



Notes on the Philosophy of Spinoza

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Mind, Vol. 3, No. 10. (Apr., 1878), pp. 195-212.

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of objects having spacial relations—as the antecedents of our space-consciousness, does all the time assume the independent and absolute existence of that very space the origin of which it seeks in a certain mode of feeling. To this it is enough to reply, that workers like Helmholtz and Wundt occupy themselves solely with the empirical problem of accounting for the genesis of the space-perception in the individual mind, viewed as an objective process, that is to say, by another mind. To A, with his developed space-consciousness, the rise of B's space-consciousness presents itself as a sequence of definite feelings on definite material processes (nerve-stimulations) in space. B is able to view the genesis of A's space-consciousness in a similar way. Now it may be that the observer in each of these cases is, after all, conceiving under these material processes in space nothing but a mode of his own (or some third person's) feelings (motor and tactual). And thus it is clear that the genetic method, in connecting the perception with certain physical antecedents, makes no assumption respecting the independent existence of space.

JAMES SULLY.

III.—NOTES ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF SPINOZA

IN the spring of last year I had the honour of giving a Friday evening discourse on Spinoza at the Royal Institution which is printed very nearly as it was delivered in the *Proceedings of the Royal Institution* (Vol. VIII, p. 363). The wise custom which as a rule confines the length of such discourses to one hour imposed on me an amount of condensation which, however necessary for the spoken word, would be needless and unsuitable in a paper intended for the readers of MIND. The present article contains a more developed statement of points which, at the Royal Institution, I could merely indicate. In the course of my work on the subject I have received valuable communications from several friends, and I take this opportunity of acknowledging once for all in a general form obligations which it would be difficult to specify accurately or adequately in detail.

It may be taken as determined beyond question that in the *Ethics* of Spinoza we have one of the most remarkable achievements of constructive philosophic genius ever given to the world. In philosophy, however, as in literature and art, the power which stamps a man's work as eminently his own is to be sought not in the part but in the whole, and a true master's fame has nothing to fear from the utmost that critical

research can do in tracing back to their sources the elements he wrought upon. As Prof. Land of Leyden well says (in his recently published lecture, *Ter Gedachtenis van Spinoza*, where much valuable matter, both historical and critical, may be found in a small compass), "originality consists, not in a man's producing every element of his work by himself, but in his binding together existing elements in a new combination which bears the stamp of his individuality, and leaves its mark behind it in the work of others". The steady light of great men's renown shines on long after the passing dazzle of so-called originality has disappeared. After all, what would a perfectly original idea be but an idea having no relation to the time, place, and circumstances in which it was put forth, and therefore hopelessly barren? True creation is not to make out of nothing, but to make new life out of the heritage of the past. In Spinoza's case there has been too much dazzle; the system of the *Ethics* seemed to have sprung from his brain armed at all points, and his conceptions, while they stood out in abrupt and isolated grandeur, have been more admired than appreciated. Leibnitz indeed asserted, and it has remained a sort of tradition in a certain school of philosophy to assert, that Spinoza did nothing but carry to an extreme development one side of the principles of Descartes. This position seems to me, I confess, so untenable that I can only wonder at its being still maintained by any competent person. M. Francisque Bouillier (*Hist. de la Philosophie Cartésienne*) adheres to it with very little qualification, and in particular minimises the importance of Spinoza's Jewish predecessors. It is fair to note that Dr. Joël's evidence was not before him. But Prof. Caird, with that evidence before him, has also taken the same line in his article on 'Cartesianism' in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. I can account for it only by the exigencies of some pre-conceived or pre-adopted theory of what the history of philosophy ought to have been.

There is no doubt an unmistakable Cartesian element in Spinoza, more especially in his form and method; and Descartes may also claim—what is more important than any particular doctrine—to have taught him that philosophy must thoroughly assimilate the lessons of natural science before she attempts any flight outside their range. The most striking specific points of Spinoza's philosophy remain, however, unaccounted for by Cartesian sources, or by any other sources that were open to him in common with the general world of letters. Only of late years the riddle has been solved, partly by the discovery of new materials for the history of Spinoza's own thought, but chiefly by the light thrown upon his already known works from an unexplored and, strange to

say, unexpected quarter. It was for a long time assumed by historians of philosophy that, after he was cut off from the synagogue of Amsterdam, Spinoza had no further use for Jewish learning save for polemical purposes; and the assumption was the more convenient, inasmuch as that learning was outside the accustomed lines of western culture, and not easily accessible to any but Orientalists. It was reserved for scholars of Spinoza's own race to make good the share of the Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages in the quarries whence the stones of his building were hewn. This work, begun by Auerbach, has been lately carried out by Dr. Joël of Breslau, who in a series of valuable monographs (now collected)* has given us a far juster notion than was before attainable of the resources Spinoza had at his disposal in the modern literature of his own people. I will now give a condensed account of the results of this line of inquiry, so far as known to me at present, collected from Dr. Joël's work and elsewhere. The simplest way is to take the leading names of mediæval Jewish philosophy in chronological order.

