

# Chapter 4: Comparative Study of Farabi and Spinoza's Shared Views on Philosophy

## Introduction

Abu Nasr Farabi, also known as the ‘Second Teacher’, was a great Muslim philosopher. He was born in Farab in 874 AD and died in 950 AD. He learned logic in Baghdad and Harran. In a short period of time, he mastered all popular sciences of his time and was considered an eminent figure.

Farabi was one of the prominent critics of Aristotle’s philosophy and had a major role in the dissemination of Greek thought among Muslims. He was called ‘Second Teacher’ because, after Aristotle, no philosopher had been known to have similar awareness of different branches of science.

Farabi described diverse aspects of logic for Muslims. He completed and instructed what all his predecessors had left out (Sharif 1986, p. 124). Farabi’s thoughts were inspired by different sources. He was especially influenced by the religion of Islam, specifically Shiite thought besides the Platonic, Aristotelean and Neo-Platonic wisdom. His views changed, evolved and became firmly established by involving a systematic and goal-centered system (ibid & Davari Ardakani 1995, p. 45) that had heavily influenced posterity.

Ibn Sina, who considers himself student of Farabi, was an outstanding philosopher. One of the characteristics of Farabi and many other Muslim philosophers was that they believed in harmony between religion and philosophy. According to these philosophers, the product of intellectual thinking in philosophy was similar to what God’s prophets achieved. Therefore, no conflict could exist between their thoughts because the origin of philosophers and prophets was one and the same.

Baruch Spinoza (1632–77 AD) was a Dutch metaphysician, epistemologist, psychologist, moral philosopher, political theorist, and philosopher of religion, generally regarded as one of the most important figures of seventeenth-century rationalism born and educated in the Jewish community of

Amsterdam. He forsook his given name 'Baruch' in favor of the Latin 'Benedict' at the age of twenty-two.

Between 1652 AD and 1656 AD, he studied the philosophy of Descartes in the school of Francis Van den Enden. As he developed unorthodox views of the divine nature and ceased to be fully observant of Jewish practice, the Jewish community excommunicated him in 1656 AD.

He spent his entire life in Holland. After leaving Amsterdam in 1660 AD, he resided successively in Rijnsburg, Voorburg and Hague. He declined a professorship at the University of Heidelberg partly on the grounds that it might interfere with his intellectual freedom. His premature death at the age of forty-four was due to consumption (Audi 2001, p. 870).

## Ontology

### Farabi

Farabi believed that all of particles in this world were created by an Eternal existence. The most important characteristic of this Existence was absolute unity, which made the unity of the world possible. That supreme existence was the ultimate cause of life. In this system, all of the particles of the Universe were struggling for perfection (i.e. attainment of a higher rank).

### Spinoza

Spinoza's ontology consisted of substances, their attributes, and their modes (Audi, 2001, p. 871). Spinoza's monism extends to mind and matter: each had a different characteristic, or a way of rationality, which led to appreciating the essence of the same one eternal Reality.

Spinoza believed that it was the intellect rather than the senses that disclosed the essential nature of things. A complete and adequate idea of God showed that He primarily had two attributes. He could be conceived under the heading of a material extension, or under that of a thought. In other words God, or Reality could be conceived in either of these two commensurable ways, which in turn disclosed an attribute or an aspect of His essence.

A problem encountered in interpreting Spinoza had been that God supposedly possessed infinitely many more attributes. By understanding our aim for increasing our knowledge about God or the Universe we discovered the way in which a closed system, which was self-sufficient and completely unified was made for. In this system everything that occurred was necessary, and nothing could be other than as it was (Blackburn 2005, p. 348).

Spinoza ascribed to nature, most of the characteristics that Western theologians ascribed to God. Spinozistic nature was infinite, eternal, necessary, existing, the object of an ontological argument, the first cause of all things, all-knowing, and the being whose contemplation produced blessedness, intellectual love, and participation in a kind of immortal or eternal life.

Spinoza's claim to affirm the existence of God was therefore no move towards evasion. However, he emphatically denied that God was a person or acted for a purpose; that anything could be good or evil from the divine perspective; or that there was a personal immortality involving memory (Audi 2001, p. 874).

According to Spinoza, except for God, no substance could be or be conceived. It followed from an analysis of the concept of substance that whatever was not it; it must be a modification of a substance thereof. Spinoza concluded that, whatever was, was in God, and nothing could be or be conceived without God'.

