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## What can Psychoanalysis Reveal us About Spinoza's Life and Work?

Marius DUMITRESCU<sup>1</sup>

### *Abstract*

*Spinoza wrote the most fascinating politico-philosophical texts during his life, because these were intertwined with his life, with the events he attended and actively involved in, hoping for a reformation of the world in which he lived. Theologico-Political Treatise and On the Improvement of the Understanding reveal us that Spinoza does not belong to eternity, but to his time. He was a thinker who wrote first of all for its contemporaries, for the people of the 17th century.*

*In this paper I will analyze in the psychoanalytic key these two texts and the context in which they were elaborated because we can better understand the philosopher's reaction to the events of his time.*

*Firstly, I will point out that these two treaties wrote by the Dutch philosopher captured the spirit attempt to maintain its thinking independence on emotional tensions that threatened to throw the soul of man in the whirl of regrettable events and actions. Secondly, I will show that Spinoza, a man of his time, was directly involved in the complicated process that aimed solutions for a spiritual unification of the old continent in the second half of the 17th century. He was able to experience a vast array of emotional states ranging from ambivalence to fear and despair and from resignation to enthusiasm in front of scientific and political realities which were on the way to be accomplish in the favorable conditions of the new Europe that emerged after Peace of Westphalia.*

**Keywords:** *psychoanalysis, Spinoza, thinking independence, emotions, ambivalence.*

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## 1. Introduction

Spinoza's life and writings, just as Descartes' biography and philosophical achievements, were well known by the psychoanalysis father, Sigmund Freud, due to Franz Brentano's influence, whose philosophy lecture courses he has attended even though he followed medical studies at the University of Vienna. Therefore, the whole theory of the Ego seen as *energy (conatus)*, if we were to use Spinoza's term, can be found in Freud's vision of the *libido*. In this paper I will argue that by analyzing Spinoza's life from the Freudian perspective of drive theory, taking into account his emotional and motivational systems, we may better understand the internal mechanisms behind the creation of the great Dutch philosopher, who was caught up in the political and religious events that he had to manage according to his own powers.

### **The origins of Spinoza's inadaptability - identity ambivalence and the persistence of alien sentiment**

Spinoza's first “desire” was a spiritual one, but it was conditioned by his integration and recognition within the Ashkenazi Jews community in Amsterdam. Spinoza came from a family of *Marranos*, Jews who were forced by the Spanish crown to convert to Christianity. In 1593, these *Marranos* began to come to the Netherlands as they were attracted by the Tolerance Decree issued in 1579 by the Union of Utrecht. Welcomed with affection by the people of the young Republic of the Seven United Netherlands, these Jews were now forced to reconvert to Judaism in order not to lose the Dutch sympathy. The new Judaism, however, was different from the one called Sephardic, inherited by the philosopher from his ancestors and which came along a Portuguese-Spanish line that had evolved under the influence of the Moorish culture in the Iberian Peninsula. Spinoza's native language was Portuguese, and his religion was that of a *Marran*. The reconversion to the new Ashkenazic Judaism was a test to be passed for the integration of newcomers into the Jewish community in Amsterdam.

Psychoanalysis can give us a full insight into this psychic drama through which young Spinoza passed, having to fight his own tradition to face the new world in which his family have disembarked. At the level of his deep unconsciousness, the young man was heavily connected to the Sephardic traditions, with its rich culture, recalling it from Maimonides, who may play probably the most important role in rediscovering Aristotle's philosophy by the scholars of Western Europe. The mystical lessons of the

Great Orthodox Ashkenazi Rabbi of Amsterdam, Saul Levi Morteira, would place him in a more ambivalent mood in relation to his Sephardic spirit seduced by logic and fact inspired reasoning.

