THE YOUNG SPINOZA

A Metaphysician in the Making

Edited by

YITZHAK Y. MELAMED

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide.

Oxford New York
Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in
Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by
Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
The young Spinoza : a metaphysician in the making / edited by Yitzhak Y. Melamed.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978–0–19–997166–4 (pbk. : alk. paper) — ISBN 978–0–19–997165–7 — eISBN 978–0–19–997168–8 (cloth : alk. paper) 1. Spinoza, Benedictus de, 1632–1677. 2. Metaphysics. 3. Philosophers—Netherlands—Biography. I. Melamed, Yitzhak Y., 1968– editor.
B3999.M45Y66 2015
199′.492—dc23
2014033974

{ CONTENTS }

{ CONTRIBUTORS }

John Brandau is a Ph.D. candidate in the Philosophy Department at Johns Hopkins University. He is currently writing his dissertation on Spinoza's theory of essence, in which he elucidates such issues as Spinoza's views on definitions, the ontological status of essences, and the relationship between causation and essence.

John Carriero is Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is author of *Between Two Worlds: a Reading of Descartes's "Meditations"* (2009) and co-editor with Janet Broughton of *A Companion to Descartes* (2008).

Edwin Curley is an Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He is the editor and translator of *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, of which Volume I appeared in 1985, and Volume II is expected in 2015. He also produced an edition of Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1994), which gives an account of the variations between the English and Latin texts of that work, and is the author of two books on Spinoza (*Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 1969, and *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 1988), and one on Descartes (*Descartes Against the Skeptics*, 1978), as well as numerous articles on seventeenth-century philosophy.

Daniel Garber is Stuart Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University. He is the author of *Descartes' Metaphysical Physics* (Chicago, 1992), *Descartes Embodied* (Cambridge, 2001), and *Leibniz: Body, Substance, Monad* (Oxford, 2009). He is also the co-editor with Michael Ayers of the *Cambridge History of Seventeenth Century Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1998).

Karolina Hübner is an Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto. She has published several articles on Spinoza's metaphysics.

Mogens Lærke is a Permanent Senior Research Fellow at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) and member of the Institut d'histoire de la pensée classique (UMR 5037) at the École Normale Supérieure de Lyon. He is the author of *Leibniz lecteur de Spinoza* (Paris, 2008) and of numerous articles on early modern

philosophy.

Michael LeBuffe is Professor and Baier Chair of Early Modern Philosophy at the University of Otago. He is the author of *From Bondage to Freedom: Spinoza on Human Excellence* (Oxford, 2010) and has interests across the early modern period and the history of ethics.

Russ Leo is an Assistant Professor in the English Department at Princeton University. He is currently developing a comprehensive book project, *Tragedy and Philosophy in Reformation Europe*, a work that examines the philosophical and theological purchase of tragedy in early modernity by tracing the importance of tragedy across diverse early modern disciplines.

Frédéric Manzini is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the Catholic University of Paris after having been an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Paris-Sorbonne University (Paris 4). He is the author of *Spinoza, une lecture d'Aristote* (PUF "Epiméthée," 2009) and of several articles on Spinoza and modern philosophy.

Colin Marshall is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Washington. From 2011 to 2013 he was the Gerry Higgins Lecturer in History of Philosophy at the University of Melbourne. He has published several articles on Kant's metaphysics and Spinoza's philosophy of mind.

Yitzhak Y. Melamed is a Professor of Philosophy at Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of *Spinoza's Metaphysics* (Oxford, 2013), and co-editor of *Spinoza's Theological Political Treatise: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge, 2011), and of *Spinoza and German Idealism* (Cambridge. 2012). Recently he won the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Burkhardt, National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and Humboldt fellowships for his next book project: *Spinoza and German Idealism: A Metaphysical Dialogue*.

Filippo Mignini teaches History of Philosophy at the University of Macerata, Italy. He has dedicated to Spinoza a hundred titles, including the critical editions of the *Short Treatise* (Amsterdam, 1982; L'Aquila, 1986; Paris, 2009) and the *Treatise on the Improvement of the Intellect* (Paris, 2009). Among his other works are *Ars imaginandi. Appearance and Representation in Spinoza* (Napoli, 1981), *Introduction to Spinoza* (Roma-Bari, 2006), and *The Ethics of Spinoza: Introduction to the Reading* (Roma, 2009).

John Morrison is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Barnard College, Columbia University. He is the author of two other papers on Spinoza, "Restricting Spinoza's Causal Axiom" and "The Relation Between Conception and Causation in Spinoza's Metaphysics." He also writes about perception.

Alan Nelson is the Harold J. Glass Professor of Philosophy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has also taught at the University of California, Irvine; the University of California, Los Angeles; Stanford University; the University of Pittsburgh; and the University of Southern California. His publications focus on canonical early modern philosophers.

Samuel Newlands is the William J. and Dorothy K. O'Neill Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame. His research focuses on early modern philosophy, metaphysics, and philosophy of religion. He has received a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) fellowship for his work on Spinoza, and he has published more than two dozen pieces on early modern philosophy in venues ranging from *The Philosophical Review* to *The Wall Street Journal*. He is the co-editor of *Metaphysics and the Good* (Oxford 2009) and *New Essays on Leibniz's Theodicy* (Oxford 2014).

Ursula Renz is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Klagenfurt. She is the author of two books and several articles. Her second monograph, *Die Erklärbarkeit von Erfahrung. Realismus und Subjektivität in Spinozas Theorie des menschlichen Geistes*, won the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (JHP) book prize; it will appear in English, published by Oxford University Press, in 2015. She won a Humboldt Fellowship for her new project on self-knowledge and wisdom in seventeenth-century philosophy.

Oded Schechter is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the Center for Advanced Studies, National Research University, Moscow. He is author of several articles on modern philosophy.

Tad M. Schmaltz is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He is the author of *Malebranche's Theory of the Soul* (1996), *Radical Cartesianism* (2002), and *Descartes on Causation* (2008). His previous work on Spinoza includes "Spinoza's Mediate Infinite Mode" (1997), "Spinoza on the Vacuum" (1999), and "The Disappearance of Analogy in Descartes, Spinoza and Regis" (2000).

Pina Totaro is Senior Researcher in Philosophy at the Istituto per il

Lessico Intellettuale Europeo e Storia delle Idee, Consiglio Nazionale delle Richerche (ILIESI-CNR), Università di Roma Sapienza, and Professor in the Philosophy Department at Rome-Sapienza University. Her research is oriented toward the study of the modern philosophy with particular reference to the history of Cartesianism and Spinozism.

Valtteri Viljanen is an Academy of Finland Research Fellow at the University of Turku. He is the author of *Spinoza's Geometry of Power* (Cambridge, 2011) and numerous articles on Spinoza.

