



E T H I C A

Ordine Geometrico demonstrata,

E-T

In quinque Partes distincta,
in quibus sequitur,

- I. De Deo.
- II. De Nominis & Origine Morum.
- III. De Origine & Natura Affectuum.
- IV. De Servitute Humana, seu de Affectuum Viribus.
- V. De Potestate Intellectus, seu de Libertate Humana.



"VII. That things is called free, which exists solely by the necessity of its own nature, and of which the action is determined by itself alone. On the other hand, that thing is necessary, or rather constrained, which is determined by something external to itself to a fixed and definite method of existence or action." (Baruch/Benedict Spinoza. *Ethica*. Kindle version).

The ban of Spinoza from the Jewish Community (written in Portuguese):

The Lords of the Ma'amad", i.e. the governing body of six parnassim and the gabbai, announce that having long known of the evil opinions and acts of Baruch de Spinoza, they have endeavored by various means and promises, to turn him from his evil ways. But having failed to make him mend his wicked ways, and, on the contrary, daily receiving more and more serious information about the abominable heresies which he practiced and taught and about his monstrous deeds, and having for this numerous trustworthy witnesses who have deposed and born witness to this effect in the presence of the said Espinoza, they became convinced of the truth of this matter; and after all of this has been investigated in the presence of the honorable hakhamim, they have decided, with their consent, that the said Espinoza should be excommunicated and expelled from the people of Israel... By decree of the angels and by the command of the holy men, we excommunicate, expel, curse and damn Baruch de Espinoza, with the consent of God, Blessed be He, and with the consent of the entire holy congregation, and in front of these holy scrolls with the 613 precepts which are written therein; cursing him with the excommunication with which Joshua banned Jericho and with the curse which Elisha cursed the boys and with all the castigations which are written in the Book of the Law. Cursed be he by day and cursed be he by night; cursed be he when he lies down and cursed be he when he rises up. Cursed be he when he goes out and cursed be he when he comes in. The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law. But you that cleave unto the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day. That no one should communicate with him neither in writing nor accord him any favor nor stay with him under the same roof nor within four cubits in his vicinity; nor shall he read any treatise composed or written by him.

So, what to make to Spinoza's staunch **dismissal** of contingency? The set of prerequisites that define the present flyer-series is **similar** to those laid down by Boccaccio in the Decameron: 100 tales/days told by 7 young women and 3 young men secluded in a villa outside Florence to escape the Black Death.

Here the volume of the **book**—Bocaccio's book with 100 stories—is not restricted to itself, but expands to encompass the space-time of the **villa**, which is a place where an attempt is made to hold up the right to live. It is a right that is held against the world (**in rem**): w/material claims for a posterity.

The letter of excommunication—not only banning but cursing Spinoza—was written in Portuguese (**not** in Hebrew). This may indicate that the community also had secular reasons to exclude him from access to the Jewish community, and also indicates that the Portuguese heritage was still alive & relevant.

He was excommunicated in 1656 (age 23/24). Ethics was written in 1664 (age 32) and published posthumously (he died in 1677 at the age of 43). We must remember that it was that living under the threat of extermination was very real, for Jewish communities of the Iberian peninsula: a cultural backdrop.

Most of the Jewish scripts—e.g. the Talmudic scripts—are written under such conditions: that is, under conditions not dissimilar from the Decameron. This is not do defend the excommunication of Spinoza, but rather to indicate that he must have been perceived as a threat to the community (in the world).

Of course, *Ethics* too was written under similar conditions, since Spinoza at this point was banned from the Jewish community. In the larger scope, we must also ask what is constitutive importance to **exegesis** of banning writers—and their writings—in Europe: our **practical idea** of how they **should** be read.

We read them as they were **constituted** by the **powers** that **banned** them, as **isolates**; and we confide with them as isolates with a **basic assumption of secrecy**—with an assumption on **authorship** not dissimilar from Agamben's **homo sacer** (someone that may be killed **without** consequence).

In critical response to this mindset—which is nowhere stated (except possibly by Roland Barthes)—I am proposing a **different** procedure: that theory is not something that we look into from a "secret place" (the isolate), but as an auxiliary resources as we "look out": thinking/learning **with** Spinoza.

Rather than thinking/learning **about** Spinoza's *Ethics*. It is a scourge of our time that we are learning **about**—rather than learning **with**—ethics. If we are out of touch we have structurally accepted a position of the **ban**, which is **relational**: alternating between the **denial** of essence **and** existence **separately**.

Agamben inquiries into the relation between the **ban** and a kind of **freedom**. Spinoza's objective/priority may have been a **better organised** knowledge, than the one prevailing at his time. Today, it is being discussed whether the **ban** against Spinoza should be **lifted**. I have found nothing conclusive here.