Together these views expressed Spinoza's substance-monism, which could be defined as a complex thesis that there was only one substance in the universe; that this substance is to be identified with God; and that all things, were a modification of this one substance; in some sense it was an extension of God (Allison 1998).

According to Spinoza a substance was not merely infinite among its own kind. That is, it became 'absolutely infinite' ultimately through any other thing of the same kind. For Spinoza, that which was all-inclusive or possessing all-reality was meant to have infinite attributes. The more reality or essence of being a thing had, the more attributes belonged to it.

A being that possessed all reality, that is – God – could be described as possessing infinite attributes. God alone was the substance that possessed all the attributes, which existed. Therefore, there were none left for any other conceivable substance.

Combining this with the proposition that two substances could not share an attribute, it followed that there could be no substance apart from God (ibid). In fact, identification of God with nature immediately led to a distinction between two aspects of nature: active or generating nature and passive or generated nature.

The former referred to God as being conceived through Himself, that is, substance with infinite attributes. The latter referred to a modal system conceived through these attributes (which included, but was not identical to a total of particular things). Consequently, the task was to explain the connection between these two aspects of nature – a task that would be the Spinozistic analogue to the traditional problem of explaining the relationship between God and creation (ibid).

According to Spinoza, God was infinite being. God was infinite substance, consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expressed God's eternal and infinite essence (I, prop. XI). Spinoza argued that God necessarily existed, because God's essence was existence. God's essence was perfect, and therefore God's perfection implied that God must exist. God's existence and the perfection itself were the same (I, prop, XX). Each attribute, which expressed God's essence, also expressed God's perfection.

Spinoza argued that God being the infinite substance, no attribute that expressed the essence of the

substance could deny God (I, prop. XIV). Every being had its essence in God. Nothing could come into being or exist without God. For Spinoza, God was the essential cause for all things.

All things by nature proceeded from necessity. God predetermined all things, and for anything that existed some effect had to follow (Scott, 2001). Spinoza believed that God as a being was absolutely infinite, that is, a substance that possessed infinity of attributes, and each one expressed an eternal and infinite essence (1996, p. 1)

Spinoza asserted that God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expressed its eternal and infinite essence, existed by necessity (1996, p.7). Spinoza maintained that God was the efficient cause, not only for the existence of things, but also for their essence (1996, p. 18).

According to Spinoza, a thing that had been determined to produce an effect had been necessarily determined in this way by God. And one, which had not been determined by God could not possibly determine itself to produce an effect (1996, p. 19).

According to Spinoza since a perfect substance existed, which possessed all attributes, and since there could not be more than one substance possessing the same attribute, it followed that this perfect substance was the only substance, since there were no attributes left for any other substance. Thus, except God, no substance could exist by itself or be conceived (Honderich 2005, p. 890).

For Spinoza perfection was the same as reality (TI, def. VI). The more perfect a thing was, the more real it was. Inasmuch as God was perfect, God was also real. God was infinitely perfect and infinitely real (Scott, 2001).

Spinoza maintained that there was only one substance. His metaphysics was thus a form of substance-based monism. This one substance was God, which Spinoza defined as an infinite being i.e. a substance consisting of infinite number of attributes, of which each was expressed as an eternal and infinite essence (Audi 2001, p. 871).

Spinoza believed that everything else that existed was in God (Nadler, 2005). His argument was that if God was the only substance, and whatever existed, was either a substance or in the attribute of a substance, then everything else must be in God. Nadler (2005) cited this by stating – ‘Whatever is – is there in God; nothing can be or be conceived without God’ (IP 15).

Since only one substance – God – existed the individual things present in the world could not be distinguished from one another by any difference in substance. Rather, among the internal qualitative modifications and differentiations of each divine attribute, there were patterns that had tendency to endure; these constituted the individual things (Audi 2001, p. 872).

Spinoza believed that all was one – nature equaled to God. In other words, he believed that a substance could not be produced from anything else and as such therefore, it would be its own cause, that is, its

essence would necessarily involve its existence, or its existence would appertain to its nature (Spinoza, 1673).

Spinoza said that we were part of nature as a whole whose order we follow. The pantheist philosopher Spinoza realized two profound things. Firstly, all that existed was One (God, Nature) and secondly that the movement was fundamental to existence. He described reality (what existed) in terms of one substance.

He began by describing what could be known about God. According to Spinoza, God was an infinite being. God necessarily existed, argued Spinoza, because God's essence was existence. God's essence was perfect, and therefore God's perfection implied that God must exist. God's essence and existence were the same (I, prop. XX). Every attribute that expressed God's essence also expressed God's existence (Scott, 2001).

