A CRITICAL VIEW OF SPINOZA'S CONCEPT OF HISTORY

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Digest

This thesis attempts an evaluation of Spinoza's view of history concentrating primarily on the Treatise on Theology and Politics (Tractatus) and the Ethics. The critical analysis takes into consideration not only the background of Spinoza's historical situation but his conceptions of nationalism, liberalism, democracy, authority, naturalism and theology.

The first chapter endeavors to understand the history of the philosopher in relation to his personal situation both in time and place. It delves into Spinoza's unique insights regarding the historical process through the underlying epistemology of his basic writings and the history making revolutionary economic breakthroughs that were occuring around him.

The second chapter analyzes Spinoza's concepts of history as they relate to Judaism and Christianity. Inasmuch as Spinoza decried both sceptism and orthodox dogmatism it is appropriate for this chapter to deal with his view of the deficiencies of biblical history as found in both the Old and the New Testaments. An examination of the reasons for Spinoza's condemnation allow an in-depth understanding of why he broke with the Jewish community of Amsterdam and why he considered neither Judaism nor Christianity to be in a superior position.

The third chapter presents the salient aspects of Spinoza's thought in his three areas of citizen endeavor, viz., liberalism, democracy and authority. Inasmuch as Spinoza opted for a society such as would be most conducive to social stability it was important that he considered the relations between decision makers and equalitarian elements in any state. Consequently Spinoza was concerned with the interaction between politics and economics and their affects on the citizens of a state. Spinoza was violent in his distaste for the monarchical system. Portrayal of Hebrew biblical

history exemplified for him what would happen when a people rebelled against its "natural" form of government. Although Spinoza misread Hebrew history he did realize that any political form must of necessity allow for tolerance in emotional beliefs, freedom of speech and press, and influence by predominant and novel social and economic concomitants.

The fourth chapter deals with the extremely complicated problems represented by the vagueness of Spinoza's thoughts about man's place in the universe. These problems involve the question of dualism in Spinoza's writings and his most sublime thoughts concerning man and nature. For the most part Spinoza's use of philosophy in history is discussed under the rubric of man and nature from his book the Ethics. Spinoza's conclusions about the facts of reality and causality in history were not inconsequential then and they are not so today. Spinoza's awareness of the change involved among all parts of the totality of existence is a most useful concept to use in a search for meaning in the panopoly of contemporary revolutions.

The concluding chapter outlines in detail Spinoza's contribution to the field of philosophical history because of the broad vision that it opens to an infinity of possibilities for the expansion of human endeavor within the purview of an infinite natural causality. From Spinoza's in-depth thinking about the commonalities between the infinity of God and the infinity-like elements within the human mind we have the resources and possibilities to break with the traditional orders of economic and political growth patterns, to evolve higher and more significant forms of incentive-minded governmental and religious structures, and to cope with the new horizons manifest in mankind's ever progressing spectrum of thought and awareness.

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Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest problems facing the historian is that of proper evaluation of the truly great individual's contribution to the understanding of his own era. As is often the case, the individual in discussion is in some manner disassociated not only from the group which claims the fruits of his genius as the product of their own inspiration but from the very subject under discussion.

One studying the works of Baruch (Benedictus) de Spinoza (1632-1677) is faced with just such a problem. While few would be so rash as to suggest that this cast-out Jew was insincere in his religious outlook there are not infrequent complaints among his students of ambiguity in thought. These ambiguities were no doubt necessary as the rationalistic tempor of the times was a decisive factor in similar inconsistencies in Descartes and Leibnitz.[1] These contemporaries of Spinoza desired to accommodate their thought in general respects to the opinions of others. It is no wonder then that when one contemplates the meaning of Spinoza's writings for a concommitant view of an holistic historicism he sees similar problems. This situation, however, is in no way a unique one for Spinoza. One may be reminded of Socrates' similar difficulties with the authorities. Like Spinoza he too was accused of atheism for the complex reason involved in any revolutionary form of thinking. Socrates, like Spinoza failed to find the conventional symbolic forms of traditional non-rationalistic society a satisfying mode of either religious or intellectual comfort. Both of the intellectual revolutionaries embraced a rationalistic metaphysical view of reality that was on a much deeper level than their contemporaries. While indifferent to the material

pleasures of the world these men saw their search for truth not as an ascetic withdrawal but as the only true way of life compatible with with the facts of natural law.

With the aforementioned problems in mind we begin our analysis of Spinoza's view of history first with a synoptic view of the significant aspects of his life and times.

Spinoza the Man

Spinoza was born to a Jewish family in Amsterdam on November 24, 1632. His parents sought refuge from the Inquisition in the Netherlands. At this time the Netherlands were an oasis of Republican libertarianism. After finding unsympathetic ears among his co-religionists for his first twenty-four years Spinoza found it no doubt necessary and truthful to sever his relationships with the orthodox Jewish community of Amsterdam. In the year 1656 Spinoza now formally excommunicated fled from his community and lived quite meagerly for some years in a near-by village. He earned a living by polishing lenses and eventually settled in The Hague living in a similar manner. Spinoza's Treatise on Theology and Politics,[2] which was of necessity published anonymously in 1670, caused a great uproar and additional persecution. Its sale was prohibited by both Catholic and Protestant groups. He was accused of spying for the French on the grounds that such behavior would be typical of an atheist. Owing to such intense opposition the publication of his crowning work, the Ethics, was delayed until after his death.[3]

Spinoza was an excellent observer of the world about him and in the Tractatus shows how strife between religious groups was one of the saddest facts of the symbolic structure of his society. He thought it true that the fundamental principles of virtue such as charity and piety were taught by all sects alike and yet violated by all in their treatment of

one another. The cause of this agreement in diversity he found to be the tendency of the sects to lay stress not upon the fundamental virtues but upon certain peculiar doctrines that each claimed to have received from some obscure and supernatural source. This tendency resulted in the fashion of each sect to find in Scripture what pleased itself and to accuse all others of spiritual blindness for not finding a similar conclusion.

It seems obvious to most that Spinoza endeavors to prove that there is in Scripture only the one element of the authoritative and divine doctrine, viz., the teaching that there is a power, rewarding virtue and punishing vice. All sects recognizing this doctrine are to be tolerated and must in turn manifest similar toleration to all others. In natural consequence, the state ought not to restrict the liberty of the subjects of its government in thinking about religious questions in any manner.

Spinoza also believed quite firmly that man is by nature a selfish animal having an original natural right to all he can gather. It is quite appropriate therefore for the individual to give up some of his liberty to the government. This liberty would be sacrificed not merely in ethical and social conduct but in cases of acts of obligation as well. Selfishness is indeed the starting point. Because of the inner conflict of the selfish desire the wise man ultimately seeks to rise above the desire and to be free from the self in the contemplation of enduring truth. On the political side this doctrine of freedom through natural right becomes one of conservative republicanism; that every man's welfare is best helped by granting the greatest possible freedom of development to his neighbor and also that a certain degree of unselfishness

is not only useful but natural to all men. With Spinoza the state is the expression of the higher consciousness of mankind. The truly useful state is, therefore, the one whose laws are founded on mutual charity freedom and justice. It is only natural, therefore, that the first prerequisite of government is stability in a form that secures mutual interests of man in man, e.g., the Republican form. He finds the majority of people know best what satisfies them and that they will be trained into such respect for the minority as not to propose immoderate legislation. Spinoza continually maintains that a government which does not recognize the wishes of the public it governs is in the highest degree dangerous both to its own interests and to the general peace of the realm. It must use force only in cases where it may be employed in the name of the masses. Theoretically, the government is the fountain of all law and can change legislation at its pleasure. Practically, it is to make and change only for the promotion of peace and harmony. Theoretically it has complete rights over the sovereignity of the individual and his property but practically it has no control over the thoughts of subjects and so must respect them. If the citizens do not think favorably of the government it will not long exist in maintainance of its full rights. It is not, then, the ultimate purpose of the government to rule or to put men under restraint of fear; neither is it in its realm to subject them to external aughority. On the contrary it must opt for freedom to all from fear and insecurity. It must guarantee him the natural right to existence and pursuance of individuality insofar as it causes hurt neither to self or neighbor. The final use of sovereignty is not to hold mastery per se but to give the subject a maximum of ordered liberty.[4]

Such then are the main events in Spinoza's life and thought in regard to the general philosophical preconditions of his era. But we do not as yet know enough about the events around the man which were among the causative factors for his own unique contributions to the stream of historical significance. We have the case not only of a great philosopher but of an individual genius with his own highly unique manner of viewing history as individual facts within a total matrix. Before analysis of this unique manner of viewing history as a unity within diversity it would not be amiss to understand the general high-points of the historical scene in Spinoza's own lifetime and in his particular geographical area of activity.

Historical Background

The year of Spinoza's birth, 1632, marked the death of Gustavus Adolphus in Lützen. This king of Sweden was an excellent ruler by most standards and he not only harmonized political differences in his native land but used Dutch military experts to create a modern army noted for firm discipline and great courage. At this time the Thirty Years War had entered its third phase and the Swedish army had penetrated into Bohemia as far as the Danube. While the political goals of the time are still not clear we may assume that the Swedes were aiming at a large federal Protestant empire to include Scandinavia and North Germany. The Swedes and Saxons made a separate peace in Prague in 1635 at which time it seemed as if the German states were coming together and that the religious wars might be coming to an end. Unfortunately, this was not the case. The Dutch were subsidized by the French and the Spanish still fought to subdue the Dutch and to consolidate the Empire.

In 1644 the peace talks had begun in Westphalia and the Germans were advocating peace. Not until the 1648 treaty of Westphalia did France and Spain even begin to make peace with one another. This Peace of Westphalia countered the Counter Reformation in Germany and added Calvinism to Lutheranism and Catholicism as an acceptable faith. The dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire was now more or less complete and confirmed both in politics and law. The Dutch and the Swiss fell away from the Empire along with the United Provinces which were recognized as sovereign and independent. In addition the Dutch were confirmed in conquest of the Scheldt and closure of its traffic to all vessels led to the commercial destruction of Antwerp. Not only did the Peace conference in 1648 block the Counter Reformation but it frustrated the Hapsburgs as well. It marked the beginning of a system of state sovereignity in international law. One could no longer pretend that Europe had any significant unity either religious political or any other. Obviously the new menace would be a universal monarchy. One must take into account the fact that Europe at this time consisted of a great number of miniscule and unconnected sovereignties; each operating according to their own laws and following their own political interest. These sovereignties, Amsterdam included, formed and dissolved their own alliances, exchanged embassies, alternated between war and peace in their necessary shifting of position to accomodate new power balances.

There is little doubt that during this period the phase of political negotiation known as "balance of power" came into general practice. Whenever one state preponderates others rise against it in coalition to create an effective balance of power to restore q equilibrium. During

this same century the aim for statesmen pursuing policies of balance of power was generally to preserve their own independence of action. The basic rule, therefore, was to ally against any state threatening domination of another. The purpose of a balance of power form of politics is to preserve the sovereignty and independence of states of Europe, rather than peace per se, against any potential aggressors. There were so many independent states during this era that even the smaller ones might count as important through the controlling of political alliances. By making monetary contributions of ships or gold, Republics such as the Dutch added just enough strength to an alliance to balance the opposing powers and their allies.[5]

Seen in the long view both Protestants and Catholics succeeded in freeing the Christian world of religion's influence in politics. However, this did not free the populace of idolatry or heresy. In the end a compromise was of necessity accepted. This was accomplished by the partitioning of the lands of the medieval church and its concommitant medieval view of life and the world.

The Italian Renaissance graudally faded out as the religious wars ceased. The stage became cleared upon which the Dutch, English and French were to take over the establishment of a new West-European leadership.

The consuming political question internationally speaking was the fate of the possessions of the Spanish crown. Owing to the danger of a universal monarchy from France most of the balance of power alliances were directed toward this country. As the ambitions of Louis XIV, the Sun King, were becoming bolder and as the capacity of Spain to resist withered away the problem of combining the European states into a balance

of power against France did indeed become crucial. This balance against Louis XIV was enginered mainly by the Dutch under William III the Prince of Orange.

The Dutch in their long struggle against Spain became a unique nation proud of their own freedom and independence. During the last phases of the Thirty Years War they relied more on their wealth, shipping and diplomacy than on actual fighting. Therefore, it was not altogether unthinkable that they should see the latter half of the seventeenth century as the beneficent rewarder of comfort and commercial achievement nearly unexcelled in all of Europe.[6]

This was also the time of the rebuilding of Low Germany and her language into a literary phenomenon by almost unequalled artistic minds. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), John Locke (1632-1704), and Isaac Newton (1642-1727) were but a few of the great intellectual giants who helped point out a new orientation for this age. The seventeenth century did indeed evidence an unparalleled regard for the power and potentialities of the human mind.

That individual coming nearest to building the new and revolutionary synthesis of this age was Baruch de Spinoza. Spinoza's praise of the powers of reason and nature above all else enabled him to be aware of the true and universal character of religion and knowledge in general.

