

A RECOURSE ON MONOTHEISM

ABRAHAM VS. SPINOZA



To Father Abraham: your prophets taught, "You shall love your neighbor." Some considered the universe as their neighborhood, some their country, some their city and some only whom that is similar to themselves and thinks same as themselves.



To The Philosopher Baruch Spinoza: its 2019 and reason is still under attack, fear & hope in charge, passions lost, governments abusive, superstition popular, happiness rare and even worse philosophy losing weight.

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God is not a concept, an invention of one person, one religion, or one philosophy. We can safely assume that all creatures with thought since the gain of cognizance have wondered some simple questions, “Why do things exist?” and “How do things work”? Initially, our ancestors sought to find a different source behind every force in the cosmos and often worshiped idols and statues that represented those powers. As we continued to progress in agriculture, medicines, and sciences, we also advanced in our understanding of God, or first cause.

Among ancient religions, we find books like the Hindu Rigveda (e. 16th to 12th BCE) which knew of one God with many sub-powers, and in one of its ten books (Mandala 10. 121) introduces the idea of creation of cosmos as a Golden Fetus, an approach similar to the crunch theory of the current era. It is not until about 3500 years ago that we read about monotheism. We can find Zoroaster (e. 15th to 5th BCE) the Persian prophet whose influenced was dragged to Greek and Roman Philosophy. Or the God of Akhenaten (1336 BC) the first assumingly Monotheistic Egyptian Pharaoh who destroyed all other Gods and temples of Egypt, and declared a God who blesses the earth via the sun. Today 56% of the world’s population, however, adhere to a few common beliefs and consider themselves to be children of Abraham. A figure that Genesis (First book of the Bible, dated back to 13th Bc by Jewish and Christian traditions) wrote about, “Now my covenant (God’s) is with you, and you shall be a father to many nations.” Abraham becomes the symbol father of prevalent religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Samaritanism, Druze, Rastafari, Yazidi, Babism, and Baha’i faiths also consider themselves children of Abraham, although often rejected by their older brethren.

In philosophy too, ideas about God (Metaphysics) are numerous, void of faith and on the merit of reason. In philosophy, we find Gods like the God of Aristotle (Greek Philosopher 4th BC) as an unmoved mover and a first cause, that causes motion of the universe and transforms its Godly forms into actual beings. An idea that most ancient and medieval philosophies follow until a philosopher named Baruch Spinoza (Dutch Philosopher, 17th CE excommunicated by the Jewish community of Amsterdam) introduces a revolutionary philosophy and becomes known as the father of “Religion of Nature” or as he called it the “Religion of Reason.” During his time, he was slandered as an atheist. It is not till centuries later that he would be recognized by scientists such as Einstein, who even wrote a poem in admiration of the Philosopher and his God.

Abraham and Spinoza are the two revolutionary approaches in the knowledge of one God. The two figures are compared to show the possibilities of how one can understand a monotheist, God. The idea of this essay is not to validate one description of God or establishing one single truth. Every conflict in the world goes back to the same roots, i.e., the feeling of superiority by at least one of the sides. In religious disputes and abuses around the world, the problem is more severe as divinity becomes a tool for the approval of such malevolence feelings. Such issues demand a theological remedy, as politics and science do very little to deal with spiritual intuitions of society which most often clouded with depict of ego and self-admiration.

However, in ecclesiastical abuses, the abuser believes they are doing the will of God, and the abused perceives they are receiving the will of God; many governments know this truth and use it to their benefits. The solution is not to “kill GOD” as Nietzsche (19th C, German philosopher) suggested (The Gay Science 1882 para. 125) is to re-course theism, is to establish within GOD an equal place for all modes of thought and matter. Our philosopher, like many others, does an excellent job at this task. Although this is not written to introduce a new revelation, discovering reality is very much in reach as Leo Tolstoy (Russian Philosopher & Writer 19th Ce) said: “truth is acquired like gold, not by allowing it to grow bigger but by washing off from it everything that is not gold.”

On God Himself (UNITY OF SUBSTANCE)

Most of medieval philosophies and religions considered God and the universe to be two different entities. God was understood as an immaterial being, one that creates or wills to produce material functioning things and the universe and all that are in it as material things that get created. The reasons they had to separate material and spiritual, beside the scriptural support for religions, it must have been life and death. Questions like why do things die? Why are some things finite? Why some have supreme senses? Led many to know reality consisted of two things: form (the immaterial) and matter. So much like body and soul. The soul is from God, in a shape that God created only to contain the soul. An immaterial God that builds with material substance.