## Anthropology

### Farabi

From Farabi's viewpoint, man was a combination of an abstract spirit or soul and a material body. Farabi also believed that man's spirit was superior to his body (Farabi 1405 A.H. b, p. 24).

Man's body and soul interacted with each other (Farabi 1991, p. 136). The body was an instrument for soul's deeds and the soul carried out acts of virtue and vice. Therefore, health or illness of the soul was dependent upon the deeds that it committed. The health or illness of the body depended on the degree of its ability to satisfy the soul's needs.

The health of the soul was maintained by its virtue and goodness, and illness occurred in the soul when it partook in vices and sins. Action was attributed to the soul, while the body was only an instrument for the soul. A body was healthy when it and its parts were able to allow the soul to do its deeds, good or bad, in the most perfect form (Farabi 1405 A.H. b, p. 23). A body was ill when it could not help the soul execute its deeds. The health of the body was ensured through moderation, and its illness was caused by deviation from moderation (ibid, p. 24).

Farabi believed that humans were superior creatures for whom and it was for their service that the other creatures had been created and not vice versa (Farabi 1887, p. 68). The goal of a human being was to reach perfection similar to other created things. Mankind's perfection was happiness in particular, and each human being would attain a special level of happiness (Farabi 1401 AH, p. 81).

Happiness being the ultimate virtue was desirable in itself (Farabi 1991, p. 106). Happiness was the most preferred and ultimate aim that a human being could achieve. It was not an intermediate instrument chosen to attain other aims (Farabi 1987 a, pp. 178 – 180). People differed in the way they perceived happiness. However once it had been recognized, it became the aim of a person's actions (Farabi 1991,

p. 106 – 107). If another measure other than happiness itself were mistakenly perceived to be a purpose for life, then the actions taken to reach that goal would be a waste.

A person who aimed for achieving happiness had a tendency to endeavor for perfection. He strove to be free of material things (ibid, p. 135). Upon reaching such a state, he or she would not be destroyed when the body was destroyed.

Even when this person remained in the material body, there was no need for material things (ibid, p. 135). Physical and external things were no longer required for survival. A person had to ascend through different ranks to reach this position. Farabi believed that intellect was an absolute requirement for attaining happiness (Fakhri 1993, p. 141).

### Freedom and Authority

According to Farabi's viewpoint, particular actions could bring a person to ultimate perfection (Farabi 1991, p. 105). Pursuing the actions that were geared towards achieving perfection, made the human soul powerful. This strength prepared the soul for attainment of happiness and perfection, eliminating the requirement of material things (Farabi 1887, p. 81).

The actions that caused a person to achieve perfection arose from man's own authority and freewill. It was through authority that a person could choose to do good or bad work, resulting in either reward or punishment in the afterlife, respectively (Farabi 1991, p. 105). Therefore, the attainment of perfection became possible because humans had authority over their own actions.

A question arose here regarding the differences between humans. If all humans' original natures were unique, and some are originally gifted in certain subjects, while others excelled in other topics, what was the meaning of reward, retribution, and authority?

There were two major elements to this question. The first element involved the learned individual differences that existed between human beings, and the second involved hereditary, natural differences among them.

Individual differences in people can be divided into two groups. Some of these characteristics occurred naturally, while others were acquired. For example, Farabi discussed differences in body and temperament, as well as variations in aptitude for learning certain sciences or industries. Some people were prepared for learning some kinds of sciences, and others had aptitude for learning other kinds. There were also differences in the quantity, speed, and rate of learning.

Existence of such differences in human beings did not determine or govern their fates. Education and other external factors could dominate natural aptitudes and even alter a person's actions. For example, it is possible that an active intellect could create different aptitudes in two different people.

Further, the individual nature of human beings could result in different abilities for learning. However,

these factors could not force a person to work or learn (Farabi, 1987 b, p. 76). Thus, differences among human beings that were secondary, such as in environment or education could affect factors such as social circumstances, social class, happiness, and interpretation of happiness (ibid, p. 77; Farabi 1991, p. 140 – 141).

## Spinoza

Spinoza regarded a human being as a finite mode of God, existing simultaneously in God as a mode of thought and as a mode of extension of one substance (Audi 2001, p. 871). Spinoza maintained that the body and the mind constituted a single individual expressed in the attributes of thoughts and extension of form. Since the fundamental modifications of the single individual was expressed in the attributes, thoughts, ideas and other modifications, such as desires and volitions were presupposed to be an idea of their object.

