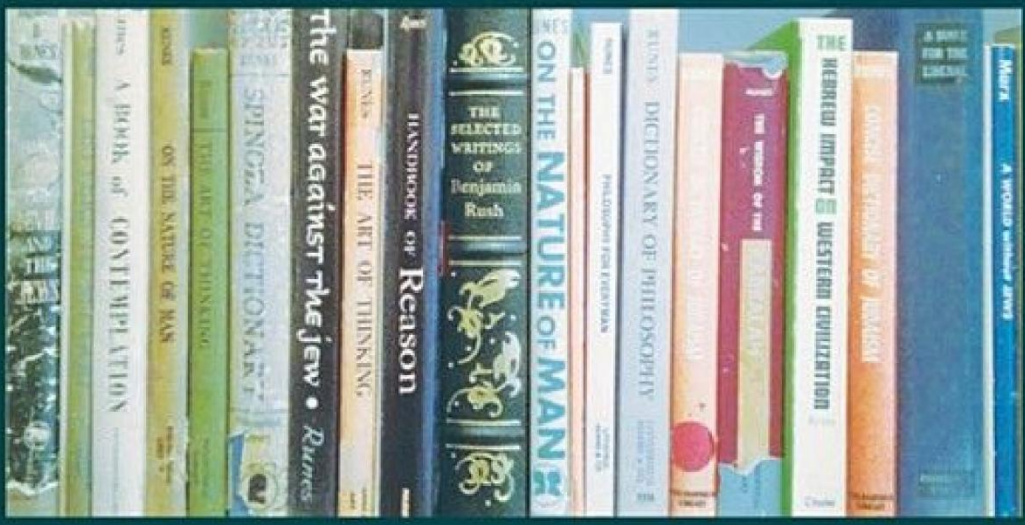
SPINOZA DICTIONARY



Dagobert D. Runes

Contents

O

P

R

S

T

U

V

W

FOREWORD

I HAVE READ THE SPINOZA DICTIONARY with great care. It is, in my opinion, a valuable contribution to philosophical literature. Spinoza is, among the great classical thinkers, one of the least accessible because of his rigid adherence to the geometric form of argumentation, in which form he obviously saw somewhat of an insurance against fallacies. In fact, Spinoza thereby made it difficult for the reader who all too quickly loses patience and breath before he reaches the heart of the philosopher's ideas.

Many have attempted to present Spinoza's thoughts in modern language—a daring as well as irreverent enterprise which offers no guarantee against misinterpretation. Yet throughout Spinoza's writings one will find sharp and clear propositions which are masterpieces of concise formulation.

In the book before us no one has the word but Spinoza himself. In alphabetical order one will find definitions, propositions and explanations in Spinoza's own words which interpret essential issues in a manner comparatively easy to comprehend, avoiding forbidding formalism.

It certainly is not the purpose of the editor to make, through this book, the study of the original works superfluous. If however the reader despairs of the business of finding his way through Spinoza's works, here he will find a reliable guide. Where there is still lack of clarity this is caused only by the fact that Spinoza himself in his struggle for clarity did not reach full perfection.

Here one will find, for instance, detailed statements about "substance" and "modes" where one can notice the hard struggle. Here one finds the majestic concept that thinking (soul) and extension (naturalistically conceived world) are only different forms of appearance resp. conceptual interpretations of the same "substance". (In expressing it this way, however, I have committed the very sin I mentioned above.) Well, everyone may interpret Spinoza's text in his own way. It is certain that our philosopher had fully recognized the senselessness of the question of an interaction of soul and body, as well as the problem which of both be the "primary".

The grand ideas of the *Ethnics* are brought out clearly in the book, not less than the heroic illusions of this great and passionate man.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Princeton, 1951

By Way of Introduction

IT IS with a certain amount of hesitance that I bring this small book before the general public. I had planned and prepared it, originally, for some of my friends who were desirous of becoming acquainted with the philosophy of our most well-known but least-read thinker. They, like many others, felt the spark that blinked through the massive, rigid structure of Spinoza's writings, but in spite of the serious efforts of many of them, they did not feel that they had succeeded in breaking through the terminological walls of the philosopher.

As a writer, Spinoza is a difficult man to comprehend. He set down his sentences cagily, in a circumscribed manner, and hintfully, sometimes allegorically, sometimes mockingly, often with tongue in cheek, and where permissible, with majestic grace and finality. Unlike other cardinal thinkers, he had no gift for word creation. There are so many new concepts in his metaphysical web, but hardly a single new term or word. He borrowed his words from the Atomists of ancient Greece, the Stoics, the scholastic theologians, as well as from his Hebrew predecessors: Maimonides, Averroes, Crescas, and of course, the Frenchman Descartes.

This policy of word borrowing is quite confounding to the novice in the study of Spinoza., and it has confused even experienced students of philosophy, so much more so as our author felt obliged to adopt for his dissertations the then modish manner of writing *more geometrico*. One must bear in mind when reading Spinoza that he was a much watched man in a very watchful time. Some of his close friends were put to

severe physical torture by the Dutch authorities. Our author had only one of his works published during his lifetime, although a number of them were ready for publication for many years. In some manner, however, Spinoza and the other thoughtful men of his time managed to put ideas and hand-copied manuscripts into circulation by way of a considerable underground machinery. Many important books of that time were known to hundreds of men before they received the public impress of printer's ink.

It is obvious that since such conditions prevailed even in comparatively enlightened seventeenth century Holland, Spinoza put down many of his ideas *sub rosa*.

As if these obstacles were not enough, we face, in the study of Spinoza, another, his quarrels with the Jewish community.

