

Despite his reputation as a heretic, Baruch Spinoza was one of the major heroes of the Jewish cultural Renaissance in Weimar Germany. This study traces Weimar Jewry's infatuation with Spinoza as it was manifested in scholarship, the popular press, and novels.

I would like to share my increasing excitement with others in a little series of blog posts. So far, all Ehrman. But unlike Ehrman, Spinoza has another, hopeful message, one he is far more passionate to tell: God always communicated the same essential simple message: Love Others As Yourself, Spinoza says. As yourself, means you do for others, as fervently and frequently as you do for yourself. Spinoza's "public domain" unknown source Yes, Spinoza says, the prophets slanted the message according to their own perspectives of life. They slanted the message according to what they thought would change the current population. That is a good thing, not a bad thing, Spinoza claims. It serves those who are listening to the prophet speak. God never told the prophets He is angry, that He will punish or reward. It shows that the message was always communicated in ways that prophets believed would change these listeners on this day. Some generations needed to imagine a rewarding God while other generations needed to imagine a vengeful God, in order to be willing or compelled to be more charitable and just. Later when humans were recopying the documents, they would again slant the messages to what they felt would be most effective with the new generation. And again when the councils codified the books of the bible once for all, these councils again slanted the meanings to be what they felt most effective or would benefit their own sect against competing sects. The ten commandments follow from these two. That was just one way that one prophet used to inspire awe in a particular crowd. Nothing in the bible is worth believing, Spinoza says, except the key message, that God commands humans to love others as self. The bible is extremely simple to understand because it comes down to be charitable to others, be just to others. The simplicity of the message means the bible is impervious to misunderstanding, Spinoza says. Does the bible teach us what God Is? The simple message in 1 and 2 is the path to salvation, being saved from misery and despair, being elevated to the quality of life we are capable of experiencing. How and why do the two things lead people from misery to salvation? The bible was not intended to explain the how and why. What kind of being is God? Any indications that God is large or small, angry or vengeful, that he leaves one place and enters another, are fabricated by prophets in order to have a convincing effect on the ones in hearing distance of their speeches. The bible contains no theology. If God had intended to describe His nature, the hows and whys of theology through simple illiterate prophets, the bible would be incomprehensible. This is why God chose to keep the message simple, to reveal only through prophets the simple, understandable orders, be charitable, be just. God is depicted by prophets as only two things consistently: Spinoza believed God is many more things. The first is to demonstrate the simplicity of two things that humans are capable of emulating. If you think you found theology in the bible, you are reading into it things that were not originally intended, Spinoza repeats. The second reason God kept his demonstration to two things was because these two things He had already previously written in their hearts, Spinoza says. Things shouted that resonate what is written in the heart, awaken the heart. Things shouted that do not resonate, fall to the side without much effect. The prophet was revered, and what he had said was written down. I have listened to all his early tapes and his voice soothes me with its reasonable though passionate critiques. I think he has been very careful and I can find fault with not one thing he has ever said or written. However, it appears his only intention is to destroy, and not to fill in the space with something better. He never tells us, is there anything in the bible worth salvaging? Is there any message that is consistent, contextually credible, multiply attested and different from what sectarians would have fabricated? Does Ehrman even believe in God? Or at least some cosmic principle of compassion? Or at least some purpose or meaning to life on this planet? Spinoza gave the same bad news Ehrman gives, centuries earlier but Spinoza does it to give what he feels is an even greater gift to humanity; the two things that cannot be tainted. Does it help humanity? Or does it divide us? The reactions to his work may be worse for humanity than the truthful things he writes. Not that I am advocating he stop sharing his useful messages. But I wonder, is there time for

