

T  
164

S P I N O Z A ' S   E P I S T E M O L O G Y

A Study and Criticism

By

Nadeem Naimy

Submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements  
of the Degree Master of Arts  
in the Philosophy Department of the  
American University of Beirut  
Beirut - Lebanon

1956

S P I N O Z A ' S   E P I S T E M O L O G Y

## T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

CHAPTER	Page
I - BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION .....	1
II - PSYCHO-PHYSICAL IDENTITY AND SELF- CONSCIOUSNESS.....	12
III - IDEA AND IDEATUM Imaginative Experience and the Theory of Error .....	25
IV - RATIONAL KNOWLEDGE; ITS BASES, ITS MEANS AND ITS ENDS.....	46
V - INTUITIVE KNOWLEDGE; ITS MEANS, ITS ENDS AND ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS.....	90
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	121

C H A P T E R   I

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION



## I

In speaking of Spinoza's epistemology we would be considering the efforts of a man who sought a way whereby he can best understand the universe in which he found himself, and in the light of such understanding know his place in it and direct his whole being to a better life and a fuller existence. All this is explained in the opening paragraph of Spinoza's Treatise on the Improvement of the Understanding.

Spinoza lived at a time when the Western world generally adhered to a mechanistic view of the universe, and showed great enthusiasm for physical science and its successes on the one hand, and mathematics and its preciseness and validity on the other. It was natural that he should be greatly impressed by the geometrical method as the ideal way to understand such a universe. Moreover he was greatly influenced by Descartes in this respect, and therefore we may say that the Cartesian method was his starting point.

Descartes who accounted for space in geometrical terms sought to interpret physics in the same way. Matter for him was movable figurable and divisible quantity and like space is capable of geometrical construction. If we start from the self-evident axioms of physics and proceed from them by deduction we would finally grasp all phenomena of physical nature

as surely as we can construct squares and triangles by lines, planes and angles. If geometrical knowledge which does not lay down anything unless it first establishes sufficient grounds for it, is infallible, a geometrical knowledge of physical nature then would be unquestionably true.

So fascinated was Spinoza with this method that he not only applied it to physics, but tried to extend it to metaphysics. If the geometric method, thought Spinoza, is applicable to physics, why should it not be applicable to metaphysics also. If it is applicable to extension, why should it not be applicable to thought?

## II

This, however, is not to say that Descartes did not himself try to extend his geometric method to demonstrate metaphysical truths. On the contrary he makes use of it in his Fifth Meditation to prove the existence of God. But the trouble with Descartes' use of this method to prove the existence of the deity is that it somehow seems to be circular and hence imperfect. In applying the geometric method to the study of metaphysics, Spinoza, was not doing something new. He was only trying to bring to perfection what at the hands of Descartes remained imperfect and confused. Descartes starts with the premise that everything he conceives to be self-evident, together with all that is

clearly and distinctly seen to pertain to it must necessarily be true. He for instance has clear and distinct ideas of the basic axioms of geometry. Therefore everything that necessarily follows from these axioms must be true. To conceive of a triangle is to grasp that its three angles add up to  $180^\circ$  and that its greatest side is subtended by the greatest angle. From this Descartes moves on to say that he has a clear and distinct idea of a supremely perfect Being, from which idea it follows that such a supremely perfect Being must, by virtue of its perfection, necessarily exist. Having thus demonstrated the existence of God, the most perfect Being, Descartes had a nice time proving that He is not a deceiver and that everything else in nature depends on Him. But the circularity of Descartes' argument appears most striking when he says that he as an imperfect being can easily deceive himself even in those matters that he believed himself to apprehend with the greatest evidence and certainty, but having discovered that he depends on God, and that God is not a deceiver, he is sure that such a God would not deceive him in making him clearly and distinctly perceive what is not essentially true. Therefore what he believes to be self-evident must necessarily be true.<sup>1</sup>

It is striking to see how Descartes demonstrates the

---

1. Descartes, Selections (ed. Eaton, Ralph), Meditation V, p. 144.

truth of God on the basis of the self-evident ideas that he possesses, and then goes back to demonstrate the truth of these self-evident ideas on the basis of the truth of God.

### III

There was always the distinction in Descartes between physics and metaphysics. Descartes' extended nature could not stand on its own feet without the help of the supernatural, without the activity of God's will to maintain it. It follows that the only guarantee for the truth of Descartes' geometrical knowledge of the physical world is God. The self-evident axioms or ideas on which the truth of our geometrical knowledge depends, are not their own guarantee. They are true in so far as we believe in a transcendent God who does not deceive us, in making us believe that we possess such self-evident axioms or ideas. This is probably why Descartes was so hesitant to extend his geometrical method to metaphysics.

To Spinoza, there was no such distinction between the physical and the metaphysical; no such break between God and nature. To postulate God as a guarantee for the truth of our self-evident ideas, is to revolve in a circle, for how are we to guarantee the truth of God. Either truth should be its own guarantee, or there would be no truth for us at all. If truth does not bear an internal sign of its truthfulness; if it is

only recognized through an external sign, then the truthfulness of the external sign must first be guaranteed. This would lead us to another external sign and so on ad infinitum, a process that will never lead to the ascertaining of the truth of an idea. If Descartes' geometrical method is valid only in so far as it starts with a true idea and proceeds deductively from it, we should then look for an idea that is self-evident in that it bears within itself the signs of its truthfulness, and depends on nothing else besides itself for being what it is. //

#### IV

Only the idea of a self-evident ideatum can be self-dependent and in consequence absolutely true and worthy of being used as the starting point for our method. Looking for the self-dependent ideatum, Spinoza, found that it can be nothing short of the whole universe. Every particular thing in nature on which we focus our attention seems to be dependent upon, and inseparably linked with, all things that are around it. Starting with ourselves, we find that in our existence we depend upon our parents who brought us into the world, upon the earth on which we live, the air that we inhale, the space that contains us, the climate, the light, the water, etc. etc., together with the infinite series of things on which these depend in their turn. Nothing short of the whole totality of

things, nothing short of the whole infinite cosmos is said to be self-dependent. Now, apart from this infinite whole nothing apparently can be or be conceived. The idea then, of the most perfect being, of the all inclusive whole, is the only self-dependent idea, and should in consequence serve as the starting point of the method as the norm of truth according to which the truth of every other idea should be tested.

If we keep this conclusion in mind, and recall Descartes' position, we may reach the following results. If on Descartes' grounds, God or the supernatural is the only self-dependent and self-caused entity on which the extended universe and our knowledge of it depends, and if on Spinozistic grounds, nothing save the whole infinite universe or nature is said to be self-dependent, the conclusion is that God and the universe, the supernatural and the natural, the physical and the metaphysical are one and the same reality. This is in conformity with Descartes' procedure, with this difference, that it gets rid of the Cartesian dualism of metaphysics and physics, and the inconsistencies which it involves.

If the physical and the metaphysical worlds; the corporeal and the spiritual are one, and if the method of geometrical demonstration proved with Descartes to be highly successful in physics, there is no reason why it should not with Spinoza be equally successful in metaphysics? What is true in physics should be equally true in metaphysics also,

and what is true of the corporeal, the extended should also be true of the ideal, of the incorporeal. If we start with the idea of the self-dependent, interrelated, and infinite whole, thought Spinoza, and consistently analyze it, we should come out with a necessarily coherent system that explains to us the full nature of reality, just as analyzing space by geometrical thinking would reveal to us its constituent parts and essential characteristics.

Spinoza seems to prefer this method to any other for the pursuit of philosophic truth because it best enables us to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and owing to its dryness and objectivity should assist us to escape the deceptions that might otherwise arise from emotional prejudices and literary overtones. Not only is mathematical deduction immune against tears and smiles, but this method warns us not to take any idea as true if it does not necessarily follow from what precedes it and perfectly cohere with the idea of the self-dependent whole.

V

It seems to me that this method involves some difficulties. Two chief ones at least stand out.

a) This method seems to imply that a true knowledge of the part presupposes knowledge of the whole. Before



knowing the totality of things; the infinite essence of God, there is no way for us to tell whether our idea of any single thing is coherent or not, whether it is consistent or not, and in consequence whether it is true or false. But speaking of God, or the totality of things as being infinite, it seems very unlikely that any human being can attain a full knowledge of the infinite. Hence no body would be able to know with certainty the truth or falsehood of his ideas.

b) Moreover, to speak of everything as wholly dependent upon, and wholly related to everything else in nature, so that nothing can be or be conceived apart from God, the infinite self-dependent unity of all, would entail that reality is more than the totality of its parts. It even seems that reality does not have parts at all in the real **sense** of the word. All the parts that are said to exist in it only appear to be parts. If this is the case then no analysis of, and deductions from, the self-dependent idea of the 'most perfect being', of reality can really lead to a full understanding of things in it, just as no synthesis of the parts can restore the unity of reality which analysis may, if possible, break down.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. I owe much of this last point to Joachim; A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza, p. 115.



VI

In stressing the fact that a true idea must be itself the criterion of its truthfulness and no other, Spinoza concluded consistently that a true idea must necessarily be its own ideatum. For no idea can be considered as true, which does not agree point to point with its ideatum. When two things are said, to agree point to point, they must be considered for all practical purposes one and the same. To be two is to differ no matter how similar.

If God or the whole self-dependent reality is the most perfect being, and if the idea of that totality is the absolutely true idea, Spinoza concluded that God and the idea of God, reality and the idea of reality are one and the same. Reality as object and reality as subject, as extension and thought are really one and the same. Thought and extension are in consequence considered by Spinoza to be two attributes of the infinite essence of reality; two ways in which the one and only essence is revealed. Not only does reality reveal itself in thought and extension, but being infinite, reality necessarily reveals itself through an infinite number of attributes, thought and extension being the only two man so far knows of.<sup>1</sup> It follows from this that whatever follows

---

1. Spinoza does not explain why of all God's attributes two only are revealed to man, nor does he seem able to explain it on his own grounds.

from God under the attribute of thought must necessarily follow from Him under the attribute of extension, and also under any other of His infinite attributes. The order and concatenation of things in the attribute of extension is necessarily the same as the order and concatenation of ideas or minds in the attribute of thought with absolutely no direct interaction between the two, since the two are only one and the same. Understanding God as thought is ipso facto understanding God as extension. There is no need for the mind in understanding the world of extension to go to that world. Nor can it do so if it so wished. Sufficient for it to work within its own attribute and the world of extension would forthwith be revealed to it.

Consequently, the human mind and the human body are one and the same thing revealed under two different attributes of God. Spinoza actually calls every individual thing in nature a mode of God, and every individual thing like man, must consequently have two sides, two aspects of its nature, the extended and the ideal. No individual thing in nature, however, is an individual in an absolute or metaphysical sense. Individuality in nature is only apparent, under close analysis, every individual is discovered to be wholly dependent upon and wholly related to the rest of things around it. Reality as a whole is the only true individual. Bodies are only distinguished from one another, not in respect of substance, for all of them are modes of one reality, but in

respect of the proportion of motion and rest that they hold to one another. Since all bodies are constantly partaking of the principle of motion and rest, it follows that it is only in an arbitrary sense that we can talk of this body or that or of this individual and that. What we might call a simple body is necessarily composed of an infinite number of bodies and is itself one of the parts necessarily involved in the composition of another body broader than itself. What is in this sense true of bodies is necessarily true of minds, if the first do not possess a true individuality in themselves neither do the latter.

This quick glance at Spinoza's metaphysics, I hope, should suffice to give us preliminary basis for discussing his epistemology in general. The bearing that his metaphysics have on his epistemology, together with the difficulties that this involves will become clearer as we proceed.

CHAPTER II

PSYCHO-PHYSICAL IDENTITY  
AND  
SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

## I

We gather from Spinoza that man is a mode of God expressed under two of His attributes only: thought and extension.<sup>1</sup> Mind and body in man are like thought and extension in God of which man is a mode; two faces, two expressions of one and the same truth. The human mind is man considered under God's attribute of thought; the human body is man considered under God's attribute of extension. To say the same thing in different words; the human body is the human mind as extended, the human mind is the human body as thought. It thus follows that as the body is, so must the mind be, and the same constituents that go as extended to compose the human body must go in as thought to compose the human mind. Whatever acts upon the body, would ipso facto be acting upon the mind and vice versa, for both are in reality one and the same.

In so completely identifying mind and body, Spinoza, is trying to avoid the difficulties involved in the Cartesian psycho-physical dualism. Descartes conceived thought and extension; mind and body, as two entirely different substances,

---

1. E. ii Prop. XIII. Dem., Cor., and Scho.

and accordingly falls in two main difficulties, out of which he does not seem to have intelligibly extricated himself. The first is: How to account for communication between mind and body. The second is: How to account for the interaction between extension and thought.

If mind is a simple substance, according to Descartes, entirely different from the extended body, how can it abide in it and in so doing direct it according to its own will. Of course, Descartes spoke of the pineal gland as a logical seat for the mind from which it directs the body, but this solution is no solution at all, and Spinoza frequently makes fun of it,<sup>1</sup> for we are apt to ask again how the mind can communicate with the pineal gland which is also a part of the body?

Granting on the other hand that the mind really dwells in the body, the question arises: How can it possibly have an idea about the body in which it dwells and about the extended world of which this body is a part? And if by some mysterious way, it happens to attain some sort of idea, how can it possibly discover whether this idea is true of the **physical** world or not? To solve the problem by considering the senses as messengers between the mind and the physical world, is to fall in what may be called the Lockean and Cartesian trilogy of objects of knowledge the unity of which is impossible to restore. By this I mean that our senses on the

---

1. E. ii, Prop. XXXV, Scho. and E.V. Preface.

Cartesian view can only have access to the secondary qualities of the physical world, such as colour, shapes, smells, hardness, softness, etc... but not to the really extended world in its primary and essential qualities like figure, motion, etc. all of which are not of a perceptible nature. If the mind requires the agency of the senses for a report of the outside world, then each outside object with which it deals would split into three: a physical object which stands on its own in the extended world, a perceptual object which reveals itself to the senses, and a mental object which is received and formulated by the mind in conformity with the reports of the senses. The mind in this respect would always be able to contrast and compare the mental object and the perceptual object and determine whether they agree, but whether these agree with the object as it truly exists in extended nature, there is no way by which the mind can ever tell. It thus follows that Descartes' mind may very well construct to itself an excellent model of nature depending in that either on the reports of the senses about nature, or on its apriori deductions from the innate ideas it possesses; but whether this model would really correspond to nature as it truly is in itself we would have obviously no way of telling.

By completely identifying mind and body, and reducing them to two expressions of one and the same reality which is

man, Spinoza tries to overcome the difficulties inherent in Cartesian dualism. The mind on this basis does not need to go outside itself to experience and know the body, it is itself the body as thought. What the body is as extended the mind is as thought. Consequently whatever innate ideas and principles the mind possesses, must necessarily exist in the body as extended, for body and mind are one and the same. It thus follows that the truth of the principles or innate ideas of the mind, lies in themselves and not in anything else outside them. If the mind takes hold of these basic ideas and consistently deduces from them, it will in consequence have a full system of knowledge, representing the whole of extended reality as it truly is in itself.<sup>1</sup>

Spinoza we have said, tried to avoid the cartesian psycho-physical dualism and the difficulties which it involved, by resorting to a sort of psycho-physical identity if I may be permitted to express it this way; where mind and body become two expressions of one and the same entity; man. But we are here promoted to ask the question: Was Spinoza's psycho-physical identity itself, free from difficulties, or did it enable Spinoza to overcome the cartesian difficulties only to fall into greater ones? The answer of this question

---

1. More on this in subsequent chapters.



will be the main concern of the rest of this chapter.

