

1 Spinoza's metaphysics

Themes in Spinoza

- Naturalistic philosophy
 - Deus sive natura: "God or nature"
 - God exists "only in a philosophical sense," should not be anthropomorphized
 - Attacks superstition, esp. in Appendix to Ethics I
- Monism
 - One substance, infinite attributes
- Necessitarianism
 - All things necessarily follow from God's nature, which is necessary
 - So everything necessarily exists and necessarily is the way it is
- Good and evil have to do with human pain and pleasure
- The Principle of Sufficient Reason
 - Spinoza is a metaphysical rationalist: he believes that everything in the world must have an explanation.
 - "For every thing a cause or reason must be assigned either for its existence or for its non-existence." (1p11p2)

2 The Ethics, Part I

Basic concepts

- A substance is "that which is in itself and is conceived through itself; that is, that the conception of which does not require the conception of another thing from which it has to be formed" (Id3)
- An attribute is "that which the intellect perceives of substance as constituting its essence" (Id4)
- A mode is "the affections of a substance, that is, that which is in something else and is conceived through something else" (Id5)
- God is "an absolutely infinite being, that is, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence" (Id6)
- All things are either "in themselves" or "in something else" (Ia1)
- If something can't be conceived through another, it must be conceived through itself (Ia2)
- The knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of the cause. (Ia4)
- Things which have nothing in common with each other cannot be understood through each other; that is, the conception of the one does not involve the conception of the other. (Ia5)

Important propositions

- Ip7: Existence belongs to the nature of substance.
- Ip8: Every substance is necessarily infinite.
- 1p11: God, or substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists.
- 1p14: There can be, or be conceived, no other substance but God.

- Corollary: "Hence it follows quite clearly that God is one: that is (Def. 6), in the universe there is only one substance, and this is absolutely infinite, as I have already indicated in Scholium Pr. 10."
- Ip15: Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God.

Argument for the existence of God (Ip11p1)

1. If God does not necessarily exist, then one can conceive that God does not exist.
2. If a substance can be conceived as not existing, its essence does not involve existence. (Ia7)
3. But existence belongs to the nature of substance. (Ip7)
4. Therefore, God necessarily exists.

Second argument for the existence of God (Ip11p2)

1. If there is no cause preventing God's existence, then God necessarily exists.
2. If there is a cause preventing God's existence, then it is in God's nature or external to it.
3. It cannot be in his nature, since that would involve a contradiction.
4. If it's external, then it must be in a substance of a different nature.
5. But then such a substance's nature would have nothing in common with God's nature, and so could not be causally related to God.
6. Therefore God necessarily exists.

What about human beings and chairs and so on?

- See Ip15: Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God.
- For Spinoza, every X is a modification of God insofar as he is Y.

3 Non-anthropomorphism

Ip8s2: "So too, those who confuse the divine nature with human nature easily ascribe to God human emotions, especially so long as they are ignorant of how the latter are produced in the mind."

Ip15s: "Some imagine God in the likeness of man, consisting of mind and body, and subject to passions. But it is clear from what has already been proved how far they stray from the true knowledge of God. These I dismiss, for all who have given any consideration to the divine nature deny that God is corporeal."