

North American Spinoza Society
NASS MONOGRAPH #9 (2000)

Love and Friendship in Spinoza's Thinking

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**Spinoza's Concept of Christian Piety:
Defense of a Text Correction by Bruder in the TTP**

Wim N. A. Klever

Esotericism and Spinoza

Errol E. Harris

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Love and Friendship in Spinoza's Thinking

Jeffrey Bernstein, Clark University

Part I

[L]ove is a joint experience between two persons — but the fact that it is a joint experience does not mean that it is a similar experience to the two people involved. There are the lover and the beloved, but these two come from different countries. Often the beloved is only a stimulus for all the stored-up love which has lain quiet within the lover for a long time hitherto. And somehow every lover knows this. He feels in his soul that his love is a solitary thing. He comes to know a new, strange loneliness and it is this knowledge which makes him suffer. So there is only one thing for the lover to do. He must house his love within himself as best he can; he must create for himself a whole new inward world — a world intense and strange, complete in himself.¹

[L]oving, for a long time ahead and far on into life, is — : solitude, a heightened and deepened kind of aloneness for the person who loves. Loving does not at first mean merging, surrendering, and uniting with another person (for what would a union be of two people who are unclarified, unfinished, and still incoherent?), it is a high inducement for the individual to ripen, to become something in himself, to become world, to become world in himself for the sake of another person....²

I begin this paper with passages from McCullers and Rilke in order to highlight a conception of love for which Spinoza will provide a dramatic and severe alternative. One might have chosen to place more explicitly philosophical statements at the beginning of this paper. These particular epigrams, however, are not descriptively lacking in articulating a view of love which presupposes *the distinction and possible unification of discrete*

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1. Carson McCullers, "The Ballad of the Sad Café." In Carson McCullers, *Collected Stories of Carson McCullers* (Boston: Houghton Nifflin Company, 1987), p. 216.
 2. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters To A Young Poet*, tr. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), p. 69.

beings.³

In McCullers' short story which illustrates the unfortunate occurrence (to say the least) of unrequited love between members of a small town, the lover and the beloved are shown to be absolutely and necessarily — which is to say, ontologically — separate; the lover, by virtue of his/her love remains alone, in solitude, and in need of confining such love in an entirely "inward world" — one which makes no pretensions to being able successfully to communicate his/her love to the beloved (i.e., the love of the lover never transforms the beloved into a "similar" lover).

In Rilke's 1904 letter (number 7) to the young and aspiring poet Franz Kappus, love (at least for most of one's life) demands solitude. Here it is not a question of the lover and the beloved's meeting initially on equal terrain or (in McCullers' words) "in the same country." Rather, the myths of surrender, merger, and union are still inappropriate when the interiors (the "in himself")⁴ of the lovers have not had a chance to develop into their proper individuality.

In these two descriptions of love, one perhaps finds two quite familiar oppositions at work: (1) the loving subject/self versus the beloved object, and (2) the loving interior versus the undeveloped or uncertain (if not outrightly hostile) exterior. This (at least somewhat stable) oppositional conception of love might lead to either: a frustrated and cynical outlook towards love or security and comfort in the belief that this aspect of life has rules, boundaries, laws, and limits which (while perhaps admitting of some

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3. Examples of such explicitly philosophical statements of the present conception of love, despite manifold differences both between them and between this paper's epigrams, can be found in (1) Hegel's early essay "Love," in *Early Theological Writings*, tr. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975): "... love strives to annul even this distinction [between the lover as lover and the lover as physical organism], to annul this possibility [of separation] as a mere abstract possibility..." (pp. 305-306), and (2) Schelling's "Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and Related Matters," tr. Priscilla Hayden-Roy, in *Philosophy of German Idealism*, ed., Ernst Behler, (New York: Continuum, 1987): "Love... combines what could be by itself and yet is not and cannot be without the other" (p. 278).
 4. It should be noted that Rilke's language of the lover's becoming "in himself for the sake of another person" strongly echoes Hegel's language in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and sheds an interesting light on the proximity of this articulation of love to Hegel's later notion of "recognition."

variation) are, for the most part, unchanging. Lest one assume that this “oppositional” conception of love is a more recent phenomenon which is here being anachronistically contrasted with Spinoza, one need only return to certain Renaissance thinkers — e. g., Marsilio Ficino — to see this conception articulated.⁵

I have already stated that Spinoza’s thinking of love will depart radically from the already illustrated views. In the rest of this paper, I will sketch the contours of Spinoza’s alternative illustration of love and friendship (i. e., as intellectual love of God/Nature). Briefly, my articulation will assume the following structure: Insofar as the previously mentioned conception of love (on Spinoza’s terms) involves beliefs in real, ontological distinctions between (1) loving subject and beloved object, and (2) the internality of love and the externality of the beloved, such a conception derives from imagination and hence is based on an inadequate conception of nature’s expression. While this conception is not ontologically, but rather perspectively, distinct from the adequate understanding of love which derives from intellectual perception (insofar as imagination and intellect are only modally distinct), it amounts to a form of nature’s

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5. See Marsilio Ficino’s *Commentary on Plato’s Symposium On Love*, tr. Sears Jayne (Connecticut: Spring Publications, 1985): “... it has been shown that the beloved ought to love his lover in return. But that he not only ought to but must is proven in the following way. Likeness generates love. Likeness is a certain nature which is the same in several things. For if I am like you, you also are necessarily like me. Therefore the same likeness which compels me to love you also forces you to love me. Moreover, the lover removes himself from himself and gives himself to the beloved. Therefore, the beloved takes care of him as his own possession.... There is also the fact that the lover engraves the figure of the beloved on his own soul. And so the soul of the lover becomes a mirror in which the image of the beloved is reflected. For that reason, when the beloved recognizes himself in the lover, he is forced to love him” (p. 57). For a reading of Ficino’s philosophy of love which situates this philosophy broadly in the tradition of Renaissance Platonism, see Paul Oskar Kristeller’s *Renaissance Thought And Its Sources*, ed., Michael Mooney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 61. For a reading of Ficino’s philosophy of love which explicitly places it in the context of “the subject/object problem,” see Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual And The Cosmos In Renaissance Philosophy*, tr. Mario Domandi (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963), p. 133. Finally, for a commentator who, unlike myself, understands “German Romantic Idealism” (especially Schelling’s) as a subsequent non-Platonic/Aristotelian alternative to the Renaissance Platonism of Ficino (among others), see Ernesto Grassi, *Renaissance Humanism: Studies in Philosophy and Poetics*, tr. Walter F. Veit (Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, Volume 51, 1988), pp. 111-125.

expression which, as it allows such expression, obscures such expression. Once love is intellectually perceived as intellectual love of God/Nature, the former imaginative oppositions of subject/object and internal/external are shown to be inadequate ideas. Finally, intellectual love of God/Nature depends upon friends, i.e., other finite modes which undergo similar affective moments.⁶

My exposition of Spinoza's articulation of love and friendship will be taken primarily from Parts 3, 4 and 5 of the *Ethics*. While much of Spinoza's correspondence and other texts provide insightful formulations of this articulation, I recognize the provisional nature of my account (due to the limits of time and space), and thus limit this exposition to Spinoza's best known text.

Part II

[B]ut the highest good is to arrive — together with other individuals if possible — at the enjoyment of such a nature. What this nature is we shall show in its proper place: that it is the knowledge of the union that the mind has with the whole of nature.

This... is the end I aim at: to acquire such a nature, and to strive that many

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6. Jeanette Bicknell, in "An Overlooked Aspect of Love in Spinoza's *Ethics*," *Iyyun, The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 47 (January, 1998): pp. 41-55, seeks to find a conception of love in Spinoza which avoids both the "common sort of love" (p. 47) based on imaginations and his almost mystical conception of the intellectual love of God" (p. 42). She holds, in my view unsuccessfully, that Spinoza's conception of friendship highlights this third alternative concerning love — an alternative which Bicknell calls "self determined love" (p. 49). While I agree with Bicknell that friendship is crucial for Spinoza's articulation of love, I find that Bicknell's treatment of friendship preserves the subject-object (i.e., lover-beloved) dualism which Spinoza continuously resists. Additionally, her claim that intellectual love of God/Nature is "almost mystical" ignores two important points: (1) for Spinoza reason/conceptuality is a necessary step along the way towards such an intuitive state — intellectual love of God/Nature, therefore, cannot be mystical in the sense of ridding the human mind of reason/conceptuality, and (2) for Spinoza, God is nothing other than the nature in which humans exist — therefore, the idea that intellectual love of God/Nature constitutes a mystical union between ontologically discrete humans with an ontologically distinct God is entirely inappropriate to Spinoza's thought). For an excellent treatment of historical misinterpretations of Spinoza's "intellectual love of God/Nature," see Vance Maxwell's "Spinoza's Doctrine of the *Amor Dei Intellectualis* I" (*Dionysus*, Volume XIV, December, 1990, Dalhousie University Press, pp. 131-156).