Moreover, Spinoza had to deal with the death of his mother, Hanna, in 1638, when he was barely six years old and remained in the care of his older step brother, Isaac (born of his father's first marriage to Rachel), along with his other brothers: Miriam, Gabriel, and Rebecca [1]. However, it is certain that before being expelled from the Jews community in Amsterdam, young Baruch saw the death coming in his family too many times. After his mother's death, Isaac, the older brother, died in 1649, then his sister Miriam in 1651, followed by the death of his stepmother, Ester, in 1653, and culminating with the death of his father, Michael, in 1654. Baruch only relatives remained his younger brother, Gabriel, with whom he continued his family business the following two years, until he was excommunicated from the Ashkenazi community, and his sister, Rebecca [2], a controversial character. Considered by some as true sister, by others as a stepsister, she was the one who sued him to take over the entire family fortune and then claim to be the heir of Baruch Spinoza's wealth at his death. Unfortunately for her, Rebecca had to give up any claim when she found out that the so-called wealth of the philosopher consisted only of "*household furniture, personal apparel, a few books, and a number of lenses that were brought to the hammer and sold by public auction; the whole proceeds of the sale amounting to four hundred florins, or about £40 sterling*" [3], which did not deserve the effort to fight for its acquisition.

Psychoanalysis can provide us with an answer to Spinoza's complicated life if we take a closer look at the relationship he had with his own father, a successful Amsterdam merchant who wanted his son to become - nothing more, but also nothing less- than a rabbi of the new tradition. Curious choice for a businessman! Instead of preparing his son for a tradesman's business, by the inheritance of the enterprise, the father blocked this possible natural mimetic chain and directed the young Baruch's whole education for becoming a rabbi in a new cult, alien to family traditions. The ambitions of the father, who wanted to be anchored and integrated into the new community as soon as possible, were extremely pressing on the son. Baruch began to develop a genuine tension in his soul concerning the aggressive religious propaganda imposed by the Orthodox Ashkenazi rabbis.

In this state of utmost confusion, young Baruch decided to study the way in which religious theories have been solved by Christian theologians, especially since this activity was also a good opportunity to deepen the Latin language that was mandatory for a cultivated man of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For this purpose, at the age of twenty, he enrolled in a famous Christian school

in Amsterdam [4]. His excessive attachment to the teacher whose school he entered, Franciscus van den Enden (1602-1674), can be attributed to the philosopher's attempt to seek a substitute for his natural father, who would die in that period, but also for the Orthodox Ashkenazi theologians.

Baruch's father, Michael Spinoza, suddenly died in 1654, after he had shown his disappointment because his son failed to be one of the leaders of the Hebrew cult in Amsterdam. Later on, Baruch's sister attempted to steal the little part of paternal inheritance that rightfully belonged to him. Affected by all these events, but, certainly, also because of his honest, but ardent character, the philosopher “managed” to create a general animosity within the Jewish community in Amsterdam. Moreover, some old friends had come to avoid him (Durant, 2011). As a result, Spinoza was in the situation of losing all his family and community support.

During the two years that had passed between his father's death, which occurred in 1654, and until his entry into van den Enden's school as a teaching assistant, in 1656 [6], young Baruch had already focused on studying the natural sciences and the Latin language but, moreover, he publicly defended the cause of Christians not officially admitted in the Netherlands, such as the sects of Collegiants, anti-clerical cult of Protestants, and the Mennonites [4].

The result of free education led Spinoza to a point where he responded to such challenges that his conflict with the synagogue could no longer be avoided. His “friends” confessed, in order to get into the good graces of the Orthodox Ashkenazi rabbis, that the young Sephardic Jew had come to claim that God had a body, and that body would not be the text of the *Torah*, but *Nature*, that angels and many other miracles in Holy Texts would be just the fruit of our imagination, that the soul was nothing but life itself, and that the Old Testament did not mention immortality anywhere [5]. The synagogue tried, first by means of benevolence, then by bribing, offering a consistent amount of money, to make Spinoza remain faithful to the Jewish faith so as not to draw the attention of the official Dutch authorities to the case of the “*Jewish philosopher*”.

