

INTRODUCTION

IN THE wave of philosophical inquiry which swept over Europe in the middle of the seventeenth century and is regarded as the beginning of a new, scientific age of the world, there were two controlling, but divergent forces, those namely represented by Bacon and Descartes, the first the founder of the experimental and the latter the idealistic or dogmatic method of philosophizing. From the former we may trace a continuous influence through Locke, Berkeley, Hume down to Mill, Spencer, Darwin, and Huxley: from the latter the development of the modern idealism represented by Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Lotze.

A potent factor in the latter development was the philosophy of Spinoza (1632-1677) which had its roots in both Bacon (1561-1626) his immediate predecessor and Descartes his contemporary (1596-1650) and, leaving its immediate impress on Leibnitz his successor (1646-1716) even to-day is traceable in schools of thought of widening influence. From Bacon he conceived the idea of a *novum organum* or new method of learning which should be applicable to the laws of human conduct as well as to the processes of nature. Inspired by the love of Descartes' mathematics he resolved to construct, after the plan of a geometrical science, a complete system of the knowledge of God, of the universe and of man. Human nature, he says, obeys fixed laws no less than do the figures of Geometry. "I will therefore write about human beings as though I were concerned with lines and planes and solids." And hence it is that we have in Spinoza's "Ethics" a treatise consisting of Axioms, Propositions, and Demonstrations like the Geometry of Euclid.

affect

human nature

the mechanics
itself is spiritual
and all is divine

excommunicated
at 24yo

avoided
university roles/
honors that
hampered speech
Pantheist whose
religion is so humble,
devout, and full of love

Phariseism
anti-dogmatism

It is this combination in Spinoza of the severe positivism of the empiricists with a deep subjectivity and an enthusiasm of piety belonging to only a most religious nature, that gives him a unique and leading place in the history of philosophy. Willing to regard the universe, including man, as a system of pure mechanics, his contention is that the mechanics itself is spiritual and all is divine. Together with this profoundly spiritual motive in his thinking must be reckoned also his bold and heroic contest for the freedom of philosophizing, if we would account for the growing admiration and love which, two centuries after his death, make his influence more potent than during his lifetime. His voluntary martyrdom in the cause of free thought was exhibited not only in the persecution and obloquy which he suffered from his own kin in his excommunication from the Synagogue in his twenty-fourth year, and in his later condemnation by Christian authorities of Church and State, but equally in his refusing, in the day of his later prosperity and growing renown, the tempting offers of royal and university honors and emoluments, lest his freedom of teaching should thereby be hampered. More singular than all is the distinction which Spinoza enjoys of being a Pantheist whose religion is so devout, humble, and full of love as to be an inspiring example to many sects of orthodox believers, and of being a Monist whose One is not nature but God.

Born in Amsterdam in the year 1632 of Jewish parents who were refugees from the Spanish persecution, Baruch Despinoza grew up to become aware of the conflict of the narrow and rigid rules of the synagogue with the free Latin culture around him. At the same time he was stirred by the monotheistic instincts of his Semitic nature to revolt against all forms of dualism and idolatry. His reverence for the Scriptures led him to rebuke the Phariseism that would kill the spirit in dogmatic adherence to the literal meaning of the law. More and more restless under the irksome formalism of the synagogue he at last declared his open revolt, which not even bribes nor the threats of disinheritance by his parents,

disinherit

afterwards fulfilled, availed to prevent; and with awful maledictions he was excommunicated for his "frightful heresies." These consisted mainly in a critique of the Holy Scriptures very much in the line of the Higher Criticism of Christian Scholars of to-day, but conducted in a more devout and even in a more rational spirit than that which characterizes much of what now passes as quite orthodox. With his Judaism he renounced his name, Baruch, and assumed the Latin equivalent in calling himself Benedictus de Spinoza. Although entering practically into the ranks of Christian philosophers, he never received Christian baptism, and the elements of mysticism and suggestions here and there in his system of the "Talmud" and the "Cabbala," with glimpses of the neo-Platonism of Philo and Plotinus make us aware of an attitude of thought and reflection distinctly different from that of his Christian contemporaries.