This must have really bugged Spinoza; bet it one sterling pound as valued before Brexit talks that he had nightmares where he screamed at Aristotle and Descartes “absurd” (Spinoza’s common term in Ethics)! How can an immaterial thing get mixed with a material being? Second, how can this thing we suggested to be free of materiality and be pure form change enough to create material substance? Therefore, he is the first to make a breakthrough by not taking God out of this museum of matter and atoms, rather by inviting God back into the very heart of the matter and putting the matter in the heart of God. Spinoza makes the matter an ingredient of God. And with that, he says we no longer need to search for a creator because matter has always been.

He refers to the laws of physics and science as the nature of God. Nature becomes God’s primary religion. There is a God that within it, there is infinite matter, energy, and thought. God’s essence is existence a nature that must exist. The two immediate attributes are referred to as extension and thought. By extension, he means matter, its motion and rest, and by the thought, he means the laws of nature. Just like a fire that has the attributes of heat and light, God or substance has the attributes of matter and thought, except God’s attributes create infinite possibilities, not just heat and light. Instead of “in the beginning, God created” (Genesis Chap. 1 Vrs 1) it is since eternity substance been existing and extending existence.

Like a big circle that has infinite shapes in it, the substance has endless modes of reality in it. Religions, similar to the Aristotelian philosophy, know God and the universe as two different entities. Isaiah says about God “Holy is the Lord of Hosts; the earth is filled with His Majesty,” (Old Testament Isaiah Chap. 6 V3) making God a holy entity that only his majesty and command reaches the earth. Spinoza would say the matter and nature of God fill the universe and cause existence. He states: “From God's commanding power or boundless nature an everlasting of things in uncountable ways – i.e., everything – has inevitably moved or is always moving...” (Ethics Chapter 1 Prop 16) presenting the earth as an extension and part of God, not somewhere, God made on purpose, visits, or manage.

What difference in life this understanding of God makes? Let us review below:

- 1) In religious views, God and nature at least in the common understating have an on/off relationship. Its left to peoples mind to translate when a thing is a coincidence, act of nature, or

the will of God. Laws of nature are subject to be overwritten at unknown times and are not eternal. In Spinoza, laws of nature are divine.

2) In religious views, God is separated from the universe, and only it has communicated wills, books, prophets, and nations are Holy. Making one nation more in touch with the supreme good. This God is more present in some houses of worship than the other.

3) In Spinoza, all beings are the nation of God. Shall you need to communicate with God you do not need prophecy; connect to your sense of reason, examine the laws of cosmos, and you will know the good of God. This God is available to all nations equally. All bits of knowledge in the universe is knowledge of God. No one is more divine by the merit of birth, or belief, people only become Godly when they act Godly, one of the attributes of which are thought, and intellect.

In short, God in today's religion is supernatural, like a magician, and nature is something God had to do to get to its goals. In Spinoza and other materialistic philosophies such as stoic, existence is God and its purpose. Perhaps the question becomes what good this unholy, natural, God of Spinoza is? Moreover, why does Spinoza insist on its existence?

Briefly nothing, but recognizing reality, a knowledge of union with rest of nature, admiration for perfection of its laws, and satisfaction of ontological and psychological intuitions of the mind.

Spinoza like Anselm and Descartes uses the human intuition of there being a greater eternal cause as its main proof for the existence of such entity. To me, we all know we belong to something bigger; deep inside, we know something that's is excellent, that is the Godly intuition everyone can find in themselves. How we satisfy this intuition is not as big as a deal to God itself, himself, or herself. If God wanted all to follow one lifestyle, it would have either appeared to all nations equally or provided acceptable empirical evidence for that doctrine to all of humanity.

(See Figure 1, Endnotes for demonstration).

ON God's ATTRIBUTES

We just touched upon the Infinium of God an idea that most philosophies and all theologies are on agreement. The infinity of God is not only in number and indivisibility, but it is also the uniqueness of God. Which means nothing that is in us the finite modes can be the same as in God the infinite. Simplified, it means we cannot assign every fluctuation, feeling, and

sickness that human has to God as well. For example, sadness is when we think our existence is diminished and weakened, happiness is when we believe our survival is strengthened and since laws of God (nature) always acts consistently, these fluctuations cannot apply to its eternal nature. Spinoza means it when he says God is unique, just claiming a nature that has infinite attributes.