Dr. Ehrman to somehow fix the divisiveness he has exacerbated? But back to Spinoza. Spinoza was passionately reminding us that each of us has written upon our hearts. Spinoza says the Word of God is nothing but the two things: This explains why, when we hear about the two things, or see it happen in the news, in events we witness, when we hear it in stories or see it in movies, we feel.. We love those we had hated. We know there is something there. It resonates deeply with a part of us—maybe this is the soul. Spinoza includes both the old and new testament when he describes the mutilation done by copyists, scribes and councils. While he had good reasons to hate organized religion after all, he was excommunicated from the Jewish faith and actually cursed with damnation in a written decree , still he cared for people deeply and wanted them to have the consolation that the bible and religion provided them, the means to salvation through the simplest method that Religion advocates: He clearly believed God exists, and has influence in all beings. Suffice to say Spinoza was more concerned with the effects of our thoughts, more than the belief that is held. Then that belief is fine even if inaccurate, he said. On the other hand, accurate beliefs, followed by harmful actions to others, is not fine. Not at all fine, to him. That means religious tolerance. If a group of people believe they are inspired to be more just and charitable through stringent food preparation, let them do it that way. In fact, support them. Make it easier for them to get the ingredients, implements and space they need for their special food preparation. If a different group feel they are better inspired to be more just and charitable by imagining the end is near , let them do it that way. Problems only arise when I insist you must become just and charitable in the same way I choose to be more just and charitable. This insisting takes the form of political force, shunning, and brute force, or violence. How sadly ironic it would be, to be unjust and uncharitable to others in order to force them adopt your way of being just and charitable! Finally Spinoza tells us, the bible itself, old and new, demonstrates a thousand different ways of getting the same effects of charity and justice—“who are we to narrow down to only one of these ways to the exclusion of others? This influenced what was later called separation of church and state. The TPT also suggested that each person should have the right, defended by the ideal government, to think what he likes, and speak what he thinks, which influenced the ideas of freedom of religion and freedom of speech. Would a particular person or religion lose its political right to tolerance, if it demonstrated harm and injustice to others? What about people who clearly state God does not exist? Should tolerance also be extended to these people? Tune in next time.

This study chronicles Spinoza's German-Jewish popularity during the years of the Weimar Republic (), explaining it from the political moral and intellectual paradoxes with which Weimar Germany confronted its Jews.

But what does he propose in place of anthropomorphic, anthropocentric belief in a transcendent creator God? Spinoza begins his Ethics by defining some basic philosophical terms: In offering these definitions, he is actually attempting a radical revision of the philosophical vocabulary used by Descartes, the leading thinker of his time, to conceptualise reality. When we understand these terms properly, argues Spinoza, we have to conclude that there exists only one substance – and that this is God. Substance is a logical category that signifies independent existence: By contrast, attributes and modes are properties of a substance, and are therefore logically dependent on this substance. For example, we might regard a particular body as a substance, and this body is not conceptually dependent on anything else. Human beings, for example, are finite substances, while God is a special substance which is infinite and eternal. In fact, Descartes thought that each human being was composed of two substances: This view famously leads to the difficult question of how these different substances could interact, known as the "mind-body problem". The philosophical terminology of substance, attribute and mode makes all this sound rather technical and abstract. But Cartesian metaphysics represents a way of thinking about the world, and also about ourselves, shared by most ordinary people. We see our world as populated by discrete objects, individual things – this person over here, that person over there; this computer on the table; that tree outside, and the squirrel climbing its trunk; and so on. These individual beings have their own characteristics, or properties: They might be hot or cold, quiet or noisy, still or in motion, and such qualities can be more or less changeable. This way of conceptualising reality is reflected in the structure of language: The familiar distinction between nouns, adjectives and verbs provides an approximate guide to the philosophical concepts of substance, mode and attribute. If, as Spinoza argues, there is only one substance – God – which is infinite, then there can be nothing outside or separate from this God. Precisely because God is a limitless, boundless totality, he must be an outsideless whole, and therefore everything else that exists must be within God. Of course, these finite beings can be distinguished from God, and also from one another – just as we can distinguish between a tree and its green colour, and between the colour green and the colour blue. But we are not dealing here with the distinction between separate substances that can be conceived to exist independently from one another. Again, this is rather abstract. The ocean stands for God, the sole substance, and individual beings are like waves – which are modes of the sea. Each wave has its own shape that it holds for a certain time, but the wave is not separate from the sea and cannot be conceived to exist independently of it. Of course, this is only a metaphor; unlike an infinite God, an ocean has boundaries, and moreover the image of the sea represents God only in the attribute of extension. But maybe we can also imagine the mind of God – that is to say, the infinite totality of thinking – as like the sea, and the thoughts of finite beings as like waves that arise and then pass away. Each wave is dependent on the sea, and because it is part of the sea it is connected to every other wave. The movements of one wave will influence all the rest. Likewise, each being is dependent on God, and as a part of God it is connected to every other being. As we move about and act in the world, we affect others, and we are in turn affected by everything we come into contact with. In traditional religion, dependence and connectedness are often expressed using the metaphor of the family: This vocabulary is shared by traditions as culturally diverse as Christianity, Buddhism and Islam. For Spinoza, the familial metaphor communicates a truth that can also be conveyed philosophically – through reason rather than through an image. What God is not; here for Spinoza, part 2: Philosophy as a way of life Topics.