## II

If mind and body are really one and the same thing expressed in two ways or looked at from different angles or modified under two of God's attributes; if the human body, as Spinoza says is the object of the idea, constituting the human mind<sup>1</sup> and the human mind the idea of the human body<sup>2</sup> it follows that as the body is, so must the mind be and the same constituents which as extended compose the human body must as thought compose the human mind. In order to know the state and constitution of the mind we must **first** look into the state of the body. What is then the constitution of the body? Where does its individuality lie, and what is its place in the whole universe around it?

To Spinoza the answer is very simple. Since God or the totality of things is the only self-dependent, and hence true individual or substance, that there is, the human body like any other body in nature is a mere link in the whole chain of links that constitute the whole extended universe. What apparent individuality and distinctness the human body

---

1. E. II. Prop. XII.

2. E. II. Prop. XV.

has is not due to something in its own nature, but to a certain balance of motion and rest that it keeps both among the minor individual bodies of which it is constituted and in relation to the infinite other bodies moving outside it.

From the standpoint of a perceiving mind the whole extended universe appears to be a conglomeration of individual bodies, each having distinct characteristics and marked individualities of their own. But upon close analysis, such marked distinctions and detached individualities turn out to be arbitrary and fictitious. A leaf on a tree may appear to have a distinct individuality of its own, but this individuality is nothing in itself apart from the branch on which it grows. In relation to the branch the leaf becomes a part of a whole. The branch in like manner, in relation to the whole tree, is a part of a whole, and so is the tree when it is considered in relation to the rest of things in the universe. The leaf, the branch, the tree, etc. are only regarded as individuals when they are arbitrarily singled out from the rest of things around them, on which they depend, and considered in themselves according to what they exhibit in their narrow fields of existence. But we should not forget that this singling out is purely arbitrary. Each single body in nature, says Spinoza, is regarded as a separate individual in so far as the smaller bodies constituting it keep among themselves a certain unified balance of motion

and rest in such a way that they can be regarded as one single cause producing one single effect. Each body on the other hand is regarded as a part of a whole in so far as it functions in such a way so as to keep, with other individual parts, a certain balance of motion and rest through which they appear to be acting as a single cause to produce a single effect.<sup>1</sup> Ratio, then, or the principle of motion and rest is the only principle of individuation in the extended universe, hence all so called individuals in the universe are only so in a relative sense.<sup>2</sup> If the truly individual body is the self-dependent and self-moved it follows that there is no individual in the true sense except the whole of nature; except God. Every so called individual body in nature is regarded as a whole only in respect to the smaller individuals that go into its composition, and is regarded as a part in relation to the greater bodies into whose balance of motion and rest, it is one among many and perhaps infinite participants. The particles of lymph, chyle, etc. in the blood, says Spinoza, are individual wholes with respect to a worm in the blood. But they are parts of a whole with respect to the blood as a whole. So is the blood with respect to the body and the whole body with respect to other wholes in which it is included.<sup>3</sup>

---

1. Spinoza, Selections (ed. Wild, John), Letter, XXXII, p. 440.  
2. E. II. Prop. XIII and what follows. Emphasis is on Lemmo I.  
3. Spinoza, Selections (ed. Wild, John), Letter, XXXII, p. 440.

It thus appears that the human body like any other body in extended nature is composed of a number of individuals of diverse natures, each of which is composite to a high degree. It also appears that the body does not have a marked and definite individuality of its own. It is only a mere link in the chain of causes and effects that compose what Spinoza calls "the face of the universe"<sup>1</sup> and is distinguished from other bodies around it in respect of motion and rest, quickness and slowness and not in respect of substance,<sup>2</sup> since all bodies are modes of one substance only; of God. The individuality of a body, then is not something which is in its nature and of its nature, something that springs from within it and belongs to it as such. It is rather something that is imposed upon it from outside by the infinite number of other bodies that act upon it and with which it is constantly in a "motion and rest" relationship.<sup>3</sup>

From all this it follows that the human mind, which is the human body considered under the attribute of thought, is not simple, but complex, and composed of a number of ideas corresponding to the number of individuals of which the human body is composed.<sup>4</sup> It also follows that the individuality of the mind is not something definite and marked. Its individuality

---

1. E. ii, Prop. XIII.  
2. E. ii. Lemma I.  
3. E. I. Prop. XXVIII.  
4. E. II. Prop. XV.

is not something that belongs to its own nature and which differentiates it from all other minds in the universe, with a particular mark or distinctness which is its own. The human mind seems to be a mere link in the chain of ideas, which compose what Spinoza calls the infinite idea of God. Its individuality cannot spring from within, for it is itself composite and complex. The only individuality that it can conceivably have, is that which is imposed upon it by the infinity of ideas that constitute the 'infinite idea of God' and with which it is in constant interaction.

The question arises now 'how can Spinoza account for what is traditionally known as the unity of apperception?' Where does the 'ego' or 'I' which belongs to the mind lie. How can we as human beings ever be able to say 'we' or 'I'. If our body does not differ from all other bodies in the universe except in respect of what apparent individuality they impose upon it, by making it enjoy a certain degree of motion and rest that differs from their own; and if what is true of our body in its world of extension is equally true of our mind in the world of thought; if our mind and body, in other words, depend for their being and existence on the infinity of bodies and minds that constitutes God's attributes of extension and thought, and cannot be or be conceived apart from those attributes, then where does our 'ego' lie, and how does it come about that we speak of this mind as being ours, and of this

body as being our body. Spinoza's system may be able to account for only one self, one 'ego', one 'I' which is God. As to the particular 'ego' that is the self or mind of this or that existing being, although it is possible that it may exist as a mere bundle of ideas in the infinite attribute of thought, yet it is not clear how this conglomeration of ideas which is the mind, and which has no distinct personality or unity of its own can be self-conscious, and speak of itself as 'I'.

It seems to follow from Spinoza's reasoning that to speak of God as the only absolute and infinite substance that there is, is to dispense with the individual selves or 'egoes' in the universe; to speak of individual self-conscious minds or selves is to dispense with the unity of God. It is amazing to see how Spinoza tries to account for the existence of both, and in consequence loses both.

"Thought" Spinoza says, "is an attribute of God, and therefore there must necessarily exist in God an idea of Himself, together with an idea of all His affections, and consequently an idea of the human mind..... But the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connections of causes."<sup>1</sup> If God in virtue of being a thinking thing, formulates an idea of the human mind, and if as we have shown,

---

1. E. II. Prop. XX.

earlier in this paper, the idea of a thing is the thing itself and not a copy of it, as the mind in being the idea of the body is identical with it, it follows that "this idea of the mind" which God formulates in virtue of his necessarily having an idea of his affections among which the human mind is one, "is united to the mind in the same way as the mind itself is united to the body."<sup>1</sup>

What Spinoza is driving at in this argument is that the human mind necessarily has an idea of itself, and that in possessing such an idea it is necessarily self-conscious.

Though this argument betrays Spinoza's great power in self-justification and in system-building, yet it in reality carries us nowhere, and is not at all satisfactory in accounting for personal self-consciousness. If the mind is a mode of God in so far as he is a thinking thing, and if there exists in God an idea of the idea which is our mind, then it is reasonable, I suppose to ask in what way does the one idea in God differ from the other? If they do not differ at all as Spinoza himself says<sup>2</sup> then what is the sense in speaking of them as two? It is meaningless to speak of two ideas; the mind and the idea of the mind, as being two when they in reality are identical and do not differ in any respect. It

---

1. E. II. Prop. XXI.  
2. E. II. Prop. XXI. Scho.



is thus evident that this argument of Spinoza's completely fails to achieve its purpose, and hence leaves self-consciousness, unaccounted for.

If on the other hand we agree with Spinoza that our mind has an idea of itself and that we are self-conscious beings, we are obliged to conclude that the idea which God, as a thinking being, formulates of Himself and of the modes of thought that follow from His nature differs from those modes and hence differs from Himself. If it does not differ, then God and God's thought of Himself would be identical and there would be no sense in speaking of them as two and hence in speaking of self-conscious minds, in the universe, a conclusion that every-day life falsifies.

If on the other hand God's idea of Himself differs from Himself, then all Spinoza's labours to conceive of God as an absolute unity would be in vain, the unity of God which he is so anxious to safeguard, would break up into a duality, the unity of which is to be sought elsewhere.

Reaching this same conclusion, Plotinus, who was seeking absolute unity centuries before Spinoza, tried to look for it in a realm above reason. The One, Plotinus reasoned, and rightly so, cannot be said to be a Thinking Thing. For the moment it is said to think, it breaks up into the duality of object and subject. To seek God the one and absolute, is to



ascend above the duality of reason and hence travel on a track trodden only by mystics. That is why, in leading us to the absolute knowledge of God, the absolute unity, Spinoza, in his three stages of knowledge gradually, unconsciously and under the disguise of reason, really leads us to mysticism. But who knows, perhaps mysticism is and must necessarily be the ultimate goal of reason. In our forthcoming study of Spinoza's three stages of knowledge, we will try to show how far this conclusion is justified.

CHAPTER III

IDEA AND IDEATUM

Imaginative Experience and the Theory  
of Error

## I

As Spinoza did away completely with the Cartesian distinction between physics and metaphysics, extension and thought, from his standpoint became two attributes through which the one coherent, self-dependent and all-inclusive reality reveals itself to man. The attribute of thought being reality expressed as a coherent and causally connected, and inter-dependent infinite system of ideas, and the attribute of extension being the same reality revealed in a coherent and causally connected and inter-dependent system of bodies. Reality as a system of bodies and reality as a system of ideas or minds is on Spinozistic grounds one and the same reality looked at from two different angles, and expressed in two different ways.<sup>1</sup> This implies that extension and thought manifest one and the same aspect about reality but in different ways. Whatever aspect of reality is revealed through extension must also be necessarily revealed through thought. By working through thought alone, it is thus possible to understand extension without really resorting to it, and hence without falling into the Cartesian psycho-physical dualism and the difficulty of accounting for the interaction between thought

---

1. E. ii. Prop. VII.

and extension. Thought and extension according to Spinoza, cease to be causally related and inter-dependent, they are conceived to be parallel.

If it is true that to understand something is to trace it to its ultimate causes, it follows, on Spinozistic grounds, that thought can only be understood and verified through thought, and extension through extension, but not the one through the other.<sup>1</sup> An idea in the attribute of thought would not be a mere copy of a body in the attribute of extension; it would not be caused by that body, it in fact would be that **body** itself as seen from the stand point of thought. To contemplate that idea and verify it would not be to resort to its ideatum in the extended universe; it would not be to trace it back to the body of which it is the ideal side, but to see it through the whole attribute of thought, or the whole system of ideas with which it is causally related. True knowledge, then to Spinoza, has nothing to do with sense experience, or with bodily affections of any sort, for bodies cannot cause ideas nor ideas bodies; bodies and ideas are only two expressions of one and the same thing.

If the true idea of reality is the attribute of thought, through which reality expresses itself in a system of coherent inter-dependent ideas; and if what reality

---

1. E. ii. Prop. VII, Schol.

expresses in thought, it expresses also in extension, it follows that a true understanding of reality, both as thought and as extended, would be a working through the attribute of thought, and a complete understanding of the concatenation and coherence of ideas of which it is constituted. True knowledge then lies in analysis and deduction, within the attribute of thought where the truth of every idea is measured according to the coherence and harmony that it enjoys both with itself and with the whole system of ideas that constitute the attribute of thought and with which it is causally related. Experience on the other hand, tells us how bodies affect one another, how they appear to one another, but not how they really are. To take experience for thought, or to say that one causes the other, as was partly done by Descartes and wholly by Locke, is to mistake appearance for reality and return to a dualistic conception of nature, which makes it impossible for us to understand it.

## II

As a mode of reality man has two sides to his nature, a mental side and an extended one; a mind and a body. It is thus in two ways that he can get in contact with nature. With his mind, man belongs to the system of interrelated and inter-dependent ideas that constitute the attribute of thought,

with his body he belongs to the world of extension. With his mind he can work through the attribute of thought and understand reality, with his body he interacts with other bodies and images to himself the ways they affect him. In the first case man is said to think and understand, in the second he is said to perceive and imagine. To perceive an object then, according to Spinoza, is something and to think it and understand it is something else. We are not to interpret the one in terms of the other, or to mix the two, or to conceive the one as caused or presupposed by the other. If we do this we fall into the error of explaining the attribute of thought in terms of the attribute of extension, or vice versa, and hence remain ignorant of both. Spinoza, thus, seems to distinguish, once and for all, between ideas and percepts, between understanding and perceiving, between mental deduction and sense experience. Our understanding of nature, he thinks, depends upon ideas that arise from the spontaneity of the mind and not from the affections of the body. Man thinking and man experiencing is one and the same man moving in two different realms. In the first case he is said to understand, in the second he is said to imagine. It is one of the major illusions of the great majority of mankind to look at the two realms as being identical, or consider the one as being the representation of the other.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XL Schol. I and II.

It is for example, one thing to experience a flower and quite another thing to understand it, and grasp its essence. To experience a flower, is to see its colour, smell its fragrance, feel the softness and delicacy of its petals, and taste the nectar enfolded therein, but the colour, the softness, and delicacy, the fragrance and the nectar, are not the flower; they tell more about the nose that smells, the tongue that tastes, the hand that feels and the eye that sees.<sup>1</sup> One nose may dislike the smell, while another enjoys it. One tongue may hate the very taste of the nectar, another eye may dislike the colour or may not see a colour at all in the flower, which other eyes may see to be blue, red or white. The flower as experienced is what the different temperaments of the different people make it to be. If knowledge is of the permanent - the real; perception which is found to be relative cannot be called knowledge and in consequence cannot in any way lead to truth.

### III

Truth as defined by Aristotle is "to say of what is, that it is, and of what is not that it is not."<sup>2</sup> This in other words means that an idea is true if it has one to one

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XL. Schol. I.

2. Aristotle, Metaphysics, B IV, Ch. 7. 1011 b, 27.

correspondence with its ideatum. Speaking on the same subject, Spinoza, says "a true idea must agree with that of which it is the idea."<sup>1</sup> It is strange, however, how this correspondence theory of truth used by different people has led to different results: e.g. it has led Spinoza to Mysticism; Descartes and Locke after him, on the other hand, to Humean Scepticism.<sup>2</sup>

If a true idea is that which completely agrees with its ideatum, that true idea, Spinoza concluded cannot have an ideatum other than itself. No idea can be other than the ideatum of which it is the idea and yet sustain a one to one correspondence with it. A true idea then is its own ideatum and in consequence is itself the test of its own truthfulness. A true idea cannot be but self-evident.

This is the type of reasoning behind Spinoza's statement that "it is also evident that for the certitude of truth, no further sign is necessary beyond the possession of a true idea."<sup>3</sup> He also states in the Ethics "What can be clearer or more certain than a true idea as the standard of truth? Just as light reveals both itself and the darkness so truth is the standard of itself and the false."<sup>4</sup>

---

1. E. i. Ax. VI.

2. The ~~truth~~ of this theme will become clearer as we proceed in this thesis.

3. Spinoza, Selections, (ed. Wild, John). Improvement of the Understanding, p. 13.

4. E. ii. Prop. XLIII. Schol.



Returning to our example of the flower now, we find that no matter how exact our perception of it may be, no matter how clear is the picture of it our mind forms, the perceptions we get, and the picture we form will always be representative of the flower outside them and hence other than what they are said to represent. As a consequence of this, they will never have a one to one correspondence with their ideatum, and if by a certain miracle they happen to have that required correspondence no human power on earth can ever be able to know or discover it. As a result of this, perception and imagination which is a result of it, can never lead to truth, and even if they possess truth no one can ever discover that they possess it.

