

ON THE UNITY OF SPINOZA'S TRACTATUS THEOLOGICO-POLITICUS

Paul J. Bagley

The question of the relationship between the theological and political parts of Spinoza's Tractatus Theologico-Politicus is generally regarded as being unproblematical. The political teaching of the treatise typically is considered to be a pragmatic extension of the theological doctrine of the treatise, insofar as the latter is said to establish the freedoms that apply to human beings in accordance with the revealed Divine Law. But that understanding of matters reverses the actual connection between the theological and political parts of the book. Instead, it is more precise to say that the political teaching of the treatise is asserted after the theological teaching because the definition of the authentic meaning of theology introduced by Spinoza provides the matrix from which political association is made feasible. In other words, the theological teaching of the treatise is actually devised for the purpose of contributing to the solution of a natural or philosophic problem by political means and for that reason Spinoza's doctrine in the Tractatus is necessarily theologicopolitical.

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The first complete translation into English of Baruch Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670) was published anonymously from London in 1689 under the title: *A treatise partly theological and partly political, containing some few discourses.*¹ As the title to the English translation suggests, the *Tractatus* consists of two distinguishable parts: one theological and the other political. However, the division between the parts is not equal. Fifteen of the twenty chapters of the treatise are devoted almost exclusively to theological subject matter and thus the unnamed translator of the work more aptly might have titled it "a treatise mostly theological and only partly political." Still, the political orientation of the book is exhibited in its subtitle as well as Spinoza's declaration in the Preface that "the principle to be demonstrated is that freedom," especially the freedoms of thought and speech, "can be granted without detriment to piety or public peace"; indeed, such freedoms "cannot be withheld without great danger to peace and grave harm to the commonwealth."²

The correlation of the theological and political parts of the treatise is first indicated by Spinoza's remark in the Preface that the conclusions he reaches concerning the freedoms of thought and speech in a polity are derived from his examination of theology.³ And again, at the beginning of the political part of the book, Spinoza states that his interest is to consider the practical consequences, "*in optima Republica*," of the separation of philosophy from theology that was achieved in the theological part of the work.⁴ On the surface, then, it appears that Chapters 16-20 of the *Tractatus* are an adjunct discussion of the manner whereby civil liberties can reflect the kind of theological and philosophical freedoms that were advanced in Chapters 1-15. And such an understanding of that relation between the two parts of the book has been advocated recently by one noted Spinoza scholar.

According to Yirmiyahu Yovel, Spinoza's program of "using state power and a purified popular religion as vehicles of a semirationalizing civilizing process" is what confers "systematic unity" upon the theological and political parts of the treatise.⁵ The political stage of the doctrine, says Yovel, is required "both for its own sake and as a complement to the theological stage" because the identification of revealed religion with the teaching

of "justice, solidarity, and mutual help" is too vague to serve as a basis for human action and therefore its principles "must be spelled out in specific legislation adapted to the social contexts in which they are meant to apply."⁶

The thesis defended by Yovel illustrates a familiar interpretation of the unity of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. On that view, the "theologico-political" character of the treatise is grasped in terms of the political teaching being a pragmatic extension of the theological teaching to which it is subordinated. But that appearance of matters reverses the actual correlation of the theological and political parts of the book. Instead, it is more precise to say that the political teaching of the treatise is formulated after the theological teaching because the definition of the authentic meaning of theology introduced by Spinoza provides the matrix from which political association is made feasible.

For Spinoza, the authentic meaning of theology (and therefore faith, revealed religion, piety, or the Bible: i.e., terms which are used synonymously with it)⁷ is reduced to making men obedient.⁸ But obedience (and the keeping of promises that attends it)⁹ is also necessary for the stability and maintenance of political regimes.¹⁰ Spinoza's ambition in the *Tractatus* is to secure certain civil liberties for men; yet the exercise of such liberties cannot be permitted without restraint. A doctrine of obedience must be introduced if men are to enjoy freedom without doing harm to others or being injured by them. Nonetheless, the fact of obedience itself occasions a "political problem." As Hilail Gildin has argued, "there is a dangerous gap between the degree of obedience that must be demanded for the attainment of peace and security and the degree to which this demand can be effectively met."¹¹ To resolve the matter, Spinoza constructs a teaching in the treatise whereby the "political problem," detected by Gildin, in fact receives a theological remedy. In other words, the theological teaching of the treatise is actually devised for the purpose of contributing to the solution of a natural or philosophic problem by political means and for that reason Spinoza's doctrine in the *Tractatus* is necessarily *theologico-political*.

In this essay, I propose to explain the unity of Spinoza's *Tractatus* in terms of (1) the natural or philosophic problem addressed by the treatise; (2) the political solution to that

philosophic problem, noting its chief limitation; and (3) the way the theological teaching of the treatise is employed to resolve the difficulty that attends an exclusively political solution to the natural or philosophic problem.¹²

The Natural or Philosophic Problem

A principal aim of the *Tractatus* is to defend the freedom to philosophize.¹³ That liberty can be attained only by allowing everyone to "think as he pleases and say what he thinks."¹⁴ The impediment to such freedom, as Spinoza makes clear in the opening passages of the Preface to the treatise, is religious prejudice which grows out of men's inclination toward superstitious beliefs and leads them to despise the use of reason in itself or to condemn it as a source of impiety.¹⁵ When religious prejudices combine with political power, the prospect for liberty, in general, and philosophic liberty, in particular, is severely compromised. To illustrate that point, Spinoza cites the case of the Turks who "hold even discussion of religion to be sinful, and with their mass of dogma they gain such a thorough hold on the individual's judgment that they leave no room in the mind for the exercise of reason, or even the capacity to doubt."¹⁶

The historical phenomenon of persecution, or the suppression of free thought and speech, by religious and civil authorities is assailed by Spinoza throughout the Preface to the *Tractatus*.¹⁷ But that historical condition results from a more basic and natural human proclivity: disaffection toward those who deviate from accepted opinions. The grounds for such disaffection concern not only ideas but of course the conduct of one's life which is based upon them. According to Spinoza, men are prone to credulity and live superstitiously at those times when they cannot govern their affairs with surety or when good fortune does not always favor them.¹⁸ More specifically, because of their ignorance of the laws and operations of nature, the vulgar adopt the prejudice that divine providence is especially manifest when the familiar order of nature is interrupted or contravened. Any who seek to explain or understand such alterations by natural causes rather than by miraculous agencies are perceived by the vulgar to be undermining the existence of

God, or at least divine providence, and thus they are thought to impugn what is believed to be the source of men's fortune or misfortune.¹⁹ The alternative to the superstitious life is the one that is despised by prejudiced men, namely, the life of reason or the philosophic life.²⁰

The natural or philosophic problem²¹ addressed in the treatise is the conduct of human affairs and the solution to the question of how human beings live together in peace and security. Such stability implies one's willingness to sacrifice his inclinations toward license without eliminating his liberty. For Spinoza, man's desire to think and speak freely required protection specifically because there were many who would seek "to compel others to think as they do" and religion often was used by them as a pretext to do so.²² His concern in the *Tractatus* with contemporary threats to freedom of thought or speech also addressed the deeper issue of the relation between those who live according to the passions (and hence embrace a superstitious life) and those who live according to reason (and therefore govern themselves philosophically).²³

The first mention of the difference between the life of the passion and the life of reason, in reference to political life, occurs early in the theological part of the *Tractatus*. In his discussion of the "Ceremonial Law" (Chapter 5), Spinoza seeks to demonstrate that the particular rituals observed by the Hebrews were ordained for them only in respect to "their temporal and material prosperity and peaceful government, and therefore could have been of practical value only while their state existed."²⁴ A consideration of the Hebrew laws and rites allowed Spinoza to explain the peculiar character of their vocation and kingdom. But it also provided him the opportunity to introduce his teaching concerning the foundations of political societies by arguing "*ex universalibus fundamentis*".²⁵

The formation of a society, asserts Spinoza, is necessary and useful for mutual security and the division of labor: "If men did not afford one another mutual aid, they would lack both the skill and the time to support and preserve themselves to the greatest possible extent." Moreover, the advantages of political life extend to developments in "the arts and sciences which are also indispensable for the perfection of human nature and its blessedness"; for one sees that "those who live in a barbarous way

with no civilising influences lead a wretched and almost brutish existence.”²⁶ While political societies are founded to overcome human insufficiencies and promote human convenience, the satisfaction of needs and desires through a life in political association with others is contingent upon the observance of laws. As the Hebrew nation enacted ritual ceremonies to enhance loyalty and obedience within the state, every political society, according to Spinoza, requires that laws be established to govern the conduct of its citizens.