Spinoza and the Reasonableness of History

Spinoza, as a true representative of his age, believed that a true religion did not depend upon space or time or place nor did it belong in an era of particular occassion. To perceive religious truth one did not have to wait for a miracle. Nature being similar to man's conscience is a window through which man can learn the truth of the universe if

only he will go about the search in a logical and systematic manner. All that one has to do is to look and think about what he has seen in a critical and orderly manner. Then and only then will reason show that there is a guide for everything that happens in history.[7]

The Age of Reason is noted for the powers man attributed to society. That each human has the right to live according to that which increased his enjoyment of life was considered as an unsuppressible right. Unlike Hobbes, Spinoza did not believe that man's nature was deserving of mean appraisal. Man was allowed to reason and in fact disposed to cooperate with his fellow men. The state of nature does not doom the species to strife and trouble if only one has the true view of this state.

Being the sophisticated philosopher that he was, Spinoza, was able to completely break away from the primitive precapitalistic notion that revelation was the repository of all final truth. In fact Spinoza knew of no revelation in fact at all. His totally different philosophical system did away with the need for a personal revealing God and substituted the notion of a God being equal to nature and comprehendible through nature and reason. God to Spinoza was the very totality of being. The world existed as the outcome of God's physical mode of extension while thought existed as the mental mode of God's essence.[8] Spinoza established an altogether new realm of reality ~~in~~ which existed as that which shows itself to mankind. Therefore, no kind of external authority could exist in a more basic fashion than the very being of the universe per se.

How appropriately did Spinoza thus fit in with the reasonableness of his age when he, by forseeing the reasonable state as that which permits the individual to think that which he would utter and to utter that which he would think, only naturally establish an entreprenurial

realm in Holland. He thusly made the individual realm free for individual exploration and exploitation. Such a revolution in thinking was necessary to proclaim the new sovereignty of reason; a sovereignty which was ultimately to play no small part in the emergence of an economic form of such stature as to generate the ideational concomitants without which the Enlightenment could not develop.

In order to minimize the possibilites of trouble between men and society had to naturally establish a state to check the urge of some to disregard the basic rights of others. Such a commonwealth is the product of a voluntary decision on the part of individuals. The aim is to evolve political unity whereby the citizens agree to abide by the stipulations of a compact. Society or the state in return for the voluntary surrender of individual rights obligated itself to protect the individual.

It is such a weltanschauung that Spinoza lived and enjoyed such great freedom of political specialization, speculation and analysis. Politics in the Dutch Republic was balanced between the pacifistic burghers who's chief interests centered about business and the Princes of Orange to whom the country owed most of its prosparity.

These burghers were aware of a new mood of confidence generated by the Peace of Westphalia. In 1650 William II, the stadholder died and no new stadholder was elected until 1672. During this entire period the burgher civilian and decentralizing tendencies prevailed. Therefore, it was not to be unpredicted that matters were to procede unfavorably during the next two decades of the Dutch Republic. All during this time---the Age of Spinoza--the Dutch were menaced by the French and Louis XIV. Under the Burgher Government and the weak leadership of the

Third William of Orange the Dutch were slow to take alarm and did indeed do little to strengthen their army. It was no wonder then that the Sun King would soon be destined to cross the Spanish Netherlands and occupy most of the Dutch provinces in 1672 by the time of Spinoza's later productive years. During the decisive years of this last William of Orange, feudal liberties were put down in the provinces and the king soon freed himself of constitutional checks and moved even more forward in the direction of absolute monarchy. The Dutch gradually came over to the side of the Spanish Hapsburgs in 1678 when the treaty of Nimwegen was signed. In 1689 William became King of England and the British Isles were now in power balance against France. While fighting for political and religious equality of all minorities in Britain, he also prepared diplomats for coalition and alliance in preparation for the coming war with France in the early eighteenth century.[9]

Projected Plan of Research and Analysis

Having now seen quite clearly the outlook of Spinoza regarding the philosophy of his times and their historical background it is not entirely remiss for us to enquire into a methodology for understanding the insights of this great man into the history of knowledge and thought of his present day world.

Obviously we cannot do this in relation to his co-religionists for one would run into the blockade of bias and bigotry in any age whenever religion becomes a primary criterion for validity of truth claims. It indeed is not a simple task for even in the taking of a random consensus of opinion among the historians one would find a lack of understanding and improper basis for evaluation. A much better manner in which to go about determining a great philosopher's view of history would be to

first endeavor to understand the history of the philosopher in relation to his philosophy and then delve into the individual's unique insights into the historical process through the underlying epistemology of his own writings.

However, the problem is not as simple as prima vista described, for one has to set up a framework for critical evaluation of the validity of the causal nexus between that very epistemology and the concomitant historical consciousness. Only then may he turn to the works per se and the evaluations of others regarding them.

This thesis will attempt such an evaluation of Spinoza's view of history. The methodology will consist of three parts, viz., exposition, analysis and evaluation. We will concentrate primarily on the Treatise on Theology and Politics (Tractatus) and the Ethics. Our critical analysis will take into consideration not only the background of Spinoza's historical time-place situation but his conceptions of nationalism, liberalism, democracy, authority and naturalism as given in the aforementioned synopsis.

In conclusion we will attempt to see if Spinoza's historical insights accomplish not only what they intend to do but whether or not they are internally self-consistent. If they are not we shall wish to know why.

Chapter Two: RELIGION

This chapter will analyze Spinoza's concept of history as it touches Judaism , Christianity and religion in general. Inasmuch as Spinoza decried both scepticism and dogmatism, it would not be unlikely for us to find a general condemnation of biblical history in his analysis of the Old and the New Testaments. Upon examination of the reasons for such a condemnation we can approach a closer understanding of Spinoza's view regarding the role played by religious nationalism in the writing of history.

One can best obtain Spinoza's opinions on this matter by examining his writings in the Tractatus concerning Scriptual Interpretation, Faith and Reason, Types of Revelation, God's Power, Metaphor and Miracles.

We must first note that Spinoza realized how the main orientation of Old Testament Judaism was in the moral rather than the metaphysical vein. The purpose of Scripture was to reveal the will of God rather than His essence. Therefore one can at this juncture sympathize with Spinoza that Judaism to a certain degree opted for any liberalism including agnosticism. Man could understand God by his effects but not by His essence. Here we find Spinoza in agreement with such Jewish mediaeval philosophers as Maimonides where were against the use of anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms in any positive characterizations of God.

It was only after the most careful examination of the Bible that one could determine which parts of it were sacred.[1] Consequently Spinoza did not concern himself with any but the plainest and most obvious glosses. One cannot learn either the attributes of God or His will from reading Scriptures. Spinoza never knew of any theologian who believed that the Scriptures "always" speak in the words of God. Most of biblical materials are concerned with speculations no more mundane than having men love their neighbors as themselves. Sublime speculations had no bearing on authenticity.[2]

Spinoza saw the necessity of using a new method of reason to interpret arguments between Church and State which arose out of the faith-reason controversy. He noted how many tended to use faith arguments in the realm of reasoned proof. Such action was the cause of the aggressive arguments between the Church and its dissenting members. He was determined to use only those facts which the light of reason could commend as worthy for use in religious contexts.[3] No event in Scripture was assumed to have happened contrary to the laws of nature. All that goes against these laws has to be against reason. This is necessary procedure, held Spinoza, in order for men to reject the unworthy from the true text.[4] Spinoza saw no controversy between faith as theology and philosophy as a science. If such was the case there could be no affinity between them as well. The bases of the two subjects have both facts and knowledge separate. Faith seeks only obedience and piety while science and philosophy are concerned with fact and truth.[5] Knowing the differentiations between these two "disciplines" one can agree with Spinoza in saying that neither is superior to the other. Both allow and even desire that man get to the essence of Scripture. Scripture teaches neither philosophy nor science but only faith and obedience to God. The prophets tried to adapt these goals for the masses the best way they could. They never dreamed that their words would be forced and interpreted out of context and obvious meaning.[6]

The Tractatus was not intended by Spinoza for the masses at all. He believed the common people to be too rooted in fear and prejudice to be capable of clear reasoning in religion. The work was to benefit only those who were capable of bringing the analytic tools of philosophy to to bear in correcting areas of religion's weakness and error.[7]

Spinoza saw two ways of interpreting Scriptural revelation, viz., as appearances or as imaginary occurances. The later could be either aural or visual but often happened in conjunction with the former.[8] Everything that happens, thought Spinoza, must take place under the power of God and through his causality. It matters little whether we know this for our ignorance of His power is in many cases equal to our ignorance of both the Cosmos and our own nature. When one does not know the natural cause of an event it makes little sense to assume that God is the primary cause behind it. Such assumptions cannot be made by those who do not understand the differentiations between primary and secondary causality.[9]

One also has to be aware of the use of metaphor in Scriptural language. Spinoza believed that many narratives found in Scripture were adapted to the low level of understanding prevalent among the religious masses. Philosophers should not mistake such anthropomorphic language for reality descriptions. Any intelligent person knows that God has no right hand or left, and that he is not moved, at rest, or in a particular place with a particular feeling. Those who use reason correctly can see that man's imagination is often affected by his natural senses to give a distorted view of God.[10] One must take Scriptural conclusions only from Scripture just as one must take non real or transcendent knowledge only from the prophets. The two cannot be mixed. Since there are no living prophets one cannot rightfully reason either from metaphor or put words into the mouth of authors.[11]

Spinoza was very much concerned with the problems of miracle interpretation. His analysis of the functioning of miracles in Scripture give an excellent insight into his methods for interpreting history in general. Spinoza was interested primarily in whether or not anything could exist in violation of the laws of nature and reason. He questioned whether miracles, even if they could occur, would prove the existence of God. Therefore he

carefully searched Scripture for contradictions of nature under the guise of miracles. Only a corrupt human nature, he believed, would allow for such contradictions for the proof of God's existence.[12] Events in the Bible that seemed prima vista to contradict the laws of nature were understood by Spinoza in the light of their man logical attendant circumstances. These were found to be in harmony with nature. Whatever happens in the Bible must of necessity occur naturally even if the event is described poetically.[13] Spinoza saw that men labled "divine" any knowledge which was beyond their understanding and anything whose cause was not generally known. Too often did men ascribe to God that which was extraordinary assuming that this was the best method of acclaiming His infinity. Also the masses tended to proclaim unusual phenomena as miracles partly from piety and partly from their own war against science; believeing as they often did that science opposed religion. Too often did Spinoza see that even theologians remained in ignorance of natural laws and causality because they devoted all of their time to adoration of their particular conceptions of God. Such ideas also arose among Jews early in their history when they saw gentiles worshiping visible gods. In order to break the influence of these pagan cults the Jews learned to describe an invisible God who worked miracles. This idea was so effective and well thought out that the Jews managed to convince both themselves and others that their God had arranged all nature for their own benifit; working miracles to help the chosen and the saved. This indeed is a "pretension" advanced by a foolish people who have no sound and unified idea of either God or nature and who confuse the best of their human ideals with God's decrees. Imagine the irrationality of conceiving nature in man to be the chief and most significant part of the nature of all the universe.[14]

In reality God needs neither words nor miracles to make himself known to his subjects.[15] God's existence cannot be proven from the miracle stories in Scripture, for it has frequently been shown that miracles could be worked or described by false prophets. The Divine order of Scripture must therefore consist only in its teaching of correct and true morality.[16]

Miracles are then equivalent to ignorance on the part of those who wish to establish God's existence by obscure and unknown methods. Such men introduce a new type of argument using the reduction to the ignorant rather than the reduction to the absurd.[17] Revelation of God may be established by only the wisdom of doctrine and not by so called miracles or in other words ignorance.[18]

Only phenomena which are clearly understandable by us indicate God's will and His decrees. Events outside or against the natural order are totally unrecognizable by Spinoza as proof of the divinity of God. Obviously if there should exist anything in nature that happens against the natural laws, which are a part of God's plan and causality, then it would follow that there is a contravention to the natural order and consequently "belief in it would throw doubt upon everything and lead to atheism."[19]

In the course of his research Spinoza found nothing taught either by Scriptures or by the prophets which was not in accordance with the laws of nature and couldn't easily be grasped by all. He became convinced that the Bible leaves man's reason absolutely free to follow the dictates of philosophical inquiry and the faith of revelation.

In fact faith and reason stand on different footings and deal with different matters. Spinoza wishes to set this proposition forth categorically so that all may understand and interpret the Bible in a rational manner without false notions. This is then the true way of obedience to reason and justice.[20]

It is plain to see from the above selections that the Subject of God in biblical Jewish History constitutes a very important part of Spinoza's opinions on accurate history. He starts with the assertion of God's uncompromised existence and ends with the mind's understanding, by way of reason, all the ramifications of this postulate. This is no more and no less than the best form of causal ontological reasoning. To Spinoza God's existence was a felt involvement in the essential meaning of infinity. Spinoza projects this idea of God upon his contemporary concept of nature. In general, one could say that he identifies both as the same in his use of the all encompassing terminology of Deus est Natura.

Yet upon closer scrutiny we see that despite Spinoza's tendency to make nature and God synonomous at this early stage he is forced to conceive of the latter as transcendent as well as immanent in the universe. This God concept is novel in that it emphasized the legitimacy of predicating substance to Godhead. Before the time of the Tractatus God was thought of as being merely the spiritual substantiation of creation. With Spinoza's universalizing and logic he believes the matter of the

universe and all historical evidences of it to be no less than a legitimate ~~offspring~~ consequence of Deity. This seems to be his way of proving that the infinity of nature (axiomatic existence) is synonomous with God.