Spinoza, who died at the early age of forty-five, was a descendant of rather poor Portuguese exiles, who had escaped the zealots of the Catholic Iberian Peninsula gone berserk with pillaging, expulsion, torture and *auto da fé*. Some of those who escaped the most ungracious interpreters of Christian grace found asylum in Holland, which was then seething with Socinians, Mennonites, Puritans and other seekers of a Christian life that would no longer make a cruel mockery of the tenets of the Lord.

The Jews in Holland and the other countries of Western Europe lived in daily terror of their unfathomable Christian neighbors who, at the drop of some vile man's ugly word, would throw them [the Jews] into torturous dungeons or tie them to a spit and burn alive whimpering humans as you might roast a pig. And from the East of Europe came equally

horrifying news of hordes of Cossack troops invading the defenseless ghettos of Poland, massacring the "pagan" Jews—men, women and children—upon the open invitation and with the fatherly blessings of the Russian Czar, the devout head of the Orthodox Church of the Christian Slavs.

In those fearful days we find Baruch Spinoza, a Talmudic student in Amsterdam. There is actually little known as to how and why and when young Spinoza became involved in the activities of Socinians and other church groups of that city. But involved he became, and, after he had deserted his Jewish school (later, after the death of his father, even the Synagogue) it became known around town that the youth was doing considerable preaching of some peculiar text. The Jews of seventeenth century Amsterdam, as well as all the Jews of the *Diaspora,* had become accustomed to men and women who preferred the comparative safety of a superficially adopted dominant faith to living dangerously as a Jew in a Christian world. The Jews would cross those persons off their books, interpreting such reneging as purification of their community from the weaklings and opportunists.

But Spinoza, following in some way in the footsteps of that renegade, Uriel da Costa, was not and did not become a convert in the usual sense. Had he done so, the Jewish community would have treated him as it had all other runaways—with indifference. But Spinoza remained a Jew, although he walked about propagating a threatening gospel, namely, that the Jewish Torah, the Book of Law, was written merely as a state law and was to be regarded only as such and nothing else, and inasmuch as the Jewish state had ceased to

exist, the Jews of the world were no longer bound by the laws of the Torah. The Torah, in his opinion, was written, designed and meant for the physical comfort and security of the State of Israel, while, on the other hand, the New Testament bears witness to God's revelation to Jesus Christ, Whose voice, therefore, was to be regarded as no more and no less than the voice of God Himself. *Vox Christi est vox Dei.*

What made Spinoza yearn for such distinction between the Old and New Testaments we do not know—a distinction which would have been utterly alien to Jesus, who said: "I did not come to destroy the Torah, but to fulfill it."

However, Spinoza did not see eye-to-eye with either Christ or Paul on the meaning and origin of the Old Testament. Spinoza's dissension from fundamental Judaism would have meant nothing to the Jews of Amsterdam had not Spinoza gone about town buttonholing, with a strong and Talmudically trained mind, bewildered Jewish adolescents, trying to persuade them to disregard the laws of the Torah as being obsolete; this without thinking that thus he would leave the widely dispersed and cruelly suppressed tribes of Israel without their great inner refuge. To the Jews of Israel, then as now and ever before and ever after, the Torah meant the binding (*religio*) between man and man, family and family, tribe and tribe, over all continents. To the Jews in the mansions of England, in the ghettos of New York, in the dust of the market place of Yemen, in the native quarters of Morocco, in the universities of Italy, the Torah is the one book in their blood-spattered history that holds them together.

This ancient heritage, as first revealed to the bewildered

people of the desert, chosen by Him as the instrument with which to destroy the polytheistic temples of a pagan world—this immeasurable heritage is symbolized in the Torah, the Books of Wisdom, the Admonitions of the Prophets, and the rest of the God-inspired literature which, for want of a better name, we still call the Bible [*biblion*, which is Greek for *book*], and the Jews, wherefrom the Lord chose a son, are still the People of the Book. From this people, his own people, Spinoza wanted to take the Book.

Perhaps the Jews of Amsterdam should have let the young man go about his fantastic preaching, which surely would have been in vain. But the Jews were terrified at the mere thought that one of their own would want to steal that Book from them, that Book for which so many of their tribe had perished at the stake. They offered the irreverent a bribe. They even tried to assassinate him. And finally, they placed over him the ban by which no Jew could either speak with him or approach him. For he was driven from the tribe of Israel, a renegade and dangerous traitor. Spinoza was only twenty-six when the Jews cast him out of their ranks. He wrote an irate *Apologia*, defending his rather untenable position. Unfortunately this essay, written in Spanish, the language of the Inquisitors, has not been found. Spinoza never forgot his accusers and in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, a much, much later book, he still deals most negatively with orthodox Jewry. It is significant that Spinoza posits in this work the only condition under which the Torah, in his opinion, might become valid again, namely, through the re-creation of a Jewish state which, he meditates, is quite a possibility, considering the changing fortunes of world history. Well, the Jewish state has been re-created, and the

Torah is valid again, even according to doubting Baruch, and all is well that ends well. The Jews have long forgiven Spinoza his juvenile paradoxisms and at the three hundredth anniversary of his birth, in 1932, he was publicly taken back into the Jewish fold by a duly representative assembly at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

* * *

I have mentioned these semi-tragic events in Spinoza's life because they have direct bearing upon some of his writings. We must take many of Spinoza's theological propositions with a grain of salt, as they were written by an outwardly cold and collected person, in whose heart burned a volcano of fire, love, devotion and pride. It was Nietzsche who first pointed out that Spinoza never forgave his people the excommunication.

I should also like to state at this time that there is as little true evidence to be found of Spinoza having been a lonely recluse, as there is truth in statements of some ill-wishing contemporaries that he was a sinner and scoundrel. Spinoza was not a lonely man; he had many, many friends,—personal friends and social acquaintances, undoubtedly more than you and I can call our own. The wardrobe found at the time of his death indicates that he was neither impoverished nor dressed like a hermit.