If truth consists in the perfect one to one correspondence between idea and ideatum, no consistent epistemologist can seek the ideatum of his ideas outside the ideas themselves. No consistent epistemologist hence, would seek a testimony for the truth of his ideas outside those ideas themselves. This is why Spinoza has insisted that if we ever decide to understand nature, we should patiently and consistently limit ourselves to the attribute of thought and not suddenly jump to another. If we decide to understand nature through the attribute of thought we must not seek the causes or criteria of our ideas in extension and hence in perception its ultimate offshoot. It would follow that knowledge or truth on this basis is necessarily apriori<sup>1</sup> and deductive. If thought on Spinozistic

---

1. Used in the Kantian sense.

grounds is an attribute of reality, and the human mind is an idea in the coherent system of inter-dependent ideas that constitute this attribute, it would seem that the ideal way of grasping reality, to Spinoza would be for the mind to start working within that attribute, with the innate powers that it has, carefully deducing one idea from another until it comes to grasp the whole system of ideas that constitute reality's attribute of thought.

If on the other hand, according to Spinoza, a true idea must necessarily be its ideatum, it would seem to follow on Spinozistic grounds that to possess an idea of reality, is to become identical with it. Knowing reality would be complete absorption in reality, and would in consequence mean mysticism. ✓

#### IV

Descartes and Locke after him, holding the correspondence theory of truth, came to think that thought is a continuation and systematization of percepts that the mind elicits through our senses from the external physical world. Our knowledge of the physical world is true, thought they, if the ideas we so formulate in our minds correspond to their physical source outside it. The ideata with these people, are in the

physical world outside the mind. As a consequence of this every process of perception that we may have must really deal with three objects. Our flower as we come to perceive it would not only be one flower but three; the real physical flower in the country side, the perceptual flower our senses elicit from this physical one, and thirdly, the perceptual flower as it has come lastly to be grasped and imagined by the mind.

The perceptual and the mental flowers are both to Descartes and Locke, mere creations or reproductions of the physical flower existing in the outside world in complete independence of any perceiver. Truth in this respect must consist in the agreement of our mental and perceptual flowers with their original, i.e. with the physical in the country side. The question arises; is this at all possible. Can we ever be in a position to compare the mental with the physical? Our mental copy of the said physical flower is all that we know about the flower; how are we ever to know whether it really agrees or disagrees with its physical counterpart, and how are we in consequence to know whether our ideas so formulated about the physical world are true or false? Whether the mental object our idea or picture of the flower we have in mind agrees with our perceptual object, as our senses pass it to us, can be thoroughly verified, but whether these two ideas agree with the physical flower in the country side there is no way by

which we can ever tell.

So far as Spinoza is concerned, there is nothing wrong with this Cartesian - Lockean procedure in perception. There is nothing wrong in speaking of three flowers in every act of flower-perceiving; of the physical flower, the perceptual and the mental, provided that the perceiver does not fall into the fallacy of drawing conclusions from a syllogism whose premises are still incomplete. By this is meant that the perceptual image of a flower - say - presented to our mind through the senses speak more of the temperaments, disposition and nature of the perceiving body than of the nature and disposition of the perceived flower.<sup>1</sup> "It is primarily the idea of a state of our own body, and only secondarily our idea of an external one."<sup>2</sup> It is surprising then how we jump from the contemplation of the perceptual image of the flower in us, to speak of the existence and nature of the flower in nature supposing it to answer point by point to our image of it. This is how we impose not only upon the physical flower in nature, but upon all of nature in general, our own prejudices, and temperaments and hence, while perceiving some of the characteristics of our body think ourselves to be speaking of the characteristics of reality. This is how most of people,

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XVI. Corol. 2. See also appendix to E. i emphasis is on the examples.

2. Joachim, A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza, p. 158.

says Spinoza, dream with their eyes opened.<sup>1</sup> It is thus evident that the fallacy of concluding from insufficient premises, in epistemology, consists in reading characteristics of existence and reality in perceptual objects, or what Spinoza calls 'affections of the body' that do not contain within them such characteristics and such existence. From the perception of our flower we should not infer or conclude that the flower exists, or that it alone is the sole cause or source of the perceptual image of flower in our mind. We should not so conclude, because, the perceptual image of a flower that we have, does not involve existence, nor does it involve the notion of a definite cause outside us which we have arbitrarily come to call the physical flower, nor does it contain either, the ultimate and in fact, infinite causes that have laboured to bring that so called physical flower about, and have in consequence brought it about that our body should be affected by it.

Knowledge from sense experience which Spinoza calls imagination, is always arbitrary and illusory, because it is always trying to overstep its boundaries; always trying to reveal what it in truth does not possess, always trying to see what is, through what is perceived, and hence always trying to draw conclusions from insufficient premises. Error to

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XVIII. Demonst.  
Spinoza, Selections (ed. Wild, John), Improvement of the Understanding, p. 18.

Spinoza then, always lies in insufficiency, in privation and can never be positive.<sup>1</sup>

In a correspondence theory of truth, similar to Descartes' and Locke's **error** occurs because the senses are deceptive. They show us what is not really there. It is only after we compare what they show us with the original with which they communicate, or after one or more of our senses correct the other senses that are in error that we overcome deception. But from what has been discussed in this paper, comparison between a perceptual and a physical object is impossible, and hence our accounting for error in that way is meaningless and absurd. As to arguing that one of our senses may correct another that is in error is equally untenable, for if there is no way by which we can compare between the image that one of our senses give, and the original from which that image comes, it is impossible to decide which one of our senses is correct about a certain image or sensation and which is in error. It is the height of absurdity then, to say that one part of our senses is right, and the other is wrong and one corrects the other.

As a proof that our senses are deceptive; some cite the instance of a basin containing water, about the temperature of which our two hands give different reports. The report of

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XXVII. Schol.

each hand is found to be determined to a great extent by the conditions in which each hand was, before it was to test the temperature of the water. The hand that was before in ice felt the cool water in the basin to be hot, the one that was formerly in hot water, felt the cool water to be cold. At this point, it is usually concluded that the senses are deceptive and are the sources of error.

Fortunately or unfortunately this account of the role of sense experience in epistemology does not prove what it is thought to prove. It does not prove that our senses deceive us but on the contrary it proves that we, so to speak, deceive our senses.

We want to know how the water feels and our hands give the answer. We say it is false testimony; but why?

It appears as though we ask our senses a question and expect them to answer another. We seem to ask our hand, how does the water in the basin feel and then expect our hand to answer the question: why this same water felt differently to some different hands? This second question was not asked of the hand as it felt the water, nor could it be expected of the hand to answer it. Our senses report simply how they are affected by sense - objects, but cannot judge how or why such objects are so characterized. Our senses in so far as they are limited within their own sphere, in so far as they



picture to us things as they affect our bodies; in other words in so far as our perception is limited to the field of imagination, are quite infallible. But as soon as we demand of our body to carry over the job of the mind, and of percepts to take the place of ideas, and answer why things appear as they do rather than how they so appear, then we deceive our senses by encouraging them to step to a realm which is not their own and hence get lost in illusion. ✓

Error then does not occur because our senses, and in consequence our imaginative experience are deceptive. It occurs when we are unaware that our imaginative experience is personal, relative, arbitrary and fragmentary and does not involve within its definition any notion of reality and universality. We err not because our senses give us false reports about reality, but because they give us reports that are in themselves true but insufficient for the explanation of reality while we are unaware of their insufficiency.<sup>1</sup> ✓

Falsity to Spinoza, then, is not something positive, it always arises from privation of knowledge; it arises from our having inadequate imaginative experience without being conscious of its inadequacy.<sup>2</sup> Our senses tell us that the sun is two hundred feet away from us. What our senses say is true, because this is exactly how the sun affects our body.

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XXIX. Corol.

2. E. ii. Prop. XXXV. Demonst.



But why the sun affects us that way, what is the nature of vision, what are the infinite causes that co-operate to bring about a sun and a man to perceive it; our perceptual image of the sun does not involve. This is why our imaginative experience of the sun though true in itself, is partial and inadequate. If we are unaware of its inadequacy, and think the sun to be really two hundred feet away from us, we then fall in error and our error would be the result of ignorance as to the true distance of the sun, and ignorance as to the real nature and limitation of the imaginative idea that we possess.<sup>1</sup>

It may be concluded that our body gets in contact with the external world. In so doing it gives us fragmentary sensory images of the world which are partly the making of that world, and partly the products of our senses and temperaments. In our ignorance of the causes of our perceptions and the whole mechanism behind them which brought them about, we attribute them to reality and the outside world forgetting that they tell more of our own temperaments and nature, than they tell about the external world to which we attribute them. It thus happens that each person through ignorance of the limitations of his imaginative experience, fashions the real world after his own likes and dislikes and after his personal

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XXXV. Schol.

temperaments and fancies. It thus happens also, says Spinoza, that at the time when man thinks himself contemplating reality, he in fact would be contemplating nothing but his illusions.<sup>1</sup>

Of the master illusions, are all the so called concepts or class ideas. Because our body is limited and is one among an infinite number of bodies in nature, it is acted upon by an infinity of things. Because of its limitedness, it is only capable of imaging only a limited number of those affections. This is how our mind groups the many similar affections under a single concept so as to facilitate its job of picturing things for itself.<sup>2</sup>

Concepts then are signs of human weakness and limitedness and not of human strength. But owing to our ignorance of the cause of such concepts that we usually have in mind, we refer them to nature itself and come forth with our species, genera substances, universals and what not, things that the philosophy of Aristotle and its mediaeval off-shoots are so fond of conversing about. In a similar manner, we see things come to be, move, grow, change or pass away, and in our ignorance of the ultimate and infinite causes that cooperate to bring about such changes, we refer those changes

---

1. Spinoza, Tractatus Politicus, Ch. 2, 8.  
2. E. ii. Prop. XL. Schol. I.

to the moving or changing individual only, and assign to it a beginning, a middle and an end. We forget that the changing thing is but a part of the totality of things without which it can neither be nor be conceived and that its motion or change cannot in consequence be or be conceived apart from eternity. In our incapability to picture eternity we break it into minutes, hours, days and generations, and then refer these divisions which are the creation of our fancy to Nature and reality.<sup>1</sup>

We are conscious on the other hand that we are moved by desire, and that our desires are always directed towards an object that we like. In so far as we are ignorant of the causes of our desire, its sources, and its nature, and hence ignorant of the ultimate causes for our actions, we suppose ourselves to be free in our movements and in the pursuit of our final goals, or ultimate good.<sup>2</sup>

In so far as we are ignorant of the nature of God and of the manner in which he acts, we represent Him after our whims and prejudices, thinking Him to be free in His actions to the extent of irresponsibility, running the world in a teleological manner, so as to achieve His final ends. We

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XLIV. Scho. and Props. XXX and XXXI.  
Joachim, A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza, p. 168 and  
p. 294.

2. E. ii. Prop. XXXV Schol.

always think of God as being a human being who is endowed with characteristics that are superhuman.<sup>1</sup>

V

As we discuss Spinoza's theory of knowledge we constantly find ourselves involved with two sorts of truth in his writings. A great deal of his efforts is spent in attempting to distinguish between them and prevent their being confounded with one another. The first of these truths is the imaginative, the second is the ultimate and the absolute. The first deals with the world as it appears to our body, the second deals with the world as it really is. Imaginative truth is limited and partial in accordance with the limitedness and partiality of the body through which it is acquired. The other is infinite and absolute, and hence cannot be acquired by means that are partial and finite. Spinoza never tires of warning us against confounding the two types of knowledge, as looking for the infinite and absolute in what is limited and partial, for in so doing lies the source of error and illusion.

If truth is one to one correspondence between idea and ideatum we should not try to understand reality by imaging it

---

1. E. ii. Prop. III. Schol.

to our selves, for to image reality is to split it in two and hence make the one to one correspondence between copy and original impossible to varify, and hence impossible to attain. To understand reality is to become it i.e. to think it as it really is and hence reach " the knowledge of the union existing between the mind and <sup>the</sup> whole of nature."<sup>1</sup> To understand reality then, the mind must not be receptive and passive, and hence imaginative, and in consequence dualistic. On the contrary it should be active, spontaneous, and hence dialectic and in consequence unifying. Nature is an infinite system of thought each idea of which is dependent on the whole without which it can neither be nor be conceived. Each idea in Nature is then in itself, finitude in infinitude. It is finite because it is limited by an infinity of other ideas that constitute Nature as thought. It is on the other hand infinite because its being involves an infinity of other beings or thoughts without which it can neither be nor be conceived. If the human mind starts with one idea, that is self-evident and hence true, it can by quiet and consistent deduction lead itself step by step to discover the infinity which was made finite in that idea. Philosophy to Spinoza is deductive and dialectic. Each idea is in itself unity within multiplicity, one and many, finitude within infinitude. If

---

1. Spinoza, Selections (ed. Wild, John) Improvement of the Understanding, p. 5.

one starts from the many and proceeds logically and consistently he reaches the one. If he starts with the one he reaches the many.

Nature is infinite. Can the mind by simple deduction grasp the infinite. Not without giving himself up unto mysticism can human reason bridge the gap between the finite and the infinite, the one and many, unity and multiplicity.<sup>1</sup>

## VI

Bishop Berkeley in attempting to avoid the Cartesian and Lockean psycho-physical dualism, had consistently proved that secondary qualities of things are inseparable from the primary ones, and that if Locke who proved that secondary qualities were mental, were to be consistent, he was to put both primary and secondary qualities of things in the same boat and declare with the Bishop that "to be is to be perceived." But to avoid making reality all dependent upon the eyes of a perceiver; coming to be when he opens his eyes, and disappearing as he closes them, the Reverend philosopher posits God on whose eternal perception all reality depends. Hume coming after Berkeley, was so positive in doing unto his ancestor what his ancestor had done unto his. He carefully

---

1. The discussion of this aspect will be the major concern of the last chapter.

set to make Berkeley consistent as Berkeley before did unto Locke. The first object of Hume's attack was Berkeley's God who certainly was not perceived and hence does not exist. The second object was the mind. Mind could not be perceived, and hence it could not be. The third object was causality. The necessary relation between cause and effect could not be perceived, so causality was more or less of a habit with no rational foundation. This is how Hume destroyed causality, the foundation of all knowledge, and hence reached his Scepticism. Hume was a product of the correspondence theory of perception and of truth as inherited from Descartes and Locke. Truth is the correspondence of that which is in the mind with that which is outside it. As Berkeley found that such a correspondence was impossible on psycho-physical basis, he dispensed with the physical world, hoping that in this way he will save truth. But it was not long before Hume pushed him to his logical conclusion and came forth with no God, no mind, no causality and no truth.

It seems to me that one is to pay his money and take his choice. Either agree with Descartes and Locke after him, that truth is the correspondence between what is in the mind and what is outside it and hence reach scepticism, or take the hand of Spinoza and agree that knowledge is deductive and dialectic and that truth is the criterion of itself and falsity, and thus end the journey in a mystical enchantment.

C H A P T E R   I V

RATIONAL KNOWLEDGE; ITS BASES, ITS MEANS  
AND ITS ENDS



## I

The history of philosophy is the story of the adventures of human thought in the field of truth and falsehood. It is the story of the incessant struggle of man to find a criterion, or criteria by which truth can be realized, grasped and lived, and falsehood recognized, avoided and banished.