As the attributes of extension in physical or material form was that which extended itself, altogether, it constituted the single thing (Allison, 1998). Spinoza determined the means through which and the extent to which human beings, as finite forms of existence, were capable of attaining freedom. Freedom here was understood as the capacity to act rather than be governed by the passions (Allison, 1998).

Spinoza defined a thing as free when its actions were determined by its nature alone. Only God – whose actions were determined entirely by the necessity of His own nature, and for whom nothing was external – was completely free in this sense. Nevertheless, human beings could achieve a relative freedom.

Hence, Spinoza's philosophy was a compatibility that concerned itself with the relation between freedom and determinism. 'Freedom of will' in any sense implied a lack of causal determination (Audi 2001, p. 871).

Human liberation consisted in movement through from the second to the third type of knowledge. Only at that level do we cease to be victims of emotions, which we do not properly understand and cannot control. The third type of knowledge ultimately yielded the 'intellectual love of God' – Spinoza's version of salvation (Honderich 2005, p. 891).

In such a rigid and deterministic world there might seem to be no room for human free will. However, Spinoza found its place by abstracting from the dimension of time. Freedom became the capacity to see the world under the heading of eternity, and without bondage to emotions and desires. These themselves were the result of ignorance of the causes whereby we had been determined.

Activity and agency were the result of adequate cognition. In other words, it ceased to be true that one was individually in control of them. In so far as in the thoughts went, the course of events was displayed as it turned out (Blackburn 2005, p. 349). For Spinoza, the will could not be separated from the intellect.

There was no such thing as free will, because the human mind was determined in willing by a cause

other than itself. God's will, which had no cause other than itself, revealed itself by necessity rather than by freedom. Thus, Spinoza explained that their will could only be a necessary cause of action, and not a free cause of action (I, prop, XXXII– cited in Scott, 2001). Spinoza said that the will could not be called a free cause, but only a necessary one (Curley 1996, p. 21).

## Epistemology

### Farabi

According to Farabi, things that sound-minded people were aware of were called the 'known sciences'. These sciences were so infallible that even a person who had vocally denied them could not deny them in their mind. Evidence that was contrary to this did not exist.

This knowledge was instinctively produced for each person from the time of his or her birth. Sometimes human beings did not pay attention to thoughts in their minds unless there were words to explain the meaning of those thoughts. Awareness of these things could be compendious and knowledge would expand through hearing of words that explained those thoughts (Farabi 1987, p. 81 – 82).

Shared primary contemplative matters among human beings were divided into three groups: first, practical skills, second, judgments of practical intellect and third, judgments of speculative intellect. The primitive or original types of practical intellect were the origin of propositions that define whether an action was good or bad. Primitive judgments of speculative intellect were the origin of propositions regarding knowledge about other creatures (Farabi 1991, p. 103)

Based on these three primitive rational ideas, speculative intellect was concerned with episteme or knowledge. Speculative intellect was the faculty through which certain knowledge about general and necessary preliminaries was naturally obtained. These preliminaries are the foundations of other sciences (Farabi, 1405 AH a, p. 50 – 51).

Episteme or knowledge, in its general and broad sense, was divided into three categories – sensory, imaginary, and intellectual (rational). Since real knowledge was that which was always true and certain, only intellectual (rational) knowledge was considered to be real knowledge. Therefore, attaining rational knowledge increased the rank of a soul, and of those souls who comprehended. The rational ideas existed eternally even after their material bodies had been destroyed (Farabi 1991, p. 142 – 145).

### Spinoza

The epistemological teaching of 'ethics' of Spinoza culminated in the distinction between three kinds of knowledge. The first was an experientially determined knowledge, which could be based either on the perception of particular things or signs, which for Spinoza included both sensory and memory images. The second was knowledge through reason, which was based on common notions and idea about the

common properties of things.

Since the former mode of knowledge involved inadequate ideas and the latter adequate ones, this was just the contrast one would expect. At this point, however, Spinoza unexpectedly introduced a third kind of knowledge, termed 'intuitive knowledge'. This supposedly proceeded from an adequate idea about the adequate knowledge of the essence of things (Allison, 1998).

Spinoza distinguished three kinds of knowledge. The first or the most basic kind was called opinion or imagination. It included or terminated in random experiences and hearsay or knowledge from mere signs. It thus depended on the confused and mutilated deliverances of the senses, and its inadequate.

