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THE IDEALISM OF SPINOZA.

TO those acquainted with the literature of Spinozism it is well known that there are extremely divergent interpretations of the system. While some critics find in it a decided Idealism, for others it seems to represent the universe as merely a purposeless, and therefore ultimately unintelligible, evolution of the infinite substance,—a necessary modification of the attributes in which its essence is expressed. On this view, Spinoza appears to interpret the processes of nature rather by the laws of unintelligent causation than by those of purposive intelligence. The controversy between the antagonistic critics has run into minute details in the interpretation of Spinoza's writings. In these details it seems to be at times forgotten that a philosophical system must be interpreted, not by comparatively brief passages in its exposition isolated from the qualifications of their context, but by the essential drift of the exposition as a whole. The most indefatigable thinker is apt to flag at times in the course of a lengthy exposition, and to drop into inconsistencies of detail, which mar the logical perfection of a system. This it is peculiarly necessary to remember in the study of Spinoza's *Ethics*, as the work might have received important modifications before publication, if the author had lived to edit it himself.¹ Something may be gained towards the true interpretation of Spinozism, if an attempt is made to construe the system as a whole in the light of what appears to be its essential drift. Now, whatever difficulties may be found in the interpretation of particular expressions,—and these will be noticed as we proceed,—it does seem as if

¹ There are some instances of superficial inconsistency even in language, which Spinoza would surely have corrected. Thus, while his essential doctrine is that an *affectus* may be either an *actio* or a *passio* (III, 58 and 59), for the whole process of moral evolution is interpreted as supplanting passive emotions by those that are active, yet he occasionally makes a slip by using *affectus* as if it were equivalent to *passio* (III, 11, schol.).

there could be no consistent interpretation of Spinoza's great work, except as an exposition of the doctrine that the universe, under all its varied phases, is essentially an evolution of intelligence.

The universe of known existence appears to be viewed by Spinoza as composed of two concurrent series of phenomena. These are, it is true, conceived as merely different modes of one and the same substance. But they are modes of two attributes so totally distinct as to be exclusive of each other ; and the substance, in which they are united, seems to be nothing more than the bare concept of being, and, therefore, to supply no fuller bond of union than the common predicate, that they *are*. But Spinoza is evidently in earnest about the substantial union of mind and matter. He is so much in earnest as to insist that the series of all phenomena, though infinite, are yet so organically united as to form one individual.¹ It is of interest, therefore, to trace the process by which this organic or substantial union is reached.

To begin, then, it must be admitted that the unifying concept of substance seems nothing but the empty concept of being. In fact, in the sixth definition of the first part, *substantia* and *ens* are used as convertible. But Spinoza does not rest here. As if conscious of its inadequacy, he proceeds at once to explain that the indifferent concept of substance, or being, becomes differentiated into attributes. He does not, indeed, make any attempt, like Hegel's, to unfold the logical process by which this differentiation takes place. For him the attributes appear simply as differentiations of the infinite substance that are empirically gathered from the modifications in which they are revealed to our knowledge. In this uncritical assumption, however, of the universal categories of known existence, Spinoza does not by any means stand alone. Not to go back upon older speculations on the categories, his position is obviously that of the old Scottish School. They, too, accepted certain categories or principles of 'common sense,' as necessary facts of knowledge in general, without any critical

¹ See part II, prop. 13, lemma 7, and schol.

scrutiny of their origin or authority. Even Kant, though he sees clearly the defect of the Scottish method, has not succeeded in avoiding it altogether. In his *Transcendental Deduction*, he endeavors indeed to show how the original unity of self-consciousness becomes differentiated into categories corresponding to the forms of judgment; yet he closes the elaborate exposition with the admission: "Of this peculiar property of our understanding—the property of realizing *a priori* unity of apperception only by means of the categories, and precisely through such and so many of these—it is just as impossible to adduce any further ground, as to explain why we have precisely these and no other functions of judgment, or why Time and Space are the only forms of intuition possible for us."¹ Still it is but fair to note that the attributes are regarded by Spinoza as necessary differentiations of substance, and therefore as expressing its essential nature; so that, in this respect, he approaches the old theistic Occasionalists more nearly than those modern Agnostics, for whom the essential nature of substance or reality is never indicated in any phenomena either of matter or of mind.

