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ANTHROPOLOGICAL SKETCH OF SPINOZA'S ETHICS

SZKIC ANTROPOLOGICZNY ETYKI SPINOZY

АНТРОПОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ ОЧЕРК ПО ЭТИКЕ СПИНОЗЫ

Abstract

Baruch de Spinoza, also known as Benedictus de Spinoza, Bento de Spinoza or Bento d'Espiñoza, is the philosopher of Jewish origin. He was a descendant of Jewish refugees from Portugal. He learned for the rabbi, but he took a critical position on religious dogmas. Because of his religious beliefs he was expelled from the religious community in Amsterdam, accursed and charged with heresy and then expelled from the city. In 1672 he was offered a proposal to teach at the university, but he refused it. His writings were not published in his lifetime. In order to maintain material and spiritual independence, he earned the money by grinding lenses, but what worsened his lung disease and he died from the consequences of the illness at the age of 44. The author analyzes the work Ethics in his study.

Keywords: *B. Spinoza, Ethics, anthropology, philosophy.*


Streszczenie

Baruch de Spinoza, znany również, jako Benedictus de Spinoza, Bento de Spinoza lub Bento d'Espiñoza, jest filozofem pochodzenia żydowskiego. Jest potomkiem żydowskich uchodźców z Portugalii. Wykształcił się na rabina, ale zajął krytyczne stanowisko wobec religijnych dogmatów, z powodu jego poglądów został wykluczony z religijnej społeczności w Amsterdamie, przeklęty i oskarżony o herezję. Został wygnany z Amsterdamu. W 1672 zaproponowano mu nauczanie na uniwersytecie, ale odmówił. Jego pisma nie zostały opublikowane w czasie jego życia. Aby zachować materialną i duchową niezależność, zarabiał pieniądze przez szlifowanie soczewek, ale to pogorszyło jego chorobę płuc i w następstwie choroby w wieku 44 lat zmarł. Autor analizuje pracę „Etyka” w swoim badaniu.

Słowa kluczowe: *B. Spinoza, Etyka, antropologia, filozofia.*

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Аннотация

Барух де Спиноза, также известный как Бенедикт де Спиноза, Бенто де Спиноза или Бенто д'Эспиноз, - философ еврейского происхождения. Он является потомком еврейских беженцев из Португалии. Он учился у раввина и занимал критическую позицию относительно религиозных догм. Из-за его религиозных взглядов был исключен из религиозной общины в Амстердаме. Он был проклят и обвинен в ереси, а затем изгнан из Амстердама. В 1672 году ему было предложено преподавать в университете, но он отказался. Его писания не были опубликованы во время его жизни. Чтобы сохранить материальную и духовную независимость, он зарабатывал деньги шлифованием линз. Это сказалось на состоянии его легких, и он умер от последствий болезни в возрасте 44 лет. Автор анализирует работу „Этика” в своем исследовании.

Ключевые слова: *Б. Спиноза, Этика, антропология, философия.*

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Statement of the problem in general outlook and its connection with important scientific and practical tasks.

Spinoza's work, *Ethics*, interpreted with the way used in geometry, had been translated and published on the occasion of three hundredth anniversary of his death. It consists of five parts which talk about God, nature and the origin of the mind and other interesting topics that we will try to analyse and understand in this work.

The introduction describes in detail his life, the beginning of his work and his studies. Spinoza lived in the 17th century in the Netherlands. In order to better understand his works, it is necessary to approach a bit of the economic, ideological and political situation of that time. The Netherlands survived the first bourgeois revolution which ended with the defeat of the feudal absolutism of Spain and the victory of the Dutch bourgeoisie. It was a time when the bourgeoisie was experiencing an unusual growth. Amsterdam became Europe's largest bank. Dutch reached up to North America, where they founded the New Amsterdam later called New York. A new state emerged that was divided into provinces, of which it headed the council composed of