Chapter 3 : Rabbinical Conference of Brunswick - Wikipedia

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It is possible that Spinoza, as he made progress through his studies, was being groomed for a career as a rabbi. But he never made it into the upper levels of the curriculum, those which included advanced study of Talmud. And then, on July 27, 1656, Spinoza was issued the harshest writ of herem, ban or excommunication, ever pronounced by the Sephardic community of Amsterdam; it was never rescinded. No doubt he was giving utterance to just those ideas that would soon appear in his philosophical treatises. In those works, Spinoza denies the immortality of the soul; strongly rejects the notion of a transcendent, providential God—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and claims that the Law was neither literally given by God nor any longer binding on Jews. To all appearances, Spinoza was content finally to have an excuse for departing from the community and leaving Judaism behind; his faith and religious commitment were, by this point, gone. Within a few years, he left Amsterdam altogether. By the time his extant correspondence begins, in 1662, he is living in Rijnsburg, not far from Leiden. While in Rijnsburg, he worked on the Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect, an essay on philosophical method, and the Short Treatise on God, Man and His Well-Being, an initial but aborted effort to lay out his metaphysical, epistemological and moral views. By this time, he was also working on what would eventually be called the Ethics, his philosophical masterpiece. When Spinoza died in 1677, in The Hague, he was still at work on his Political Treatise; this was soon published by his friends along with his other unpublished writings, including a Compendium to Hebrew Grammar. Ethics The Ethics is an ambitious and multifaceted work. It is also bold to the point of audacity, as one would expect of a systematic and unforgiving critique of the traditional philosophical conceptions of God, the human being and the universe, and, above all, of the religions and the theological and moral beliefs grounded thereupon. What Spinoza intends to demonstrate in the strongest sense of that word is the truth about God, nature and especially ourselves; and the highest principles of society, religion and the good life. Despite the great deal of metaphysics, physics, anthropology and psychology that take up Parts One through Three, Spinoza took the crucial message of the work to be ethical in nature. It consists in showing that our happiness and well-being lie not in a life enslaved to the passions and to the transitory goods we ordinarily pursue; nor in the related unreflective attachment to the superstitions that pass as religion, but rather in the life of reason. To clarify and support these broadly ethical conclusions, however, Spinoza must first demystify the universe and show it for what it really is. This requires laying out some metaphysical foundations, the project of Part One. From these, the first proposition necessarily follows, and every subsequent proposition can be demonstrated using only what precedes it. References to the Ethics will be by part I—V, proposition p, definition d, scholium s and corollary c. In propositions one through fifteen of Part One, Spinoza presents the basic elements of his picture of God. God is the infinite, necessarily existing that is, uncaused, unique substance of the universe. There is only one substance in the universe; it is God; and everything else that is, is in God. A substance is prior in nature to its affections. Two substances having different attributes have nothing in common with one another. In other words, if two substances differ in nature, then they have nothing in common. If things have nothing in common with one another, one of them cannot be the cause of the other. Two or more distinct things are distinguished from one another, either by a difference in the attributes [i. In nature, there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute. One substance cannot be produced by another substance. It pertains to the nature of a substance to exist. Every substance is necessarily infinite. The more reality or being each thing has, the more attributes belong to it. Each attribute of a substance must be conceived through itself. God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists. But this, by proposition 7, is absurd. Therefore, God necessarily exists, q. No attribute of a substance can be truly conceived from which it follows that the substance can be divided. A substance which is absolutely infinite is indivisible. Except God, no substance can be or be conceived. This proof that God—an infinite, necessary and uncaused, indivisible being—is the only substance of the universe proceeds