Jewish thought in general does not concern itself with a major doctrinal difference between conclusive philosophical criteria and historical awareness of absolutes. We note that the Bible contains an abundance of corporeal descriptions of God. Yet all of these descriptions were no more than substitutions which were intended primarily not to assert the transcendentalism of God as much as it was to remove from Him the anthropomorphisms of materiality. The insistance of Jewish teachers over the ages including Spinoza, seems to have been to emphasize the unity and incorporeality of God rather than any desire for abstract reflection over metaphysical vagaries. The aim of such writings was to demarcate Israel and distinguish his spiritual life from the polytheism of the Canaanites and the doctrines of Gnosticism. Biblical Jewish historicism then was a steering to safety of the Jewish mind which was too free to lose itself in independent reveries and reflection among the ascendency of vital yet antagonistic views such as dualism and incarnationism.

With such awareness it is not unusual for Spinoza to have had the need to characterize his God in history as both immanent and transcendent. This is the essence of his distinction between the natura naturata or sum total of nature and the natura naturans or the absolute.

This new appraisal of the Universe is done by mathematical standards, namely, under the form of eternity and absolute objectivity following the

rules and guidlines of geometry. This leads Spinoza to bestow upon things a degree of perfection determined only by their realness. The corrollaries of such reading and appraisal of nature and reality are indeed many. The place which Spinoza assigns to man in the cosmic panorama is not of necessity insignificant. This is in harmony with basic forms of historic Judaism where man holds a much exalted place.

After the preceding exposition of relevant aspects of Spinoza's philosophy regarding Jewish and Christian historicism we are at the point of evaluation of the place miracles play in Scriptures. First of all we note that Spinoza's interpretation of Scripture is by way of allegory, for those parts that seem "unnatural." This manner of explanation is no different from that of Philo or Maimonides. Since Spinoza's rational basis for the philosophy of religion allows of no internal contradictions, it is absurd for him to assume that any event described therein is contrary to the laws of God and nature.

Secondly, Spinoza shows that there is no "faith-reason" controversy in his interpretations. He shows how faith is distinct from and supplementary to reason. Therefore, anything in the realm of the "non-observable," or "nonreasonable," --that is found in Scripture—is there to provoke faith through persuasion for "good ends." He observes, quite correctly, that the majority of men so misconstrue that dichotomy between faith and reason as to subscribe to all of the faith-provoking events within the Bible as if they were factual and existent actualities.

Thirdly Spinoza has proven that miracles can neither take place in violation of the laws of nature nor can they prove God's divinity. It is because of the position he takes on miracles that an evaluation

evaluation can be made concerning the validity of his philosophy of religion for thought in general and Judaism in particular.

Finally we have seen the liberal interpretation of Spinoza's explanation of the term miracle as a nonobviating force in the field of personal communication between man and deity. As a transitory note we should take special awareness of the Spinozistic answer to the "plain man's" view of miracles as "violation of the laws of nature." One of the major reasons for the lack of acceptance of the miracle stories as authentic and factual--in our day as well as in Spinoza's--resides in the assumption of their necessary contravention of the laws of nature. Spinoza has shown this assumption to be fallacious on the grounds that we do not know all of the laws of nature. Even if we did know all of these laws there is no reason to suppose that we might understand the various effects of the variety of permutations and combinations of their workings. Only if such assumptions were reduced to the level of fact would we be justified in positing a miracle to be a contravention in God's laws of nature.

Spinoza's deep insight into Biblical Hebraic grammar has shown him the necessity for interpretation of miracle predications as allegorical. It must be clear at this point that Spinoza does not equate "miracle" with the term ignorance; he only wishes to show that those who believe in the plain or ordinary usage of the term miracle are in a state of total ignorance regarding the true meaning of the term. Interestingly enough, Spinoza's explanation of miracles includes a definition of what a miracle is not (determined by negation, cf., Maimonides' predications of God's attributes, in the Guide) rather than what a miracle is. However, his philosophical as well as his theological position leaves

a definite avenue of approach open toward acceptable definition. In evaluating a position, based upon this approach, we must determine how valid and how reliable the explanation is. A seemingly acceptable explanatory position regarding a miracle that also fits into Spinoza's premises is that of a "religious sign event." This position states that a miracle is a definite theological sign. Such a sign must be gerundively construed as that which affords good reason for practicing a way of life in accordance with religious behavior. This type of sign interpretation is psychological in nature for it allows of subjective and individualistic determination of a miracle. Under such a sign one would either see a miracle (if he was religiously inclined) or not see a miracle. The essence of the sign event being a miracle would depend upon the observer's interpretation. Obviously a nonreligious observer would find some difficulty in interpreting an arbitrarily accepted religious sign event as a miracle. Why is this meaning of miracle acceptable under our interpretation of Spinoza's position? The reasons are first that the stipulated definition does not depend upon a "plain man" (nature contravening) interpretation of miracle phenomena. It completely does away with the problems involved when we seek to unite the individual realms of history, science and religion into one single and harmonious conception of causality in the universe. Second, it allows for both objective and subjective verification. Conceivably, a miracle could objectively take place if all data about natural law and its operations were known. A sign event under this category would naturally allow for pragmatic verification. However, there are no reported instances to date of such an occurance. A miracle could subjectively occur

providing all of the personal criteria for the event are satisfied within the observer's own mind. Such an interpretation would leave room for belief in a "personalistic" God and liberalistic Jewish prayer forms, because it would depend only upon the individual's personal conception of his deity in both history and philosophy. We will note how Spinoza's allegorical interpretations of religious miracles agree with this.

Spinoza's Comparison of New and Old Testament Historicism

We note that Spinoza considers both the prophets of Judaism and Christianity in the same historical category. In the first place he notes that the election of any people by God is no more than a natural phenomena. God could have elected any people in the present world. All things occurring in either nature or history have God as their ultimate cause. Most important of all is Spinoza's affirmation of Israel's unique place in history--if we can even call it that--which lay not in the character of its moral awareness and insight into divine knowledge, but only in its social organization:

> Nations, then are distinguished from one another in respect to the social organization and laws under which they live and are governed; the Hebrew nation was not chosen by God in respect to its wisdom nor its tranquility of mind, but in respect to its social organization and the good fortune with which it obtained supremacy and kept it for so many years. This is abundantly clear from Scripture. Even a cursory perusal will show us that the only respects in which the Hebrews surpassed other nations, are in their successful conduct of matters related to the government, and in their surmounting great perils solely by God's external aid; in other ways they were on a par with their fellows, and God was equally gracious to all. For in respect to intellect (as we have shown in the last chapter) they held very ordinary ideas about God and nature, so that they cannot have been God's chosen

> in this respect; nor were they so chosen in respect of virtue and the true life, for here again they, with the exception of a very few elect, were on an equality with other nations; therefore, their choice and vocation consisted only in the temporal happiness and advantages of independent rule.[23]

In an age when the last vestiges of superstitious belief in pragmatic reward and punishment were still held Spinoza is found to view Israel's chosen historical position as one deserved only temporal- and temporarily because of her relative tranquility and independent rule. Spinoza further notes the fact that all nations possess prophets and philosophic vision. Therefore to single out one above all others for superior Scriptures would be a moral error:

> As it is a fact that God is equally gracious, merciful and the rest, to all men; and the functions of the prophet was to teach men not so much the laws of their country, as true virtue, and to exhort them thereto, it is not to be doubted that all nations possessed prophets and that the prophetic gift was not peculiar to the Jews. Indeed history, both profane and sacred, bears witness to the fact. Although, from the sacred histories of the Old Testament, it is not evident that the other nations had as many prophets as the Hebrew, or that any Gentile prophet was expressly sent by God to the nations, this does not affect the question for the Hebrews were careful to record their own affairs, not those of other nations.[24]

Spinoza recognizes the existence of other teachers and lawgivers with the only difference being that the Jews had received their law and prophetic writings in script while the other nations could rely only upon immagination:

> I confess that in Paul's Epistle to the Romans I find another text which carries more with important thought, namely, where Paul seems to teach a different doctrine from that here set down, for he there says (Rom.iii,1): "What advantage then hath the Jew or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly,

> because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." ....Wherefore it is most evident that to all men absolutely was revealed the law under which all lived--namely the law which has regard only to true virtue, not the law established in respect to, and in the formation of, a particular people. Lastly, Paul concludes that since God is the God of all, and since all men equally live under the law and under sin, so also to all nations did God send His Christ, to free all men equally from the bondage of the law, that they should no more do right by the command of the law, but by the constant determination of their hearts. So that Paul teaches exactly the same as ourselves. When, therefore, he says, 'To the Jews only were entrusted the oracles of God,' we must either understand that to them only were the laws entrusted in writing, while they were given to other nations merely in revelation and conception, or else...that Paul was answering only in accordance with the understanding and current ideas of the Jews, for in respect to teaching things which he had partly seen, and partly heard, he was to the Greeks a Greek, and to the Jews a Jew.[25]

In the concluding paragraphs of his chapter Spinoza explains the temporary conditions of Israel's superiority in history not withstanding their being one of the many ordinary ethnic groups:

> At the present time, therefore, there is absolutely nothing which the Jews can arrogate to themselves beyond other people. As to their continuance so long after the dispersion and the loss of empire, there is nothing marvelous in it, for they so separated themselves from every other nation as to draw down upon themselves universal hate, not only by their outward rites, rites conflicting with those of other nations, but also by the sign of circumcision...
>
> That they have been preserved in great measure by Gentile hatred experience demonstrates. When the King of Spain formerly compelled the Jews to embrace the state religion or go into exile, a large number of Jews accepted Catholocism. Now, as these renegades were admitted to all the native privileges of Spaniards and deemed worthy of filling all

> honorable offices, it came to pass that they straightway became so intermingled with the Spaniards as to leave of themselves no relic or rembrance. But exactly the opposite happened to those whom the king of Portugal compelled to become Christians, for they always though converted, lived apart, inasmuch as they were considered unworthy of any civic honors.
>
> The sign of circumcision is, as I think, so important that I could persuade myself that it alone would preserve the nation for ever...
>
> Of such a possibility we have a very famous example in the Chinese. They, too...keep themselves apart from everybody else, and thus kept themselves during so many thousand years that they far surpass all other nations in antiquity. They have not always retained empire, but they have recovered it when lost, and doubtless will do so again after the spirit of the Tartars becomes relaxed through the luxury of riches and pride.
>
> Lastly, if any one wishes to maintain that the Jews, from this or that other cause, have been chosen by God forever, I will not gainsay him if he will admit that this choice, whether temporary or eternal, has no regard, insofar as it is peculiar to the Jews, to aught but dominion and physical advantages (for by such alone can one nation be distinguished from another) whereas in regard to intellect and true virtue every nation is on a par with the rest, and God has not in these respects chosen one people rather than another.[26]

Spinoza's treatment of the place and powerm of Jesus is very interesting in that it is an example of a prevalent type of contradiction that one can find throughout the Tractatus:

> We may be able to comprehend that God can communicate immediately with a man, for without the intervention of bodily means He communicates to our minds His essence; still, a man who can by pure intuition comprehend ideas which are neither contained in nor deducible from the foundations of our natural knowledge, must necessarily possess a mind far superior to those of his fellow men, nor do I believe that men have been so endowed save Christ. To him the ordinances of God leading men to

> salvation were revealed directly without words or visions, so that God manifested Himself to the Apostles through the mind of Christ as He formerly did to Moses through the supernatural voice. In this sense the voice of Christ, like the voice which Moses heard, may be called the voice of God, and it may be said that the wisdom of God, (i.e., wisdom more than human) took upon itself in Christ human nature, and the Christ was the way of salvation. I must at this juncture declare that <u>those doctrines which certain churches put forward concerning I neither affirm nor deny, for I freely confess that I do not understand them.</u> What I have just stated I gather from Scripture, where I never read that God appeared to Christ or spoke to Christ, but that God was revealed to the Apostles through Christ, but ....the old law was given through an angel and not immediately by God; whence it follows that if Moses spoke with God face to face as a man speaks with his friend,...Christ communed with God mind to mind.[27]

The need for contradictions such as the above are credited to expediency and diplomacy. Spinoza's language shows he tried very hard to accommodate the Christians in his fight for philosophic freedom. This same opinion is voiced in his private correspondence, even in the letters to his friend Oldenberg, in whose confidence he seldom wavered;

> As I take it this is the reason why Christians are distinguished from the rest of the world, not by faith, nor by charity, nor by the other fruits of the Holy Spirit, but solely by their opinions, inasmuch as they defend their cause, like everyone else, by miracles, that is by ignorance, which is the source of all malice; <u>thus they turn a faith which may be true, into superstition.</u> Lastly in order to disclose my opinion on the third point, I will tell you that I do not think it necessary for salvation to know Christ according to the flesh; but with regard to the Eternal Son of God, that is the Eternal Wisdom of God, which has manifested itself in all things and especially in the human

> mind, and above all in Christ Jesus, the case is far otherwise. For without this no one can come to a state of blessedness, inasmuch as it alone teaches, what is true, false, good or evil. And inasmuch as this wisdom was made especially manifest through Jesus Christ, as I have said, His disciples preached it, in so far as it was revealed to them through him, and thus showed that they could rejoice in that spirit of Christ more than the rest of mankind. The doctrines added by certain churches, such as that God took upon himself human nature, I have expressly said that I do not understand; in fact, to speak the truth, they seem to me no less absurd than would a statement that a circle had taken upon itself the nature of a square.[28]

In order to understand these contradictions we must realize first that the very subject matter of the Tractatus itself is more Jewish than Christian. We recall that Spinoza refrained from philologic examination of the New Testament by his insufficient knowledge of Greek.[29] Spinoza was obviously more familiar with the Jewish than the Christian tradition. We note as well that Spinoza has argued that the true meaning of the work stands on the principle that any Biblical passage must be established regarding truth or falsity exclusively out of the Bible per se., without regard to philosophic truth. We note the first contradiction in this light in regard to his discussion of miracles where Spinoza asserts that the Biblical teaching agrees with philosophy and that any contradiction to the latter has to be rejected as sacrilegious addition to Scripture. This same metnod of solving the conflict between history and philosophy on the one hand and the Bible on the other was used with great energy by Spinoza's older contemporary Uriel da Costa.