representatives of the wealthiest families of merchants, led by the governor. The entire state was governed by a General Council comprising representatives of the seven provinces and major cities whose headquarters were in The Hague. In this place the representatives of the Orange family were appointed for many years. He resisted it in the struggle for independence. Despite all the efforts of political, ideological and philosophical thinkers, class differences began to manifest themselves again in the Netherlands. The bourgeoisie did not eliminate all the imperfections of feudalism which was reflected in so many ideological and religious disputes. However, the Netherlands was much more liberal than other feudal states and many thinkers who feared persecution in their own country also came here. It was the period of Dutch painting (Rembrandt, Ruysdael, Vermeer). His Jewish ancestors named de Espinoza moved to Amsterdam having faced persecution in Portugal. A large Jewish community was founded there, and

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therefore this city was called "New Jerusalem". Spinoza studied in the Jewish school where he focused on Hebrew, the Bible, the Talmud and the Kabala. He knew three languages, namely Latin, Dutch and Spanish. When he was 15, they considered him the future light of the synagogue. All-out, his successes didn't satisfy him. He zealously studied the writings of Descartes, mathematics and the natural sciences. His life and thought were also influenced in some way by Van den Enden, who was later accused of atheism and expelled from the Netherlands to France.

While the influence of Jewish philosophy and scholasticism on Spinoza's thought cannot be denied, the influence of later progressive philosophical directions was stronger (materialistic pantheism by G. Bruno, materialism by R. Descartes and T. Hobbes, the mathematical methods by G. Galileo). And so he also tried to deal with the problems that were up to date for that time. These were, in particular, questions about human-being's position in the world, his conduct, his happiness and his freedom. His goal was to find true well-being and make it accessible to all, to bring people to true happiness. These were the reasons why the work received the name of „Ethics”.

These questions, however, were not addressed in an abstract way but on the contrary he tried to solve them, revealing the great links between man and the natural and social being. In order to find the way to happiness and freedom, it was necessary to clarify man's place in the world, his essence and help him to know the world and himself. It is therefore clear that this is precisely the basis of Spinoza's Ethics, of the theory of existence (metaphysics) and of psychology. All his thought was

subordinate to the single objective which is to achieve the highest human perfection.

Spinoza considered ethics in scope of the theory of practice, the knowledge of the world and of man, of his happiness and freedom. He argued that philosophy and metaphysics must serve ethics, and vice versa, ethics is not possible without metaphysics, practice without theory, happiness and freedom of man without knowledge.

He was convinced that ethics as a learning about man cannot be in contrast with learning about nature and being. On the contrary, it is part of the human being as well as man is a part of nature. That is why his fortune and his nature must be deduced from nature. The greatness of his philosophy lies in his teaching on the unity of body and spirit, the unity of nature and thought.

This argument was on the contrary with objective idealism (in the sense of religious idealism) and also with the dualism of Descartes. However, this lesson on the component laws of nature was limited by the fact that these laws were reduced to mechanical laws. At that time, it could not have been otherwise, because the development of productive forces and manufacturing techniques required the discovery of mechanics laws. However, its results were unthinkable without mathematics, so these two science divisions became the most important means of analysing and exploring nature.

Spinoza tried to introduce the method of mathematical deduction into philosophy. His proclamation of the mathematical method as the only valid method to acquire truth was justified to the extent that the world can be considered as a unitary, eternal, immutable order, subject to determinism, based on dependence on the chain of causes and effects.

This system of cognition tries to represent an absolute truth and uses the geometric form for the structure of his main work, Ethics. This structure is based on the fact that Spinoza (similarly as Eukleides) is based on the definition that precisely defines the terms with which it works. In addition, it presents axioms, i.e. basic phrases, from which derive the various phrases, statements and tests in the next interpretation. Finally, it links observations in which problems are freely expressed and explanations such as the implications of individual phrases and statements. This form of interpretation makes the study of Ethics quite demanding. The difficulty is also increased by the use of expressions such as being objective where today we would use the term subjective, formally

changes the idea to objective instead of subjective, and so on. If we do not take it into account, the method is useless for us to solve philosophical problems. Spinoza managed to elaborate accurately and convincingly his thoughts. Using analysis and mathematical syntheses, he presented a coherent philosophical system in the form of a process passing from general to specific ideas and from specific to general ones. This application of the mathematical method placed Spinoza among the representatives of realism. In this section, we have tried to bring you closer to the way of thinking and understanding of the world through the eyes of Benedict Spinoza. We will then discuss the individual chapters of his work.