Quite importantly, Spinoza’s defense of the need for laws is located within a specific account of human nature propounded by him in the treatise.

If men were constituted by nature as to desire nothing but what is prescribed by true reason, society would have no need of any laws. Nothing would be required but to teach men true moral doctrine, and they would then act to their true advantage of their own accord, whole-heartedly, and freely. But human nature is far differently constituted. All men do, indeed, seek their own advantage, but by no means from dictates of sound reason. For the most part the objectives they seek and judge to be beneficial are determined only by fleshy desire, and they are carried away by their emotions, which take no account of the future or of other considerations. Hence no society can subsist for long without government and coercion, and consequently without laws to control and restrain men’s lust and their unbridled urges.²⁷

The discussion of the Hebrew kingdom, in the context of political life and the institution of civil laws to prevent the majority of men from pursuing their base interests, points to the crucial natural difference between those who live “*ex sola libidine, & animi affectibus abrepti*,” i.e., the passionate, and those whose lives are conducted “*ex sanae rationis dictamine*.²⁸ If all men lived according to the dictates of sound reason, there would be no need for laws (and hence no need for obedience to laws) since each would be acting in his own interest and to his own “true advantage.” However, the fact that the majority of men are passionate rather than rational leads Spinoza to conclude that in

order to subsist every society requires government, coercion, and the enactment of laws that place restrictions on men's behavior.

The account of the "formation of society" given in Chapter 5 of the *Tractatus* serves as the philosophic preface to the political instruction of the treatise which commences in Chapter 16. The discussion of "natural right," contained in the later chapter, explains the human condition as it is according to nature and thus it reveals the truth about the basic character of human being.²⁹

By "*ius et institutum naturae*," Spinoza understands nothing other than the rules that determine the nature of any individual thing to act and exist in a certain way.³⁰ According to the nature of fish, therefore, they swim; and big fish eat little fish because it is their nature to do so. Whatever any individual thing does by its own nature and through its own power, says Spinoza, it has the "highest right" to do; and hence it is concluded that "the right of the individual is co-extensive with its determinate power (*ius uniuscuiusque eo usque se extendere, quo usque eius determinata potentia se extendit*)."³¹ Nor is that identification of natural power with natural right limited by Spinoza to lower animals. Rather it includes all aspects of human nature as well.

Since it is the supreme law of Nature that each thing endeavours to persist in its present being, as far as in it lies, taking account of no other thing but itself, it follows that each individual has the sovereign right to do this, that is (as I have said), to exist and to act as it is naturally determined. And here I do not acknowledge any distinction between men and other individuals of Nature, nor between men endowed with reason and others to whom true reason is unknown, nor between fools, madmen, and the sane. (*Nec hic ullam acgnoscimus differentiam inter homines & reliqua naturae individua, neque inter homines ratione praeditos & inter alios, qui veram rationem ignorant, neque inter fatuos, delirantes, & sanos*). Whatever any individual thing does by the laws of its own nature, it does with sovereign right, inasmuch as it acts as determined by Nature, and can do no other. Therefore among men, as long as they are considered as living under the rule of Nature, he who is not yet acquainted with reason or has

not yet acquired a virtuous disposition lives under the sole control of appetite with as much sovereign right as he who conducts his life under the rule of reason. That is to say, just as the wise man has the sovereign right to do all that reason dictates, i.e., to live according to the laws of reason, so, too, a man who is ignorant and weak-willed has the sovereign right to do all that is urged on him by appetite, i.e., to live according to the laws of the appetite (*Hoc est, sicuti sapiens ius summum habet ad omnia, quae ratio dictat, sive ex legibus rationis vivendi; sic etiam ignarus, & animi impotens summam ius habet ad omnia, quae appetitus suadet, sive ex legibus appetitus vivendi*).³²

Spinoza's account of the *ius et institutum naturae*, as it applies to human nature, also addresses the natural or philosophic problem by resolving the question of whether passion or reason is primary in the conduct of human affairs. According to that teaching, "the natural right of every man is determined not by sound reason, but by his desire and his power (*Jus itaque naturale uniuscuiusque hominis non sana ratione, sed cupiditate & potentia determinatur*)."³³ And because men by nature are bound to preserve themselves, even when they are ignorant of the rules and laws of sound reason, it is common for them to be guided by their appetites alone.

Thus whatever every man, when he is considered as solely under the dominion of Nature, believes to be to his advantage, whether under the guidance of sound reason or under passion's sway, he may by sovereign natural right seek and get for himself by any means, by force, deceit, entreaty, or in any way he best can, and he may consequently regard as an enemy anyone who tries to hinder him from getting what he wants.

From this it follows that Nature's right and her established order, under which all men are born and for the most part live, forbids only those things that no one desires and no one can do; it does not frown on strife, or hatred, or anger, or deceit, or at anything at all urged by appetite.³⁴

Most striking in Spinoza's account of human nature (and hence his philosophic teaching) is the acknowledgement that the

life of passion is equally as legitimate as the life of reason "*per ius et institutum naturae.*" Hence the life of the bellicose individual is no less warranted by nature than is the life of the tranquil individual. Each may pursue whatever each perceives to be to his own advantage or interest and each may do so regardless of the consequences that may ensue for the other. The natural or philosophic problem, then, involves the prospect of rational men living peacefully and securely among a majority of men who live passionately and who "regard as enemies" anyone who seeks to impede them from satisfying their desires, however excessive and self-indulgent they may be. Indeed, the passionate, by right of nature, may employ any means at their disposal to achieve the ends they seek and only that which no one desires or no one can do is excluded from anyone's right or anyone's power.

Because most men are governed by "fleshy instincts and emotions" rather than by "dictates of sound reason," the guiding natural endeavor of human beings to preserve themselves is implicitly jeopardized by any individual's exercise of natural right, since that right is limited only by the individual's power. No one *by nature* is prevented from wresting what he desires, or acquiring what he believes to be to his profit, from others by force. In such a condition, even those who ignore reason for the sake of the passions are as much at risk from others who live according to the passions as are the rational.³⁵

In order to avoid the dangers inherent to the natural condition, some remedy must be devised which allows men the exercise of their natural rights and powers within the bounds of some restriction upon them. Laws must be established among men which set limits to how they may act in the pursuit of their interests; and men must be induced to obey those laws. The most efficient way to achieve that end is the construction of a political society that threatens punishment for those who violate the laws and promises rewards for those who abide by them.³⁶ Moreover, the entrance of men into political life occasions two specific benefits for them. For in addition to curtailing harmful exercises of natural right, the purpose of political association, as defined by Spinoza, is to safeguard mutual security as well as afford men the conveniences of life through a division of labor. Thus the

obvious and appealing solution to the natural or philosophic problem would seem to be a political one.

The Political Solution to the Philosophic Problem

Human life determined by the right of nature has the ironic effect of making human life itself precarious. Since the natural right of every man is typically determined by desire and power, rather than reason, there is no positive guarantee that the "supreme law of Nature," which obliges each to preserve himself, actually conduces to the protection of human life. On the contrary, the fact that any man has "*summum ius*" to live according to his appetites alone implies that all men could act injuriously toward others, if they believed it to be useful to do so. Still, in Spinoza's view, no one can doubt that it is more salutary for men to live in accordance with laws and the sure dictates of reason that are intended for man's true advantage.³⁷

[T]here is nobody who does not desire to live in safety from fear, as far as is possible. But this cannot come about as long as every individual is permitted to do just as he pleases, and reason can claim no more right than hatred or anger. For there is no one whose life is free from anxiety in the midst of feuds, hatred, anger, and deceit, and who will not therefore try to avoid these as far as in him lies. And if we also reflect that the life of men without mutual assistance must necessarily be most wretched and must lack the cultivation of reason, as we showed in Chapter 5, it will become quite clear to us that, in order to achieve a good and secure life, men had necessarily to unite into one body. They therefore arranged that the unrestricted right naturally possessed by each individual should be put into common ownership, and that this right should no longer be determined by the strength and appetite of the individual, but by the power and will of all together. Yet in this they would have failed, had appetite been their only guide (for by the laws of appetite all men are drawn in different directions), and so they had to bind themselves by the most stringent pledges to be guided in all matters only by the dictates of reason (which nobody ven-

tures openly to oppose, lest he should appear to be without capacity to reason) and to keep appetite in check in so far as it tends to another's hurt, to do to no one what they would not want done to themselves, and to uphold another's right as they would their own.³⁸

The price of a secure and peaceful life is man's entrance into political society and the ceding of some portion of his natural right. That is, one must promise to forsake certain behaviors in obedience to regulations enacted for the welfare of the entire community and the individuals who inhabit it. Specifically, all members of the society, either expressly or tacitly, yield their private right of self-defense to the body politic. The result of such a transference of right and a pledge of obedience to commonly acknowledged laws, says Spinoza, is the formation of a democracy, i.e., "a united body of men which possesses sovereign right over everything in its power."³⁹ Furthermore, the founding of such a society is declared to be compatible with natural right.