1. *Avicbron*.†

Ibn-Gebirol (d. at Malaga 1070) belongs to the earliest generation of Jewish philosophers, and is not the least striking figure among them. There is reason to think that some at least of his ideas found their way to Spinoza, but it was by a strangely circuitous road. In his day the Aristotelian doctrine, which so long held undisputed sway in both Jewish and Catholic schools, was still struggling with Neo-Platonism, and it was chiefly with Neo-Platonic materials that Ibn-Gebirol constructed his own brilliant and rather eccentric speculations. Honoured but little among his own people, he was soon overwhelmed in the Peripatetic flood, and entirely forgotten as a philosopher. Meanwhile his principal work had been translated into Latin under the name of *Fons Vitæ*, and became well known to the founders of the Scholastic philosophy. The author's name was concealed under the Latinised Avicbron, and by a sort of unreasoned mental attraction he was set down as belonging to the Arabian group headed by Averroes and Avicenna. It was only in late years that the sagacious industry of the late Dr. Munk re-discovered in the unknown Avicbron the Jew Ibn-

* *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie*, Breslau, 1876. I cannot help finding one fault with Dr. Joël's work: he seems to assume that all his readers will be Hebrew scholars, and often gives long extracts without a translation.

† See Munk, *Mélanges de Philosophie juive et arabe*; Lewes, *History of Philosophy*, II. 61.

Gebiorol. The *Fons Vitæ*, however, fell in due time into the hands of Giordano Bruno, who received it with a much more kindred spirit than Aristotelian orthodoxy had done. Bruno repeatedly cites Avicbron with approval, and there is a good deal of likeness in the general strain of their speculation. The ideas thus taken up were passed on in turn to Spinoza, who can never have even suspected how much nearer to him their real source was. Spinoza's relation to Giordano Bruno has been exaggerated in some quarters and ignored in others. It is enough to say, however, that there is no external probability against Spinoza having been acquainted with the main contents at least of Bruno's works, and the internal evidence in favour of it is all but irresistible. It may remain, perhaps, an open question whether Spinoza had read the actual text of Giordano Bruno, though there is no reason why his knowledge should not have been at first hand. There can also be little doubt that the terminology of Spinoza's metaphysic (as to attributes and modes) was suggested by Giordano Bruno. But of Spinoza's precision in the use of terms there is no trace in Bruno, who is everything but systematic.

The element specially contributed from this quarter to Spinoza's philosophy is that which has caused it to be commonly ranked as pantheism—the speculative delight in the conception of the world as an infinite unity, wherein all the varieties of finite existence are welded into one without losing their reality. Spinoza's philosophy is utterly remote from the Oriental pantheism which denies reality to finite things. People who talk of "Pantheism from the Vedas to Spinoza" for the purpose of showing that Spinoza produced only a new variety of ancient error show nothing but that they have either neglected to procure ordinary information, or are incompetent to discuss philosophy at all. It is needless to remark that the pantheism of developed Hindu philosophy is in fact later than the Vedas by a number of centuries not yet accurately determined. It is surprising, however, to find such a writer as Prof. Caird countenancing the vulgar error by speaking of "the Spinozistic pantheism that reduces the world and the finite spirit to an illusion". We shall shortly see that another Jewish predecessor may likewise claim a share in this element.

2. *The Jewish Peripatetics.*

Partly coinciding in time with Catholic Scholasticism, but with its rise and culminating period nearly a century earlier, a series of Jewish philosophers in Spain, Provence, and the East, did work which has a far more important place in the general history

of philosophy than has commonly been allowed to it. The task they set themselves was the same in kind as that of the Schoolmen, who, in spite of religious difference, joined hands with them on the common ground of Aristotle, and used their work with open acknowledgment and respect. They strove, in one word, to systematise theology on an Aristotelian footing. For this purpose it was necessary to embark on a critical and philosophical interpretation of Scripture; and in this undertaking the comparatively undefined character of Jewish orthodoxy secured them a certain amount of freedom.* Or rather philosophy presented itself to Jewish speculation as an enlightened interpretation of the hidden meaning of the law. Thus Moses Maimon and Ibn Ezra were leaders in biblical criticism no less than in philosophy. The ideas they put forward in this field were to be carried out to their full development in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. Spinoza's object is indeed opposite to that of Maimonides; so far from finding philosophy in the Scriptures, he maintains that it is idle to seek it there; and the sharpness of his criticism on Maimonides's artificial system of interpretation has probably distracted attention from that which they really have in common. Maimonides' work was continued by Levi ben Gerson, or Gersonides (born at Bagnal in Provence in 1288, living in 1340), who, professing to be a mere interpreter of the Scriptures and to rely on them as the source of every kind of knowledge, was at the same time more thoroughly Aristotelian than his predecessors. The discovery of Aristotelian metaphysics in the Song of Solomon was probably the extreme feat of the Jewish theologico-philosophical dialectic.

