Introduction

SPINOZA IS ONE of those great men, as Santayana rightly observed, whose eminence grows more obvious with the lapse of years. His thought was centuries ahead for his own time and still is ahead in our own. The more one understands him the more one marvels at his genius in having conceived of a philosophical system capable of giving a surprisingly coherent account of a number of philosophical issues in such fields as philosophy of mind and philosophy of action, which only recently have begun to receive the attention they deserve. For this reason Spinoza's thought today assumes a greater philosophical relevance than perhaps that of any other philosopher in history apart from Aristotle.

E. M. Curley, in his study of *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, observes that: "No philosopher should be easier to understand than Spinoza, for none has taken so much trouble to explain himself, defining his key terms, listing his basic assumptions, and arguing carefully for each conclusion he draws from these assumptions. But few have proved harder." For as Bayle in his *Dictionary* remarked rather gloatingly, few men have made any serious effort to study his theories, and among those who have, "there are few who have understood it and have not been discouraged by the perplexities and the impenetrable abstractions that are found in it. . . ." Insofar as the essays in this volume make an attempt not only at understanding Spinoza but also at explaining his thought in terms of a modern philosophical vocabulary, they make Spinoza more accessible to those who wish to study the philosopher but are deterred by his "impenetrable abstractions."

All the studies in Spinoza that are collected here were written in English. Most of them were written after 1937. The two exceptions are S. Alexander's lecture on "Spinoza and Time," delivered in 1921, and A. Wolf's paper on "Spinoza's Conception of the Attributes of Substance," which was read at the Aristotelian Society meet-

ings in 1926–27. My own article here is the only one that has not been published before.

Compared to the number of articles published in English on other philosophers such as Descartes, Hume, and Kant, there are very few on Spinoza, and of these fewer still are of sustained merit. This does not mean of course that everything worthwhile that has been written in English on Spinoza has been included in this volume. The essays that appear in this collection are self-contained studies of one or the other specific aspect of Spinoza's thought. Some are openly critical of Spinoza's views, others defend Spinoza against misunderstandings, and some attempt to present a more or less neutral interpretation. In general, however, each article does all this in varying degrees.

The discussions included here deal with Spinoza's metaphysics, theory of knowledge, and moral theory. It has not been possible to devote equal space to each of the three areas. The final selection of the essays was made not so much from the point of view of their textual criticism but on the basis of their ability to advance one's philosophical appreciation of Spinoza's thought.

Forsyth's article attempts to explain Spinoza's notion of cause—in particular the notion of self-caused cause—in its application to Substance or God. Forsyth argues that in identifying God with one substance or ultimate reality, Spinoza is neither merely using conventional language nor forcing his own terminology upon a conception to which it is inappropriate. He is expressing his own insight into the real meaning of the concepts concerned through a reinterpretation of extant thought and usage. Spinoza identifies the God of religion with ultimate reality which philosophical thought compels him to affirm, and thereby makes it possible for him to unite the philosophical search for truth with the intellectual love of God. The article also analyzes the difficult notions of immanent and free causality in Spinoza.

Wolf's article is an analysis and interpretation of Spinoza's conception of the attributes of substance which forms the very foundation of Spinoza's philosophy. He argues that for Spinoza the relation of cause-effect is not identical to that of ground and consequent, and explains briefly but brilliantly what it means for Spinoza to speak of substance as "constituting of infinite attributes."

Haserot, in his article on attribute, discusses and analyzes the nature of attributes in Spinoza's philosophy by raising the question

of whether they are essentially forms of cognition and hence subjective or whether they refer to the inherent character of substance and are hence objective. Haserot acutely examines the ambiguities and difficulties involved in Spinoza's definition of an attribute and other related notions such as intellect. In doing so he refers to the original Latin version of Spinoza's definition. But the article is written in a way that does not presuppose knowledge of Latin to appreciate and understand the argument and analysis.

In his article on universals Haserot examines the question of whether Spinoza was a nominalist or a realist in his stand regarding the nature of universals. This throws some important light on the nature of attributes. Haserot has very ably argued in his other article in this volume that attributes are not mental entities but have an objective reference. Here he argues that a nominalist view of universals logically leads through positivism to pragmatism, whereas "Spinoza's philosophy represents the antithesis of pragmatism." Through a careful analysis and interpretation of the relevant passages from the text, Haserot clarifies Spinoza's real position in regard to universals and compares it illuminatingly with that of Plato.

Alexander's is an insightful discussion of the concept of time in Spinoza's philosophy. He begins with an examination of the relations between attributes, infinite modes, and finite modes, and argues that if motion-and-rest is the infinite mode of extension (and if motion is not to be understood statically in Cartesian terms as merely change of place), then extension must not be space, but space-time. In that case, time itself becomes an attribute of reality. The implications of this conclusion are further examined in light of the impossibility of regarding time as an attribute in Spinoza's thought.

Ruth L. Saw argues that when Spinoza said "our highest knowledge is of the individual" it is generally believed that Spinoza was promising us an account from which one might arrive at individuals such as Peter and Paul in all their particularity as the object of our highest knowledge. But this belief is mistaken. For Spinoza, what we know when we know Peter fully is not Peter as a person but Peter who is a unique system of interrelated finite modifications of substance under the attributes of extension and thought existing in its own place in the spatiotemporal scheme of *natura naturata*. So that although Spinoza's aim was to increase human happiness and to show man the way to that end, the men who finally emerge as having

attained happiness are not individuals in their emotional and passionate uniqueness but human beings as "rational men" with nothing to individuate them.