What induces men to foreswear the unrestricted exercise of their natural rights or powers and live in compliance with civil regulations owes to their observance of a universal law of human nature. According to Spinoza, "nobody rejects what he judges to be good except through the hope of a greater good or fear of greater loss, and no one endures any evil except to avoid a greater evil or to gain a greater good."⁴⁰ Because self-preservation of the individual is the *lex summa naturae* and political societies are designed to protect men from injury as well as improve their lives, it is understandable that men would join political societies in hope of achieving a "greater good," or avoiding a "greater loss," by doing so. Man's sacrifice of his entitlement to the exercise of certain rights would be a "lesser evil" that could be endured for the sake of a "greater good" in the form of gaining protection from injury by others. Still, it is Spinoza's contention that the manner of discriminating between various goods and evils remains an entirely individual and self-interested matter.

That is to say, everyone will choose of the two goods that which he judges the greater, and of two evils that which

seems to him the lesser. I say expressly, "that which in his belief is the greater or lesser"; I do not say that the facts necessarily correspond with his judgment. This law is so deeply inscribed in human nature that it should be accounted among the eternal truths universally known (*Atque haec lex adeo firmiter naturae humanae inscripta est, ut inter aeternas veritates sit ponenda, quas nemo ignorare potest*).⁴¹

One's perception of what does or does not conduce to his advantage is not necessarily either constant or consistent. Even the promised advantages that one would receive from participation in political life may not be sufficient to ensure that men will remain law-abiding. Indeed, based on what he regards as an "eternal truth about human nature," Spinoza concludes that "the validity of an agreement rests on its utility, without which the agreement automatically becomes null and void (*concludimus pactum nullum vim habere posse, nisi ratione utilitatis, qua sublata pactum simul tollitur, & irritum manet*)."⁴² Therefore, however beneficial, the maintenance and stability of any political regime depends entirely upon the estimation of its utility by its citizens. If the polity ceases to be regarded as useful by any of its inhabitants, then he is no longer bound by the terms of his allegiance to it. Yet in that crucial respect, the right of nature that conduces to political association (i.e., where men choose such a life as a "greater good" based on its utility to them) is the same right which undermines such a society (i.e., where men regard continuing in such a state as a "greater evil" because of its lack of utility to them). Consequently, the political solution to the natural or philosophic problem of how to guarantee a secure and peaceful life for both rational and passionate men is itself uncertain because ultimately it cannot eliminate a particular exercise of natural right that is subversive of civil society.

Within the discussion of the "universal law of human nature" that commands men to choose in favor of the greater of two goods or the lesser of two evils, Spinoza makes an admission which demonstrates the chief limitation of the political solution to the natural or philosophic problem. From the universal law of human nature "it necessarily follows that nobody is going to promise in all good faith to give up his unrestricted right, and in general nobody is going to keep any promises whatsoever,

except through fear of a greater evil or hope of a greater good (*At ex ea necessario sequitur neminem absque dolo promissurum, se jure, quod in omnia habet, cessurum, & absolute neminem promissis staturum, nisi ex metu majoris mali vel spe majoris boni*)."⁴³ Because an individual's natural right is determined by power alone, Spinoza acknowledges that one can act deceitfully in dealing with an assailant, for example, and promise him whatever he desires though there is no genuine intention on the part of the victim to fulfill the promise. In order to comply with the highest law which directs one to preserve himself, it therefore is a legitimate exercise of natural right that one act deceitfully with others where necessity or utility seem to demand it.

The case of lying to a robber, cited by Spinoza,⁴⁴ is perhaps an extreme but understandable example of how one would choose "greater goods" or "lesser evils" in accordance with his perception of what is useful in a given situation. That one would offer a robber all of his wealth instead of only what he possessed at the moment of the attack, if such a promise would prolong his life, seems to be a very useful course of action to adopt. It even may be an act undertaken by otherwise honorable men. Nevertheless, without regard for the integrity of the parties involved, the extreme character of Spinoza's illustration should not obscure for us the basic principle which remains operative in it. For Spinoza, it is a consequence of human nature that agreements are made valid only by their utility. And that fact applies especially to the constitution of a political regime.

Now if all men could be readily induced to be guided by reason alone and to recognise the supreme advantage and the necessity of the state's existence, everyone would entirely foreswear deceit. In their desire for this highest good, the preservation of the state, all men would in absolute good faith abide entirely by their agreement and would regard it as the most important thing in the world to keep their word, this being the strongest shield of the state. But it is by no means the case that all men can always be readily induced to be guided by reason; for each is drawn by his own pleasure, and the mind is frequently so beset by greed, ambition, envy, anger and the like that no room is left for reason. Therefore although men may make promises with every mark of sincer-

ity, and pledge themselves to keep their word, nobody can rely on another's good faith unless the promise is backed by something else; for everyone has the natural right to act deceitfully and is not bound to keep his engagements except through hope of greater good or fear of greater evil.⁴⁵

While men may be enticed to live in political society because of the assistances or conveniences it offers, they abide by the promises they make in that political setting only because of "the threat of the supreme penalty universally feared by all."⁴⁶ It is that threat of punishment or the hope of some reward to which Spinoza alludes when he asserts that one cannot depend on another's "good faith unless the promise is backed by something else." For many men, the threat of punishment, whether severe or mild, may be enough to prompt them to obey the laws of the state and fulfill the terms of their agreements with others. But daily experience plainly confirms that even threats of severe punishment do not moderate all human actions. Those who are guided only by their "fleshy instincts" regularly ignore the laws of the state, abrogate their commitments to others, and frequently escape retribution for their crimes.

If men can act viciously toward others with impunity, even in political societies, then there is little optimism for a life of peace and security for anyone. Where "greater goods" or "lesser evils" are decided principally on the basis of their utility to individuals who are driven by their own desire and power, there is little possibility that men will comply with civil laws or the terms of their obligations to others. Thus, an exclusively political solution to the natural or philosophic problem is discredited by the implications of what Spinoza himself calls "a universal law of human nature that is so deeply inscribed in human nature that it should be accounted among the eternal truths universally known."

The examination of natural right in respect to the formation of a state indicates the tension that occurs between man's interest to satisfy his own desires selfishly and the demands that are placed upon citizens to restrain themselves, by obedience to known laws, for the sake of the advantage of the community as a whole. In other words, we are confronted with the "political problem" noticed by Hilail Gildin. But that problem is further

compounded by another element of Spinoza's account of human nature. For it can be deduced from his philosophic teaching that the phenomenon of obedience itself is not natural and hence some extraordinary means must be introduced to support any political solution to the natural or philosophic problem.

The Theological Solution to the Political Problem

After treating the foundation of a democratic state, Spinoza describes how various civil relationships are to be conceived. For instance, he notes the manner in which citizens may submit to a sovereign political authority without involving themselves in slavery; he defines who is an ally and who is an enemy as well as what constitutes justice and injustice in the state; and he defines the nature of treason. In respect to the latter item, Spinoza notes that treason is involved where "anyone embarks on some undertaking of public concern on his own initiative and without the knowledge of the supreme council...even if the state were sure to gain some advantage from his action."⁴⁷ The question of treason, as involving an action of one's own initiative, returns Spinoza to the issue of natural right whereby one legitimately lives only according to desire and power. At stake in the discussion is the principle of the sovereignty of the individual over and against the sovereignty of the state. But the return to the doctrine of natural right in that context now strangely incorporates a reflection on one's obligations to the Divine Law.

To remove the last shadow of doubt, it remains for us now to deal with the following objection. Is not our earlier assertion, that everyone who is without the use of reason has the sovereign natural right in a state of nature to live by the laws of appetite, in clear contradiction with the divine law as revealed? For since all men without exception, whether or not they have the use of reason, are equally required by God's command to love their neighbour as themselves, we cannot, without doing wrong, inflict injury on another and live solely by the laws of appetite.