Truth has always been the beloved and ever worshipped Goddess of mankind, in the name of which thousands of gods (including beliefs, philosophies, sciences, etc.) in history had and are having their day and thousands of them ceased and are ceasing to be.

It seems that consciously or unconsciously, mankind have come to possess the criterion of truth while they in their incessant search and struggle for it in history appear as though they do not possess it. The mere fact that one is not pleased with what he has, is a proof that he knows what it is to be pleased, or else how could he ever be displeased. The very fact that we hate our prison walls is a proof that we know how it feels to be outside them. The very fact that human thought is always discerning some fault with its intellectual heritage and is incessantly aiming at reaching

a state of intellectual security in which falsehood does not abide, is a proof that man already knows what it is to be faultless; to possess the truth. Had people been totally without a criterion of truth there would have been no sense in their being dissatisfied with one philosophy and in favour of another; or in their discarding one religion or way of life, and adopting another.

## II

If people possess a criterion of truth, then what is it really that they possess and why is it that when they come to discuss it or to discuss that of which it is the criterion, they so hopelessly disagree?

In reply to the first question, it seems to me, that all philosophies, sciences, religions, etc., consciously or unconsciously have come to identify it with permanence. Nothing which is transient and changing can be an object of knowledge, hence, truth cannot be sought in that which is not permanent. This is why all our religions which identify truth with God make permanence and eternity his chief attributes. This is also why our scientists make it their chief occupation to extract out of their hundreds of experiments permanent laws, under which all the particular and contingent phenomena of the world are subsumed. This is why

Thales asked his age-old question, "What is that which is permanent in the universe?" Even the most consistent of sceptics are inconsistent when they declare that nothing is permanent, and that truth in consequence is relative and does not in an absolute sense exist. They are unconsciously undermining their own philosophy, which in reality is confirming an absolute truth about the relativity of truth. This is how Plato at least, saw the philosophy of Protagoras to be self-refuting.<sup>1</sup>

If permanence is one criterion of truth, goodness is another. Many go to the extent of identifying the two. Nothing is more detested and feared by mankind than death and disintegration. In fact the whole of human life and activity can generally be explained in terms of man's incessant struggle for life and self-preservation. The greatest good for man seems to lie in life, in permanence, and in the overcoming of death. Not only man, but nature in general, seems to struggle against non-being, and to cling to self-preservation. Not a simple flower withers away, and is scattered by the wind without a desperate fight and a good deal of resistance. Not a single stone easily yields to the hammer, and nearly no man has ever submitted to death without fear and trembling.

---

1. Plato, The Dialogues of Plato, (tr. Jowett, B.) V. 2, Theatetus, p. 173-174.

In seeking the good and the permanent man seems to be inescapably seeking power. For to enjoy the goodness in permanence, is to be capable of resisting and overcoming all the agencies of death and non-being. Nothing can be good and permanent unless it has the power of winning over its very enemies. It has to overcome dualism. To be absolutely good then is to be absolutely permanent, is to be absolutely powerful and hence absolutely one and self-dependent.

Permanence, goodness, power, happiness, unity, self-dependence, freedom, life being and the like, vague as they sound, all seem to be in the last analysis different words with ultimately one meaning and significance. They are the criterion of truth responsible for any positive, negative, or neutral attitude that mankind may hold towards science, philosophy, religion or art. In all our activities we always aim at the better the more lasting, the more beautiful, the one that gives us more strength and infuses us with the greater amount of happiness.

If what has been said above is true, it becomes evident that any epistemology in seeking a criterion of truth is necessarily seeking permanence, goodness, power, freedom, and happiness, and is in consequence primarily ethical. This explains why epistemology and ethics are so intertwined in Spinoza's philosophy so that it is impossible to separate them.

In fact the whole of Spinoza's Treatise on the Improvement of the Understanding is written for ethical motives. "I finally resolved", says Spinoza in the opening paragraph of the Treatise in question, "to inquire..... whether there might be anything of which the discovery and attainment would enable me to enjoy continuous, supreme and unending happiness."<sup>1</sup>

### III

At this stage of our discussion we may raise a further question: If happiness, permanence, unity, power, self-dependence, etc. are generally agreed upon to be the criteria of truth, and if every human thinker is after truth, then why is it that so many opposing and conflicting views have arisen among philosophers whenever each has attempted to express his own theory of truth. Why is it that we have Plato, and Hume, in the history of philosophy. Why is it that we have Protagoras and Spinoza?

It seems to me that it is not very difficult to answer such a question. It is always easy to account for the disagreement between two thinkers when they have one or more points of agreement, just as it is easy to say who of two runners has outrun the other, and why, if they have both

---

1. Spinoza, Selections, (ed. Wild, John) Improvement of the Understanding, p. 1.

started the race together and from one point.

Plato, Hume, Spinoza and Protagoras, all agreed that stability and permanence are the criteria of truth. They all agreed that truth should be definite and certain. But in utilizing these standards for examining things and distinguishing what stands the test from what fails to do so, they applied their standards in different fields, and in consequence they came out with different and conflicting results. Protagoras and Hume, empiricists as they were, starting from the premises that all our knowledge starts with sense experience, examined and re-examined their sense data, in the hope that something will fit what standards of truth they possessed and in the end came out with two similar conclusions. Examining the world as he perceived it, Protagoras found out that all things are in motion, and that nothing is permanent. He thus concluded that there is no absolute truth, that truth is relative, and that man is the measure of all things. Hume on the other hand, keeping in mind that the criterion of truth is that it must be sure and definite, looked and looked at his sense data, but found nothing among them that could be called sure knowledge. All his sense data were series of causes and effects following each other, but there was no such thing in his experience, as a so called necessary relation that links the cause to the effect and makes one sure that he can always predict when a

certain cause happens that a certain effect will follow. This made Hume conclude that all our so-called knowledge is a mere bundle of sense data held together by habit and no matter how much one tries it, one can never derive any permanent knowledge, and accordingly truth out of it.

In applying the criteria of truth to sense experience, both Protagoras and Hume came out with the conclusion that there is no universal and permanent truth. They came out with scepticism.

I do not here intend to discuss the basic assumptions of either Protagoras, Hume, Plato or even Spinoza. I have only mentioned these aspects of the philosophies of the first two people in order to show the significance of Spinoza's refusal to seek truth in the field of sense experience, and the result in which this refusal culminates. This refusal is significant because it is decisive so far as epistemology in particular and philosophy in general are concerned. It determines whether one is to be a sceptic or a mystic in philosophy. ✓

We have so far shown how people who seek truth in sense experience end in scepticism. It is now our job to show how and where Spinoza sought truth, and how in his refusal to seek it in the world of experience he together with people who worked on similar lines have ended in



mysticism.

#### IV

Spinoza had many reasons for not seeking truth in the world of sense experience which can be summed up in two. The first is that it cannot be done. The second is that the mere attempt to do it is self-contradictory.

To attempt in the first place, to discover truth in the world of sense experience, leads inevitably to a correspondence theory of truth like that held to a certain extent by Locke, and which has been shown in the preceding chapter to be impracticable, and to lead to sceptical results. In the second place, to hold that truth is permanent is to hold as I have shown that truth is self-dependent and hence one cannot conceive of it as being other than the means through which it is sought and yet remain self-consistent. If truth is self-dependent, one cannot hold this criterion and expect something that will fit into it from the outside, for in so doing he is contradicting the criterion of self-dependence that he holds. "Thought" says Spinoza, "is said to be true, if it involves subjectively the essence of any principle which has no cause, and is known through itself and in itself. Wherefore the reality of true thought must exist in the thought itself without reference to other thoughts."<sup>1</sup> If the criterion of truth

---

1. Spinoza, Selections (ed. Wild, John) Improvement of the Understanding, p. 27.



is other than truth itself, reasoned Spinoza, truth, then will have no reality of its own and hence it will have no power or pre-eminence above falsity. A man possessing truth would be as uncertain, as hesitant, and as dependent as the man who did not possess it for in this case the value, and reality of what they both possess would not be self-revealing, self-rewarding, and self-dependent but would on the contrary be received from the outside. Truth in itself, then, would possess nothing that distinguishes it from falsity. Its excellence would not belong to it, but to the distinguishing external sign by which it is recognized and differentiated from falsity. To possess truth, then, would be to go beyond truth, which is just like saying that to know is to go beyond knowledge, or to enter a house one is to remain at the same time outside so as to judge whether he has entered it or not. Such absurdities, and the desire to avoid them, led Spinoza to conclude that "Just as light reveals both itself and the darkness, so truth is the standard of itself and of the false..... If a true idea is distinguished from a false idea only in so far as it is said to agree with that of which it is the idea, the true idea therefore, has no reality nor perfection above the false idea (since they are distinguished by an external sign alone), and consequently the man who has true ideas will have no greater reality or perfection than he who has false ideas only.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XLIII. Schol.

In defining a true and an adequate idea, as that which contains in itself all the intrinsic marks or properties of a true idea, so far as it is considered in itself, without relations to its objects,<sup>1</sup> and in insisting on the fact that he who has a true idea knows at the same time that he has a true idea, nor can he doubt the truth of the thing.<sup>2</sup> Spinoza is very intelligently distinguishing between two things which have not at all been unfrequently confused in the history of philosophy. He in fact is distinguishing between science and philosophy.

V

Science which tends to take a descriptive attitude towards things; which is more concerned about the how rather than the why of things, always tends to observe, to abstract and to generalize. No scientific abstraction or generalization, has any value or truth if it is not exemplified in what is observable and experiencable. Any scientist, then, must by definition and by necessity hold a correspondence theory of truth. A philosopher on the other hand who is more concerned about the why of things is by necessity obliged to go beyond the thing and explain how it fits into the structure

---

1. E. ii. Def. IV.

2. E. ii. Prop. LXIII.

of his understanding. When we understand a thing, we simply see how it fits into the scheme of ideas that our intellect already has, but when we observe a thing we abstract from it, and give our mind an image of its properties which this mind may not have formerly possessed. When one asks how a thing is, one is to go outside himself and find the answer to his question in what characteristics that thing has. When on the other hand one asks why a thing is as it is, or appears as it does; one is to go into himself and answer the question by analyzing the principles and ideas he has and through which he comes to comprehend the thing if he does comprehend it. It thus appears that science is synthetic, is always trying to step outside itself, when it hopes to find its self-justification, while philosophy on the other hand is deductive, is always stepping into itself to find justifications for things. This is why the criterion of scientific truth is external. It is in things, while the philosophic truth, as Spinoza says, is its own criterion. "To abstract from a thing the finite characteristics that it possesses, is the basis of science," says Whitehead, "The task of philosophy is to reverse this process, and thus exhibit the fusion of analysis with actuality. It follows that philosophy is not a science."<sup>1</sup>

Descartes and Bacon were the fathers of modern science rather than the fathers of modern philosophy. Locke and

---

1. Whitehead, Essays in Science and Philosophy, p. 86.

Berkeley were scientists, but it seems that they did not mind being called philosophers. It was Hume who proved that science cannot be philosophy.

In order to clarify a bit what has just been said, let us consider for a while the principle on which all science rests; namely the principle that nature is orderly; that it exemplifies a certain sequence of events with a certain uniformity. Does this principle which is presupposed by science belong to science? Is it in other words part of scientific knowledge? If so, then why is it always presupposed by science. If this principle is derived from experience, then why does Hume's conclusion that causality, upon which the concept of order and the possibility of science depend is empirically untenable, appear so startling?

It is not for science then (experience) to establish the bases for science. This job is for philosophy. ✓

## VI

Spinoza recognized that if we are to understand reality, and if our understanding is to be certain and necessary, and not merely descriptive, we are to resort to principles that do not belong to experience, principles that are purely mental and are presupposed whenever the understanding ✓

of reality is in question. "It is in the nature of reason\* to perceive things truly, that is to say as they are in themselves, that is to say, not as contingent, but as necessary. Hence it follows that it is through imagination\* alone that we look upon things as contingent.<sup>1</sup>

It is of the nature of our experience that it deals with things in time. It follows that everything that we experience, must have a life history; a past, a present and a future. But past, present and future are meaningless unless they are viewed against a background that is neither past, nor present, nor future; a background of permanence without which time is meaningless and impossible. The fact that we experience things in time presupposes in us a principle of permanence which does not belong to experience. Were this not the case, then all our percepts would have been unrelated and fragmentary. When we say yesterday, we presuppose a point of reference which remains fixed in us while the present slips into the past to constitute our yesterday. This point of reference, unperceptible as it is (and which we sometimes call the I) is the principle of permanence, from which past, present and future diverge and in which alone they can have meaning and significance.

---

\*. The foundation of reason to Spinoza are the common notions.  
\*. Imagination to Spinoza is knowledge from sense experience.  
1. E. ii. Prop. XLIV. Dem. Corol.

Hume who failed to find this necessary principle of permanence in the world of experience, which would convey meaning necessity and universality unto the knowledge that we derive from sense data, was obliged through his thesis that all knowledge starts with sense experience, to conclude that all our knowledge is contingent and habitual, and that the human ego or mind is nothing but a stream of consciousness.

A little reflection upon the conclusion of Hume would show that in the very word habit that he uses, there in lurks the very principle of permanence, the supposed absence of which made of Hume a sceptic in philosophy. Habit itself, involves a consciousness of past, present and future, or else there would be no sense in calling it a habit; and consciousness of past, present and future, necessarily presupposes in the conscious being something that is permanent. To speak of the mind on the other hand, as being a stream of consciousness, is to presuppose in it a continuous substratum not belonging to perception, to which fragmentary percepts are moored so as to constitute a stream. A stream is more than a collection of drops. It is a collection of drops that are unified. When two drops of water are unified, they cease to be two drops. Some third factor enters into them which is not water. They become two drops, plus a third unperceived entity which is the union. It is through this third unperceived factor only that their new state can be

explained and understood. To speak of the mind as a stream of consciousness, is to presuppose in the mind a factor which is not of the stream, a principle which does not belong to the nature of those of which consciousness is constituted. Like the principle of unity between the two drops of water, it is what we call the unperceived ego, or mind, or reason without which there would be no sense in speaking of a consciousness or a perception. It is the principle of permanence in us through which the contingency of our experience in past, present and future is made universal necessary and intelligible. This principle of permanence, Spinoza calls, reason to distinguish it from imagination which depends on sense experience and contemplates things in time and space and presents them to us as contingent.<sup>1</sup> It is here that Spinoza's distinction between his first and second stage of knowledge is most clearly marked. In the first stage, that is the imaginative we perceive things as contingent; as they are presented to us in time and space, and as far as that stage goes, our knowledge remains arbitrary, fragmentary and habitual. It is only when we come to the second stage of knowledge and look at things through the permanence of reason that our knowledge of nature becomes true permanent and necessary.<sup>2</sup> To understand nature according to Spinoza, then, is

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XLIV. Dem. Corol. 1.  
2. E. ii. Prop. XLI. Dem.



not to go outside ourselves and observe it, but to go into ourselves and analyze the necessary and eternal laws of reason, through which the contingency of our experience is made necessary and intelligible. This is why philosophy to Spinoza is deductive. Throughout his Treatise on the Improvement of the Understanding, he speaks of self-evident Apriori\* ideas which can be used as foundations to a deductive system of reasoning that would lead one to a sure knowledge of the whole of reality.<sup>1</sup>

We may conclude from what has been said, that it is not our experience of nature that explains what basic and necessary ideas we have in our minds, but on the contrary, it is those apriori and necessary ideas that our mind possesses that explain the outside world as it is contingently revealed to our senses.<sup>2</sup> To ignore such a fact is to ignore the importance of all philosophers who do not conform with the Humean scepticism. All those who do this will find sense in these lines of Spinoza, saying that "It is of the nature of reason to perceive things under a certain form of eternity"<sup>3</sup> the foundations of reason are notions which explain those things which are common to all, and those things explain the essence of no individual thing and must therefore be considered

---

\*. Unless otherwise indicated, apriori means here and in what follows independent of experience.