*acquire it with me. That is, it is part of my happiness so that their intellect and desire agree entirely with my intellect and desire.*⁷

At first glance, this passage seems to be in profound agreement with McCullers' and Rilke's epigrams: the "nature" which constitutes the "highest good" (on Spinoza's terms) is said to be the "knowledge of the union that the mind has with the whole of nature."⁸ Further, the end at which Spinoza aims in the TdIE (and in the *Ethics* as well) is that the intellect and desire of as many as possible "agree with my intellect *and* desire."⁹ Is Spinoza merely *substituting terms of opposition*, in his articulation of "intellectual love of God/Nature" (i.e., mind/nature and intellect/desire), while maintaining an overall oppositional character of love? Were Spinoza's passage to be understood in this manner, Spinoza's thinking would amount to a precursor, rather than an alternative, to McCullers' and Rilke's conceptions of love.

Such an interpretation of Spinoza's passage however, overlooks his Islamic nominalist heritage, where issues concerning the unifying (and therefore occluding) character of language amount not merely to logical/linguistic problems, but rather to "ontological" problems (one example of such nominalism can be seen in the work of Maimonides).¹⁰ Put differently (in E3P57): "Each affect of each individual differs from the affect of another as much as the essence of the one from the essence of the other." Spinoza's concern (in the TdIE and *Ethics*), therefore, is that a multitude of singular, fluidly determinate, non-identical, finite modes undergo nature not in a merely *passive* (viz., affected) fashion, via imagination, but in an *active* fashion via intellect (i.e., a fashion whereby activity and passivity are only perspectively distinct). This "collective undergoing" cannot be understood as a union of ontologically distinct "things" (either as human being/human being, or as human being/nature) because such singular finite modes are only perspectively distinct. Additionally, this "collective undergoing" cannot be understood as adhering to a duality of intellect and desire because (from E3P9Schol): "*desire* can be defined as *appetite together with consciousness of the appetite*." It would be more appropriate to view Spinoza's statement

7. TdIE, 13-14. Baruch Spinoza, *Collected Works of Spinoza*: Volume 1, tr. and ed. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

8. "*cognitionem unionis, quam mens cum tota Natura habet*" [emphasis mine].

9. "*intellectu et cupiditate*" [emphasis mine].

concerning “intellect agreeing with desire” (in the light of Aristotle’s “desiring intellect”¹¹ in the *Nicomachean Ethics*) as perspectively distinct.¹²

Given that real opposition/ontological distinction is not a feature of Spinoza’s articulation of love (understood as intellectual love of God/nature), how does Spinoza understand the conception of love presented at the beginning of this paper? In the Definition of the Affects, Spinoza states: “Love is a Joy, accompanied by the idea of an external cause” [Def6]. Insofar as it is a joy, love is an undergoing which brings humans from a lesser to a greater perfection [Def2] — i.e., it allows “human nature” more agreement (and less conflict) *within* nature “as a whole.” But insofar as love amounts to joy “accompanied by the *idea* of an external cause,” it derives from imagination (viz. the mind’s capacity to regard the “effects” of bodily affections as external and present to “consciousness” [E2P17Schol]). Since this conception of love gives rise to dualistic images (e.g., subject/object, inside/outside, cause/effect), it limits the capacity of humans to perceive/undergo nature. With respect to human

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10. See the first chapter of Maimonides’ “Eight Chapters,” in *Ethical Writings of Maimonides*, eds., Raymond L. Weiss, and Charles Butterworth (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1975): “We have already indicated in this chapter that our discourse would be about the soul of man because man’s nutritive part, for example, is not the same as the nutritive part belonging to a donkey or horse. For a man is nourished by the nutritive part of the human soul, a donkey is nourished by the nutritive part of the donkey’s soul, and a palm tree is nourished by the nutritive part of its soul. Now all these individuals are said to be ‘nourished’ solely due to the equivocal character of the word, not because the meaning itself is one” (pp. 61-62). Maimonides’ passage bears a striking resemblance to E3P57Schol of Spinoza’s *Ethics*: “So also the lusts and appetites of insects, fish and birds must vary. Therefore, though each individual lives content with his own nature, by which he is constituted, and is glad of it, nevertheless that life with which each one is content, and that gladness, are nothing but the idea, *or* soul of the individual. And so the gladness of the one differs in nature from the gladness of the other as much as the essence of the one differs from the essence of the other.” This passage was called to my attention by Genevieve Lloyd’s “Rationalizing the passions: Spinoza on Reason and the Passions,” in *The Soft Underbelly of Reason: The Passions in the Seventeenth Century*, ed., Stephen Gaukroger (New York: Routledge, 1998) p. 41. For a fuller treatment of Spinoza’s Islamic nominalist inheritance, see Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, “Maimonidean Aspects In Spinoza’s Thought,” *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 17, No. 1-2 (1994), pp. 153-174.
 11. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book Z, Lines 1139b5-6, tr., Hippocrates G. Apostle (Grinnell: The Peripatetic Press, 1984), p. 102.

understanding and human undergoing (the two of which are only perspectively distinct), therefore, the initially articulated conception of love (with its imagined dualities) amounts to a hindrance to living. It is for this reason that Spinoza desires to alert humans to the different modalities (i.e., *activities*) of imagination and intellect; it is for this reason, that Spinoza states: “We strive... that whatever is related to... imagination is of hardly any moment in relation to the intellect” [E5P39Schol].

But if affects, when perceived by intellect, are not separate from their “caused effects” (as they appear to be during imaginative representation), how does Spinoza understand “being affected”/“undergoing” in the context of intellectual love of God/Nature? Spinoza’s definition of “affect” [E3Def3] is stated in the following manner “By affect, I understand affections of the Body by which the Body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections. *Therefore, if we can be the adequate cause of any of these affections, I understand by the Affect an action; otherwise a passion*” [my emphasis]. Undergoing is, therefore, *the same thing as understanding* (viewed from a different perspective), and active *insofar as it is perceived as* involving understanding. Put differently, when humans blindly undergo bodily affections, their affects are, to that extent, passive; when humans

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12. A full discussion concerning consciousness — here understood as reason, second-order knowledge — and intellect, while crucial for understanding Spinoza’s thinking, cannot be undertaken here due to limits of time and space. It will perhaps suffice to say that, insofar as mind and body are only perspectively distinct (for Spinoza), both reason and intellect (from the point of view of intellect) are only perspectively distinct from affect. Genevieve Lloyd moves in the direction of the sameness of mind and body (in “Rationalizing the Passions”) when she states that Spinoza’s philosophy puts forth “a form of reason which is itself affective” (p. 36). However, at later points, Lloyd’s essay moves very close to the dualistic language of parallelism: “It [*hilaritas*] belongs in Spinoza’s story of the interlocking of the mind’s transitions to greater or lesser understanding with the related transitions in the body of which it is the idea” (p. 41). But since (for Spinoza) mind and body are the same, the language of “relation” imports the very opposition which Spinoza (and presumably Lloyd) wish to avoid. For another example of a careful reader who nonetheless remains ambiguous regarding the issue of the sameness of mind and body (in Spinoza), see Amos Funkenstein’s *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 84: “Thought and matter do not act on each other; rather, the order of ideas and their configurations is the same as the order and connection of things; they are two modes of expression that stand in a one-to-one correspondence.”

understand “themselves” to be the cause (or rather, “site”) of their affective undergoings, their affects are, to that extent, active. And given that (for Spinoza) the mind and body are the same, if an affect is passive (i. e., if it is conceived as having an external cause), that affect is (according to the General Definition of the Affects in E3) a “confused idea.” It is important to note, however, that activity and passivity (concerning human undergoing) cannot be understood dualistically (which is to say, as ontologically distinct) in Spinoza’s thought. Insofar as humans have ideas, even when such ideas derive from imaginative “conception,” their undergoings cannot be *completely* blind, and therefore cannot be *completely* passive. There is always a measure of activity in human undergoing. The problem, for Spinoza, amounts to one of *increasing* activity (thereby *decreasing* passivity) via intellectual perception.

What does it mean to say that humans are the cause/site of their undergoings; that human affections and “effects” are the same? Put differently, what (for Spinoza) replaces the billiard-ball causality which has served as the conventional model for seventeenth-century causality? Spinoza’s alternative articulation comes at E3P6 in the notion of “striving” or, rather, “*conatus*.” “Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives (*conatur*) to persevere in its being.” In such striving (much like Aristotle’s “activity”), there is no ontological distinction between the striver, the striving, and the resultant persevering in being. Put differently, there is no ontological distinction between cause, affecting, and effect. In this way, therefore, there is no externality to conative undergoing. Striving/*conatus* occurs as a mode of nature’s expression, and admits of no external or unified *telos* other than nature’s expression. To say that humans are the cause/site of their undergoing/understanding is to say that humans occur as conative, finite modes of nature’s expression. It is for this reason that love cannot be directed towards an external cause (except through imaginative conception) — there is no external cause that can serve as the mechanistically causal referent. But once externality is shown to be a product of imagination (rather than of intellect), internality also comes into question. Since nature is manifest only as the conative movement of singular finite modes, there is no limit which would mark the inside of nature (as if nature were a closed system). All that exists is the occurrence of finite modes continuously undergoing and understanding. In other words, all that can be loved is *conatus* (or rather, nature’s striving).¹³

Given the striving of singular finite modes of nature, Spinoza’s view of friendship emerges (in E4P18Schol) in the following way:

There are... many things... which are useful to us, and on that account to be sought. Of these, we can think of none more excellent than those that agree entirely with our nature. For if, for example, two individuals of entirely the same nature are joined to one another, they compose an individual twice as powerful as each one. To man, then, there is nothing more useful than man. Man, I say, can wish for nothing more helpful to the preservation of his being than that all should so agree in all things that the Minds and Bodies of all would compose, as it were, one Mind and one Body; that all should strive together, as far as they can, to preserve their being; and that all together, should seek for themselves the common advantage of all.