The influence of these writers on the purely philosophical part of Spinoza's work was comparatively slight: it is perhaps not too much to say that there are only traces of it in the *Ethics*. Still the points of affinity are notable. The following are specimens of those which may be found in Maimonides' great work, the *More Nebuchim*.†

The will and the wisdom of God are regarded as inseparable. And not only is there no real distinction between the divine attributes, but no attribute whatever can be predicated of God in

* The Mahometan schools enjoyed the same advantage. Strictly speaking, neither Judaism nor Islam has any dogmatic theology at all. At the same time there must have been in practice a good deal of restraint. Maimonides expressly warns his readers that on many points he will be deliberately obscure; and Ibn Ezra could only hint with elaborate mystery that "the Canaanite was then in the land" could not have been the language of Moses' generation. The intervals of absolute silence in his commentary on Isaiah are even more significant.

† Edited by Dr. Munk, *sub tit.* *Le Guide des Égarés*, with literal French translation.

the ordinary sense—even eternity and existence, as applied to him, are merely *homonymous* with the same terms in any other application (c. 56 *et alit.*). This however is by no means peculiar to Maimonides.

The existence of God is involved in his essence; otherwise of the existence of any finite creature, which may be considered as an accident in the logical sense (cc. 57, 58).

God coexists with the creation as its cause *in actu*, not as a cause *in potentia*, which precedes the effect in time.*

Perfect intellect forms no conception of good and evil, only of true and false. Such was the first state of Adam. Good and evil belong to the region of probable opinion (c. 2).

Dr. Joël also calls attention to Maimonides' reflections on final causes as being fitted to prepare the way for Spinoza's entire rejection of them.†

3. Don Chasdai Creskas.

Chasdai Creskas (of Barcelona, *fl. circ.* 1400) broke with the Peripatetic tradition to strike out an independent line of his own. Several of the most characteristic points of Spinoza's philosophy—some already well developed—are found in his *Or Adonai* (1410).

He censures as fallacious the notion of infinite extension being made up of measurable parts (Spinoza, *Eth.* i. 15, schol., *Ep.* 29): he also holds matter to be eternal, the act of creation consisting only in the ordering of it; and maintains that the material world, being (as known by revelation?) good in its kind, partakes of the Divine nature. The contrast of this with the Cartesian theory of substances distinct *in genere* probably had something to do with Spinoza's conception of extension as an attribute co-equal with thought.

Again, the perfection of God consists not in knowledge, as the Aristotelians say, but in love. This love is what determines God to creation as a necessity of his nature, and nevertheless an act of will. Love being the chief attribute of God, the perfection of any creature depends on the extent to which it shares in this: thus the love of God (for its own sake, not as a means of salvation) is the chief end of man. Here we get some light on the fifth book of the *Ethics* of Spinoza, which has always seemed

* Cap. 69. One may be allowed to note (though not here relevant) Maimonides' answer to the standing question why the world, if created in time, was created at one time rather than another. He says it is just like asking why there exists a certain number, neither more nor less, of individuals of any kind—*e.g.*, the fixed stars.

† *Zur Genesis der Lehre Spinoza's* (in *Beiträge zur Gesch. d. Philos.*)

to me the most obscure part of his philosophy both in itself and in relation to the rest. Perhaps Orientalists may have yet more to tell us on this head.

Most remarkable of all, perhaps, is Chasdai's thorough determinism. He explicitly denies that any event, whether depending on human choice or not, can be called possible or contingent in an absolute sense. It is inconceivable, he says, "that two men, being themselves of like temper and character, and having before them like objects of choice in like circumstances, should choose differently". Volitions are determined by motives as much as anything else in nature is determined. An act of free will is *free* in so far as it is not *compelled*, but *necessary* in so far as it is not *uncaused*. Reward and punishment are themselves parts of the necessary order of things, attached however by Providence, for reasons of policy, to those actions which are free in the popular sense—that is, which are determined by a state of mind involving the love of God or its contrary. The argument on this topic seems to be fully worked out, and to deal with most of the points that have been made in later controversy on the subject. Chasdai holds fast, it must be remembered, to the idea of *designed* order in the universe, though final causes in the ordinary sense are as it were swallowed up in the absolute, self-sufficient necessity by which God's love manifests itself. Thus he cannot be regarded as a forerunner of Spinoza's system; Spinoza took the suggestions in detail and worked them into a systematic connexion of his own, which would probably have found little favour in Chasdai's eyes.

As to Descartes, Spinoza's philosophical relation to him has been so amply discussed that there is no occasion to dwell on it. I doubt, however, whether justice has been done to the scientific side of it. A clear grasp of physical conceptions and a careful avoidance of mistakes in physical science are prominent in Spinoza's work. That the spirit of exact science must go before the spirit of philosophy, if philosophy is to be more than a plaything, was a precept which Spinoza might learn from Descartes, and from him alone. I must add nevertheless that I do not agree with those (including Dr. Joël) who hold that Spinoza was at any time a Cartesian. All the evidence we have goes to show that such a time, if any, must have been exceedingly short. The early *Essay on God and Man* is little, if at all, more Cartesian than the *Ethics* in its general principles, though doubtless much more Cartesian in detail. The account of the passions follows pretty closely Descartes' *Traité des Passions*: yet the differences are already important. Of Descartes' elaborate physiological explanations there is not a word, an omission which we may

fairly interpret by the light of Spinoza's later criticism. Descartes asserts that all the passions are in themselves good, and only their excess is harmful; sorrow has its place no less than joy, and is even "en quelque façon première et plus nécessaire". Spinoza denies it even more sharply than in the *Ethics*, rejecting hope, fear, and all passions derived from them, as unworthy of a wise man's life.