Remember as well that the aim of the Tractatus is to separate philosophy from theology, yet a deeper argument exists that prophecy is

an entirely historical and natural phenomenon. The proof is offered in the first two chapters of the Tractatus. Yet this proof is not adequately spelled out until the fifth chapter wherein is discussed the kind of phenomena which are peculiar to a nation and the privileges to which a nationx as a nation can be chosen.

To avoid the break with the Bible regarding the crucial historicity of the existence of miracles Spinoza maintains that the possibility of miracles per se are denied by the Bible. To maintain this assertion he had little choice but to suggest that any Biblical accounts of miracles cannot be truly Biblical but must be sacrilegious additions to Holy Writ:

> We may then be absolutely certain that every event which is truly described in Scripture necessarily happened, like everything else, according to natural laws; and if anything is there set down which can be proved in set terms to contravene the order of nature....we must believe it to have been foisted into sacred writings by irreligious hands; for whatsoever is contrary to nature is also contrary to reason.(italics mine) [30]

One must again be forced to admit that the Tractatus is addressed primarily for the liberation of Christianity from its Jewish heritage. The contemporary historian is inclined to view the purpose of the Tractatus to be such an approach addressed not to Spinoza's contemporaries but to potential Christian philosophers.

With regard to the New Testament in particular, Spinoza puts forth the teaching which in general is not rational morality but a combination with such a history as permitted its being preached to the common people of all nations. The substance of his teaching regarding the two Testaments is therefore identical. They differ only in this: The Old Testament prophets preached that identical teaching by way of

the Mosaic Covenant, whereas the apostles preached it by virtue of the passion and therefore addressed it to all men.[31]

Spinoza's views concerning the general intelligibility of Biblical theological history must be stated at this point as follows: since one cannot realize that the teaching of a book is absurd if one does not understand that teaching the Bible is certainly intelligible. But it is easier to understand a book whose teaching is lucid than a book whose teaching is not. It is very difficult to get the meaning of a book that consists to a considerable extent of self-contradictory assertions, of remnants of prejudice and superstition. It is still more difficult to understand it if it is poorly compiled and in a poor shate of preservation.

We must remember that Spinoza teaches that God, and Jesus and Paul as well, in speaking to men who held common opinions, accommodated themselves to the capacity of their hearers by professing that they did not question those opinions. Spinoza suggests that he may have taught things which he did not believe:

> The universal rule, then, in interpreting Scripture is to accept nothing as an authoritative Scriptual statement which we do not perceive very clearly when we examine it in the light of history. What I mean by its history, and what should be the chief points I will explain....we must evidently infer that Moses held this doctrine himself, or at any rate, that he wished to teach it, nor must we refrain because such a belief seems contrary to reason.[32]

The authors of the Bible speak to the common man by communicating a pious teaching while not only not questioning but even professing and thus confirming the untrue or absurd principles or premises of the hearers.[33]

In conclusion we may then see that Spinoza held neither Judaism nor Christianity to be in a superior position. Obviously he wanted to communicate his view of history to the majority of philosophers in the world who were of course Christians. Furthermore we must remember that Spinoza had irrevocably broken with the Jewish community and he could no longer address Jews in the same way as he could address Christians. Furthermore we must remember that Spinoza had irrevocably broken with the Jewish community and he could no longer address Jews in the same way as Christians. At any rate Spinoza was a Christian with the Christians in the way in which, according to him, Paul was a Greek with the Greeks and a Jew with the Jews.[34] It was the political and social power of Christianity which also explains why the subject matter of the Tractatus is Jewish rather than Christian. Simply put, it was less dangerous to attack Judaism than to attack Christianity, and it was distinctly less dangerous to attack the Old Testament than the New Testament.

Chapter III: POLITICS

This chapter presents the salient aspects of Spinoza's thought in his three areas of citizen endeavor, viz., liberalism, democracy and authority. Inasmuch as Spinoza opted for a society such as a democracy which would be most conducive to social stability it was important that he considered the relations between equalitarian elements in the society and their relations to their decision makers. Consequently Spinoza was concerned with the relations between politics and ecomomics in history and their affects on the citizens of a state.

Spinoza's Concepts of Liberalism

We gain insight into Spinoza's motivation in his writings which so frequently decry the false values of money and property in apposition to the true life of faith and caring for others. Writing in the above vein in his book On the Improvement of the Understanding[1] we learn that:

> After experience had taught me that all the usual surroundings of social life are vain and futile,... I finally resolved to inquire whether there might be some real good of which the discovery and attainment would enable me to enjoy continuous, supreme, and unending happiness...To achieve it is necessary to form a social order such as is most conducive to the attainment of this character by the greatest number with the least difficulty and danger....It is my happiness to lend a helping hand, that many others may understand even as do I.[2]

Spinoza was very inclined toward pacifism and believed in a simple peaceful dedication to his principles of rationality rather than war:

> Patriotism does not derive from true ideas but from opinion only. It is the kind of love which tends to our ruin. Its hold on people is similar to the attitude of children to their father; because their father tells them that this or that is good they incline towards it, without

> knowing anything more about it. We see it also in those who from love give their lives to the Fatherland.[3]

We cannot but help suspect that there was a great tension in the life of almost mystical withdrawal led by Spinoza, for certainly his writings bear out the strong motivation of the political theorist who desires to play more than just a passive part:

> It is certain that duties towards one's country are the highest that man can fulfil; for if, government be taken away, no good thing can last, all falls into disrepute, and anger and anarchy reign unchecked amid universal fear. Consequently there can be no duty towards our neighbor which would not become an offence if it involved injury to the whole state, nor can there by any offense against our duty towards our neighbor, or anything but loyalty in what we do for the sake of preserving the state.[4]

During the high tide of the Republican rule in Holland Spinoza seemed most optimistic in his writings regarding Democratic liberalism. He wrote of seeing happiness in a republic where all citizen's judgment was free without prejudice to the public peace. And with special pride did he write of his city:

> The city of Amsterdam reaps the fruit of this freedom in its own great prosperity and in the admiration of all other people. For in this most flourishing state, and most splendid city, men of every nation and religion live together in the greatest harmony, and ask no questions before trusting their goods to a fellow citizen, save whether he be rich or poor, and whether he generally acts honestly, or the reverse....His religion and his sect provided they harm no one, pay every man his due, and live uprightly, are not deprived of the protection of the magisterial authority.[5]

Evidently the desire for economic security tended to make persons persons rational. But there seemed to be a conflict within the Calvinist system which Spinoza noticed. While explicity endorsing the prudence of the Dutch East India Company in its policy of religious liberalism in the Far East, Spinoza took pains to comment on its strangulation of religion in Japan during the year 1641. "The Dutch were there to make money and not Christians."[6] And Spinoza commented with approval on the rule of economic reason:

> Those who live in a country where Christian religion is forbidden are bound to abstain from such rites, and none the less live in a state of blessedness. We have an example in Japan, where the Christian religion is forbidden and the Dutch who live there are enjoined by the East India Company not to practice any outward rites of religion.[7]

Spinoza further believed that religious controversies should not be allowed to obtrude themselves upon political concerns:

> When the religious controversy between Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants began to be taken up by politicians and the states, it grew into a schism, and abundantly showed that the laws dealing with religion and seeking to settle its controversies are much more calculated to irritate than to reform and that they give rise to extreme license: further, it was seen that schisms do not originate in a love of truth, which is a source of courtesy and gentleness, but rather in an inordinate desire for supremacy.[8]

There seems to be no other explanation for Spinoza's high evaluation of religious and personal freedom than the condition of Calvinism in the Netherlands at the time. In the very beginning the liberal principle of minority rights had to be in conflict with the principle of majority rule. The Dutch were loyal to Calvinism and therefore liberal tolerance had always an uphill struggle against latent intolerance.

The chief centers of Calvinistic growth were quite explicitly found where the large industries were in existence, viz., the large proto-capatalistic harbors and shipping ports of Holland. Wherever Calvinism flourished the worker was reduced to a precarious existence. Unlike the Marxian premise that the revolutionary masses tend to be scientific and irreligious, we find that conditions among the workers in Holland at this time manifested millenarian and visionary modes of hope. In such a situation the redemptive metaphysics of any universalistic religion would capture the mentality of the masses. The Dutch revolt of 1572 managed to take away the revolutionary crisis which had brought Calvinists to leadership. Calvinism up to this point gave expression to the resentment of the poor and inspired them with the conviction that they were God's chosen. It channeled their aggressions against the oppressors. Calvinist rigor made a virtue of the poverty of the poor and a sin of the beauties and pleasures which only the rich could afford. As the crisis disolved with the emergence of the new commercial class of the Netherlands Calvinism of necessity begin to dissolve. As the Dutch became a great trading nation the citizens wished for a more liberal philosophyy.

Spinoza who lived in the era following the decline of Calvinistic absolutism was an heir to the liberal movement. It is of note that when Spinoza in his Short Treatise wrote of a dialogue concerning his ideas, he gave the name Erasmus to the main speaker.[9] During this time when Spinoza was working on his Tractatus he did hope to persuade those who would listen that their own self-interest would be furthered by putting aside religious quarrels, separating religion from politics and evaluating all issues by the criterion of the welfare and prosparity of the community.

Spinoza followed the great Republican leader, John de Witt, in applying the geometrical method of mathematics to the science of man, politics and history. Geometry was the only discipline of the time that possessed an eternal quality and the possibility of realizing a priori truths. Spinoza's intention was to consider human actions and appetites as if he were considering planes and bodies. He believed and this was shared by both men, that mathematics could provide a rule of truth to liberate man from darkness. Spinoza too believed, as did De Witt, that nature is always and everywhere one. Her virtue is the same, and her power of acting (laws and rules) are everywhere the same so that there must be in all places only one method of understanding the nature of all things, i.e., the universal laws and rules of nature.[10]

To a man of such genious the geometrical method applied to human history could reveal only the utter stupidity of the mass of mankind who built their own tyranny. How could Spinoza, looking back on such a history, conceive that there ever could be built a liberal order of government when it had to be founded on the precarious structure of of ordinary mankind:

> This element of inconsistency has been the cause of many terrible wars and revolutions, for as Curtius well says, 'The mob has no ruler more potent than superstition....The mass of mankind remains always at about the same pitch of misery, it never assents long to any remedy, but is always the best pleased by a novelty which has not yet proved illusive.[11]

The high regard with which Spinoza held the "free man" above the history of the masses' reckless action is illustrated by the following statement. By not identifying with them Spinoza could have no illusions concerning the true course of their history:

> The free man who lives among those who are ignorant strives as much as possible to avoid their errors and their favors...A free man should maintain his aloofness from the masses in order that he may not be hated by the ignorant nor yet yield to their appetites...For although men are ignorant, they nevertheless are men, who when we are in straits, are able to afford us human assistance--the best assistance which man can receive. It is often necessary therefore to receive a favor from the ignorant, and to thank them for it according to their taste; and besides this care must be used, even in declining favors, to not seem either to despise the givers or through avarice to dread a return, so that we may not, while striving to escape their hatred, by that very act incur their displeasure.[12]

Regarding the history of mankind in general in any area of social action Spinoza was a firm believer in determinism. Tyrants and despots, Spinoza knew, had also been shrewd practitioners of social science. His purpose, however, was to use analysis to help achieve liberal goals. Regarding this problem the author writes:

> But if in despotic statecraft the supreme and essential mystery be to hoodwink the subjects and to mask the fear which keeps them down, with the specious garb of religion so that men fight as bravely for slavery as for safety and count it not to shame but highest honor to risk their blood and their lives for the vainglory of a tyrant, yet in a free state no more mischievous expedient could be planned or attempted.[13]

At this point Spinoza tries to overcome political defeat (the rule of tyranny) by showing how the highest possible peace of mind is the intellectual love of God arising when one perceives things or rather their essences as logically following from the eternal attributes of God. The moral value of determinism would thusly be the guiding of actions and the comforting of defeat with the consolation

of its inevitability. Such a view of the history of liberalism would obviously give an anodyne to anyone unprepared to accept the defeat of political and private hopes which seemed at the time ever present in manifestation on the horizon.

