

ETHICS

30 as a model, in what he does, and at which he aims, as at a certain goal. This is simply to subject God to fate. Nothing more absurd can be maintained about God, whom we have shown to be the first and only free cause, both of the essence of all things, and of their existence. So I shall waste no time in refuting this absurdity.

35 P34: *God's power is his essence itself.*

II/77 Dem.: For from the necessity alone of God's essence it follows that God is the cause of himself (by P11) and (by P16 and P16C) of all things. Therefore, God's power, by which he and all things are and
5 act, is his essence itself, q.e.d.

P35: *Whatever we conceive to be in God's power, necessarily exists.*

Dem.: For whatever is in God's power must (by P34) be so comprehended by his essence that it necessarily follows from it, and therefore necessarily exists, q.e.d.
10

P36: *Nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow.*

15 Dem: Whatever exists expresses the nature, or essence of God in a certain and determinate way (by P25C), i.e. (by P34), whatever exists expresses in a certain and determinate way the power of God, which is the cause of all things. So (by P16), from [NS: everything that exists] some effect must follow, q.e.d.

APPENDIX

20

With these [demonstrations] I have explained God's nature and properties: that he exists necessarily; that he is unique; that he is and acts from the necessity alone of his nature; that (and how) he is the free cause of all things; that all things are in God and so depend on him
25 that without him they can neither be nor be conceived; and finally, that all things have been predetermined by God, not from freedom of the will or absolute good pleasure, but from God's absolute nature, or infinite power.

Further, I have taken care, whenever the occasion arose, to remove prejudices that could prevent my demonstrations from being perceived. But because many prejudices remain that could, and can, be
30 a great obstacle to men's understanding the connection of things in the way I have explained it, I considered it worthwhile to submit them here to the scrutiny of reason. All the prejudices I here undertake to expose depend on this one: that men commonly suppose that all natural things act, as men do, on account of an end; indeed, they maintain as certain that God himself directs all things to some certain end,
II/78

THE METAPHYSICAL MORALIST

5 for they say that God has made all things for man, and man that he might worship God.

 So I shall begin by considering this one prejudice, asking *first* [I] why most people are satisfied that it is true, and why all are so inclined by nature to embrace it. *Then* [II] I shall show its falsity, and
10 *finally* [III] how, from this, prejudices have arisen concerning *good* and *evil*, *merit* and *sin*, *praise* and *blame*, *order* and *confusion*, *beauty* and *ugliness*, and other things of this kind.⁷¹

 [I.] Of course this is not the place to deduce these things from the nature of the human mind. It will be sufficient here if I take as a
15 foundation what everyone must acknowledge: that all men are born ignorant of the causes of things, and that they all want to seek their own advantage, and are conscious of this appetite.

 From these [assumptions] it follows, *first*, that men think themselves free, because they are conscious of their volitions and their appetite, and do not think, even in their dreams, of the causes by which they
20 are disposed to wanting and willing, because they are ignorant of [those causes]. It follows, *secondly*, that men act always on account of an end, viz. on account of their advantage, which they want. Hence they seek to know only the final causes of what has been done, and when they have heard them, they are satisfied, because they have no reason to
25 doubt further. But if they cannot hear them from another, nothing remains for them but to turn toward themselves, and reflect on the ends by which they are usually determined to do such things; so they necessarily judge the temperament of other men from their own temperament.

 Furthermore, they find—both in themselves and outside themselves—many means that are very helpful in seeking their own advantage, e.g., eyes for seeing, teeth for chewing, plants and animals for food, the sun for light, the sea for supporting fish [NS: and so with almost all other things whose natural causes they have no reason to
30 doubt].⁷² Hence, they consider all natural things as means to their own advantage. And knowing that they had found these means, not provided them for themselves, they had reason to believe that there was someone else who had prepared those means for their use. For after
35 they considered things as means, they could not believe that the things
II/79

⁷¹ Wolfson's discussion of medieval doctrines concerning final causes (1, 1:422-440) is useful background to this appendix. But Gueroult is surely right to argue (1, 1:398-400) that Spinoza's antifinalism, while owing much to Descartes, is, in the end, directed against him as well as the scholastics.

⁷² What Gebhardt adds here from the NS, Akkerman (2, 161) regards as a translator's gloss, though it seems to me to go beyond the sort of thing one would expect from Balling.

ETHICS

had made themselves; but from the means they were accustomed to prepare for themselves, they had to infer that there was a ruler, or a number of rulers of nature, endowed with human freedom, who had taken care of all things for them, and made all things for their use.

