



## Philosophical Review

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### Review

Reviewed Work(s): On Spinozistic Immortality by George Stuart Fullerton

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Spinoza. Leibniz believed in teleology, and the chief aim of his life was to harmonize mechanism and teleology, while Spinoza absolutely repudiated every attempt to explain the world from the standpoint of final causes. Moreover, Leibniz inclined towards idealism, while Spinoza never lost sight of the materialistic element in the divine substance. Leibniz's attention is centered upon individuals; from individuals he passes to God; the necessity of explaining the harmony existing between the monads leads him to assume the existence of a Creator, a doctrine which contradicts his original theory of absolute, eternal monads, which cannot be affected by anything outside of their own nature. There is no such contradiction in Spinoza; for him the individual is a dependent reflection of the absolute substance. Leibniz is a philosopher of compromises; his desire to establish individualism or pluralism, and at the same time to save the hypothesis of an all-powerful Creator, leads him into contradictions, and hinders him from seeing the similarity between his own system and that of the despised Spinoza. But he is not the only thinker who becomes involved in such difficulties, and it is hardly fair to impugn a man's character because he does not see that the assumption of an absolute Creator means pantheism.

Höffding also seems to me to weaken Locke's opposition to Descartes. "Locke," he declares, "can hardly have been aiming directly at Descartes" (p. 383). This is, in my opinion, a mistake. Locke's polemic was directed against all those who advocated the doctrine of innate ideas, as it was commonly understood in the seventeenth century; against Descartes, the Cartesian school, Herbert of Cherbury, More, Cudworth, and Gale, as I have tried to show in my inaugural dissertation, *Leibnizens Streit gegen Locke in Ansehung der angeborenen Ideen*, Heidelberg, 1891, to which I beg to refer the reader for the proofs.

FRANK THILLY.

*On Spinozistic Immortality.* By GEORGE STUART FULLERTON, Professor of Intellectual and Moral Philosophy in the University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia, Published for the University, 1899. Ginn & Co., Selling Agents, Boston, Mass.—pp. viii; 154.

The subject with which this monograph deals is really broader than that indicated by the title. Professor Fullerton has found that his study of Spinoza's doctrine of immortality required him to give an exposition of the fundamental points of the whole system, and especially to deal at length with the "doctrine of existences and of essences and

of the passage of the soul from the world of perishable things to that of things imperishable and eternal." We find, accordingly, that the work has the following main divisions: Part I, The World of Existences; Part II, The World of Essences; Part III, From Bondage to Freedom; Part IV, The Religious Element in Spinoza.

Professor Fullerton maintains that Spinoza has been much misunderstood by uncritical readers, and he insists strongly on the necessity of scrutinizing carefully the philosopher's own statements. Moreover, he urges the importance of an objective and unbiased interpretation, and lectures rather severely Hegelians and others who read into Spinoza "doctrines which he could not possibly have had in mind, since they were not formulated until long after his time" (p. 119). To understand the full purpose of Professor Fullerton's study, and to rightly comprehend the scope of his criticism, it is also necessary to note the following passage from his preface: "It is perhaps not out of place to remark that this paper ought to have rather more than a merely historical interest. Spinoza represents a certain way of thinking, which properly belongs, I believe, to the past, but of which there are to-day, particularly in England and America, numerous survivals. Spinozism has an historical justification; it is an articulated system resting upon a basis which might well have seemed, in the seventeenth century, sound and satisfactory. Its very errors are deserving of a certain respect. But conceptions which do not appear out of place upon a background of seventeenth century thought, are a discordant element in the thought of the nineteenth. They have not the excuse for existence which they once had, and they hold their own, I believe, simply because they are not analyzed with sufficient care. If my criticisms will contribute even a little towards turning upon such conceptions a more searching light, I shall be abundantly satisfied."

The first part of the monograph the author devotes to an exposition of Spinoza's doctrine regarding the two orders of existence—the world of bodies, and the world of ideas. "There exists, then, two independent but parallel worlds, consisting, in the one case, of finite individual bodies, and, in the other, of finite individual ideas. These two worlds exhaust the sum total of existence" (p. 24). Moreover, "in some incomprehensible way, ideas, which have been declared absolutely unlike bodies, still truly represent them. The world of thought mirrors with exactitude the world of extension" (p. 14). Again, Spinoza "simply identifies idea and thing in the one substance of which they are aspects, and thus explains their correspondence. His monism furnishes, if I may so express it, the *justification*

of his parallelism ; it is his explanation of how ideas and things come to correspond " (p. 18).