He called the second kind of knowledge reason. It depended upon 'common notions' – in other words, upon characteristics of things that were common to all and were equally present in the part and in the whole. It was based on adequate knowledge of these characteristics as opposed to the essence of things.

The third kind of knowledge, which he called intuitive knowledge, proceeded from the knowledge of the essence or attributes of God. It was derived from knowledge of essence of things, and hence proceeded in the proper order, from causes to effects. The third kind was preferable, however, as it involved not only a certain knowledge about something that it is so, but also on knowledge of 'how' and 'why' it is so (Audi 2001, p. 871, 872).

From Spinoza's viewpoint, man's activities were three, and for each one there was a corresponding moral perfection. With sensible cognition man was governed by passions, with rational cognition man enjoyed tranquility and contemplation on the unity of the world and with intuition, man enjoyed the intellectual love of God (Radical Academy, 2003).

The better we were able to control our emotions, the better we would understand God. For Spinoza the more active the mind, the more adequately it came to know God. The more passive the mind was, the less adequately it knew God. The more active the mind is, the more it was able to avoid emotions, which were evil. The more passive the mind was, the more it accepted emotions, which were evil.

Spinoza, believed that evil was a lack of good and that falsehood was a lack of truth. Error and falsehood arose from inadequate knowledge of God (Scott, 2001). According to Spinoza, all ideas, insofar as they were related to God, were true. Error or falsehood arose because not every idea possessed by the human intellect was related by intellect to God, that is, it was not always viewed as a determinate member of the total system of ideas. In other words, error or falsehood was a function of incomplete comprehension, or of partial truth being taken as complete truth (Allison, 1998).

## **Axiology**

## Farabi

### Virtue

Whether something was virtuous or not determined the perfection of the essence and action of that thing (Farabi 1987 a, p. 24). The virtues of a human being caused him or her to do good deeds. Vices resulted in bad deeds (Farabi 1405 AH b, p. 24). The relationship between virtue and happiness is created through good deeds. Good deeds, which sprang from virtues, brought happiness to human beings.

This mutual relationship between deed and virtue was cyclical (Farabi, 1991, p. 106). In other words, as good deeds sprang from virtues, virtues were also created from good deeds (Farabi 1405 AH b, p. 30). Good deeds that were carried out before the development of virtues and good disposition were attributed to the natural power of authority in humans. Those deeds that are carried out after the development of virtues were created through a good disposition (Farabi 1987 a, p. 193).

Farabi divided virtues into four groups – speculative, intellectual, temperament and practical acts. According to Farabi, these virtues produced happiness for human beings during life as well as in the afterlife.

Speculative virtues were those that accrued based on constant and unchangeable things. Intellectual virtues developed when a person tried to identify a way to accomplish something that was more useful and more desirable based on volitional rational ideas. When the aim of the goal was good, intellectual virtue was created, but if the aim of the goal was bad, the intellectual virtue will not be generated (Farabi 1401 A.H., p. 69 – 70).

The virtue of temperament involved effects on the soul through lust, pleasure, refreshment, anger, fear, enthusiasm, zeal, and mercy. Practical crafts were concerned with physical actions such as socializing, appearance, and spiritual singing.

If the possessor of intellectual virtue had not intended to perform action consistent with his realisation, no temperament or practical virtue would be created in him or her. Thus, the temperament and practical virtue of each person became a function of his or her intellectual virtue. There was a possibility of the actualization of temperament and practical virtues in a person only to the extent that the person had the ability to identify good aims and how to attain them.

A person having the capacity to recognize the lasting value in others was superior in temperament and practical virtues than the person who only identified a fleeting value of others (ibid, p. 71 – 72). When a person achieved the highest virtue and maintained its use, he or she would inevitably use all the other virtues. A person who possessed the highest virtue is completely prepared for having all virtues (ibid, p. 72).

Actualizing all four virtues caused a person to reach a rank higher than rest of the mankind. Such a person was called a divine individual. Contrary to this, a predatory soul would be one, which has actualized all vices. A divine person could be considered a real angel, while a predatory person got expelled from the society (Farabi, 1405 A.H. b, p. 33).

Farabi said that a person should cultivate virtues to attain happiness. In other words, he or she should obtain all virtues, or soul-related attributes, in order to make it possible to reach their happiness through cognition and action. These soul-related attributes were good disposition and a strong mind. A good disposition was achieved by expelling negative soul-related influences. Strength of mind was gained through positive cognition and by maintaining harmony with reality.