However, we can easily answer this objection if we confine our attention to the state of nature only, for this is

prior to religion in nature and time. For nobody knows by nature that he has any duty to obey God. Indeed, this knowledge cannot be attained by any process of reasoning; one can gain it only by revelation confirmed by signs. Therefore prior to revelation nobody can be bound by a divine law of which he cannot be aware. (*Nemo enim ex natura scit, se ulla erga Deum teneri obedientia, imo nec ulla ratione hoc assequi, sed tantum ex revelatione signis confirmata unusquisque id habere potest. Quare ante revelationem nemo jure divino, quod non potest non ignorare, tenetur.*)⁴⁸

On the issue of treason, Spinoza's response is plain and quite conventional. Where political societies have been formed with the explicit or tacit consent of the citizens, the sovereignty of the state is to be acknowledged above any individual interest. Accordingly, private right must yield to public right and those who prefer to exercise the former rather than to submit to the latter can be punished to the maximum degree. But Spinoza also asks another question that makes a different point. In the absence of governments with laws, must not men restrain their desires and actions in accordance with that divine law which obliges them to love one another? Spinoza's reply is that men are not bound by any such command if we consider them according to nature; for the state of nature is prior to religion both in nature and in time. Consequently, Spinoza concludes that the origin of religion is by definition identical with the foundations of a civil state. That is, the origination of each involves the surrendering of certain natural freedoms and the transference of rights from individuals to a sovereign power, be it God or the polity.⁴⁹

The natural right of human beings is governed solely by the laws of nature. By nature, no one is obliged to comply with decrees of either human or divine origin. Rather each one lives as his power determines him to live, viz., according to the power of reason or according to the power of the passions. Political right or theological right has its inauguration and becomes binding only after the adoption of a contract among men whereby they expressly resign their unlimited exercise of natural rights and freedoms and transfer certain powers to a commonly acknowledged authority. Furthermore, it is only through such an act and an agreement that the phenomenon of obedience is

established or known. For just as "no one knows by nature that he owes any obedience to God," prior to an express covenant with God, surely no one knows that he owes any obedience to his equals, prior to his pledge to adhere to civil laws and the adjudications of the civil authorities. Thus obedience, either to God or to other men, is an artificial construct rather than a natural fact and that realization returns us to the core of the natural or philosophic problem.

In accordance with the *ius et institutum naturae*, man legitimately can seek to preserve himself through either rational or passionate means. The rational man acts for his "true advantage" whereas the passionate man acts as he is "drawn by his own pleasure."⁵⁰ The pursuit of pleasures that are connected with base interests, i.e., the "fleshy instincts and emotions," produce "greed, ambition, envy, anger," and other sources of strife. Men protect themselves against the perilous consequences of the passionate life by agreeing to live with one another peaceably and securely. But by natural right men may enter into such an agreement with others and then abrogate it arbitrarily. In order for political association to hold out the prospect of a "greater good" for men (e.g., as contributing to the conveniences of life) or represent a "lesser evil" to them (e.g., as an alternative to the dangers of the purely natural condition), men must be made obedient since they are not obedient by nature. However, it also is a fact that man's natural faculties are not competent to that task.

The rational man who understands what conduces to his genuine benefit is governed by sound reason in both the natural and political situations. Action that is rationally self-determined does not involve "acting at the bidding of another" and hence no obedience is implied;⁵¹ for, strictly speaking, no one can be said to obey himself. The fact that the rational and self-determined life does not involve obedience also helps to explain Spinoza's conclusion that "no one knows by nature that he owes any obedience to God nor can he attain such knowledge by any reasoning." Instead, obedience must be introduced through the suprarational and supernatural means of "revelation confirmed by signs."⁵²

The passionate man, on the other hand, rejects the dictates of sound reason because they are contrary to what his appetite

esteem. He will comply with rational decrees which affect his true advantage only if he is compelled to do so. But more frequently, by nature, the passionate man submits only to his immediate desires and consequently he may bring harm to himself or others. Whereas the rational man can live peacefully without obedience, the security of all men is put in doubt if the passionate man is not made to be obedient. Yet if nature and reason do not teach obedience, what hope is there for moderating the behavior of passionate men?

Passionate men, as much as rational men, in accordance with the *lex summa naturae*, seek to preserve themselves. But in the pursuit of that end they do not follow the dictates of reason. Rather they succumb to their emotions and appetites. Therefore it is difficult for them to govern their circumstances with "sure council" and instead they turn to fortune, even with its vacillations, to favor them. Because passionate men become naturally prone to superstition, they become naturally disinclined to find any remedy to the problems of human life which might ensue from the exercise of reason; for they consider "reason to be blind and human wisdom as vain," in respect to obtaining fortune's favors. Still, the superstitious inclinations of passionate men can be exploited in order to prompt them to live moderately in accordance with a suprarational (and hence supernatural) doctrine that assures them of a "greater good" or some "lesser evil" if they adhere to its precepts.

The natural or philosophic problem of men living together in peace and security cannot be solved naturally (i.e., philosophically) because by nature the life of passion is as legitimate as the life of reason. Moreover, philosophy or reason cannot honestly teach that a life of obedience is a true life because the genuinely rational life is self-determining and thus it does not submit to "the mandates of external authority." Nor can the natural or philosophic problem be solved by exclusively political means. For the political solution requires obedience to laws based upon man's commitment to abide by the promises he makes to others to behave within certain constraints. However, by nature, no one ever completely forfeits his natural right to act deceitfully (e.g., to make an oath of obedience to civil laws and then violate it) if one believes it to be in his interest to do. Thus a wholly

political solution cannot eradicate a sanctioned exercise of natural right which itself corrodes civil society.

The terms of the political arrangement advocated by Spinoza, viz., a democratic regime, go as far as is reasonably possible to allow men to employ their natural rights and freedoms within tolerable limits. And though the political solution demands obedience to laws, one cannot rely on natural appetites or emotions to secure and guarantee that obedience. Nor can one appeal to reason to deduce that a life of obedience is a natural or philosophic existence. Thus the political solution to the natural or philosophic problem is simply to compel men to obey laws which conduce to the advantage of all by threatening the disobedient with severe penalties. Yet what will constrain passionate men who believe that "promises are made to be broken" and who also have avoided civic retribution? The answer to that question is located in the theological teaching of Spinoza's *Tractatus*.

According to Spinoza, the sole and specific instruction of theology is obedience to God through the commandment "to love God above all and to love one's neighbour as oneself."⁵³ Such love implies a reciprocal treatment of neighbor and self in the making and keeping of promises. Indeed, Spinoza explicitly asserts that one is obliged to honor his promise of obedience and allegiance to the state (and hence all commitments made to other men in political life) because "all are bound by their pledged word, which God bids them to keep inviolate."⁵⁴ In the political treatment of the natural problem, men are persuaded to keep "good faith" when making agreements with others where such a pledge is "backed by something else." Politically speaking, that "something else" is fear of punishment or hope of reward. But whereas civic punishment or reward is not absolutely reliable, the promise of divine retribution is held to be more perfect. What Spinoza's account of theology brings to the solution of the natural or philosophic problem is the doctrine of obedience, a teaching which otherwise is unavailable to reason, on grounds which are persuasive especially to the majority of men who are ruled by the passions.

The theological endorsement of obedience to laws and the upholding of promises exceeds any merely political resolution of the natural problem (and thus corrects its chief limitation) in two decisive respects. First, among the seven dogmas of the

"universal faith" articulated by Spinoza as representing the authentic meaning of theology, it is a cardinal tenet that men acknowledge the omnipresence of God: "All things are open to God and nothing can be concealed from God; if one did not realize God's omnipresence, one might doubt of the uniformity of God's justice."⁵⁵ In other words, where civic authorities fail to monitor and punish the abrogation of agreements among men, belief in God's omnipresence implies that no deceit among men goes undetected by God and therefore no act ultimately can elude the prosecution of divine justice. Human justice, to the contrary, is typically far less effective or comprehensive. Second, because "obedience to God consists solely in justice and charity, or love towards one's neighbor, and only those who obey God are saved,"⁵⁶ it follows that obedience to established laws and the keeping of promises are not only politically salutary but they also satisfy necessary conditions of man's religious salvation. Consequently, in principle, Spinoza makes the terms of human justice and divine justice virtually identical; and in practice, the meting out of divine justice is said to be witnessed in human acts.⁵⁷

Spinoza's theologico-political teaching provides a solution to the natural or philosophic problem by permitting the identification of political welfare with religious salvation through a peculiar interpretation of the genuine meaning of Scripture, faith, or theology.⁵⁸ Indeed, the theological contribution to the political solution of the natural or philosophic problem specifically provides the needed corrective for those who live according to the passions. For while all men are absolutely able to obey, there are only a few, if compared to the whole of mankind, who acquire the habit of virtue by being lead solely by reason, so except that we have the testimony of Scripture we would doubt the salvation of nearly all men (*Quippe, omnes absolute obedire possunt, & non nisi paucissimi sunt, si cum tot humano genere comparentur, qui virtutis habitum ex solo rationis ductu acquirunt, adeoque, nisi hoc Scripturae testimonium haberemus, de omnium fere salute dubitaremus*).⁵⁹

Philosophy, Politics, and Theology

Philosophy or reason has for its object the teaching of nature. From that teaching, reason understands that philosophy and politics are insufficient means, taken individually or taken together, to solve the natural or philosophic problem posed by the life of passion. That is to say, some men will remain simply incorrigible. The teaching of theology, however, which is characterized as suprarational and involves supernatural means of communication or confirmation, affirms that obedience, law-abidingness, and commitment to one's contracts with others are requisite to human salvation (*salus*), first in theological terms and then in political terms. Thus it would appear that the *theologico-political* nature of the treatise was accurately explained in Yirmiyahu Yovel's account of it.