Analysis of latest research where the solution of the problem was initiated.

Spinoza began to discover the contradictions between the Bible and the Talmud which led him to cease believing in religious truths and to avoid religious rites. For this reason, he was essentially excommunicated from the Jewish community, and was marked as cursed (the curse on him was very hard). Even the name Benedictus accepted instead of Baruch (Baruch in Latin is Benedictus which means blessed) was distorted by Maledictus, which means cursed. This

fact also affected his personal life. He had to face the attempt of murder by an unknown man. He went through a difficult period full of attacks, hiding and relocation. Although he lived alone, he wrote the letters and was in contact with scholars and thinkers. Among them were, for example, the doctor L. Meyer, a mathematician and logician E. W. Tschirnhausen, a chemist Boyle, a physicist Ch. Huygens and the famous philosopher G. W. Leibniz.

Aims of paper. Methods.

While writing scientific studies, one uses content analysis as a research method; it is the procedure for an objective, systematic and quantitative description of the obvious content of textual communication. In our

case, text documents of a predominantly official nature: legislative and administrative. This method is an important methodological tool.

Exposition of main material of research with complete substantiation of obtained scientific results. Discussion.

About God

To understand what Spinoza says about God and what he perceives as the truth about Him, it is first necessary to define the individual terms he uses.

1. In calling something 'cause of itself' I mean that its essence involves existence, i.e. that its nature can't be conceived except as existing.

2. A thing is said to be 'finite in its own kind' if it can be limited by something else of the same nature. For example, every body counts as 'finite in its own kind' because we can always conceive another body that is even bigger. And a thought can be limited by—i.e. can count as finite because of—another thought that somehow exceeds it. But a body can't be limited by a thought or a thought by a body.

3. By 'substance' I understand: what is in itself and is conceived through itself, i.e. that whose concept doesn't have to be formed out of the concept of something else.

4. By 'attribute' I understand: what the intellect perceives of a substance as constituting its essence.

5. By 'mode' I understand: a state of a substance, i.e. something that exists in and is conceived through something else.

6. By 'God' I understand: a thing that is absolutely infinite, i.e. a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, each of which expresses an eternal and infinite essence. I say 'absolutely infinite' in contrast to 'infinite in its own kind'. If something is infinite only in its own kind, there can be attributes that it doesn't have; but if something is absolutely infinite its essence or nature contains every positive way in which a thing can exist—which means that it has all possible attributes.

7. A thing is called 'free' if its own nature—with no input from anything else—makes it necessary for it to exist and causes it to act as it does. We say that a thing is 'compelled' if something other than itself makes it exist and causes it to act in this or that specific way.

8. By 'eternity' I understand: existence itself when conceived to follow necessarily from the definition of the eternal thing. Since the following statements and affirmations are many and cannot be sufficiently analysed and understood, we have decided to focus on a single statement no. 11, which states: " God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists" (Hubka K., 1977, p. 55-57).

The proof that Spinoza proposes is a statement: " If God didn't exist, then God's essence would not involve existence; and that is absurd. Therefore God necessarily exists" (Hubka K., 1977, p. 65).

When this proof is provided, it is based on axiom 7 and statement 7. Therefore, the axiom says: " If a thing can be conceived as not existing then its essence doesn't involve existence." (Hubka K., 1977, p. 58). It actually means that if something has the property that does not exist, then we perceive it as non-existent. Therefore, none of its properties can be existence, because it is excluded.

Furthermore, statement 7 states: "The existence of the substance belongs to the nature of the substance" (p. 60). So the substance can't be created by something else. This is because it is the cause of one's own self, as we say in definition 1, then that its essence necessarily implies existence.

