cannot be modified; hence the mode is nothing; movement, change the cosmic process, particular beings, individuals, bodies, souls, the *natura naturata*, in a word, have no real existence. Still this conclusion, which Parmenides and Zeno drew, is not Spinoza's. On the contrary, he declares with Heraclitus that motion is co-eternal with substance; he makes an infinite mode of it. Unmindful of the principle of contradiction, but supported by experience, he affirms both the immutability and the perpetual change of being. In this conflict between reasoning and the evidence of facts, which is as old as metaphysics, he deserves credit for not sacrificing thought to reality, or experience to reason. But he tries to smooth over the difficulty; he does not perceive, or does not wish to perceive, the antinomy, leaving it to modern speculation to point it out and to resolve it.

The human soul, like all intellectual modes, is a modification of infinite thought, the human body a modification of infinite extension. Since the intellectual or ideal order and the real or corporeal order are parallel, every soul corresponds to a body, and every body corresponds to an idea. The mind is therefore the conscious image of the body (*idea corporis*).³² Not that the mind is the body becoming conscious of itself; the body cannot be the conscious subject, for thought cannot come from extension, nor extension from thought. Spinoza, like Descartes, regards body as merely extended, and soul as merely thought. But the body is the *object* of thought or of soul, and there can be no thought, apperception, or soul, without a body. The mind does not know itself, it is not *idea mentis* except in so far as it is *idea corporis* or rather *idea affectionum corporis*.³³

Sensation is a bodily phenomenon; it is a prerogative of animal and human bodies, and results from the superior organization of these bodies. Perception, on the other hand, is a mental fact: simultaneously as the body is affected by an excitation the mind creates an image or idea of this excitation. The simultaneity of these two states is explained, as we have said, by the identity of the mental and bodily substance. The mind is always what the body is, and a well-formed soul necessarily corresponds to a well organized brain.³⁴ By the same law (the identity of the ideal and the real orders), intellectual development runs parallel with physical development. Bodily sensations are at first confused and uncertain; to these confused modifications of the imperfect organism correspond confused and *inadequate* ideas of the *imagination*, the source

of prejudice, illusion, and error: this makes us believe in general ideas existing independently of individuals, in final causes presiding over the creation of things, in incorporeal spirits, in a divinity with human form and human passions, in freewill and other idols.³⁵

It is characteristic of *reason* to conceive *adequate* and perfect ideas, that is to say, such as embrace both the object and its causes. The criterion of truth is truth itself and the evidence peculiar to it. He who has a true idea, at the same time knows that he has a true idea, and cannot doubt it.³⁶ To the objection that fanaticism too is conceived of its truth and excludes uncertainty and doubt, Spinoza answers that the absence of doubt is not, as yet, positive certainty. Truth is true in itself; it does not depend on any argument for its truth; if it did, it would be subject to that; its own standard. Even as light reveals itself and darkness, so is truth the criterion both of itself and of error.³⁷

The imagination represents things as they are in relation to us; reason conceives them from the standpoint of the whole in which they are produced and in their relation to the universe. The imagination makes man the center of the world, and what is human the measure of all things: reason rises beyond the self; it contemplates the universal and eternal, and refers all things to God. All ideas are true in so far as they are referred to God,³⁸ that is, whose objects are conceived as modes of the infinite Being. It is also characteristic of reason that it rejects the notion of contingency, and conceives the concatenation of things as necessary. The idea of contingency, like so many other inadequate ideas, is a product of the imagination, and is entertained by such as are ignorant of the real causes and the necessary connection of facts. Necessity is the first postulate of reason, the watchword of true science.³⁹ The imagination loses itself in the details of phenomena; reason grasps their unity; unity and consubstantiality, - that is the second postulate of reason. Finally, it rejects, as products of the imagination, final causes and universals considered as realities.

The only universal that really exists and is at the same time the highest object of reason, is God, or the infinite and necessary substance of which ever thing else is but an accident. According to Spinoza, reason can form an adequate idea of him, but not the imagination.⁴⁰

The will or active faculty is not essentially different from the understanding.⁴¹ It is nothing but a tendency of reason to retain ideas agreeable to it, and to reject such as are distasteful. A volition is an idea that affirms or negates itself.