The "systematic unity" of the theological and political parts of the *Tractatus* was said to be found in Spinoza's use of "state power and a purified popular religion as vehicles of a semi-rationalizing process." In Yovel's argument, the political solution to the natural or philosophic problem also relied on an appeal to a *religio catholica* which was "a popular version of the religion of reason that remains rooted in passion and the imagination and is rational only externally or by imitation."⁶⁰ Thus the formation of a civil state was intended to provide a middle ground between two possible extremes: "the state of universal strife where no government is available, and the state of universal rationality where no government is necessary."⁶¹ In order for civil society to serve as a median between those extremes, it must induce the passionate multitude to live according to the dictates of reason; and they will be motivated to do so because of the teaching of revelation or theology.

On the surface, it would appear that my explanation of the unity of the *Tractatus* is similar in principle to the account offered by Yovel. We both acknowledge the natural distinction between those who are ruled by the passions and those who are governed by reason. We further agree that Spinoza employs religion as a corrective to the life of passion. But the crucial difference between our interpretations of the unity of Spinoza's treatise is our respective regard for the seriousness of the theological doctrine propounded by Spinoza. According to Yovel,

there is a legitimate way to comprehend the theological tenets asserted in the treatise as metaphorical expressions of Spinoza's genuine philosophic teaching. For example, he proposes the following translations of "metaphoric expressions into their systematic equivalents": *God's intellect*: The totality of adequate ideas (including all individual essences, and all true propositions and theories of the universe) taken in their interrelations; or, *God's omnipresence*: The fact that all modes are in the substance; etc.⁶² And with respect to the seven articles of the "universal faith," enunciated in the *Tractatus*, Yovel concludes that "at least six of Spinoza's seven principles can also be given some general philosophic interpretation."

That God exists; that he is one and unique, omnipresent, and possessing supreme rights (power) and dominion over everything; that his worship consists entirely of leading a life of justice and loving one's neighbor; and that only those (and all those) who obey God in leading such a life will be "saved" — all these statements are compatible with both superstition and philosophical truth, depending on the mode of interpretation.⁶³

A problem in Yovel's interpretation of the unity of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is located in his advocacy of an equivalence between Spinoza's metaphorical or non-philosophic statements and his non-metaphorical or philosophic statements. Such a position admits that both kinds of statements are fundamentally true, though one kind of statement is designed to appeal to the imagination of some men whereas other statements are intended for rational men. That view, however, compels us to regard metaphorical expressions on a par with rational assertions, even though many of the philosophic statements actually contradict their non-philosophic counterparts.

For example, according to Yovel, the belief that obedience to God brings salvation is said to be "compatible with philosophical truth." But such a tenet opposes the doctrine that the life of reason, as self-determined, does not involve any action "*ex sola imperantis autoritate exequatur*." Furthermore, "since no one knows by nature that he owes any obedience to God nor can he attain to such a knowledge by reason," it is difficult to under-

stand how the doctrine of obedience to God, derived only "*ex revelatione signis confirmata*," can have any tolerable philosophic validity.⁶⁴

There are also severe difficulties connected with assigning any "philosophical truth" to the seven fundamental dogmas of the "universal faith." For essential to the characterization of the divine nature in the dogmas is the assumption that God is a king who legislates, judges, and rules. But according to Spinoza, such a conception of God is both vulgar and erroneous.

We therefore conclude that it is only in concession to the understanding of the multitude and the defectiveness of their thought that God is described as a lawgiver or ruler, and is called just, merciful, and so on, and that in reality God acts and governs all things solely from the necessity of his own nature and perfection, and his decrees and volitions are eternal truths, always involving necessity (*Concludimus itaque, Deum non nisi ex captu vulgi, & ex solo defectu cogitationis tanquam legoslatorem aut principem describi, & justum, misericordem, &c., vocari, Deumque revera ex solius suae naturae, & perfectionis necessitate agere, & omnia dirigere, & ejus denique decreta, & volitiones aeternas esse veritates, semperque necessitatem involvere*).⁶⁵

In the seven fundamental articles of the universal faith, Spinoza affirms God's mercy, God's forgiveness of sins, God's rule and dominion over the world, etc. Yet, all such characterizations of the divine nature were concluded to be vulgar and intellectually defective. Such an inconsistency of doctrine would cause philosophic men to withhold conviction in the dogmas. And that being so, one should pay special attention to Spinoza's assertion that discrediting any one of the tenets results in nullifying a man's obedience to God.⁶⁶

Spinoza's contradictory declarations make it difficult to defend any attempts at an interpretation of them which holds that some statements should be understood merely metaphorically whereas others may be taken literally. Instead, the contradictory assertions expressed by Spinoza essentially pronounce the unphilosophic (and hence untrue) character of his theologizing. But that consequence should not be startling since he openly

acknowledges that "faith does not require true dogmas but only pious ones," i.e., dogmas which move men to obedience.⁶⁷ Since rational or philosophic men do not need obedience, in order to live truly advantageously, it is difficult to conceive that they would yield to anything (especially a suprarational matter) without some demonstration of its being true. What Spinoza teaches as the "the fundamental principle underlying all theology and Scripture"⁶⁸ is not a metaphorical expression of philosophical truth. Rather it is simply a mitigated form of superstition⁶⁹ which is designed to appeal to particular theological prejudices of vulgar and passionate men. Nevertheless, it is perhaps only through such an appeal that the majority of men will yield to the corrective that is necessary for the type of life that is guided solely by "fleshy instincts and emotions."

For Yovel, the compatibility of superstition with philosophic truth means that the political teaching of the treatise is subordinated to the theological doctrine in that work. But if we understand that Spinoza's theological teaching is fabricated to emphasize almost exclusively a doctrine of obedience to God and care or respect for others, it becomes increasingly clear that his theology is in the service of his political instruction. For neither philosophy nor reason can teach that obedience is natural and politics can offer only an artificial but fragile inducement to obedience: viz., the avoidance of punishment or the suggestion of prosperity.

Theology's teaching of obedience (though also artificial since it is initiated in an express contract with God) contains enticements to obedience for passionate men which both philosophy and politics lack. It is suprarational and supernatural in origin; it promises eternal reward for compliance with God's command and threatens eternal punishment for resistance to it; finally, it offers what passionate and superstitious men most desire: good fortune now and in an afterlife. The account of the basis of theology provided by Spinoza supplies precisely what philosophy and politics cannot. But that does not mean what it therefore advances is true. On the contrary, philosophy and reason know that obedience is not natural, but they also acknowledge that only a compellingly persuasive doctrine of obedience will suffice to resolve the natural or philosophic problem.⁷⁰

To deal with passion, prejudice, and superstition in respect of human sociability, Spinoza invents an interpretation of theology which conspicuously makes available the one ingredient left wanting for a political solution to the natural or philosophic problem. Without recourse to the touchstone of theological obedience, the hope of civic obedience would be depreciated. In other words, without the purportedly divine justification of human obedience, there would be little optimism for any solution to the natural or philosophic problem. And for that reason, the philosophic purpose of the *Tractatus* to reconcile the lives of passionate and rational men in peace and security is achieved only through a teaching, accommodated for non-philosophers, which unifies theology with politics but only where the former is made ancillary to the latter.