As to the *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*, I can see no sufficient reason for doubting Spinoza's own account of the circumstances under which that work was produced. He was unquestionably not a Cartesian when it was put into shape for publication; and if we may trust his own words, he was not so at the time of giving the private lessons that were the foundation of it (*Ep.* 9). In short, at the most important time of his growth Spinoza necessarily breathed a Cartesian atmosphere, just as a century and a half later he would have breathed a Kantian atmosphere: but it is a long way from this to making out a case of subordination or even of direct descent.

When everything has been said about the sources of Spinoza's philosophy, or rather of the several elements combined in it, the whole remains as much his own as ever. Nothing more strongly shows its individuality than the extreme difficulty of making it fit into any of the usual classifications. It has been called by every possible name, but the more one considers it, the more it refuses to be put into any of the pigeon-holes labelled with words in *ism*. Every name is found to halt somewhere in the application except those which are too vague to convey any real information. There is no pleasure and small profit in discussing the various attempts of critics to mete Spinoza with their various little measures. It is simpler to give the reader an earnest warning once for all not to take upon trust any statement, especially any hostile statement, of Spinoza's doctrines. The use of good expositions is to send one to the text; and this is eminently the case with Spinoza. I know of hardly any philosopher since Plato who loses so much in being reported at second-hand.*

The reader of the *Ethics* is startled almost at the threshold—

* The best general account is Kuno Fischer's. Of distinctly adverse critiques the best I know is Saisset's; for M. Paul Janet's excellent papers on Spinozism can hardly be classed under that head, though his philosophy is widely different from Spinoza's. One or two which have lately appeared in sectarian journals in this country are beneath serious notice. John Howe's *Living Temple* (1702) deserves remark as containing the first English polemic against Spinoza. The argument never gets beyond the definitions of substance and attribute. Howe shows no sign of really understanding Spinoza, and I suspect that he had not read more than the first Part of the *Ethics*.

many I believe are deterred—by the theory of the Attributes. This, if it is nothing else, is one of the most brilliant *tours de force* ever achieved in metaphysics. Looking at the matter in a purely scientific spirit, I suppose we must not approve *tours de force* on any terms. Yet it is impossible to refrain from admiring a flight of speculation which is guided in the very height of its daring by the finest possible sense of the dangers to be escaped on either hand. In the light of more recent controversies one is almost tempted to call it a prophetic tact. Those who maintain that the methods of scientific inquiry, if good for anything, are good for the whole field of human knowledge, have ever been assailed by the cuckoo cry of materialism. They are charged (in almost every case most unjustly) with seeking to reduce all being to that which can be touched and tasted and handled. Spinoza soars at one stroke to a height where this cackling is inaudible. The material world, or to speak with Spinoza, the world perceived under the attribute of extension, is complete in itself; the laws of matter and motion are our sole and sufficient guides to the understanding of it. But this is not the whole world. Extension is only co-ordinate with thought and with infinite other aspects under which existence may present itself to other intelligences than ours. Extension is not after the other attributes, but it is not before them. The universe in its conceivable though not imaginable fullness is infinitely beyond any sensible world. Whatever else Spinoza's system may be, it is not materialism or naturalism. We know, again, how many flying from the Charybdis of materialism have been wrecked on the Scylla of idealism. They have sought to bring the unruly world of things into subjection by making it out a mere creature of thought. They have turned the realities of common life into a phantom show deceiving the self that brought them forth. But a sure Nemesis awaits all such attempts to spurn the conditions of existence: the self thus made the measure of all things has at last no assurance of its own reality. The cure prescribed for materialism turns out to be the heroic remedy of absolute scepticism, and from this worst fate of all a fresh escape has to be sought in some violent assumption. A very few bold and honest speculators, such as Fichte, make their assumption openly, but as a rule it is more or less elaborately disguised. Spinoza saw the net spread for the tribe of modern idealists, and he would have nothing to do with a phantom universe. Extension is as real as thought, or rather they are one and the same reality. I am real in exactly the same sense that the world I live in is real, and we are each other's sureties, if the expression may be allowed, that the whole thing is not one vast illusion. It is needless to say however that this language is not Spinoza's;

the questions it suggests are nowhere explicitly discussed by him. For my own part I do not think any theory of perception can be satisfactory which treats man as a mere individual. I believe that a human being's assurance of the reality of things outside him is inseparably connected with his assurance of the reality of other people, and I half suspect that the latter really comes first. Some social feelings are probably inherited, and social feelings involve the belief that your fellow is as real as yourself. But to dwell on this would take us much too far from Spinoza.

