

On the ‘Credo Minimum’ in Spinoza’s *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*

Osamu UENO

Summary

It would certainly be surprising if a nonbeliever philosopher were to propound ‘dogmas of faith’ and pretend that everyone is bound to accept them. Such was the case with Baruch or Benedictus de Spinoza (1632-1677) in his doomed *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670), which aroused a strong suspicion of ‘disguised arguments’. In this paper I will try to defend him against the charge of ‘double language’ by shedding new light on the problem.

Is it conceivable at all that an infidel should truthfully talk about ‘*credo*’? A solution has been offered by what is called ‘dual language’ theory, according to which Spinoza is immaculate because the dogmas are ‘metaphors’ of philosophical truths. Although misleading in their literal sense, the dogmas are perfectly ‘translatable’ into philosophical language, and consequently not necessarily deceptive nor inconsistent with his own philosophy. I examine this theory to show its deficiency in grasping the emphasis Spinoza lays upon the radical indifference of the dogmas to truth claim.

An alternative view will be proposed, which will bring us to a notion of grammatical norm involved in saying ‘pious’ or ‘impious’: the dogmas are propounded to determine conclusively that which a man, regardless of what he actually holds in his mind, can be justly *presumed* to hold about God when, and only when, this man is rightly said to be ‘pious’. Spinoza achieves this aim by founding the legitimacy of religious beliefs exclusively upon their being necessary conditions of obedience to God’s command to love one’s neighbour. The *credo minimum* is derived from a grammatical norm of saying right which everyone agrees to *de facto*, and hence everyone is bound to accept the dogmas, apart from truth claim. I draw the conclusion that the *credo minimum* has nothing to do with metaphor or disguise, its aim being to show the norm beyond which abuse in what we may call the language game of ‘piety’ begins.

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It would certainly be surprising if a nonbeliever philosopher were to attempt to convince us of 'dogmas of faith' and pretend that everyone is bound to accept them. Such was the case with Baruch or Benedictus de Spinoza (1632-1677) in his doomed *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670), which aroused a strong suspicion of 'disguised arguments' and was banned by the secular and ecclesiastical authorities. In this paper I will try to defend him against the charge of 'double language' by shedding new light on the problem.

i Introduction: 'Credo Minimum'?

After dwelling on Scriptural interpretation in the early chapters of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Spinoza comes up with 'the dogmas of the universal faith' in Chapter XIV, which he considers to be 'the basic teachings Scripture as a whole intends to convey.'¹ These dogmas, often dubbed '*credo minimum*',² consist of seven statements on 'God'. Spinoza spells them out:

- '1. God, that is, a Supreme Being, exists, supremely just and merciful, the exemplar of true life.'
- '2. God is one alone.'
- '3. God is omnipresent, and all things are open to him.'
- '4. God has supreme right and dominion over all things.'
- '5. Worship of God and obedience to him consists solely in justice and charity, or love towards one's neighbour.'
- '6. All who obey God by following this way of life, and only those, are saved; others, who live at pleasure's behest, are lost.'
- '7. God forgives repentant sinners.'³

Every man, reminds Spinoza, 'is in duty bound to adapt these religious

dogmas to his own understanding and to interpret them for himself in whatever way makes him feel that he can the more readily accept them with full confidence and conviction, so that he may the more easily obey God with his whole heart.’⁴

It goes without saying that this ‘*credo*’ has been a crux of Spinoza scholarship. The ‘God’ of the dogmas is apparently the God of revealed religion and not the God of Spinoza. It is basic to Spinoza study that Spinoza’s God is the ‘*Natura naturans*’ or ‘*causa immanens*’, the substance absolute and infinite that produces everything as its modes as a necessity. Man is also a mode, for whom the substance God has neither love, nor hate.⁵ How could this horrible Nature-God be the ‘God’ stated in the dogmas as ‘supremely just and merciful’ and who ‘forgives repentant sinners’?⁶ In fact, Spinoza says elsewhere that expressions such as ‘God is displeased with the deeds of the impious and pleased with those of the pious’ are wrong when taken philosophically. They are for Spinoza mere projections of human attributes that have in reality no place in the true God.⁷ If so, how dare he propose, without scruples, that such ‘dogmas’ be accepted ‘with full confidence and conviction’ while he himself probably sees no ‘shadow of truth’ in them?⁸ In a word, is it conceivable at all that an infidel should truthfully talk about ‘*credo*’? Everything seems thus questionable.

A solution has been offered by what is called ‘dual language’ theory. It says that every time statements seem quite against an author’s philosophy, they are to be understood in a rhetorical sense. The idea is that those passages or words unbecoming to the philosopher are adapted on purpose to the understanding of the common reader so as to insinuate into his mind ideas otherwise difficult to swallow, just as Scripture, as Spinoza himself suggested, is adapted to the understanding of the common people.⁹ I shall first examine this ‘dual language’ theory in its full range and see whether it bears any relevance to the matter in question. Then an alternative view will be proposed, which will bring us to a notion of grammatical agreement – agreement, we shall see, quite different in kind from consent or accord by persuasion.

ii Dual Language Theory

The theory of dual language – ‘double language’ may be a better word in this case – has perhaps never been advanced more impressively than by Leo Strauss. Detecting that the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* ‘abounds in

contradictions', he makes the supposition that the author speaks 'after the manner of man'. From this comes the rule of interpretation: 'if an author who admits, however occasionally, that he speaks "after the manner of man", makes contradictory statements on a subject, the statement contradicting the vulgar view has to be considered as his serious view; nay, every statement of such an author which agrees with views vulgarly considered sacred or authoritative must be dismissed as irrelevant, or at least it must be suspected even though it is never contradicted by him.'¹⁰ This may be called a ruse, but a 'good or legitimate' ruse.¹¹ For 'that book serves the purpose, not merely of enlightening the potential philosophers, but also of counteracting the opinion which the vulgar had of Spinoza, i.e., of appeasing the *plebs* itself.' This is why, says Strauss, the author needs to speak in dual language. 'In the *Treatise* Spinoza addresses potential philosophers of a certain kind while the vulgar are listening. He speaks therefore in such a way that the vulgar will not understand what he means.'¹²

This 'exoteric' interpretation, a modern version of 'disguise' theory we may say, is widely accepted among those scholars who hold that the aim of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is to undermine the biblical authority,¹³ and has been tirelessly criticised by those who reject such an interpretation. I shall not go into the details of the debate.¹⁴ It is more interesting to note that even those who are critical of Strauss's thesis do not deny Spinoza a 'constructive' use of dual language.

