

SPINOZA.

4/8/2019

1.) Lived in Holland (1632-1677) of Portuguese-Jewish background. Was excommunicated from Judaism at the age of 23.

A contemporary of Descartes & Leibniz, he corresponded with some of the major scientists of his day. He worked as a grinder of lenses used in scientific equipment.

His philosophy is laid out in depth in his work "Ethics—demonstrated in geometrical order," but he also wrote another book "Theologico-political Treatise."

2.) In "Ethics," he takes on Cartesian dualism, presenting a radically different alternative. Descartes: 2 different substances, Mind & Matter, interacting via pineal gland: mind causes Matter, & vice-versa, in an interactive loop. For Spinoza, there is just one substance, which he equates with Nature or God. Mind & matter are just 2 different attributes of this same substance, amongst several other possible attributes. Mind & Matter do not interact causally with each other, rather they are just 2 different expressions of one & the same process—thought doesn't move the brain nor vice versa: rather, thought & brain movements happen in parallel, like 2 sides of the same coin.

3.) Given that the substance comprises all that is, there is nothing outside of it, there is no transcendental entity that could have created it—*causa sui*—*Autopoiesis!*

4.) The substance has a fundamental tendency to persist in time—*Conatus*.

5.) In humans, the *Conatus* manifests itself through all the varied emotions, or affects. For example, fear moves one to avoid or flee from what one judges or perceives to be threatening to one's existence. Pain is a sign of diminished power of existence whilst pleasure is a sign of increase in this power.

6.) 3 kinds of knowledge: I.) knowledge based on the senses (impressions from appearances, from what we remember authorities teaching us. These impressions form the basis for "imagination," an unreliable source of knowledge often leading to delusion & prejudice); II.) knowledge based on Reason (once one starts to see the limitations & inconsistencies of the first kind of knowledge, one starts to question it, to think independently. If one follows this understanding further, one will arrive at logic, pure reason, critical thinking, enabling clear & distinct ideas, arriving at universal laws & more accurate representations of the Truth)

III.) knowledge based on intuition (an immediate, direct, holistic grasp of the Infinite; an experiential, non-verbal apprehension of the Truth, within one's heart, so to speak—a visceral knowledge deep within one's being).

7.) These 3 kinds of knowledge have distinctly different transformative effects on the human emotions. We all start off with the basic emotions in an interactive relationship with the sensual knowledge. This relationship maintains & promotes the passive emotions or passions. He speaks at length about cause & effect: "Given this (nature), that follows by necessity"—we all act in accordance with our nature. Sensual knowledge gives us the impression that we are merely the effect of a cause, a victim of circumstance. This results in 2 striking illusions: Free will, & Fatalism. We may look back over our past & say "if only I had made a different choice, my life would be different now"—an imaginary scenario that does not exist. The passive emotions such as fear, anger & lust, foster the attitude that says "This circumstance made me do it"; "It's all his fault"; "It's in my nature, I can't help it!" Emotional Slavery.

8.) The 2nd. kind of knowledge transforms passive emotions into active emotions, emotions that spring from within oneself as opposed to just being reactions to the environment. E.g. anger becomes courage. Reason shows us that what is truly & ultimately beneficial for oneself is also what is truly & ultimately beneficial for others—recognition of this is source of Honesty, Justice & Solidarity. Since understanding is the most beneficial thing of all, the rational person seeks above all to understand: he wishes for himself, his worst enemy & his best friend just one thing: understanding. What's the point of punishment or revenge if it does not foster understanding? CBT—the Stoics—how we perceive, how we understand, our perspectives affect our emotions, & therefore ultimately our behaviour.

9.) Intuitive knowledge transforms rational understanding into "knowledge of God/Nature"; & this knowledge in turn transforms our emotions into the "Intellectual Love of God". Knowledge of God arises as one gets to see everything under the perspective of Eternity. From this viewpoint, past & future are just different aspects of one eternal everlasting present moment. Everything is eternal, in the same manner as mathematical theorems. Here & there are just different angles of the whole—everything is intimately interconnected—everything influences everything else. Cause & effect are just different sides of the same process. We do not so much act according to our nature: we are our nature—we are not only effect, we are also the cause! Through the understanding Love of God, we achieve the greatest happiness possible, we become liberated from the slavery to our emotions. When a person has an experience, God is having that experience through that person. When a person loves God, God is loving itself through that person. Can one have a beautiful rose without the thorny bush that gave rise to it?