Spinoza's Concepts of Democracy

Spinoza, in his attempt to understand the history of Republican forms of rule endeavored to explain the reasons for the failure of Cromwell's revolution in England. Spinoza firmly understood that all revolutions directed against the traditional forms of government in a given country were doomed to failure. Hence, there could never be a successful republican revolution in a monarchical country. He wrote that the English were accustomed psychologically to a monarchy and could not adapt to any other political form of ruling organization. The Dutch, on the contrary, were republican and could never change to monarchy. This view of the history of government allowed rebellion but could never comprehend the existence of a real revolution. Obviously then Spinoza was criticizing the revolutionary hopes of the house of Orange in Holland demonstrating that political revolution is against the laws of political science:

> The representative of a new monarchy will employ all his zeal in attempting to frame new laws, so as to wrest the rights of dominion to his own use, and to reduce the people till they find it easier to increase than to curtail the royal perogative...For his people are accustomed to royal authority and will obey no other, despising and mocking at any less august control.
>
> It is therefore necessary, as the prophets discovered of old, if one king be removed, that he should be replaced by another, who will

> be a tyrant from necessity rather than choice... Hence, it becomes an historical truth that peoples have often changed their tyrants, but never removed them or changed the monarchical form of government into any other.[14]

This historical insight of Spinoza's unfortunately is too much of a generalization to be empirically true. Yet Spinoza does attempt to use the insight for analysis of a problem facing his community, viz., the impossibility of a successful revolution by the Puritans:

> The English people furnish us with a terrible example of this fact. They sought how to depose their monarch under the forms of law, but when he had been removed they were utterly unable to change the form of government and after much bloodshed only brought it about, that a new monarch should be hailed...At last, however, the people reflected that it had accomplished nothing for the good of the country beyond violating the rights of the lawful king and changing everything for the worse. It therefore decided to retrace its steps as soon as possible, and never rested till it had seen a complete restoration of the original state of affairs.[15]

Spinoza expressed, therefore, the general disillusionment of the Dutch with Cromwell's revolution. Oliver Cromwell had to use the political revolution and a type of absolutist dictatorship to consolidate his power, which made it impossible for the parliamentary dreams to be realized.

At the close of his eighteenth chapter Spinoza now shows how the Republican form of government is still the normal and stable one for the Netherlands. He praises the United States of the Netherlands highly for the existence of nontyrannical courts from which the citizens could claim all rights. And in drawing conclusions from these examples, he states the following:

> The rights of sovereign power have always been vested in the States, though the last Count endeavoured to usurp them. It is therefore little likely that the States should give them up, especially as they have just restored their original dominion, lately almost lost. These examples, then, confirm us in our belief, that every dominion should retain its original form, and indeed, cannot change it without danger of the utter ruin of the whole state. Such are the points I have here thought worthy of remark.[16]

Spinoza assumed that invariably in the past, people who were either broken or frustrated had never been able to achieve peace. The only answer lay in a fee domocratic society.

> For peace is not mere benign absence of war, but is a virtue that springs from force of character...Besides, that commonwealth, whose peace depends on the sluggishness of its subjects, that are led about like sheep, to learn but slavery, may more properly be called a desert than a commonwealth....For a free multitude is guided more by hope than fear, a conquered one, more by fear than hope: inasmuch as the former aims at making use of life, the latter but as an escape for death. For the former, aims at living for its own ends, the latter is forced to belong to the conqueror; and so we say this is enslaved, but that is free.[17]

In a sense, any successful democracy had to be compatible with oligarchical rule. Of course men had to agree to live with one another according to the dictates of reason in an ethical manner. What the majority believed was therefore of no account.

> Democracy is a society in which if each individual hands over the whole of his power to the body politic, the latter will then possess sovereign natural right over all things. That is to say that it will have sole and unquestioned dominion, and everyone will be bound to obey, under the pain of the severest punishment. A body politic of this kind is called a Democracy, which may be defined as a society which wields all its power as a whole. The sovereign power is not restrained by any laws, but everyone is bound to obey it in all things.[18]

One of the most interesting of all of the chapters of the Tractatus deals with Spinoza's attempt at analyzing the problems of the Dutch Republic through a comparitive discussion of the Biblical Hebrew Confederation. The latter was also a Republic but is was in the Theocratic form. Spinoza indicated the contemporary bearing of the study of Biblical political history because:

> This occurred most frequently during the time of Joshuah, when they had no fixed dwelling-place. They possessed all things in common....In respect to their God and their religion they were fellow citizens; but, in respect to the rights which one possessed with regard to another, they were only confederated: they were, in fact, in much the same position (if one excepts the Temple common to all) as the United States of the Netherlands.[19]

In his viewing of Biblical history Spinoza remained concerned with the social status and political form of the Hebrew confederation. One might suppose that Spinoza's calling of the Hebrew confederacy by the term "theocracy," was the result of a borrowing from Josephus.[20] This seems sure inasmuch as contemporary political histories spoke only of monarchies, aristocracies and democracies. In his chapter on "The Hebrew Theocracy,"[21] Spinoza argues that the commonwealth was extremely stable for three reasons. Most significant among them are the second two viz., God, the Supreme Judge, ['judicial powers] was the due recipient of all final obligations, and the army could employ no mercenaries. This of necessity kept judicial and executive powers separate and separated absolute sovereignty from the rulers so that even the highest captains could be judged. Spinoza noted that in a theocracy one had a God-given right to revolution. This would as such limit military dictatorship and as Spinoza describes the situation:

> An additional check may be found in the fear of a new prophet arising, for if a man of unblemished life could show....he ipso facto obtained the sovereign right to rule, which was given to him, as to Moses formerly,... on the other hand if affairs were well ordered the captain would be able to make provision in time; that the prophet should be submitted to his approval, and be examined whether he were really of unblemished life, and possessed indisputable signs of his mission...[22]

Spinoza believed in civilian supremacy in government. If the soldiers ruled, war would be very probable. The purpose of civilian rule was to guarantee that peace would be the aim of the government:

> Lastly, neither captains nor army had any reason for preferring war to peace. The army as we have stated, consisted entirely of citizens so that affairs were managed by the same persons both in peace and war. The man who was a soldier in the camp was also a citizen in the marketplace...he who was a general in the camp was a ruler in the state. Thus no one could desire war for its own sake, but only for the sake of preserving peace and liberty ...[23]

Since peace was becoming very important to the Dutch at this time, it was not unusual for Spinoza to turn up all of the positive historical points in this Hebrew Commenwealth which could in any way serve as an example to the Orangists. Little concern was given in his ends-justifying means solution to the facts which were at the most quite doubtable inasmuch as they were based on a history which was quite a distance from the truth of reality; by his own admission in early chapters no less! Yet he found that one virtue could be extracted which was the system of checks and balances to be used against the executive powers, viz., the captains and the priests. This type of a system managed to promote an extremely stable government for the Hebrews. Their state inspired not only loyalty but supreme patriotism. The grounding loyalty was based upon simple economic necessity according to Spinoza:

> Thus the love of the Hebrews for their country was not only patriotism, but also peity, and was cherished and nurtured by daily rites... but besides this characteristic there was one feature peculiar to this state and of great importance in retaining the affections of the citizens, and checking all thoughts of desertion, or abandonment of the country: Namely, self-interest, the strength and life of all human action. This was peculiarly engaged in the Hebrew state, for nowhere else did citizens possess their goods so securely as did the subjects of this community, for the latter possessed as large a share in the lands and fields as did their chiefs, and were owners of their plots of ground in perpetuity...there were other similar enactments against the possibility of alienating real property.[24]

Spinoza read history as telling how all civil war arose only from improper economic and authoritarian uses of power. He believed that if there were no inequalities in land ownership and authoritarian service was left up to the individual (with the only stipulation being of course that he could serve God with primary obligation) then civil war could be avoided:

> Again, poverty was no-where more endurable than in a country where duty towards one's neighbor that is, one's fellow citizen, was practiced with the utmost piety, as a means of gaining the favor of God the King. Thus the Hebrew citizens would nowhere be so well off as in their own country; outside its limits they met with nothing but loss and disgrace...The following considerations were of weight, not only in keeping them at home, but also preventing civil war and removing causes of strife...no one was bound to serve his equal, but only to serve God...piety and love towards fellow-citizens was accounted the highest piety...the strict discipline of obedience in which they were brought up...such a habit was thus engendered, that conformity seemed freedom instead of servitude, and men desired what was commanded rather than what was forbidden.[25]

Even in the decline and fall of the Hebrews Spinoza was able to see a lesson for history. Perhaps Spinoza forsaw the decline and destruction of Holland following just as surely as if history took the Hebrew model as the universal mold. Unfortunately Spinoza does not put forth a rise and fall theory in his political history. But he did isolate factors causing the decay of states. He insisted the social structure of a people would dtermine to a great extent its ascent or descent.

> I must now inquire into the causes which led the people (the Hebrews) into a falling away from the law, which brought about their frequent subjection, and finally the complete destruction of their dominion....If then the Hebrews were harder of heart than other nations, the fault lay with their laws or customs.[26]

Another argument along these same lines purports to prove that the decline was due to the great and idle class of priests who disturbed the peace of the political situation. Perhaps Spinoza was merely looking for a counterpart for the Calvinist clergy, whom he believed disrupted the Dutch Republic:

> The gifts which the people were obliged to bestow on the Levites and priests...all these I say were a continual reproach...a continual reminder of their defilement and rejection. Hence the people got into the way of watching the Levites, who were but human; of accusing the whole body of the faults of one member, and continually murmuring. Besides this, there was the obligation to keep in idleness men hateful to them, and connected by no ties of blood. Especially this is grevious when provisions are dear.[27]

Spinoza also attributed the decline of the Hebrews to the conflict between the priesthood and the democratic principles of the people as a whole. He further argued that the state should have stressed the equality of all of the tribes rather than two above the remainder:

> The tribes would thus have been united by a far closer bond, if all alike had possessed the right to the priesthood. All danger would have been obviated, if the choice of the Levites had not been dictated by anger and revenge....This passage is confirmed by history. As soon as the people in the wilderness began to live in ease and plenty, certain men of no mean birth began to rebel (Korach et al) against the choice of the Levites, and and to make it a cause for believe that Moses had not acted by the commands of God, but for his own good pleasure, inasmuch as he had chosen his own tribe above all the rest, and had bestowed the high priesthood in perpetuity on his own brother....they therefore stirred up a tumult...Moses was not able to pacify them with reasons; but by the intervention of a miracle...they all perished...After a great slaughter, or pestilence, the rising subsided from inaction, but in such a manner that all preferred death to life under such conditions.[28]

Of course the history of the Hebrew Confederation as Spinoza sees it is not at all accurate owing to its frequent editing and rewriting by the various factions of competing priesthoods. Neglect-, this obvious fact Spinoza assumes the historical truth of the wilderness experiences and goes on to draw from it his unwaranted conclusions. Spinoza sees Korah as the Biblical counterpart of the revolutionist for right causes. Perhaps Spinoza even felt sympathy for him for he describes the revolutionaries in the words of Scripture as "men of no mean birth." We might assume that Spinoza had grave doubts as to the efficacy of Moses's leadership and authority; being perhaps too

Republican of persuasion to properly critically evaluate the rebellion for in conclusion he writes:

> Indeed, it happened according to his words, as we all know. Great changes, extreme license, luxury, and hardness of heart grew up; things went from bad to worse, till at last the people after being frequently conquered, came to an open rupture with the Divine right, and wished for a mortal king, so that the seat of government might be the court, instead of the Temple, and that the tribes might remain fellow-citizens in respect to their king, instead of in respect to Divine right and his high priesthood.[29]

We see in retrospect that Spinoza was violent in his distaste of the monarchical system for all of the bitterness which it caused to the Hebrews primarily and the Dutch secondarily. He saw kings as sharing schemes to obtain a maximum of sovereign rights in their hands. This led to prophetic cause for protest against tyrannical measures used by these kings. Leading finally to the abandonment of the republic the Hebrews exemplified for all historians to see, just what would happen when a people went against its traditional form of government. Of course there could not have been any desire on Spinoza's part for a reification of the Hebrew theocratic form of government in 17th century Holland for he realized that this particular society was of use only in an autarchic system for those who have no foreign relations and live in separation from the rest of the world. What he did learn from his misreading of Hebrew history was that any political form must of necessity be related to economic foundations. In more or less universalistic principles Spinoza gave us dicta for the perseverance of a democratic model of government based upon his own particular reading of Scripture. Still one may learn a good lesson for their history contained many excellent features.[30]

Chapter IV: PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

This chapter deals with the extremely complicated problems represented by the vagueness of Spinoza's thoughts about man's place in the universe. These problems involve the question of dualism in Spinoza's writings and his most sublime thoughts concerning mankind and nature. For the most part we will discuss Spinoza's use of philosophy in history from his book the Ethics[1] under the rubrics of dualism, mankind and nature.

Dualism

Upon close examination and study of the Ethics one becomes more and more aware of its multilayered depth. The book therefore is certainly applicable to its concluding line "all noble things are as difficult as they are rare." The problems of dualism in the Ethics are in a sense similar to those in the Tractatus inasmuch as Spinoza seems almost consistantly to make use of a double or multileveled theory of truth. In any event Spinoza most clearly in the Ethics shows himself as a product of his age. At one and the same time he is a materialist and an idealist, a naturalist and a supernaturalist. Possessing such a paradoxical secular-religious philosophy Spinoza shared a division of mind characteristic of his age and manifested by John Donne, Sir Thomas Browne and Descartes.

In understanding the sources for and content of Spinoza's dualism we must again recall the age in which he lived; a time of the rise of capitalism and nationalist-secular culture over the wreckage of time-honored institutions. This was a period of power balance struggles between the new nation-states at the same time of religious wars. It was an age of revolution in the human spirit.