Practically banished from Amsterdam, where he was even threatened with assassination, Spinoza lived in several obscure villages and towns of Holland in scholarly retirement, enjoying the fellowship of a few devoted friends and disciples until his final settlement in The Hague in 1671, in which city he died in 1677. The publication of his "*Theological Political Treatise*" in which he pleads for freedom of thought both in civil and religious matters as essential to the well being of both the Church and State, brought him into such disfavor with the authorities,—it being placed in the Index by Rome and its publication forbidden by the States General,—that the book could only be circulated under a false title and many of his friends assumed an attitude of cold reserve or open criticism. Among these was the English Scholar, Oldenburg, the first Secretary of the Royal Society of England, who nevertheless continued in correspondence with him and, being a friend of Robert Boyle, the chemist, kept Spinoza informed of the progress of science in England. Meanwhile in The Hague, supporting himself in the humble vocation of a grinder of lenses and living in the greatest simplicity in the family of a poor painter, Van der Spijk, Spinoza was

devotion

constructing and revising the work with which his fame is chiefly associated but which was not published until immediately after his death, the "Ethics."

Spinoza's earliest work was his "Principles of the Cartesian Philosophy together with Cogitata Metaphisica," published at Amsterdam in 1663. It at once established his reputation as a master of Cartesianism, without winning his own indorsement, and its preparation and dictation to his youthful pupil Albert Burgh did not interfere with his maturing at the same time his own independent system of philosophy which was, for a time, to bring him into a very different repute. This embraced first his celebrated "*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*," which, besides setting forth the claim for free criticism of affairs both civil and religious, is largely a study of the Old Testament with the effort to show that the end of religion is not to inculcate truths but obedience: that the Scriptures are not scientific but ethical in their nature and authority; that Christ is superior to Moses in that the latter was taught by exterior vision, the former by intuitive consciousness, showing that in Christ the Divine Wisdom had taken on human nature. This much abused treatise was published in Hamburg in 1670. It bore the motto: 1 John: IV: 13. "Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us because he hath given us of his spirit." The book being interdicted was printed with false titles once in Leyden and twice in Amsterdam in 1673.

The "Ethics," although begun probably before 1661, was not printed until after the author's death in 1677, and then in a volume entitled "*Opera Posthuma*." These embraced besides the "Ethics" other treatises written about the same time. They were the "*Treatise on the Improvement of the Understanding*" embracing the method introduced in the "Ethics"; and the "*Tractatus Politicus*" in which the absolutism of Hobbe's "Theory of Government" is criticised; also some "Letters from Learned Men" and the author's replies and a "Compendium of Hebrew Grammar." "A Treatise on God, on Man and His Happiness" with notes on the "*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*"

Opera
de Posthuma

was quite recently discovered and published in 1852 at Halle: also a "Tract on the Rainbow," Spinoza's sole scientific treatise, with a "Collection of Letters" and a "Biography" was published in Amsterdam in 1862.

The "Ethics" proper is entitled: "*Ethica: ordine geometricæ demonstrata, et in quinque partes distincta, in quibus agitur; I. de Deo; II. de natura et origine mentis; III. de natura et origine affectuum; IV. de servitute humana seu de affectuum viribus; V. de potentia intellectus seu de libertate humana.*"

The treatment is mathematical proceeding as in Euclid from Definitions and Axioms to Propositions deduced therefrom. Thus Part First embraces the Definitions: I. Cause sui; II. the Finite; III. Substance; IV. Attribute; V. Modes; VI. God; VII. Freedom; and VIII. Eternity. Then follow the Axioms, and Propositions, and Corollaries.

It will be seen that although entitled "Ethics" the treatise covers the whole range of metaphysics, theology, and epistemology, and yet that the ethics forms the culmination of the whole system, inasmuch as it looks to establishing a clear demonstrable nexus between God and the human conduct. From the ontological proof, if proof at all it can be called, of the existence of God from his nature, or from his being of "such an essence as can only be conceived of as existing," and thus from God's being and existence as necessary, he derives all the laws of existence, of creation, of nature, and of man's conduct as fixed in an eternal necessity. But God's necessity must at the same time be perfect freedom, since it cannot be constrained by any things except itself, inasmuch as there can be no "other" to the One absolute substance. The only "other" to the One self-existent and self-caused substance must be that of the finite "affections" and "modes" of the infinite attributes possessed by the One substance. These attributes are summed up in the two universal ones, Extension and Thought, which are not, as in Descartes, two subordinated or created substances, but are merely two aspects of one and the same only substance. So that God as the one substance is at once all extended