On the other hand, all three of the Abrahamic religions have declared a different name, personality, and preferences for God as needed for peoples understanding. To say that God wants something or has a mission is to say God acts like one of us. Understanding God only to the limits and comparison with our nature is as absurd as understanding the universe according to the limits of our natural sight and ending it at the skies. The three religions have understood and taught of God as an earthly king and let me tell you not with the attributes of a European king who is a calm, symbolic king. In reality, the state of perfection cannot have wants or needs because it is already perfect. God does not have an end goal, because it is the absolute truth, what mission does God need to fulfill.

The narrative by some becomes that life is not worthy on its own. We came on earth to either remedy our sick essence, pass our test, magnify God's name, bring or recognize Messiah or convert others. In the rational religion of Spinoza, the purpose of existence is to exist. We might understand this quote by Nelson Henderson, better "The true purpose of life is to plant trees; under whose canopy you do not expect to sit."

One can recognize that if we have such thing as worship, it is not because of the almighty needs. God cannot be rewarding us for how much we have pleased him, as I have described no pleasure can be related to its attributes. Any ultimate good should solely be depended on whom we have advanced to become, in our nature. We cannot make a shortcut to the game, not play its levels in fairness, honesty, virtue, equality, humility, and happiness and then expect to receive any such place in another universe should such thing exist.

FAITH, FEAR & HOPE VS REASON

Humanity or any other species are built with fear and hence, are always in thought of preserving life and existence, it is natural for humanity to resort to what they perceive to be the most powerful. It is the need for security that drives us to seek morality and social justice. Imagine how scary it would be to drive on a cliff with no traffic signs, lights, or fences. That is how we perceive a world without morality. As Friedrich Nietzsche says, "Fear is the mother of morality." Therefore, often, the narrative that a supernatural, immaterial entity has expectations sets rewards and punishment fits very well with the creatures of free thought, imagination, and fear.

Another reason for the popularity of an idea that things beside laws of nature are run continuously by the will of God is the considerable responsibility we get to share with the divinity in the outcome. It's never man's full responsibility. Add to these, humanity's emotional and spiritual needs and a dogmatic God becomes most popular. Spinoza does not deny these human feelings; instead, it advocates for understanding them. Since evidently, we are not just some moving atoms, and we have the highest mode of thought we crave to understand and connect to things that are more than ordinary events of life.

However, for Spinoza achieving that salvation is not reliant on a belief to a prophet or a book, this salvation is not exclusive to one nation. It is for all equally, and it is not a product of faith, fear, or feelings, rather pure REASON. As he writes, "The highest activity a human being can attain is learning for understanding because to understand is to be free." Spinoza inserts you can and should connect to God, indeed should you read any of his books, you will think that is mad in love with God, but Spinoza's love is not out of fear or hope for reward.

Leadership and logic are not primary tools in religions. Its followership before free thought and faith before reason. It is like teaching a bird, that wings are their secondary tool, and the feet their primary means of travel. It is the doctrine that limits God to one truth and truth to one nation. Once a person becomes captivated in a belief, be it religious, emotional, mental that person is bound to act by that belief in all their endeavors. One who believes the reason is insufficient and truth only belongs to the Rabbi, Church, or Imam, will be of that mentality in all areas of life to doubt the capacity of reason and intellect. Once someone directs the brain to

faith, all daily actions will be taken to please the deity as the heart feels and not toward the end natural results as the intellect understand. As a result, reason becomes obligated not to think freely, because such a thing should be allowed, all the deficiencies of the holy writs, such as when scripture contradicts itself in negligence or inconsistencies with science, or lack of empirical proofs will become a problem to the free mind.

Further, since being good is the will of God and humanity must be forced by fear of hell and reward of heaven to be good, it becomes a burden to be moral. Aforementioned is the reason humanity should want to be good because true blessedness is only possible with virtue a thing to be achieved via our natural tools on top of which is freedom and the right to think freely. As Einstein wrote, "If we are good because of fear of punishment or hope for the reward we are a sorry lot, indeed." Therefore, on this account, the devaluation of the reason is a severe crime, to which there is a little remedy. The Sanctuary of Ignorance, sadly, is always defended in order not to have the pain of contradictions.