The question remains, and is a fair one, whether Spinoza's metaphysic, though it steers clear of subjective idealism as well as of materialism, is not in some sense idealist after all. The infinite attributes—which are of no practical use, as our knowledge is limited to those of extension and thought—seem at first sight designed to avoid such a result. The ideal or psychical order of the universe is merely one of infinite orders, all strictly homologous with one another and with the ideal order, while differing in kind. So in plane geometry we may conceive figures similar and similarly situated to those we are dealing with to be repeated in an infinite number of planes other than the plane of the paper. But the descent from this conception to our finite experience is not made out. I do not mean only that no reason is given why finite things should exist at all, why there should be variety among them, why they should be as they are and not otherwise, and the like. That class of questions may well be put aside, and Spinoza did expressly put them aside, as being irrational (*Ep.* 72), and accordingly divers ingenious persons have first assumed that Spinoza meant to answer such questions, and have then proved, much to their own satisfaction, that he did not succeed in answering them. But the relation of thought to the other attributes remains obscure. Man is an extended and thinking being, and nothing else. How does Spinoza account for his being nothing else? What becomes of the infinite modes of other attributes corresponding to the mode of extension which is the human body? Spinoza seems to say that each of these has a finite mind to itself: and that besides all these there is an idea or mode of thought* not in any finite mind (*in infinito Dei intellectu*) which in some way more eminently corresponds with all the homologous modes of the other attributes.† This leads

* *Idea* in Spinoza's usage—mode of the Attribute *cogitatio*, not necessarily in a human or conscious mind. It would include Prof. Clifford's "elementary feeling" or "piece of mind-stuff".

† Correspondence between Tschirnhausen and Spinoza (*Ep.* 67, 68). Spinoza's answer is only a fragment, and I must confess that after repeated

us into regions where articulate speech becomes impossible, and we can only manipulate symbols of imaginary quantities. Meanwhile the definition of Attribute is itself idealist in its language: "Per attributum intelligoid quod intellectus de substantia percipit tanquam eiusdem essentiam constituens". This seems to cut the ground from under the equality of the Attributes; and if they are not equal, their infinity will hardly serve its purpose. Now the insoluble puzzles we have just glanced at arise wholly from the infinity of the attributes — in other words from the attempt to make the world of experience carry the burden of worlds beyond experience. The real working parts of Spinoza's system, which are naturally concerned only with the world we do know, remain substantially unimpaired when these brilliant but dangerous ornaments are given up. The conception of Substance and Attribute taken not merely from the definitions, but as we find it worked out in the second and third parts of the *Ethics*, leads to such a view of the relations of mind and matter as is now called Monism; and herein Spinoza's position is at least compatible with an idealist Monism such as my friend Professor Clifford has lately advocated. Some such conclusion, I believe, is that to which philosophy and science are now converging. The dualism of matter and mind is becoming not only inadequate but unthinkable. Mr. Lewes, Mr. Spencer, Professor Huxley—yea, the new Oxford school of Hegelians, though in a speech hard to understand—are all telling us the same story in their different ways. The greater part of what is denounced as "scientific materialism" is only very good Monism. If any one expects to build up a soul out of soulless atoms, it is not Prof. Tyndall or Prof. Huxley. The life-potent atom of the Belfast address is not a piece of the old material substance of the schools. It is rather a monad instinct with its share, however lowly, of mind, soul, spirit, or whatsoever name may be given to that very certain reality which finds its highest known manifestation in the consciousness of civilised man. We can now less than ever admit a break in nature in either the material or the mental aspect of life: neither can we stop even at the old break between the organised and the unorganised world. It will one day be understood that Mr. Darwin has made materialism impossible. The people who still cry *materialism* may perhaps not find scientific idealism much more to their taste: but that is another matter.

Let us turn to Spinoza, and we shall find that the very keystone of his psychology is this principle of con-

consideration I do not fully understand it. I doubt whether Spinoza was quite satisfied with it himself. See *Ep.* 72.

tinuity, apprehended with a firmness of mental grasp, and carried out to its results with a thoroughness and clearness which have been surpassed by no modern writer. The distinction between mental and material phenomena, which forces itself upon man as soon as he begins to think at all, leads him to conceive of mind and matter—the regions of inner and outer experience—as two distinct worlds set over against one another and separated by a great gulf. The philosophers of all ages have busied themselves with attempts to bridge this gulf, which have all failed. We are delivered from floundering in pathless contradictions, and consequent invocations of some *deus ex machina*, only when we perceive that the gulf itself is the creature of our own thought. The question put in the dualist form—How does Mind act upon Matter?—is irrational and insoluble. The Cartesians and afterwards Leibnitz, perceiving this but clinging to the notion of mind and matter as distinct entities, were led to the devices of Occasional Causes and Pre-established Harmony.* Spinoza, for his part, rejects the two entities. The distinction between the physical and the mental order of phenomena is made sharper than ever: no link in the one series can be a link in the other, so that to speak of will, for instance, as possibly a form of energy is to put words together without meaning: but this is just because the two series are the diverse expressions of one and the same reality. If the rough comparison of the clock may pass muster at all, we must speak not of two clocks, but of one clock with two faces.† It will be observed that Spinoza does not assume an unknowable reality behind the manifestations. I think he would have said, agreeing herein with Berkeley, Ferrier, and idealists generally, that unknowable reality (that is, unknowable absolutely, not merely to us) is a contradiction in terms. Now I am far from saying that Monism, in Spinoza's or any other form, is demonstrated. It seems very doubtful whether any proposition about the relations of mind and matter is capable of demonstration. We may be satisfied if we get a conception which is consistent in itself, involves the least possible amount of assumption about the ulti-