Philosophers of the age manifested the prevalent division of mind brought on by this revolution in a type of two-truth theory; the doctrine of truth being one thing in religion and another in science, thought and reality. Spinoza, rationalist though he was, reflected this schism in presenting a divided picture of reality. Such a philosophy allowed him to deal decisively with the problems of idealism and materialism. On the one hand we find his writings manifesting psychological, ethical and religious associations; provided we read his work with concentration only upon mental and spiritual terms. However, it appears that Spinoza adopts the materialist framework more strongly than the idealistic. We remember that for Spinoza the basic meaning of "idea" is essence, or nature of the body or bodily modification of which it is an idea. Even the intellectual love of God is but the essence of God. Obviously since all essences are what they are, immortality and eternal love are not the same (only philologically similar) for a man as they would be for matter in general.

Like Descartes we find that Spinoza tended to express in a unique manner the division of mind characteristic of his age. Spinoza could not have helped being influenced by all of the traditional attitudes associated with the Judaism of his period. And he seems to reflect in his writings an ambiguity of the identity and difference of the attributes of thought and extension and their modal manifestations. In terms of the attribute of thought, the traditional language of God and the soul is in part preserved; so much so that to a later mind Spinoza appeared to be a god intoxicated man. However, in terms of extension Spinoza takes on not only a naturalistic character but the form of materialistic

mechanism as rigorous as that of Democritus. One could say that logically Spinoza was a materialist first and foremost, and only secondarily and in an absolutely ambiguous fashion, an idealist. Evidence for such a statement is found as previously shown, in the basic meaning of the term idea for Spinoza as form or that of which it is an idea itself. In such a sense the mind is the idea of the body. For Spinoza matter is not anything potential but the actuality itself of what it is. A body is what it is and what it is is a mind; so the mind is none other than the nature of the body of which it is a mind. For this reason the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things in the universe.

Similarly, the "idea of the mind is united to the mind in the same way as the mind itself is united with the body."[2]

> The mind and the body are one and the same individual which at one and the same time is considered under the attribute of thought and under that of extension: the idea of the mind, therefore and the mind itself are one and the same thing, which is considered under one and the same attribute of thought.[3]

The points on which Spinoza disagrees most with his predecessors in the religious tradition concerning the nature of mind in man and God, exist precisely because of his holding to a mechanistic conception of the material world. According to our reasoning he would agree as well to a mechanistic conception of mind, which is not other than the very nature of an object in the mechanical material world per se. On this ground free will and final causation are eliminated from the world of mind as from that of body both for man and for God. Since the material world is regarded as mechanistic in its causal order a like mechanistic determinism must hold in the world of mind for mind is none other than the nature of body: "The order and connection

of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things." For Spinoza the world of mind, human and divine,is necessarily ordered in such a geometrical and hierarchal system simply because this world exists in such an ordered fashion.

This dual and paradoxical character of Spinoza's philosophy that we have seen reflected in his doctrines of substance, of attributes, etc., is manifested as well in the sometimes ambiguous character of his conception of (your) "historical" causation, "essence" and in his confusing account of the difference between the various infinite and finite types of modes.

Spinoza conceived the cause-effect relation as a logical relation of the necessary coimplication of Axioms III-IV of part one of the Ethics: "From a given determinate cause an effect necessarily follows; and on the other hand if no determinate cause be given it is impossible than an effect can follow...The knowledge of an effect depends upon and involves the knowledge of the cause..." In answering the question regarding whether or not the cause and the effect are the same yet different in essence and nature, we receive the ambiguous reply that they are regarded as the same when they are considered in their causal nexus and as not the same when they are not so considered.

In coming to a conclusion regarding essence and the cause effect relation we can only surmise that Spinoza holds that God is the essence of the world and the world is the essence of God; natura naturata no essentially different from natura naturans.

What then can one say regarding finite and temporal things: Do they fall among the infinite numbers of things, i.e., all things that follow from God's nature according to the sixteenth proposition? One could not help but answering again equivocally. Spinoza's position on this question is complicated by what he says in Part V concerning the nature of things under the aspect of eternity:

> Things are conceived by us as actual in two ways; either in so far as we conceive them to exist with relation to a fixed time and place, or in so far as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the Divine nature.[4]

While on the surface it seems that Spinoza is at conflict with himself over his theory of causality upon closer analysis we see that this isn't so at all. There is then no dichotomy of order perceived by a divided mind unable to differentiate the finite apart from the infinite and the finite as part of the infinite. One has instead to realize that the finite mind of humanity has only a limited awareness of the infinite. God still remains the interacting totality of the world ordering effects through a causal hierarchy.

Mankind: Essentially One or Many?

One should now be prepared to consider whether the essence of a single man is different from that of another or do all men have the same essence or the same desire? Spinoza's answer to this question is not at all clear on first reading in the fifty-seventh proposition of part three in the Ethics:

> The affect of one person differs from the corresponding affect of another as much as the essence of one person differs from that of the other.

For another demonstration is also given from the definitions of the three primitive affects, desire, joy and sorrow, thus he writes:

> Desire is the very nature of essence of a person (schol., Prop. IX, Part 3) and therefore the desire of one person differs from the desire of another as much as the nature or essence of the one differs from that of the other...and therefore joy and sorrow are desire and appetite in so far as the latter is increased, diminished, helped or limited by external causes.

More generally, the problem is this. Spinoza makes "desire"as valuable as his "essence". It follows that as the desire of one person differs from that of another, so does the essence of one differ from that of another; further, as the desire of the same person varies from time to time so it follows that the nature of this person is as variable as is his desire.

It is only to say, argues Spinoza, that men have a common nature to be sure, all differences being passions of the individual only and not that which follows from their common nature. Here as in other inconsistencies in Spinoza's writings we see the problem as one involving the division in his thinking which at one and the same time is both spiritual and materialistic, supernatural and naturalistic; truly a unity within diversity! In the scholium to Proposition 39 of Part 4 Spinoza argues:

> No reason compels me to affirm that the body never dies unless it is changed into a corpse. Experience, indeed, seems to teach the contrary. It happens sometimes that a man undergoes such changes that he cannot very well be said to be the same man, as was the case with a certain Spanish poet of whom I have heard, who was seized with an illness, and although he recovered, remained nevertheless, so oblivious of his past life that he did not believe the tales and tragedies he had composed were his own, and he might indeed have been taken for a grown-up child if he had also forgotten his native tongue. But if this seems incredible, what shall we say of children? The man of mature years believes the nature of children to be so different from his own, that it would be impossible to persuade

> him he had ever been a child, if he did not conjecture regarding himself from what he sees of others. But in order to avoid giving to the superstitious matters any new questions, I prefer to go no farther in the discussion of these matters.

One must take cognizance of the fact that Spinoza recognizes no potentiality in anything. Everything is actual in two ways, as eternal and as temporal, and whatever anything does is no more than an expression of its nature alone. It follows that an inanimate body at rest of itself only remains at rest, and a similar body in motion remains in motion. It follows, as well, that any change in anything is a change in its essence--except in the case of man whose essence it is to change—and the flux of nature being what it is, the essence of one man is not the same as that of another; what one calls the same man is not the same as that being he was before the change.

Yet the most important aspect of this train of thought is the scholium of Proposition LIX, the last proposition of Part 3:

> I have now, I think, explained the principal affects and vacillations of the mind which are compounded of the three primary affects, desire, joy and sorrow and have set them forth through their first causes. From what has been said it is plain that we are disturbed by external causes in a number of ways, and that like waves of the sea agitated by contrary winds we fluctuate in our ignorance of our future and our destiny.

One can readily see that the above is no more or no less than a figure of the predicament of men subjected to the pressure of life's passions--and external pressures--ultimately overcomming them. While it is believable that Spinoza regards men as variable in their passions it is also clear that he regards them as not variable in essence but possessed of a common and unchangable nature. Indeed it is with respect

to his constant nature that man's variable states are said to be passions, for it is this nature that suffers the impact of these states and still remains unchanged by them.

Spinoza, in Part IV and in the first half of Part V of the Ethics implies the notion of a constant and common human nature in all men independently of his conception of this same nature as eternal—a curious development—inasmuch as Spinoza is quite aware of being arbitrary on this issue. He sees their existence as temporal and variable in respect to one another yet sharing a common unchanging nature. Thus we see in the prefact to Part V:

> With regard to good and evil, these terms indicate nothing positive in things considered in themselves, nor are they anything else than modes of thought, or notions which we form from the comparison of one thing with another. For one and the same thing may at the same time be both good and evil or indifferent. Music, for example is good to a melancholy person, bad to one in mourning, while to a deaf man it is neither good nor bad....By good, therefore, I understand in the following pages everything which we are (certain is a means by which we may approach nearer and nearer to the model of human nature we set before us. By evil, on the contrary, I understand everything which we are certain hinders us from reaching that model.

One cannot overlook Spinoza's conception of the good life as being without bearing on his concept of history. Of course one cannot say that his conception of this state, common to all men, is not a noble conception to be realized in this world.

Essential to this conception of the good life is Spinoza's view that the soul is both immortal and temporal. Of course the two views are contradictory but as we have shown Spinoza holds them both as different aspects of his totality. There are many more difficulties involved in the acceptance of Spinoza's conception of mankind but

there is little doubt that he did believe in such a life of crowning glory for man. The discovery and attainment of such a happiness would enable him "to enjoy continuous, supreme, and unending happiness."[5] Spinoza does overlook the obvious fact that only a theoretically homogenous race of individuals would have the ability to achieve such a state of grace. Certainly this would be impossible for all men!

Nature: Interaction of Man and Law

In our analysis of the various aspects of Spinoza's thoughts which touch on this concept of history we now come to the last category of analysis regarding man's place in nature and the essential function for all law as a governing agent .

In questioning how the state has the power to set itself up as the defender of rights and obligations, and seeking the answer to the causes of these rights Spinoza must enquire deeply into the nature and conditions of all forms of rights. He correlates human rights and rights that are neutral with societal and political rights.

At the base of Spinoza's conception of the world is the notion of order, harmony and fitness; but not mankind's order, harmonies or ideas of fitness:

> What seems to us in nature to be ridiculous, absurd or bad arises from the fact that we know things only partially, and that we are for the most part ignorant of the order and coherence of the whole of nature.[6]

In reference to the war between England and Holland Spinoza observed to Oldenburg that the had learned to study human nature in all these troubles without applying praise or blame, without either laughing or crying at man's folly and foolishness. He had thought that man was only a part of Nature; that we are ignorant about. This part is congruent

with the whole and all the parts cohere with each other; and this ignorance encourages the mistaken notion that there is order or confusion in the universe. Because we see the world inadequately and in a shortsighted way some things appear to us useless disordered and absurd. First Spinoza reiterates his warning that there is no beauty nor ugliness no good order nor confusion in Nature. It is our imagination which finds things beautiful or ugly or different. All things are really part of the same whole; being no less than subordinate systems in the natural grouping of things:

> That is why I hold the human body to be a part of the universe; and as regards the human mind, that too I conceive as part of the universe. For I maintain that there is given in the Nature of things and animated objects, an infinite power of thinking, which qua infinite, comprehends in itself ideally the whole of nature...and I hold the human mind to be this same power...so far as it perceives only the human body; and it is in this sense that I conceive the human mind to be a part of a certain infinite intelligence...[8]

But what are these laws of nature? The answer lies in the very essence of man which strives both to persist and to change. However, man is only a part of nature which contains all of the constituents of the universe acting upon all of the rest. The good for each thing is that which helps it. The good for man is that which most helps man become most completely human just as the good for rocks is that which helps rocks be as "rocky" as possible. The ability and power to secure this good is virtue. "The more each person strives and is able to seek his own utility that is to preserve his own being, the more virtue does he possess."[8] Spinoza denies that moral law is distinct from natural law, for the former is one with natural right.

One of Spinoza's more interesting questions concerns that which makes it possible for man to devise and maintain a civil order. The question is really antehistorical as there was actually no time when social life began; rather it should be answered in reference to any kind of settled society, if we analyze carefully the elements of which it consists and their relations to one another. This is the question to which Spinoza first devotes himself, showing that man's law of nature or "natural right" has the actual basis of natural right of all objects:

> It is certain that Nature, taken as a whole, has the highest right over all things in its power; that is to say, the right of nature extends as far as its power extends. For the power of nature is the very power of God, who has the highest right over all things taken together... Each particular thing has the highest right to everything in its power, or that the right of each extends just as far as its power extends.[9]

Spinoza goes on to admit the nonethical character of the law of universal nature (of God) and stresses that nature as a whole is neither a moral order or the source of moral laws for men.

This admits then that no material object or animal does or can act contrary to the laws of universal nature or to the laws of its own existence. He shows that as all natural laws are alike in every man no moral standard of conduct can be derived from them. In this state of existence Spinoza sees the true status of natural right.

Assuming that the theorems in Spinoza's Ethics have been correctly deduced we can deduce the following implications. Knowledge, in general, is knowledge of something; the possibility of certainty inevitably proving the existence of a real object. By analyzing the nature of knowledge one could eventually come to a complete understanding of the nature of reality.