In fact, there is fairly general agreement that the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is a work exceptionally abundant in rhetoric: it often seems to sway between strictly philosophical sense and ordinary sense, and that seemingly on purpose.¹⁵ P.-F. Moreau points out that 'accommodation' or adaptation to the language of the common people does not necessarily imply fraud or dissimulation. Since in Spinoza's view inadequate ideas are those originally adequate but since 'mutilated', every imaginative represented in ordinary language contains a clue to 'partial truth'. Taken this way, 'accommodation' implies less disguise than a sincere commitment of the philosopher to ordinary language, with the view to transforming its crude representations into 'quasi-conceptual instruments'.¹⁶ If so, there would be no reason to deny an author the use of 'dual language' as it has no deceptive intention. Spinoza is fully justified in using terms such as 'help of God', 'salvation', etc. in order to insinuate unorthodox meanings compatible with his own philosophy. To quote the introductory note by B. S. Gregory to the

recent English translation of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, such 'linguistic play and manipulation' is 'part of his persuasive programme, attempting to bring others around to his own point of view through the use of familiar terms.'¹⁷

Thus the idea of dual language is widely appreciated not only by Straussians but also by anti-Straussians, and by scholars holding both constructive and destructive views of its purposes. Yirmiahu Yovel's interpretation, known to have located Spinoza in the 'Marrano' tradition, is very interesting in this respect, for he skilfully blends the antithetic elements into a whole-encompassing theory of 'dual language'.¹⁸ As he explicitly relates 'dual language' to the *credo minimum* problem, it is worthwhile examining his theory closely.

Extending Strauss' view, Yovel distinguishes three functions in the use of 'dual language' supposedly at work in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*:

(a) 'Passive or defensive function'. A philosopher must be cautious when coming up with unfamiliar truth. He has to meet two conflicting imperatives: 'provoking a rational conversion in those capable of it, and concealing his true message from those whom it will not benefit and might even threaten him for having expressed it.' A mask is needed. One of the most efficient is the use of pious phrases and images borrowed from the Scriptures, and, in Yovel's view, the *credo minimum* is an example.¹⁹

(b) 'Offensive function'. Spinoza also uses dual language in order to 'arouse doubts' in the audience and 'subvert their entrenched beliefs in preparation for philosophy.' '... Spinoza wished to start by provoking perplexities in order to loosen the grip of religious superstition over the multitude and make it ready to accept new, rationally guided authorities... and also, for a select few, in order to clear the ground for a genuine life of reason.' This 'offensive' function, asserts Yovel, is 'independent of the defensive'.²⁰

(c) 'Constructive-hermeneutical function'. 'There is a whole series of terms which serve Spinoza as metaphors, but are perfectly translatable into strict philosophical language', such as 'salvation' which can be translated into 'knowledge of the third kind coupled with intellectual love of nature-God', 'God's omnipresence' to 'the fact that all modes are in the substance', 'God's decrees' to 'the eternal laws of nature', and so on. Yovel encapsulates this 'metaphoric-systematic equivalence' thus:

(met)
P ≡ P'

Taken literally, P and P' have different meanings and 'opposing truth values'. Only P', the true, is meant to be taken literally, as P, in itself false, draws its meaning from P' and serves as a 'rhetorical envelope' for it. This metaphoric discourse, says Yovel, serves Spinoza as the 'building-blocks of the semirational imagination', which is meant to facilitate 'a gradual growth of rationality from within the domain of *imaginatio*'. 'While part of the multitude, whose dogmatic discourse has been shattered, will eventually move on to genuine rationality, the majority will remain in the realm of the passions and the imagination, which, in Spinoza's plan, must be recognized as an external imitation of reason.' Yovel then refers to the 'Articles of Faith', the *credo* in question, as an illustration of this rhetorical use.²¹

The distinctions above are conceived as functional, not substantial. Yovel supposes that a single rhetorical discourse can combine the three functions, working differently on different readers. It works defensively against the uncultivated majority, while "offensively" to 'part of the multitude' who are sensitive enough to be perplexed by the non-literal use of language. In either case the effect will be equally constitutive: addressing in double language helps in the first case to establish 'the semirational imagination' of the reader, to enhance their rational behaviour in society, while in the latter preserves religious connotations for rational truth which otherwise would be too austere.²² The *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, according to Yovel, was carefully designed to work multi-functionally.

Or was it? If it had so worked out, Spinoza would be deserved to be praised as 'a master... of equivocation and double language'²³. But we know that this was not the case. Reception studies fully show that the alleged defensive function failed. The book was completely helpless against the charge of atheism. True, it did offend many, but perhaps too much, in a manner the least constructive. As to the 'metaphoric-systematic equivalence', few were convinced of the supposed truth lapped in metaphor. On the contrary, the book was blamed precisely for equivocation, taken as the sure sign of 'disguised arguments' to some subversive purpose.²⁴ I incline to agree with Alan Donagan in thinking that writing in dual language would have been 'clumsy and inefficient' for Spinoza.²⁵ What is more, Yovel's well-constructed dual language theory is scarcely helpful for elucidating the

scandal the book created, just as a draft for a perfect new model car tells us all the less about how it will go wrong on the highway. Our problem is precisely the bewilderment Spinoza expresses at such a double language accusation, and we may suspect that answering this question with a dual language theory is redundant.

I do not imply thereby that the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was lacking in precautions or meagre in rhetoric. But to be cautious or supple in expressions is one thing, while to exercise an mastery of equivocation is another. The author seems to be well aware of the shortcomings of rhetorical precautions when, assuring the reader that his arguments contain nothing impious, he readily admits his expositions will be vulnerable to some impious interpretations. It is practically impossible to prevent this, reminds Spinoza, because such 'ungodly men' are beyond help, 'as the old saying goes, nothing can be so accurately stated as to be incapable of distortion by misrepresentation.'²⁶ So he had a keen awareness that conciliating euphemism would be worse than useless and that it would be better to write in no uncertain terms. What matters for us is the decision we see here, rather than any putative mastery of equivocation.

But now back to the *credo minimum*, and let us examine whether the dual language theory is relevant to the problem.

iii *Credo and Truth*

Let us return to the puzzle. The question was: how could the philosopher advance without scruples 'the dogmas of the universal faith' while probably having no belief in the so stated 'God'? Yovel's proposed answer was: Spinoza is immaculate because the dogmas are 'metaphors' of philosophical truths. Although misleading in their literal sense, they are perfectly 'translatable' into philosophical language, and consequently not necessarily deceptive nor inconsistent with his own philosophy.²⁷ Yovel is not the first to advance 'metaphoric equivalence'²⁸: Madelène Francès once talked about '*transposition*' and '*équivalents rationnels*',²⁹ and actually such equivalents for all seven dogmas were specified skilfully by Alexandre Matheron.³⁰ And not without reason, for some passages give the impression that Spinoza himself is talking about this kind of 'translation' or 'transposition'. Having brought forward 'the dogmas of the universal faith', he goes on:

'But as to the question of what God, the exemplar of true life, really is, whether he is

fire, or spirit, or light, or thought, or something else, this is irrelevant to faith. And so likewise is the question as to why he is the exemplar of true life, whether this is because he has a just and merciful disposition, or because all things exist and act through him and consequently we, too, understand through him and through him we see what is true, just, and good. On these questions it matters not what beliefs a man holds. Nor, again, does it matter for faith whether one believes that God is omnipresent in essence or in potency, whether he directs everything from free will or from the necessity of his nature, whether he lays down laws as a ruler or teaches them as being eternal truths, whether man obeys God from free will or from the necessity of the divine decree, whether the rewarding of the good and the punishing of the wicked is natural or supernatural. The view one takes on these and similar questions has no bearing on faith, provided that such a belief does not lead to the assumption of greater license to sin, or hinders submission to God.³¹

Here Spinoza seems to contrast two versions of interpretation of the dogmas, namely, the philosophical and the imaginative, and to hold the difference as inessential. So there seems at first sight to be good reason to suppose a philosophical equivalent for each of the dogmas, as Matheron does in his memorable work: *Le christ et le salut des ignorants chez Spinoza*. Let me reproduce here Matheron's explication of the passage.³²

1. 'God, that is, a Supreme Being, exists, supremely just and merciful, the exemplar of true life'. The equivalent for this first article of the *credo minimum* can be found in the *Ethica*. For instance, Proposition 11 of Part 1: 'God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists.' Admittedly, the statement allows the imagination to misrepresent God as 'fire, or spirit, or light'. But it also allows to represent him as 'thought', which is not purely false, thought being one of those infinite attributes of God.³³ True, it is grossly misleading in representing God as having 'a just and merciful disposition'. Spinoza is known to be stern on personification. However, as man is in Spinoza's view a finite mode of Nature-God,³⁴ it will not be odd to say that there is something in God that prompts man to form the notions of charity and justice, something that shows him the way to salvation. If all things exist and act through him, then we, too, know through him what is true, just, and good.

2. 'God is one alone.' Spinoza offers no comment, for the equivalence is clear. See the *Ethica*, Proposition 14 of Part 1: 'Except God, no substance can be or be conceived.'

3. *'God is omnipresent, and all things are open to him.'* This may lead to misrepresent him as omnipresent only in respect of the power he is assumed to exercise from outside. But the statement is open as well to the Spinozistic interpretation that God is omnipresent in respect of his essence from which 'there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes', and by virtue of which he is 'the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things'.³⁵

4. *'God has supreme right and dominion over all things.'* The expression may support the misconception that God directs everything from 'free will'. But it can also be taken as stating determination by God 'from the necessity of his nature', which is perfectly congruent with Spinoza's notion.³⁶

5. *'Worship of God and obedience to him consists solely in justice and charity, or love towards one's neighbour.'* The term 'worship' can be taken to be either religious or intellectual love towards God. It can stay neutral. Admittedly, the term 'obedience' reminds us of an observance of 'laws' laid down by a 'ruler'. But we are allowed to construe it as a metaphor for the intellectual understanding that laws are 'eternal truths' that nothing can elude.

6. *'All who obey God by following this way of life, and only those, are saved; others, who live at pleasure's behest, are lost.'* Such 'rewarding' or 'punishing' can be taken to be 'natural' as well as 'supernatural'. Spinoza has no scruples about accepting the former.

7. *'God forgives repentant sinners.'* Again, the same can apply. Divine forgiveness can mean a natural effect.

Such equivalences may relieve Spinoza scholars of the tormenting suspicion of inconsistency or hypocrisy: Spinoza is not deceiving in proposing the dogmas, provided that they are always convertible into true philosophical equivalents. If he wanted the dogmas to serve as a pedagogical instrument for preparing the reader for a rational conversion³⁷ and to protect at the same time the ordinary majority from more or less shocking philosophical truths, or, again, if he wished to flavour his otherwise too austere notion of divinity with 'the semantic halo' of traditional religiosity,³⁸ there would be no reason to blame him for 'hypocrisy'. It is not surprising that many scholars have followed a similar vein. It is not surprising either that they sometimes display little scruple at calling, though somewhat loosely, the dogmas 'truth'.³⁹ The 'dogmas of the universal faith' are in their view a metaphoric envelope, or, to echo Yovel, a 'special kind of equivalence',⁴⁰ of truth.

However, this solution by ‘metaphoric equivalence’ might be a pitfall. I do not imply that such equivalence is inconceivable — it is conceivable indeed, as shown by Matheron in his fine analysis. But whether such equivalence was the point Spinoza wanted to make is another question.

Examined more closely, the text cited above proves to be saying something else. What is clear is that the stress is less upon the alleged possibility than upon the irrelevance of such equivalence. It says: whether to interpret the dogmas imaginarily or philosophically is ‘*nihil ad fidem*’ — ‘irrelevant to faith’, or ‘it does not matter for faith’. The point here is not that the dogmas can be construed in philosophical terms, but that such concern for truth does not count, ‘does not matter’. ‘On these questions’, says Spinoza, ‘it matters not what beliefs a man holds’ (*‘perinde est, quicquid de his unusquisque statuerit’*).⁴¹ This is rather a bold statement. There is no doubt that Spinoza here denies, once for all, that truth value should bear upon dogmas of faith. The idea is: let philosophers and non-philosophers interpret the dogmas as they like in their own way, for *faith and its dogmas have nothing to do with the truth of the matters they seem to relate*. Whether the interpretation is philosophical or imaginative *does not matter* for faith, after all. As we shall see, the function Spinoza assigns to ‘the dogmas of the universal faith’ is indeed to dislocate truth claims as a whole, — such claims, philosophical or imaginative, having no bearing on defining faith.

The difference we have pointed out is by no means trivial, for the irrelevance of truth now coming into focus is closely related to the aim of Chapter XIV: that is, the separation of faith and philosophy, which Spinoza declares is ‘the main object’ of the entire book.⁴² After the presentation of ‘the dogmas of the universal faith’ Spinoza sets out this object:

‘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 must now 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 obedience and piety.’⁴³

We can be fairly certain that the irrelevance of truth we have been discussing has to do with this radical separation: philosophy is simply the quest for truth, to which faith — or theology which defines the dogmas of faith

– has ‘no relation and no affinity’ (*‘nullum...commerucium nullamve affinitatem’*). Such a statement drives us all the more to the question of whether the dual language theory, and ‘rhetorical equivalence’, does justice to Spinoza’s meaning. If there is ‘no relation and no affinity’, ‘nothing common’ between philosophy and faith, there would be little hope of bridging them by the putative metaphoric equivalence.⁴⁴ It is now clear that so far as the so-called *credo minimum* is concerned, the ‘dual language’ theory is highly questionable. We can say with fair certainty from the above that, if Spinoza had no scruple in advancing ‘the dogmas of the universal faith’, it was not that they were convertible into truth, but that he held that they had nothing to do with truth about reality and that, consequently, the question of truth in interpretation was absolutely ‘irrelevant’ to the dogmas.