The three articles by Barker include some of the most provocative and intensive discussions of Spinoza's theory of knowledge written in English. The first article is devoted to a severe and critical examination of whether Spinoza's assertions with regard to questions about knowledge and mind and the relation of knowledge to its object and of mind to body are true of our actual experience. If they are not true, then the formal scheme of *Ethics* I, so far as it cannot be true if they are not, must be rejected with them.

In the second article Barker analyzes the most important and critical proposition in *Ethics*—Proposition 7 of Part II—and discusses the difficulties concerning the nature of attributes and those concerning the relation between the *idea* and the *ideata* which are involved in it.

The third article deals specifically with the relation of mind and body as involved in Spinoza's theories of *idea* *ideae* and truth and error.

Hallett discusses and clarifies the equivocal use made by Spinoza of the term *idea* as at once the mental correlate of some physiological state of the body of the percipient as well as of an external object. While making a very able defense of Spinoza against misinterpretation of one of the most important notions in his theory of knowledge, Hallett also throws light on the difficulties involved in the causal theory of perception.

In his first of two articles in this volume Taylor discusses the difficulties one has to face in Spinoza with regard to the relation between finite modes and infinite substance, which is an extremely important issue in connection with the existence of individuals in Spinoza's philosophy. The metaphysical framework of *Ethics* I, Taylor argues, requires the admission that finite modes are mere illusions, while the doctrines elaborated in *Ethics* II–V demand that they must not be treated as such. He also deals with problems concerning the nature of mind and its relation to the body, self-consciousness, the process from imagination to knowledge, and freedom in Spinoza.

Parkinson analyzes the relation of Spinoza's theories of substance, attribute, and infinite mode to his theories of truth, falsity, and error, and by way of clarifying the relation between the *idea* and

object in his theory of knowledge, discusses whether or not Spinoza can be said to have held the coherence theory of truth.

Savan examines the extent to which Spinoza's views on language affect his philosophy and its formulation. Savan's argument is that the language Spinoza uses to express his thoughts cannot be identified with or taken as a literal exposition of philosophical truth or true ideas. An idea, in Spinoza's sense, does not consist of words. This leads not only to Spinoza's rejection of the semantic theory of truth but to his acknowledgment that no simple, direct, precise and consistent verbal account of the true philosophy is possible. Spinoza's words do, nevertheless, have a proper role to play in the formulation of "entities of reason" which function as tools or mental aids to a true idea or philosophical truth. But a thing is truly understood, in Spinoza's view, when it is perceived simply by the mind without words and images.

Guttorm Fløistad discusses the relation between knowledge and language, the distinction between two types of imagination in Spinoza, and the relation between reason and intuition. He examines Savan's thesis that Spinoza's writings are not and were not intended to be a direct or literal exposition of philosophical truth, by raising a question regarding the kinds of knowledge implied in the propositions of the *Ethics*. An answer to this question as well as to the question of whether true knowledge can (or may) be adequately expressed in language is provided by the arguments of his essay. His thesis is as follows: (a) there are no instances of imagination (Spinoza's first kind of knowledge) to be found in the *Ethics*; (b) the larger part of the *Ethics* contains propositions that belong to Spinoza's second kind of knowledge, namely reason; and (c) instances of Spinoza's third kind of knowledge, namely intuition, not only occur frequently but play a crucial role in the *Ethics*.

Demos's article contains a critical analysis of Spinoza's views on moral freedom, moral judgment, and the nature of moral consciousness. The fundamental question raised in this article is whether it is possible in Spinoza's philosophy to seek to better one's condition in life. Demos argues that the denial of "genuine possibility" by Spinoza leads to the denial of moral freedom, moral judgment, and purposive behavior.

In his second article on Spinoza, A. E. Taylor argues that if Spinoza's statement "We do not desire a thing because it is good, it is good because we desire it" means that *good* is only a name for what-

ever is in fact desired by the person using the word, then it would be in principle impossible for a Plato, an Aristotle, or a Kant to agree with him. Spinoza's proposal to treat moral actions exactly as though they were geometrical figures leads to his ignoring their specific character as *moral*. For, Taylor says: "To construct a morality from which the distinctions of the objectively good and evil, right and wrong are absent is like proposing to construct a geometry superior to the 'vulgar prejudice' that there is a distinction between straight and curved." In short, Taylor maintains that the exclusion of the notion of moral value excludes the possibility of a genuinely ethical doctrine in Spinoza. The article also includes a brief discussion of the doctrine of "intellectual love of God."

Hampshire's contribution is not only a penetrating analysis of the notion of freedom but also a brilliant defense of Spinoza. The central question raised concerns the precise connection between a man's knowledge of the distinction between different levels of knowledge and his freedom of action. This connection, it is suggested, is to be found in Spinoza's theory of individuals. Hampshire's argument consists of an illuminating analysis of this theory and its relation to the freedom of man.

I argue in my paper that the commonly accepted view that Spinoza's philosophy makes no allowance for purposive behavior rests upon the misconception that he fails to distinguish "appetite" from "desire." If it can be shown, as I try to do, that Spinoza not only makes a clear and crucial distinction between the above two concepts but also accepts the idea that the direction of one's energies toward a consciously pursued ideal is a necessary condition for self-improvement, then it would follow that his system cannot have rejected the applicability of the concepts of intentional and purposive action to man.

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