1. Spinoza, Selections (ed. Wild, John) Improvement of the Understanding, pp. 11, 15, 21.

2. Ibid., p. 35.

3. E. ii. Prop. XLIV. Corol. 2.



without any relation to time but under a certain form of eternity."<sup>1</sup>

What are these common notions that can disprove the thesis of Hume, and are to provide us with sure and universal knowledge, and which are to Spinoza the foundations of reason? Since it is discovered that sure and universal knowledge presupposes and necessitates Apriori notions or principles, the question arises as to what type of apriori notions or principles are these? Are they of the Kantian type, i.e. purely formal, and precede experience only to categorize it and in so doing render it meaningful? Or are they pure concepts, or innate ideas of the understanding of the cartesian type, that precede experience and are also independent of it, forming in themselves, as self-evident truths the basis for a deductive system that pretends to be a right representation of reality?

Both alternatives involve difficulties, that Spinoza's philosophy seems to avoid. We are now to point out these difficulties and see how Spinoza seems to have avoided them.

## VII

Kant in his attempt to stem the tide of Humean scepticism showed that if we are ever to have knowledge that is

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XLIV. Dem. to Corol. 2.

certain, necessary and permanent, we must posit the existence of apriori principles or categories in the understanding through which our sensual manifold is ordered and made intelligible, necessary and universal. These principles are the categories, said Kant. If Hume did not find them in our sensuous manifold, and if the mere possibility of our sense experience must necessarily presuppose their existence it follows that these principles must be apriori. The world then presented to us as fragmentary, personal and arbitrary, in our sensuous manifold, is to Kant, patterned, by the categories of the understanding and rendered intelligible, and our knowledge of it, is thereby made universal, permanent and necessary.

Kant in this way assures us that we can have permanent certain and universal knowledge, despite Hume's contention to the contrary. But there remained one other point which he had to clear up before he could rest assured that the British sceptic has been silenced at last. If our sensuous manifold is personal, and if the categories through which this manifold is made intelligible are apriori, how are we to know that this nature made intelligible through our categories; has any objective reality of its own, and that it is not altogether the mere creature of our mind and senses brought together. This has led Kant to posit the thing-in-itself, which though unknown to us, is yet the source of all our perceptions which constitute the sensuous manifold to which

the categories are applied.

### VIII

It seems to me that Kant had tried to solve the problem which Hume had raised by merely going around it. Hume had proved that our knowledge of the external world as reported by our senses, is only habitual and contingent. To save our knowledge of reality from the scepticism of Hume, Kant tried to build it on a priori principles of the understanding. But as soon as this was done, he found the existence of the extended world which he was seeking to vindicate, jeopardized. As a compensation for this lost objective world, Kant had to introduce the unintelligible thing-in-itself as a substitute.

But what did really come out of this Kantian unperceivable and unknowable, thing-in-itself, which was posited in order to account for the objective basis of our sensuous manifold? It really betrayed a self-contradiction in the Kantian philosophy the clearing of which at the hands of the critics of Kant, brings us back to the heart of the Spinozistic philosophy, and throws much light on the significance of the Spinozistic common notions which seem to have been capable of doing unto Hume what Kant's categories could not do without

self-contradiction.

The world of things-in-themselves on Kant's assumptions is an independent and transcendent order of things that affects our senses and supply the material for our ideas. Apart from this, the thing-in-itself does nothing, nor is anything else revealed or revealable unto us through it. As we get our impressions from this transcendent and unknown principle, reason orders them according to its apriori forms of time and space and creates its phenomenal world. It then applies its apriori categories of relation, magnitude, substance etc. to the phenomenal world and thus produces for us nature as a whole; an order of things, formulated by the apriori forms of sensibility and tied together by the necessary laws of reason by means of which it is made intelligible through and through. If the thing-in-itself cannot be experienced in time and space and if none of the categories of the thinking subject can thereby be applied to it, we in consequence cannot possibly regard it as anything in particular, and particularly as the cause of phenomena, in spite of the fact that Kant regards it as the cause of our impressions,<sup>1</sup> which is a flagrant contradiction.

How can this self-contradiction in Kant be resolved? Shall we say that our impressions have no objective origin?

---

1. Perry, History of Philosophy, p. 388.

If this is assumed, then we are either to say that we have no impressions at all; an assumption that our everyday life falsifies and which leaves our categories empty and meaningless; or that all our impressions are apriori; an assumption that leaves unexplained the fact, e.g. that a deaf person no matter how expert he is in the laws of sound, can never form a genuine notion of sound.

What sort of an objective basis shall our world have then? If this objective basis, though conceived to be independent of our categories, cannot be an unintelligible, thing-in-itself it has to be something that is intelligible, and yet absolute. It must be something which, though not categorized, or captured by thought, is not yet altogether irrational. That which according to the philosophy of Kant is absolute and independent, and which though not captured by thought is not altogether irrational, is the thinking subject, the transcendental ego, the substratum of inner phenomena.

It does not require much thought to conclude that on Kant's thesis, the so-called objective substratum of our phenomena, and the subjective substratum of our categories are really identical. Object and subject, form and matter, nature and thought are one and the same.

IX

In trying to resolve the difficulties inherent in Kant's philosophy, and in pushing it to his logical conclusions, we find ourselves brought at once to the heart of the Spinozistic philosophy. The absolute and the transcendental thing-in-itself which Kant posited in order to account for the objective basis of nature as it is known to us, when freed from its unintelligibility and absurdity, is found to be indistinguishable from the inner basis of our categories; the absolute in us, the transcendental ego. Without this absolute inner substratum of thought, our categories would be impossible; without the objective substratum of phenomena, nature as we perceive it would be impossible. If the outer substratum of phenomena and the inner substratum of thought are in the last analysis found to be identical, we are at once brought to the monism of the two absolutes, the objective and the subjective; to the absolute ego or, as Spinoza would say, Substance or God which reveals itself subjectively through thought, and objectively through extension or nature. We are in other words, brought back to Spinoza's absolute substance with its two attributes of thought and extension.

As the dualism of the ego and the non-ego, the subjective and the objective dissolves into Spinozistic monism, it becomes meaningless for us to speak of the Kantian

categories as belonging solely to the human mind. What belongs subjectively to the mind must belong objectively to nature; for subject and object, thought and extension are one and the same. If this conclusion is as consistent as it appears to be, it follows that the categories or apriori forms of thought that our mind is said by Kant to possess are in truth no other than the categories of reality itself. The Kantian categories according to this type of reasoning lose their pure formal character and become essences; they cease to be forms of things and become concepts, ideas, or notions of which rationalists continually speak.<sup>1</sup>

This is how Spinoza's monism of subject and object, makes him avoid the unintelligible thing-in-itself, necessitated by Kant's dualism of object and subject, i.e. of his speaking of the apriori principles or idea necessary for all thought and understanding, as pure empty forms that can only be rendered meaningful by being applied to the formless world of phenomena.

This monism of the subjective and the objective, is I suppose, the main basis upon which Spinoza builds his statement that "the human mind possesses an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God."<sup>2</sup> That is to say,

---

1. See above, p. 62.  
2. E. ii. Prop. 47.

since the categories that our minds possess are no more formal but are no other than the categories of reality as it is in itself, it follows that to analyze what basic concepts our mind possesses, and to deduce from them what conclusions they yield is to understand nature as it really is, and to grasp truth that is concealed behind all appearances.<sup>1</sup>

X

Now we turn to the other difficulty, the difficulty of the rationalists which Spinoza seems to avoid. There is one danger to which rationalism and its deductions a priori are exposed, which Spinoza with his monism of mind and nature seems to have avoided. The rationalist usually resorts to what he conceives to be self-evident and a priori principles of the mind which he takes to be unquestionably true, and by a process of analysis of, and deductions from such primary principles, he proceeds to build a system of knowledge which he takes to be a true representation of reality as it is in itself. But the trouble with the rationalist is not whether his deductions are true or not, or whether his system as a whole follows from his basic principles and assumptions. Our basic question is whether the basic principles from which our rationalist has proceeded to build his system are the principles

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XL.



of nature itself or not. Before the rationalist can tell us that his system is a true representation of reality, he must first determine whether reality itself admits of the primary principles upon which his system is built. The trouble with Kant - a semi - rationalist - is that he tried to endow the mind with categories or basic principles that it bestows upon nature and which nature itself does not possess. That is why it happened that as he tried to use these categories for a true understanding of nature, he found out that he had formulated an idea of reality which dispensed with reality itself. Reality being reduced to a mysterious thing-in-itself.

In stressing the monism of mind and extension, nature and thought, Spinoza tries to avoid the danger of building ivory towers in philosophy. When he speaks of the human mind as a modification of God under the attribute of thought, he only means that whatever basic and a priori principles of thought our mind may possess, it possesses only in virtue of its being a modification of reality. The essence of thought is one, whether it be of the human mind as such or of the universal attribute of thought of which the human mind is but a modification; just as the essence of water is one whether it be in a single drop or in the wide outstretched ocean. The basic principles then which the human mind possesses are no other than the basic principles of reality.<sup>1</sup> If the human

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XLV.

mind, then, lays hold of the basic apriori principles of thought that it possesses in virtue of its being a thinking thing, and tries by analysis and deduction to unfold the conclusions they yield, it would be in truth laying hold of the axioms that constitute the essence of reality, and by unfolding them grasping reality as it has come to unfold itself.

With this Spinozistic monism of mind and nature, of the subjective and the objective, it becomes obvious that the only way to understand reality as it is in itself is to discover its basic principles and axioms as they are given in the mind. Once these are discovered, any consistent conclusion drawn from them would be equally valid for reality.

Now we turn to discover these basic principles of the mind which must be on Spinozistic grounds, the basic principles of reality, and without which thought and understanding are impossible. In other words, what is it in our mind that is always and necessarily presupposed whenever we try to think about something and try to understand it?

## XI

A thing continues to exist for thought, so long as it has qualities of which one can talk. That is to say, so long

as it has something that qualifies it and gives it a distinctive character of its own. A rose continues to exist for thought so long as it has qualities that give it a "thisness" which enables it to stand in comparison with other things that lack what it particularly has. If no single entity whatsoever can exist for thought or have a thisness of its own without having qualities it is equally true to say, that no single entity can have a thisness without there being 'otherness' which render its being qualified significant and intelligible. A mountain is possible, when and only when, a valley is possible, and vice versa. Both mountain and valley are possible when a plain is also possible. It is, in other words, only possible for a thing to be qualified when it is related to other things in which relations its being qualified is solely meaningful and significant. Nothing can exist for thought then unless it is understood through its relations to other things in nature. For it is only through such relations that it can possibly be qualified. But things can only be said to stand in relations to each other when they have something in common. To speak of the relations in which one thing stands to another is to speak of the similarities and dissimilarities, agreements and disagreements between the two. But before we can talk of two things as being similar, there is always presupposed a principle of difference in which the two participate before they are said to be alike.

Had there not been such a common principle the two would have been one and the same and not at all similar. It is also as true to say that before two things are said to differ there is always presupposed a principle of sameness in which the two participate before they can be said to differ. It is nonsense to speak of two things as different when they really have no common ground according to which their difference is judged. Even when we speak of them as two we are actually presupposing a principle of unity in which both participate before their twoness so to speak, can be made intelligible. It is by the principles of sameness and difference which things have in common and in which they all participate, that they can be said to agree or differ, and hence be related. Along with sameness and difference, go such principles as unity, plurality, permanence, succession, motion, rest and the like. Nothing can be said to move unless it has within itself and in relation with other things around it a principle of rest, of unity, of identity, or of sameness. If not, the statement "It is moving" would be meaningless.

If things exist for thought only when they have qualities, if qualities are only possible through the relations in which things stand to one another, and if such relations between things are made possible and intelligible only through the universal principles which they hold in common, such as sameness, difference, unity, plurality, permanence, and

succession, it follows that such universal and common principles are the bases of all thought and the foundations of all true knowledge.

Though these universal principles are common and hence are not the essence of any one particular entity, yet no entity can exist for thought without a full participation in them, for no entity can exist for thought without qualities.

These common principles, then which are discovered to govern all relations between objects whatsoever are the bases of qualities but cannot be qualities, they are the bases of objects as they exist for thought but are not objects since they are presupposed by them. Nor are they the product of sense experience, for sense experience cannot go beyond objects and their qualities.

If man is a thinking thing, and if nothing can exist for thought or for experience unless the common principles of sameness, difference, motion, rest, unity, plurality, etc. constitute its very foundation and existence as such, it follows that such principles are the very foundations of thought and reason itself. They must be innate in it and constitute its very nature, for they are evidently presupposed in any process of thinking or understanding or experiencing. This is what Spinoza means by saying: "The foundations of reason are notions which explain those things which are common

to all. And these things explain the essence of no individual things, and must therefore be conceived without any relation to time but under a certain form of eternity."<sup>1</sup> They must be conceived without any relation to time for they are necessarily presupposed by time itself. Apart from succession and permanence, sameness and difference, unity and plurality, the words 'now', 'then', 'to day', 'yesterday', 'past', 'present' etc. would have no meaning whatsoever. The very word yesterday presupposes a principle of eternity in us which at one and the same time connects it with today and distinguishes it from it.<sup>2</sup>

These common principles or notions as Spinoza calls them, are what rationalists in general and Spinoza in particular mean by innate ideas. They are self-evident because they are the primary instruments of thought with which our mind feels itself to be naturally furnished without any effort on its part to acquire from any where. On the contrary, our mind feels itself obliged to presuppose them if it is to be at all capable of thinking. "The intellect", says Spinoza "by its natural strength\* makes for itself intellectual instruments, whereby it acquires strength for performing other

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XLIV. Corol. 2. Dem.

2. See above, p. 60-61.

\*. Strength that is not bestowed on us by external causes, i.e. by experience.

intellectual operations.... and thus gradually proceeds till it reaches the summit of wisdom."<sup>1</sup>

XII

With the Spinozistic monism of thought and extension, of the subjective and the objective, of mind and nature, it seems evident that<sup>that</sup> which is to Spinoza the source and foundation of thought must be the source and foundation of reality. The common principles or notions which we have found to be the foundation and source of any object of thought, must necessarily be the foundation and source of that object as it is in itself in the world of reality. When Spinoza says what has just been quoted, or that "it is evident that, in order to reproduce in every respect, the faithful image of nature, our mind must deduce all its ideas from the idea which represents the origin and source of the whole of nature, so that it may itself become the source of other ideas."<sup>2</sup> He says it because he believes that "the idea in the world of thought is in the same case as its correlate in the world of reality."<sup>3</sup> This is what makes Spinoza's deductive system, in my opinion, more acceptable and safer than that of Descartes. There is always a dualism in Descartes, between the

- 
1. Spinoza, Selections, (ed. Wild, John) Improvement of the Understanding, p. 11.
  2. Ibid., p. 15.
  3. Ibid.



subjective and the objective; between thought and extension. This is why there was always a justified doubt, that any system of knowledge that our mind builds on apriori self-evident ideas or notions may not be an honest representation of reality. Such a system may very well be deduced from apriori principles that are peculiar to the mind, but of which reality does not at all admit. Here was the key to Hume's scepticism. Unless such a gap between the subjective and the objective is bridged, scepticism will always find in it a most fertile ground. Kant's failure lies in that he bridged the gap at one point but only to open it at another. He opened it between nature as it is to the mind and nature as it is in itself.