But not only does Spinoza feel that substance is an empty concept, apart from the attributes that express its essential nature; even the attribute itself is recognized as an empty abstraction which, to become a reality, must be differentiated into concrete modes, just as, in Kant's doctrine, the categories are empty forms of thought till they receive a content from sensible experience.

Reality, therefore, for Spinoza, is not substance by itself, nor yet substance as defined by attributes, but substance as realized and manifested in the innumerable modes into which its attributes are 'modified.' And, therefore, though isolated expressions may seem to represent each series of modes as running in parallel lines, never coming into any real connection, yet the entire drift and significance of the *Ethics* forbid us from taking that view; otherwise, Spinoza's meaning cannot be grasped. There is, specially, no meaning in the conception

¹ *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, § 21.

of all modes being organically united as if they formed one individual.

What, then, is the only possible connection? Here the first impression might be that the concept of substance is the only connective principle, or at least the only one explicitly recognized by Spinoza. But, running through his whole exposition, there is another principle which is assumed implicitly, at least, not only in the general outline, but often even in minute details, — assumed in laying the foundation, as well as in every part of the superstructure.

A. The *foundation* of Spinoza's philosophy is determined by the method he has adopted. That method is geometrical; and, therefore, like the geometer, he is obliged to found on axioms, definitions, and postulates. It is not necessary to inquire into the general conditions of contemporary thought, or the special idiosyncrasies of Spinoza's mind, which may have led him to the adoption of this method. It is sufficient for us that the method was adopted; and, in view of this fact, it becomes obvious that our interpretation of Spinoza must always keep in mind the necessities which the method imposed on his own exposition of his system.

The adoption of a method peculiar to any of the special sciences must always impede the intellectual procedure by which Philosophy seeks to reach the solution of its problems. It does not matter whether the method adopted be the demonstrative method of mathematical science, or the inductive method of experimental science. The extension of such methods to Philosophy overlooks the fact that Philosophy is an inquiry into the validity of these methods themselves. Such an inquiry, however, must obviously go beyond the methods inquired into, and cannot, to begin with, assume these methods as valid for its own direction. Underlying all experience — all experiential science — there must be some truth which forms the criterion and foundation of experience itself; but that primordial truth cannot be merely a fact found in experience, that is, found by the method of experiential science. In like manner the demonstrative method of geometry assumes, not

only the validity of the process of demonstration, but certain data to form the premisses or starting-point of the process. Here again, however, the task of Philosophy is to get beyond the presuppositions of science, — to find what right the mathematician has to assume the data with which he starts, or to assume that demonstration is a conclusive method of reaching truth. This Spinoza unfortunately overlooks; and we find him, accordingly, trying to start with definitions and axioms and postulates, after the fashion of a geometer, without any critical inquiry into their origin or foundation.

But does Spinoza make no effort to obviate this objection to his method? On a superficial interpretation of his system, he makes none. On such an interpretation his data are simply assumed, like those of any special science, without any critique of their validity. But a critical examination of Spinoza's statement of his data makes such an interpretation impossible. These data are stated in such a manner that the critical vindication of their authority is in general clearly indicated. The statements imply that the data are assumed on the ground of their being necessary to intelligibility; in other words, because without them — not only could there be no intelligible system of Philosophy, but there would be no intelligible universe, of which Philosophy could be called to give an account. This is specially clear with regard to the three fundamental definitions of substance, attribute, and mode.

Take first the definition of *substance*: “Id quod in se est et per se concipitur; hoc est id, cujus conceptus non indiget conceptu alterius rei, a quo formari debeat.” On the first blush, as already stated, it looks as if this were merely the bare concept of being in the abstract, assumed without any investigation of its validity, or even of its meaning. But a more careful study of Spinoza's language proves at once that it goes a long way beyond that. Substance is defined to be, not merely that which *is* in itself, but also that which *is conceived* by itself; and, to make the meaning perfectly explicit, this latter predicate is more fully expanded into “that of which the concept does not require the concept of anything else, by which it has to be

formed." Substance is, therefore, not an empirical idea taken up simply as something which happens to be found among the natural furniture of our minds. It is a necessary concept of reason. For it will be observed that substance is defined, not as a concept of any individual reason, nor even as a concept of human reason in general. It is to reason universally — to reason simply as reason — that the definition appeals. It draws attention to the fact that reason must conceive something *per se*, just as we shall see presently, it must also conceive some things *per aliud*. Substance is thus a necessary concept of pure reason. Without it there could be no reasonable thinking at all.