iv Double Bind

True, such a conception of the dogmas of faith leaves Spinoza’s meaning even more enigmatic. Does it make any sense at all to propound articles of ‘*credo*’ which have nothing to do with the truth of what they state? Perhaps readers of the seventeenth century were more sensitive to this question. Christian Kortholt, for example, the author of *De tribus impostoribus magnis* printed in 1680, who denounced Edward lord Herbert of Cherbury, Thomas Hobbes and Spinoza as ‘three great imposters’, believed to have found in the ‘dogmas’ full evidence of imposture. What enraged him was exactly the dismissal of the truth claim, which seemed in his eyes to spell farewell to any serious attempt at theology. As he believed exegetics had to be grounded upon the profound truth accessible to expert theologians alone, the unbridled liberty Spinoza was claiming for the interpretation of the dogmas was a big worry: it would surely degenerate into lawlessness and undermine the truth of the Scriptures.⁴⁵ A serious theologian Kortholt did not hesitate to charge the author as an impostor. For what could be phonier than pretending to convince the reader by saying, ‘you must believe this – though it needs not be true’?

The case was not entirely groundless. Let us read the following passage of Spinoza through the eyes of a plain reader:

‘...faith requires not so much true dogmas as pious dogmas, that is, such as move the heart to obedience; and this is so even if many of those beliefs contain not a shadow

of truth, provided that he who adheres to them knows not that they are false.⁴⁶

Puzzling, indeed. Since we are told by the author that the dogmas need not be true, and are consequently supposed to admit that they may not be true, how could we still be expected to 'adhere' to them? Surprisingly, Spinoza himself continues: 'If he knew that they were false, he would necessarily be a rebel, for how could it be that one who seeks to love justice and obey God should worship as divine what he knows to be alien to the divine nature?' Is the philosopher inviting us to a purified faith or cunningly instigating us to rebellion?

From logical point of view, we may see this paradox as a kind of 'double bind'. A double bind assaults you when two contradicting orders of message are given at once, such as 'believe this, but not really'. This kind of utterance leaves the 'real' intention of the speaker inscrutable: does he want me to believe it or not? The logical structure makes it impossible to tell what intention the speaker really has in saying so.⁴⁷ The same applies to the extract we quoted above. It may be that it was this kind of perplexing effect that aroused the suspicion of 'double language' or 'disguised arguments' — and not vice versa. The Straussian interpretation was a natural one, for once we take Spinoza to be attempting to make us believe in the dogmas, we easily face contradicting messages and proceed to presume a concealed plot. So did Spinoza's contemporaries. In fact, the generally perplexed reactions to the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* show signs of the devastating effect very likely to have been produced by a double bind.

This explains also why the *credo minimum* could not have worked as a constructive 'dual language' as suggested by some scholars. Instead of hinting subtly at 'philosophical equivalents', the exposition of the dogmas simply aroused an ever-growing suspicion about itself. Maybe the same suspense characteristic to the double bind bears upon the endless 'double language' debates on the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, dividing scholars into the constructive-rhetoric view and the destructive-disguise view. Is it the astute device of an atheist or an instrument for gradual enlightenment? The 'real intention' being logically indeterminable in a double bind, it is no surprise that such debates always prove to be inconclusive.⁴⁸ Some may wish to put an end to it by saying: so this is it, this long disturbing effect was what Spinoza wished to produce so as to subvert the readers' entrenched belief in old religion. But let us not be so hasty to commit to such a 'solution', which will completely blind us to the real problem.

In any case, as to the ‘dogmas of the universal faith’, one thing is certain: as long as we take Spinoza’s argument to be a kind of persuasion or edification, to exhort the reader to ‘adhere’ to the dogmas, we will never be freed from the double bind, and consequently remain oscillating in suspense under the Straussian spell.

v The Grammar of Faith

Was Strauss right, after all? Perhaps not. That Spinoza devised such a devilish double bind on purpose is unlikely. It seems more reasonable to suppose that Spinoza’s intention was not edification, not to ‘trigger the desired effects in his audience’.⁴⁹ The function Spinoza assigns to ‘the dogmas of the universal faith’ was ‘demarcation’. His aim is not so much to induce the reader to purify or stabilise his faith — in which case we fall back to the double bind — but rather to define objectively what belief has the right to be called ‘pious faith’. At stake is the criterion or norm involved in saying ‘pious’ or ‘impious’. In other words, the ‘dogmas’ are proposed to determine conclusively that which a man, *regardless* of what he actually holds in his mind, can be justly *presumed* to hold about God when, and only when, this man is rightly said to be ‘pious’. Let us now examine Spinoza’s argument in Chapter XIV more closely.

As noticed by many, the procedure Spinoza follows here is strictly deductive. The dogmas of faith are to be deduced from ‘the definition of faith’, and this definition, from ‘the aim of Scripture’.

Restating the outcome of the biblical exegesis he has pursued in previous chapters, Spinoza declares ‘the aim of Scripture’ to be ‘simply to teach obedience’. And as to what every man should do in order to serve God, Scripture also tells us ‘quite clearly in many places’: it is ‘to love one’s neighbour’, that is, ‘justice and charity’.⁵⁰ Interestingly, Spinoza claims these things to be so plain and manifest (*‘res manifestissima’*) that ‘no one can contest’ or ‘no one can deny’ them. He even sees no need to confirm them by referring to specific scriptural texts.⁵¹ We shall have more to say about this later. Spinoza goes on to say that this commandment to love one’s neighbour is ‘the one and only norm’ (*‘unica norma’*) of the universal faith against which all the dogmas of faith every man is bound to accept should be measured.⁵² The definition of faith derives from this norm, or the ‘given foundation’ (*‘datum fundamentum’*):

'On this given foundation, faith must be defined as the holding of certain beliefs about God such that, without these beliefs, there cannot be obedience to God, and if this obedience is posited, these beliefs are necessarily posited.'⁴⁸

This definition of faith, states Spinoza, derives in such a logical manner that 'it needs no explanation'.⁴⁹ It is true, indeed, that, if the binding command of Scripture is simply obedience to God, faith must be determined solely in correlation with the 'being posited' (*'posui'*) or 'being eliminated' (*'tollit'*) of obedience. From this Spinoza draws some important remarks on faith, which, again, are logical consequences rather than explanations. For the sake of convenience, we may put the 'definition of faith' thus:

$$(\sim F \rightarrow \sim O)$$

which is the contraposition of

$$(O \rightarrow F)$$

where 'O' stands for 'there is obedience', 'F' for 'there is faith', that is, there are beliefs about God. The definition above permits inferences such as: if there is no faith, then there is necessarily no obedience: ($\sim F \rightarrow \sim O$). And, if there is obedience, then necessarily there is faith: ($O \rightarrow F$). These two forms are known to be logically equivalent, hence interchangeable: ($\sim F \rightarrow \sim O$) = ($O \rightarrow F$). This shows that F is a necessary condition of O, while O a sufficient condition of F. The definition precludes other forms of inference, such as ($O \rightarrow \sim F$), ($F \rightarrow O$), ($\sim O \rightarrow \sim F$), etc.. That is to say, in the matter of faith, these other forms cannot be inferred correctly. The definition of faith aims at showing that there are right and wrong ways of talking about 'faith', the content of specific beliefs *aside*. Though Spinoza does not write explicitly in such logical forms, it is no exaggeration to say that his arguments are strictly in conformity with the logical structure implied in the definition. He begins thus:

'I shall now briefly show what consequences it entails. First, faith does not bring salvation through itself, but only by reason of obedience; or James says (ch.2 v.17), faith in itself without works is dead. ... Secondly, it follows that he who is truly obedient necessarily possesses a true and saving faith; for, as we have said, obedience being posited, faith is necessarily posited. This is again expressly stated by the same

Apostle in chapter 2 v.18, "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." Likewise John, in 1 Ep. ch.4 v.7,8, "Everyone that loveth (his neighbour) is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love."⁵⁵

The first point concerns one of the wrong ways of talking about faith. You cannot say rightly that faith can be acknowledged apart from works of obedience. To put it another way, you cannot say: there can be a faith which never produces obedience, i.e. $(F \rightarrow \sim O)$. This is obvious in its contrapositive form, $(O \rightarrow \sim F)$: if there be obedience, then there is necessarily no faith, which is meaningless. Therefore, The Apostle James was right to say that 'faith in itself without works is dead'. That was the first point stated above. The second point goes without explanation. The inference $(O \rightarrow F)$ is valid by the definition of faith itself, which says: if there is obedience, then there is necessarily faith.⁵⁶ Therefore, it is true to say that 'he who is truly obedient necessarily possesses a true and saving faith', and consequently James and John were right.

From these remarks Spinoza draws a general rule of judging a man's faith:

'From these considerations it again follows that only by works can we judge anyone to be a believer or an unbeliever. If his works are good, he is a believer, however much he may differ in religious dogma from other believers; whereas if his works are evil, he is an unbeliever, however much he may agree with them verbally. For obedience being posited, faith is necessarily posited, and faith without works is dead.'⁵⁷

Let us try to reconstruct the logic. We should notice that, according to the definition of faith there is only one form by which we correctly conclude the existence of faith in someone, that is: $(O \rightarrow F)$, which, no matter what beliefs he may actually entertain, holds true, provided that his works are good. What if someone insists he has faith while showing no good works? We cannot decide whether he has faith or not until he shows the sign of obedience. For the inference $(\sim O \rightarrow \sim F)$ is no less invalid than the inference $(\sim O \rightarrow F)$, both of which being precluded by the definition of faith. This will be clearly seen by contraposition. The inference $(\sim F \rightarrow O)$ – the contrapositive of $(\sim O \rightarrow F)$ – amounts to saying: 'if there is no faith, there is necessarily obedience' – which would make faith useless. The inference $(F \rightarrow O)$ which is the contraposition of $(\sim O \rightarrow \sim F)$ says: 'if

there is faith, then there is necessarily obedience', which is no less senseless. For, if this were true, faith would be something that automatically produces good works, and consequently there would be no moral question about faith, which is obviously contrary to what people think about faith. Faith is a necessary condition for obedience, but not sufficient. Otherwise, there would be no need for prayer or the saving grace of God.

From the above we may say: so long as a man shows no good works the existence of his faith is inconclusive, whatever he may claim. In other words, there remains the possibility that he may boast of 'true faith' without being faithful. Although the absence of obedience does not imply by itself the inexistence of faith, the suspicion will be sufficiently confirmed when his works are evil enough to testify a contempt of the commandment of justice and charity. In other words, the hypothesis 'if he has no faith, he will never show obedience', i.e. ($\sim F \rightarrow \sim O$), explains the case very well. We usually presume such a man to be a liar, as rightly said by John: 'And hereby do we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.'⁵⁸ So ($O \rightarrow F$) is the only valuable form to conclude the existence of faith in a man while his evil works are to be explained by the presumed inexistence of faith in him, no matter what he claims. Therefore we obtain what the extract says: 'only by works can we judge anyone to be a believer or an unbeliever'.

It all boils down to the general rule cited above: 'If his works are good, he is a believer, *however much he may differ* in religious dogma from other believers; whereas if his works are evil, he is an unbeliever, *however much he may agree* with them verbally' – the stress is mine.

I would like to lay special emphasis on the formal character of the procedure Spinoza follows. The general rule we saw belongs to what we may call 'the grammar of piety', the grammar which applies to any discourse that mentions 'piety' or 'impiety', and that *regardless of* the specific confessional belief the man claims to have. Spinoza's final remark on faith, a severe criticism indeed, is in this respect more grammatical than ethical. He declares:

'From this we can again conclude that the enemies of Christ are *in fact* [*revera*] those who persecute the righteous and the lovers of justice because these disagree with them and do not uphold the same religious dogmas. Those who love justice and charity we know *by that very fact* [*per hoc solum*] to be the faithful, and he who persecutes the

faithful is an enemy of Christ.'⁵⁹

The point is clear: whatever one may claim for one's faith, one is judged pious or impious according to one's deeds, in conformity with the grammatical rule. The truth of the content of beliefs is thus irrelevant to such judgement, for whatever different opinions men may have about God, the grammar of piety holds the same.

vi Dogmas in the Light of Grammar

Spinoza then moves on to the question of 'the dogmas of the universal faith'. The irrelevancy of truth claims carries much weight here. 'Finally', he says, 'it follows that faith requires not so much true dogmas as pious dogmas, that is, such as move the heart to obedience; and this is so even if many of those beliefs contain not a shadow of truth....'⁶⁰ Needless to say this passage is the central problem posed at the opening of this paper. A long quote is perhaps worthwhile:

'As, then, each man's faith is to be regarded as pious or impious not in respect of its truth or falsity, but as it is conducive to obedience or obstinacy; and as nobody questions that there is to be found among men a wide variety of temperament, that all men are not equally in agreement in all matters but are ruled some by one opinion some by another, so that what moves one man to devotion will move another to ridicule and contempt, it follows that a catholic or universal faith must not contain any dogmas that may give rise to controversy among good men.... A catholic faith should therefore contain only those dogmas *which obedience to God absolutely posits, and without which such obedience is absolutely impossible.*'⁶¹

What the passage makes clear at once is that Spinoza opposes the dogmas of faith to beliefs or 'opinions' ('*opiniones*').⁶² There being such a 'wide variety of temperament', it is practically impossible to induce all men to agree in all matters. Agreement in opinion is ideal but unrealistic, and where disagreements arise, the controversial question of the truth and falsity of conflicting opinions dominates. But, states Spinoza, as far as faith is concerned, a man's faith can be rightly judged as 'pious or impious' with no regard to the 'truth or falsity' of his opinions on God. That is to say, however much they disagree in their opinions, men agree *de facto* in respect of the grammar of piety. Any talk of piety that conflicts with the

grammatical rule will simply prove to be nonsense, as we have seen. Therefore, in order that the universal faith contain no dogmas 'that may give rise to controversy among good men', these dogmas should be sought, not in the common denominator of the opinions men actually hold about God, but in the grammatical agreement, that is, the minimum requirements for talking rightly about 'God' in conformity with the grammar of piety.