in three simple steps. First, establish that no two substances can share an attribute or essence Ip5. Then, prove that there is a substance with infinite attributes i. It follows, in conclusion, that the existence of that infinite substance precludes the existence of any other substance. For if there were to be a second substance, it would have to have some attribute or essence. But since God has all possible attributes, then the attribute to be possessed by this second substance would be one of the attributes already possessed by God. But it has already been established that no two substances can have the same attribute. Therefore, there can be, besides God, no such second substance. If God is the only substance, and by axiom 1 whatever is, is either a substance or in a substance, then everything else must be in God. As soon as this preliminary conclusion has been established, Spinoza immediately reveals the objective of his attack. But how far they wander from the true knowledge of God, is sufficiently established by what has already been demonstrated. Much of the technical language of Part One is, to all appearances, right out of Descartes. But even the most devoted Cartesian would have had a hard time understanding the full import of propositions one through fifteen. Spinoza was sensitive to the strangeness of this kind of talk, not to mention the philosophical problems to which it gives rise. When a person feels pain, does it follow that the pain is ultimately just a property of God, and thus that God feels pain? God is now described not so much as the underlying substance of all things, but as the universal, immanent and sustaining cause of all that exists: According to the traditional Judeo-Christian conception of divinity, God is a transcendent creator, a being who causes a world distinct from himself to come into being by creating it out of nothing. God produces that world by a spontaneous act of free will, and could just as easily have not created anything outside himself. The existence of the world is, thus, mathematically necessary. It is impossible that God should exist but not the world. This does not mean that God does not cause the world to come into being freely, since nothing outside of God constrains him to bring it into existence. But Spinoza does deny that God creates the world by some arbitrary and undetermined act of free will. God could not have done otherwise. There are no possible alternatives to the actual world, and absolutely no contingency or spontaneity within that world. Everything is absolutely and necessarily determined. In nature there is nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way. Things could have been produced by God in no other way, and in no other order than they have been produced. There are, however, differences in the way things depend on God. They include the most general laws of the universe, together governing all things in all ways. From the attribute of extension there follow the principles governing all extended objects the truths of geometry and laws governing the motion and rest of bodies the laws of physics ; from the attribute of thought, there follow laws of thought understood by commentators to be either the laws of logic or the laws of psychology. Particular and individual things are causally more remote from God. More precisely, they are finite modes. There are two causal orders or dimensions governing the production and actions of particular things. On the other hand, each particular thing is determined to act and to be acted upon by other particular things. Thus, the actual behavior of a body in motion is a function not just of the universal laws of motion, but also of the other bodies in motion and rest surrounding it and with which it comes into contact. It is an ambiguous phrase, since Spinoza could be read as trying either to divinize nature or to naturalize God. There are, Spinoza insists, two sides of Nature. First, there is the active, productive aspect of the universeâ€”God and his attributes, from which all else follows. Strictly speaking, this is identical with God. There is some debate in the literature about whether God is also to be identified with *Natura naturata*. Outside of Nature, there is nothing, and everything that exists is a part of Nature and is brought into being by Nature with a deterministic necessity. Because of the necessity inherent in Nature, there is no teleology in the universe. God or Nature does not act for any ends, and things do not exist for any set purposes. All the prejudices I here undertake to expose depend on this one: I, Appendix God is not some goal-oriented planner who then judges things by how well they conform to his purposes. Things happen only because of Nature and its laws. People] findâ€”both in themselves and outside themselvesâ€”many means that are very helpful in seeking their own advantage, e. And knowing that they had found these means, not provided them for themselves, they had reason to believe that there was someone else who had prepared those means for their use. For after they considered things as means, they could not believe that the things had made themselves; but from the means they were accustomed to prepare for themselves,