Spinoza was accused of, having been inspired by René Descartes, proposing a new and more radical religious reform than that of Calvin, approaching the idea of a religion without rabbis and pastors and, far more seriously, even without the authority of Holy Texts, seen by the young philosopher as mere stories from which moralizing teachings could be extracted. Not successful in this way, the Orthodox rabbis were forced to announce his excommunication on July 27, 1656. It was a time when the community could not risk any kind of deviation from discipline. The Great Orthodox Rabbi of Amsterdam, Saul Levi Morteira, Spinoza's professor in

his early years of Jewish education, who could have influenced the excommunication sentence, was travelling to England to negotiate with Oliver Cromwell the reception of a large Jewish community in England. Under these conditions, the Rabbi's mission could not be compromised by rumors that, in Amsterdam, the Jewish community were hosting an atheist and revolutionary rebel, since Cromwell, being, in his turn, a profoundly religious man, disfavored the freedom of thought with a philosophical perfume.

In the act of excommunication it was written as follows: *"The Senhores of the Mahamad (i. e. the Ruling Council) make it known that they have long since been cognizant of the wrong opinions and behavior of Baruch d'Espinoza, and tried various means and promises to dissuade him from his evil ways. ... horrible heresies which he practiced and taught, and of the monstrous actions which he performed ... and after all this had been investigated in the presence of the rabbis, they decided with the consent of these that the same Espinoza should be excommunicated and separated from the people of Israel, as they now excommunicate him with the following ban ... We order that nobody should communicate with him orally or in writing, or show him any favor, or stay with him under the same roof, or come within four ells of him, or read anything composed or written by him"* [7].

The excommunication was a significant decision in the life of young Baruch, 24-years old, who found himself in the situation of losing all the relationships he had inherited from his father and his keen. Perhaps the best description of the impact of that day on Spinoza's life was made by Seymour Feldman, who wrote: *"From that day on Spinoza was no longer a resident of the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam, but of the Dutch Netherlands and indeed of Western Civilization"* [8]. Moreover, the situation culminated in an assassination attempt upon him that left some traces of a knife blade to his throat. Another philosopher with Portuguese Marranos roots, Uriel da Costa [10], [11], who probably was a distant relative with Spinoza's mother [9], was considered a heretic by the communities in Venice and Hamburg, also came to Amsterdam in 1623, where he published a book in Portuguese, titled *Exame das tradições phariseas (An Examination of the Traditions of the Pharisees)*, in which he claimed that the Hebrew Bible, especially the Torah, did not support the idea of immortality of the soul, but that this idea would have been formulated primarily by later Pharisaic rabbis: *"But even were we to concede that 'Adam had originally been granted immortality ... on condition that he obey the commandment laid upon him; at the moment when he transgressed it, he would have lost that immortality and, consequently, died. It must also be remembered that even if conditional immortality had originally been granted' Adam, it would, of course, have been physical immortality. But he sinned, died and any immortality he might have was gone. The truth of the matter is, however, that he was created mortal and corruptible"* [10]. A

year later, his book, considered an attack to the official doctrine of the Amsterdam Jews community, was burned, perhaps at the instigation of the same Great Rabbi *Morteira* (1596-1660) with which Spinoza also came into contact in his adolescence. In 1633 he was excommunicated by the rabbis of the synagogue in Amsterdam, being humiliated and forced to live in isolation for seven years, for which reason he apparently committed suicide in 1640 [12]. An even more tragic fate had another Jew, Juan de Prado, who in 1656, was also threatened with exclusion from the Jewish community in Amsterdam being accused of claiming that the soul dies with the body, that God exists only from philosophical point of view and that faith is profitable [13]. Some commentators of Spinoza's life and work (Feld, 1989) wrote that there have been some witnesses of Dr. Juan de Prado's and Spinoza's meetings, the latter being sustained to maintain his own ideas in front of the rabbis at the Amsterdam synagogue. Unlike Spinoza, who had done nothing to prevent exclusion and was already preparing to live outside the Jewish community, Juan de Prado refused the excommunication sentence as he urged the community leaders in Hamburg to intervene in his favor. Unfortunately, the punishment was enforced, and he went to live in Antwerp where, in 1659, he died accidentally.