{ ABBREVIATIONS }

Descartes' Works

AT	Adam and Tannery (eds.), *Oeuvres de Descartes*
CSM	Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch (eds. and trans.), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (third volume edited by A. Kenny also)

Spinoza's Works

CM	*Cogitata Metaphysica* (an appendix to Spinoza's DPP)
DPP	*Renati Des Cartes Principiorum Philosophiae Pars I & II (Descartes' Principles of Philosophy)*
Ep.	Spinoza's Letters
G	*Spinoza Opera*. Edited by Carl Gebhardt. 4 volumes. 1925
KV	*Korte Verhandeling van God, de Mensch en Deszelfs Welstand (Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being)*
TIE	*Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*
TTP	*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*

Passages in Spinoza's *Ethics* are referred to by means of the following abbreviations: a-(xiom), c-(orollary), e-(xplanation), l-(emma), p-(roposition), pref-(ace), s-(cholium), and app-(endix); "d" stands for either "definition" (when it appears immediately to the right of the part of the book) or "demonstration" (in all other cases). The five parts of the *Ethics* are cited by Arabic numerals. Thus "E1d3" stands for the third definition of part 1 and "E1p16d" for the demonstration of proposition 16 of part 1. Passages from DPP are cited using the same system of abbreviations used for the *Ethics*.

References to Gebhardt (ed.), *Spinoza Opera*, follow this format: G volume number/ page number/ line number. Hence "G II/200/12" stands for volume 2, page 200, line 12.

Passages from Adam and Tannery (eds.), *Oeuvres de Descartes*, are cited by volume and page number. Thus "AT VII 23" stands for page 23 of volume 7 of this edition.

The Young Spinoza

Introduction

Yitzhak Y. Melamed

Spinoza's fame—or notoriety—is due primarily to his posthumously published magnum opus, the *Ethics*, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, to the 1670 *Theological-Political Treatise*. Few readers take the time to study his early works carefully. If they do, they are likely to encounter some surprising claims, which often diverge from, or even utterly contradict, the doctrines of the *Ethics*. Consider just a few of these assertions: that God acts from absolute freedom of will,[1] that God is a whole,[2] that there are no modes in God,[3] that extension is divisible and hence cannot be an attribute of God,[4] and that the intellectual and corporeal substances are modes in relation to God.[5] Yet, though these claims reveal some tension between the early works and the *Ethics*, there is also a clear continuity between them.

Spinoza wrote the *Ethics* over a long period of time, which spanned most of his philosophical career. The dates of the early drafts of the *Ethics*, as documented in his earliest letters,[6] seem to overlap (or almost overlap) with the assumed dates of the composition of the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* and the *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being*, and precede the publication of Spinoza's 1663 book on Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy*. For this reason, it seems that a study of Spinoza's early works (and correspondence) could illuminate the nature of the problems Spinoza addresses in the *Ethics*, insofar as the views expressed in the early works help us reconstruct the development and genealogy of the *Ethics*. Indeed, if we keep in mind the common dictum "nothing comes from nothing"—which Spinoza frequently cites and appeals to—it is clear that great works like the *Ethics* do not appear ex nihilo. In light of the preeminence and majesty of the *Ethics*, it is difficult to study the early works without having the *Ethics* in sight. Still, I would venture to say that the value of Spinoza's early works is not at all limited to their being stations on the road leading to the *Ethics*. A teleological attitude of such a sort would celebrate the works of the "mature Spinoza" at the expense of the early works. However, we have no reason to assume that on *all* issues the views of the *Ethics* are better argued, developed, and motivated than those of the early works. In other words, we should keep our minds open to the possibility that

on *some* issues the early works might contain better analyses and argumentation than the *Ethics*.

The mid-nineteenth-century discovery of the two Dutch manuscripts of Spinoza's *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being* proved to deliver a crucial impetus for the study of the formation of Spinoza's thought and his early works. The publication of Meinsma's seminal 1896 study and collection of sources, *Spinoza en zijn kring*, was followed in the twentieth century by the important books of Jacob Freudenthal (*Spinoza: sein Leben und seine Lehre*, 1904), Stanislaus von Dunin-Borkowski (*De junge de Spinoza*, 1910), I. S. Révah (*Spinoza et Juan de Prado*, 1959), and Henry Méchoulan (*Amsterdam au temps de Spinoza*, 1990). These crucial tomes, alongside scrupulous philological works by Filippo Mignini, Fokke Akkerman, and Piet Steenbakkers and more recent studies by Yosef Kaplan on the seventeenth-century Jewish community of Amsterdam, placed the field on solid ground. Nevertheless, there is still much regarding Spinoza's early biography and thought that is shrouded by the veils of ignorance and ideology. Specifically, we seem to have little solid knowledge of the reasons for the ban placed on Spinoza in July 1656, and of Spinoza's intellectual development in the following years. Regrettably, much of the discussion of Spinoza's attitude toward Jewish philosophy and thought has been motivated and masked by ideologies and counter-ideologies. On the one hand, we encounter the still-common narrative, which could be dismissed as simple ignorance were it not the outcome of deeply entrenched prejudices, of Spinoza's ascent from the fundamentalist philosophy of the rabbis to the enlightenment of Cartesianism. In fact, the major medieval Jewish philosophers—Maimonides, Gersonides, and Hasdai Crescas—openly advocated views which hardly any Cartesian would dare entertain due to their heretic perception in the Christian context. On the other hand, we find the ideological construct of "Philonic philosophy" by Harry A. Wolfson, who virtually effaced any difference between Spinoza and his medieval predecessors (as well as between the various medieval philosophers themselves) in an attempt to provide a counter-narrative to Hegel's Christian historiography of the history of philosophy. Thus a careful, thorough, and ideology-free examination of Spinoza's critical dialogue with Jewish sources is still a desideratum, awaiting the formation of a critical mass of scholars equipped with the required philological and philosophical skills.

Most of the essays in the current collection stems from two jointly organized conferences that were held in the fall of 2011 at Johns Hopkins University and the École normale supérieure de Lyon. The aim of the conferences, and of this collection, was not to provide a systematic commentary on the corpus of Spinoza's early works, but rather to bring together scholars from several continents, with diverse

philosophical orientations and scholarly interests, in order to stimulate the study of Spinoza's early works. For this reason, I have not hesitated, as editor, to allow some degree of overlap among the topics of the papers, especially since they display well-distinguished attitudes. The scholarly literature on the early works of Spinoza is quite limited (especially in English), and it is my hope that the current volume will stimulate interest and further study of this argument-rich, bold, and imaginative corpus. Our aim here is not to summarize the achievements of a certain research agenda, but rather to re-launch one.

The twenty studies assembled in this volume differ significantly in their scope. Some concentrate on a single work by the young Spinoza, while others discuss a broad selection of texts. In the first of these studies, **Edwin Curley**, a leading scholar and translator of Spinoza for several decades, addresses an early work of Spinoza's that is not available to us (and perhaps never existed at all!). In his *Dictionary* article on Spinoza, Bayle claimed that Spinoza had composed (but never printed) a defense of his departure from the synagogue, which included many of the things that subsequently appeared in his "pernicious and detestable" *Theological-Political Treatise*. Curley attempts to determine what this work might have contained, assuming that it existed.

In 1979 **Filippo Mignini** published a groundbreaking study that contested the then commonly assumed chronology of Spinoza's development, and argued that the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (= TIE, first published in Spinoza's 1677 *Opera Posthuma*) had been written by Spinoza before the *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being*.[7] Over the past thirty-five years, several editions and translations of Spinoza's early works have appeared, along with a number of studies concerning the formation of his philosophy, and a great majority of these have followed this seminal essay, either in its entirety or in partial form.[8] In his current contribution (Chapter 2 of this volume), Mignini provides additional evidence in support of the anteriority of the TIE, and further develops his general interpretation of it, by focusing on Spinoza's notion of "fiction."