they had to infer that there was a ruler, or a number of rulers of nature, endowed with human freedom, who had taken care of all things for them, and made all things for their use. And since they had never heard anything about the temperament of these rulers, they had to judge it from their own. Hence, they maintained that the Gods direct all things for the use of men in order to bind men to them and be held by men in the highest honor. So it has happened that each of them has thought up from his own temperament different ways of worshipping God, so that God might love them above all the rest, and direct the whole of Nature according to the needs of their blind desire and insatiable greed. Thus this prejudice was changed into superstition, and struck deep roots in their minds. I, Appendix A judging God who has plans and acts purposively is a God to be obeyed and placated. Opportunistic preachers are then able to play on our hopes and fears in the face of such a God. They prescribe ways of acting that are calculated to avoid being punished by that God and earn his rewards. Nor does God perform miracles, since there are no, and cannot be, departures whatsoever from the necessary course of nature. This would be for God or Nature to act against itself, which is absurd. The belief in miracles is due only to ignorance of the true causes of phenomena.

Download free ebook: Salvation through Spinoza. English ; 20 Sept. ; ISBN: X ; Pages ; PDF. download ebook - Home,History, Military, pdf.

Dan Chung for the Guardian Although Baruch Spinoza is one of the great thinkers of the European philosophical tradition, he was not a professional scholar – he earned his modest living as a lens grinder. So, unlike many thinkers of his time, he was unconstrained by allegiance to a church, university or royal court. He was free to be faithful to the pursuit of truth. This gives his philosophy a remarkable originality and intellectual purity – and it also led to controversy and charges of heresy. In the 19th century, and perhaps even more recently, "Spinozist" was still a term of abuse among intellectuals. In a sense, Spinoza was always an outsider – and this independence is precisely what enabled him to see through the confusions, prejudices and superstitions that prevailed in the 17th century, and to gain a fresh and radical perspective on various philosophical and religious issues. He was born, in , to Jewish Portuguese parents who had fled to Amsterdam to escape persecution, so from the very beginning he was never quite a native, never completely at home. Although Spinoza was an excellent student in the Jewish schools he attended, he came to be regarded by the leaders of his community as a dangerous influence. At the age of 24 he was excluded from the Amsterdam synagogue for his "intolerable" views and practices. This is often identified as pantheism, the doctrine that God and the world are the same thing – which conflicts with both Jewish and Christian teachings. Pantheism can be traced back to ancient Greek thought: But although Spinoza – who admired many aspects of Stoicism – is regarded as the chief source of modern pantheism, he does, in fact, want to maintain the distinction between God and the world. His originality lies in the nature of this distinction. God and the world are not two different entities, he argues, but two different aspects of a single reality. Over the next few weeks we will examine this view in more detail and consider its implications for human life. Since Spinoza presents a radical alternative to the Cartesian philosophy that has shaped our intellectual and cultural heritage, exploring his ideas may lead us to question some of our deepest assumptions. His ideas are never merely intellectual constructions, but lead directly to a certain way of life. This is evidenced by the fact that his greatest work, which combines metaphysics, theology, epistemology, and human psychology, is called Ethics. In this book, Spinoza argues that the way to "blessedness" or "salvation" for each person involves an expansion of the mind towards an intuitive understanding of God, of the whole of nature and its laws. In other words, philosophy for Spinoza is like a spiritual practice, whose goal is happiness and liberation. Unlike most of the great philosophers, Spinoza has a reputation for living an exemplary, almost saintly life, characterised by modesty, gentleness, integrity, intellectual courage, disregard for wealth and a lack of worldly ambition. According to Bertrand Russell , Spinoza was "the noblest and most lovable of the great philosophers". Although his ideas were despised by many of his contemporaries, he attracted a number of devoted followers who gathered regularly at his home in Amsterdam to discuss his philosophy.