Banned from the synagogue, in 1656, Spinoza was seeking a philosophical and a religious conversion and a family space to provide him with the much desired comfort. The renegade will find a quiet family whose house was on the Outerdek road outside of Amsterdam. The hosts were Christians of the Mennonite sect and, as heretics themselves, they could probably understand, to a certain degree, another heretic [5]. Mennonites were the advocates of the baptism at mature age when man could decide on the value of Christian life, refusing the authority of the clergy and the Catholic Church.

In the same period, Spinoza found a new affection in the family of Professor van den Enden, who has opened a private school in Amsterdam in 1652. Educated in the Jesuits school, the professor was an enlightened man, concerned with the idea of a social reform in the spirit of the ideas of equality and freedom. A rebellious and adventurous spirit, he will be a critic of established institutions as he wanted a reform bordering utopia. At the same time a physician, art trader and ideologist of equality between men, he was considered one of the spiritual masters who prepared the French Revolution in view of the activity in the School that he would open in Paris in 1671. Unfortunately, having been involved in a conspiracy against the King of France, he was found guilty and hanged in 1674 [5]. This exotic character, however, will be chosen by Spinoza as a substitute for his “ultra-potent” real father and “ultra-potent” spiritual fathers in the Ashkenazi

synagogue, people who had marked the first youth of the thinker, determining in him a reaction of negation and rebelliousness in front of any principle of authority that would have inhibited his freedom, be it of thought or of choice.

### Missing love of Van de Enden's daughter, Maria Clara

In van den Enden's school, a wonderful thing seems to have happened for young Spinoza, when he fell in love with the teacher's beautiful and elevated Clara Maria. He discovered the feeling of pure love under the attraction of van den Enden's older daughter. George Henry Lewes, in his book *A Biographical History of Philosophy*, describes the approach of young Baruch to the daughter of van den Enden, who at that time was a teenager of about 14-16 years: “... her personal charm were equivocal, but she was thoroughly versed in Latin, and was an accomplished musician. The task of teaching young Benedict generally fell to her: as a consequence the pupil soon became in love with the master. We often picture this courtship to ourselves, as a sort of odd reverse of Abelard and Heloise. Spinoza, we fancy, not inattentive to the instruction, but more in love with it coming from so soft a mouth: not inattentive, yet not wholly absorbed. He watches her hand as it moves along the page, and longs to squeeze it. While 'looking out' in the dictionary their hands touch – and he is thrilled; but the word is found, nevertheless. The lesson ended, he ventures on a timid compliment, which she received with a kind smile; but the smile is lost, for the bashful philosopher has his eyes on the ground; when he raises them, it is to see her trip away to household duties, or to another pupil: and he looks after her sighing. But, alas for maidenly discernment! our female Abelard was more captivated by the showy attractions of a certain Kerkering, a young Hamburg merchant, who had also taken lessons in Latin and love from the fair teacher; and who, having backed his pretensions by the more potent seductions of pearl necklaces, rings, etc., quite cast poor Benedict into the shade” [15].

The suddenly broken love, through the humiliation of the soul, of a young man who had chosen the path of uncompromising life, inspired by van den Enden's lessons, caused perhaps in Spinoza's soul a certain aversion to matrimonial commitments. The philosopher was probably thrown into the nets of accidental relationships with women of a certain condition that did not make them a candidate for marriage. This fact could cause reactions of affective non-fulfillment of the sexual intercourse. Biographers tell us that this rejection has prompted Spinoza to abandon any marriage project and “turned from love to philosophy” [15]; moreover, it marked his separation from his magister and his withdrawal to Rijnsburg, near Amsterdam, and later to Voorburg, near Hague, where his political adventure would begin.