I hope that a perusal of this small dictionary will indicate to the reader that only a man troubled by great desires and deep emotions would give so much of his mental efforts to clarifying his inner life and desires; only a man plagued by the devil could find the path that angels tread.

D. D. R.

Acknowledgments

The following translations were used as a basis for this edition:

> *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, translated from the Latin, with an introduction by R. H. M. Elwes; London: George Bell & Sons. Volume I: Introduction, Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, Tractatus Politicus. Second edition, revised. 1887; Volume II: De Intellectus Emendatione—Ethica. (Select Letters). Third edition. 1889.
> *Spinoza's Short Treatise on God, Man, & His Well-Being*, translated and edited, with an introduction and commentary and a life of Spinoza by A. Wolf; London: Adam and Charles Black. 1910.

Only unavoidable changes were made by the editor. Those changes are based on the C. H. Bruder edition, *Opera quae supersunt omnia*, 3 volumes, Leipzig, 1843-46.

KEY TO REFERENCES

C-PB—*Correspondence with Peter Balling.*

C-B—*Correspondence with Blyenbergh.*

C-HB—*Correspondence with Hugo Boxel.*

C-IB—*I. B. has been identified by some with John Bredenburg, a citizen of Rotterdam, who translated into Latin (1675) a Dutch attack on the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, but the tone of the letter renders this improbable. Murr and Van Vloten think that I. B. may be the physician, John Bresser, who prefixed some verses to the "Principles of Cartesian Philosophy."*

C-F—*Correspondence with Fabritius.*

C-CH—*Correspondence with Christian Huyghens.*

C-JJ—*Correspondence with Jarig Jellis.*

C-LM—*Correspondence with Lewis Meyer.*

G-O—*Correspondence with Oldenburg.*

G-GHS—*Correspondence with G. H. Schaller.*

G-T—*Correspondence with Tschirnhausen.*

C-S DE V—Correspondence with Simon de Vries.

E-I—*The Ethics.* (*Part I*)

E-II—*Of the Nature and Origin of the Mind.* (*Part II*)

E-III—*On the Origin and Nature of the Emotions.* (*Part III*)

E-IV—*Of Human Bondage, or the Strength of the Emotions.* (*Part IV*)

E-V—*Of Human Freedom.* (*Part V*)

G-1—*God, Book* 1.

G-2—*God, Book* 2.

P-T—*A* Political Treatise.

T-P—*Theologico-Political Treatise.*

U—*On the Improvement of the Understanding.*

A

ADEQUATE CAUSE

By an *adequate* cause, I mean a cause through which its effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived. By an *inadequate* or partial cause, I mean a cause through which, by itself, its effect cannot be understood.

—E-III

ADEQUATE IDEAS

Between a true and an adequate idea, I recognize no difference, except that the epithet true only has regard to the agreement between the idea and its object, whereas the epithet adequate has regard to the nature of the idea in itself; so that in reality there is no difference between a true and an adequate idea beyond this extrinsic relation. However, in order that I may know, from which idea out of many all the properties of its object may be deduced, I pay attention to one point only, namely, that the idea or definition should express the efficient cause of its object. For instance, in inquiring into the properties of a circle, I ask, whether from the idea of a circle, that it consists of infinite right angles, I can deduce all its properties. I ask, I repeat, whether this idea involves the efficient cause of a circle. If it does not, I look for another, namely, that a circle is the space described by a line, of which one point is fixed, and the other movable. As this definition explains the efficient cause, I know that I can deduce from it all the properties of a circle. So, also, when I define God as a supremely perfect Being, then, since that definition does not

express the efficient cause (I mean the efficient cause internal as well as external) I shall not be able to infer therefrom all the properties of God; as I can, when I define God as a Being.

I assert, that from certain properties of any particular thing (whatever idea be given) some things may be discovered more readily, others with more difficulty, though all are concerned with the nature of the thing. I think it need only be observed, that an idea should be sought for of such a kind, that all properties may be inferred, as has been said above. He, who is about to deduce all the properties of a particular thing, knows that the ultimate properties will necessarily be the most difficult to discover.

—C-LXIV T

The activities of the mind arise solely from adequate ideas; the passive states of the mind depend solely on inadequate ideas.

—E-III

There is no modification of the body, whereof we cannot form some clear and distinct conception.

Hence it follows that there is no emotion, whereof we cannot form some clear and distinct conception. For an emotion is the idea of a modification of the body, and must therefore involve some clear and distinct conception.

Seeing that there is nothing which is not followed by an effect, and that we clearly and distinctly understand whatever follows from an idea, which in us is adequate, it follows that everyone has the power of clearly and distinctly understanding himself and his emotions, if not absolutely, at any rate in part, and consequently of bringing it about, that

he should become less subject to them. To attain this result, therefore, we must chiefly direct our efforts to acquiring, as far as possible, a clear and distinct knowledge of every emotion, in order that the mind may thus, through emotion, be determined to think of those things which it clearly and distinctly perceives, and wherein it fully acquiesces: and thus that the emotion itself may be separated from the thought of an external cause, and may be associated with true thoughts; whence it will come to pass, not only that love, hatred, &c. will be destroyed, but also that the appetites or desires, which are wont to arise from such emotion, will become incapable of being excessive. For it must be especially remarked, that the appetite through which a man is said to be active, and that through which he is said to be passive is one and the same. For instance, we have shown that human nature is so constituted, that everyone desires his fellow-men to live after his own fashion; in a man, who is not guided by reason, this appetite is a passion which is called ambition, and does not greatly differ from pride; whereas in a man, who lives by the dictates of reason, it is an activity or virtue which is called piety. In like manner all appetites or desires are only passions, in so far as they spring from inadequate ideas; the same results are accredited to virtue, when they are aroused or created by adequate ideas. For all desires, whereby we are determined to any given action, may arise as much from adequate as from inadequate ideas. Than this remedy for the emotions (to return to the point from which I started), which consists in a true knowledge thereof, nothing more excellent, being within our power, can be devised. For the mind has no other power save that of thinking and of forming adequate ideas.