God's
perfect
freedom

laws of existence
of creation
of nature
of man's
conduct

body and all thought. Particular things having a limited or finite existence, whether in thought or extension, are but modes or affections of one or the other of these chief attributes. Their life or being is distinguished from the life of God as "being in alio" as distinguished from "being in se." But the "being in alio" is subject to limitations and restrictions from other "being in alio"; it is thereby subject to passion, to feeling, to desire, to will, to emotions of pleasure, appetite, want, and pain. Its desire is to complete its being. The sense of this completion is joy; the sense of its absence is sadness. These emotions, joy and sadness, will and appetite, are all called "affections of thought," but of the thought as natura naturata, or the created "mode," and not of the thought in God, or natura naturans. With this limitation of the affections as of "being in alio," or subject to imperfection and constraint, comes also, and, indeed, as its cause, ignorance or the lack of the adequate or perfect knowledge. It is this lack of the perfect knowledge of the whole which causes these affections and passions to wear in man's temporal experience the appearance of what is evil. This delusion of evil is the bondage of passion or of the affections, the *servitus humana*, treated of in Part IV., in which division of the work, the ethics truly begins. From this bondage there is liberation and redemption only through the more and more perfect knowledge of God with the consequent vision of all things sub specie æternitatis, or in their relation to the divine perfection. This satisfaction in the relations of the limited "being in alio" amounts to an extension or completion of life, and is termed joy; and the experience of this joy with the knowledge of its source, or of the completeness of life in the divine, is love.

The highest attainment of the human mind is the "intellectual love of God," which is the contemplation of the divine perfection in which all the seeming limitations and imperfections of the finite are lost in the harmonious unity of the infinitely many in the One. This knowledge is itself virtue since to know a thing to be good is to love it, and only that can be seen to be good which is a

being in alio
is subject to
feeling

natura naturata
(created << mode >>)
vs. (past
participle)

natura naturans
(present
active
participle)
(thought -
feeling-mind)

joy
life in the divine
love

intellectual
love of God

part of the common or universal good. In this "intellectual love," or the love of knowing the good, even God may be said to love himself in loving mankind; and man in the same love rejoices in virtue "not because it enables him to govern his lusts; but because he does rejoice in it, therefore to govern his lusts is possible." The mortal part of man is the affections and modes of his "being *in alio*," including the imagination and the memory of his earthly mind. The immortal part is that idea which expresses the essence of the body under the idea of eternity, or as God sees it, and which therefore can never perish but survives death, although it passes from all the limitations and consequent emotions and memory of a temporal world.

the essence
of the body
under the idea
of eternity
(perception)
feeling vs.
emotion
(human)

matter
and
memory

The later critics found Spinoza's logic to be far from irrefutable, and the ordinary reader will not fail to detect instances of his reasoning in a circle where he seems to be convinced that he is offering an infallible demonstration. Skepticism will find it easy to challenge even his first certainty and to agree with Voltaire's verdict:

"Vous êtes tres confus Baruch Spinoza: mais êtes vous aussi dangereux qu'on le dit? Je souhais que non: et ma raison c'est que vous êtes confus, que vous avez écrit en mauvais latin, et qu'il n'y a pas dix personnes in Europe qui vous lisent d'un bout a l'autre quoique on vous ait traduit en francais."

The, in one aspect, sublime idea of the "intellectual love of God" may in another aspect be interpreted as only an expression of an infinite self-love on the part of deity contemplating with delight his own perfection and granting this contemplative joy only to those finite creatures who cast themselves into the abyss of his infinity at the sacrifice of their own individuality. On the other hand when viewed in his relation to his time and to the traditions, religious and philosophical, with which the aspirations of his youthful and generous nature had to contend, coupled with the gentle and self-sacrificing traits exhibited in his conduct with friends and foes and his heroic contention for the freedom of thought and belief, the contribution of Spinoza to the humanizing influence

the God-intoxicated

xii

SPINOZA

enactivistic
truth as
public health

"medi-dæval"

of philosophy cannot be denied, nor the existence in his theory of truth germs of vast significance.

It is not strange that the epithet attached to Spinoza by Novalis — "the God-intoxicated," should have come to be held the most truly descriptive of this philosopher who found in his Euclidian demonstrations a vision of God as real as that accorded to the ecstasy of the medi-dæval saints; or that Hegel should say that, better than to call him an atheist were it to call him an acosmist, as one who in his vision of that which is the union of the world and God loses all sight of the world in the fuller vision of God.

Frank Savell

atheistic Spinoza — no God; reduces God to Nature/world

acosmist Spinoza — no world; reduces world to God/Being