Two studies address the crucial notion of truth in the TIE. According to **Alan Nelson** in Chapter 3, though the TIE emphasizes the project of attaining true ideas, it proposes that the final goal, the "highest good," is to perfect one's nature through the "knowledge of the union that the mind has with the whole of Nature" (TIE §13). In the first part of his chapter, Nelson draws out connections that Spinoza seems to be making between true ideas and the unification of the mind with the whole of Nature, or God, and points out the Cartesian background of these connections. The second part of the chapter traces the development of these themes in the *Ethics*. The goal of the *Ethics* is again to achieve union with God, but now this is to happen through

an intellectual love of God, which is "the very love of God by which God loves himself" (E5p36) and *one and the same* as God's love of men (E5p36c). The mind's being a true idea of the body, however, appears to be inconsistent with unification with God, because the mind is affected by other finite things. In Chapter 4, **John Morrison** suggests a thorough and systematic new interpretation of Spinoza's concept of truth in the TIE (and the *Ethics*), according to which an idea of *x* that is contained in *S*'s mind is true, if and only if, (1) it represents *x*'s essence (and perhaps properties) but nothing else, and (2) it is contained in *S*'s inborn idea of her own essence, or was deduced by *S* from ideas contained in her inborn idea of her own essence.

Michael LeBuffe's contribution (Chapter 5) addresses the provisional morality of the TIE. According to LeBuffe, the young Spinoza proposes that even as we work at emending the intellect we should live by certain rules, which we must assume to be good. We should accommodate ordinary ways of speaking and living to the extent that we can without compromising our project. We should enjoy pleasures in moderation. Finally, we should seek instrumental goods only insofar as they are necessary for health and social acceptability. In order to explain shifts in Spinoza's views about the way that we should live while we pursue the good, LeBuffe traces developments in his accounts of ideas and of the relationship between the philosopher and society. The final essay to concentrate on the TIE is by **Mogens Lærke**, who studies Leibniz's engagement with this work. In May 1678, Leibniz wrote from Hanover to his friend Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus: "Surely you do not ignore that the posthumous works of Spinoza have been published. Among them there is a fragment *On the Emendation of the Intellect*, but he stops exactly at the place where I expected the most" (A II, i, 413). This short passage constitutes the only direct evaluation of Spinoza's TIE by Leibniz that we know of. It was the result of his first (and last) reading of the text, which had taken place some four months earlier, shortly after the son of a certain Abraham Arendt brought Leibniz a copy of the freshly printed *Opera Posthuma*, which had been sent directly to Hanover from Amsterdam by one of the editors of the work, Hermann Schuller. At that time, Leibniz read the TIE attentively, underlining and writing short marginal comments in his copy of the work. Leibniz's evaluation of the TIE in the letter to Tschirnhaus expresses disappointment, and one wonders what exactly it was that Leibniz so eagerly expected to learn at the point where Spinoza's text breaks off with a *reliqui desiderantur*. In Chapter 6, Lærke attempts to answer this question by reconstructing Leibniz's reading of the TIE on the basis of his marginal notes and the context of his engagement with Spinoza's philosophy in the latter half of the

1670s.

Five of the chapters concentrate on the *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being* (= KV). This early work of Spinoza's was neither published in his lifetime nor included in his *Opera Posthuma*. Two manuscripts of the Dutch translation of the work were discovered in the nineteenth century, and ever since it has attracted the attention of scholars interested in Spinoza's philosophical development. **Daniel Garber** studies the Cartesian nature of this work in Chapter 7. Spinoza is best known for the monism of his *Ethics* and his account of mind as identical to body. However, Garber argues, he took quite a different view in the KV. Although in many ways Spinoza's early view of mind and its relation to body shows many affinities with the view that he was later to take, Garber argues that in the KV Spinoza held that the mind is a thing (a mode, though not a substance) genuinely distinct from the body. More generally, Garber argues, in the KV Spinoza is much more directly engaged with debates coming out of Descartes and early Cartesianism than he would be in the *Ethics*, where the influence of Hobbes is stronger. **Colin Marshall**, in Chapter 8, studies Spinoza's mostly neglected account of reason in the KV. That account, Marshall argues, has at least four features that distinguish it from that of the *Ethics*: in the KV, (1) reason is more sharply distinguished from intuitive knowledge, (2) reason deals with things as though they were "outside" us, (3) reason lacks clarity and distinctness, and (4) reason has no power over many types of passions. Marshall argues that these differences have a unified explanation, consisting of a principle that Spinoza accepts in both works and a central change. The principle is that "whatever we find in ourselves has more power over us than anything which comes from outside," and the change is that the objects of reason are common things/common notions. Understanding this, Marshall claims, sheds light on the psychological and epistemological motivations behind Spinoza's mature doctrines.

In Chapter 9, **Russ Leo** shows that Spinoza was a careful reader of Calvin and of Reformed Orthodoxy. Throughout the KV, Spinoza used and transformed Calvinist concepts and terms. This suggests that Calvinism acted as another crucible for Spinoza's mature thought. Moreover, it shows that, in his attempt to address a larger, ecumenical audience, Spinoza was willing to enter into debate with Calvinists and Anti-Calvinists alike during the vibrant and volatile theological-political milieu of the 1640s and 1650s. Chapter 10 by **John Carriero** focuses on chapter 16 of part 2 of the KV. His contribution scrutinizes Spinoza's odd notion that the will is not a "real thing" but rather a "being of reason." Spinoza develops this claim by comparing the will to a universal. In the first part of the chapter, Carriero contrasts Spinoza's conception of a (physical) individual as a determination of

the universe's basic geometrical, kinetic, and dynamic invariances with an Aristotelian conception of an individual constituted by various interrelated "perfections" that are capable of two modes of existence, one in the individual and another in the mind. As Carriero argues, Spinoza's thesis that the will is not a real thing concerns what might be thought of as the ontology of power and cuts more deeply than the themes usually associated with Spinoza on the topic of free will, namely those concerned with freedom, determinism, and the Principle of Sufficient Reason. Spinoza's fundamental claim concerns what a power (such as the will) *is*—that is, a certain determination of the universe's invariances, which implies that the will is *not* some "compartmentalized" power that we bring to the universe's causal table.

The last essay focusing on the *Short Treatise* is Chapter 11 by **Valtteri Viljanen**. In this chapter, Viljanen traces and explicates the rather consistent essentialist thread that runs through the KV. This allows us not only to better understand the work itself but also to obtain a firmer grasp of the nature of its author's whole philosophical enterprise. In many ways, the essentialism we find in the *Short Treatise* is in line with Spinoza's mature thought; but there are also significant differences, and discerning them throws light on the development of his philosophy. Viljanen argues that, while Spinoza's notion of essence remained rather stable throughout his career, its ontological status underwent some notable changes, being in the *Short Treatise* less independent of actual existence than in the later works.