* The doctrine of occasional causes is not in Descartes himself: he seems to have formed no distinct theory. Leibnitz's simile of the two clocks is also found in Cartesian writings. See the quotation from the editor of Geulinx's posthumous *Ethics* in Bouillier's *Hist. de la Philos. Cartésienne*, I. 305 (3d ed).

† For the fuller setting forth of all this see Mr. G. H. Lewes's last volume of *Problems of Life and Mind*. Compare also Dr. S. E. Löwenhardt's *Benedictus von Spinoza in seinem Verhältniss zur Philosophie und Naturforschung der neueren Zeit*, Berlin, 1872—where the harmony of Spinoza's doctrines, especially on this point, with modern science, is discussed with much vigour and ability.

mate nature of things, and above all conforms to the scientific postulate of continuity. Prof. Tyndall has observed (*Fortn. Rev.*, Nov. 1877, p. 607): "It is no explanation to say that the objective and subjective effects are two sides of one and the same phenomenon". If I may say so without presumption, I entirely agree. It is not an explanation, but a statement which puts us on our guard against fallacious shows of explanation and helps us to see that no real explanation is possible, or that the further question (to take it in Prof. Tyndall's form): "Why should the phenomenon have two sides?" is in its nature unanswerable. The point of the monistic hypothesis, it must be repeated, is that the two-sidedness does not emerge abruptly in the consciousness of vertebrate animals or at any other point in the scale of organic nature, but runs through all phenomena whatever. The water that "runs into frost-ferns upon a window-pane" certainly does not think. It is fairly certain that it does not in the popular sense feel. But that it does not in some sense feel appears to me a very rash assertion indeed, and savouring of a dogged and desperate materialism. And it is of no possible scientific use. The monistic conception may at least serve to keep the provinces of physics and metaphysics distinct, and (if I may repeat an expression I have used elsewhere) to save metaphysics from degenerating into bad physics. And it has a real practical value in teaching us what to expect and what not to expect from physiology. It shows us the importance of observing vital phenomena from the physical side, while it guards us against materialism. This did not escape Spinoza, who says—after asserting the exact correspondence of body and mind, as representing a substantial identity*—"Hence we understand, not only that the mind of man is united to the body, but what is to be understood by this union: yet the same cannot be understood adequately or distinctly without first having an adequate knowledge of the nature of our body:" and he goes on to state, briefly but unmistakeably, that everything has a share of life, and that the degree of life depends on—or rather *is*—the degree of organisation.† The power of the psychological method thus obtained is shown by the ease with which, a few propositions later, Spinoza anticipates the modern doctrine of Association, and that on its physiological side.‡

Even more remarkable is the theory of Desire in the third part of the *Ethics*, and the treatment of the Passions founded

* Mind and body are "*unum et idem individuum, quod jam sub cogitationis, jam sub extensionis attributo concipitur*". *Eth.* ii. 21, schol.

† *Eth.* ii. 13, schol.

‡ *Prop.* 17, 18.

upon it. For the scientific worth of Spinoza's results it is enough to quote the testimony of Johannes Müller:—"With regard to the relations of the passions to one another, apart from their physiological conditions, it is impossible to give any better account than that which Spinoza has laid down with unsurpassed mastery. In the following statement I shall therefore confine myself to giving the propositions of Spinoza on that subject."* And this he does accordingly, without further criticism or comment.

Spinoza reduces the passions to the elements of pleasure, pain, and desire. Pleasure is defined as the passage from less to greater, pain as the passage from greater to less perfection. This is singularly like the account of pleasure and pain lately given by Mr. H. Spencer on biological grounds—namely, that pleasure is originally correlated to actions beneficial to the organism, pain to those which are injurious to it. Desire does not mean for Spinoza a desire of pleasant things as such. All living things, whether conscious or not, have *appetite*—a physical impulse determined by the universal tendency or *effort*, as Spinoza calls it, towards self-preservation. Desire is conscious appetite, and as such is prior to the voluntary pursuit of pleasant things as pleasant. Pleasure and desire are related not as cause and effect, but as effects of a common set of causes or functions of the same conditions. This appears to me truer, deeper, and more fruitful, than the current modern notion that desire consists in the conscious pursuit of something already deemed to be pleasant. Spinoza's conception is also far more consonant with what science has now taught us to think of the history of life on the earth. The self-preserving effort of all things—"conatus quo unaquæque res in suo esse perseverare conatur"—does not seem, as it stands in the *Ethics*, to be sufficiently connected with the living world. There is a gap left open between the idea and the facts. But the wonder is that Spinoza left it open exactly at the right place. He could not have filled it in adequately with the materials he had, and he had the wisdom to let it wait. The theory of Evolution has now supplied the moving force that was wanting. The impulse, older by countless ages than conscious desire, older even than anything to which we grant the name of life—