Again, if this passage is interpreted as articulating the union of ontologically different “things,” then Spinoza’s thinking of friendship would amount to a precursory analogue rather than an alternative to the initially stated conception of love. Friends would, like lover and beloved, admit of real dualities. By the same token, if the above passage is interpreted as articulating strict identity, Spinoza’s thinking of conative friendship would fail insofar as finite modes would lose their singularity in becoming friends. The significance of Spinoza’s usage of the term “the same” has to do with the preservation of a non-reducible, perspective (in Spinoza’s language, “modal”) difference. Finite modes having “the same” nature as each other undergo such nature differently. What remains “the same” is their conative, expressive undergoing of nature. For Spinoza, the more humans undergo and understand (i. e., the more humans intellectually perceive), the more humans share (albeit in their own singularly fluid ways), and consequently, the more humans flourish (insofar as they are not blindly being moved by bodily affections).¹⁴ Put differently, the more humans act as many finite modes coming to form one single individual, the more such human action increases and thus by E4Def8 and E4P24, the more virtue/power there is.”¹⁵ This increase in virtue/power amounts, on

13. Put slightly differently, the distinction between external/internal amounts to a version of the distinctions between nature/God and body/mind — i. e., none of these oppositions are either strictly identical or ontologically separate. They are, rather, modally/perspectively distinct.

Spinoza's terms, to an increase in *conatus*.

In the light of the above discussion of friendship (insofar as it remains crucial for Spinoza's alternative articulation of love) Spinoza's statement in E4P73 can be heard in sharp contrast to the opening epigrams of McCullers and Rilke: "A man who is guided by reason is more free in a state, where he lives according to a common decision, than in solitude, where he obeys only himself." But reason is not simply identical to intellectual perception (i. e., understanding). Spinoza sharply distinguishes second-order knowledge (i. e., reason, conceptuality, discursivity), and third-order knowledge (i. e., immediate, intuitive, intellectual [which means also affective] perception — understanding). Reason is not a sufficient condition in order to bring about intellect, but it is a necessary one: "What we strive for from reason is nothing but understanding" [E4P26]; "The Striving, or Desire to know things by the third kind of knowledge... can indeed arise from the second [kind of knowledge]." For Spinoza, then, friends undergoing nature together (even through reason) are more likely to undergo nature "actively" — i. e., reach third-order knowledge/intellectual perception of nature's expression — than humans in solitude.

Until this point, this paper has discussed intellect, active, undergoing, *conatus*, and friendship. How do these notions operate respectively together in order to illustrate Spinoza's thinking of "intellectual love of God/Nature" ?

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14. One way of stating this idea would be to say, as Curley does, "as friends share their knowledge with one another, each finds that his own knowledge is increased" [Edwin Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method: A Reading of Spinoza's Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, [1988]), p. 125]. However, I fear that Curley seems to view such knowledge, in this instance, as second-order (i. e., rational) cognition — e. g., "Any kind of scientific understanding of any subject matter will count as knowledge of God" (p. 125) — rather than third-order intuitive perception. If so, this would bestow identity, rather than respective sameness, upon reason and intellects — a view which runs counter to Spinoza's.
 15. E4Def8 reads, "By virtue and power (*potentiam*), I understand the same thing, that is... virtue, insofar as it is related to man, is the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as he has the power (*potestatem*) of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone. E4P24 reads: "Acting absolutely from virtue [or rather, power (*potentia*)] is nothing else in us but acting, living, and preserving our being (these three signify the same thing) by the guidance of reason, from the foundation of seeking one's own advantage."

1. **Intellect:** Spinoza holds in E4App4 that “man’s highest happiness... is nothing but that satisfaction of mind that stems from the intuitive knowledge of God.” Insofar as God and nature are the same (as stated, for example, in E4Pref), Spinoza is here explicitly referring to the “active,” intellectual, conative affirmation of nature’s expression. This intellectual perception/understanding of nature, in sharp contrast to the abstractions constitutive of reason (and imagination), amounts to an understanding of singular things: “The more we understand singular things, the more we understand God” [E5P24].
2. **Active Undergoing:** Spinoza holds that the ability to separate affects from their imagined external causes (i.e., from the confused ideas about their causes), and instead join them to other thoughts, dissolves the ideas of external causes (by E5P2) and transforms — through the acquisition of clear and distinct ideas (i.e., the ideas without imaginative external referents) — passive affects into active ones [E5P3]. Put differently, the more humans realize that external causes could be imaginary, the more humans can perceive nature by means of the intellect, and therefore, actively undergo nature.
3. **Conatus:** Such active undergoing amounts to an understanding that nature is comprised of singular, fluidly determinate, finite modes which differ only in the respect by which they express nature. This affective understanding (in Aristotle’s language from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, “*desiring intellect*”) is the same as the desire to “persevere in one’s being,” insofar as it is an active understanding of one’s “own” affects: “He who understands himself and his affects clearly and distinctly loves God, and does so the more, the more he understands himself and his affects” [E5P15]. The conative understanding/undergoing (insofar as it is not ontologically distinct from understanding/undergoing nature), therefore, is the same as “loving God/Nature.”
4. **Friendship:** Given that (as alluded to above) understanding nature is the “same” as loving nature, the more humans there are that understand nature, the fewer humans there are that amount to blind and ignorant undergoings of nature. Put differently, the flourishing of nature’s expression is the same as (and thus, increases with) the flourishing of human *conatus*: “The mind’s intellectual love of God is the very love of God by which he loves himself” [E5P19].¹⁶ This “self-love of God/Nature, it should be noted, differs from the initial articulation of love (given in this paper) insofar as no external cause exists for God/Nature to love and God/Nature cannot “pass from a greater to a

lesser perfection” [E5P17dem]. This is why Spinoza states, “God is without passions, and is not affected with any affect of Joy or Sadness” [E5P17].

In sum: intellectual love of God/Nature amounts to an affective understanding of nature’s expression. Such love (deriving from third-order knowledge) — in contrast to the imaginative conception of love — recognizes no dualities (e.g., subject/object, internal/external, cause/effect, mind/body, intellect/desire, activity/passivity), and occurs non-reductively

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16. Spinoza’s articulation of love as the “sameness of God/Nature/Humans” has a Renaissance predecessor in Leone Ebreo’s *Dialoghi d’Amore* (tr. F. Freideberg-Seeley and Jean H. Barnes, [London: Soncino Press, (1937)]): (1): “The chief cause of love between the heavenly bodies is congruence of nature, as in men congruence of disposition. Such is the congruence of nature and essence between the heavens, planets, and stars, that their motions and activities harmonize in such proportion that their diversity becomes a concordant unity; wherefore they seem rather diverse members of one organic body than different separate bodies.... So that this natural harmony is the cause of love between members of a single person, even as the heart loves the brain and other organs.... And this love surpasses all love for any other person. Thus it is that the members of heaven love one another mutually through the harmony of their nature, and, all co-operating in unity of purpose and function, they serve one another, supplying each others’ needs in such wise as to form a perfectly organic heavenly body” (p. 109). (2): “You have heard from me ere now, O Sophia, that the whole Universe is one individual (i.e., like a single person), each one of these bodies and spirits, eternal or corruptible, being a member or part of this great individual.... Thus by loving and turning their spheres they bind the Universe in unity, and so properly win the divine love and grace, and even to union with God, that love and union being alike what holds the Universe together and their ultimate end and desired happiness” (pp. 188-189). For commentators affirming the kinship between Leone and Spinoza, see (1) Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanist Strains* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), p. 68; (2) Hubert Dethier, “Love and Intellect in Leone Ebreo: The Joys and Pains of Human Passion,” in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 353-386; (3) Richard H. Popkin, “The Religious Background of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 25, 1987, p. 42; (4) Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics: The Marrano of Reason* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 124. In opposition to this view, see Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the Latent Processes of His Reasoning* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), vol. 2, p. 277. Finally, for a commentator who gives a careful review of the historical influences on Leone’s thought, see Alfred Ivry, “Remnants of Jewish Averroism in the Renaissance,” in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 243-264.

as the “same” as nature’s expression. Ultimately, love (as the “greatest happiness” in Spinoza’s account) occurs as the affirmation of singular expression of nature in their finite occurrences. Insofar as this affirmation is intellectual, it strives not to “make present to consciousness” things which are not (and cannot be) so. Rather, it strives to understand/undergo — to the greatest extent possible — nature’s expression:

>From the third kind of knowledge, there necessarily arises an intellectual love of God. For from this kind of knowledge there arises... Joy, accompanied by the idea of God as its cause, i. e.... Love of God, not insofar as we imagine him as present... but insofar as we understand God to be eternal. And this is what I call intellectual Love of God [E5P32Cor].