Chapter 12 by **Frédéric Manzini** poses the question: "When was Spinoza not young anymore?" As Manzini points out, there is much discussion about whether Spinoza's system was the same in his early works as in his *Ethics*. Manzini suggests that Spinoza's coming of age —philosophically speaking—can be assigned to a single, crucial moment, namely the incompletion of his 1663 book, *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy*, which presumably attested to Spinoza's decision to abandon, rather than reform, Cartesianism. Chapter 13 by **Tad Schmaltz** studies the conception of eternity in Spinoza's early period. There is some scholarly controversy over whether Spinoza endorsed a durational or non-durational account of eternity in the *Ethics*. There is also the unresolved question of whether the sort of eternity that Spinoza attributes to substance in this text is the same as the sort of eternity he attributes there to certain modes of substance (such as "infinite modes" and the human mind). Schmaltz suggests that we can make some progress on these difficult interpretive issues by considering the connection of the *Ethics* to two 1663 texts by the young Spinoza: the *Cogitata Metaphysica* (appended to Spinoza's book, *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy*) and the so-called "Letter on the Infinite." According to Schmaltz, these texts indicate that, on

Spinoza's considered view, substance is eternal in a non-durational sense, but that modes can be eternal only in a durational sense.

For German and British Idealist readers of Spinoza, the key to his metaphysics is its alleged "acosmism"—that is, its denial of the reality of the "world" of finite things. In Chapter 14, **Karolina Hübner** examines and challenges the oft-repeated Idealist argument that what leads to the unreality of finite things is the fact that the differentiation of finite individuals as finite requires negation, whereas what genuinely exists is purely positive. The chapter investigates how Spinoza understands the nature of negation, its role in constituting finite things, and its relation to both divine and human thought; it also examines several possible but ultimately unsatisfying arguments on both sides of the controversy, arguments that focus on divine omniscience and divine attributes. In conclusion, Hübner suggests that Spinoza's early *Metaphysical Thoughts* offers unparalleled insight into his conception of negation, showing in particular that its account of "beings of reason" presents a powerful argument against the Idealist. Chapter 15 by **Oded Schechter** traces the development of Spinoza's theory of the three (or four) kinds of cognition. While previous scholars have paid some attention to the minor changes in the description of each of the kinds of cognition, Schechter goes further, and shows that the nature and function of the threefold distinction changes from one work to another. The TIE relies on the distinction as part of its attempt to find the *proper method* for philosophizing. In the KV the kinds of cognition are presented as different *manners of conduct*, while in the *Ethics* the three kinds of cognition constitute distinct *manners of existence*. Relying on this crucial observation, Schechter explains Spinoza's enigmatic claims in the conclusion of the *Ethics* about the eternity of our minds.

In his early writings, Spinoza advocates a thoroughgoing *anti-abstractionism*. As he warns readers in his earliest work, "so long as we are dealing with the investigation of things, we must never infer anything from abstractions, and we shall take very great care not to mix up the things that are only in the intellect with those that are real" (TIE §93). In Chapter 16, **Samuel Newlands** explores Spinoza's early writings against *abstracta* and abstract thinking. He investigates whether Spinoza's early repudiation of abstractions and abstract thinking is consistent with his ontology, and also looks at Spinoza's only explicit argument in these texts for his anti-abstractionism. Finally, Newlands discusses the wide-ranging uses to which Spinoza puts his anti-abstractionism. **Yitzhak Y. Melamed** argues in Chapter 17 that a study of the early works of Spinoza and the early drafts of the *Ethics* shows that Spinoza experimented with various conceptions of substance and attribute that are significantly distinct from the definitions we find at the beginning of the final version of the *Ethics*.

Indeed, Melamed suggests that at a certain point in his development Spinoza seems to have entertained a metaphysics free from the notion of attribute. According to Melamed, the tensions inherent in Spinoza's account of substance and attribute were never fully resolved, even in the final version of the *Ethics*.

Ursula Renz in Chapter 18 examines the shift from Spinoza's early characterization of the intellect as "wholly passive" to his later views, according to which mental states consist in the activity of forming ideas. Following a close reading of the relevant passages of the *Short Treatise*, she argues that, in contrast to Descartes, Spinoza is not bound by any kind of systematic constraint to conceive of the intellect as either passive or active. The reason is that, according to him, there is no real distinction between the understanding and the will, or to be precise, between the activity of understanding and the activity of willing. Renz investigates the development of Spinoza's use of the notion of idea, and she contends that this development is at least partially due to Spinoza's new approach to the mental. As an overarching argument, she shows that while large parts of the conceptual or metaphysical framework remain the same in the *Ethics*, there are major shifts in the level of Spinoza's philosophy of mind and epistemology. In Chapter 19, **John Brandau** concentrates on Spinoza's enigmatic claim in the KV that entities can have varying *degrees of essence*. This puzzling claim can create the impression that Spinoza quantified essence as a mass term rather than a count term, and that entities are distinguished not by possessing distinct essences so much as by possessing distinct quantities of a homogenous "stuff," essence. In his chapter, Brandau provides an alternative explanation of what Spinoza might have meant by claiming that entities may have varying degrees of essence. He argues that Spinoza identified a thing's essence with its perfection, and that, generally speaking, an entity may have more or less essence in proportion to the quantity of its essential properties.

Pina Totaro, the author of the concluding chapter of the volume, is the co-discoverer of the manuscript of Spinoza's *Ethics*, recently found in the Vatican Library. The manuscript contains some crucial elements for a better understanding of the intellectual biography and philosophy of the young Spinoza. The Vatican manuscript is not an autograph, but a copy made by Pieter van Gent. It was brought to Rome probably by the German mathematician and philosopher E. W. Tschirnhaus, who gave the manuscript to the Danish scientist and theologian Niels Stensen. Before leaving Rome for Northern Europe, Stensen delivered the manuscript of the *Ethics* to the Congregazione del S. Uffizio with a complaint against Spinoza. After having recovered the history of the Vatican manuscript, Totaro discusses the differences between the manuscript of the *Ethics* and the printed

edition in the *Opera Posthuma* (1677).

Let me conclude by thanking the Philosophy Department, the Singleton Center for the Study of Pre-Modern Europe, and the Stulman Program in Jewish Studies—all at Johns Hopkins University—and the École normale supérieure de Lyon for their generous support of the two conferences and this collection. I would also like to thank Jason Yonover for his skillful copyediting of the final manuscript of the book and Alex Englert who prepared the index with great care. Finally, I would like to dedicate this volume to our colleague, Alan Gabbey, in honor of his retirement.

---

[1] CM I 2 | G I/238/6, 15. Cf. CM II 9 | G I/266/12.
[2] KV I 2 (First dialogue) | G I/30/31.
[3] CM II 5 | G I/258/32.
[4] CM I 2 | G I/237/30.
[5] KV I 2 (First dialogue)| G I/29/26.
[6] See Eps. 2 and 4.
[7] F. Mignini, “Per la datazione e l’interpretazione”; see also F. Mignini, “Nuovi contributi.”
[8] S. Auffret-Ferzli, “L’hypothèse d’une rédaction echelonnée.”