Will and intellect being identical in their essence, it follows that the development of the one runs parallel with that of the other. Corresponding to the imagination, which represents things according to our impressions, we have, in the practical sphere, passion, or the instinctive movement which impels us towards an object or makes us shrink from it. When what the imagination shows us, is of such a nature as to give our physical and moral life a greater intensity; or, in other words, when a thing is agreeable and we strive for it, this wholly elementary form of willing is called desire, love, joy, or pleasure. In the opposite case, it is called aversion, hatred, fear, or grief.

To the higher understanding corresponds, in the practical sphere, the will proper, that is, the will enlightened by reason, and determined, not by what is agreeable, but by what is true. Not until it reaches this stage can the will, which is quite passive in the state of instinct, be called an active faculty. We act, in the philosophical sense, when anything happens either within us or outside of us, of which we are the adequate cause (*adequata*), that is, when anything follows from our nature within us or outside of us, which can be clearly and distinctly understood through our nature alone. On the other hand, we are passive when something happens within us or follows from our nature, of which we are but the partial cause.⁴² To be passive or to be acted upon does not, therefore, mean not to act at all, but to be limited in one's activity. We are passive in so far as we are a part of the universe, or modes of the divine being. God or the universe, by the very fact that he is unlimited, cannot be passive. He is pure action, absolute activity.

However active man may seem in his passions, he is really passive in the proper and primary sense of the term: i.e., limited, impotent, or the slave of things. He can be made free and become active only through the understanding. To understand the universe is to be delivered from it.

To understand everything is to be absolutely free. Passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear idea of it.⁴³ Hence, freedom is found in thought and in thought alone. Thought, too, is relatively passive in so far as it is limited by the imagination, but it can free itself from this yoke by sustained application and persistent effort. Since freedom is found only in thought, our knowledge of things is the measure of our morality. That is morally good which is conducive to the understanding; that is bad which hinders and diminishes it.⁴⁴

Virtue is the power of the understanding; or, still better, it is man's nature in so far as this has the power of producing certain effects which can be explained by the laws of that nature alone.⁴⁵ To be virtuous is to be strong, or to act; to be vicious is to be weak, or passive. From this point of view, not only hatred, anger, and envy, but also fear, hope, and even pity and repentance, must be reckoned among the vices. Hope is accompanied by a feeling of fear, pity and sympathy, by a feeling of pain, that is to say, by a diminution of our being, by a weakening of our energy. Repentance is doubly bad; for he who regrets is weak and is conscious of his weakness. The man who orders his life according to the dictates of reason will therefore labor with all his might to rise above pity and vain regrets. He will help his neighbor as well as improve himself, but he will do it in the name of reason. Thus will he be truly active, truly brave, and truly virtuous (in the original sense of the Latin word). He will be brave, for he will not let himself be conquered either by human miseries or his own mistakes, and he will not let himself be vanquished, because he knows that all things follow from the necessity of God's nature.

For the philosopher, who is convinced of the necessity of human actions, nothing merits hatred, derision, contempt, or pity.⁴⁶ From his absolute standpoint of reason, even the crimes of a Nero are neither good nor bad, but simply necessary acts. Determinism makes the philosopher optimistic, and raises him, by gradual stages of perfection, to that disinterested love of nature which gives everything its value in the whole of things, to that *amor intellectualis Dei*, or philosophical love of nature, which is the summit of virtue. This sentiment differs essentially from the love of God of positive religions. The latter has for its object a fictitious being, and corresponds to the elementary stage of understanding called opinion or imagination. Since the God of the imagination is an individual, a person like ourselves, and like every living and real person, possesses feelings of love, anger, and jealousy, our love for him is a particularistic feeling, a mixture of love and fear, of happiness and restless jealousy; and the happiness which it procures for us is still far removed from the perfect blessedness to which we aspire.