By unifying extension and thought, nature and mind, and by discovering the nature of thought in what he calls the common notions, Spinoza feels that he has discovered in them the nature of the whole of reality. These common notions Spinoza feels, can only be adequately conceived by our mind. Since they are the foundations of thought and of reality, it follows that the mind conceives them in themselves and through themselves and in virtue of themselves. That is to say, the very conception of them, is true, because its truth depends on itself, and not on anything else outside it. "Those things which are common to everything and which are equally in the



part and in the whole can only be adequately conceived."<sup>1</sup> Since the human mind by possessing an adequate conception of the common notions, is in possession of that which is the foundation and source of all thought and also of reality, it means, in Spinozistic terms, that it possesses an adequate idea of those things without which nothing can be or be conceived, i.e. an adequate idea of the essence of all nature, of God. "The human mind" says Spinoza, "possesses an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God."<sup>2</sup> Not a single idea, just as no single object of thought can arise or exist for us without fully participating and being fully based in the common notions that govern all relations between things and that in consequence are responsible for any quality by which an object or an idea acquires its rights to intelligibility.

Once the essence of a thing is grasped, all the particular characteristics of that thing become fairly reasonable and intelligible. Once we know the essence of an axe we know why it is made sharp and solid, or made that way and not the other. Since our mind possesses, on Spinozistic grounds, an adequate idea of the essence of reality, it becomes possible for us by drawing on that knowledge to understand truly and adequately all the particular characteristics with which reality is possessed, for all the

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XXXVIII.  
2. E. ii. Prop. XLVII.

characteristics of a thing follow from its essence. "Those ideas," says Spinoza "are also adequate which follow in the mind from ideas which are adequate in it."<sup>1</sup> Here in lies the secret of Spinoza's distinction between his stages of knowledge.

### XIII

Spinoza's distinction between what he calls the first stage of knowledge on the one hand, and the second and third stages on the other; between the 'imaginative' stage on the one hand and the 'scientific' and 'intuitive' stages on the other, is wholly built on the type of procedure one follows in his attempt to know things. Does he start by perceiving the characteristics and qualities of things so that by enumerating, analyzing, and grouping them he might grasp their essence, or does he start with conceiving the essence so that in its light he may understand the characteristics. The first procedure which is used in the imaginative stage of knowledge cannot in Spinoza's opinion lead to sure and universal knowledge. True knowledge can only be reached through the second procedure which is used in the scientific and intuitive stages. If what has been said above, that no object can possess qualities and characteristics in virtue of itself

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XL.

alone, but in virtue of its being related to things other than itself in nature; if this has any germ of truth in it, it follows that any understanding of that object through its qualities and properties, must presuppose a full understanding of the relations in which it stands to things other than itself. But no matter how exact our perception of the qualities and properties of a thing may be, it can never tell us a word about the relations that those properties hold to one another, or to the thing, or about the relations that thing holds with the rest of the world, in virtue of which relation it comes to possess what qualities it does possess. Hume has at least sufficiently proved to us that sense experience cannot tell us anything positive about relations.

Any knowledge that we attain about things through their sensible qualities and properties alone, is merely descriptive but not explanatory, it is personal, fragmentary and arbitrary, but not necessary and universal.<sup>1</sup> If our knowledge of things then is to be more than descriptive, disconnected and personal; if it is to be explanatory, it must not start with the qualities that things individually possess, but with those things that decide the qualities and make <sup>them</sup> what they are; it must start with the relations that things hold with each other and in virtue of which they possess what qualities and characteristics they

---

1. Spinoza, Selections, (ed. Wild, John) Improvement of the Understanding, p. 10.

exemplify. Since no single entity in nature can exist or be conceived in virtue of itself alone but in virtue of its "togetherness" with things, it follows that no entity can be adequately understood except through this togetherness, and the principles which govern it and make it possible. This means that to understand an individual object is to universalize it. In other words, since objects are nothing apart from their qualities, and qualities are nothing but articulations of relations, it follows that to understand nature truly is not to perceive it as a mere conglomeration of individual things, but to conceive how the separate individualities of things vanish upon close analysis into the relational unity of the whole. This type of procedure in understanding things is the procedure of reason. It is what Spinoza calls the second stage of knowledge whereby the intellect attempts to comprehend the characteristics of things through comprehending their essences.

Since the essence of a thing is that in virtue of which that thing exists for thought, and since nothing can exist for thought apart from its being in a relational unity with the whole, it follows that to comprehend a thing truly, that is through its essence, means to comprehend it through the idea of the relational unity of the whole, for its essence lies in its being related. This is exactly what Spinoza means by saying that "Every idea of any body or actually existing

individual thing necessarily involves the eternal and infinite essence of God."<sup>1</sup>

We have expounded how Spinoza speaks of the "common notions" such as motion, rest, sameness, difference, unity, plurality, as constituting the essence of God or of reality just as they constitute the essence or foundation of all thought, or of what I have come to call the idea of the relational unity of the whole. We must now try to find out how on Spinozistic grounds, a true understanding of things is effected through such means. That is to say, **how** do we know things **according** to Spinoza's second stage of knowledge, which he describes as knowledge resulting "from our possessing common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things,"<sup>2</sup> and of which he says that it is necessarily true.<sup>3</sup>

#### XIV

To understand something truly is to subsume all its characteristics under a certain law. That is to say, it is to see how all these characteristics are related, in the light of which relation they complete and justify each other and in consequence render one another meaningful and significant. A

- 
1. E. ii. Prop. XLV and Dem.
  2. E. ii. Prop. XL.
  3. E. ii. Prop. XLI.

law is a statement about the common elements that things governed by that law hold in common. No law can govern two things which have nothing in common. It follows in the same way that understanding is a unifying process, and is an incessant struggle against dualism. A seeker of knowledge is ever eager, whenever presented with a plurality of things, to see how this plurality can fit into a pattern, into a unity and in consequence into a law. Whenever the seeker of real knowledge feels that he is faced with things not completely comprehended by the present law he holds, he immediately tries to shift his ground and rise to a higher level of understanding whereby he can comprehend what his former law was too narrow to include.

A simple farmer watching his apple tree in **Spring** will surely wonder at the sight of a yellow and faded leaf on one of its branches. He wonders because the yellowness of such a leaf in spring does not fit into the general pattern of vegetable life in **Spring**. A clever farmer would instantly look for a law or an explanation that would account for apple leaves getting yellow in both Autumn and Spring. He may, by examining the particular leaf in question, discover that it had turned yellow because a worm has eaten its stalk. But still, to a seeker of true knowledge, this is not a complete answer. He would still want to know the relation between a leaf getting yellow because its stalk was damaged and its getting yellow because Autumn has come. Why did not the leaf under such

circumstances also get black or red or white, or even remain green? The answer to such a question would lead one to study the structure of a leaf, its relations to the branch on which it stands, its relations to the tree, to the soil, to the air, to the light, to the seasons, and in short to the environment in which it exists as a whole, which in this respect is the whole universe. This however, would entail a theory or a law that would display the common principles governing all branches of knowledge in which human intelligence works and of which it can ever think.\*

A true seeker of knowledge then is ever trying to envisage the plurality of things presented to him as constituting the universe into a principle of uniform sequence. He then necessarily presupposes that nature is orderly, that it is a relational unity and that no single entity in it can exist or be conceived in itself alone and through itself. Otherwise, his attempt at envisaging the plurality of things under a principle of uniform sequence, or in other words his attempt to understand at all, would be impossible, because absurd. Let us stop for a while to consider what this principle of uniform sequence is, and where does it come from?

---

\*. This is not to say that the farmer would not know why his leaf got yellow unless he develops a theory that governs the whole universe. This is to say that the farmer would not adequately know the reason until he develops such a law.



XV

*plentitude  
continuity*

To envisage the things of this universe under a principle of uniform sequence means to be able to account for their motion, their rest, their change, their order, their disorder, and in short their causal relations as they interact with each other. No principle of uniform sequence is tenable which does not account for all these in things. But do we in experiencing nature experience such things as motion, rest, unity, plurality, order, disorder, permanence, succession, change and hence relations as such among things? The obvious answer is no. For it has been shown throughout this paper, that sense experience cannot produce an idea of relations, but on the contrary presupposes it. It follows that the principle of uniform sequence through which we try to envisage nature as we come to comprehend it, is the principle of reason. And the notions or ideas upon which this principle is built, such as motion, rest, sameness, difference, succession, permanence, etc. are also notions of reason in which the things to be comprehended must participate before they are admitted to the understanding.

When Spinoza, speaking of his second stage of knowledge, says that it is necessarily true, and that it is the result of our possessing common notions and adequate ideas of the



properties of things,<sup>1</sup> he means that it is that stage of knowledge, at which we do not merely try to understand things as they appear to our senses, but as we try to envisage them under the principle of uniform sequence, which rests on the universal a priori principles of reason such as succession, permanence, sameness, otherness, unity, plurality, etc., which Spinoza calls the common notions.

To envisage nature into a principle of uniform sequence, is to conceive of nature as an absolute unity where each individual is lost into the uniformity of all. According to Spinoza's second stage of knowledge, individuality in nature is only illusory. It is the product of sense experience. For true knowledge there can be no individuals, because understanding is the product of reason and reason's implements for understanding things are the common notions; the principles of relations. To be grasped by reason is to be related. To reason nothing can be conceived to be at rest unless it is related to what is in motion; nothing can be the same unless it is related to what is other than itself; nothing can be one unless it is related to what is many. For reason, things can have no privacy, because "each individual thing" as Spinoza would say, "is determined by another individual thing to existence in a certain way,"<sup>2</sup> and hence cannot be conceived through itself. ✓

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XLI. Dem.  
2. E. ii. Prop. XLV. Schol.

The only individuality that reason admits of is the individuality of the whole; the relational unity of the whole universe, of God, because the whole of nature is the only thing that can be conceived to be self dependent, and self sufficient.<sup>1</sup>

XVI

If this be the case with Spinoza's second stage of knowledge, it follows that no true seeker of knowledge and in this case no rationalist can ever help being other than a thorough going mystic. If reason admits of no individuality in nature, save the individuality of the whole, it follows that it must automatically deprive its bearer, i.e. the rationalist from what individuality he has. The rationalist, in other words, cannot understand nature adequately and yet remain a person, an individual, an ego. His individuality, his ego, his self-consciousness, must dissolve into the individuality of the whole; into the Absolute ego and the Absolute self-consciousness of God. To divide the world into two camps, that is to say, to a mind or reason, that understands, and a nature or reality that is understood, is to admit of a dualism which Spinoza's second stage of knowledge is primarily intended to refute. If Spinoza is to be

---

1. E. i. Prop. XXIV.

consistent, in pursuing his second stage of knowledge to its final and logical conclusion, he is to end up in the monism of the knower and the known of man and nature. Reason cannot conceive of nature as a relational unity that is absolute and infinite and yet remain himself separate and aloof. If reason according to Spinoza's second stage of knowledge cannot see in nature any individuality save the individuality of the absolute and infinite whole, it follows that, unless reason is to be considered as a supernatural entity, it must, as a self-conscious entity, functioning to understand nature adequately, undermine itself, and lose its self-consciousness by merging into the absolute and infinite whole. The moment we start looking at nature through the eye of reason, individuality starts disappearing from it by merging into a self-dependent relational unity, and in consequence, reason as a self-conscious, and hence individual entity, starts accordingly to undermine itself. To attain an adequate conception of nature, is to reach, on the part of the individual conceiver, a state of absolute self-negation whereby his own individuality vanishes before his reason's very eyes into the relational unity of the infinite whole.

The obvious conclusion of Spinoza's second stage of knowledge, then, is that, to use reason is to lose it. To understand nature adequately is to reach a stage of self-forgetfulness and self-negation, and in consequence, of union

with the whole universe.

Was Spinoza really satisfied with this mystical conclusion to which his second stage of knowledge pointed? Did he really intend to be such a mystic? Could he remain silent as he saw reason led by the second stage of knowledge into an irrational impasse? An answer to these questions will be attempted in the course of our discussion of Spinoza's third stage of knowledge.

C H A P T E R   V

INTUITIVE KNOWLEDGE; ITS MEANS, ITS ENDS  
AND ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## I

Now that we turn to discuss Spinoza's third stage of knowledge it is important, I think, to outline the factor or factors which make the existence of such a stage necessary. Why, in other words, was it necessary for Spinoza to speak of a third stage. What demands in his theory of knowledge is this third stage trying to meet?

It seems to me that there are two chief nightmares that have always haunted philosophy. Some philosophers in history have spent their lives avoiding and even fighting them; others have submitted to their snare on the ground that they are inevitable. By these two nightmares, I mean, scepticism and its disguised sister, mysticism. These are nightmares to philosophy because they undermine it as a human effort claiming to be capable of reaching permanent and universal truth. Scepticism either denies the existence of such a truth, or denies man's capability of ever reaching it if it does exist. Mysticism on the other hand, though it never doubts the existence of such a truth, yet it either relies on a supernatural, and hence superhuman aid to reach it, or claims to be capable of grasping it unaided but incapable of revealing unto others, and in human terms what is grasped. This is why most earnest

philosophers in history felt it their duty to fight both Mysticism and Scepticism fully convinced that if either of the two reigned, philosophy as such would commit suicide.

Spinoza, whose sincerity to philosophy, I have no reason at all to doubt, has bitterly fought scepticism in his epistemology. Not in few places have I in my discussion of Spinoza's epistemology, touched upon the points by which he tried to avoid and banish scepticism. Let me sum up and recapitulate these points here.

1. Having insisted on speaking of God as the immanent cause of all things, and as the all-inclusive self-dependent and infinite substance that there is, which expresses itself, through infinite attributes one of which is the attribute of thought, Spinoza assured himself of having a universe which is open to thought, and intelligible through and through. He thus thought he had escaped the sceptical conclusions that would follow from the mediaeval conception of a transcendent God who created the world ex-nihilo, by an act of will and who in consequence, would always remain beyond the independent effort of his creatures to understand Him.<sup>1</sup>

2. In speaking of thought and extension as being two attributes of one and only one reality which is the universe, Spinoza thought he had escaped the sceptical conclusions that

---

1. E. ii. Prop. III. Schol.

would follow from the belief in the dualism of the two opposite natures; thought and extension where the one is set the impossible task of understanding the other.

3. In believing that the human mind is the human body expressed in thought and that the human body is the mind as extended, and that both are two ways of speaking of the same mode which is man, and that in consequence whatever, happens to the one automatically happens to the other. By stressing the fact, in other words, that an idea is its ideatum and not a mere copy of it,<sup>1</sup> Spinoza thought he had overcome the sceptical results of the Cartesian psychophysical dualism through which there is no way of accounting for how the mind which has nothing in common with the body can yet dwell in it, direct it and through it understand the physical world of which the body is a part.<sup>2</sup> Psychophysical dualism can in no way, assure us that whatever impressions our mind gets from the physical world, are really true representatives of that world, for it denies us the privilege of being able to check their truth by comparison.<sup>3</sup>

4. In believing that an idea is its ideatum, because each idea is a mode of God, and hence must be revealed, both as extended and as thought, in accordance with the attributes through which God reveals Himself, Spinoza also believed that

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XXI, Schol.