In Spinoza's philosophy to achieve blessedness, there is no secret formula, its using intellect and reason to rid of sufferings and to exist with bliss. As he said, "blessedness is not the reward of virtue but virtue itself." Within all modes of existence, its only humanity that has such a rational, intellectual mind. It is only fair to say that reason should be our primary tool. We should never sell our free thinking which the clear gift of the universe to the Sapiens, for granted.

Summary

Lastly, I must add the religions have one thing science never has, that is an inclination to find a deeper meaning for life and upholding values, moral and ethics via the practice rituals. They also had something philosophers will never have, and that is popularity; it's like comparing the ratings of Game Of Thrones to a documentary, the former is more exciting and popular. The point is not to defy deity, piety, justice, charity, humility, and virtue. Its neither to dismiss scriptural teachings. Moreover, perhaps none of the reasons I have brought so far is enough to support the cause of defying religion, just for the words of Thomas Jefferson that said: "...it does me no harm for my next-door-neighbor to assume there are twenty Gods or no God. It

does not pick my pocket nor breaks my leg.” However, the reality has become that the God of religions only prefers a nation or two, has one set of books, only produces beliefs in Mesopotamia, permits slavery, condemns idolatrous, adulterers, gays and many other to death even though he gave them life and mode of thought. A God that could be pleased by donations or slaughter of animals. God that his wisdom is unknown and in need of description by an appointee. A God that creates billions of galaxies, and species for no unknown reason. Hence the people that intended to shed light on the world became the tools for sacrilegious power-hungry minds to blind and cripple large portions of humanity. For the sake of sanctifying God, they made an entire universe mundane. Its worthy to note the several influential and esteemed philosophers were men of faith from either religion, and they adhered to both philosophy and religion a few to name are: Augustine (4th CE) or Berkley (17th CE), Maimonides (12th CE) or Gersonides (13th CE), Ibn Sina (10th CE) Or Al-Ghazali (11th CE), and again our purpose is no more than comparing how vast imagination can be. For the ego that one religion has over another is unprecedented and the source of hatred. Each denied the doctrine of the other, not necessarily with malice, but defiantly in a way that endears one nation to God more than another. To the sober mind, the idea that each religion or philosophy serves its purpose and has truth on its own would be acceptable. On the other hand, any belief that disregards any different views should be considered absurd, and no faith has a significant proof or evidence of divinity to another.

The slaughter of reason on the altar of ego and fear is the cause for the heinous murder of kids in the temples, churches, and mosques. Should the world stop obsessing with the glorification of self through a God or ideology, love the natural as much as the supernatural powers, recognize that all we are is a little part of one nature and that no one is a big deal, but everyone has a big responsibility, we will achieve everlasting international peace. Despite all disagreements on one concept, all religions and philosophies agree on, and that is “what you hate for yourself to your neighbor do not do.” (Tractate Shabbat 31a. Matthew 22, Verse 39, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Quran 2, 208 “O You who believe! Enter completely into peace”.) Conceivably cutting hate for God and living in peace is the Godliest thing everyone should do. Perhaps if we establish international peace and freedom, remove racism and

discrimination, abuse of rights, and starvation of kids, all of which are as holy acts as rebuilding a burnt house of worship, we would be the Messiah ourselves, and earth will be like heaven. Before we ask God for another life, let us pledge to live this life properly. Maybe that is when we will truly earn the free title, we gave ourselves, best of creation.

Dedicated to the victims of Pittsburg, Christ Church, Sri Lanka, and rest of voiceless victims of humanity.

Abrahamic God

GOD= Immaterial, Infinite, Has Will, Has to create MATTER, Universe Is Created For A Purpose, Mankind Are Best of Creation.

Transcends 10 steps to create matter and the universe.



Naturalistic God

God: Is a substance with infinite attributes. The substance has within it two attributes of Extension and thought. God doesn't create, its exists with power. All modes of existence are powered by unlimited power of substance, and simply exist because are possible. The universe doesn't have a purpose. Everything is a mode of creation, mankind is a rational animal.

Extension: Matter & Energy. Motion & Rest.



Thought: Laws & Systems Of Nature, The Idea that makes each particular.

Summary Table:	God	Universe	Human	Universe Size	After Life	Relation to God
Supernatural God	Immaterial	Material	Body & Soul	Finite	Yes, soul is eternal	Serve God
Natural God	Immaterial/Material	Extension & Thought	Extension & Thought	Infinite	No, only matter is eternal	Act Like God

Figure 1

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