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We have here an interest in the Spinoza's conception of being. There are at least two reasons for the inquiry on this conception: In the first place the problem (or the question) of being is representing the most important element in every philosophical system and secondly Baruch Spinoza tried to solve the difficulties involved in this problem in original a remarkable way. Although many contemporary philosophers presume that the conception of being does not have to be solved, because it is even no problem from their angle of vision, I suppose that this problem is not resolved up to this time and the philosophy must go inquire on it. The Spinoza's solution may be very inspiring.

Many interpreters and commentators of spinozism remarked that Spinoza set up the ontological basis of his philosophy rather early when he studied and explained the philosophy of R.Descartes. The principles of the Cartesian philosophy that he expounded for his pupil were the great source of Spinoza's thought, but to present Spinoza primarily as a sort of apostolic successor of Descartes is misleading.

Young Dutch philosopher summarized the results of his intellectual effort in the "Renati des Cartes Principia philosophiae more geometrico demonstrata per Benedicti de Spinoza Amstelodamensem" (Principles of the Cartesian philosophy) to which he added the appendix called "Cogitata Metaphysica" (Metaphysical Thought). This appendix indicating convincingly the independence of Spinoza's thought contains philosopher's own ideas and conceptions. From this it follows that this work and particularly the text of appendix might be used as our field of inquiry.

Let's begin to inquiry so that we could try to understand the sense and meaning of spinozistic being. What sort of ontological philosophy does Spinoza offer in the Cogitata Metaphysica? In this work, as he says¹⁾, he wanted to elucidate "the dark places" of metaphysical considerations. What "dark places" (circa obscuriora) does Spinoza mean? He begins with the concept of being. From this it is clear that this concept is dark. Why, however, just this concept? So as to understand the Spinoza's reason let's give an example. We must know the nature of parabola in order that we could know the nature of its orderly applications. Analogously, if we were ignorant of the nature of being as such, it would be impossible to know the nature of being things. In one's effort to understand the nature of being what means to understand first of all the sense of the concept of being we must return to its darkness and unclarity caused by host of various philosophical explications. Unless we shall do it the ontological will keep in the dark background and we shall not be able to understand.

Primarily Dutch philosopher inspired with mathematical methods furnishes the definition of the concept of being (definitio entis): "Incipiamus igitur ab ente, per quod intelligo id omne, quod, quum clare et distincte percipitur, necessario existere vel ad minimum posse existere reperimus."²⁾ I am convinced that the verb "reperire" ("Reperimus" is the first person of plural

in simple present tense.) is the most important word of this definition. There are many meanings of this latin verb: to find something, to find something lost, to find out, to search out, to think of, to descry, to espy etc. To reconstruct what meaning was in Spinoza's mind first of all is very difficult and only hypothetical. Nevertheless let's try consider the possibilities: If we find something as existing or potent to exist, we find it as being. It is possible to say, too: we search out something being just as existing or potent to exist. Even it could be said: we think of something as being as long as it exists or is potent to exist.

I suppose that the meaning germaned to the Spinoza's definition is "to find". Human mind (reason) is able to find something such a kind of being. Now, however, a question turns up: How are we able to do it? On what and how is based our ability of such finding? My answer goes like this: Finding mentioned by Spinoza is not only finding of anything, but it is finding of something just as being. We are able to find such point (or characteristic) of something, because we are alone being! Our active and finding mind is being. Moreover from this it follows that the process of finding is actually meeting. The mind as thinking thing, which is being, meets with some non-thinking thing, which is being too. Thus being hidden in the mind (or presented in the mind) meets with something what exists or is potent to exist out of mind. Therefore true being, i.e. being as being, is found or thought or researched just in this meeting.