Notes

1. Prior to the 1689 publication of the entire treatise in English, Charles Blount had incorporated an English translation of Chapter 6 of the treatise ("De Miraculis") into his own anonymously published book, *Miracles no violations of the laws of nature* (London, 1683). That Spinoza's *Tractatus* was known in England is confirmed by the fact that the interpolation by Blount was quickly recognized and denounced by Thomas Browne in his *Miracles, works above and contrary to nature* (London: Samuel Smith, 1683). All passages cited from the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* will be taken from the standard Heidelberg Latin edition and from the English translation of it by Samuel Shirley. See, *Spinoza Opera*, ed., Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitaetsbuchhandlung, 1925) 4 vols.; and *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, trans., Samuel Shirley (Leiden: E.J. Brill Publishers, 1989). In the notes, the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* will be abbreviated TTP and the page number where the passage appears in the Heidelberg edition will be cited followed by the relevant page number in the Shirley translation. In the text, the book will be referred to as the *Tractatus* or the treatise, wherever appropriate.
2. The subtitle to the TTP describes the book as "containing a number of dissertations, wherein it is shown that freedom to philosophize can not only be granted without injury to Piety and the Peace of the Commonwealth, but that the Peace of the Com-

- monwealth and Piety are endangered by the suppression of this freedom," see, *TTP*, 3:7/52; and compare *TTP*, 3:11/55.
3. *TTP*, 3:11/55: "After thus making clear the freedom granted to every man by the revelation of the Divine Law, I pass on to the second part of our subject, namely, the claim that this freedom can be granted without detriment to the public peace or to the right of civil authorities, and should be granted, and cannot be withheld without great danger to peace and grave harm to the entire commonwealth."
 4. *TTP*, 3:189/237: "Up to this point our object has been to separate philosophy from theology and to show that the latter allows freedom to philosophize for every individual. It is therefore time to enquire what are the limits of this freedom of thought, and of saying what one thinks, in a well-conducted state." On the separation of philosophy from theology, see Chapters 14 and 15 of the *TTP*, esp., 3:179/226: "It now remains for me finally to show that between faith and theology on the one side and philosophy on the other there is no relation and no affinity, a point which now must be apparent to everyone who knows the aims and bases of these two faculties, which are as far apart as can be. The aim of philosophy is, quite simply, truth, while the aim of faith, as we have abundantly shown, is nothing other than piety and obedience."
 5. Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), vol. 1, p. 130.
 6. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 133-34.
 7. On the identification of theology with faith, piety, Scripture, revealed religion, etc., see, e.g., *TTP*, 3:179-81/226-28 and 3:184/232.
 8. *TTP*, 3:184/232: "The domain of reason, as we have said, is truth and wisdom, the domain of theology is piety and obedience. For the power of reason, as we have already demonstrated, does not extend so far as to enable us to conclude that men can achieve blessedness simply through obedience without understanding, whereas this alone is the message of theology, which commands only obedience and neither seeks nor is able to oppose reason."
 9. See, *TTP*, 3:192ff/240ff.
 10. See, *TTP*, 3:179/225-26: "For we have shown that faith demands piety rather than truth; faith is pious and saving only by reason of the obedience it inspires, and consequently nobody is faithful except by reason of his obedience. Therefore the best faith is not necessarily manifested by him who displays the best arguments, but by him who displays the best works of justice and charity."

How salutary this doctrine is, and how necessary in the state if men are to live in peace and harmony, and how many important causes of disturbance and crime are therefore aborted at source, I leave everyone to judge for himself." Cf., *TTP*, 3:188/236 where Spinoza again emphasizes the importance of theology in terms of its ability to induce men to obedience.

11. Hilail Gildin, "Spinoza and the Political Problem," *Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed., Marjorie Grene (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), p. 382.
12. Against the interpretation of the unity of the *TTP* advocated by Yovel, I maintain that Spinoza's theological doctrine in the treatise is primarily intended to serve his political teaching. That is, Spinoza's interpretation of the authentic meaning of theology affords a kind of divine legitimacy to the doctrine of obedience. Thus Spinoza's theological teaching is, in fact, subordinated to his political intentions.
13. See the subtitle to the *TTP*, quoted above in note 2; and compare the list of conclusions that Spinoza claims to have demonstrated in the *TTP*, 3:246-47/298-99.
14. Those words form the title and subject matter of Chapter 20 of the *TTP*.
15. *TTP*, 3:9-10/53-54.
16. *TTP*, 3:6-7/50-51.
17. See, e.g., *TTP*, 3:7/51: "To invest with prejudice or in any way coerce the citizen's free judgment is altogether incompatible with the freedom of the people. As for those persecutions that are incited under the cloak of religion, they surely have their only source in this, that law intrudes into the realm of speculative thought, and that beliefs are put on trial and condemned as crimes. The adherents and followers of these beliefs are sacrificed, not to the public weal, but to the hatred and savagery of their opponents. If under civil law 'only deeds were arraigned, and words were not punished,' persecutions of this kind would be divested of any appearance of legality, and disagreement would not turn into persecution."
18. *TTP*, 3:5/49: "*Si homines res omnes suas certo consilio regere possent, vel si fortuna ipsis prospera semper foret, nulla superstitione tenerentur.*"
19. See, *TTP*, 3:81-82/124-125: "Therefore unusual works of Nature are termed miracles, or works of God, by the common people; and partly from piety, partly for the sake of opposing those who cultivate the natural sciences, they prefer to remain in ignorance

of natural causes, and are eager to hear only of what is least comprehensible to them, and consequently evokes their greatest wonder....This idea seems to have originated with the Jews. In order to refute the beliefs of the Gentiles of their time who worshipped visible Gods — the Sun, the Moon, the Earth, Water, Sky and so on — and to prove to them that these Gods were weak and inconstant, or changeable and under the command of an invisible God, they boasted of their miracles, from which they further sought to prove that the whole of Nature was directed for their sole benefit by command of the God whom they worshipped. This idea has found such favour with mankind that they have not ceased to this day to invent miracles with a view to convincing people that they are more beloved of God than others, and are the final cause of God's creation and continuous direction of the world."

The immediate danger of such prejudice and superstition is that it leads the vulgar to accept the false as though it were true. But it furthermore induces them to treat with hostility any who would attempt to correct them of their errors; for such would be tantamount to revealing the fact that such men are not the unique beneficiaries of divine agency nor is their status in the world select.

20. The degradation of reason by those who are governed by religious prejudice and superstition is a pronounced theme of the Preface to the *TTP*. See, e.g., *TTP*, 3:5/49-50: "we see that it is particularly those who greedily covet fortune's favours who are the readiest victims of superstition of every kind, and it is especially when they are helpless and in danger that they implore God's help with prayers and womanish tears. Reason they call blind, because it cannot reveal a sure way to the vanities they covet, and human wisdom they call vain, while the delusions of the imagination, dreams, and other childish absurdities are taken to be the oracles of God. Indeed, they think that God, spurning the wise (*imo Deum sapientes aversari*) has written his decrees not in man's mind but in the entrails of beasts, or that by divine inspiration and instigation these decrees are foretold by fools, madmen or birds. To such madness are men driven by their fears." Also, the identification of the life of reason with the philosophic life can be established through the synonymous use of the terms reason and philosophy, in contradistinction to theology, revelation, and Scripture, by Spinoza in the *TTP*. See, e.g., *TTP*, 3:180/228: "Those who do not understand the distinction between philosophy and theology argue as to whether Scripture should be ancillary to reason, or reason to Scripture; that is, whether the meaning of Scripture should be made to conform

with reason, or reason with Scripture. The latter view is upheld by the skeptics who deny the certainty of reason, the former by the dogmatists. But it is clear from our earlier findings that both parties are utterly mistaken, for whichever view we embrace we are forced to do violence either to reason or to Scripture....[H]e who makes reason and philosophy ancillary to theology has to accept as divinely inspired utterances the prejudices of a common people long ago, which will gain hold of his understanding and darken it (*Qui autem contra rationem & Philosophiam Theologiae ancillam facit, is antiqui vulgi praejudicia tanquam res divinas tenetur admittere, & iisdem mentem occupare & obcaecare; adeoque uterque, his scilicet sine ratione, ille vero cum ratione insaniet*)."

21. For the identification of the *natural* with the *philosophical* in the doctrines of the TTP, see, e.g., 3:179/226: "Again, philosophy rests on the basis of universally valid axioms, and must be constructed by studying Nature alone, whereas faith is based on history and language, and must be derived only from Scripture and revelation, as we showed in Chapter 7." It would not be misleading to say that Spinoza's philosophical teaching in the TTP is the same as what he defines as that which is "by nature."
22. TTP, 3:97/140.
23. A discrimination between the rational or philosophic life, on the one hand, and the passionate or superstitious life, on the other, is confirmed by the fact that in the Preface to the TTP Spinoza singles out the "philosophical reader" (*philosophe lector*) as the intended student of the teaching of the work, while he simultaneously exhorts "the vulgar and all those of like passions with the vulgar" not to read the book: see, TTP, 3:12/56.