In proving the existence of only one substance, viz., God, Spinoza attempts to show that He is neither a transcendent being nor a finite substance. God is merely the totality of all that is; a rational system whose truth and reality is guaranteed by the certainty of mathematical knowledge. Any substance is is in its own right whatever it is. Its being and nature do not depend on something outside of it. Standing alone it is independent of its environment. This is really the basic difference between a substance and an attribute. An attribute, Spinoza believes, does not stand alone but depends for its being and existence on something else, viz., on a substance.

We have seen, furthermore, that in Spinoza's analysis of the nature of knowledge one needs only one logical way to understand anything, viz., the way of geometry. We must be able to deduce it from something else, and to be deduced the thing in question must stand in an implicatory relation to a system of which it is a part. Therefore nothing but the whole itself stands alone.

In an historical perspective most thinkers have supported positions holding to the existence of a transcendent other to support the rational system. In effect Spinoza denied the logic of such arguments. It would follow then that God did not create the world in any sense that we can understand; that he neither watches over one nor has any of the attributes ascribed to him by man's projections of his own ignorance.

Yet Spinoza does apply the name "God" to a system of implicatorily related truths. In such ascription he is quite in tune with his time. Even Christian philosophers called God ultimate reality; the guarantor of all finite existence. That Spinoza's system of reality fails to satisfy

the ordinary man's religious needs cannot be helped for any true metaphysical historical truth is not designed to assuage the fears of the superstitious.

In this chapter we have stressed the discussion of the universal nature of reality as a totality of everything that is.. We also considered the totality as it is in itself under different aspects. Since there is but one substance and since what is not itself substance must be a property of a substance, everything that is minus the whole must be a property of the one substance, viz., God. Accordingly, Spinoza holds that all that is not God is either an attribute or a mode of God.[10] Unfortunately this is at first study difficult to understand. Yet Spinoza did take the wholeness of reality very seriously; calling the parts of his reality modes seemed no doubt to reinforce this sense of oneness. Spinoza added that the attributes of mind and body are the only attributes of reality. Hence, the same mode appears under the aspect of a variety of attributes; one being mind, the other body, and all else unknown.

In a sense all ideas are always true, according to Spinoza, inasmuch as they are always about theif objects. Since all ideas of perception are adequate God must be their cause:

> So long as we consider things as modes of thinking we must explain the order of the whole of nature, or the whole chain of cause, through the attribute of thought only. And, in so far as we consider things as modes of extension we must explain the order of the whole of nature through the attribute of extension only.... Wherefore of things as they are inthemselves God is really the cause....I cannot for the present explain my meaning more clearly.[11]

We have seen what Spinoza did to the generally conceived notion of "personal Deity" and we will also have noticed the implication of what his thought did to the notion of freedom of choice as the basis of

responsibility. In Spinoza's rigorous determinism, freedom of choice is an illusion born of our ignorance of our own natures and of their dependence on the universal system of things:

> When a man has purposed to make a given thing... his work will be pronounced perfect, not only by himself, but by everyone who rightly knows, or thinks that he knows, the intentions and aim of its author. For instance, suppose anyone sees a work (which I assume to be not yet completed) and knows that the aim of the author of that work is to build a house, he will call the work imperfect; he will, on the other hand, call it perfect, as soon as he sees that it is carried through to the end, which its author had purposed for it...such seems to tell the primary meaning of these terms.
>
> But after men began to form general ideas, to think out types of houses, buildings, towers etc., and to prefer certain types to others, it came about that each man called perfect that which he saw agree with the general idea he had formed of the thing in question, and called imperfect that which he saw agree less...even though it had evidently been completed in accordance with its artificer.. This seems to be the only reason for calling natural phenomena, which, indeed are not made with human hands, perfect or imperfect; for men are wont to form general ideas of things natural, no less than of things artificial, and such ideas they hold as types, believing that nature...has them in view, and has set them as types before herself... Thus we see that men are wont to style natural phenomena perfect or imperfect rather from their own prejudices, than from true knowledge of what they pronounce upon....
>
> As for the terms good and bad, they indicate no positive quality in things regarded in themselves, but are merely modes of thinking or notions which we form from the comparison of things one with another. Thus one and the same thing can be at the same time good, bad, and indifferent. For instance, music is good for him that is melancholy, bad for him that mourns; for him that is deaf, it is neither good nor bad.[12]

Since we note that all values are private preferrences, agreements even about those values that are not rooted in our coming to objective knowledge remain tenuous. They result from the fact that our bodies happen to be similar and are being operated on by similar environments.

We have seen that the goal of life according to Spinoza is to know God.[13] Since knowing God means knowing the whole nexus of implicatory relations of which we are a tiny finite part; it means, therefore, understanding our place in the universe. This life of supposed bondage is truly real. Freedom is only supposed as well when we believe that all of our acts are autonomous and all of our values objective. Happiness then consists in the preservation of our own being; the basic right, the fundamental moral law, is still to love one's self and to seek one's own profit. Virtue lies in acting in accordance with mankind's own law of nature in each particular instance.

However, we see that the laws of our nature are a part of the pervasive rational scheme and that our own profit is a part of that universal order. And since this order is rational, we will not have to take it on either faith or fear. We will understand it and that will be sufficient. This then would be what Spinoza calls the "intellectual love of God," a kind of rational certainty that "in God we live and move and have our being." As rational knowledge surpasses perception, so the highest stage of knowledge surpasses rational knowledge. This intuition, believed Spinoza, is a type of rational knowledge, surely not possible by all, involved when one grasps all at once the connection between things. Everything falls into place and we can view the whole as it might view itself, sub specie aeternitatis.

The central difficulty noted is Spinoza's attempt to combine the world of fact and the world of value. At times he can do this but quite often the attempt lends itself to ambiguity regarding the nature and status of religion; an ambiguity which as we have seen runs through the age.

In reconciling religion with science the traditional concept of the human self seems to disappear into God; a rationale validating all thought.

Spinoza's conclusions about the facts of reality and causality in human history were not inconsequential in his age and they are still more important today. His awareness of the change involved among all parts of the totality of existence is surely a most useful concept to understand in our search for meaning in today's contemporary revolutions.

In the concluding chapter we will analyze the above conclusions in relation to their consistancy and practicability. In so doing the awareness will be made clear concerning a manner of adapting Spinoza's ideas of history to a viable process interpretation of contemporary monotheism.

Chapter V: CONCLUSION

We have seen first of all how similar is Spinoza's manner of understanding biblical history to his comprehension of the laws of nature. The knowledge of the Bible obtained only from biblical data just as knowledge of nature is obtained only from nature herself should be the optimal method of operation. Any judgments based on such data should really be free from spurious considerations of what is good, beautiful or reasonable.[1]

Biblical history as conceived of by Spinoza contains essentially three main parts: First, thorough knowledge of the language of the Bible; second, collection and clear arrangement of the statements of each biblical book regarding every significant subject; third, knowledge of the lives of Biblical characters and authors, including their time of composition, occasion, and motivations. Such data properly arranged and understood in the light of grammar, and history, etc., are the basis of interpretation per se., which consists in inferring by legitimate reasoning from the gathered data just what was the thought of the Biblical authors.[2] This principle of Biblical interpretation viz., the only meaning of a biblical passage is its literal meaning except when reasons of language demand metaphorical interpretation, is indeed an exaggeration justified by powers of against free speech which he is against. By the use of such a rule Spinoza lets us know how he thinks one should understand the literary records of historical reporting in the light of factual history. Since most worthwhile books are neither absolutely intelligible nor absolutely unintelligible without history; "history," is required for the understanding of any book to the extent to which the book is not self-explanatory. According to Spinoza then the contribution of history to the understanding of truly useful books cannot be trivial.

The modern philosopher takes it for granted that in order to be adequate to its task, all interpretation of any literature whatsoever must be historical and that therefore the history of philosophy in the context of its time is invaluable. Spinoza realized that men need more of history for understanding the past than for understanding the contemporary situation. Regarding his opinion of the history of philosophy we have noted that when he speaks of the philosophy of politics he declares flatly that all prior to his own is useless.[3]

We have noted how one had to judge the predominant thought of Spinoza in relation to the philosophy of his times. In present day understanding science rejects any final account of the whole, whereas in Spinoza's day the belief in the possibility and necessity of a final account of the whole was prevalent. At that time history in general and history of human thought in particular was not a part of the philosophic effort. The study of earlier thought led the historian to realize that one could not understand the thought of the past as long as one was guided by the conviction that history formed an integral part of the philosophic effort. This "self-destruction" of historicism was bound to come by the nineteenth-century. Yet in Spinoza's writings we note his need to limit history to the understanding of difficult books.

We must remember that Spinoza wrote primarily for a large audience. In order to affect the largest possible numbers of mature minds he then wrote to communicate primarily with the Christians.[4] Yet in its subject matter the Tractatus is more Jewish than Christian for the obvious fact that Spinoza was more versed in Jewish than Christian sources. In his

discussion of miracles Spinoza asserts, in striking contradiction to that principle,[5] that the biblical teaching fully agrees with philosophy and that any biblical passage which contradicts that teaching must be rejected as sacrilegious. Such a method of solving the conflict between philosophy and the Bible had been used by Spinoza's contemporary Uriel da Costa. Perhaps this is a relic of Spinoza's youthful reflections. In his discussion of miracles Spinoza continually rejected the possibility of supra-rational teachings, viz., miracles. Yet he does speak of the existence of supra-rational teachings in the "format" of revelation. To avoid the break with the Bible over the essential teachings of Judaism Spinoza had to assert that the possibility of miracles per se was denied by the Bible. He had no choice, therefore, but to say that any biblical account of miracles could not have been really biblical but must have been an addition.[6]

Let us recall that the Tractatus was written after Spinoza's break with Judaism and therefore he could not address his fellow Jews in the same manner in which he could speak to Christians and any open minded persons. Of course Spinoza realized that in order to win the most converts for his cause he had to take into account the social power and political advantages of Christianity. This could explain why he attacks Judaism and the Old Testament more than Christianity. However, we must realize, contradictions aside, that the arguments put forth for Judaism hold equally true for Christianity. The history put forth by any religious dogmatist was in severe disrepute in Spinoza's opinion. The Tractatus seems directed primarily against any type of scepticism or dogmatism be that Jewish or Christian. This is necessary for him to approach an accurate historical interpretation of

the history of the time. Such a criticism, we have attempted to show, seeks to destroy the ancient prejudices that go along with the Bible as "document."

In using the Bible both as an authoritative text as well as a target of philosophical criticism Spinoza seems to value the separation of theology and philosophy over that of anything else. It is almost as if he uses an objective historical criticism of the Bible for philosophical motives; to reject any form of theological authority as unacceptable to the mind. The first six chapters of the Tractatus, which set the foundation for the entire work, do not presuppose the results of a higher criticism of the Bible or in any other way contradict the results. In these chapters, Moses' authorship is clearly taken for granted. The same can be said for Spinoza's utilization of the Tractatus' seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth chapters for possible political instruction. Yet the value of Spinoza's views on History are not impaired by this "apparent" contradiction; for regardless of who the authors of the Bible were, or the originators of the institutions recorded and recommended in the Bible, the rational critique of the supernatural claims for biblical teaching leads to the rejection of all biblical authority.

Spinoza viewed the Bible as rich in contradictions. In one set of passages he suggests that the Bible is hieroglyphic, i.e., unintelligible on account of its subject matter.[7] In another set of passages he says with equal definiteness that the Bible is easily intelligible on account of its subject matter; that all difficulties obstructing its understanding are due to our insufficient knowledge of the language and the poor condition of the text...[8] It is very

difficult to ascertain the meaning of a book that consists of contradictions especially if it has been poorly preserved. Spinoza regarded the Bible as such a book. He thought that by use of the right method the problem could be overcome. This method consists in part of seeing through contradictions. In the Tractatus, Spinoza addresses potential philosophers of a certain kind while the common men are listening. Like Maimonides in the Guide for the Perplexed, he speaks in a way that the plain man will not understand. Possibly it is for these reasons that he speaks so often in "seeming" contradictions. For instance we have seen how Spinoza denies the possibility of miracles proper. But he goes on to speak in later chapters of miracles without making it clear that he understands them to be merely natural phenomena which seemed to be strange to the particular "plain men" who observed and recorded them. One might say that the chapters of his work are used to refute particular orthodox dogmas. Very few readers would understand that often an author makes frequent contradictory statements on a subject to conceal his true views. Probably the only sound rule for understanding Spinoza's feelings on history in the Tractatus is that in case of a "contradiction" the statement most opposed to what Spinoza considered the common view has to be regarded as expressing his serious view. There certainly was reason for Spinoza to believe that the educated would eventually be able to find and understand his truths.

Spinoza did believe that revelation was intelligible and that it did not interfere with reason. Biblical history satisfied him that the phenomenon of prophecy or revelation is not directly affected by Divine will but by the secondary causes. Accordingly, he sought for natural explanation of the fact that revelation could be partly above but never

against reason. Spinoza does realize then that God encompasses the totality of the existence of physical as well as human nature. No human being is really outside of history for all parts of the existent reality are intrinsically interconnected within God. In his Ethics, Spinoza recognizes the existence of a hierarchy of values. He also notes the differentiation between intuition and reason. In seeking that objective evaluation of Spinoza's views on history we first should note his three stages of method: the intuitive response to externality, the awareness of scientific methodology, and the lack of real difference between subject and object in referrents "sub species aternitatis."