How do we understand it? It could seem the human mind is held by Spinoza as the creator of being. This may be simple enough, but it is misleading. In the spinozistic sense is better to say: "The creators" or "the inventors" or "the producents" of being are two: the God as absolute Being (*ens absolutum*) and human mind (*mens*) or reason (*intellectus*). Though Spinoza wrote probably never this sentence, I am convinced that it consists in the fundamentals of his ontological ethics. I will attempt to give the reasons for this interpretation of Spinoza's definition of being.

The primary task in the discussion before us is to examine the Spinoza's treatment of the nature of our finding something just as being. This finding occurs within the framework of clear and distinct knowledge. The clear and distinct knowledge, for Spinoza, must be considered as the effect of reason and also as a top act of human active mind. Our mind, however, products and contains many acts. If we are thinking, our mind is full and many various ideas present in it. These ideas are imaginary being, then they are beings of thought. Does it follow from this that all acts of our mind have the nature of solely mental being? Supposing yes so they would be only something thought and we could find something as being only as something thought. All our ideas, deductions, considerations etc. would be closed in the area of our mind. Philosophical said they would be only and solely immanent being of mind. Is it like this? May be all our knowledge and finding of being only our invention or products? Is it really like this? These are very difficult and rending questions whose urgency Spinoza appreciated good. Let's turn our attention to his answers.

In the second paragraph of *Metaphysical Thought* Spinoza affirms and demonstrates³) that certain contents of our mind as chimeras, fictitious being and being of thought (*chimera, ens fictum et ens rationis*) are not being according to its definition. Chimeras cannot be at all, because their nature embraces a contradiction. Fictitious beings cannot be known clear and distinct so they cannot be found as being. Beings of thought or mental beings outside the mind are pure nothing. They are real entities only as the modes of thinking (*modi cogitandi*). Spinoza clearly says that mental beings "*inservit ad res intellectas facilius retinendas, explicandas atque imaginandas*".⁴) These modes of thinking have no real object (*ideatum*). From this it is clear that their being is constituted by the modal differentiation of thinking thing (*res cogitans*). Therefore there is no possibility to cross the limits of our mind with assistance of these mental beings.

If we had only such mental beings in our mind, our situation would be very odd. We could say nothing valid about the external world. We would be closed in our mental world and our knowledge would have to do only with our mind and its content.

Nevertheless it is not like this ! Taking it all in all we say anyhow about the external world. Even we have the adequate ideas and the adequate ideas are true ideas. But what is a true idea ? It is capable of being understood through itself.5) Then we know truth. This certainly does not depend on the establishment of relations between ideas and things and the determination of the precise nature of such relations, the test of validity of an idea is not in the correspondence of the idea and the thing.6) However where from do we know truth ? Does it come out of externality ? It seems no ! Spinoza in according with Descartes presumes that "nam ens quatenus ens est per se solum ... nos non afficit."7) Thus how and where from can we know truth ? There is at least one way how to answer this question. We must realize that truth, as Spinoza says, "makes itself manifest".8) So we must truth descry or discern, i.e. to realize it. Such realizing is necessary for our mind because descrying of truth is a promise for our finding of something as actual or real being. Although mental beings are only modes of thinking, i.e. they are not actual or real being, even they are not-being, to have true knowledge is to possess true or adequate ideas. From this reason Spinoza repudiates the division of being into real entities and mental entities as a bad division. Being is not common kind of real and mental entities. Real entities distinguish from mental entities as being from not-being.

It is necessary to return to our ability of clear and distinct knowledge again, because this ability connects very tightly with our possession of true ideas or with our ability of having truth. We are able not only to know clear and distinct, but we also know about it. In his Ethics Spinoza writes unambiguous: "For, indeed, the idea of the mind, that is to say, the idea of the idea, is nothing but the form of the idea in so far as this is considered as a mode of thought and without relation to the object, just as a person who knows anything, by that very fact knows that he knows, and knows that he knows that he knows and so ad infinitum."9) Our mind is able to reflect its acts and this ability belongs to the nature of our mind. Upon this depends the real possibility of self-knowledge and self-understanding. What means it ? I suppose that it is very important fact. Human mind is real being which is not only set of its modes, but it is being in full-value sense. Therefore understanding to motion and structure of mind means to understand to "structure of being", i.e. to realize truth.