Part III

In one respect, this illustration of love might signify the exemplary moment of Joy which humans could possibly undergo, insofar as (with respect to humans) it amounts to the moment of greatest perfection (i. e., the moment of experiencing most intensely one’s conative occurrence within the context of nature’s expression). At the same time, such an illustration of love may give rise to extreme ambivalence. At the beginning of this paper, I mentioned that such an articulation of love constitutes a *severe* alternative to the conception expressed in McCullers’ and Rilke’s epigrams. Spinoza’s articulation is severe insofar as it steadfastly and uncompromisingly resists the conventional, “normal” dualities which operate throughout Western societies and which are entrenched in issues concerning everything from intimacy in personal relations to dialogue in pedagogical and therapeutic encounters. Without wishing to determine the situation either way, it seems to me a productive undertaking to acknowledge the radical otherness of Spinoza’s thought, especially concerning issues as concrete as love and friendship, within the historical context of modern philosophy is adumbrated here. I suggest, therefore, (in light of possible ambivalence towards Spinoza’s articulation of love) that we reflect upon Harold Bloom’s controversial and provocative view — which I here paraphrase — that, for us, the most unfamiliar sentiment concerning God (and we can here add nature, love and friendship) is contained in E5P19 of Spinoza’s *Ethics*: “He who loves God cannot strive that God should love him in return.”¹⁷

Spinoza's Concept of Christian Piety: Defense of a Text Correction by Bruder in the TTP

W. N. A. Klever

Alexandre Matheron maintains in his well known and very influential book that according to Spinoza, Christ preached the 'universal charity', i. e., a charity on a cosmic scale, a charity which is not reducible to political loyalty. He would have been the advocate of 'interhuman solidarity' and harmony among all peoples of the world.¹ For that reason, he would have been a turning point in the history of the human race.² In this article I claim that Spinoza's theory of Christ's mandate to his apostles and followers was a different one, namely the unconditional love of one's fatherland, patriotism and political loyalty and that his position in the history of the Jewish people is not exceptional, let alone in the history of mankind.

In order to bring my reader closer to this objective and to convince him/her of my position against an eminent scholar like Matheron, I know no better means than a thorough discussion of the central passage of chapter 19 of the TTP. This passage explains Spinoza's notion of piety. It starts with the affirmation that a pious behaviour towards one's fatherland is certainly the highest kind of piety one can afford.³ It cannot be doubted that the contents of piety is a strict observance of the laws of one's country.

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1. A. Matheron, *Le Christ et le salut des ignorants chez Spinoza* (Paris: Aubier, 1971). "Un complément s'imposait donc... une fois accomplies les obligations légales, restait à pratiquer la charité extra-légale. C'est pour quoi le Christ prit bien soin de distinguer son enseignement moral des lois de l'Etat" (p. 64). "Il s'agissait, sans restriction aucune, de travailler à la concorde en général. Telle était la seule façon de faire renaître, à l'échelle cosmique, ce climat communautaire dont Israël gardait invinciblement la nostalgie" (p. 65). See also pp. 63-66, 69, 81.
 2. Ibid., chapters 1, 7. "Comment le Christ... infléchit le cours de l'Histoire" (p. 263).
 3. "Certum est, quod pietas erga patriam summa sit, quam aliquis praestare potest." I warn my reader in advance to pay due attention to this phrase in which 'piety' is the object of an activity (*praestare*). The phrase can be converted into: "*unusquisque debet pietatem (erga patriam) praestare*," in which 'pietatem' is, then, the grammatical accusative form.

This appears clearly from the sentence: “Consequently nothing pious can be done towards our neighbour which would not become impious if it involved injury to the whole state; and inversely there cannot be committed any impiety towards him which is not assessed as piety when done in behalf of the conservation of the state.” The judgment about what is beneficial or injurious to the state is the exclusive privilege, as is argued in the context, of the highest political authority. In the case somebody robs me of my legal properties (e. g., my clothes), it is appropriate and pious to effectuate his punishment by proceeding against him in a lawsuit; when somebody perpetrates a great thing (e. g., the victory in a battle) for the salvation of the state but does so against the explicit order of the commander in chief, his act is impious and will be punished severely. Even his being put to death by his father (the commander Manlius Torquatus) is perfect piety.

What things in fact have to be considered as pious or impious and which behaviour is everybody’s duty towards his neighbour, is decided by the state alone. It belongs to the state, writes Spinoza literally, to decide “*qua ratione unusquisque debet proximum pietate colere.*” The grammar is important here. Spinoza uses the grammatically correct form ‘*colere aliquem aliqua*’, not ‘*colere aliquem aliquod*’ like, for instance, in the case of ‘*docere aliquem aliquod*’ (e. g., *doceo aliquem litteras*). We are now ready to read and try out a good translation for the following sentence (Fragment 1):

Nam quandoquidem ex Dei mandato omnes (nullo excepto) pietate colere tenemur, neminique damnum inferre, hinc sequitur, nemini licere, opem alicui cum alterius, et multo minus cum totius reipublicae damno ferre; adeoque neminem posse proximum pietate colere secundum Dei mandatum, nisi pietatem et religionem publicae utilitati accomodet.⁴

4. See Spinoza, *Opera*, ed. by C. Gebhardt (Heidelberg: Winter 1925), vol. III, 232, 1.32-233 1.2. Gebhardt’s text edition corresponds exactly with the text of the 1670 publication, p. 218.

At first sight there seems to be no difficulty at all. One might easily translate the fragment as follows:

For as by God's command we are bound to do justice to everybody without exception and to do no man an injury, there follows from this, that it is not allowed to anybody, to provide somebody with riches to the detriment of another, let alone to the detriment of the whole state.⁵ Nobody, then, can do his duty to his neighbour in accordance with God's command except by accommodating his piety and religion to the public utility.

But in reading this passage one ought to be struck by a minor irregularity. When read in its context, the accent is certainly on the fact that it is not allowed to anybody (*nemini licere* etc.) to help other people economically (or otherwise) except on the command or with the permission of the highest political authority. But in the first part of the sentence, it is stated that God commands us to do charity or justice to all men (*omnes nullo excepto*). There are, of course, people outside our country or fatherland, very often in great poverty and distress. God wants us to help them as much as we can. The passage seems to imply this, on the condition, of course, that we do not act to the disadvantage of our own state. Isn't this a bit curious, speaking first about our religious obligation to help everybody in the world and immediately afterwards explaining this by declaring that the service to our neighbours may only be aimed at the well-being of our state in conformity with the decisions of its government?

It seems, therefore, that we have a problem, a problem which I tried to bypass by translating the curious expression "*omnes pietate colere*" with the well sounding "doing justice to everybody," which is a rather free

5. Spinoza is rather short with his exemplification of impiety. He, however, has probably in his mind the famous case of a certain Spurius Maelius, about which Machiavelli writes in his *Discorsi* 3/28: "When the city of Rome was suffering from famine and the public resources had come to an end, a certain Spurius Maelius, a very rich man in those days, took it into his head to lay in a private supply of corn and to dole it out to the plebs to acquire gratitude. He thereby gained such favour with the crowd that the senate, foreseeing the inconvenience to which this liberality of his might give rise, in order to put a stop to it before he should acquire more power, appointed forthwith a dictator and put Maelius to death" (translation L. J. Walker, Penguin Books, 1981).

translation. The same remark is to be made for the phrase “*proximum pietate colere*” (in the same fragment quoted above), which I rendered with “doing his duty with his neighbour.”

When Spinoza has further explained that a private man can only know by means of the decisions of the state what is useful for the state and that, therefore, “nobody can fulfill in a correct way the duties of piety (*ergo nemo pietatem recte colere... potest*) except by following and executing the decisions of the highest political authority,” he confirms this practice by mentioning a few things from Jewish history.⁶ The Jews were bidden to love their fellow-citizens as themselves (Lev. 19:17-18) but were nevertheless bound to point an offender of the law out to the judge (Lev. 5:1 and Deut. 13:8-9) and eventually, when he would be condemned, to slay him (Deut. 17:7). Further, it was their practice as well as their legal duty and piety, to hate their enemies, that is to do everything that could harm them and bring them down.

In order that the Hebrews might preserve their acquired liberty and might retain absolute sway over the territory they had conquered, it was necessary, as we showed in chapter 17, that they should separate themselves from the rest of the nations, wherefore it was commanded to them “Love your neighbour and hate your enemy” (Matt. 5:43). But after they had lost their sovereign power (*imperium*) and were carried off as prisoners to Babylon, Jeremiah gave them the instruction (*eosdem docuit*) to contribute to the conservation of that state, towards which they were transported as prisoners⁷ (*ut incolumitati illius civitatis, in quam captivi ducti erant, consulerent*);⁸ and since Christ saw them being spread over the whole world, he taught them (*eo docuit eos*), *ut omnes absolute pietate colerent*. All of which instances

6. “*Atque hoc ipsa etiam praxi confirmatur.*”

7. Two pages before, Spinoza had quoted Jeremiah 29:7: “And seek the peace of the city, whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall you have peace.”

8. ‘*Consulere*’ does not mean to give advice (as is supposed by Akkerman in his paper, “*Mots techniques*” in G. Totaro, ed. *Spinozana* [Firenze: Olschki, 1997] pp. 1-22), but to behave in a way which is profitable for the well-being of the state.

show most clearly, that religion has always been accommodated to the well-being of the state (*religionem reipublicae utilitati accommodatam semper fuisse*).⁹

I intentionally left untranslated half a phrase: the italicized fraction which I will call forthwith fragment 2. The whole alinea aims at the lesson that in practice religion comes down to care in every respect for the highest value, that is, for the peace and advantage of the common good of the state in which one lives. Inside this alinea Spinoza does not make any difference between the practice of the Jews in their own state shortly after the exodus from Egypt, the practice of the Jews in the Babylonian state or the practice of the Jews in other states on the world, as it was foreseen by Christ in his time, when the process of emigration from the country oppressed by Romans and priests alike had started already. For all these situations the same principle has to be applied: piety, that is, observing the laws and contributing to the well-being of the state of which one is a part.