It seems right to say frankly at the outset, that these statements, and others in the same chapter, appear to me to be based on an entire misconception of Spinoza's standpoint and method, and that many of the author's criticisms derive their cogency from the same source. Spinoza did not begin, as I understand his system, by assuming the independent reality of bodies and ideas as given in ordinary experience, and then *attempt to pass from this kind of reality to something else*. But his starting-point was always the conception of the unity of things, and his problem was to see finite things in their truth, *i. e.*, as parts of the infinite whole of substance, and not in the isolated fragmentary form in which the imagination presents them. The one substance is not obtained by abstraction from the particulars ; it is for Spinoza the starting-point, the fundamental postulate of the whole system. Secondly, I do not find anything in Spinoza to justify the statement that "the world of thought mirrors with exactitude the world of things." It is true that Spinoza does speak in the *de intellectus emendatione* of the correspondence of an idea to its *ideatum*, and of the mind, by the help of the true method, reproducing in every respect the faithful image of nature. But these statements by no means warrant us in supposing that he held to the doctrine of representative perception. For (1) the true order of ideas is to correspond to the *real* order of nature, and not to the imaginary order of the senses ; and (2) ideas in Spinoza's system can not be said to copy or mirror things or to follow after them in any such way as would be necessary in any copy or representative theory. And, again, it is surely an inversion of Spinoza's proceeding to derive his monism from his parallelism. The truth seems to be, as we have already pointed out, that monism was from beginning to end the fundamental postulate of Spinoza's thought. It is as prominent in the *Short Tractate* as in the *Ethics*, though in this earlier work he had not yet reached the position of parallelism. We must, however, suppose that, before the *Ethics* was written, Spinoza came to see that Descartes's position of two finite substances, which were in all respects opposed to each other and united only in an external and mechanical way, was not consistent with his own monistic position. He therefore adopted the parallelistic conception, not, as is sometimes supposed, to widen the gulf between mind and matter, but to exhibit their inner and essential unity, as was demanded by his monism.

In the second, and to some extent in the third part of his study,

Professor Fullerton is concerned with existences and essences and their relation. Although he points out certain nominalistic tendencies of Spinoza's philosophy, he nevertheless maintains that "Spinoza was at heart a thorough realist, he thought like a realist, he felt like a realist, he wrote like a realist" (p. 33). In this connection it is interesting to note that Pollock insists strenuously on Spinoza's nominalism. There is no doubt that in the main Professor Fullerton's view is correct, as is also his general conclusion with regard to the 'hierarchy of essences.' It does not seem to me possible, however, to assume with the author that Spinoza unconsciously went back to the mediæval mire from which Descartes had in some degree rescued philosophy. As a matter of fact, Spinoza had a much keener eye for the 'fallacies of abstraction' than had Descartes. But he was firmly convinced that the world is a real unity whose parts depend upon each other in a systematic way. Doubtless, also, this dependence was conceived by him as a hierarchical or straight line order, where things when seen in their true essences, stand in relations somewhat analogous to the subordination of concepts in the logical table. Moreover, as the *de intellectus emendatione* clearly shows, Spinoza *consciously* and *explicitly* adopts his method of investigation; and here also we find that this method is based upon his ontological postulate. Just as things, ontologically, depend upon God, he tells us, the true method of knowledge is that which begins with the concept of God or substance, and proceeds deductively "so that its essence represented in thought may be the cause of all our ideas." In criticizing Spinoza, then, it is necessary to distinguish carefully between his general ontological postulate of the unity of things, and the magnificent, though fruitless, attempt which he made to proceed by way of knowledge from the conception of that unity to the true order of nature. The postulate of the unity of things is held in some form by every thinker of the present day, though probably no one conceives of that unity just as Spinoza did. But, on the other hand, there is no one, I suppose, who today needs to be warned that it is impossible to proceed deductively in our investigations from the highest or most general concept. That is to say, though we believe that the world is a unity, we recognize that it is impossible to begin at the center and unfold the nature of that unity, but that our task must be to proceed by the road of experience, fitting together as best we may our fragments of knowledge into a system.

Professor Fullerton's criticisms are in these divisions of his work exceedingly acute, and on particular points often most pertinent. I cannot but feel, however, that his own doctrine that a universal can

be nothing but an abstraction from particulars, has seriously interfered with his understanding of Spinoza. The question of the universal is a large one, and, of course, cannot be discussed here. I venture to suggest, however, that 'common-sense empiricism' has its own disadvantages, as a standpoint from which to interpret a philosopher whose genius was so genuinely speculative as that of Spinoza.

In discussing the question of time and eternity Professor Fullerton points out what he regards as a very serious confusion in Spinoza's thought. "Just as his essences refuse to remain pure universals, but tend to become vaguely concrete; so his eternity refuses to remain timeless, but tends to become vaguely temporal." And after bringing together the most of the passages in which Spinoza treats of time and eternity, the author sums up as follows: "To my mind these passages clearly indicate that Spinoza's eternity obtains its significance *as eternity* from its temporal suggestions. At the same time they plainly indicate that the word brought habitually before Spinoza's mind more than a *mere* continuance in existence. . . . The thought of a life after death no better than the present life, and of substantially the same character, filled him with disgust. The eternal part of the mind, as he conceived it, took its place in the world of essences, and partook of an existence of a purer and higher kind than that allotted to the perishable things of this world. This idealization of the essence is in accordance with the ancient tradition; it is Platonic, Neo-Platonic, Scholastic. The word eternity, which had been used to describe this higher and purer existence, came to Spinoza rich with associations, and with a connotation but imperfectly grasped. But whatever the associations which have come to cluster about the word, and whatever other qualities we may attribute to the objects to which we habitually apply it, the word itself really signifies an indefinite continuance in existence" (p. 89). There is no doubt a real difficulty at this point in Spinoza's system, though here again I think that we cannot follow Professor Fullerton in regarding it as the result of an unconscious confusion. There is evidence in the *Ethics*, I think, that he was himself aware of the difficulty and sought to overcome it (cf. A. E. Taylor: *Mind*, No. 18, N. S., pp. 145 ff.). Spinoza does not regard endless continuance of existence as identical with eternity—rather the truth of things is for him something which cannot be expressed in disparate moments of time. Yet, as Professor Fullerton shows, duration does enter into Spinoza's notion of eternity. But it should not be forgotten that for Spinoza duration is thought rather as a *consequence* of the concept of eternal existence than as part of its content. The subject is a most difficult