—E-V

ADMIRATION

See Rational Life

AFFECTIONS

Different men may be differently affected by the same object, and the same man may be differently affected at different times by the same object.

We thus see that it is possible, that what one man loves another may hate, and that what one man fears another may not fear; or, again, that one and the same man may love what he once hated, or may be bold where he once was timid, and so on. Again, as everyone judges according to his emotions what is good, what bad, what better, and what worse, it follows that men's judgments may vary no less than their emotions, hence when we compare some with others, we distinguish them solely by the diversity of their emotions, and style some intrepid, others timid, others by some other epithet.

—E-III

AFFECTS

Whatsoever disposes the human body, so as to render it capable of being affected in an increased number of ways, is useful to man; and is so, in proportion as the body is thereby rendered more capable of being affected or affecting other bodies in an increased number of ways; contrariwise, whatsoever renders the body less capable in this respect is hurtful to man.

—E-IV

Towards something future, which we conceive as close at hand, we are affected more intensely, than if we conceive that its time for existence is separated from the present by a longer interval; so too by the remembrance of what we conceive to have not long passed away we are affected more intensely, than if we conceive that it has long passed away.

—E-IV

AFFIRMATION

See Ideas; Will

ALLIES

See Democracy

AMAZONS

See Women

AMBITION

Ambition is the immoderate desire for power.

Ambition is the desire, whereby all the emotions are fostered and strengthened; therefore this emotion can with difficulty be overcome. For, so long as a man is bound by any desire, he is at the same time necessarily bound by this. "The best men," says Cicero, "are especially led by honor. Even philosophers, when they write a book condemning honor, sign their names thereto," and so on.

—E-III

We endeavor to do whatsoever we conceive others to regard with pleasure, and contrariwise we shrink from doing that which we conceive men to shrink from.

This endeavor to do a thing or leave it undone, solely in order to please men, we call *ambition*, especially when we so eagerly endeavor to please the vulgar, that we do or omit certain things to our own or another's hurt: in other cases it is generally called *kindliness*.

—E-III

See Adequate Ideas; Emotions; Love; Lust

AMOS

See Words

ANGER

The endeavor to injure one whom we hate is called *Anger*; the endeavor to repay in kind injury done to ourselves is called *Revenge*.

—E-III

Anger is the desire, whereby through hatred we are induced to injure one whom we hate.

—E-III

See Enmity; Hate

ANTIPATHY

Simply from the fact that we conceive, that a given object has some point of resemblance with another object which is wont to affect the mind pleasurably or painfully, although the point of resemblance be not the efficient cause of the said emotions, we shall still regard the first-named object with love or hate.

—E-III

It may happen, that we love or hate a thing without any

cause for our emotion being known to us; merely, as the phrase is, from *sympathy* or *antipathy*. We should refer to the same category those objects, which affect us pleasurably or painfully, simply because they resemble other objects which affect us in the same way. I am aware that certain authors, who were the first to introduce these terms "sympathy" and "antipathy," wished to signify thereby some occult qualities in things; nevertheless I think we may be permitted to use the same terms to indicate known or manifest qualities.

—E-III

APPETITE

Endeavor, when referred solely to the mind, is called *will*, when referred to the mind and body in conjunction it is called *appetite;* it is, in fact, nothing else but man's essence, from the nature of which necessarily follow all those results which tend to its preservation; and which man has thus been determined to perform.

Further, between appetite and desire there is no difference, except that the term desire is generally applied to men, in so far as they are conscious of their appetite, and may accordingly be thus defined: *Desire is appetite with consciousness there of.* It is thus plain from what has been said, that in no case do we strive for, wish for, long for, or desire anything, because we deem it to be good, but on the other hand we deem a thing to be good, because we strive for it, wish for it, long for it, or desire it.

—E-III

See Desire

APPROVAL

If we conceive that anything pleasurably affects some object of our love, we shall be affected with love towards that thing. Contrariwise, if we conceive that it affects an object of our love painfully, we shall be affected with hatred towards it.

We will call the *love towards him who confers a benefit on another, Approval*; and the *hatred towards him who injures another*, we will call *Indignation*. We must further remark, that we not only feel pity for a thing which we have loved, but also for a thing which we have hitherto regarded without emotion, provided that we deem that it resembles ourselves. Thus, we bestow approval on one who has benefited anything resembling ourselves, and, contrariwise, are indignant with him who has done it an injury.

—E-III

Approval is love towards one who has done good to another.

—E-III

À PRIORI

See Persuasion

ARISTOTLE

See Bible

ARISTOTELIANS

See Superstition

ARTS

See Education

ATHEISM

See Miracles; Prophecy

ATTRIBUTE

By *attribute*, I mean that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of substance.

—E-I

See Definitions; Existence; God; Substance

AVARICE

Avarice is the excessive desire and love of riches.

—E-III

See Emotions; Love; Lust

AVERSION

Aversion is pain, accompanied by the idea of something which is accidentally the cause of pain.

—E-III

See Hate

AXIOM

See Definition

B

BAD

See Bondage; God, Nature and Properties of; Good and Bad; Natural Right

BASE

See Natural Right

BASHFULNESS

See Timidity

BEASTS

See Natural Right; Social Life

BEAUTY

I do not attribute to nature either beauty or deformity, order or confusion. Only in relation to our imagination can things be called beautiful or deformed, ordered or confused.