"The will to live, the competence to be,"

this is now in the sight of all men, even as it was for Spinoza's keener vision, the root of all action and of all that makes the world alive. If Spinoza had not the advantages of modern supporters of evolution, he was free from some of their tempta-

* Müller, *Physiol. des Menschen*, vol. ii., p. 543.

tions. He never hypostatizes the universal *conatus*, as some have done in our own day, into a sort of unconscious Providence, nor does he fall into a confused nature-worship. Still less does he discover in all the workings of the world the vast plot of a blindly-cunning power to deceive every creature into keeping up the supreme evil of life. For him the universe and the natural order of things are in themselves neither good nor bad, those terms having no meaning except in relation to the welfare of some individual or kind.

True to the principle of continuity, Spinoza does not hesitate to carry this same conception into the field of moral action. Here as elsewhere the self-preserving *conatus* is the ultimate fact of life. "The foundation of virtue is no other than the effort to maintain one's own being, and man's happiness consists in the power of so doing."* But this does not lead—as might be supposed, and is now and then supposed by persons who have not read Spinoza to the end—to a system of selfishness or even of rational egoism. For Spinoza treats morality from a completely social point of view, as the business not of the individual simply, but of the individual living in a society in whose welfare he must find his own. He does not stop to prove that it is for the interest of the individual to promote the common weal; he simply appeals, in effect though not in express terms, to the fact of experience that man is a social animal. "*Homini nihil homine utilius.*" In this frank assumption of the essentially social character of morality he is at one with the Stoics.

Throughout his ethical doctrine, indeed, the parallel with the Stoics is of the most striking kind. The Stoic principle of "following nature" as explained by the Stoics themselves, is really identical with Spinoza's "*suum esse conservare*". In both systems we start from the position that as a matter of fact man's nature is social: and then the application of the general principle to man as a social animal leads to the conception of morality and virtue as aiming at the welfare of the community before that of the individual. The reasonable man ("*qui ex ductu rationis vivit,*" and, by a still more singular coincidence with Stoic speech, "*homo liber*") must seek his own weal in the common weal. In both systems again, all men, good and bad, fulfil in some way the universal and necessary order, being themselves part of it; but the righteous man fulfils it with willing consciousness, thus doing a service which is perfect freedom, and therein finds his sure and sufficient reward. Can all this be coincidence? At first sight it is hard to think so; but on the whole I do so think, for the very reason that the resemblances go so deep

* *Eth.* iv. 18, schol.

down. They are not of the kind that would result from a second-hand acquaintance with Stoicism, such as might be got, for instance, through Cicero. If it were so, one would find Stoic forms and phrases, or at least reminiscences of them. But Spinoza's language is all his own. And an acquaintance at first hand is very unlikely. Of Plato or Aristotle, at least, Spinoza must have known very little to speak of them as he does, putting them aside as mere fathers of scholastic figments, not to be listened to by reasonable people (*Ep.* 60, *ad fin.*). And there is no reason to suppose that he thought later Greek philosophy more worthy of attention. We have, moreover, his own statement that his knowledge of Greek was imperfect.

In his estimate of the extent to which the conditions of happiness are under man's control, Spinoza goes a good way with the Stoics, and with them also he qualifies the practical effect of this estimate by saying that the life of wisdom, though possible, is so hard that very few find it. There is, however, nothing to correspond to the famous paradoxes. These were simply unflinching deductions from the teleological optimism which was a fundamental principle of the Stoic system but has no part in Spinoza's. Epictetus would preach to a man with a toothache that toothache is not really an evil, but is to be accepted as a necessary part of an order which is absolutely good. Spinoza would say that the facts constituting a toothache are, in themselves, as part of the order of nature, neither good nor bad; but he would not dispute that they are bad for the organism in which they happen. Still the Stoics had got the root of the matter in seeing that it was absurd to complain of the universe for giving one a toothache. Man has no rights against the universe—and owes it no duties. It may be objected that Stoicism even with nature-worship is hard enough, but Stoicism without nature-worship would be intolerable. This however is to mix up philosophy and poetry. No doubt it is undesirable to think and speak scientifically at all times, just as society would become impossible if every man always stood on his strict rights. The popular and poetic language which admires, exalts, or even adores the order of nature is fit and laudable in its place. But the prosaic reason of the facts behind it is that, being born into an order of things we did not make and cannot unmake, we have to conform to it at our peril; which being so, the only rational thing to do (as M. Renan somewhere says) is to make the best of the necessity and be wise with a good grace. And on this ground there is no fear that the poets and prophets will ever cease to be welcome.