{ 1 }

Spinoza's Lost Defense

Edwin Curley

I begin with a fact which is not in dispute:[1] that in his *Dictionary* article on Spinoza, Bayle claimed that Spinoza had composed, in Spanish, a defense (*une apologie*) of his departure (*sortie*) from the synagogue, that this work was never printed, but that Spinoza put in it many of the things which subsequently appeared in his "pernicious and detestable" *Theological-Political Treatise* (henceforth, the TTP).[2] Bayle was not the first to make these claims—only the best-known author of his day to give credence to a story which originally appeared in a work by Salomo van Til, his *Voor-hof der Heydenen* (1694).

Van Til's report of the defense is the earliest we have. Though brief, it is also the most informative:

> Then this opponent of religion was the first to dare to overthrow the authority of the books of the Old and New Testament, and attempted to show the world how these writings had been repeatedly altered and transformed through human effort (*vlijt*), and how it had been possible to raise them to a reputation of godliness. He had collected detailed objections of this kind in a Spanish treatise against the Old Testament, under the title 'A Defense of my Departure from Judaism.' But on the advice of friends he suppressed this writing and undertook to introduce these ideas somewhat more skillfully and briefly (*behendiger en spaarsamer*) in another work, which he published under the title *Theological-Political Treatise* in 1670.[3]

The story of a lost defense also appears in other early sources. For example, Colerus tells us that Spinoza wasn't present at the excommunication, and wrote his defense in response to having received a written copy of the ban. He also tells us that he tried to locate a copy of the defense and was unable to.[4] It's unclear what Colerus's source for this information is. In one of the two passages where he talks about the defense, he mentions Bayle. But he can't be depending only on Bayle, since some of what he tells us—that Spinoza was not present at the excommunication, and wrote his

defense in response to that event—is not in Bayle.

Apart from Van Til, I think the most interesting early source is Hallemann's travel journal, which tells of a visit to Spinoza's publisher, Rieuwerts, who claimed that after Spinoza died, he published everything of Spinoza's he could find

> except a large work which Spinoza had written against the Jews, which treated them very harshly. Spinoza already had this finished before the *Theological-Political Treatise*, and he let it lie unpublished, from which they concluded that he did not want it published. He (Rieuwerts) had had the ms., but he let someone else have it.[5]

There's been some skepticism about the existence of this lost defense. Sigmund Seeligman called the stories about it "fables." And W. G. van der Tak, to whom I'm indebted for the information about Seeligman, was also dubious about its existence.[6] So was Steven Nadler in his recent biography.[7]

On this issue, however, I'm a believer. I take Hallemann's report to provide strong confirmation of Van Til's claims about a lost defense. He says Rieuwerts told him he had once possessed a manuscript of this work. I assume Halleman is reporting accurately what Rieuwerts said, and that Rieuwerts is a reliable source. Halleman's report also contains information we don't find in any of the earlier reports: that the defense was a large work, and that it treated the Jews very harshly. This last information might explain why the defense was never printed, and perhaps never even given to the leaders of the synagogue who had been responsible for the excommunication.[8] Spinoza may have written it in the heat of the moment, and when his anger cooled, decided not to make it public, postponing any discussion of these topics until another day, when he could treat the matter more dispassionately. Hallemann's report also suggests a reason why Rieuwerts might not have thought it essential to preserve the manuscript: he thought Spinoza hadn't wanted the work published, because the TTP superseded it, and perhaps also because, on calm reflection, he did not want to treat his former co-religionists as harshly as he originally had. Under those circumstances, Rieuwerts might well have felt that there was no reason to preserve the earlier work. If that's true, it's a pity.

I'll proceed in this chapter on the assumption that the early reports are substantially correct: that Spinoza did once write a defense of his departure from the synagogue which was at least roughly like what the early reports would lead us to expect. And I propose to try to reconstruct, as well as our sources permit, what is likely to have been in that lost defense. You might ask, "How can you possibly do that?" The short answer: we are not without resources. Since the work of Revah, we've had some reasonably good information about the

grounds for Spinoza's excommunication. The information is good insofar as it's fairly reliable, I think, but not so good insofar as it's rather sketchy and in some respects inconsistent. Nevertheless, taking that information as our starting point, and using Van Til's hint that some of what Spinoza said in his defense later appeared in the TTP, we can try to reconstruct some of the probable contents of the defense. It seems safe to assume that Spinoza's defense would have responded to the main charges against him, and that passages in the TTP relevant to those charges would give us some idea of the sort of thing Spinoza is likely to have said in his defense. I would not claim that the Spinoza of 1656 had worked out his views on these issues as fully and adequately as the Spinoza of 1670 had. Probably there would have been some development in his thinking between these two dates. After all, his thought certainly developed considerably between the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics*. But I would expect the main lines of the defense of 1656 to be broadly similar to what we find in the TTP regarding these religious issues. If we find that there's material in the TTP which addresses the charges made against Spinoza, that will tend to confirm the early reports of a lost defense and will give us a reasonable conjecture about what it's likely to have contained.

Revah's sources about the grounds for the excommunication were two Hispanic travelers who visited the Netherlands in the late 1650s and who, after they returned to Spain, gave depositions to the Inquisition about their encounters with Spinoza and other freethinkers during that visit. Because there was a fairly large community of Spanish and Portuguese expatriates in the Dutch Republic, some of whom were apt to travel back to the Iberian peninsula or communicate with people there, the Inquisition had a keen interest in knowing what was going on in the Dutch Republic, which had achieved its independence from Spain only relatively recently. I don't think we have properly appreciated how much contemporary Spinoza studies owe to the Inquisition. We're indebted to it not only for the best evidence we have about the grounds for Spinoza's excommunication, but also for the only manuscript copy we have of Spinoza's *Ethics*.[9] It was probably not the Church's intention to further the study of Spinoza's thought. But that has been, for us, a happy consequence of its curiosity.

According to the first of these informers, Father Tomas Solano, the excommunication involved three charges, made against both Spinoza and a friend of his, Juan de Prado, a Spanish expatriate living in the Netherlands, whom the congregation had excommunicated only the day before they excommunicated Spinoza:

1. That they believed that God only exists philosophically;
2. That they believed that the soul dies with the body; and
3. That they believed that the law of Moses is not true. (Revah, p. 32)

That's what Solano says early in his deposition. A bit later he repeats the first two charges, but gives a different version of the third charge:

4) That they believed they did not need faith. (Revah, ibid.)

The second informer, one Captain Miguel Perez de Maltranilla, gives a less detailed account. He says only that Spinoza and Prado had been Jews, and had professed the law of the Jews, but that they had separated themselves from it because

5. they believed that the law was not good and was false. (Revah, p. 33)

Can we trust these sources? After all, they were informers to the Spanish Inquisition, a class of people who do not, as a rule, have a good reputation for telling the truth.[10]

I grant the point. But there are at least a couple of ways in which we might try to satisfy ourselves that they're telling the truth in this case. Revah did it by exploring the Marrano milieu of seventeenth-century Amsterdam and seeing whether the ideas the informers attributed to Spinoza and Prado were characteristic of heterodox thinkers in that world. His results should go some distance toward eliminating any unease we might feel about relying on their reports. I propose to follow a different route: seeing to what extent we can find in the TTP expression of, and justification for, the theses the informers claimed were grounds for Spinoza's excommunication. To the extent that we have independent grounds for thinking that these are the kind of thing Spinoza might well have said—making allowance for some possible distortion of his views in their reports, arising from lack of understanding—then it will be that much more reasonable to give their reports credence.