That the TTP is primarily devoted to the deeper question about the kind of claim that is laid upon man's life by superstitious inclinations rather than rational ones is indicated, I think, by a remark made by Spinoza in the Preface to the TTP. Even though Spinoza says that "we have the rare good fortune to live in a commonwealth where freedom of judgment is fully granted to the individual citizen and he may worship God as he pleases, and where nothing is esteemed dearer and more precious than freedom," nevertheless he believes he is "undertaking no ungrateful or unprofitable task in demonstrating that not only can [the freedom to philosophize] be granted without endangering piety and the peace of the commonwealth, but also that the peace of the commonwealth and piety depend on this freedom" (TTP, 3:7/51).

If nothing truly were "esteemed dearer and more precious than freedom," then Spinoza would have no need to defend

philosophical liberty in the treatise. Instead, however, he perceived that the natural freedom of philosophizing was in jeopardy because of the threats to civil freedoms of thought and speech that were patent among the more zealous anti-republican alliances between sectarian religious forces and monarchist groups in The Netherlands during the 1660s. Still, such historical considerations only magnified the more natural problem inherent in the tension between the life of passion and the life of reason, and its consequences for political peace and security, of which Spinoza was aware.

24. *TPP*, 3:69/112.
25. *TPP*, 3:73/116.
26. *Ibid.*: "All men are not equally suited to all activities, and no single person would be capable of supplying his own needs. Each would find strength and time fail him if he alone had to plough, sow, reap, grind, cook, weave, stitch, and perform all the numerous tasks to support life, not to mention the arts and sciences which are also indispensable for the perfection of human nature and its blessedness."

Consider the similarity between Spinoza's account of the origins of political association based upon mutual security and the division of labor with Plato's account of the "city of natural necessity," which is born out of man's lack of self-sufficiency, *Republic* 369b3ff. On the disadvantages of life outside political society, compare with Spinoza's remarks the description offered by Thomas Hobbes in Chapter 13 of *Leviathan*, where life in the "state of nature" is described as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

27. *TPP*, 3:73-74/116-17. In Chapter 4 of the *TPP*, Spinoza provides an examination of the nature of law. There he suggests that law be defined "in its narrower sense, that is, as a rule of life which man prescribes for himself or for others for some purpose." In that context, Spinoza declares that for most men reason plays little or no part in the way they live: "*Attamen, quoniam verus finis legum paucis tantum patere solet, & perplurimum homines ad eum percipiendum fere inepti sunt, & nihil minus quam ex ratione vivunt*" (*TPP*, 3:58-59/102).
28. *TPP*, 3:73/116. In Spinoza's view, "man's true happiness" consists in "the enjoyment of the good" which involves "wisdom and knowledge of the truth," see, *TPP*, 3:44/88. The condition of "true happiness" also is said to imply knowledge of the "Divine Law," see, *TPP*, 3:69/112. But according to Spinoza, it also is the case that the "natural light of reason" is sufficient to attain an understanding of the "natural divine law," see, *TPP*, 3:68/111.

When taken together, the statements indicate an identification of the "happy life" with the life of reason in contradistinction to the life of passion and its connection with superstition and religious prejudice. In that regard, consider Spinoza's dismissal of the argument by Rabbi Joseph: "[A]lthough Aristotle (whom [Rabbi Joseph] considers to have written the finest work on Ethics, esteeming him above all others) may have neglected none of the precepts of true morality — which he also advocated in his own Ethics — and may have diligently followed all these teachings, this could not have furthered his own salvation, because he embraced these doctrines not as divine teachings prophetically revealed, but solely through the dictates of reason. However, I think that any attentive reader will be convinced that these are mere figments of imagination, unsupported by rational argument or Scriptural authority. To state this view is sufficient to refute it. Nor do I here intend to refute the view of those who maintain that the natural light of reason can give no sound instruction in matters concerning true salvation. Those who deny to themselves a faculty for sound reasoning cannot claim to prove their assertion by reasoning. And if they claim for themselves some supra-rational faculty, this is the merest fiction, and far inferior to reason," see, *TTP*, 3:80/123.

29. Again, for Spinoza, philosophy concerns itself solely with truth as it is based on universally valid axioms derived from Nature alone, see, *TTP*, 3:179/226.
30. *TTP*, 3:189/237. The account of the natural condition given by Spinoza in Chapter 16 of the *TTP* is essentially repeated in the *Tractatus Politicus*, Chapter 2.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *TTP*, 3:189-90/237-38.
33. *TTP*, 3:190/238.
34. *Ibid.*
35. The suggestion that the life of reason is superior to the life of passion is supported by Spinoza's identification of living according to "the dictates of sound reason" with acting in accord with one's "true advantage," see, e.g., *TTP*, 3:73-74/116-17. Moreover, if "man's true happiness" demands "knowledge of the truth" (*TTP*, 3:44/88) and only philosophy or reason is devoted to the truth (*TTP*, 3:179/226), then the life of reason must be naturally superior to the life of passion and its expression in religious prejudice or superstition. Common to both the passionate life and the superstitious life are "anger, hatred, and deceit": cf., *TTP*, 3:6/50 and 3:190/238. Indeed, Spinoza plainly declares

that superstition itself originates from the "most powerful kinds of emotion" and not from reason: "*Sequitur deinde eandem variam admodum, & inconstanter debere esse, ut omnia mentis ludibria, & furoris impetus, & denique ipsam non nisi spe, odio, ira, & dolo defendi; nimur, quia non ex ratione, sed ex solo affectu, eoque efficacissimo oritur*" (TTP, 3:6/50).

36. Spinoza's account of the "formation of society," in Chapter 5, lists three specific pragmatic recommendations for the founding of governments. The second recommendation is that "in every state laws should be so devised that men may be influenced not so much by fear as by hope of some good that they urgently desire; for in this way each will be eager to do his duty" (TTP, 3:74/117). That passage from Chapter 5 must be compared with Spinoza's remarks in Chapter 4 concerning the definition of law "in its narrower sense, that is, as a rule of life which man prescribes for himself or for others for some purpose." There, Spinoza expresses more plainly the role of law in relation to those whose lives are guided by passion rather than by reason. See, TTP, 3:58-59/102: "since the true purpose of law is usually apparent only to the few and is generally incomprehensible by the great majority in whose lives reason plays little part, in order to constrain all men alike legislators have wisely devised another motive for obedience, far different from that which is necessarily entailed by the nature of law. For those who uphold the law they promised what most appealed to the masses, while threatening transgressors with dire retribution, thus endeavouring to keep the multitude on a curb, as far as is practicable."
37. See, TTP, 3:191/239: "*Verum enimvero, quanto sit hominibus utilius secundum leges, & certa nostrae rationis dictamina vivere, quae, uti diximus, non nisi verum hominum utile intendunt, nemo potest dubitare.*"
38. *Ibid.* The conditions for participation in civil government are markedly similar to the conditions necessary for man's religious salvation, as they are detailed by Spinoza in Chapters 12-15 of the TTP. That is, the terms appropriate to living advantageously in a polity (e.g., restraining desires and treating others as one would wish to be treated by them) are the same as the terms of the "Divine Law," viz., to love one's neighbor as one's self. Given the primacy of the life of passion among most men, the prospect of civic peace and security would be enhanced where political obedience were closely connected with the demands of divine obedience. Spinoza's account of the "basis of theology" (see, esp., TTP, 3:177-80/224-27 and 3:184-85/232-33) as being identical with obedience to God's command to love one's neighbor

prepares the success of political life to the degree that the passionate will be prone to adopt the rules of sound reason when such dictates resemble the theological doctrines the many already embrace, albeit because of religious prejudice or superstition.

39. *TPP*, 3:193/241. The concept of entering into a contract with others and transferring individual natural rights to the community, as a condition for admission to civil society, is also characteristic of the political doctrines of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. See, e.g., *Leviathan*, Chapter 17: "The only way to erect such a common power, as may be able to defend them from invasion of foreigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort, as that by their own industry, and by the fruits of the earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly; is, to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon an assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will...as if every man should say to every man, I authorize and give up my right of governing myself, to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner." And compare, *The Second Treatise of Government*, Sect. 128: "For in the state of nature, to omit the liberty he has of innocent delights, a man has two powers: The first is to do whatsoever he thinks fit for the preservation of himself and others within the permission of the law of nature....The other power a man has in the state of nature is the power to punish crimes committed against that law. Both these he gives up when he joins in a private, if I may so call it, or particular political society and incorporates into any commonwealth separate from the rest of mankind." Nevertheless, whereas Spinoza cites sacrificing the "right of self-defense" as a condition for citizenship, both Hobbes and Locke concede the right of self-defense to individuals where society fails to protect the individual's fundamental right of self-preservation: cf., *Leviathan*, Chapter 14 and *The Second Treatise*, Chapter 3. Such a doctrine is not found explicitly in the *TPP*.
40. *TPP*, 3:191-92/239.
41. *TPP*, 3:192/240.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*
44. See, *TPP*, 3:191-92/239-40.
45. *TPP*, 3:192-93/240-41.