Happiness was stated to be the highest goal that human beings could hope to reach. Happiness could be divided into real and imaginary. Acquisitions such as knowledge, wealth, esteem, and physical pleasures constituted imaginary happiness, when considered as the highest aim. Real happiness was that which, after being attained left no other goal worthy of trying to achieve (Farabi 1987, p. 80).

### Ethics and Morality

Farabi believed that morality of a person could be changed. He was of the opinion that morality – good or bad – was learned and was not hereditary. A person could obtain a particular disposition through learning and experiences, and if a special disposition is gained, it can be changed through free will (ibid, p. 190 – 191).

Farabi suggested that the long and continuous repetition of an action consistent with each disposition caused its occurrence in a human's soul. If these actions would be consistent with virtues, they would cultivate virtues, and if they were consistent with vices, they would create vices (Farabi 1405, A.H. b, p. 30)

Good or bad dispositions created in human beings were not equal from a changeability point of view. Some of these were removed through the repetition of contradictory deeds and the creation of new habits. Others were only weakened. Some of them might not be removed. Yet, a person could avoid doing actions related to that habit through patience (ibid, p. 33 – 34).

Farabi considered a good deed to be the moderate deed (Farabi 1987 a, p. 194). A good deed was the average of two extremes – both of which were considered vices. One was doing in excess and the other involved falling short (Farabi 1405, A.H. b, p. 36). The meaning of moderate differed in depending on the time and surrounding conditions. Therefore, it was necessary to evaluate deeds and dispositions in accordance with their subject, action, and location so that a moderate deed and moderate disposition could be created in accordance with the circumstance (ibid, p. 37 – 39 and Farabi 1987, p. 198).

Farabi believed that deeds were moderate when they are most efficient in bringing about humans happiness. Moderate consumption of food was the most suitable for maintaining a healthy body (Farabi

1987 a, p. 197 – 198). According to Farabi, moderate actions were the most reliable way for human beings to achieve happiness. Anyone who could develop the power to forsake the pleasure of engaging in bad actions had obtained the ability to choose moderately had approached good morality (Farabi 1405 A.H. b, p. 32).

Pleasures were divided into two groups – sensory and comprehensible. Sensory pleasures were perceived through superficial senses and comprehensible pleasures involved faculties of chairmanship and knowledge. Human beings usually remained in pursuit of sensory pleasures and believed that these kinds of pleasures could result in perfection. This was so because material pleasures were able to satisfy personal and social needs. For example, eating was a pleasure that satisfied a personal need and reproduction satisfied a social need for surviving in the world.

Sensory pleasures had two characteristics that increased human attention towards them. First, they were easily understood. Secondly, they were easy to achieve. These two characteristics prevented human beings from many virtues and moved them away from what led them to happiness. When doing a good deed caused a person to lose a sensory pleasure, a tendency to forsake that deed could develop (ibid, p. 31 – 32).

Sensory and comprehensible pain and pleasures could be immediate or delayed. A person needed to assess whether the pain or pleasure produced by an action would be its immediate or delayed outcome. This would help the person determine whether an immediate pleasure could cause pain in the future.

Considering the future pain produced by a bad action would prevent a person from developing a tendency to act for immediate pleasure alone. The realization of worth of future pleasure produced by a good action would facilitate forbearance of immediate pain. Therefore, the motivation for performing a bad action would be suppressed and the motivation for doing a good action would be strengthened.

## Spinoza

Spinoza argued that knowledge of good and evil arose from an awareness of what caused pleasure and pain. The greatest good of the mind, and its greatest virtue, was to know God (IV, prop. XXVIII).

To act with virtue was to act according to reason (IV, prop XXXVI ). If we acted according to reason, then we would desire only that which was good. When acting in accordance with reason, we would try to promote what was good not only for ourselves but for others as well.

Freedom was said to be the ability to act rationally and to control the motions. Servitude was the inability to act rationally or to control the emotions. Spinoza admitted that all emotions might not necessarily conflict with reason. Emotions, which agreed with reason, might cause pleasure, while emotions, which did not agree with reason, could cause pain. Inability to control the emotions could cause pain.

Spinoza maintained that reason could control the emotions. Reason was virtue, and virtue was love

toward God, The more we loved God, the more we were able to control emotions (V, prop. XLII, proff). Spinoza's ethics proceeded from a premise similar to that of Hobbes – that men call 'good' whatever gives them pleasure – but they reached very different conclusions.