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Perhaps the most puzzling and and disconcerting question in political philosophy is the one that was posed by Spinoza in his Theological-Political Treatise: It is only by entering into composition with other bodies, by adding our powers to theirs, that we can know the joy of acting. So when the corporeal constraints imposed by tyranny make us unable to act, we are susceptible to superstition, and so our impotence appears in our imaginations as the result of our own will. Superstition is something like what Karl Marx will much later describe as ideology, and which Louis Althusser will famously merge with the argument of the appendix to book 1 of the Ethics, in which Spinoza wrote: We are led to superstition when we believe the prophets, who insist that they have perceived the truth through revelation. It takes hold in our imaginations because our bodies are limited, and cannot form knowledge of nature without the practice of reason. Tyranny, which has an interest in keeping us ignorant, is the material relation which is represented in the imagination as superstition. However, this ignorance cannot explain the existence of tyranny and servitude. But it is also the fear that the masses inspire in whoever is placed in the position of governing or acting politically, hence in the state as such. The ethical life is one which operates according to reason and overcomes the sad passions that prevent us from acting. Superstition is the barrier to this, and it is entirely social. All people have the capacity for reason, which they are prevented from exercising because tyranny keeps them in a state of ignorance. But there is no natural basis for the belief that only the select few are capable of governing. But criticizing Trump is too easy and frankly, self-congratulatory. And explaining Trump in terms of the ignorance of the American voter is an unsatisfactory explanation which remains purely at the level of the imagination. In an earlier instance of an alarming electoral swing to the right, Stuart Hall presented an attempt at explaining the rise of Margaret Thatcher. The prevailing liberal analysis of the changing political landscape refuses to confront the material basis of superstition. Instead, it operates entirely on the model of revelation. There are those of us to whom the truth has been revealed. And unlike the multitude of the Midwest, we are fit to govern. To appeal to this multitude with reason is not simply fruitless, it is morally wrong, because the multitude is racist and backwards. Perhaps Hall was able to reject such false explanations because his work in cultural studies, even before the groundbreaking turn that was the theory of authoritarian populism, was based on an appreciation of ordinary life – popular culture. He saw, as Spinoza did, that in the common notions of the multitude there is greater wisdom than in prophecy. In the place of practicing politics, of attempting to find new compositions of the multitude, we have opted for the sad passions of social media. In other words, we have accepted the philosophy of Trump. Instead of politics, we engage in chatter. And it is a sad chatter, whose prevailing form is denunciation. The practice of denunciation debases the multitude. In the place of action, it accepts hatred, which merely externalizes the sadness of passivity; in the place of agency, it accepts fear, and pleads for security; in place of the collective democratic subject, it accepts the superstitious mob. Superstitious mobs can only serve tyrants, as Spinoza knew well. We now face a new theocracy of our own making, one which through the chatter of social media decomposes our powers and makes politics impossible. It is incumbent upon us to make politics possible again, and this requires us to abandon the position of moral and political purity that can only rely on superstition.

Chapter 6 : Baruch Spinoza (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