5 And since they had never heard anything about the temperament of these rulers, they had to judge it from their own. Hence, they maintained that the Gods direct all things for the use of men in order to bind men to them and be held by men in the highest honor. So it has happened that each of them has thought up from his own temperament different ways of worshipping God, so that God might love
10 them above all the rest, and direct the whole of Nature according to the needs of their blind desire and insatiable greed. Thus this prejudice was changed into superstition, and struck deep roots in their minds. This was why each of them strove with great diligence to understand and explain the final causes of all things.

15 But while they sought to show that nature does nothing in vain (i.e., nothing which is not of use to men), they seem to have shown only that nature and the Gods are as mad as men. See, I ask you, how the matter has turned out in the end! Among so many conveniences in nature they had to find many inconveniences: storms, earthquakes, diseases, etc. These, they maintain, happen because the Gods [NS: (whom they judge to be of the same nature as themselves)]⁷³ are angry on account of wrongs done to them by men, *or* on account of sins committed in their worship. And though their daily experience contradicted this, and though infinitely many examples showed that conveniences and inconveniences happen indiscriminately to the pious and
20 the impious alike, they did not on that account give up their long-standing prejudice. It was easier for them to put this among the other unknown things, whose use they were ignorant of, and so remain in the state of ignorance in which they had been born, than to destroy that whole construction, and think up a new one.

30 So they maintained it as certain that the judgments of the Gods far surpass man's grasp. This alone, of course, would have caused the truth to be hidden from the human race to eternity, if Mathematics, which is concerned not with ends, but only with the essences and properties of figures, had not shown men another standard of truth.
35 And besides Mathematics, we can assign other causes also (which it is unnecessary to enumerate here), which were able to bring it about that men [NS:—but very few, in relation to the whole human race—]⁷⁴

⁷³ What Gebhardt adds here from the NS, Akkerman (2, 161) regards as a translator's gloss.

⁷⁴ What Gebhardt adds here from the NS, Akkerman (2, 161) suggests may be a

THE METAPHYSICAL MORALIST

II/80 would notice these common prejudices and be led to the true knowledge of things.

[II.] With this I have sufficiently explained what I promised in the first place [viz. why men are so inclined to believe that all things act for an end]. Not many words will be required now to show that Nature has no end set before it, and that all final causes are nothing but
 5 human fictions. For I believe I have already sufficiently established it, both by the foundations and causes from which I have shown this prejudice to have had its origin, and also by P16, P32C1 and C2, and all those [propositions] by which I have shown that all things proceed by a certain eternal necessity of nature, and with the greatest perfection.

10 I shall, however, add this: this doctrine concerning the end turns nature completely upside down. For what is really a cause, it considers as an effect, and conversely [NS: what is an effect it considers as a cause]. What is by nature prior, it makes posterior. And finally, what is supreme and most perfect, it makes imperfect.

15 For—to pass over the first two, since they are manifest through themselves—as has been established in PP21-23, that effect is most perfect which is produced immediately by God, and the more something requires intermediate causes to produce it, the more imperfect it is. But if the things which have been produced immediately by God
 20 had been made so that God would achieve his end, then the last things, for the sake of which the first would have been made, would be the most excellent of all.

Again, this doctrine takes away God's perfection. For if God acts for the sake of an end, he necessarily wants something which he lacks. And though the Theologians and Metaphysicians distinguish between
 25 an end of need and an end of assimilation,⁷⁵ they nevertheless confess that God did all things for his own sake, not for the sake of the things to be created. For before creation they can assign nothing except God

comment by Balling, "who thinks most people stupid." Akkerman is no doubt thinking of the gloss at 81/20, which probably is due to Balling. But the comment here seems to say no more than that few men are able to see common prejudices for what they are and rise above them, and that seems to be a genuinely Spinozistic view. Cf. the Preface to the TTP, III/5-6, 12. If we ascribe this line to Spinoza, we need not imagine that he deliberately omitted it in revising his first draft. If it was Spinoza's own copy of Balling's translation that Glazemaker used in compiling the NS, Spinoza may have added the line to the translation without adding it to the text, through some oversight.

⁷⁵ As Wolfson points out (1, 1:432), the distinction is to be found (among other places) in Heereboord's *Meletemata* where it is explained that in acting for the sake of an end of assimilation God acts for the benefit of other things which are outside him and are made to be like him. Heereboord does also concede there that God has done all things for his own sake.