The yet untranslated phrase, however, suggests the opposite attitude as the right one. According to Christ we would be obliged “to love and help absolutely everybody.” This assertion is part of a whole paragraph in which the total dedication of everybody to his actual fatherland, of which he draws so many benefits, is not only recommended by the quotation of various places of Scripture but even systematically demonstrated as the right attitude. The Mosaic prescription to hate one’s enemies, i. e., the other threatening nations, is not cancelled by Christ.¹⁰ Christ does not abolish any national law at all. The phrase in question, however, seems to suggest precisely, that it nonetheless is cancelled and substituted with the obligation to love all people in the world.

The reader of the Latin text must necessarily feel uneasy and get the impression that the text is not coherent. He will naturally search for a clarification by the professional readers, namely the translators of the text. And so did I. But my surprise only became a bit greater.

In his bilingual (Latin and German) edition of the TTP, Günther Gawlick translates the fragments as:

9. Gebhardt, vol. 3, p. 233, l.15-26, exactly matches p. 219 of the 1670 publication.

10. Cf. TTP VII: “*Si haec Christus tanquam legislator iudices iuberet, legem Mosis hoc praecepto destruxisset; quod tamen contra aperte monet. Vide Math. Cap.5 vers.17.*”

Denn da wir alle (ohne Ausnahme) nach Gottes Gebot
Frömmigkeit üben und niemandem einen Schaden
zufügen sollen, so hat....

Christus... lehrte sie gegen alle ohne ausnahme
Frömmigkeit zu üben.¹¹

As one may see, in the first fragment '*omnes*' is considered to be the grammatical subject of '*pietate colere*', but in the second fragment the word '*omnes*' is interpreted as the grammatical accusative and as indicating the (human) objects towards which one has to exercise piety. I do not understand how Gawlick could present his translation of the original Latin text, which he presents faithfully on his left page, without discussing a possible printer's error. Another translator, Madeleine Francès, takes the same position as Gawlick:

En effet — puisque tous les humains sont obligés, en
exécution du commandement divin, de conformer leur
conduite à des principes sacrés et de ne point infliger de
préjudice à qui que ce soit....

11. Spinoza, *Opera — Werke, Lateinisch und Duetsch* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1979), pp. 582-583 (fragment 1) and p. 585 (fragment 2).

Le Christ... les pressa de pratiquer le devoir de charité à l'égard de tous les humains.¹²

The Dutchman Fokke Akkerman, however, who prepares the Latin text for a new bilingual (Latin-French) edition, keeps the traditional interpretation in which '*omnes*' is in both cases considered as the object of the acts of piety, thought of by Spinoza:

Want aangezien wij door Gods gebod verplicht worden alle mensen, zonder één uitzondering, met vroomheid te koesteren....

Christus... leerde dat zij alle mensen zonder uitzondering met vroomheid moesten koesteren.¹³

When one compares the translation of '*pietate colere*' as given by the three translators quoted just now, one cannot help remark their great ambiguity or uncertainty. What kind of behaviour is this doing of piety to all people? Is this the same as loving and helping them? But which relation does it have, then, within the definite contents of piety stipulated by Spinoza in the context of these short fragments? The Spanish translator Atilano Domínguez, likewise considers '*omnes*' as the pronomen indicating in both cases the objects of the cultivation of piety. But he, at least, has reflected and done some research on the difficulty of the text. He provides us with the following footnote:

El texto dice: "*omnes (nullo excepto) pietate colere tenemur neminique damnum inferre.*" Tal como está, '*omnes*' tiene que ser complemento de '*pietate colere*'. El sentido, además ("*hinc sequitur nemini licere...*") así lo exige. Excepto Appuhn, todos entienden la frase suponiendo que '*omnes*' es sujeto: Gebhardt, M. Francès, Reus, Vargas/Zozaya. Ello supondría que hay una errata y que hay que leer: '*pietatem*' en vez de '*pietate*'.¹⁴

12. Spinoza, *Oeuvres complètes* (Pléiade volume, Paris: Gallimard, 1954), pp. 888-889.

13. Spinoza, *Theologisch-politiek Traktaat* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1997), pp. 415-416.

The text as it is delivered to us requires that ‘*omnes*’ must be read as the grammatical object of ‘*pietate collere*’. In his own translation Domínguez follows Appuhn. He discovered, however, that ‘*todos*’ (all translators and commentators?) understand the ‘*omnes*’ of our first fragment as ‘*sujeto*’.¹⁵ Besides Francès he mentions Gebhardt, Reus and Vargas/Zozaya. But, as far as I know, he is the only author, who suggests that there may be an error in the text and that one has to read ‘*pietatem*’ instead of ‘*pietate*’.

I myself had never any difficulty in reading this passage of Spinoza’s famous nineteenth TTP-chapter. The reason is, however, that I do not use the editions of Van Vloten-Land and Gebhardt, but the three volume Bruder edition,¹⁶ which I bought forty years ago in a booksellers antiquariat when I still was a student. This edition, indeed, has ‘*pietatem*’ instead of ‘*pietate*’, not only in fragment 1, but, not surprisingly, also in fragment 2. In his preface to the first volume of Spinoza’s texts, Bruder declared that it had been his intention to return to the “*editiones principes*” of Spinoza’s works and to show the text as precisely as possible “*sublati vitiis*,” without its vices. “*Errores detecti et remoti sunt.*”¹⁷ We must assume, therefore, that Bruder considered the ‘*pietate colere*’ (without an ‘*m*’) of the fragments 1 and 2 as corrupted places of the original edition, i. e., as text, they were not intended by Spinoza. Either the transcriber of the text who prepared a fair copy or the type-setter must have made an error, which is not so strange since everybody who was educated as a Christian was and is convinced, then and now, that Christ teaches us to love everybody unconditionally, compatriot or not. Bruder, then, corrects the text to:

Nam quandoquidem ex Dei mandato omnes (nullo
excepto) pietatem colere tenemur neminique damnum

14. Spinoza. *Tratado teológico-político: Traducción, introducción, notas e índices de A. Domínguez* (Madrid: Bolsillo, 1986), pp. 398-399.

15. “Pues, como estamos obligados por precepto divino a practicar la piedad con todos (sin excepción alguna)” for fragment 1 and “Cristo... les enseñó que practicarán la piedad con todos sin excepción” for fragment 2. Ibid., pp. 400-401.

16. *Benedicti de Spinoza Opera quae supersunt omnia. Ex editionibus principibus denuo edidit et praefatus est Carolus Hermannus Bruder*. Three volumes. Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1843-1846.

17. Ibid., vol I, p. v.

inferre.... Christus... docuit, ut omnes absolute pietatem
colerent....

By means of this adaptation, the unity and consistency of the whole issue about 'piety' is restored. Was it not Spinoza's intention to demonstrate in this chapter that "God has no special kingdom among men except in so far as he reigns through the political authorities"?¹⁸ Spinoza teaches us that piety, in the sense of civil obedience (and every kind of contribution to the well-being of our state), is the duty of everybody, the means by which he exclusively may serve God, because (cf. ch. 16) there is no other way to realize justice and charity towards which we are admonished by prophets (Christ included) and our reason alike. Piety in this meaning is the thing all of us have to do and to cultivate according to Christ's lesson and the prescription of our reason. Spinoza's exposition about this Christian piety (and his interpretation of Christ's mission) makes him a close follower of his master Franciscus Van den Enden, who bluntly defended the proposition that Christ is the "*gemenebest betrachter aller volkeren*" (the advocate of [and worker for] all people's republican well-being).¹⁹

The text correction proposed and defended here is very important for a correct understanding of Spinoza's objective: the determination of the essence of Christianity as the practising of justice and charity along national-political lines. Christ does not preach love and help all people all over the world in a practical sense (e. g., by private or public financial and medical help for underdeveloped peoples far away from our country), but indeed in a theoretical sense and as an eminent philosopher (like Spinoza), insofar he contributed (by his life and works) to the enlightenment about this fundamental tenet of human well-being. In our daily life, however, we only have to be concerned about our fellow citizens: they, and they alone, are the '*proximi*' we have to love and care for and treat as our equals. I

18. "*Nam prius ostendere volo... Deum nullum singulare regnum in homines habere, nisi per eos, qui imperium tenent.*"

19. Franciscus Van den Enden, *Vrye Politijcke Stellingen, ingeleid en uitgegeven door W. N. A. Klever* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1995), p. 203. In my newest book, *Definitie van het Christendom. Spinoza's Tractatus theologico-politicus opnieuw vertaald en toegelicht* (Delft: Eburon, 1999) I give a more extended commentary on the thorough influence of the ideas of the master on Spinoza, the writer on politics and theology.

want to confirm this, my new interpretation of the TTP, by briefly mentioning two additional texts.