This is clear from the passage I emphasised above: 'A catholic faith should therefore contain only those dogmas *which obedience to God absolutely posits, and without which such obedience is absolutely impossible*'. The homology with the definition of faith is obvious. Faith being by definition the 'holding of certain beliefs about God'⁶⁸, these 'certain beliefs' must be in conformity with the grammar of faith. So we may restate Spinoza's requirement for the dogmas thus: *If each man, to be regarded as pious, is bound to accept certain dogmas of faith, these dogmas must be such that, if they are unknown, there cannot be obedience to God, and if obedience be posited, they are necessarily posited: $(\sim F \rightarrow \sim O) = (O \rightarrow F)$* . It now remains for Spinoza only to fill up 'F' with grammatically valid statements.

And such statements, indeed, are the seven articles of the '*credo minimum*'. If we look closely at the explications Spinoza provides for each article (except the fifth), we shall notice that they all follow the type of inference $(\sim F \rightarrow \sim O)$ or $(O \rightarrow F)$, which are exclusively permitted by the definition of faith. Let us view them in order.

1. '*God, that is, a Supreme Being, exists, supremely just and merciful, the exemplar of true life*'. Here is Spinoza's explication: 'He who knows not, or does not believe, that God exists, cannot obey him or know him as judge.'

2. '*God is one alone*.' Explication: 'No one can doubt that this belief is essential for complete devotion, reverence and love towards God; for devotion, reverence and love spring only from the pre-eminence of one above all others.'

3. '*God is omnipresent, and all things are open to him*.' Explication: 'If it were believed that things could be concealed from God, or if it were not realised that he sees everything, one might doubt, or be unaware of, the uniformity of the justice wherewith he directs everything.'

4. '*God has supreme right and dominion over all things*.' Explication: 'If this were not believed, there would be no reason that 'all are required to obey him absolutely'.

5. '*Worship of God and obedience to him consists solely in justice and*

charity, or love towards one's neighbour.' (It is noteworthy that Spinoza gives here *no* explication. We shall return to this very interesting point later on).

6. *'All who obey God by following this way of life, and only those, are saved; others, who live at pleasure's behest, are lost.'* Explication: 'If men did not firmly believe this, there is no reason why they should obey God rather than their desires.'

7. *'God forgives repentant sinners.'* Explication: 'There is no one who does not sin, so that without this belief all would despair of salvation, and there would be no reason to believe that God is merciful.'⁶⁴

In a word, obedience is utterly inconceivable if these dogmas are unknown. We should not overlook the fact that these explications — grammatical remarks so to say — make no reference to traditional beliefs, nor do they rely on the scriptural passages theologians usually dwell upon. They simply unfold what is contained in the logic of faith. In this respect, these dogmas of faith represent the minimum of grammatically valid statements that must be accepted by all those engaged in the language game of 'piety'. Let us review the structure of the whole procedure:

- (a) The aim of Scripture (the given foundation)
- /
- (b) The definition of faith (the grammar of piety)
- /
- (c) The dogmas of the universal faith (grammatically valid statements on God)

This move from (a) to (b) and then to (c), as the term 'follow' (*'sequi'*) reflects⁶⁵, is completely deductive, or analytical in the sense that it unfolds all the possible norms of 'piety' implied in the given foundation of Scripture. This is perhaps why Spinoza gives no explication of the 5th article, for this article states the 'given foundation' itself from which all the dogmas derive, and which, for this reason, is to remain unexplained in the language game of piety it supports.

In any case, this logical procedure cannot be overemphasised, for it is this purely grammatical character — and certainly not their putative convertibility into metaphysical notions — that bestows universality to the dogmas. In that Spinoza differs widely from any other proponents of so-called 'natural religion'. If there can be no disagreement on these dogmas,

it is according to him not because they state obliquely what God actually is, nor because they represent the greatest common factor of the religious imagination, but because, and only because, anybody who contests any of these dogmas simply proves to be committing a grammatical mistake, that is, to be uttering nonsense about the 'God' of Scripture.

With this point in mind we can now get in view the function of the '*credo minimum*'. It is, as we suggested in the previous section, less edificatory than demarcative. It confines the legitimacy of religious claims to the necessary conditions of obedience. In other words, 'the dogmas of the universal faith' Spinoza propounds are such that any man who displays the works of justice and charity has a right to be considered as believing them, and that any man is legitimately presumed to believe them if he is to be regarded as pious.

This is why Spinoza derives from the above the freedom, as well as duty, to adapt the dogmas to one's own belief. Whether you believe God to be 'fire' or 'spirit' or 'thought' or whatever has no bearing on your piety, 'provided that such a belief does not lead to the assumption of greater license to sin, or hinders submission to God.'⁶⁶ So you may be at rest with your present belief and you need not try to convert others into the same confession nor to worry about blame for impiety. You are thus free to believe as you believe, free to picture the God of the dogmas as you wish, unless you contradict the dogmas of universal faith. But on the other hand you have no right to contest these dogmas, for that implies you are saying something wrong about 'God'. Therefore, for the sake of your own conviction, you are bound to 'adapt' the dogmas to your understanding and belief.⁶⁷ Such is, I think, the idea Spinoza entertains.

Apart from this adaptation to the grammatical norm, there is neither obligation nor freedom in matters of 'pious faith'. It is those who deny the duty and freedom that deserve the charge of 'impiety', says Spinoza. 'My accusation against them is this, that they refuse this same freedom to others. All those who do not share their opinions, however righteous and truly virtuous the dissenters may be, they persecute as God's enemies, while those who follow their lead, however dissolute they may be, they cherish as God's elect. Surely nothing more profane than this and more fraught with danger to the state, can be devised.'⁶⁸ Those persecutors deserve the charge of 'impiety' because they violate the grammatical norm which does not allow one to bring a charge against anyone who displays good works. Their charges, in Spinoza's view, are nothing but abuse of the words 'piety' and

'impiety'.