ETHICS

for whose sake God would act. And so they are necessarily compelled to confess that God lacked those things for the sake of which he willed to prepare means, and that he desired them. This is clear through itself.

30 Nor ought we here to pass over the fact that the Followers of this doctrine, who have wanted to show off their cleverness in assigning the ends of things, have introduced—to prove this doctrine of theirs—a new way of arguing: by reducing things, not to the impossible, but to ignorance. This shows that no other way of defending their doctrine was open to them.

35 For example, if a stone has fallen from a roof onto someone's head and killed him, they will show, in the following way, that the stone fell in order to kill the man. For if it did not fall to that end, God
II/81 willing it, how could so many circumstances have concurred by chance (for often many circumstances do concur at once)? Perhaps you will answer that it happened because the wind was blowing hard and the man was walking that way. But they will persist: why was the wind
5 blowing hard at that time? why was the man walking that way at that same time? If you answer again that the wind arose then because on the preceding day, while the weather was still calm, the sea began to toss, and that the man had been invited by a friend, they will press on—for there is no end to the questions which can be asked: but why was the sea tossing? why was the man invited at just that time? And
10 so they will not stop asking for the causes of causes until you take refuge in the will of God, i.e., the sanctuary of ignorance.

Similarly, when they see the structure of the human body, they are struck by a foolish wonder, and because they do not know the causes of so great an art, they infer that it is constructed, not by mechanical, but by divine, or supernatural art, and constituted in such a way that
15 one part does not injure another.⁷⁶

Hence it happens that one who seeks the true causes of miracles, and is eager, like an educated man, to understand natural things, not to wonder at them, like a fool, is generally considered and denounced as an impious heretic by those whom the people honor as interpreters
20 of nature and the Gods. For they know that if ignorance⁷⁷ is taken

⁷⁶ As Wolfson points out (1, 1:434-436), the argument of this paragraph goes back at least as far as Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* and was used in the Middle Ages by Maimonides (1, III, 19).

⁷⁷ Gebhardt here adds a phrase from the NS which would be translated: "or rather, stupidity." He takes it that Spinoza had omitted this phrase when revising his first draft, in order to avoid unnecessary offense. But as Akkerman (2, 97) points out, it is more likely that the translator was offering a double translation of a single Latin term, to heighten the effect of lines that strongly appealed to him. The translator uses other

THE METAPHYSICAL MORALIST

away, then foolish wonder, the only means they have of arguing and defending their authority is also taken away. But I leave these things,⁷⁸ and pass on to what I have decided to treat here in the *third* place.

25 [III.] After men persuaded themselves that everything that happens, happens on their account, they had to judge that what is most important in each thing is what is most useful to them, and to rate as most excellent all those things by which they were most pleased. Hence, they had to form these notions, by which they explained natural things:
30 *good, evil, order, confusion, warm, cold, beauty, ugliness*. And because they thought themselves free, those notions have arisen: *praise and blame, sin and merit*. The latter I shall explain after I have treated human nature;⁷⁹ but the former I shall briefly explain here.

35 Whatever conduces to health and the worship of God, they have called *good*; but what is contrary to these, *evil*.

And because those who do not understand the nature of things, but only imagine them, affirm nothing concerning things, and take the
II/82 imagination for the intellect, they firmly believe, in their ignorance of things and of their own nature, that there is an order in things. For when things are so disposed that, when they are presented to us through the senses, we can easily imagine them, and so can easily remember
5 them, we say that they are well-ordered;⁸⁰ but if the opposite is true, we say that they are badly ordered, or confused.

And since those things we can easily imagine are especially pleasing to us, men prefer order to confusion, as if order were anything in nature more than a relation to our imagination. They also say that
10 God has created all things in order, and so, unknowingly attribute imagination to God—unless, perhaps, they mean that God, to provide

double translations in this passage without provoking Gebhardt to make the corresponding additions to the text (e.g., l. 19, *interpretes/tolken en verklaarders*, l. 20, *stupor/verwondering of verbaasdheid*). Is the addition consistent with Spinoza's thought elsewhere? Akkerman notes that it is "familiar humanistic ground" that philosophers try to raise people out of their ignorance and that priests see their authority threatened by this. But does Spinoza think the people are not merely ignorant but stupid? Akkerman appeals to TTP, VII, 27 (III/319-20) to show that he does not.

⁷⁸ Gebhardt here adds, as if it were something omitted in the Latin, what is surely (cf. Akkerman 2, 164) a translator's gloss on this first clause: "But I leave it to them to judge what force there is in such reasoning." Since Gebhardt also gives, as part of the text, the Latin which the Dutch glosses, his text is redundant.