one, and Spinoza's treatment is far from clear, but it was certainly a merit to insist as he did that *mere* continuance through an infinity of temporal moments is not eternity.

The last part of the monograph deals with the question of the religious element in Spinoza. The author's conclusion is that Spinoza's system, when taken logically, leaves no place for any religious element. With regard to the test of what is to be considered religious, he says: "I think that the history of human thought justifies me in refusing to apply the word to any philosophy, which, while retaining, perhaps, the word God, has divested the corresponding conception of every shred of anthropomorphic reference" (p. 129). Simple as this test may seem, it is not always very easy to apply; and Professor Fullerton's treatment does not here seem to show so much thoroughness and care as in his earlier discussions. After simply quoting several pages from the appendix to the first Part of the *Ethics*, he reaches the following conclusion: "Properly understood, Spinoza's view of nature is an unpromising naturalism. He does not merely deny the current teleology, homocentric and restricted as it is in its outlook; he denies every interpretation of nature in any way akin to it. God or nature becomes nothing more than nature; and it is only a traditional use of language and the associations that have been inherited with it that cast over nature the veil through which it is seen as a fitting object to arouse religious emotion. Could all these be stripped away, it would, I think, be recognized that he has stepped quite outside of the circle of religious thinkers in the extract which I have given, and has become an out and out Democritean" (pp. 137, 138). In the same way Professor Fullerton finds that the doctrine of the *Ethics* does not admit of an immortality for the individual in the ordinary sense of the words; hence his general conclusion that there is no religious element in Spinoza's system.

It is impossible here to enter into any discussion of these points. A great deal has been written on both sides, but to the literature of the subject Professor Fullerton unfortunately makes no reference. Loewe, in an essay entitled *Ueber die Gottesbegriff Spinozas und dessen Schicksale*, which is published as an appendix to his work on the philosophy of Fichte, gives an account of the literature of this subject, and after an exceedingly careful discussion reaches a very different conclusion from that of our author. It seems to me that Loewe and others have proved that God in Spinoza's system must be regarded as at least a self-conscious being. Though there is a sense in which Spinoza's philosophy may be called 'naturalistic,' as opposed to a

transcendent supernaturalism, yet it is surely true that 'naturalism,' in anything like the Democritean sense, is the very antithesis of Spinozism.

After so many critical remarks, it is right that I should add that I regard Professor Fullerton's study of Spinoza as an exceedingly able and important piece of work. The discussions are unusually clear, and the point of view always fresh and interesting. Though the interpretation of Spinoza is very different from that to which my own studies have led me, and though I regard the total neglect of the Spinoza literature as a serious defect, I have read the work with great interest and profit, and can testify heartily to its real importance.

J. E. CREIGHTON.

*History of Modern Philosophy in France.* By LUCIEN LÉVY-BRUHL. Maître de conférences in the Sorbonne, Professor in the École libre des sciences politiques. Translated by Miss G. Coblenze. Chicago, The Open Court Publishing Co.; London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1899.—pp. x, 500.

This book can scarcely be described as a systematic history of French philosophy; it is rather a collection of essays, more or less popular, on the different French philosophers. A certain unity is imparted to the work by the author's evident desire to trace the development and influence of the positivistic spirit from the time of Descartes to the present day. This in a large measure accounts for the lack of proportion which is observable in more places than one. The book, however, is well written, and is valuable as an effort to give a continuous account of French philosophy during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The fact that it comes from the pen of a Frenchman lends it a special interest and value, for we have been too much accustomed of late to view the history of philosophy from the German standpoint.

The first four chapters are devoted to Descartes, Malebranche, Pascal, Bayle, and Fontenelle. A clear and concise account is given of Descartes's method, its implications and influence. Malebranche is treated at length as a philosopher whose historical importance has been overlooked. His doctrine of 'occasional causes' "completed the Cartesian revolution and consummated the defeat of scholastic physics." It replaces "the confused scholastic notion of 'cause' by the clear scientific notion of 'law.'" His criticism of the common notion of cause is a masterly one. Not even Hume excels him in showing that the connection of cause and effect escapes us precisely where we think we lay hold of it, and therefore that it is not a notion due to experience "