2. E. v. Preface.

3. See Chapter II above, pp. 12-14.



each idea must accordingly be the ideatum of itself. This is so because by virtue of having thought as one of His attributes, God possesses an idea of Himself and hence of all modes that follow from his nature. This means that he possesses an idea of each idea that follows from Him under the attribute of thought. The human mind then by being an idea of the body is also an idea of itself, and in consequence is self-conscious.<sup>1</sup>

By thus accounting for a self-conscious mind which is an idea of an extended body and a modification of reality under one of its attributes, Spinoza assured himself of the fact that whatever basic and innate ideas or principles the mind possesses, it possesses in virtue of its being a modification of reality, and in consequence all such basic and a priori principles or ideas of which the mind is conscious, are really the principles of reality. If the mind according to this Spinozistic thesis, consistently deduces from these basic principles, and rightly builds on them, whatever truths it thus deduces and derives would be universal and right truths about reality itself. Spinoza in this way thought he had avoided the sceptical conclusions that would issue from a deductive philosophy built on axioms or starting points which a cartesian or a similar mind thinks to be self-evident and true, but has no way to definitely assure itself whether reality

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XX and Prop. XXI. See also Chapter II above p. 14.

itself admits of them or not, and in consequence whether its philosophic system, thus achieved is a true representation of reality or not.<sup>1</sup>

By thus accounting also for a self-conscious mind that is itself a mode of reality and wholly tied to it, Spinoza sought to avoid the sceptical conclusions involved in what is like the Humean conception of the mind as a stream of consciousness, with no unity of its own and hence with no capability to think for itself or understand or supply its bearer with any idea or truth about reality.

5. In speaking of common notions or innate principles as the foundations of the mind,<sup>2</sup> and which it possesses in common with other things in the world in virtue of their all being modes of one substance,<sup>3</sup> Spinoza thought, the human mind to be in possession of the foundation and essence of reality through which essence all diversity in nature can be understood and in which the diversity is seen to be envisaged in a unified and uniform sequence.<sup>4</sup> Spinoza in this way thought he had avoided things like the Scepticism of Hume arising from the Lockean thesis that the mind is a tabula raza, and the Berkelean consistent conclusion from such a thesis that to be is to be perceived.<sup>5</sup>

---

1. See Chapter IV above pp. 69-70.

2. E. ii. Prop. XLIV. Dem. to Corol. 2.

3. E. ii. Prop. XXIX.

4. E. ii. Prop. XLV.

5. See Chapter III above pp. 44-45, and Chapter IV, pp. 51-52.

II

In these five major points which sum up our conclusions so far, Spinoza fought against one of philosophy's major nightmares; against scepticism. But what of philosophy's second nightmare? Was Spinoza really able in fighting scepticism to avoid mysticism or at least mystical conclusions?

It seems to me that the more Spinoza intended to be anti-sceptical in his epistemology, the more he became, willingly or unwillingly a thorough going mystic. He was so absorbed in wrestling with scepticism that he did not notice that the very tools with which he was fighting were no other than the arms of Plotinus and Budha.<sup>1</sup>

In more than one place I have in my discussion of Spinoza's epistemology, pointed out his mysticism or the mystical conclusions to which he was driven. Here I sum up the main points I made.

1. Having insisted on speaking of God or reality as the immanent cause of all things; as that infinite all-inclusive and self-dependent substance without which nothing can be or be conceived; Spinoza has made it impossible for

---

1. See Chapter II above pp. 23-24 and Chapter IV pp. 87-89.

any one mind to understand any one thing adequately in nature without first understanding the whole, without which that thing can neither be nor be conceived. To be able in other words to understand the finite, we must first understand the infinite upon which the finite is said to depend and through which it is made what it is.<sup>1</sup> "Anything that we fasten upon short of the whole of things would turn out to be intertwined with other things themselves interconnected with others until we should have the whole again."<sup>2</sup>

The question to be asked now is: how is the mind to possess a knowledge of the infinite so as to be able to grasp the finite? It appears that there can only be two alternative answers to this question both of which are suggested by Spinoza and both of which equally lead to mystical conclusions.

(a) Conceiving reality (God) as a series of causes and effects inseparably related to each other and winding up in an absolute and infinite whole, as the last quotation from Wild suggests, the human mind may well start inferring the causes of things from their effects in a process that finally enables it to wind up with the absolute or infinite where it would both know the finite and the infinite. This way is suggested by Spinoza's second stage of knowledge, and

---

1. Spinoza, Selections (ed. Wild, John) Short Treatise, p. 86.  
2. Ibid., Introduction, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

is clearly stated in the "Improvement of the Understanding."<sup>1</sup>

(b) The second way is to conceive of the mind as possessing an adequate idea of the eternal and infinite essence of God in virtue of its being a modification of Him, whereby it can deduce from that essence the infinite number of things that follow from it. This method is apparently a continuation of the first and is suggested by Spinoza's third stage of knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

The trouble with the first procedure is that it seems to be attempting the impossible. It approaches the infinite by finite steps. If the universe is a chain of infinite causes, of infinite effects, then no matter how patiently the mind steps, so to speak, from one effect to one cause aiming at reaching the infinite, there shall always remain an infinite chain of causes and effects ahead of it. The road to the infinite is infinite, and not without a sort of a Plotinian mystical leap can one walk it to the end.

If it is on the one hand impossible for the mind to bridge the gap between the finite and the infinite, without a sort of mystical leap, it would be equally impossible for it without that leap also to bridge the gap between the infinite

---

1. Ibid., Improvement of the Understanding, p. 8.

2. E. ii. Prop. XL. Schol. 2, and E. ii. Prop. XLVII Schol.

and the finite as the second way mentioned above suggests.<sup>1</sup>

2. Spinoza speaks of reality or God as the only absolute, infinite and all inclusive relational and unbroken unity that there is, without which nothing can be or be conceived. He on the other hand, speaks of this absolute and unbroken unity of God, as expressing itself in an infinite number of attributes only two of which, namely Thought and Extension, are known to man. This is to say that nature as a system of extended bodies, and nature as a system of ideas or minds, is one and the same nature, looked at from different angles, and revealed through two different aspects.

In so speaking, Spinoza, prompts us to ask the question as to how can the absolute unity of God reveal itself in a variety of ways,<sup>2</sup> or attributes and yet retain its unity? How are we to think of the plurality of attributes in their relationship to the absolute unity of God? Are we to take it, that the plurality of ways through which God reveals Himself is of His essence? But this surely does away with the unity of God which Spinoza so much laboured to maintain, in order to do away with the sceptical results that would otherwise follow. If we on the other hand, maintain that the plurality of God's Attributes is not due to His nature but to the nature of the

---

1. More on this point in sequel.

2. E. i. Prop. v - xv.

mind or consciousness trying to apprehend Him, we would simply be maintaining that God's Attributes, including thought and extension are only appearances while God's true nature is something-in-itself, existing behind the appearances and resisting any rational effort to understand it.<sup>1</sup> To believe in the existence of a reality beyond experience and beyond reason and thought is excellent mysticism, but bad philosophy.\*

3. The human mind together with all other minds in the universe, are modes of God, apprehended under His attributes of Thought. Being a thinking thing in virtue of having thought as one of His attributes, God necessarily, according to Spinoza, formulates an idea of His essence together with all things that follow from it. It follows that He has an idea of each mode of thought that follows from His nature.<sup>2</sup> This means that God has an idea of the human mind which idea is necessarily united to its ideatum, the mind as the mind itself is necessarily united to its ideatum the body.<sup>3</sup> The human mind then necessarily has an idea of itself, and is in consequence self-conscious.

In accounting for self-consciousness or self-conscious minds in the universe, in this way Spinoza is unconsciously

---

1. Joachim, A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza, pp. 102-103.  
\*. This point was approached at the end of Chapter II above, but not sufficiently developed.  
2. E. ii. Prop. XX.  
3. E. ii. Prop. XXI.

falling into the pit which he so much laboured to avoid, namely dualism in God as a thinking being. If God is at one and the same time a system of minds, and also a system of ideas of those minds, how are we then to think of Him as a unity. If Spinoza is to say as he actually does say, that the idea of the mind and the mind are actually one and the same thing;<sup>1</sup> we are apt to ask the question - what is the sense in speaking of them as two, and of God as a self-conscious being. It seems to me that to speak of God as a self-conscious being from which an infinity of self-conscious minds follow, is to split Him into (a) God as a thinking subject, which is active, and (b) God as object of thought which is passive. The moment God is conceived to be a thinking thing, He starts being dualistic. To preserve the absolute unity of God, and thoroughly remain consistent, Spinoza has to seek Him in a realm somewhere above the duality of thought or reason, a process that would make of Spinoza a perfect Plotinian Mystic.<sup>2</sup>

4. To speak of Nature or God, as the only all inclusive self-dependent, and absolute relational unity, without which and outside of which nothing can be or be conceived,<sup>3</sup> is to dismiss all the individualities of things we see in the world as mere appearances and illusions arising from the inadequacy

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XXI. Schol.

2. See Chapter II above, pp. 23-24.

3. E. ii. Prop. XLV.



and fragmentariness of our imaginative experience, which presents things to us as they appear without being able to trace them back to their ultimate cause or causes. The only true individual would be the absolute and infinite; would be God.<sup>1</sup> Being a modification of God under His attribute of thought, the human mind can neither be nor be conceived apart from that attribute. It is in truth entirely dependent upon, and absolutely related to the thought absolute; to God as a thinking being. It seems to follow from this that any feeling on the part of the human mind, that it is a self-conscious entity with real individuality and personality of its own acting on and is acted upon by a universe, that is, and will always be, other than itself; and with which it is and will always be in a constant understanding - understood, relationship; any such feeling I say on the part of the mind is only illusory and is a proof of its inadequate knowledge of itself and of the world. The true being or individuality of the mind, is the being of the whole series of minds and ideas which constitute God's Attribute of thought and on which the mind depends, and apart from which it can have no being whatsoever. The mind's true self-hood then would consist in losing its self-consciousness as an independent ego with a personality of its own and becoming identical with the all inclusive ego of God.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XL. Schol. 1. and Prop. XXXV. Schol.

2. See Chapter IV above, pp. 87-89.

Though this sort of wisdom which says that one is to lose himself in order to find it and which seems to be the logical conclusion of the Spinozistic absolute, monism; is a riddle to philosophy, yet it is the bread and wine of the mysticism of Budha.

### III

After summing up, at the opening of this chapter, the points in Spinoza's epistemology, by which he tried to avoid scepticism, I have attempted in these last four points to summarize the aspects in it which result, or would if pressed to their logical conclusions result in Mysticism. It seemsto me that the chief way by which Spinoza attempted to avoid scepticism in philosophy, was to fight dualism in all its forms; Dualism of God and the universe, the spiritual and the material, thought and extension, mind and body, idea and ideatum. That is why he spoke of God and the universe as one, of thought and extension as the expressions of one reality, of the mind as the idea of the body, and of the idea as its ideatum and not a mere copy of it.

To avoid dualism on the other hand by resorting to a monism where all differences and individualities in nature melt into an absolute unity is to fall into a Budhistic self-negation, where all individual entities in the universe,

including the self of who ever is looking into nature to understand it as such, lose their characteristics as individuals and merge into the static uniform and all-inclusive unity of the whole.

The problem for Spinoza, and for all other philosophers who follow similar lines in fighting dualism, is to find as philosophers, a way by which they can retain their belief in absolute monism and at the same time avoid the mystical conclusions which such a belief involves. In other words, they have to explain how it is conceivable that a plurality of things arise from and exist within an absolute and all-inclusive unity, without their ignoring the individualities of the first or splitting the unity of the other. Spinoza's consciousness of such a problem, it seems to me, and of the pressing philosophic necessity to solve it, explains why, it was necessary for him to speak of a third stage of knowledge, that would tackle the problem which the first two stages created but did not solve.

#### IV

Scientific knowledge, or Spinoza's second stage of knowledge, as I have tried to explain in the last chapter, was chiefly concerned to look at nature and comprehend it through the "common notions" or principles with which the mind is

naturally endowed. That is to say, scientific knowledge does not at all care to know the essence of this or that individual thing as individual. Its chief concern is to draw all things back to their ultimate cause. It seeks to see how all these individuals exhibit characteristics and features that do not solely belong to this or that individual thing, but are common to all and characterize all things as being modes of one attribute of one reality, one unity which is God. A mountain, a human body, a tree, a moon, etc. do not exist as separate individuals to science, with each possessing distinct and private characteristics not enjoyed by the others. Science looks at these as modes of one and only one reality which is extension. All their private distinctions melt in the all inclusive unity of the infinite attribute. But knowledge which results from science, is wholly abstract. By merging all things in the absolute and infinite unity of God from which they arise and in which they exist, we lose sight of their concrete existences, of their private living individuality. In other words, scientific knowledge buries the finite alongside the infinite; the vigour of the concrete in the abstractness of the universal; the positiveness of the positivist in the negation of the mystic.

Spinoza meant intuitive science, or his third stage of knowledge to be the reverse of scientific knowledge. He meant it "to give us a concrete knowledge of Reality in its living

fullness."<sup>1</sup> The object of intuitive knowledge is not to show how all individuals are really nothing but modifications of one and only one reality, but to reverse this order and show how the one reality lives in all the individuals within it. In other words, its object is not to show how the plurality of things in the universe converges into a unity, but how the unity of substance diverges into a plurality of things, without really breaking itself up.

V

Describing this third stage of knowledge in different parts of his writings Spinoza says:

1. "This kind of knowledge advances from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things."<sup>2</sup>

2. "The third kind of knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things."<sup>3</sup>

3. "Hence we see that the infinite essence and the eternity of God are known to all; and

---

1. Joachim, A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza, p. 179.  
2. E. ii. Prop. XL. Schol. 2.  
3. E. v. Prop. XXV. Dem.

since all things are in God and are conceived through Him, it follows that we can deduce from this knowledge many things which we can know adequately, and that we can hence form that third sort of knowledge."<sup>1</sup>

4. "Lastly, there is the perception arising when a thing is perceived solely through its essence or through the knowledge of its proximate cause."<sup>2</sup>

These four descriptions of the third type of knowledge amount to really one and only one thing. They all emphasize the fact that an adequate knowledge of the part presupposes a knowledge of the whole without which the part can neither be nor be conceived. To know what things actually follow from a definition, one must first know the definition. If a definition of a thing comprehends those characteristics without which that thing can neither be nor be conceived, and if God on the other hand, is that all-inclusive and self-dependent substance without which nothing can be nor be conceived, it follows that God is the definition of all things and by knowing God we are apt to know all things that follow from His nature. This is how I suppose,

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XLVII.

2. Spinoza, Selections (ed. Wild, John) Improvement of the Understanding, p. 7.

Spinoza arrived at his description of the third stage of knowledge as that which "advances from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God (definition of God) to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things (things that follow from this definition)."

Though the fourth point listed above, by which Spinoza describes his third type of knowledge is expressed differently from the three that preceded it, yet I believe that the difference, when Spinozistically understood would only be accidental and not at all essential. We understand a thing through its essence when we look at it through that without which it can neither be nor be conceived. But that, to Spinoza, without which a thing can neither be nor be conceived, is the attribute of God of which the particular thing in question is a mode. It thus seems to follow that when Spinoza speaks of understanding a thing through its essence, he actually means, seeing it through an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God.<sup>1</sup>

To understand a thing on the other hand through its proximate cause, would mean to understand it through the series of causes, by which it is produced. The series of causes, in Spinozistic terms by which a thing is produced, is no other than the infinite series which constitutes the attribute

---

1. Wolfson, The Philosophy of Spinoza, V. 2. p. 142.

of God of which the thing in question is a mode.