TTP 17 elaborates, apart from its constitutional vice, the ‘*praestantia*’ of the Jewish state. The final sentence of this chapter betrays Spinoza’s fascination: “And therefore the Hebrews were by their religion not bound to any piety towards the heathens, who were not involved in their pact, but only towards their fellow citizens.”²⁰ More convincing perhaps for the contemporary reader is the other place, found earlier in this chapter, where Spinoza strongly appreciates the laws regulating the support of poor people in the Hebrew state. “Poverty could nowhere be more tolerable than here where one had to exercise with highest piety the charitable care for the fellow men, that is for the fellow citizens (*caritas erga proximum, hoc est, erga concivem*). Spinoza clearly identifies the ‘*proximi*’ we have to love according to Christ’s prescription with our fellow compatriots, with whom we form our state.

I think that the character ‘m’ which we introduced with Bruder in Spinoza’s text has no minor consequences for our interpretation of his standpoint. His thesis is that external religious behaviour, called piety, is coextensive with the fulfilling of our civil duties. Internal religion is, of course, a different thing. In order to be happy one must know God/Nature and love him above all. This highest kind of knowledge²¹ induces us towards sound political behaviour, but does not fail when politics fails.

20. “*Et ideo Hebaei nulla pietate erga gentes, quae pacto non interfuerunt, ex iussu religionis tenebantur, sed tantum in concives.*”

Esotericism and Spinoza

Errol E. Harris

When he reviewed my book, *The Substance of Spinoza*, in the spring issue of *Interpretation* in 1996,¹ Professor Paul Bagley wrote a long and learned article opposing my defence of Spinoza against Strauss's contention that there is an esoteric doctrine concealed in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. At the time I did not respond to Professor Bagley's paper, because it seemed to me that my earlier arguments still stood, in spite of his criticism. Now, however, having recently re-read the *Tractatus* in Shirley's admirable new translation,² I have been convinced afresh of Spinoza's sincerity and of the complete absence of any esoteric doctrine. I am therefore prompted to return once more to the debate to clarify the position as I see it.

First we should ask ourselves what Spinoza's exoteric doctrine actually is. What he really believed is what he claimed to have proved with geometric certainty. When in Ep76 he wrote to Albert Burgh that he knew his philosophy was true "in the same way that you know that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles," he was clearly asserting that what he held to be the truth was what he had written in the *Ethics*. That this contained no esoteric doctrine is further confirmed by his assertion in the TTP that matters easily and clearly apprehensible, simple and perfectly intelligible, such as Euclid's theorems and proofs, need no special method of historical interpretation.³ Clearly, Spinoza's belief that his philosophy could be proved *geometrico ordine* and known for certain must assure us that what is written in the *Ethics* is his genuine conviction. If then we find no divergence in the TTP from the doctrine of the *Ethics* we have definite evidence that the *Tractatus* contains nothing esoteric.

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1. Harris, Errol E., *The Substance of Spinoza* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1995). Paul Bagley, "Harris, Strauss, Esotericism in Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus*," *Interpretation* 23 (1996), pp. 387-415.
 2. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, tr. Samuel Shirley (Leiden: Brill), 1991. Reprinted with introduction by Seymour Feldman (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company), 1998. References are to this later edition.
 3. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

We may notice immediately that in several places in the TTP Spinoza repeats what he says in the TdIE and what he professes to demonstrate in the *Ethics*. In TTP, Chapter 4 he writes:

Since our intellect forms the better part of us, it is evident that, if we wish to seek what is definitely to our advantage, we should endeavour above all to perfect it as far as we can, for in its perfection must consist our supreme good. Now since all our knowledge, and the certainty that banishes every possible doubt, depend solely on the knowledge of God — because, firstly, without God nothing can be or be conceived, and secondly, everything can be called into doubt as long as we have no clear and distinct idea of God — it follows that our supreme good and perfection depends solely on the knowledge of God. Again, since nothing can be or be conceived without God, it is clear that everything in Nature involves and expresses the conception of God in proportion to its essence and perfection; and therefore we acquire a greater and more perfect knowledge of God as we gain more knowledge of natural phenomena [*res naturales*]. To put it another way, since the knowledge of an effect through its cause is nothing other than the knowledge of a property of that cause, the greater our knowledge of natural phenomena, the more perfect is our knowledge of God's essence, which is the cause of all things. So the whole of our knowledge, that is, our supreme good, not merely depends on the knowledge of God but consists entirely therein. This also follows from the principle that man's perfection is the greater, or the reverse, according to the nature and perfection of the thing that he loves above all others. So he who loves above all the intellectual cognition of God, the most perfect Being, and takes special delight therein, is necessarily most perfect, and partakes most in the highest blessedness.⁴

In the TdIE and in the fourth and fifth parts of the *Ethics* this is the

4. Ibid., p. 51.

doctrine Spinoza claims to prove (cf. E5Pref. *ad fin.*, Def. 1, PP. 26-28, 37Schol1, E5P14 *et seq.*). In the TTP he is arguing that what is called Divine Law in the Scriptures ought to be interpreted in the light of this doctrine. He continues:

This, then, is the sum of our supreme good and blessedness, to wit, the knowledge and love of God. So the means required to achieve this end of all human action — that is, God, in so far as his idea exists in us — may be termed God's commands, for they are ordained for us by God himself, as it were, in so far as he exists in our minds. So the rules for living a life that has regard to this end can fitly be called the Divine Law.⁵

There is nothing that Spinoza asserts in the TTP as his own belief that is at variance with what he claims to have proved elsewhere. Whatever he states as positively true he genuinely believed, and he makes no attempt to disguise his own opinions. For instance, he states his doctrine about miracles quite openly and straightforwardly without any attempt to prevaricate. This is no esoteric doctrine, and there is clearly none involved.

The mistake Professor Bagley makes is to attribute to Spinoza beliefs that he ascribes to the prophets, or to represent Spinoza as approving these beliefs when all he is doing is explaining them. He plainly says that they are the product of the imagination, and while *imaginatio* is for the most part a source of error, it is not necessarily so; hence what is revealed to the prophets through the imagination can contain certain truths (*certa cognitio*). These truths, he makes plain in Ch. 12, are moral truths which can be proved by reason (as he himself has done in E4), to which other views held by the prophets (also the product of *imaginatio*) are irrelevant.

Scripture demands nothing from men but obedience, and condemns not ignorance but only obstinacy.... Other philosophical questions which do not directly tend to this end, whether they be concerned with knowledge of God or with knowledge of Nature, have nothing to do with Scripture and should therefore be dissociated from revealed religion.⁶

5. Ibid.

What, however, cannot be demonstrated from first principles, is also what the Bible teaches, that, without rational knowledge of the true nature of God, simple obedience to the precepts (imagined as God's commands) to love God and one's neighbour can assure salvation. Nevertheless, Spinoza plainly states, we can be *morally* certain that this teaching of the prophets is sound, just as their own certainty is not mathematical but only moral certainty.

It is essential to keep these points clearly in mind (as Professor Bagley seems not to have done) when assessing Spinoza's doctrine in the TTP. They contain his central theses which certainly do not involve his approval or condonation of false imaginary ideas of God or natural events. He quite unambiguously states that the prophets were not philosophers or scientists and that their imaginative ideas of God are often contradictory. But these ideas, he maintains, are not the essential teaching of the Scriptures, are not what makes them sacred. There is no need, no moral obligation, he asserts, to subscribe to them. The teaching, which is consistent throughout, is the moral teaching: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." What has to be accepted on faith, and of which we can be morally certain, is simply that obedience to this moral law will ensure salvation through divine Grace, even though one does not understand (through *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva*) the true nature of God and is incapable of *amor intellectualis Dei*. It is evident, from Colerus' report of Spinoza's advice to his landlady that her religion could assure her of salvation "provided, whilst you apply yourself to Piety, you live at the same time a peaceable and quiet life," that this was Spinoza's genuine belief.

Professor Bagley contests my submission that it would have been inconsistent with Spinoza's moral character and intellectual honesty for him to seek to deceive his less perspicacious readers by disguising his true opinions beneath a hypocritical assumption of orthodoxy. The putative evidence against this marshalled by Bagley I shall consider presently. First let us take note of the evidence for Spinoza's sincerity and honesty.

Colerus (who disapproved of the doctrine but admired the man) reports that the Jewish authorities had offered him a pension of one thousand florins if he would conform outwardly to the practice of the synagogue and conceal his heretical opinions, but he had replied "that if

6. Ibid., p. 158.

they had offered him ten times as much, he would not have accepted it, nor frequented their Assemblies out of such a motive; because he was not a hypocrite, and minded nothing but the Truth.”

E4P72 states: “The free man never acts deceitfully but always with good faith.” This Spinoza proceeds to prove *geometrico ordine*, so he must have taken it to be incontrovertible. The scholium shows that it is absurd to argue that it would be reasonable even to save oneself from death by deception.

The alleged esoteric doctrine is atheism; yet clear evidence that Spinoza did not consider himself an atheist is given in Ep30 to Oldenburg, his trusted friend, from whom he would not have disguised his true views, in which he says that one of his main objectives in writing the TTP is to dispel the *false* attribution to him of atheism by the common people. Similarly, in Ep43, he writes to another close friend, Jacob Ostens, in response to van Velthuysen’s criticism, explicitly denying that in the TTP he teaches atheism by hidden and disguised arguments. As he denied, with obvious sincerity that he was an atheist, he could hardly be advocating atheism under the pretence of orthodoxy.