The role of the demarcative function is now obvious. It is to show, according to the grammar, the confines within which men are free to think about God without harming 'piety', and beyond which 'abuse' begins. The last paragraph of Chapter XIV is impressive in this regard:

'Let him [i.e. the reader] accept my assurance that my purpose in writing these chapters has not been to introduce innovations but to correct abuses [*ut depravata corrigemus*], such as I hope one day to see corrected.'⁶⁸

Spinoza here specifies his purpose in writing. It is not to introduce 'innovations' ('*nova*'), but only to 'correct the abuses' in what we may call the language game of 'piety' in which the readers as well as the author were all involved. Spinoza has no need to 'convert' anew the readers to the dogmas of universal faith. For the dogmas he proposes are nothing new, nothing more than the norms of pious belief, the making visible of what his readers have been doing in saying 'such-and-such or so-and-so is pious'. Spinoza shows the norm against which abuse also can be defined. Such a communal norm therefore requires no persuasion nor edification in order to be agreed to, it is agreed to *de facto*, a fact that each reader has just to take a little trouble to notice. It is on this ground that Spinoza goes on to declare: '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 profanity are thereby aborted at source, I leave everyone to judge for himself.'⁷⁰

The political import of the *credo minimum* is now clear: the freedom and duty defined above will form part of the theologico-political structure that Spinoza promises in the Preface of the treatise to show as compatible with a free republic — a republic which had no choice other than to concede the freedom of judgement to everyone, at the risk of seditious controversies.⁷¹ But let us leave this point to a future discussion. What is important here is Spinoza's dismissal of the truth claim in religious matters. Spinoza was upright in saying that 'faith requires not so much true dogmas as pious dogmas'. Since the grammar of piety requires no truth value for the content of belief, he was absolutely right to say that 'this is so even if many of those beliefs contain not a shadow of truth'.⁷² Again, since the 'God' of the dogmas has nothing to do with truth claim, Spinoza has no worry to square it to his own truth claiming in the *Ethica*, either. His purpose was not to make an imaginative 'God' into an instrument for gradual enlightenment

but to show the grammar of saying right. At stake was a normative device by which the divergence in opinions on God – whether crude or sophisticated – would be simply irrelevant to the question of piety and impiety.

We are now in the position to propound an answer to the question we posed at the beginning of this paper. As far as the ‘dogmas of the universal faith’ are concerned, no metaphor or disguise is implied: everything is on the surface, as a grammatical form. Nevertheless, this may sound somewhat sinister. So it did to the philosophers and the theologians of the time who had no intention of giving up the ‘profound truth’ of Scripture. This is a question to be discussed elsewhere.

NOTES

This paper develops in much greater detail some of the themes sketched in my ‘Spinoza and the Grammar of Piety – the “dogmas of the universal faith” in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*’ [in Japanese with an English summary], *The Philosophical Studies of Ymaguchi University*, Vol.4, 1995, and will constitute part of a monograph on Spinoza’s *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. The text followed is: Benedictus de Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Kürnath, 1670; in *Spinoza Opera*, Im Auftrag der Heiderberger Akademie der Wissenschaften hrg. von Carl Gebhardt, Carl Winter, 1925; 2. Auflage, 1972, Bd.3. For citation I used the translation by Shirley: Benedictus de Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, translated by Samuel Shirley, E. J. Brill, 1991.

Abbreviations

TTP = *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*: with page-numbers according to *Spinoza Opera*, Bd.3.

E = *Ethica more geometrico demonstrata*: with citation conventions commonly used in *Studia Spinozana*. (P: propositio, C: corollarium, S: scholium, etc.)

Ep = *Epistolae*: with letter numbers according to *Spinoza Opera*, Bd.4.

TP = *Tractatus Politicus*: with chapter and section number.

1 TTP, p.177.

2 W. Klever points out that dubbing this ‘*credo minimum*’ is misleading, since it implies there are more, whereas the seven dogmas are the ‘maximum’ in the sense that there cannot possibly be other dogmas of the universal faith. See Klever, 1999, p.254. This claim is relevant for reasons discussed below: the dogmas of universal faith are the *sine*

qua non for obedience to be posited, and hence are logically determined as an integral set. But we permit ourselves to continue using the term to connote the demarcative function.

3 TTP, pp.177-178.

4 TTP, p.178. Shirley fails to translate the last clause: '*...ut consequenter Deo pleno animi consensu obediatur.*'

5 E 1P29S, 1P18, 1P25S, 1P33S2, 5P17C.

6 The assumption that Spinoza's concept of God might have evolved is out of the question. Principal part of the *Ethica* had been already achieved when he interrupted it around 1665 to start composing the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. See Mignini, 1983, pp.82-84.

7 Ep 23.

8 TTP, p.176.

9 As to Spinoza's own accommodation theory, see TTP, p.10, p.77 and Ep 23.

10 Strauss, 1952, pp.176-177.

11 Strauss, 1952, p.179.

12 Strauss, 1952, p.184.

13 For example, Kaplan, 1973, pp.1-17; Den Tex, 1967, p.11; Franc 峻, 1954, pp.1456-1458; TOSEL, 1984, pp.50-69, 106-118; Smith, 1997, p.39.

14 Objections to the Straussian thesis abound. For example, Harris, 1978, passim; Zac, 1965, pp.189-190, pp.224-229; Zac, 1962/1, pp.35-37; Gregory, 1991, pp.37-44; Donagan, 1988, pp.14-15; Moreau, 1994, pp.367-368. A critical assessment of the objections is given by Moutaux, 1993, pp.421-444.

15 Akkerman, 1985, p.385.

16 Moreau, 1994, pp.367-368.

17 Gregory, 1991, p.43.

18 Yovel criticises Strauss' one-sided view, while basically agreeing with him. Yovel, 1989, pp.150-152.

19 Yovel, 1989, pp.141-143.

20 Yovel, 1989, pp.143-145.

21 Yovel, 1989, pp.145-148.

22 Yovel, 1989, p.145.

23 Yovel, 1989, p.141.

24 See the criticism from Lambert van Velthuysen: Ep 42. For further details of the charge of 'disguised arguments', see Van Bunge, 1980, pp.236-237, pp.243-245; also Van Bunge, 1993, pp.89-90; Van Bunge, 1995, pp.24-25. Van Bunge, 1997, pp.20-22; Van Bunge, 1999, pp.344-346. Spinoza betrays an air of injured innocence in Ep 43, written against Van Velthuysen. He was so much bewildered that in Ep 68 he begs the correspondent

Henry Oldenburg to point out 'the passages in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* which have proved a stumbling-block to learned men.' Ridiculous requests, if he had been a subversive atheist.

25 See Donagan, 1988, p.14.

26 TTP, p.159. In this case Spinoza is talking about his argument on imperfection in the corpus of Scriptures. Things went just as Spinoza had foreseen. Israel, 1995, p.923: the 1690s saw 'a spread of a simplified Spinozism in Dutch, and even more the fierce reaction it provoked from the secular and ecclesiastical authorities'.