His first philosophical work, the *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione* (*Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*) (c. 1656-1661), unpublished during his life, prefigured the future *Ethics*, where the whole energy of the subject is oriented towards an intellectual love of God. In the text of the *Treatise* we find some fragments suggesting precisely this affective non-fulfillment of sexual act at Spinoza. Thus, a fragment reveals a side of the soul of the philosopher whom psychoanalysis may certainly pay attention to. Speaking in the first part of the *Treatise* about pleasure, the author makes the following statement: “*With regard to sensual pleasure, the mind is so utterly obsessed by it that it seems as if it were absorbed in some good, and so is quite prevented from thinking of anything else. But after the enjoyment of this pleasure there ensues a profound depression which, if it does not completely inhibit the mind, leads to its confusion and enervation.* [16]” Further, the text expresses the fact that this deplorable condition in which he finds himself after indulging in bodily pleasure leads to repentance.

So, in Spinoza's opinion, if sexual intercourse is determined only by carnal desire in the sense of concupiscence, without having a satisfactory subject, it turns into a state of psychological strain, manifested precisely in the terms described by Spinoza as a *profound depression* which finally will end into a great *repentance* (de Spinoza, 1949). Such sexuality is close to the condition of the one who produces sexual pleasure, being indifferent to his partner. We can deduce from these expressions the deplorable state of the philosopher who, either because of the lack of real object of his sexual desire, masturbated or, if we consider another possibility, went to “*women of pleasure*” for whom he could not have any deep affective feeling, as they practiced sex for little money. These extreme frustrations led him to sublimate his sexual impulses. In compensation, Spinoza turned to the tenuous world of Mathematics, of calculations and universal and incontestable certainties, which could represent what Descartes hoped to find in them, namely “*the rock*” on which a world of certainty and fulfillment can be built, beyond the darkness and the challenges of the affections that bind us to the order of senses.

The text of the little *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione* reveals how Spinoza has tried to compensate for sexual frustration in the first instance. Fragments that refer to the ephemeral character of pleasures and the disgust that followed their fulfillment are correlated with those in which the pride satisfied by honors is described. “*For the things which for the most part offer themselves in life, and which, to judge from their action, men regard as the highest good, can be reduced to these three headings: riches, honour, and sensual pleasure. ... The pursuit of honour and wealth, too, engrosses the mind to no small degree, especially when the latter is sought exclusively for its own sake, for it is then regarded as the highest and the ultimate end to which everything is directed. Then again, in both these cases, there is no repentance*

*as in the case of sensual pleasure. The more of them is possessed, the more our joy is enhanced, and we are therefore more and more induced to increase them both*“[16].

## **The great misunderstanding of a political vision that has long surpassed its era**

In connection with the fascination for honors and social recognition, perhaps the most disturbing experience in Spinoza's life was that of his involvement in politics. From an anthropological point of view, politics is the full expression of legitimate manifestation of power that, in the civilized world, is usually adjectivied, becoming a military, religious or scientific power, which manifests itself as power of the titles offered by universities or academies. The quality of “*queen*” of all powers is undeniably held by the political power. But behind the power is hidden a much deeper level of the energetic being, through which the human being is connected to the cosmic forces. *Power* is actually the most refined form of aggressiveness; it is the expression of the fulfillment of this instinct. Power is a cultural instance in itself, which people want because it is the framework that allows aggression to manifest itself, legitimizing it at the same time. To imagine non-aggressive human beings without wish for power is like instead of real people we would deal with angels and other figments of the imagination. Aggression, whether we recognize it or not, is, actually, the secret or, even more, the key to our survival as individuals and as a species.

Following Spinoza's political destiny, we find that in 1660, the philosopher moved to the quiet village of Rijnsburg, near the university town of Leyden, where the Collegiants had set up their headquarters. So we see young Baruch, who in this period changed his name to the Latinized Benedictus (“*blessed person*”), in the midst of a new family that seems to be a good substitute for the real family (own father and Jews community) who had rejected him. The religion of the new family was exactly what Spinoza was looking for, i.e. a religion without rabbis, priests or pastors, a religion of free people seeking God. To these people Spinoza actually devoted his *Ethics*, the most wonderful book, whose purpose was, in fact, God's free search beyond any kind of superstition, any kind of textual constraint, a God belonging to people capable of thinking freely and independently.