The same conclusion is forced upon us by an examination of the definition of *attribute*. As already stated, Spinoza appears to realize that mere substance or being is an empty abstraction. To predicate being alone, is to predicate nothing at all; to give predicative thought any content, you must at least predicate *what* is. That is to say, substance must be defined by some predicate of a more determinate character than the bare fact of its being; else there is no definition of what it really is. It is determined to be something, to be a reality; in other words, it is determined to *be*, only in virtue of its attributes. And therefore attribute is defined to be "that which intellect perceives in regard to a substance as constituting its essence." Here, again, it might appear as if a concept were taken up, without critical scrutiny, simply as an idea accidentally discovered in the mind. This appearance is mainly due to the fact already noticed, that Spinoza makes no attempt to explain the process by which intellect perceives attributes as constituting the essence of substance. But it is evident that he did not regard attribute as a fact given to intellect from some extra-intellectual source. For him, rather, attribute is that without which substance or being is incapable of being conceived by the intellect at all. It is, therefore, like substance itself, a necessary concept of pure reason.

All this applies, with equal clearness, to the definition of *mode*. Attribute itself is seen to be an unreal abstraction; it

does not become a reality till it assumes a concrete form,— a particular *modification*, as we should say.¹ Mode is defined in the first instance rather tautologically as an *affection* of substance, and then more explicitly as that which exists, not *in se*, but *in alio*, and is also conceived *per aliud*. The *aliud*, in which mode *is*, might be taken to be substance; but, as it is also that by means of which mode is conceived, it must be attribute, or (what is the same) substance as expressed in some attribute.

B. All through these definitions, therefore, it is evident that their critical vindication is founded on their being necessary concepts of intellect, insuperable conditions of intelligibility. But not only do the foundations of Spinoza's system thus assume the idealistic point of view; we are raised to the same point of view at almost every step in the erection of the superstructure. This superstructure of course is an attempt to explain the whole process of nature — the process by which the infinite attributes of substance are evolved into an infinite variety of modes. This process is, therefore, an evolution of the concept of attribute and the concept of mode.

I. Though the attributes of substance are said to be numerically infinite, yet there are only two of which we know and partake, *viz.*, thought (*cogitatio*) and extension. Now these attributes, and all others of course as well, are apparently made coördinate by Spinoza. But the coördination is merely apparent. For all attributes are defined to be what they are in themselves by what intellect conceives them essentially to be. That is to say, they are defined by their relation to thought; and thus thought becomes the supreme attribute or category, by relation to which all else must be interpreted.

In fact, Spinoza himself seems anxious to avoid a representation of the two attributes, as if they were absolutely discrete, or mutually independent. In the first place, he connects them, as we have seen, on the ground of their belonging in common to one and the same substance; and he is at pains to explain

¹ Spinoza himself uses *modificatio* at times as an equivalent for *modus*. See, e.g., I, 7, schol. 2.

that there is no absurdity in supposing a substance to possess several different attributes (I, 10, schol.). But there is another connection between the two attributes of thought and extension. Thought is conscious of itself, but it is conscious of extension as well. Inferentially we may add that thought must be conscious of all the attributes of substance. The modes of extension, as well as of other attributes, whatever these may be, are thus made modes of thought; and the whole infinitude of attributes in all their infinite modes are ultimately interpreted in terms of the one attribute of thought. The connective concept, therefore, which gives unity of system to the infinite variety of nature, turns out to be not the bare abstraction of being or substance. That abstraction itself, as we have seen, is valid only as a necessary concept of reason; and it is by relation to rational thought that substance, with its infinite attributes, receives an intelligible unity.

II. But the same interpretation is forced upon us when we proceed to consider how Spinoza conceives the attributes of thought and extension evolved into the infinite variety of their modes. Here, again, it appears as if the two series of modes were made exactly coördinate with one another. But here again, too, the coördination is merely apparent. It is, indeed, more than once explicitly stated by Spinoza. It forms, in fact, the distinct subject of a well-known special proposition: "Ordo et connexio idearum idem est ac ordo et connexio rerum" (II, 7). But the teaching of such statements must be interpreted in harmony with other doctrines that are essential factors of Spinoza's system.