The philosophical love of God, on the other hand, is an absolutely disinterested feeling; its object is not an individual who acts arbitrarily and from whom we expect favors, but a being superior to love and to hate. This God does not love like men; for to love is to feel pleasure, and to feel pleasure is to pass from less to greater perfection; now the infinitely perfect being cannot be augmented.⁴⁷ Hatred likewise is foreign to him, since to hate is to be passive, and to be passive is to be diminished in one's being, which cannot be the case with God. Conversely, the hatred which some men entertain towards God, and their complaints against him, are possible only from the standpoint of the imagination, which conceives God as a person acting arbitrarily. We hate persons only; we cannot therefore really hate God, conceived as the necessary order of things, as the eternal and involuntary cause of everything that exists. The philosopher cannot help loving God; at least, he cannot but feel perfectly contented, peaceful, and resigned in contemplating him. This complete acquiescence of the thinker in the supreme law, this reconciliation of the soul with the necessities of life, this entire devotion to the nature of things, — is what Spinoza, by accommodation, without doubt, calls the intellectual love of God,⁴⁸ the source of eternal happiness.

In this peculiar feeling, the difference between God and the soul, or substance and mode, is obliterated; the loved object becomes the loving subject, and conversely. The intellectual love of man towards God is identical with the love of God towards himself.⁴⁹ Owing to this "transformation of natures," the human soul, which is perishable in so far as its functions are connected with the life of the body,⁵⁰ is immortal in its divine part, the intellect. By the immortality of the soul we mean, not so much the infinite duration of the person⁵¹ as the

consciousness that its substance is eternal. The certainty that the substance of our personality is imperishable, because it is God, banishes from the soul of the philosopher all fear of death, and fills him with an unmixed joy.

Let us sum up. Substance is that which exists by itself and by itself alone. Hence neither bodies nor minds can be called substances; for both exist by virtue of the divine activity. God alone exists by himself and by himself alone: hence there is but one absolutely infinite substance. This substance or God has two relatively infinite attributes: extension and thought. Extension is modified, and forms bodies; thought is infinitely diversified, and forms minds. Such is the metaphysics of Spinoza. Necessity and joyful resignation: these two words sum up his ethical teachings.

We have shown in what respect Spinozism advances beyond the Cartesian philosophy. By making mind and matter, soul and body, manifestations of a common principle, it destroys the dualism of a physical universe, absolutely divested of all ideal content, and an exclusively intellectual order of things, a world of abstract, incorporeal entities, which are as different from the real cosmos as the latter is supposed to be from the realm of pure thought. The universe is one. True, it contains two elements that are eternally distinct and cannot be explained in terms of each other: matter and thought; but these two elements, although distinct, are inseparable because they are not substances, but attributes of one and the same substance. Every movement, or, in other words, every modification of infinite extension, has an idea, i.e., a modification of infinite thought, corresponding to it; and vice versa: every idea has as its necessary accompaniment a corresponding fact in the physiological order. Thought is not without matter, nor matter without thought. Spinozism points out the intimate correlation between the two elements of being, but guards against identifying them, as materialism and idealism do, from opposite points of view.

But this gain is counterbalanced by a difficulty which seems to make for Cartesian dualism. Spinoza holds that one and the same thing (substance) is both extended and thinking, that is, inextended; hence, he flagrantly violates the law of contradiction. True, he anticipates this objection by declaring, in opposition to Descartes, that corporeal substance is no more divisible, in so far as it is substance, than spiritual substance;⁵² and so prepares the way for the Leibnizian solution. But, on the other hand, he goes right on calling corporeal substance extended (*res extensa*).⁵³ Now, indivisible extension is a contradiction in terms.

It was left to Leibniz to prove that there is nothing contradictory in the assumption that one and the same thing can be both the principle of thought and the principle of corporeal existence. He proclaimed the truth which is now accepted as a fundamental principle in physics, that the essence of matter does not consist in extension, but in force, and thereby turned the scales in favor of concrete spiritualism. It is a contradiction to hold that the same thing is both extended and inextended; it is not a contradiction to say that the same thing is force and thought, perception and tendency.