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Princeton University Press Format Available: This ambitious study presents Baruch Spinoza as the most outstanding and influential thinker of modernity--and examines the question of whether he was the "first secular Jew. Yirmiyahu Yovel shows how Spinoza grounded a philosophical revolution in a radically new principle--the philosophy of immanence, or the idea that this world is all there is--and how he thereby anticipated secularization, the Enlightenment, the disintegration of ghetto life, and the rise of natural science and the liberal-democratic state. *The Marrano of Reason*: Yovel uses their fascinating story to show how the crypto-Jewish life they maintained in the face of the Inquisition mixed Judaism and Christianity in ways that undermined both religions and led to rational skepticism and secularism. He identifies Marrano patterns that recur in Spinoza in a secularized context: They held that philosophy is intrinsically incapable of revealing anything of any relevance to theology, or in fact to any study of direct practical relevance to human life. He believed that philosophy reveals the true nature of God, and that God is nothing like what the majority of theologians, or indeed of religious believers in general, think he is. The practical implications of this change in the concept of God were profound and radical. Oxford University Press Format Available: *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. Philosophy, especially great philosophy, does not appear out of the blue. In the current volume, a team of top scholars--both up-and-coming and established--attempts to trace the philosophical development of one of the greatest philosophers of all time. Featuring twenty new essays and an introduction, it is the first attempt of its kind in English and its appearance coincides with the recent surge of interest in Spinoza in Anglo-American philosophy. Few readers take the time to study his early works carefully. If they do, they are likely to encounter some surprising claims, which often diverge from, or even utterly contradict, the doctrines of the *Ethics*. Consider just a few of these assertions: Yet, though these claims reveal some tension between the early works and the *Ethics*, there is also a clear continuity between them. Spinoza wrote the *Ethics* over a long period of time, which spanned most of his philosophical career. Indeed, if we keep in mind the common dictum "nothing comes from nothing"--which Spinoza frequently cites and appeals to--it is clear that great works like the *Ethics* do not appear *ex nihilo*. In light of the preeminence and majesty of the *Ethics*, it is difficult to study the early works without having the *Ethics* in sight. A teleological attitude of such a sort would celebrate the works of the "mature Spinoza" at the expense of the early works. However, we have no reason to assume that on all issues the views of the *Ethics* are better argued, developed, and motivated than those of the early works. In other words, we should keep our minds open to the possibility that on some issues the early works might contain better analysis and argumentation than the *Ethics*.

Chapter 7 : Salvation through Spinoza

Get this from a library! Salvation through Spinoza: a study of Jewish culture in Weimar Germany. [David J Wertheim] -- This study chronicles Spinoza's German-Jewish popularity during the years of the Weimar Republic (), explaining it from the political moral and intellectual paradoxes with which Weimar.

Additional Information In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: The Two Moralities of Spinoza I Robert McRae The philosophers of the ancient world believed that philosophical knowledge was essential to the attainment of the good life. Rarely has this value been placed upon it in the modern world. No one denied the ancient claim for philosophy more emphatically than Kant himself. It was then possible for him to say that in giving the principle an explicit formulation he was not teaching men anything new, but was only directing their attention to a principle that they themselves always employed in their moral decisions. Thus the knowledge necessary for the attainment of wisdom and virtue is not philosophical but vulgar knowledge, possessed by the simplest and least educated of men. He argued that the common man not only has as good a hope as any philosopher of making a correct moral decision, but is more likely to do so. The philosopher is at the disadvantage of being able to use his philosophical skills to argue on the side of his desires and inclinations against the strict laws of duty, to question their validity, and to corrupt them. Christianity had much to do with the destruction of the ancient claims on behalf of philosophy. It is taught in the New Testament that to enter the kingdom of heaven it is necessary to become a little child. Gregory Nazianzen protested that the kingdom of heaven was not necessarily confined to fools-but the Church has always taught that the knowledge necessary to salvation is within the grasp of the simplest intelligence. On the secular side the development of theories of natural law also weighed heavily against the classical ideal. When "law" in the sense of "command" or "ordinance" is taken as the basic ethical concept, as is the case in natural law theories, then it will follow that the knowledge required for the attainment of virtue is common knowledge. If a law is to oblige it must be known. This will be as true for moral laws as for civil laws. There were, however, two philosophers of the seventeenth century who were pre-eminent in maintaining that moral knowledge is philosophical knowledge and who thereby denied to the multitude the hope of acquiring it. For Descartes the science of morals, "the last degree of wisdom," rests on the foundations of metaphysics and physics. This moral knowledge he confessed he had not himself reached. He had to be content with a merely provisional code. But if it had been found it could never have become popular knowledge, for the metaphysics on which it was to rest was confined by Descartes to the very few whom he considered capable of metaphysical thinking. Descartes was, however, a good Christian. He could not ignore the doctrine that the knowledge necessary for salvation lies within the reach of every man. He therefore made a sharp distinction between what must be known for salvation in the next world and what must be known for the good life in this world You are not currently authenticated. View freely available titles:

Chapter 8 : Siris: Spinoza's Christ

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