(1) For example, his doctrine of causality controls the whole conception of the process by which the modes of an attribute are evolved. According to this doctrine, every mode of an attribute is, in a certain sense, caused by antecedent modes of the same attribute "as its *proximate* causes," and these again by other modes antecedent to them, and so on, till the causal process finds its complete explanation in the nature of the divine attribute, which is "the *prime* cause" of all its modes (II, 7, schol.). Now, though Spinoza takes care to explain

that modes can, in this sense, be caused only by modes of the same attribute, and never by concurrent modes of another attribute, yet this explanation receives its real significance from the peculiar position of the attribute of thought. For that position, as we have seen, implies that all attributes are ultimately interpretable in terms of thought; and this fact determines Spinoza's conception of causality. It makes the process of causation a process of thought. Nor is this a strained inference from a merely incidental remark in the course of Spinoza's exposition. It is his own avowed teaching when he takes up the subject deliberately for the purpose of explanation; and it is a teaching necessitated by the essential drift of his whole system. Thus he explicitly defines cause to be not merely a temporal antecedent, but a logical antecedent which in its very conception involves, and therefore, of necessity, evolves its effect as its logical consequent (I, ax. 4; I, 16, dem.). Accordingly *ratio* is used as convertible with *causa* (I, 11, second dem.); and, to make the doctrine unmistakable, the nature of the causal sequence is illustrated by the logical sequence, by which from the very concept of triangle it follows that its three angles must be together equal to two right angles (I, 17, schol.). From this of course it follows that all the processes of natural causation, in matter as well as in mind, are in their essence processes of thought evolving its logical implications.

(2) But there is another important qualification of the proposition that "ordo et connexio idearum idem est ac ordo et connexio rerum." For, in spite of this, Spinoza explicitly points out that the two series of modes are not simply concurrent, each mode of one attribute being represented by a corresponding mode of the other. In the phenomena of mental life, he recognizes, indeed, an association of ideas which corresponds to the order of external nature; but he asserts that over and above this there is a "concatenatio idearum," which does not correspond to that order at all. This concatenation of ideas "is formed in accordance with *the order of intellect*, in which the mind perceives things by means of their first causes" (II,

18, schol.). This obviously implies that the order and connection of ideas are not simply parallel with the order and connection of sensible things. And this, we shall find, is confirmed by its development into a theory of knowledge to be noticed presently.

The recognition of such an intellectual combination of ideas, diverging from a purely natural order, is a fact of the highest import both for the Psychology of Spinoza and for his theory of the moral life.

(a) It neutralizes, in the first place, any appearance of psychological Sensationalism, which the *Ethics* may otherwise present. There are, as already indicated, certain passages which have been interpreted as meaning that the human mind is to be conceived as merely a temporal association of ideas, that is, sensations, corresponding to concurrent changes in the body. Indeed, memory is explicitly interpreted from the physiological point of view (II, 18, schol.); and so far as it is interpreted from the psychological point of view, it is, in the spirit of Sensational Empiricism, reduced to the one law of temporal association (II, 18). This Sensationalistic aspect of Spinoza's Psychology may seem to be confirmed by the fact that even self-consciousness is made to depend on sensation (II, 23). But, all this to the contrary notwithstanding, the concatenation of ideas in accordance with a purely intellectual order, implies that there is in the human mind something more than a temporal association of ideas concurrent with the temporal succession of phenomena in space. This is more fully developed in a prominent feature of Spinoza's Psychology, which becomes of essential significance in his moral theory.

The feature referred to is Spinoza's theory of knowledge. In this theory three distinct kinds of knowledge are recognized. The first is what he calls *opinio*, or *imaginatio*, and is referred to two sources. It may, in the first place, be derived from sensation. This seems to be the only kind of knowledge in which our ideas are supposed to run parallel to the succession of sensible things; for it is described as a "representation of individual things through the senses in a manner mutilated

and confused, and without relation to intellectual order." Moreover, in his explanation, Spinoza refers to II, 29, cor., where he had shown that the mind obtains only a confused and mutilated knowledge by a "perception of things derived from the common order of nature." The second source to which *opinio* or *imaginatio* is referred, is language; that is, the signs by which things are recalled to the mind. Here again, perhaps, Spinoza intends to represent the course of ideas as concurrent with the course of physical events, for in his explanation he refers to the passage noticed above (II, 18, schol.), where he accounts for memory by a physiological theory.