By the association of parts, then, I merely mean that the laws or nature of one part adapt themselves to the laws or nature of another part, so as to cause the least possible inconsistency. As to the whole and the parts, I mean that a given number of things are parts of a whole, in so far as the nature of each of them is adapted to the nature of the rest, so that they all, as far as possible, agree together. On the other hand, in so far as they do not agree, each of them forms, in our mind, a separate idea, and is to that extent considered as a whole, not as a part. For instance, when the parts of lymph,

chyle, &c., combine, according to the proportion of the figure and size of each, so as to evidently unite, and form one fluid, the chyle, lymph, &c., considered under this aspect, are part of the blood; but, in so far as we consider the particles of lymph as differing in figure and size from the particles of chyle, we shall consider each of the two as a whole, not as a part.

Let us imagine, a little worm, living in the blood, able to distinguish by sight the particles of blood, lymph, &c., and to reflect on the manner in which each particle, on meeting with another particle, either is repulsed, or communicates a portion of its own motion. This little worm would live in the blood, in the same way as we live in a part of the universe, and would consider each particle of blood, not as part, but as a whole. He would be unable to determine, how all the parts are modified by the general nature of blood, and are compelled by it to adapt themselves, so as to stand in a fixed relation to one another. For, if we imagine that there are no causes external to the blood, which could communicate fresh movements to it, nor any space beyond the blood, nor any bodies whereto the particles of blood could communicate their motion, it is certain that the blood would always remain in the same state, and its particles would undergo no modifications, save those which may be conceived as arising from the relations of motion existing between the lymph, the chyle, &c. The blood would then always have to be considered as a whole, not as a part. But, as there exist, as a matter of fact, very many causes which modify, in a given manner, the nature of the blood, and are, in turn, modified thereby, it follows that other motions and other relations arise in the blood, springing not from the mutual relations of its parts

only, but from the mutual relations between the blood as a whole and external causes. Thus the blood comes to be regarded as a part, not as a whole. So much for the whole and the part.

All natural bodies can and ought to be considered in the same way as we have here considered the blood, for all bodies are surrounded by others, and are mutually determined to exist and operate in a fixed and definite proportion, while the relations between motion and rest in the sum total of them, that is, in the whole universe, remain unchanged. Hence it follows that each body, in so far as it exists as modified in a particular manner, must be considered as a part of the whole universe, as agreeing with the whole, and associated with the remaining parts. As the nature of the universe is not limited, like the nature of blood, but is absolutely infinite, its parts are by this nature of infinite power infinitely modified, and compelled to undergo infinite variations. But, in respect to substance, I conceive that each part has a more close union with its whole. For substance being infinite in its nature, it follows that each part belongs to the nature of substance, and, without it, can neither be nor be conceived.

One sees, therefore, how and why I think that the human body is a part of nature. As regards the human mind, I believe that it also is a part of nature; for I maintain that there exists in nature an infinite power of thinking, which, in so far as it is infinite, contains subjectively the whole of nature, and its thoughts proceed in the same manner as nature—that is, in the sphere of ideas. Further, I take the human mind to be identical with this said power, not in so far as it is infinite, and perceives the whole of nature, but in so far as it is finite, and perceives only the human body; in this manner, I

maintain that the human mind is a part of an infinite understanding.

—C-XV-O

See God, Nature and Properties of

BEING

See Bondage; Definition; Ideas

BELIEF

Everyone must recognize that knowledge of God is not equal among all good men. Moreover, a man cannot be ordered to be wise any more than he can be ordered to live and exist. Men, women, and children are all alike able to obey by commandment, but not to be wise. If any tell us that it is not necessary to understand the Divine attributes, but that we must believe them simply without proof, he is plainly trifling. For what is invisible and can only be perceived by the mind, cannot be apprehended by any other means than proofs; if these are absent the object remains ungrasped; the repetition of what has been heard on such subjects no more indicates or attains to their meaning than the words of a parrot or a puppet speaking without sense or signification.

—T P-XIII

BENEVOLENCE

Benevolence is the desire of benefiting one whom we pity.

—E-III

We seek to free from misery, as far as we can, a thing which we pity.

This will for doing good, which arises from pity of the thing

whereon we would confer a benefit, is called *benevolence* , and is nothing else but *desire arising from compassion.*

—E-III

BIBLE

Scriptural doctrine contains no lofty speculations nor philosophic reasoning, but only very simple matters, such as could be understood by the slowest intelligence.

I am consequently lost in wonder at the ingenuity of those who detect in the Bible mysteries so profound that they cannot be explained in human language, and who have introduced so many philosophical speculations into religion that the church seems like an academy, and religion like a science, or rather a dispute.

It is not to be wondered at that men, who boast of possessing supernatural intelligence, should be unwilling to yield the palm of knowledge to philosophers who have only their ordinary faculties; still I should be surprised if I found them teaching any new speculative doctrine, which was not a commonplace to those Gentile philosophers whom, in spite of all, they stigmatize as blind; for, if one inquires what these mysteries lurking in Scriptures may be, one is confronted with nothing but the reflections of Plato or Aristotle, or the like, which it would often be easier for an ignorant man to dream than for the most accomplished scholar to wrest out of the Bible.

—TP-XIII

See Superstition

BLESSEDNESS

Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself;

neither do we rejoice therein, because we control our lusts, but, contrariwise, because we rejoice therein, we are able to control our lusts.

It appears, how potent the wise man is, and how much he surpasses the ignorant man, who is driven only by his lusts. For the ignorant man is not only distracted in various ways by external causes without ever gaining the true acquiescence of his spirit, but moreover lives, as it were unwitting of himself, and of God, and of things, and as soon as he ceases to suffer, ceases also to be.

Whereas the wise man, in so far as he is regarded as such, is scarcely at all disturbed in spirit, but, being conscious of himself, and of God, and of things, by a certain eternal necessity, never ceases to be, but always possesses true acquiescence of his spirit.

If the way which I am pointing out as leading to this result seems exceedingly hard, it may nevertheless be discovered. Needs must it be hard, since it is so seldom found. How would it be possible, if salvation were ready to our hand, and could without great labor be found, that it should be by almost all men neglected? But all things majestic are as difficult as they are rare.