46. *TTP*, 3:193/241. The suggestion, of course, is that the ultimate penalty, or greatest evil, would be death since it is the negation of that which inclines men toward life in general, and political life in particular, viz., the law of self-preservation. Cf., *TTP*, 3:58-59/102 and 3:73-74/116-17.
47. *TTP*, 3:197-98/246.
48. *TTP*, 3:198/246.
49. See, *TTP*, 3:198/246: "And it is not only in respect of men's ignorance that we conceive of the state of nature as prior to, and lacking, the revelation of God's law, but also in respect of that freedom with which all men are born. For if men were by nature bound by the divine law, or if the divine law were a law by nature, there would have been no need for God to enter into a contract with men and to bind them by covenant and oath. Therefore we must concede without qualification that the divine law began from the time when men by express covenant promised to obey God in all things, thereby surrendering, as it were, their natural freedom and transferring their right to God in the manner we described in speaking of the civil state."
50. See, *TTP*, 3:190-93/238-41 and 3:73-74/116-17.
51. See, *TTP*, 3:74/117: "*Denique quoniam obedientia in eo consistit, quod aliquis mandata ex sola imperantis autoritate exequatur....*"
52. *TTP*, 3:198/246. The confirmation of revelation "by signs," for Spinoza, implies the working of miracles. That identification can be demonstrated by considering the fact that Spinoza refers to the phenomenon of the "sun standing still" for Joshua as "a sign" in Chapter 2 of the *TTP* and then he cites the same occurrence as an example of "a miracle" in Chapter 6. Cf., *TTP*, 3:36/84 and 3:84/127. Spinoza disingenuously confirms the possibility of miracles (events which he elsewhere asserts are impossible [see, *TTP*, Chapter 6]) for prejudiced or superstitious men because for them only what is extraordinary and seemingly contranatural commands their attention. In effect, in order for passionate men to become peaceful and moderate in their behavior, Spinoza appeals to the very prejudices and superstitions which they embrace.
53. See, *TTP*, 3:165/211.
54. See, *TTP*, 3:199-200/248: "...quandoquidem hac ratione jus civitatis prorsus violatur, hinc sequitur summae potestati, cui soli jura imperii conservare, & tutari tam jure divino, quam naturali incumbit, jus summum competere de religione statuendi quicquid judicat; & omnes ad eiusdem de eadem decreta, & mandata, ex fide ipsi data, quam Deus omnino servari jubet, obtemporare teneri." In the context of the

passage quoted, Spinoza even demands, rather ironically, that the divine warrant for one's obligation to obey the civil authorities extends to their adjudications regarding religious matters. Accordingly, one's faithfulness to God has the effect of subordinating religious concerns to political decisions. Or, one's religious virtue becomes most apparent in the exercise of the principal civic virtue, viz., obedience.

55. See, *TPP*, 3:177-78/224-25..
56. *Ibid.*
57. See, e.g., *TPP*, 3:198-99/247: "I assert that in the state of nature everyone is bound to live by God's revealed law from the same motive one is bound to live according to the dictates of sound reason, namely, that to do so is necessary to his greater advantage and salvation. He may refuse to do so, but at his own peril (*nempe quia ipsa utilius est & ad salutem necessarium; quod si nollet, cum suo periculo licet*)."
And compare, *TPP*, 3:231/283: "the divine teachings revealed by the natural light or by prophecy do not acquire the force of command from God directly; they must acquire it from those, or through the medium of those, who have the right to command and issue decrees, and consequently it is only by their mediation that we can conceive of God as reigning over men and directing human affairs with justice and equity. This conclusion is supported by experience; for indications of divine justice are to be found only where just men rule (*nam nulla divinae justitiae vestigia reperiuntur, nisi ubi justi regnant*)."
Equating divine justice with human justice is a principal intention of the theoglico-political teaching of the *TPP* and it leads to the subordination of religious practices to civil governance, as described in Chapter 20 of the *TPP*.
58. Spinoza employs the Latin word *salus* to communicate both political welfare or safety and religious salvation or deliverance. See, e.g., *TPP*, 3:179/225-26: "For we have shown that faith demands piety rather than truth; faith is pious and saving only by reason of the obedience it inspires, and consequently nobody is faithful except by reason of his obedience (*ostendimus enim, fidem non tam veritatem, quam pietatem exigere, & non nisi ratione obedientiae piam, & salutiferam esse; & consequenter neminem nisi ratione obedientiae fidelem esse*). Therefore the best faith is not necessarily manifested by him who displays the best arguments, but by him who displays the best works of justice and charity. How salutary this doctrine is, and how necessary in the state if men are to live in peace and harmony (*Quae Doctrina, quam salutaris quamque necessaria sit in republica, ut homines pacifice, & concorditer vivant*), and how many important causes of distur-

bance and crime are thereby aborted at source, I leave everyone to judge for himself." And compare, *TTP*, 3:188/236: "Before I continue, I wish to emphasise in express terms — though I have said it before — the importance and necessity of the role that I assign to Scripture, or revelation. For since we cannot perceive by the natural light that simple obedience is a way to salvation (*quandoquidem non possumus lumine naturali percipere, quod simplex obedientia via ad salutem sit*), and since only revelation teaches us that this comes about by God's singular grace which we cannot attain by reason, it follows that Scripture has brought very great comfort to mankind."

59. *TTP*, 3:188/236.
60. Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, vol. 1, p. 133.
61. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 135.
62. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 146-47.
63. See *TTP*, 3:177-78/224-25; and Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, vol. 1, p. 147. Since the natural alternative to the philosophic life is the superstitious life, there is something quite odd about any suggestion that superstition and philosophic truth somehow could be compatible.
64. On the point mentioned here, see note 52 above.
65. *TTP*, 3:65/108-109.
66. See *TTP*, 3:178-79/225-26.
67. See *TTP*, 3:176/223: "*Sequitur denique fidem non tam requirere vera, quam pia dogmata, hoc est, talia, quae animum ad obedientiam movent: Tametsi inter ea plurima sint, quae nec umbram veritatis habent, dummodo tamen is, qui eandem amplectitur, eadem falsa esse ignoret, alias rebellis necessario est.*"
68. *TTP*, 3:187/234.
69. I have treated the issue in more detail elsewhere; see, "Spinoza, Biblical Criticism, and the Enlightenment," *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, ed., John McCarthy (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, forthcoming).
70. The defect of the purely political solution is its inability to forestall man's natural right to act deceitfully. Thus the success of any purely political solution to the natural or philosophic problem would be identical with its ability to coerce men into submission to the law out of fear of punishment. In other words, the purely political solution depends largely on the threat of force or repression. But, according to Spinoza, such a course of action is repugnant to human nature; for "human nature will not submit to unlimited repression, and, as Seneca says in his trag-

edy, rule that depends on violence has never long continued, moderate rule endures" (*TTP*, 3:74/117). Without recourse to some other benign means of constraining men to obedience, there would only be politically repressive regimes and such governments would exacerbate, rather than mitigate, the natural or philosophic problem by driving men into more conflict. The use of theology or religion, in the service of a political solution to the natural or philosophic problem, can be made to avoid such difficulties when the teaching of brotherly love and respect for others is the foundation of one's convictions. The kind of theology promoted by Spinoza's teaching in the *TTP* is intended to be universalizable as well as non-sectarian and to that degree it seeks to minimize the kind of political or theological strife in which passionate men often engage. Still, it is plain that Spinoza's theological teaching is designed to have its impact on passionate and superstitious men. What prompts him to employ a theologically-political solution of the natural or philosophic problem is perhaps indicated in an acknowledgment expressed by him in the Preface to the *TTP*. Spinoza, who infrequently refers to other thinkers, makes this intriguing laudatory observation: "*nam (ut ex modo dictis patet, & Curtius etiam lib. 4. cap. 10. optime notavit) nihil efficacius multitudinem regit, quam superstitione*" (*TTP*, 3:6/50).