But the main point to be observed is the fact, that on Spinoza's theory all inadequate ideas, and therefore all errors, come from this first kind of knowledge. Accordingly, to attain truth, we must seek knowledge of the other two kinds. The former of these is generalizing reason, which penetrates beyond individual differences to the common properties of things; and by this means we may attain ideas that are adequate (II, 38 and 39). But this kind of knowledge is merely a step to a higher, in which knowledge attains completion. This is demonstrative science, *scientia intuitiva*. Here we start from an adequate idea of the formal essence of any of the divine attributes, and proceed to deduce from that an adequate knowledge of the essence of things.

(b) But the psychological import of this doctrine of Spinoza is confirmed and extended in its ethical implications; for it is irreconcilable with the theory of moral life which has been commonly associated with Sensationalism in Psychology. Even the emotional impulses or tendencies (*conatus*) of the mind, which form the natural basis of morality, are described in a manner totally inconsistent with Sensational Ethics. Whatever scientific criticism may have to say about Spinoza's theory on the subject, it is at least a very unequivocal indication of the radical tendency of his mind to seek the ultimate interpretation of all facts in terms of thought. There is, according to him, an universal tendency in things, which is intrinsic, because involved in the very conception of their essential nature. For, by its

very definition or essence, everything, whether mental or bodily, posits itself ; there is nothing in it to negate or destroy it. The tendency, therefore, to continue in existence is the very essence of a thing (III, 4-7). This tendency in the mind is called 'will' (*voluntas*); in mind and body together, it is appetite; and when appetite rises into consciousness of itself, it becomes desire (*cupiditas*).

It is not necessary to follow into detail the classification of emotions, growing out of this theory of their origin ; but there is one outgrowth that has a peculiar ethical significance. For it is evident that the fundamental impulse or craving of the human mind must take a direction indicated by Spinoza's theory of knowledge. According to that theory, the essential nature of mind is realized, not in that succession of ideas which represents merely the order of nature, but in that concatenation of ideas—that inductive and deductive science—which represents the order of mind or intellect itself. Now, if the fundamental tendency of everything is to maintain its own existence, then this tendency becomes in the human mind an impulse to attain, not those inadequate ideas which are imposed upon it by the extrinsic order of external things, but those adequate ideas which are formed by the laws of its own intellectual order. For, as Spinoza is careful to explain, an idea is not made adequate by its agreement with its object. Such agreement is an extrinsic circumstance which has nothing to do with the essential character of the idea itself, and therefore the adequacy of the idea depends only on its own intrinsic character (II, def. 4). Consequently the mind posits its own reality, conserves its own existence, only in so far as it attains to adequate ideas of things. This, in fact, forms the basis of Spinoza's theory of immortality. For ideas, formed in accordance with a purely intellectual order, are not merely the counterparts of sensible things, but exist independently of these ; and, therefore, in so far as the human mind forms general ideas, it lives a life that is not imperilled by the destruction of the body. This may, of course, be interpreted as not necessarily implying the immortality of the individual person; but it is quite incom-

patible with Sensationalism or Nominalism. It has rather an appearance of affinity with mediaeval Realism, as giving an independent reality to general ideas, even though that may be their eternal existence in the consciousness of God.

The full significance of all this is still more clearly unfolded in its practical or ethical applications. To understand these, a few definitions require special notice. Among them is the definition of adequate and inadequate causes,—a definition which, it will be observed, obtrudes very prominently the conception of causation as essentially a logical process. According to this definition, when an effect can be completely understood by means of a cause, then the cause is adequate. Otherwise—that is, if the effect can be but partially comprehended by a given cause—the cause is inadequate. From this it follows that a man can be said to perform an *action*, in the strict sense of the term, only when an event occurs of which he is the adequate cause; while he is subject to *passion* when anything occurs in his life of which he is only an inadequate cause (III, def. 1 and 2). It is an obvious corollary of these definitions, that the mind is active only in so far as it forms adequate ideas of things, but passive in so far as its ideas are inadequate (III, 1). We can, therefore, understand how will, the active power in man, is identified by Spinoza with intellect, the power of cognition (II, 49, cor.).