Yet to achieve it is very difficult for everyone. Often we grope around and misbelieve. By thinking about the things of external world we do not distinguish between the true ideas and other mental beings. In spite of the fact that we have no reason for it, we conceive many fictitious ideas as ideas of things outside the mind. Their real nature, i.e. only mental being, keeps hidden for us. Therefore, unless the philosophers, thinkers and other understood this real nature, so many philosophical or metaphysical conceptions were mistaken and their authors worried with many "dark places" (circa obscuriora). For the advance in metaphysical philosophy these problems must be enlightened. From this reason Spinoza pays attention to this problem in the first part of Metaphysical Thought. What are the results of his effort?

The reason, for Spinoza, is a producer or maker (in latin language "repertor" - see the verb "reperire") of being receptived as an extramental existence. Though they are receptived as real beings, a lot of them have the nature of mental beings (may be said "quasi-beings") whose maker is our own mind. Accordingly with the definition real being is only what exists necessary or at least is able to exist. At once real being demonstrate the action and structure of Being in the supreme sense - i.e. the God. Our mind as the source of clear and distinct knowledge (clare et distincte cognoscere) is being in a very real sense. It must, therefore, demonstrate the action and the structure of the God, which is the "creator" or "producer" ("maker") of all forms of being included the human mind. The actual essence (or nature) of God is the absolute matter of all what is real and immediately of all what is a mode of real being. Briefly said: Our reason finds being as being and so it touches "to be" of being. From this it follows that our reason meets with it in what is being as being. In this meeting our reason is knowing in what being is constituted. Both forms of being (mind and something) collaborate in this way and the results of their

collaboration are the knowledges of being. So being is found as being which is known clear and distinct in the human sense.

The hidden truth of being gets understandable for us. Spinoza demonstrates this in his conception of real division of being in second part of *Metaphysical Thought*.¹⁰⁾ The true division of being is into being which necessarily exists, or whose essence necessarily involves existence, and being whose essence does not involve existence except in possibility. Dutch philosopher used the older philosophical concepts of essence and existence for more exact expression. The first kind of being stated by Spinoza as the substance is such being whose essence involves existence. The second kind of being named by Spinoza *modus* is such being whose essence does not involve existence. Consequently thought the difference between the essence and the existence is possible and understandable only by so called modal being, i.e. by *modus*. In the case of substance this difference has no meaning.

Let's ask again: What sense has Spinoza's conception of being? This problem I attempted to catch by thesis about the God and the human mind as the "creators of being". Also I attempted to give the reasons of this statement, from which it follows that for Spinoza being is the substance or the *modus*. What beings are the God and the human minds? In the case of an individual human mind there is no problem, because it is able to exist, but its existence is not necessary. A human mind, therefore, is only modal being, i.e. *modus*. It seems doubtless. However it is not so simple. There are a host of difficulties in understanding of human mind. We must mention at least one. It was pointed out above that something is hidden in the human mind, upon which depends our ability of clear and distinct knowledge and also our ability of knowing and understanding ourself. (It is very important that human power of transcendence is based on these abilities!) Our mind is able to understand itself and so it is able to understand the substance, of which is modal form of being, i.e. the God. By virtue of these abilities our mind has, as Spinoza says¹¹⁾, the own eternal part.