To understand these three points we must first remember Spinoza's advice in the Ethics regarding the good, i.e., that mankind, acting within the order of nature, can only allow passion to control valuations inasmuch as passion is the source of values. Good will forever remain that which is useful to us and evil be that which impedes the possession of good. The only power for preservation of man's being is the power of God and His universal essence. Thus the effect of external causes on the mind may be far greater than that of the knowledge of good or evil which so few possess. Mankind suffers because it forms a part of nature. Yet we should not confuse the means with the ends in this understanding of the doctrine of good. A thing is good because it is desired; yet it is not desired because it is good. Superficial interpretations can only become subversive in this respect. Naturally any external cause would be restrained by a present desire which is stronger than an existing desire. Opinion excercises a more potent force than reason.

Hence one tends to approve the better, but follow the worse. Generally men act in accord with reason and want for themselves only what they want for all. Their knowledge of God is the supreme mental virtue and subject of our understanding. To know God is the supreme good and it is a goal in harmony with our natures. Really nothing which is not in harmony with our natures can be understood as good. Unfortunately men cannot agree in nature with others when they act out of passion. Men are most useful to each other when they are ruled by the laws of reason. Therefore, the advantages of social life preponderate over its disadvantages for men can achieve their needs most efficiently through cooperation in mutual aid. Any man seeking after virtue then will desire others to do so and this desire will increase in proportion to the increase of his knowledge of God. This is in accordance with reason, which is the operation of the mind according to its essential nature. Therefore, the greater the knowledge of God involved, the greater will be the desire to further social harmony in others and in the community.

The problems seen occassionally arising in the Tractatus regarding the nature of man and his actions in history may now be understood not so much as paradoxical but as different elements of his nature manifesting themselves at different times and in different situations. If the "whole" is always constant it must of necessity determine all causal connections. The only exception is God being self-caused as the totality. All relationships in the world then are determinate within God. What on the surface seems a contradiction of the finite being within and yet conceived apart from the infinite is really none other than an awareness, on a limited measure, of the infinite. Since God

is the interacting totality of the world and cannot experience contradiction within his system of causality there can exist no actual division in his mind or his desire. Also in the case of man there is no division of mind; rather a unity of diversity. Men are at one and the same time a totality and a set of interacting elements. When one analyses the elements and the causes for their acting in history the way that they do, he is not really disintegrating the totality of his human nature but distinguishing between the elements. Knowledge of man's place in the totality of the laws of nature is then done by extension; with the mind bridging the gap to God as totality and essential substance.

A human then can be aware of multiplicity at the same time that he is aware of the relationship of parts. This is done vis-a-vis God within a context of universal totality. This implicatory relationship of the parts to the whole, set down geometrically in the Ethics, allows us to better understand man's role in the world. The universal nature of reality is then a totality of everything that exists. One may compare this to a whole person. His limbs and his nervous system are attributes of his total existence. Depending upon which stimulus is in the forefront, one's interest may be related at times either to the various individual parts or to the totality as a personality. Yet in any case the parts remain subordinate to the whole. An amputated limb is not a limb in the same sense as when it was attached to the body.

Arriving finally at the highest stage of intuitive knowledge, one does not set the object outside of the subject or apart in any form. He realized that apartness is merely an intellectual division of the totality, and that this differential is simply a way of viewing the modes and attributes of a single reality.

Understanding Spinoza's conception of the interrelatedness of the parts to the whole, we can view his concept of history more intelligibly. Spinoza realized the limitations of theology and religion as applied to history of human beings. He knew that the good religion did not have to depend upon either time or place. Nature, being similar to man's conscience is the only window through which he can learn the truth of the universe—insofar as such truth is knowable—with his finite awareness. The world is now seen as the outcome of God's physical mode of extension, while thought is the mental mode of God's activity. With God being the totality, and the world existing as the interconnection of the parts, there is no room for revelation per se. Man's chief aim must then be to evolve political unity whereby the citizens of a state agree to abide by the stipulations of a compact. The society in return for the voluntary surrender of individual rights is obligated to produce protection for the individual.

Further, Spinoza viewed Scripture as tending to orient man toward teleology. No positive characteristics of God's action in the world may be gained by an analysis of His effects or essence. In fact the subject of God in history can only be made clear by its role in nature and the universe; the only legitimate consequences of God's activity. The infinity of nature is then the existence of God, viz., "Deus est Natura." With such awareness it is not unusual for Spinoza to have characterized God in history as both immanent and transcendant. In the Ethics this appraisal of the universe is done geometrically with a maximum of objectivity and logic.

In his comparison of the Old and New Testament historicism, Spinoza considered all the prophets to fall within the same historical category; for all things occuring in nature and history have of necessity God as their ultimate cause. We recall the aim of the Tractatus; to separate philosophy from theology, and to show how prophecy is an historical phenomenon. To maintain a place for religion at all in his scheme Spinoza had no other choice than to suggest that all miracle stories are no more than additions to Scripture.

Spinoza's views concerning Biblical history rest on the non-intelligibility of miracles set down as remnants of superstition and prejudice. He accepted nothing as authoritative in Scripture which did not jibe with history as then known. Spinoza held that neither Judaism nor Christianity was in a superior position historically. He merely desired to teach that no doctrine can be accepted as historical unless it can be found to withstand the scrutiny of reason.

Spinoza did understand politics as a firm use of liberalism being undergirded with authority. He had a high evaluation of religious and personal freedom during a time when Calvinist rigor seemed to make a virtue of the prevailing poverty of the masses. He considered all human acts of history as a consequence of appetites, and believed that only through mathematics could one attain liberation along the pathway of intellectual truth seeking. Geometry had both an eternal quality and a priori truths, necessary for an understanding of the universal laws of nature. After applying such a scientific method Spinoza could only be appalled by a past human history so filled with tyranny and absolute authority. There was no sucessful democracy in history which

was incompatible with oligarchical rule. What the majority believed was not important for they were too often frustrated and unenlightened. Thus Spinoza could read history as telling how all civil war arose from improper economic and authoritarian uses of power. One should then serve God with primary obligation to avoid civil war. This lesson, derived from the Old Testament, is of course subject to doubt inasmuch as Spinoza really could not know how inaccurate his sources in fact were.

Perhaps Spinoza wished to see more in Biblical history than was really there. His analysis of the decay of states, based on this history, neglected comprehension of the inexactitude of the history within them. In so stressing the importance of the Hebrew state as a model, and assuming its downfall to be related only to the conflict between priest and government, Spinoza overlooked the possibility of the rational models in the story being nonexistent in reality. Surely he realized that the history of the wilderness wanderings was not altogether accurate! Unfortunately, he neglected the fact that quite possible and truely they were not at all historical. His antipathy toward Moses' leadership quite probably gave him the unseen bias for uncritically accepting the story of Korach's rebellion. Spinoza's distaste for the Biblical monarchy, coupled with his disdain for the Dutch government of the united states of the Netherlands no doubt led him to gloss over some of the historicity of Biblical material at his disposal in order to make a stronger point. Utilizing only reason and logic as the measure, Spinoza was hasty in accepting any Biblical narrative that was reasonable and logical to be historically accurate. Thus his respect for science and freedom of thought led him too often,

in his analysis and comparisons, to identify the naturally possible and intellectually reasonable with the historically true and accurate.

Spinoza does realize that it is the essence and the nature of man to undergo change, but he talks only about changes in man necessary to overcome external pressures. In so doing he places too much emphasis upon ideal situations which he hopes could be common to all men. Since such an equality could not be other than theoretical, perhaps in a distinct racial group, such an idealization holds little practical value. Yet even discounting this element of a unified harmonious history, we can still agree with his insights on the parallelistic relationship of man and nature. In showing how our views of the absurdity of nature are related to the level of ignorance within us of the coherence of the whole, Spinoza presents a good case for a universal harmony in the world; one that could be approached by man. Just as the good for all things is that which helps them to be more in line with their essential nature; the good for man as well is that which makes man more completely human.

Through Spinoza's analysis of the nature of knowledge, he is able to see that the only true way of understanding history is to be able to deduce its facts from an implicatory relation to all other facts. Thusly, to comprehend the total system of related truths would be to understand causality; God himself (the hierarchy of values per se.

The only flaw in Spinoza's reasoning thus far lies within the analysis of the wholeness of historical causality, and an absolute parallism of human nature with the laws of natural order. If God is the totality of all cause and effect in nature, and the cause of nature

itself, there seems little room for either stages of unprecedented growth in human endeavor or the appearance of new elements in the panopoly of human causality. This then seems to be Spinoza's most conspicuous blind spot regarding historical analysis. Of course God is an iffinite all-inclusive and timeless being manifesting finite modes of existence in the world as we know it. God, in his infinite causality, is the source of all that is and all that can be. The "yet to be" or future element is the weak link in Spinoza's analysis of history. This of course is quite understandable since Spinoza overlooked, linguistic analyses excluded, the fact that his sources of history themselves were not at all accurate. They were not reliable because they were the outcome of a complex historical form of process development that made them difficult to date with precision.

Most important is the fact that these sources did not operate with a conception of dynamic change allowing for stages of development from primitive economic forms to sophisticated capitalistic or entreprenurial breakthroughs. Just as the evolutionary principle operates consistantly in nature it operates, though slowly, in human nature as well. Since the mind of man is capable of an awareness of the novel, individualistic, it would follow that God must be its cause.

Spinoza's view of the repetition of history must thus be modified to include process and development, not only within our own minds, but but in the world at large. Since our minds are a part of the whole, and can become aware of the infinity of God, it is quite in order to posit the existence of directional purpose through innovation, and stages of growth and development. Inasmuch as this falls within the

existing system of natural order, it is only right that our very concepts of God should evolve to higher and more sophisticated levels. Thus Spinoza can, if interpreted on this level, be modern and relevant. One must simply follow his system of historic interpretations out to their logical consequences in order to see that the inclusion of expanding, creative monotheism is not only possible, but historically verifiable. If Spinoza had access to our historical tools of modern criticism, he no doubt would have arrived at these same conclusions, since they do fall within an expanded and logical extension of his concept of God as the self-caused totality.

Spinoza's contribution to the field of philosophical history then, is inestimable in its value, because of the broad vision that it opens to the infinity of possibilities for expansion of human endeavor within the purview of an infinite natural causality. It is then from such an in-depth mode of thinking about the commonalities between the infinity of God and the infinity-like elements within the human mind that we today have the resources and possibilities to break with the traditional orders of economic and political growth patterns, to evolve higher and more significant forms of incentive-minded governmental structures and to cope with the new horizons manifest in mankind's ever progressing spectrum of thought and awareness.

NOTES

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2 Correspondence with Blyenberg, Letter XXXIV.

3 Tractatus, Preface.

4 Tractatus, VI.

5 Ibid., XIV.

6 Ibid., XV.

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9 Ibid., I.

10 Ibid., VI.

11 Ibid., VI.

12 Ibid., VI.

13 Ibid., VI.

14 Ibid., VI.

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16 Tractatus, VII.

17 Correspondence with Oldenbergh, Letter XXXIII.

18 Ibid., XXI.

19 Tractatus, VI.

20 Ibid., VI.

23 Tractatus, pp. 46-47.

24 Ibid., pp. 49-50.

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27 Ibid., pp. 18-19.

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31 Ibid., pp. 165-6.

32 Ibid., p. 101.

33 Ibid., p. 18.

34 Ibid., p. 54.

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1 On the Improvement of the Understanding, Elwes, loc cit.

2 Ibid., pp. 3-7.

3 Short Treatise, pp. CXXV.

4 Tractatus, p. 249.

5 Ibid., p. 6.

6 Ibid., p. 76.

7 Ibid., p. 78.

8 Ibid., p. 268.

9 Short Treatise, pp. 36-40.

10 Ethics, Part III, Preface.

[11] Tractatus, pp. 5-11.
[12] Ethics, IV, Proposition LXX.
[13] Tractatus, p. 5.
[14] Ibid., p. 242.
[15] Tractatus p. 243.
[16] Ibid., p. 244.
[17] Ibid., pp. 314-315.
[18] Ibid., pp. 205-6.
[19] Ibid., p. 205.
[20] Josephus. p. 284.
[21] Tractatus., p. 226.
[22] Ibid., pp. 227-228.
[23] Ibid., p. 228.
[24] Ibid., p. 230.
[25] Ibid., p. 232.
[26] Ibid., p. 235
[26] Ibid., p. 234.
[28] Ibid., p. 234.
[29] Ibid., p. 235.
[30] Ibid., p. 236.

Chapter Four

[1] Ethics, Spinoza. (Elwes Vol II.)
[2] Ibid., Prop. XXI, Part I.
[3] Ibid., Prop. XXI.
[4] Ibid., Schol., Prop. XXIX.
[5] On the Improvement of the Understanding p. 1.
[6] Tractatus, p. 201
[7] Ethics, p. 80-84.

8 Ibid., p. 20.

9 Tractatus, pp. 200-201.

10 Ethics., Defs. III, IV, V. Axiom II.

11 Ibid., Part II, Prop. VIII.

12 Ibid., Part IV, Preface.

13 Ibid., Part IV, Prop. XXVIII.

Chapter Five

1 Tractatus, VII, pp. 98-101.

2 Ibid., VII, pp. 101-104.

3 Ibid., I. 1.

4 Ibid., p. 21.

5 That the true meaning of any biblical passage has to be established solely out of the context of the Bible.

6 Ibid., VI, p. 9.

7 Ibid., VII, pp. 98-112.

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