—E-V

In respect of blessedness—God was equally gracious to all.

—T P-III

Every man's true happiness and blessedness consist solely in the enjoyment of what is good, not in the pride that he alone is enjoying it, to the exclusion of others. He who thinks himself the more blessed because he is enjoying benefits

which others are not, or because he is more blessed or more fortunate than his fellows, is ignorant of true happiness and blessedness, and the joy which he feels is either childish or envious and malicious. For instance, a man's true happiness consists only in wisdom, and the knowledge of the truth, not at all in the fact that he is wiser than others, or that others lack such knowledge: such considerations do not increase his wisdom or true happiness.

Whoever, therefore, rejoices for such reasons, rejoices in another's misfortune, and is, so far, malicious and bad, knowing neither true happiness nor the peace of the true life.

—T P-III

See Ideas; Intellect; Intellectual Love; Knowledge; Rational Life; Well-Being

BODY

Desire arising from a pleasure or pain, that is not attributable to the whole body, but only to one or certain parts thereof, is without utility in respect to a man as a whole.

As pleasure is generally attributed to one part of the body, we generally desire to preserve our being without taking into consideration our health as a whole: to which it may be added, that all desires which have most hold over us take account of the present and not of the future.

—E-IV

Whatsoever brings out the preservation of the proportion of motion and rest, which the parts of the human body mutually possess, is good; contrariwise, whatsoever causes a

change in such proportion is bad.

I consider that a body undergoes death, when the proportion of motion and rest which obtained mutually among its several parts is changed. For I do not venture to deny that a human body, while keeping the circulation of the blood and other properties, wherein the life of a body is thought to consist, may none the less be changed into another nature totally different from its own. There is no reason, which compels me to maintain that a body does not die, unless it becomes a corpse; nay, experience would seem to point to the opposite conclusion. It sometimes happens, that a man undergoes such changes, that I should hardly call him the same. As I have heard tell of a certain Spanish poet, who had been seized with sickness, and though he recovered therefrom yet remained so oblivious of his past life, that he would not believe the plays and tragedies he had written to be his own: indeed, he might have been taken for a grownup child, if he had also forgotten his native tongue. If this instance seems incredible, what shall we say of infants? A man of ripe age deems their nature so unlike his own, that he can only be persuaded that he too has been an infant by the analogy of other men. However, I prefer to leave such questions undiscussed, lest I should give ground to the superstitious for raising new issues.

—E-IV

The endeavor, whereby a thing continues to persist in its being, involves no finite time, but an indefinite time.

—E-III

If the human body has once been affected by two or more

bodies at the same time, when the mind afterwards imagines any of them, it will straightway remember the others also.

—E-II

The idea of each modification of the human body does not involve an adequate knowledge of the human body in toto.

—E-II

The idea of each modification of the human body does not involve an adequate knowledge of the external body.

—E-II

The human mind is capable of perceiving a great number of things, and is so in proportion as its body is capable of receiving a great number of impressions.

—E-II

The human mind has no knowledge of the body, and does not know it to exist, save through the ideas of the modifications whereby the body is affected.

—E-II

The human mind perceives not only the modifications of the body, but also the ideas of such modifications.

—E-II

We can only have a very inadequate knowledge of the duration of our body.

—E-II

The idea of every mode, in which the human body is

affected by external bodies, must involve the nature of the human body, and also the nature of the external body.

Hence it follows, first, that the human mind perceives the nature of a variety of bodies, together with the nature of its own.

It follows, secondly, that the ideas, which we have of external bodies, indicate rather the constitution of our own body than the nature of external bodies.

—E-II

The object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body, in other words a certain mode of extension which actually exists, and nothing else.

—E-II

If the human body is affected in a manner which involves the nature of any external body, the human mind will regard the said external body as actually existing, or as present to itself, until the human body be affected in such a way, as to exclude the existence or the presence of the said external body.

—E-II

The idea of the idea of each modification of the human body does not involve an adequate knowledge of the human mind.

Hence it follows that the human mind, when it perceives things after the common order of nature, has not an adequate but only a confused and fragmentary knowledge of itself, of its own body, and of external bodies. For the mind does not know itself, except in so far as it perceives the ideas of the

modifications of body. It only perceives its own body through the ideas of the modifications, and only perceives external bodies through the same means; thus, in so far as it has such ideas of modification, it has not an adequate knowledge of itself, nor of its body, nor of external bodies, but only fragmentary and confused knowledge thereof.

I say expressly, that the mind has not an adequate but only a confused knowledge of itself, its own body, and of external bodies, whenever it perceives things after the common order of nature; that is, whenever it is determined from without, namely, by the fortuitous play of circumstances, to regard this or that; not at such times as it is determined from within, that is, by the fact of regarding several things at once, to understand their points of agreement, difference, and contrast. Whenever it is determined in anywise from within, it regards things clearly and distinctly.

—E-II

The ideas of the modifications of the human body, in so far as they have reference only, to the human mind, are not clear and distinct, but confused.

—E-II

The idea or knowledge of the human mind is also in God, following in God in the same manner, and being referred to God in the same manner, as the idea or knowledge of the human body.

—E-II

The individual preserves its nature, whether it be, as a whole, in motion or at rest, whether it be moved in this or

that direction; so long as each part retains its motion, and preserves its communication with other parts as before.