It is not in the cosmical but in the social order that we must look for the full harmony of reason and feeling, the reconciliation of science and poetry. In the common weal of our fellow-

men, and in that alone, can we find a true and sufficient law of life, proposing an unlimited field of labour for the reason, and an unlimited scope for the best affections of our nature. Impelled by the sympathies laid up within us by the thoughts and deeds of the past, and guided by the ever ripening wisdom delivered from generation to generation, it is for man to seek his inheritance in fulfilling that law, and therewith to be content. If any think they are assured of something more, we grudge them not their hopes. But let them not force their promises upon us, nor forbid men to love one another without first loving some inscrutable ideal. Let them not disparage the plain grounds and sanctions of human morality to exalt the virtues of their supernatural remedies for our ills. Righteousness and goodwill among men are too precious to be the monopoly of any sect or persuasion; they will not be tied down to an assent, real or nominal, to speculative propositions. Speculation is doubtful and divided; experience, continuous, certain and fruitful. Morality, being founded on experience, can be in no real danger from speculation. To cry down speculation in the interest of morality is the act, if sincere, of a shallow and fickle mind to which the foundations of morals are but casual and arbitrary ordinances. If insincere, I know of only one name by which honest men may call it.

FREDERICK POLLOCK.

NOTE.—A very brief indication of modern authorities on Spinoza (besides those already cited in the course of the foregoing paper) may perhaps be useful.

The biography prefixed to the last edition of Auerbach's translation of Spinoza's works (Stuttgart, 1871), together with the preface, contains either explicitly or by reference almost everything necessary to be known. The translation itself is scrupulously exact, and may be consulted with great advantage. The version of the recently discovered works is by Professor Schaarschmidt, of Bonn, and as to the *Tractatulus de Deo et Homine* probably represents a better recension of the original text than has yet been published.

Dr. A. Van der Linde's *Benedictus Spinoza : Bibliografie* (The Hague, 1871) gives a classified catalogue, as exhaustive as human industry can make it, of everything published of and concerning Spinoza down to the date. (The same author's earlier book on Spinoza, Göttingen 1862, contains the curious and formerly little known history of the Spinozistic heresies which sprang up in the Reformed Church of Holland in the 18th century.)

The second edition of Dr. J. van Vloten's book (*Baruch d'Espinoza zijn leven en schriften*; in 2d ed. the title is changed to *Benedictus de Sp. naar leven en werken*) appeared in the same year. There is unfortunately no translation of it. It is the best if not the only comprehensive account of Spinoza's life and philosophy yet produced in a literary and untechnical form. Dr. Van Vloten's chief weakness, in my opinion, is one which he has in common with Dr. Löwenhardt, whose book has already been mentioned. He tries now and then to be more Spinozist than Spinoza himself, or rather to make Spinoza so.

Dr. Hugo Ginsberg has brought out a new edition of the *Ethics* and *Letters* with useful prolegomena (Leipzig, 1875-6 : see Mr. A. B. Lee's notice in *MIND*, No. VI., p. 273).

A recent and very full monograph on the philosophy is Theodor Camerer's *Die Lehre Spinoza's*, Stuttgart, 1877. I have been able as yet to make only a slight examination of this. The criticism is minute and ingenious ; so minute that a reader not already familiar with Spinoza would be in some danger of not seeing the wood for the trees, and so ingenious as rather to exceed the bounds of profitable discussion. Herr Camerer seems to have a predilection for difficulties, and to choose the more involved and troublesome view of Spinoza's meaning wherever there is any choice. In at least one place (*Eth.* ii. prop. 21) he forces upon Spinoza, in my opinion, a difficulty which Spinoza was especially careful to avoid. As to the general interpretation of the system he seems to stand at the opposite extreme to Dr. Van Vloten.

The bicentenary commemoration at the Hague has given rise to a good deal of occasional and controversial literature, much of it bearing only remotely on Spinoza and his doctrines. One ultramontane journal devoted several articles to violent abuse not only of M. Renan—to whom it denied even the merit of a commonplace sophist—but of his style, which it discovered, much to its own satisfaction, to be "flasque et énérvé". Dr. H. J. Betz's little book (*Levensschets van Baruch de Spinoza, met een kort overzicht van zijn stelsel*," The Hague, 1876) may be mentioned as of permanent value.

IV.—THE ORIGIN AND MEANING OF GEOMETRICAL AXIOMS. (II.)

My article on 'The Origin and Meaning of Geometrical Axioms' in *MIND* No. III. was critically examined by Professor Land in No. V., and I will now try to answer his objections. We differ substantially on two points. I am of opinion that the recent mathematical investigations—or, as they have been called, "metamathematical investigations"*—as to wider kinds of geometry, have established the following propositions :—

(1) Kant's proof of the *a priori* origin of geometrical axioms; based on the assumption that no other space-relations can be mentally represented, is insufficient, the assumption being at variance with fact.

(2) If, in spite of the defective proof, it is still assumed hypothetically that the axioms are really given *a priori* as laws of our space-intuitions, two kinds of equivalence of space-magnitudes must be distinguished : (a) *Subjective equality* given by the hypothetical transcendental intuition ; (b) *Objective equivalence*.

* The name has been given by opponents in irony, as suggesting "metaphysic"; but as the founders of "Non-Euclidian Geometry" have never maintained its objective truth, they can very well accept the name.