So if God is a substance, it necessarily implies existence, therefore it cannot be

inexistent, inasmuch as it would contradict the previous assertions.

About nature and the origin of the mind

At the beginning of this chapter Spinoza writes: "Now I move on to explain things that must necessarily follow from the essence of God, i.e. the essence of the infinite and eternal thing—not, indeed, all of them (for I have demonstrated that infinitely many things must follow from it in infinitely many ways), but only those that can lead us by the hand, as it were, to the knowledge of the human mind and its highest happiness" (Hubka K., 1977, p. 109) So, he seeks to know the human mind and to help man find his greatest happiness.

Definitions:

1. By 'body' I understand a mode that in a certain and determinate way expresses God's essence with God is considered as an extended thing.
2. I say that to the 'essence' of a thing x belongs anything without which x can neither exist nor be conceived, and which can neither exist nor be conceived without x.
3. By 'idea' I understand a concept that a mind forms because it is a thinking thing.
4. By 'adequate idea' I understand an idea which, considered in itself and without relation to an object, has all the properties or intrinsic marks of a true idea. Duration is the indefinite continuation of existing. Explanation: I say 'indefinite' because you can't work out how long a thing will last from its own nature, or from its efficient cause, because the cause implies the existence of the thing and not its non-existence.
6. By 'reality' and 'perfection' I understand the same thing.
7. By 'particular things' I understand things that are finite and have a determinate existence. If a number of individuals work together in one process so that together they are all the cause of one effect, I

consider them all as being to that extent one particular thing.

Here we focus on statement 1: " Thought is an attribute of God; that is, God is a thinking thing." (Hubka K., 1977, p. 56). Spinoza demonstrates this by the fact that particular thoughts are modes that express God's nature in a certain and determinate way . Therefore God has an attribute the concept of which is involved in all particular thoughts, and through which they are conceived. So thought is one of God's infinite attributes that expresses the objective and infinite essence of God, because God is a thinking thing.

This proof is based on the definition 6 of the previous section, which deals with the infinite existence of God and the infinite numbers of essences that it contains in itself. Subsequently, Spinoza uses the definition 5 of the previous section, considering individual things and thoughts as simple "modalities" that is, "states" of substance. Thus, in fact, he affirms that one of God's properties is thought, and that this attribute is infinite.

Another very interesting matter is statement 14, which says: " A human mind can perceive many things, and the more ways its body can be arranged the greater is its ability to perceive things " (Hubka K., 1977, p. 132). This means that the human mind is stimulated in the most common way by external bodies. A human body is affected in a great many ways by external bodies, and is disposed to affect external bodies in a great many ways. But the human mind must perceive everything that happens in the human body. It also indicates the need for development of people's way of thinking when it says that the mind is the more perceptive the more impulses it gets.

The Origin and Nature of the Affects

In this part, Spinoza deals with mental states like no mechanism. It states that the

principle of mental life is to seek out affects that increase the mind's ability to be active and avoid affects that diminish the mind's ability to be active.

Definitions:

1. I call a cause 'adequate' if its effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived through it. I call it 'partial' or 'inadequate' if its effect cannot be understood through it alone.

2. I say that we 'act' when something happens, in us or outside us, of which we are the adequate cause—that is when something happens that follows from our nature, and can be clearly and distinctly understood through it alone. On the other hand, I say that we are 'acted on' when something happens in us. . . of which we are a partial cause.

3. By 'affect' I understand states of a body by which its power of acting is increased or lessened, helped or hindered, and also the ideas of these states. Thus, if we can be the adequate cause of any of these states, the affect in question is what I call an 'action'; otherwise it is a 'passion' (Hubka K., 1977, p. 179) Spinoza uses the concept of passion for those affects that have been passive to the body, that is, have a cause outside of us or of which we are the cause partially.