We thus see, how a composite individual may be affected in many different ways, and preserve its nature notwithstanding. Thus far we have conceived an individual as composed of bodies only distinguished one from the other in respect of motion and rest, speed and slowness; that is, of bodies of the most simple character. If, however, we now conceive another individual composed of several individuals of diverse natures, we shall find that the number of ways in which it can be affected, without losing its nature, will be greatly multiplied. Each of its parts would consist of several bodies, and therefore each part would admit, without change to its nature, of quicker or slower motion, and would consequently be able to transmit its motions more quickly or more slowly to the remaining parts. If we further conceive a third kind of individuals composed of individuals of this second kind, we shall find that they may be affected in a still greater number of ways without changing their actuality. We may easily proceed thus to infinity, and conceive the whole of nature as one individual, whose parts, that is, all bodies, vary in infinite ways, without any change in the individual as a whole. I should feel bound to explain and demonstrate this point at more length, if I were writing a special treatise on body. But I have already said that such is not my object, I have only touched on the question, because it enables me to prove easily that which I have in view.

I. The human body is composed of a number of individual parts, of diverse nature, each one of which is in itself extremely complex.

II. Of the individual parts composing the human body some are fluid, some soft, some hard.

III. The individual parts composing the human body, and consequently the human body itself, are affected in a variety of ways by external bodies.

IV. The human body stands in need for its preservation of a number of other bodies, by which it is continually, so to speak, regenerated.

V. When the fluid part of the human body is determined by an external body to impinge often on another soft part, it changes the surface of the latter, and, as it were, leaves the impression thereupon of the external body which impels it.

VI. The human body can move external bodies, and arrange them in a variety of ways.

—E-II

We comprehend, not only that the human mind is united to the body, but also the nature of the union between mind and body. However, no one will be able to grasp this adequately or distinctly, unless he first has adequate knowledge of the nature of our body. The propositions we have advanced hitherto have been entirely general, applying not more to men than to other individual things, all of which, though in different degrees, are animated. For of everything there is necessarily an idea in God, of which God is the cause, in the same way as there is an idea of the human body; thus

whatever we have asserted of the idea of the human body must necessarily also be asserted of the idea of everything else. Still, on the other hand, we cannot deny that ideas, like objects, differ one from the other, one being more excellent than another and containing more reality, just as the object of one idea is more excellent than the object of another idea, and contains more reality.

Wherefore, in order to determine, wherein the human mind differs from other things, and wherein it surpasses them, it is necessary for us to know the nature of its object, that is, of the human body. What this nature is, I am not able here to explain, nor is it necessary for the proof of what I advance, that I should do so. I will only say generally, that in proportion as any given body is more fitted than others for doing many actions or receiving many impressions at once, so also is the mind, of which it is the object, more fitted than others for forming many simultaneous perceptions; and the more the actions of one body depend on itself alone, and the fewer other bodies concur with it in action, the more fitted is the mind of which it is the object for distinct comprehension. We may thus recognize the superiority of one mind over others, and may further see the cause, why we have only a very confused knowledge of our body.

—E-II

Bodies are distinguished from one another in respect of motion and rest, quickness and slowness, and not in respect of substance.

—E-II

All bodies agree in certain respects.

—E-II

If the parts composing become greater or less, but in such proportion, that they all preserve the same mutual relations of motion and rest, the individual will still preserve its original nature, and its actuality will not be changed.

—E-II

If from a body or individual, compounded of several bodies, certain bodies be separated, and if, at the same time, an equal number of other bodies of the same nature take their place, the individual will preserve its nature as before, without any change in its actuality.

—E-II

Every body is moved sometimes more slowly, sometimes more quickly.

—E-II

By *body* I mean a mode which expresses in a certain determinate manner the essence of God, in so far as He is considered as an extended thing.

—E-II

See Communion with God; Immortality of the Soul; Mind

BODY AND MIND

Body cannot determine mind to think, neither can mind determine body to motion or rest or any state different from these, if such there be.

—E-III

The mind can only imagine anything, or remember what is

past, while the body endures.

—E-V

BONDAGE

Human infirmity in moderating and checking the emotions I name bondage: for, when a man is a prey to his emotions, he is not his own master, but lies at the mercy of fortune: so much so, that he is often compelled, while seeing that which is better for him, to follow that which is worse.

When a man has purposed to make a given thing, and has brought it to perfection, his work will be pronounced perfect, not only by himself, but by everyone who rightly knows, or thinks that he knows, the intention and aim of its author. For instance, suppose anyone sees a work (which I assume to be not yet completed), and knows that the aim of the author of that work is to build a house, he will call the work imperfect; he will, on the other hand, call it perfect, as soon as he sees that it is carried through to the end, which its author had purposed for it. But if a man sees a work, the like whereof he has never seen before, and if he knows not the intention of the artificer, he plainly cannot know, whether that work be perfect or imperfect. Such seems to be the primary meaning of these terms.

But, after men began to form general ideas, to think out types of houses, buildings, towers, &c., and to prefer certain types to others, it came about, that each man called perfect that which he saw agree with the general idea he had formed of the thing in question, and called imperfect that which he saw agree less with his own preconceived type, even though it had evidently been completed in accordance with the idea of its artificer. This seems to be the only reason for calling

natural phenomena, which, indeed, are not made with human hands, perfect or imperfect: for men are wont to form general ideas of things natural, no less than of things artificial, and such ideas they hold as types, believing that Nature (who they think does nothing without an object) has them in view, and has set them as types before herself. Therefore, when they behold something in Nature, which does not wholly conform to the preconceived type which they have formed of the thing in question, they say that Nature has fallen short or has blundered, and has left her work incomplete. Thus we see that men are wont to style natural phenomena perfect or imperfect rather from their own prejudices, than from true knowledge of what they pronounce upon.