If then Spinoza was so firmly opposed to dishonesty, why was TTP published anonymously and over the name of a fictitious publisher in Hamburg? The answer is fairly obviously that his friends, Meyer and Rieuwertz, who were the actual publishers, (not Spinoza himself) feared the opposition and possible hostile action of the Calvinistic religious authorities. They feared for his safety, about which he himself seems to have been wholly unconcerned, and they were probably well advised, because the book did excite widespread disapproval, of which Spinoza himself was contemptuous (as is evident from his letter, Ep43, to Ostens).

Professor Bagley cites Spinoza’s deprecation of the repression of the freedom of philosophizing as evidence of his approval of deception. But this is a gross misrepresentation of his plea. Spinoza says that intolerance is to be deplored because it makes criminals of honest men. He denounces the conditions in which “the disgusting arts of sycophancy and treachery would be encouraged”⁷ and he goes on to say:

Those who are conscious of their own probity do not fear death as criminals do, nor do they beg for mercy, for they

7. Ibid., p. 234.

are not tormented with remorse for shameful deeds. On the contrary, they think it an honour, not a punishment, to die in a good cause, and a glorious thing to die for freedom. What sort of lesson, then, is learnt from the death of such men, whose cause is beyond the understanding of those of sluggish and feeble spirit, is hated by trouble-makers, but is dear to the hearts of all good men? The only lesson to be drawn from their death is to emulate them, or at least to revere them.⁸

Professor Bagley misquotes this passage, altering Shirley's translation, which is correct,⁹ to make it appear that the lesson learnt from the martyrdom of those who defy repression is to imitate or flatter their oppressors. Nothing in the original Latin justifies this interpretation. The lesson to be learnt, Spinoza is saying, is either to imitate the martyrs, or at least to revere (or to wonder at) them.

Professor Bagley admits that Spinoza does not advocate the simulation of orthodox opinions, but complains that he does not condemn it. Surely the above-quoted passages are condemnation enough! What Spinoza is doing is deploring the dilemma in which those persecuted find themselves, with no alternative but to suffer the penalties or to conceal their genuine opinions. There is no suggestion of approving dissimulation.

The fact that other philosophers have not considered it improper to repress the truth for reasons of prudence, as Professor Bagley admits, is no evidence of Spinoza's attitude or practice, and what numerous writers have said about Spinoza's opinions, van Velthuysen, Hume, and others at later dates, cannot be simply accepted as sound, for it may well be based on misunderstanding. Spinoza's own declaration that he has written nothing that he would not willingly submit to the judgement of his country's government is almost certainly sincere, for at the time that he wrote, he was under the protection of the de Witts — in fact, L. S. Feuer believes that he moved to the Hague on their invitation to be their political philosopher in place of the late Jean de la Court.¹⁰ If this is correct, there would have been

8. Ibid., p. 236.

9. The Latin reads: "*nemo sane ex eadem exemplum capere potest, nisi ad imitandum, vel saltem ad adulandum.*" (Kirschman has "*admirandum.*") Elwes' rendering is incorrect, but even if we choose to adopt it (as Bagley wishes to do), it does not imply that Spinoza is approving the alternative offered, rather than deploring it.

no reason for Spinoza to disguise his genuine views from fear of disapproval from the political authorities. Evidence that it is correct appears in the preface of the treatise itself, where he writes:

Now since we have the rare good fortune to live in a commonwealth where freedom of judgement is fully granted to the individual citizen and he may worship God as he pleases, and where nothing is esteemed dearer and more precious than freedom, I think I am undertaking no ungrateful or unprofitable task in demonstrating that not only can this freedom be granted without endangering piety and the peace of the commonwealth, but also the peace of the commonwealth and piety depend on this freedom.¹¹

There can be no dispute about the fact that Spinoza's views were rejected and abominated by many (not only van Velthuysen) during his lifetime and long after, and that he was generally considered to be an atheist, but it does not follow that these judgements were just or that they were supported by Spinoza's own convictions, nor are they based on any imputation to Spinoza of a surreptitious doctrine. They are based on what he wrote quite openly about God (e. g., his identification of God with Nature), about miracles, and about the prophets' imagination of God's nature.

Strauss alleged that the TTP was "hieroglyphical" because it was full of inconsistencies and contradictions and Professor Bagley's defence of this contention is long and involved, but it revolves mainly (as does Strauss' argument) around the meaning of the phrase "*captum humanum superare*." In my refutation of Strauss, I spoke of supernatural knowledge, the phrase used by Spinoza, where (Bagley points out) Strauss refers to suprarational knowledge. For Spinoza, of course, there was no difference between these terms. Natural knowledge, for him, was what was revealed by "the natural light," i. e., reason, and what is suprarational is therefore supernatural. But when he speaks of what exceeds human capacity, he means what it is beyond the capacity of human reason to prove or understand. As the statement quoted by Bagley asserts:

10. L. S. Feuer, *Spinoza and the Rise of Liberalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), pp. 58-59.

11. Spinoza, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

[F]rom whatever surpasses our capacity for understanding we can understand nothing (*absolute ex eo, quod nostrum captum superat, nihil intellegere possumus*).

Now the revelation to prophets of moral truths through the imagination is a gift that we cannot explain rationally any more than we can explain the gift of poets to express profound truths in beautiful metaphors. It is beyond our rational capacity although there is plentiful evidence that it occurs. Hence, in Ep21 to Blyenburg, Spinoza writes:

[I]t only remains for me to show... that Scripture, just as it is, is the true, revealed Word of God. Of this I can have no mathematical proof, except by Divine revelation. For this reason I said, I believe, but not I know mathematically, that all things which God revealed to the prophets, etc....

Further, the imagination is prolific of images and associations that cannot be demonstrated rationally, in this sense it exceeds our rational capacity. Elsewhere Spinoza remarks that people who habitually reason most clearly are usually deficient in imaginative capacity, as those most gifted with imagination are less skilled in mathematical reasoning. Now much that the prophets declare and expound is beyond our ability to understand, for it is fantastic, often inconsistent and contrary to the known laws of nature. None of these prophetic utterances does Spinoza accept as literally true, and he insists that our interpretation of prophecy does not aim at the discovery or demonstration of its truth, but only of its intended meaning. For the prophets were no scientists or philosophers and their opinions on speculative matters have no claim to authority. What is to be accepted as true revelation is only the moral import of prophecy and this can be easily understood and can be demonstrated rationally.

A further reason that much of what is written in the Bible “surpasses our understanding” or is indemonstrable by natural reason is that it is historical narrative, the truth of which requires historical evidence most of which has been lost. And what is recorded is often the occurrence of signs and wonders inexplicable by any known natural laws — as Spinoza says:

Scripture frequently treats of matters that cannot be deduced from principles known by the natural light; for it

is chiefly made up of historical narratives and revelations.¹²

But, he assures us, if we adopt the correct method of interpretation and gather the meaning of the Scriptures exclusively from what is written in the Bible itself,

one can deal with matters that surpass our understanding with no less confidence than those matters which are known to us by the natural light of reason.¹³

As long as what extends beyond the limits of natural knowledge is understood in this way, it is by no means inconsistent with Spinoza's exhortation to his readers to rely exclusively on their rational faculty, or with his scornful rejection of claims to some superior divine light, beyond and above human reason, made by those who find mysteries lurking in the Scriptures.

Now of course, in the light of what has just been said, we cannot take the speculative opinions of the prophets on such matters as the nature of God as "certain knowledge;" but this does not conflict with Spinoza's definition of prophesy as certain cognition of some things revealed by God to men (*Revelatio rei alicujus certa cognitio a Deo hominibus revelata*). He is not claiming that everything presented by the imagination to prophets is certain knowledge, but only that through their imagination, God reveals some things as certain knowledge: i. e., that salvation may be achieved by obedience to the injunction to love God and one's neighbour. If we accept Bagley's claim that in Chapter 4 of TTP "it is concluded that the Mosaic moral doctrine incorporated a vulgar and untrue account of the nature of God," there is still no conflict with the truth of the central moral teaching of Biblical prophecy, for Moses' ideas about God's nature are irrelevant to that. They are the product of *imaginatio* and are not among the *res aliquae* of which *certa cognitio* is vouchsafed. In any case, Spinoza is arguing in this context that what was revealed to Moses was simply a practical means of uniting the people of Israel as a political community, having temporary applicability, and no eternal truth. For this purpose vulgar and untrue accounts of the Nature of God, imparted *ad captum vulgi*, could be very

12. Ibid., p. 89.

13. Ibid.

efficacious. Bagley's argument persistently overlooks the fact that Moses is a prophet, to whom truth is revealed through the imagination and not through the intellect. The ideas he entertained were therefore always figurative and picturesque, never scientific or what Spinoza calls mathematical.

That there could be false prophets, as Moses warns and against whom he legislates, is again quite consistent with Spinoza's definition. The criterion of true prophecy is that it inculcates true religion and true piety — love of God and neighbour. There may be (and in fact frequently have been) those who claim to be prophets but whose teaching is mere superstition. The source of their "inspiration" is certainly *imaginatio*, but unless its effect is to promote love, justice and mercy, it is not true prophecy. They may even be able to produce miracles, as Spinoza understands them — i. e., not supernatural events, but unusual and unexpected effects of which there are natural but, in many cases, unknown causes.