This section also deals with many topics and their demonstrations, but we are more interested in the second part of this chapter which defines singular affects. We don't show them all, but only the most interesting and the most comprehensible. For example:

2. Pleasure is a man's passing from a lesser perfection to a greater

4. Sadness is a man's transition from greater perfection to lesser perfection.

5. Disdain is an imagining of a thing that makes so little impact on the mind that its presence moves the mind to imagining what is not in it more than what is.

6. Love is a pleasure accompanied by the

idea of an external cause

7. Hate is unpleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause

10. Devotion is a love of someone whom we wonder at.

12. Hope is an inconstant pleasure, born of the idea of a future or past thing whose outcome we are in some doubt

16. Gladness is pleasure accompanied by the idea of a past thing that has turned out better than we had hoped.

19. Favour is love toward someone who has benefited someone else

20. Indignation is hate toward someone who has harmed someone else

24. Compassion is love that affects a man so that he is glad at someone else's good fortune and gets unpleasure from his misfortune

26. Humility is unpleasure that a man has from considering his own lack of power, his weakness

28. Pride is thinking too highly of oneself, out of self-love.

29. Despondency is thinking less highly of oneself than one should, out of unpleasure.

Similarly, Spinoza defines concepts such as drunkenness, avarice, sensuality, voluptuousness, wonder, humanity, ambition, cruelty, fear, courage, cowardice, shame, desire and many others. In general, he defines affects as follows: "... is a confused idea through which a mind affirms of its body (or of some part of it) a greater or lesser force of existing than it had before—an idea which, when it is given, makes the mind think of one thing rather than another." (Hubka K., 1977, p. 255-256).

Human Bondage, or on the power of affects

Definitions:

1. By 'good' I shall understand what we certainly know to be useful to us.

2. By 'bad' I shall understand what we certainly know prevents us from being masters of some good.
3. I call an individual thing 'contingent' if we can't find in its essence anything that necessarily requires it to exist or necessarily excludes it from existing.
4. I call an individual thing 'possible' if we don't know whether the causes that would be needed to produce it are bound to produce it.
5. By 'opposite affects' I shall mean affects that pull a man in different directions though they are of the same genus— such as greed for food and greed for wealth. These are both species of love, and they are opposite not intrinsically but because of circumstances
6. What I understand for the affection in future terms, present or past, I explained in the previous text (there is no need for a precise definition here, because we will not use this definition in the following text).
7. By the 'end' for the sake of which we do something I understand appetite.
8. By 'virtue' and 'power' I understand the same thing. That is (by III7) the virtue of a man is his very essence or nature insofar as it gives him the power to do things that are purely upshots of his nature.
Very interesting is the statement 2: "To the extent that we are a part of Nature that can't be conceived through

itself without bringing other things in, we are acted on." (Hubka K., 1977, p. 269). Then we are acted on when there occurs in us, something of which we are only the partial cause, that is something that can't be deduced from the laws of our nature alone but only through other "parts of nature", that is, other people, and therefore we do not receive our understanding of ourselves, but only through others. So you can see the mutual need and dependence between the people.

The Power of the Intellect, or Human Freedom

This last part is slightly different from the previous ones since there are no more defined concepts. Spinoza only offers a variety of topics and evidence.

There is a very interesting statement - 6, which explains the attitude of a man in the confrontation of life: "Insofar as the mind understands all things as necessary, to that extent it has a greater power over the affects, i.e. is less acted on by them." (Hubka K., 1977, p. 276).

Therefore, if the mind considers the facts and events surrounding it as necessary and determined by the endless chain of causes of existence and activity, it is less acted on by affections. This we can also observe in practice when a person loses something or someone close to him, the sadness for the loss of a certain good will be less when he realizes that this loss could not be prevented in any way, and was therefore necessary.

Conclusions.

The Ethics by Spinoza is very broad and demanding to understand. If we tried to decipher and to understand it in detail, it would be necessary to write a new book. In this work we have focused only on a few definitions and those of them which affect

our lives the strongest. I reckon that the work and life of Benedict Spinoza was a demanding search for the truth about God, about himself, about life, and I find his attempts to help all people find true happiness and vital goodness praiseworthy.

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