NOTES

1. *Benedicti de Spinoza opera que supersunt omnia, iterum edenda curavit, prefationes, vitam auctoris, nec non notitias, que ad historiam scriptorum pertinent, addidit*, H. E. G. Paulus, Jena, 1802-03. More recent editions by A. Gfrorer, Stuttgart, 1830; Riedel, *R. des Cartes et B. de Spinoza precipua opera philosophica*, Leipsic, 1843; C. H. Bruder, 3 vols., Leipsic, 1843-46; completed by J. van Vlooten, *Ad. B. de Sp. opera que supersunt omnia, supplementum contin. tractatum de Deo et homine, etc.*, Amsterdam, 1862; [best edition by Van Vlooten and Land, *B. de Sp. opera quotquot reperta sunt*, 2 vols., The Hague, 1882-83]. Spinoza's complete works translated into French by Saisset, Paris, 1842; 1861; 3 vols., 1872; [into German by B. Auerbach, 2d ed., 2 vols., Stuttgart, 1872; phil. works trans. into German by Kirchmann and Schaarschmidt (in the *Philos. Bibliothek*, 2 vols.). *The Chief Works of B. de Sp.*, transl. into English by R. H. M. Elwes, 2 vols., London, 1883-84 ff.; *Ethics*, transl. by White, London, 1883; 2d ed., 1894; Selections, tr. by Fullerton, New York, 1892; new ed., 1895; transl. of *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*, by White, New York,

1895. - TR.] Biographies of Spinoza by Coler (in Dutch, 1705, in French, 1706) and Lucas (*La vie et l'esprit de Mr. Benoit de Spinoza*, 1719); Armand Saintes, *Histoire de la vie et des ouvrages de Spinoza*, Paris, 1842; J. van Vlooten, *Baruch d'Espinoza, zyn leven en schriften*, Amsterdam, 1862; [2d ed., Schiedam, 1871]. [T. Camerer, *Die Lehre Spinozas*, Stuttgart, 1877; F. Pollock, *Spinoza, His Life and Philosophy*, London, 1880; J. Martineau, *A Study of Spinoza*, London, 1882; also in *Types of Ethical Theory*, Oxford, 1886; J. Caird, *Spinoza*, Edinburgh, 1888; R. Worms, *La morale de Spinoza*, Paris, 1892; L. Brunschvigg, *Spinoza*, Paris, 1894. See also K. Fischer's excellent volume on Spinoza, *History of Philosophy*, I., 2. For full references see Ueberweg-Heinze and A. van der Linde, *B. Spinoza Bibliografie*, Graveuhage. 1871. - TR.]

2. [Ludwig Stein has shown (*Neue Aufschlüsse über den litterarischen Nachlass und die Herausgabe der Opera posthuma Sp. 's*, *Arch. f. G. d. Ph.*, I, 1888) that the Opera posthuma were published by the physician G. H. Schuller and not by Meyer. Meyer most likely wrote the preface. - TR.]

3. Published by Ed. Bohmer, Halle, 1852; [by Van Vlooten, Amsterdam, 1862; by Schaarschmidt, id., 1869. German translation; by Schaarschmidt (vol. 18, *Phil. Bibliothek*), 1869; by Sigwart, 2d ed., Tubingen, 1881. - TR.]

4. *Principles*, I., 51.

5. We do not at all wish to be understood as denying the influence which the Jewish theology of the Middle Ages exercised on Spinoza's intellectual development. This influence is apparent, and it would be ridiculous to call it in question. It was owing to it that Spinoza found what he did find in Descartes; he was already a pantheist when he took up the study of the French philosopher. Still, we must maintain that his leading thought, and particularly his method, are the logical outcome of the Cartesian system.

6. *Tractatus politicus*, c. 1, § 4; *Ethics*, III., Preface.

7. *Ethics*, I., Def. 3: *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.*

8. *Ethics*, I., Def. 4: *Per attributum intelligo id quod intellectus de substantia percipit, tanquam ejusdem essentiam constituens.*

9. *Ethics*, I., Def. 5: *Per modum intelligo substantie affectiones sive id quod in alio est, per quod concipitur.*

10. *Ethics*, I., Prop. 7.