Similarly, an accurate account of Divine Law would be such as Spinoza sets out in the *Ethics*. But the Biblical writers, while they exhort to obedience and inculcate what is in effect Divine Law, adapt their teaching to the capacity and habitual way of thinking of the common people, which to a great extent they themselves share. Even had the prophets been philosophers and had understood clearly what Spinoza considered to be the true conception of God, they could not have conveyed that to the mass of the people, who would be unable to cope with the reasoning of a philosopher, or follow his demonstrations.

What then is entailed by this phrase, "*ad captum vulgi loqui*"? This is the first rule stated in the TdIE. Professor Bagley says that my understanding of it is mistaken when I say that it is a provisional and temporary precept and that I contradict myself when I assert also that it is always used (or advocated) by Spinoza to express truth in a way that the vulgar can understand. Let me try to clarify my position (and, incidentally, Spinoza's). First I say that in the TdIE it is enunciated as a provisional rule because that is precisely what Spinoza says it is:

Unde quisque jam poterit videre, me omnes scientias ad unum finem et scopum velle dirigere, scilicet, ut ad summam humanam, quam diximus, perfectionem perveniatur... hoc est, ut uno verbo dicam, omnes nostrae operationes, simul et cogitationes, ad hunc sunt dirigendae finem. Sed quia, dum curamus eum consequi, et operam damus, ut intellectum in rectam viam redigamus, necesse

est vivere; propterea ante omnia cogimur quasdam
vivendi regulas, tamquam bonas, supponere, has
scilicet.¹⁴

Tamquam, “as if,” implies an interim presumption. Elwes actually translated the phrase “as provisionally good.” Here, I am sure, Spinoza intended the rules to be regarded as merely provisional until the *debitus ordo* of the intellect had been discovered. Before he knows the correct method he will be in no position to dictate or pontificate and clearly has no wish to do so, he will therefore conform to what is commonly accepted until he knows better. The reasons he gives for this provisional rule of conduct is that nothing should be done to impede his search and that much is to be gained by conceding, as far as is justifiable, to common opinions so as not to antagonize people, to retain their friendship and secure a sympathetic audience when the truth is found and may be imparted.

But in the TTP he recommends the rule for a different purpose, as a principle of moral education. The essential teaching of the Bible, he insists, is moral. It exhorts to obedience to the Divine Law that God is to be loved above all else, and one’s neighbour as oneself. To instil this precept into the multitude (first the Israelites and later, in the New Testament, all nations) it is useless to present them with long and difficult demonstrations or intellectual arguments. One must therefore use language and appeal to ideas that they can understand and accept in accordance with their common beliefs. As long as the moral purpose is attained it is unimportant whether these latter are true or false.

A man’s beliefs should be regarded as pious or impious only in so far as he is thereby induced to obey the moral law, or else assumes from them the license to sin and rebel. Therefore if anyone by believing what is true becomes self-willed, he has a faith which in reality is impious; and if by believing what is false he becomes obedient to the moral law, he has a faith which is pious.

14. Hence anybody can see that I am directing all sciences to one end and aim, namely, to attain to the highest human perfection, as we have said... that is, to put it in one word, all our actions and thoughts together should be directed to this end. But because, while we take care to pursue it, and endeavour to direct the intellect in the right path, we have to live; on that account before all else we are compelled to set down certain rules of living assumed to be [as if] good.

For we have shown that true knowledge of God is not commanded, but is a divine gift, and that God has asked no other knowledge from men but knowledge of his divine justice and charity, this knowledge being necessary not for philosophical understanding, but for obedience to the moral law.¹⁵

(In the last sentence Spinoza is referring to what the prophets represent as God's commandment).

This is why the biblical writers speak *ad captum vulgi*; this is why even God is represented as addressing Adam and Moses in accordance with their capacity to understand and their ordinary beliefs. It is not, as Bagley complains, a matter of confirming errors without attempting to correct them, because it is not an endeavour to impart truth as such.¹⁶ To attempt to enlighten the average person and the masses philosophically would have been futile, for their intellectual capacity would not have been sufficient, nor would such an attempt have been needed to instil the moral truth being revealed.

Moreover, the biblical writers were themselves (with the exception of Solomon) not philosophical thinkers, but were imaginatively inspired prophets, hence their representations of God as walking in the garden of Eden in search of Adam and Eve, as visiting Abraham in his tent, as speaking "face-to-face" with Moses, etc., etc. Spinoza does not endorse these picturesque representations as literally true, he is merely reporting how and explaining why they occur in the Scriptures, and what purpose they serve.

Professor Bagley thinks to justify *ad captum vulgi loqui* in this way involves insincerity on the part of the teacher and deception of the pupil; but he is surely wrong. The representations of God as a king or sovereign power who governs, judges and shows mercy, in Spinoza's list of the seven articles of what he calls the universal religion, are not strictly false, they are simply metaphorical. When Shakespeare makes Horatio say,

15. Ibid., p. 162.

16. Some of Bagley's examples of what he considers confirmation of errors are somewhat ill-chosen, for instance, the revelation to Noah that God was about to destroy the entire human race, which Noah believed was confined to Palestine. Noah's conception of the extent of the world's population was altogether irrelevant to the revelation of God's purpose in this instance. The correction of Noah's misapprehension, therefore would have had no significance.

But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill,

we do not accuse him of deception, although the dawn is not in fact a person who wears a mantle, nor does it walk. Spinoza, as Professor Bagley admits, maintained that God acts solely from the necessity of his own nature and perfection and his decrees and volitions are eternal truths. To represent him as an almighty king governing with justice and mercy is no reprehensible misrepresentation, but an apt metaphor adapted to the understanding of the worshipper.

Moreover, the last three tenets of the “universal religion” are set out as they are presented in the Scriptures whose authors not scientists or philosophers; they would therefore use such metaphorical language. Spinoza is not here or elsewhere endorsing the picture thinking involved, the nature and occurrence of which he has already explained. He is, however, approving and advocating what is not expressed metaphorically, namely, the moral precept stated in the fifth article. Nor is the statement of the first four tenets strictly metaphorical for they are completely in keeping with what is demonstrated geometrically in the first and fifth Parts of the *Ethics*.

At the same time, if the metaphors were inappropriate and simply the result of fear and wishful thinking, Spinoza rejected and castigated them as superstition. He was careful to distinguish what he recognized as *religio vera*, the universal religion represented by the central teaching of the Bible, from *religio vana* as described in the preface to the treatise.

Certainly Spinoza was prepared to excuse the ignorance of philosophical truth among the mass of the people, as long as, like his landlady, they had the right sort of faith, applied themselves to piety, and lived peaceably, because he thought them for the most part incapable of technical reasoning and of understanding scientific truth. And he did not, as Bagley alleges, “inculcate the supra-rational doctrine of theology that requires the belief in God as a legislator.” He did not consider the doctrine “suprarational” in the sense of supernatural (it is perfectly natural to those who think imaginatively), and he did not condone as true and merely imaginative anthropomorphic idea of God; yet he did, in a true sense, hold that God of necessity legislated — His eternal laws are the laws of Nature, which include those of human nature, of the passions and the virtues listed in the Appendix to E4. These, as he has proved in that work, lead to the ability of human beings to act to their own true advantage with love and

compassion and reverence for God.

In no case of legitimate adaptation of moral teaching to common beliefs and mental capacity is there any deliberate deception, because its aim is not to propound true philosophy, but to procure good conduct and pious inclinations. And it is in almost all contexts that Spinoza uses the phrase “*ad captum vulgi loqui*” in this sense and for this purpose. He saw that, apart from the faith in Divine Grace bestowed upon those who love God and their neighbours, salvation would be accessible only to the very few who were capable of *scientia intuitiva* and *amor intellectualis Dei*, the path to which, we are told at the end of E5, is exceedingly difficult and to be found only with great labour — a goal that is as rare as it is excellent. Faith in divine Grace and salvation attained by piety, justice and charity are therefore the only hope for the majority of people.

Nor is there any contradiction between the account given of the content of prophecy, with its imaginative representations of God, and the definition of it that Spinoza offers, because the *certa cognitio* revealed is only of some things (*rei alicujus*), namely what are necessary for obedience, charity, holy desires and just actions. The entire doctrine is coherent and straightforwardly intelligible with no suggestion of *double entendre*. It contains nothing concealed and no surreptitious intimations of a hidden meaning cloaked under hypocritical appeasement.

Further, if it is alleged that Spinoza was, throughout, writing *ad captum vulgi*, we must ask for whom in fact he was writing. It could not have been for the common public, because he wrote in Latin, of which they were ignorant. Strauss says that he “addresses potential philosophers while the vulgar are listening,” but listen as they might, if they could not understand Latin they would hear nothing. Spinoza himself, in his preface, adjures the common people not to read his book but to disregard it altogether. He addresses the reader whom he believes it will interest as “learned” (*Philosophe Lector*) and says that he does not seek to commend the treatise to other than philosophers. If then he is addressing the learned and the perceptive and not the mass of the people, he cannot be speaking *ad captum vulgi*, and he will have no motive and no need to disguise his genuine beliefs or to cover them up with pretences of conformity to orthodox dogma.

To me, therefore, despite all Professor Bagley’s elaborate and erudite argument, it seems abundantly evident that there is no esoteric doctrine concealed in the *Tractatus Theologico-politicus* nor in any other of

Spinoza's writings, and the belief that there is results only from misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

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