27 Yovel, 1989, p.144, p.146.

28 Yovel, 1989, p.148.

29 See Francès, 1954, p.1472, and Francès, 1951, p.82.

30 See Matheron, 1971, pp.99-103. .

31 TTP, p.178.

32 See Matheron, 1971, pp.100-103. Spinoza himself alludes to such equivalence in the letter to Van Blyenbergh, 5 January 1665. See Ep 19: 'I say that Scripture, being particularly adapted to the needs of the common people, continually speaks in merely human fashion, for the common people are incapable of understanding higher things. That is why I think that all that God has revealed to the Prophets as necessary for salvation is set down in the form of law, and in this way the Prophets made up a whole parable depicting God as a king and lawgiver, because he had revealed the means that lead to salvation and perdition, and was the cause thereof. These means, which are simply causes, they called laws, and wrote them down in the form of laws; salvation and perdition, which are simply effects necessarily resulting from these means, they represented as reward and punishment. All their words were adjusted to the framework of this parable rather than to truth....So philosophers and likewise all who have risen to a level beyond law, that is, all who pursue virtue not as a law but because they love it as something very precious, should not find such words a stumbling-block.' I do not deny that Spinoza, if he wanted, could 'adapt' the dogmas to his own rational concepts. See, for instance, TP, 2/22. But this is not the point here.

33 See E 2P1.

34 E 2P11C: '...the human Mind is a part of the infinite intellect of God.'

35 E 1P16, P18.

36 See E 1P32C1, P29.

37 This is the view of J. Lagrée in Lagrée, 1991, p.121, who agrees with A. Matheron and G. Boss in thinking that the universal faith prompts the 'Desire to do good generated in us by our living according to the guidance of reason' (E 4P37S1). 'Ici ce n'est plus la raison qui mène à la foi, mais bien plutôt la foi qui mène à la raison.'

38 Yovel, 1989, p.149.

39 For example, Smith, 1997, p.115: ‘...Spinoza clearly believes that the principles of this religion are superior to the superstitious beliefs that he analyses elsewhere in the *Treatise*, thus indicating that he is operating with some conception of differing degrees of truth. ... Thus the unenlightened person may believe in the existence and unity of God because that belief has the support and authority of Scripture behind it, whereas the philosopher may arrive at the same belief because reason leads to that conclusion.’ See, for another example, Malet, 1978, p.225: ‘Certes les *dogmata* constituent la *〈fides catholica, sive univeralis〉* et à cet égard ils sont au-dessus de l’imagination et de l’histoire. Ils sont des vérités spéculatives (TTP XIII, p.168) et ce n’est pas d’eux que parle Spinoza quand il dit que les dogmes de la foi n’ont pas une ombre de vérité mais de leur adaptation aux opinions d’un chacun.’

40 Yovel, 1989, p.146.

41 TTP, p.178.

42 TTP, p.174.

43 TTP, 179.

44 TTP, p.10. This does not preclude the possibility that theology or the dogmas of faith ‘agree with reason’ so far as the moral effect is concerned: see TTP, p.185. As we shall see below, the essential of Spinoza’s idea is that good works can be fully appreciated regardless of what one believes. See TTP, p.80: ‘...we cannot know anyone except by his works. He who abounds in these fruits – charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...he, whether he be taught by reason alone or by Scripture alone, is in truth taught by God, and is altogether blessed.’

45 See Lagrée, 1995, p.179.

46 TTP, p.176.

47 Here is the general description of the ‘double bind’ situation given in Bateson, 1973, p.180, p.186: (1) When the individual is involved in an intense relationship; that is, a relationship in which he feels it is vitally important that he discriminate accurately what sort of message is being communicated so that he may respond appropriately. (2) And, the individual is caught in a situation in which the other person in the relationship is expressing two orders of message and one of these denies the other. (3) And, the individual is unable to comment on the messages being expressed to correct his discrimination of what order of message to respond to, i.e., he cannot make a metacommunicative statement. In this situation, the victim is punished for discriminating accurately what the speaker is expressing, and he is punished for discriminating inaccurately – he is caught in a double bind. This situation is very similar to that of one confronted with a passage like the quoted one.

48 See, for example, the inconclusive dispute in den Tex, 1967, pp.21-24.

49 Expression in Yovel, 1989, p.130.

- 50 TTP, p.174. As for the equivalence, TTP, p.177: ‘...*Justitia, & Charitate, sive amore erga proximum...*’
- 51 TTP, p.174.
- 52 TTP, pp.174-175.
- 53 TTP, p.175: ‘*Ut itaque rem totam ordine ostendam, a fidei definitione incipiam, quae ex hoc dato fundamento sic definiri debet, nempe quod nihil aliud sit, quam de Deo talia sentire, quibus ignoratis tollitur erga Deum obedientia, & hac obedientia posita, necessario ponuntur.*’ Shirley puts ‘*ex hoc dato fundamento*’ into: ‘According to our fundamental principle’, which I had to modify into: ‘On this given foundation’, in order to stress the character of ‘*datum*’. This corresponds the terms little above, TTP, p.175: ‘*ex hoc invento fundamento*’, i.e. ‘this discovered foundation’.
- 54 TTP, p.175.
- 55 TTP, p.175.
- 56 It might be objected that a philosopher like Spinoza can practice justice and charity without having faith. But the philosopher has no need to ‘obey’ the commandments of God to do so. The term ‘*obedientia*’ appears nowhere in the *Ethica*, except the case where it explains obedience and disobedience to the civil law (E 4P37S2). At stake here is the grammar of ‘faith’, which is different from the grammar of the ethics of reason founded exclusively on ‘the striving to preserve oneself’. See E 4P22C.
- 57 TTP, p.175.
- 58 TTP, p.176.
- 59 TTP, p.176. Shirley’s translation slightly modified. The emphasis is mine.
- 60 TTP, p.176.
- 61 TTP, pp.176-177. I have modified Shirley’s translation for precision.
- 62 For a discussion of the distinction between ‘piety’ and ‘opinions’ from the political viewpoint, see Zourabichvili, 1994, pp.166-167.
- 63 TTP, p.175.
- 64 TTP, pp.177-178.
- 65 See TTP, p.175, ll.16-17; p.176, l.18, l.27.
- 66 TTP, p.178.
- 67 TTP, pp.178-179.
- 68 TTP, p.173. Shirley’s translation slightly modified. See note 70.
- 69 TTP, p.180.
- 70 TTP, p.179. Shirley translates ‘*scelerum*’ as ‘crime’. I prefer ‘profanity’ in that it keeps the religious connotation of impiety or blasphemy. Cf. TTP, p.7, l.16, p.97, l.25, p.171, l.30, p.180, l.1, p.185, l.14, p.197, l.5, p.203, l.27, p.244, l.5. For crime in juridical sense Spinoza uses the term ‘*crimen*’. See TTP, p.7, l.16, p.196, l.3, p.197, l.15, l.18, p.206, l.13, p.225, l.21, p.255, l.5.

71 See Preface: TTP, p.7.

72 TTP, p.176. As to the theologico-political crisis in the Republic of Holland in the 17th century, see Price, 1994, pp.184-201 and Israel, 1995, chapter 34, pp.889ff.

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