11. *Id.*, I., Prop. 8.

12. *Id.*, I., Props. 11 f.

13. *Monotheism* here becomes *monism*. According to monotheism, God is the only God but not the only being; according to monism or pantheism, he is the only being and the only substance; he is the only existing being (*Ethics*, I., Prop. 14; *Letter XLI*).

14. *Principles*, I., 51.

15. *Ethics*, I., Prop. 17.

16. *Id.*, I., Prop. 17, Scholium.

17. *Ethics*, I., Prop. 32 and Corollaries.

18. *Ethics*, I., Prop. 33, Scholium, 2.

19. *Id.*, I., Prop. 18.

20. Hence, the Spinozistic conception of immanency implies both permanency and, if we may use the term, *interiority*; that is to say, the immanent God is both the inner and the permanent cause of the universe.

21. *Ethics*, I., Def. 6.

22. *Id.*, II., Props. 1 and 2.

23. *Id.*, I., Def. 6, Explanation.

24. [The difference between the two interpretations may be more clearly stated as follows: Some construe the participle *constituens* as agreeing with *quod*, while others refer it to *intellectus*. According to the latter (*formalistic*) view, which is accepted by Hegel and Ed. Erdmann, the attributes are mere modes of human thinking, they are merely *in intellectu*; not *extra intellectum*, not *realities* in God. According to the former (*realistic*) explanation given by K. Fischer and others, the attributes are not merely modes or forms of thought, but expressions of God's nature. They are not merely in the human mind but in God. God is equal to all his attributes. See Kuno Fischer's discussion of the point in his *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie*, I., 2, Book III., chap. III., 3. - TR.]

25. *Letter L.*
 26. Who maintain that to give attributes to God means to limit him.
 27. *Letters LXVI. and LXVII.*
 28. *Ethics, I., Prop. 31.*
 29. *Id., II., Prop. 7, Scholium.*
 30. *Ethics, II., Prop. 7.*
 31. *Letter LXXI.*
 32. *Ethics, II., Prop. 13.*
 33. *Id., Prop. 23: Mens seipsam non cognoscit nisi quatenus corporis affectionum ideas percipit.*
- The reader will observe that Spinoza does not say: *corporis* AFFECTIONES, but rather: *corporis affectionum IDEAS percipit*; so greatly is his psychology still influenced by Cartesian dualism.
34. *Ethics, III., Prop. 2, Scholium.*
 35. *Ethics, II., Prop. 36; Prop. 40, Scholium; Prop. 48; III., Prop. 2, Scholium.*
 36. *Ethics, II., Prop. 43.*
 37. *Id., II., Scholium.*
 38. *Id., II., Prop. 32.*
 39. *Id., I., Prop. 29.*
 40. *Ethics, II., Prop. 47 and Scholium.*
 41. *Id., II., Prop. 49, Corollary: Voluntas et intellectus unum et idem sunt.*
 42. *Ethics, III., Def. 2.*
 43. *Id., III., Prop. 59; V., Prop. 3.*
 44. *Ethics, IV., Props. 26 and 27. Cf. § 14.*
 45. *Id., IV., Def. 8.*
 46. *Tractatus politicus, I., 4.*
 47. *Ethics, V., Prop. 17.*
 48. *Id., V., Prop. 32, Corollary.*
 49. *Id., V., Prop. 36.*
 50. *Ethics, V., Prop. 21*
 51. *Id., V., Prop. 34, Scholium*
 52. *Ethics, I., Prop. 13, Corollary: Ex his sequitur nullam substantiam et consequenter nullam substantiam corpoream, quatenus substantia est, esse divisibilem.*
 53. *Id., II., Prop. 2.*

Alfred Weber. *History of Philosophy*. Trans. Frank Thilly. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908.

© SophiaOmni, 2012. The specific electronic form of this text is copyright. Permission is granted to print out copies for educational purposes and for personal use only. No permission is granted for commercial use.