Let's take first the proposition that God only exists philosophically. What does that mean? I suggest it means that the most accurate conception of God, perhaps the only conception on which we have good grounds for affirming God's existence, is the philosophic conception of God as a supremely perfect and absolutely infinite being. A definition of God along those lines was certainly common among philosophers in the seventeenth century. That's roughly the definition that Descartes favored in the *Meditations*.[11] It's also roughly the definition Leibniz proposed in his *Discourse on Metaphysics* as "the most widely received and the most significant notion we have of God."[12] And it's exactly the definition Spinoza himself invokes, in Letter 2 (G IV/8), when he argues that from this definition we can derive a definition closer to the one he would later give in the *Ethics*, that "God is a being consisting of infinite attributes,

each of which is infinite, *or* supremely perfect in its kind" (G IV/7). Although Spinoza may have a preference for this latter formula, which he thinks makes it easy to demonstrate the existence of God, I believe he thought the two formulas were equivalent. (At the very least, he thought that the common philosophical definition entailed his own.)

To hold that the philosophers' definition—a definition emphasizing God's supreme perfection—provides the best way of conceiving God is, arguably, to reject the scriptural conception of God. For in spite of the popularity of that definition of God among Christian philosophers, someone who just looked at the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, and tried to form a conception of God solely on the basis of those texts, would not easily arrive at the philosophers' formula—hence the contrast Pascal drew between the God of the philosophers and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.[13] Spinoza draws the same contrast in the TTP, though his allegiance is different. The prophets, he argues, did not conceive of God as a supremely perfect being. One of his central conclusions in that work is that their prophecies

> varied according to the opinions the prophets embraced, and that they had various, and indeed, contrary, opinions, as well as various prejudices . . . about purely speculative matters. . . . Prophecy never rendered the Prophets more learned, but left them with their preconceived opinions. So we are not at all bound to believe them concerning purely speculative matters. (G III/35 | ii, 24)

Spinoza promises to argue this "carefully and in great detail," because he thinks the matter is of great importance. He then proceeds to give numerous examples of passages in which the prophets conceived of God as imperfect in some way: for example, Adam seems not to know that God is omnipresent and omniscient (G III/37 | ii, 32); Abraham seems not to know that God foreknows all things (G III/37–38 | ii, 34); and even Moses, who was supposed to have a clearer knowledge of God than any other prophet (Numbers 12:6–8, Deuteronomy 34:10), did not have an adequate conception of God, believing that he is corporeal and visible, that he is subject to such affects as compassion, kindness, and jealousy, and that he has his dwelling place in the heavens (G III/38–40 | ii, 35–45).

So far this is an old story. Maimonides had begun his *Guide of the Perplexed* with a lengthy discussion of the many passages in the Bible which, on a naive reading, say or imply that God is a being who has human qualities, many of which involve his being corporeal, others of which involve his being imperfect in other ways. Maimonides' solution was: *don't read the Bible naively*. "The Torah speaks in the language of the sons of man" (*Guide* I, 29), that is, it adapts what it says about God to the human understanding, describing God in terms which reason tells us are not literally accurate, but which have the

advantage that they can be understood by ordinary men, who are not philosophers. Reason demonstrates, for example, that God is incorporeal. So the Bible should not be taken literally when it seems to say or imply that he is corporeal. When it does that, it is accommodating its teaching to the intellectual deficiencies of its audience. Non-philosophers are not capable of grasping the philosophical conception of God, which, as Maimonides presents it, is even more austere and remote than Spinoza's conception.[14] So the prophets speak of God in a language they can understand, but which is not, and is not meant to be, an accurate description.

By the time Spinoza wrote the TTP, he had a well-worked out position on this issue.[15] He denied that Maimonidean rationalism gives us a viable principle for interpreting Scripture. If Maimonides were correct, the common people, who have no knowledge of philosophical demonstrations, and lack the time to study them, would be unable to understand Scripture properly. Lacking philosophical knowledge, they would not know when to take Scripture literally, and when to take it figuratively—not, at least, without relying on the authority of philosophers to make that distinction for them. This is true of the common people of our own time, and even more true of the common people of ancient Israel, who lived at a time when philosophy was not well cultivated. I would guess, but cannot prove, that Spinoza had the key elements of this response worked out in 1656. In any case, the question of Scriptural anthropomorphism, and the proper way to understand it, must have exercised him at an early age. This is the easiest, most obvious objection to the scriptural conception of God, and an objection which must have been discussed when Spinoza was studying the Bible with his teachers.

But I think Spinoza's criticism of Scripture goes deeper than these objections to anthropomorphism. In the TTP he argues that Scripture really has no coherent conception of God. We've seen this claim already in the passage quoted above (G III/35 | ii, 24). The prophets are inconsistent in what they say about God. Among the examples Spinoza uses to support this claim are Ezekiel, who contradicts the Decalogue when he denies that God visits the sins of the fathers upon their children, and Jeremiah, who contradicts Samuel when he allows that sometimes God repents of his decrees.[16]

Perhaps the most fundamental contradiction Spinoza alleges concerns a proposition often thought to be at the heart of Judaism, its affirmation of monotheism. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one."[17] So begins one of the most familiar passages in the Hebrew Bible, a passage often understood as a clear affirmation of the uniqueness of God. These are supposed to be the words of Moses. And yet, Spinoza argues, Moses was no monotheist. Spinoza does not have the term that critical biblical scholars would now use to characterize

Moses's position—*monolatry*—but he recognizes the facts which ground that classification. That is, Moses believed in a plurality of gods, among whom there was only one whom the people of Israel ought to worship. So when Moses asks, in Exodus 15:11, "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods?" this is an expression of what is ultimately a polytheistic view.[18] God is uniquely powerful, greater than all the other gods. And therefore, he alone is to be worshiped—at least by the people of Israel, whom he led out of bondage in Egypt, and whom he is specially concerned to protect. But he is not the only god. Not on Moses' conception of things. And if there are other passages in Scripture which are unequivocal affirmations of monotheism—as there are, for example, in Isaiah[19]—that merely demonstrates the impropriety of speaking of *the* scriptural conception of God. There is no coherent conception of God in Scripture. It follows that Scripture offers no viable alternative to the God of the philosophers.[20]

That there are these contradictions in the Hebrew Bible—or, to put it a bit more diplomatically, that there are many passages in the Bible which *seem* contradictory to one another—would not have been news to the members of the Talmud Torah congregation, not if they were familiar with one of the best-known works of one of their most distinguished rabbis. In 1632 Manasseh ben Israel had published in Spanish a work he called *The Conciliator*, which claimed to identify all the passages in Scripture which seemed contradictory to one another, and to show that they weren't really contradictory. This work was translated into Latin in the following year, and was highly regarded in its day. In the nineteenth century it was still thought worth the labor of an English translation, and in the twentieth century that English translation was thought worth reprinting.[21]