But Spinoza's theory of knowledge leads to a further explanation of his meaning. From that theory it follows that an adequate idea represents the third kind of knowledge; and consequently, not only does the knowledge of man in its highest form belong to an order of the intellect which is not determined by the order of nature, but the voluntary actions of men are now seen to claim an equal freedom from the necessitation of natural causes. Of course man is, in a certain aspect, a part of nature; so that the events of his life are partly resultants of external causation (IV, 2). To that extent he is subject to passion (IV, 4, cor.). But in so far as his life is regulated by adequate knowledge, he is spontaneously active, obeying an order that is totally distinct from the order of nature. It is

quite true that passages may be cited from the *Ethics* which seem explicitly enough to deny man any real freedom, and to represent the phenomena of his mind as being necessary modifications of the divine attribute of thought in the same way as the phenomena of his body are necessary modifications of the divine attribute of extension. But whatever explanation these passages may receive, it still remains an essential feature of Spinoza's philosophy, that the modes of thought are not determined by the modes of extension, and that the order of intellect is not simply concurrent with, but radically different from, the order of nature.

It is surely, therefore, significant that in spite of all the apparent necessitarianism of his occasional teaching, Spinoza should find in the power of intellect a genuine freedom for man. The concluding part of the *Ethics* bears the suggestive title, *De Potestate Intellectus seu de Libertate Humana*. No wonder that this part has always formed, and will undoubtedly continue to form, one of the chief fascinations of the work. Here the reader finds an almost exultant relief from the terrible oppression of the rigid mathematical Pantheism of the earlier parts, in which all individuality of existence and activity had vanished. Here, in fact, Spinoza follows Plato in his ascent to those serene heights of mental life in which genuine knowledge is illuminated with a moral splendor, by being identified with genuine love ; while the fierce light of geometrical demonstration, which seemed to fuse all existences into a violent mechanical union, becomes mellowed into a glorious haze in which the finite spirit feels as if all its harsh self-assertion faded away into a mystical communion of love with the Infinite Spirit, in whom all live, and move, and have their being.

For, as we have seen, knowledge becomes adequate, only when its object is viewed "sub quadam aeternitatis specie," as a logical derivative from one of the attributes of God. Such knowledge is thus essentially a knowledge of God as He reveals Himself in the innumerable modes of His attributes. But this intellectual process of knowing God has also an emotional

phase. For, according to the theory of Spinoza, all pleasure consists in an advance from a lesser to a greater perfection (III, 11, schol.); and, as he identifies perfection with reality (IV, Preface), the soul of man is conceived as capable of pleasure only by attaining a higher realization of its essential nature. It is evident that such an advance to completer realization or perfection must be made by every step towards that adequate knowledge which is always essentially a knowledge of God. Such an advance in knowledge is therefore by its very nature a joy. But when an object is conceived as the cause of joy, the joy takes the form of love for the object which is its cause (III, 13, schol.); and, consequently, the joy derived from that knowledge of God which is the highest activity of intellectual life, becomes an intellectual love of God (V, 32, with cor.). The emotional state thus identified with the highest intellectual activity is the purest of all joys. It is blessedness (*beatitudo*); and blessedness is defined to be the joy that is reached when the soul is not merely promoted to a greater perfection, but is endowed with perfection itself, or, in other words, attains a complete realization of its essential nature (V, 33, schol.). But the complete realization of its own nature is complete emancipation from all subjection to extraneous agencies; and therefore blessedness is freedom (V, 36, schol.). Spinoza would unhesitatingly say that it delivers men from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Man is thus, in fact, elevated into something more than the likeness of a filial relation to God. He is described as assimilated to God in language such as can be paralleled only in the excesses of the literature of Mysticism. Here again, indeed, one is perplexed by expressions which seem to imply an Agnosticism that excludes any veritable communion between the human spirit and the divine. This perplexity is increased by a vacillation of language, in which intellect and will are denied to God (I, 17, schol.; I, 31; I, 32, cor. 2), while the human mind is spoken of as part of the infinite intellect of God (II, 11), and elsewhere intellect is ascribed to God, though with the qualification that it resembles the intellect of man only in name

(II, 17, schol.). But such expressions cannot alter the fact that the whole drift of Spinoza's ethical teaching assumes, as an essential principle, that man is capable of a real knowledge of God, and a real love of God based on that knowledge. This intellectual love of God is the radical impulse (*conatus*), which man shares in common with all things, to conserve himself ; it is the spontaneous activity in which he posits his freedom from all enslaving or destructive agencies ; it is the supreme virtue, in which alone blessedness can be found (V, 25). Spinoza, therefore, may well say in the noble proposition with which his great work closes, that "blessedness is not a reward of virtue, but virtue itself ; nor do we gain the pleasure of blessedness because we control our passions, but, on the contrary, we gain the power of controlling our passions because we find pleasure in this blessedness."

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