Human beings, indeed all of Nature, shared a common drive for self – preservation by this drive all individuals seek to maintain the power of their being, and in this sense virtue and power were one. Knowledge, virtue and power were one (The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 2005).

Spinoza argued that the 'highest good' was the knowledge of the connectedness that the mind had with the whole of Nature. Distinguished from this was the true good, which was defined as whatever that could be a means to attaining one's highest good. (Miller, not dated, p. 157). According to Spinoza, if something 'agreed' with our nature, it was good. And, if it disagreed and was neither good nor bad – it was indifferent (Miller not dated, p. 151).

Spinoza was a relativist about value. He appeared to maintain that good and evil were relative in some ways (Miller not dated, p. 150). The notion that the usefulness of a good determined its value was so fundamental to Spinoza's thought that he made them his official definition of good and bad.

Spinoza determined value in terms of use (Miller not dated, p. 152). Spinoza asserted that insofar as physical things – food, drink, theatre, green plants – were useful to the body; they are valuable and hence good (Miller, not dated, p. 157). Spinoza was of the opinion that, the good was identified with what was truly useful in this regard and the bad with what was truly harmful.

In spite of his amoralism, Spinoza did not equate virtue with the ability to survive or the good with what was in one's self-interest that was narrowly conceived. What mattered was not mere living, but living well; and this meant being active – that is, being, to the fullest extent possible. This was an adequate cause for one's existence. And since being an adequate cause was a function of adequate ideas, virtue was directly correlated with knowledge.

Knowledge, however, had a dual role in the Spinozistic scheme. It was the major weapon in the struggle against the passions, since it was through understanding our passions and their cause that we were able to gain some measure of control over them. But it was also itself constitutive of the good life, since our freedom was manifested essentially in exercise of reason.

Spinoza concluded that knowledge of God was mind's greatest good; its greatest virtue was to know God (Allison, 1998). Spinoza insisted that the goods of the body were of secondary worth. Since the body's maintenance itself was less important than that of the mind, they too are accorded lower status and not valued as true goods (Miller, not dated, p. 157).

Spinoza said that he meant the same thing when stating 'virtue' and 'power' (pr. 7, III). Virtue, in so far as it was related to man, was man's very essence or nature in so far as he had the power to bring about that which could be understood solely through the laws of his own nature (IVD 8). To the extent that we

acted virtuously, we necessarily sought what we judged to be good and avoided what we judged to be evil.

However, given Spinoza's understanding of 'good' and 'evil', this amounted to the pursuit of our own welfare. 'The more every man endeavored and was able to seek his own advantage, that is, to preserve his own being, the more he was endowed with virtue' (p. 20). Spinoza's ethics was no narrow doctrine of self-interest, for the only things that contributed to our 'real advantage' (IVP 18 S) were those that actually increased our power, or determined for us to become more active.

Spinoza said to maintain absolute conformity that 'pleasure' was defined as the transition from a less perfect state to a state of greater perfection. He defined 'pain' as the (passive) transition from a state of greater perfection to a state of less perfection. Spinozistic ethics sought to show how a person acted when 'guided by reason'. To behave in this way was to behave with virtue or power at the same time.

All actions that resulted from understanding – i.e. virtuous actions – could be attributed to strength of character. Such virtuous actions could further be divided into two classes. Those due to tenacity, or 'the desire by which each one strove, solely from the dictate of reason, to preserve his being'; and those due to nobility, or 'the desire by which each one strove solely from the dictate of reason, to aid other men and join them to him in friendship.'

Thus, the virtuous person did not merely pursue private interests, but sought to join himself with others in a political state. Nevertheless, the ultimate reason for doing so was conducive to one's own welfare, and particularly to one's pursuit of knowledge, which emphasized that it was a good that could be shared with loss. A free man who achieved an increasing participation in gaining knowledge during his lifetime, acquired a body of adequate knowledge that always had been eternal. So, at death, a large part of the free person's mind would become identified with the eternal (Audi 2001, p. 872).

Spinoza argued that those who lived under the guidance of reason desired nothing for themselves that they did not also desire for others. This reflected his undoubtedly idealized portrayal of those devoted to a life guided by the mind. In so far as this devotion was pure (which it can never be completely), such individuals would not come into conflict because the good which they sought i.e. knowledge could be held in common (Allison, 1998).