It thus seems to follow, that to understand a thing through its essence, or through its proximate cause, or to deduce it from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God, is according to Spinoza one and the same process; it is comprehending individuality through universality; it is seeing the many concrete individual things in the universe as they spring from, live in, and absolutely depend upon, God their unifying principle. (11-12°)

It thus appears, that intuitive science, or the third type of knowledge, as Spinoza calls it, starts where the second stage ends. The second stage begins where the individual human mind with the innate powers that it has, starts inferring the causes of things in the universe from their effects in the hope of grasping the ultimate cause on which all things depend and through which they all are conceived. The end of scientific knowledge is to grasp reality in its complete and inter-dependent totality; it is to reach a point at which the mind in realizing that all things are really one becomes itself absorbed in that unity with the feeling that, that unity is its own and that the universe as a whole is in truth its greater and real self. If this "feeling of union existing between the mind and the whole of nature,"<sup>1</sup> is the climax of

---

1. Op.cit., p. 5.



scientific knowledge, it is at one and the same time the basis of intuitive knowledge, for in reaching such a state of unity with the whole of reality our mind can thereby feel the whole of nature in itself and through itself. It is no longer necessary for it to reason about things, that are outside it and discover their connecting link for it has become itself all comprehending. All that it needs to do is to look into *itself*, to feel itself and with one flash of insight, one spark of intuition it will grasp reality as a complete living organism. It will not only see how all individuals in the universe are merely nothing but modifications of one absolute and infinite substance but will understand how this absolute and infinite substance with which the mind is united is really a living organism with each individual in it including the human mind itself occupying its proper place, doing its proper job, living its proper life, and in so doing participating in all that is around it in the complete life and harmony of the infinite whole.

What Spinoza means by the whole process of shifting from the scientific stage of knowledge to the intuitive one, will probably become clearer if we illustrate it by an example. To understand the world scientifically is just like climbing a hill. The mind starts inferring the causes of things from their effects in the hope of finding their common link through which they are all envisaged in a principle of uniform sequence.

Causes and effects will only interest the mind not in so far as they have distinct characteristics of their own, but in so far as they participate in common characteristics through which they are seen to constitute one whole, continuous and infinite series. Similarly, to the climber of a hill, all rocks, stones, bushes, cliffs, etc. existing on the slope and constituting it, are of no interest to him as such. They only interest him in so far as they constitute the whole slope which he has to climb. He does not ask himself how old is this bush or of what kind is this stone or of what colour is this rock, etc. but only how many steps or meters has he still to climb before he reaches the summit. It is only when he reclines at the summit, and looks back that the hill to him ceases to be so many dead steps to climb and becomes all of a sudden, and with one flash, a whole world of living things (in the wide sense). Rocks of different shapes, sizes, and colours, trees of varying kinds, plants of all varieties, cliffs, rivulets, cataracts, hinges, all stand with their unveiled privacy and concreteness before the climber's very eyes, yet all stand side by side, and shoulder to shoulder to constitute that very hill on which he rests his feet.

Similarly, not until the mind reaches the summit of understanding, i.e. that complete unity with the whole reality, that it can look back and discover with one intuition that reality is not merely a dead and static unified series of causes

and effects but a whole organism of concrete living individuals. This is how the third type of knowledge according to Spinoza, enables us to observe concrete individuality in reality without really infringing upon its unity.

To illustrate the same point, Spinoza resorts more than once to an example which though less flowery and more difficult to understand than the example of the hill, yet it apparently comes to nearly the same thing. "Let there be three numbers given" he says, "through which it is required to discover a fourth which shall be to the third as the second is to the first."<sup>1</sup> According to scientific knowledge, we examine numbers in general, and find out the nature and property of proportion, namely that the product of the first and fourth is always equal to the product of the second and third.<sup>2</sup> In this way we immediately conclude the fourth proportional to our given three numbers.

This method as is obvious, concentrates not on the individual numbers as such, but on the law which governs them namely the nature of proportion. Numbers are only important to it in so far as they exemplify a certain common property or proportion. If we are to find a fourth proportional to three numbers we infer it from something that is other than

---

1. E. ii. Prop. XL. Schol. 2.

2. op.cit., pp. 8-9.

itself, namely from the law or nature of proportion in which it is contained.

Intuitive knowledge on the other hand, finds the fourth proportional not by virtue of concluding it from a certain law, but "intuitively without going through any process,"<sup>1</sup> i.e. without resorting to something external to the nature of the numbers given. It **flashes** there before its very eyes, without any demonstration. This is best seen, Spinoza says, in the case of simple numbers. If 1, 2, 3, are given, we immediately see that the fourth proportional is 6 much more clearly than by any demonstration.<sup>2</sup>

To make a long story short, it seems that Spinoza wants to stress the fact that while scientific knowledge always understands something in terms of something else, and hence remains deductive, and discursive, and ignorant of the concrete natures of the things understood, intuitive knowledge on the other hand, by virtue of being a product of an all comprehending intellect that is completely united to, and entirely absorbed in the whole of reality, is capable of understanding things and of feeling them as they are in themselves, and through themselves, and not as they are inferred from something that includes them but is other than

---

1. Ibid.

2. E. II. Prop. XL. Schol. 2.

what they concretely are. We intuit that 6 is the fourth proportional of the numbers 1, 2, 3, not because we deduce it from a certain law that governs all proportionals, but because as mathematicians we live so to speak the numbers with which we deal, and in living them, we are able to glance at one instant, with no intermediary steps the proportion in which they stand to one another.

## VI

If these two examples mentioned above, illustrate the meaning of Spinoza's intuitive stage of knowledge, they also illustrate the end which this type of knowledge is meant to serve, namely, how is it possible for us to conceive of reality as an absolute unity without denying the existence of concrete individuals within it. How in other words can we be monists and avoid mysticism at one and the same time. The man at the top of the hill is able by virtue of his position to see the hill-side as a whole, as a unity, so to speak; he can see it all at one glance. But seeing the whole slope at one glance does not prevent him at the same time from seeing each rock, each cliff, as it stands in itself, and as it also communicates its being to the being of others, to constitute the hill-side in its complete form. Though the hill-climber is able to enjoy the beauty of each bit that constitutes the hill-side, yet never by virtue of his domineering

position at the top is he drawn to conceive the hill-side as a plurality of things. He constantly sees it as one stretch. Similarly the mathematician, by living the simple numbers with which he deals, he is capable to see at one glance each individual number as it stands in proportion to the other, but he is also able to see how all numbers are really conceived through one proportional unity.

The human mind reasoned Spinoza, can in a similar way reach the point of grasping reality as a whole if it can reach the climax of scientific knowledge, where everything in nature including itself seem to inter-penetrate and merge into a single infinite and inter-related system or principle of uniform sequence. As a consequence of this union with nature, the mind, can by looking into itself, by feeling itself, like the man at the top of the hill, both see reality as one stretch, as one whole and at the same time directly see and feel the different concrete individuals as they live and move within that reality. The mind, by uniting with reality can conceive of nature as a plurality in unity without either being pluralistic or mystical. It cannot be said to be pluralistic, because it conceives of all individuals in nature as being inter-dependent and inter-related and constituting one infinite unity; it cannot be said to be mystical on the other hand, because it directly feels reality living in it, it directly feels every individual as it lives, moves and occupies

its concrete place in the chain of causes and effects that constitute the infinite whole.

## VII

If my interpretation of Spinoza's intuitive stage of knowledge is sound, I am here tempted to suggest that this stage, has somehow failed to serve its purpose. I fail to see how on Spinozistic grounds the third type of knowledge is possible, both in theory and in practice. It is not possible in practice, I believe, because it demands complete union between the mind and the whole of reality, that is a complete absorption of the human mind in nature, so that there would be no dualism left, between knower and known; between subject and object. It is perfectly reasonable to say that to know something adequately is to become that thing, But will man as such be able in this sense to know anything adequately? Will man, as man, ever be able to overcome the dualism between himself as a conscious knower standing over and against a reality to be known? And if he ever does, will he still be called man? And in what sense can we speak of him as knower. To know reality adequately on Spinozistic grounds, would be to become nobody, it is to become reality, or God. But in becoming God man is no longer himself.

I do not wish here to argue whether man can reach Spinoza's third grade of knowledge, and that complete union



with God or not. I only want to stress the fact that if he ever does, he is no more man; he is God. If ever he tries, in this state of his being, to express himself unto others, whatever he says would be religion and not philosophy. This is why I suppose whenever Spinoza speaks of his third stage of knowledge we feel mentally disturbed but spiritually comforted.

Any process of knowing, according to reason, deals with at least two factors, namely, a subject and an object. But Spinoza's third stage of knowledge dispenses with this dualism making it one. This is why in my belief the third stage, is not tenable on rational grounds, nor is Spinoza justified in using it as a philosophic or at least rational solution for the problem of the relation between the one and the many in his system.

The second point I have in mind, against Spinoza's third stage of knowledge as a process by which the mind knows the infinite reality in its concrete unity, is that it is not possible in principle. We cannot at all be said to know the infinite as infinite. The moment we are said to know it in concrete it stops being infinite to us and breaks into finite constituents.

To say that "the infinite essence and the eternity of God are known to all, and that we can deduce from this knowledge



many things which we can know adequately"<sup>1</sup> i.e. we can see this infinite essence in its concrete existence, as Spinoza meant his third type of knowledge to do, involves to my mind a contradiction in terms. The essence of God cannot be infinite, and yet known to all, for knowledge is of the finite, and the concrete. To know something is to see its limits, to discriminate it from the other than itself. It is to see it through a definite law and a finite pattern. "Thought" as Whitehead says, "is one form of emphasis"<sup>2</sup> and hence it sounds meaningless, if not impossible to say, that the infinite as infinite can in any way be emphasized, for it by definition is boundless, patternless and indefinite. It seems to me that if we are to understand reality at all, we are to understand it through the finite, for to understand something is to define it, and hence be able to differentiate between what belongs to it as such, from what is outside it. Before we are able to see the limits of something we cannot be said to know it, to grasp it or to define it. The prison is prison, because it has definite walls, otherwise it would not be a prison. A chair is a chair, because it has distinct characteristics that differentiate it from the tables, the beds, the cupboards, the space, etc. that are with it in the room, otherwise it would not be a chair. It thus seems to follow

---

1. E. ii. XLVII. Schol.

2. Whitehead, Essays in Science and Philosophy, p. 79.

that to be an object for reason, for thought, or even to be something at all, is to be qualified; is to be differentiated from others, and in consequence to be limited. Would the infinite as such then, be anything at all? Can the infinite in itself, be other than mere void? Furthermore, if the infinite is not to be permeated with pattern; with limits; with finitude, would anything at all be deduced or deducible from it as such? "Apart from the finite," says Whitehead, "the infinite is devoid of meaning and cannot be distinguished from non-entity."<sup>1</sup>

Spinoza to my mind cannot in any way stress the infinitude of the essence of God and at the same time maintain that in grasping it we are enabled thereby to deduce many things which we may know adequately. For the essence of God as such is mere vacuity out of which nothing can be deduced. It is only when the infinity of God is permeated with finitude, with definite things that it becomes meaningful and intelligible.

It would be equally true to say also, on this point, that the finite in turn is unintelligible and impossible without the infinite. For the finite by definition presupposes that which is beyond it and which limits it. Every finite thing, every pattern, every definition, presupposes something that limits it, that patterns it, that defines it from the

---

1. Ibid., p. 81.

outside. "The notion of the essential relatedness of all things," says Whitehead again, "is the primary step in understanding how finite entities require, the unbounded universe, and how the universe acquires meaning and value by reason of its embodiment of the activity of finitude."<sup>1</sup>

### VIII

It seems to me that the net result of what has preceded is that the infinite is unintelligible without the finite, just as the finite is impossible without the infinite. They both depend upon each other and fulfil each other and are essential for any attempt on our part to understand the universe. To say as Spinoza does, that from our grasping the infinite we can deduce the finite, would be as impossible as saying that from grasping the finite one can deduce the infinite. They presuppose one another.

If reason works through the finite, if it only deals with patterns, laws, and definitions, and if the finite is meaningless and impossible apart from its relationship with that which is beyond it, it seems to follow that no matter how energetically and systematically, and consistently reason tries to grasp reality and assemble it within definite concepts and laws, there shall always, by definition remain outside its laws, and concepts something, that defines them,

---

1. Ibid.

that makes them possible by being related to them, but something that always proves to be wider than they are and remains in itself undefined and undefinable. Without the undefinable, <sup>6</sup> definition would be impossible.

To remain a consistent rationalist one is to convince himself, that no matter how much he tries to define reality, there shall always remain outside his definition that which is undefinable, and yet makes his definition possible. To grasp the undefinable, one is to give up definition, and pass over from reason to *Mysticism*. This is what Plotinus did when he was seeking absolute unity, or the unpatterned pattern. This, it seems to me, is the ultimate conclusion of any rationalist seeking to be an absolute monist. Spinoza's third stage of knowledge could not at all save Spinoza from mysticism.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brown, Lewis, Blessed Spinoza;  
The Macmillan Company, New York, 1932.
- Caird, John, Spinoza;  
William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh.
- Casseres, Benjamin de, Spinoza; Liberator of God and Man;  
New York, Sweetland, 1932.
- Hallet, H.F., Aeternitas;  
At the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1930.
- Hampshire, Stuart, Spinoza;  
Penguin Books, The White Friars Press Ltd., Tombridge,  
London, 1951.
- Joachim, Harold H., A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza;  
At the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1901.
- McKeon, Richard, The Philosophy of Spinoza;  
Longman, Green and Co., London, 1928.
- Parkinson, G.H.R., Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge;  
At the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1954.
- Roth, Leon, Spinoza;  
Ernest Benn Limited, London; Bouverie House, E.C.4, 1929.
- Spinoza, Benedictus de, Selections; (Wild, John, ed.)  
Charles Scribners Sons, London, 1930.
- Spinoza, Benedictus de, The Philosophy of Spinoza;  
(Ratner, Joseph, ed.) Tudor Publishing Company,  
U.S.A. 1926.
- Spinoza, Benedictus de, Spinoza Dictionary; (Runes, Dagobert D.ed)  
Philosophical Library, New York, 1951.
- Spinoza, Benedictus de, Writings on Political Philosophy;  
(Balz, A.G.A. ed.) D. Appleton Century Company, Inc.,  
New York, London, 1937.
- Spinoza, Benedictus de, The Principles of Descartes' Philosophy;  
(Britan, Halbert Hains, tr.) The Open Court Publishing Co.,  
Illinois, 1943.

Spinoza, Benedictus de, The Living Thoughts of Spinoza;  
(Zweig, Arnold, ed.) Longmans, Green and Co.,  
New York, Toronto, 1939.

Strauss, Leo, Persecution and the Art of Writing;  
The Free Press Publishers, Glencoe, Illinois, 1952

Whitehead, Alfred North, Essays in Science and Philosophy;  
Philosophical Library, New York, 1948.

Wolfson, Harry Austryn, The Philosophy of Spinoza (two volumes)  
Harvard University Press, 1948.

The Oldest Biography of Spinoza; (Wolf, A., ed., tr.)  
George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 40 Museum Street,  
W.C. London, 1927.