Having worked closely on the TTP for many years now, I find it inconceivable that Spinoza was not quite familiar with Manasseh's work. He never cites Manasseh. But citing his opponents is not something Spinoza often does in any case. So I don't think that's much of an objection. He does often refer to the opinions of the commentators Manasseh cited (usually without identifying them). And he regularly discusses problems that Manasseh discussed, and regularly rejects the solutions that Manasseh proposed. I think that for the young Spinoza, Manasseh provided an introduction to the rich tradition of Jewish commentary on the Scriptures, which at some point, probably well before his excommunication, Spinoza immersed himself in. I cannot try to prove that here. But I will note that Manasseh discusses *all* the putative contradictions I mentioned earlier.[22]

If the existence of apparent contradictions in Scripture was well known in the synagogue, then in addressing that audience, Spinoza

would probably not have thought it enough merely to call attention to them. He would probably have felt the need to say something about the received way of dealing with them. He might, for example, have pointed out that, in spite of Manasseh's claim to explain away all the prima facie contradictions in Scripture, he does not in fact discuss *all* of them. If we may judge by the attention he gives it in the TTP, one stretch of text Spinoza might well have cited is the story of Jacob and Joseph. In Chapter IX he comments that this whole story "is so full of inconsistencies that it must have been culled from different historians and copied out" without regard to consistency. (G III/130–131 | ix, 12)

Here are some of the problems: in Genesis 35:10, Jacob is told that he will no longer be called Jacob, but henceforth, Israel. But after this he continues to be called Jacob—not consistently, but quite frequently.[23] Again, when the brothers deliberate about what to do with Joseph, one of the brothers persuades the others not to kill him. But which brother is it, Reuben (37:21–22) or Judah (37:26–27)? Who is it who sells Joseph to the Egyptians, the Ishmaelites (37:28) or the Midianites (37:36)? Who is it, later in the story, who provides surety for Benjamin's safe return to his father, Reuben (42:37) or Judah (43:8–9)?

These are questions which might very naturally occur to a bright young reader of Genesis, even if he has not yet achieved philosophical sophistication.[24] Manasseh discussed the first of these problems, but not the last three. And his solution to the problem he does discuss is not very satisfying. When he takes up the problem of Jacob's name, his solution, essentially, is that the text doesn't mean what it says:

> When the angel[25] said, "Thy name shall not be called any more Jacob," it is not to be understood that he entirely took away that name from him, but that the name of Israel should be the principal and superior, and that of Jacob inferior and accessory.[26]

He gives no textual reason for thinking that the angel made this distinction and makes no attempt to show that it explains the pattern of name use.

By the time Spinoza wrote the TTP, I think he would have said that Manasseh is hampered in his treatment of these problems by a false, but fundamental, assumption. He assumes that because the Bible is "in the highest degree true, it cannot contain any text really contradictory of another."[27] So wherever there is something that looks like a contradiction between two or more texts, this must be a false appearance, and the reader's (or interpreter's) job is just to determine how to reconcile the texts.

At the beginning of the TTP, Spinoza announces that he will not make this assumption. The ministers of religion, he complains, merely give lip service to Scripture.

> This is evident from the fact that most of them suppose, as a foundation for understanding Scripture and unearthing its true meaning, that it is everywhere true and divine. So what we ought to establish by understanding Scripture, and subjecting it to a strict examination, and what we would be far better taught by Scripture itself, which needs no human inventions, they maintain at the outset as a rule for the interpretation of Scripture. (G III/9 | Preface, §19)

In the context he's speaking explicitly of Christian ministers, but his criticism also applied to Manasseh. Had Spinoza arrived at this reversal of traditional procedure by the time he wrote the lost defense? Since this assumption is so fundamental to the TTP, I would conjecture that he had. So long as we lack a copy of the lost defense, or a more detailed account of its contents than we possess, this can only be a hypothesis, to be judged by its role in constructing a coherent and plausible theory of the evidence we have. I'm content to let it be judged by those criteria.

However that may be, this discussion of the contrast between the God of the philosophers and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob may give us some understanding of the negative implications of the statement that God only exists philosophically. The God who actually exists, and whose existence we can demonstrate, is not at all like the God of Scripture. We can also find in the TTP something more positive about what God is like. It's an implication of God's perfection that he's immutable. And the TTP explains, in its third chapter, how it is that the world of finite, constantly changing things can nevertheless be the result of the actions of an immutable being. For there Spinoza gives an account of God's activity in the world which does not require change on his part:

> By *God's guidance* I understand the fixed and immutable order of nature, *or* the connection of natural things. For we've said above, and have already shown elsewhere, that the universal laws of nature, according to which all things happen and are determined, are nothing but the eternal decrees of God, which always involve eternal truth and necessity. Therefore, whether we say that all things happen according to the laws of nature, or that they're ordered according to the decree and guidance of God, we say the same thing. (G III/45–46 | iii, 7–8)

I take this to mean that God's action in the world must be understood as the operation of impersonal natural laws, which admit no exception. This is why there can be no miracles. Whatever happens which seems to be a violation of natural law must be capable, in principle, of being understood through natural laws—though we may not have the resources to understand them that way. We may not, for example, know enough about the laws of nature, or about the circumstances in the particular case, to see how it could have happened naturally.[28]

meaning of *ruagh*. But the association of *ruagh* with breath, the most obvious sign of life, suggests that this passage might give us a more accurate version of what he said to Lucas—or perhaps a version which expressed his considered view on the subject more accurately than what he in fact said to Lucas. (Someone writing for publication might well say something more complicated than anything he would say in conversation—particularly if he judged his conversational partner to be not up to too much complexity.)

Among the passages Spinoza chooses to illustrate the use of *ruagh* to mean mind or soul (*mentem sive animam*) are two from Ecclesiastes, which have an interesting history:

> 3:19—*Spiritus* (sive *anima*) *eadem est omnibus* [The spirit (*or* soul) is the same in all].
>
> And
>
> 12:7—*Spiritus ad Deum revertitur* [The spirit returns to God].

What I've given here is first Spinoza's Latin translation of the Hebrew, followed by my translation of his Latin.[32] Spinoza does not comment on these passages, nor does he quote enough of them to explain why he has selected them to illustrate this usage. It will help us to understand what's at issue in them if I quote their larger context, in a recent English translation:

> 3:19—For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath [*ruagh*], and humans have no advantage over the animals; for all is vanity. 20 All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. 21 Who knows whether the human spirit [*ruagh*] goes upward and the spirit [*ruagh*] of animals goes downward to the earth?[33]

This ends on a note of skepticism, but otherwise looks like a rather blunt denial that humans are immortal. The second passage is less straightforward:

> 12:1—Remember your creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come, and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no pleasure in them"; 2 before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened, and the clouds return with the rain . . . 5 when one is afraid of heights, and terrors are in the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails; because all must go to their eternal home, and the mourners will go about the streets; 6 before the silver cord is snapped, and the golden bowl is broken . . . 7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath [*ruagh*] returns to God who gave it. 8 Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher; all is vanity.[34]

cannot seriously aspire to him before we begin to become displeased with ourselves."[23] Perhaps nothing is more alien to the KV than sentiments such as these. Nevertheless, in the *Institutio* Calvin introduces a distinction between the knowledge of God the Creator and faith (proceeding from the knowledge of God the Redeemer)—headings under which he locates providence and predestination, respectively. Of the former, Calvin speaks "only of the primal and simple knowledge to which the very order of nature would have led us if Adam had remained upright."[24] One can also see Calvin's influence on Heereboord here and, in turn, the purchase of Heereboord's *Meletemata philosophica* (1654) in the work of the young Spinoza. A professor of logic at Leiden as well as a controversial public figure, Heereboord was as much a Calvinist as a Cartesian. Indeed, in his early work *De Notitia Dei Naturali* (1643/1647), the very title of which echoes the Latin langauge of I.iii of the *Institutio*, Heereboord uses Calvin's major work to support his idea that "it is dangerous to believe that there is no innate idea of God."[25] Heereboord quotes from *Institutio* I.iii in particular, using as evidence Calvin's claim that "[m]en of sound judgment will always be sure that a sense of divinity which can never be effaced is engraved upon men's minds" and that "the perversity of the impious, who though they struggle furiously are unable to extricate themselves from the fear of God, is abundant testimony that this conviction, namely, that there is some God, is naturally inborn in all, and is fixed deep within, as it were in the very marrow."[26] However different Heereboord's Calvinism was from that of his contemporaries—say, Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) or Johannes Hoornbeeck (1617–1666) or Jacob Revius (1586–1658)—the *Meletemata* is in many ways a thorough engagement with the varieties of Reformed Scholasticism that comprise the bulk of the archive of "Calvinist" writing after Calvin's death in 1564.

Heereboord works to understand the natural knowledge of God scholastically and subjects the relatively open term to a series of distinctions for the sake of clarity: innate and acquired, objective and subjective, and so on.[27] Calvin and Heereboord differ, however, as they proceed from this shared belief in the natural knowledge of God toward a more complete and complex description of human knowledge. The contrast between the two is not necessarily methodological—it is not as if Calvin the "humanist" rejects "scholasticism" *tout court* while Heereboord the philosopher writes appropriately detailed scholastic philosophy—rather, Calvin develops an entirely different set of distinctions. In the *Institutio*, the organizing principles are the scholastic distinctions between aspects of God, between God the Creator and God the Redeemer; between Christ's offices as priest, prophet, and king; between knowledge of Christ and the way human beings receive the grace of Christ. Calvin thus subjects

the natural knowledge of God to these divisions—and, as the natural knowledge of God only applies to our knowledge of God the Creator, he demonstrates that it is limited: "In this ruin of mankind no one now experiences God either as Father or as Author of salvation, or favorable in any way, until Christ the mediator comes forward to reconcile us."[28] Thus we learn that "the pious mind does not dream up for itself any god it pleases, but contemplates the one and only true God" and "it does not attach to him whatever it pleases, but is content to hold him to be as he manifests himself."[29] Moreover, it is absolutely crucial that men make the distinction between God's order in nature and his providential design, through which we understand our comportment to this order. Calvin makes this point with striking clarity in a bold rhetorical move, as he approaches and quickly rebounds from a position akin to Spinoza's own: "I confess, of course, that it can be said reverently, provided that it proceeds from a reverent mind, that nature is God; but because it is a harsh and improper saying, since nature is rather the order prescribed by God, it is harmful in such weighty matters, in which special devotion is due, to involve God confusedly in the inferior course of his works."[30]

Not only has the knowledge of God been "naturally implanted" [*naturaliter esse inditam*] in all men, but Calvin also explains how the doctrine of providence perfects and sharpens this knowledge.[31] Where Book I begins with a study of God in and as nature, Calvin introduces the doctrine of providence to sharpen and clarify our understanding of God's presence in nature. Calvin affirms the truth of both general and special providence, like Spinoza after him, where "it is true that the several kinds of things are moved by a secret impulse of nature, as if they obeyed God's eternal command, and what God has once determined flows on by itself."[32] And providence is as comforting as it is illuminating, for "when that light of divine providence has once shone upon a godly man, he is then relieved and set free not only from the extreme anxiety and fear that were pressing him before, but from every care."[33] We arrive at Calvin's chapter on predestination hundreds of pages later, in III.21, after his treatment of faith; here *praedestinatio*, to the letter, is given as ultimately distinct from such related terms as *electio*, *reprobatio*, and *praescientia*. According to Calvin, "We call predestination God's eternal decree [*aeternum Dei decretum*], by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is fore-ordained [*praeordinatur*] for some, eternal damnation for others."[34] Thus in the 1559 *Institutio*, as in the KV, providence is a kind of knowing that is markedly different from predestination.

Spinoza follows a very similar method, and Calvin surely serves as an influence from I 3 to the end of Part I, or at least until his treatment

of “naturing nature” [*Naturende Natuur*] in I 8. When we name God merely as one *oorzaak* among many causes, or as a *voorbeschikker*, *voorzorger*, or *Regeerder van alle dingen*, we acknowledge his activity [*werkinge*] but only via external designation [*uÿtwendige benaming*]. However, once we understand God’s activity as necessary —that is, once we see God as both the cause of all things as a free cause, and consider the terms of this freedom in light of God’s perfection—we can accurately say that all has been *voorbepaalt* or *geordonneert* by God, predetermined, but with a stronger sense of necessity. Then, once we understand how everything proceeds from God’s necessary activity, we consider how the entirety of Nature behaves in accordance with this necessity under the sign of *Voorzienigheid*, Providence. Spinoza, like the Calvin of the *Institutio*, is explicit here in noting the experiential dimension of Providence, illustrating in brief how we experience or encounter [*ondervinden*] Providence, both in the whole of nature and in particular things. This in a sense confirms our understanding of God’s necessary activity and enables us to address more complex issues of causality, such as mediation and the meaning of distinctions like proximate and remote. In I 5, Spinoza uses this contentious term *praedestinatie* to address a more direct philosophical question: “whether there is any thing of which we cannot ask why it is?” [*of er eenige saake is, van de welke wÿ niet konnen vragen: waarom ze is?*] (KV 85, 279). God’s *Praedestinatie* is directly related to our knowledge of particular things and, in particular, our providential knowledge of God as a *voorzorger* over all particular things [*bezondere dingen*]. Predestination shows us how, precisely, to understand God’s causality, perfection, necessity, necessary activity, and providence.

Spinoza took great care to develop this series of terms in accordance with what is perhaps the most canonical treatise in the history of Reformed thought: Calvin’s *Institutio*. But to what ends? First, there is rhetorical (even ecumenical) value in addressing the audience of the KV in the language of Reformed disputation. Following the work of Meinsma as well as a host of scholars in the past thirty years, we know a great deal about Spinoza’s heterodox interlocutors, about the Collegiants at Amsterdam and Rijnsburg as well as the circle of *philosophes* operating in conversation with him, including Meyer, Adriaen Koerbagh (1632–1669), Franciscus van den Enden (1602–1674), and Henry Oldenburg (1619–1677).[35] What often gets left out of the story, however, is the wide variety of potential Calvinist interlocutors, from the Remonstrants who continued, well into the 1650s and 1660s, to lay claim to Calvin and the resources of Reformed thought, to the orthodox Contra-Remonstrants themselves. The careful treatment of providence and predestination in the KV suggests an attempt to speak to and persuade an array of “Calvinist” readers who

{ INDEX }