Three years later, Spinoza left the Collegians in Rijnburg and moved to Voorburg, a suburb of the Hague, where he rent a room in the house of a painter. Here, the philosopher met Christian Huygens, who would lay the foundations for modern optics, through whom he became a lens polisher, but also a friend with a well known mathematician, who translated

Descartes' *La Géométrie*, but also an influential politician, Johan Hudde (1628-1704), the mayor of Amsterdam beginning with that year, 1663. By means of this select companionship, Spinoza entered the circle of Jan de Witt, the enlightened state man who held the position of the Grand Protector (*raadpensionaris*) of the Netherlands [4]. Jan de Witt was a charismatic character, whose deep convictions were related to the principles of a parliamentary life, guaranteed by a republic, in which religious tolerance and freedom of expression of the people were to prevail.

The period was still tense, although the Peace of Westphalia had created the conditions of a Europe in which at least religious pretenses could no longer be invoked to trigger a conflict. The struggles that were beginning to appear on the horizon were related to the birth of colonial empires, the great commercial routes stretching across continents and the world. Thus, the Netherlands saw itself directly involved in a conflict with England, whose pretexts were shipping routes, as well as the clear delineation of the maritime territories that provided the basic activities of the Netherlands, namely trade and fishing. This conflict also opened a road of peace talks between Cromwell, as commander of the English army, and Jan de Witt - on the Dutch side. In these negotiations, Cromwell required reduction the role of royalty in the Netherlands towards a constitutional monarchy. The compromises made by Jan de Witt have not been viewed with good eyes by the Orangist (Royalist) party that held a strong and authoritarian monarchy in the Netherlands, precisely in order to be able to lead the army during a war. These controversies between the party led by the de Witt brothers and royalists have turned into an ideological confrontation regarding the nature of the state, and especially regarding the role and the manner in which religion has to interfere with political issues.

At this point, Spinoza became the most appropriate person to turn from a contemplative into a true ideologist of this political project with a republican finality. To this end, he drafted his first political treatise, which he published, without having the courage to sign it. This was a far too ambitious political-religious program for his time, the author being aware that, unfortunately, his contemporaries were still unprepared for such a message, whose main purpose was the liberation of the human being from the empire of a religious imaginary, which moved fantasy into irrational forces, often taking delusive forms and pushing poor mortals to regrettable deeds.

Spinoza dreamed of a political and especially religious context that would allow the initiative and the freedom of expression for the people cultivated through education. In 1670, the *Theological-Political Treatise* was

published, and the reactions of the ones concerned with this radical reform, emerging from its text, will be extremely virulent.

Also in this period, in order to be closer to his protector, Spinoza moved to The Hague, assuming the implication in the political events that precipitated in the context of the war that involved France, which allied with England in order to conquer Dutch territories. As such, in 1672, the French armies invaded the Dutch republic and established its headquarters at Utrecht [6].

In this context, the de Witt brothers' enemies described Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* as “forged in hell by the apostate Jew working together with the devil and published with the knowledge of Jan de Witt” [4]. Also in 1672, on August 20, the mob, manipulated by the Royalist forces, has considered the defeat of Dutch Republic in front of the French armies of Louis XIV as a result of the Jan de Witt's betrayal. Popular fury unleashed upon the Great Protector and his brother, the two being captured and publicly executed by evisceration. The macabre spectacle has terrified and impressed the artists of the era who have immortalized the scene in several paintings that create a strong emotion even for the viewers over time who face with the martyrdom of the two politicians.