Now we showed that Nature does not work with an end in view. For the eternal and infinite Being, which we call God or Nature, acts by the same necessity as that whereby it exists. For we have shown, that by the same necessity of its nature, whereby it exists, it likewise works. The reason or cause why God or Nature exists, and the reason why He acts, are one and the same. Therefore, as He does not exist for the sake of an end, so neither does He act for the sake of an end; of His existence and of His action there is neither origin nor end. Wherefore, a cause which is called final is nothing else but human desire, in so far as it is considered as the origin or cause of anything. For example, when we say that to be inhabited is the final cause of this or that house, we mean nothing more than that a man, conceiving the conveniences of household life, had a desire to build a house. Wherefore, the being inhabited, in so far as it is regarded as a final cause, is nothing else but this particular desire, which is really the efficient cause; it is regarded as the primary cause, because

men are generally ignorant of the causes of their desires. They are, as I have often said already, conscious of their own actions and appetites, but ignorant of the causes whereby they are determined to any particular desire. Perfection and imperfection, then, are in reality merely modes of thinking or notions which we form from a comparison among one another of individuals of the same species; hence I said that by reality and perfection I mean the same thing. For we are wont to refer all the individual things in nature to one genus, which is called the highest genus, namely, to the category of Being, whereto absolutely all individuals in nature belong. Thus, in so far as we refer the individuals in nature to this category, and comparing them one with another, find that some possess more of being or reality than others, we, to this extent, say that some are more perfect than others. Again, in so far as we attribute to them anything implying negation—as term, end, infirmity, etc.,—we, to this extent, call them imperfect, because they do not affect our mind so much as the things which we call perfect, not because they have any intrinsic deficiency, or because Nature has blundered. For nothing lies within the scope of a thing's nature, save that which follows from the necessity of the nature of its efficient cause, and whatsoever follows from the necessity of the nature of its efficient cause necessarily comes to pass.

As for the terms *good* and *bad,* they indicate no positive quality in things regarded in themselves, but are merely modes of thinking, or notions which we form from the comparison of things one with another. Thus one and the same thing can be at the same time good, bad, and indifferent. For instance, music is good for him that is melancholy, bad for him that mourns; for him that is deaf, it

is neither good nor bad.

Nevertheless, though this be so, the terms should still be retained. For, inasmuch as we desire to form an idea of man as a type of human nature which we may hold in view, it will be useful for us to retain the terms in question, in the sense I have indicated.

In what follows, then, I shall mean by "good" that which we certainly know to be a means of approaching more nearly to the type of human nature, which we have set before ourselves; by "bad," that which we certainly know to be a hindrance to us in approaching the said type. Again, we shall say that men are more perfect, or more imperfect, in proportion as they approach more or less nearly to the said type. For it must be specially remarked that, when I say that a man passes from a lesser to a greater perfection, or *vice versâ,* I do not mean that he is changed from one essence or reality to another; for instance, a horse would be as completely destroyed by being changed into a man, as by being changed into an insect. What I mean is, that we conceive the thing's power of action, in so far as this is understood by its nature, to be increased or diminished. Lastly, by perfection in general I shall, as I have said, mean reality—in other words, each thing's essence, in so far as it exists, and operates in a particular manner, and without paying any regard to its duration. For no given thing can be said to be more perfect, because it has passed a longer time in existence. The duration of things cannot be determined by their essence, for the essence of things involves no fixed and definite period of existence; but everything, whether it be more perfect or less perfect, will always be able to persist in existence with the same force wherewith it began to exist; wherefore, in this

respect, all things are equal.

—E-IV

BOOKS

If we read a book which contains incredible or impossible narratives, or is written in a very obscure style, and if we know nothing of its author, nor of the time or occasion of its being written, we shall vainly endeavor to gain any certain knowledge of its true meaning. For being in ignorance of these points we cannot possibly know the aim or intended aim of the author; if we are fully informed, we so order our thoughts as not to be in any way prejudiced either in ascribing to the author or him for whom the author wrote either more or less than his meaning, and we only take into consideration what the author may have had in his mind, or what the time and occasion demanded. I think this must be tolerably evident to all.

It often happens that in different books we read histories in themselves similar, but which we judge very differently, according to the opinions we have formed of the authors. I remember once to have read in some book that a man named Orlando Furioso used to drive a kind of winged monster through the air, fly over any countries he liked, kill unaided vast numbers of men and giants, and such like fancies, which from the point of view of reason are obviously absurd. A very similar story I read in Ovid of Perseus, and also in the books of Judges and Kings of Samson, who alone and unarmed killed thousands of men, and of Elijah, who flew through the air, and at last went up to heaven in a chariot of fire, with horses of fire. All these stories are obviously alike, but we judge them very differently. The first only sought to amuse, the

second had a political object, the third a religious object. We gather this simply from the opinions we had previously formed of the authors. Thus it is evidently necessary to know something of the authors of writings which are obscure or unintelligible, if we would interpret their meaning; and for the same reason, in order to choose the proper reading from among a great variety, we ought to have information as to the versions in which the differences are found, and as to the possibility of other readings having been discovered by persons of greater authority.

A further difficulty attends this method in the case of some of the books of Scripture, namely, that they are no longer extant in their original language. The Gospel according to Matthew, and certainly the Epistle to the Hebrews, were written, it is thought, in Hebrew, though they no longer exist in that form. Aben Ezra affirms in his commentaries that the book of Job was translated into Hebrew out of another language, and that its obscurity arises from this fact. I say nothing of the apocryphal books, for their authority stands on very inferior ground.

The foregoing difficulties in this method of interpreting Scripture from its own history, I conceive to be so great that I do not hesitate to say that the true meaning of Scripture is in many places inexplicable, or at best mere subject for guesswork; but I must again point out, on the other hand, that such difficulties only arise when we endeavor to follow the meaning of a prophet in matters which cannot be perceived, but only imagined, not in things, whereof the understanding can give a clear and distinct idea, and which are conceivable through themselves: matters which by their nature are easily perceived cannot be expressed so obscurely

978-1-5040-1305-5
Philosophical Library
119 W. 40th Street
New York, NY 10018
www.philosophicallibrary.com

Distributed in 2015 by Open Road Distribution
345 Hudson Street
New York, NY 10014
www.openroadmedia.com