In the case of absolute being, i.e. Being as God, it could seem that the problem is simple enough. The God is identical with the substance. Some of Spinoza's propositions, demonstrations and notes in his *Ethics* verifies this supposition.¹²⁾ In my opinion but it is misleading. I consider that the spinozistic God is identical and also not-identical with the substance. In the first case the God and the substance are beings whose the essence involves the existence. Therefore they exist from the necessity of their own nature alone. The God, however, is not only necessary being, but also He is the fullness of being. He must be more than substance because He is the supreme reality. This conclusion may be demonstrated by lot of Spinoza's propositions from his works and correspondence.¹³⁾ Here I restrict only on brief notes from *Metaphysical Thought*. The first paragraph of second part contains following statements¹⁴⁾: "1. Deum eminenter continere id quod formaliter in rebus creatis reperitur, hoc est, Deum talia attributa habere, quibus omnia creata eminentiori modo contineantur. 2. Deum se ipsum atque omnia alia intelligere, hoc est, omnia obiective etiam in se habere. 3. Deum esse omnium rerum causam eumque ex absoluta libertate voluntatis operari." (Marginal note: The third point has somewhat non-spinozistic character. In this case, however, our attention must be turned to Spinoza's main work *Ethics*. In the first book¹⁵⁾ Spinoza demonstrates that will of God is identical with His reason and both are not by any means similar with the human will and reason.)

The first and second points are very important. Here it is avouched: The God is the cause of all what can either be or be conceived. Does it mean that the God as the absolutely infinite Being is one and the same as the substance? I do not assume that it is so, because I think that the God is not the same as all of beings. Why? In my opinion following proposition is valid: "The God is all, but all is not the God."¹⁶⁾ I will try to explain.

The God is all in the same sense as the substance, which is the substance of all its modes. Thus the God is all being, because beings, for Spinoza, are either substance or *modus*. Nevertheless from this it does not follow that all being is the God. By Spinoza the God is

defined as a being absolutely infinite, i.e. being in the supreme sense or by another name being as the fullness of "to be". He is the absolute Being (ens absolutum). And such Being is inexhaustible and in the extreme perfect. He is out of time and space, He has no form, no shape, no substance. In the Spinoza's philosophy the God acts from the laws of His own nature only, i.e. from His absolute power of "to be and to act". His essence or His nature is the absolute ability to exist and to act. God's "to be able to be" (posse existere) and "to be able to act" (posse agere) beats everything of being. The God is so in excess of the substance and its modes.

If we conceive and understand this God's nature, we know truth. In knowing truth we can understand the sense. This is the way of wise man (homo sapiens)¹⁷). Spinoza calls this understanding "intellectual love to God" in the fifth book of Ethics. It is love which consists in "the intuitive knowledge" (scientia intuitiva)¹⁸) as the source of true life of man, to which is aimed whole Spinoza's philosophy and then also his conception of being.

Notes:

- 1) Benedicti de Spinoza Opera quae supersunt omnia, ed.C.H.Bruder, vol.I, Lipsiae 1843, p.99
- 2) ibid.
- 3) ibid., p.100
- 4) ibid.
- 5) See A.Balz: Idea and Essence in the Philosophies of Hobbes and Spinoza, Columbia University Press New York 1918, p.40 and following.
- 6) See The Ethics of Spinoza, transl.W.H.Write, Great Books of the Western World, vol.31, University of Chicago 1952, p.373.
- 7) See R.Descartes: Principia philosophiae, I, § 52.
- 8) A.Balz: cited work, p.41
- 9) The Ethics of Spinoza, cited edition, p.383
- 10) Benedicti de Spinoza Opera quae supersunt omnia, ed.C.H.Bruder, vol.I, p.104 and following.
- 11) The Ethics of Spinoza, cited edition, p.458
- 12) See for example propositions 11, 14 and other in the first book of Ethics.
- 13) See M.Hemelik: De Deo (The problem of God in the Spinoza's philosophy), Palacký's University of Olomouc 1995
- 14) Ben.de Spinoza Opera ... , ed.C.H.Bruder, vol.I, p.104
- 15) The Ethics of Spinoza, cit.ed., p.367
- 16) This sentence originates in the jewish cabbalistic tradition.
- 17) The Ethics of Spinoza, cit.ed., p.463 18) ibid., p.388

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