Many authors wrote about a story saying that at this moment of utter disruption, the philosopher, being horrified by the tragic event, would write on a placard the words *Ultimi barbarorum*, accusing the anonymous murderers as being “ultimate barbarians”. He wanted to bring it in the place where the remnants of the two politicians could hardly be identified. He was restrained to go there by a prudent friend [17] who locked him inside the house, preventing another violent death [18]. Some others wrote about a lost text, entitled *Ultimi barbarorum*, in which he presented the way in which this drama that involved the manipulation of that great crowd of people was produced [4]. The echoes of this event would also be found in the pages of Spinoza's *Ethica*, where the philosopher would present the mimetic mechanisms underlying the manipulation of the crowds.

## Negative freedom or the isolation of a philosopher

As if these events were not enough, an even more serious fact happened in Spinoza's life. His *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* has drawn the attention not only to the lay people, but also to the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, who was preparing to make a decision about that anonymous book published in 1670. Four years later, when it was clear to

everybody that Spinoza was its author, the decision was announced: *Tractatus* will be officially banned.

The disaster would follow him from that time on until the year of his death, being constantly suspected as a homeland traitor, similarly to his lynched protector. The situation culminated in 1677, when Spinoza undertook a peace negotiation with the French army that had camped in Utrecht. In the eyes of the suspicious people, the failure of this negotiation will add again, besides the heretic label, that of a homeland traitor or a spy [4].

Lacking the enthusiasm that reception of his ideas by his contemporaries would have given him, the philosopher would only be able to isolate himself, refusing to leave his home. He reoriented all his aggressive energy toward himself. What in his outer life has manifested as an effort to polish the lenses, in fact, from the point of view of his much deeper inner life, this activity reflected a complex process of torturing his soul. It was probably a process by which he wanted to change his own self, transforming it into a drive-free one, capable of ultimately reflecting and understanding the outer reality as much as possible without subjecting it to any process that would imply a subjective deformation of it.

The polishing of his own soul has reached such a threshold that he would not allow the presence of any minimal state of emotional enthusiasm in relation to ephemeral things, reorienting all his spiritual energy to the eternal dimension of the world, to the place of ineffable encounter with the author of the wonderful vibrating energy hidden in things. His freedom has become only the need for understanding and his will—that intellectual love for God (*amor Dei intellectualis*).

## Conclusion

Spinoza believed in politics, in the possibility of rationalizing it in universally recognized frameworks that would necessarily involve, first and foremost, the existence of a real constitution and a real parliamentary life based on freedom. He believed that these hopes could actually turn into reality in a parliamentary republic, as the de Witt brothers dreamed of.

Spinoza was a man who had anticipated Europe's political reality for at least a century, making it incomprehensible in its century. This singularity, reflected in the impossibility of manifesting its aggressiveness outside of it, led him to deep frustration, reflected in his *Ethics*, treatise to which he worked until the year of his death, willingly not publishing it, leaving it however to the posterity. In this final work, following the geometric model,

the Dutch philosopher tries to rationally justify, following a course according to the order of reason, the human condition, which is that of a finite being, however, having the consciousness of the infinity of God. This disturbing experience of living in the vicinity of the divine transforms man into a being with a special position in the universe, which forces him to an infinite love for his Creator.

Thus ends the life of a man who, as Bertrand Russell would write, was intellectually surpassed by just a few of his contemporaries, but ethically he held the supreme place. *“Intellectually, some have surpassed him, but ethically he is supreme. As a natural consequence, he was considered, during his lifetime and for a century after his death, a man of appalling wickedness.”* [19]. Ethics only led Spinoza the man to a series of inhibitions in front of a reality which he received in a neurotic, ambivalent way, and in front of which he retracted, considering himself to be misunderstood, born too early. If many people suffer from deep melancholy, considering that they have souls belonging to past worlds, there are still a few exceptions, whose souls have an enormous anticipatory vocation, as if they were brutally projected from a future world in their own age. Such persons were, certainly, Leonardo da Vinci, Johannes Kepler or René Descartes, and why not, Benedict Baruch Spinoza. These people have looked so far in the future that, in fact, their contemporaries were a few centuries behind them.

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