

Diplomová Práce. Jan Vašíček, Býtí jedno jen: Základy Spinozovy ontologie

Posudek oponenta

In his diploma thesis, the author presents an interpretation of the groundplan of Spinoza's metaphysics set out in *De Deo*, the First Part of the *Ethics*. This interpretation, particularly as it relates to the triad of concepts Substance-attribute-mode, is then defended in opposition to a number of different objections, including those put forward by G.W.F. Hegel. One aim of the work is to recognise the originality and independence of Spinoza's contribution and to avoid reading it as derived from the thought of other philosophers, particularly Descartes. Another aim is to do justice not just to the immanent logical structure of Spinoza's proofs, but also to the significance of the overall content of the position ("jako jedna z podob lidského uvažování o povaze skutečnosti", p. 9).

The thesis is undoubtedly a deeply-considered, well-informed and philosophically stimulating work. Its relatively narrow focus and its judicious use of the secondary literature are also to be commended, as is the strong structure and organisation of the thesis as a whole.

I would ask the author to address the following questions in his defence:

- (i) The author seems to take a "subjectivist" approach to attributes at the beginning of the thesis, writing that "Reálně (mimo rozum) totiž existují pouze substance a jejich modifikace", and emphasising that attributes exist insofar as they are perceived by "reason" (rozum) (p. 11). The author also suggests a "subjectivist" understanding of Spinoza's claim that an attribute *expresses* the nature of substance (p. 19). The author should explain to us how this is compatible with Proposition 11 which states that there is an infinite range of attributes that transcend human reason. Is the author reading "reason" as the reason of the divine intellect? If so, does it not make the reason of God a privileged attribute in comparison with the other infinite set of attributes (all the others would depend on their appearing to, or being perceived by, the divine attribute of reason, whereas the attribute of reason would depend only on appearing to itself).
- (ii) The author should explain in greater detail how Spinoza's claim that the same substance can have many attributes is an improvement on Descartes' view that a substance can have only one attribute. He argues (p. 23) that the Cartesian conception of the substance-attribute relation

leads to a fragmented picture of the universe in which there would be chaos not cosmos and mind could not interact with matter. He immediately allows, however, that in Descartes' system God plays the role of uniting the operations of different finite "substances", rendering God the only substance in an absolute sense. This would seem to be Descartes' view in his *Principles*, and it is not clear to me, without further explanation, why it is necessarily inferior to Spinoza's explanation of the unity of things which postulates that all attributes belong to one substance.

- (iii) The author resists the idea that attributes are quantitative or numerically distinguished, and prefers to describe them as qualitative. It does seem, however, that we can understand each attribute separately, and then count attributes (we humans are acquainted with exactly *two*), and when the author states that "Spinozův požadavek na nekonečnou kvalitativní složitost substance implikuje, že je tato složitost numericky transfinitní", it is not clear to me what this means if it does not involve an implicit acceptance of the countability, and numerical differentiation, of attributes (p. 28). Or does the author assume that numerical difference and therefore quantification applies, by definition, only to substances?
- (iv) The author argues that the term God in Spinoza's philosophy should not be treated as invoking any of the traditional characteristics of the deity in the monotheistic traditions, but merely as a synonym for ANS (absolutně nekonečná substance) (p. 40). This would, among other things, seem to imply that God (ANS) is not a *person* as biblical tradition claims. It is thus surprising to see the claim later made that "Lidstvo může v dějinách dosahovat většího sebevědomí, ale ne Bůh" (p. 66). Am I right in thinking this amounts to the claim that God already has complete self-consciousness? If so, does this not grant to God the key biblical characteristic of personhood?

Overall, this thesis is an independent and carefully argued interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy that shows a good understanding of the ontological problematic under discussion. I approve its progress to defence. For the time being, I propose a grade 1 (*vyborně*) be awarded, and I hope that the defence will confirm this grade.

doc. James Hill
V Praze, dne 15.1.2018