Spinoza believed that maximizing our understanding of God (i.e. Nature) contributed most to our welfare. Not only was this most satisfying intrinsically, it also enabled us to minimize conflicts with others (Mautner 2005, p. 569).

Spinoza's account of the specific virtues reflected his general principles. These virtues were identified with certain affects or emotional states and their value was regarded as a function of their capacity to promote an individual's efforts. For this purpose the affects are divided into three classes – those that were intrinsically bad, and a large group that was good in moderation but bad if they became excessive. In identifying the virtues with affects that could never become excessive, Spinoza differed from Aristotle

for whom virtues were regarded as a mean between two extremes (Allison, 1998).

Spinoza believed that love of God was crucial to mental health and blessedness. Moreover, since the ultimate positive thought was the love of God, this love served as the chief remedy against the passions. On the other hand, since the adequate knowledge of anything involved the love of God as its affective dimension, it could be said that the love–knowledge of God was to be considered as the supreme remedy against the passions (Allison, 1998).

Spinoza took up popular religion, the interpretation of scripture, and their bearing on the well–being of the state in his works (Audi, 2001, P.873). Spinoza intended to demonstrate the truth about God, nature and especially ourselves along with the highest principles of society, religion and the good life. From Spinoza’s viewpoint, our happiness and well–being lay not in a life enslaved to passions and to the transitory goods we ordinarily pursue; nor in the related attachment to the superstitions that pass as religion without any reflection; rather, it was present in a life of reason (Nadler, 2005).

## Conclusion

Farabi believed that the world was like a single frame, with all its particles having been created by an eternal existence. The supreme existence, i.e. God, was the ultimate cause of every being or existence.

In the world, which was a system, all the particles of the universe were struggling for perfection, i.e. attainment of a higher rank. Farabi maintained that man was combination of an abstract spirit and a material body, and his spirit was much more superior than his body. The health or illness of the soul was dependent upon the deeds that it did. The health of the body was ensured in the light of moderation, and its illness was due to deviation from moderation.

According to Farabi, man had been created to reach perfection, and specific perfection for man was happiness. Happiness was absolute virtue. The actions, which sprang from man’s authority and freewill could cause man to attain perfection. It was through authority on self that man could perform good or bad acts.

Spinoza asserted that except God, no substance could be or be conceived by itself. His view was: ‘Whatever is – is in God, and nothing could be or be conceived without God.’ There was only one substance in the Universe. This substance was to be identified as God. This could be called substance–monism.

Spinoza argued for God’s necessary existence with God being an infinite being and infinite substance. God’s being and existence in nature were the same. All was one: Nature and God.

God was the efficient cause of not only the existence of all things, but also of their essence. A thing, which had been determined to produce an effect, had necessarily been determined in this way by God.

As for human being, Spinoza believed that human beings were finite forms. They were capable of attaining freedom, understood as their capacity to act rather than to be governed by their passions. Only God was completely free. Humans could only achieve a relative freedom. Spinoza maintained that the mind and the body constituted a single individual.

According to Farabi, since a real knowledge was that which was true and certain for all times, then only the intellectual (rational) knowledge, as compared with sensory and imaginary, could be considered as the real knowledge. Those souls that attained understanding of the contemplative matters (rational ideas) became eternal after destruction of material bodies.

Spinoza believed that it was the intellect rather than the senses that disclosed the essential nature of things. The first knowledge for Spinoza included both sensory and memory images. The second was knowledge through reason, and the third was intuitive knowledge.

The better we could control our emotions, the better we could understand God. The more active the mind was, the more it was able to avoid emotions, which were evil. Evil and falsehood arose from inadequate knowledge of God. Error or falsehood were a function of incomplete comprehension.

Farabi believed that the virtue of everything was that which caused the perfection of the essence and action of that thing. Good deeds brought humans to happiness. Virtues caused happiness to humans in this world and in the hereafter. Such happiness was the highest aim that man had been seeking. Real happiness was that which once attained, one would see no other aim as worthy of trying to achieve.

Farabi maintained that one could change their disposition in the light of free will. Farabi considered the good deed as the moderate deed. A good deed was the average (moderate) of two extremes. Those deeds that were moderate were the most efficient in bringing man to happiness.

According to Spinoza, the greatest good of the mind, and its greatest virtue, was to know God. To act with virtue, was to act according to reason. If we would act according to reason, then we would desire only that which was good. Reason was virtue, and virtue was love for God. Our happiness and well-being lay in a life of reason. On the other hand, Spinoza determined value in terms of use.

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