⁷⁹ NS: "the human mind." Akkerman (2, 169) thinks that this variation may, in fact, stem from Spinoza's altering the text after it had been translated, and that this may be a survival of the period in which Spinoza conceived the *Ethics* as having a tripartite structure (I. On God, II. On the mind, III. On human nature). The topics referred to are treated in IVP37S2 as things presently stand.

⁸⁰ In the NS this passage is translated: "we say that they are in good order, or in order." Gebhardt assumes that something has been omitted in revision, but probably this is no more than a double translation. Cf. Akkerman 2, 88.

ETHICS

for human imagination, has disposed all things so that men can very easily imagine them. Nor will it, perhaps, give them pause that infinitely many things are found which far surpass our imagination, and
15 a great many which confuse it on account of its weakness. But enough of this.

The other notions are also nothing but modes of imagining, by which the imagination is variously affected; and yet the ignorant consider them the chief attributes of things, because, as we have already said,
20 they believe all things have been made for their sake, and call the nature of a thing good or evil, sound or rotten and corrupt, as they are affected by it. For example, if the motion the nerves receive from objects presented through the eyes is conducive to health, the objects by which it is caused are called beautiful; those which cause a contrary
25 motion are called ugly. Those which move the sense through the nose, they call pleasant-smelling or stinking; through the tongue, sweet or bitter, tasty or tasteless; through touch, hard or soft, rough or smooth, etc.; and finally, those which move the ears are said to produce noise, sound or harmony. Men have been so mad as to believe that God is
30 pleased by harmony. Indeed there are Philosophers who have persuaded themselves that the motions of the heavens produce a harmony.

All of these things show sufficiently that each one has judged things according to the disposition of his brain; or rather, has accepted affections of the imagination as things. So it is no wonder (to note this,
35 too, in passing) that we find so many controversies to have arisen among men, and that they have finally given rise to Skepticism. For although human bodies agree in many things, they still differ in very
II/83 many. And for that reason what seems good to one, seems bad to another; what seems ordered to one, seems confused to another; what seems pleasing to one, seems displeasing to another, and so on.

I pass over the [other notions] here, both because this is not the place to treat them at length, and because everyone has experienced
5 this [variability] sufficiently for himself. That is why we have such sayings as "So many heads, so many attitudes," "everyone finds his own judgment more than enough," and "there are as many differences of brains as of palates." These proverbs show sufficiently that men judge things according to the disposition of their brain, and imagine, rather than understand them. For if men had understood them, the things would at least convince them all, even if they did not attract
10 them all, as the example of mathematics shows.

We see, therefore, that all the notions by which ordinary people are accustomed to explain nature are only modes of imagining, and do not

THE METAPHYSICAL MORALIST

15 indicate the nature of anything, only the constitution of the imagination. And because they have names, as if they were [notions] of beings existing outside the imagination, I call them beings, not of reason, but of imagination. So all the arguments in which people try to use such notions against us can easily be warded off.

20 For many are accustomed to arguing in this way: if all things have followed from the necessity of God's most perfect nature, why are there so many imperfections in nature? why are things corrupt to the point where they stink? so ugly that they produce nausea? why is there confusion, evil, and sin?

25 As I have just said, those who argue in this way are easily answered. For the perfection of things is to be judged solely from their nature and power; things are not more or less perfect because they please or offend men's senses, or because they are of use to, or are incompatible with, human nature.

30 But to those who ask "why God did not create all men so that they would be governed by the command of reason?" I answer only "because he did not lack material to create all things, from the highest degree of perfection to the lowest;" or, to speak more properly, "because the laws of his nature have been so ample that they sufficed for producing all things which can be conceived by an infinite intellect" (as I have demonstrated in P16).

35 These are the prejudices I undertook to note here. If any of this kind still remain, they can be corrected by anyone with only a little meditation. [NS: And so I find no reason to devote more time to these matters, etc.]⁸¹

II/84

Second Part of the Ethics On the Nature and Origin of the Mind

10 *I pass now to explaining those things which must necessarily follow from the essence of God, or the infinite and eternal Being—not, indeed, all of them, for we have demonstrated (IP16) that infinitely many things must follow from it in infinitely many modes, but only those that can lead us, by the hand, as it were, to the knowledge of the human Mind and its highest blessedness.*

⁸¹ This concluding formula, which Gebhardt adds from the NS, Akkerman (2, 161) attributes to the translator.